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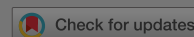
Wa Grotesque: Headhunting Theme Parks and the Chinese Nostalgia for Primitive Contemporaries

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younger people may embrace the revival. I discuss the new Chinese repackaging of primitive violence and the different Wa understandings of these staged exoticizations of their culture, including ways the staged representations are taken up in Wa attempts to revive aspects of their cultural past.

KEYWORDS:

- Primitivism
- grotesque
- kitsch
- cultural theme parks
- Wa
- China
- Asia

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Notes

1. This is a reference to the famous cave paintings (Lascaux grotto) of the Paleolithic period. The cave paintings of a long-billed bird, a bird with a long beak, and a long-billed bird, grotesque has been found here it is original.
2. Nij Tor is a Dutch name for the Chinese. It shows the Chinese shows how early Chinese prefix for non-Buddhist (Keesjö [2006](#); [2013](#)).

3. I myself passed by these avenues many times without seeing them.

4. The photo of defence works is again from the 1930s, borrowed from the IHP ethnographic photography database at the Academia Sinica in Taipei, organized on the internet by Wang Ming-ke and his colleagues from the undeveloped films left from the 1930s! There are at least 538 Wa-related photos in the Institute for History and Philology web-based database (中國西南少數民族聯合資料庫), http://140.109.18.243/race_public/index.htm (see under 'Photos of Ethnographic Expeditions' 田野照片). On these photos, see Fiskesjö (2000) and Wang Ming-ke (2008).

5. Friedman (1979), in his *System, Structure and Contradiction* (one of the most spectacularly unread classics of anthropology, Southeast Asian, and Chinese studies) attempted to show how these circumstances are both generated and produced in a transformative dialectic (of agricultural production and tribute-making, in opium trade and war, etc.), something which Edmund Leach and others (Leach 1954; 1960; Lévi-Strauss 1969) had failed to achieve (Fiskesjö 2010b). It is worthwhile to re-engage with this work, including the 1998 edition where the author confesses to the total absence in his own Marxist 'modelling' of the historical agency of the people involved, of people as agents of their own history. The extreme example in the original 1979 work is the aetiology of the Wa belief that the Chinese are descended from rats, in the externalizing of the Chinese as 'rats' (Fiskesjö 1986).

6. For example, the Wa belief that the Chinese are descended from rats, in the increasing number of rats in a cage that the Chinese are said to have taken from the Wa (Fiskesjö 1986).

7. This does not mean that the Wa are not aware of the historical agency of the Chinese. Jokes about the Chinese being descended from rats are a common theme in Wa oral tradition (Fiskesjö 1986). The Wa are also aware of the historical agency of the Chinese, as in the 'erotic' literature on the 'erotic' Wa' (prex a vi, son like the tiger do their hands (or paws

8. Compiling the 'erotic' literature on the 'erotic' Wa' (prex a vi, son like the tiger do their hands (or paws

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10. See below, and see Stasch ([2014](#)) and Merlan ([2014](#)) for extended discussions of how this ambivalence reflects the complex 'intersystem' character of primitivist tourism wherein those involved are potentially able to adopt and identify with others' perspective on themselves but at the same time also to manipulate these perspectives, as well as their difference from dominant others, belying any simplistic assumptions of 'absolute, extreme or ontologically based difference between parties in encounter' (Merlan [2014](#)).

12. It is a common view that the Chinese government is responsible for the earthquake.

14. Most [redacted] ma border region. (One man recognized me from an encounter long ago, in 1996, back in his

mountain village, when he was still a 10-year-old kid.)

15. For further discussions of this mega-park (apart from Tapp, mostly on the ‘Splendid China’ portion of the park), see Tapp ([1993](#)), Campanella ([1995](#)), Anagnost ([1997](#), Ch. 7), Pun ([2003](#)), Ren ([2005](#); [2007](#)), Stanley et al. ([1995](#)), also Yang ([2011](#)) on migrant worker's perspectives; and Gordon's ([2005](#)) film *Global Villages: The Globalization of Ethnic Display*.

16. See Note 10, and compare Hammons ([2014](#)). Curiously, the ‘Rousseauan’ propensity of Westerners to find something among the primitives that is ‘lost’ among themselves has long been absent in Chinese ‘civilization’ (Fiskesjö [1999](#)) – but may be emerging now as China merges with the Global North (Fiskesjö [2011b](#)).

17. Fiskesjö and Hsing ([2011](#)). Incidentally recent genetics research affirms, to a certain extent, the Wa view of themselves as an ancient people.

18. So that the tension between Chinese settlers and aboriginal peoples on the former imperial peripheries can be suppressed (see Sturgeon [2007](#)).

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