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Beyond the Gaze: The Autonomous Smangus Tribal Tourism

John Urry's theory of 'tourist gaze' discusses the tourist's dominance in tourist industry. Later, Maoz (2006) proposes the idea of 'mutual gaze' to reverse the over determination of tourist power; the local is an agency resist the tourist gaze by gazing back at the tourist, and manipulating cultural activities to satisfy tourist's search for exoticism. This paper first argues that Maoz's idea of agency is problematic, in that the local, as the tourist, both act according to the capitalist mode of culture as a commodity. The cultural performance is still staged-authentic and the local has no autonomy in presenting the tourist cultural performance. Then, this paper offer an idea of autonomous agency for the tourist studies, by demonstrate the Smangus tribal tourism case in Taiwan. This paper explores the ways in which Smangus holds their autonomy in developing a successful tribal tourist activity. This paper reviews local tribal communities' motivation, tourist activity planning and content, and promotion materials. The results suggest that Smangus not only 'deliver' tribal cultural performance, but 'educate' tourists about their traditional life, knowledge, values, belief, and how to behave in the Smangus community.