Tibetan Nationality: 
Tourism, Commodification, and Souvenirs

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As a student of geography, applying multidisciplinary methods in order to further the knowledge base on virtually endless topics brings me great satisfaction. Spending time on the road as a child coupled with several family moves opened my eyes to physical and cultural geography at a young age. My time at HSU has allowed me to further this pursuit of knowledge with a more capable tool set.

Abstract:

Since 1978, tourism in Tibet has been growing rapidly. The Chinese pressure on and authority over Tibet penetrates the Tourism industry and even the types of souvenirs available in tourist areas. Textual analysis of the souvenirs sold in tourist areas show how tourists perceive, remember, and portray Tibetans. This region is in a state of social and political turmoil. The west sympathizes with Tibet perceiving an idealized image of the Tibetan people. China continues to expand the economy of Tibet and bolster military and political control of the region but ironically, Tibetans are gaining a soft power China has little or no ability to control. The tourism industry is one part of this large machine that reinforces Tibetan nationality and perpetuates idealized perceptions. In this case, tourism, commodification, and souvenirs may be serving as an agent of soft power for Tibetans, preserving identity and the human geography of the plateau.