Kaili, the homeland of 100 festivals: Space, music and sound in a small city

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KAILI, THE HOMELAND OF 100 FESTIVALS: SPACE, MUSIC, AND SOUND IN A SMALL CITY

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines the production of social space in Kaili, a small city in southwest China, through its branding as "the homeland of one hundred festivals", inhabitants' conceptualizations of music, amateur music-making practices, and the construction of the built environment. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's triad of social space as a basic framework, I explore the complexity of the city through multiple aspects of the relationship between space, music and sound: how the built environment of post-Mao China hinders and hides amateur music, even in a city branded as a place of authentic (*yuanshengtai*) ethnic folk music; how disparities between the branding and living of Kaili have produced a discourse whereby citizens relocate authentic musical practices to an imagined rural space outside the city; and how amateur musicians have constructed hierarchies of amateur musical space within the city.

This thesis makes a distinctive contribution across a range of disciplinary and theoretical interests: Chinese studies, multi-disciplinary debates about Lefebvre's spatial theory, and urban studies. For Chinese studies, it gives detailed scrutiny to Lefebvre's spatial theory in considering the historical and recent formation of urban space in China, and in so doing goes beyond the truism that social space is socially produced. It intervenes in ongoing discussions about Lefebvrian theory outside the parameters of Chinese studies, by grounding what has been a predominantly abstract discussion in ethnographically and textually-based research. My discussion of city branding and everyday musical activity elaborates Lefebvre's theory, both modifying and adding to his triad of perceived, conceived and lived space.

My fieldwork further suggests the need for both Chinese studies and urban studies to look beyond the big city for a more comprehensive understanding of how cities and urban spaces are configured. Most notably, many inhabitants of Kaili conceptualize not only a rural-urban divide – long a dominant geographical imagination of China – but also a spatial triad of village, big city and small city. These multiple interpretations of space interweave with a discourse of authenticity which assigns "real" minorities and their folk music practices to the village, authenticity-seekers to the big city, and sinicized "fake" minorities to Kaili. This latter category, of "fake" minority, emerges in this thesis as a little-studied form of self-identification in the context of literature on ethnicity in China.

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Acknowledgements

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More generally, I'd like to thank all of those who have assisted or befriended me during the PhD. Aiming in the direction of Kaili, special thanks to all those who helped me during the early stages of fieldwork, as well as those who became friends rather than passing acquaintances in the field. A list of individuals would be too long and the pseudonyms too many, but most were attached in some way to one or more of the following spaces: Apple Hill Park, Bright Star, Longtouhe village, Kaili University, and Fenghua choir. Back in London, multiple generations of the Westminster Wells Street PhD room provided good company and diverse academic perspectives, as did old acquaintances in the School of African and Oriental Studies.

Statement of Authorship

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Introduction: Situating the Ethnographic and the Academic

"Don't waste your time in Kaili",[1] advised Wang Dewei, a retired English teacher who played *erhu* (two-stringed spike fiddle) for an amateur choir in one of Kaili city's local parks. An accusation of laziness would have made me happier than his intended meaning, that my time was wasted because I had chosen the wrong place to do fieldwork on everyday musical activity. The city of Kaili was not the best place for music and I should instead head to the surrounding countryside, Teacher Wang explained, as we walked down from the summit of Apple Hill Park (*Pingguoshan gongyuan*). International Labour Day holiday was less than a week away, and he felt that this would be a good opportunity for me to visit the nearby town of Zhenyuan, where there would be festive activities. I asked if Kaili would not have similar activities. It would, Teacher Wang told me, but organized by the city government, whereas those in Zhenyuan would be organized by ordinary people (*lao baixing*).

By the time of this conversation, I was already somewhat accustomed to statements advising me to get out of Kaili, even though I had only spent a total of two weeks in the city, such was the regularity of their occurrence. Accustomed, but still not entirely comfortable. It had become an unanticipated repetition across the otherwise disparate spaces - parks, karaoke bars, classrooms - in which I did my fieldwork, where I talked with people whose only immediately apparent commonality was a desire to usher me out of the city and into the countryside, where I could find music worthy of academic study. However, the frequency of this repetition prompted what eventually turned out to be a fruitful question: why do the inhabitants of Kaili consider their own city as musically without merit in comparison to the surrounding villages?

Some ten minutes' walk away from Apple Hill Park, a completely different interpretation of the city was suggested by a giant statue of a multi-pipe wind instrument. The statue was located on the roundabout island of Dashizi, a busy junction which had constituted the heart of Kaili since the settlement was designated a prefectural capital in the 1950s. Rising high above the circling traffic, the statue depicted a *lusheng*, a free-reed instrument described by tourist organizations, Chinese academics and Kaili residents as a cultural marker of the Miao minority, who have historically constituted the majority of the population in the Kaili administrative area. The giant *lusheng* was encircled by a grey-white band and three slabs designed to represent bull horns, since water buffalo fighting was also associated with the Miao. This statue's location at the heart of the city derived from its status as the "soul of the highlands" (*gaoyuan hun*) (S. Long 1996; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2009a), since it supposedly encapsulated the essence of the city and the wider prefecture through the representation of minority folk practices.

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[1] With the exception of this opening remark, I try to avoid the usage of quotation marks for comments which were made to me during participant observation, since I feel unable to guarantee verbatim recollection. See the sub-section *Fieldwork methods* in chapter one for further details.

Figure I.1: Dashizi intersection and *lusheng* statue (fieldwork photo 2013)

How strange, that a city which is represented at its centre – and in the majority of the promotional literature - by a musical instrument, was also home to inhabitants who had a decidedly low opinion of music-making in their urban everyday. There is, I argue, a connection between the two phenomena. In linking official representations of music, such as the *lusheng* statue, with inhabitants' conceptualizations of music and with their own amateur music-making, this thesis explores the relationship between the built environment, city branding and everyday life, all of which are conceptualized as elements of social space.

The term "social space" is closely associated with the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991a [1974]), whose theories have exerted a strong influence on the structure of this thesis. While space has become a buzzword in Chinese studies (Bray 2005: 10), this thesis goes beyond the truism that social space is socially produced and towards a closer engagement with Lefebvre's theories, particularly his spatial triad of perceived, conceived and lived space.[2] As such, I wish to bring together Lefebvre, space and China by applying a level of theoretical detail which is not commonly found in academic studies of space in China.[3] This thesis also contributes to the theoretical discussion of Lefebvre which has taken place outside of Chinese studies (e.g. Soja 1996; Shields 1999; Elden 2004; Harvey 2006; Merrifield 2006), by going beyond abstract theory to connect the spatial triad with ethnographically and textually-based research. It offers a critical reassessment of Lefebvre's spatial theory in light of ethnographic and textual realities, and in regard to two particular themes: the contemporary branding of cities, and the everyday living of space.

The *lusheng* statue evidences how the built environment and branding are closely interlinked elements in the production of space. Academics have often employed the term "marketing" to describe the ways in which governments attempt to produce places which appeal to tourists (Holcomb 1999: 55–6). "Branding", however, seems a more appropriate term to describe the manner in which the desired city image is seared on to the urban landscape in the form of Miao architectural motifs and streets cleansed of "uncivilized" activity. Located within a picturesque part of Guizhou province, Kaili has been promoted by local government and the tourism industry as a musical place, with the *lusheng* statue as an early built consequence of these promotional efforts. Commentators in local newspapers, tourist brochures, and party journals have frequently described the city as "an ocean of song and dance" (*gewu haiyang*) or "the homeland of 100 festivals" (*baijie zhi xiang*), with reference to seasonal musical activities which are attributed to local minority

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[2] The spatial triad was Lefebvre's attempted unification of the various elements of space – which he argued had been fragmented across academic disciplines – including space as physically *perceived*, as intellectually *conceived* through planning and mapping, and as symbolically and socially *lived* (1991a: 38-46 [1974]). See chapter two for a more detailed description of this theory.

[3] In contrast to the limited critical engagement with Lefebvrian theory in Chinese studies, sociologist David Bray (2005) has successfully integrated Foucault, space and China in his study of the Chinese work unit. However, I also seek to disprove the assertion that Lefebvre, in contrast to Foucault, has little to offer towards a detailed and concrete analysis of space (J. Zhu 2010: 112–3).

groups (e.g. *Kaili wanbao* 2000a: 2; 2002b: 1; C. Zhang 2005: 1; F. Xiao 2008: 38; KSSX 2010: 60).[4] Such monikers rely upon representations of minority cultures as exotic and artistic, which anthropologists have identified as intrinsic to the imagining of both the Han and Chinese nations (Gladney 1994; Schein 2000), as further discussed in chapter two.

City branding has by no means been confined to Kaili during the last couple of decades, with local governments across China striving to reinvent their urban centres as sites for tourism, entertainment, heritage, commerce, or anything else that might attract outside capital. In an era of intense inter-city competition, increasingly complex urban environments have been routinely reduced to single-sentence advertising slogans. Accompanying this branding, many features of the Kaili cityscape have already been identified in other studies of Chinese cities, including the partial disintegration of the work-unit (*danwei*) system (Bray 2005; D. Lu 2006), the de-homogenization of city districts (Gaubatz 1995), the construction of public leisure spaces (Hoffman 2003; Ma and F. Wu 2005), and the rise of spectacular architecture (Ma and F. Wu 2005: 12; Broudehoux 2007; Hsing 2010: 19). Many of the trends described in this thesis can therefore be observed across much of urban China. From this general perspective, Kaili is a case study of China's strategic and ideological shift[5] from industrialism, production, and art as education, towards urbanism,[6] consumption, and art as consumption.

However, there are also particularities which have arisen from Kaili's status as a small and relatively new inland city. Moreover, these particularities are missing from an existing literature which largely confines itself to the urban centres of China's coastal region, particularly the big cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou. Despite identification of "the woeful neglect of the small city in the literature on urban studies" (Bell and Jayne 2006: 5), as well as the need to look beyond "paradigmatic cases" of the urban form (Amin and Graham 1997: 411), the small Chinese city continues to receive minimal academic attention. Whereas urban studies may tend towards "slippage between generalizing about 'urban life' and generalizing about 'urban life in the west'" (Wasserstrom 2011: 370), there is an even more insidious tendency in both urban and Chinese studies which reduces urban life to big city life. An increased focus on the small Chinese city, whose combined populations constitute a substantial slice of the global urban experience, can lead to more inclusive theories of urban form. It can also contribute to efforts in Chinese studies to spatialize China in ways which are not limited to dominant geographic notions, particularly that of

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[4] One local writer has provided a more exact figure of 133 festivals (Guangquan Yang 1997: 15–6).

[5] This shift may seem to be primarily one of political economy, following the commencement of economic reforms in 1978. However, it is also an ideological departure from an emphasis on collective production – including art as production for political goals – towards an emphasis on the entrepreneurial individual and the consumer.

[6] Urbanism, as used in this thesis, describes an "accumulation strategy" based upon the transformation of the built environment (F. Wu 2009: 418–9). Again, this shift from the industrial to the urban has been ideological as well as strategic, in terms of a move away from the ambivalent Maoist appraisal of the city towards a concept of the city as generator of wealth and innovation.

the rural-urban divide.[7] Fieldwork acquaintances in Kaili notably conceptualized China not only in terms of the city and the countryside, but also in terms of the village, the small city and the big city.

The general national shift from planned economy to "socialist market economy" – beginning in 1978 – produced the specific result of reversing the fortunes of industrial and minority culture in Kaili. Whereas the planned economy era witnessed secret military factories – as part of the Third Front, a national defence project – and the denigration of backward minority folk practices, market reform encouraged the rise of tourism centred around those same minority folk practices and the bankruptcy or relocation of heavy industry. As China embraced the urban and cities embraced competition, Kaili reinvented itself as a tourist destination, with promotional literature focusing on natural scenery and the rural folk practices of minorities. However, the city also expanded and modernized – carving away surrounding mountains in the process – to produce a built environment largely antithetical to its rustic representation, despite the attachment of minority motifs to a variety of public spaces. The recent history of Kaili is a history of how the urban has come to be advertised to potential investors and tourists through the propagation of rural imagery and the rejection of an industrial past. In chapter three, I revisit this history to further complicate the notion of the rural-urban divide, this time by harnessing Lefebvre's (2003 [1970]) theory of rural, industrial and urban space.

Considering the presence of a giant *lusheng* statue in the city centre during my fieldwork, any serious attempt to analyze the specifics of Kaili can hardly avoid mention of music, a topic towards which this thesis adopts an inclusive approach. Decades ago, ethnomusicologist Alan Merriam (1964: 32–5) called for the study of music systems on three analytical levels: "conceptualization about music, behaviour in relation to music, and musical sound itself". My approach somewhat resembles this model in examining the contribution of musical sound, the behaviour of amateur music groups, and concepts about music to the socio-spatial production of Kaili, although my primary focus is a city rather than a music system. Examples of such contributions to the production of the city include the assumptions about music and ethnicity which have led to the construction of a *lusheng* statue in the city centre, and the everyday comments about music during fieldwork which described amateur groups and their spaces in terms of generational difference. I also treat music as one element within the wider soundscape of the city, whose non-musical sounds – particularly those produced by construction, leisure and commerce – played an important role in determining the spaces where live music-making could occur.

At the same time as situating music within the wider soundscape, an exploration of amateur musical practices and conversations about music has facilitated an analysis of how inhabitants cope with – and contribute to – the ongoing representation and construction of their city. During my fieldwork, there was a gap between the branding of Kaili as a bastion of authentic folk music and

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[7] Most obviously, this divide has been complicated by work on rural-urban migration and "villages within cities" (*cheng zhong cun*) (e.g. Solinger 1999, Zhang 2002, Bach 2010).

an aurally chaotic built environment which contained small pockets of necessarily amplified amateur music. This gap contributed to everyday conceptualizations about music, as expressed in a localized discourse of *yuanshengtai* (roughly translatable as "authenticity", but see chapter four for a more thorough examination), which relocated unamplified folk music to the surrounding villages and proudly declared the city to be the home of the urban inauthentic. While academics have already commented on *yuanshengtai*, particularly within the Chinese-language literature,[8] I advance the discussion by critically considering how and why this word is used in everyday life. Drawing upon participant observation and interviews, I argue that this neologism has been utilized by urbanites to make sense of, and even redefine, their environment. *Yuanshengtai* was not simply the tool of branders and preservationists, it was also wielded by the inhabitants of Kaili, who produced social space rather than simply having space produced for them by government and commerce.

The imagining of Kaili as a de-ethnicized city – which constituted an element of the *yuanshengtai* discourse – went beyond both my expectations and the extensive academic literature on ethnicity in China. Prior to fieldwork, I had expected ethnicity to be the most important form of social difference within the city, along with class, but had not given much consideration to rural-urban, gender or generational difference. However, instead of ethnicity as a producer of social difference within the city, I encountered citizens who proudly declared themselves "fake" minorities in opposition to the "real" minorities of the countryside. Meanwhile, retiree and middle-aged music groups constructed spaces that evoked the politically serious artistic endeavours of the Mao era, and defined themselves against the perceived sentimental tastes and untrained voices of the younger generation. Thus, the city population as a whole tended to contrast inauthentic Kaili with the surrounding *yuanshengtai* villages, but also split internally along generational lines, with untrained, romantic singing associated with the younger generation and their entertainment spaces, while elderly groups adhered to more technical, educational singing in what remained of the work-unit network. In this way, ethnic, rural-urban, and generational difference emerged from my fieldwork as the most important forms of difference pertaining to music and space in Kaili, and this is reflected in the emphasis of my thesis.

By focusing on the built environment, city branding, and inhabitants' conceptualizations of the cityscape through music, I address each element of Lefebvre's triad of social space (1991a [1974]), that is, space as physically *perceived*, as mentally *conceived* through planning and mapping, and as symbolically *lived*, as a theory so often evoked in spatial literature yet rarely scrutinized alongside extensive fieldwork data. In attempting to represent space in its totality, I draw upon strands of research in Chinese studies, urban studies, human geography, ethnomusicology and sounds studies

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[8] For example, see Kaili University's *Yuanshengtai minzu wenhua* journal, with articles which have mostly promoted the notion of *yuanshengtai*, but also some ferocious criticism from the social scientists Naran Bilik (2010) and Weng Naiqun (2010), whose articles are considered further in chapter four.

which have hitherto been largely unconnected. I thus use the spatial triad, interdisciplinarity and fieldwork in order to gather together multiple sounds, images and sites in the representation of Kaili, purported homeland of 100 festivals, as a city constructed out of the sometimes contradictory elements of branding, building and everyday life.

Thesis structure

The first full chapter of the thesis introduces fieldwork methodology through a discussion of my initial experiences in Kaili and the impact of these experiences on the subsequent direction of my research. I elaborate on my three main methods of data collection, namely participant observation, unstructured interviews and textual research. Finally, I introduce some of the branded and musical spaces of Kaili by describing a number of my walks and bus journeys in the city.

Following this preliminary description of the sights, sounds and spaces of the city, chapter two sets out the main theoretical conceptualizations shaping my analysis. I identify and tackle five keywords – space, place, music, sound, and ethnicity – reviewing the relevant literature for these concepts and also outlining my own approach, with reference to human geography, urban studies, sociology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, sound studies, and Chinese studies. The chapter begins with an outline of the basic qualities of space, as found in theoretical works on the subject. I then focus on the theories of Henri Lefebvre, arguing for the adoption of his triad of social space as a means towards comprehending space in its totality. This triad serves as the overarching theoretical framework for subsequent chapters, albeit with modifications in accordance with my fieldwork experience and the changed state of the world since the triad's conception. I also consider the relationship between space and place, as terms that are so often paired in the relevant literature. I then examine literature on music and space/place, before arguing for the need to consider musical sound alongside other urban sounds, and the wider soundscape alongside other sensory dimensions. Finally, I examine *minzu*, the Chinese word for the delineation of groups such as Miao and Dong, which has become increasingly comparable with "ethnicity", but continues to contain the vestiges of "nationality", its earlier Stalin-derived meaning. I approach *minzu* as a process which provides an important link between notions of music and the rural-urban divide, as found in the branding and everyday discourse of Kaili.

Chapter three draws primarily upon textual sources to describe the historical development of Kaili since its designation as prefectural capital in 1956, focusing on the built environment, branding and musical practices. Making a distinction between rural, industrial and urban space, as proposed by Lefebvre in *The Urban Revolution* (2003 [1970]), I identify the disparate collection of rural settlements, administrative work units, military factories and local industry that previously constituted Kaili, and argue that urban space did not become dominant until the 1990s. I also assess the twilight years of industry left behind by the planned economy era, identifying a shift in priorities from production and industry to consumption and tourism. Moreover, this shift was

accompanied by a change in representational focus, from pictures of factories and railway stations to the current synecdoche of ethnic spectacles. Yet while the likes of Dashizi have stressed the claimed local quality of *yuanshengtai*, there has also been a tendency towards a relatively homogeneous process of urbanization, as seen across post-Mao China, with the accommodation of the private car and a "civilizing" project to sanitize the city image. The facilitation of private transport and intensification of the built environment has also channelled outdoor leisure activity into a limited number of public spaces, where the high-decibels sounds produced by commerce, construction and leisure have rendered untenable the existence of unamplified *yuanshengtai* music.

Chapter four presents *yuanshengtai* as a term which ought to be understood within the wider context of research on cultural authenticity in tourism. I argue that national singing competitions, branding literature and everyday statements all characterized *yuanshengtai* as an authenticity of rural ethnic place, with *yuanshengtai* music envisaged as the product of an environment where humankind exists in quiet harmony with nature. Branding has attempted to present Kaili as *yuanshengtai* through promotional literature that blurs the distinctions between rural periphery and urban centre. In contrast, citizens reconciled the gap between branding and lived urban experience through conceptualizations that relocated *yuanshengtai* to the surrounding villages of Qiandongnan. While identifying the rural other as authentic, Kaili inhabitants denied the possibility of *yuanshengtai* within the city, and even declared themselves to be "fake" minorities.

Whereas chapter four draws upon both textual and ethnographic data, I rely more heavily on the latter in chapters five and six. Chapter five shows how music groups in Kaili operated within – and as a part of – a rapidly shifting urban environment. The notion of "public space" has marshalled leisure activity into specific areas, and yet these areas have not been not built or regulated with sound in mind, making it difficult for musicians to compete with the piped music of other groups. I therefore move beyond the squares and spectacles of the city to introduce the often hidden spaces of amateur musicians. I utilise anthropologist Tim Ingold's (2011) notion of the meshwork to highlight the spatial fluidity of amateur music within Kaili, but argue that this fluidity is a cause of concern rather than celebration. Given the constant reconfiguration of the urban environment, I examine how musicians and other citizens have been able to orientate themselves, with reference to Kevin Lynch's (1960) concept of the city image. I point to the importance of place names in providing everyday spatial orientation, including the names of rural and industrial spaces that no longer existed in the physical environment encountered during my fieldwork.

Chapter six largely remains with the same musical groups, but considers the differences between them, rather than the commonalities presented in the previous chapter. Moving from the physical to the imagined, I examine how music groups have produced lived space by contrasting their own musical practices with their perceptions of practices pertaining to other music groups and spaces. Indoor retiree and middle-aged choirs sang for educational self-improvement, with an emphasis on vocal technique, and defined their own activities in partial opposition to the less

technical singing of Apple Hill Park, where music performed the function of physical exercise. Meanwhile, both the indoor choirs and the park choir contrasted their musical practices with that of the younger generation, whom they understood as singing technically unsophisticated solo songs with sentimental lyrics.

As stressed in the thesis conclusion, this project is an attempt to complicate rather than reject the representation of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals. The reduction of the complex contemporary city to a simple slogan has become an unavoidable element of municipal government strategy in the face of fierce inter-city competition. Instead of outright rejecting such slogans – something that fieldwork acquaintances in Kaili rarely did – this thesis considers them alongside the history of the city, the contemporary built environment, the practices of amateur musicians, and everyday conceptualizations of *yuanshengtai*, in order to present a more total representation of the city.

Chapter One: False Starts and Reformulations

Reformulating research through fieldwork experience and grounded theory

In this chapter, I describe how my research project evolved into printed form. In keeping with a commitment to certain aspects of grounded theory, outlined below, I have allowed my fieldwork experiences to shape the thesis. "Shape" is perhaps too mild a word; "beaten into shape" is a phrase which comes closer to describing how my pre-conceptions were battered by my initial fieldwork experience, leading to significant changes to the research structure and a shift towards space as the main theoretical tool of analysis (when I had previously treated it as a secondary consideration subservient to music and ethnicity). Recounting how and why these shifts in focus occurred will, I hope, serve to explain the sequence of themes and arguments I finally decided to develop. It also provides the lead-in to describe how I went about doing fieldwork.

I first arrived in Kaili for a two-week reconnoitre in June 2010, on a mission to problematize the official system of ethnic classification in China, described further in chapter two. I was specifically intending to look at cross-ethnic musical interaction in public spaces. Of the various cultural practices associated with minorities, I had chosen music on the basis of past experiences, having worked for over two years as a music journalist in Beijing before later returning to London to study for an MMUS in ethnomusicology. I chose a cross-ethnic approach to music because of an ongoing frustration with much of the PRC musicological literature, which often depicted the musical genres and behaviour of minorities as culturally bounded. Even academic work that questioned the ethnic classification system often took the same system as its starting point, by researching a specific minority (e.g. D. Y. H. Wu 1990; Diamond 1995; Schein 2000), or a specific minority's musical activity (e.g. Rees 2000; Harris 2004). I hoped to provide a different perspective by studying a single city with multiple ethnic groups, following such rare examples as Jankowiak (1993), Blum (2001), and to a certain extent, Rees (1995). Although I did not think in such terms at the time, this decision made the city the main unit of analysis, rather than any ethnic group. I had also taken on space as an additional theoretical interest, but my knowledge in this field was rather superficial; I roughly equated social space with public space, and worked it into the research accordingly.

In order to select a suitable fieldwork site, I consulted population maps of China. I wanted a location that contained a good ethnic mix, including a sizeable Han population, since this group was often written out of studies on minority regions. Southwest China was an obvious place to start; I was already acquainted with the ethnic diversity of the region, having travelled there multiple times, and having read related academic works during my MMUS study. Narrowing down the available sites, my supervisor at the time felt that it would be a waste of my Chinese-language ability to do fieldwork in a big city, especially since English-language research on Chinese music was already partially skewed in that direction (e.g. A. Jones 1992; A. Jones 2001; Baranovitch

2003; Stock 2003; de Kloet 2010). At the same time, I did not want to do research in a village, feeling that there was as much of an over-emphasis on rural folk music (e.g. S. Jones 1994; Schimmelpenninck 1997; Harris 2004; S. Jones 2004) as on metropolitan sub-cultures in the literature on Chinese music. I had also spent most of my five years in China in Beijing, and wanted to build upon my accumulated experiences of the urban, rather than sever myself from them. It therefore made sense to look at small cities as likely gathering points for Han migrants without the outnumbering of minorities that occurred in big cities. Additionally, brief trips to small cities, including Quzhou, my wife's hometown in Zhejiang province, had led me to hypothesize that there was a triad of cultural practices in China pertaining to the village, the big city and the small city, rather than the commonly mentioned rural-urban divide.[9] Existing literature had neglected the small city in favour of either the big city or the village, and I felt this needed to be partially redressed.

Exactly what constitutes a small city or a big city requires some elaboration. The classification of Kaili as a small city within this thesis relies upon considerations of administrative ranking, representational power, city dynamism, and citizens' self-identification. In administrative terms, all Chinese cities exist within a sophisticated five-tier hierarchy. The first tier consists of the four direct-controlled, provincial-level municipalities of Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Tianjin. The second-tier is also a select group, of fifteen sub-provincial cities, including the likes of Shenzhen, Qingdao and Xi'an, as major urban centres which are located within provinces but enjoy significant autonomy from provincial government. Cities in these two elite tiers not only possess substantial administrative power, but also a high level of representational power, as nationally or even internationally famous places which hold mega-events and receive varying degrees of scholarly attention. These are big cities, where concentrations of people, institutions and enterprises have produced a cosmopolitan dynamism that has come to represent all of urban China, through fast-cutting montages of the futuristic Shanghai skyline or time-lapse filming of the ever-active streets below. The relationship between representational power and dynamism is also two-way: a well-known city attracts ambitious enterprises and people, who in turn contribute to the bolstering of the city brand.

The third, fourth and fifth administrative tiers contain the vast majority of Chinese cities: third-tier prefecture-level cities come under the direct jurisdiction of provinces; fifth-tier county-level cities come under the jurisdiction of prefectures; and a small number of cities are sandwiched between these two tiers as sub-prefectural-level cities.[10] In the upper echelons of these less administratively privileged places, many prefecture-level cities possess the necessary dynamism

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[9] This hypothesis was of an either/or nature; I had not initially considered the possibility that there could be *both* a rural-urban divide *and* a triad of village, big city and small city.

[10] The academic literature is not completely consistent in stating the number of administrative tiers. Cartier (2005:24) gives a four-tier hierarchy which excludes sub-prefectural cities, while F. Wu et al. (2007: 124-5) include sub-prefectural cities in a five-tier hierarchy.

and representational clout to be classifiable as big cities. Guiyang, for example, is a big city, as the capital of a province – albeit a poor one – and therefore nationally well-known, even if knowledge of the city's characteristics may be hazy. Furthermore, as a provincial capital, it is the default location of provincial-level government organs, as well as major cultural institutions (e.g. Guiyang Symphony Orchestra, Guizhou University). In comparison, Quzhou is a small city, despite possessing the same administrative rank (prefectural-level) as Guiyang. Not well known outside of Zhejiang and neighbouring provinces, Quzhou also lacks the major cultural institutions that contribute to city dynamism. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, both Quzhou and Kaili, a county-level city, are home to inhabitants who tend to self-identify with a small-city lifestyle and to define this lifestyle – often positively – against that of big cities. Typical everyday comments refer to the relatively slow pace of life, cleanliness, and value for money of small cities, in comparison to the stress, pollution and exorbitance of big cities. Of importance to this thesis, these comments refer to the city proper, rather than the official municipal boundaries of prefecture-level and county-level cities, which often include huge swathes of rural territory. Indeed, the residents of Kaili city defined themselves against not only the big city, but also surrounding rural areas, including outlying parts of Kaili municipality, as described in chapter four.

As a county-level city in Guizhou province with a relatively low profile – despite the branding efforts described in this thesis – Kaili appeared to constitute a small city, and this was a classification which its inhabitants repeatedly stressed during my eventual fieldwork . It also fitted my ethnic diversity requirements, with its population of under 200,000 consisting of Han (43%), Miao (39.5%), and Dong (11%) (D. Liu 2002),[11] as well as smaller groups, not all of whom were officially recognized.[12] Of equal importance, the official promotional literature made frequent references to music, describing Kaili as "the homeland of 100 festivals", and accompanying such claims with pictures of the *lusheng* statue at Dashizi and minority music-making. Such branding implicitly followed the discursive emphases of internal orientalism, as identified by anthropologist Louisa Schein (2000: chap. 4), depicting minorities as innately artistic, rustic, backward, and feminine, in comparison to the urban, educated and male Han majority. Envisaging fieldwork against such a promotional backdrop, I anticipated scenarios that offered telling contrasts between representations of mono-ethnic folk music and the multi-ethnic diversity of everyday music-making. The fact that the official literature was incredibly vague about actual musical events and

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[11] These figures refer to the five (urban) neighbourhood districts (*jiedao*) of Kaili city, as given in the 2000 national census, rather than the population of Kaili municipality, which includes both the sub-districts of the city and an extensive rural periphery. See chapter four for a detailed discussion of the relationship between city and municipality. By the time of the most recent national census, conducted in 2010, there were six neighbourhood districts with a total population of just over 275,000, while the population of the entire municipality was just over 479,000 (Feng Nailin 2012: 769). A seventh neighbourhood district was established in 2010 but did not feature in the national census.
[12] See Xiong (1998: 207–15) for details of officially undefined peoples (*weiding minzu*) in Kaili.

sites did not especially bother me; I was sure that there would be a great deal of music, just as I was sure that such musical practices would cut across official ethnic categories.

However, as fieldwork drew nearer, I began to develop doubts about the city's suitability. In preparation for a preliminary trip, I contacted bloggers who had spent time in Kaili, posted on a local forum, and talked to academics with experience of the city. I received many responses, but most were notably unenthusiastic about my chances of finding cross-ethnic musical activity in the city. One Chinese musicologist stressed that Kaili was just a Han city. A musicologist with an interest in the music of the Dong minority was even more scathing, asking why I would want to go *there*, and regarding Kaili as little more than an extension of Guiyang, the provincial capital, some two hours away by train. An American teacher at Kaili University responded that he had been to many parks, squares and other public spaces, but had rarely seen musical performances. One internet forum respondent suggested I study Dong Big Songs (*Dongzu dage*), but was not forthcoming when I pressed for details as to where I could find such music in Kaili city.

On arriving in Kaili, I became increasingly concerned that it lacked sufficient musical activity to make meaningful contrasts with the city branding. I mainly split my time during this trip between three groups: English-major students and their American teachers at Kaili University; a Kaili-born student of a coastal city university and her visiting classmates; and some affluent young professionals. I had become acquainted with these groups via the blogs and musicologists mentioned in the previous paragraph. For example, one of the young affluents, Lan Xunyi, was the former student of a contact at the Chinese Conservatory of Music. She had released an album and married a businessman with plans for a chain of "cultural hotels" in China. My hope was that these various contacts could help me seek out local musical activity.

They did a lot more than that. Over two weeks, they introduced me to a number of music groups. However, these introductions were overshadowed by my new acquaintances' conceptualizations of Kaili and music. I was struck by the frequency of two interlinked responses to my fieldwork plans: firstly, there was little music of interest in the city; and secondly, I should look for authentic ethnic music in the villages of the wider Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, outside the prefectural capital of Kaili.

My first meeting with Lan Xunyi provides an example of how such responses emerged. Ringing her mobile on the third evening of my first stay in Kaili, I ascertained that she was attending a gathering of family and friends in an upmarket restaurant close to my hotel in Bonan, the new southern district of the city. After inviting me along, meeting me at the hotel, and assessing my Mandarin level, Xunyi and her friend, Chen Xingqi, a Han businesswoman, wanted to know which ethnic group's music I intend to study, Dong or Miao. I responded that I hoped to do a multi-ethnic study. This was robustly dismissed as an impossibility by Xingqi, who owned a bar and an imported wine shop; I must choose one or the other. To my slight consternation, they both encouraged me to go out into the villages and study authentic (*yuanshengtai*) music. During the

meal and drinking session that followed, many members of the group talked to me enthusiastically about *yuanshengtai* music and its associated rural locations, without any encouragement on my part. Xunyi and her friends also devised a plan to take me to Xijiang, a popular tourist destination, as a place where I could witness *yuanshengtai*.

Despite being advised to focus on the villages, I continued to press for information about music in the city itself. Xunyi told me that there were young people singing courting songs in Dage Park at night, in the Old Street area, but I should not go there alone, as she considered the area somewhat disreputable (*luanqi-bazao*). Besides, she told me, such activity was not indigenous to Kaili, it had been imported from the villages. She applied the same judgement to "performance-style" (*biaoyanxing*) music in the city's song-and-dance restaurants, telling me that people tended not to visit those places any more because of the trend towards *yuanshengtai*, preferring to go to the villages instead. I kept asking about the city; what about modern music in parks? Xunyi's mother-in-law responded that a group of old people gathered every morning in Apple Hill Park to sing songs from the 1960s and 70s, amid general amusement that I would be interested in such music.

This denigration of music-making in Kaili was not confined to the three groups with whom I initially became acquainted. I also looked to start conversations with strangers whenever I ventured out alone, and to ask if they knew where I could find musical activity in Kaili. My hotel had a display table of local festival names, dates and places, but the receptionist flatly denied the existence of music within the city itself. My first taxi driver, a male 30-something Miao, breezily told me that there was no music in the city, and that I should head to a village like Xijiang, since it had a performance for visitors every morning. A young female chemist from neighbouring Guangxi province made no effort to contain her surprise at the fact that I had come to Kaili to study musical activity.

Being repeatedly told that Kaili had no music – or no music worth studying - and that I should look elsewhere, nearly convinced me to change my fieldwork site. I had not yet come across the semi-joke attributed to Chicago sociologist Everett Hughes, that "the researcher should select the research problem for which the setting chosen is the ideal site" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 29). Even if I had, it probably would not have done any good. Kaili had many desirable qualities as an urban fieldwork site – garrulous citizens, manageable size, busy soundscape – but a lack of actual music would have been disastrous for my research project.

However, back in London, after looking over my fieldwork notes and talking with my new supervisor, I came to realize that I had encountered all kinds of musical activity during my trip, including a park choir, an amateur Peking opera troupe, itinerant street musicians, bar singers, restaurant performances, and a university music department. This list owes a lot to Lan Xunyi, Chen Xingqi and their friends, who did their best to take me to see and hear urban music groups, even though they did not necessarily understand why I would want to do such a thing. I had

actually found what I had sought, a diversity of music-making sites. My initial failure to appreciate the accumulation of musical experiences indicated the extent to which I had absorbed the repeated references to the lack of music in Kaili. I had paid attention to words but not to musical sound.[13]

My initial confusion was exacerbated by expectation. Given the urban developmental trends of the post-Mao era, whereby cities promote unique city images while embarking on similar paths of relatively homogenized urbanization, I had anticipated the opportunity to contrast the official image of Kaili as musical folk town with the everyday realities of amateur musical-making. In this uncomplicated conceptual binary of official-unofficial culture (as described in J. Wang 2001a: 3–4), locals were restricted to a choice between approving or resisting the official image of the city. I had not properly appreciated that discourses such as internal orientalism travel beyond official promotional literature, shifting in meaning as they thread their way through society. I was therefore surprised when taxi drivers, store workers, businesswomen, and conservatoire graduates were dismissive of both official *and* everyday music-making within the city limits, and expected me to venture further afield in pursuit of *yuanshengtai*. The common attitude was that a researcher – even a researcher of music in urban spaces – would surely be more interested in rural ethnic music than in what was happening in Kaili, a place which had once possessed its own folk singing, but which was now too "urbanized" (*chengshihua*). Fieldwork participants frequently interpreted "music" as meaning "*yuanshengtai* music", and this did not include much of what could be heard in Kaili. They also dismissed those urban incidences of minority music which did exist, such as song-and-dance troupes and themed restaurants, as not indigenous to Kaili, and therefore not *yuanshengtai*.

I wrote in my fieldnotes that I had gone looking for a binary but gotten a headache. It was perhaps for the best that further fieldwork was delayed by my decision to transfer from the School of Oriental and African Studies to the University of Westminster, since this gave me more time to reformulate my approach in response to my initial fieldwork experiences. I subsequently made two major changes. Firstly, I decided to incorporate a modified version of grounded theory into my fieldwork, in response to the disparities between my anticipated research focus and empirical evidence from the field. This methodology holds that social phenomena are constantly changing, and that these changes must be built into the research method by grounding analysis in the key themes that emerge during fieldwork (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 5–6). There is thus no linear model of hypothesis, data collection, analysis, and write-up. Rather, it is an interwoven process, whereby research questions and theories are constantly revised by, and tested against, new data, which is collected and analyzed according to themes which emerge during the fieldwork process. For example, I had not anticipated any talk of *yuanshengtai* outside of government circles, and initially

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[13] These were initially the words of Lan Xunyi and Chen Xingqi, who chaperoned me to the extent that I did not get that much opportunity to talk directly with the musicians we met. However, during later trips, I got to know many musicians, and found their opinions on the relative qualities of music in Kaili city and the surrounding villages remarkably similar.

considered it a hindrance to my study, as it went hand in hand with worrying statements about the lack of music in Kaili city. I did not immediately see how the discourse of rural *yuanshengtai* related to Kaili itself. However, as I came to realize that I could not simply ignore the earliest and clearest theme that had emerged from my data, I pursued the discourse of *yuanshengtai* as an attempt to understand why people were talking about a music elsewhere, and what this could tell me about their perceptions of the city.

I have borrowed methods from grounded theory, as well as ethnography, without being an utterly loyal adherent of either. The former methodology is ripe for selective usage, given the epistemological rift between Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss – the two founders of grounded theory – since their original joint publication, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (2008 [1967]).[14] Of the positions that have subsequently arisen, I broadly subscribe to the constructivist, interpretative branch of grounded theory rather than the positivist, objectivist branch.[15] I therefore understand data as something which comes into existence as a result of the interaction between fieldworker and participant in a specific time and place, rather than as a pre-existing object of knowledge awaiting discovery by the researcher. This interpretation of grounded theory can be seen in my approach to the emergence of fieldwork themes. As mentioned above, I had decided to focus on ethnicity right at the beginning of my PhD project, and as anticipated, this emerged as a major fieldwork theme, albeit in unexpected form, as a means of distinguishing the city from the countryside. I had also anticipated that social class would emerge as a key marker of social difference in everyday musical practices and discourse, yet if anything, class was the least evident axis and term of differentiation. In contrast, rural-urban and generational difference emerged in conjunction with ethnicity as crucial themes through which space was imagined and lived. However, as indicated above, the way in which the researcher interacts with his or her fieldwork site inevitably influences the emergence of themes. Thus, ethnic, rural-urban and generational difference emerged as important themes partly because of the way in which I did fieldwork, paying particular attention to how people talked about music, and noting how their conversations tended to dwell on these three forms of difference in conjunction with notions of space. Had I focused less on local conceptualizations of music and more on the social composition of groups, then gender would have been at the forefront of this thesis. Women, for example, numerically dominated many amateur music groups yet as singers, while the majority of instrumentalists were men. Space (*kongjian*), meanwhile, rarely emerged in conversations as a term per se, yet it was implicit in local conceptualizations of *yuanshengtai* music, crucially characterized by distinctions between the rural and the urban.

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[14] Glaser has maintained a strict, positivist approach to grounded theory, while Strauss has collaborated with Juliet Corbin to take a more constructivist approach.

[15] See Charmaz (2006: chap. 6) for summaries of constructivist and objectivist approaches to grounded theory.

I share little with grounded theory in my approach to background reading. The earliest publication on grounded theory was vituperative in its criticism of sociology for being only interested in the verification of "great-man" theory, rather than the generation of new theory (Glaser and Strauss 2008: 9–11 [1967]). Wishing to avoid the scenario where a researcher went out into the field, collected data, then tacked on some Marxist or Weberian theory, the authors forbade background reading until key themes had emerged from the analysis of fieldwork data (Glaser and Strauss 2008: 37 [1967]). Even a more recent and moderate grounded theorist such as Kathy Charmaz has recommended that the researcher leaves previously absorbed theories to "lie fallow" during the fieldwork process (2006: 166), as if an existing mental bank of knowledge could somehow be temporarily held in stasis. Thus, while necessarily condemning the distortion of everyday life and fieldwork data by preconceived theoretical models, grounded theory veered to the other extreme in its attempt to escape the existing academic corpus. No such escape is necessary, however, as long as existing theories are treated as ongoing processes receptive to modification, rather than completed products in need of verification. Theorizing is part of the fieldwork process; data collection and analysis both shape, and are shaped by, existing theories. Thus, as I explain in chapter two, Lefebvre's spatial triad offers an initial framework which can be developed – rather than verified – through interaction with experiences that arise from the Chinese urban everyday. After each visit to Kaili, I did further reading, according to the themes that had emerged during fieldwork. This reading then produced further themes, which in turn influenced my later fieldwork.

The second major change was my theoretical turn towards, and interpretation of, space. I had fashionably tacked space on to my early research topic through reference to public spaces, but had not read enough to justify this inclusion. I had read secondary works on space and place, but not the key theoretical works upon which they were based. At this point, I thought of space as something purely concrete and physical. Engagement with some key works, most notably Lefebvre (1991a [1974]) and Massey (2005) dissuaded me of this notion. If space is not merely a physical vessel for life, but is also socially conceived and imagined, then I could not confine my attention to the musical activities that occurred within the physical parameters of public spaces, since users often conceptualized these spaces in relation to their understanding of musical activity in other spaces. One idea shared by many urban residents was that the best music could be found outside of the urban public spaces in which we conversed, in the villages of Qiandongnan. I consequently began to understand the discourse of *yuanshengtai* as a spatial discourse which divided Qiandongnan prefecture into authentic rural space and inauthentic city. My initial idea of studying cross-ethnic musical interaction had pre-supposed bounded Dong and Miao musical cultures in the city, since I would not otherwise have been able to clearly identify the crossing of boundaries through multi-ethnic musical activity. However, the main ethnic division – as conceptualized by fieldwork participants – was between the "fake" minorities of the city and *yuanshengtai* villagers.

Fieldwork methods: participant observation, interviews and textual research

Extended fieldwork finally commenced in April 2011. By May 2012, I had paid three extended visits to Kaili, and spent a total of some nine months in the city. During the first and second of these visits, I relied mainly on multi-site participant observation. Non-participation was hardly an option, since I was invariably dragged into the events of a social space once its users had noted my (highly visible) presence. There were few foreigners living in Kaili, and even fewer who spoke more than basic Mandarin, so I was regarded with great curiosity. I even ended up on local television twice, despite my best efforts at evasion. One retiree member of the Apple Hill Park choir joked that I could become the Dashan of Qiandongnan,[16] making a living as a special guest at formal functions.

This level of interest in me as a foreigner obviously affected the fieldwork process. To my benefit, it was easy to start conversations with strangers and establish connections, and I often found myself wondering, with slight discomfort, how a Kaili-born ethnographer would reciprocally fare in my home city of London. As indicated above, preliminary fieldwork led me to Apple Hill Park, where I quickly established good relations with a number of park singers who later took me to less visible indoor choirs where they also sang. Similarly, one of my earliest contacts, an American teacher at Kaili University, later established an *a cappella* group, which became a further object of study. Through this teacher, I also came to know the dean of the foreign languages faculty, whose impeccable connections gained me access to classes at the music department of the university. From there, I got to know a handful of music students, one of whom liked to hang out at Totem (*Tuteng*), an on-campus business selling Taiwanese pearl milk tea, where students gathered to play guitar. These same students sometimes went to Bright Star, an entertainment venue in the city centre with private karaoke booths and an open-mike stage; indeed, we shared some of the same contacts at Bright Star, where I had become familiar with staff and local customers after repeated previous visits alone. In a small Chinese city, this coincidence of mutual acquaintance was common; it sometimes seemed that everyone knew everyone else, although there were in fact multiple social meshworks within the city, two of which I describe in chapter five.

If my foreignness made it easy to establish connections in the city, I often had to answer flurries of questions about life in the UK before I could hope to learn anything about life in Kaili, to the extent that early conversations felt far removed from what I had imagined. Still, these conversations were useful for establishing rapport. They also frequently involved talk of *yuanshengtai*, which was at its most pronounced when I was getting to know people, whereas it tended to fade into the background as we became better acquainted. I interpret this conversational trend in detail in chapter four, arguing that the discourse of *yuanshengtai* was fuelled by local

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[16] Dashan is a Canadian-born performer and television host in China. His chief selling-point as an entertainer is his technically magnificent spoken Mandarin.

interpretations of the aesthetic tastes of big-city tourists and that many Kaili residents were themselves uninterested in authentic village music.

I continued participant observation during my third and final major fieldwork trip, and also conducted twenty unstructured recorded interviews.[17] Within this thesis, quotations taken from recorded interviews are enclosed within quotation marks. In contrast, comments from the informal interviews of participant observation are given – to the extent that coherence allows – without quotation marks, having been taken from my fieldnotes, which cannot be regarded as verbatim recordings of conversations. In terms of methodological compatibility, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 103–4) have argued that participant observation and formal interviews can complement each other, and pre-academic interview experience inclined me to agree. In my previous life as a journalist, I never had the time to establish a long-term rapport with interviewees and so results were not always satisfactory. There was second-guessing on both sides; I guessed what questions might encourage the other side to talk, and the interviewee guessed what kind of answers I might want to hear. I therefore hoped that interviews after extended participant observation could produce better directed questions and a more relaxed environment wherein interviewees felt more comfortable expressing themselves.[18]

Things did not exactly turn out that way. On the one hand, the questions were better directed. I compiled a skeletal set of questions, which were modified before each interview to suit the circumstances and knowledge of the interviewee. I also altered the order of my questions in line with the flow of conversation, and added follow-up questions as appropriate. On the other hand, while I expected unstructured interviews to confirm existing fieldwork findings and allow for more detailed consideration of related themes, interviewees sometimes said almost the opposite of what I had anticipated on the basis of previous conversations. These contradictions usually occurred in response to questions about the general cityscape, rather than questions about specific sites. For the latter, my questions were mainly about lived experience. The cityscape questions, meanwhile, were more demanding, since they simultaneously addressed everyday experience and branding, and also because they required an attempt to conceptualize the entire city. I describe some of these questions in the following paragraph.

If the interviewee was not native to Kaili, I began the interview by asking about what expectations they had developed of the city before coming to live there. I then asked them to

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[17] I refer here to the interview taxonomy given by Bernard (2006: 211–2), which consists of informal, unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews. Informal interviews occurred as everyday conversation during participant observation. Unstructured interviews were formal in that they were recorded at a set time and date, and with a clear plan in mind, but lacked the more rigid procedures of semi-structured and structured interviews, which would have unnerved many of my acquaintances.

[18] At times, participant observation also took on some of the qualities of a one-to-one interview. Like most visitors to southeast Guizhou from a non-adjacent province, I found the local dialects difficult to comprehend. As a result, I derived more information from one-to-one chats in standard Mandarin than from dialect-based group conversation, particularly during the early months of my fieldwork.

compare their pre-arrival expectations with their current impression of the city. In contrast, I asked Kaili-born interviewees how they described the city when they were outside of Guizhou province and asked about their hometown. I was surprised when these opening questions prompted a number of interviewees to describe the city as *yuanshengtai* or "thick with minority flavour", since these individuals had talked of Kaili in a very different manner during periods of participant observation. These discrepancies between interview and informal response are perhaps testimony to the power of city branding. When put on the spot, there is often a tendency to fall back on clichés as safe conversational havens. Clichés of the city are particularly powerful, since it is so hard to conceptualize and then elucidate the complexity of a cityscape within just a few spoken sentences. *Yuanshengtai* is certainly a clichéd description of Kaili, having become ubiquitous in newspaper articles, television reports and official speeches since the mid-2000s, so its usage in interviews should not have been altogether surprising. Perhaps I should have been more surprised at how this mention of *yuanshengtai* was by no means the unanimous response during interviews; one interviewee scoffed at the idea of Kaili as *yuanshengtai*, and others voiced their strong antipathy towards this term and the culture associated with it, as discussed in chapter four.

Two more points about the interview process need to be noted here. Firstly, the interviewee demographic was far more youthful than that of participant observation. As a general rule, the older the acquaintance, the less likely they were to agree to an interview. For example, I attempted three times to arrange an interview with the retiree leader of one choral group, who was an extrovert of the everyday, but totally unwilling to sit down for a more formal conversation. Similarly, Teacher Wang, the *erhu* player, told me he was always happy to shoot the breeze (*luan tan*) about music and Kaili, but not on record. However, this demographic slant was balanced out by elder inhabitants' enthusiastic and loquacious presence in everyday encounters, to the extent that I already possessed a good deal of information on their lives and opinions.

Secondly, as a result of wanting to record the interviews, I came to appreciate that there was hardly a quiet spot to be found in Kaili. Factors explained below had prompted me to stay in a hotel, and I was not generally comfortable with conducting interviews in my room, which was hardly quiet anyway, with piped music periodically played through speakers on each floor landing. Outside, the barrage of sound was almost relentless, and I found my interview activities restricted to two or three cafés, which were quieter than the surrounding city, but still contained significant levels of background sound. This made me think more about how the high decibel levels of the Kaili soundscape might play a role in determining where musical activity occurred in the city.

While participant observation and interviews contributed to my comprehension of how spaces were contemporarily lived, I also consulted a wide range of official and newspaper data in order to understand how spaces were planned and branded in both previous decades and the fieldwork present. I began looking for general historical background on the city in the libraries of Oxford (Bodleian) and the School of Oriental and African Studies. As themes emerged during participant

observation, I honed my textually-based research accordingly, to look for two types of data. Firstly, I researched the recent history of the built environment in Kaili, including the emergence of new public spaces, the destruction of older ones, musical performances in these spaces, and references to noise pollution. Secondly, I researched the representation of Kaili, paying particular attention to changes in city branding, including the emergence of *yuanshengtai*. Since most of the textual sources I consulted were produced by government or party organs, they were rather more forthcoming about emergences than disappearances. There was thus a great deal of information about the rise of the tourism sector but far fewer details about the concomitant decline of the industrial sector. Although such textual data presented its own complexities, such as a narrative of progress which sometimes denigrated the past conditions of Kaili in order to promote the present, it was generally easier to detect the contours of political and economic policy – such as the promotion of ethnic tourism – in such materials than in participant observation.

I initially consulted the Kaili and Qiandongnan gazetteers (*difang zhi*), and a Kaili directory of place names (*diming zhi*). These compilations provided indispensable information for the 1970s and 80s, but their timelines stopped around 1990, with no new editions forthcoming. For more recent information, I switched to tourism literature, city almanacs (*nianjian*), and local newspapers. The latter proved especially useful; I compiled some 700 articles from the *Qiandongnan Daily* (*Qiandongnan ribao*), and the *Kaili Evening News* (*Kaili wanbao*), which provided essential information on the branding, built environment and formal musical events of Kaili. The *Qiandongnan Daily* was mainly aimed at government workplaces, and rarely purchased by casual readers, but proved an invaluable source for information on official branding policy, construction of the built environment, and formal music events. It also had a surprising number of articles on everyday life in the city. The defunct *Kaili Evening News* covered similar topics to *Qiandongnan Daily* during its operational period in the 1990s and early 2000s, excepting the geographically scope of its reportage, with more stories on the city proper.

Getting hold of these newspapers proved more difficult than I had imagined. Online editions of the *Qiandongnan Daily* stretched back to 2007, but even accessing these editions was tricky, since the website's links were broken, so that a URL address had to be typed manually for each date. For earlier issues, dating back to the newspaper's post-Mao revival in 1985 (G. Xiong 1998), I visited the local archives bureau. The problems I encountered there were frustrating but illuminating. Firstly, I went to the wrong archives bureau, going to the municipal bureau, in the city centre, rather than the prefectural one, which had been relocated to the new development zone (*kaifa qu*). There seemed to be two of every government department in Kaili, simply because there were two governments; one prefectural (*zhou*), the other municipal (*shi*). Technically, the prefectural government ranked higher, and its officials were better paid. However, its headquarters were comfortably overshadowed in magnificence and location by the municipal government, which looked out across the city from an elevated position in Bonan, the new southern district. Issues

relating to the wider Qiandongnan area came under the auspices of the prefectural government, but spheres of influence overlapped confusingly within the city. The result was a meshwork of departments and party organs rather than a monolithic governmental machine, with occasional evidence of inter-departmental disputes surfacing in newspaper articles.

After the municipal archives had pointed me to the prefectural archives, I hit a second problem, of what appeared to be extreme caution, if not paranoia. Initially, the archivists cautiously agreed to my requests, since I only required publicly released (*gongkai faxing*) information, while making it clear that internal documents would not be available. As a consequence, I have sometimes had to rely on secondary sources more than I would have preferred. For example, I have relied on gazetteers and newspapers for summaries of city plans since the plans themselves were out of reach. Moreover, by the time I had gone through the years 1985 to 1989 of the *Qiandongnan Daily*, the archive bureau's stance on access to once publically accessible information had changed. According to what an archival worker later told me, a leader in another department had become infuriated that I had been allowed access to the bureau without following proper procedure; I should have sought a letter of permission from the (prefectural) state affairs bureau. My university's letter of introduction was considered insufficient, since it lacked a red seal, and my L visa did not permit me to visit a bureau which housed state secrets (*baomi ju*), even if I only wanted to read some old newspapers. In short, the sanctity of the space overrode the ordinariness of the data.

I discovered a couple of weeks after the event that the archives bureau had been investigated by the state security bureau because of my unregulated visit. I was luckier, avoiding sanction and later stumbling upon a large stash of unattended yellowing newspapers in the library of Kaili University, which included the *Kaili Evening News* from 1999 to 2003, and the *Qiandongnan Daily* from 1999 to 2006. I often spent afternoons in Kaili reading these local textual sources, since the majority of musical activity tended to occur either in the morning or the evening. However, I still lacked extensive data for the 1990s. To remedy this problem, I procured a Visiting Scholar's visa for a short return trip in June 2013, but was still not allowed into the archives bureau. Fortunately, I received vital assistance from an acquaintance - whose actions cannot be recounted here for reasons of personal safety – and finally obtained access to newspapers from the 1990s, which as chapter three shows, was a transitional period in the transformation of Kaili from a collection of disparate rural, industrial and administrative-urban spaces into a cohesive and branded city. During this follow-up trip, I also conducted eight more interviews – taking the total to twenty-eight – and took recordings of sound pressure levels in order to further explore the relationship between music-making and the wider city soundscape.

My experience in the archives bureau highlighted one of the city's contradictions. Departments such as the prefectural commerce bureau aimed to encourage tourism, yet the city had a secretive history which perhaps hindered this aim. Much of Kaili's initial development resulted

from its selection as a site for the Third Front, a massive industrial development project between 1964 and 1978, which established military factories over an extensive inland zone containing some of the most inaccessible parts of China, including Kaili. Although almost entirely omitted from current city branding, this project was extremely important to both the economic and cultural development of the city, and receives extensive analysis in chapter three. Here, I simply want to make the point that some of the caution from this secretive episode continued into the time of my fieldwork. The archivists did not mention the Third Front during their repeated statements about the need for caution. Instead, one female departmental head said that they had to be especially careful because Kaili was an ethnic area (*minzu diqu*). I find it hard to imagine any place *less* likely than Kaili to have an ethnic insurrection. However, it is reasonable to suggest that a national fear of ethnic unrest has combined with the mentality of the Third Front era and the former inaccessibility of the area to make Kaili more cautious towards foreigners than might otherwise be expected of a tourist city. Landlords were similarly nervous about renting to foreigners, and furnished apartments did not exist, so I spent the duration of my fieldwork in a hotel. Concerns about my safety also prompted Teacher Wang, the *erhu* player, to spread word among mutual acquaintances that I should be walked back to my hotel after evening events.

A walk in the city

Fortunately, it was rarely a long walk home, since my long-term hotel of residence, the Blue Phoenix, was right in the centre of Kaili, and close to the majority of my fieldwork sites. To give an outsider's description, the hotel is situated on the east section of Beijing Avenue (Beijing lu), the main east-west boulevard. A local inhabitant, however, would rarely describe it thus, much preferring place names – including the names of defunct military factories – over road names and cardinal directions. Between Dashizi and the prefectural government headquarters, in the old Lido hotel building, would be a more localized description.

On a summer evening, I leave the hotel and walk west to Dashizi, the city's main intersection, main meeting place, and most obvious musical site, as home to the aforementioned giant *lusheng* statue.[19] The statue itself does not produce any sound, making the roundabout island on which it stands the only part of Dashizi that can make such a claim. I count 37 loudspeakers on the junction's four corners, either mounted on lampposts, placed inside/outside shops, or strapped to buskers. Not all of them are operating, but there are still numerous examples of piped music. On the northwest corner alone, I hear sprightly modern music with Chinese instruments blasting from a photography store, a prostrate beggar's portable amp playing rock music while he draws calligraphy, and a cosmetics store's stereo switching from high-octane pop to slower pop. These

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[19] In this section, I describe a number of journeys that I made on a frequent basis. The descriptions are collations of actual walks, and I emphasize this semi-fictional quality by employing the present tense.

musical sounds are accompanied by the sounds of vehicular traffic, conversations and a group of children racing around a temporary roller-skating course to the guiding whistles of their coaches.

There is only one outdoor public space that is perhaps louder than Dashizi, and that is Wanbo Square (*Wanbo guangchang*). Continuing my walk, I travel south along the city centre's other main artery road, Shaoshan Avenue (*Shaoshan lu*), away from where it meets Beijing Avenue at Dashizi. After a few minutes, the Nationalities Museum (*Minzu bowuguan*) comes into view at the end of the avenue. A monumental building, the museum appears to hold far more than three modest floors of exhibition, thanks to its hanging eaves and raised position above the open space of Wanbo Square below. The museum is also a determinedly ethnic building, with eaves imitating the structure of a Dong drum tower, and inscriptions of minority scenes on its side towers. Like the Dashizi roundabout, the museum itself is fairly quiet whenever I look around, as a building often seen but rarely visited by locals.[20] The square in front is a different matter.

There are three separate dance groups in the square, two engaged in line-dancing, the third in ballroom-dancing, and each with their own stereo system. There is also a part of the square where children drive colourful toy vehicles adorned with animal shapes and speakers. The overall result is cacophony, despite the relative size of the square. I find the environment exhausting, as my brain attempts to process the multiple sounds buffeting it from various directions. Such is the volume of the piped musics that a group of unaccompanied folk singers on the edge of the square are aurally hidden, and I only find out about them towards the end of fieldwork, following a tip from a friend.

The sounds of the square make the area just to the south seem quiet as I continue walking through the city. Indeed, the square is something of a dividing line, between the bustling city centre of the last half a century, around Dashizi, and a quieter new southern district named Bonan (literally "south of the museum"). Whereas Dashizi is the more lively area, much of its ageing work-unit housing compares poorly with the luxurious high-rise apartments of Bonan. The Bonan area also contains the Nationalities Stadium (*Minzu tiyuchang*), which surpasses the museum and the *lusheng* statue in scope and style, with statues of Dong and Miao musicians outside, and a structure that incorporates the architecture of a "wind-and-rain bridge" (*fengyu qiao*), a covered structure associated with the Dong. Bearing further comparison to the museum and the roundabout island, the stadium itself is usually silent, with events few and far between, while an open space on its western side is filled with dancers, open-air music bars, and giant television screens, depending on the season and the circumstances. The three main ethnic monuments of the city are quiet at their core, but surrounded by the sounds of everyday leisure and entertainment.

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[20] For example, Kaili-born Chen Xingqi, the bar-owning friend of Xun Lanyi, said that she had never been inside the museum. This made me think of the relevance of a tourist attraction like the Tower of London to my life in London; I often see such sites, but have only rarely visited them, either as a child on a school trip or to accompany out-of-town friends.

Both Bonan and Dashizi are pre-dated by the Old Street (*Laojie*) area, which sits on a hill about 500 metres to the north of Dashizi. This was the original Kaili, meaning "open fields" in the Miao language, before it was made capital of Qiandongnan in the 1950s and the fields began to disappear. Today, it is somewhat isolated from the rest of the city, except for its bustling Sunday market, since access by car is restricted and there is no through route to the north. Instead, the modern city has effectively bypassed Old Street, with a road tunnel that burrows underneath the settlement and out into the northern suburbs, where the train station is located.

The above descriptions refer to the same sites that have typically been pinpointed in official descriptions and photographs of Kaili: *lusheng* statue, museum/square, stadium. The official literature has employed a "strategy of synecdoche" (Massey 2007: 41),[21] whereby specific parts of the city have been utilised to represent the whole. This strategy of synecdoche has also been a shifting one; as the city's physical development was increasingly oriented towards the south during the 1990s and 2000s, so that northern spaces, such as the train station and Dage Park (in the Old Street area) were replaced in representational importance by newer, more ethnicized monuments to the south. The next proposed shift is towards the south and west, with government plans for an "international riverside tourist city" of 1.2 million people, which would shift Kaili towards the currently peripheral Qingshui River, and extend it past the universities and high-speed rail station of the development zone to merge with neighbouring Majiang county (R. Wang 2013: 8).[22]

The power of such synecdoches is undeniable; the spectacular spaces of Dashizi intersection, Wanbo Square and the Nationalities Museum were so prominent that nearly any existing written description of Kaili has employed them as at least reference points, and my own description here is no different.[23] Since these spaces are so often featured in textual sources, I already knew of them before visiting the city, and they were therefore among the first spaces that I visited. In everyday language, residents of Kaili used these spaces as common reference points when giving directions or arranging to meet friends. In such conversations, what constituted Wanbo extended well beyond the actual square, so that a phrase such as "I'll meet you in Wanbo" could actually refer to a building across the road from the square which housed a local choir. Nevertheless, the practice of using images derived from these public spaces to represent the whole has overlooked the everyday musical activities of local citizens. Since I wish to consider contemporary Kaili from multiple perspectives, this introduction to city sights and sounds cannot end with the stadium and the square.

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[21] Massey used this phrase to describe the manner in which global cities have been envisaged in terms of just one part of their economies (e.g. the finance sector in London). Throughout the thesis, I emphasize how a strategy of synecdoche also relates to the built environment of Kaili, with ethnic architecture utilized to promote the preferred economic sector of tourism. For more on geographical synecdoche (and metonymy), see Lefebvre (1991a: 225 [1974]), de Certeau (1984: 101 [1980]), and Augé (1995: 63–4, 67–8).

[22] During fieldwork, there was a display of the plans and maps for a Kaili-Majiang megacity along the pavement of the south section of the Shaoshan Avenue, a little to the north of Wanbo Square.

[23] Local government did not, of course, exert a monopoly on the visual representation of the city or directly control all photography pertaining Kaili. However, photos of spectacular spaces such as Dashizi and the Nationalities Stadium also unsurprisingly find their way into the online posts of visitors to the city.

Map of spaces in chapter one

Figure 1.1 (author's own, based on map in Xiong 1998)

Figure 1.2: Looking south towards Dashizi and Nationalities Museum (fieldwork photo 2013)

Figure 1.3: Looking north towards Old Street, road tunnel, and Dage park (fieldwork photo 2012)

Two more walks and two bus journeys

I take a second walk, this time around 8:30 in the morning. I leave the Blue Phoenix hotel, and head in the opposite direction from Dashizi, towards Apple Hill Park. Despite the time of day, when many people are heading to work, most pedestrians are moving at a leisurely pace, and none of them are wearing headphones. In order to reach the park, I have to cross the six lanes of traffic which roar and parp along Beijing Avenue, ignoring the existence of a zebra crossing. A green verge divides pavement from road, and only presents gaps at certain points, forcing pedestrians on to the designated crossings, and yet still there is no onus upon vehicles to slow down.

Apple Hill Park is well on the way to becoming another part of the synecdoche, with the construction of an ethnic-style viewing tower on its summit. However, the new tower is not the reason for my visit; I am a regular of the choir that meets on the summit every day, festivals and weather permitting. Around 9am, anywhere between ten and forty people gather together to sing from an impressive repertoire that ranges from early revolutionary songs and film theme tunes to recent revivalist "red songs" (*hongge*) and even contemporary R&B. A certain aesthetic coherence is imposed on this diverse repertoire by the group's adherence to a simple format of unison singing accompanied by an instrumental core of *erhu* (two-stringed fiddle) and *dizi* (bamboo flute). The choir situate themselves at the summit of the park, whose steep contours raise the musicians well above the sounds of the busy avenues below.

Most of the choir members are retired. This group of men and women includes both those who have reached official retirement age (*tuixiu*), and those whose work units have asked them to take early retirement in exchange for continuing to receive the greater part of their salary (*neitui*). With a relative abundance of free time, many of these choir members are also involved in multiple leisure activities across the city, and proceed to introduce me to a meshwork of spaces and music groups that would have otherwise been extremely difficult to find. One such group is located within the walled compound of the prefectural construction company (*zhoujian gongsi*), at the northeast foot of the park. With surrounding walls but no identity checks at the entrance, old-fashioned residential housing, an outdoor market, and a "pedestrian street", the construction company is a good example of an old socialist work unit which has retained some of its confining features but has also become more fluid under market reform. It is also the location of an amateur Peking opera troupe, which meets twice a week in a somewhat dilapidated building earmarked for "activities for the elderly" (*laonian huodong*). When I visit them on a hot summer day, activity spills beyond their rehearsal room, whose sliding entrance is left open as some members practise inside while others gather outdoors to chat. The musicians are highly audible within the compound, but invisible and inaudible from the main avenues of the city, just like the park singers.

Regulars at Apple Hill Park participate in further music groups across town, all of which are located in rooms within larger buildings or work unit compounds, making most of them difficult to find, and impossible to visually or aurally detect from the street. Some are located in unlikely

institutes, or in institutes whose own locations are unlikely. One instrumental group, for example, can be found in the designated activity room for the elderly of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), which is itself located in the back part of a small hotel. A second choir is based in an official "culture centre". Nothing strange there, except that the culture centre is itself situated within the compound of the municipal financial bureau. A third choir is located in the building of the municipal labour union, which has in previous decades served as a location for inter-work unit song competitions and performances. Nowadays, the labour union is practically defunct, and has resorted to renting out its rooms; the choir is run by a local music teacher as a commercial venture, with a kindergarten and an English-language school as neighbours. In comparison to Apple Hill Park, both the labour union choir and the culture centre choir sing in multi-part harmony, and their teachers place heavy emphasis on the importance of vocal training and pronunciation. The two choirs were previously one choir, until a dispute over money and administrative structure escalated into a schism.

I take a third walk from my hotel, this time during the evening hours, when Kaili's pavements are at their busiest, as people stroll among a sea of commerce. Given the pedestrian traffic, I have to slow my pace as I walk towards Dashizi. On reaching the intersection, I continue to head west, instead of turning left to Wanbo Square or right to the Old Street area. In order to cross Dashizi, I take my chances on a zebra crossing slightly to the north, rather than descend into the urine-tinged underground market below, which connects the four corners of the intersection for pedestrians. On the widened pavement of one of Dashizi's corners, outside the main supermarket, there are multiple throngs of onlookers. The largest group is watching the previously mentioned group of roller-skating children race to the whistles of their coach. A smaller crowd is watching a busking guitarist play a maudlin pop song, accompanied by a basic drum machine. A white board at the guitarist's feet introduces him as Ah Yong, a Miao from a distant and poor village, who needs money to pursue his art.

There is a busy bus stop just past Dashizi. Aesthetically, it is a normal bus stop by Kaili standards, and therefore unique by global standards; all of the major bus stops in the city have been constructed according to the ethnic markers of the Miao, with main pillars that are topped with representations of silver head-dresses (see Figure 1.4). In a future interview, a university teacher will refer to these bus stops as one of her favourite examples of the city's special minority flavour (Interview: 2 April 2012). Somewhat incongruously, speakers embedded into the sheltering roof of the bus stop are playing a mixture of Western and Chinese pop music, as broadcast by the local radio station, with a distinct lack of minority flavour. These tracks intermingle with the frequent sounding of horns, as bus drivers jockey to enter and leave the limited demarcated space of the bus stop.

Figure 1.4: A Kaili bus stop with Miao-style adornments (fieldwork photo 2013)

The pavement widens near the bus stop, as it meets one of the entrances into Zhongbo Plaza (*Zhongbo guangchang*), a maze-like, two-level pedestrianized shopping and eating zone. A group of middle-aged and elderly people are ballroom-dancing in this widened space, in either male-female or female-female pairs. They have set up their own sound system, which blasts out a curious selection of tracks: a dance version of *Nanniwan*, a revolutionary classic which borrows from the folk traditions of northern Shaanxi; a modern Miao composition performed by the famed local singer Ah You Duo; and a Mandarin version of *Jimmy Jimmy Jimmy Aaja*, a song from the 1982 Indian film *Disco Dancer*. During the latter song, partner dancing is replaced by solo disco dancing.

I hurry past the area, since I do not want to get roped into the activity by Older Brother Zhou, a local character and regular dancer who has taken a shine to me. The dance activity is a prominent part of the soundscape, but my main focus is on music-making, and I continue into Zhongbo, past the sounds of the various stalls and shops, as well as the beeping of QQ instant messenger service from an unseen computer. I am heading to Bright Star, located in the centre of Zhongbo, but whose environs are inaudible and invisible from outside; there is a small entrance at ground level, with an escalator leading down to the venue proper, which has been constructed out of a former underground car park. Every evening, from 7:30-9pm, an open-mike night takes place on a stage in Bright Star. Descending from the bustle of street level, the presence of this semi-live musical activity cannot be detected, as a consequence of the high-decibel sounds produced by the arcade at the foot of the escalator. Particularly audible is the Japanesque electro-pop hit *Dragostea din te*, from the Moldovan pop group O-Zone, which plays from the dance machines at the front of the arcade. I spend some time observing the open-mike night, sometimes chatting to regulars, sometimes to strangers. I head back to the hotel via a different route to Dashizi, walking past a

building which houses Pink, one of only two nightclubs in Kaili, as well as a Uighur kebab man, who plays both Mandopop and Central Asian music over his speakers.

A fourth trip from the Blue Phoenix hotel, and it is evening again, but this time I am taking the bus. The entirety of the city centre is accessible by foot, but the centre does not encompass the entirety of city life. I walk to the nearest Miao-style bus stop, and take bus number 10, which is heading west through the city, past Dashizi. My destination is Longtouhe village, right at the end of the line. In fact, this line has only just started to stretch as far as Longtouhe, which is located some 3km to the west of the city centre, on either side of Qingshui River, which runs down the western edge of Kaili. There was once a bustling ferry crossing here, but it declined in the 1980s, and the main transportation route is Longtouhe Bridge, built in the 1970s. Like most city buses in Kaili, the number 10 bus has speakers embedded in its roof, and the young driver is taking advantage of them to play a mixture of hip hop and pop. The bus crosses the bridge, and turns right to terminate in Lijia zhuang, a sub-village of Longtouhe. The area could not look any more different to Dashizi, with a lack of street lighting and pavements, and independently-constructed detached houses on either side of the main road. The sound of traffic is different too, as heavy-goods vehicles lumber their way towards mines and factories far outside of the city in a new industrial zone. The remains of former industrial projects also surround the settlement, most noticeably the looming but abandoned towers of the power plant, which has also been relocated far outside of the city. Some vehicles are being repaired at the side of the road, so that the combined sounds of maintenance work and traffic make this another unlikely site for musical activity. And yet, most Friday and Saturday evenings, a group of women from the sub-village gather together outside one of their houses to dance to *lusheng* music. On a good day, they have a male *lusheng* player to accompany them. Otherwise, they use a stereo system.

A fifth and final trip, again by bus, from a stop to the east of my hotel, outside the prefectural government building and opposite Apple Hill Park. As I reach the bus stop, a sanitation truck (*huanwei che*) is hosing down the street and emitting a beepy rendition of *Into the New Era* (*Zoujin xin shidai*), an upbeat nationalist celebration of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from the late 1990s which is also popular with the Apple Hill Park choir. I take the Kaikai Line (*Kaikai xian)*, which is somewhere between a city- and a long-distance route, with its high-powered bus transporting students and commuters between the centre and the new development zone. The bus initially crawls through the city, heading south from Dashizi past the museum and the stadium, before accelerating to occasionally terrifying speeds as it hits the southern ring road and then the main highway. I am heading to the new campus of Kaili University in the still undeveloped development zone. There is a local joke that the university's students "*kaimen jianshan*", a phrase which usually means "to get to the point", but is used here in its literal sense of "opening the door to see mountains" to describe the remote and mountainous location of the campus. The throughways of the campus have extremely clear human rhythms, often being deserted until bell

rings for the end of class and waves of students appear. The crowds are accompanied by the sounds of programmes produced by the university broadcasting station, which are transmitted through speakers around the classroom and dormitory areas from 12:10-12.40pm and 6-6.30pm.

Despite the efforts of the broadcasting station, some students complain about the dullness of their lives and the lack of atmosphere on the campus. Indeed, it is so quiet that I can hear cicadas at night, when work crews are not dynamiting nearby mountains to produce flat land for construction projects. However, as with the rest of Kaili, first impressions are misleading, and there is also musical life here. During the afternoon, I visit the music department – isolated at the back of the campus – to observe and interact with students taking classes in Dong singing or practising the piano. Between classes, I hang out with a music student in Totem, a small business selling Taiwanese pearl milk tea, where the hipper students gather to play guitar. In the evening, I observe an American teacher guiding an extra-curricular *a cappella* group, who sing songs in Chinese, English, and even both languages together in a medley arrangement of Savage Garden and Jay Chow borrowed from Pennyo, the University of Pennsylvania's "premier Chinese *a cappella* group".[24]

Some of my own synecdoches. I could continue, and describe further spaces, sights and sounds encountered in Kaili, but the thesis would ultimately become one large descriptive enterprise, and would still be a synecdoche, certainly of time, and almost certainly of space too. The above descriptions should be ample for their purpose, to highlight the diversity of musical activity encountered during my fieldwork in Kaili, as well as hint at certain patterns and themes that will be elucidated in later chapters. This diversity complicates both the branding of the city as the homeland of 100 festivals and the declaration of its citizens that there was no music in the city. There was music, but it was not, for the most part, the ethnic folk music indicated by promotional literature or the Dashizi statue. Indeed, ethnicized monuments such as the Dashizi *lusheng* statue are designed to give the impression of musical activity, rather than facilitate such activity. If anything, with the partial exception of music classes at Kaili University, the music which I have described was hindered by the efforts of government and private enterprise to transform Kaili into a modern tourist city. Amateur musicians were hidden, by imbalances of representation and research – as described in Ruth Finnegan's (1989) ethnography of amateur musicians in Milton Keynes – and also by the configuration of the built environment, which encouraged indoor activity in back rooms, away from the over-powering sounds of busy avenues and public spaces. However, before embarking on a more detailed examination of the branding, built environment and music-making of Kaili, it is first necessary to establish a theoretical framework.

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[24] http://www.pennyo.org (last accessed 31 January 2014).

Chapter Two: Theoretical Conceptualizations

In this chapter, I set out the theoretical foundations of this thesis through the examination of five keywords: space, place, music, sound and ethnicity. In doing so, I draw on theory from human geography, urban studies, sociology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, sound studies, and Chinese studies. This chapter prepares the groundwork for coming chapters on the specifics of Kaili, developing a theoretical position through a critical review of existing literature. It also delineates the scope of the thesis, as a study of music's interaction with other spatial elements – including non-musical sound – in the production of Kaili as a social space.

The first keyword is space, as the principal conceptual tool used in this thesis. I first present a summary of the basic qualities of space that can be found in the theoretical literature, namely its fluidity, imbuement with time, social construction, multiplicity and relationality. I proceed to focus on Henri Lefebvre's (1991a [1974]) triad of social space, arguing that it is the most applicable model for attempting to understand the space of a small city in its totality. I then link space and place, arguing that theoretical developments since the 1980s have challenged the once-oppositional relationship of (abstract) space and (concrete) place, but have failed to clearly establish the new relationship between the two terms. Following the lead of geographer Andrew Merrifield (1993), I present an attempt to reconcile space and place from the perspective of the spatial triad.

As I noted in the thesis introduction, music constituted a central fieldwork theme because of its place in Kaili's branding and my own personal background. In urban China, musical activity is often marginalized by the sounds of construction, traffic, commerce and other leisure activities. I therefore conceptualize music as part of the wider aural production of space, a process which contains interwoven elements of music, sound and noise. While concurring with literature that has presented the aural as an overlooked dimension of social space, I also argue that the aural needs to be considered alongside – rather than instead of – the visual. Finally, I conceptualize ethnicity as one more process in the production of space. Within the city, ethnicity operated as a frequent determinant in the everyday categorization and differentiation of space, music and people. I therefore treat ethnicity as a process of categorization, which can be applied to buildings, musical genres, and cities, just as it can be applied to people.

A summary of spatial theory

Space has been a popular topic across the social sciences and humanities for at least fifteen years. However, as David Bray (2005: 10) commented in his history of the Chinese work unit, many publications have contained the word "space" in their title but provided "negligible analysis of spatial formations or practices". Similarly, the geographer David Harvey (2010) has argued that space has become a useful metaphor for academics whose goal is the disruption of received wisdom, rather than a genuine interest in space itself. Another trend has been a tendency to focus

on what space is not. It is *not* a mere container of things, it is *not* only the built environment, it is *not* a surface, it is *not* neutral and it is *not* static. At the earlier stages of spatial theory, this tendency was surely motivated by the desire to debunk former assumptions about space. For example, the geographer Doreen Massey (2005) accompanied her own theorization of space with an extensive critique of ingrained assumptions about space. However, as theories of space have progressed, the impulse to critique old and obviously flawed notions has become unproductive, especially when the critique is directed at authors who are not specifically working on spatial theory.[25]

Despite this tendency towards correction, there actually exists a consensus among many recent spatial theorists – across disciplines – as to the basic qualities of space. The following few paragraphs offer a summary of these qualities, since they have been somewhat buried by the corrective tendency identified above and given their central importance to the formulation of my arguments. Firstly, space is fluid (e.g. Connor 1997; Broudehoux 2004; Massey 2005; Thrift 2006; Meyer 2008). This quality even applies to the built environment of urban space, as "an infrastructure of hard surfaces, filled out with objects of all sorts, upon which the play of life is supposed to be enacted" (Ingold 2011: 124). Despite appearing as a static surface in everyday perception, a building or pavement surface experiences gradual but constant change, as it interacts with rain, heat, wind, and human beings, as well as the dust of new constructions.

From fluidity, it is a short step to the second quality of space, that it is imbued with time (e.g. Lefebvre 1991a [1974]; Allen 1999; Massey 2005). The perceived space of the built environment at any given moment is only a surface, a frozen slice of space. In contrast to this space-as-surface, space imbued with time includes what existed prior to the construction of an architectural structure, as well as what will exist after it has been demolished. Every city is full of buried histories, most obviously in the form of decrepit buildings (de Certeau and Giard 1998) and visible ruins (Massey 2005: 117), but also buildings whose present configuration is informed by past functions (M. M.-H. Yang 2004).

Combining these two qualities of fluidity and imbuement with time, space can be described as an unfinished process.[26] This is readily apparent in the context of contemporary urban China, where entire streets are razed and reconstituted with frightening rapidity. However, to really appreciate

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[25] See, for example, Anne-Marie Broudehoux's (2004: 20, n24) critique of a long list of works in Chinese studies which "fail to provide a spatial framework for their research, and use space as a container for social processes". Although in basic agreement with her critique, I maintain that the larger problem is that spatially-aware theory has expended too much time critiquing existing assumptions and not enough time developing new theory.

[26] It is perhaps worth reiterating that this notion of space is common across a number of disciplines. For example, while modernist architecture was the static nemesis of earlier spatial theorists such as de Certeau, I was surprised to discover at a 2013 workshop – organized by Scarcity and Creativity in the Built Environment – the extent to which architects have also embraced a notion of space as fluid and imbued with time. This has already impacted upon the contemporary built environment, with the deliberately unfinished appearance of buildings such as The Shard in London.

the fluid complexity of urban space, it is necessary to move beyond the surfaces of the built environment. This leads to the third quality of space, that it is socially constructed, or produced (e.g. Lefebvre 1991a [1974]; Castells 2010 [1996]; Thrift 2009: 96). This can be demonstrated in at least two ways; firstly by examining the social and political factors that influence the construction of the built environment, and secondly by examining how this environment can be transformed by its inhabitants.

Architecture produces forms which are ideological as well as physical. For example, the early Soviet concept of the *social condenser* was unashamedly ideological, being based on the belief that "spatial forms could operate like machines for the transformation of human subjects" (Bray 2005: 93). The work unit space of the Mao era was heavily influenced by this architectural and ideological concept, while there has been a shift in ideological emphasis from production-oriented industrialism to consumption-oriented urbanism during the post-Mao era. This shift had led to the construction of urban spaces whose purpose is more accumulative than productive, including luxurious shopping malls to encourage consumption, and spectacular architecture to encourage tourism and further investment.[27]

Looking beyond the physical construction of the built environment to the transformative practices of inhabitants also leads to the fourth quality of space, its multiplicity (e.g. de Certeau 1984: 117 [1980]; Chambers 1994; Soja 1996; Massey 2005; Thrift 2006; Amin 2008).[28] To combine the qualities described so far, space is a collection of fluid, interwoven processes. These processes originate from different historical moments but interact with each other in the present, either through interpenetration or superimposition. The built environment is only one of these spatial processes – albeit an important one – which interacts with further elements in the production of urban space, including climatic elements, city branding, and the activities of everyday inhabitants. Examples of the superimposition of the everyday upon the built environment are common in the spatial literature: Beatrix Campbell (1993: 177) has recounted how young British males have "hijacked public space" in neighbourhoods through tactics of intimidation; Nancy Chen (1995: 361) has described how *qigong* practitioners in Chinese parks dissociate themselves from both the built environment and the state through meditative movement; and Zhang Li (2002: 73–4) has related how the planned spatial hierarchy of the courtyard building was disrupted when Beijingers began renting out their best rooms to socially denigrated but wealthy migrants. Much of this literature on the transformation of the built environment by the everyday owes a debt to Michel de Certeau, particularly his essay *Walking in the City* (1984 [1980]). De Certeau (1984: 128

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[27] See Croll (2006: 16, 30) on the post-Mao shift in emphasis from production and worker to consumption and consumer, as well as Hsing (2010: 18) on the slightly more recent shift from industrialism to urbanism.
[28] De Certeau (1984: 117 [1980]) described space as "composed of intersections of mobile elements" in contrast to stable place. Soja (1996: 6) conceptualized Thirdspace as "a multiplicity of real-and-imagined spaces".

[1980]) asserted that walkers resist the homogenizing grids of urban planners, traversing the city according to "an 'anthropological', poetic and mythic experience of space".

Emphasizing the everyday transformation of built space can highlight the unfinished and socially disparate qualities of space, but it can also set planners in opposition to people, and reduce the built environment to a seemingly pliable irrelevance. Studies of urban planning in China have suggested that those involved in constructing the built environment lack the power and uniformity of opinion assigned to them by de Certeau. During the Mao era, municipal planners were often powerless to prevent the territorial transgressions of work units which were answerable only to the central government (D. Lu 2006: chap. 4). Despite the increased power of municipal governments in the post-Mao era, Marc Blecher (2008) has suggested that they are not always able to control the market forces with which they hope to realize their urban plans. In his study of Xinji municipality, the construction of a new development zone prompted the unwanted abandonment of an older flagship project in the city, as private businesses relocated *en masse* while the government was unable to attract capital to renovate the older space (Blecher 2008: 172, 178).

The reduction of the built environment to an irrelevance is equally dangerous. David Harvey (2006: 146–7; 2010) has derided works which have abandoned the notion that an absolute space exists and exerts influence on social relations. For example, numerous articles in *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Bull and Back 2003) focused on practices that seemingly emancipate individuals from the surrounding physical environment, including the usage of the walkman (Thibaud 2003), the mobile phone (Bassett 2003), and the automobile (Bull 2003). At times, it seems that there has been a reversal of the older notion of space as physical vessel, so that space exists without concrete form. This recent neglect of absolute space has perhaps been a reaction to the theories of the past, such as architectural determinism, which held that the built environment was the main determinant of social behaviour.[29] In contrast, a recent work by the anthropologist Tim Ingold (2011: 124–5) has dismissed the built environment as simply a temporary and futile blockage of the movement of life. However, while the built environment may be just one element of space, its form is especially congealed, and not easily reconfigured by other spatial elements. As a consequence, whoever is involved in the determination of built form also exerts significant influence over the production of space in its totality.

The fifth quality of space is its relationality (e.g. Lynch 1960: 1; Foucault 1986; Massey 2005; Harvey 2006: 77; Thrift 2009: 96). Taking a pertinently musical example from the geographical literature (Howitt 1998),[30] the notes of C natural and D natural exist together in various scales. The sounds of these notes are seemingly altered in the context of different scales, yet what actually gets

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[29] See, however, Tim Cresswell's (2011: 238) assertion that there has been an even more recent turn in cultural and geographical theory, this time away from representation and back towards materiality.
[30] Howitt's example was mainly intended as an elucidation of geographical scale, but it can also serve as an elucidation of space.

altered is the *relationship* between notes, allowing them to be heard in a new way (Howitt 1998: 55–6). Just as we hear a note differently when it is played together with other notes in different sequences, so we can only perceive the totality of a space by examining its relationship with other spaces.

Connecting this idea of relationality with the other four identified qualities, a space becomes a multiplicity of interwoven processes which can only be fully comprehended through its relationship with other collections of processes. In the study of city space, there is the need to think in terms of both internal and external relations. Sociologist James Farrer's (2002: 57, 61-3) work on Shanghai serves as a good example of how cities are constituted through their internal relations, with his identification of the local differentiation between the "high corner" of former foreign concession areas and the "low corner" of migrant shanty towns. For external relations, anthropologist Lisa Hoffman (2010: 45) has shown how the government of Dalian, a coastal city of Liaoning province, promotes the city in relation to the provincial capital of Shenyang. At the same time as the branding of Dalian takes investment away from industrial Shenyang, its promoters create a gendered distance between the two, describing picturesque Dalian as a beautiful young woman in comparison to sturdy male Shenyang. As further examples, chapter three of this thesis examines the changing internal relations that have made Kaili into a city, while chapter four considers the lived construction of Kaili as a city of "fake" minorities in comparison to the external "real" minorities of the surrounding *yuanshengtai* counties.

Universal theories of space and the spatial triad

A number of theorists have incorporated the five commonalities summarized above to formulate universal theories.[31] Such theories have tended towards a conceptualization of global networks. For example, mobilities theory in sociology has asserted that "society consists of boundless networks of diverse flows, interconnected by nodes" which include transport hubs, cities and other locations (E. Cohen and Cohen 2012a: 2181). Alternatively, Manuel Castells (2010 [1996]) has conceptualized the space of flows as the spatial logic which orders the new network society. This spatial logic consists of three layers: a circuit of electronic exchanges; nodes and hubs which are linked by this circuit and located in specific places; and the spatial organization of the network society's managerial elite (Castells 2010: 442–7 [1996]). In the same year, Arjun Appadurai (1996: 32–6) argued for an understanding of the global cultural economy according to five scapes, representing ideological, financial, ethnic, technological and media flows, as well as the interrelations between them. A final example is actor-network theory, which has argued for the distribution of agency throughout networks, so that animals and technological objects have the

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[31] It should be noted that there are further common qualities of space present within the relevant literature, including, for example, its hierarchical, sensory and emotional qualities. It is, however, impossible to coherently address all of these qualities within a single thesis.

capacity to act as well as humans (e.g. Latour 2007). From the perspective of actor-network theory, it would not be enough to simply examine how humans act in order to understand space, it would also be necessary to examine how humans act in accordance with other living and non-living forms to produce space.

Some of the terminology contained within these theories has been unfortunate. For example, sociologist Caroline Knowles (2011: 138) has argued that "Mobile sociology's toolkit of 'fluidity', 'scapes' and 'flows' conveys an unreal sense of ease…that is contracted by even a cursory examination of the mechanics of specific mobilities". Although not necessarily the intention, such language has failed to highlight the imbalances in power that allows certain nationalities and class groups to move unimpeded around the world, while others are prevented by border controls or financial constraints. More importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, while the above theories all contain the qualities of space outlined above, the orientation of their concerns do not facilitate an understanding of the small city. The theorists mentioned above had quite different priorities: Appadurai focused on the nation-state; Castells on technology and mega-cities; and actor-network theory on agency. More generally, many such theories concentrate on the transgression of national boundaries and the rise of transnational forces, rather than exploring the minutiae of everyday urban life.

In contrast, Henri Lefebvre's attempt to conceptualize space in its totality followed his previous research on everyday life. Constantly concerned with the problem of fragmentation and alienation in modern society, Lefebvre attempted to establish theoretical totalities of both the everyday and social space. Realizing that leisure could not be separated from other aspects of life, he argued for an everyday triad of work, leisure and family life (Lefebvre 1991b: 31 [1958]).[32] Arguing years later that there was a fragmentation of space across disciplines (1991a: 89–90 [1974]), Lefebvre similarly attempted to bind those fragments together into a spatial triad. The triadic nature of his arguments was crucial, since it avoided the tendency to conceptualize in binary terms. For example, the above overview of space indicates that recent academia has sometimes de-emphasized the built environment, while previous literature was more likely to treat it as an all-determining structure. In contrast, Lefebvre's spatial triad has provided a means to escape this dichotomy of immaterial and material space.

Before introducing the spatial triad, it is necessary to introduce a further quality of space, as identified by Lefebvre; that it is a process which can become thing-like. Lefebvre described social space as a "concrete abstraction" (1991a: 100 [1974]), that is, an abstraction that "concretizes and realizes itself socially, in the social practice" ((1977: 59) cited in Stanek 2008: 68). In doing so, he

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[32] While this thesis is directly concerned with the everyday, there is no room for a detailed analysis of Lefebvre's work on the everyday. Perhaps his most important contribution in this area was concerned with the relationship between leisure and work (Lefebvre 1991b: 29–42 [1958]). In contrast, this thesis is more concerned with the relationship between leisure and city branding.

was influenced by Marx's work on the labour process and the commodity form (Shields 1999: 159; Stanek 2008: 67, 70). For Lefebvre (1991a: 81 [1974]), "the most durable accomplishment of Marxist thought" was its "unmasking of *things* to reveal (social relationships)". The labour process is objectified in the thing-like form of the commodity, which can then be directly sold in the marketplace. The labour process "in its fluid state" is not itself value, but becomes value "in its coagulated state, in objective form" as a commodity (Marx 1990: 142 [1867]). At the same time, the commodity form partially conceals the labour process. In global markets, it becomes difficult to ascertain the geographical origins of a product, let alone the details of the labour process which have created the product.

While Marx identified the commodity as a concrete abstraction, Lefebvre identified space as another such concrete abstraction. Once "embedded in a variety of relations" (Stanek 2008: 63–4), abstract space takes on a thing-like form, which can be bought and sold. The purchase of property according to the measurements of a homogeneous, geometric space (e.g. squared metres) is the most obvious example of this concretizing process; measured space assumes form and value when considered in the context of building construction, the real estate industry, interior design, and the wider urban infrastucture.

Space is particularly congealed and thing-like in the realm of *perceived space*, which Lefebvre also referred to as spatial practice. Although a certain cohesiveness and physicality suggests that spatial practice *is* space, it is just one element within a triad of intertwined spatial elements, alongside *conceived space* (representations of space) and *lived space* (spaces of representation). Perceived space denotes the perceived physical dimension, including activity within that dimension. Conceived space is the intangible Cartesian grid upon which perceived space is planned and mapped, and lived space is the symbolic imagining of perceived space (Lefebvre 1991a: 38–40 [1974]). For example, a building is conceived in the mind of an architect, and expressed through maps and mathematical calculations within the realm of conceived space. This conceived space comes into existence within the realm of the perceived, where users experience the physical embodiment of the building and also contribute their own movements. Finally, these users attach symbolic meanings to the perceived space of the building, to create lived space.

This is a triad of space, where each element exists in a relationship with the other two elements, rather than a trichotomy of spaces. In a basic sense, it is comparable to a musical triad. Lefebvre deplored fragmentation (e.g. 1991b: 149 [1958]), and was therefore surely describing a process whereby space is constantly produced and reproduced through the interaction of its three

elements, rather than describing three separate types of space.[33] The interaction of the three elements was also non-linear, with no clear starting point and no ending.[34] In the above example of a building, the process of spatial production began with conceived space and ended with lived space. However, this process can easily be extended; for example, the conceived space of urban planners is influenced by their everyday experiences of the perceived and the lived.

As I suggested in outlining my modified approach to grounded theory in chapter one, an existing theory such as the spatial triad can be regarded as an initial framework rather than a finished product, particularly given the constant evolution of urban form. Most notably, Lefebvre devised his triad at a time when the marketing of city images had not yet become an essential element of the city.[35] The branding of Kaili as *yuanshengtai* has created a certain kind of conceived space, which is not quite the same as city maps and architectural plans. Branding deliberately employs the language of the everyday, whereas Lefebvre's conceived space is expressed through abstract, specialist terminology. Branding needs to establish a rapport with potential visitors to the city, and therefore requires a closer connection with the everyday. While architectural plans may produce buildings with no regard for the surrounding cityscape, a branding concept needs to be more closely aligned with existing perceived space. There therefore had to be something specific about Kaili which made it amenable to being branded as a *yuanshengtai, prior* to the construction of statues and the publication of literature which reinforced the brand. As such, the perceived space of Kaili is the product of two distinct types of conceived space: one that utilizes the Cartesian grid of traditional conceived space, and one that looks to the everyday for inspiration. This latter element, a kind of conceived branded space, has become an essential component of the competitive

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[33] Interpretation of the triad is contested. For example, Edward Soja (1996), one of the best known interpreters of Lefebvre, took inspiration from the spatial triad to develop the theory of Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace, that is, three separate forms of space. In response, Christian Schmid (2008: 42) asserted that the triad constitutes "three dialectically interconnected processes of production" rather than three separate spaces, rendering Soja's theory "fundamentally different" to the spatial triad. However, Lefebvre was also unclear in his (translated) writing; the three dimensions of space were "interconnected" but did not necessarily form a "coherent whole" (1991a: 40 [1974]). If existing theories are treated as still-evolving processes receptive to modification, as I argued in chapter one, it is not necessary for contemporary theorists to be entirely loyal – if such a thing is even possible – to Lefebvre's theory, as long as they are forthcoming about their own modifications. To declare a modification of my own, I go further than Lefebvre in my belief that the three elements of the triad are present in *all* instances of Chinese urban space.

[34] In an example of the triad's multi-directionality, Lee (2009: 33) has described how the conceived space of contemporary Tiananmen Square (i.e. square as the embodiment of the PRC) arose from lived space (i.e. May Fourth protestors claiming an "empty space").

[35] There is, of course, a long history of inter-city competition; Harvey (2001: 367 [1989]) has described civic boosterism and urban entrepreneurialism as old traditions of capitalism which enjoyed a revival in the 1970s and 80s. A brief examination of modern Chinese history reveals efforts at city promotion by both colonialist (Hoffman 2010: 34) and Republican powers (Strand 2000: 100). Yet while cities have always attempted to improve their status, heightened competition for capital and the increasing homogenization of the built urban landscape has rendered city branding far more important than in previous decades (Robins 1993: 306). Even in the capitalist world, the first official marketing campaigns for New York only took place in the early 1970s (Greenberg 2008: 21), around the same time as the publication of *The Production of Space*. In contrast, Maoist China tended to promote a unified national culture over regional and city identities (Brownell 2001: 125).

modern city. I devote particular attention to this element of space in this thesis, arguing that its relative malleability allows it to be transformed into new forms of lived space. I therefore distinguish between *conceived planned space* and *conceived branded space* within this thesis. Based on this distinction, I also argue that the relationship between lived and conceived space in Kaili did not seem as oppositional as that indicated by Lefebvre: local inhabitants appropriated the conceived branded space of the city for their own purposes, rather than rejecting it outright (see chapter four), and also wielded their own everyday versions of conceived space in constructing lived musical spaces (see chapter six). In contrast, Lefebvre sometimes appeared at risk of lapsing into a dichotomy of dominant conceived space and dominated lived space, particularly when stressing the impact of homogenized state planning on everyday life, despite his own positing of a spatial triad.

The spatial triad was also based on a rather geographically confined set of urban experiences. David Cunningham (2009: 527) has described Georg Simmel's concept of the metropolis as an attempt to articulate "speculatively *universal* forms of social and spatial relationality…and the modes of experience produced by such constitutive relations". These forms were speculative because Simmel, like Lefebvre, lacked significant data beyond Western Europe.[36] If urban studies is to work towards "a theoretical knowledge of urban form as an *immanently fragmented whole*", then researchers need to pay more heed to those urban populations who were excluded from the old universalisms (Cunningham 2009: 523, 526). For example, Lefebvre refused to separate capitalist and socialist experiences of urbanization (2003: xi [1970]), yet there is now enough information to assert that the Soviet city was markedly different to the capitalist city in its spatial configuration, while the Maoist city was different to both. East Asia was a particular blind spot for Lefebvre, who speculated as to whether the existence of Chinese characters meant that there was no distinction between conceived and lived space in "the Orient" (1991a: 42 [1974]). Unfortunately, there has been insufficiently detailed application of the triad to urban China to properly discredit this speculation.[37]

Four decades on from the triad's inception, the problem remains among the academic descendants of Lefebvre – and in wider spatial theory – that certain spaces and cities have received far more attention than others. The Western megacity has been the privileged site of spatial investigation; "What about Huddersfield?" goes the critique of Edward Soja for his fixation on Los Angeles (Elden 1997: 48). What about the Chinese Huddersfields? Even if the net is spread wider

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[36] Eduardo Mendieta (2008: 151) has described Lefebvre as a "keen observer" of the United States, but otherwise "embedded in his European context".

[37] Lefebvre has been frequently cited within the literature on urban China, but these citations have not generally been followed by close engagements with his theory. While modification of the triad is potentially productive, transforming it into a binary of lived space and conceived space seems like a step backwards (e.g. Broudehoux 2004: 26, 34; Rolandsen 2011: 12, 69). To date, an examination of rural space rather than urban space constitutes one of the most extensive applications of Lefebvrian theory to Chinese specifics (M. M.-H. Yang 2004).

to include general urban studies, beyond Lefebvrian works, the literature on China offers a skewed depiction of urban experience, by largely disregarding small cities and focuses on the big cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.[38] If space is relational, small cities ought to be studied not only to establish a broader understanding of the urban, but also in order to perceive big cities from new perspectives.

Another problem in Lefebvre-influenced works has been a lack of balance in the research of perceived, conceived and lived space. In order to comprehensively study the three spatial elements, it is necessary to consult different types of data. While Lefebvre accused anthropologists of over-privileging lived space (1991a: 41 [1974]), it is hard to see how lived space can be studied *without* participant observation, which has often been lacking in urban theory.[39] I was able to study perceived and lived space through participant observation, but needed further methods of data collection in order to study conceived space. I therefore consulted local gazetteers, newspapers and maps in order to ascertain long-term planning and branding strategies, the mapping of the city, and the histories of specific spaces. Much of this literature was primarily intended for internal distribution within local work units and not generally read by the wider Kaili population. However, planning details often filtered through to everyday life in one way or another, with fieldwork acquaintances often knowing a friend who knew a friend in a relevant department, even if they tended not to directly read the *Qiandongnan Daily*, the local official newspaper. The implementation of these plans was also perceived in everyday life; for example, through the construction of an ethnic-style viewing tower, or the relocation of Kaili University to the new development zone as part of efforts to create a "university town" (*daxue cheng*).

Having already identified five commonalities of space in the relevant literature, I have argued in this section that Lefebvre's spatial theory is the most appropriate for the study of everyday life and space in a small Chinese city. The triadic nature of Lefebvre's social space also enables an escape from the tendency to think of space in binary terms, as either immaterial or material. While Lefebvre's focus on the everyday offers invaluable theoretical insights to my project, his theory of social space should be treated as an incomplete product which can be modified through the process of fieldwork, particularly fieldwork which takes place outside of the so-called "global cities". Whether in Europe or China, the urban form has changed since the publication of *The Production of Space*, with the rise of city branding making it necessary to reassess the notion of conceived

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[38] Exceptions to this bias towards the big city include Shue (1995), Hyde (2001), Blecher (2008) and Rolandsen (2011), making for a small collection of works in comparison to the wealth of data on direct-controlled municipalities and Special Economic Zones, as well as a reasonable number of works on provincial capitals.
[39] For example, Christian Schmid (2008: 41) has accused David Harvey of narrowing Lefebvre's triad to pursue a political economy of space that concentrates on material spatial practice and pays insufficient attention to the lived everyday. Edward Soja, meanwhile, has displayed extensive knowledge of Los Angeles, but his comparative study of Amsterdam (1996: chap. 9) relies on observations derived from little more than the act of dwelling, rather than participant observation.

space, as well as its relationship with lived space. Academia has changed too, producing new conceptualizations of place since the time of Lefebvre's major works. These conceptualizations, I argue in the following section, can be usefully examined alongside his theory of social space.

The redefinition of place

Space and place have been frequent companions in geography, and to a certain extent, the wider social sciences and humanities, and their meanings have been constructed through mutual reference. However, the relationship between them has shifted significantly in the theoretical literature of recent decades. Whereas space and place were once defined in opposition to each other, their meanings have converged in a way that can create confusion. In this section, I trace the shifts in meanings that have occurred, and apply the Lefebvrian triad in an attempt to unite academic and everyday understandings of place. This attempt to create closer links between theory and the everyday accords with my modified approach to grounded theory, and the accompanying belief that academic theory must be critically reassessed through lived experience.

According to Doreen Massey (2005: 64–8), the mainstream understanding of space and place during modernity has been an oppositional one. Philosopher-geographer Yi-fu Tuan (1977: 6, 54) displayed this understanding during the disciplinary turn of geography towards place in the 1970s, describing space as abstract and undifferentiated in contrast to humanized, enclosed, and stable place. As a portion of infinite space becomes known and endowed with lived meaning, it becomes bounded place (Tuan 1977: 6). This kind of place is "an organized world of meaning. It is essentially a static concept. If we see the world as process, constantly changing, we should not be able to develop any sense of place" (Tuan 1977: 179).

The emerging language of globalization reinforced this opposition, wherein global flows of space erode local place (Massey 2005: 81, 183). Early work on globalization also revealed a contradictory attitude towards place. On the one hand, it assigned causality to the level of the global, rendering all local places the passive "products of international capital accumulation", so that there was little to be gained from studying places (Massey 1994: 117). On the other hand, there was anxiety about the plight of place, which appeared to be under threat of extinction in the face of global flows of capital, media and people (Massey 1994: 162–7). Frederic Jameson (1998: 63), for example, worried that the global dissemination of American media threatened the "traditional cultural systems" of third world nations. Whatever the perspective, place was in trouble. Theorists declared that the space of flows dominated the "space of places" (Castells 2010: 408–9, 445 [1996]), and that global space rendered place "increasingly phantasmagoric" (Giddens 1990: 18), or even destroyed places to create non-place (Augé 1995: 78–9).

There was no future for place if it was conceptualized as local, bounded and stable. In these terms, the best that place could do was preserve itself by looking inwards and becoming a reactionary locale. However, some thinkers began to reconceptualize place as something other than

the losing half of a binary which pitted bounded locality against global flow. Most notably, Doreen Massey (1991) argued for a "global sense of place", and supported this claim with a description of Kilburn High Street. With its IRA graffiti, shop windows displaying Indian saris, Muslim newsagents, and aeroplanes overhead, late-twentieth century Kilburn High Street was a "meeting place…constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 1991: 27).[40]

This radical re-conceptualization of place has since become a commonly encountered one across disciplines. For example, in anthropology, Clifford Geertz (1996: 260) once argued that place had not been developed as a theoretical concept. However, anthropology has since produced theories of place which are comparable with Massey's global sense of place. Stephan Feuchtwang (2004), for example, argued that only some places are physically bounded, and that places are being constantly remade in an unstable but centring process, as local territorial centres negotiate with the national and the global. Most challengingly, Tim Ingold (2007: 100; 2011: 148–9) has described places as complex knots where multiple trails of life converge before heading their separate ways, so that places "are delineated by movement, not by the outer limits to movement". Together, these trails and knots constitute a meshwork, a term borrowed from Lefebvre by Ingold as an alternative to network (Ingold 2011: 63-5, 84-5), and one which is also utilized in the last two chapters of this thesis – particularly chapter five – to emphasize the fluid but connected qualities of music-making sites in Kaili.

These reformulations of place are convincing for the simple reason that we still continue to experience place. If the early globalization literature was correct, and places were static bounded things threatened by global flows, surely they would all have been destroyed by now. The re-theorization of place has also provided an important justification for the study of the local, as the study of wider social processes at a small scale, rather than the study of bounded local data in contrast to abstract theory. It can consequently be argued that research on the everyday of Kaili generates new perspectives on global and national processes, including notions of authenticity, ethnicity, and leisure.

However, this reformulation of place also needs to be examined in the context of changing conceptions of space. As the previous section demonstrated, recent theory has rejected the old notion of space as abstract and declared it to be fluid, imbued with time, pluralistic, socially produced, and relational. While place has taken on certain qualities of space - such as its global dimensions – space has also taken on certain qualities which were previously exclusive to place, to

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[40] Assemblage theory provides further means for overcoming the binary of concrete place and global space. According to relevant literature, abstract and dynamic global phenomena – such as systems of governance – are territorialized in a specific situation as an assemblage, that is, "the product of multiple determinations that are not reducible to a single logic", rather than a locality whose conditions are determined by global forces (A. Ong and Collier 2005: 4, 12). See Zhang and Ong (2008) for an application of assemblage theory to the specific situation of contemporary China, and Cresswell (2011: 239–41) for a consideration of place as assemblage.

produce a certain *convergence* of space and place. It might even be described as a *reconvergence*; in his history of Anglo-American geography, Kenneth Olwig (2002: 3) has traced the word "space" back to the German word "*raum*", which can refer to both boundless, three-dimensional space *and* enclosed, room-like place. In the mid-twentieth century, the former definition was privileged, as geographers propagated a "science of space", which "did not focus upon a historically constituted place, but rather on phenomena delimited by the geographer according to abstract, timeless, spatial criteria" (Olwig 2002: 2). However, the latter definition began to reassert itself, as researchers discovered that it was untenable to reduce experiences of space to the purely abstract. This led to the appearance of terms such as "relative space", which described more enclosed, bodily experiences of the world (Olwig 2002: 10–1). Or in other words, more *place-like* experiences.

The final quality of social space is therefore that it also constitutes place. Lefebvre did not write extensively about place in *The Production of Space*. However, as others have already noted (Merrifield 1993; Hoelscher 2011: 252), certain aspects of social space share similarities with place. Massey (2005: 130) has defined space as "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" and places as "collections of those stories". Yet social space, as the product of three interwoven elements, also constitutes a collection of stories; place is where the three elements of the triad interweave and congeal. Lefebvre's triad of social space can also be seen in Tim Cresswell's (2011: 238) definition of places as "complex and dynamic collages of things (material culture, objects), representations (places as representations and representations of place) and practices (the things people do, often habitually)", even if the three elements are constituted somewhat differently. There is still a difference between space and place, but it is one of emphasis rather than meaning, as a result of the different histories of the two terms. Recent theories of space have endeavoured to escape the void, while theories of place have sought to reclaim the locality as a site of scholarly relevance. Given this convergence of space and place, the spatial triad can be employed to conceptualize understandings of place in more nuanced terms.

Doreen Massey (1994: 121) commented some years ago that her conceptualization of place did not describe how places were seen, but rather how they could be seen. Indeed, "defensive and exclusivist place-loyalties" indicated that place continued to be predominantly seen as a bounded local space (Massey 1994: 121). This still holds true; everyday discourse frequently understands places as centred and stable on account of the existence of boundaries. Massey's critique of bounded place was surely correct, but how could places ever be regarded as bounded if they are as permeable and fluid as academics have come to suggest? I tentatively propose that place should be considered in terms of three different types of boundary, namely perceived, conceived and lived boundaries, in accordance with the three spatial realms of the triad. As a consequence of these different boundaries, a place may be relatively permeable within one realm of the triad, but bounded in another. When the triadic elements combine, the result is a place that can seem both bounded *and* porous. For example, conceived boundaries are drawn on a map, creating enclosed

places. However, these lines may or may not be realized in the realm of perceived space. Thus, the mapped lines of national borders and city limits vary significantly in their levels of permeability in perceived space; it is generally easier to enter a city than a country. The mapped lines of conceived space may also conflict or coincide with existing lived space, where inhabitants have demarcated the parameters of their lives according to more symbolic considerations, such as the chime of a church bell.

Examples explored in the following chapters can further illustrate this mingling of perceived, conceived and lived boundaries. In chapter four, I argue that *yuanshengtai* is a nostalgic discourse about the perceived destruction of authentic rural place. These places are conceived by official maps and urbanites as bounded, but are linked to the wider world by processes of tourism and infrastructural development. In chapter five, I refer to place names which provide orientation within the city; these denoted lived spaces which were not always aligned with the conceived administrative boundaries of Kaili. More frequently, they aligned with perceived boundaries, such as major roadways and different gradations of real estate. Incorporating place into the spatial triad thus makes it possible to approach place as a phenomenon which can appear enclosed *and* open, depending on which element of space is being considered. This also reiterates the importance of attempting to comprehend space in its totality, as a combination of maps, brands, buildings, and everyday life, rather than simply considering one fragmented aspect of space.

Social space and the aural

Having established a conceptualization of social space which also contains a notion of place, this section addresses those keywords which are involved in the aural production of space, namely music and sound. In order to do so, it is necessary to address an almost entirely different literature, since many key theorists of space have paid scant attention to the aural dimension of space.[41] De Certeau (1984: 92–7 [1980]), for example, criticized the top-down panoptic view of urban planners for totalizing the messiness of human life, preferring a down-to-earth tactile-kinaesthetic exploration of the city. However, he could have stayed at the top of his skyscraper and still retained a sense of messiness if he had only listened.[42] Beyond spatial theory, a collaborative cultural studies book on the walkman has argued that modern culture is commonly perceived as dominated by the image, while the accompanying "revolution in sound" is either forgotten or ignored, to the detriment of our understanding of city life:

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[41] By "key theorists", I refer to those academics whose works have exerted considerable influence beyond their own disciplinary fields. Lefebvre is one rare example of a key theorist who has provided guidelines for the study of urban space and sound, with his work on rhythmanalysis (2004 [1992]), but these are also incomplete guidelines, and insufficient by themselves. See also cultural studies works on popular music and urban experience (e.g. Chambers 1994: chap. 3; du Gay et al. 1996).

[42] My panoramic experiences of Kaili were also rather different to de Certeau's skyscraper view of New York; from the summit of a small hill, I could perceive the messiness of marginal areas that were not discernible from the more orderly main streets.

If we can conjure up a picture of what 'modernity' is like as a distinctive way of life, with an image of, say, the Manhattan skyline or some other similar urban landscape...we could do the same by tuning in to the typical sounds of the late-modern city. They would include not only snatches of recorded music but other familiar sounds, like the wailing siren of ambulance, fire-engine or police car, the endless murmur of traffic, the exhalations from sooty exhausts, wheezing engines and chugging juggernauts – the modern soundscape (du Gay et al. 1996: 19).

Aural-related literature has reacted strongly to the purported dominance of the visual: architects have critiqued their discipline for failing to consider the acoustic qualities of buildings (Sheridan and Lengen 2003; Blesser and Salter 2007); aural space has been contrasted to visual space (Connor 1997: 207; Arkette 2004: 160); and most famously, Jesuit philosopher Walter Ong (1982: 72) declared that **"**Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer". According to this argument, the aural emphasizes the fluidity, multiplicity and messiness of space, in contrast to the distancing visual.

The creation of a binary from a world of at least five senses is no mean feat.[43] The visual has been privileged over *all* other sensory experiences, rather than just the aural (Lefebvre 1991a: 286 [1974]; Pallasmaa 2005), so why replace the old sensory tyrant with a new one? Indeed, Jonathan Sterne (2003: 15) has already critiqued much of the Ong-inspired aural literature, which "idealizes hearing" in opposition to denigrated vision. Writing of anthropology and the senses, Veit Erlmann (2004: 5) has come to the related conclusion that "...it is crucial to emphasize that it is not enough to denounce vision and replace it with a new sensibility based on the ear". Thus, the aural should be studied alongside, rather than instead of, the visual. Tim Ingold (2011: 134–7) has even opposed terms such as lightscape or soundscape, declaring that we experience just one environment, rather than a fragmented multiplicity of scapes. Certainly, the ideal urban study would grasp the senses in their totality, just as the Lefebvrian triad attempts to grasp social space in its entirety. However, such a project is unfortunately beyond the scope of a single researcher, and I focus on the intersection of the aural and the visual in my study of Kaili. I began with the aural, as a result of my own research background, which led me to a city whose central intersection contains a giant visual – rather than aural – representation of a musical instrument. As the dominant sensory dimension in contemporary China, the visual has thereby come to feature prominently in what was initially intended as a study of only the aural. As a further example, in the wider practice of *yuanshengtai*

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[43] In his introduction to *The Five Senses* by Michel Serres, Steven Connor (2008: 2) noted arguments from both Socrates and twentieth-century psychologists for the existence of further senses, such as heat and weight.

music, I frequently observed performances where there was a far greater focus on the authenticity of the visual (ethnic costume) than the aural (piped music). For this reason, the aural and the visual are especially inseparable in the context of this thesis. A future study of Kaili could usefully focus on the haptic, olfactory and even gustatory aspects of social space.

The musical representation and construction of place

Having argued for the theorization of space as a collection of interwoven processes, this section focuses on music as one of the most privileged spatial processes in this thesis. Throughout the thesis, I study the interaction of amateur music with other elements of the city, including the branding of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals, the urban spaces that attempt to evoke this branding, the leisure practices of urban inhabitants, and the non-musical sound of the wider city environment. While space is the principal theoretical tool in this thesis, social and cultural research on music has often focused on place, with a spate of such studies since the early 1990s, particularly within ethnomusicology and geography. Given the close relationship between space and place, this literature has nevertheless raised some important points which are relevant to this thesis, and which are explored below.

The key theme of the music-place literature – particularly during the 1990s – was that a certain composer, composition or musical genre can evoke or construct place (e.g. Stokes 1992; Stokes 1994; Leyshon, Matless, and Revill 1998; Kong 1998; Järviluoma 2000). In fact, this theme can be divided into two sub-themes, since there is a major difference between evocation and construction. As an example of the former, Lily Kong (1998: 1) has argued that "music lyrics from a specific area can convey images of the place". Similarly, musicologist Adam Krims (2007: xxxiv) has described musical and lyrical characterizations of cities as a "relatively blunt but still notable respect in which music projects the new urban form". On these terms, the role of music is relatively impoverished, since it merely operates as a medium to disseminate or reinforce notions of an already completed place. For example, in an article on Woody Guthrie, John Gold (1998: 262) analyzed Guthrie's representation of the Dust Bowl, but also argued that his musical representations did not have any significant impact on the "traditional folk music of that region". In a study of brass bands in the same edited volume, Trevor Herbert (1998) examined the usage of brass band music in advertisements alongside nostalgic "extramusical" references, such as a famous Hovis advert featuring cloth cap, cobbled road, bicycle and northern accent. Herbert (1998: 107) wrote that this evocation constituted a stereotype which "gnaws at and camouflages the truth so that the root identity of its subject becomes obscured, or even lost". According to this formulation, the representation exists outside of place; no matter whether true or false, it does not alter the realities of place. Representation as evocation is a one-way process.

Even if this assumption is accepted, musical evocations of place are still noteworthy for what they choose to include or omit. Robert Stradling (1998: 176–83), for example, has shown how

English Musical Renaissance composers mainly evoked the lands around the River Severn in their portrayals of English civilization. Elsewhere, Zdzislaw Mach (1994: 63–6) has argued that no Chopin composition has served as the Polish national anthem – despite the composer's status as a "national prophet" – because of the nation's preference for military anthems to evoke its constant struggles with foreign oppressors. Such examples demonstrate that even the musical evocation of place constitutes an act of synecdoche guided by certain motives. The branding of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals has evoked a specific quality of the city, that it is demographically the location of many minority groups, and ignored certain other qualities, such as its previous involvement in the Third Front, an industrial project of national importance.

However, describing musical representations as constituting the *construction* of place indicates a more important, two-way process, whereby representations are not only shaped by, but also shape, places. Jonathan Stock (2003: 101) has claimed that much of the relevant literature has simply described the musical evocation of an already-known sense of place, rather than the musical construction of place. Perhaps it is more the case that the musical construction of place has not always been fully elucidated. I would argue that a musical representation of place will always construct, rather than simply evoke, since the representation is itself a constitutive element of place. For example, anthropologist Sara Cohen (1994) has shown how rock journalists construct local music scenes such as the 1980s "Manchester Sound" or the 1960s "Liverpool Sound". The musical characteristics of bands in these scenes are interpreted by journalists and fans as representing local geography, so that Joy Division supposedly captured the alienation of a decaying Manchester, while the acoustic and parochial sound of Liverpool bands reflected the city's insular, nostalgic character (Cohen 1994: 121-4). Such representations of musical practices and places undoubtedly influence subsequent experiences of the city. Thus, as an undergraduate student in nearby Lancaster, when I thought of Manchester, I thought of industrial decay *because* of Joy Division in a way that affected my subsequent experience of the city.

Following this argument, I treat representations of Kaili as an element of the city. Given the intense inter-city competition for capital, cities cannot exist without representations, which reduce everyday urban complexity to a coherent and marketable slogan, such as the homeland of 100 festivals. A representation of this kind constitutes conceived branded space, and also needs to be studied alongside other spatial elements of the city. As a synecdoche of conceived branded space, the representation of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals has been reinforced by the construction within perceived urban space of a synecdoche which includes Dashizi, Wanbo Square and Nationalities Stadium, as well as the organization of festivals around and within these ethnicized landmarks. In order to emphasize construction over evocation, the representation must be pursued into the realm of the perceived. In the example of Kaili, the analysis of a music-oriented representation must be combined with more ethnographic work on music-making in the everyday of the city, as Ruth Finnegan (1989) did in her study of amateur musical practices in Milton

Keynes. Another example is Sara Cohen's (2007) book on Liverpool, which goes beyond the Beatles-dominated representation of the Liverpool sound to ethnographically explore other musical practices within the city.[44]

The branding and amateur music-making of Kaili, as experienced during my fieldwork, were related to each other, but not in a straightforward manner, as I indicated in the thesis introduction. Branding produced an ethnicized built environment, and so existed alongside amateur music-making in perceived space, where they were joined by further processes of space which were not necessarily musical, including traffic and other forms of leisure activity. One noticeable aspect of this perceived space was its multiplicity of sounds, among which live music was a relatively hidden element. As I argue in chapter three, branding is a consequence of urbanism, which also produces rapid urbanization. This urbanization covers a variety of practices which produce high intensities of sound, including construction and traffic. As a partial consequence, amateur music-making did not, on the whole, occur in the ethnicized outdoor spaces of Kaili, but within quieter and more secluded indoor spaces. There are therefore other types of sound that need to be considered alongside musical branding and musical practice. I subsequently argue in the following section for the need to treat live amateur music as one sound among many in the aural production of urban space.

Unifying music and sound

There were two important aural processes with which live music interacted in Kaili; piped music and non-musical sound. During fieldwork, although I focused on live music-making, I could not ignore the concurrent existence of piped music and non-musical sound. In short, the amateur musicians of Kaili had to compete for space with a barrage of piped music and non-musical sound. In chapter three, I argue that this kind of "aurally saturated urban environment" (Hirschkind 2006: 21) exists in opposition to the projection of *yuanshengtai* branding, even though they are both the logical consequences of urbanism. Before arriving at such a conclusion, it was first necessary to regard live music as one (important) element among a wider range of city sounds.

There is a wide array of research across disciplines on recorded and piped music, including work on musical programming in an American shopping mall (Sterne 1997), piped music on the UK high street (DeNora 2008), sermon tapes in the streets of Cairo (Hirschkind 2006), classical music's effect on customer habits in wine stores (Areni and Kim 1993), radio's impact on listening

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[44] In a later article, Lashua, Cohen and Schofield (2010: 128) further elaborated the representation of Liverpool, arguing that "the story of one venue (the Cavern), one band (the Beatles) and one moment (Mersey Beat) have come to represent an entire district of the city (indeed, at times, the entire city)". They also argued that the representational prominence of the Cavern Club has existed as part of a three-step narrative of popular music in the city, alongside Eric's Club (post punk in the late 1970s/early 1980s) and Cream (house music in the 1990s) (Lashua, Cohen, and Schofield 2010: 127–8). My thesis shares the desire to consider dominant representations alongside less documented musical practices, such as the 1970s pub rock scene in Liverpool or park singing in Kaili. However, Kaili during my fieldwork differed to Liverpool in that the dominant representation of *yuanshengtai* unequivocally represented the entire city (and surrounding prefecture), with little representational competition from other musical genres.

habits in the 1930s (Goodman 2010), and the introduction of the walkman into public space (Chambers 1994; du Gay et al. 1996). However, a considerable number of musical studies on China have displayed a preference for visible musicians who play genres and instruments associated with a local region (e.g. S. Jones 1994; Witzleben 1995; Schimmelpenninck 1997; Rees 2000; Harris 2004; S. Jones 2004), as opposed to piped music of non-local origin.[45] Indeed, geographer Arun Saldanha (2002: 348) has criticized the "geography of music" and ethnomusicology for sometimes presenting music "as a purely local, uncontested cultural phenomenon". To ignore the constant presence of piped music in urban China would be to ignore this critique. Piped music frequently existed alongside live music in Kaili, and often at higher levels of intensity. It therefore exerted influence on live music's position within the wider production of space.

Beyond piped music, non-musical sound also needed to be considered in order to assess the contribution of music to the production of urban space. In terms of social space, music is a process which is definable through its relations with other processes, including other sounds; music and non-musical sound are intertwined elements of "humanly organized sound" in the aural production of space. Ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1973: 3, 10) famously defined music as "humanly organized sound" in order to expand the horizons of musicological study beyond Western art music, and demolish the "ethnocentric divisions between Music and Ethnic Music". In the context of this thesis, it is used to contribute to the erosion of the division between the study of music and non-musical sound in the aural production of space.[46]

Imagine a concert hall performance, where musical sound emanates from a single stage, and there is little non-musical sound to disturb an analyst of music and space, beyond the odd cough, expressions of audience appreciation, and the interlude. Compare this hypothetical scenario with a fieldwork example from Apple Hill Park in Kaili. On a summer morning, the unison singing of an amateur choir intertwines with the tweeting of caged birds, recorded music from portable amplifiers, construction noise, and loud conversation. Speech exists with music here, not in the

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[45] One English-language exception is an early article by Rees (1995), which catalogued all types of music present in the city of Lijiang, in contrast to the focus of her book (2000) on "Naxi Ancient Music". Meanwhile, many PRC scholars have written about minority areas as though they *only* have local folk music (e.g. Du 1993; F. Yang 1997; Hengfu Wang 1999; D. Deng 2001; F. Yang 2003).

[46] A recently published edited volume (Born 2013) included several articles that take a similar approach to music and sound. For example, in the introduction, Georgina Born (2013: 5) noted that sound-related studies have had little to say about "music's inhabitation of and entanglement with the encompassing acoustic environment". Another article asserted: "Music theory, the aesthetics of music and the psychology of music have all tended to treat music as if it were a phenomenon radically separate from the rest of the auditory environment" (Clarke 2013: 90). Finally, an article by anthropologist Tom Rice demonstrated how music could be fruitfully considered alongside the wider acoustic environment, with the example of how ward patients listened to hospital radio with headphones in order that they might gain relief from the whimpers and screams of others patients (2013: 172–4).

same way as found in hip hop or certain indie music,[47] but in the way that choir singers drop back from the main group in order to gossip. Thus, music exists in a interwoven relationship with other sounds in a park which functions as a multi-purpose entertainment venue, where interconnected groups engage in a variety of leisure activities. A study of choral sound alone could provide insights into amateur music-making, but would miss the complexities involved in the aural production of the park as a social space.

Blacking's definition of music as "humanly organized sound" provides unlikely assistance towards the adoption of an inclusive approach for the study of music as one aural process among many in the production of space. Only some of the activities found in Apple Hill Park produced what is typically called music, yet they were all instances of "humanly organized sound". To quote Jerrold Levinson, a philosopher of aesthetics:

> The output of a jackhammer, the ticking of a metronome, the shouts of a drill sergeant during a march, the chirping of a sparrow, the roar of a lion, the whine of a police siren, a presidential campaign speech - all are organized sound but not instances of music (1990: 270).

If the goal is a logical definition of music, there are clear problems with both "organized sound" and "humanly organized sound". Levinson first rejected "organized sound" as a suitable definition of music, before quickly proceeding to hoist "humanly organized sound" on to the scrapheap of discredited terminology. However, for the purposes of studying social space, "humanly organized sound" works rather well, as a category which includes every single sound heard within the Apple Hill Park, with the semi-exception of bird sound.[48] Originally intended as a means to broaden the study of musicology, this definition can also be employed to advocate a broader approach to the study of musical production within a complex urban environment. When concentrated together in public spaces, the many sounds of Kaili often became humanly disorganized sound, and conflicts inherent to the production of social space began to emerge.

The study of music together with non-musical sound should have become the rule rather than the exception many decades ago, when the concept of "soundscape" was introduced by Murray Schafer (1969).[49] He proposed a conceptualization of sound which envisaged the world as a "macrocosmic musical composition", and equated music more closely with other sounds (Schafer 1994: 5). Schafer (1994: 111) confidently proclaimed: "The blurring of the edges between music

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[47] Indie bands such as The Blue Aeroplanes, Animals That Swim, Arab Strap, and The Hold Steady do not sing but speak their lyrics.

[48] Actor-network theory might disagree, but the birds were humanly organized in that they were brought to the park in cages by retiree men. Bird sound was also humanly organized to the extent that human placement of cages decided *where* it occurred in the park and human prompts influenced *when* it occurred.

[49] Note also the efforts of Steven Feld, who as early as 1972 wrote a student paper called *The Anthropology of Sound*, a response to *The Anthropology of Music* (Merriam 1964) critiquing "the limitations, sonic and cultural, imposed by the notion of 'music'" (Feld and Brenneis 2004: 463).

and environmental sounds may eventually prove to be the most striking feature of all twentieth-century music". Acoustic ecology (or soundscape studies) was subsequently born as a discipline, while the term "soundscape" also became relatively commonplace in ethnomusicology.

However, as noted in a recent literature review, many music scholars have used the term "soundscape" rather loosely, "as a new cover term for 'the context in which music occurs', but without exploring the sonic aspects of that context" (Samuels et al. 2010: 331). Thus, music-focused work on "soundscapes" may include references to recorded music (e.g. Harris 2004: 172) and the musics of contesting groups (e.g. Solomon 2000), but frequently omits non-musical sound, with slippage from soundscapes to "the soundscapes of popular music" (P. Long and Collins 2012: 144) or of other musical categories.[50] The result can be a description of social space that is too clean, and that is the aural equivalent of the skyscraper view of the city which de Certeau (1984: 92–3 [1980]) critiqued. If live music was considered in isolation, it would be relatively easy to attribute a single musical genre to each slice of perceived space in Kaili. However, a similar logic produced the homogenized representation of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals. Even a music-centred study of urban space needs to conceptualize live music as just one aural process in a knot of other processes.

Sound and the spatial triad

Following my suggestion for the study of music in the context of the wider urban soundscape, this section considers how humanly organized sound functions in the production of social space, with reference to relevant literature, the Lefebvrian triad, and the idea of perceived, conceived and lived boundaries. A number of sound studies have directly addressed the theory of space, and many of their findings have already been covered in my earlier summary of the basic qualities of space. In fact, the consideration of sound seems to have provided a short-cut for the identification of space's fluidity and imbuement with time. Lefebvre (2004: 18 [1992]), for example, noticed how rhythm connected space with time. Even earlier, Edmund Carpenter and Marshal McLuhan (1960: 67) developed the idea of acoustic space, that is, the shifting and temporary space in which a sound can be heard. This concept was later applied to urban and rural environments in sound studies, which developed the argument that the acoustic space of certain informational sounds can define communities (Truax 1984: 58–61; Schafer 1994: 53–4). As portrayed in sound studies, acoustic space largely operates within the realm of perceived space, and sometimes produces lived space. However, notions of sound are also relevant to the conceived element of the spatial triad, in the branding of Kaili as the site of acoustic *yuanshengtai* music.

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[50] "Musicscape" (e.g. S. Cohen 2012a, Roberts 2014) is surely a more appropriate term than soundscape to describe the distribution of musical practices across space. Also see Lashua (2006) for a third understanding of soundscape, as a form of composition, whereby an "aural collage" is created through the mixing together of various recorded sounds.

Murray Schafer (1994) has noted that the acoustic space of a sound can act either centripetally or centrifugally, to draw people inwards or drive them away. The siren, for example, "broadcasts distress"` in order to drive people out of the way (Schafer 1994: 178). The church bell, meanwhile, primarily acts in a centripetal manner, calling parishioners to church (see Schafer 1994: 53–4; Torigoe 2002). Sounds sometimes simultaneously perform centrifugal and centripetal functions; the church bell also frightens away evil spirits (Schafer 1994: 54). There is thus a sense in which acoustic space produces perceived boundaries. However, this boundary is weakly perceived in comparison to more visual boundaries, such as walls and fences. These latter boundaries are relatively fixed in comparison to aural boundaries, and are far more likely to appear as conceived boundaries on maps and plans. Sound is perhaps better at complicating visual boundaries than creating its own boundaries in the realm of perceived space.[51]

The acoustic space of music can nevertheless be exploited for its centripetal effect, particularly when allied with more visual boundaries. In Kaili, one fieldwork example was the music of buskers on the corners of Dashizi intersection. These corners saw a constant flow of people, with the flow at its heaviest during evenings. The task of the buskers was to create a congealed space out of this flow, that is, to convince a sufficient number of people to stop walking and pay attention. Once a few had stopped, others would join them, to create a circle of onlookers. On a summer evening, as many as two hundred people clustered around a single busker. The circle of onlookers was important, since it created a more readily perceived visual boundary, which grounded the activity. As more people stopped to look, the boundary thickened, until the circle either had to expand, or it became difficult for newcomers to both observe and hear the spectacle. One particularly clever method involved a large piece of calligraphy paper, a singer at one end, and a calligrapher at the other end. Once the calligrapher had filled the available paper, he attached a further strip of paper. This process was repeated, slowly enlarging the piece of paper, to increase the distance between calligrapher and singer, and thus expand the perceived space of their activity. The crowd adjusted itself around this growing space, providing room for additional onlookers.

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[51] Regarding the transgression of visual boundaries by sound, consider, for example, how the sounds of pain emerge from behind privacy screens in hospital wards (Rice 2013: 172), or the sounds from a flight path intrude upon private homes (Schafer 1994: 214).

Figure 2.1: A singing busker makes some space in Dashizi (fieldwork photo 2013)

However, creating a musical space in the outdoor spaces of Kaili was not an easy matter for many musicians, as a consequence of the surrounding high-decibel environment. One of Murray Schafer's (1994: 3, 43, 214) worries was the "massive noise position" of the modern world, as modern technological objects emerged with increasingly large acoustic spaces, and the intensity of city life produced an "overdense population of sounds". Musicians could strengthen their own acoustic spaces through amplification in Kaili, but even this was often insufficient in outdoor public spaces, given their particularly high sound pressure levels. As a partial consequence, many amateur groups chose to practice music indoors, where walls provided more solid perceived boundaries and kept out at least some of the outdoor sound. Additionally, elderly groups often chose indoor spaces that gave a sense of social enclosure, including rooms within work units with which they had long-established connections.

Musical activity in the perceived space of Kaili was hindered by varieties of sound which come under the overarching term of noise. "Unwanted sound" is the most common definition of noise (see Schwartz 1973; Truax 1984; Bijsterveld 2008; Keizer 2010). A combination of factors can make for unwanted sound, most obviously sound intensity, but also repetition (Schwartz 1973: 144), judgements of taste (Picker 2003), social context (Bailey 2004; Keizer 2010) and historical context (Attali 1985). Simply labelling all hindrances to acoustic music-making in Kaili as noises would be to overlook the different social processes from which these sounds emanated, including the development of the built environment, the facilitation of private transport, and the promotion of dance as a healthy leisure activity. Thus, the high-decibel sounds that saturated public spaces and hindered live music included the piped music of dance groups and shops, as well as the more conventionally defined "noise" of heavy traffic and construction. Wanbo Square, in particular, was infamous in Kaili for the high levels of sound produced by its many dance groups. As one group

raised the volume of its piped music, another group would respond in kind, creating a vicious circle in the competition for acoustic space.

In this way, music could become noise. In twentieth-century contemporary art music, the creation of "noise-as-music" has featured as a deliberate process (Frith 2002: 37), described by Douglas Kahn (1999: 17–8) as the recuperation of selected noises into musical sound.[52] In Kaili, it was rather "music-as-noise" (Frith 2002: 37), that is, music became a potential source of annoyance because of the intensity of city life, as well as the unimportance of music in comparison with more economically productive activity. Beyond the thunderous piped music of Wanbo Square, even acoustic or partially amplified music was sometimes regarded as noise in Kaili, although this was the exception rather than the rule. In general, it was notable that sounds which I perceived as intrusive were often treated as background sound by long-term residents. Georg Simmel (1997 [1903]) famously argued that the city dweller becomes indifferent as a defence mechanism against the sensory onslaught of the metropolis. In fact, a small Chinese city such as Kaili presents a greater aural onslaught than many so-called global cities, where sound is more tightly regulated by noise pollution laws than during Simmel's era. The notion of "*renao*" (lit. "hot and noisy") to positively describe situations and places indicates that high sound pressure levels are relatively welcome in China. However, this must be balanced against recent reports of disputes in urban China between dancers in public spaces and nearby residents over the perception of piped music as noise (e.g. Cheng 2013: AL02; X. He 2013: A15; Xueying Li 2013: A08; Z. Shi and Xue 2013).

Although sound predominantly operates within the realm of the perceived, sometimes creating lived space, it can be also be realized as conceived space, in terms of both planning and branding. The former can be seen in Lilian Radovac's (2011) application of a Lefebvrian analysis to the anti-noise movement of 1930s New York. The invention of decibels, which measure sound intensity, allowed for the quantitative categorization of sound. This, in turn, allowed for the creation of noise maps, which brought noise into the realm of the conceived and made it more controllable (Radovac 2011: 739). In the conceived branded space of Kaili, as the homeland of 100 festivals, noise simply does not exist. This *yuanshengtai* place is comparable with the soundscape studies concept of an acoustic community, that is, "any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of inhabitants" (Truax 1984: 58). The ambient sound level of this acoustic community needs to be quiet enough for acoustic information to be successfully transmitted. This acoustic community did not exist in the perceived space of Kaili, but it did exist in the conceived space of *yuanshengtai* place, where a noise-free environment allows for the cultivation and transmission of acoustic folk music across the community. Thus, it has been claimed by some PRC scholars that the melodies of the *lusheng* can communicate information and transmit cultural knowledge through

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[52] Jazz and avant-garde classical musicians have deliberately incorporated noise into their music (Thompson 2002: 132–3), while futurist composers celebrated noise as a symbol of the mechanical age and the metropolis (Bijsterveld 2008: 139).

a system whereby musical pitches are phrased together to represent spoken sentences (e.g. F. Yang 1997: 31; J. Hu 1999). From this perspective, the branding of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals is more than the representation of musical activity, it is also the representation of an environment, whose pre-modern qualities facilitate the practice of unamplified *minzu* customs and also influence Kaili inhabitants' interpretations of their city (see chapter four).

Ethnicity and *minzu*

In the final section of this chapter, I conceptualize ethnicity as another process in the production of social space, and one which provides an important link between notions about music and the rural-urban divide, as found in the branding and discourse of Kaili. In comparison to aural processes, ethnicity may appear somewhat more concrete, especially in the context of China, where the official ethnic identity of each individual is fixed from the age of twenty years old.[53] However, Emily Honig (1992: 9) has already argued with reference to China for the conceptualization of ethnicity as a process. Literature outside of Chinese studies has also made a similar argument. Sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2004), for example, has suggested that ethnicity should be understood not as a concrete *group*, but as a cognitive *category*, as a process by which people classify themselves and others in order to make sense of the world. It is only a short step from this stress on the *process* of categorization to Hal Levine's (1999) idea of "ethnicity in people's heads". Although "devoid of the cultural markers and permanent psychological significance stressed in much of the ethnicity literature", ethnic categories are filled with meaning through social interaction and discourse (Levine 1999: 171, 174). These authors' understanding of ethnicity as a classificatory activity rather than a concrete group render it alignable with the theorization of space as a collection of intertwined spatial processes.

In linguistic terms, "ethnic group" translates into Chinese as "*zuqun*". However, this Taiwan-imported neologism is mainly confined to academia (M. Yang 2003: 7; Mullaney 2011: 132). Instead, textual sources and Kaili inhabitants referred to Miao, Dong and Han as categories of *minzu*. An earlier import from Japan, *minzu* is as ubiquitous as *zuqun* is specialist, with multiple meanings including "ethnicity", "nationality", "race", and "nation", according to context. Within the scope of this thesis, *minzu* mainly refers to a form of ethnicized nationality, whose historical development requires a brief summary in order to contextualize its usage in post-Mao Kaili.

The Miao, Dong and Han are three of 56 officially designated *minzu* in China, as defined by a top-down classification system nominally based on Stalinist theory. Stalin (1953 [1913]) defined a nationality according to two criteria: commonalities and mode of production. Firstly, a nationality should possess the "four commonalities", of language, territory, economic life, and psychological quality, with the latter manifested in a common culture (Stalin 1953: 304–7 [1913]). Secondly, a

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[53] See Scharping (2003: 154-5) for a brief summary of rules on the reclassification of *minzu* status.

nationality should have reached the capitalist mode of production. If a group had not yet reached this mode of production, it could only be considered a clan, tribe or tribal federation (Mullaney 2011: 11).

Although the *minzu* classification project in the early 1950s claimed this Stalinist definition as its guiding principle, the mode of production criterion was too divisive to be strictly implemented (Tapp 2001: 29–30). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had stressed China's multi-ethnic diversity in opposition to the mono-ethnic stance of the Nationalist Party during the 1930s (Mullaney 2011: 21). With a weak grip on some minority areas after the establishment of the PRC,[54] the CCP had no wish to alienate minority groups by categorizing them as backward clans or tribes (Tapp 2001: 29–30; B. Yang 2008: 20–3, 29). Additionally, the social scientists involved in the classification project conducted their investigations according to a linguistic approach which had been inherited from Republican-era ethnological practices (Mullaney 2011: chap. 2). As a consequence, not only was the mode of production criterion dropped, but the commonality of language was also elevated in importance above the other three commonalities. The project was additionally guided by administrative concerns; a previous attempt at categorization according to self-identification had yielded an unmanageable confusion of over 400 different *minzu* names (Mullaney 2011: 2, 32, 38–9). The classification project sought to rectify this problem by fusing together groups on the basis of their potential for becoming a single coherent *minzu,* rather than on the basis of existing realities (Mullaney 2011: 11–2).

Since the 1980s, Western academics have conducted extensive fieldwork among the various *minzu* groups designated by the classification project. Given the flexible and rushed manner in which the classification project had been conducted, many fieldworkers unsurprisingly discovered that identities on the ground differed markedly from official *minzu* categories (e.g. D. Y. H. Wu 1990; articles in Harrell 1995a; Harrell 2001). Consequently, the early literature often presented itself as a critique of the classification system. Anthropologist Norma Diamond, for example, argued that it was hard to see how *any* of Stalin's commonalities could be applied to the Miao, the demographically dominant *minzu* in Kaili municipality (1995: 92). However, as Thomas Mullaney (2011: 90) has more recently argued, such literature was unaware that the original classification teams had delineated groups according to their *potential* for being transformed into coherent *minzu* by the state, rather than existing realities. On these terms, anthropological fieldwork has actually confirmed the success of the classification project, through the identification of incidences of ethnogenesis (see D. Y. H. Wu 1990, Harrell 1995b: 30, 33), whereby people without obvious historical commonalties have nevertheless developed a common *minzu* identity.

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[54] See, for example, Jeremy Brown (2007) on the civil war that took place in Guizhou province (1950-1), with village militia groups and Nationalist units forcing complete CCP withdrawal from 28 counties in March 1950. This included the decision in April 1950 to temporarily abandon Kaili, where a "bandit" government – as described by the official local gazetteer – had been established earlier in the month (G. Xiong 1998: 20).

Beyond Western anthropological fieldwork, there has been a general revival of interest in minorities since the Cultural Revolution, with the establishment of new ethnology journals and institutions (Mueggler 2002: 8), increasing tourism to minority areas, and frequent exposure of minority cultural practices on official media channels, including documentaries and studio-based performances. However, the representation of minorities has been as double-edged as during the relatively tolerant 1950s, before the ideal of a "uniform socialist culture" led to the suppression of *minzu* diversity, particularly during the Cultural Revolution (Schein 1997: 71). On the one hand, televised singing competitions such as the *China Central Television Young Singer Competition* – discussed in chapter four – have celebrated the artistic qualities of minorities, with the near-mandatory assertion that non-Han *minzu* are "good at singing and dancing" (*nengge shangwu*). Similarly, the Kaili municipal government has drawn on such representations of minorities in its advertisement of the city as an ocean of song and dance. On the other hand, this celebration of minority culture has also constituted something of a backhanded compliment; minorities possess exotic folk culture, but only on account of their primitive closeness to nature and distance from civilization.

In his famous theorization of oriental orientalism, anthropologist Dru Gladney (1994) argued that representations of minorities are a means towards the end of constructing a modern, sophisticated and masculine Han nation, which can be better imagined in opposition to a primitive, sensual and feminine minority. Louisa Schein's (1997) theory of internal orientalism – although similar in name – was somewhat different, arguing that minorities were simultaneously represented as an important element within the Chinese nation *and* as a counterpoint to the Han nation. Thus, during the root-seeking movement of the 1980s, many intellectuals perceived a void in China's national identity, and consequently looked to minorities "as reservoirs of still-extant authenticity", which could help China culturally differentiate itself from imported foreign culture (Schein 1997: 72). While Gladney's 1994 article portrayed the minorities as powerless to oppose their representation, Schein and others (e.g. Baranovitch 2001; J. Chen 2008: 18) argued that minorities could exert some influence over their representation.

This academic focus on representation points to the fact that culture – intertwined with language – has become the most important marker of *minzu*. Despite understandably conservative interpretations of *minzu* during the early years of the post-Mao period (e.g. Fei 1980: 154–5; Jiang 1985), an essay (Xiong 1983) proposing the adoption of social customs as a fifth commonality better encapsulates the direction of post-Mao discourse, wherein *minzu* has come to denote *cultural*

ethnic groups rather than *political* nationalities.[55] Indeed, there has been a tendency for *minzu* to be translated as "ethnicity" rather than "nationality" in official language since the mid-1990s (Bulag 2003: 761; Bulag 2010: 442; Minglang Zhou 2010: 492).[56] Meanwhile, conceptualizations of culture have also parted from classical Marxism, so that culture has become an economic activity in itself, rather than a reflection of the economic base (J. Wang 2001b: 83). This has made the representation of minority culture a lucrative business. Since the 1980s, areas in southwest China have marketed themselves as destinations for *minzu* tourism. Such marketing has included efforts by local groups and governments to rebrand regional Han musical forms as minority forms (e.g. Oakes 1998: 143–4; Rees 2000), since minority folk culture is more marketable. Although Western backpackers have been attracted by *minzu* culture, the domestic tourist has become the main source of revenue for tourist destinations, thanks to increased mobility, disposable income and annual holidays, particularly for the emerging middle classes. Yet while certain conditions have facilitated *minzu* tourism, a place such as Kaili has focused on tourism out of necessity as much as choice; the market economy has rendered former industrial projects unsustainable, leaving *minzu* as the only significant resource which Kaili can utilize in order to compete with other cities for outside capital.

Language has continued to be an important marker of *minzu*, according to a conceived space of linguistic family trees, wherein the twigs of sub-*minzu* "dialects" stem from a *minzu* language branch, which itself exists within a larger multi-*minzu* language family.[57] Language is also intertwined with culture, as evidenced by the frequent assertion that groups such as the Miao and Dong communicate their histories through musical genres, since they lack written scripts. The focus on culture has also prompted many PRC academics to attempt to delineate unique, bounded musical cultures for the various *minzu* (Mu 1995: 114). This portrayal of culturally bounded *minzu* is not restricted to Han academics; ethnomusicologist Rachel Harris (2004: 53) has noted that minority musicologists and practitioners often regard cross-*minzu* studies of locality with suspicion, as a possible attack on their ethnic integrity. My own review of literature on the *lusheng*

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[55] See, for example, the changing position of Fei Xiaotong, twentieth-century China's most prominent social scientist, during his later years. His cautious 1980 text (cited above) presented the four commonalities as a guiding principle which simply required adaptation to national conditions. In contrast, he argued in a 1996 speech that the commonalities could only be used for reference, that psychological quality should be understood as ethnic consciousness, and that the commonality of economic life did not apply to Chinese conditions (B. Yang 2008: 53–4).

[56] Uradyn Bulag (2003: 761; 2010: 442) has claimed that this is a political move on the part of the Chinese government, since it would prefer to deal with *ethnicities* without separatist claims to nationhood, rather than *nationalities*. Thus, instead of 56 nationalities, there is one Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*), which consists of the Han majority and multiple ethnic minorities (*shaoshu minzu*) (Gorfinkel 2012: 100). Zhou Minglang (2010: 478–9, 488–91) has argued that this 'one-nation-with-diversity' model' (*duoyuan yiti*) was developed out of the belief that the multi-national model had played a major role in the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, and could create a similar crisis if maintained in the PRC.

[57] For a typical example, see ethnomusicologist Du Yaxiong's book on the music of Chinese minorities, with genres groups according to *minzu*, and *minzu* grouped according to language branches (*yuzu*) within language families (*yuxi*) (1993: 63–6).

has revealed a somewhat inconsistent attitude towards the assertion of mono-*minzu* cultures: a Guizhou CCP journal article has declared the *lusheng* a "visual marker" (*xingxiang biaozhi*) of the Miao (W. Yu 2009: 64); ethnomusicologist Deng Diao (2001: 19) has described the instrument as multi-*minzu*,[58] and a third writer has expressed both of these opinions in two different articles (F. Yang 1997: 26; F. Yang 2003: 1). There has therefore been a partial recognition that minority cultures have sometimes blurred into each other. In further illustration of this point, the branding of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals has principally stressed Miao cultural practices, but it has also occasionally incorporated Dong imagery, since Kaili is the capital of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture.

Another form of conceived space concentrates minorities together in remote and rural regions, far away from the urbanized, coastal regions. When I have described my research to Chinese friends from big cities, mention of minorities has always produced the assumption that I must be studying a rural area. Indeed, Kaili acquaintances often complained to me during fieldwork that coastal urbanites assumed Guizhou province to be just one big village. This assumption of rurality is essential to the promotion of Kaili as an authentic *minzu* destination. Uradyn Bulag (2002: 202) has noted that "cities are not supposed to be ethnic", and pointed to the absence of the word "city" in the legal definition of China's autonomous *minzu* areas. It is perhaps more that cities destroy the ethnic, according to the belief of fieldwork acquaintances that prolonged exposure to modernization and urbanization leads to sinicization, including the adoption of Mandarin and the loss of cultural traits. Consequently, Kaili has attempted to reduce the evidence of its urbanization by branding rural *minzu* practices on to new public spaces.

A conceived boundary therefore confines minority place to the realm of the rural. However, in terms of perceived space, the boundaries have become increasingly blurred. Whereas Kaili was relatively inaccessible in the 1950s,[59] it has since become increasingly well connected with the rest of China, allowing the inward movement of tourists and outward movement of minorities seeking employment in the big cities. Despite these developments, the conceived boundary remains for a number of reasons, as suggested by both academic literature and fieldwork participants. Firstly, anthropologist Jenny Chio (2011: 60) has claimed that state tourism discourse has conceptualized the rural as "the ideal periphery, a desirable and attractive 'decorative edge' to the modern, contemporary Chinese nation". Such discourse has characterized the rural as distant in order to

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[58] The description of *lusheng* as multi-*minzu* is most accurate; a variety of groups in southwest China play the instrument, although there are differences in *lusheng* types between and across *minzu*.
[59] One elderly interviewee recalled how he would travel from his home to school in Kaili by a combination of boat and foot (Interview 22 June 2013).

encourage tourism, and also impacted upon perceived space, through the beautification of villages in accordance with the assumed desires of urban tourists (Chio 2011: 61, 72).[60]

Secondly, there is the widespread assumption that a person's place of origin is more important than current location in determining identity. One fieldwork acquaintance, for example, declared that one's family must have dwelt in a place for five generations before regional identity could be claimed. Studies of urban migrancy have similarly shown how newcomers have been marked by long-term residents almost as ethnic groups, according to their place of origin (Honig 1992: xii–xiii; Solinger 1995: 120–1; L. Zhang 2002: 19–20). Indeed, such is the negativity attached to the floating population that the word "hooligan" (*liumang*) is etymologically linked to the outsider, according to Michael Dutton (1998: 62). Seemingly, individuals' identities remain locked into place even after their bodies have departed.

And yet thirdly, there was the opposing belief in Kaili, explored in chapter four, that urbanization rapidly produces sinicized minorities. In contrast to its branded image, Kaili was one such site of urbanization, and the home of citizens who frequently proclaimed their lack of *minzu*, describing themselves as "fake Miao" (*jia* Miao), or "fake Dong". Even if they had been born in the surrounding villages, citizens argued that growing to adulthood within an urban environment had resulted in their failure to maintain the language and cultural customs of their official *minzu*. Long-term Kaili residents further asserted that those minorities who had remained in the rural counties continued to engage in *yuanshengtai* practices, including folk music; these "real" minorities were confined to the rural by conceived boundaries. [61]

As Louisa Schein (2001: 229) has noted, *minzu* needs to be considered alongside other "intersecting forms of difference". After place of origin, the other form of difference considered in this thesis is generation. While amateur musicians in Kaili often defined themselves *en masse* against the peasants of surrounding counties, as fake versus real minorities, there was also internal differentiation along generational lines. In particular, retiree groups stressed the collective and technical nature of their singing practices, in contrast to the perceived sentimental lyrics and untrained voices of the younger generation. As I argue in chapter six, this generational discourse was another example of official discourse becoming blurred, as Maoist ideas about the political importance of artistic practices mingled with a post-Mao discourse of art as inconsequential entertainment, reinforcing generational differences.

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[60] During a visit to Longtouhe village in 2013, I was surprised to see that all of the houses had an apparently wooden exterior, in comparison to their previous white painted appearance. According to Older Sister Yang, whose house I was visiting, this transformation had been enacted by the prefectural government, who had simply *painted* over the old exteriors in a wood-like colour.
[61] Bearing resemblance to this claimed fragility of rural minority customs, Connell and Gibson (2003: 36) have noted how the migration of people and instruments became seen as a threat to the purity of rural folk musics following the commencement of the Industrial Revolution and global capitalism. In contrast, Iain Chambers' (1985: 119-20) description of the mythology of the male country singer bears comparison with the importance attached to place of origin in determining identity; the singer has experienced the city and its vices but remains loyal to simple rural virtues.

This section on *minzu* concludes a chapter which has established the keywords of this thesis and their relationship with each other. I have defined space as a collection of interwoven processes – including music, sound and ethnicity – which concentrate together at certain points to create congealed space, or place. While arguing for Lefebvre's spatial triad as the most applicable theory for the study of a small city, I have also noted the bifurcation of conceived space in recent decades, so that abstract, planned space exists alongside a more malleable branded space. These two types of conceived space are considered alongside each other in the following chapter. I have also attempted to reconcile older notions of bounded place with more radical theorizations of porous place, by arguing for the theorization of different kinds of boundaries, as generated from the spatial triad. Finally, I have argued for the need to study music in terms of its relationship with other spatial processes, including non-musical sounds and visual representations of sound.

Chapter Three: A Spatial History of the Rural, the Industrial and the Urban in Kaili

In October 2002, Kaili prepared for its fourth annual China-Guizhou-Kaili International Lusheng Festival. As I leafed through back issues of the *Kaili Evening News* and the *Qiandongnan Daily*, an article promoting the event caught my attention. It announced that the organization of the festival would be based on the concept of "government leadership, social participation, and market operation" (*zhengfu zhudao, shehui canyu, shichang yunzuo*) (*Kaili wanbao* 2002c:1). Social participation meant that local citizens were to "adopt the mindset of hosts" (*quanshi renmin dou yao shuli dongdaozhu de sixiang*) for this tourism-oriented event. The inhabitants of Kaili were to act hospitably towards guests, provide good service, and remember the city slogan that "every person constitutes a [part of the] tourist image, and the investment environment is all around" (*renren dou shi lüyou xingxiang, chuchu dou shi touzi huanjing*). With only a passing reference to the musical and artistic elements of the festival, the article described the festival as a "brand" (*pinpai*) which would contribute to the economic development of Kaili, "the pearl of the Miao Mountains" (*Miaoling mingzhu*) (*Kaili wanbao* 2002c:1).

This article is but one example of the local government's recent obsession with Kaili's city image. Less than fifty years ago, workers were sent into the Kaili area to establish the industrial Third Front project and produce military equipment for the good of the socialist nation. By the arrival of the new century, the dilapidated factories were being demolished to make way for luxury apartments and holiday villas, and citizens were expected to contribute to the production of an image for the good of the city. In particular, they could help foster a good city image through "civilized" (*wenming*) behaviour on the streets and in new public spaces.[62] With their *minzu* motifs, these public spaces were designed not only to accommodate leisure activities, but also to complement tourism-oriented spectacles and contribute to the image of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals. Along with other post-Mao cities, Kaili was being packaged as a commodity, while the specific form of this commodity was produced through the alignment of local *minzu* resources with the national discourse of ethnic exoticism, characterized by Louisa Schein (2000) as internal orientalism.

This chapter historically contextualizes the branding of Kaili, by describing how a scattered collection of rural, industrial and administrative-urban spaces have fused to form a city which has marketed itself in recent years through the promotion of the rural and the elision of the industrial. Relying on local textual material supplemented by informal and unstructured interviews, it charts the demise of the industrial Third Front project and the rise of the tourist city, as well the accompanying shift in priorities from the production of industrial goods for the central government to the production of a city image for consumption by tourists and investors. This chapter also

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[62] See the sixth section of this chapter, *The civilized city*, for a description of the connotations found in the word "civilized".

examines the spatial and functional reconfiguration of leisure activity which has occurred alongside these changes. Whereas the scope of leisure was spatially and politically confined by enclosed work units during the Mao era, the intertwined ideologies of urbanism and consumerism have loosened the former moral controls over leisure while simultaneously marshalling it into specific public spaces. While acknowledging that leisure has also moved into the private home (Latham 2007: 236), this chapter concentrates mainly on outdoor public spaces, which I argue have facilitated both leisure activity and city branding. The municipal government has mainly regulated these spaces according to visual considerations, as befits a branding strategy which has focused on images rather than sounds, despite frequent references to musical practices. Meanwhile, the intensity of city life has produced compressed public spaces saturated with sound, where acoustic folk activity was practically impossible, and where citizens had more interest in line dancing than *yuanshengtai*. The musical activity which did feature in the city during my fieldwork had to either amplify or seek out less visible indoor locations. As described in chapters five and six, some of this hidden musical activity was located in the administrative and industrial spaces of work units, while the folk music of rural space was mobilized to sell the city.

In terms of the spatial triad, this chapter is primarily concerned with the relationship between conceived planned space, conceived branded space, and perceived space. I describe here the social and historical construction of a cohesive city, whose internal relations have taken form as the perceived and conceived boundaries of former spaces have broken down. Recalling the basic qualities of space outlined in chapter two, both this and subsequent chapters consider the social construction of space. Moreover, this chapter addresses two further qualities: the imbuement of space with time, and the internal relations that have produced the city space of contemporary Kaili. *Minzu* emerges here as a process in the production of conceived branded space, where it has fused with minority-associated musical practices to construct the city image of the homeland of 100 festivals. The chapter also examines the historical development of music in the perceived spaces of Kaili, and the impact of the contemporary soundscape on music-making. The historical soundscapes of spaces in Kaili are sadly beyond the scope of this thesis.

This chapter also takes up the development of the city through the lens of Lefebvre's history of rural, industrial and urban space, as found in *The Urban Revolution* (2003 [1970]). In this schema, agriculture produces heterogeneous, unplanned spaces, before partially succumbing to planned and measurable industrial space (2003: 125–6 [1970]).[63] Finally, urban space emerges as the dominant force in a society, constituting a space which is simultaneously whole and fragmented (2003: 37 [1970]). Literature on socialist cities has argued that some achieved industrialization without the same density and size of urban population that occurred in the cities of capitalist societies (Szelényi

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[63] Lefebvre's rural space is a somewhat nostalgic interpretation of space in the pre-modern state. With the onset of modernity, these rural spaces are permeated by the planned logic of industrial space. For example, collective periods of agriculture during the Mao era produced organized and planned rural spaces.

1996: 294–99; F. Wu 2009: 420–1). Whereas countries such as Poland and Hungary experienced slow rates of urbanization, China even went through a short period of "zero-urban population growth" during the Mao era (Szelényi 1996: 287, 297).[64] In contrast, the post-Mao period has witnessed a strategic and ideological shift from industrialism to urbanism, particularly from the mid-2000s onwards (Hsing 2010: 18). Urban space has subsequently become dominant, superimposing itself on both rural and industrial space. However, recalling the theorization of space in chapter two – as an interwoven collection of temporal strands – rural and industrial forms have continued to exert an influence on urban society, as spaces which are buried but not dead. While Kaili has needed to rely on representations of rural folk music to sustain its economy in a competitive market, the leisure practices of administrative and industrial work units have continued to permeate the city, even after the perceived spaces of these work units have disappeared.

Figure 3.1: An abandoned Third Front work unit behind the *minzu* walls which flank some of Kaili's roads (fieldwork photo 2013).

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[64] It should be emphasized that the period of zero-urban population growth was short-lived, and that the Mao era cannot be understood as an anti-urban era. According to geographer Kam Wing Chan, the urban population grew during the 1950s and exploded during the Great Leap Forward, before subsequently declining in the early 1960s, as urban migrants were returned to their villages. During the Cultural Revolution, urban growth was sluggish, before gathering pace in the post-Mao era (Chan 1994: 37–48). Lacking access to data, earlier scholars of China were unable to properly scrutinize the details behind the anti-urban rhetoric of the Mao era (Chan 1994: 2–4); urban population growth was restrained by the household registration system, but this same system rendered cities "privileged spaces" (Brown 2012: 2), shutting out an agricultural population who lacked access to the goods and subsidies upon which the non-agricultural population relied for survival in the city. However, the privileging of the urban which occurred during the Mao era occurred in spite of an ideological desire to erase the difference between city and countryside, whereas more overt government promotion of the urban has occurred during the post-Mao era.

Of administrative-urban, industrial and rural spaces

Local books and newspaper articles have over a number of decades described Kaili as an "up-and-coming industrial city" (*xinxing gongye chengshi*) (e.g. QMDZGB 1986: 7; G. Xiong 1987: 1; *Kaili wanbao* 2002b: 1; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2002b: 1), even persisting with this tag after most of the original factories had come and gone.[65] The Kaili that I encountered would be better described as a mutant strain of the post-industrial city, following its transformation from a scattered collection of rural, industrial and administrative-urban spaces into a cohesive tourist city. However, even this Kaili could be called "up-and-coming" in the sense that it was still a new city. Until the establishment of the PRC, Kaili was never more than a sub-county district (G. Xiong 1998: 3–8; Z. Li 2005: 129). In the second year of the PRC, when military groups described by the local gazetteer as bandits, counter-revolutionaries and Nationalist remnants threatened the area, Kaili was abandoned in order to concentrate on a more important county town (G. Xiong 1998: 20). After the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture was established in April 1956, this new administrative unit was initially centred on the town of Zhenyuan, while Kaili remained an insignificant settlement, of only around 0.3 km^2 in size (Wen 2009: 4). For reasons that are not entirely clear,[66] Kaili was subsequently plucked out of obscurity and declared the prefectural capital in July 1956, and the administrative organs of government were relocated there in 1958 (G. Xiong 1998: 27–9; Li Ruiqi 2001: 111). In the words of one local account, "From this point on, a small unknown town became the prefecture's political, economic and cultural capital" (Tongquan Yang 1994: 200).

The population of Kaili started from a tiny base of just 9,915 in 1949, and was still just 29,176 in 1964 (G. Xiong 1987: 34).[67] In their planning of the new capital's conceived space, the authorities decided to construct a "Kaili new town" on the flat land to the south of hilly Old Street, with the new Dashizi intersection to function as its infrastructural heart (G. Xiong 1987: 109; G.

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[65] I mentioned the tendency of interviewees to fall back on clichés in chapter one. Although hardly under the same temporal pressures, the writers of gazetteers and newspaper articles have needed to be careful about what they write, and this has encouraged a cut-and-paste approach to textual creation, so that clichéd descriptions such as "up-and-coming industrial city" have persisted long after they ceased to align with perceived space. To an extent, the same thing has happened with the "homeland of 100 festivals" moniker in more recent years, with the major difference that the local government has attempted to reinforce this brand in perceived space through the construction of *minzu* public spaces and the organization of *minzu* festivals.

[66] The textual data has not explained why Kaili became the new prefectural capital. Long-term residents argued, quite plausibly, that Kaili was a more appropriate capital than Zhenyuan, since it had a greater proportion of minority inhabitants and had more flat land for future expansion. The municipal gazetteer also described a fair amount of revolutionary activity and organization in 1930s Kaili (G. Xiong 1998: 8–17), while a more recent article declared the city's intent to declare itself an old revolutionary area (*geming laoqu*), as the first place in Qiandongnan to establish a communist organization (M. Li 2013: 5). The designation of Kaili's capital status may have been a reward for early commitment to the communist cause.

[67] These are the official local statistics. On the basis of interviews with Kaili residents, geographer Wu Jiaping (2014 and personal communication) has estimated that the population of the old town was just 2000 in 1953. One of my interviewees stated that the population could not have been more than 10,000 in 1958, when he came over to Kaili with the prefectural forestry bureau (Interview: 23 June 2013), while a *People's Daily* article put the 1956 population of the town at just 4,000 people, prior to the arrival of some 2,000 construction workers to build the new prefectural capital (Yangshen Liu 1956: 2).

Xiong 1998: 717). Plans were continually adjusted, in 1958 (the year that prefectural organs were relocated to Kaili), 1964 (just before the relocation of factories for the Third Front) and then multiple times during the reform era (G. Xiong 1998: 718; Wen 2009: 4). The ambitions of conceived planned space outstripped reality; the 1956 plan for a city area of 4km^2 was scaled up to 9km^2 (1958), 12 km^2 (1964), and 31.1km^2 (1985), yet urban Kaili only covered an area of 7.4km^2 by the end of the 1980s (Wen 2009: 4). Despite adjustments to the scope of planning, Dashizi remained the central reference point right up until the early 2000s. The establishment of the prefectural capital thus led to the creation of a slowly expanding administrative-urban centre around Dashizi, which included local branches of central ministries, the prefectural hospital, teaching colleges, the labour union building, the prefectural assembly hall, and the mass meeting arena, as well as various other administrative and cultural work units.

One article in the *Qiandongnan Daily* has divided the development of Kaili into four temporal phases: initial construction (1949-78), readjustment and resumption (1978-90), gradual development (1990-2000), and high-speed development (2000-present) (Wen 2009: 4). This outline functions well as a description of the post-Mao era, in highlighting the period of intense urbanization which occurred during the 2000s. However, it overlooks the construction of industrial space during the era of the Third Front, an immense national project which marked the next stage of Kaili's development after its designation as prefectural capital.[68] Another *Qiandongnan Daily* article, penned by Wang Taiqi, a member of the municipal China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (*shi wenlian*), has more accurately divided Kaili's modern development into two eras: a 22-year period from the establishment of the prefecture on through the Third Front era (1956-78), and a 25-year period from the Third Plenary of the 11th Central Committee to the time of his article (1978-2003) (T. Wang 2004c: 3). This division captures the initial development of Kaili as a collection of administrative, industrial, and rural sites, and its later transformation into a close-knit city sustained by the marketing of rural customs.

The Third Front project exerted a seismic influence on Kaili and wider Guizhou province, the effects of which continue to reverberate to this day, in spite of the fact that its legacy has been almost entirely ignored in the branding of the city. The Third Front was a hugely ambitious and expensive military project instigated as a result of China's international isolation during the complicated 1960s phase of the Cold War, which saw an escalation in tensions between China and not only the United States but also the Soviet Union (Naughton 1988: 352–3).[69] The majority of

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[68] As with so many state-sanctioned local and national histories of the PRC, this temporal framework conveys a theme of near-continuous progress, with the post-Mao era compared positively to the Maoist era, which itself saw the establishment of a "New China" and the end of a chaotic, insignificant Kaili. This temporal framework overlooks the distinctive stages of the Mao era, from New Democracy to Third Front and Cultural Revolution, reducing their differences to "initial construction".

[69] According to historian Lorenz Lüthi (2008: 27, 30), the initial phase (1964-6) of Third Front construction was mainly motivated by the fear of US invasion, while a second period of construction (1969-71) occurred in the wake of the 1969 Sino-Soviet border clash.

China's industry at that time was located either in the northeast or along the eastern coast, and was therefore vulnerable to close-range enemy strikes from land and sea. The proposed solution to this vulnerability was the construction from scratch of a defendable industrial zone within the inaccessible inland regions, particularly Sichuan and Guizhou provinces. This zone was called the Third Front, and consisted of scattered "rusticated factories" (Naughton 1988: 383), which were connected through the arduous construction of transport links across mountainous terrain.

Following the issue of a 1965 central directive to "make great efforts to construct the Third Front" (*zhuahao Sanxian jianshe*), ten central-run industrial enterprises (*zhongyang changkuang*) and their workers were relocated to the Kaili area from Beijing, Chengdu and other major cities (Gu 1989:264; ZQZDY and QRS 2009:5). These factories came under the auspices of the 083 military base of the No.4 Department of Mechanized Industry, the department responsible for the production of electronics within the Ministry of Defence (Sun 2007: 1; Helen Wang 2008: 121). The facilities of this base were distributed across Kaili and Duyun, the capital of neighbouring Qiannan Buyi and Miao autonomous prefecture, with the base headquarters in Duyun and a sub-branch in Kaili. Although the Kaili sub-branch was located within the administrative-urban space of Dashizi, the stress on defensibility meant that the factories were distributed far and wide. The 083 military base was connected with the wider Third Front zone by the completion of a railroad in 1972, which spurred the development of local-run factories, with new industrial spaces still appearing in the early 1980s (Gu 1989: 7, 259; J. Ni 1997: 3).

The Third Front probably could not have been sustained even by the continuation of a planned economy, and was certainly incapable of surviving the marketization of the post-Mao era, which saw a shift in industry from inland to the east coast during the 1980s (Vogel 2011: 431).[70] At the end of the 1970s, the military began to produce and sell civilian products, but many Third Front factories were unable to adapt to this market-oriented policy, since they lacked connections with the rapidly developing markets of coastal China (Tingzhai Yang 1992: 4). In the early 1980s, semi-privatization occurred, as the 083 military base became a share-holding company and relocated to Guiyang (Yang 1992:4; Sun 2007:1; ZQZDY and QRS 2009:5). Many of the 083 factories moved

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[70] This geographical shift of industry partly occurred because China's leadership was no longer preoccupied by the threat of foreign invasion (Vogel 2011: 431). It was also hastened by the establishment of Special Economic Zones and Open Port cities in the coastal region. According to the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-90), the east would focus on industry, technology, consumer goods, and foreign trade; the central region would serve as the national energy reservoir; and the west would develop agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and transport (Gittings 2005: 218–9). With the establishment of the Special Economic Zones, it was explicitly acknowledged by Deng Xiaoping that some regions could get rich first (X. Deng 1993: 52 [1984]), and the post-Mao era subsequently saw increasing disparities between coastal and inland regions. The Great Western Development Project, launched in the late-1990s, has attempted to address these disparities, by promoting the development of tourism in inland areas, as well as encouraging those coastal cities which got rich first to contribute to late developers such as Kaili (Oakes and Schein 2005: 8; Su and Teo 2009: 2).

to Guiyang,[71] but the relocation process was a protracted one, and the original factory spaces continuing to operate in diminished form around Kaili throughout the 1980s and 1990s. One former Third Front factory, 262, went bankrupt, while local-run factories were also unable to compete in the marketplace, and a number of scandals arose as the result of land sell-offs to private investors.[72] By the time of my fieldwork, most of the factories had either been demolished or lay in ruins. However, as chapter five argues, their presence continued to resonate, as providers of place names within a city of subsumed industrial spaces.

The Third Front factories and local-run factories initially constituted relatively independent settlements, which were mostly located at a distance of around five to ten kilometres from the centre of Kaili (Z. Li 2005: 142). These factories combined work, rest and leisure into one enclosed space. Architectural theorist Duanfang Lu (2006: 33–4) has described Maoist work units as socialist versions of the 19th-century US company town, following adoption and modification of this conceived planned space by the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Each of the large factory units around Kaili had its own accommodation, nursery, school, and medical facility, while some even had libraries and swimming pools. Of particular note for this thesis, many of these industrial spaces possessed "cultural clubs" (*wenhua julebu*) and flood-lit outdoor courts, where leisure activity could take place (Z. Li 2005: 142–7). With the exception of married couples who worked at different work units, most employees had few occasions, or permission, to leave the compressed space of the work unit and interact with the wider environment. This was especially the case for Third Front factories, which were deliberately built in remote areas for reasons of military secrecy.[73]

At the end of the Mao era, these Third Front factories and local-run factories existed alongside urban and rural spaces. Beyond the administrative-urban space of Dashizi, examples of rural space included the Old Street area, and the villages of Longtouhe and Jinjing, located to the west and south of Dashizi respectively. Older Sister Yang, a middle-aged Longtouhe resident, recalled that there were six brigades (*dadui*), which together constituted "The East is Red" agricultural commune of Kaili county (Interview: 4 May 2012). Her mention of "Kaili county" also highlighted that Kaili had yet to be designated a city at the end of the 1970s; it was only in 1984 that the county

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[71] The central government also encouraged Third Front work units to "open a window" in Special Economic Zones and coastal cities during the early market reforms (Tingzhai Yang 1992: 4), providing a direct example of how industry shifted from west to east during the post-Mao period.

[72] See, for example, an extremely frank online article about the bankruptcy of 262 factory in 1995 (Sun 2007). The factory's land was sold cheaply to private investors who used the space to build and sell commercial housing. The article includes the heartbreaking question of an 80-year old worker directed at the leaders appointed to deal with the factory's closure: "Can it be that the efforts of our generation for the nation's Third Front were simply wasted efforts?" (Sun 2007: 1).

[73] Two movies directed by Wang Xiaoshuai, *11 Flowers* (*Wo shiyi*) and *Shanghai Dreams* (*Qinghong*), have depicted the lives of workers in Guizhou Third-Front factories, during the 1970s and the 1980s respectively. Interestingly, numerous English-language reviews of *11 Flowers* have understood the work unit featured in the film to be a village, when it is actually an example of rusticated industrial space.

became a municipality (G. Xiong 1998: 45), along with a wave of similar transformations across China during the mid-1980s (Chan 1994: 26–7). According to local statistics, as well as the standard requirements for counties wishing to acquire municipal status,[74] the population of the urban centre had surpassed 100,000 by the time of this administrative transformation (QMDZGB 1986: 7). However, changes to rules regarding the bestowal of municipal status meant that the boundaries of new municipalities encompassed the entire county areas that they replaced, rather than just an urban core (Chan 1994: 26). As a consequence, Kaili municipality included not only the administrative-urban centre of Dashizi, but also the surrounding jumble of rural and industrial spaces. Despite pockets of intensity, the municipality as a whole lacked the intensity and concentration of life, time and space that constitutes a city (Pile 1999), even a small socialist city. It also lacked certain elements that have become essential to the contemporary Chinese city, including a recognizable city image, developed transportation network, spectacular architecture and multiple public spaces.[75]

The small urban centre of Kaili eventually expanded to consume older rural and industrial spaces, and become a substantial city.[76] However, until the mid-1990s, there was a relative lack of infrastructural connections between the various spaces that came to constitute the city. Kaili did not have anything remotely resembling a comprehensive public transport network during the 1970s and 1980s, with 14 buses operating on seven routes in 1977 and 27 buses on eight routes in 1984 (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2009b: 8). Factory workers were therefore reliant on the occasional shuttle buses of their work units if they wished to travel into the administrative-urban centre. Xinyun (208) factory had a bus running to the centre four times a day during the early post-Mao years (Z. Li 2005: 43). Mother Xu, a former worker at the local-run cotton mill (*mianfang chang*), recalled that their work unit had a shuttle bus into the centre, but she rarely went, since there was not much to do there. Nevertheless, the cotton mill's shuttle bus was a source of admiration for others, who had to rely on bike or foot if they wanted to get around. Older Sister Yang of Longtouhe village joked that her main mode of transportation was Bus No. 11 (i.e. walking) during her youth in the 1980s, whether for attending school or leisure events at local-run factories, such as the glass factory (*boli chang*) to the south of her village (Interview: 4 May 2012).

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[74] To be more precise, the 1980s regulations stated that the urban centre of a county should possess a non-agricultural population of more than 100,000 in order to qualify for municipal status. However, this and other requirements could potentially be waived for the political capitals of autonomous prefectures (Chan 1994: 156-7).

[75] Paradoxically, many post-Mao cities have achieved greater cohesion of infrastructure and image only to re-fragment into districts demarcated by differences of income and occupation.

[76] There is still some way to go before the entire municipality is completely urbanized, in the sense of being covered by a close-knit built infrastructure. In terms of branding, the surrounding rural belt has already been closely tied to the urban centre through a process described in chapter four, whereby the centre is substituted for the periphery in the representation of Kaili (municipality) as the homeland of 100 festivals. However, while former rural spaces have already been swallowed to create the existing city of Kaili, the urban built environment cannot expand indefinitely, or there will be no villages left to produce *yuanshengtai* imagery; urban *minzu* spaces by themselves are insufficient for the construction of a convincing *yuanshengtai* brand.

Attending leisure events at the Third Front factories would have been hindered not only by poor transport links but also by the fact that these were secret military work units which were not accessible without good reason. I once joked with Wang Dewen, the *erhu* player of Apple Hill Park, that I wouldn't have been allowed into Kaili during the days of the Third Front; he laughed, never mind you, *we* weren't allowed into the factories! He also talked of a certain social distance between the new Third Front workers and locals; the former hailed from wealthier areas of China, and Teacher Wang felt that they looked down on the locals. I received a similar impression of social distance from Yao Ling, who was raised in Shandong, but sent to work at Factory 262 as a translator in 1967. Still speaking in a thick northern accent, he recalled that Kaili was very "backward" (*luohuo*) when he first arrived. He said that the Han had been sent to help the area catch up, since it was bad for the nation's stability if there were wealth gaps between regions and *minzu*. He further recalled how it was difficult to get the minorities to adapt to factory work, since they were not willing to take off their traditional costumes for fear of being branded traitors by their fellow *minzu*. This was a potential safety hazard, Yao Ling told me, so they were sent to the big cities for training.

These reminiscences convey a sense of differentiation according to place of origin, *minzu*, and work-unit status. Wang Taiqi (2004c: 3) – of the municipal China Federation of Literary and Art Circles – wrote that local inhabitants initially regarded the secretive factories and mines with a sense of awe, and did not know what they were producing. The factories workers were visually and aurally marked by their blue clothing, non-local accents, and *en masse* arrival by shuttle bus at the central market, where they attracted further admiration (and envy) by not bargaining for vegetables. However, Wang added that this clash of industrial civilization (*gongye wenming*) and agricultural civilization (*nonggeng wenming*) led to the production of a new and less isolated Kaili (2004c: 3).

The emergence of a large and cohesive city was therefore hindered until well into the post-Mao era by minimal urban infrastructure, the spatial enclosure of work units, and social difference. Before urban space became dominant and appropriated the folk music of rural space for the branding of Kaili, there were two spatial trajectories of amateur music frequently mentioned within local textual sources. The first trajectory was the performance of political songs which occurred within and across work units, while the second consisted of *lusheng* playing and folk singing in outdoor spaces, with both of these trajectories overlapping somewhat within the administrative-urban centre of Kaili. These trajectories have continued to exist within the contemporary city, but within different elements of the triad. Whereas the politically-oriented singing of the industrial work unit has continued within perceived space in the activities of retirees and middle-aged amateurs, as well as official functions for the promotion of the nation, the conceived branded space of Kaili has stressed folk practices which rarely occurred within the city itself during my fieldwork.

Musical activity in the proto-city of Kaili

There is ample documentation in official gazetteers and newspapers of amateur singing activity within and across the work units of Kaili during the Mao and early post-Mao eras, with the municipal labour union building (*shi gonghui*), the prefectural assembly hall (*zhou dalitang*) and other indoor spaces around Dashizi having served as the key sites for such activity. The organization of such activity offered controlled opportunities for leisure activity, which typically consisted of multiple work units sending troupes to compete or perform in recognition of a politically important occasion. To list a couple of early examples, the Kaili area organized eighteen revolutionary singing contests in 1964 involving over 30 work units and 3000 participants (G. Xiong 1998: 1022). Throughout the 1960s, there was a wider Qiandongnan amateur art-and-literature competition; the gazetteer of the municipal labour union briefly described Kaili's entry into this competition in 1969, when a dance act was selected ahead of Peking opera and ballet to represent the prefectural capital (KSZG 1995: 135). There is more extensive evidence of musical activity within and across work units in the 1980s and 1990s, including the following sample: a New Year's performance by the workers of the prefectural hospital (Peng 1985: 4); a Spring Festival singing competition at the school of Xinyun (208) factory (Zhanhua Zhou 1987: 2); an inter-factory singing contest for International Labour Day, including a song about the qualities of glass from the glass factory (X. Lu 1989b: 1); a singing competition to mark the 70th anniversary of the CCP (Xu and Wang 1991: 1); and a singing competition of revolutionary songs for middle-school students at Kaili Transport Company (Z. Liu 1992: 4).

Figure 3.2: A choral competition organized by the prefectural labour union (ZZG and Xu 1996:3)

This was generally art for overt political purposes, in accordance with Mao Zedong's (1972 [1942]) famous assertion that art and literature should be utilized to provide ideological education for the masses. Whereas *yuanshengtai* at least appears on the surface as light-hearted – albeit authentic – entertainment, music in the socialist mode of musical production was a matter of more obvious ideological importance. One entertaining example of the importance of such performances has been described by Wu Zhongde (2009), a former employee at the power plant, in a recollection piece written for the online *China Power News Network* (*Zhongguo dianli xinwen wang*). Mr Wu was hanging around the basketball court of his work unit one evening in 1970, when his boss asked him to go into Kaili and attend an performance with him. Taking place at the prefectural hall, the performance was organized by the 083 military base, on account of the presence of the head of the No.4 Department of Mechanized Industry in Kaili. Given the importance of the occasion, the head of 083 had called over the power plant workers, since he was worried about the possibility of an electricity cut, a frequent phenomenon in Kaili at that time. In the event, several cuts occurred during the performance. A month later, the Guizhou military district of the People's Liberation Army announced that the power plant would henceforth be subject to military supervision. As Wu Zhongde noted, the two incidences were perhaps not unconnected!

Inter-work unit events of this kind were organized by various administrative or artistic work units, such as the municipal labour union, the municipal cultural bureau, the prefectural mass art centre, and the municipal China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. I interviewed two octogenarian members of the latter organization, Yang Guoren and Wang Chengzu, who throughout their careers had organized various musical and other artistic events, usually at the prefectural assembly hall. The organization of such events consumed valuable resources, so generally only occurred a handful of times each year, to mark important political and festive dates. Attendance was limited to about 1000 people by the capacity of the assembly hall, while the municipal labour union building was even smaller. Tickets were distributed throughout the various work units rather than sold, rendering them difficult to procure for individuals who lived and were employed outside of industrial and administrative-urban space. Yang Guoren also stressed that Third Front workers rarely came to the centre, instead holding activities in their own work units (Interview: 17 June 2013).

Mother Xu of the cotton mill recalled the lack of space for performers at the prefectural assembly hall during multi-troupe performances in the early post-Mao era; each troupe entered the building only to perform its part of the programme, and had to leave immediately afterwards. She also recalled that such events only took place two or three times a year, usually to mark National Day, International Labour Day, and the anniversary of the CCP. Mother Xu was a member of the cotton mill's labour union, and therefore involved in the selection of personnel for the troupe. Since the events were usually competitive, the reputation of the factory was at stake, and so the best singers and dancers were repeatedly selected for each performance. Musical activity within the

space of the cotton mill itself was primarily conducted in order to prepare for upcoming performances at the prefectural assembly hall.

Although amateur, these musical activities were hardly trivial; they were competitive events which marked symbolic dates, and operated within the context of a state discourse which had definite views about leisure as well as art. As indicated above, art and literature were conceptualized as tools for teaching the masses. However, they were also valued for the moral purpose of channelling the leisure time of workers, so that they might not be distracted by "unhealthy" forms of entertainment, particularly activities which facilitated gambling. Leisure time was a potentially problematic time, which needed to be filled with appropriate activities, preferably occurring within the work unit where they could be easily monitored.[77] Local newspaper articles thus noted with approval the efforts of work units to improve the cultural lives of their workers through the organization of artistic events (e.g. KZZ and Yang 1990: 2; *Qiandongnan ribao* 1990: 1; X. Yang 1995: 3). The term used to describe such activities, "*yeyu*", is usually translated as "amateur", but a closer translation might be "after hours", or "after work". In contrast to the recent swing towards consumption as an economic and cultural tool, "after hours" activities were subservient to the productive activities of work hours; one article simply referred to "the time outside of the eight-hour work day" (*ba xiaoshi zhiwai de shijian*) (*Qiandongnan ribao* 1990: 1). Indeed, artistic activities even constituted a form of work in themselves; a caption in the *Qiandongnan Daily* described workers of the flour mill engaged in "political thought work" (*sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo*) through their singing of *Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China* (*Meiyou Gongchandang jiu meiyou xin Zhongguo*) (H. He 1990: 3).

Beyond the amateur artistic efforts of ordinary workers under the auspices of work units, there were also a number of professional troupes in Kaili, most notably the prefectural song-and-dance troupe (*zhou gewutuan*), which had existed in one form or another since 1956, and also the newer municipal cultural work troupe, which later became the municipal song-and-dance troupe (*shi gewutuan*) (G. Xiong 1998: 1020). However, beyond fulfilling their duty of "sending culture to the villages" (*song wenhua xia cun*), professional troupes and their star performers largely came to function as promotional tools for Kaili and wider Qiandongnan, particularly following their appearances at European festivals in the 1980s (H. He 1986: 4; B. Ni 1988: 1). In contrast,

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[77] The state attitude to consumption – including leisure activities – was one of ambivalence in the 1980s, encouraging consumption through market reforms, yet also attempting to contain it through measures such as an anti-spiritual pollution campaign which promoted the "habits of simplicity" (Croll 2006: 30). According to anthropologist Yan Yunxiang (2000: 160), it was not until the late 1990s that the government "openly recognized consumption as they key to economic growth", even encouraging people to take out loans. The prosecution of leisure activities has consequently subsided to a significant extent – so that a game of *mahjong* will no longer procure a trip to the police station – even if moralizing pronouncements about unhealthy forms of leisure have remained commonplace (Rolandsen 2011: 4–6).

performances within Kaili city itself were relatively rare; Wu Zhongde (2002: 7) recalled that Kaili audiences had never been enthusiastic about the prefectural troupe's "rustic style" (*xiangtu qixi*).[78]

The performances of these troupes partially drew on elements from the *lusheng* meet (*lusheng hui*),[79] the most notable musical product of rural space in the Kaili area. Still taking place outside of Kaili city in the wider municipality during my fieldwork, these are seasonal events primarily associated with the Miao, when people from surrounding settlements converge on a large outdoor space to dance to the *lusheng* and watch bull-fighting. Secondary activities include the singing of mountain songs, bird-fighting and horse-racing. The *lusheng* dances are led by male instrumentalists, who step, sway and turn as they play, accompanied by a circle of female dancers. Multiple dances occur simultaneously, with multiple circles of dancers and players packed closely together. Male players drift between circles, while female dancers generally stay within their allotted circle, at the centre of which is posted the place name of their settlement.[80]

During my fieldwork, the majority of *lusheng* meets occurred during the first month of the Chinese New Year in the more rural areas of Kaili municipality, particularly around the administrative area of Zhouxi town; there were three days in one village, then three days at another, and so on, throughout the month. During the early 1980s, there were three main spaces for *lusheng* meets within what has since come to constitute the urban space of Kaili: Jinjing village held an annual *lusheng* meet next to Jinquan Reservoir (*Jinquan hu*) (G. Xiong 1987: 67; Gu 1989: 14, 343; G. Xiong 1998: 181; Tuo 2001);[81] Longtouhe village held a slightly smaller event next to the banks of the nearby Qingshui River (Gu 1989: 23, 343; G. Xiong 1998: 181; Guangquan Yang 2000: 7); and the largest meet was organized by the Kaili government in an arena built behind the local-run cotton mill (Gu 1989: 14, 259; G. Xiong 1998: 45; Lei 2000: 113; Guangquan Yang 2000: 7).

The involvement of the Kaili government in a *lusheng* event organized behind a local-run industrial work unit evidences the increasingly merging of rural space and industrial space with the administrative-urban space of Dashizi, particularly after the creation of Kaili municipality in 1984. During the mid-1980s, tourism was beginning to emerge as a potential source of revenue for Kaili, and so it was unsurprising that the local government involved itself in *lusheng* meets. However,

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[78] A local newspaper summed up these twin functions of the prefectural troupe perfectly, in stressing that the troupe had not forgotten its purpose of serving its rural brethren, despite being involved in performances relating to foreign affairs (M. Wang 1995: 3). The city of Kaili falls between the geographical scopes of these two functions.

[79] These events have often been described in official literature as "*lusheng* festivals" (*lusheng jie*), but acquaintances during fieldwork also talked about "*lusheng* meets" (*lusheng hui*), or simply "going to the meet" (*kan hui*).

[80] In comparison, Samuel Clark (1911: 65), a missionary to Guizhou in the early twentieth century, described a festival with similar circling motions and gender roles, but with equal numbers of players and dancers following the single player of a particularly large *lusheng*.

[81] According to one academic article, the Jinquan Reservoir area once belonged to Jinjing village, and was a space for festive activity prior to the construction of the reservoir and the park (Huang and Gong 1992: 9).

tourism was still relatively undeveloped at this stage, and had not yet replaced the industrial sector, which staggered into the 1990s.[82] It was not until the early 1990s that all of the counties of Qiandongnan received permission to open up, and the prefecture received less than 30,000 overseas visitors during the Eighth Five-Year Plan of 1991-1995 (Yongbi Yang 2009: 1). Furthermore, none of the *lusheng* meets were given significant government backing. The space for the Longtouhe meet was lost during the expansion of Kaili's power plant during the 1990s, which also led to the relocation of a section of the village (Interview: 4 May 2012). By the time of my fieldwork, the power plant stood abandoned, after its relocation far outside of Kaili city, as a result of environmental considerations (Luo 2007: 1), which were themselves no doubt prompted by the desire to create a clean tourist city. The cotton mill meet vanished once the local government stopped providing funds (Guangquan Yang 2000: 7), yet attitudes had changed again by the time of my fieldwork; the arena had been demolished to make way for a "*minzu* customs park" (*minzu fengqing yuan*), which was to be a combination of upmarket holiday villas and buildings for the display of minority cultural practices (N. Yao and Ouyang 2011b: 1; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2012: 8). Finally, the Jinjing *lusheng* meet had to relocate itself as the result of urban development, but continued in diminished form in Yang'a'sha Square (*Yang'a'sha guangchang*), a small space on the southern edge of Kaili city.

Beyond these three *lusheng* meet sites, which were initially located in rural surroundings and later engulfed by the expanding city, there was also folk music activity in the administrative-urban space centred around Dashizi. Prior to the designation of parks in the city, three "street gardens" (*jiexin huayuan*) were created in the 1970s and 80s, including a flagship garden on the roundabout island of Dashizi (Z. Li 2005: 87; C. Long 2009: 1). Photographs of Dashizi from the 1970s and 80s show a plot of greenery encircled by a low railing. There is a notable scarcity of accompanying vehicles and surrounding urban density, while people are shown walking in the road and sometimes within the garden.

In one of his newspaper articles, Wu Zhongde (2002: 7) recalled Miao youth singing mountain songs (*shan'ge*) at Dashizi intersection as early as 1964, before the official creation of a garden. A 1960s report by *Xinhua News Agency* (1962: 2) in the *People's Daily* described 30,000 people descending on Kaili for a Miao festival, with the central intersection crowded with *lusheng*-playing men and costumed women dancers. In another recollection, Wang Taiqi (2005: 3) wrote of people doing the "loyalty dance" (*zhongzi wu*) to Chairman Mao in the centre and on the corners of Dashizi in the late 1960s, again highlighting the fact that different leisure practices were never entirely spatially separate prior to the formation of the post-Mao city. Nor indeed were minority practices exempt from the state's stress on the political function of art; a 1954 *People's Daily*

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[82] In 1992, the cotton mill and polyester plant were still described by the *Qiandongnan Daily* as "backbone enterprises" (*gugan qiye*) of Qiandongnan, as the newspaper claimed a doubling in the gross output of industry in Guizhou's *minzu* areas over the seventh five-year plan (1985-90) (X. Long 1992: 3).

article described the incorporation of socialist education into the Miao songs of the Kaili area (X. Ji 1954: 3), while a 1969 article reported Miao youth playing *lusheng*, dancing and singing in the centre of Kaili to celebrate the culmination of the Ninth National Congress of the CCP (*Xinhua News Agency* 1969: 4).

Figure 3.3: Dashizi in the 1970s (Kaili Municipal Housing and Construction Bureau 2013: http://www.kljsj.gov.cn/2013/kailifengmao_0127/289.html)

Figure 3.4: Dashizhi in the 1980s (Gu 1989)

Beyond textual sources, conversations with long-term residents also yielded references to the occurrence of musical festive activity around Dashizi in previous decades. Wang Chengzu, of the municipal China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, remembered minorities singing and dancing there when he first arrived in Kaili in the late 1950s (Interview: 17 June 2013). Yao Ling, the retired 262 factory worker, described the intersection as a site for minorities to gather, sing and court in the 1960s. He said that there was no garden back then; the minorities treated the whole of Dashizi intersection as a kind of square, since there was not much traffic to worry about. Another Apple Hill Park regular, Auntie Zhang, a retired female clerk from the *Qiandongnan Daily*, stated that a mixture of *minzu* groups would come to sing and court in the Dashizi garden around the time of Chinese Valentine's Day,[83] from the first to the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. Moving nearer to the present, a mid-1980s history of Qiandongnan described Dashizi as a place where people would gather to dance, sing and play *lusheng* throughout the night during Miao festivals (QMDZGB 1986: 8). Even a young teacher at Kaili University remembered Miao dancing around the corners of Dashizi when she was a child in the 1990s, although the garden was closed to the public during her time, with the exception of festive dates.

Just to the northwest of Dashizi was another outdoor public space known as the mass meeting arena (*dahuichang*), a bare and dusty oval space created during the 1960s on a mass grave site from the Miao rebellion of the Qing dynasty (G. Xiong 1998: 1052). Beyond its function as a place for political rallies and public executions, this arena was also a spot for leisure activity.[84] Fieldwork participants stressed that activities there were mostly sportive, while Wang Taiqi (2004c: 3) recalled factory youth taking the bus into town to play football at the arena, and Wu Zhongde (2002: 7) mentioned a basketball court to the back of this space in the 1960s. However, Wu's article also made reference to Miao youth singing courting songs there in the 1960s. Additionally, Wang Chengzu and Yang Guoren of the prefectural China Federation of Literary and Art Circles had memories of Miao musical activity in the outdoor arena, as well as the events that they organized themselves (Interview: 17 June 2013).

Finally, it is worth paraphrasing a retiree who first lived in Kaili as a child in the 1950s, and talked about the Sunday market-day on Old Street as a further place for musical activity. This market attracted inhabitants from the surrounding spaces of Kaili, including groups of young people who would sing courting songs upon encountering each other. This sometimes occurred around Xiaoshizi, a minor intersection located along the short straight road between Dashizi and Old Street. Rather than Dashizi or the mass meeting arena being bounded spaces, the recollections

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[83] Auntie Zhang was referring to Qixi Festival, also known as Chinese Valentine's Day.

[84] Older Sister Yang of Longtouhe village remembered the mass meeting arena as a place for sports meets, political meetings, struggle sessions (*pidou*), and pubic trials with executions (*gongshen dahui*) (Interview: 4 May 2012). In the film *11 Flowers*, set in a Third Front factory, a group of children rush along country lanes from factory to nearby urban centre when they hear that a public execution is about to occur in the local meeting arena.

of long-term residents provided the sense that outdoor musical activity could move around a broader area, thanks to the low level of traffic.[85] While the enclosed spaces of work units were carefully regulated, the relative underdevelopment of Kaili allowed sufficient outdoor space for singing, and rendered designated leisure spaces largely unnecessary.

However, as urban space became dominant in the post-Mao era, the rise in traffic volume and the concentration of the built environment meant that leisure activity could no longer just happen anywhere, but had to be ushered into designated spaces. This provision of leisure space was made all the more necessary by an increase in leisure activity resulting from more free time,[86] more disposable income, more mobility, and a shift towards consumerism. In the following section, I examine a transitional period for Kaili, as it gradually began to build public spaces which fulfilled two leisure-related functions; as spaces for everyday leisure activity and as images for the promotion of Kaili as a *minzu* tourist destination.

A transitional period: from factory space to entertainment space

Kaili had few outdoor spaces for leisure activity during the Mao era. Unlike cities such as Beijing, it even lacked the population and built density to make official parks necessary. When I asked Yao Ling, the retired 262 factory worker, if there were any parks when he first came to Kaili in the late 1960s, he joked that people used to say Guizhou was just one big park (*daochu dou shi gongyuan*), and remembered that Kaili was permeated with snakes, apples, mushrooms, and even bears. He would sometimes climb up Apple Hill, but there was no real leisure activity there, and it was not officially a park. Indeed, it was not technically open to the public, according to a retiree worker of the provincial forestry bureau which oversaw the management of this space (Interview: 23 June 2013). There had not been a need for official green spaces in the Mao era, given the lack of urban intensity, as well as the lack of leisure time.

The 1983-2000 urban blueprint for Kaili municipality included plans for five parks: Dage, Apple Hill, Jinquan Reservoir, Yanglongtan and Duimenpo (G. Xiong 1998: 718–9). The latter two were never realized in perceived space, while the former three represented the formalization and makeover of existing green spaces.[87] Jinquan Reservoir Park (*Jinquan hu gongyuan*) was constructed in the early 1980s, but was more National Park than city park, existing outside of the

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[85] I cannot discount the fact that these spaces only blurred as they became distant memories. However, this blurring was also consistent with practices that I encountered in less densely-populated areas during fieldwork. For example, one day I accompanied Older Sister Yang to a wedding ceremony in a nearby town, where she did *lusheng* dancing with her amateur troupe. Circular dancing took place on a main road, before the troupe and the wedding congregation paraded into the town centre.

[86] Free time increased significantly during the early post-Mao era, with less political study and "voluntary labour", more time-saving domestic appliances, more holiday time, and the nationwide introduction of a five-day working week (S. Wang 1995: 157; Pun 2003: 471; Friedmann 2005: 79; Blumenfield and Silverman 2013: 9).

[87] Exactly what constituted a park was a matter of disagreement in Kaili, with inhabitants identifying anywhere from three to zero parks in the city. This is discussed further in chapter five.

urban area at the time of its construction, before being reduced in size by the encroachment of real estate in more recent years. During the 1980s, only Dage was a park in the sense of being a managed enclave of greenery surrounded by streets and buildings, while Apple Hill did not formally open to the public until many years later.

Kaili did still have the mass meeting arena during the 1980s, but this was mainly for political events rather than leisure, with music and other art forms as secondary activities. As Anne-Marie Broudehoux (2004: 116) has commented in her work on Beijing, lack of leisure time, disposable income and mobility all limited the usage of public spaces, which chiefly consisted of parks, squares and museums, and "whose main purpose centred on the reproduction of labour, and ideology formation". In his study of socialist cities in Eastern Germany, Hartmut Haussermann (1996: 216–7, 222) noted the ability of the state to congregate such monumental spaces in the city centre, owing to the absence of a real-estate market mechanism. The state monopoly on land ownership allowed for the development of symbolic, central spaces such as Alexanderplatz in East Berlin, which "expressed some kind of imperial grandeur and responded to certain ceremonial needs of a socialist society" (Szelényi 1996: 301). However, the centre of Kaili lacked aesthetically impressive spaces until the mid-1980s, with the old Dashizi and the mass meeting arena both lacking in grandeur. There was certainly no grand socialist square; the stadium square did not exist until well into the 2000s, and Wanbo Square was only fully developed in the same era, having previously existed as a much smaller undeveloped space outside of the administrative-urban centre.[88] As a result of their later construction dates, these squares were built for leisure and the branding of the local, rather than as national symbols of socialism.

Furthermore, identification with the work unit and the socialist nation was far more important than identification with the city. Broudehoux (2004: 30) has argued that the contemporary marketing of cities in China is heavily influenced by Maoist strategies, which were themselves inspired by the *potemkinist* approach of the Soviet Union, whereby the facades of the built environment were utilized to impress foreign visitors. Yet while there may have been a continuation of image construction strategy, the Mao era was more concerned with the construction of the image of the nation rather than the image of the city, with a few exceptions.[89]

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the visual representation of Kaili included numerous photos of rather homogenous architecture. Photos of industrial space appeared alongside articles and captions stressing the production feats of local factories (e.g. Dai 1992: 1; Ding 1992: 1; X. Yang 1992: 1). Photos and accompanying literature also highlighted the construction of buildings

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[88] One Kaili resident described the older incarnation of Wanbo Square as simply an "empty space" (*kongdi*).

[89] Beijing obviously numbered among these exceptions, as the symbolic centre of the nation. A second exception is Dalian, which was presented by the national press in 1949 as a model state-run production city of New China (Hess 2011: 385). But this second exception also emphasizes how branding has changed; Dalian was proffered as a model for other cities to emulate, whereas cities must nowadays differentiate themselves through the production of contrasting images.

which were principally functional rather than aesthetic, such as the establishment of a new bus station, which warranted an opening ceremony of live percussion bands and broadcast of the revolutionary classic *Socialism is Good* (*Shehui zhuyi hao*) (G. Tang and Li 1992: 1). During the mid- and late 1980s, the train station was probably the most frequently featured space in the *Qiandongnan Daily* (e.g. Dai 1986: 3). This accorded with the jovial claim of Older Brother Xiong, a local intellectual encountered during my fieldwork, that the railroad was the most advanced thing in Kaili at the beginning of the reform era. These photos of train stations and factories highlighted modernization, production and the socialist nation. Rather than possessing individual qualities, such buildings reflected the tendency of industrial space "toward homogeneity, toward a rational and planned unity of constraints" (Lefebvre 2003: 37 [1970]). These buildings resembled buildings and monuments found in other cities, with architectural form replicated across the nation. Attempts to reflect Kaili's cultural status as the capital of a minority prefecture were tokenistic, such as the minor *minzu* adornments on the new bus station, an otherwise functional rectangular building. Such buildings were inspired by ambitions for the modernization of the nation, rather than the construction of a brand according to the unique qualities of a specific city.[90]
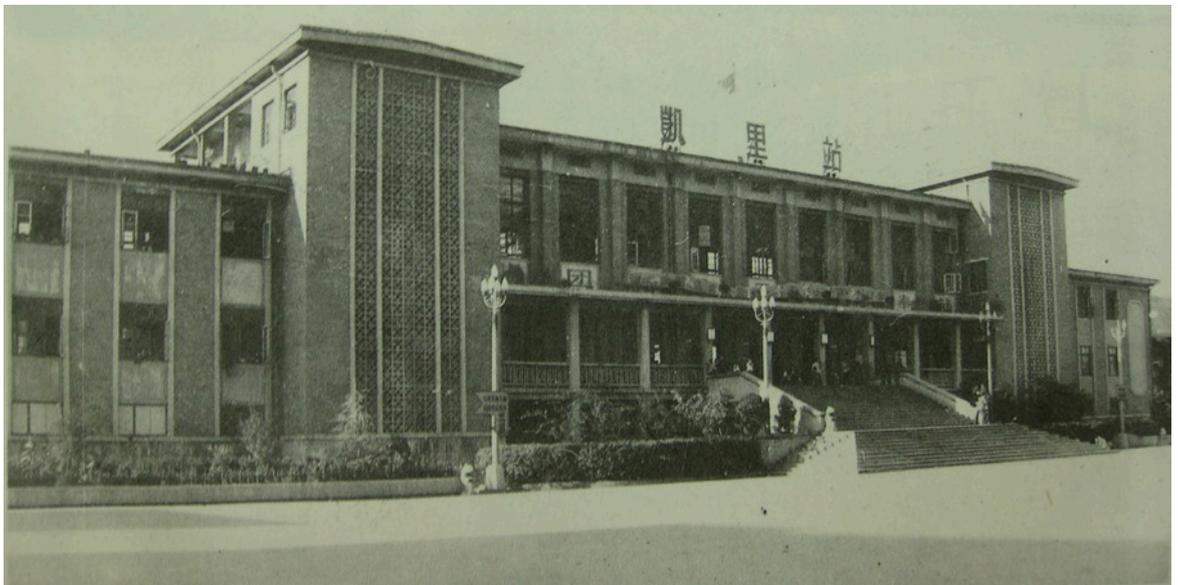
Figure 3.5: Kaili train station (Xiong 1998)

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[90] But it should also be noted that approaches to architectural form differed across the Mao period. For example, architectural theorist Jianfei Zhu (1996: 74–5) has written of how monumental buildings in the 1950s – most notably the "Ten Grand Buildings" (*shi da jianzhu*) of 1959 in Beijing – combined European architectural styles with Chinese roofs, forms and motifs under the mantra of "socialist content, national form". However, this approach came to be criticized as reactionary and wasteful, leading to plainer architecture during the 1960s which also reflected the need for fiscal austerity after the Great Leap Forward (J. Zhu 1996: 74–5).

Figure 3.6: Kaili cotton mill (Y. Tang 1990: 3)

Figure 3.7: Kaili power plant (Xiong 1998)

However, signs slowly began to emerge in the 1990s of an increasing awareness that Kaili needed to brand itself. Moreover, folk minority culture was the only obvious local resource for the construction of a conceived branded space; Older Brother Xiong joked again – in reference to the recent branding of Kaili – if you do not have anything else to put on your name-card, then *yuanshengtai* will have to do. In the 1980s and 1990s, the word *yuanshengtai* had not yet begun to circulate as a discursive term, and the industrial sector was still staggering forward. The result was a combination of city monikers that marked the twilight years of socialist industrial space and the dawn of the *minzu* city. Thus, one newspaper article referred to Kaili as both an "electronics industrial city" and a "*minzu* tourism city" in a single sentence (Gong 1996: 1), while another article fused the two sectors together, with the name "electronics city of the Miao Mountains" (*Miaoling dianzi cheng*) (B. Li 1992: 1). The need to fashion conceived branded space must have been something of a shock for local policy-makers. While local governments across China were all having to grapple with the concept of place promotion, it was almost a reversal of direction for Kaili; the Third Front had required secrecy – the opposite of branding – with the spatial anonymity of factories preserved by the usage of numerical monikers such as 083 (base) and 262 (factory). It was a project of conceived space in the classic planned sense, with no interest in notions of conceived branded space.

Pictures of *minzu*-style buildings began to appear alongside pictures of more functional buildings during the early years of the post-Mao period, but lacked the impact of later constructions. One early example was the prefectural Nationalities Museum, built in 1988 (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2011b: 4). In what would become a familiar trope, this structure combined both Miao and Dong architecture, with exhibition wings in the style of Miao wooden housing and a central tower in the style of a Dong drum tower (Y. Deng 1997: 64). However, the impact of the museum was diminished by the presence of indoor market buildings to its front, in contrast to the expansive Wanbo Square, which later replaced these buildings and drew attention to the museum.[91] Even earlier, a Dong tower was constructed in Jinquan Reservoir Park in 1985 (G. Xiong 1998: 46), but collapsed in 1997 (Y. Shi 2003), due to inadequate maintenance. Throughout the 1980s and much of the 1990s, Dashizi garden had a rather small white pagoda at its centre. A newspaper contributor in the mid-1980s considered this pagoda a blemish rather than an adornment, on account of its toy-like size. "Could the pagoda not be transformed into something bigger, which also reflects our homeland's special characteristics?", asked the author (Pan 1985: 2). This question was not answered until 1996, with the construction of the *lusheng* statue in place of the pagoda, and then the addition of a surrounding illuminated fountain in 1999. Earlier spaces were thus revamped or abandoned as the city image began to become a matter of governmental importance.

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[91] The museum also required a major overhaul in order to meet the branding demands of the twenty-first century, and at one point there was a government debate as to whether this 1980s building should be demolished or preserved (Xu 2004:1).

Figure 3.8: The Nationalities Museum in the 1980s (Yang 1991)

The evolving representation of the city occurred alongside changing attitudes to marketing, consumption, and leisure activity. While semi-private entertainment spaces such as dance halls and karaoke bars began to appear in the 1980s (Z. Li 2005: 110), suspicion towards consumption-oriented leisure, as well as the public spaces and marketing associated with it, was a common, if gradually diminishing feature of official attitudes. An early-1990s article criticized entertainment spaces which were motivated by profit rather than "social outcomes" (*shehui xiaoguo*), referring to cinemas, card halls, and a dance hall as sources of pornography and gambling (Xingjian Li 1993a: 1). Table tennis venues became a craze in 1985, but were banned after just one month because of associations with gambling activity. Following the lifting of the ban in 1988, only specific official organizations, such as the mass art centre (*qunzhong wenyi guan*), were allowed to open table tennis venues (G. Xiong 1998: 1033–4). Involvement in the popular pastime of *mahjong* could still lead to arrest (X. Lu 1989a: 3), while one proclamation even suggested banning morning activity in dance halls, arguing that it affected people's work and study (ZXB and He 1991:3).

Despite this official opprobrium, many consumption-oriented spaces were operated by work units, such as a short-lived dance hall opened in 1985 by the prefectural mass art centre, with backing provided by the prefectural song-and-dance troupe (G. Xiong 1998: 1033). By 1995, a "holiday village" (*dujia cun*) had even been constructed within Kaixuan, a Third Front factory, in collaboration with the prefectural tourism bureau, to consist of a clubhouse, dance hall, ice rink, swimming pool and other facilities. A newspaper description of the holiday village made a rare confession as to the economic difficulties of the factory in recent years, and expressed the hope that this new project could help alleviate the circumstances of the workers (H. Shi 1995: 3). This signalled a significant shift, as a factory once engaged in the production of military equipment turned to consumption and the entertainment industry. Its new role also entailed the disintegration

of conceived and perceived boundaries, as this former industrial space opened its doors to consumers and the expanding urban space of Kaili.

The treatment of karaoke in the early 1990s also evidenced the increasing willingness of authorities to harness consumption for political and economic purposes. On the one hand, the *Qiandongnan Daily* accused karaoke joints of noise pollution (Xingjian Li 1993b: 2), sharp business practices (Guobing Yang 1992: 3), and the moral pollution of students (S. Xiao 1993: 1). On the other hand, karaoke was incorporated into the canon of acceptable artistic forms for the veneration of political movements and dates, with the organization of such events as a "patriotic" (*aiguo*) karaoke competition at the labour union (X. Wang 1995: 1). This was consistent with a national policy of attempting to assimilate rather than suppress karaoke. In what Geremie Barmé has described as the "commodified war of the ideologues", the CCP came to realize that karaoke could be adapted in the fight against "the saccharine wave of offshore love songs" emanating from Hong Kong and Taiwan (1999: 117).[92]

Finally, the transition from planned to market economy saw the rise of the real estate market, following initiatives announced by the Second National Housing Reform Conference in 1991 (Davis 2000: 9). In a retrospective of 1994, a *Qiandongnan Daily* article noted that property had become the hot new consumption trend in Kaili (W. Chen 1995: 2). The newspaper was also starting to feature advertising, including an advert for a new residential project to the south of Dashizi (*Qiandongnan ribao* 1992: 1). The rise of private property further integrated the old work units into wider urban space, as workers began to purchase private apartments and commute to work. The home also became a new site of consumption and leisure in China, with interior design accompanied by the purchase of televisions, *mahjong* tables, and karaoke systems (Latham 2007: 236–8). Some of the processes involved in the production of this new kind of home – particularly intensification of the built environment, increased disposable income, and increased commuting – also contributed to the rise of public spaces in the early 2000s, as providers of leisure space in a compressed city. These spaces were also the consequences of inter-city competition, as another element of China's marketization, and the accompanying construction of city images.

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[92] For example, the Ministry of Propaganda released a collection of revolutionary songs adapted for karaoke in 1991 (Barmé 1999: 117), while *Red Sun* (*Hong taiyang*), a collection of revolutionary folksongs set to discobeat, was released in 1992 (Harris 2000: 57).
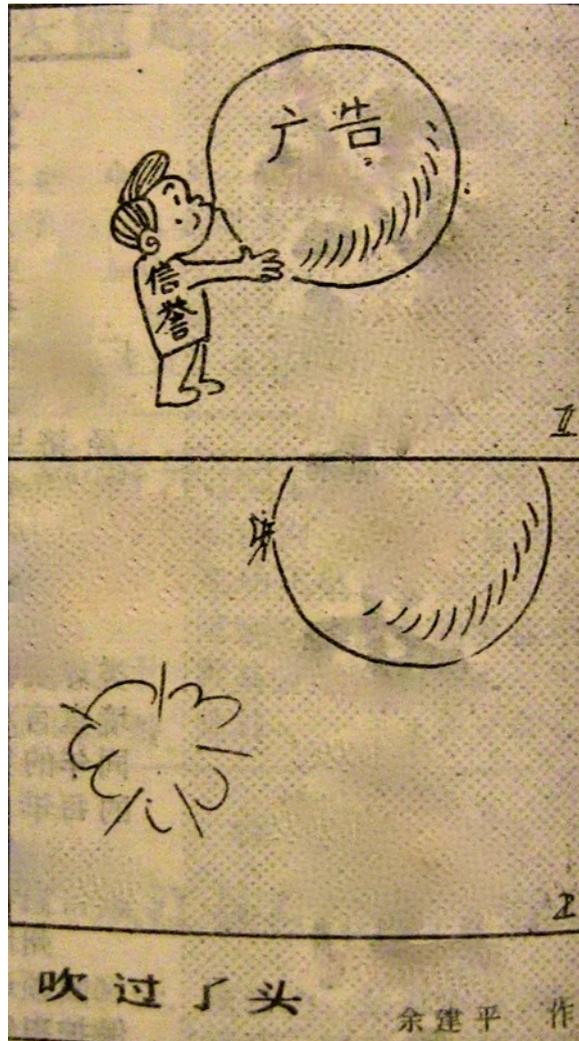
Figure 3.9: A prophetic cartoon in the *Qiandongnan Daily*; the man's shirt reads "prestige" and the balloon reads "advert", while the caption at that bottom refers to the practice of "blowing oneself up" (J. Yu 1992: 2)

Public spaces and the city image

By the mid-1990s, Kaili was a cohesive city which had established basic infrastructure and connections with the wider world. Against a background of failing industry and softening attitudes to leisure activities, the local government intensified its focus on tourism as the future of Kaili and wider Qiandongnan, following initial experiments in the 1980s. There had been a nationwide revival of interest in minority cultures after the Cultural Revolution, with the creation of new ethnological institutions and journals alongside new festivals (Mueggler 2002: 8–10). Yet while Kaili was designated as the core city of Guizhou's eastern tourism circuit (*Guizhou dongxian lüyou zhongxin chengshi*) as early as 1985 (G. Xiong 1998: 46), early visitor numbers were low compared to the flourishing western circuit, and tourism only became a significant economic sector in the 1990s (Oakes 2000: 158–64).

The growth of tourism occurred in conjunction with a nationwide trend towards the intertwined political strategies of urbanism and consumption. Kaili entered its phase of high-speed urban development in the early 2000s, at a slightly later date than many other Chinese cities, but

with certain similarities of form, including the expansion of urban space, construction of new public spaces, regulation of public behaviour, facilitation of traffic, and promotion of city image. The urbanization process was particularly contradictory for Kaili, since it entailed the construction of a modern "civilized" city through representations of *minzu* folk practices which were associated with rural space. Urbanization absorbed rural settlements, which the *Qiandongnan Daily* subsequently portrayed as problematic "villages within cities" (*cheng zhong cun*),[93] rather than carriers of *yuanshengtai* culture (Yuanli Li 2011: 5). This section examines how Kaili constructed *minzu* spectacles as elements within a strategy of synecdoche that represented the expanding city as the homeland of 100 festivals.

A number of articles at the turn of the century noted the lack of public spaces and significant architecture in Kaili. One journalist lamented that Kaili did not have a proper square, and instead had to make to do with the mass meeting arena, a silted ball court whose edges were being eroded by the encroachment of hotels, tea houses and arcades (Z. Ji 2001: 7). Another journalist even lavished praise on the park of neighbouring Duyun city, and expressed the wish that Kaili might one day have a similar public space (Yan Liu 2000: 4). Finally, an article in a Sichuan party journal criticized the general lack of *minzu* architecture throughout Kaili and the county capitals of Qiandongnan (Maoli Zhou and Xia 2002). The article complained that buildings were grey, simplistic, cheap, multi-storey affairs, with a lack of "landmark architecture" (*biaozhixing jianzhu*), while the air was saturated with the smells of industry: "Apart from Kaili's Dashizi, with its *lusheng* statue carved out of marble, there are basically no buildings or statues in these cities with special characteristics, and it is even harder to find a trace of minority culture" (Maoli Zhou and Xia 2002: 72). In order to remedy this situation, leisure spaces were needed which would reflect minority customs (Maoli Zhou and Xia 2002: 74).

In the following year, a number of projects with *minzu* characteristics were completed or under construction, including Yang'a'sha Square, the municipal government headquarters and the Nationalities Stadium (B. Zhu 2003: 2). The first space was a small square situated at the entrance to Jinquan Reservoir Park, alongside a busy junction. The *Qiandongnan Daily* reported that this square would possess *minzu* flavour (Guangquan Yang 2003: 2); this consisted of a pattern of circles within circles on the ground, in depiction of a Miao copper drum.[94] The municipal government headquarters was an imposing building whose grounds included a green public space interspersed with Dong drum towers. It was situated next to the Nationalities Stadium, the most spectacular *minzu* space of all. Thus, within just a few years of the critical assessment of the Sichuan journal, Kaili could claim to possess a number of landmarks with *minzu* flavour (SB and

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[93] The term "villages within cities" refers to rural settlements which have been consumed by expanding cities. See Bach (2010) for an analysis of the Chinese city's complex relationship with these "urban villages".
[94] Once a year, the square held the Jinjing village *lusheng* meet, while on ordinary days it accommodated a bouncy castle.

SRZB 2007: 3; KSSX 2010: 61). These brand-new constructions were complemented by the revamped Nationalities Museum and adjacent Wanbo Square, as well as the Dashizi *lusheng*.

Public *minzu* spectacles of this kind can serve multiple functions. As anthropologist Lisa Hoffman (2010: 42–3) has remarked, an attractive square can help boost the real estate of a surrounding area. As I argue in chapter five, it can also function as a point of orientation in a fluid cityscape. However, in this section I want to highlight how local government has conceived of these spaces as both providers of leisure facilities and marketers of the city (e.g. KSGGJ 2008: 4; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2008: 6), as well as the relationship between these two functions.

When the Nationalities Stadium first opened, it hosted a variety of events, including the opening ceremony of a transplanted Miao festival (Yingming Li 2004: 1), the opening ceremony for the International Lusheng Festival (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2004: 3), and a celebration of the prefecture's 50th anniversary (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2006b: 2–3). Performances of *minzu* contributed to the stadium's branding potential at such events, while somewhat incongruously appearing alongside national celebrities and pop stars such as Zhou Xun, Fan Bingbing, and Wang Feng. In fact, beyond the stadium and Wanbo Square, there were no obvious places where large-scale musical events could take place in Kaili; despite the attention to the construction of *minzu* landmarks, the city had a scarcity of landmark music venues. The stadium was therefore the obvious choice for Qiandongnan prefecture's golden anniversary, which saw the mobilization of a significant swathe of the local population, with 9,600 performers involved in one song-and-dance act, and a 25,000-strong audience providing unison backing for a Miao folk song (Yuehua Li 2006: 1). A newspaper article after the anniversary recalled the previous thoughts of a former provincial leader, who had criticized Kaili for becoming akin to a concrete jungle as a result of modernization. The journalist commented that this *had* been a major problem, but the stadium and its mass Miao performance had provided the solution (Liao and Zhang 2006: 1).
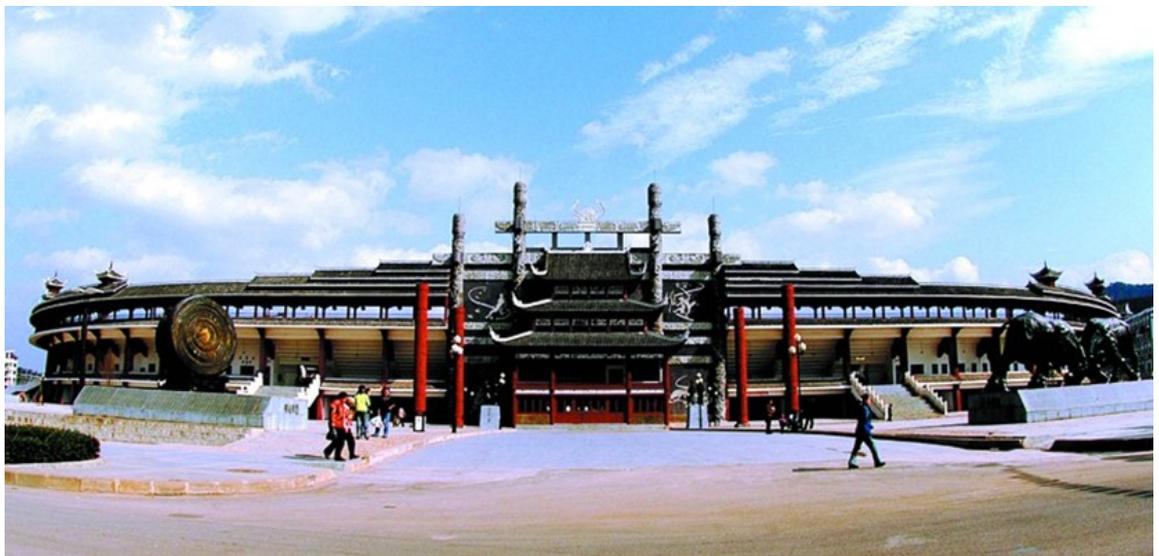
Figure 3.10: Kaili Nationalities Stadium (People's Government of Kaili Municipality 2012: http://www.kaili.gov.cn/info/17055/184118.htm)

The stadium was never open to the public for uncontrolled leisure activities. More bafflingly, it even ceased to host regular *minzu* spectacles after a few years. Instead, recent events have generally taken place in the square to one side of the stadium. During my fieldwork, the 2012 International Lusheng Festival began with a procession of village and district delegations from the east of Dashizi to the stadium via Wanbo Square. The costumed delegations finally gathered in the stadium square, where local leaders gave lengthy speeches from a temporary stage, with the stadium as their backdrop. Speeches were followed by predominantly mimed performances of *minzu*-style pop on the stage. Before these staged performances had finished, the delegations below the stage began to dance in circles to live *lusheng* playing. At this point, I spotted at least one group which had been present during rural *lusheng* festivals around the Zhouxi town area. However, in contrast to the rural festivals, where dancing lasted for hours and hours over successive days, dancing in the stadium square lasted for only around 20 minutes, before the groups started to disperse, heading down the street into the city centre, accompanied by the occasional burst of *lusheng*.

I found it peculiar that the square was utilized rather than the inside of the stadium, and asked around during my fieldwork to see what Kaili residents made of this phenomenon. No-one knew for certain why this was the case, while some considered it a shame, and one young university teacher was particularly forthright; there is just one word to describe it, she asserted, "stoopid" (*er* = Beijing slang). On reflection, events at the closing ceremony of the festival, held two days later, explained why the inside of the stadium was not utilized. Held in the studio of Qiandongnan Television Station, the closing ceremony began with footage of the short-lived *lusheng* dancing which had occurred outside of the stadium. Whereas the dancing had been secondary to the speeches and staged performances on the initial day, it was presented at the closing ceremony as though it was a central element of the festival. For the purposes of post-event branding, it was not important whether the event had been held inside or outside of the stadium, as long as there was a shot for posterity of groups in *minzu*-style dress alongside a *minzu*-style building.

Spectacles such as the Nationalities Stadium operate within two main contexts: surrounded by the traffic, pedestrians and leisure activity of everyday perceived space; and surrounded by other examples of conceived branded space in promotional photomontages of the city. In the latter realm of conceived branded space, these buildings and their images can represent an entire place, as part of a strategy of synecdoche. However, when the stadium square was not being utilized for a festival-cum-photo shoot, it hosted the kind of leisure activity that was typical to any other modern Chinese city, including drinking tents (*pijiu guangchang*) and dance-oriented exercise. The *minzu* spectacle – the stadium – was largely unused in everyday life, while the adjacent square teemed with activity. The space of Wanbo Square and the Nationalities Stadium followed a similar pattern; the museum – the visual centrepiece – was either deserted or shut for refurbishment, while the

square was occasionally requisitioned for an official *minzu* event, but generally served as a space for amateur line- and ballroom-dancing.

The images derived from these sites have conveyed a misleading impression of everyday life in Kaili. No-one viewing these photos without supporting knowledge could guess that the local pastimes are *mahjong*, line dancing, ballroom dancing, karaoke, night markets, and drinking, rather than *lusheng* dancing and folk singing. This distortion has been achieved through the manipulation of both space and time. *Minzu* architecture can function most convincingly in the branding of Kaili when combined with temporary spectacles, such as the International Lusheng Festival. Extracted from clock-time by photography, these spectacles become permanent, to give the impression that life in Kaili is just one long *minzu* festival.

As noted in chapter one, the visual has been prominent in the branding of Kaili, despite the brand's reference to musical practices. Of course, aural branding is also a possibility; the famous quote that "sight isolates, sound incorporates" (W. J. Ong 1982: 72) overlooks the fact that sounds can also be isolated from their sources, and then repackaged to manipulate a sense of place. For example, the branding of Hawaii has involved both visual representations of music, with pictures of Hula girls, *and* aural representations, with the release of albums such as *Destination Honolulu* in the 1960s (Gibson and Connell 2005: 19, 24–5). With regard to Kaili, a number of songs have been released which promote the *minzu* tourism of wider Qiandongnan, including *July in Qiandongnan* (*Qiandongnan de qiyue*) and *Drunken Miao Village* (*Zui Miaoxiang*); both were fusions of pop music and Miao folk music performed by the female singer Ah You Duo. The piped occurrence of these songs was a repetitive element of the Kaili soundscape during my fieldwork. Nicholas,[95] a student at Kaili University, recalled being interested in *yuanshengtai* music when he first arrived in the city, but later tiring of hearing the same songs wherever he went (Interview: 18 May 2012). A Kaili-born hip hop dancer even felt that long-term residents had become "numb towards *yuanshengtai*" (*dui yuanshengtai zhe ge dongxi mabi le*) as a result of such aural repetition (Interview: 15 May 2012).

This repetition highlights a certain lack of attention towards the aural branding of the city. I was surprised that events such as the International Lusheng Festival frequently contained incidences of performers singing along to backing tracks or even miming, despite the stress of *yuanshengtai* on acoustic instrumentation and authenticity, as described in chapter four. Instead, performances highlighted the visual, with exotic and sometimes revealing *minzu* costumes worn by performers who were typically young and female. Over at Kaili University, the ratio of female-male students on a major in minority folk practices evidenced that young women were the preferred representatives of *yuanshengtai* culture, with a recruitment process that appeared to value looks at least as much as musical talent. Thus, despite monikers such as "an ocean of song and

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[95] I have used English pseudonyms for individuals who preferred to use their English names when interacting with me.

dance", the development and branding of Kaili has tended to stress only the visual. Moreover, as the final section of this chapter argues, urban development has actually hindered amateur musical activity within the city. However, in the penultimate section, it is first necessary to show how the conceived planned space of urban development has sometimes come into conflict with the conceived branded space of *minzu* tourism.

The civilized city

"The automobile spectacle...strives for a perfect traffic flow entailing the destruction of old urban districts, while the city spectacle needs to preserve those districts as tourist attractions" (Debord 2005: 32 [1967]).

The construction of *minzu* spaces to promote Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals took place within a wider process of standardized urbanization, which attenuated rather than accentuated local flavour. The facilitation of traffic, the development of urban infrastructure, the civilizing of the population, and the sanitization of streets have related to *minzu* tourism in a manner which is both contradictory and complementary. On the one hand, a tourism destination must make efforts to be clean and well-ordered. On the other hand, *minzu* tourism contains the promise of a pre-modern, spontaneous experience, which must involve a certain unpredictability and messiness.[96] Thus, the relevance of Guy Debord's quote, which highlights a central contradiction of urbanism, that is, the need to create unique city images at the same time as developing a relatively homogeneous urban infrastructure for the convenience of citizens, visitors and businesses.

As the city image gradually became a matter of importance, the *Qiandongnan Daily* published an article about the unsatisfactory levels of "hygiene" (*weisheng*) in Kaili, which had ranked last out of ten cities in Guizhou province over three consecutive years (ZAH and Hu 1990:3). Hygiene was more than just a medical issue, it was also a matter of "civilization", or *wenming*, as revealed in Kaili's efforts throughout the 1990s and early 2000s to become a "civilized hygienic city" (*wenming weisheng chengshi*) (Zhenqiang Wang 1992: 3; L. Yao 1996: 1; Zhong Wang 1997: 1). This is a common but complex combination of words in city branding, which has previously been noted by historian Ruth Rogaski (1999: 30) in her research on the northern city of Tianjin. Meanwhile, in her analysis of the word *wenming*, anthropologist Anne Anagnost (1997: chap. 3) has identified a state-led discourse of civilization in post-Mao China, which focuses on the population's perceived lack of modernity, order and discipline. To address these issues, the government has cast itself in the role of raising the "quality" (*suzhi*) of the population to meet

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[96] This is not only a contradiction of urbanism but also of tourism which purports to step beyond the beaten path. Notar (2006a: 31) has described how backpackers in the tourist destination of Dali sought "the authentic modern, but then complained of inefficient, nonmodern systems of transportation of infrastructure".

global labour standards.[97] This discourse has interwoven with inter-city competition in the post-Mao era; evidence of a civilized workforce helps to attract investors, so cities have worked hard to improve their "civilization" levels. Beyond educational attainments and workplace professionalism, citizens can also contribute to the civilized city image through ordered behaviour in public spaces.

When twinned with this notion of civilization, the second word, *weisheng*, goes beyond notions of cleanliness and hygiene to suggest "a harmony of interests between public space and private behaviour, presided over by an enlightened and effective government" in the production of an ordered, green and unpolluted city (Rogaski 1999: 30). The notion of a "civilized hygienic city" is thus one that treats both the built environment *and* the everyday behaviour of citizens as important elements in the production of city space. This production and branding of civilization constitutes another essential element of the post-Mao Chinese city.[98] Without the qualities of civilization and cleanliness, a concentration of people and buildings is more like an oversized village than an ordered city. However, municipal aspirations towards a universal notion of civilization can easily clash with simultaneous efforts to mould more individual city images, such as Kaili's image as the homeland of 100 festivals.

While civilizing efforts occurred during the 1990s, it was in 2002 that local government prioritized the transformation of Kaili into a clean, civilized tourist city, under the slogan "Be a civilized citizen, create a civilized city, build a beautiful homeland" (*zuo wenming shimin, chuang wenming chengshi, jian meihao jiayuan*) (H. He 2002b: 3). A 2003 article in a party journal summarized the subsequent results, commenting that the roads were now wider, cleaner, greener and better illuminated, the transport network was orderly, and everything was developing in a healthy manner (D. Chen 2003: 32). The article also mentioned further activity, including the opening of a road tunnel beneath Old Street, advances in hygiene, and the distribution of 1000 cadres, city managers and Public Sector Bureau members to over 50 outposts throughout the city, from where they could educate people and enforce regulations at street-level (D. Chen 2003: 32–3).

The fostering of civilization was thus intertwined with the urbanization of Kaili, including the facilitation of the private car and the ordering of the city. The antithesis to civilization resided in the names which journalists claimed had formerly been attached to Kaili, such as "dirty, disorderly and poor" (*zang-luan-cha*) (Luo 2002: 2b), and even "peasant city" (*nongmin chengshi*) (Shen 2006: 3). Despite the promotion of *yuanshengtai*, rural spaces absorbed by the expanding city were labelled as disorderly "villages within cities" which required government attention (Yingming Li 2003: 1). Industrial space was also a presented as a threat to the cleanliness of the city; an article on pollution was accompanied by a black silhouette of smoke stacks and a power plant (Guanglan

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[97] Quality can only serve as a rough translation of *suzhi*, a term which refers to a person's overall quality, including but not limited to considerations of education, morality, appearance, manners and accent.

[98] For better-known examples of civilizing efforts, see references in Chen (1995: 351) and Broudehoux (2004: 161–97) to the regulation and beautification of Beijing in preparation for the 1990 Asian Games and the 1999 golden anniversary of the PRC respectively.

Yang 2007: 2). The ongoing urbanization process had brought inconvenience to citizens, noted the city mayor, including the upheaval of the road network, but Kaili would soon become a green and beautiful city (H. He 2002a: 3).

To create a civilized city, it was not enough simply to have a developed urban infrastructure, citizens also had to contribute. As one article pointed out, it was not good enough if Kaili looked like "Hong Kong from afar, but like a village market from nearby" (*yuanwang xiang Xianggang, jinkan xiang xiangchang*), on account of uncivilized behaviour in everyday life, such as swearing, drunkenness, counterfeiting, and prostitution (T. Wang 2004e: 3). A couple of photo montages in the local newspapers provided further evidence of uncivilized behaviour, including people playing *mahjong* on the pavement, the accumulation of rubbish, and the inappropriately prominent street signs of restaurants (*Kaili wanbao* 2002a: 3; B. Zhu 2002: 3). More recently, the *Qiandongnan Daily* reported twice on the perceived ugliness of an unofficial advertising wall along Beijing Avenue (Y. Hu 2011; Zhiban Zhou and Wang 2011).[99] Well-ordered and unimpeded streets constituted an important element of the civilized city, with further articles pointing to the problems of haphazard parking, and the need for pedestrians to utilize zebra crossings (S. He 2008: 1; Yong Yang 2009: 2).

One of the side effects of this civilizing project was a reduction in the potential of streets to serve as sites for leisure activity. Although private market stalls could congregate in certain areas, particularly a pedestrianized street to the northwest of Dashizi, the widening of roads reduced pavement space. Moreover, as the above mention of *mahjong* indicates, leisure activity was a potential obstacle to the unimpeded flow of the modern city. In a further example, an article on hip hop dancing in Kaili cited the regret of performers that they could not do their street-dancing on an actual street (Zhangyi Wu 2007: 2). My own interview with one of the featured dancers ascertained that their street performances were not permitted by the authorities because they blocked the pavements (Interview: 2 May 2012).

This regulation of streets was closely tied to the construction of public spaces such as Wanbo Square and Apple Hill Park. Firstly, if streets primarily served as sites of commerce and transportation, then the rising demand for leisure needed to be sated through the provision of designated squares and parks. In a famous example, 1930s New York saw the targeting of the street-based economy alongside the simultaneous construction of new thoroughfares and recreational spaces (Radovac 2011: 748–50, 754–5).[100] Even more famously, Haussmann's

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[99] The government attempted to solve the problem by creating an official advertising space on a lesser street. However, posters were unsatisfied with the remoteness of the new location, and ended up placing adverts in both places, even going so far as to deface the pavement of Beijing Avenue. *Qiandongnan Daily* lamented the negative effect of such behaviour on the city's tourist image (Zhiban Zhou and Wang 2011: 5).

[100] In present-day London, most busking activity is channelled into the underground system and designated entertainment spaces such as Covent Garden. Sound artist Peter Cusack (2009) joked during a talk on soundscapes that it used to be permitted to busk anywhere in London except on the tube, whereas nowadays a person can busk on the tube but not outside!

transformation of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century – already mentioned in the Chinese studies literature (e.g. Bray 2005: 73–4) – involved the construction of both wide avenues and large recreational spaces. In Kaili, the ordering of streets, increased leisure time, and increased disposable income, together with the intensifying built environment, all contributed to the need for public leisure spaces. Hence, there has not only been an increase in leisure activity outside the work unit during the last two decades, there has also been a recompression of that activity into designated spaces. Whereas the market provides spaces for profitable leisure activities such as drinking and dining, state-backed squares and parks are necessary to provide space for more physically and morally "healthy" forms of leisure, such as line-dancing and calisthenics.

Secondly, as argued in the previous section, public spaces can contribute to the unique city image of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals. The importance of this contribution has been accentuated by the surrounding "civilization" of the city, which has actually reduced the viability of branding Kaili as a site of *minzu* tourism. Over the centuries, minority areas such as Guizhou province have been subject to numerous civilizing missions emanating from a central power (Harrell 1995b). Whether directed by imperial Confucianism, colonial Christianity or state communism, these missions all took the standpoint that minority groups were uncivilized. This has made cities such as Kaili – with high numbers of minorities – particularly anxious to lose their association with backwardness. However, an assumed lack of civilization is also what gives minority areas their allure as exotic tourist destinations. According to the discourse of internal orientalism, minorities are good at singing and dancing *because* they are pre-modern and backward. Indeed, many Kaili residents felt that the urbanization and modernization of the city had resulted in the loss of its *minzu* flavour. Whereas branding has declared Kaili to be simultaneously modern and *yuanshengtai*, most participants attributed modernity to the city and authentic minority practices to the rural.

The soundscape of outdoor leisure spaces

The attempt to establish a civilized tourist city has been a success in many respects, despite the inherent contradiction described above. Following the intensified civilizing efforts of the early 2000s, Kaili was rewarded with national outstanding tourist city status in 2004, prefectural-level civilized city status in 2005, and provincial-level civilized city status in 2006 (C. Zhang and Liao 2008: 1).[101] These are not empty status symbols: Kaili has established a network of wide avenues and aesthetic public spaces over the past decade, and fieldwork acquaintances who were relatively recent arrivals to the city emphasized its cleanliness. One university student from Hunan province even told me that Kaili citizens were known in his hometown for their good manners, particularly

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[101] At the end of 2011, Kaili was admitted into the pot for applying to the rank of *national* civilized city, making it the first county-level city in Guizhou province to reach this stage in the application process *(Guizhou dushi bao* 2012; R. Wang 2013: 8).

their ordered usage of zebra crossings. However, the actual occurrence of *yuanshengtai* singing and dancing in the city was another matter. From my observation of leisure activity in public spaces, Kaili was an ocean of piped song and line dance. Live music-making, particularly unplugged music-making, was hindered by the marshalling of leisure into public spaces, where the concentration of activity produced a high-decibel environment. With a city brand that relied on visual rather than aural representation, public spaces possessed visual *minzu* characteristics but entirely lacked the acoustic soundscape associated with *yuanshengtai*.

Although there has been no government effort to create a *yuanshengtai* soundscape, there have been scattered references to the problem of noise in local gazetteers and newspaper articles over the last 30 years.[102] The most comprehensive I have found was a noise survey conducted from 1991 to 1995, whose findings were published in a local academic journal (M. Yang and Zhang 1997, statistics reproduced in left-hand columns of figure 3.11). The survey showed a significant leap in the quantity of vehicular traffic, from an average (over 16 named sites) of just 326 cars an hour in 1991 to 869 in 1995. This rise in the quantity of traffic contributed to a jump in the equivalent continuous sound level of these sites, from an average of 65.7 LAeq in 1991 to 71.1 LAeq in 1995 (M. Yang and Zhang 1997: 55).[103] Central sites saw a precipitous rise in both statistics, for example, a rise from 325 to 1,530 vehicles and 68 to 76.2 LAeq at Middle School No.3 over the five years of the survey. These statistics are consistent with the argument throughout this chapter, that Kaili only became a coherent and concentrated city during the early 1990s. In 2013, I carried out a continuation of this noise survey by conducting my own investigations at four of the survey's more central sites. I was able to replicate some of the methods of the original study, including decibel weighting, duration of sound pressure level (SPL) recording, and approximate location of measurement. However, the study did not state at what time of day investigations had been carried out, so there was no way of knowing if the traffic and sound pressure levels reflected conditions in the city during peak or off-peak hours. I therefore took recordings in the morning (7:30-9am), afternoon (2-4pm) and evening (7-9pm) to produce a representative spread of results (see figure 3.11).[104]

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[102] There are parallels here with Sara Cohen's (2007: 213-4) analysis of cultural tourism areas in Liverpool, where there has been focus on the material landscape and on the problem of noise pollution, but little recognition of how the urban soundscape might be positively developed to represent such areas.

[103] The abbreviation LAeq provides two piece of information about these readings. Firstly, these were A-weighted decibel readings, the most common weighting, which attaches less value to low frequency sound. It might have been interesting to also take C-weighted recordings, given the prominence of low-frequency noise (LFN) in urban environments (see Johnson 2010 on LFN in urban space, and Truax 1984:89 on decibel weightings). Secondly, these were readings of the equivalent continuous sound level, that is, a single decibel value for the total sound energy detectable over a period of time, in this case a little over quarter of an hour. In outdoor spaces with fluctuating sound pressure levels, this time average reading is far more useful than an instantaneous reading, which captures sound energy at a single moment in time.

[104] Interestingly, the afternoon results were at similar levels to those of the morning rush hour, with traffic and sound levels only dwindling in the evening.

Location	Vehicles per hour/Decibel level						
	1991	1992	1993	1995	2013 morning	2013 afternoon	2013 evening
No.3 Middle School	325	600	720	1530	2064	2260	1824
	68.0	64.0	66.7	76.2	71.5	70.2	68.7
Water Resource Bureau	203	480	600	1602	3072	2868	2624
	56.4	63.8	68.4	71.9	70.0	69.7	71.0
Prefectural Government	427	780	729	1446	2084	2040	1720
	65.4	66.3	70.3	72.8	70.0	70.1	69.7
Ximahe Bridge	536	498	768	1052	1756	1648	1361
	67.4	66.4	70.4	72.9	75.0	76.3	72.1

Figure 3.11: Table of vehicular volume and decibel levels at street locations (M. Yang and Zhang 1997; fieldwork SPL recordings 2013)

Location	Decibel level		
	2013 morning	2013 afternoon	2013 evening
Wanbo Square	63.8	63.1	68.0
Dashizi Northwest Corner	66.7	69.7	80.1
Zhongbo Plaza	63.6	69	73.3
Apple Hill Park	77	66.4	60.3

Figure 3.12: Table of decibel levels in public spaces (fieldwork SPL recordings 2013)

According to my results, there was another major increase in the volume of vehicular traffic between 1995 and 2013. The water resource bureau – to the south of Dashizi – had witnessed a particularly large increase, testifying to the southward shift of the city in the last decade. In contrast, decibel levels have actually decreased in three of the four locations. Despite a stress on the visual, there were occasional statements during the civilizing project about the need to target traffic-related noise pollution (e.g. Luo 2002b: 2; D. Chen 2003: 33). One specific measure was the switch from Portland cement to asphalt concrete (C. Zhou 2008: 1), while the widening of roads has reduced potentially noisy bottlenecks. The composition of vehicular traffic has also changed considerably; the mid-1990s noise report noted a problem of noisy pedicabs, which have since been replaced by an extensive public bus network, taxis, and private cars. A chaotic multitude of private buses has also disappeared since its identification in the 1990s (Q. Shi 1991: 2). Most importantly, there was no longer the shortage of green verges noted in the 1990s noise report (M. Yang and Zhang 1997: 56–7). These verges not only regulate roads by separating vehicles from pedestrians, but also absorb sound. A verge could be found at three of the four recording sites, and I elected to stand on the pavement side of the verge in order to get a representative recording of pedestrians' everyday aural experiences. After taking a morning recording at No. 3 Middle School, I

experimented with bypassing the verge to make a second recording, with the result of an increase from 71.5 to 75.8 LAeq. Ximahe Bridge was the only site that did not have a verge, and was also the only site which had experienced a significant increase in sound pressure levels.

Figure 3.13: (author's own, based on map in Xiong 1998)

The roads of Kaili were thus significantly more regulated and busier than in previous years, but not necessarily louder. However, focus on the flow of traffic has led to the concentration of consumption- and leisure-oriented activities within a limited number of bounded spaces. As a result, the squares and parks of Kaili are high-decibel environments, where no *yuanshengtai* music could exist. To illustrate the position of amateur music in the public spaces of Kaili, I briefly describe the scene of a public space on Old Street, as encountered during my preliminary fieldwork. Although far smaller than Wanbo Square, this space was also aesthetically prominent, with the Chinese eaves of its pavilion structure highly visible from the auxiliary roads which led from Shaoshan Avenue up to Old Street. The pavilion provided shade for various activities, including outdoor pool tables, barbering and even dentistry. A group of elderly musicians also occasionally gathered here, and I stumbled upon them during my first visit to Kaili. On an early summer afternoon, I watched a male retiree play some tunes on his *dizi* (transverse bamboo flute). They were mostly well-known Chinese hits of the twentieth century, including a number of revolutionary songs. The flutist was later joined by a handful of friends, who sang along to his melodies, and soon ushered me into their little group. However, to end the description at this point would be to credit this group with a level of spatial control that they entirely lacked, since they were drowned out by recorded music from one of the local shops surrounding the pavilion. This piped music also obliterated the aural traces of the surrounding street barbers, dentists and snooker tables.

While the rise of the private car has contributed to the concentration of leisure activity in public spaces, it was construction, consumption and leisure which generated the highest volumes of sound in these spaces. There was actually a marked lack of traffic around the pavilion, with non-essential vehicles prohibited from driving along Old Street, which was not a logical route for most journeys through the city. However, Old Street was a building site during much of my fieldwork, as the road was excavated for the laying of pipes and eventual resurfacing. For a time, a large swathe of the pavilion was filled with construction materials, while the sounds of roadwork merged with the buzz of saws from local hardware stores. Despite this environment, the pavilion was still a popular gathering point for leisure activity. On summer evenings, the central area of the pavilion was occupied by couples waltzing to recorded music. This group competed for acoustic space with the recorded music of two line-dancing groups – one on the periphery of the pavilion, and one in a building just outside of the pavilion – as well as with the half-sung, half-spoken amplified sales pitch of a travelling snake-oil salesman.[105] Few musical instruments would have been audible within this maelstrom of sound. In contrast, local inhabitants recalled that unamplified folk singing had occurred in the same space just a few years back. Wang Taiqi (2004b: 3) also wrote of middle-

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[105] "Snake-oil salesman" in the literal sense; he was selling alternative medicine made from the oil of a variety of snakes.

aged and elderly people singing antiphonal mountain songs in this part of Old Street less than a decade ago, attracting onlookers with their "earthily authentic Kaili style" (*didao de Kaili tuwei*).

A second table of sound level recordings (figure 3.12) further demonstrates the high sound pressure levels found in the public spaces of Kaili. The four sites comprise the most popular outdoor spaces in the city centre: a square (Wanbo), a wide area of pavement at Dashizi intersection, a square within a zone of pedestrian walkways (Zhongbo), and a park (Apple Hill). As chapter five explains, there was relatively little leisure activity in the afternoon, particularly on a hot summer day with little shade, and this session produced the lowest of my readings, 63.1 LAeq in Wanbo Square. Even this was hardly a "quiet area", that is, an area where the sound level is no higher than 55 decibels, as defined by QSIDE, a noise-related research project funded by the European Union.[106] Whereas QSIDE has been mostly concerned with traffic noise, it was construction and piped music from commercial ventures which provided the most substantial contributions to sound levels in the public spaces of Kaili. In certain morning and evening sessions, these were joined by the even higher volumes of dancers' piped music, as well as a miked busker singing to piped music in the evening at Dashizi. Rather than taking sound recordings in the central and loudest parts of public spaces, I chose peripheral spots where music-making was more likely; the periphery of Wanbo Square in the evening was 68.0 LAeq, compared to 77.7 LAeq in the centre. Live music for non-commercial purposes contributed only to the morning reading for Apple Hill Park, where it was comfortably subsumed beneath the piped music of dancers and exercisers.

The concentration of social activity into pavilions, squares and parks has marked these sites as spaces for self-entertainment. However, this self-entertainment must compete with other more powerful users, including renting or busking commercial interests, and a local government which has partially created these spaces for branding purposes. Within the ranks of self-entertainment, dance groups backed with powerful sound systems constituted the aurally dominant force. While high sound levels were a bearable inconvenience for walkers and other leisure seekers, they rendered live music-making almost impossible. There were subsequently two options for musicians: amplify their own sound in the quieter outdoor spaces, particularly Apple Hill Park, or move indoors. Thus, while city branding has created spectacular spaces which exploit the exotic imagining of minority cultural practices as performed outdoors without amplification (e.g. singing across mountains, playing at *lusheng* meets), the majority of local music-making was amplified, located indoors, or both. Ruth Finnegan (1989) has described the "hidden musicians" of Milton Keynes, whose amateur activities have been overlooked by academics in favour of professional music-making. In Kaili, amateur musicians were hidden not only by branding, which did not favour their generic Han-style music, but also by the construction of the built environment and the accompanying soundscape, both of which were unsympathetic towards everyday musical activity.

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[106] http://www.qside.eu/definitions.html (last accessed 30 January 2014).

In this chapter, I have described the spatial history of Kaili since its establishment as a prefectural capital, paying particular attention to the impact of conceived planned space and conceived branded space on the realm of perceived space. Whereas Kaili was once a scattered collection of rural, industrial and administrative-urban spaces, it developed during the post-Mao era into a coherent city. This city subsequently branded itself as a *minzu* tourist destination of rural minority folk practices, with minimal reference to industrial practices. One method of branding the city has involved a strategy of synecdoche, whereby public spaces with *minzu* motifs provided images for promotional literature, as well as accommodating the need for leisure space, which has resulted from increasing levels of urbanization, spare time and income. However, the piped music of dance groups and commerce has saturated these spaces, making it difficult for acoustic amateur music-making – the supposed ideal of *yuanshengtai* – to exist.

Much more will be written about urban amateur musical activity in chapter five, where I describe the fluid spatial practices of amateur groups in Kaili within a challenging environment. Much of this activity has occurred as a semi-continuation of work-unit practices in the shells of old centres, such as the old labour union building, which rented out its rooms to the director of a local choir, as well as other private educational ventures. However, before describing the practical responses of musicians to the urban environment, the next chapter examines the reimagining of space by Kaili residents, both musicians and otherwise, as they have tried to make sense of the disparity between the branding of the city and their perceptions of the urban everyday. This also leads the thesis to a consideration of *yuanshengtai*, as the keyword for the branding of Kaili since the mid-2000s, which emerged from the local shift towards *minzu* tourism identified in this chapter, as well as a nationwide shift towards the consideration of intangible heritage.

Chapter Four: Locating Cultural Authenticity in Kaili Municipality/City

It was about 7:30pm on a summer evening in 2011 when I parted ways with a friend around Wanbo Square, following a post-dinner stroll. Intending to head back to my hotel, I walked a few steps towards Dashizi, before stopping, changing my mind and direction, and walking back towards Wanbo. Curiosity had got the better of me. Just a few minutes prior, I had seen a group of people exit a hotel wearing what I sometimes described in my notes as "battle dress", that is, an elaborate, expensive and "ethnic" costume which I generally only saw worn at staged performances, marriages, and other important events. Highly conspicuous among the jeans, t-shirts and suits of everyday Kaili, this costume also included heavy, rustling silver ornamentation, rendering its wearer cumbersome and audible, even above the sounds of traffic. I was thus able to quickly relocate the group and observe them heading into the headquarters of Qiandongnan Television Station.

At around that point, I recalled that Xue Baojian, a retiree from the Apple Hill Park choir, had recently mentioned his upcoming involvement in a choral singing competition near Wanbo. Already accustomed to the coincidences and connectedness of small-city life, I surmised that he would probably be involved in whatever was taking place inside the television studio, but could not reach him by phone to confirm. Reluctant to walk into an official space unannounced and without identification, I pondered my next move, until a security guard from an adjacent work-unit recognized me from a previous encounter (a second coincidence), and took me into the building. No-one appeared concerned as I walked into the television studio and found a seat in the audience, next to a couple of other local acquaintances, including one whose husband happened to be a judge at the competition (a third coincidence). I ascertained that the event was part of a provincial government-organized multi-part singing competition. The final round of the prefectural stage was about to commence, with a number of groups from Kaili and the surrounding counties competing for the right to progress to the provincial finals in Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou.

Xue Baojian's involvement in the event was somewhat complicated. It was mandatory for each administrative area of Qiandongnan prefecture to send a "representative group" (*daibiao dui*) to participate in the competition.[107] However, Tianzhu county had been either unable or unwilling to comply, and had subsequently paid a sum of money to a local Kaili choir - of which Baojian was a member - to covertly perform on their behalf. Dressed in *minzu* costume, the unofficial proxy group performed *The Miao Family Welcomes Happiness* (*Miaojia yingzhe xingfu lai*), adhering largely to Western choral music in terms of singing style, instrumental accompaniment and group structure, but with the addition of lyrical and melodic elements associated with Miao culture.

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[107] The event in Kaili constituted the Qiandongnan regional final, with the winners progressing to the provincial final in Guiyang. This singing competition was a part of *Colourful Guizhou* (*Duocai Guizhou*), an ongoing series of cultural events aimed at raising the profile of the province (Ouyang 2011: 2).

Unfortunately, the preceding group, from Jinping county, had performed exactly the same song. Consequently, the efforts of Tianzhu's unlikely representative group were received with amusement by the audience, and low marks by the judges.

After his performance, Xue Baojian spotted and joined me in the audience for the rest of the competition, during which time he passed comment on the remaining acts. While around half of the groups adopted a performance style similar to his own group, there were also some acts which Baojian approvingly identified as culturally authentic (*yuanshengtai*). He applied this label to a performance from Liping county, which the hosts presented as a "labour song" (*laodong ge*) of the Dong minority, and which began with performers imitating the sounds of farmyard animals. Baojian enthusiastically commented that the performers were "genuine peasants" (*zhenzheng de nongmin*), wider audience reaction was audibly positive, the television hostess declared that "the lives of working people are really happy", and the judges awarded their highest marks so far. Later, a second Dong act, from Rongjiang county, trooped on stage, and was declared *yuanshengtai* by Baojian even *before* singing had commenced. Just after his remark, the singers were joined on stage by a pianist and a conductor, prompting a swift reappraisal from Baojian; the Dong do not have this kind of thing in their music, he said, this group will definitely get a lower mark than Liping. During the group's performance, he said that the *minzu* flavour of their chosen song had been lost, and spoke contemptuously of the process whereby composers alter village songs and then get villagers to sing their new versions, implying that this was one such example.

There was a notable contrast between Xue Baojian's own actions and his assessment of others. Baojian was involved in a performance which he found amusingly inauthentic; beyond the fact that his Kaili-based group was clandestinely representing another county for money, he also pointed out that the "silver" ornamentation of their costumes consisted mainly of foil. At the same time, he was convinced of the cultural authenticity of other performances in the same competition. This fieldwork vignette is just one of many references to *yuanshengtai* which I encountered in Kaili, whether reading newspapers, talking with acquaintances, or watching singing competitions. *Yuanshengtai* is a term which has become central to the branding and construction of Kaili as a *minzu* tourist city, and which has also exerted an influence on how inhabitants experience their city. References to *yuanshengtai* in Kaili were so pervasive that it is presented in this chapter as a discourse of cultural authenticity, that is, as a conceptualization of authenticity so socially embedded that its essential logic went unquestioned. Whether in the pronouncements of the *Qiandongnan Daily* or the conversations of Apple Hill Park, there was almost unanimous agreement as to the existence and properties of *yuanshengtai*. However, *where* such cultural authenticity existed was another matter entirely, and it was on this matter of location that there was a divergence between the branding and everyday life of Kaili. Whereas official and touristic literature conceived Kaili as a place of authentic minority practices, fieldwork acquaintances

conceived Kaili as a city of "fake" minorities, in contrast to the "real" minority peasants of surrounding *yuanshengtai* villages.

In this chapter, I examine how and why notions of *yuanshengtai* were articulated in Kaili during my fieldwork, and how this intersected with a national discourse of *yuanshengtai*, which has itself operated as part of a global discourse of cultural authenticity. I argue that both national and local understandings of *yuanshengtai* denoted a specific type of cultural authenticity which was rooted in rural place and associated with minorities. Recalling the theoretical discussion of space and place in chapter two, this was *not* the progressive place of human geography, but rather a place which was pre-modern, bounded, rural and remote. In Lefebvrian terms, it was a conceived space, a nostalgic ideal that did not exist within the realm of perceived space. While I initially encountered *yuanshengtai* as a description of musical activity, the discourse extended beyond music to encompass folk culture in general, as well as the places which produced this culture. *Yuanshengtai* denoted a rural-based, mainly ethnic authenticity, and did not encompass forms of urban authenticity commonly found in city branding, such as "old Beijing" culture (see Dong 2003: 1–2), or the architectural heritage of former colonial settlements (see Koga 2008). However, it was highly relevant to Kaili as both a key element of branding, which presented the city as an almost rural destination, and the everyday understanding of *yuanshengtai* as the domain of minorities in surrounding villages, in contrast to the "fake" but modern lifestyle of urban Kaili.

The usage of *yuanshengtai* in Kaili, while certainly influenced by national discourse, has shifted to accommodate both branding needs and everyday experience. In terms of branding, no perceived space could ever exactly reflect the idealized space envisaged by *yuanshengtai*, and so a certain linguistic slippage has occurred within the branding literature in order to facilitate the portrayal of Kaili as *yuanshengtai*. While amenable to the promotion of their city, fieldwork acquaintances generally rejected the notion that Kaili could be considered *yuanshengtai*, and instead reserved this term for the description of surrounding rural counties. In the process, the conceived branded space of Kaili – as homeland of 100 festivals – was relocated to the surrounding villages. With regard to relationality – the fifth quality of space suggested in chapter two – the branded conceived space of *yuanshengtai* came to serve as a contrast to the lived space of Kaili, which was imagined by many of its inhabitants as the urban homeland of sinicized minorities.

Yuanshengtai as authenticity

Yuanshengtai literally translates as "original ecology". This literal translation is clumsy but important, since it highlights the fact that *yuanshengtai* is a strain of authenticity which stresses

both originality and the relationship between people and the natural environment.[108] It is also a relatively new term for the description of cultural products and performers, having become a buzz word of the PRC media during the mid-2000s.[109] While ethnomusicologists have regularly addressed issues of authenticity, tradition and musical change in China (e.g. Kun, Provine, and Thrasher 1981; Lau 1998a; Rees 1998), English-language work on the related but more recent notion of *yuanshengtai* has understandably only just begun to emerge (e.g. M. Yang 2009; Gorfinkel 2012; Pease 2013).

In contrast, PRC-based academics have busily penned articles about *yuanshengtai*. However, far from critiquing the indiscriminate usage of *yuanshengtai* in domestic media, much of this academic output has seemed content to accept the word as an unproblematic addition to the terminology of social sciences and humanities (Weng 2010: 6). Instead of questioning the assumptions and motivations behind the discourse of *yuanshengtai*, many scholars have employed *yuanshengtai* as a means to categorize, celebrate, and advocate the preservation of various folk genres. In those instances where PRC-based scholars have interrogated the notion of *yuanshengtai*, the most common result has been rejection. For example, Naran Bilik, a social scientist at Fudan University, has critiqued *yuanshengtai* as a nostalgic imagining of timeless culture by urban inhabitants (2010: 16). Similarly critical, Weng Naiqun, an anthropologist of minorities at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, has concluded that *yuanshengtai* is ultimately no more than an advertising term, and destined to a short lifespan (2010: 13). While these critiques are certainly useful, and have influenced the formation of this chapter, I am more concerned with considering how *yuanshengtai* functions in everyday discourse, rather than dismissing it as a flawed concept.

Weng Naiqun has also compared *yuanshengtai* to the idea of the "unpolluted native" in early anthropology (2010: 5), yet there have been few other attempts to situate the study of *yuanshengtai* within the wider discourse of cultural authenticity. This is unfortunate, since there has been a good deal of literature in tourism studies, sometimes labelled constructivist, whose approach towards cultural authenticity in modern tourism could be usefully applied to the discourse of *yuanshengtai* (e.g. Bruner 1994; E. Cohen 1988; Olsen 2002). Such literature has taken the epistemological view that authenticity is constructed by subjects, rather than inherent to the cultural object or person that

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[108] It should also be noted that the exact meaning of *yuanshengtai* has been contested. Scholars have generally agreed that it is an amalgamation of two words, the second of which, "*shengtai*", means "ecology", or as one musicologist has described it, "the existence and development of organisms within the natural environment" (J. Qiao 2006: 26). However, there has been less consensus over the first word, "*yuan*", which could be translated as "original", "primitive" or even "place". According to the social scientist Zhu Bingxiang (2010: 1), there have been two main interpretations: (1) "*yuan*" refers to time (i.e. original), and *yuanshengtai* thus denotes culture which exists in an untouched state; (2) "*yuan*" refers to place, to create the concept of "place ecology", that is, the ways in which a group of people adapt their culture to the surrounding natural environment. The former understanding has been more common. Additionally, fieldwork acquaintances commonly interpreted "*yuan*" as shorthand for "*yuanshi*", which can be translated as "original", "primeval", or "primitive", according to context.

[109] One study of Chinese tourism has dated the beginning of the *yuanshengtai* phenomenon to 2007 (Y. Zhu 2012: 312) but 2003 is a more commonly cited starting year (e.g. M. Yang 2009: 2; Weng 2010: 6).

is deemed authentic. Of particular relevance to this chapter, anthropologist Edward Bruner (1994: 400) has closely connected authenticity with authority. While the authority he described was the official stamp of authenticity granted to heritage sites by state governments, the authority described in this chapter is less formal; it is the authority derived from geographical hierarchies that allows urbanites to authenticate rural minorities and their customs, and thereby reassert their belonging to a modern and sinicized urban society.

As a socio-spatial process rather than an object, authenticity varies according to differing configurations of society across time and space. Dean MacCannell (1973; 1999 [1976]), the trailblazer of tourism studies, provided an interpretation of how authenticity was constructed under the specific conditions of Western modernity. He argued that the Western tourist's quest for authenticity is motivated by the sense of inauthenticity produced by the fragmented and alienating experience of the modern everyday (1973: 589–90). Since authenticity is perceived as absent from the spatial-temporal territory of modernity, tourists search for authenticity in sites that they consider both remote (spatially distant) and pre-modern (temporally distant). However, this quest is doomed to failure; there can be no escape from the fragmented everyday of modernity, which pursues the tourist wherever he or she may travel (MacCannell 1973: 597; MacCannell 1999: 7, 13 [1976]).

MacCannell's analysis of authenticity provided a useful link between tourism and the mundane everyday.[110] In contrast, more recent academic work on tourism has sometimes been sidetracked into a less fruitful quest for a viable conceptualization of the authentic. MacCannell, for example, has been attacked, with limited justification,[111] for believing that there could be something authentic in the world of the pre-modern, but that tourists were simply unable to obtain it. Academics have sub-categorized other academics' definitions of authenticity,[112] found fault with

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[110] During the same decade, Lefebvre (1991a: 352–3 [1974]) made a similar argument: individuals wish to escape from the everyday *space of consumption*, a quantitative zone controlled by state and market forces, by travelling to places with unique qualities; however, the market is only one step behind the first batch of travellers, and moves to exploit desires for qualitative space, while simultaneously exerting a homogenizing influence, to create destinations for the *consumption of space*.

[111] It is not altogether clear whether MacCannell was willing to accept the consequence of his argument and be enclosed within his structure of modernity. At times, he implied that we are all tourists, and so all equally unable to distinguish between staged authenticity and real authenticity (1999: 1, 9 [1976]). Elsewhere, he appeared to have somehow transcended modernity to successfully distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic. For criticisms of MacCannell, see Cohen (1988), Bruner (1994), Taylor (2001), Olsen (2002), and Gotham (2002).

[112] For example, scholars have distinguished between objectivist, constructivist and postmodernist/existentialist conceptions of authenticity (e.g. N. Wang 1999: 351; E. Cohen and Cohen 2012b: 1296). However, these categories contain significant internal differences. For example, it is odd to group Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard together in regards to authenticity, whatever their postmodern associations: Eco (1986) argued that the fake was better than the original, but preserved the link between the two; whereas Baudrillard (1983), far more radically, declared that the link between original and counterfeit had been severed.

existing definitions, and suggested their own alternatives,[113] often with minimal reference to fieldwork situations. As with the act of tourism itself, the study of authenticity in tourism has sometimes appeared to be an attempt to escape the everyday.[114] In contrast, I approach the discourse of *yuanshengtai* as a means to understand the everyday of Kaili. Whether or not *yuanshengtai* can exist is irrelevant to the two ultimate goals of this chapter, namely, to demonstrate how local branding sells Kaili as a *yuanshengtai* destination and how the inhabitants of Kaili conceptualize rural *minzu* authenticity in opposition to their inauthentic but modernized city.

Returning again to existing tourism studies, the scope of this academic field has extended to include research on non-Western tourists (E. Cohen and Cohen 2012a: 2179; e.g. Oakes 2005; Chan 2009; Lim 2009; Winter et al. 2009). There has also been a theoretical shift in regards to the object of the tourist gaze, who is no longer regarded as simply a passive "touree" (e.g. van den Berghe and Keyes 1984; critiqued by Peers 2007: 64), but rather as a fully-rounded individual possessing agency, as can be seen in Louisa Schein's (1997: 77) depiction of Miao women financially exploiting the touristic desire for photographs of exotic minorities. In this chapter, I bypass the old binary of active tourist and passive touree by focusing on urban inhabitants in a tourist destination who considered themselves neither tourists nor tourees. Localizing the question "how does one live in a branded city?" (Donald and Gammack 2007: 1), I consider how the inhabitants of Kaili live in a city branded as *yuanshengtai* when the perceived space of the everyday clashes with this branding. I therefore follow the branding to the city resident rather than the tourist or the touree, whose interpretations of branding are largely beyond the scope of this discussion.[115]

As with Lefebvre's theory of space, MacCannell's theory of authenticity is incomplete due to its focus on Western experiences. In studies of Asia, where domestic tourism has become increasingly prominent, it becomes necessary to "grapple with the tensions between universalism and cultural relativism" (Winter, Teo, and Chang 2009: 7), and thereby avoid treating a discourse such as *yuanshengtai* as either entirely compatible or irreconcilable with existing Eurocentric theories of cultural authenticity. While tourism in China has certainly not developed in the same manner as mass Western tourism, there are also similarities between notions of *yuanshengtai* and MacCannell's Western-oriented conceptualization of cultural authenticity. Tourism as commercial

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[113] See, for example, arguments for abandoning variations of object authenticity in favour of existential authenticity (N. Wang 1999; Reisinger and Steiner 2006; Steiner and Reisinger 2006). Taylor (2001) has even argued for the replacement of authenticity with sincerity, a term that previous literature had associated with the relatively fixed social roles of the feudal mode of production (e.g. Trilling 1972; summarized in Berger 1973).

[114] This has been a problem in sociology far more than in anthropology, which has produced ethnographically-grounded works such as Beth Notar's (2006a: chap. 2) study of transnational travellers in Dali, Yunnan province, or Edward Bruner's (1994) work on museum professionals involved in the reconstruction of the village where Abraham Lincoln lived.

[115] Tourists and tourees only feature in this chapter insofar as they were conceived by the inhabitants of Kaili.

leisure was typically regarded as unacceptably bourgeois in Maoist China,[116] and continued to be seen by some government officials as an immoral distraction from the task of production during the post-Mao era (Nyíri 2009: 153–4). The recent explosion of tourism in southwest China over the last couple of decades has been entwined with the notion of heritage, which has also experienced a dramatic reversal in fortunes. Although heritage was not deliberately targeted for destruction during the 1980s – as it had been during the 1966 attack on the "Four Olds" – the recent domestic importance attached to heritage is predated by backpacker tourism in southwest China, which saw the likes of Lijiang and Dali in Yunnan province become popular destinations for independent foreign tourists during the late 1980s and 1990s. China joined UNESCO's International Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1985, but domestic heritage tourism did not really become properly established until the mid-1990s (Su and Teo 2009: 28), with Lijiang gaining UNESCO world heritage status in 1997 only after many years as a backpacker destination. [117] Moreover, the intangible aspect of heritage tourism only became truly prominent in the mid-2000s, alongside China's ratification of the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2004 (Evans and Rowlands 2014) and the emergence of the discourse of *yuanshengtai*.

The anthropologist Stevan Harrell (2013: 287–8) has claimed an inherent tension in China's participation in the world heritage movement; it aspires to international standards as part of its nation-building efforts, yet these standards – with their stress on the authentic original – conflict with a Confucian tradition which does not clearly distinguish between the authentic and the new. According to Harrell, this tension has produced a tendency towards reconstruction and restoration in China, rather than preservation. [118] Scholars have also argued that Chinese domestic tourists expect tourist sites to be developed and performance-oriented, in contrast to authenticity-seeking Westerners (Oakes 1998: 2; Oakes 2005: 183–4; Nyíri 2009: 156). Yet these arguments either pre-date or overlook the discourse of *yuanshengtai*, which absolutely valorizes the authentic original, even if the ideals of *yuanshengtai* can never be realized in perceived space. Many inhabitants of Kaili felt that both domestic and foreign tourists attached great value to authenticity, and as I argue below, conceptualized an authenticity of the original, rather than of the reconstruction. It is therefore appropriate to understand *yuanshengtai* as belonging to a global discourse of cultural authenticity, which bears comparison with MacCannell's concept of authenticity-seeking tourism as an attempt to escape the inauthentic modern everyday.

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[116] Of course, this ignores socialism's own version of tourism, which consisted of visits to model villages such as Dazhai or Xiaojinzhuang; see Brown (2012: chap. 8) for a description of the latter site.
[117] As an example of the shift from international backpacker tourism to mass domestic tourism, some 2.3 million domestic visited Dali in 1995, compared to half a million between 1984 and 1990 (Notar 2006a: 54).
[118] See also Karlström (2009) and Evans and Rowlands (2014) on the ideal of preservation through renewal and reconstruction in East and Southeast Asia.

Minzu and rural place in _yuanshengtai_ discourse

The conceptualization of _what_ constituted _yuanshengtai_ did not differ markedly across the various contexts – national competition, branding literature, and everyday conversation – discussed in this chapter. What differed was the matter of _where yuanshengtai_ was located, as well as _why_ this concept was evoked. Before considering these differences, I first outline the common conceptualization of _yuanshengtai_, beginning with the _China Central Television National Young Singer Competition_ (_Zhongyang dianshi tai qingnian geshou dianshi dajiangsai_, henceforth the _Young Singer Competition_), as a prominent musical example of the national discourse of _yuanshengtai_. I argue that _yuanshengtai_ denotes – or at least denoted[119] – authentic folk practices which are rooted in rural place and associated with minority groups. Fieldwork participants, in particular, also used the term to denote rural place itself, as a site which nurtures folk practices and facilitates their oral transmission.

From 1986 until 2004, the _Young Singer Competition_ consisted of three singing categories: _tongsu_ (pop), _meisheng_ (_bel canto_), and _minzu_. In this context of singing technique, _minzu_ refers to a "national" style of professionalized folk singing, which often draws upon minority musical elements, but tends to stress scientific technique rather than cultural authenticity. Since the early years of the Mao era, and before, musical development in China has been heavily influenced by the intertwined goals of modernization and nationalism,[120] prompting the transformation of local genres, instruments and singing techniques into "scientific" national forms. _Minzu_ singing is one such national form, in combining certain elements from Chinese folk opera and folksong with the techniques and training methods of Western art music (Jia 2008: 37).[121]

Organizers of the _Young Singer Competition_ added a _yuanshengtai_ singing category to the three existing categories in 2006, along with a fifth category of "group" (_zuhe_) singing.[122]

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[119] As with the description of other fieldwork phenomena, I generally use the past tense when referring to the discourse of _yuanshengtai_. Firstly, changes may have occurred to the usage of _yuanshengtai_ in Kaili since fieldwork. Secondly, it should be noted that the Younger Singer Competition returned in 2013 – after a hiatus – with the notable absence of a _yuanshengtai_ singing category. Qin Xinmin, the competition director, provided two somewhat odd reasons for this removal, as paraphrased in a newspaper article: firstly, _yuanshengtai_ materials could not be newly produced, so the competition had already basically exhausted the available repertoire; and secondly, _yuanshengtai_ singers had proved so successful that the new category had upset the overall balance of the competition (H. Li 2013: 11). However, it still remains to be seen whether Weng Naiqun (2010: 13) is correct in his assertion that _yuanshengtai_ is a passing fad.

[120] Scholars have already comprehensively examined the values which have informed efforts at musical modernization by state-funded conservatories, composers and ensembles, as well as their musical results, in both China (e.g. Holm 1984; Kraus 1989; Stock 1996; Lau 1998b; Jones 2001) and the wider world (e.g. El-Shawan 1984; Rice 1994; Davis 1997).

[121] There are therefore similarities between the _bel canto_ and _minzu_ techniques (Gorfinkel 2012: 104), to the extent that musicologist Zhu Fengyu (2008: 33) has described the latter as "the bastard offspring" of the former. _Bel canto_ is typically described as "open and resonant" (_dakai yu gongming_), while _minzu_ is "head-based and bright" (_kaoqian yu mingliang_) (F. Zhu 2008: 32). See chapter six for more on these techniques.

[122] These five categories constituted a common format for official singing competitions during the late-2000s and during my fieldwork. For example, the _Colourful Guizhou_ series of cultural events – one of which was described in the chapter introduction – published its stipulations for another singing contest in 2008 with the same five categories as the _Young Singer Competition_ (DGZ 2008: 2).

According to ethnomusicologist Rowan Pease (2013), this *yuanshengtai* category was introduced into such competitions in order to satisfy increased audience demand for authenticity, which could not be met by the professionalized *minzu* category. Whereas *minzu* singers were conservatoire-trained, *yuanshengtai* singers were to be amateurs who had been raised in an environment permeated with folk music. Whereas *minzu* singers performed in Mandarin, *yuanshengtai* singers were to sing in their original dialect or minority language. In contrast to both the *minzu* and *bel canto* styles, with their strict, standardized technical demands, *yuanshengtai* lacked consistency of technique, with singers potentially performing in any folk style from one of China's 27 provinces and autonomous regions. Thus, "*yuanshengtai* singing style" (*yuanshengtai changfa*) is an oxymoron for musicologist Zhu Fengyu (2008: 32), who has argued that *yuanshengtai* denotes a "mode of existence" (*yizhong cunzai fangshi*) rather than a single vocal technique. This notion of a "mode of existence" provided some coherence to the category of *yuanshengtai*. In terms of singing technique, instrumentation and clothing, a *yuanshengtai* entry – in its ideal form[123] – was an authentic rendition of those everyday practices which have emerged from an original ecology, that is, from a locality defined by pre-modern relations between humans and the natural environment.

With regard to both the *yuanshengtai* category of national competitions and the comments of Kaili inhabitants, *yuanshengtai* was not merely a description of a folk practice, but also a description of the place that had produced this practice. And yet when watching events such as the *Young Singer Competition*, it would be easy to forget about place – despite the literal meaning of *yuanshengtai* – and think solely in terms of peoples, such has been the predominance of minority performers. Ethnomusicological research on the 2006 competition has shown that there was a far higher proportion of minority entrants in the *yuanshengtai* category than in the other categories (M. Yang 2009: 55). "Can Han Chinese also have *yuanshengtai* music?" was a revealing audience question put forward during one round of the *2010 Young Singer Competition*, as first broadcast on 22 June. Equally revealing was the somewhat disgruntled reaction of the designated expert, as he answered that "of course" *yuanshengtai* was not specific to minorities. One of my interviews, with Nicholas,[124] a university student at Kaili University, and member of K-Vox, an amateur *a cappella* group, further revealed the semi-automatic association of *yuanshengtai* with minorities. His initial comments about *yuanshengtai* specifically referenced minorities, prompting me to ask the question, "must *yuanshengtai* be of minorities?". "No", came the response, "you can only say that *yuanshengtai* originates from minorities", then after a pause, "you can only say that minorities are representatives of *yuanshengtai*" (*zhi neng shuo shaoshu minzu shi yuanshengtai de daibiao*) (Interview: 18 May 2012).

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[123] It must be stressed that *yuanshengtai* certainly did not always appear in this ideal form; Qinghai Television's entry to the *2010 Young Singer Competition* included two performers dancing in a two-piece yak costume.

[124] Remaining with the convention established in chapter three, I have used English pseudonyms for individuals who preferred to use their English names when interacting with me.

Rather than *yuanshengtai* being restricted to minorities, it is usually minorities who are generally thought to exist in those conditions which facilitate the continued existence of *yuanshengtai* customs. As implied by the literal translation of original ecology, a *yuanshengtai* custom is the cultural product of a specific type of environment or place. Indeed, according to stricter definitions, a performance could only be considered *yuanshengtai* if it takes place in its original "singing environment" (*gechang huanjing*) (J. Qiao 2006: 26). As a consequence, there has been debate as to whether performances at studio-based events such as the *Young Singer Competition* could be considered *yuanshengtai*. For example, Zhu Fengyu (2008: 32) has suggested that an alternative term – *yuanxingtai* (original form) – be used to describe a staged performance of this kind, arguing that it might adhere to authenticity of form, but not to authenticity of location, since it occurs outside of the environment in which the relevant folk custom has been historically transmitted and practised. This is somewhat reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's (2008: 22–4 [1936]) famous conceptualization of the authenticity, or aura, of an artwork, as being derived from its existence in a particular time and place; the aura is always lost in the process of reproduction, even if the resulting replica appears flawless.[125] And as with the concept of the aura, which only becomes important as a result of reproduction, there is a twist to Zhu's argument, with his assertion that *yuanshengtai*, as a cultural authenticity of form *and* environment, can only exist in the imaginations of musical scholars and audiences.[126]

In contrast to Zhu, most of my fieldwork encounters, relevant newspaper articles and national competitions projected the understanding that non-staged *yuanshengtai* existed in bounded, rural place. Interviewee Nicholas, for example, tapped into common knowledge when he stressed the lack of electricity in *yuanshengtai*, both in terms of musical performance and everyday life. With the absence of electricity, "everything is done using what is given by the natural world" (Interview: 18 May 2012). Another interviewee, Barbara, a young office worker in Kaili, added a certain timelessness to this notion of naturalness, explaining that *yuanshengtai* is "a really natural thing, it is what it is; over a millennium, a century, a decade, it has maintained the same appearance, and it hasn't changed" (Interview: 30 March 2012). Barbara was specifically referring to places in Qiandongnan that she had visited as a student, which she said had been *yuanshengtai* prior to their "development" (*kaifa*) and "commercialization" (*shangyehua*). Many fieldwork participants used these two words as the antitheses of *yuanshengtai*, in describing customs and places which had

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[125] Qiao Jianzhong has also questioned whether performances transported to studios and stages can be considered *yuanshengtai*, only to arrive at a slightly bizarre conclusion. Despite admitting that such performances cannot be strictly called *yuanshengtai*, he claimed that they are manifestations of everybody's ideals in regards to *yuanshengtai*, and will certainly assist in the preservation of the real thing (2006: 27)!

[126] Following Zhu's argument to its logical conclusion, *yuanxingtai* performances are incidences of the precession of simulacra, whereby the representation precedes the original (Baudrillard 1983: 1–2). However, his position has been the exception rather than the rule. While there has been much debate as to whether staged performance can be considered *yuanshengtai* (e.g. Mu 2004; J. Qiao 2006; Mu 2007; J. Qiao 2011; N. Zhang 2011), most authors have appeared to assume that *yuanshengtai* does exist somewhere, just not necessarily on stage.

been modernized and "spoiled" (*bianwei le*), particularly as a result of tourism. However, Barbara, amongst others, also qualified her remarks with the assertion that a place or custom *can* change and still be *yuanshengtai*, but that this change is the result of natural evolution, rather than purposeful (*keyi de*) transformation by external forces (Interview: 30 March 2012). As one young university teacher explained, relying on something of a stock description, *yuanshengtai* has "not been affected too much by outside culture" (*meiyou shoudao hen duo wailai wenhua de yingxiang*) (Interview: 4 April 2012).

Such comments described an idealized *rural* place, where *yuanshengtai* customs are the result of a relationship between local people and a pristine natural environment, without interruption from national or global forces. In addition to fieldwork conversations and newspaper commentary, musical and lyrical elements of *yuanshengtai* performance have similarly stressed the natural and the rural, such as the vocal mimicry of the cicada and the cuckoo in performances of Dong song,[127] or the lyrical references to clean streams and water buffalo in songs performed by Ah You Duo, a famous Miao singer. Undisturbed by the noises of industrialization and urbanization, folk music and environment intertwine; for example, Ah You Duo's songs have referenced the playing of acoustic instruments, even of tree leaves, and the musicality of nature (e.g. babbling brooks).

Given this underlying conceptualization of place, it is no wonder that *yuanshengtai* has so often been associated with the minorities of China, particularly of the southwest, since these groups are themselves frequently associated with the rural, the natural and the premodern. The representation of minorities in China constitutes a kind of oriental orientalism (Gladney 1994), or internal orientalism (Schein 2000), as examined in chapter two, whereby an urban, masculine and modern Han is constructed against a rural, feminine and pre-modern minority. Louisa Schein's work in this area is particularly relevant. She has argued that there was a cultural identity crisis in 1980s China, sparked by the destructive years of the Cultural Revolution and the imported foreign cultural products of the early reform years. Cosmopolitan Han Chinese consequently looked to rural minority cultures as "reservoirs of still-extant authenticity" (Schein 1997: 71–2). However, it should be noted that there were also incidences of film, pop music, and literature which stressed an authentic *Han* identity rooted in agricultural place.[128] The represented traditions were located in a rural place geographically distant from the city; this meant a focus on minorities, given their demographic concentration in the mountainous and inland regions of China, but also an interest in the Han folk traditions of areas such as Shaanxi province. However, while the Han peasantry may have possessed exotic traditions, dwelling on the existence of this social group highlighted class

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[127] See, for example, ethnomusicologist Catherine Ingram's (2012: 66) description of the *Cicada Song*.

[128] In film, the so-called fifth generation examined the customs of both rural minorities (e.g. *The Horse Thief*) and rural Han (e.g. *Yellow Earth*, *Red Sorghum*). In music, Northwest Wind (*Xibeifeng*) was a proto-rock genre which incorporated melodies from the rural Han music of northwest China. In literature, roots-seeking writers imagine the authentic roots of Chinese civilization in rural areas, arguably as a counter to the CCP-dominated urban areas in which they dwelt (Lee 1993: 377), with the portrayal of both Han and minority practices.

differences that threatened the unity of the Han *minzu*; any focus on classes of Han was unwelcome at a time when the CCP had abandoned the Maoist goal of eradicating class distinctions (Andreas 2009: 213–4). In contrast, the minority peasant was the perfect foil for the construction of a modern Han identity. Meanwhile, the minority urbanite, whose circumstances and opinions are an important element of this chapter, was mostly invisible.

In the early twenty-first century, the discourse of *yuanshengtai* has been a continuation of this search for the rural authentic. However, this search has also been accelerated by a shift towards the intertwined political strategies of urbanism and consumption. In terms of consumption, the ability to differentiate between the authentic original and the counterfeit has become a potential matter of life and death as a consequence of *shanzhai* (knock-off) culture (see Wallis and Qiu 2012). Facilitated by minimal protection of intellectual copyright, this innovative strain of commercialism has involved the sale of not only fake clothing brands but also fake milk powder and even fake eggs. Thus, in her study of the tourist town of Dali, in Yunnan province, the anthropologist Beth Notar (2006b) has argued that authenticity is a matter of concern not only for Western travellers but also local inhabitants. Increased commodification has contributed to "authenticity anxiety" among Dali townspeople, who, in their role as consumers, have become increasingly concerned about the circulation of fake products and fake money (i.e. counterfeit notes) (Notar 2006b: 64–70).

Somewhat paradoxically, the commodification of artistic practice has also rendered *yuanshengtai* increasingly open to interpretation, in order to meet the assumed tastes of target consumers. During my fieldwork, it sometimes seemed that just about any kind of musical performance could be sold as *yuanshengtai*, with professional personnel, Mandarin lyrics and piped accompaniment all working their way into the mix. Comparing the relative success of two female Korean entrants into the *yuanshengtai* category of the *Young Singer Competition*, Rowan Pease (2013) suggested that being *too* authentic could actually be a vote-loser. Whereas one singer played to the cameras and gained second place, the second singer kept her style guttural, did not smile, and barely addressed the audience during performance, prompting one internet commentator to suggest that she sing in a more adapted style.

The spread of China's urban fabric has weakened the physical boundaries between the city and the countryside but has had a more ambivalent impact on conceived and lived boundaries. In terms of physical boundaries, an increase in leisure time and mobility, as well as improved transport, has meant that predominantly rural areas such as Qiandongnan are easily accessible for tourists from the major cities. Yet this is just one aspect of a dual process, as described by the anthropologist Jenny Chio (2011: 60–1), whereby the rural is brought closer to modern China through infrastructure development but simultaneously characterized as distant in order to serve as an attractive destination for domestic tourism. Under such conditions, the rural, more than ever, becomes the nurturer of traditions which are threatened by urbanization and modernization. Although an urban authenticity is possible, the city is no place for *yuanshengtai* as the fragile,

orally-transmitted folk practices of bounded rural culture. The spread of the urban fabric – in terms of both tourism and infrastructure – threatens the existence of what could be considered *yuanshengtai*, but it is this same threat which makes *yuanshengtai* valuable and accessible. This is the contradiction with which Kaili has to contend; it has to present itself both as an accessible, developed tourist destination *and* the homeland of 100 festivals. It is these conflicting goals which have produced a branding strategy which actually collapses conceived boundaries, as the branding of Kaili blurs the city proper with the rural outskirts of its municipal territory, as described below.

Yuanshengtai and the branding of Kaili

In the previous section, I argued that the discourse of *yuanshengtai* describes a culturally authentic way of life rooted in rural place and associated with minorities. However, *yuanshengtai* has also proven to be a shifting discourse which can be manipulated to suit circumstances and purposes. In the branding of Kaili as a tourist destination, the term has been closely connected with specific minority cultures but its exact location within the administrative area of Kaili has often been left unclear. This is because the rural place envisaged by *yuanshengtai* is a conceived branded space rather than a physical reality. This is not a significant problem for performances of *yuanshengtai* in Beijing television studios, since they are but manifestations of the *yuanshengtai* that supposedly exists in remote areas. However, Qiandongnan constitutes one of those remote areas, and thus has the impossible task of meeting the criteria of *yuanshengtai* place.[129] Within Qiandongnan, those villages which come closest to according with the notion of *yuanshengtai* are also the most remote and inaccessible. They are, of course, closest to the *yuanshengtai* ideal for the very reason that they have not been at the centre of tourism development. The urban centre of Kaili, meanwhile, has been transformed by tourism to the extent that it can no longer be easily packaged as *yuanshengtai*. As with the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lijiang, Kaili has needed to internationalize and modernize in order to become an international tourist destination – as well as a civilized city (see chapter three) – but also to maintain its local flavour (Su and Teo 2009: 2). A branding strategy has therefore arisen – whether deliberate or otherwise – which has linked together two types of location: those with resources which can be represented as *yuanshengtai* (i.e. distant villages); and those in the business of selling *yuanshengtai* (i.e. Kaili as economic centre). Rather than the city simply leading the rural periphery, the city has also become reliant on the assumed resources of the rural for its continued prosperity.

In the previous chapter, I focused on the construction of ethnicized public spaces within the city as part of a strategy of synecdoche, whereby photos of these parts come to represent the whole. In Kaili, this has dovetailed with a second process of branding, which blurs the periphery with the centre. This is a far less commonplace strategy, at least in the context of international branding

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[129] After all, if Qiandongnan is no more *yuanshengtai* than the spectacles offered by television shows and minority theme parks, then why would tourists bother making the journey?

discourse. Take, for example, the branding of London, as described by Doreen Massey (2007). When Massey wrote of the strategy of synecdoche, she was mainly referring to the branding of the economy, and the promotion of the financial industry as if it were London's *only* industry (2007: 41–2). She did not devote significant consideration to how this strategy was also extended to the built environment, but the process is clear enough; financial sites (e.g. the Bank of England, Canary Wharf) and tourist attractions (the Tower of London, Millennium Bridge) are separated from their surroundings and fused together to represent the whole. These spectacular sites are all located within the perceived centre of London, although in some cases these sites may have prompted a partial reimagining of where the centre is located. Outer suburbs such as Bromley and Bexley, meanwhile, are as invisible as the less affluent inner city areas of Lambeth and Southwark. Greater London is not so great, in terms of representational power.[130]

I found that Kaili centre had a different relationship with its periphery. Agricultural rather than suburban – as a consequence of the manner in which municipalities have been demarcated since the 1980s (see chapter three) – this periphery was the supposed source of a *yuanshengtai* culture which has been utilized to brand the whole of Kaili. Despite the construction of central landmarks with minority markers, Kaili cannot persuasively advertise itself as the homeland of 100 festivals without reference to this periphery, as a consequence of the infrastructural development and urbanization described in chapter three. The prominence of the periphery in tourism branding has been such that the rural village is at times representative of Kaili as a whole, while the urban centre only appears in the guise of ethnicized public spaces, or in sections of texts where assurances about local levels of modernization are provided.

I illustrate this branding strategy through reference to a short article written by the propaganda department of the Kaili city party committee (KSSX 2010). The two-page article adheres to a spatial template common to much of the promotional literature on Kaili. It begins by situating Kaili geographically, and listing official titles; for example, Kaili is a prefectural capital and an officially-designated tourism city/town. Following this introduction, the article focuses on minority customs, with sections on festivals, the *lusheng*, and bull-fighting, all of which are located in Kaili. But what is this Kaili in which these customs are located? The first section to follow the introduction, entitled "The homeland of one hundred festivals", begins by describing Kaili as a

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[130] Notable exceptions are those inner suburban areas which advertise a kind of urban authenticity, such as Shoreditch and Hoxton in London, Williamsburg in New York, and Dashanzi in Beijing. Initially establishing themselves as hip and anti-tourist colonies of artists, these areas are increasingly located in peripheral areas where rent is still affordable, including abandoned industrial premises. Once their fame has been established, these areas become attractive to tourists and real-estate speculators for their urban cool. However, such developments also lead to a perceived loss of urban authenticity. Kaili did not possess areas of this kind during my fieldwork, but the tension between commodification and authenticity exists in regard to both Shoreditch and *yuanshengtai* place. See Zukin (1982) on the spatial transformation from semi-derelict industrial district to artistic enclave to gentrified neighbourhood which has occurred in parts of Manhattan, as well as more musically-oriented accounts pertaining to Liverpool (Cohen 2007: 111-3) and Manchester (Milestone 2000).

"multi-*minzu* city/town"; the Chinese word "*chengshi*" is more nebulous than the concept of "city", in that it can describe either a city or a town, but it does unequivocally denote an urban settlement. There are no population statistics in the introduction, so it is difficult at this point, assuming no prior knowledge on the part of the reader, to deduce the size and intensity of life in Kaili from the text alone. However, a fuzzy panoramic photo of Kaili, surrounded by mountains, appears at the top of the page, carrying the caption "highland style" (*gaoyuan fengcai*). Scrutiny of both text and photo should therefore lead to the conclusion that Kaili is a small city.

In many ways, this conclusion is correct, Kaili *is* a small city. However, it is also a municipality (*shi*). This municipality extends beyond the city to include a number of "*zhen*" and "*xiang*", which officially translate as "town" and "township" respectively, but which are best understood as denoting largely rural areas. According to official terminology, Kaili *shi* refers to Kaili municipality. However, the "*shi*" may also be dropped, so that a reference to "Kaili" could refer to either the city proper or the municipality. Following initial references to Kaili as a "city" (*chengshi*), the text draws attention to Kaili's reputation as the homeland of 100 festivals, and in doing so, shifts its scope from the city to the 1,306km^2 of the municipality, over which where is a claimed average of one festival every 10km^2. The space of the municipality is homogenized with this statistic, with no indication of any disparity between rural and urban areas. There is no direct announcement to indicate that the article has shifted from city proper to municipality; no usage of the word "*shi*", just a reference to 1,306km^2, which would seem far too large (if read carefully) to constitute an urban settlement.

A couple of sentences later, the article does refer to the fact that different *villages* hold their festivals at different dates. This is a more spatially specific statement, and yet it is made primarily to assure tourists that there is a good chance of encountering a festival no matter when they come to "Kaili". This statement could refer to either Kaili municipality or city. The reference to villages makes the former seem more likely, yet the fact that the article labels itself as an introduction to the "city/town" (*chengshi*) of Kaili – carrying the subheading "city soul" (*chengshi zhi hun*) and without a single reference to "Kaili *shi*" (municipality) – also makes the latter a coherent possibility. The article then mentions the most famous local festival, the "China: Kaili Gannangxiang International Lusheng Festival".[131] The article does not immediately explain where this festival is held, but the answer is contained in the name: the festival is held simultaneously in both Kaili city *and* Gannangxiang, a *lusheng* arena in Zhouxi town, itself located in the wider Kaili municipality.

As the article progresses on to a second page, there is a clearer focus on the rural parts of Kaili municipality under a section entitled "Rural tourism overflows with *minzu* flavour". There is even mention of a specific space, Nanhua village, as a popular tourist destination. Finally, the article

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[131] Note that this is the same event as the China-Guizhou-Kaili International Lusheng Festival introduced in chapter three, with a subtle change of name to emphasize the rural *lusheng* arena of Gannangxiang.

returns to the city itself, with references to the likes of Nationalities Stadium and Yang'a'sha Square. The article clearly situates these buildings within the main neighbourhood districts of Kaili city (*Kaili chengqu zhuyao jiedao*). This section also contains a sentence referring to the *yuanshengtai* culture of "Kaili". In terms of the *yuanshengtai* discourse identified earlier, this would seem to be a reference to Kaili municipality, yet the cotext suggests otherwise: the section is entitled "City architecture embodies Miao and Dong culture"; and the specific sentence states that *yuanshengtai* culture is one of the reasons why Kaili deserves the name of "international tourist city". The section then stresses the need to increase the pace of city construction by fusing economic development with cultural tourism. In spatial summary, the article begins with the city, expands to the municipality to include various village practices, and then returns to the city.

Beyond the photo of the city surrounded by mountains, the article has three more photos: two of the stadium and the municipal administrative headquarters at night; and one of a picturesque Miao village, whose wooden structures are bounded by a hillside, a river and a highway. These images offer a good example of how a strategy of synecdoche works alongside the blurring of centre and periphery. Photos of Dashizi, Wanbo Square and other central spaces offer a definite impression of minority culture. However, a more convincing representation of Kaili as *yuanshengtai* is offered by photos of *lusheng* meets at pretty Miao villages within the wider municipal area. Combine the two, and Kaili begins to look like the homeland of 100 festivals.

This blurring of centre and periphery is not confined to a single article and its photos. For example, an article in the publication *China Place Name* unequivocally describes Kaili as a "city which possesses thick *minzu* flavour, with a rich abundance of *minzu* craftsmanship, festivals and song-and-dance" (*yi ge juyou nonglie minzu tese de chengshi, minzu gongyi, minzu jieri, minzu gewu fengfu duocai*) (F. Xiao 2008: 38). But while it also attributes such monikers as "the homeland of 100 festivals" directly to the city (*chengshi*), the title of the article is "Kaili *shi*". In a further example, an article in a party journal uses a stock phrase for texts on Kaili, describing it as "a Miao-dominated multi-*minzu* city, thick with *minzu* customs" (*yi ge yi Miaozu wei zhuti duominzu juju, juyou nongyu de minzu fengqing de chengshi*) (D. Chen 2003: 32). And yet this is one of those texts mentioned in chapter three, which celebrates the transformation of Kaili into a "civilized city" through the imposition of orderly urbanization, that is, the imposition of qualities which are at odds with the expectation – within the discourses of both internal orientalism and *yuanshengtai* – that minority customs exist in pre-modern rural place.

The blurred wording of many such descriptions contributed substantially to some of my confused expectations about Kaili, which were later resolved by the experience of perceived urban space. Having seen photos of villages and Miao-style public spaces, I was somewhat nonplussed by the environment I encountered upon first arriving in Kaili, first at the train station, in a gritty part of the city, and then as I travelled through the centre by taxi. Superficially, Kaili looked, sounded and smelled like just any other Chinese city, with an excess of traffic, piped music and high-rise

buildings. On the one hand, I had anticipated this, having already collected a fair amount of statistical data which indicated that references to the city as "thick with minority flavour" might not be accurate portrayals. However, I had still somehow simultaneously harboured the expectation that Kaili would have maintained a rural *minzu* flavour. Nor was I the only one who came to Kaili with confused expectations. During my fieldwork, I became well acquainted with a couple of American teachers who had been assigned to China by their US-government programme. Upon undergoing training and orientation in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, they were then assigned to Kaili. During separate interviews, I asked them to recall their expectations of Kaili prior to arrival.

On discovering that he would be sent to Kaili, Ryker did some English-language internet research and asked around in Chengdu about the place where he was to teach English for two years, as well as an *a cappella* group. He summarized the information gleaned from Chinese acquaintances into two constantly recurring points: there is "clean water, and available, open nature" and "there are many minorities" in Kaili. Ryker's internet research reinforced this view, with photos giving the impression that Kaili was a "very natural place". During online searches, he found a lot of tourism-related references to Kaili, but little concrete information on the place, such as population statistics. Having found Kaili in the *Lonely Planet*, he surmised, "Oh, it's an actual place you can go for tourism, and not just a city" (Interview: 24 March 2012).

Jake had also heard a great deal about minorities before he arrived in Kaili. During summer orientation in Chengdu and upon receiving news of his assignment to Kaili, his American boss made mention of minorities in Kaili. Jake was less rigorous than Ryker in his internet research, but he also noticed a lack of trustworthy demographic data. Jake did not read the Lonely Planet entry for Kaili until he arrived, at which point he considered it to be an inaccurate description, in that it depicted Kaili as akin to one of the county towns in Qiandongnan. The only part of Kaili that he would have described in such a way was the ramshackle Old Street area, which was also a place where he never saw tourists:

> When I go there, it's kind of what I thought Kaili was going to be like, or what you'd think Kaili would be like if you're reading the *Lonely Planet* or something (Interview 26 March 2012).[132]

Jake came into contact with many backpackers, as he had registered on a couch surfing website used by budget travellers in search of free accommodation. He reckoned that many of his

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[132] In a similar example, one international tourist responded to a survey about the UNESCO world heritage site of Lijiang, stating their pre-arrival expectation that this sizeable city would actually be "a small village" (Su and Teo 2009: 102). In contrast to Lijiang, whose old town has been its main tourist attraction, Kaili's attractions were located outside of the centre, while the Old Street area was left relatively undeveloped by tourism.

couch surfing guests found the old Lonely Planet entry similarly inaccurate, and so generally only utilized Kaili as a base to visit surrounding villages. He noted that the newer version of the *Lonely Planet* was an improvement, in that it referred to Kaili as a "gateway".

Beyond being spatially elusive, promotional literature also plays tricks with time. During his pre-arrival research, Ryker found references to festivals in the area, including the statement that there were some 1000 festivals in Kaili.[133] He made a quick calculation:

> …that's 3 festivals a day, even if they are different minorities, that's just crazy and absurd. How does the school program function? It's like ancient Rome, where there's a festival, or a feast day, every day. When are they getting anything done? (Interview: 24 March 2012).

Lusheng festivals, or *lusheng* meets, are an essential part of Kaili's tourism promotion. Such festivals combine all of the exotic cultural activities associated with the Miao into one spectacle, with *lusheng* dancing, unaccompanied singing, courting, costume ritual, and bull-fighting. Henri Lefebvre (1991b: 202, 207 [1958]) argued that festivals are intensifications of everyday life, rather than operating outside of everyday life. The difference between festivals and everyday life is therefore a partially relative one. If there was a festival every day, then there would be no detectable variation in the intensity of life, and thus no day would be identifiable as a festival day. For Lefebvre, a festival everyday would be akin to a "permanent cultural revolution" (1971: 38, 194 [1968]),[134] but this is not quite the notion which the branding of Kaili wishes to convey! More prosaically, a travel destination needs to attract tourists all year round, rather than for just one or two festive days. Kaili has therefore attempted to promote itself, like many tourist cities, as a place "where an unceasing flow of events constantly unfolds" (Judd and Fainstein 1999: 4), through the strategy of expanding the parameters of branding to include the festivals of a substantial rural hinterland.

By itself, the settlement of Kaili has never hosted more than a handful of festivals during the PRC era, as mentioned in chapter three. References to 100 or more festivals rely on the aforementioned strategy of blurring space, by expanding without announcement from Kaili city to Kaili municipality. Moreover, different settlements within the wider municipality tend to hold the same festival at different times. One village will host the festival for a few days, before it moves on to the next village, and so on. The festival thus maintains its relative intensity over normal everyday life by moving from settlement to settlement. Such a festival can be counted in the plural

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[133] References to 100 festivals are more commonplace.

[134] As well as arguing that festivals could not be considered separate from everyday life, Lefebvre asserted the wild frenzy of the peasant festival was the antithesis of the modern everyday, and could be harnessed to achieve "a transfiguration of everyday life" (1971: 38 [1968]). The first argument, about the inseparability of festivals from everyday life, is more relevant to Kaili, whose festivals did not seem likely catalysts for radical social change.

for branding purposes. Similarly, the number of festivals is swollen by the fragmented nature of the Miao group, with sub-groups celebrating different events. For example, the main festivities around the Zhouxi town area took place in the first lunar month, in accordance with the Chinese New Year. In contrast, a village in the Sankeshu town area primarily celebrated the so-called Miao New Year, which occurred during the tenth lunar month. Thus, the vast majority of these festivals take place at the same time, during the first month of the lunar year, as noted in chapter three. This is the worst possible season from the perspective of tourism, as a time when the area is damp and cold. The effects of climate are exacerbated by the lack of central heating. Residents described Kaili as a place where the cold seeps into your bones, and certain elderly friends migrated away for the winter (*guo dong*), preferring the colder but dryer climate of north China, where central heating is the norm. However, the temporal concentration of festive activity into a winter month disappears as soon as festivals are reduced into a simple per annum statistic. Just as space is homogenized with the claim of one festival every 10km^2, so time is homogenized with the claim that there is "a small festival every day, and a big festival every three days" (*xiaojie tiantian you, dajie san liu jiu*) (e.g. *Qiandongnan ribao* 2006a: 11; KSSX 2010: 60).

Although this branding, according to my own interpretation, blurs the distinction between city and municipality in depicting the homeland of 100 festivals, it is entirely possible that a more culturally competent domestic tourist would not be so confused. More sustained contact with domestic tourists in Kaili – rather than residents of the city – would be necessary in order to investigate whether or not this is the case. Perhaps domestic tourists are more accustomed to unannounced switching between description of city and municipality, as a feature of place branding that is not limited to Kaili within the PRC. Certainly, there is a clearer distinction between city base and rural attraction in the representation of areas in the UK. The scenic Peak District, for example, may extend into Greater Manchester, but it does not bleed into textual descriptions of the city of Manchester. A generic web search for images of Manchester returns exclusively urban images, while a similar search for Kaili (in *pinyin* and Chinese characters) returns a clear majority of rural images, together with a few images of the *minzu* urban spaces described in chapter three. Perhaps the assumptions of internal orientalism can compensate for unclear geographical delineations; a reference to minority practices must be a reference to rural practices. Or maybe it could lead to the assumption that the whole of Kaili was rural, that even the centre was no more than a small town? Whenever I passed through larger cities and mentioned to cosmopolitan Chinese that I was studying Guizhou, they immediately associated my research with the rural. When I responded by stressing my focus on the urban, one Shanghainese student expressed doubt that there were *any* cities in Guizhou.[135]

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[135] See also Guang Lei's (2003) analysis of a Shanghai newspaper writer who lambasts the coarse tastes of rural migrants, and whose list of these migrants' places of origin includes not only the villages but also the cities of neighbouring provinces. In this way, big city dwellers reduce entire provinces to rural spaces.

How a domestic tourist would react to Kaili's branding literature is therefore uncertain. Indeed, for a domestic tourist on an organized tour through southwest China to see *yuanshengtai minzu* culture, Kaili might be just a name on an itinerary, with no indication as to whether this name referred to city, municipality, or county, so that branding bears no direct impact on expectations. However, it can be more confidently stated that the method of distinction in Kaili's branding between city proper and rural municipal outskirts differs not only from the unambiguous distinctions between city and countryside in UK tourism literature but also the unambiguous distinctions between urban and rural dwellers in general PRC discourse. Moreover, as this chapter ultimately argues, everyday discourse in urban Kaili allowed for no blurring of city and countryside, with inhabitants making a strict distinction between the *yuanshengtai* practices of minorities in the rural hinterlands and their own urban lives as "fake minorities".

Professionalized *yuanshengtai* and self-entertainment

As I have already argued, *yuanshengtai* is a concept of cultural authenticity rooted in place and associated with minorities. Beyond minorities and place, national media, academic articles and everyday conversation in Kaili additionally indicated that *yuanshengtai* pertains to self-organized amateur activity which occurs as a natural expression of everyday life, whether for the sake of self-entertainment or traditional societal functions such as ritual and courting. For example, in the introduction to this thesis, Teacher Wang alluded to the quality of self-organization, when he positively described cultural activities arranged by ordinary people, in comparison to those organized by the government. Another typical example, an article on folk dance in *Wenjiao Ziliao*, a publication of Nanjing Normal University, made reference to the qualities of amateur self-entertainment, describing *yuanshengtai* dance as "belonging to the square and not the theatre, self-entertainment and not performance" (Li Ma 2010: 82).

In Kaili city, however, the notion of *yuanshengtai* as amateur activity for self-entertainment was complicated by at least two factors. Firstly, events labelled as *yuanshengtai* and held in the public spaces of the city typically took the form of professional performance, in contrast to the ideal amateur form of *yuanshengtai*. Secondly, local residents make a clear distinction within the field of amateur music between their own urban amateur cultural activities and the *yuanshengtai* activities of rural minorities. From the perspective of most residents, *yuanshengtai* certainly did not belong to the theatre, but it did not belong to the urban square either. Instead, urban inhabitants unequivocally located *yuanshengtai* in rural space, in marked contrast to the vagueness of the promotional literature described above.

The amateur status of participants is a requirement and selling point of *yuanshengtai* which distinguishes it from the professionalized *minzu* style of performance. Yet in practice, there is rarely such a clear division between amateur *yuanshengtai* self-entertainment and professional *minzu* performance. In Kaili city, whether in squares or indoor venues, *yuanshengtai* was generally

performed by professional troupes. Most illuminatingly, the music department at Kaili University ran a "class for the transmitters of *minzu* culture" (*minzu wenhua chuancheng ban*), which consisted of training students for potential careers in the performance of *yuanshengtai*. Funded by the provincial government, this five-year vocational degree (*zhuanke*) offered subsidized classes to middle-school graduates who ostensibly came from impoverished rural families, but whose numbers also included under-achievers from mainstream education. Although applicants were tested for artistic ability, Wu Paihuan, the Dong song teacher, described her first-year students as knowing absolutely nothing (*shenme dou bu dong*) about the basics of music. While most were unable to read cipher notation, and a handful could not even pitch a note, a handful of students were competent in the folk genres specific to their home areas, including varieties of Dong song and *lusheng* playing. Yet whatever their background, first-year students had to study not only the minority genres of Qiandongnan, but also more generic skills such as *bel canto*, music theory, and piano; that is, the kind of professional and scientific training against which *yuanshengtai* is commonly defined. This style of training also extended into the *yuanshengtai* classes. For example, rather than learning the six-pipe *lusheng*, as commonly seen in Miao festivals, students learned to play a modernized *lusheng*, usually a 19-pipe version. Illustrating the difference, a well-known *lusheng*-maker in Zhouxi town explained to me that he rarely played the six-pipe version, but would keep one to hand in case any media crews came to interview him. The six-pipe *lusheng* had "collector's value" (*shoucang jiazhi*), he told me, but it was possible to play a greater variety of tunes on "improved" (*gailiang*) *lusheng*, such as *España Cañí*, the signature tune of Yang Zhenping, a *lusheng* teacher at Kaili University and director of the municipal song-and-dance troupe.

As taught in Kaili University, *yuanshengtai* comprised the training of students for the professionalized performance of amateur genres. This professionalization of folk forms is a familiar story which predates the discourse of *yuanshengtai*. As ethnomusicologist Qiao Jianzhong (2011: 47) has noted, the PRC government has been adapting folk music for stage (*wutaihua*) since the 1950s. For Qiao, the spring of 1953 was a watershed date for the professionalization and adaptation of folk, when hundreds of folk practitioners performed at the first National Folk Song and Dance Joint Performance in Beijing.[136] With minimal previous experience of the stage, attendees received specialist instruction in order to ease the transition from folk practice to folk performance; they learned how to dress, move and act on stage. Beyond producing aesthetic changes, this process altered the historical course of folk music, in Qiao's opinion, as the qualities of practicality, spontaneity and self-entertainment were lost or reduced during the transition to

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[136] However, a more important watershed moment was surely the 1942 Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, which Qiao Jianzhong did not mention in his article, where Mao (1972 [1942]) asserted that art and literature should reflect the lives of – and provide ideological education to – the masses. As a result, folk forms were being promoted and modified long before the 1953 performance which Qiao marked as a watershed.

stage. Following the event, many of those who had performed were absorbed into professional artistic institutions, namely conservatories and song-and-dance troupes (J. Qiao 2011: 47–8).

A further example of this ongoing process of professionalization can be seen in the experiences of Wu Paihuan, the teacher of Dong song at Kaili University. In 1978, when she was 15 years old, members of the prefectural song-and-dance troupe visited her village to conduct auditions. The examiners considered her appearance, singing ability, and Chinese pronunciation. Upon being accepted into the troupe, based in Kaili, far away from her home, Wu Paihuan was taught to sing more exquisitely (*youmei*), to read musical notation, and to learn other vocal styles, including Miao and *minzu* singing. She was later a key member of the Dong singing delegation which famously performed in Paris in 1986 (Interview: 9 May 2012).

While the professionalization of folk was not therefore new to the *yuanshengtai* era, it was motivated by new spatial priorities. In the 1950s, the performance of folk was geared towards the building of a strong, united nation. In the post-Mao era, it has increasingly been harnessed for the generation of income through promoting regional and local tourism. Although lip-service may have sometimes been paid to national intangible heritage projects, the performance of *yuanshengtai* in Kaili was mainly for the purpose of generating money from, and for, a post-industrial city that contained few other entrepreneurial options. The majority of inhabitants I met in Kaili were understandably supportive of such efforts to promote the area. However, the *yuanshengtai* era also differed from previous eras in its increased emphasis on the authenticity of performance, which in its ideal form should be presented by "genuine peasants", as identified by Xue Baojian at the beginning of the chapter. In fact, in its ideal form, *yuanshengtai* should not be a performance at all – at least not in the narrow sense of an organized, staged event – but rather occurs as a spontaneous element of everyday life. Given the obvious discrepancy between this ideal and the realities of professionalized *yuanshengtai* performance in Kaili, it is no wonder that few inhabitants considered their city to possess genuine *yuanshengtai*.

As discussed in chapter one, the regulars at Apple Hill Park, among others, never really accepted that I could have travelled so far simply to study city music, and made continual efforts to send me to the countryside. During one conversation, Auntie Zhang, the retired *Qiandongnan Daily* clerk, insisted that I must go and hear Dong Big Songs at a village called Xiao Huang in Congjiang county, as the birthplace of the genre. Her friend, Auntie Yang, countered that Xiao Huang was not the only place for Dong Big Songs; I could also hear them in the villages of Liping county, although not the county town of Liping itself. I responded that I had already heard Dong Big Songs at Kaili University. Despite their initial difference of opinion, the two friends were certainly united in their subsequent assertion that the singing at Kaili University was not genuine *yuanshengtai*.

While the formal practices of university departments and song-and-dance troupes may have been somewhat far removed from the folk ideals of *yuanshengtai*, there was a great deal of activity

in Kaili that *was* self-organized, amateur, and for self-entertainment. Indeed, the term "self-entertainment" (*ziyu zile*), a common descriptor of *yuanshengtai* in academic and media articles, was generally employed by Kaili inhabitants to describe their own everyday artistic practices.[137] For example, members of the Apple Hill Park choir often made references to the amateur and self-entertaining qualities of their music-making, with one regular even describing her *qinqin* (plucked lute) as a "self-entertainment" instrument, as opposed to a professional (*zhuanye*) instrument. As a further example, the leader of an elderly instrumental ensemble – which met in the designated activity room for the elderly of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China – emphasized that he and the other members were all amateurs (*yeyu de*) and played for self-entertainment.[138] He further explained that none of them had been taught to learn their respective instruments, and so their technique was not great.

While amateur musical activity mainly took place in indoor spaces, for reasons outlined in chapter three, amateur self-entertainment also extended into the squares, with their dance groups, as well as more overtly commercial spaces. Chen Xingqi, the bar owner mentioned in chapter one, identified a trend towards a desire for musical self-entertainment among her customers. During the early years of her bar, she had employed a singer, who had initially proved popular. However, in recent years, people had developed a preference for doing their own singing, and so she no longer employed a professional singer. Instead, customers could order and sing songs within the main area of her bar, in addition to the private karaoke rooms located towards the back of the establishment. Xinqqi attributed the change in attitudes to the success of televised talent contest shows such as *Super Girl* (*Chaoji nüsheng*), which she believed had encouraged people to make their own public efforts at artistic expression.

There was therefore a great deal of artistic activity in Kaili which occurred as an ordinary element of everyday life and for reasons of personal enjoyment. Described in this way, such urban activities sound extremely similar to urbanites' descriptions of *yuanshengtai*. And yet to make this comparison would be to ignore notions of space, *minzu*, and ultimately, hierarchy, which meant that urban amateur activity and *yuanshengtai* were never conflated during my conversations in Kaili. For while branding vaguely located *yuanshengtai* in Kaili, fieldwork acquaintances firmly placed genuine *yuanshengtai* in the villages, and in opposition to the modern everyday practices of their small city. Indeed, as I describe in the following section, a number of inhabitants described Kaili not just as an inappropriate place to search for *yuanshengtai* but even as a city of fake minorities. In doing so, they demonstrated the malleability of conceived branded space, as indicated in chapter two; the notion of the homeland of one hundred festivals could serve as a

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[137] Whereas this chapter considers commonalities across urban spaces, I explore the internal divisions of amateur activity in Kaili city in chapter six.

[138] It should be added that the group did get paid invitations to perform at events, and self-entertainment was not the only function of their musical activity, but it was nevertheless a common method of self-description.

conceived space of the everyday – following its conceptual relocation to the villages – against which the lived space of Kaili city was constructed.

The real and the fake in *yuanshengtai* discourse

During fieldwork encounters, the location of a musical occurrence regularly came across as a decisive factor in determining whether or not urbanites considered it *yuanshengtai*, while musical sound was a secondary consideration. The usage of *yuanshengtai* also extended beyond the description of musical and other artistic activity to serve as a description of place. Whereas *yuanshengtai* referred primarily to folk practices in singing competitions, as transplants of authentic rural place, *yuanshengtai* in Kaili discourse was not only a descriptor of folk practices but also of the places that fostered these practices. In chapter one, I recounted how Lan Xunyi, the professional Dong singer, regarded the music in the city's song-and-dance restaurants as too "performance-style" (*biaoyanxing*), with people preferring to go out to the villages in search of *yuanshengtai*. She subsequently took me to Xijiang, a well-known Miao settlement in Leishan county, located a short distance from Kaili municipality. We arrived just in time to catch the second half of the daily performance. I was particularly struck by one song, *There Is a Place Called Xijiang* (*You ge difang jiao Xijiang*), performed by a male singer in standard Mandarin, with a vocal technique closer to *bel canto* than Miao folksong. The singer was accompanied by a backing track of *lusheng*, synthesizers and strings. Xunyi seemed surprised when I queried the genre to which the performance belonged, saying she thought it was "very *yuanshengtai*". A few days later, I observed a performance in *Dongzhailou,* one of the city's two main song-and-dance restaurants, whose offerings appeared far closer to the musical ideals of *yuanshengtai*, with usage of live acoustic Dong instruments and a less blatantly conservatoire-trained singing style. And yet Xunyi had dismissed music in Kaili itself as performance-oriented and not indigenous to the city.

With location as the main authenticator, other properties of *yuanshengtai*, such as amateurism, spontaneity, *minzu* flavour, and self-organization, derived from its existence in rural place. However, while the majority of Kaili acquaintances agreed that there was no *yuanshengtai* in the city, there were divergences of opinion as to exactly which rural areas of Qiandongnan possessed – and constituted – *yuanshengtai*. Those with stricter criteria than Xunyi declared that there was little about Xijiang that could be considered *yuanshengtai*. Xue Baojian scoffed when I mentioned Xijiang during a conversation about *yuanshengtai*, dismissing it as "man-made" (*renmin zao de*); all human settlements are, of course, man-made, but Baojian's reaction implied that there was something especially artificial about the construction of Xijiang. As Auntie Yang argued during a debate with other Apple Hill Park regulars, Xijiang had become "commercialized" (*shangyehua*); the locals did not even grow their vegetables in Xijiang any more, but rather purchased them from stores in the city. During a further conversation at Apple Hill Park, Teacher Wang, along with Yao Ling, the retired 262 factory worker, similarly expressed the belief that Xijiang had become

commercialized and touristic (*lüyouhua*). During the same conversation, Wang added that Xijiang had been genuinely *minzu* during the 1990s, before it had been developed.

As attested by these comments, both development and commercialization were frequently presented as destroying the authenticity of not only everyday folk practices but also rural minority place itself.[139] As far as Xue Baojian and some others were concerned, Xijiang was no longer *yuanshengtai* or *minzu*, and its stage performances were the cultural expression of a tourist destination rather than a rural minority place. As a general rule, the further away a village or region was situated from Kaili, the greater the likelihood of consensus among urban inhabitants that it was *yuanshengtai*. Consequently, there was almost unanimous praise for the remote village of Basha in Congjiang county, as a place of exotic folk practices. Whereas the urban fabric had already permeated Xijiang through tourism and infrastructural development, Basha was still *yuanshengtai*, at least for the time being.

Similarly, some urban inhabitants argued that Kaili city had possessed a completely different flavour prior to the recent high-speed modernization described in chapter three. Although only seventeen years old, Xu Ningjing, a music student, lamented that minority traditions had died out in Kaili, and complained that the city had really lost its special minority qualities following urbanization. Her mother, a former worker at the cotton mill, and mentioned in chapter three (as Mother Xu), nostalgically remembered Kaili as a small mountain town when she first came over from Xinjiang with her parents some thirty years ago, and how Dashizi used to have *minzu* dancing and singing.

The importance of location indicated that the presence of minorities alone did not guarantee the existence of *yuanshengtai*. After all, Kaili itself had a great number of minorities; nobody denied that this was the case, and many acquaintances over-estimated the percentage of minorities in the city, in comparison to official statistics. However, whereas branding conflated city with municipality, and urban with rural, very few inhabitants described Kaili as *yuanshengtai* during everyday conversation. Instead, local discourse identified two types of minority – real and fake – and only the real minority was associated with *yuanshengtai* culture. In contrast, the fake minority was the product of an urban and modern lifestyle, and no longer spoke the language or practised the customs of their official *minzu* category. The city produced fake minorities, just as rural place produced real minorities and *yuanshengtai*.

In order to be a real minority, a person had to have been born and raised in rural place; continuous dwelling in a rural environment facilitated the continued practice of minority language and customs. During another debate with the Apple Hill Park regulars, Auntie Zhang had been

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[139] Such descriptions pertained to *yuanshengtai* in its ideal form. However, from a market-oriented perspective, the term *yuanshengtai* has a more contradictory relationship with development (*kaifa*). As one Kaili businessman told me, "it's strange, because a place can't really be *yuanshengtai* until it has been developed".

making some sweeping statements about Miao festivals, and I had pointedly asked if she was Miao herself. No, I'm Han, she replied. In fact, she continued, I do not think there are any real Miao (*zhenzheng de Miao*) here [in our group], only fake Miao (*jia Miao*). At which point, Auntie Yang, something of a contrarian, interrupted to assert that she was in fact a real Dong. So what makes somebody a fake Miao, I asked? They cannot speak the [minority] language (*yuyan butong*), and are not born-and-bred (to the location in which they reside), answered Auntie Yang.

Auntie Yang's criteria for a fake minority was far more common than her somewhat anomalous assertion that she was a real Dong (having been born in Liping county but raised in Kaili).[140] According to her criteria, only a small percentage of the Kaili population could be considered real minorities, given the relative youth of the city and the constant movement of people, together with the linguistic dominance of standard Chinese and its Kaili variant. Instead of being the home to "real" minorities, inhabitants described Kaili as a new city, even as an "immigrant city" (*yimin chengshi*), where various cultures had intermingled with each other. Such descriptions were apt considering the history of Kaili, described in chapter three, which has seen a constant influx of newcomers, arriving first with the administrative headquarters of Qiandongnan in the 1950s, then with the Third Front construction of the 1960s, and finally with the development of tourism in the post-Mao era. It is also worth recalling the aural qualities of perceived space in Kaili, as described in chapter three. How could the oral traditions of real minorities be successfully transmitted when faced with the noisy intensity of the city environment? The conceived space of *yuanshengtai* is rather akin to the acoustic community of soundscape studies, mentioned in chapter two, where human and nature interact in an environment largely free of technological sound, which allows for the cultivation and transmission of acoustic folk music. The perceived space of Kaili could hardly be further removed from this ideal, so it was no wonder that most inhabitants considered it too urbanized for anything more than isolated incidents of folk activity in anachronistic spaces.

Against this background of movement and mingling, traffic and technology, the phenomenon of the fake minority had emerged. Whereas *yuanshengtai* pertained to the practice of "real" minorities, a number of urban residents – particularly students, but also elderly acquaintances – referred to themselves as fake Dong or fake Miao, and as sinicized (*hanhua*). Initially, I assumed this to be a negative self-description. However, I eventually realized that many urban minorities

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[140] Auntie Yang had moved to live in Kaili with her grandmother during her early teens. She said that she could speak a little Dong, but not much, due to her upbringing in Kaili. A Miao making this comment would almost certainly have been referring to the sinicizing effect of urbanization, but a Dong could equally have been referring to the relatively small number of Dong people in Kaili, particularly when Auntie Yang first arrived over four decades ago. As with many other elderly acquaintances, Auntie Yang displayed a certain ambivalence to urbanization, preferring the small city to the dirt and compression of Guiyang, the capital city, while also declaring the villages to be the locations of *yuanshengtai*. Although she considered herself a "real" Dong, she also offered evidence as to the relatively de-ethnicized state of everyday life in Kaili, noting that she was unsure of the number of Dong in the Apple Hill Park choir because they didn't ask each other (*women bu wen*) about *minzu* status.

were somewhat proud of their self-proclaimed fake *minzu* status. This first came to my attention during an interview with Julia, a student of the English department in Kaili University, and member of the same *a cappella* group as Nicholas.

> Julia: ….although I'm a minority, I'm fake (laughs).
>
> Me: In what way fake?
>
> Julia: You know Han? (Me: I know)….I've already been sinicized (*yijing bei hanhua le*). My own minority [the Buyi] have their own language, but I can't [speak it].
>
> ….
>
> Julia: …Nowadays, it's a diverse society, it's not like, you're in a minority area, so I expect you to sing Miao songs, speak Miao, and do everything in this way. It can't be like this, society is already open to the outside world.
>
> Me: So "fake Miao", it's not necessarily a negative word, then?
>
> Julia: No, it's not negative, it's not negative. It's just to say that an individual hasn't carried forward Miao culture, hasn't carried forward the culture of their *minzu*, that they already have a Han-style and relatively modern lifestyle. It's not that kind of traditional…it's not negative (laughs), it's not negative (Interview: 12 April 2012).

Despite my initial interpretation, it turned out that the fake could sometimes be better than the authentic original. When I asked acquaintances if they considered "fake Miao" to be a derogatory term, they commonly defined it as a neutral term, yet there was a discernible pride in the employment of this terminology as self-description. This might seem absurd, especially considering the adulation of genuine *yuanshengtai* culture by Kaili inhabitants that I have already described in this thesis. However, there were good reasons to be a fake minority. Most obvious were those cases where a person was born of a mixed *minzu* (minority and Han) relationship. In such cases, parents often choose minority status for their child in order that he or she could enjoy state privileges, including bonus points for the all-important university entrance examination (*gaokao*) and exemption from the one-child policy during subsequent adulthood. For example, one interviewee, a high school student named Elliot, asserted that he was Han, but his Dong mother had changed his *minzu* status to her own in order that he gain an extra twenty points for the high school entrance examination; "one point is worth 10,000RMB [in future earnings]", he quipped (Interview: 20 April 2012).

However, the official perks of minority status cannot explain why some individuals from minority-only families also described themselves as fake *minzu*. As a Miao high-school student explained to me in a typical conversation, her family was originally from a village in Kaili municipality, but she was a fake Miao because she had grown up in the city. Even members of retiree music groups made similar statements. Teacher Wang, for example, whose family came

from Old Street in Kaili, was amused when I asked him about his plans for the Miao New Year; no, we're not Miao, we're already sinicized, he said, before adding that he felt this applied to Kaili city as a whole. In such cases, it was the city environment, rather than simply lineage, which produced fake minorities.

Identification with the sinicized and the fake was generally made out of self-association with the modern and the urban, as against the genuine but backward minority of *yuanshengtai*. Louisa Schein (1997: 80) has shown how the minority is valorised as a preserver of cultural heritage and yet also derogated as economically backward. There was a similar ambiguity in the *yuanshengtai* label, as certain individuals in Kaili were well aware, such as Wang Shenglong, a hip-hop dancer and studio owner who described himself as half-Shui, half-Buyi:

> …my personal viewpoint is one of antipathy towards this word, because wherever you go [outside of Kaili], people say "*yuanshengtai, yuanshengtai*". Actually, I think this city is really diverse. The government is doing its high-intensity city propaganda, and it always does *yuanshengtai*. Actually, *yuanshengtai*, speaking about it in a nice-sounding way, it's our special local *minzu* characteristics, but speaking in a less nice way, it means primitive. So when people say "oh, you there [in that place], you're really *yuanshengtai*", it sounds like a positive term, but it's actually derogatory (Interview: 15 April 2012).

Those who labelled others *yuanshengtai* appeared to be paying a compliment, but they were also asserting their superiority in the context of China's geographical and social hierarchies, where to be sinicized and urban is to be modern while to be minority and rural is to be backward. Naran Bilik (2010) and Weng Naiqun (2010) have both argued that rural dwellers do not choose the tag of *yuanshengtai*, but are instead "authenticated" (*bei yuanshengtai*) by urbanites nostalgic for a pre-modern lifestyle. Uniquely, the urban minorities of Kaili straddled this binary: they spoke standard Mandarin, but had official minority status; they lived in Qiandongnan, an area associated with *yuanshengtai*, but specifically within a city. They could choose to identify with either *yuanshengtai* culture or urban society. Young minorities, in particular, embraced the urban, as fake minorities, and rejected *yuanshengtai*.

Studies of authenticity and *minzu* in other parts of China have yielded findings which bear some comparison with the fake minorities of Kaili. For Dali in Yunnan province, Beth Notar (2006b: 69) has argued that locals associated the false with Han Chinese and external things, and the real with the local Bai. For Xinjiang, anthropologist Joanne Smith Finley (2007: 220, 229–30) has written of how Uyghurs educated in the Uyghur language (*minkaomin*) have come to regard Uyghurs educated in Chinese (*minkaohan*) as almost a separate ethnic group, while the *minkaohan* themselves oscillate between feelings of shame at cultural loss and of pride in their identification with the modern. However, fake minorities in Kaili were far less ambiguous in their identification

with the modern city, to the extent that they celebrated being fake, in opposition to the "real" minorities of *yuanshengtai*. In doing so, they undermined the *minzu* classification system while simultaneously reinforcing the urban othering of "genuine peasants".

Coda: repositioning Kaili

Wang Shenglong referred during his interview with me to the government and the city as "doing *yuanshengtai*" a couple of times. In a separate interview, Zhang Rui, a music student at Kaili University, described Kaili as a "gathering point" (*jujidi*) for *yuanshengtai*; despite not possessing real *yuanshengtai* itself, it enabled the assembly and concentration of folk genres from the surrounding counties (Interview: 5 May 2012). Kaili was thus positioned as a space where *yuanshengtai* was actively packaged, rather than a space where the passive raw materials of *yuanshengtai* were located. In the conclusion to this chapter, I tentatively suggest that the inhabitants of Kaili at times understood their small city as an intermediary between the village and the big city, which packaged and produced *yuanshengtai* from the supposed raw materials of rural culture for consumers from Beijing, Shanghai and beyond. Thus, in addition to the opposition of genuine rural minority and fake urban minority, there appeared to also be a more complex conceptualization of village, small city and big city which separated Kaili from the larger cities, and even elevated it above them.

An interview with Tom, an English-language student in the same *a cappella* group as Julia and Nicholas, hinted that *yuanshengtai* discourse involved more than just two parties. Tom had been raised in Kaili, but had many relatives who continued to work as farmers in more remote parts of Qiandongnan. He did not consider Kaili to be *yuanshengtai*, but felt that tourists saw things differently:

Tom: …they think that Kaili's air is good, and it's the most basic kind of lifestyle, without the pursuit of things, so they think that it's a *yuanshengtai* lifestyle. Not exactly that it's primitive, but that it's a relatively simple lifestyle…. If you're talking about Beijingers, then Kaili can be considered *yuanshengtai*. But in Kaili, in Qiandongnan, as far as Kaili people are concerned, the life of people out in the countryside, in the counties, is *yuanshengtai*, where they're tilling the land and planting in the fields….

Me: So what about the people in the countryside (i.e. what do they consider *yuanshengtai*?).

Tom: They don't think there's such a thing as *yuanshengtai*…. (Interview: 6 April 2012).

For Tom, *yuanshengtai* was a "relative thing", whose location depended on the residential location of the person making the classification. However, there was a further difference between Beijingers, as understood by Tom, and the citizens of Kaili, in that the latter often sang the praises of rural *yuanshengtai* without themselves being consumers. I initially missed this last point, that

many people in Kaili had no real interest in hearing and seeing *yuanshengtai*, having assumed that an individual would only recommend a cultural product that he or she also personally enjoyed. Wang Shenglong had once told me that he appreciated that foreigners were interested in *yuanshengtai* but locals like him were already really bored of the stuff. I slowly came to realize that Shenglong's lack of personal interest was shared by many other acquaintances, including those who had enthusiastically recommended that I explore *yuanshengtai*. This lack of interest became particularly obvious during festive periods, when there were many opportunities to observe rural folk activities.

During the first lunar month of 2012, I followed the festive circuit around Kaili municipality, attending events in the villages of Wengyi, Dazhong, Xinguang, Shiqing, and Baiwu, as well as Zhouxi town and Kaili city itself. Consequently, one of my main conversational tropes with urban acquaintances was to mention visiting these festivities, and asking if they had been. High-school student Elliot responded that he was used to the festivals, and bored of them, but understood that such things must be fresh for people new to the area. At the entertainment venue Bright Star, I talked with a local tax officer about one of my recent festive trips; yeah, it's interesting when you first go, he responded. But when we go, added his friend, it's just people watching people (*ren kan ren*). Nor were such responses restricted to younger residents of Kaili. I talked about festivals on separate occasions with middle-aged and elderly members of the choir based in the culture centre. "I'm already used to seeing [the festivals], and don't want to see them any more" laughed one female singer, who was officially Dong, but claimed sinicization. A 20-something Miao friend from Bright Star was particularly direct when I asked if she had any plans for the Miao New Year; haven't you noticed yet, she exclaimed, locals in Kaili aren't interested in that stuff [i.e. folk traditions], it happened a long time ago here.

International and domestic tourists might think of Qiandongnan as a "strange" (*xiqi*) land, but the local customs no longer held any great fascination for many Kaili residents, especially those who were officially minorities and had been raised in the area. They had heard and seen it all before. Beyond distancing fake minorities from their rural cousins, the blasé attitude of Kaili urbanites towards *yuanshengtai* also reconfigured the hierarchy between small and big city. Kaili has admittedly relied quite heavily on the visits and proclamations of cosmopolitan researchers, preservationists and cultural commentators for the promotion of local tourism.[141] However, locals were to an extent humouring visitors such as myself when they waxed lyrical about *yuanshengtai*, as something which might impress inexperienced outsiders, but in which they had no personal interest. While the surrounding remote villages were the true locations of *yuanshengtai*, Kaili was the disinterested packager of *yuanshengtai* for visitors from other cities. It was these visitors who

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[141] For example, the well-known writer and cultural commentator Yu Qiuyu has commented positively on *yuanshengtai* in Qiandongnan and become a *Qiandongnan Daily* favourite in the process (e.g. a whole page of articles in *Qiandongnan ribao* 2007: 2; D. Wang 2007: 3; Y. He 2012: 3).

were the genuine consumers of *yuanshengtai*, while those who dwelt in the packaging zone were close enough to the product to know its secrets, but not so close that they had become part of the product.

Throughout the chapter, I have stressed the spatial aspects of *yuanshengtai* discourse. At the heart of *yuanshengtai* is a conceptualization of rural place as the nurturer of authentic folk practices and real minorities. Whereas studio- and stage-based performances of *yuanshengtai* are merely representations of this rural place, Kaili is located within Qiandongnan, the supposed homeland of *yuanshengtai*. Local branding has accordingly attempted to present Kaili itself as *yuanshengtai*, despite rapid modernization and urbanization as an ironic consequence of tourism. In particular, branding has employed a strategy of synecdoche, described in chapter three, and a strategy of blurring the centre with the periphery, which has conflated the city of Kaili with the wider municipality of Kaili. While understandably willing to support the promotion of their city, the inhabitants of Kaili firmly locate *yuanshengtai* outside of the city, in the surrounding rural hinterland. Kaili itself becomes the homeland of the self-proclaimed fake minority, who recommends *yuanshengtai* to visitors while remaining personally aloof from such peasant practices.

I have also stressed the main commonality that, from my fieldwork observations, appeared to connect the inhabitants of Kaili during fieldwork; a conceptualization of rural place, *minzu* and cultural practices which distinguished urbanites from the surrounding counties. This was also a conceptualization that blurred the elements of the conceived and lived in Lefebvre's spatial triad, in that city inhabitants wielded the conceived branded space of *yuanshengtai* place in their construction of the lived urban space of de-ethnicized Kaili. In contrast to this consideration of the rural and the urban, the following two chapters narrow the focus to concentrate on the relationality of spaces and groups within the city itself. While chapter five focuses on commonalities of perceived space, chapter six focuses on conceptualized differences which were internal to the city, which stressed generation far more than *minzu*, and which further complicate the distinction between conceived and lived space.

Chapter Five: Music Groups, Fluidity, and Perceived Space

In this chapter, I turn to the behaviour of predominantly amateur music groups within, and as a part of, the perceived space of Kaili city, a space which in my analysis includes the activities of the musicians themselves and the built environment whose construction was partially described in chapter three. Examining the details of these two aspects of perceived space, this chapter documents the practical responses of musicians to the built environment, particularly amplification and relocation, following their more conceptual responses described in chapter four. I understand these practical responses as contributions to the constant reconfiguration of space rather than reactions to finished space. My discussion here begins with Apple Hill Park, one of the public spaces mentioned in chapter three, before moving on to other music-making locations not included within the strategy of synecdoche employed to promote Kaili.

In considering the frequent relocation and mobility of amateur musical activity, this chapter emphasizes fluidity, the first quality of space identified in chapter two. It also considers imbuement with time, the second quality of space, in exploring the effects of daily, weekly, annual and seasonal rhythms on the location of musical practices. While fluidity and imbuement with time are closely related qualities of space, this chapter also draws attention to the contrast between the disruptive fluidity of a shifting cityscape and the regular rhythms of the calendar. The unpredictability of urban development in contemporary China has created a fluidity of movement over which amateur musicians exercise little control. In comparison, daily, weekly, seasonal and annual rhythms can bring a certain temporal stability; even the disruption that Chinese New Year exerts upon daily amateur musical routines is rhythmic and predictable in contrast to the arrhythmic disruption wrought by breakneck urbanization. But beyond this rhythmic stability, I argue that everyday life must also have stable spatial reference points in order to be coherent and navigable, and that these points exist to a degree in the form of local place names. While this chapter mainly constitutes an introduction to the activities of musicians within the realm of perceived space, I conclude that lived space – in the form of place names – plays an important role in the orientation of everyday life, including amateur music-making.

In order to depict the fluidity of perceived space in Kaili – as well as the relations between spaces - I present amateur musical activity in terms of two meshworks. Tim Ingold has proposed the meshwork as a more fluid alternative to the network; instead of fixed lines and hubs, the meshwork consists of trails and knots (2011: 63–5). As an organism journeys through life, it creates multiple trails, also referred to as wayfaring lines, which intertwine with the trails of other organisms to create knots (Ingold 2011: 148–9).[142] In the theoretical language of this thesis, the trails are spatial processes and the knots are points of intensity where processes have intertwined to

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[142] My research is limited to the study of human organisms and their products, while the meshwork theoretically allows for the inclusion of all organisms.

create congealed space.[143] The meshwork stresses movement, which I emphasized in chapter one by describing my own journeys throughout the city, as well as the sites of music-making encountered on these journeys. In this chapter, I describe two wider meshworks of amateur musicians, one consisting mainly of retirees, and a second of young people. Most multi-site fieldwork automatically entails a study of meshworks, as the researcher accompanies participants from one site to another, or meets friends of participants whose main leisure activity occurs in Wanbo Square rather than Apple Hill Park. The so-called snowballing method of data collection also constitutes a study of meshworks. Presenting amateur music groups as elements of wider meshworks faithfully portrays how I encountered these groups, beginning with the choir in Apple Hill Park, then following participants to further activities across the city. My presence probably even intensified the meshwork in certain areas; for example, when my accompaniment of one Apple Hill choir singer to another music-making site prompted further park singers to join us.

Beyond musicians and the built environment, I examine weather as a third element of perceived space.[144] Although Beijing became known for its weather manipulating missiles before the 2008 Olympics, public and private powers in Kaili do not have control over local weather conditions. The weather therefore added a non-human element to the configuration of space, and one which was frequently discussed by residents.[145] The prevalence of the weather as a topic was unsurprising, since it exerted significant influence over leisure activity in the city, as well as the tourism-oriented ambitions of local governments and enterprises. Although unpredictable at times, it contributed to detectable city rhythms around which leisure activity was ordered.

These city rhythms contrast with the unpredictable fluidity of space created by rapid urbanization, which not infrequently prompted the relocation of musical activity. In a theoretical attempt to acknowledge fluidity as an attribute of space, Doreen Massey (2005), in particular, has gone to great lengths to discredit the binary of static space and fluid time. However, acknowledging and describing spatial fluidity does not necessarily equate to a celebration of fluidity. The fluidity of musical activity in Kaili often derived from the fact that amateur musicians operated within locations that legally belonged to others, including businesses, work units and the municipal government. This fluidity is therefore partially produced by imbalances in power. It is also

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[143] It is important to note that Ingold would not use this language of space, having claimed himself unable to think of space as anything other than a void (2011: 141-2). However, terms such as "lifeworld" and "environment", as found in Ingold's work, are comparable with the notion of space found in this thesis.

[144] Of the spatial theories explored in chapter two, it is surprising that few authors have made significant reference to weather as an element of space. Indeed, Ingold (2011: 130) has noted the absence of the weather from anthropological and architectural works that set out to investigate the interaction between humankind and the material world. According to Ingold, this omission has been the consequence of a flawed distinction between the immateriality of agency and the materiality of inanimate things and the environment (2011: 73). To talk about weather in this context is to sabotage the division between human agency and static built environment.

[145] This included conversations among themselves about the weather in the Kaili dialect, suggesting that the choice of topic did not solely arise out of a desire to accommodate the perceived interests of a British fieldworker.

particularly intense in the post-Mao city, where urban expansion and the market mechanism result in the constant reconfiguration of stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, government institutions and entire streets, either through relocation or renaming. How then do people orientate themselves and their activities in this shifting cityscape?

Kevin Lynch was concerned with addressing just this potential problem – of urban disorientation – in his classic work, *The Image of the City* (1960). Lynch focused on the legibility – or imageability – of the cityscape, that is, "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern" (1960: 2–3). Each individual has a mental image of the cityscape, produced by both immediate sensations and memories, which facilitates navigation (Lynch 1960: 4). When an image is shared by groups of people, it becomes a *public image*, whose existence is necessary for individuals to co-operate with each other within the cityscape (Lynch 1960: 7, 46). As *The Image of the City* progressed, Lynch concentrated almost solely on how the visual sensation could be harnessed to produce legibility. However, his initial and more inclusive reference to sensation and memory (Lynch 1960: 3–4) is taken as the departure point for the last section of this chapter and its search for spatial stability in Kaili. Whereas stable points of orientation in the city were provided by visual spectacles such as Wanbo Square, they were also provided by the place names of former rural and industrial spaces. Far more than maps, I argue that these place names constituted the reference points of a lived space which allowed for coherence of movement within the modern city.

Apple Hill Park and a first meshwork

As a partial consequence of the high sound pressure levels of the outdoor environment, most amateur musicians in Kaili based themselves indoors. Apple Hill Park was a notable exception, which by the time of my fieldwork was designated as an outdoor leisure site, with an ancient history of commerce and a modern history of state-run agriculture and forestry. The Kaili gazetteer of place names named the hill "cattle market slope" (*niuchang po*), on account of a market that used to take place at its foot (Gu 1989: 293). The gazetteer added that the hill was originally covered by long grass and shrubbery, but later covered by a planted forest (*rengong lin*) under the ownership of the provincial forestry bureau. According to a retired worker, the forestry bureau purchased what was then a "desolate hill" (*huangshan*) from the Jinjing village production brigade,[146] following the bureau's relocation to Kaili with other prefectural government organs in 1958 (Interview: 23 June 2013). The bureau subsequently used the space to build an office building and dormitory, and to grow a variety of trees and agricultural produce, including apple trees, maize

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[146] In fact, the long-term control of the hill by administrative-urban space did not occur without a fight with rural space. The retired forestry bureau worker told me how the bureau had been engaged in a long-term dispute with Jinjing village, to whom the land originally belonged. While the bureau claimed to have purchased the land, the proof of purchase had been lost, and the village was still claiming the land during the 1990s (Interview: 23 June 2013).

and wheat. During the early post-Mao period, the ageing apple trees were chopped down, and Apple Hill – retaining the moniker but not the apples – was transformed into an experimental tree garden, with over 350 varieties of tree (M. Huang 2001: 3; Interview: 23 June 2013). Even in this latter guise, the area remained the exclusive domain of the forestry bureau; according to the retired worker, Apple Hill was only officially opened to the public around the turn of the century.

Exactly when the hill became a park is debatable, particularly given that there was no single understanding among choir members and other park users as to what constituted a park. As stated in chapter three, until significant urban density occurs, there is no pressing need for a park, in the sense of a "green lung" (*lü fei*) for the city.[147] As with *yuanshengtai* in the previous chapter, a park does not generally become a park until it has been designated and then developed (*kaifa*) by a source of authority. Thus, as far as one gazetteer was concerned, in 1982, there was only one park, Jinquan Reservoir Park, and only *plans* for parks at Apple Hill and Dage, despite the fact that green spaces already existed at these two sites (Z. Li 2005: 7).[148] In 2001, a newspaper article called for the transformation of Apple Hill into a "forest park" (*senlin gongyuan*), in accordance with the central government's emphasis on "the preservation and construction of the ecological environment" (M. Huang 2001: 3). As argued in chapter three, the creation of designated public spaces was also part of nationwide efforts to meet increased demands for leisure and beautify cities for branding purposes. Apple Hill was subsequently officially designated as a park by the prefectural forestry bureau in March 2002 (QZMDZGL 2010). However, the development of the space into a park was still progressing in 2008 and 2009, with the destruction of the prefectural library to facilitate the construction of grand steps leading up from Beijing Avenue to the park entrance (G. Tang 2009a: 5; X. Pan 2011: 8), as well as the paving of various paths within (C. Long 2009: 1; QZRZ 2010). These developments prompted the *Qiandongnan Daily* to state that everybody who had visited the space "extends their thanks to the prefectural party committee and government for major investment in transforming Apple Hill into a park" (G. Tang 2009a: 5).

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[147] A newspaper article described Apple Hill Park as a "green lung" in 2008, by which time there had been enough urbanization for the city to require multiple parks (Wen 2008). The urban historian Mingzheng Shi (1998) has argued that the concept of the public park as a quiet, natural retreat from the city emerged in 1830s Europe. By the 1900s, there had been a change in the concept, so that parks were planned as spaces of natural beauty *and* recreation, with the addition of playgrounds and tennis courts (M. Shi 1998: 225–6). Hillel Schwartz has given a more class-based analysis, whereby public parks were "one of the fiercest battlefronts between modes of leisure", regarded by the wealthy as quiet nature retreats, and by the working class as "neutral spaces open to possibility", where they could noisily engage in sport, music and sex (2011: 285). Public parks in Republican Beijing developed into multi-functional spaces, with a governmental emphasis on producing morally and physically healthy citizens (M. Shi 1998: 232, 241). This coincides with local perceptions of parks encountered during fieldwork, as spaces of fresh air and nature which facilitated a variety of exercise-based activities. For local newspapers, the presence of a park could also indicate the benevolence of government and the aesthetic beauty of a city; not having a park to compare with that of nearby Duyun city was therefore a matter of shame for Kaili (Y. Liu 2000: 4).

[148] However, official textual sources were inconsistent in their cataloguing of parks. For example, one newspaper article described Dage, rather than Jinquan Reservoir, as the first park in Kaili (Zhao and Tang 1985: 4), while the city almanac referred to Apple Hill as a park long before its official designation (Huang 2002: 53).

Figure 5.1: The main entrance to Apple Hill Park under repair (fieldwork photo 2013)

Figure 5.2: The prefectural library demolished to facilitate the park entrance (Xiong 1998)

There was a certain amount of cynicism towards this process of park-making among retired users of Apple Hill. Bao Xuejian, the retired bank clerk and impersonator of chapter four, remarked that no space in Kaili deserved to be called a park, but they (i.e. the local authorities) put up a sign (*gua paizi*) and suddenly it becomes a park! And yet, there is also some truth to the proclaimed park creation of local governments, in that such projects prepare the physical conditions that enable a green but inhospitable space to become a site of social intensity. When I first visited Apple Hill Park, I initially refused to believe that there could be any music-making beyond the foot of the park, because it seemed too steep for the transportation of instruments and equipment. At that time, there were already steps leading to the summit, approximately 760 metres above sea level (Gu 1989: 293), as well as a wider lane that wound around the hill to the summit, but I was certainly breathing hard by the end of the climb.[149] Before the construction of these paved routes, the climb must have involved a fair amount of scrambling and muddying of clothes, particularly given the many days of rain that the city experiences. A young university teacher told me that her parents had only started visiting Apple Hill after it was designated as a park; there had been people exercising in the space before, but nowhere nearly as many as after the official change in status. Before Apple Hill had become a park – when there were still snakes around – her parents and others had gone to another space called Bird Hill (*Niaoshan*), but it was too small. Similarly, one Apple Hill park singer told me that Bird Hill has been his old "base of operations" (*genjudi*), but the environment there was not good, and it was mostly people just playing *mahjong*, with no singing.[150] Although there was textual evidence of occasional bird-fighting competitions at Apple Hill prior to its official naming as a park (e.g. *Kaili wanbao* 2000b: 1; Huang 2002: 53; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2002c: 7; C. Zhang 2005: 1), most exercisers and singers had only started to frequent the space around the time of its development. I attribute this to the improved infrastructure and taming of Apple Hill, as well as the manner in which it was subsequently promoted as a space for leisure (e.g. C. Long 2009: 1; J. Yang and Yang 2009: 3). As a part of this promotion, access to Apple Hill also became free to the public (*mianfei kaifang*), with the abolition of its 0.5RMB entry fee.[151]

In order to trace the trails of amateur musical activity into Apple Hill Park, it must be noted that a core section of the choir had previously sung in Dage Park, according to the recollections of *erhu* player Teacher Wang, a founding member. He told me that a small group of ten or so musicians and singers used to meet in a room within the cluster of faux-traditional buildings on the

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[149] I should add that I periodically suffered from a racing pulse, probably caused by a reaction to a particular ingredient in local food. I do not want to exaggerate the extent of the climb; it was certainly doable for any able-bodied individual, but it made the summit – without context - an unlikely site for musical activity.

[150] Acquaintances rarely mentioned the much smaller Bird Hill during fieldwork, and I have only found one piece of textual data referring to this space as a park (W. Long 2000: 3).

[151] This was part of a nationwide trend towards free entry for parks. An article from *Xinhua News Agency* claimed that "free" (of charge) had become a buzzword in 2007, following a governmental trend towards free entry for parks and museums (Xinhuanet.com 2008). A central government announcement in January 2008 encouraged museums to adopt a free-entry policy, and Kaili's Nationalities Museum complied in June 2009 (Qiandongnan ribao 2011c: 4), while the emergence of free parks began slightly earlier.

summit of Dage. They relocated to Apple Hill Park in 2007 as the result of an internal dispute, which culminated in one elderly *erhu* player changing the lock on their leisure space, so that no-one else had access. Paying a visit to the summit of Dage during fieldwork, I found a locked room which fitted Teacher Wang's description, with large handwritten music scores on an inside wall discernable through a dirty window.

As with many choir members, Teacher Wang also simply found the location of Apple Hill Park more convenient. He had once lived on Old Street, close to Dage Park, but during my fieldwork lived near to the old campus of Kaili University, between the two parks. The city – and many of its inhabitants – had shifted southwards in recent years, making Apple Hill more accessible, while Dage became somewhat isolated in its northern location.[152] Once portrayed as an important historical centre and a contemporary rest space in the local gazetteer (Xiong 1998: 719, 1046), Dage was also remembered as a once-lively park by fieldwork acquaintances who recalled its former miniature railway with fondness. By the time of my fieldwork, it existed in a state of material and symbolic decline; Kuixing Pavilion, a historic building on the summit, was permanently closed for refurbishment that never happened, while a tattered map flapped in the wind at the entrance and was later removed completely.[153]

Figure 5.3: Abandoned ticket booth in Dage Park. Blue sign (top-left) reads: "This park is free and open to the public" (fieldwork photo 2011)

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[152] Dage Park lay at the end of an alleyway accessible via Old Street, which itself was not a major connecting road. One choir singer thus saw Dage as a "dead end" (*sijiao*) in comparison to Apple Hill.

[153] Public spaces in China often have maps at their entrance. The deterioration and removal of the map at Dage Park highlights the importance of conceived planned space in the making of place; the park was symbolically impoverished by the decline and disappearance of conceived space.

So it was that – through a combination of internal disputes, entry fees, park development, and city movement – Apple Hill Park came to have a choir.[154] This group was well known to a meshwork of park goers, but hidden from those who travelled the streets below, on account of its relatively isolated location, as well as the cloaking of musical sound by the sounds of traffic and other leisure activities. On a typical journey from my hotel, walking up the steps from Beijing Avenue to the park entrance, I am still a long way from hearing any indication of the choir; the sounds of the streets are to my rear, and there is a group of *taiji* practitioners above me at the top of the steps, moving to the calming sounds of stereotypically "traditional" Chinese music. Entering the park proper, I still cannot hear the choir; there is a lot of social activity, and a temporary sign stating "hubbub is prohibited in public spaces" (*gonggong changsuo jinzhi xuanhua*) has minimal effect. Various individuals are walking up the main slope: some are walking backwards, some are periodically yelling at the top of their lungs (for exercise rather than communication), and others are carrying portable amplifiers (more of which later). From entrance to mid-level, there is also the constant ambient background of bird sound from birdcages that groups of old men bring to the park. At mid-level, there is a group dancing in unison to the music of a small portable amp; the music is more lively and less contemplative than that of the *taiji* group, since their activity is geared towards more vigorous exercise. At this point, the sound produced by an amplified *erhu* on the summit occasionally reaches me, cutting through the acoustic space of more immediate objects. I keep climbing, until the paved slope comes to an end, giving way to a mostly unpaved summit where people are singing, exercising and talking. While other forms of activities could be found throughout the park, the summit was the main gathering point for musical activity.

Why did the choir choose to establish themselves at the summit of the park? Initially, it might appear an illogical location, given the need for elderly musicians to carry instruments and chairs up the hill.[155] I believe that there were both negative and positive reasons for the site selection. Firstly, it was one of the outdoor spots furthest removed from the high-decibel sounds of traffic, commerce and concentrated dance activity.[156] Secondly, it was one of the only suitable spaces in the park that was not already occupied by bird owners, dancers or *taiji* practitioners. Thirdly, and most importantly, the site was compatible with a broader exercise regime which retirees most frequently cited as the main purpose for their park visits, and of which music was but one activity. Routines varied from person to person, but walking up and down the hill by the longest possible route was a

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[154] Bearing in mind the description of outdoor public spaces in chapter three, there were not many other options. Wang Dewen told me that the choir had once experimented with singing in Wanbo Square, but gave up after half a month because the piped music of dancers negatively influenced their music-making.

[155] Wang Dewen, for example, was not in the best of health, so he did not immediately rejoin the group after its hiatus during the coldest months and the Chinese New Year period. Until weather conditions improved, he took morning walks in the streets below as an alternative activity.

[156] Apple Hill Park certainly had dance groups, but not in the same numbers as found in the squares, nor with the same kind of high-powered stereo systems. However, on my return in 2013, the once-rough summit of the park had been paved to create a smoother surface that was more suitable for dancing. This development had produced a notable increase in the number of dancers.

staple activity for most park goers, and my companions often reminded me of the correct route when I took shortcuts. Singing started around 9am, giving attendees time to enter the park, engage in other exercise activities – such as *taiji* or dancing – climb the hill, and join the choir. There was also enough space for the semi-simultaneous performance of calisthenics on the summit, with a group of women gathered loosely around a portable amp which issued instructions and basic melodies. On a typical day, these calisthenics took place before 9am, at the same time as a handful of more enthusiastic singers gathered around one or two instrumentalists. At a later point, a choir member started to prepare the musical scores, and a number of people finished their separate activities to gather and sing in unison. There were invariably late arrivals, and people who preferred to gossip at the back of the choir rather than sing. There were also potential new members, who would come across the choir during their walk to the summit of the park. The choir was perfectly placed to allow the trails of the musicians from Dage to intersect with other morning exercisers, who constituted potential recruits to the choir.

As already implied, many choir members regarded singing itself as a form of exercise. One retired driver told me that singing was good for breathing and clearing one's thoughts. Sitting around with friends at a choir member's house, drinking some home-made alcohol, a middle-aged singer began to talk with enthusiasm about the great air in Apple Hill Park. There was so much in the way of exhaust emissions and dust on the streets, she said, so it was necessary to rid the body of poisons by working up a sweat a few times a week and by singing to expel exhaust fumes from the lungs. The park had proven especially beneficial for those with asthma and throat problems, she explained, and singing in a natural environment (*da ziran*) was particularly good for one's health. Given this stress on musical activity as healthy exercise, it made sense that the choir would choose the summit of the park, as the location furthest removed from the pollution of the city.

There were a number of trees on the summit which were incorporated into leisure activities. Someone had hammered nails into some of the tree trunks, so that people could hang their coats and other possessions when singing or exercising. A number of men liked to utilize the low-lying branch of one tree as a piece of gym equipment for exercising their upper body muscles. Most importantly, the choir utilized the trees so that that they could read from large handwritten scores; a rope was tied around two trees, hanging horizontally and taut like a washing line, with musical scores and binder clips instead of clothes and pegs. These scores contained both lyrics (Chinese characters in black ink) and melodies (cipher notation in red ink). Such was size of these scores that Teacher Wang compared them to the big-character posters (*dazibao*) of the Cultural Revolution. Much effort had obviously gone into the creation of these scores, which were mainly produced by Fang Xiaoming, retired lawyer and group conductor, who would stand next to them during choir practice, tracing the flow of the music across paper with his baton. Each pair of binder clips held a batch of scores, and there were maybe four or five different batches hung along the rope, reflecting the large and varied repertoire of the group. Teacher Fang would select one batch,

and then work his way through it methodically, flipping each score over as he went, and only occasionally skipping a piece. Faced with the top scores of four of five batches, other choir members could sometimes influence the progression of the repertoire by asking Teacher Fang to move on to the visible score of their choice.

Figure 5.4: The scores and singers of Apple Hill Park (fieldwork photo 2011)

Amplified trails

Beyond the conductor, instrumentalists, and singers, there was a fourth and final group member, the announcer. This position was filled by the self-appointed Old Yang, one of the relatively small number of male singers in the group. Utilizing an extremely formal style of speech that often amused other group members, he made announcements between songs, describing one piece as a "red song" (*hong ge*), another as a "sentimental song" (*shuqing ge*), remarking on the group's artistic progress, and occasionally correcting the pronunciation of certain phonetic sounds. In order to project his announcements over the group's chatter, he used a portable amplifier. The spatial trails of such devices merit description, as a common feature of the city soundscape.

Although most users simply referred to these devices as amplifiers (*kuoyinqi*), they were actually integrated devices which could be used not only to amplify sound, but also play mp3 files and listen to FM radio. A typical model was the Aker MR2800, a black, rectangular and compact device not much larger than an ordinary wallet. The top side of the Aker contained a variety of controls and inputs, all marked in English. A user would often attach a head-set style microphone and a shoulder strap to the amplifier, which hung around his or her waist. According to Teacher

Wang, the device was originally intended for usage in classrooms where teachers had to address large numbers of students. Indeed, the Aker model is advertised as suitable for teachers, coaches and tour guides.[157] However, the manual of an alternative model, the TS Loudspeaker produced by Ningbo Tiansheng Electron Company (sic), extended potential usage of the device to bus conductors, security guards, hawkers, and morning exercisers. Moreover, a recent online *China Daily* article (Chinadaily.com.cn 2013) has noted the growing popularity of these amplifiers among exercisers, on account of their portability and ability to simultaneously produce sounds from two inputs (e.g. microphone and flash drive). In Kaili, the amplifiers were readily available from local electronics vendors, such as those of the "Small Zhongguancun City" indoor market,[158] where the TS Loudspeaker could be purchased for around 230RMB in 2011.[159] Purchase of the product also procured a free download service; the buyer handed a flash drive and list of desired songs to the store clerk who downloaded the songs to the drive, which could then be attached to the amplifier. As a result, users could enjoy the full potential of the amplifier even if they lacked technical know-how.[160]

The usage of these amplifiers constituted a portable response to a high-decibel cityscape. The relationship here between music and more dominant urban sounds was as fraught as ever: musicians could obtain this useful object by making a purchase within the kind of street environment whose sound levels and facilitation of vehicular traffic discouraged musical activity; and these same musicians significantly increased sound levels in quieter spaces of the city through subsequent amplification. Although largely unaffected by the sounds of traffic and construction, Apple Hill Park experienced relatively high decibel levels as a consequence of singers, announcers, and instrumentalists utilizing amplifiers to enlarge their acoustic spaces. The increase in decibel level also coincided with a decrease in sound quality, since these cheap and basic amplifiers distorted vocal sound. Moreover, unintended sounds arose when two amplifiers came into close proximity, causing them to produce feedback, or to "shout together" (*jiao zai yiqi*), in the words of one choir singer. Some singers and musicians adjusted their spatial movement accordingly, while others either did not notice or did not care about the high-pitched squeaking that emerged from their amplifiers. Even though park goers celebrated Apple Hill as an escape from the rest of the city, certain elements of the city followed them into the park.

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[157] http://www.amazon.com/Amplifier-MR2800-TK-Products-Presentations/dp/B0055865MY?tag=duckduckgo-d-20 (last accessed 31 January 2014).

[158] The market's name is a canny reference to Zhongguancun in Beijing's Haidian district, a nationally famous centre for electronic retail and research often known as China's Silicon Valley.

[159] A little over 20 British pounds, according to 2011 exchange rates.

[160] One choir member took me to visit a store for a similar service. We provided a list of wanted songs to the store worker, which he located, downloaded, and burned on to CD, as well as printing out relevant cipher notation found on the internet.

Figure 5.5: The Aker MR2800 amplifier, mp3 player and radio (Amazon 2011: http://www.amazon.com/Amplifier-MR2800-TK-Products-Presentations/dp/B0055865MY?tag=duckduckgo-d-20)

The trails of these amplifiers and their users also continued together well beyond the summit of Apple Hill. Following the end of a choir session, a core group of members would often walk downhill together, as they headed towards late-morning activities which ranged from household chores to playing *mahjong*. Sometimes the music continued as they slowly walked down through the park, with the sole portable instrument (*dizi*) accompanied by amplified singers. Usually the group stopped playing upon reaching the park entrance – after around twenty minutes – and I had a sense that this represented a perceived and lived boundary for some. But not so for others. Auntie Liu, a dancer and singer at Apple Hill, took me with her friends to a restaurant-cum-*mahjong* joint close to the park. Since she did not play *mahjong*, the two of us spent the better part of the session practising recent additions to the choir repertoire,[161] reading from scores, and singing along to mp3s downloaded by her son on to her amplifier. Another retired choir singer, Zhang Xi, who used to work with the Sinopec Group, appeared to be inseparable from his device. One evening, I encountered him sitting on a bench along Beijing Avenue, near my hotel, listening to music from his amplifier and enjoying the night scene (*kan yejing*). Another day, on a climb up Small High Mountain (*Xiaogao shan*), a local scenic spot just outside of the city, I heard Zhang Xi before I saw him, as his amplifier extended his acoustic space and musical tastes into the wider environment.

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[161] These included the new "red songs" associated with Bo Xilai's "sing red, strike black" movement in Chongqing, prior to his embroilment in scandal and subsequent imprisonment.

Fluid groups and temporary music sites

The summit of Apple Hill Park was my entry point into a wider leisure meshwork dominated by retired individuals. Certain singers, especially skilled male singers – who were relatively scarce – such as the bank clerk Xue Baojian, belonged to as many as three or four different musical groups, which were situated in indoor spaces across the city, with the outdoor exception of the summit choir.[162] Individuals moved across music groups, which were themselves often on the move. These trends of individual and group movement can be illustrated through reference to the experiences of an indoor choir who were based in the prefectural culture centre (*zhou wenhua guan*) when I first encountered them. This sparsely furnished site for organized leisure activity was situated within, and to the back of, the prefectural finance bureau, next to the local television station. This position, away from the main road and the cacophony of nearby Wanbo Square, provided a relatively quiet environment, so that I could always hear if the choir had started practising in their second-floor room as I walked through the enclosed space of the work unit.

I was initially introduced to the choir by Lin Zhuo, a retired school teacher from Cengong county in Qiandongnan prefecture, who lived in Kaili principally for the sake of his daughter's education. We had become well acquainted at Apple Hill Park, where he had raved about a second choir that he attended near Wanbo Square. He subsequently took me along to attend a practice session, although his own enthusiasm later dwindled and he relocated to yet another choir. Compared to my experiences with the Apple Hill choir, the group at the culture centre was more structured and ambitious: it met two evenings a week, levied membership fees, employed a teacher, sang in two-part harmony, and possessed a formal leadership structure (see chapter six for details). However, individuals were haphazard in their attendance, despite the centralizing efforts of a committed core. The formidable group director (*tuanzhang*), Auntie Xiong, told me that there were 86 members in total, but many were busy with work and only joined them for public performances. There was therefore considerable group fluidity, as with the park choir, and as evidenced by the frequent appearance of new or long-absent members at rehearsals, where they were coaxed to the front of the room by Auntie Xiong in order to say a few words to the choir.

Beyond this inner fluidity, the entire group was the product of a schism with another choir. Previously, a number of singers had belonged to a choir called Huifeng, which practised at the old municipal labour union building. There had been a rift between the teacher and some of the members, culminating in the formation of a new choir by Auntie Xiong and other dissatisfied singers. On the wall of the culture centre, an introduction dated the new choir to March 2011, and only mentioned that the group had formed under "extremely difficult financial circumstances" (*zai jingfei shifen kunnan de qingkuang xia*). However, the name of this new choir, Fenghua,

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[162] To elaborate slightly, most of these groups were *based* indoors, but they also went on occasional trips to outdoor spaces found in the outskirts of the city, where they would sing, eat and play *mahjong*.

recognized its origins by including the same character (风/*feng*) found in the name of the labour union choir. As one of the vice-directors explained, the choir actually had a history of four years, if one included their time as part of Huifeng.[163]

Fenghua choir moved again during my main period of fieldwork. In April 2012, having not attended the choir for a few weeks, I was told by one member during a conversation in Apple Hill Park that they were relocating to a place which she called the "supply and marketing canteen" (*gongxiao canting*). I subsequently attended their first session at this location, which Auntie Xiong described in one of her formal announcements as our new home (*women xin de jia*). According to Xiong Jianwei, the elder brother of Auntie Xiong and a regular member, the culture centre had managed to get hold of some money, which was being spent on refurbishment. Initially, he told me that the choir hoped to return once the refurbishment was complete. However, about a month later, he said that it would not be possible to return to the culture centre, since their former space was being divided into various offices. The new location was also a temporary one, and the choir was in talks with the university for the elderly (*laonian daxue*) to try and secure a permanent space there. On my return to Kaili in 2013, the choir had actually relocated to a room in the China National Salt Industry Corporation, the former work unit of Auntie Xiong. During a subsequent interview in this space, one of the choir's vice-directors lamented the lack of venues for amateur artistic activity and blamed local government for failing to provide such facilities. He pointed to the demolition of previous venues – such as the prefectural assembly hall – for the development of real estate, and accused the culture centre of covertly using state property for personal profit, renting out what should be a free space for singing (Interview: 21 June 2013a).

Despites its official attachment to the culture centre, Fenghua was subject to the transience of everyday life in a rapidly changing cityscape. Indeed, this spatial transience even applied to professional purveyors of *yuanshengtai*, such as the municipal song-and-dance troupe. Zhang Jian, the hip hop studio owner mentioned in chapter two, moonlighted at this official troupe. One day, he took me to visit the troupe and interview the director, Yang Zhenping, a famous *lusheng* player who also taught at the music department in Kaili University. The troupe was based in a difficult-to-locate space in the Wanbo Square area. Although an outdoor sign marked it as a "municipal culture centre" and "cultural activity centre", the narrow entrance was obscured by the umbrella of a convenience store on the ground floor. The actual troupe space, on the second floor, was spacious and well-furnished, but the location had surprised me, since there was a clearly marked space for the troupe in the 262 factory area of Kaili. Zhang Jian and his boss explained that the current location was their temporary home, following the need to relocate from the former space, whose

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[163] Many members were more than happy to gossip about the split. Auntie Xiong described the labour union teacher as highly competent but too concerned with money. Another member gave more details, identifying what she regarded as differing visions for the group; they (the splittists) had considered the choir to be a matter of public welfare, as good for society, but the teacher had been more interested in money, resulting in fees that the splittists considered too high, since the choir included a number of laid-off workers.

facilities were now outdated. They were considering the possibility of moving to Xichukou, a hotel-park complex under construction to the southwest of the city centre. Zhang Jian reckoned that the complex would become a popular tourist spot, and the troupe could operate there as the in-house entertainment. A year later, in 2013, the troupe was still in its temporary residence.

I was initially surprised by Yang Zhenping's assertion that the troupe lacked proper financial support from the government, as well as the plan to settle in Xichukou, which indicated that the troupe was expected to move with the market. In fact, despite the promotion of *yuanshengtai*, there has been a government trend since the 1980s towards expecting state-run cultural units to support themselves.[164] During the interview, I told Yang Zhengping of my surprise at the lack of financial support, in light of the constant promotion of *yuanshengtai*. He interpreted such promotion as little more than talk, and told me that he always ended up grouching (*fa laosao*) about the lack of forthcoming financial support at government meetings. As an example, he pointed to the training of students to become "transmitters of *minzu* culture" at Kaili University, saying that it was all very well to have such courses, but there were no jobs for those who graduated (Interview: 11 May 2012). Zhang Jian, who listened to part of the interview, seemed as surprised as me, and had previously complained during *his* interview that local hip hop culture was suppressed (*bei ya de hen di*) by the prominence of *yuanshengtai* (Interview: 2 May 2012). As we walked out together, Zhang Jian modified his former comments, saying that actually both *minzu* and hip hop dancing had been affected by the shock of the (market) economy (*jingji chongji*).

The examples of Fenghua and the municipal troupe demonstrate the constant reconfiguration of space that occurred during my fieldwork in Kaili. This was a logical consequence of breakneck urbanization, which had constantly expanded, rearranged and even recentred the city. Thus, Dage Park had dwindled in popularity not only because of personal disputes, but also because residential locations had shifted to the south, making Apple Hill a more convenient and central location for many park goers. The municipal song-and-dance troupe had moved in a similar direction, away from the 262 factory area towards a temporary location in the south near Wanbo Square. The troupe's plan to relocate to Xichukou would entail further movement to the south, as well as westwards, towards the development zone.

As the city was expanding, finding an indoor space did not prove particularly difficult for music groups, especially in comparison with outdoor space, which was dominated by the sounds of traffic, construction and other leisure activities. The majority of amateur groups were located in indoor spaces which were often buried within walled enclaves and thereby comfortably removed from the bustle of the street. These spaces were neither public nor private; their relatively hidden

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[164] As early as 1988, a local article stressed the need to speed up the reform of artistic organizations, arguing that they had become lacking in vitality and creativity as a result of state support (Dang 1988: 3). The need to compete in the market subsequently led to mergers, such as that of the municipal song-and-dance troupe and the electric power art troupe in 2002 (D. Chen 2002: 1; M. Luo 2003). See also the film *Platform* (*Zhantai*) (dir. Jia Zhangke), which has charted the vicissitudes of a provincial troupe during the 1980s.

nature hindered citywide recognition, but their location within a wider meshwork provided knowledge and access to a specific section of society, with many music groups operating an open-door policy for potential new members. Furthermore, these spaces were often procured through the meshwork, which extended from social activity into the world of work units. One instrumental group, for example, practised in the "activity room for the elderly of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC)" – curiously tucked away at the back of a hotel – since one of their members had connections with the bank. Another activity room for the elderly, provided by the prefectural forestry bureau, at the foot of Apple Hill Park, was also occasionally used for musical activity, thanks to the presence of a bureau retiree. Thus, the old work unit system provided some of the spatial means for interaction and organization among elderly musicians.

If procuring an indoor space was easy, it was rarely a permanent base. In general terms, a city in flux will result in disruption at the level of the everyday. Scrutinizing specific examples, relocation occurred for a variety of reasons, including: the desire for a larger room with air-conditioning (the instrumental ensemble in the ICBC room); disputes and the transformation of state-owned space (Fenghua choir); the need to procure better facilities and pursue the market (municipal song-and-dance troupe), the disturbance of commerce by musical activity (Totem teahouse, see below); and the construction of a drum tower (Apple Hill Park choir, see chapter six). While much of the transience stemmed from lacking legal ownership of space, meshwork individuals rarely expressed hostility towards spatial owners, excepting the comments above of Fenghua choir's vice-director, and it would be a profound misrepresentation to describe their transience as tactics of resistance.[165] Indeed, groups were often emotionally linked with spatial owners,[166] particularly the work-units where certain group members had previously worked. Instead of movement as resistance, groups were principally motivated by practicalities, as they grasped opportunities to create musical spaces wherever they could.

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[165] De Certeau (1984: 36–40 [1980]) has delineated the temporal *tactics* of the everyday in resistance to the spatial *strategies* of governments, armies, and businesses. According to this formulation, the latter entities have the power to delimit their own spaces, from where they can plan strategies pertaining to external forces. In contrast, individuals and groups who lack their own space must operate within the territory of others, and therefore must rely on temporary tactics rather than any general strategy. See Massey (2005: 45) for a critique of this problematic binary.

[166] In the rare example of a *lusheng* group in Longtouhe village, one group member was essentially the spatial owner; practise took place in the yard designated by a cluster of buildings belonging to one household. After a daughter in the household contracted a terminal illness, one of the dancers, Older Sister Yang, told me that the group felt it inappropriate to continue engaging in a joyful activity like dancing in this location. The group met more sporadically afterwards, in a couple of different locations within the village.

A second meshwork

As argued in chapter three, the high decibel levels of commerce, traffic and other leisure activities played an important role in determining where amateur musical activity occurred in Kaili. Paradoxically, there were also occasional instances when the actions of amateur musicians themselves constituted an aural annoyance for others, or at least when musicians perceived that they may have been annoying others. In most cases, musicians simply adapted to the requirements of spatial owners and other spatial users, except in one case, where the perception of music as noise resulted in the abandonment of a site. This latter example will be considered here, as an introduction to a second meshwork, as well as a continuation of the previous section's focus on movement and disruption. This second meshwork was centred around Kaili University in the development zone, and had little contact with the retiree meshwork that revolved around Apple Hill Park and the work unit spaces of the city centre. Although the perception of live music as noise was not a frequent occurrence, that this perception should occur at all was significant, given the prominence of sound produced by traffic, construction, and other leisure activity in the city. This perception was also indicative of amateur music's relatively lowly status within Kaili, despite its branding as an ocean of song and dance.

The university campus was a prominent manifestation of the shifting cityscape, having been relocated to the development zone from Culture Street (*Wenhua lu*), the old educational zone of Kaili (Xiong 1998: 81; T. Wang 2004a: 3), a little to the east of Dashizi intersection and my hotel. The new campus was opened in 2008, marking the initial stages of a planned "university town" (*daxue cheng*) (Y. Li 2008: 1; Zhou 2008: 1).[167] By 2013, Kaili University had been joined by the local technical college, which established a campus directly adjacent to the university. During my fieldwork, Kaili University was open for classes but still under construction. Barbara, an office worker quoted in chapter four, was a former student who had experienced both campuses. When I asked her to compare the two, she remarked that the new site was larger, flatter and more modern, but also lacked something:

> My main feeling is in regard to the cultural atmosphere (*wenhua de qixi*); the old campus had real culture, it made you think that it was a school with a history, and I think it gave you the desire to study; being in that place, you really felt that you were a student. Whereas maybe in the new campus, that kind of culture still hasn't grown up, and it doesn't yet have enough soul (*renqi hai buzu*)….However, I think that this will improve, as more businesses and other schools appear in the surrounding area (Interview: 30 March 2012).

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[167] The establishment of university towns in suburban areas has been a nationwide trend since the turn of the century (Ma and F. Wu 2005: 273–4).

Figure 5.6: The main thoroughfare of Kaili University during class hours (fieldwork photo 2012)

Figure 5.7: The main thoroughfare during a photo shoot (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2009d: 5)

For Barbara, the smaller scale of the old campus made the various departments feel more connected and not so independent of each other. Xu Ningjing, a music student mentioned in chapter four, had not studied in the older campus, but also commented on the lack of soul at the new location. Another of her classmates complained about the dullness of her life, saying that it simply consisted of "three points on a line" (*sandian yixian*), moving from dormitory to classroom to canteen every day.[168] The remoteness of the university also meant that there was less contact between students and the city centre. One of my closer acquaintances, Li Ming, a first-year student from Guiyang, was an adventurous type, but typical in that he only went into the city if he had specific business. Links were not encouraged by the single bus route, the Kaikai line, whose crammed buses stopped around 10:30pm, or earlier, depending on the mood of the drivers. This discouraged students from heading into the city for entertainment, since getting back to the campus

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[168] The orthodox colloquialism is "two points on a line" (*liangdian yixian*), to describe the monotony of a life that consists of commuting from home to work and then back again.

was always a problem.[169] "Meshwork" therefore initially appears a less appropriate term when describing the relationship of Kaili University to both its internal elements and the wider city.

Despite first impressions, there was movement and contact with the rest of the city, albeit within the context of a looser meshwork than the one described earlier in this chapter. I begin with the site abandoned because of the perception of music as noise, and follow the trails from there into the wider meshwork. During my third fieldwork trip, I paid a number of visits to Totem, a small business selling Taiwanese pearl milk tea, located on the second floor of a building which housed one of the main university canteens, as well as a number of small shops and restaurants. Totem was notable as being almost the only commercial space on campus where students could sit and chat without ordering food. It also became the haunt of a group of guitar players and their friends. I was introduced to the group one day by the music student Xu Ningjing, following lunch together, after which she suddenly expressed the desire for a pearl milk tea. We subsequently headed to Totem, a teahouse I had visited before, but which had been aesthetically transformed since my last visit, with new sofas accompanied by wall drawings of Super Mario and Manga posters. The clientele had changed too; Xu Ningjing proceeded to engage in a bout of flirting and swearing with Zhang Rui, a guitarist of some repute on campus, and unofficial leader of a group that frequently met at the teahouse to practice guitar. Zhang Rui was something of a renegade music student, as a proponent of pop-style singing, rather than *bel canto* or *yuanshengtai.* Indeed, he had fallen out with one of his *bel canto*-oriented teachers, described by Zhang Rui as a rigid individual who believed that a person must suffer in order to develop a good singing voice. Although the large scale of the campus discouraged inter-departmental mixing in comparison to the older campus, the other group members were studying for a diverse array of majors, having mainly got to know each other at Totem.

I quickly established close relations with the group, since we shared reasonably similar musical tastes, although much of their slang went above my head. In preparation for an appearance at a formal student party (*wanhui*), the group asked me to sing vocals on *Hotel California*, and we subsequently rehearsed together at Totem, although in the event I was away from Kaili for the performance itself. As the performance date approached, we switched rehearsal locations, moving from Totem to a near-deserted campus restaurant. I later carried out separate interviews with three core members of the group in the restaurant, and asked – among other questions – about the spatial history of their music-making. Wang Weiyue, a humanities major with basic skills on the guitar, recalled that he had started to hang around Totem at the beginning of that academic year (2011-2) (Interview: 20 May 2012). Before that, some guitarists had gathered at a vacant lot (*kongdi*) towards the back of the male dormitory buildings, but they were all quite accomplished players, so

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[169] By 2013, the Kaikai route had been renamed route No.12, and finished operating even earlier than before. Students who went into the city for entertainment often ended up staying the night in a cheap hotel, making it a relatively expensive – and therefore rare – experience.

he had just watched. At the start of the academic year, he had returned to university early and found himself bored, with little to do for several weeks. He subsequently visited Totem and fell into conversation with the new owner, nicknamed Little Eight, who was just as bored as him, on account of slack business. As time passed, more people gathered there to chat and play instruments.

During my interview with Wang Weiyue, I noted that the group had not spent much time in Totem recently, and guessed that this might be due a change in their relationship with the owner and his improving business:

Me: Does Little Eight mind you playing guitar?

Wang Weiyue: (laughs) That's a good question, it's a bit too incisive. Sure, he minds. During the winter, business wasn't good, he'd just started, and he thought it was pretty interesting. Little Eight, this guy, he's somewhat narrow-minded and oppressed in character, he doesn't like to express himself too much…..

Me: Has he told you directly that he doesn't like you playing?

Wang Weiyue: No, but I can tell from his manner when he's talking [to us], there's a kind of loathing (*yanwu*) there (laughs) (Interview: 20 May 2012).

I put the same question to Li Ming, the first-year student from Guiyang, and another guitarist. He gave a similar response, saying that they had been going to Totem less recently, because "after all, this is a place where people are doing business, and if we're there for long periods of time, then the effect [on business] might not be too great" (Interview: 20 May 2012). He was also sure that the owner minded, saying "at first he didn't show it, but later, we're all adults, [we] can see it, and so started going less on our own initiative, and now rarely go". At the same time, Li Ming and Zhang Rui had begun renting an off-campus apartment in the development zone with friends, which they used as a rehearsal and living space. Li Ming added that they could play their music there and no-one would bother them, at least not during the daytime; they had come to an agreement with their neighbours that they could play between midday and 7pm. When I returned to Kaili in 2013, both had moved back to the university dormitories; Li Ming complained that he had felt too distant from university life when living off-campus. The teahouse had changed hands, so Li Ming felt even less comfortable playing guitar there, and instead played outside in an undeveloped space towards the back of the campus, behind a new artificial lake.

Little Eight's perceived resentment of the young musicians was entirely understandable. In fact, this example of site abandonment also emphasizes the remarkable tolerance of sound that existed in Kaili, and the abundant but temporary availability of indoor spaces for musical activity. Zhang Rui and his friends had seized the opportunity afforded by a new owner and temporarily lax business to create a space for their music. While their reason for relocation – the perception of music as noise – was something of an anomaly, the wider concentration and fluctuation of the

everyday produced by rapid urbanization was not; both the city centre and the development zone were undergoing significant changes to their built environments.

On those occasions that Li Ming and his friends did travel into the city centre, karaoke was a popular choice of destination. Some karaoke bars were almost the exact opposite of the open-ended Apple Hill Park; separate groups sang in separate booths, isolated by a combination of sound-proofing design and high decibel levels, to result in minimal interaction with strangers. However, this description certainly did not apply to all karaoke bars, including Bright Star, a well-known venue which was briefly described in chapter one, and became my second-most visited fieldwork site after Apple Hill Park. It was particularly popular with high-school and university students such as Li Ming, who described it during interview as a "centre for food, drink and entertainment" (*yinshi yule de zhongxin*) and "a really good space of consumption for young people" (Interview: 20 May 2012). It was also another site where music was sometimes perceived as noise, but provides a somewhat more typical example than Totem; management treated music as a secondary activity but did not extinguish it.

Bright Star (*Xingguang canlan*) was opened in 2009 by a Taiwanese businessmen, who had already established a venue of the same name in Guiyang, the provincial capital. A *Qiandongnan Daily* article described Bright Star as a *guangchang* with a capacity of 1,200 people (L. Chen 2009: 6). While *guangchang* typically denotes a "square", the cultural critic and feminist theorist Dai Jinhua (2002: 213) has shown how this word also came to mean "plaza" in the mid-1990s, as a new name for the modern shopping mall. Dai saw this linguistic transformation as "a political transgression, signifying to the nation the gradual metamorphosis from socialism to a capitalist market economy", as society was oriented away from the old-style *guangchang*/square of mass rallies and towards the new-style *guangchang*/plaza of leisure and consumption (2002: 215–6, 223). As a venue for food and other entertainment,[170] Bright Star was certainly closer to a shopping plaza than a square. Indeed, a "cultural square" such as Wanbo Square was also more closely aligned with the shopping plaza than the revolutionary square, as a site of leisure and branding rather than of overt political activity.

The design structure of the venue was somewhere between the open plan of a square and the walled rooms of a private home, consisting of a large open area separated into themed sections by semi-partitions such as glass panels, rather than permanent walls. The escalator at the entrance took customers down to the first section, a gambling area masquerading as an arcade.[171] On the left side of this arcade, a corridor led through a food court - with an open-mike stage to the right - and then through a bar area, to culminate at the reception to a section for private karaoke booths. This was not a corridor in the sense of a passageway enclosed by walls. Instead, it was a long open space

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[170] Its full name is "Bright Star Gourmet Food and Entertainment Plaza" (*xingguang canlan yule meishi guangchang*).
[171] This semi-hidden gambling area of Bright Star was its main source of income.

demarcated by rows of tables and customers on two sides and intermittent rectangular glowing gateways. Similarly the bar area was separated from the food court by a waist-high partition rather than a complete wall. The deliberate consequence of this design was the creation of a perceived space which was divided into smaller sub-sections according to entertainment type, and which facilitated and encouraged movement across sub-sections. If a customer grew weary of the arcade section, he or she could clearly perceive the adjacent food court section, and might choose to stay and eat in Bright Star, rather than leave for an outside restaurant. As Wang Weiyue semi-joked during his interview, "they don't have rooms for staying the night, otherwise you really could stay there for a few days and not leave" (Interview: 20 May 2012).

Figure 5.8: The stage and food court in Bright Star (fieldwork photo 2012)

Bright Star had therefore been designed to encourage fluid and sustained consumption. However, musical sound posed something of a problem for this design, which had not really been created with sound in mind, according to manager Lao Xiong (Interview 4 May 2012). Every evening, an open-mike night was arranged on the stage at one end of the food court. Performances mostly comprised karaoke solos or duets, but there were also occasional performances by guitarists and dancers. For a period of time, the open-mike night was also followed by a covers band, who played a selection of Chinese, American and Britain rock tracks, such as *Nothing to My Name* (*Yiwu suoyou*) by Cui Jian and *Smoke on the Water* by Deep Purple.

Positioning the food court next to the stage meant that groups of friends could eat together while they waited for their turns on stage. However, this layout also meant that all of those eating in the food court became a captive audience. This was a particular issue for the covers band, who played a repertoire which did not appeal to the tastes of some customers. A Taiwanese dining companion, for example, was not at all happy with their selection of tracks, complaining to me that their "heavy" (*zhong*) music was completely inappropriate for a place where people went to eat.

Subsequently, venue management retained only one member of the band, and relocated him to the bar section where he sang and played acoustic guitar.[172]

Lao Xiong, the manager of the KTV, bar, stage and food court sections was an approachable veteran of the Taiwanese music industry. Despite working extremely long hours, he was a cool-headed manager. Two of the rare occasions when he did lose his temper were prompted by recurring issues of movement and volume, relating to the corridor and the stage respectively. The issue with the corridor – and movement through the corridor - surfaced during a hip hop event at Bright Star, organized by Zhang Jian's studio. Such events produced a fairly large crowd, with many middle- and high-school students attending to either perform or support their friends. Since all the seats were occupied, a number of them stood within the corridor space, blocking the flow of customers between sections. During previous busy nights, security personnel had moved people away from the corridor space, but on this occasion Lao Xiong promptly strode over and angrily shouted at them to move away. I had also often observed Lao Xiong watch with bemusement as customers ignored the obvious corridor route and instead threaded their way through the tables of the food court, in order to get from the arcade section to karaoke reception. One night I mentioned this phenomenon, and he speculated as to why people did not walk along the corridor; was it a feeling of pressure (because the corridor was right in the centre of the room)? The unhindered movement of customers between sections appeared to be a matter of operational importance, for reasons of both consumption and safety.

During the same hip hop night, one performer asked for an increase in the volume of the backing music, and received the compliance of the sound engineer, only for Lao Xiong to stride purposely in the direction of the stage, prompting a major reduction of volume by the engineer before a word had even been uttered. This highlighted a conservative approach to sound levels on the Bright Star stage. During open-mike sessions, singers would sometimes tap the mike and gesture towards the host to have the rather low volume levels increased. One music student of Kaili University even told me that she was not prepared to sing in Bright Star because the volume was too low. And so it was not altogether surprising when Lao Xiong lost his temper with Wang Shenglong, another hip hop studio owner mentioned in chapter four, who also hosted the open-mike night during the first half of my fieldwork. Wang had taken to the stage after the conclusion of the open-mike night slot, and was rapping with a friend on stage, when Lao Xiong went over and bawled at him to be quiet.[173]

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[172] The bar area was a new section of Bright Star which had not yet gained popularity, and the guitarist appeared to attract new customers, but ultimately the manager dispensed with the band personnel entirely, since they did not "add value" (*jiazhi*).

[173] Lao Xiong's concern with sound levels sometimes seemed quite personal, even as an expression of Taiwanese difference; he felt that people in Kaili were accustomed to jumbles of sound, yet nevertheless made efforts to order this jumble in Bright Star, including not only his strict management of the stage but also the creation of new partitions between areas in order to separate sounds (Interview 4 May, 2012)

Management of the stage at Bright Star and the abandonment of Totem by the guitarists were two examples of how music-making was occasionally perceived as noise. This was despite the generally high decibel levels of the cityscape, with its abundance of traffic, commerce and construction. Although music needed distance from these sources of sound in order to be coherent and enjoyable, it was also potentially regarded as noise. This further contributed to the hidden nature of music in Kaili, as the guitar group in Totem had to abandon the site when it become too popular with non-musicians, while singing customers in Bright Star had to make do with a reduction in their acoustic space in order to accommodate other customers.[174]

In other examples, the music department of Kaili University – like so many other music departments – was geographically isolated from the rest of the university in order that music might not become a source of noise; the department was the principal component of the fine arts faculty building, to the back and left of the campus, which even appeared to be located outside of the university on one map (see Figure 5.9). Also on campus, K-Vox, an extra-curricular *a cappella* group, initially lacked a dedicated space for its evening practices,[175] and usually practised in whichever classroom was free in the foreign languages faculty where its members were mostly enrolled. Tenor singer Nicholas initially said that he did not worry about disturbing other students, but then said that the group did usually try to find a top-floor classroom, away from the "evening self-study" (*wan zixi*) classes below.[176] Nicholas was more mindful about disturbing others in his dormitory when he practised singing his part alone (Interview: 18 May 2012).

The potential perception of music as noise was certainly not a universal phenomenon, and was probably greater within the second meshwork of young people rather than the meshwork of retirees. Indeed, on a rare visit to Bright Star, the choir singers of Apple Hill Park were conspicuous in terms of the heightened sound intensity of their conversations as well as their appearance. They were also extremely unimpressed by the low sound levels of the open-mike stage. Nevertheless, there were occasional instances of anxiety regarding the production of noise among retiree groups. This includes an example in the following section,[177] which focuses on relatively regular rhythms, in contrast to the arrhythmic disruptions of space described so far.

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[174] By 2013, Lao Xiong, the Taiwanese manager, had departed and established his own bar. On visiting Bright Star to meet an old friend working there, I noted the increased volume of music. My friend smiled; "that's because Lao Xiong isn't here any more".

[175] Ryker, the American teacher who led this group, found the lack of a designated space to be a hindrance to group organization. By the time of my return in 2013, Ryker had procured a specific room for the group. He felt that this had made a big difference in terms of attendance and punctuality, although the latter continued to be a problem. The designated room was located on a high floor away from self-study students.

[176] Rather than having the freedom to study where they wanted, first-year students had to attend evening classes where they conducted self-study, in addition to taught daytime classes.

[177] Additionally, Fenghua made efforts to sound-proof their most recent rehearsal room within the China National Salt Industry Corporation, since there were many residences in this work unit. However, this did not prevent the group from conducting high-decibel activity *outside* the room; at the end of one session, Auntie Xiong bawled down a few flights of stairs at a security guard, who had prematurely locked the exit for the night, preventing the choir's egress.

Figure 5.9: Kaili University map affixed to a wall next to the campus library; the fine arts buildings (艺术楼) is isolated in the top-left corner (fieldwork photo 2012)

Rhythms of musical activity

Music-making in Kaili was influenced by at least four types of overlapping rhythms: daily, weekly, seasonal and annual. Daily and weekly rhythms were largely determined by the routines of individuals and the wider city population. Seasonal rhythms were primarily the product of weather conditions, and also had a secondary impact on daily and weekly rhythms. Annual rhythms were the most intriguing; although I have critiqued the branding of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals, there were nevertheless a great number of annual events that impacted upon daily and weekly routines. These included long-observed festivals (e.g. the Chinese New Year), modern holidays (e.g. International Labour Day), political anniversaries (e.g. anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party), and other nationwide events. While the majority of putatively Miao festivals often had minimal impact on amateur music-making in Kaili, these more obviously modern events exerted greater influence. One example, relating back to the perception of music as noise, was the national middle school examination (*zhongkao*). This resulted

in the Apple Hill choir temporarily relocating from its summit site to a midway point on the hill, in order to avoid disturbing No. 9 Middle School with the sound of their singing.[178]

During my time in Kaili, my fieldwork split into two shifts – morning and evening – with little musical activity during the afternoon. A good proportion of retiree activities took place during the morning, including the Apple Hill Park choir, the instrumental ensemble, singing classes at the university for the elderly, and dance practice at a second culture centre led by live instrumentation. As noted by local intellectual Wang Taiqi, the elderly got up early in Kaili (and across China), around 6am, while the young and middle-aged were still sleeping (2005: 3). They subsequently left their homes to embark on exercises routines, of which music was one element. For a number of acquaintances, especially women, the early start presented an opportunity to relax, socialize and exercise, before family duties consumed the rest of the day. For other men and women, the late morning and afternoon involved a continuation of leisure activities, particularly *mahjong*, but not much further music-making. Seasonal rhythms interacted with these daily routines; few people ventured outside on hot summer afternoons.[179]

The evening was, unsurprisingly, the busiest part of the day, and I sometimes found myself rushing from one fieldsite to another. There were three evening choirs of retirees and middle-aged workers, which met two or three nights a week in the prefectural culture centre, the municipal labour union and an additional culture centre formerly known as the mass art centre (*qunyi guan*). The open-mike night in Bright Star got underway at 7:30pm,[180] while Kaili University was the venue for the *a cappella* group K-Vox, who practised two nights a week, as well as a group of first-year music students who met irregularly in their own time to rehearse Dong singing. Evening was also the time when "mountain song" (*shange*) singers were mostly likely to gather in a dedicated space on the fringes of Wanbo Square; they generally did not meet during the daytime because of the square's lack of shade from the sun. Latest of all, a group of mainly middle-aged women in Longtouhe village practised dancing *lusheng* from around eight or nine until midnight.

Beyond music, Kaili as a whole tended towards evening- and night-based activity. During dinner with music student Xu Ningjing and her high school friend, the former stated that people who did not work in Kaili would sleep through the day and then come out at a night. Her friend concurred, stressing the extent of the night scene (*yejing*) in the city, especially during the summer, when there were so many people out on the streets. Much of this nightlife consisted of simply

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[178] Bright Star also had to close during the high school examination (*gaokao*) period, although this was not so much a matter of muting a source of noise as preventing students from seeking entertainment when they should be concentrating on an exam that would determine their future. Such was the prioritization on education that arcades and internet bars within 200 metres of schools had their contents temporarily confiscated during one crackdown on potential sources of distraction (H. Yang 2000: 3).

[179] A couple of exceptions were the amateur Peking opera association, who met on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, and the guitar players at Totem teahouse in Kaili University, who met during afternoons.

[180] During the latter part of fieldwork, there was a shift in the starting time of the open-mike night, from 7:30pm to 8pm.

strolling and window-shopping around the central areas of Zhongbo and Dashizi. Indeed, when Zhang Jian, the hip hop studio owner, talked about the venue-oriented nightlife culture (*yechang wenhua*) in Kaili, he compared it negatively with other cities, noting that the two main nightclubs, Yes and Pink, only generally stayed open until around midnight, while clubs in larger cities like Guiyang did not hit their peak until after midnight (Interview: 2 May 2012). His comments accorded with my own observations; as the night progressed, there were more people out having late-night snacks (*chi xiaoye*) at clusters of roadside stands than in the nightclubs.

There is little that needs to be said about the weekly rhythms of music-making. Groups that arranged to practise two or three times a week tended to meet on weekdays, including the indoor choirs, the instrumental group, and the *a cappella* group. Groups that met irregularly or every day were more likely to have their largest turnouts over the weekend. At Apple Hill Park, for example, there was a marked increase in the choir size at the weekend, as numbers were augmented by middle-aged singers whose work prevented weekday attendance.

Seasonal rhythms were far more marked than I had anticipated. For a couple of months over the winter, a number of musical activities ceased almost entirely, in the face of bitter cold and driving rain. I had experienced far colder winters in Beijing, but there had always been central heating indoors, whereas this was non-existent in Kaili. Instead of travelling through the rain to badly insulated practice rooms, people huddled around stoves at home. As noted in chapter four, some retirees left the city altogether during the winter, preferring to stay with relatives in the dryer climes of northern China. Just traversing the streets could be a difficult task, as freezing temperatures produced treacherous surfaces, and the parks became practically inaccessible. On returning to Kaili for my third major fieldwork trip in January 2012, I climbed Apple Hill Park a couple of times. On the first day, there was constant drizzle, and my low expectations of encountering musical activity were confirmed by an almost empty park, with just three *taiji* exercisers at the entrance, one dancer at mid-slope, and a few stray individuals walking along the puddle-strewn pathways, some carrying bird cages. On the second attempt, the following day, the water had turned to ice, and I found myself sliding uncontrollably backwards for a few metres at the first bend of the main route up to the park summit. Many of the choir members were stoic in the face of mere rain, particularly the conductor Fang Xiaoming; when one singer said that she did not come when it rained (*xiayu bu lai*), Fang countered jovially but forcefully that one should come even come during the rain, but not during a thunder storm (*xiayu hai yao lai, dalei bu lai*). However, the weather during winter months made the park paths dangerous, and there was no choral activity for a number of weeks.

This weather coincided with an important annual rhythm and festival – the Chinese New Year – which also made a major contribution to the decline in musical activity. Tourism promotional literature associates festivals with spectacular events, but they are also opportunities for families to

reunite and spend time together.[181] Given the massive internal migration of Chinese labour since the 1980s (Murphy 2009: 3–4), many individuals have to expend considerable effort in negotiating the New Year's rush (*chunyun*) to return to their hometowns, which has possibly contributed to the tendency to stay at home or visit relatives over the festive period. Wang Shenglong, the hip hop studio owner, told me that the custom in Kaili was to avoid eating outside home in restaurants for the first few days of the new year. Music student Xu Ningjing declared that the new year period in Kaili was "nowadays really cold and cheerless" (Interview: 9 May 2012). She was unaware of the International Lusheng Festival, which simultaneously took place in Kaili city and Zhouxi town over a three-day period in the third week of the Chinese New Year. Coinciding with the discourse analyzed in the last chapter, she argued that there were no *yuanshengtai* events in Kaili during the new year period, and that such activity only occurred in the surrounding villages.

In fact, there were some similarities between rural and urban rhythms over the festive period. Textual sources state that rural *lusheng* meets within Kaili municipality commence on the first or second day of the new lunar year and finish some twenty days later (G. Yang 1987: 1; *Kaili wanbao* 2002d: 7; CITS 2013).[182] These meets constituted a procession of activity from village to village, rather than a continuous rural-wide celebration, so that the vast majority of settlements did *not* have meets at the very beginning of the new year period. For example, the largest festival, in Zhouxi town, did not take place until towards the end of the 20-day period.[183] Thus, for most villages, the Chinese New Year included periods of both recuperation and intensity, with the latter culminating in the Zhouxi *lusheng* meet. The city followed similar patterns of quiet and intensity; the fireworks and incense-burning[184] of New Year's Eve gave way to a period of inactivity intermittently interrupted by festive activities, culminating in the Lantern Festival (*Yuanxiao jie*) and the International Lusheng Festival.[185] Such large-scale activities often replaced - rather than

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[181] See, for example, Fei Xiaotong's description of the Chinese New Year in a classic text as "fifteen days for rejoicing and obligatory visiting of relatives" during a period of few agricultural duties (1983: 65 [1936]).

[182] In 2012, the earliest meet I attended began in Wengyi on the third day of the lunar month.

[183] I could find no consistency across textual sources as to the dates of the Zhouxi festival; it was 18th-20th (of the first lunar month) in three sources (H. He 1991: 3; Ding 2000: 3; G. Yang 2000: 7), 15th-20th in two sources (Xu 2002: 4; X. Wu 2009: 2), 16th-20th in another two sources (QMDZGB 1986: 261–2; Tongquan Yang 1994: 202), 15th-21st in another source (Kaili wanbao 2002d: 7), and 17th-21st in yet another source (H. He 1988: 1). During my fieldwork, a music student friend from Kaili University – who performed at the festival – told me that the event would begin formally on the 16th of the first lunar month, yet the official International Lusheng Festival calendar stated 18th to 20th. Rather than participation observation confirming the accuracy of one textual source over another, I suspect that the times have varied slightly from year to year, while the preference of local archivers and the tourist industry for temporal certainty has produced assertions that the festival falls on a fixed occasion. There was similar cross-source conflict for the dates of other *lusheng* meets within Kaili municipality.

[184] According to my observations, Dage Park was at its busiest on the first morning of the new lunar year, as people ascended to make offerings and burn incense at Kuixing Pavilion. A 70-year old woman, who had been working in the pavilion throughout the night, said that peak hours had been between midnight and 5am.

[185] According to a published list of 2013 New Year's activities in Kaili, there were official activities throughout the first lunar month, but the major events (e.g. Jinjing *lusheng* meet, International Lusheng Festival) only occurred after over a week of relatively low-key events (Qiandongnan ribao 2013: 6).

existing alongside - the routine activities that occurred during the rest of the year, such as the local choirs. While the Apple Hill Park summit was empty, a small group of its usual singers visited Wanbo Square, where there was a solo singing talent context between the second and fifth days of the new year. On the sixth day of the new year, the sounds of an annual bird-fighting competition in Apple Hill Park were not accompanied by the everyday soundscape of the park, since dancers, *taiji* practitioners and singers had not yet returned.[186] The Lantern Festival, meanwhile, was a citywide event, occupying the main avenues with a procession, which started in the northeast of the city, passed through Dashizi and Wanbo, and concluded at the municipal government building in the south. In 2012, activity centred around three lantern associations (*longdeng hui*), which represented different parts of the city. Members of these associations engaged in dragon dancing and terrorizing the accompanying crowds with firework-sparkler hybrids, as well as the playing of Chinese shawms and percussion.[187] The Lantern Festival was followed three days later by another procession, this time as part of the International Lusheng Festival, which was undeniably a major spectacle, even if residents such as Xu Ningjing were somehow unaware of its passing. Taking place over three days, this festival also involved major outdoor and indoor performances throughout the city.

The Chinese New Year was therefore notable for both a decline in routine musical activity in the city, and the increased occurrence of publicized performances and festivals throughout the city and the wider municipality. Within the context of literature on city branding (e.g. Gotham 2002; Gotham 2005; Broudehoux 2007; Shin 2012), such events could be referred to as "spectacles". In using this term, such literature has associated itself with the work of Guy Debord (2005: 7 [1967]), according to whom directly experienced life has become nothing more than a representation in the modern capitalist era, where fragmented images are severed from life and regrouped "as a separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at". However, while Debord claimed that modern life in its entirety has become a spectacle, the recent branding literature has specifically applied the term to mega-events, interpreted as government-private efforts to accumulate capital, encourage consumption, and detract public attention from growing social problems. This narrowing of the definition of the spectacle has separated official mega-events and festivals from everyday life. It has also further privileged the big city, as the only urban form which possesses the resources and infrastructure to stage mega-events such as the Olympics (e.g. Beijing 2008) and the World Exposition (e.g. Shanghai 2010). Despite lacking the ability to successfully bid for an established mega-event, small cities such as Kaili create similar events of their own, such as the International Lusheng Festival. Small cities also attempt to gain peripheral involvement in established mega-

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[186] Textual sources indicate that this event regularly occurred in the park during the Chinese New Year period (G. Huang 2008: 2; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2009c: 1).
[187] A local newspaper article described similar activities at the Lantern Festival in 2011, albeit with two lantern associations from Kaili and one from Leishan county (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2011a: 2).

events. Thus, Kaili featured on the torch relay of the Beijing Olympics and also served as the new site for the Shanghai Expo's relocated Guizhou pavilion.

The theorization of the spectacle – in both Debord's work and the more recent literature – has also tended towards a treatment of the masses as bovine consumers duped by a perfidious alliance of state and corporation. One exception is Gotham (2005: 236), with the argument – to which this thesis subscribes – that "residents and tourists are not simply passive recipients of accepted meanings produced by advertisers and place marketers". Citizens in Kaili were not restricted to the role of passive spectator, and many simply chose to ignore events such as the International Lusheng Festival. Alternatively, some were involved in the spectacle as performers, but found room for manoeuvre within their roles. This can be demonstrated through a fieldwork example relating to the procession of the International Lusheng Festival, which consisted of groups marching, dancing and playing under the banners of their purported villages, towns and districts. At one point, I was surprised to see Older Brother Zhou from the Old Street area dressed as an ancient loafer, with blue gown, black belt, black hat, opium pipe and bird cage. Reminiscent of Xue Baojian in chapter four, he was representing Huaxi, a region associated with minorities but nowhere near Kaili. I remarked that I thought he was from Old Street; he jokingly responded that he was a "fake Miao". He had also inserted a cigarette into his opium pipe, while the birdcage lacked bird and bottom.

Rather than operating outside of everyday life, festivals and official holidays were rhythmically predictable disruptions and intensifications of the everyday. Although no other annual event exerted as much influence on daily and weekly rhythms as the Chinese New Year, it is worth listing a few other examples in order to situate festivals within the wider context of everyday life. On Mid-Autumn Festival, choir practice at Apple Hill Park proceeded as normal, but *lusheng* dancing at Longtouhe village started later than usual, since members were enjoying prolonged meals with their family. The dancing also finished earlier, since some of the members followed a custom of stealing things (mainly crops, particularly pumpkins) at night to mark the festival. International Children's Day caused a reduction in numbers at Apple Hill Park, as members participated in activities with their grandchildren in accordance with the organizational efforts of kindergartens, primary schools and the municipal bureau of education (B. Li 2009: 1; N. Yao and Ouyang 2011a: 6). Double Ninth Festival prompted the creation of a temporary choir - including members from Apple Hill Park, the labour union and the university for the elderly – which rehearsed intensively for a provincial competition in Guiyang. On Labour Day, a couple of Apple Hill Park choir members organized a formal singing event in the park; activity was relocated from the summit to a rectangular area, speeches were made, a programme list (*jiemu dan*) was created, and individuals or small groups took turns singing in front of an audience. Elsewhere, Zhang Jian's studio took advantage of the Labour Day holiday to organize a hip hop event in Bright Star. For the week around Tomb-Sweeping Festival, a couple of acquaintances told me that people did not

generally accept social invitations, and some university students went back home, indicating a drop in the level of overall social activity. On the other hand, the same festival also produced an outing for the culture centre choir, who combined with some instrumentalists to perform at an outdoor event in the nearby settlement of Yatang.[188] Finally, as 2011 was the 90th anniversary of the CCP, there was a continuous flow of related activity, including the singing of red songs by visiting army troupes (X. Long 2011: 1), schoolchildren (Y. Yang 2011: 2) and the party members of local work units (Z. Jiang 2011: 1).

Coda: the stability of place names

Much of this chapter has emphasized the transient and disrupted nature of music-making in Kaili. It has not, however, been intended as a celebration of such qualities. David Harvey (2010) noted that many scholars have seized upon space as a means to pursue their interest in "disrupting everything". Space *is* fluid, and there has been good reason to stress this quality, considering the manner – as described by Massey (2005) – in which it has been historically represented as static surface. Yet whereas grand theories such as functionalism once stressed continuity and stability (Kuklick 2010: 312; Ingold 2011: 235), recent academic thinking has perhaps swung to the other extreme in its celebration of disruption and fluidity. I find myself thinking that life in urban China is currently rather too unstable. Thus, I argued in the last chapter that the recent stress on *yuanshengtai* has been tied to anxieties about the authenticity of essential goods in the everyday, following scandals that have encompassed everything from milk powder to cooking oil. The cyclical rhythms described in this chapter did provide a certain stability to musical and wider social activity in Kaili. However, there initially appeared to be few spatial anchors around which individuals could stabilize and orientate themselves under conditions of relentless urbanization.

In fact, spatial stability was partially provided by the longevity of place names, including those of rural and industrial spaces which no longer existed in the realm of perceived space.[189] Although musical groups were constantly reconfiguring and relocating, they carried out these operations within a relatively stable grid of place names. I mentioned in chapter one that road

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[188] According to Xiong Jianwei, the event was organized both to mark the festival and as a reunion of friends; the hostess was a classmate from his childhood in Kaili, as were a number of the other attendees.

[189] A potentially interesting area of research beyond the scope of the thesis is the potential stability offered by conceived spaces of the future. One option for government is to present the disruption of the present-day as the temporary hardship that must be paid to ensure future stability, as the Kaili mayor did in presenting urbanization as a temporary inconvenience necessary to the production of a beautiful city (H. He 2002a: 3). One research question might be, how does this image of a beautiful city in the future map on to everyday spatial experiences in the present?

names and cardinal directions were not frequently utilized in everyday conversation.[190] A number of long-term residents even told me that they did not know the name of the street on which they lived.[191] Instead, orientation was provided by a collection of place names, which included topographical features, factories, administrative work units, sites of commerce, schools, parks, and squares. These were usually sites which had been located in the same perceived space for a relatively long period of time, which were larger in scope than their surroundings, or which possessed both of these qualities.

To address the first of these qualities, as long as a site had been established for a sufficient length of time, and become known to enough people, then its name might continue to exist as a method of orientation even after the accompanying physical structure had disappeared. On the west side of the city, there was an area known as Killer's Hollow (*Sharen'ao*). Previously, this had been an actual pass between two hills, and served as the narrow main route into Kaili from the west; Wang Taiqi (2004d: 3) recalled that the name used to scare outsiders when the bus conductor called out the stop there. Later, the area was levelled out, and dormitories were constructed there for workers at the new power plant. According to Wang, a lively T-junction replaced desolate Killer's Hollow and the old name was replaced by the new name of Power Plant New Village (*Dianchang xincun*). Another article made a similar claim, that the name Killer's Hollow nowadays only existed in the crannies of the local gazetteers (X. Liu 2006: 3). And yet it was a name that continued to exist in everyday life. I once discussed with Teacher Wang a 1990s photo of Kaili in a book that he had lent me, since I could not work out the location; he immediately pinpointed it as Killer's Hollow. Even though the topographical feature had disappeared, the name of this former rural space had survived, and continued to provide orientation in the city.

The local bus map was an excellent guide to place names, confirming and reinforcing the importance of certain sites, and even including sites that no longer existed. During my fieldwork, the bus map still mysteriously referred to 083 at the crossroads of Culture Street and Beijing Street, as did many acquaintances, except that they used the word "dong" (洞) for "zero" – an old-fashioned telephone variation – instead of the commonplace "ling" (零). It took me many months before I realized that "*dong ba san*" (洞八三) was 083, the name of the Third Front military base encountered in chapter three. On the west side of the city, there was another stop named 262, after one of the Third Front factories within the 083 network. These were examples of defunct industrial

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[190] There are some similarities and differences between the situation described in Republican Beijing by historian Madeleine Yue Dong (2003) and that which I encountered in Kaili. In Beijing, residents had named their own alleys (*hutongs*), and continued to utilize these names long after the government attempt to impose its own standardized names through the usage of maps (conceived space) and street name markers (perceived space) (Dong 2003: 74–5). However, Kaili inhabitants tended towards a system of place names which denoted areas rather than streets. This system of place names overlapped considerably with official bus maps but was not comparable with street maps.

[191] I had initially thought that knowledge of one's own address would be necessary for postal purposes. However, many acquaintances preferred to have mail sent to their work unit.

spaces that still existed within the lived space of the everyday. The names of schools were also basic to everyday orientation, since school locations were relatively stable, and their names were quick to pronounce, usually consisting of two characters denoting number and type (e.g. "three middle" = No.3 Middle School), as is typical across China. Some schools had moved in recent years, but their old sites remained embedded in the lived landscape. For example, the old campus of Kaili University continued to serve as a point of orientation, despite the construction of a shopping mall on the majority of its perceived space, so that only some accommodation for teachers remained.

For some older residents of Kaili, memories were attached to these places names, so that they potentially functioned as more than just points of orientation, although memory was not a specific research theme that I explored during my fieldwork. Meanwhile, for many younger people, the appearance or function originally attached to a place name was unknown; the name simply provided practical orientation. Music student Xu Ningjing knew the name of Killer's Hollow but not that it had once constituted a topographical feature. The numerical names of the Third Front were particularly successful in obscuring the original function of a site; Ningjing's teenage friends were unaware that 083 had once denoted a military base, while one of them simply knew 262 as a place that sold good noodles.

The everyday usage of place names intertwined with the branding strategy of synecdoche in such examples as Dashizi, Wanbo Square, the Nationalities Stadium, and Zhongbo Plaza. The former two were well-established sites,[192] while the latter two were considerable in scope. The function of these sites as place names differed considerably from their operation within the branding strategy described in chapter three. The branding strategy separated spectacular spaces such as the Nationalities Stadium from their surroundings and fused them together, to create a strategy of synecdoche. In contrast, musical and other social activity often did not occur within a space such as the Nationalities Stadium, but within a wider and vaguely bounded area which was centred by a place name. When a friend described the culture centre choir as located 'at Wanbo' (*zai Wanbo*), he did not mean the square itself, but the lived space of the neighbourhood around the square. Similarly, an instrumental group based "at the stadium" (*zai tiyuchang*) was not located inside the actual stadium – which was almost never used, even for formal events – but in a former hotel opposite, which was occupied by the university for the elderly.

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[192] The name "Wanbo" predated the square, which had replaced Wanbo Trade City (*Wanbo Shangmao Cheng*), originally established in 1996 (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2002a: 4).

This spatial extension of a place name beyond its centre can also be apprehended in reference to the names of factories and mountain passes which no longer existed. For example, 262 had come to denote a sizeable area; one day, I went for a stroll around town with Elliot, a high-school hip hop

dancer from Zhang Jian's studio, who pointed out the "262 bridge" and the building of the "262 song-and-troupe", even though the latter was clearly marked as belonging to the municipal song-and-dance troupe, and was empty following the troupe's relocation. To return to the extension of social space into place proposed in chapter two, the centres of places such as 262 were conceived on bus maps, but their lived boundaries were porous; where Wanbo Square ended and the stadium began was not a clear-cut cartographical matter. These lived boundaries coincided, overlapped or conflicted with the conceived boundaries of administrative sub-districts in Kaili. As a county-level city, Kaili lacked administrative urban districts (*shiqu*), instead dividing directly into neighbourhood districts (*jiedao*). Dashizi, for example, was an administrative area which contained five further sub-divisions (ZRGGT 2013), extending far beyond the lived and perceived boundaries of Dashizi. Lived boundaries more frequently coincided with the perceived boundaries of artery roads and gradations of real estate. In this way, place names denoted areas which could be simultaneously bounded and open, depending on the configuration of boundaries in perceived, conceived, and lived space.

While chapter four described how the citizens of Kaili defined themselves in opposition to a perceived authentic rural place of minority folk music, this chapter has focused on some of the commonalities that existed across music groups and spaces within the city. Urban amateur musical activity was often on the move as a result of group relationships, the shifting built environment, and the relatively low esteem in which amateur music-making was held throughout wider society, despite the branding of Kaili. In demonstrating the often disruptive fluidity of amateur musical activity, I have also argued that some kind of stability was necessary in order to ensure the co-ordination of music-making and other group-related activities in the city. The seeming fluidity of the built environment was anchored in cyclical rhythms and lived geographies whose points of orientation included the names of former rural and industrial spaces, as well as the names of contemporary spectacular architecture. These place names contributed to what Kevin Lynch would have called a public image, a shared image of place which allows for the co-ordination of collective activity within a complex city environment.

Chapter Six: Lived Musical Space in Kaili City

During my preliminary fieldwork, I paid a visit to Jinquan Reservoir Park with Chen Xingqi, the bar owner mentioned in chapters one and three, who showed me around some of the music-making sites of the city. The park was not part of the musical itinerary; rather we were due to visit a Dong song-and-dance restaurant near to the park entrance, and had some time to kill before meeting our other dining companions. Nor was the park an impressive place; while it had received flowery praise in a local late-twentieth century publication (M. Chen 1997), a newspaper article just four years later expressed regret at the deterioration of the park, which had become as noisy as the surrounding area, as the roar of cars cut through the former tranquillity (*Qiandongnan ribao* 2001: 3). The park I encountered was more fairground than idyllic retreat, with a variety of amusement rides packed into a space between rather lifeless Yang'a'sha Square and the reservoir itself. It did, on the other hand, have music; for 3RMB, anyone could order and perform a song on a vendor's karaoke machine. Well, maybe not anyone; Xingqi was rather scornful about those people who chose to sing at this spot, commenting on how they "sing songs that they think sound good". She added that the people who sang in this park were usually students or migrants rather than locals, who were embarrassed to sing in the open.

Unlike the comments about the lack of music in Kaili mentioned in chapter one, this was exactly the kind of thing I wanted to hear, as a comment that hinted at the possibility of a spatialized class-based discourse. Unfortunately, it was almost as much of a red herring as declarations that there was no music in the city. After more fieldwork, it became evident that the symbolic meanings attached to musical spaces by amateur groups were influenced by a diverse set of considerations that could not be reduced to class, including vocal technique, pronunciation, administrative structure, repertoire, generation and nature.[193] This chapter focuses on the socio-spatial hierarchies created through reference to these considerations, as an analysis of lived musical space in Kaili city.[194]

In Lefebvre's triad (1991a: 38–40 [1974]), lived space pertains to the symbolisms and ideas imprinted by inhabitants on spaces as they experience them. It constitutes a reimagining of the perceived realm, in response to the domination of conceived space. This chapter examines this

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[193] Class-based notions of cultural capital perhaps informed the stress of some amateur musicians on vocal technique and pronunciation. However, even an indirectly class-laden term such as *suzhi* – which refers to the "quality" of a person – occurred so infrequently that it would be unwise to subsume a diversity of differentiating tendencies under a singular overarching hierarchy of class. Unsurprisingly, the word "class" (*jieji*) itself did not emerge during my fieldwork, gives its negative association with "class struggle" (*jieji douzheng*). Many PRC social scientists prefer to substitute "stratum" (*jieceng*) for "class" (*jieji*) (P. Li 2004: 3; Q. Li 2004: n50, 302), but neither term featured significantly in the everyday discourse of Kaili. *Minzu*, meanwhile, was a minor factor in distinguishing between spaces within the city, in contrast to its prominence in distinguishing the city from the countryside.

[194] Music, but not sound; previous chapters have already sufficiently contextualized the position of music within the wider soundscape of the city.

lived space in the context of relationality, the fifth quality of space suggested in chapter two. To describe space as relational means that a site can only be fully comprehended through an exploration of its relations with other sites. Although grounded in an immediate vicinity, lived space must therefore be constructed in relation to other locations. This relational construction, I argue, produces a blurring of conceived and lived space. According to Lefebvre, lived space emerges directly from everyday experience, in contrast to conceived space, which must first be conceived in thought. However, the lived experience of a space surely constitutes a symbolic construction of that space with reference to a conceived impression of other sites. In the simplest form possible, the users of location A live their space in relation to a conception of location B. For example, in the discourse of *yuanshengtai* considered in chapter four, many inhabitants of Kaili made a distinction between their modern city space and rural *minzu* space.

This is a simplification both of *yuanshengtai* discourse – which also pertained to the big city – and spatial relationality, which might see the users of location A imagine their social space in relation to conceptions of locations B, C, D, and E, which may exist at various points on the geographical scale. However, the key point is that a focus on relationality reveals a closer and less confrontational relationship between lived and conceived space than originally indicated by Lefebvre, who had a tendency to simply treat these two spatial elements as oppositional. I already tentatively made this suggestion in earlier chapters, by highlighting the malleability of conceived branded space, as opposed to the conceived planned space with which Lefebvre was concerned, and which he often pitted against everyday lived space. This chapter further considers the relationship between conceived and lived space, arguing that they are not only inseparable but even in cooperation within the perceived space of the everyday.

The lived space conceptualized here also differs from Lefebvre in a second key way. His basis of lived space was *absolute space*, the first stage in his history of social space, which "was made up of fragments of nature located at sites which were chosen for their intrinsic qualities" (Lefebvre 1991a: 48 [1974]). Lefebvre located the creation of this absolute space in the distant past, prior to the onset of history and accumulation, although it survived into his present as a dominated space. In Mayfair Yang's faithful interpretation, lived space is located within the "native culture" of Wenzhou, which preceded the establishment of the Maoist state and enjoyed a revival in the 1980s (2004: 727–8). In contrast, the lived musical spaces described in this chapter have emerged as a partial result of fluctuations in modern state discourse, as well as inconsistencies in the interpretation of this discourse. This assertion, that lived space has been partly produced through the actions of the modern state, contrasts sharply with Lefebvre's treatment of state bureaucracy as an ally of modern capitalism in the destruction of lived experience.

During the Mao era, the state regarded leisure as a collective activity subordinate to work, which should contribute to worker productivity through the enhancement of mental and physical faculties (S. Wang 1995: 152). In twenty-first century Kaili, this conceptualization of leisure

contributed to two quite different lived spaces; an indoor choir which focused on educational improvement, and an outdoor choir which regarded singing as exercise. Additionally, the Maoist conceptualization of leisure has come to exist alongside the more recent notion of leisure as consumption.[195] The latter entails an entirely different attitude to leisure; it does not matter so much whether leisure activity is collective or individual, educational or inconsequential, so long as it contributes to China's internal consumption. The concurrent existence of these two conceptualizations has contributed to the relational construction of lived musical spaces along generational lines in Kaili. To elaborate, some members of the retiree network contrasted their collective, artistic singing activities with those of younger people, which they conceived as individualistic and technically insubstantial. Thus, contrasting forms of state discourse have contributed – quite unintentionally – to a complex mosaic of lived musical spaces in Kaili.

The contested function of park music

As a relatively established site for musical activity, and a focal point in a wider meshwork, Apple Hill Park again provides a good starting point, this time for demonstrating the construction of lived space through relational complexity. With regard to the city as a whole, choir members lived space in opposition to the rural *minzu* place of *yuanshengtai*; they played music for inconsequential self-entertainment in contrast to the folk music of "real" minorities in unsullied villages. At a different geographical scale, and in partial contradiction to the above distinction, park users also imagined Apple Hill in relation to the rest of the city, as a space of nature. Choir singers portrayed their musical activity as part of an exercise regime that was conducted in a retreat from the concrete and the complications of the wider city. This imagining accorded quite closely with the official delineation of the park as a leisure space. There was, however, a certain divergence when formal literature followed city branding to the extreme and declared that the trees of Apple Hill, although not "primeval" (*yuanshi*), nevertheless conveyed a thick *yuanshengtai* flavour (G. Tang 2009b: 3). Official representations of the park also tended to focus on bird-fighting, as a claimed "*minzu* speciality" of Qiandongnan prefecture (e.g. C. Long 2009: 1; W. Qiao 2009: 5), with less reference to other leisure activities, and minimal reference to music-making.

In further contrast to newspaper articles and promotional literature, many park users imagined Apple Hill as the *only* retreat in the city, and did not consider Jinquan Reservoir Park or Dage Park to be worthy alternatives. When I asked elderly acquaintances why they chose to come to Apple Hill Park rather than Dage Park, many of them asserted that Apple Hill was the greener of the two

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[195] In her work on leisure in contemporary Quanzhou, Rolandsen (2011: 4–5) has described an official "PRC leisure ethic" discourse, whereby scholars criticize those who engage in unproductive or unhealthy leisure activities. Rolandsen has also suggested a link between this current discourse and the collectivist ethic of 1960s, when leisure was seen "as a resource that belongs to the greater collective, and one that should be put to use for the benefit of society" (2011: 6). Rather than two different but related discourses, surely this is a single discourse which has mutated somewhat over time, but which continues to advocate engagement in productive leisure for the benefit of society.

and had more trees. One retired teacher stated that Apple Hill was the *only* place in the city for some fresh air and nature. I asked, what about Dage Park? He replied that it didn't have *any* trees.[196] Beyond facilitating the hanging of musical scores, the trees also held some symbolical importance for the group, who were prepared to defend them against threats. One regular, Auntie Yang, recounted to me how some of the group had got into a long argument with the builders of a new Dong-style viewing tower on the summit, and had threatened to report the builders to the relevant authorities if they cut down any more trees. She had also said that she had reprimanded a younger male park user for swinging on the branch of a tree, believing that his weight would damage it, and had been threatened with violence during the ensuing argument.

Figure 6.1: The completed viewing tower in Apple Hill Park, with leisure activity at its foot (fieldwork photo 2013)

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[196] In fact, Dage Park definitely did have trees. I once mentioned to a regular at Dage the claim that Apple Hill had the best air; "pah, how would they know, they never come here [to Dage]", was the response. He asserted that the trees were higher in Dage and there were less people, so of course the air was better.

At yet another geographical scale, the ongoing construction of the summit viewing tower occurred alongside a division that was internal to the park, as the summit choir experienced temporary fragmentation. Although this temporary split did not produce a long-term reconfiguration of the lived musical space of the park, it did demonstrate that there was a hierarchy of amateur status concealed within musicians' classification of their own activity as "self-entertainment" (*ziyu zile*). An examination of the split can serve to highlight the construction of a second type of lived leisure space in the city, where education and the regulation of musical sound were the main goals, rather than physical exercise and the experience of nature. The split was also another example of the spatial transience of music-making in Kaili, as presented in chapter five; the choir had been forced to adjust its position on the summit, as construction work on the Dong-style viewing tower progressed. At around the same time that the building site encroached on their space, the choir splintered, with a number of singers and instrumentalists relocating to a site between mid-level and summit, while the majority remained on the summit, as close as possible to their former position.

The small splinter group focused on solo singing, in contrast to the continued unison singing of the summit choir. The more prominent members of the splinter group included the flamboyant announcer Old Yang, his brother on *sanxian,* and another retiree who had previously been ostracized from the choir for his over-exuberant singing. There were also a couple of men in the group whom other members identified as "experts", and who had not to my knowledge spent any significant time with the summit choir. As I walked down from the summit one morning with Teacher Wang, we saw and heard this splinter group; he commented that they had broken up (*fenshou*) with the summit choir (of which he was a prominent member), preferring to sing solo rather than unison. We continued the conversation the next day, when Teacher Wang asked me pointedly why I was not with the solo singers. Interpreting the question as a test of my loyalty, but wishing to remain neutral, I responded that I would go between groups, and then asked him the same question; one man's meat is another man's poison (*luobo baicai geyou suo'ai*) was Teacher Wang's guarded response. I pressed the issue, asking if that meant he did not like solo singing; he responded that solo singing was fine, but these singers had deliberately left the group. Teacher Wang stressed his sense of responsibility towards the group, describing it as *his* group, and saying that he needed to be there for the other members.

Members of the splinter group told me a different story. As I observed their singing one morning, Old Yang came over to initiate a conversation with me - something that he had never done before - explaining in a serious tone that the summit singers often made errors with no attempts at correction (*jiuzheng*), so they kept on making the same mistakes. An *erhu* player complained separately that the summit group was chaotic and irregular (*luan, bu zhenggui*), and that they stressed quantity over quality (*jiangjiu shuliang, bu jiangjiu zhiliang*). In a similar vein, a middle-aged female singer said that she never learned anything with the group at the top, whereas

there were two male members in this group who were experts (*zhuanjia*) and corrected their mistakes.

These comments take the chapter beyond Apple Hill Park and into the wider retiree meshwork, within which it was quite common to hear individuals distinguish between groups according to singing structure, with references to unison, solo and multi-part singing. This was often a hierarchical distinction, with practitioners tending to rank multi-part singing above solo singing, and solo singing above unison singing. In accordance with the demands of the more sophisticated singing categories – particularly multi-part – it was deemed necessary for a group to have guidance from some kind of teacher or expert. This created a further point of difference; most individuals saw themselves as amateur singers, but might consider their group as a whole to be more professional when guided by an expert. During a chat on the summit of Apple Hill Park, the retired bank clerk Xue Baojian once told me about an indoor choir with which he was engaged in artistic (*yishu*) activity, describing it as more professional than the summit choir. I pressed for details of what he meant by "professional"; well, they have a professional teacher (*zhuanye laoshi*), he responded.

While only some groups in the meshwork had professional teachers, all of them possessed individuals who were referred to as "teachers". The vast majority were men, despite the fact that women comfortably constituted the majority in all of the groups that I attended. Those who were referred to as teachers usually had the ability to play musical instruments and provide singing instruction. In the choir on the summit of Apple Hill, there was only one regular female instrumental player (on *dizi*), while the three or four regular *erhu* players were men, including Teacher Wang. The conductor, Fang Xiaoming, was also addressed as "teacher", yet others who were involved in the more practical organization of the summit choir – and who were often women – were not similarly addressed.[197]

The teachers were held in varying degrees of regard. During a choir expedition to Small High Mountain, a local scenic spot, I took a walk alone with Lin Zhuo, a retired primary school teacher mentioned in chapter five, who had many opinions about the "quality" (*suzhi*) of other acquaintances. He was not impressed with the ability of Teacher Fang, and even implied that he was losing his mental faculties because of his advancing years. On the other hand, he exalted Teacher Wang as a "high-class intellectual" (*gaoji zhishifenzi*), who would be able to give the choir comprehensive training if not for his poor health. During another conversation, Lin Zhuo asserted that Teacher Wang, being a high-class intellectual, would not choose to attend Apple Hill Park himself, but his wife enjoyed singing there.

Despite possessing a variety of teachers, the summit choir lacked an expert, or professional

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[197] For example, one female singer generally collected money from members to cover the costs of planned outings to out-of-town scenic spots. Another female singer cajoled the group into formation in preparation for a rare performance by the choir at an indoor venue.

teacher,[198] and the splinter group differentiated themselves through reference to this perceived lack, as did members of the indoor choirs. The splittists further underlined their sense of artistic superiority with their chosen group name of "Apple Hill Forest Park Vocal Music Group" (*Pingguoshan senlin shengyue tuan*), in comparison to the summit choir, who simply referred to themselves as "Apple Hill Choir" (*Pinguoshan hechang tuan*).[199] The word "*shengyue*" implies a sophistication that is lost in the translation to "vocal music"; conservatoires offer courses in *shengyue* training, while more down-to-earth karaoke and park singers simply "sing" (*chang*). No wonder then that there was some tension in the park, albeit more among the leaders than the wider singing community, some of whom moonlighted at both groups.[200] One female summit singer joined the soloists after her dancing one day, rather than head directly to the choir. Seeing that I was heading to the summit, she told me to inform Teacher Wang that she hadn't finished dancing yet, but would be along soon. In contrast, the leaders did not cut across groups. Teacher Fang stopped to observe the soloists on his way past their space one day, but notably paused at the foot of the two steps which led into the covered area where they were singing.

The splinter group singers were pretenders to a couple of thrones, and failed to procure either. Firstly, the summit choir continued to be the main musical representative of the park; the splinter group lacked a sufficient core of committed members to flourish and transform Apple Hill Park into a sophisticated singing space. Secondly, this group lacked some of the qualities needed to be considered a sophisticated amateur singing group; in terms of expertise and organization, it fell somewhere between the summit choir and the indoor choirs described in the next section. As with the other groups and sites considered in this chapter, there was a definite form of distinction taking place in the park, but it was also difficult to assess to what extent such distinction was inscribed in space. The splittists made a distinction between the two groups, and these two groups certainly existed in space. From this perspective, all modes of difference are spatial. But whether there was a lasting inscription of difference in space is less clear, especially given the spatial fluidity of musical practices described in chapter five, whereby groups were constantly relocating. A lasting inscription did, however, occur in sites where practices were sustained. Thus, members of the wider retiree network did associate Apple Hill Park – and parks more generally – with an unsophisticated, unison form of singing, given the relatively established nature of the summit choir.

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[198] When they were unexpectedly recruited for a formal performance, Teacher Fang was subsequently temporarily replaced by another conductor, who was referred to not merely as teacher, but as a master (*dashi*). Thoughtlessly, I asked Teacher Fang if he would not be conducting at the performance; no, he (the master) will be, responded Fang, he's a professional (*zhuanye*).

[199] The groups used these two monikers in their written literature, such as the song lists upon which people had to write their name and chosen song if they wanted to sing solo.

[200] No-one was paid to attend these groups, but I use "moonlight" here to highlight the fact that choir members sometimes described their group as a work unit (*danwei*). One male singer, who only ever sang at the summit, jokingly referred to the other group as my "second company" on discovering that I had been attending both groups. As with the place names mentioned in chapter five, this raises interesting questions regarding memory and the Mao-era work unit which are unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

The other clear example was Bright Star and its open-mike singing, which had also been established to the extent that symbolism became more tightly intertwined with a specific space.

The educational indoor choir

In this section, I extend my analysis of lived space to the indoor choirs, particularly Fenghua choir, initially based in the culture centre, as the group with which I became best acquainted. Given the relationality of space, an examination of the indoor choirs concomitantly sheds further light on the status of Apple Hill Park. A number of the indoor choir members sang at Apple Hill Park, but considered the musical efforts there to be artistically inferior. Recalling further details of my conversations with Lin Zhuo, who attended three choirs during the course of my fieldwork, he felt that the overall quality (*zhengti suzhi*) of the summit choir was not particularly high; their volume was fine, but they could not read cipher notation. As a result, he argued, the group tended to go off course (*pao diao*) and off key (*chang huang*). He was also unimpressed by their outing to Small High Mountain, which had purportedly been about singing, but had mainly consisted of playing *mahjong*, an activity which he did not hold in high regard. In contrast, he later disclosed to me his satisfaction with another indoor choir, which he considered to have a high level of quality.

The indoor choirs which I observed were all instructed by individuals with paid music teaching positions at official institutions, including Kaili University, No. 1 Middle School, and No. 3 Middle School. The presence and behaviour of these teachers contributed to the formalization of social activity in the indoor choirs, which was noticeably more structured than the activity of the Apple Hill summit choir. Whereas the park choir mainly regarded singing as an opportunity to exercise and socialize, an indoor choir such as Fenghua included some members who were more concerned with the improvement of singing technique and the regulation of sound.[201] In order to achieve these educational aims, these choirs required the production of a more strictly regulated social space. In terms of the built environment, there was not much chance of procuring a relatively permanent base, as noted in previous chapters. However, an indoor space did at least provide a certain amount of protection from the sound and rain of the city. Additionally, the group could

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[201] However, everyday practice often diverged from these ideals, which were certainly not shared by all choir members. Members often turned up late to practice or did turn up at all, while preparations for performances were rushed and haphazard. Even so, there was an aspiration among a core of committed group members towards a more ordered choir. Thus, one regular complained that discipline in the group was too "loose" (*song*), and admitted that Huifeng (a rival choir in the labour union building) was much stricter, noting approvingly that if you didn't come to practice then you weren't expected to come back. An interview with one of the vice-directors also revealed conflicting attitudes to discipline. On the one hand, he celebrated the self-organized (*zifa de zuzhi*) character of current choirs, in comparison to previous decades, when there was a certain coerciveness (*qiangzhixing*) involved in the organization of work unit choirs. On the other hand, he complained about the difficulties of not being attached to a work unit, so that the choir could not punish members or dock wages for failing to attend practice (Interview: 21 June 2013a).

establish a relatively structured – and even professional[202] – space through strict training, administrative organization, the positioning of bodies, and the regulation of their own vocal sound.

Aside from professional teachers, Fenghua choir also had a formal administrative hierarchy, including the director, Auntie Xiong, two vice-directors (one for administrative duties, one for singing duties), and two members in charge of financial logistics. A publicity display (*xuanchuan lan*) on one of the walls provided the names, titles and photos of the various administrators, as well as a short official history of the choir's founding. The financial officers attended to membership fees, doing the rounds of members with a name list, collecting money and making a mark against the names of those who paid. Membership fees (*huifei*) were 30RMB a month, which covered the renting of the room, "hygiene fees" (*weisheng fei*) and payments to the teachers. The director, Auntie Xiong, told me that the teachers would be happy to instruct for free, but that the group felt that they should receive something for their efforts, and so paid a "hardship fee" (*xinku fei*) of 500 RMB a month. Referring to Teacher Song, a young teacher who was working at No. 1 Middle School while he prepared for the civil service examination, one singer asked me if I had noticed how the group treated him like a son, given their awareness of his difficulties; his mother had passed away and he did not yet have a formal work position. Statements of this kind evinced a sense of claimed collective moral duty that was less evident within the more relaxed organization of the Apple Hill summit choir.

During the bulk of my fieldwork, Fenghua choir met twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays. An attendance record was kept; members were expected to attend regularly or to have valid excuses for their absence. In a long speech outlining his plans for the choir, Teacher Song proposed an even more structured system of learning in order to improve their performance ability. He suggested two types of class: a mass-style (*qunzhonghua*), ordinary class (*puji ban*) on Mondays and Wednesdays; and an additional class (*jiachang ban*) for more serious singing on Fridays. He stressed that the ordinary class was for everyone, but people needed to think carefully about whether or not they would be committing themselves to the additional class. It was not enough just to sing well; members with poor attendance records would not be permitted to join the additional class.

Since the indoor choirs were all multi-part, each singing section also had a formal leader. Fenghua choir usually sang in either two- or three-part harmony; we divided into sopranos, altos and tenors for one song, while sopranos and altos doubled up with tenors and basses respectively for another song (i.e. the tenors sang the same part as the sopranos at a lower register). This multi-part format involved the ordering of bodies in space according to gender; women were positioned at the front and men at the back. The women were usually well ordered, occupying two regular

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[202] One of the vice-directors contrasted the "amateur musical activities" of Kaili's past with the appearance of "professional choirs" in recent years, such as Fenghua (Interview: 21 June 2013a). On the other hand, I also heard ordinary members make jokes about Fenghua being a "*professional* artistic group".

lines of plastic stools, with sopranos to the right and altos to the left. The men, on the other hand, were chaotically arranged. There were not enough male singers to maintain coherent tenor and bass sections, and the men instead spread their stools irregularly in the space behind the female sections. Their spatial disorder was exacerbated by the long rectangular shape of the culture centre room, which was out of proportion to the size of the choir, leaving a large space to the rear of the group, into which the men could easily disperse if not properly ordered by the administrative hierarchy.

A piano and a portable whiteboard were positioned to the front of the members, for use by the teacher, who also frequently issued verbal instruction with the combination of portable amp and headset mike described in chapter five. Such amps provided rather poor quality sound reproduction, so it was somewhat surprising that the group would use such a device, even if it was largely confined to announcements, considering their emphasis on the regulation of vocal sound. During one session, the choir experimented with a wireless microphone and a speaker to the back of the room. However, the speaker was placed so far to the back that some choir members complained they could not hear, and Auntie Xiong resorted to the usual amp to make her formal announcements, which occurred at the start of each session.

Following announcements, musical activity always began with vocal exercises, which constituted a means of both warming-up and improving technique. It was not acceptable for an individual to simply sing in the manner which came easiest to him or her; there was a clearly conveyed sense of right and wrong in the matter of intonation, and something of an obsession with technique. This can be illustrated through reference to the disciplining of Lin Zhuo, who had a powerful voice with heavy vibrato. During one class, almost as soon as Lin Zhou's section started practising, the teacher rushed over from his piano, and exhorted him not to sing in such a tone. The teacher did not explain the exact error, but it seemed that Lin Zhuo's somewhat arrhythmic vibrato did not meld well with the overall sound produced by the section. Correct breathing, posture, and shaping of the mouth were all required in order to facilitate vocal quality. Most crucially, teachers emphasized that a sound could only be produced correctly if it came from the correct part of the body. In particular, they identified the abdomen as the correct location for the production of most sounds; as Teacher Song put it, "the belly has a mouth", whereas sound quickly disperses (*san*) when produced from the throat. Choir members described their vocal technique either as *minzu* or *bel canto*; despite their division for the purposes of singing competitions, both of these categories emphasize vocal control and technique.[203] Indeed, musicologist Jia Zhong (2008: 39) has argued that the *minzu* technique especially resembles Western art music in terms of vocal training, with

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[203] As mentioned above and in chapter four, there are certain similarities between *minzu* and *bel canto* singing techniques, and an array of different understandings sometimes led to conflation during fieldwork. For example, Lin Zhuo made a geographical distinction, associating *bel canto* with the West, and *minzu* singing with China. In contrast, Lao Tong, one of the Fenghua vice directors, claimed that every country has a *minzu* singing style, but *bel canto* was *the* method for choral singing (Interview: 21 June 2013b). If Lao Tong's definition is followed, *minzu* technique bleeds into singing methods that might also be described as *yuanshengtai*.

focus on the alteration of the voice and breathing in accordance with *bel canto*, while anything outside of this ideal is labelled "unscientific" (*bei tieshang bu kexue*). However, *bel canto* was more highly regarded than *minzu* singing by some choir members, including the vice-directors, who maintained that the choir was utilizing *bel canto* in order to achieve a unity of sound:

> The most important point of *bel canto* is that you have a fundamental tone (*jidiao*), and everyone tries to get as close as possible to it. People have different vocal qualities and ranges, but *bel canto* gives you a fundamental tone, and you can get as close to that as possible (Interview: 21 June 2013b).

> When singing solo, individuality of voice is fine; *yuanshengtai*, pop or *minzu* singing techniques are all ok. But for choral singing, it's best to achieve a unity of sound, and to use the *bel canto* method to achieve that unity of vocal sound (Interview: 21 June 2013a).

In contrast, the enforcement of vocal technique did not often occur on the summit of Apple Hill, which served as a relational contrast for some indoor choir members in the construction of their lived space. Comparing the choirs, Lin Zhuo saw the Apple Hill Park choir as "just singing" (*zhi shi chang*), with nothing artistic about it, whereas there was a process of improvement (*tigao guocheng*) at the indoor choir he attended. Another member of Fenghua choir similarly described the summit singing as just unison (*qichang*) singing, with a lack of aesthetic attention (*jiangjiu*). Yet another member of Fenghua preferred to sing with the splinter group when she visited the park, echoing the comments of Old Yang when she complained that the summit choir just sang the same songs over and over again. In fact, Apple Hill Park had the largest repertoire of any group encountered in Kaili, but there was a tendency to sing a song straight through and then proceed to the next one, with no attempt to concentrate on improving specific passages, and certainly no vocal training. In contrast, teachers would frequently stop indoor choirs mid-song to upbraid them for errors of vocal technique or pronunciation. Leisure was a serious matter for some members of Fenghua, particularly the administrative leaders and the teacher.[204] Moreover, in order to fulfil the educational aims of their leisure, the choir needed to be based indoors rather than outdoors, according to one vice-director:

> Because it's too noisy outside…in an choir, you need to keep practising repeatedly in order to achieve a unity of sound. Practising in some square, you couldn't achieve that kind of unity….the hill or the square, it's an entertainment space, so it's ok to do whatever you want

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[204] Leisure was even a moral matter; talking about an upcoming television appearance for the group, one middle-aged singer told me how she hoped that the broadcast might encourage people to pick up the good habit of singing, rather than play *mahjong* or gamble.

there. But if you want to achieve some kind of training goal or to improve, then there isn't much chance [in those spaces], which are instead better for promotion and atmosphere (Interview: 21 June 2013a).

As part of this focus on the refinement of vocal sound, there was also a strict attitude towards the enunciation of lyrics, which had to be pronounced in standard northern Chinese. It was rare that a choir practice passed without some complaint from the teacher – or one of the more confident members – about the non-standard Chinese of a section of the choir. During one practice, a Fenghua teacher took the male singers to task for their dialect-tinged pronunciation, to the delight of the female members. Among the list of crimes, the men were not rolling their tongues in the pronunciation of the word "burning"; instead of "*ranshao*" they sang "*ransao*", the latter being the common pronunciation of many southern provinces, including Guizhou. The teacher noted that their melody was fine, but complained of the constant need to correct pronunciation. She added that this was not something she should be having to do; it was not a singing matter, but something that they should all have learned previously.[205]

The Fenghua teacher claimed a practical motive behind her demand for standard northern Chinese; there were fifty ways of pronouncing a single word, so it was necessary to achieve coherence by means of standard pronunciation when singing in unison. But if mere coherence was the key, why not simply sing in the local dialect, either of Kaili, or wider Guizhou? Since most choir members had spent many years in Kaili, it would surely have been easier to achieve a unity of sound by means of a local dialect, rather than a form of Chinese that many found difficult to master, despite its official status. However, the preference for standard northern Chinese was informed by an educational philosophy which has sought to achieve the vocal standardization not just of a single choir but of a nation. As mentioned in chapter four, Chinese conservatoires have emphasized the modernization of music through the application of "scientific" and "rational" methods. In the process of transforming regional musics into national music, musical professionals from the early twentieth century onwards began to standardize instruments and vocal technique, replace unpredictable heterophony with fixed harmony, and demand strict adherence to the written score. Adopting a single dialect, standard northern Chinese, was a part of this process, in facilitating a national unity of modernized singing practices.[206]

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[205] The choir teachers themselves generally spoke in standard Chinese, but occasionally lapsed into dialect during moments of extreme dissatisfaction with the choir.

[206] Students in music education at Kaili University did not just apply for teaching jobs upon graduation, but also for positions as hosts at television stations, where clear and standard Mandarin pronunciation was an essential quality.

Figure 6.2: Fenghua choir practice; leader Auntie Xiong told members to look smart while I took footage (fieldwork photo 2011)

However, choral practices in Kaili were also influenced by the branding of Kaili and broader Qiandongnan as custodians of unique cultural flavour. As examined in chapter four, the discourse of *yuanshengtai* places heavy emphasis on linguistic ability; "real" Dong and Miao were expected not only to be fluent in their respective languages, but also to sing in these languages. Although most Kaili citizens stressed their sinicization, the indoor choirs were also interested in attaining prestige through success at provincial and national singing competitions, and had identified the expression of their Qiandongnan characteristics as a selling point. Teacher Song made just this point during his long outline of developmental strategy, stating that once Fenghua choir had improved, they should go out into the world and introduce their "Qiandongnan elegance" to other places. Just as the representation of unique minority flavour could give Kaili a competitive advantage over other cities, so choirs could excel in musical competition through a similar strategy.

Newspaper articles have described the local Kaili dialect as genuine and *yuanshengtai* (Di 2007: 3; M. Liu 2009: 5), but this was incompatible with the standardizing and unifying aesthetic of the indoor choirs. Instead, the desire to sell local flavour led to the selection of modern compositions that emphasized the places and customs of local minorities. For example, two of the indoor choirs were learning a Chinese-language composition named *Early Spring in the Miao Mountains* (*Miaoling chunzao*), while Fenghua had even chosen a two-part folk song in the Dong language. The rest of the performance repertoire of indoor choirs, meanwhile, consisted mainly of *minzu* songs on national themes, such as *The Waves of Gulangyu* (*Gulangyu zhi bo*) on cross-strait relations, and *Loushan Pass* (*Yi-qin-e Loushan guan*), a musical adaptation of a poem written by Mao Zedong during the Long March. There was therefore a mixture of local and national themes,

but all delivered in standard northern Chinese, with the exception of the Dong song. Rather than sing in the Miao-tinged but "*yuanshengtai*" dialect of Kaili, choirs stressed local flavour within the framework of nationally standardized vocal pronunciation. Speaking of examples such as *The Miao Family Welcomes Happiness* (*Miaojia yingzhe xingfu lai*), one vice-director asserted that "The sources of these songs are found within folk culture, but these songs also exceed that of folk culture. Art comes from life, but it also exceeds life" (Interview: 21 June 2013a).

To a certain extent, even the Dong song was incorporated into the scientific training methods of conservatoire, where the written score is typically preferred over aural transmission.[207] Although Fenghua choir possessed both an mp3 and a transcription of the song, most singers simply followed the notation at those points where it diverged from recorded sound. However, practice of the Dong song was also notably different from that of other songs. Rather than sitting or standing in lines, the group stood in a circle. With few Dong speakers, there was little stress on accuracy of pronunciation, and subsequently few efforts at correction. Just getting the melody right was sufficient, along with the addition of a few bodily movements to emphasize the rhythmic and carefree nature of Dong singing, as understood by the choir.

The practice of the Dong song also sometimes diffused the rather tense atmosphere that arose when a teacher was dissatisfied with the choir's progress. During occasional sessions with Fenghua, the choir underwent a barrage of criticism from the teacher of the moment; at such moments, it appeared that educational improvement was more important than social pleasure. In one example, a teacher began his admonishment with some talk about the importance of "thought work" (*sixiang gongzuo*). In a manner that hovered between menace and black humour, he declared that while persistence was his strong point, irritability was his main failing. He then listed his various demands of the choir; for example, members had to smile when performing, and to watch him conduct rather than stare at the sheet music. In fact, they had to learn the music by heart for the following week. Half speaking, half shouting, the teacher criticized the group for their chaotic singing (*luan chang*) and rhythmic hesitancy. In subsequent run-throughs, the choir became even less rhythmically stable than before. The teacher also overpowered the entire choir with his powerful voice at the conclusion of one run-through, to emphasize a further point, that they were singing too quietly during the end section of the piece, with not enough attention to dynamics.

The administrative order of Fenghua choir attempted to construct a more serious space for

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[207] The music department of Kaili University offered an interesting counter-example to this conservatoire preference for the written score. Wu Paihuan, teacher of Dong song, gave cipher notation to her first-year students, but was also aware that many of them were unable to read either cipher or staff notation. She primarily relied on memorization through aural transmission, singing a song passage-by-passage and having her students recite back until she felt that they could sing on their own.

musical practices, in contrast to the relatively unstructured Apple Hill choir.[208] While Apple Hill Park was marked as a leisure space for physical exercise, enjoyment of nature and socializing, the indoor choirs placed more emphasis on leisure as education. From a historical perspective, their concern with hierarchy, administration, pedagogy and technique was a partial continuation of the social organization and leisure practises of the work unit. However, a choir such as Fenghua could hardly be seen as a facsimile of Mao-era leisure practices; it also drew on the marketed image of Qiandongnan, and (negatively) on the disordered music-making of Apple Hill Park in the relational construction of lived space. The Apple Hill choir, meanwhile, was influenced by a different strand of the Maoist leisure aesthetic. Rather than being beneficial to the mind, park regulars regarded singing as beneficial to the body. Leisure during the Mao era was supposed to enhance both *mental* and *physical* health, since both were required for productive work. As China's population began to age in the post-Mao era, leisure as exercise became important to retiree singers for a different reason. As one female park goer put it, there were so many elderly people in China now that their greatest contribution to home and country was to keep healthy through such activities. While exercise had once constituted a means of improving productivity, it had also become a way in which those excluded from production could at least avoid becoming a burden to the nation.[209]

This section has emphasized the differences that existed within the retiree and middle-aged meshwork. Groups such as Fenghua choir and Apple Hill choir practised amateur musical activity with different goals in mind, and this produced different types of social space. Some members of Fenghua choir even lived their spaces in opposition to the activities of Apple Hill. However, numerous individuals in these groups also lived their musical spaces through the making of contrasts to singing practices which occurred *outside* of the retiree meshwork. Apart from the *yuanshengtai* of rural place, they also made distinctions between their music-making and the singing practices of young people. In the following section, I examine how Bright Star became a well-known space associated with young people, before proceeding to consider the construction of lived space along generational lines.

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[208] There was some structure to the park choir, but it was far more informal. One of the members joked with me about their organization, deliberately employing the tone and language of officialdom to humorous effect, telling me that Fang Xiaoming was probably the troupe director (*tuanzhang*) and one of the more confident women was vice-director; in fact, some would even say that she was the real director. He classed Teacher Wang, meanwhile, as a senior-ranking officer (*daxiao*). Assessing the group as a whole, he said that that they were not part of the city government, or of the street office, they were mass art (*qunzhong yishu*)!

[209] For a somewhat different interpretation, see Hung (2005) on the development of *yang'ge*, an outdoor folk dance which was adapted in the early 1940s for the purposes of mass education, and underwent a renaissance during the post-Mao era as a form of physical exercise. Hung asserted that post-Mao *yang'ge* practices have been "depoliticized" (2005: 99), but to what extent are these practices entirely divorced from the governance of citizens? Whereas *yang'ge* once served as a means for the organization of mass celebration, activities of this kind surely assist the contemporary state in keeping an ageing population healthy and preoccupied.

Healthy entertainment for youth

Although only founded in 2009, Bright Star had already established a solid reputation by the time I went to Kaili for preliminary fieldwork in 2010, and was one of the few suggestions that a group of students could manage when I asked them to name the musical spaces of the city. During my main fieldwork, it became evident that the site was well known across nearly all of the groups with whom I had contact. This reputation may have been assisted by the prior establishment of a sister venue in the provincial capital of Guiyang back in 2003; many inhabitants of Kaili were familiar with goings-on in Guiyang, and therefore had prior exposure to the brand. The operators of Bright Star had also purchased their site in Kaili some years before its official opening in 2009, first sitting on the location for a while and then spending two years on design. Given the central location, the construction phase must have generated attention, as well as indicating the resolve of the company to establish a long-term site in the city, with the furnishing at Bright Star far surpassing those of other venues in terms of both sturdiness and flair. Darren, a Taiwan acquaintance, owned a drinks stall by the entrance to Bright Star, and his brother had been involved in the design. During our numerous conversations, Darren stressed the design quality and cleanliness of Bright Star, claiming that locals did not believe prior to opening that anybody would invest so much money and create such a clean place. The company had also utilized advertising to extend knowledge of the location beyond the immediate vicinity: a trail of posters led potential customers from Beijing Avenue, the city's main east-west boulevard, to Bright Star's location in the centre of the pedestrianized Zhongbo Plaza; and a billboard on the outskirts of the city announced the venue's presence to drivers on the highway into Kaili.

Individuals involved in Bright Star – as well as adverts and newspaper articles – promoted the venue as a place which offered value-for-money and "healthy" entertainment to students. During a karaoke session, I remarked to Darren on the brightness of the private booths in Bright Star. He responded that Bright Star was a "healthy space", and so was well lit; it was not a place where you could get a hostess to accompany you (*pei xiaojie*). He slyly referred to other karaoke bars in town as "having colour" (*you yanse*), a comment echoed in an online newspaper article about the Guiyang branch of Bright Star, which approvingly noted the venue's lack of "insidious sexual service" (sexual = *seqing*, literally "colourful lust") (J. Jiang and He 2003). Lao Xiong, the manager of the KTV, bar, stage and food court sections in the Kaili branch, similarly described Bright Star as offering a purer (*danchun*) type of entertainment than other places.

The KTV section of Bright Star was advertised as "pure wholesale" (*chun liangfan*), a term that requires brief dissection, but which, in short, also stressed the affordable and healthy nature of entertainment in Bright Star. The combination of two characters for "wholesale" (量販) was created in Japan to describe the practice of selling goods in bulk at reduced prices in hypermarkets (Wei Han 1999; Ma and Wang 2007: 60). On being imported into Taiwan, and later the PRC,

"wholesale" no longer referred only to buying household goods in bulk, but came to denote any kind of business with a cheap and transparent pricing policy, and where customers served themselves (Ma and Wang 2007: 61). Thus, for a karaoke venue such as Bright Star, "pure wholesale" indicated that customers only had to pay for the price of a karaoke room, with no other mandatory costs. This contrasted with the "minimum spend" (*zuidi xiaofei*, literally "minimum consumption") of many establishments in contemporary China, whereby customers have to spend a minimum amount of money for their karaoke experience, which often includes copious amounts of alcohol and the decidedly impure presence of hostesses.[210] If Bright Star consumers wished to purchase drinks or food to accompany their karaoke activity, these could be bought separately from a space next to the karaoke reception, which had been designed to resemble a 7-11-style convenience store.

The "healthy", good-value entertainment proclaimed by Bright Star made it attractive to students and young groups of friends, rather than people looking to develop business contacts. The brightly-coloured and open surroundings conveyed an impression of safety and cleanliness, in contrast to the slightly threatening seediness of other karaoke bars, so that it was quite common to see unaccompanied middle-school students. Entry to the non-KTV areas was free, and management was relaxed about individual consumption, with many customers just buying a single bottle of water or iced green tea, and some buying nothing at all. Bright Star consequently attracted numerous individuals who just needed a place to rest for a while, including the odd (harmless) eccentric. Incidences of extreme drunkenness were rare in Bright Star, particularly in comparison to the wider city, where significant quantities of alcohol constituted an important element of everyday leisure for many working men and women. A 20-something white-collar worker at the local construction company told me that he did not often go to Bright Star; he then recounted to his friends in Kaili dialect – with some hilarity – how some students had invited him for a night out there and been surprised that he had wanted to drink alcohol rather than simply sing. Similarly, Older Sister Yang, of Longtouhe village, wondered that my student friends had not been drinking at my leaving-party in Bright Star; personally, she would always drink at karaoke.

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[210] According to Guizhou provincial law, the "minimum charge" policy of other businesses was illegal (GSRZ 2006). Amazingly, the same law stipulated that businesses could not prevent customers from bringing their own food and drink, something that even a "healthy" space such as Bright Star attempted to prohibit, albeit only in karaoke booths. Local newspaper articles have criticized entertainment spaces which break this latter element of the law, with even the Guiyang branch of Bright Star named as one of what must surely have been an endless list of transgressors (L. Yang 2007; 2011; L. Yang and Xie 2013).

Figure 6.3: An advertisement for Bright Star (fieldwork photo 2012)

Generationalism, vocal technique and repertoire

As a consequence of its conceived branded space and perceived space, Bright Star was known throughout Kaili as a space for young people.[211] In turn, those young people – and the space – were associated with certain musical practices, as part of a stress on the importance of generation in determining musical activity. In his work on contemporary Chinese culture, Geremie Barmé (1999: xv) identified a tendency towards "generationalism", that is, "the subdivision of cultural activists according to their provenance in terms of both locale [i.e. place of education] and age group". The best-known example is the identification of a "fifth generation" of PRC film-makers, such as Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang, who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy and rose to international prominence during the 1980s. Despite being an "amorphous group" (Barmé 1999: xv), these film-makers came to be associated with a particular type of cultural work, which was contrasted with those of other cinematic generations. Similarly, division of the rock music of China according to generation is a project in which I have been involved (Kendall 2009), following in the wake of other music critics and academics (e.g. Yan 2004:195-198, cited in Groenewegen 2005: 38–9; de Kloet 2005). While these examples relate to the categorization of professional artists in media and academia, many inhabitants in Kaili made similar assessments in their everyday descriptions of musical activities. As an example, I recount a short ethnographic vignette from Bright Star.

One evening, I was sitting at a table in the food court, and watching the proceedings on the open-mike stage while I ate, having just grabbed some food from the 10RMB buffet. Since Kaili was a small city, and Bright Star was a popular central spot, it was common to bump into acquaintances; on this night, apart from a high-school regular, the manager Lao Xiong, and drinks-stall owner Darren, I also crossed paths with Old Brother Cui, a new middle-aged member of Fenghua choir. Originally from Shandong, he had been doing unspecified business in Kaili for four years. Bright Star was a stop on his evening walk, and a place where he came to listen, rather than sing. He apparently also came to pass judgement on those who braved the open-mike stage. Unprompted, he started to talk with affable certainty about a generation gap between "us" and the singers; he explained that "we" like old songs, including *minzu* singing, and especially Tibetan songs, with their loud and resonating (*gaokang*) vocal style, while the young solo singers liked sentimental (*ruanmianmian*) songs. Later, he commented on the performance of a specific

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[211] However, it should be noted that Bright Star was a little passé for some young people. Music student Xu Ningjing claimed that Bright Star was not to her tastes, and asked me, "had I not noticed that most of the people who went there were students", implying that this was a negative trait. When I pointed our her relative youth, she elaborated that she tended to hang out with her older boyfriend and his friends (hence the maturity of her tastes) (Interview: 9 May 2012). Zhang Rui has once been a regular, but stopped attending when the rock band no longer played, "because the atmosphere in Bright Star is pretty weak, so if you go, it's with a specific goal in mind …if the band are not there, you go and it feels very hollow, and it makes you wonder why you bothered" (Interview: 10 May 2012).

individual on stage; you see, it's all sentimental, he said, conveying a mixture of humour and contempt.

Later that same evening, Older Brother Cui saw a fashionably-dressed customer in his early 20s walk past our table; he was wearing a trench coat, and had his longish hair tied back. Older Brother Cui subsequently got into a spirited debate with another customer as to the possible occupation of the young man, before concluding that he must definitely be involved in something artistic (*gao yishu*). He then approached the "artist" and began to accost him with a number of direct questions which initially drew a wary reaction, before the young man dropped his guard and joined us at our table. As the conversation progressed, Older Brother Cui asked our new acquaintance – who turned out to be a hairdresser - what he was intending to sing tonight; *Sentimental Trails* (*Jiuqing mianmian*) by Zhang Xueyou, from the 1970s or 80s, came the answer. Old Brother Cui did not know the song, but firmly maintained that it could not possibly be from the 1970s or 80s.

Older Brother Cui was correct on at least two counts; the song had been released in the early 1990s, and, as implied by the song title, it was another example of the sentimental style that he had identified, with crooned love lyrics, and an instrumental wash wherein strings, piano and acoustic guitar dominated a weak drum rhythm. His words also provided forthright examples of the manner in which many friends and acquaintances identified Bright Star as a place for young people, and particularly the "post-90s" generation, a group who sang differently to his generation in terms of both vocal style and repertoire. In fact, generation came second only to *minzu* in terms of the frequency with which it occurred in fieldwork participants' statements about social differentiation. Moreover, while *minzu* generally referred to rural-urban contrasts, generation had more relevance to differences which were internal to the city.

The assessment of Bright Star as a place of young people and pop music was made both within the venue itself and at other music-making locations in Kaili. Comments made *within* the venue often came from confident characters such as Old Brother Cui, who were prepared to go to Bright Star despite its association with a section of society different to their own. Another entrepreneur, in his late 30s, whom I had first met at Apple Hill Park, described himself as unable to understand the songs of the younger generation, as he watched a singer perform a track by the Taiwan girl group S.H.E.. However, he was still prepared to hang out in Bright Star, since he was "young at heart". Beyond these cross-site wayfarers, assessments of the younger generation and their singing practices were also given by less adventurous members of the Apple Hill Park choir and indoor choirs, who knew about Bright Star, but felt uncomfortable going there, as another short ethnographic vignette can demonstrate.

On one occasion, Li Jianshu, a middle-aged regular at both locations, and another individual with absolutely no sense of inhibition, convinced a small group of more reticent singers from Apple Hill to join us at the open-mike night in Bright Star. Li Jianshu happily performed his song,

having become accustomed to singing at Bright Star.[212] However, our other companions encountered problems. Lin Zhuo wanted to sing *The Highland is Red* (*Gaoyuan hong*),[213] but the song machine did not have his preferred version, performed by the Inner Mongolian singer Tenger. Opting for another singer's version, he struggled with the rhythm in a way that surprised me, given his generally confident and accurate singing at Apple Hill Park. After his performance, I asked him if he preferred singing to instruments or to a backing track; instruments, he answered, joking that it was more *yuanshengtai*. Teacher Wang, who had also joined us, stressed the importance of the timbre of live instruments, while the whole group was unimpressed by the sound system in Bright Star. Teacher Wang elected not to sing, claiming a cold, while Zheng Wang, a female singer, also demurred, saying that she needed to get used to the environment (*shuxi huanjing*). Li Jianshu found her comment almost incomprehensible, despite his own past experiences, arguing that if she was willing to sing at Apple Hill Park, she was surely willing to sing anywhere!

Zheng Wang was not a fan of the music played in Bright Star; although she had some knowledge of 1980s pop stars such as the Hong Kong band Beyond, she was unclear as to the nature of the pop music in Bright Star, and wondered aloud whether or not it was jazz. She told me that she personally liked to sing in the *minzu* style. This again returns the thesis to the singing categories found in televised competitions such as the *Young Singer Competition*. Older Brother Cui, Zheng Wang and other acquaintances tended to distinguish themselves from young singers through reference to singing style and repertoire. This distinction extended to Bright Star, as the most accessible and famous location for young people to hang out and sing. Whereas many middle-aged and elderly acquaintances liked to sing in the *minzu* or *bel canto* styles, which stressed vocal technique and clear enunciation, Older Brother Cui criticized young singers in Bright Star for reliance on the throat (rather than the abdomen), lack of vocal power, and unclear pronunciation. In short, Bright Star and its clientele were associated with the pop method of singing.

The pop method, known as *tongsu* or *liuxing*,[214] is often denigrated by purveyors of *minzu* and

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[212] On another visit, he told me that they played one song at a slower tempo in the park, and it had taken him a while to adapt to the fast-paced recorded version at Bright Star.

[213] This song is not performed in the classic *minzu* vocal style, but the lyrics are reminiscent of *minzu songs*, portraying the beauty of China's exotic highlands. This kind of *neo-minzu* song was highly popular with the retiree meshwork.

[214] Pop music is known as either t*ongsu or liuxing (yinyue)* in the PRC. Andrew Jones (1992) argued for a distinction between the two; *tongsu* as "popularised music", a category which "clearly implies political legitimacy and ideological orthodoxy"; and *liuxing* as "popular music", with roots in the negatively regarded "yellow music" of pre-1949 Shanghai. Similarly, Nimrod Baranovitch (2003: 15) has written that the word *tongsu* was coined as a means to describe popular music without making reference to *liuxing*, such were the negative connotations of the latter word. Finally, Wang Qian (2007: 45) made a distinction inspired by Anahid Kassabian's interrogation of the word *popular*: *tongsu* for popular-as-popularist, a positive term for music which meets the demands of society; and *liuxing* for popular-as-mass, a negative term for music blindly consumed by the masses. However, there was no consistent distinction between the two terms in the urban everyday of Kaili. One student musician, for example, regarded *tongsu* as the more negative term, as denoting a superficial kind of music, while Teacher Fang of Apple Hill combined the two when he described a song as a "popularized popular song" (*tongsu de liuxing ge*).

bel canto styles in China for its lack of technique. Zhang Rui, the guitarist at Totem teahouse, was enrolled as a singing major in the music department, having passed the entrance examination through pop singing. I asked him whether his teachers approved of his chosen singing style:

> They certainly don't approve. In the '09 class, I was the only one who got through the entrance exam by relying on the pop method. At the first vocal music class, everybody else was singing *minzu* or *bel canto* style, and there was just me feeling awkward, so I asked the teacher, what the hell should I be singing, and he said I should switch to *bel canto*. So I thought I'd give it a go, but after two classes my teacher couldn't stand it, and specially approved that I not attend his class any more (Interview: 10 May 2012).

In the long term, Zhang Rui felt that he had gained the respect of the music department through his determination to propagate his own style. Nevertheless, he maintained that proponents of *minzu* and *bel canto*, which shared certain vocal techniques, generally looked down upon pop singing as "very simple", since it lacked technique and sophistication. He might easily have been describing the views of Zhang Xi, one of the Apple Hill singers. When I asked him about singing categories, Zhang Xi described his own style as *minzu*, while pop music consisted of young people singing "dong dong dong dang dang", he said with obvious sarcasm, imitating his perception of pop rhythms. Alternatively, Zhang Rui might have been describing the views of Teacher Song, the Fenghua teacher, who was appalled by the presence of pop singers on the CCTV Spring Festival gala; referring to one of these performers, Wang Fei – a well-regarded Hong-Kong based singer – he complained about "trash singers" (*laji geshou*).

Zhang Rui was a regular at Bright Star himself for a period of time, and took to the stage to perform a couple of his own songs one evening during my fieldwork. This usage of new and original material was exceptional, however, and it was striking that even the youngest singers at Bright Star tended to choose songs from the 1980s and 1990s by well-established pop singers such as Andy Lau or Zhang Xueyou. The Bright Star singers even shared some repertoire with Apple Hill Park. Hearing a recorded version of one modern R&B track, *Flying Free* (*Ziyou feixiang*), gave me a shock; I had heard the Apple Hill Park choir sing it numerous times, but their usual use of *erhu* and *dizi* instrumentation, as well as their omission of a rapped interlude, had led me to assume that it was an older tune belonging to an entirely different genre.

In fact, there was considerable chronological overlap in the repertoires of the various singing sites in Kaili. Although the military songs, *minzu* songs and red songs of Apple Hill Park were grounded in the musical aesthetic of the Mao era, their compositional dates spanned the decades of the PRC, so that many of these compositions were contemporary to the pop tracks of Zhang Xueyou and Andy Lau. The historical diversity of the Apple Hill repertoire can be illustrated with a few examples: *For Whom* (*Wei liao shei*) commemorated military heroes of the 1998 Yangtze

River floods; *I Love You, Siberian Snow* (*Wo ai ni Saibei de xue*) was a reminiscence of childhood experiences in Northeast China written in the early 1980s; and *Beijing Has a Golden Sun* (*Beijing you ge jin taiyang*) was a classic from the Cultural Revolution with musical and lyrical references to the Tibetan minority. Repertoire also tilted towards the present day as a result of the success of Bo Xilai's "sing red, strike black" campaign, with the choir learning a number of associated songs.[215] The bank clerk Xue Baojian noted the longevity of the park choir's songs in comparison to Cantonese and Taiwanese pop singers (*gangtai*), whom he criticized as mediocre singers lacking vitality. However, a sizeable proportion of the park repertoire itself hailed from the post-Mao era.

The singers at Apple Park Hill thus performed a selection of songs which were not restricted to the Mao era, despite frequent references to "old songs". However, there was a notable preference for songs with patriotic lyrics which celebrated both the nation and the party. Lyrics compared the motherland to the family, lauded acts of self-sacrifice for the collective good, and celebrated the unity of the 56 *minzu*. Young singers, meanwhile, sang a selection of songs that were not significantly newer, but eschewed *minzu* and revolutionary music in favour of songs about romantic love.[216] They tended to avoid political songs;[217] when I made the karaoke selection of *Into the New Era* (*Zoujin xin shidai*) – a 1990s nationalist celebration of the CCP – a student acquaintance burst out laughing when the title appeared on-screen, asking who had selected such a song. On another occasion, I mentioned to Nicholas, the *a cappella* member (and Bright Star customer), that my elderly acquaintances preferred the *minzu* and *bel canto* singing styles; yeah, the elderly are too artistic, he joked, before proceeding to impersonate an affected falsetto. Another *a cappella* member, Julia, identified her and her mother's generation as having common tastes in terms of a "classic" singer such as Deng Lijun, but laughed when she referred to "revolutionary songs" about the "Red Army" and the "Long March" which her mother also liked (Interview: 12 April 2012).

It should therefore be reiterated that there was crossover of repertoire, in cases such as Deng Lijun, the Taiwanese singer whose romantic songs constituted musical contraband during the early 1980s,[218] but which could be heard in both Apple Hill Park and Bright Star during my fieldwork. It would also be incorrect to state that the older groups avoided romantic songs. However, with a few exceptions such as Deng Lijun, lyrical references to romance occurred within two main contexts.

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[215] Bo Xilai's fall from grace occurred during my fieldwork but did not exert any significant influence on the park choir's repertoire.

[216] They were also far more likely to sing songs in Cantonese or English.

[217] Of course, *all* music is political to a certain extent. For example, certain *gangtai* pop songs such as *Chinese People* (*Zhongguoren*), by Andy Liu, contain frank statements of Chineseness which certainly can be understood as political, and yet still enjoyed popularity with younger individuals in Kaili. I am here referring specifically to songs which directly extol government policy and slogans.

[218] Deng Lijun's songs were regarded by the PRC government as morally corrosive. Indeed, one of her most famous songs, *When Will You Return* (*Heri jun zai lai*), was a cover of a pre-1949 Shanghai composition which had been condemned – along with many others – as bourgeois and pornographic during the Mao era (Barmé 1999: 117, 125, 221; Steen 1999: 124–5).

Firstly, there were songs which linked love with patriotic struggle: in *Green Flower of the Army* (*Jun zhong lühua*) a soldier sacrifices his relationship for duty; and in *The Full Moon* (*Shiwu de yueliang*), a wife cares for children and parents while a husband guards the national border.[219] Secondly, there were *minzu* songs – and occasional *yuanshengtai* songs – about the romantic activities of minority groups. While the former subjugates romantic love to more collective goals, the latter could be interpreted as either gazing on the exotic practices of minorities or as utilizing minorities to indirectly address romantic themes. Either way, these songs of sacrifice and songs of *minzu* love were both far removed from the explicit romantic lyrics which Older Brother Cui attributed to the younger generations.

There were therefore numerous differences in the singing practices of the older and younger meshworks, as identified by both fieldwork acquaintances and myself. Although there was chronological overlap of repertoire, the middle-aged and retiree network tended to prefer songs about patriotism and politics, in comparison to (in their ears) the simplistic and sentimental songs of young singers. For their part, young singers such as Zhang Rui were well aware of how their singing was regarded by older generations. Another young singer and *a cappella* member, Keely, enjoyed "high" pop music,[220] but always avoided performing such songs at singing competitions, having observed that their selection by other participants resulted in swift elimination by competition judges. Instead, Keely elected to sing *minzu* songs, in accordance with the tastes of the judges (Interview: 21 June 2013).

There was certainly a degree of stereotyping involved in describing the musical practices of another generation. With the exception of a prominent space such as Bright Star, the perceived space of sites such as the Totem teahouse were not even specifically known to retiree singers. Instead, there was a generic impression of young people's spaces and activities – a conceived space – which contributed to middle-aged and retiree singers' production of their own lived musical spaces. A similar process occurred with the discourse of *yuanshengtai*; Kaili residents lived city space through their conceptualizations of a rural space which was sometimes generic and vaguely located, and sometimes specific, such as Xiao Huang village as the supposed home of Dong Big Song. In this way, lived space became inseparable from conceived space in the everyday in a way not indicated in Lefebvre's description of the spatial triad, which instead highlighted the clash between conceived planned space and everyday lived space in the realm of the perceived.

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[219] Again, it is worth noting the scattered dates of repertoires, with these two songs hailing from the 1980s and 1990s. The Mao era also produced songs which interwove romance with political ideology; for example, see Blake's (1979) classic study of love songs produced during the Great Leap Forward.

[220] The English word "high" was used by young people in Kaili, particularly teenagers, to describe songs and social atmospheres which had a positive intensity to them.

Figure 6.4: K-Vox before performing at a party for new students at Kaili University (fieldwork photo 2011)

Coda: pop meets multi-part

Older Brother Cui asserted that young people preferred to sing solo, while "we" like to sing together. It would therefore have been interesting to see what he made of K-Vox, a group of English students at Kaili University who sang group *a cappella*, usually in the classrooms of the new campus, far away from the city centre. Groups such as Fenghua differentiated themselves from the relatively relaxed unison singing of Apple Hill Park through reference to the educational function of their music. Indoor choirs presented multi-part singing as more difficult to master than mere unison singing, requiring standardization of vocal technique and pronunciation, knowledge of formal musical notation, administrative infrastructure, and a professional music teacher. Meanwhile, members of K-Vox sang in four-part harmony, often in a foreign language, and without the aid of instrumentation. Despite the difficulty of performing this musical task, the group did not conduct its activities with anything like the strictness of Fenghua; musical notation was personalized, authority was decentralized, and vocal idiosyncrasies were generally allowed within the collective act of singing in harmony. I conclude the chapter with a description of the lived space of this group, as an example of musical practices which to a certain extent cut across the generational divide proclaimed by many amateur musicians, particularly the elderly.

K-Vox was established in 2011 by James, an American teacher in the English department of Kaili University. Although he had a certain amount of choral and instrumental experience, James had never participated in an *a cappella* group himself, and would have been considered insufficiently professional to train one of the formal indoor choirs. However, he was an extremely

popular teacher at Kaili University, thanks to his conscientious and amiable personality, and initial auditions for the group attracted a large number of try-outs. James also made efforts to ensure that the group continued after his departure in the spring of 2011, by requesting that his replacement teacher possess some kind of musical ability. As a result, his successor Ryker had extensive vocal experience, having participated in barbershops, glee clubs, *a cappella* groups and choirs in the United States.

The teaching of K-Vox did not involve the demands for uniformity and technical accuracy which existed within the teaching of Fenghua choir. The first two sessions I attended were organized by James, just before he left China. While the rhythm of the choir was generally stable, there were obvious problems with the harmonization, and I commented on this to James; he responded that he knew they were making mistakes, but did not want to discourage them by being too critical. His replacement, Ryker, focused on correcting the harmony of the group, but the resulting improvement occurred without the teacher's accompanying stress on standardization of pronunciation and vocalization.[221] For example, after some of the original members left the group, it became necessary to recruit students through a second round of auditions. While Ryker wanted existing members to make the main decisions about the operation of the group, he was perturbed by their tendency to assess auditioning candidates on the basis of their English pronunciation, rather than their singing ability. Even though the group predominantly sang in English, he did not consider pronunciation a major issue, since they usually sang in front of audiences whose mother tongue was not English. On another occasion, I mentioned my experiences with the Fenghua choir, and their strictness about pronunciation; Ryker felt that he was encountering a similar attitude towards the teaching and learning of English among colleagues, where the technical accuracy of pronunciation was elevated above other concerns. Thus, the school had an English song class in which the teacher taught pronunciation but not meaning. Ryker also complained about the manner in which K-Vox members tried to progress from the mechanical to the musical, rather than first get a feel for the music and then worry about technique, as he would do.

Despite the methods of their American teacher, there was therefore a certain desire to stress standardization and technique among K-Vox members. However, the standard being sought also differed to that of the indoor choirs, being based on an impression of – and desire to learn about – cultural practices that were not commonplace in Kaili or wider China. For soprano Keely, *a cappella* singing appeared "really different and fresh" while Miao song offered her "nothing to be surprised at" (*buzu wei qi*), given that she had already heard it so many times before. (Interview: 21 June 2013). K-Vox members felt that they were involved in an activity which was unique to their geographical circumstances; during an impromptu practice on a train to Guiyang, one alto

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[221] There were exceptions to this relaxed pedagogical attitude to vocal technique. One singer, Keely, told me she had to adjust her style somewhat, and sing less from the nose, since Ryker found her tone too "strident" (*jian*) (Interview: 21 June 2013).

wondered aloud whether this was the first time that people had sung *a cappella* on a train in China. Within their conceived understanding of Western musical practices, there was more room for manoeuvre and creativity than in Fenghua, which had well-established ideas about what constituted correct musical practice. K-Vox members were mainly interested in studying a cultural practice that was new to them, rather than striving for a standardized professional sound.

Instead of working towards a unity of sound, K-Vox initially tended towards fragmentation. During one practice, James was accompanied by a couple of out-of-town American friends with singing experience. After the session, they commented to John that many of the members had lovely voices, but they did not listen to each other enough. Indeed, upon attending numerous further sessions with Ryker, I noticed that the music-making processes of the group seemed relatively fragmented. Since many members were not that comfortable with notation – and transcriptions of *a cappella* arrangements were not readily available – they learned primarily by listening to mp3s. Each session saw singers scattered across a classroom, listening to tracks on their mobile phones through earphones, each inhabiting their own personal acoustic space. Some individuals even wandered off into the corners of the room in order to listen more carefully. They also sang their parts aloud as they listened, to produce a practice phenomenon that their teacher Ryker found bizarre, whereby a bass might be singing the beginning bars of a song while a soprano five feet away was singing the end section. Ryker compared this type of behaviour to his experiences in US college groups, where it was "absolutely unheard of for people to be practising two parts of the song at the same time"; he would have been admonished by the rest of an *a cappella* group for commencing his part while another section was practising (Interview: 24 March 2012). Such behaviour was also rare since US groups generally had the unifying influence of a piano, as did Fenghua and the other indoor choirs, while K-Vox had only pitch pipes to locate the first note of a piece.

In his work on the origins of sound reproduction technologies, Jonathan Stern has described the emergence of *audile technique*, defined as "a set of practices of listening that were articulated to science, reason, and instrumentality and that encouraged the coding and rationalization of what was heard" (2003: 23). Among other things, audile technique transformed acoustic space into "a kind of bourgeois private space" that facilitated specialized listening (Sterne 2003: 93). The concept of a private acoustic space even extended to apparently collective leisure activities. Previously rowdy opera and concert audiences began to quieten during the nineteenth century, as did later visitors to vaudeville and film showings; people continued to be physically grouped together but listened as individuals with a recognized right to their own undisturbed acoustic space (Sterne 2003: 160–1). In contrast, some singers in K-Vox seemed capable of creating a personal acoustic space by filtering out the continuing sounds around them, which they could do with far greater success than either Ryker or me. Talking of this ability to tune out surrounding sounds, Ryker said that he did not know how the students did it, that most musicians he knew were unable

to sing their part while someone else was simultaneously singing another section of the same piece just five feet away (Interview: 24 March 2012). Perhaps this was a necessary talent to acquire, given the high decibel levels found in many spaces of Kaili.

 In order to memorize their parts, most members devised some kind of notation system. Again, there was a relative lack of standardization and uniformity. Despite certain technical similarities, and commonality of teaching input, students described their systems as personalized efforts and did not generally try to read each other's notation. One bass singer represented a beat with a dash, then placed the next dash lower or higher on the page, to reflect upward or downward movements of pitch. An alto wrote out the words or vocables, and indicated pitch direction with accompanying arrows. Yet another student wrote out words and vocables at first, but finding a lot of repetition, began to just write a single vocable to represent a phrase where there was no change. She represented the most common pitch with a horizontal line, and indicated rising and falling pitch with plus and minus numbers; the higher the number, the greater the shift in pitch, although her units did not equate to semitones.

There was also a certain amount of micro-generationalism within the group. Following a second round of auditions, the older singers were somewhat cold towards the new arrivals; the former had become close as a result of their accumulated musical experiences together, and were also a year or two higher in the university structure than the newcomers. Scanning the classroom during one subsequent session, I saw the three older altos working together, while the new alto, Julia, was left somewhat isolated. The new bass was even more spatially isolated from the rest of the group, while the other bass, Tom – an older member mentioned in chapter four – tended to gravitate towards his old friends in the alto and tenor sections.

However, the fragmented learning practices of K-Vox were not permanent. Members of the group initially only had experience of singing solo at karaoke, and it took time to transform such individualistic practices into a more collective method of music-making. In karaoke, the performer was guaranteed acoustic space through the power of amplification, with the volume sometimes turned so high that the actions of others became aurally irrelevant. As part of a group, K-Vox members discovered that they could not simply out-sing each other – although this was the initial tactic – and instead began to develop a more collective acoustic space. The eventual result was a group which could sing together, but without the rigidity of technique, pronunciation, score, and teaching found within Fenghua choir. Bass singer Tom recalled how the group had developed their cohesiveness (*ningjuli*) over time:

Before, if I sang something wrong, no-one else would notice. Now if I make even a small mistake, people will notice. Before it was each section singing separately, now I can hear the altos' mistakes, and they can hear mine (Interview: 6 April 2012).

During the early stages of the group, the ability to tune out other sounds hindered the ability to harmonize together. When members *did* listen to each other, this also created problems. For example, the tenor Nicholas felt that his singing was being taken off in the wrong direction by the pitches of other individuals (*bei bieren daizhe pao*) (Interview: 18 April 2012). Tom also noted this problem, which was particular severe for him, since he was sometimes the only bass singer; he found himself singing along with other sections, instead of following his own part (Interview: 6 April 2012). However, as the singers became aware not only of other singers, but also their relational position within a collective musical space, their harmony greatly improved. In further contrast to Fenghua choir, where a collective acoustic space was achieved only through the regulation of vocal technique, K-Vox managed to sing in harmony while remaining in a looser pop idiom. It was harmony without the accompanying "harmonization" of the individual.[222] Alto Julia expressed it better:

> With group singing, every person is a centre (*mei ge ren wei zhongin*), every person is a focal point (*jiaodian*)….we all need to maintain the same sound, we need to sing in a way whereby each person has their own specialty but we also have points in common (Interview: 12 April 2012).

While there was a reluctance to assume organizational roles and no administrative apparatus, the group also became socially closer over time, taking trips to local scenic spots and going to karaoke sessions. There was also a noticeable increase in the confidence of some of the shyer singers. Tom, for example, told me that he was quite insecure before he joined the group, on account of his plumpness, of which he was constantly reminded by his family. After singing with the group for a while, he found it easier to talk with strangers and develop contacts (Interview: 6 April 2012). Alto Julia initially found multi-part singing difficult, but she too grew in confidence. Previously she had sung men's songs at karaoke, and not dared to test her upper vocal register, even considering a singer such as Adele to be out of her range. This bothered her, particularly since her mother had described how both she and her siblings had been able to sing at high registers when they were younger. As she improved within K-Vox, Julia also became willing to test her range and attempt the songs of female artists in karaoke (Interview: 12 April 2012).

As a result of the confidence that came from group cohesion, K-Vox members also developed something of an attitude towards those outsiders who auditioned to join the group. During the call for a third influx of singers, once shy Tom, wearing a black jacket and glasses, had the air of a

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[222] Recent CCP discourse has stressed the importance of a "harmonious society". However, citizens have also wielded the notion of "being harmonized" (*bei hexie*), especially on the internet, to mock government censorship practices. Thus, at one K-Vox practice, a reference to the need for musical harmony prompted jokes about "being harmonized".

judge on *X-Factor* or *The Voice of China*. The format was similar to the second audition; potential recruits had to sing one song in Chinese, another in English, and then sing back a number of intervals. However, whereas Ryker had carried out nearly all of the assessment during the previous audition, existing members were now eager to get involved, giving forthright opinions and advice to try-outs, and taking turns to pitch the intervals for the sing-back section of the audition.

In the transition from solo to harmony singing, K-Vox developed a sound which fell somewhere between the individualistic pop singing of Bright Star and the controlled collective efforts of Fenghua. Their practices also demonstrate the diversity of lived musical spaces that could arise within a small city such as Kaili. Participants often made a division between the practices of young people and the older generation, and there was some truth to these conceptions, which contributed to the relational construction of lived space. However, each music group was informed by multiple and varying cultural and ideological processes, producing differences within as well as between generations. Thus, Apple Hill Park and Fenghua choir were influenced by different strands of state discourse about productive leisure activity, while K-Vox began with the individualist pop aesthetic found in Bright Star but ultimately produced something quite different. In contrast to the homogeneity of Kaili's *yuanshengtai* branding, and the commonalities across different groups that I have discussed in previous chapters, an analysis of lived musical space reveals a more complex cityscape of music-making, about which no generalizing conclusion can be easily offered. Despite possessing similar attitudes to *yuanshengtai*, amateur groups varied tremendously in their attitudes to administrative structure, pronunciation, technique, and notation, as a result of different visions for the kind of lived music spaces that they wished to create. These groups also defined themselves against their understandings of other urban musical practices. A combination of knowledge about other practices and associations with well-established spaces, such as Bright Star or Apple Hill Park, made lived and conceived space inseparable – and even in alliance – within the everyday in a way that Lefebvre did not indicate in *The Production of Space*, where the conceived space of the modern state dominates the marginalized lived space of the everyday. This blurring of triadic elements coincides with my distinction between conceived branded space and conceived planned space, and foregrounds again how Lefebvre's spatial theory might be critically modified to account for contemporary experiences of an urban everyday which is not confined to the famous big cities of Europe and North America.

Conclusion

Quite a lot has changed since finishing my fieldwork. Writing almost two years on from my last major stay in Kaili, I cannot help but wonder if *yuanshengtai* is still the preferred topic of conversation with visitors from big cities, given its prominence in both my fieldwork and thesis. After all, the word itself would not have featured in everyday conversation just 15 years ago, having only appeared as a categorizer of cultural activity during the mid 2000s. On the other hand, the topic to which *yuanshengtai* refers, place-based cultural authenticity, was certainly of economic importance to Kaili at the turn of the century, as the city placed increasing emphasis on *minzu* tourism and prepared for the first International Lusheng Festival.[223] Checking contemporary news reports to see what might have changed since I was last in Kaili, I am aware that local Guizhou newspapers will not provide direct information about everyday conversation in the city, but do discover that the iconic *lusheng* statue at Dashizi has been demolished, as traffic jams have prompted the need for a larger intersection without a roundabout (*Guiyang wanbao* 2013: A20).

Such reflection and source-checking might prove useful for future research. However, whether the word *yuanshengtai* or the giant *lusheng* continue to exist is of secondary importance to this thesis; they are but manifestations of the more enduring issues which I have examined, including musical activity in the urban environment, city tourism branding, conceptualizations of *minzu* and rural-urban hierarchies. This thesis has explored these issues as key dimensions of how urban Chinese space is conceived, planned, experienced and lived through music and sound. Research in Chinese studies has only very rarely theorized space through music and sound, while detailed theorizations of space have rarely drawn on the ethnographic and local textual data that fieldwork can produce. My analysis, therefore, makes an important interdisciplinary contribution to the study of urban Chinese space, as well as the broader study of urban social space, and, I hope, lays the foundation for further research on related themes, some of which I briefly identify below.

This thesis has considered the branding of Kaili as 100 festivals, exploring why local government and entrepreneurs have chosen to portray the city in this way, how this branding has been realized within the built environment, how people have lived in a branded city, and which aspects of the city have been overlooked by the branding. The branding, I have argued, has taken advantage of a discourse of internal orientalism, which characterizes minorities – especially those of southwest China – as possessing innate gifts for singing and dancing which they demonstrate at self-organized festivals. However, minorities and their folk practices are also associated with rural

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[223] Looking back on turn-of-the-century articles from Kaili, would-be marketers of authenticity appeared to be rooting around for the right words, but not quite able to locate the ideal phrase; the 1999 festival was one of "ecotourism" (*shengtai huanjing you*) (G. Yang 2000: 1), with variations of this term employed to describe Kaili and relevant events over the following years (Huang 2002; *Qiandongnan ribao* 2002b; Y. Luo 2002a; KSLJ 2003; M. Li 2004).

place, and this has created a contradiction within urbanism; Kaili has developed a relatively homogenous and urban environment while branding has continued to advertise a homeland of 100 festivals.

The solution to this contradiction has been two-fold: a strategy of synecdoche, whereby public spaces with *minzu* characteristics have represented the city; and a blurring of centre and periphery, whereby city and municipality have become conflated within the branding. While the strategy of synecdoche is common to many cities, the blurring of centre and periphery does not appear to be a strategy of more commonly studied cities such as Shanghai or Beijing. It could, however, exist in regard to other small *minzu* tourist cities, that is, cities which promote rural qualities despite recent urbanization. Further studies could ascertain whether the blurring of centre and periphery is unique to Kaili or a widespread trend among similar cities, with capitals of autonomous prefectures such as Duyun in Guizhou province and Enshi in Hubei province being obvious candidates for investigation. It will also be interesting to see how tourism-oriented representations of Kaili develop in the coming years. In particular, there is the representation of Kaili as a "gateway" (*menhu*) to rural *yuanshengtai*, which has only occasionally appeared in local media (e.g. H. He 2002a: 1) but has already become a standard description in the international tourism literature (e.g. Harper 2007: 126) and accords with Kaili residents' own understandings of their city.[224]

The synecdoches which represent Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals, whether linguistic (*yuanshengtai*) or architectural (Dashizi *lusheng*), have proven to be as fluid as would be expected in the expanding and shifting urban environment of contemporary China. The Dashizi *lusheng* was a first-generation *minzu* synecdoche which became expendable after the creation of more impressive *minzu* spectacles in the new southern district of the city, particularly the Nationalities Stadium. Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, although an issue of the *Qiandongnan Daily* might depict the odd early *minzu* structure, it was even more likely to feature the relatively homogeneous constructions of socialist industry and modernization, such as the cotton mill and the train station. These constructions, I argued in chapter three, reflected the image of the socialist nation rather than the image of local *minzu* tourism. They also represent a former industrial sector which has been unsurprisingly overlooked by contemporary branding, considering the incompatibility of industry and *yuanshengtai*, but which made a significant contribution to the historical development of the region. The wider Third Front project, to which the military factories around Kaili belonged, has received a similar lack of English-language ethnographic and historical attention, despite the national importance of the project, the sacrifices of the workers involved, and its potential relevance to theories of social space, memory, heritage, and the rural/urban divide. How, for example, have the sounds, sights and smells of these industrial spaces been remembered by their former workers? The example of the Third Front also lends plausibility to Lefebvre's

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[224] However, this representation of Kaili as gateway still does not result in recognition of artistic activity in the small city, described by the *Lonely Planet* (Harper 2007: 126) as a place where "not much goes on".

(2003 [1970]) triad of rural, industrial, and urban space. Further research could build on the preliminary sketch of industrial space around Kaili in chapter three of this thesis, as well as a number of contemporary Chinese films concerned with the factories and workers of the Third Front, including *Shanghai Dreams*, *11 Flowers*, and *24 City*. As briefly noted in chapter three, English-language reviews of *11 Flowers* describes the film's work unit setting as a village, yet life in the Third Front work unit deserves more concentrated academic attention as a mode of existence which was neither rural nor urban.

Alongside branding and the built environment, amateur music-making has comprised the third major element of this thesis, but one which has been hierarchically disadvantaged within the urban environment of Kaili, and which, like the Third Front, has been excluded from city branding, despite the amateur emphasis of *yuanshengtai*. If the Dashizi *lusheng* statue has yielded to the dynamism of urban infrastructural development, then it is no surprise that musicians with little interest in performing *yuanshengtai* have frequently found themselves on the move, as recounted in chapter five. Most amateur musicians in Kaili were hidden musicians in terms of both location and profile; branding and urban development created public spaces which were visually attractive but aurally chaotic, so that musicians instead sought out indoor spaces within work units or other building complexes, away from busy avenues and noisy public spaces.

Linking everyday musical activity and conversation with *yuanshengtai* branding brings together a multitude of sounds, images and sites to represent the city, rather than offering any single counter-representation to the branding of Kaili as the homeland of 100 festivals. I underlined this in chapter four, arguing that the majority of fieldwork acquaintances did not directly resist city branding, or question the notion of *yuanshengtai* as a place-based authenticity associated with *minzu*. Instead, these individuals unequivocally located *yuanshengtai* practices in the villages, whereas branding vaguely referred to festivals in Kaili city/municipality. Moreover, many residents considered Kaili city to be too urbanized for *yuanshengtai*, while some even self-identified as "fake" Miao or Dong, that is, as the sinicized inhabitants of the modern city. If there are multiple ways of being ethnic (Harrell 2001), then my fieldwork suggests that there are also ways of not being ethnic; the minorities of Kaili stressed their urban circumstances in order to gain membership to what Dru Gladney (1994: 118) has described as the "unmarked category" of Han-ness. This discourse of the fake minority indicates a need not only to look beyond the formal categories of the *minzu* classification system – as anthropologists have already done – but also to avoid the assumption that ethnicity is always the key form of social differentiation in areas where official ethnic categories are present. As argued in chapter six, generation was an important marker of music groups within the city, whereas *minzu* served to distinguish the city from the countryside.

Despite the diversity of sounds, images and spaces considered in this thesis, it is still a limited representation of Kaili, on account of both the duration of fieldwork and the accessibility of archival data. There were multiple contemporary music groups I was unable to meet during my

fieldwork, such as a students' guitar association in Kaili University and a retiree instrumental group near the Nationalities Stadium. As a consequence of problems with access to local archives, I have uncovered what must be only a small fraction of those musical activities which took place in previous years and decades. More research would therefore be needed in order to comprehensively map the contemporary and historical musical spaces of Kaili. Even with full archival access, if British institutional archives have not generally treated popular music as worthy of systematic collection (S. Cohen 2012b: 592), then the gazetteers and other official data of Kaili have conveyed a general lack of interest in the everyday, let alone the specific field of amateur music-making. Yet while a music map is not yet possible, this thesis has managed to examine the relationship between live music and other types of sound in the city. As with the elements of the spatial triad (considered below), live music proved to be inseparable from the wider soundscape in Kaili, since the sounds of commerce and construction played important roles in determining where live music-making could take place. This finding suggests the need to avoid narrowing the scope of soundscape to musical sound and instead to embrace a notion of soundscape as the sum of all sounds in perceived, conceived and lived space.

My initial interest in how ethnicity and music shape urban space has led to clear thematic and methodological emphases. Despite pursuing grounded theory, I cannot rule out the possibility that another researcher might have interacted with fieldwork participants in a manner that brought gender and class more to the fore as forms of socio-spatial difference, rather than *minzu* and generation. After all, *minzu* was notable as much by its absence as a categorizer of difference within the city as by its presence in distinguishing the city from the countryside. Another researcher might therefore have given more attention to the disproportionately low number of female instrumentalists and "teachers" in amateur groups, and made comparisons with the numerical dominance of young women in the professionalized performance of *yuanshengtai*. Every researcher makes choices about emphasis; it is not possible to assign all decision-making responsibility to the emerging data.

While acknowledging this, I am reminded how much room for research manoeuvre I gained by selecting a small city. Compared to the output on Beijing and Shanghai, the academic literature on small Chinese cities was sparse enough at the time of my fieldwork that there was little fear of producing unoriginal research, no matter whether I chose to focus on *minzu* or gender. This room for manoeuvre has been created by academic over-emphasis on the big city, and this is a shortcoming which continues to exist in Chinese studies and urban studies. Academia seems to be both attracted to and repelled by the spectacular architecture and mega-events of the big city. But how can urban studies critique the exclusionary tactics of branding and simultaneously exclude small cities from analyses of urban experience? In a sense, Beijing has operated as a synecdoche of the Chinese city just as *yuanshengtai* has operated as a synecdoche of Kaili. Jennifer Robinson's (2006) postcolonial critique, for example, condemns any categorization of cities, arguing that we

should treat all cities as ordinary, rather than adhere to divisive categories, particularly the binary of Western city and Third World city. But does actual discrimination end when conceptual categories are abolished? Following her critique, Robinson (2006: chap. 3) outlines a more inclusive "cosmopolitan urban studies" in order "to decouple the modern from its privileged association with the West", with accompanying case studies of New York, Rio de Janeiro, Kuala Lumpur, Lusaka, and Johannesburg. However, although this list certainly straddles the West/Third World divide, these cities are all national centres of economy, culture and/or politics. It might require initial recognition of the categories of big and small city in order to produce a collection of case studies which better represents the diversity of global urban experience: how about New York, Huddersfield, Kandy, Liupanshui, and Salvador?

If urban spatial theory is to be grounded in more than just the university, then it needs to accommodate categorizations generated by wider urban experience. My own fieldwork indicates that the category of small city has to be taken seriously, considering the ways in which urban inhabitants themselves distinguished Kaili from both the village and the big city. This was evident in the discourse of *yuanshengtai*, whereby Kaili citizens distinguished themselves not only from the authenticated and genuine minorities of the countryside, but also from the authenticity-seeking cosmopolitans of Beijing and London. More directly, acquaintances described Kaili as cleaner, safer, cheaper, and more relaxed than Beijing and Shanghai, as well as the provincial capital of Guiyang, whose inhabitants were regarded with disdain. Thinking from the perspective of the small city can help counter the popular tendency to conceive China as either timeless village or futuristic metropolis. This is not to discount the rural-urban divide, but to suggest that it must be considered alongside other geographical conceptions of China, including a spatial triad of village, big city and small city.

Ethnographic research is indispensable to uncovering local, lived geographical categorizations, along with everyday theories of music, *minzu* and generation. The process of fieldwork also allows for the testing of existing academic theories, and nowhere has this been more necessary than in the case of Lefebvre's spatial theory. In fact, his book *The Production of Space* ((Lefebvre 1991a [1974]) has received so little ethnographic application that I sometimes feared that previous researchers had abandoned its ideas as unworkable in the field. Instead, its triad of perceived, conceived and lived space has proved a useful framework for interpreting space, music and sound in a small city. In turn, the specifics of fieldwork have suggested a critical revision of aspects of his theory. Most importantly, my fieldwork emphasized that the spatial triad can only be analytically useful if its three elements are treated as inseparably intertwined. Lefebvre seemed more certain of this fact than some of his interpreters have recognized, but even he did not perhaps appreciate how conceived and lived space can blur to the extent that they become almost

indistinguishable from each other.[225] Lefebvre was writing during an era of state-led, technocratic capitalism, whose conceived space utilized abstract, specialist terminology in the planning of cities. In contrast, contemporary urban entrepreneurialism has prioritized the conceived space of branding, which is far less distinguishable from lived space, since it has to connect with consumers through everyday language rather than abstract terminology.

David Harvey (2006: 133–4) has noted that any kind of rumination on space is but a representation of space, and thus limited to the realm of the conceived. Yet despite this inherent limitation, it is only sustained ethnographically and textually-based research which can convincingly represent all three elements of space, and clarify the interaction that takes place between them. My analysis of textual data has suggested the need to think in terms of not only conceived planned space but also conceived branded space. Whereas this distinction hints at the bridging of conceived and lived space by branding practices, my ethnographic data in chapter six suggests that lived and conceived space are not only inseparable but even work together in the construction of amateur music-making space in the everyday. Just as a more comprehensive understanding of the urban can only be achieved through a more inclusive attitude towards small cities, the elaboration of spatial theory can only be achieved through sustained critical engagement with both the academic and the ethnographic.

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[225] After all, fieldwork acquaintances made no distinction between lived, conceived and perceived space. In a sense, the everyday conceptualization of space is already a total one, which requires partial disassembling for analytical purposes, but should never be fragmented across academic disciplines.

Glossary of Selected Chinese Characters

(esp. key fieldwork terms, places, music-related terms, and branding slogans)

baijie zhi xiang	百节之乡
Beijing lu	北京路
Beijing you ge jin taiyang	北京有个金太阳
bianwei le	变味了
biaoyanxing	表演性
biaozhixing jianzhu	标志性建筑
boli chang	玻璃厂
Bonan	博南
chang huang	唱黄
Chaoji nüsheng	超级女声
cheng zhong cun	城中村
chengshihua	城市化
chun liangfan	纯量贩
Dage gongyuan	大阁公园
dakai yu gongming	打开与共鸣
dahuichang	大会场
danwei	单位
Dashizi	大十字
daxue cheng	大学城
Dianchang xincun	电厂新村
dizi	笛子
Dongzu dage	侗族大歌
Duocai Guizhou	多彩贵州
erhu	二胡
Fenghua	风华
fengyu qiao	风雨桥
gailiang	改良
gangtai	港台
gaokang	高亢
gaoyuan fengcai	高原风采

Gaoyuan hong	高原红
gaoyuan hun	高原魂
gechang huanjing	歌唱环境
gewu haiyang	歌舞海洋
gongxiao canting	供销餐厅
Gulangyu zhi bo	鼓浪屿之波
Guizhou dongxian lüyou zhongxin chengshi	贵州东线旅游中心城市
hanhua	汉化
Heri jun zai lai	何日君再来
hongge	红歌
Huifeng	惠风
jia Miao	假苗
jiangjiu	讲究
jiedao	街道
jiexin huayuan	街心花园
Jinjing cun	金井村
Jinquan hu	金泉湖
Jiuqing mianmian	旧情绵绵
jiuzheng	纠正
Jun zhong lühua	军中绿花
kaifa	开发
kaifa qu	开发区
Kaili shi	凯里市
Kaikai xian	凯开线
kaoqian yu mingliang	靠前与明亮
kongdi	空地
kuoyinqi	扩音器
laji geshou	垃圾歌手
laodong ge	劳动歌
Laojie	老街
laonian daxue	老年大学
Lijia zhuang	李家庄

Longtouhe cun	龙头河村
luan chang	乱唱
luohou	落后
lusheng	芦笙
lusheng hui	芦笙会
lüyouhua	旅游化
Meiyou Gongchandang jiu meiyou xin Zhongguo	没有共产党就没有新中国
mianfang chang	棉纺厂
Miaojia yingzhe xingfu lai	苗家迎着幸福来
Miaoling chunzao	苗岭春早
Miaoling dianzi cheng	苗岭电子城
Miaoling mingzhu	苗岭明珠
meisheng	美声
minzu	民族
Minzu bowuguan	民族博物馆
Minzu tiyuchang	民族体育场
minzu wenhua chuancheng ban	民族文化传承班
Nanniwan	南泥湾
Niaoshan	鸟山
nongmin chengshi	农民城市
pao diao	跑调
pijiu guangchang	啤酒广场
Pingguoshan gongyuan	苹果山公园
Pingguoshan hechang tuan	苹果山合唱团
Pingguoshan senlin shengyue tuan	苹果山森林声乐团
Qiandongnan de qiyue	黔东南的七月
Qiandongnan Miaozu Dongzu zizhizhou	黔东南苗族侗族自治州
qichang	齐唱
qinqin	秦琴
qunzhong wenyi guan	群众文艺馆
ruanmianmian	软绵绵
sanxian	三弦

Sanxian	三线
Shaoshan lu	韶山路
Sharen'ao	杀人坳
senlin gongyuan	森林公园
shangyehua	商业化
Shehui zhuyi hao	社会主义好
shengtai huanjing you	生态环境游
shi gewutuan	市歌舞团
shi gonghui	市工会
Shiwu de yueliang	十五的月亮
shuqing ge	抒情歌
suzhi	素质
tongsu	通俗
tuanzhang	团长
Tuteng	图腾
Wanbo guangchang	万博广场
Wei liao shei	为了谁
weisheng	卫生
Wenhua lu	文化路
wenming	文明
Wo ai ni Saibei de xue	我爱你塞北的雪
xiaojie tiantian you, dajie san liu jiu	小节天天有，大节三六九
Xibei feng	西北风
Xingguang canlan yule meishi guangchang	星光灿烂娱乐美食广场
xinxing gongye chengshi	新兴工业城市
xiqi	稀奇
Yang'a'sha guangchang	仰阿莎广场
yeyu	业余
Yi-qin-e Loushan guan	忆秦娥娄山关
yimin chengshi	移民城市
Yiwu suoyou	一无所有
You ge difang jiao Xijiang	有个地方叫西江

yuanshengtai	原生态
yuanshengtai changfa	原生态唱法
yuanshi	原始
yuanxingtai	原型态
zang-luan-cha	脏乱差
zhenzheng de Miao	真正的苗
zhengfu zhudao, shehui canyu, shichang yunzuo	政府主导，社会参与，市场运作
Zhongbo guangchang	中博广场
zhongyang changkuang	中央厂矿
Zhongyang dianshi tai qingnian geshou dianshi dajiangsai	中央电视台青年歌手电视大奖赛
zhongzi wu	忠字舞
zhou dalitang	州大礼堂
zhou gewutuan	州歌舞团
zhou wenhua guan	州文化馆
zhuahao Sanxian jianshe	抓好三线建设
zhuanye	专业
Ziyou feixiang	自由飞翔
ziyu zile	自娱自乐
Zoujin xin shidai	走进新时代
Zui Miaoxiang	醉苗乡
zuo wenming shimin, chuang wenmin chengshi, jian meihao jiayuan	做文明市民，创文明城市，建美好家园

Bibliography

NB 1 Official Chinese-English translations in round brackets, own translations in square brackets where official translations are not available.

NB 2 To avoid repetition of translation within bibliography, details for the two main newspaper sources are printed in full below:

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