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From tobacco to tourism - new traditions in Shilin County

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This paper encompasses an empirical observation of the changes and challenges occurring in the rural areas of Shilin County, Yunnan, China. It takes as its focus the Sani Yi village of Nuohei; a place founded on the traditions of agriculture and crops such as maize and tobacco but which is now becoming well-known as a place for tourists to observe a typical stone village and to sketch and paint. Shilin County is widely known as the location of the Stone Forest, a spectacular display of Karst limestone formations, and the abundance of stone has also provided the basic construction materials for many surrounding villages. The history and culture of Nuohei are laid out for easy access of visitors, and new businesses cater for the new source of income as well as providing places in which artists may tarry. A further impetus to embrace change comes from the need to broaden from traditional agriculture because of risks of climate perturbations. In 2010 Yunnan suffered from a severe drought which affected many crops. The paper describes how materials and buildings might be the providers of future prosperity and a modifier of tradition and understanding.