

# **AN ANALYSIS OF THE DONGBA ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF TOURISM**

**PhD**

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**I dedicate this work to my late father**

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## Abstract

The study examines the critical link between Lijiang's tourism development and the Naxi dongba culture. The link between tourism and culture is demonstrated by the effects of modernity and globalisation, resulting in the loss of traditional social orders and the commodification of culture (Giddens, 1990). However, ethnic culture and identity are both flexible to these external changes (Cohen, 1988; Harrison, 2001a; Hitchcock, 2000a). This dissertation examines the role of individuals and groups within a specific tourism destination in China in adapting and responding to both government policy and tourism development in the region. The key research methodological feature is an ethnographic approach, constituting a number of qualitative research techniques, i.e. in-depth interview and participant observation, intertwined in each other in a seven-month-long fieldstudy in Lijiang from September 2007 to April 2008. The findings focus in particular on the dongba culture as affected by the development of tourism. This traditional religious practice has been accepted by the wider Naxi ethnic group as one of their most valuable cultural properties and an identical part of their ethnic identity. Lijiang's tourism has contributed remarkably to the modification of the local urban/rural dichotomy. The expansion of tourism wealth is not entirely distributed according to the government's arrangements, but rather is greatly influenced by the very nature of the tourism industry itself. Whilst the government's main objectives focus on the need for economic regeneration of the area more generally, the primary concern of those who are seeking to maintain dongba culture is to reinforce and renew the dynamic communication between the Naxi and their mountain rural community. In this regard, the contribution of tourism is controversial and double-edged. On the one hand, the involvement of tourism weakens this traditional bond by employing many dongba in urban areas, leaving their rural communities unattended. On the other hand, the impaired connection awakens the affected communities, leading them consciously to protect their religious practices in the face of the impact of tourism and commodification. Moreover, both the local government and the Naxi farmers use tourism as a major force to define the content of the dongba culture divergently. The government sanitises the dongba culture as an academic activity practised only in museums or institutes, ignoring the religious feature of the practice. In contrast, the farmers emphasise the very religious and ritual character of cultural practices as evidence of the authenticity of that culture. They embrace this religious practice as their most powerful ethnic identity in the context and in the face of tourism. This has had an effect on Naxi ethnic identity within the urban areas as well, leading to a revaluing and revitalising of Naxi tradition and culture.

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## Abbreviations

**CCP** – Chinese Communist Party  
**DCM** – Dongba Cultural Museum  
**DCPA** – Dongba Culture Preservation Association  
**DCRI** – Dongba Culture Research Institute  
**DPC** – Dongba Paper Company  
**LTB** – Lijiang Tourism Bureau  
**NTC** – National Tourism Conference  
**PRC** – People’s Republic of China  
**RMB** – Ren Min Bi, (Chinese currency)  
**sqm** – square metre  
**SARS** – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome  
**TGJDP** – The Great Jade Dragon Policy  
**UNESCO** – United Nations of Educational and Cultural Organisation  
**WHS** – World Heritage Site  
**WMHL** – World Memory Heritage List  
**WTTC** – World Travel and Tourism Council



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images of the Naxi. This study is therefore a discourse exploring the causal link between the Naxi dongba culture and tourism development.

## **Outline of the Chapters**

This thesis consists of 10 chapters, including the literature review (Chapter 2), the background information on the research setting (Chapters 3 and 4), the applied methodology of this study (Chapter 5), discussions of the fieldwork data (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9), and analysis and conclusion (Chapter 10).

Chapter 2 examines the debates concerning tourism and culture. The discussions are deployed under three heads. The first one is about modernity and globalisation, which are the two factors that have greatly impacted the world as a whole, causing dramatic changes in people's life in the past thirty years. The second topic focuses on the discussion between authenticity and commodification, which are often the two indicators to define the impact of tourism upon indigenous cultures. In relation to this discourse, tourist arts (handicrafts) are an important gauge to reflect the interaction between these two processes. The last heading is concerned with the issue of ethnicity and explores the role of tourism and its contribution to the ethnic identity of minority groups.

Chapter 3 narrows down the debates to the relevant circumstances within China. The review starts from an examination of Chinese tourism development, including its policies, achievements and problems in the past half a century. In China, tourism is considered more as an agency of modernisation, installing infrastructural progress and economic growth. To acquire a better understanding of the features of the research setting, the review extends the debate regarding PRC's ethnic and cultural policies, which is one of

the leading forces in shaping minorities' cultural and ethnic profiles. In many of the Chinese ethnic regions, the domestic tourism industry plays a predominant role that manipulates minorities' economic and social progress.

Chapter 4 explains demographic information of the Naxi in Lijiang region, tourism development in the researched area and gives an anthropological portrait of the Naxi based on previous studies. The examinations include the history and origin of the Naxi, the size of their population, the geographic location, and the socio-economic character of the society. In addition it briefly introduces the mountain rural life in Lijiang, where the dongba culture is mainly practised, so that a better perception of the culture and farmers' situation would be ascertained. The review of Lijiang's tourism development concentrates on those generated achievements and problems in the past ten years in social, cultural and economic aspects. Most of the issues are valued by the researcher as a springboard from where the fieldwork sets off.

Based on the discussed issues and problems that existed in Lijiang region, Chapter 5 explains the related methodological concerns, possible research aims and objectives, and relevant research methods. The major methodological characteristic of this study is ethnography, dictating that the researcher construct a 'contextual understanding' of the research setting. The Naxi behaviour, values and beliefs need to be unpacked in their own social and cultural context. This chapter also discusses the advantages of using qualitative research methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interview, ad hoc focus groups, case study and historical documents analysis. Three research locations, Dayanzhen, Shuming and Xinzhu villages, are examined according to their values in relation to the research objectives. Detailed discussions regarding the fieldwork are reported in the following chapters. The report of this seven-month-long fieldwork is divided into four

chapters, pointing towards the four identified research objectives.

In the first place, Chapter 6 addresses Lijiang's tourism development explicitly. Apart from its economic achievement, this chapter focuses on the social impact upon rural communities where the dongba religion is still developing. The unevenly distributed economic wealth is alleviated by the features of tourism growth to such an extent that the traditional urban/rural dichotomy is modified in the process of involving more farmers into the provision of social benefits. Meanwhile, this rapid expansion provoked a number of conflicts in rural and urban areas. The host/guest communication is considerably contracted due to the change in travelling modes. In addition, some farmers have lost their land in this economic development without an appropriate compensation, whilst the interest of many small private business players is largely ignored in the promotion of tourism business.

Secondly, Chapter 7 concentrates the attention on dongba practice by reviewing its history, characteristics, rituals and current situation in the Naxi mountain area. The historical background of this culture reveals that the Naxi traditional cross-cousin marriage has a close relation to the most important dongba cultural ceremony, the Propitiation of Heaven. This marriage model also exerts an influential pressure upon the Naxi peculiar event, 'love suicide', which used to be exercised by some Naxi youth in mountain regions.

Unfortunately, the tourism industry is, for marketing purposes, promoting this scenario as a 'romantic' feature of the group.

Meanwhile, from the cases studied, the link between tourism and dongba culture, and the close connection between dongba and their rural communities are identified. This suggests that the traditional bond between dongba and their communities is paramount for the

development of dongba culture in the modern times of tourism. The dongba culture has become the most unusual ethnic feature of the group. A large number of dongba work in urban areas, leaving their rural communities unattended. In response to these movements, a number of young dongba trainees go to dongba schools to seek a higher job opportunity in tourism, which in return intensifies the weakened traditional bond. Dongba practitioners are promoted as tourist assets, figuring as living icons of the group.

Thirdly, Chapter 8 presents a detailed account on the dongba cultural handicrafts and souvenirs, which are one of the parts that receive most attention from the tourism industry. The commodification of dongba cultural handicrafts is related to the local government's mass tourism policy. It entails a mass production market in handicrafts and souvenirs sector. The pictographs are randomly engraved on a variety of tourist arts, such as paper, bags, T-shirts, woodcarvings and other items, with low accuracy and respect. Moreover, this mass production business model outplays the local craftsmen and artists, who mostly rely on the traditional family-run business model. Their handmade arts and crafts lose out in the competition with those mass produced commodities in price, manufacturing, provision and quantity.

Furthermore, the chapter also discusses the effects of the process of commodification on dongba who work in the tourism industry. Their duty has changed from practising religious ceremonies for rural residents to sitting in the tourism shops writing pictographs for tourists. This commercial process is more intangible but has a deeper influence than the commodification of dongba handicrafts. It has dramatically influenced many young dongba trainees' study in terms of motivation, content and depth of learning in a long-term perspective.

Last but not least, in response to these impacts from the tourism industry, Chapter 9 proceeds to the examination of the issue of preserving the dongba culture through the perspectives of local government, the tourist enterprises and the mountain farmers. The discourse focuses on two perspectives. According to one view, all of them preserve the dongba culture subject to their own concerns, definitions of the culture and practical interests. The governments grasp most of the political and social resources, which enables them to define the dongba culture according to their political concerns. The tourist enterprises are mostly concentrated on the economic value of the matter and exhibit their strength with economic power. The mountain farmers are the group that have little power in political, social and economic resources. The only force they possess is that they are the group that actually practises this religion in real life, which is highly appreciated by many of the individual tourists who seek authenticity.

In the other perspective, all of these players use tourism to achieve their objectives accordingly. The public unit emphasises the value of the pictographs and manuscripts to tourists, so that the religious feature of the practice is subsequently shaded. The commercial unit combines the economic interest in the culture with the farmers' expectations, operating the preservation as a commercial project. The farmers, however, consolidate their influence in this negotiation by classifying the culture into 'commodified' and 'authentic' categories, by practising the religious rituals more frequently in real life, and by inviting dongba to hold rituals on more social occasions.

Chapter 10 analyses the findings of the fieldwork and concludes the thesis accordingly. The discussed issues, problems and conflicts in previous chapters are displayed systematically in an attempt to present an overall portrait of this study. In addition, the reviewed theories in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are reconstructed in response to the findings

acquired in the field, so that the relationship between Lijiang's tourism development and the dongba arts and culture is established into a theoretical framework. Last but not least, the weakness of the study is evaluated and some possible recommendations for further research directions are presented.

In the next chapter, the study commences by reviewing other scholars' work and viewpoint concerning the relationship between tourism and culture, thereby establishing the theoretical foundation for this thesis.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review – Tourism and Culture**

This chapter reviews the relationship between tourism and culture through several perspectives. The first one is the discussion on modernity and globalisation, which strongly characterise modern tourism in the last thirty years. Within the context of tourism, a large number of people living in different parts of the world can travel and visit each other, with the result that mutual understanding and communication have been greatly expanded and deepened. On the other hand, various traditional social and cultural institutions have been confronted with unprecedented cultural intrusion, which inevitably leads to cultural hegemony on a global scale. The second perspective focuses on the debate of authenticity and commodification, which are often used to assess the impact of tourism upon host communities. The third aspect is the dialogue on ethnicity and the influence of tourism upon ethnic identities. Especially in some less developed countries, tourism has been used by local states or ethnic groups as an efficient medium to consolidate their preferred identities.

### **2.1 Evaluating the Impact of Tourism upon Culture**

Smith, M.K. (2003: 53) acknowledges that compared with economic and environmental impacts resulting from tourism development, those invisible factors in social and cultural context are more difficult to assess in terms of positive or negative effects.

Notwithstanding, some methods have been developed. Fletcher (2005: 249-250) and Smith, M.K. (2003: 55) employ a number of indicators to monitor the impact of tourism in social and cultural areas, e.g. the ratio of tourists to locals, the locals perception of and attitude to tourism, ratio and type of local employment, degree of commercialisation of local arts and culture and so forth.



In response to this unresolved debate, Harrison (2007: 65-77) puts forward a conceptual framework for analysing tourism incidents, in particular social and cultural influences. The social analysis of tourism should be evaluated on three levels. The first is on the 'social action and interaction' level; the second is on the 'social institutions and structures' level and the third is on the level of 'the wider social structures and socio-cultural systems'. Moreover, this framework also enables one to observe cultural progress. Within this framework, social groups' views and stances can be examined through the perspective of 'globalisation, commodification, demonstration effects, inward and outward acculturation, the evolution of arts and crafts, the construction and consumption of place, history and heritage, staged authenticity, and so on' (Harrison, 2007: 77).

Mainly based on this conceptual framework, the following debates examine the relationship between tourism and culture through the perspectives of modernity, globalisation, authenticity, commodification, tourist arts and ethnicity respectively.

## **2.2 Modernity and Globalisation**

Modernity is valued by Giddens (1990: 63) as a social progress characterised by three interconnected features, which are the separation of time and space, the development of disembedding mechanisms and the reflexive appropriation of knowledge. This mode of life has drawn us away from many types of traditional social orders, in particular the detachment from our traditional sense of time and space. The course of history, in which many long-standing traditional cultures are embedded, is diverted from evolutionary narrative to discontinuous understanding. Traditional societies are confronted with the attacks of modernity in its pace of change, scope of change and especially the change

involving the best known of modern institutions, the nation-state, with the result that mankind is able to enjoy a securer state than any type of pre-modern system.

In Wallerstein (1995: 126) and Wheeler's (1999: 3) view, this social condition is distinguished by two features, namely modern technology and liberation. The former one signifies an increase in capitalist commodification, which is governed by global markets, and a growth of bureaucratic organisational structures based on supposedly rational lines. The latter one, on the other hand, entails the loss of traditional dogma, embracing the struggle of human equality and democracy. These two approaches intertwine with each other in a manner that may lead to a state of confusion, uncertainty, disappointment and disillusionment.

Although Giddens (1990), Wallerstein (1995) and Wheeler (1999) all admit that many traditional social orders are broken down by the forces of modernity, it is very hard to evaluate this comment in positive or negative manner. Whether this modernity evolves relatively gradually or rather rapidly, the overall picture could differ considerably in terms of its impact, either to be seen as an indicator of social progress or to be seen as a social disaster. This uncertain characteristic of modernity is elicited by Oakes (1998: 7) as 'a tense and paradoxical process through which people produce, confront and negotiate a particular kind of socio-cultural change.'

To offset these negative consequences due to the growth of modernity, the discourse of post-modernity is perceived as distinct from modernity because history is no longer regarded as a linear process (Jameson, 1992). In a similar vein, Harvey (1989) suggests that it is a process that has moved away from a rigid model of industrial regulations and accumulations, such as the 'Fordism' of the 1930s onwards, to a more diversified model

allowing greater flexibility. Nevertheless, the distinctive feature of post-modernity is to some extent characterised by 'superficiality' and 'depthlessness'.

By comparison, Giddens (1990: 163-164) views this 'unlinear' development as clusters of institutional trends including four post-modern orders, which are 'multilayered democratic participation, post-scarcity system, demilitarization and humanisation of technology'. The most distinctive feature of post-modernity, in Wallerstein's (1995: 144) vision, is that it is the end of modernity of technology but the onset of modernity of liberation, characterised by the increase of equality and democracy. The discussion of post-modernity has not come to an end in academia. It can either be seen as an extension of modernity or just a warning to ensure that the modern project is far from finished.

Meanwhile, globalisation is identified by Giddens (1990: 64) and Held and McGrew (2002: 1) as a worldwide intensification of human organisation, linking distant communities together with the result that it extends its influence across the world's political and geographical barriers. So the relationship between modernity and globalisation is thus combined by Giddens (1990: 175-177) in such a way that modernity is apparently becoming universal, and hence globalisation is one of the fundamental consequences of modernity.

Moreover, Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 236) draw attention to the consequence of globalisation upon the development of ethnicity. Given that the effects of globalisation are integrative and homogenising in one way or the other, it resuscitates old identities and inspires new ones, distinguishing people in modified circumstances in physical, social, cultural and political aspects. Therefore, the force of modernity and globalisation stimulates the growth of ethnicity within a global context.

Within the realm of tourism, Oakes advocates that:

Tourism is a particularly meaningful metaphor for the experience of modernity in that it displays both modernity's relentlessly objectifying processes as well as its promise of new and liberating subjectivities for those participating in either side of the tourism encounter. (1998: 11)

The value of modernity is echoed by Harrison (2001a: 4), Mackerras (1994; 181) and Uriely (2005: 199) who grant that tourism is by and large a meaningful modern phenomenon, enabling people to enjoy a life with better mobility and more chance of working in other places. The movement of a large number of people is not only for sightseeing purpose but also for employment, migration, or visiting friends and relatives. However, this positive attitude is challenged by Cohen (1988), who argues that tourists, with different backgrounds or situations, might be motivated by entirely different purposes.

The contribution of globalisation within the tourism industry, according to Daher (2000), Wahab and Cooper (2001) and Xu (2001), is a result of the continued expansion of tourism economy, great technological advancements in acquiring information, communication skills, transportation and distribution channels. All of these factors have led to vast numbers of tourists descending on worldwide destinations at more affordable prices.

Mackerras (1994: 181) contends that tourism is one of the industries most associated with globalisation investments from various parts of the world to the destinations, including some ideas and fashions which exert impact upon the local community in many ways.

With the advent of globalisation, tourism or international travelling has expanded

dramatically, overcoming physical barriers, which used to separate peoples from each other. This globalising economy has increased affluence and wealth in many countries, in particular in the Third World where many countries promote tourism as the most efficient means of enhancing their socio-economic situations and expanding their international influence.

Fayed and Fletcher's (2002: 221-222) research confirms that the leading source of foreign exchange in one in three developing countries is tourism, which accounts for the top five export categories in 83% of countries in the world. According to the latest figures released by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), by the end of 2008, the contribution of the tourism economy accounts for 9.4% of world GDP, 7.6% of total employment, and there will be 275.7 million jobs created by 2019. Globalisation is thus perceived in the Third World as a process that is intertwined with nation building, during which geographical, social, political and cultural constraints receded considerably, with capital, technologies, communications, management skills, commodities and information circulating more smoothly.

The negative impact of modernity and globalisation is analysed by Buckley (2004), Mackerras (2003), Marcus (1992) and Wang (2000) as a process of destroying cultural difference and identities in a global context. The homogenisation of cultural expression and the emergence of some dominant cultural forms tend to exclude others. Some developing countries' governments define these two social processes as threats, by which their social and political control are undermined. Kellner (1997) explains this situation in an online publication:

Today's world is organised by increasing globalisation, which is strengthening the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, supplanting the primacy of the

nation-state by transnational corporations and organisations and eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture.

(<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed253a/dk/GLOBPM.htm>)

Within the tourism sector, the negative impact of these two issues, according to Burns (1999: 133) and Reisinger and Steiner (2006: 67), is manifest under such circumstance that to cope with tourists' thirst for seeking differentiated products, people who reside in places classified on tourist brochures as 'exotic' or 'primitive' are deprived of the right to inhabit a modern world for the sake of the interest of other people – tourists, who might be dwelling thousand miles away. The lifestyle of some local inhabitants in certain tourist destinations is being frozen by their local authority in order to 'preserve' them in an 'untouched' condition for the consumption of the tourists who are seeking 'authenticity' or 'differences'. In response to this kind of preservation in a global context, 'staged authentic' products and commodification of indigenous culture becomes inevitable in some highly developed tourism areas where tourists are looking for authenticity (Clarke, 2000: 24-26).

To some extent, the process of modernity and globalisation can be regarded as a series of social progresses in which traditional social orders are in some ways destroyed and substituted by new institutions. Therefore, modernity and globalisation can be viewed as either positive or negative, depending on whether the discussion is concentrated on their constructive or destructive aspects. By comparison, those positivists reviewed above scrutinise the two processes from a broader perspective and on a longer scale than those who stress the negative aspects. Nevertheless, those studies stressing negative aspects also often focus on more detailed or narrower research contexts and so provide more tangible data on which to assess what an ethnic group, a village or even a family, in a very remote corner of the world, has actually obtained or lost from modernity or globalisation.

The above discussions encourage the researcher to provide a detailed account of various processes at work, not just confined to positive or negative outcomes, but also including an overall assessment of the situation, clearly outlining the specific context in which the outcomes are placed, and addressing explicitly from whose perspective the arguments are perceived. More specifically, the study will narrow its focus to why some traditional orders in the Naxi society that is being examined have been weakened by the forces of tourism, which is often regarded as a tangible agency of modernity and globalisation, whilst other traditional institutions not only survive but revive and thrive.

### **2.3 Authenticity, Commodification and Tourist Arts**

With the encounter of modernity, Wang (2000) points out, the traditional link between individual and society has been undermined in the process. The traditional, spontaneous and authentic community, in which a kind of social authenticity embedded, is replaced by 'impersonal, contractual and interest-calculated relationship between the owners of private capital and the non-owners' (2000: 63). Thus, people start to seek authentic human relationships outside the capitalised economic system. This argument is taken up by Cohen (1988: 374), who suggests that the desire for looking for authenticity is derived from a logic that presupposes that modern society is inauthentic. Therefore, some modern seekers have to look elsewhere for authentic life. As a result, the quest for authenticity becomes an attractive motif of modern tourism. The modern tourists are assumed to be looking for something that is pristine, primitive natural and of course 'untouched' by modern society.

As far as the debate of authenticity is concerned, Cohen (1988: 378), Harrison (2001b: 28) and Hitchcock (2000a: 5) acknowledge that it is a concept that should be understood in a

‘relative’ context rather than an ‘absolute’ one. It varies according to tourists’ experience, expectation of goals of travelling, their general background, such as educational level, belief and travelling motivation, which all play a part in judging the value of who and what is ‘authentic’. Furthermore, Harrison’s (2001a: 8) study emphasises that from the very time they leave home, tourists become agents of social change. They bring over their social values, customs and languages to the host community; meanwhile, they also adopt something valuable from the local communities. As a result, one cultural product completely accepted as ‘authentic’ by one tourist who is less concerned with the authenticity of the travelling experience, might be regarded as a ‘contrived’ in the eyes of a person who is ‘strict for authenticity’. Therefore, it is hard to apply a universal standard in tourism studies. To offset this ‘ambiguity’, extensive empirical research is needed with an anthropological approach, in which the participants’ definitions, goals, beliefs and actions could be assessed.

Apart from this ‘relative’ feature, Greenwood (1989: 184) also associates authenticity with cultural politics, enabling local communities sometimes to achieve their political aims. Tourism is thus involved in the struggle to define what and who is ‘authentic’, where a number of additional meanings have been included. Tourism is thereby, kidnapped by those who want to achieve their political aims through a reinforcement of their cultural traditions and ethnic identity, and, hence, attracting a large number of tourists becomes a mission loaded with political content.

By emphasising its negative force, Goulding (2000: 836) views commodification as a process ‘by which things and activities come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value in a context of trade.’ Likewise, Greenwood (1989: 179-180) declares that commodification of local culture is a process in which culture is bought or sold in such a



way that the interest of local culture has been compromised. They both suggest that the capitalist system has priced most of the valuable features of local culture. From the locals' perspective and interest, commodification has a negative impact upon the authenticity of culture in that the local participation and consent is excluded from this process in which the culture's exchange value is overemphasised and given more prominence than religious, cultural or social values. This process causes the intrinsic meaning of local culture to be compromised by simply adding on some new significance to cope with tourists' tastes and satisfactions.

On the contrary, Cohen (1988, 2001), Handler and Linnekin (1984), Harrison (2001a), Hitchcock (2000b) and Xie (2003) underline the fact that culture and tradition are highly flexible and adaptive, and can be divided into different categories. Tourists' experience of 'authenticity' cannot be abolished completely by those commercialised performances. The meaning of contrived products for tourists is mainly seen as an entertainment. Though commodification does entail some changes, a new meaning, which is not always exclusive of the old one, could be 'additive' and can be acquired by both tourists and locals.

As Handler and Linnekin (1984: 276) note, 'tradition is always symbolically constructed in the present, not a 'thing' handed down from the past'. Meanwhile, compared with Goulding (2000) and Greenwood (1989)'s negative conclusion, they underline that the importance of people's active response to those impacts should not be underestimated. People can sometimes perform vigorously when encountering with the capitalist world system, using culture and tradition as a medium in which to defend themselves and their interests. Moreover, commodification can act as a catalyst when the culture is at a declining stage by offering substantial funding, creating employment and inspiring professional training.

In terms of measuring authenticity and commodification, a detailed empirical examination becomes paramount for observing the specific situation of a given indigenous culture. More importantly, a study of the impact of tourism upon indigenous cultures should accommodate further investigations at different time periods. For instance, Greenwood (1989) notices in his paper 'Culture by the Pound' that, tourism turns the local culture in Spain into commodity, diminishing the intrinsic meaning of the indigenous festival. However, Hitchcock's (2000a: 10) study indicates that the festival studied by Greenwood remains a 'vibrant' and 'exciting' ritual. This suggests that the researcher of the present study needs not only to carry out detailed experiential studies, but also to maintain his attention over a relatively long time period so that he might have opportunity to observe the resilience of culture and the growth of 'additive' new meanings in response to external attacks. Moreover, the conclusion of this study should not be understood as stationary or fixed but part of an ongoing process of cultural phenomena.

To examine the correlation between authenticity and commodification, tourist arts are important for two reasons. One, suggested by Graburn (1979: 1-3; 1984: 393), Costa and Livio (1995: 29) and Litrell, Anderson and Brown (1993: 199), is that the forms of tourist arts not only contain a greater sense of authenticity but also have close links with the ethnic groups' tradition, history, social progress, and their cultural expressions. It conveys the groups' identity, ideological references, pride and dignity. Tourist art is something that satisfies producers' symbolic ethnicity, dignity and pride, and ideological meanings of a particular place, in parallel with purchasers' demand and concerns, and material features. The other reason, according to Graburn (1979: 30-32), is that by monitoring three elements of tourist arts the compromise between authenticity and commodification can be scrutinised. These factors are the audience that the arts and crafts are made for, the

function that these items possess and the characteristics they convey.

In this regard, Graburn (1979: 1-3) divides an ethnic group's arts into several corresponding categories. Those arts that are mainly for the group's own consumption and daily use, and entirely produced depending on their tastes and tradition, are called traditional arts. Those arts that are made by the same ethnic group but collected mostly by tourists from outside as souvenirs, thereby modifying the motif, aesthetic value and functions of these objects, should be defined as tourist arts of the ethnic group. Those arts imitating the characteristics of the majority society, primarily meeting the demand of exchanging for money, can be named only as commercial arts. In many cases, the transformation from traditional arts to tourist arts will not occur until the 'aesthetic standards' and 'the satisfaction of the artists' give way to the economic motive and the need to please the consumer.

However, this transformation is often associated with ambiguity. The reason is that:

'The maker's original intentions and the buyer's response often diverge. These rules are perceived by those involved in the artistic exchange, though the rules operate at many levels and are often modified and broken.' Hitchcock (2000a: 11)

Therefore, the study of these two cultural issues needs to be unpacked explicitly within the context of the local socio-cultural circumstances.

The evolution of tourist arts illustrates that it is a valuable perspective from which an insightful vision of the correlation between tourism and culture can be obtained. From a positive point of view, tourist art can bring values to local tradition, by creating extensive learning opportunities for those tourists bearing educational interests. This commercial vision of the traditional practices inspires the local, in particular women, to learn and

improve their skills (Crippen, 2000: 275-279). In addition, machine-made designs of souvenirs can be positive, since, firstly, large quantities of such items around the world increases their recognition and popularity. Secondly, industrialised production will certainly create more employment for the local community (Oss, 2000: 267). Moreover, handicrafts can make a unique contribution to the development of tourism in some regions. The tourists' presence and consumption makes the role of cultural products more meaningful (Hitchcock and Nuryanti, 2000: 357).

However, Linnekin (1997: 215-216) argues that this tourist contribution is quite contradictory. On the one hand, the locals would be tempted to optimise economic benefits from their culture, whilst on the other hand, they would at the same time try to protect the dignity of their tradition. In the process of communicating with tourists, promoted by the state, local people prefer to re-evaluate their culture, customs and traditions or even re-conceptualise their identity. In contrast to those scholars who believe that tourism brings about increased sense of pride and admiration for the given ethnic culture, Graburn (1979: 32) responds that such external support will only lead to the 'final, certainly the most devastating and ignoble, transformation of those very arts.' Thus, for example, the artist might remove certain elements or features of his work that might trigger puzzlement or confusion on the part of customers, simply in order to produce a product that is more saleable and acceptable to an external audience.

Apart from the functional aspects of tourist arts, Graburn (1979: 6) also suggests that tourist art is a cultural institution, reflecting the emerging present-day reality of the community. Hence, the study of an ethnic group and their arts requires consideration of the special relationship between the majority and minority societies for the reason that hardly any minority group can avoid being influenced by the majority community in social,

cultural and political aspects. Some of the ethnic arts are the reflection of the history and correlation between the majority and minority groups in forms, functions and contents.

## **2.4 Ethnicity**

Although Harrison (2007: 65-77) does not include ethnicity as an indicator in his conceptual agenda to evaluate the impact of tourism, it is worthy of discussing its value within the context of this study. MacCannell (1984: 376) states that modern mass tourism functions as a powerful shaper of ethnic identity, though the distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' is not self-evident (Wood, 1992: 56). When tourists consume those ethnic goods and products, a certain transformation of ethnicity has occurred, obscuring the distance between living ethnic culture and the official versions of the tradition (Leong, 1997: 85).

In the Western concept, ethnicity means 'people can be classified into a mutually exclusive bounded group according to physical and behavioral differences' (Wood, 1997: 7). In order to balance the Western-oriented ethnic study, more researches should be conducted by those 'non-Western' people and more attention should be given to the ethnic groups in question. Also, the way to define an ethnic group should respect the ethnic groups' own identities, so that the groups' name bestowed by other people, associated with derogatory meanings, should be unacceptable (Hitchcock, 1999: 18).

On the positive side of ethnicity, it is seen as a collection of social relations based on certain similarities and differences shared by different social groups. The contribution of ethnicity resides in constituting a 'metalanguage for communication across important structural divisions', commanding a primary identification (MacCannell, 1984: 379). It is

necessary when there is no presumption of mutual openness to conversation. On the negative side, on the other hand, ethnicity is seen to cause political subjugation, economic exploitation, forced acculturation or even genocide. Sometimes, this consciousness is shaped by external factors.

In Hitchcock's (1997: 4-6) study, the notion of ethnicity is conceived as a synonymous term with nation or country, in which shared history, language, set of customs, sense of belonging and characters are grouped together to shape the political entity. This political perspective regards national identity as a concept connected with space, defined territory and an information network including signs and symbols. Hence, he argues that ethnic identity is constantly changing alongside changes in the political, economic and cultural environments.

Nonetheless, the variability of ethnicity and its complex interrelation with social structure might prevent researchers from understanding its real nature. For instance, the adoption of the view that identifying an ethnic group solely through territory or boundary markers should be rejected could also lead to a series of further questions, without answers. Nevertheless, Wood (1997: 19-20) proposes that it is necessary to pay closer attention to the ethnic boundary 'that defines the group' than 'the cultural stuff that it encloses.' The word ethnicity will thus bring more value when it is used to emphasise the groups' differences from others rather than similarities with them.

Within the context of tourism, the concept of ethnicity can be narrowed down to the cultural differences between the tourist and the touree (Graburn, 1984: 396) and given further substance through ethnographic observations of 'host' and 'guest' relationships (Smith, V.L., 1989: 17). In a global context, ethnic identity can act as a self-protection

force in response to increasing global integration (Hitchcock, 1997: 6-7). Hitchcock (2000d: 64) points out that on a broader plane, tourism should not be treated as a moving ball, acting upon an inert ball – local culture, or as Wood (1980: 565) puts it, we should not observe indigenous cultures as if in a static state. In contrast, Hitchcock argues that both tourism and indigenous culture should be identified as living forces. The moving direction of the indigenous culture is altered according to the impact that it receives from tourism. When the positive value of the tourism outweighs negative ones, the traditional culture will move in line with the direction of tourism, acting as a catalyst in order to optimise the benefit. When tourism brings more negative than positive impacts, however, the indigenous culture and the whole community will try to reduce this negative influence by moving in an opposite direction.

Moreover, Xie (2003: 13) also suggests that tourism should no longer be conceived as an external force impacting communities from ‘outside’, without seriously considering the institutionalised factors impinging on the situation. In fact, ethnic culture should not be treated as a uniform, passive and inert phenomenon. Neither should tourism be measured solely on whether it is harming or preserving ethnic culture. Instead, it should be perceived as a process, entailing an ongoing experience of cultural invention (Hitchcock, 1999: 21).

Within a multiethnic country, the affiliation between majority and minority groups plays a part in shaping minorities’ ethnic identity. MacCannell (1984: 380-385) reveals four kinds of relationships between different groups in the production of ethnicity. In the first place, the inferior group tries to associate itself with the superior. Secondly, the inferior group sees itself in antithesis to the superior group. The third place is the superior group attempting to associate itself with the inferior group. And, lastly, the superior group defines itself in the antithesis to the inferior group.

To create 'richer' and so 'benignly tolerant' cultural diversity, Graburn (1979: 203) explains that those 'Fourth World' minorities' culture are exploited as tourist assets and consumed by domestic tourists. Minorities are therefore shaped in the forms of 'less civilised', 'childlike', 'pre-modern' and 'close-to-nature', so waiting to be 'civilised' by the dominant groups. He elaborates that 'the closer to extinction and disappearance a way of life appears to be, the more inherently attractive is to today's modern urban tourists' (Graburn, 1979: 204).

Furthermore, to articulate the substantial impact of tourism upon ethnicity, both Wood (1997: 2-15) and Leong (1997: 71-89) turn their attention to the role of the state, which has enormously benefited from both tourism and ethnicity. In some African and Asian countries, ethnicity is a far more neutral social scientific concept. In order to obtain some political advantages, ethnic groups are classified by the states in such a way that class boundaries are obscured, class unique labels are weakened so that ethnic culture and identities are displayed in a 'harmless' manner.

The role of the state in tourism development is thus summarised under four headings: a planner of tourism development, a marketer of cultural meanings, an arbiter of cultural practices and an arena for new forms of politics (Wood, 1984: 362-371). A multiethnic state would not limit its interest in international tourism to just optimise foreign exchange but also to create a favourable national culture in which the political stability and national solidarity can be claimed. Tourism becomes a property of nationalism by which the identification of a place, redefining of 'authenticity', a sense of historical past and the integration of social groups, all can be articulated. Thus, MacCannell (1984: 385-389) infers two tendencies of modern mass tourism. One is the international homogenisation of indigenous culture, which is one of the negative results of modernity, and the other is the



artificial preservation of the local ethnic groups.

However, viewing the matter on the side of the ethnic groups, Hitchcock (2000b: 224-236), Oakes (1997: 36) and Wood (1997: 20-24) all acknowledge that ethnic groups have their own way of escaping from political restrictions and the impact of tourism. By mastering the discourse of authenticity and the images of 'otherness', local groups can actively respond to the state and the industry. In addition, Cohen adds:

The inhabitants 'display themselves' by dressing up in their 'native' dress for exposure to tourists, while using ordinary urban dress at home. They sell as souvenirs craft objects that they have ceased to use themselves, and they perform rituals as touristic spectacles, often at times and locations unrelated to their ritual calendar. (2001: 41-42)

Moreover, minorities' emerging self-consciousness and self-determination are inspired by the booming up of ethnic tourist attractions that are closely associated with minorities' history, tradition and culture. The government is therefore confronted with a pressure to modify minorities' historical record and even the way they are classified. Tourism might thus be regarded as a potential prompt for the state to amend its minority policies.

## **2.5 Summary**

Arguably, there is no static background upon which to measure the impact of tourism at all times. Some destruction can become construction, on condition that it is assessed according to the interests of different people or social groups, seen from a different angle or perhaps at a different time period. In many developing countries, tourism development intertwines with local ethnic culture in many ways. This varies according to certain conditions, ranging from political institutions, the distribution system of the economic

benefits, the local community's self-consciousness of their culture, and people's attitude towards and participation in tourism.

In this study, the issues of modernity and globalisation will be evaluated in a detailed research context in order to enrich the understanding of the performance of these two social movements within the confines of tourism development. It will scrutinise the influences and characters of Lijiang's tourism development from the perspective of the Naxi and elaborate the reflections of this economic growth on various aspects of the dongba culture. Any possible positive or negative results of this research will be unpacked based on an overall understanding of the research setting.

With regard to the debates between authenticity and commodification, the researcher will not only undertake an empirical study to examine the ethnic group in question, but also to accommodate his attention to the resilient aspect of their culture and those 'additive' meanings. To some extent, the debates of authenticity and commodification have been overwhelmingly concentrated on the perceptions of tourists, leaving the visions of the locals, e.g. craftsmen, artists and cultural practitioners who present their arts and culture to tourists, largely ignored. Consequently, this study will focus on the Naxi, exploring their understanding of these two issues respectively. In addition, the researcher will observe the correlation of these two issues through the perspective of the state and the ethnic group, who both play the two concepts as a method of manipulating tourism for their own concerns. In this regard, tourist arts, such as handicrafts, will be a focus of the study to envisage the group's cultural expressions and their ethnic characteristics.

Within the context of tourism, ethnicity is not only a meaningful perspective to analyse the government's ethnic policies and the ethnic groups' history, tradition and culture, but also

a useful benchmark to review their understandings and attitudes towards tourism. In relation to examining an ethnic group's ethnic construction within a multiethnic state, the approach of this study will take into account the government's role and the interrelationship between the majority and minority groups. Moreover, the researcher will assess this issue on two levels. In the first place, the examination will focus on the performances of the given group in response to the external influence from the government and the tourism industry in the process of expressing their identity, dignity, demands and compromises. Secondly, people's interrelationships, such as their kinship, shared interests and beliefs, will be considered as active factors in integrating the ethnic group as a whole and distinguishing themselves from others.

In order to understand the particular effects and impacts of tourism within China, it is necessary to take into account the very particular circumstances prevailing in China, with its own policies towards tourism and culture in ethnic regions. The next chapter will review the Chinese government's cultural and religious policies, tourism development in the past three decades and the situations in its vast minority regions.

## **Chapter 3 Tourism and Culture in China**

This chapter reviews the relevant situation in China under four headings. First is the evaluation of Chinese tourism development in the past three decades. Tourism in China has certainly achieved significant progress recently; however, the trajectory of this development shows a zigzag course, due to the state's changing social and political objectives concerning the functions of tourism within its overall strategy. The second is the discussion of Chinese domestic tourism, which has been employed by the Chinese government as a power engine to fulfil a number of economic and political concerns, such as encouraging domestic consumption and promoting the special character of Chinese socialism. The third discourse is the assessment of the Chinese government's ethnic and cultural policies. In China, the state's concerted ideology has been one of the leading forces in shaping minorities' cultural traits and ethnic identities. The last heading is the review of Chinese tourism in minority areas, which indicates that the government has been using tourism to fulfil their 'socialist cultural reconstruction' project and position minority cultures according to a hierarchical definition of ethnic identity.

### **3.1 Tourism Development in China**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949 by Chinese Communist Party (CCP). From then on until 1978, when the country adopted an 'open door' policy to the outside world, tourism was virtually a non-existent issue in this country (Tisdell and Wen, 1991: 55, Richter, 1983: 397, 1989: 24). PRC's negative attitude towards tourism was largely due to her embarrassed international situation at the time when most tourist generating countries (largely Western ones) were hostile to this new communist entity (Richter, 1989: 24).

Consequently, CCP's tourism policy between the 1950s and the 1970s was 'the fewer outsiders the better'. International tourism in China served as a means of promoting the advantages of communism to the outside world (Lew, 2004: 112). Most of the international travellers were foreign friends coming from friendly countries mainly under the name of diplomats, tightly controlled either by the State Council or state-run travel companies. Outbound and domestic tourism hardly existed, excluding those out-going tours for diplomatic purposes (Wen, 1998: 467). All foreign tourists had to be escorted at all times to hold back or inspect the tourists, contact with local Chinese, who might release some contradictory interpretation of the politics and 'undermine' the national image (Sofield and Li, 1998: 369; Richter, 1983: 397). Under this circumstance, only 4.203 million tourists visited China in 1978, and China's tourism market ranked only the 48th in the world; foreign exchange revenue was merely US\$263 million, standing at the 41st in the world (Pan, 2002: 114).

Mao Zedong's death in 1976 drew a hasty end to this situation. His 'socialism construction' had finally come to an end. PRC's political stance was significantly altered in many ways after Deng Xiaoping came to power. After realising the fact that the Russian style socialism was not fit for China, Deng decided to recover the contact with the West; this was why his new policy labelled 'opening gate policy'. China's National Congress held in 1978 first endorsed the Four Modernisations as the country's national goal towards the next century, including huge efforts toward rapidly modernising the whole country in agriculture, industry, national defence, science and technology (Richter, 1989: 25-26). Economic development has been given top priority ever since. In the light of this statement, the economic achievement that the West has obtained was thus examined carefully.

Between 1979 and 1989, Westerners, or Western tourists, materials and concepts from the West were roughly perceived as 'modern' or 'advanced' by many Chinese officials and scholars. Tourism development, or to be more specific, international tourism, was thus closely associated with economic and social progress, and modernisation. By then, the nature of tourism was concentrated on being a tool to achieve progress in both political and economic spheres (Pan, 2002: 114, Zhang; King and Ap John, 1999: 472). Zhang, King and Jenkins (2002: 40) also suggest that tourism cannot only improve mutual understanding and friendship, but can also attract foreign investment for the plan of Four Modernisations. In view of this advantage, tourist related investment was not just confined to building luxury hotels and purchasing Boeing aeroplanes, but also extended to infrastructure construction, such as international airports, the national transport network, communication and power construction in China's many locations.

However, the June 4<sup>th</sup> 1989 political event in Tiananmen Square considerably changed this situation to the extent that the political impact of tourism outweighed its economic function. Tisdell and Wen (1991: 61) and Sofield and Li (1998: 363) note that PRC was by then facing the need to use international tourism in order to break through the Western countries' boycott for the second time since its establishment. It was for this political use that tourism was more or less valued as a means of political propaganda rather than solely as an economic tool. Consequently, tourism has been developed through a distorted perspective, with its environmental and socio-cultural impact neglected for nearly 20 years, to the extent that the development of international tourism has overwhelmingly dominated investment in domestic tourism. Consequently, luxury hotels, assumed as the right accommodation style for foreign tourists alone, were constructed more than might have been necessary.

Since the 1980s, tourism development in China has been one of the economic sectors most considerably affected by the national economic campaign. PRC was experiencing a period that moved from central planning to a market-oriented economy. Meanwhile, the ownership of enterprises has considerably changed from a system in which the state used to own all property to one allowing some ownership of property and enterprise to be shared between the state, collectivities, individuals and even foreign corporations, whilst leaving the lion's share controlled by the state. So the role of the state in the national economy was modified from planning everything to controlling only some strategic important resource industries, such as steel, power, wood, food and communication. After 1988, the focus of the government's role in the service industry of tourism gradually shifted, retaining significant input in policy-making, infrastructure supply and destination promotion, whilst leaving issues of pricing and merchandising to tourist enterprises.

From 1978 until 2008, China has indeed achieved astonishing progress in tourism development. According to WTO released statistics, the number of foreign tourist arrivals reached the 6<sup>th</sup> worldwide in 1998, and earnings reached to the 7th place. In 1996, the annual income of China's international tourism was US\$10.2 billion (see Table 3-1). In 2007, foreign tourist arrivals reached to 131.87 million people, up 5.5% on the year of 2006, and tourism foreign exchange receipts reached to US\$ 41.92 billion, a more than fourfold increase in just 11 years. The Chinese tourist revenue has increased dramatically after a temporary downturn in 2003 due to the impact of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) (see Table 3-2).

Seven of the Top 10 tourist generating countries in 2006 were from Asia (see Table 3-3), indicating that Chinese tourism is more attractive in Asia than in other parts of the world.

However, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has announced that the Chinese tourism industry, to some extent, has become a driving force of the international tourism industry, and will become the second largest tourism industry in the world before the next decade, just narrowly behind the U.S. Statistics show that by the end of 2005, the Chinese tourism industry held total fixed assets of US\$110 billion. It currently employs nearly 6 million people, offering half a million jobs each year, and by the year of 2010, it will be able to accommodate 10 million direct employment positions in inbound and outbound sectors (The Year Book of China Tourism, 2007: 89-93).

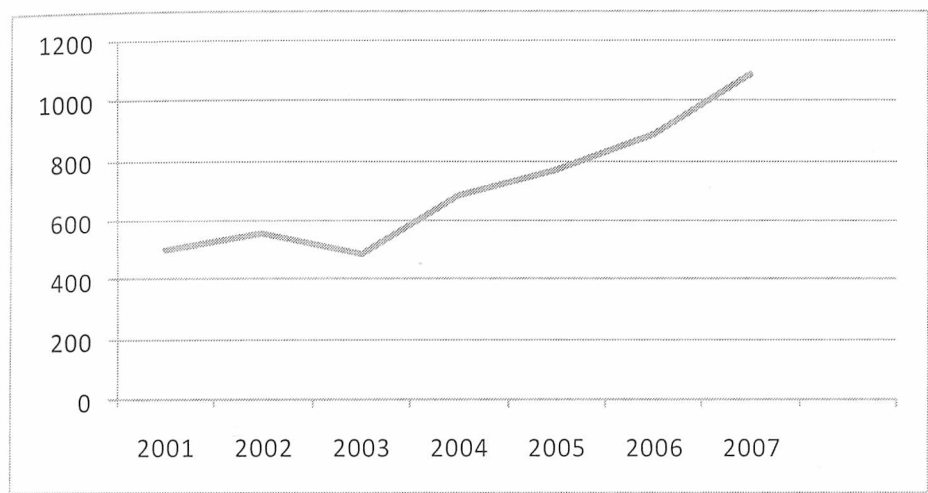
**Table 3-1: China’s international tourist arrivals and revenue (1996-2007)**

Year	Arrivals (million people)	Revenue (billion US\$)
1996	51.13	10.20
1997	57.59	12.07
1998	63.48	12.60
1999	72.80	14.11
2000	83.44	16.23
2001	89.01	17.79
2002	97.91	20.39
2003	91.66	17.40
2004	109.04	25.74
2005	120.29	29.30
2006	124.00	33.5
2007	131.87	41.92

Source: The Year Book of China Tourism (2008: 15)



Table 3-2: China’s total tourist revenue (2001-2007)



(Unit: Billion RMB)  
Source: The Year Book of China Tourism (2008: 14)

Table 3-3: Top 16 tourist generating countries in 2006

No.	Country	Inbound (10,000 people)	Growth (%)
1	South Korea	392.4	10.68
2	Japan	374.59	10.5
3	Russia	240.51	8.15
4	USA	171.03	9.95
5	Malaysia	91.05	1.2
6	Singapore	82.79	9.53
7	Philippines	70.42	7.67
8	Mongolia	63.12	-1.68
9	Thailand	59.2	0.97
10	UK	55.26	10.6
11	Australia	53.81	11.41
12	Germany	50.06	10.05
13	Canada	49.97	16.26
14	Indonesia	43.3	14.67
15	India	40.51	13.64
16	France	40.22	8.12

Source: The Year Book of China Tourism (2007: 24)

### 3.2 Domestic Tourism in China

Wu, Zhu and Xu's (2000: 296) study suggests that China's domestic tourism is driven by three factors: the growth of income per capita, the increase of leisure in urban areas, and the structural adjustment of the national economy. Initially, it was the National Tourism Conference (NTC) held in 1987 that started to look at the domestic tourism industry in a positive way. Relevant investments and favourable policies were put in place one after the other. But the general situation did not change significantly until 1994 when the second NTC opened, encouraging a variety of investment in the domestic tourism industry.

In fact, this movement had a profound international background. In the 1990s, a number of international events heavily influenced China's economic, social and political policies (Mackerras, 2003, 2005). The Gulf War, the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia and the ongoing pressure from the independence appeal of Taiwan all awakened the Chinese central state to the fact that although they had been developing peacefully for over ten years, the international situation was far from firm and stable. In response to this external situation, the central authority announced the Great West Campaign in 1997, in an attempt to transfer the national strategic development centre to inland areas.

This movement shows that tourism not only has the power of earning foreign exchange, creating employment and generating foreign direct investment, but also is capable of enhancing communication among different social groups, pulling domestic consumption and embodying 'the unique Chinese socialism' function (Oakes, 1998: 23-25). To explore the inland regions, domestic tourism first received the government's attention, to be used as a means of 'preferential policies for minority areas' (Wen, 1998: 480), accelerating

mutual understanding between the Han people and minorities, and bringing more business opportunities to the ethnic regions.

The importance of domestic tourism varied in different regions, valued by the central state as a helpful motive to improve the backward infrastructure system in those inland regions, such as Yunnan, Sichuan, Qinghai, Guizhou, Xinjiang and Tibet (Tan, 2001). In return, the improved general environment would accordingly attract more investment. Under such circumstances, domestic travelling was promoted by the state to boost better cultural understanding among people who lived in different parts of the country. Another task of domestic tourism was to conserve ethnic culture and tradition so that the cultural diversity of PRC can be maintained. The third function of domestic tourism was to improve the locals' living standards to ensure that they can keep up with the mainstream of socialist modernisation.

Meanwhile, the five-day working system introduced in 1995 has enabled people for the first time to have enough time to travel, if the country's size was taken into account (Wu, Zhu and Xu, 2000: 296). Nonetheless, this policy was not the untying of the last string restricting China's huge domestic tourism market. Two years later, the catastrophic financial crisis in Southeast Asia rang the bell. PRC, as a country that was dominated by export-oriented economy, was severely impacted by this unexpected incident and a large number of factories, firms and enterprises did not have enough business or faced being closed down. Consequently, the state decided to encourage domestic consumption in an attempt to offset the surplus supply. Domestic tourism once again was targeted as the means of achieving this.

To create a favourable macro-environment, the central state implemented in 1999 four

‘seven-day-long holidays’; January 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> for New Year celebration; seven days in February for Chinese Spring Festival (which varies according to Chinese Lunar Calendar); May 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> for International Labour Day; and October 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> for PRC National Day. As a result, these extended public holidays created a favourable environment for the domestic tourism market. In addition, significant progress on the transport network, technical supply and the increase in people’s disposable income all encouraged the take-off of domestic tourism (Tan, 2001: 7).

Generally speaking, Chinese domestic tourism is still at its early stage. Wu, Zhu and Xu comment:

‘For domestic tourism in China, products with smaller demand elasticity are mostly intermediate-short-haul sightseeing and short-haul weekend vacation...their market shares are estimated at more than 70 percent...the supply of tourist products is abundant in amount but fewer changes took place in product type while the demand for tourist products became diversified, classified and specialised’ (2000: 296-298).

In addition, most of the types of travelling in ethnic regions are labelled as ‘folk tourism’, dominated by folk dances, musical dinners, minority village tours and natural landscape sightseeing. Nevertheless, Wen (1998: 470-471) stresses the positive value of the domestic tourism compared to foreign visitors who are highly restricted by their time budget. Domestic travellers have a much better chance of visiting not just coastal regions but also rural and remote inland areas, thereby making a greater contribution to those relatively less developed areas. Domestic tourism is no longer considered as a competitor for the supply of transport and accommodation for inbound tourism, but valued in its own right.

With the rapid growth over the past ten years, domestic tourism has accounted for a major part of the Chinese tourism industry. In 2007, there were 1.61 billion domestic tourists

travelling within China (see Table 3-4), generating revenue of RMB 777.06 billion, accounting for 71.3% of China’s total tourist revenue, whereas the three figures in 1996 were 0.639, 163.84 and 65.87% respectively. The figures provided by Wu, Zhu and Xu’s (2000: 296) paper show that domestic tourism in Chinese ethnic region, Yunnan, has boomed at an annual rate of 30% in the past two decades. It is obvious that domestic tourism has achieved significant progress in tourist numbers, revenue and market percentage. In the past 11 years, domestic tourism has played a vital role in increasing consumption, reducing poverty and creating job opportunities.

**Table 3-4: China’s domestic tourist numbers and revenue (1996-2007)**

Year	Tourist numbers (million people)	Revenue (billion RMB)
1996	639	163.84
1997	644	211.27
1998	694	239.12
1999	719	283.19
2000	740	317.55
2001	784	352.24
2002	878	387.84
2003	870	344.23
2004	1102	471.11
2005	1212	528.59
2006	1394	623.0
2007	1610	777.06

Source: The Year Book of China Tourism (2008: 59)

**3.3 China’s Ethnic and Cultural Policies**

Apart from the economic power of the tourism industry, PRC’s ethnic and cultural policy is another force that can profoundly shape the life of ethnic groups. To begin with, the ethnic issue receives considerable attention from the PRC authority. Anything that is

associated with minorities in China will become a 'serious case'. As Lemcine (1989: 8-9) and Mackerras (1994: 148) both argue, in China, ethnicity is a political issue, or to put into another way, its political value takes precedence over its social and cultural meanings. To understand this statement, it is necessary to look into the situation of the minorities living in China.

In political terms, both Mackerras (2003) and Stanley (1998: 64) associate the importance of the Chinese minorities with their geographical locations. Mackerras elaborates:

'Although the 2000 census put the proportion of the minority population in China at 8.41 per cent, the areas where they reside take up about 60 per cent of the territory of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and many live near sensitive borders. For this and other reasons, China's minorities are actually considerably more important for China than their population would suggest.' (2003: 1)

Therefore, Heberer adds that:

'The country's internal stability and its defence capacity are to a large degree dependent on the behaviour of minorities.' (1989: 16)

Grunfeld (1985), Mackerras (1994, 2003, 2005) and Sofield and Li (1998) all suggest that the fundamental principle of the PRC's ethnic policy is generally based on a 'deal', which is 'autonomy, but no secession'. Compared with past Chinese regimes, CCP host the most powerful authority. The PRC's ethnic policy grants more preferential rules to the minorities, including economic incentives and improvement in living standards on condition that the minorities do not attempt any secession from the central state. As a result, minorities' living conditions such as health care, education and social services have been significantly improved since CCP came to power. In some minority areas, minority inhabitants have much higher voting rights than the Han.

By comparison, since 1978 ethnic groups in China have enjoyed more tolerant policies and practices than have Han inhabitants. For instance, they have more religious freedom than Han, are exempt from the one-child policy and are given more respect for their cultural integrity. As far as the circumstances in Yunnan Province are concerned, although Tan (2001: 13) places attention on the richness of natural and ethnic resources as the main contribution to tourism in this area, Mackerras (1994: 190) stresses that the major issue for government in this area is the issue of ethnic integration in Yunnan, which is associated with consolidating Chinese borders with Vietnam, Burma and other Southeast Asian countries.

White (1997: 299) continues that policies regarding minorities not only include health and medical treatment, education, economic development and social welfare, but also associate with national security, solidarity and foreign affairs. The state minority policies play a powerful role in forming minorities' identities and their culture status. However, Heberer (1989) argues that these favourable policies could to some extent cause negative consequences to ethnic groups in the Chinese ethnic regions. Heberer elaborates:

‘Many vital social structures were altered and denied these groups. Measures such as forced settlement and prohibition of marriages among relatives are grave attacks on the cultures and customs of these people, and are destroying their cultural and social fabric.’ (1989: 92)

In the second place, China's cultural policy has not been developed within the same historical or political framework as its tourism policy. The concept of tourism in China is more or less aligned to modernisation, foreign investment, technological improvement and ‘modern’ values from the West (Harrison, 2001b; Richter, 1989; Sofield and Li, 1998; Wen, 1998; White, 1998). Cultural policy, by contrast, is seen in a different light. Culture is translated into ‘*wenhua*’ in Chinese, linking to something from highly civilised society,

such as Han or some other highly developed areas (McKhann, 1998: 27). The term '*wenhua*' is in fact a modern invention by the Japanese, who initially used it to coin an equivalent to the Western word 'culture' (Brodsgaard and Strand, 1998: 320). Most of the minorities' culture, on the other hand, is treated as '*feng su xi guan*', connoting something connected to custom and tradition, especially associated with minorities or backward areas.

As far as the state's cultural policy is concerned, McKhann (1998) and White (1997) both characterise the state's cultural policy in two distinctive discourses. One is based on hierarchical distinction, concerned with 'modernity' and social progress. The other is the discourse of authenticity, in which the notion of 'tradition' of certain cultural practices lends 'legitimacy' and authenticity. White (1997: 303- 305) states that the discourses concerning hierarchy are a legacy of the former Soviet Union and Marxism-Leninism as interpreted by Mao. The discourse of authenticity partly derives from such notions concerning hierarchy. Modernity is thus reduced to economic progress and achievement accomplished through the power of science and technology. Oakes adds that:

'Modernity in China is characterised by shifting meanings that are contingent upon local histories and geographies, and the articulations of these with the state and with global capitalism.' (1998: 10)

The CCP's major cultural ideology is a 'scientific world view' to fulfil the task of reconstructing socialist culture with 'China's special characteristics' (Brodsgaard and Strand, 1998: 260; Guo, 1998: 165). The dogma is elicited in their following account:

'We (CCP) should work actively to change those undesirable customs that still prevail in cities and the countryside, to advocate cultured, healthful ways of living that are in keeping with scientific principles and to eliminate ignorance and backwardness. Bad wedding and funeral customs have to be changed and superstitious, feudal beliefs and practices must be eradicated.' (1998: 261)



With this principle, the approval of a cultural practice is based solely on whether this activity is favourable to national unity. Given these criteria, those practices that are labelled as 'traditional culture' will be preserved and even advocated, whilst those viewed as 'feudal superstition' will be suspended or prohibited. The notion of 'social evolution' and longstanding Confucianism are both reflected in the ethnic policies in which non-Han people and their culture are perceived as 'feudal' and 'backward', needing to be 'civilised' by the Han's culture, which is positioned as a model of 'progressive' and 'advanced' society. The rural/ urban dichotomy and consequent differences in educational attainment further enhance the distinctions made in such a hierarchical discourse. Village life would be described as 'relatively backward' and 'non-hygienic', while a higher educational level is the standard of more 'advanced', more 'modern', more 'cultured' and implicitly, more Han population (White, 1998: 16-18).

Ironically, Sofield and Li (1998: 367-371, 388) note that the traditional Chinese culture used to be severely condemned by the CCP as an obstacle to the successful implementation of socialist doctrine. Since the beginnings of the PRC, the Chinese traditional culture has been criticised by the CCP as 'superstitious', 'feudal', 'backward', 'anti-modern and antisocialist'. The CCP has waged a continuous campaign to abolish those traditional values completely and replaced them with socialist values, which are depicted as 'scientific', 'democratic' and 'revolutionary'. However, the 'opening gate policy' indicates that those socialist ideologies need to be modified for China.

After the June 4<sup>th</sup> movement in 1989, the deteriorating external environment forced the CCP to revise socialist doctrine for the purposes of national integrity and unity. The traditional Chinese culture and its relevant philosophies are thus injected as a unique

Chinese characteristic in the modified discourse of socialism. This unique feature legitimises China's economic reforms by pointing towards low levels of economic attainment. In order to overcome such a situation the Chinese state began to formulate a Chinese style of socialist ideology that praises traditional Chinese culture as a means of countering some of the ill effects of modernity, i.e. the liberalisation and democracy being planted in China in the process of modernisation (Brodsgaard and Strand, 1998: 261).

Apart from dealing with the external pressure from the West, the CCP's cultural policy also reflects concerns about the internal impact of various religious practices. In China, anti-religious attitude has a long history, dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. With regard to the relationship between culture and religion, culture is more associated with the image of civilisation, detached from the realm of religion, which is often associated with superstition.

'China's supreme power has always endeavoured to keep religious activities under control so as not to jeopardise the unity and stability of the state, since religious sects and secret societies have been regularly at the head of peasant revolts. Religions were therefore approved and tolerated only as long as they supported the state and demonstrated themselves to be loyal. Religion was never regarded as a power above the state.' (Heberer, 1989: 105)

In the light of this statement, it is necessary to reconsider Safran's (1998: 6) conclusion that 'religious practices are no longer banned, as they were during the Cultural

Revolution'. The CCP has never claimed that they ever restricted freedom of religion.

What they prohibited, according to their religious policy, were the practices that have been classified as 'superstition'. However, Chao (1996: 212-215) stresses that apart from those four forms of religion officially approved by the state, i.e. Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism and Islam, all other folk religious practices fall within the category of 'feudal superstition', which is strictly banned. Therefore, religion is seen in a considerably different light from

culture, conceptualised in an inferior position, in White's (1997) hierarchical framework, often falling into the category of superstition.

### **3.4 Tourism in China's Ethnic Regions**

According to (McKhann, 1998), tourism is one of the good places to examine the CCP's ethnic and cultural policies. The role of tourism in Chinese ethnic regions is often associated with the purpose of facilitating the local economic development, alleviating poverty and further promoting the benefits of socialist national policies. The government's influence upon tourism in minority regions is mostly achieved through regulating investment, commoditising the ethnic culture, controlling production and sustaining consumption (McKhann, 1998; Sofield and Li, 1998; Wen, 1998; White, 1998).

Although the CCP's minority policy does grant ethnic groups autonomous status, the implementation varies in different regions and at different times (Yang and Bramwell, 2008: 970-972; Yang, Wall and Smith, 2006: 752). The problems that arise in tourism development in minority areas include issues of political control, assimilation, less empowerment, discrimination, exploitation by the majority society, economic impoverishment and cultural degradation of the ethnic culture. Among those problems, three of them are most pressing.

One is found in Wen's (1998: 468) study, which focuses on the issue of uneven distribution of tourism wealth from a horizontal perspective, the development of tourism business has been an unbalanced process as one moves from coastal to interior regions, or from urban to rural regions. This unequal circulation of wealth has caused social disparity between coastal and inland areas, where residents are mainly Han and minorities

respectively. Economic wealth is highly concentrated in the coastal area, whereas more than half of the most favoured tourist attractions, revealed by a survey conducted in 1991, are actually located in the interior regions. Yet, the coastal areas obtain 86.5% of tourism receipts and 81.2% of all tourist arrivals of China in 1994.

According to Wen (1998), and Yang, Wall and Smith (2006), the disparity of Chinese tourism reflects an economic inequality between coastal and inland regions since China implemented economic reforms in the early 1980s. Tourism in China is closely concerned with alleviating poverty in economically less developed areas, many of which are located in minority regions. The regional disparity of tourism should therefore be seriously tackled, otherwise, the growing regional economic inequality in China could jeopardise the interests of China as a whole and affect social stability. As a matter of fact, the disparity between the Han and minorities in some places has been widened since China's rapid economic growth in the 1990s.

The second problem in minority regions revolves round ethnic identity. According to Oakes (1997: 36-37, 47-48), Lew (2004: 117) and Swain (1990: 26), local place identity is influenced by the state-sponsored tourism in two different ways. The first is the state policy that promotes and defines ethnic minority culture and preservation. The other one is the commercialisation of tourism development. The ethnic religion, tradition and arts and crafts are not promoted or valued unless and until they are regarded as an integral segment making up the diversity of Chinese culture. Yet, the development of tourism in minority areas is not merely meant to sustain ethnic groups, but, rather, is ultimately determined by the state's overall policies for regional redevelopment.

Indeed, ethnic identification and regional autonomy are not the endorsement of self-determination but a classification of the ethnic group's backwardness. Both social and economic developments are subjected to the imperatives of national integration, geopolitical security and the promotion of patriotism. Nevertheless, the commercialisation of ethnic culture in tourism has further consequences, such as the change to traditional family structure, moral system, social values, lifestyles and ideological attitudes. This study will seek to examine some of the implications of commercialisation and commodification in greater depth.

The third problem within the minority regions is in reference to the operations of the tourism industry. According to Wen (1998), Oakes (1995, 1998), MacCannell (1984) and Swain (1995), minority cultures are being exposed to tourism for the sake of the economy, with no serious concern for the long-term socio-cultural consequences. The promotion of tourism is heavily focused on economic values, with a result that commodification of ethnic culture becomes the major characteristic of the industry in minority regions. Oakes elaborates his profound concern in the following account:

'Ethnic culture is not only reproduced according to the demands of rationalised commodity production, but is in fact invented and manufactured in order to facilitate the local specialisations necessary for economic integration and tourism development, as well as contribute to the cultural construction of an alternative modern China... The national project of manufacturing traditional, yet commercialised, ethnic culture tends to construct folk culture primarily as a performance.' (1998: 140)

Moreover, ethnic groups do not control the major share of the revenue (Swain, 1990, 1995). Thus, the role of tourism in ethnic regions is reduced to an 'enticement', attracting public and private investment to commoditise the minority cultures, landscapes and the ethnic groups themselves, to quench the minority elite's desire to be modernised (Oakes,

1998: 10). Stanley (1998: 64) adds that minorities are nothing more than the 'hard currency' and 'symbolic capital' for the CCP to propagate their assertion that 'the equal status and autonomous rights' of the ethnic groups are maintained under party leadership.

Nevertheless, Lemcine's (1989) and Swain's (1995) studies in Yunnan, Xie's (2003) study in Hainan, and Oakes' (1998) study in Guizhou all demonstrate that despite the fact that the central state exerts a powerful impact upon ethnic groups in shaping their culture and weakening their ethnic identities, cultural differences still remain in their own way. Given that some ethnic groups have lost their distinctive languages, most of the minorities that they examined have a very strong will to identify their ethnicity, proudly assuring their minority status in many ways. In response to the government's control over business, cultural facilities and investment, villagers in remote mountainous areas endeavour to reconstruct their ethnic identities and fortify their culture by playing upon the concept of authenticity in their dealings with tourists. Therefore, the issue of ethnicity in the context of Chinese tourism is concerned with the state's political considerations, the regional economy, and the ethnic groups' own demands in the cultural and social field.

### **3.5 Analysis and Discussion**

The PRC's tourism has, in the main, been developed only since the early 1980s. It was initially regarded as a powerful economic engine, by which foreign exchange, employment opportunities, foreign direct investment and communications between different social groups could all be accelerated. The state, for a long time, assumed that that tourism was a low-input but high-output industry. Many political and economic values or meanings have been added on to tourism since then, completely transforming the nature and character of tourism in China. As the country experienced the struggles of moving

from a planned economy to a free-market economy, tourism development was significantly affected by changing national economic strategies. China's external situation also had a significant impact on state policies; tourism strategy became linked to the need to improve the country's image abroad and the political impact of tourism took on new meanings. Tourism is now usually regarded as a means of political propaganda, vividly described as a 'window industry' by the state.

In terms of the value of domestic tourism, the state often promotes it as an efficient way of consolidating its internal communications. Moreover, it is also featured as promoting regional economic growth, improving local infrastructure, pushing the development of tourism related industries and enhancing local financial strength. However, a broader vision should be reconsidered from Tan's study, in which he argues:

'Tourism is an important growth industry in China not just for international tourism but even more significantly for domestic tourism...China enjoys many advantages in tourism promotion. It is a vast country of diverse terrain with many ethnic groups and cultures as well as a long history. It has rich cultural, historical, and physical resources that can be drawn upon...The study of tourism in China thus has both domestic and international significance.' (2001: 7-8)

Although domestic tourism has become a major contributor to tourist revenue, few academic papers have explicitly addressed its influence and problems in the social sphere, in particular in the vast ethnic regions where domestic tourist activities are mainly to be found. Much of the literature scarcely explores whether the problems in ethnic regions are caused by the domestic or the international tourism sector. In regard to acquiring a clearer vision of Chinese domestic tourism, it is worth conducting detailed studies to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, in both the economic and social spheres.

The Chinese ethnic policy is mainly shaped by the authorities' political concerns. Whilst a number of favourable privileges are conferred on ethnic groups as long as they do not impede the national solidarity, the negative influence of such state policies should not be overlooked. As far as the CCP's cultural policy is concerned, the ethnic cultures have been marginalised to an inferior position in the government's hierarchical cultural grid. This cultural framework serves as a mechanism to upgrade the government's economic achievements.

The main difficulty of this perspective is that on the one hand, it has to counteract those modern influences from outside, such as freedom of speech and democracy, which the party perceives as dangers; on the other hand, it also has to downplay the insurgence of those traditional cultures from inside, such as religious practices seen as 'superstition', which they also assume as threats. The dilemma of this awkward situation is that those 'acceptable' Western trends, such as modernisation, are also linked to processes such as freedom of speech and freedom of worship. It will be a very long process for the CCP to balance the positive and negative influences resulting from modernisation.

The circumstances in the minority regions denote that tourism has been loaded with the task of helping the government to control or assimilate those ethnic groups. This situation has credited the industry with becoming an interesting index with which to examine China's social development. The problems of tourism have thus become a reflection of Chinese society. We can therefore scrutinise Chinese ethnic and cultural diversity through the disputable medium of the ethnic arts and culture, but also through the unevenly distributed tourism wealth and the processes of commodification. We can also observe the social disparity between the dominant and subdominant Chinese groups, between urban and rural regions, and analyse the process of Chinese modernisation through the locals'



living standard and the appraisal of tourism.

More importantly, the contribution of tourism in ethnic regions should be distinguished more specifically from its negative impact. Apart from improving the local economic situation, the role of tourism in the locals' social progress and ethnic construction should also be examined. In addition, the locals' attitude and behaviour in terms of using tourism to achieve their social and cultural demands should be scrutinised.

### **3.6 Summary**

Tourism in China has been burdened with too many political, social and economic tasks to the extent that its nature and attributes have been obscured. Tourism has been narrowly praised as a powerful economic engine to fulfil the government's achievement. The evident institutional divergence between China and the international world restricts the scope of tourism for alleviating the conflicts between them. Unfortunately, when the tourism industry is run as an efficient political or economic agency, its social and cultural consequences have been seriously underestimated. Nevertheless, Chinese tourism's over-loaded social, political and economic connotations provide an interesting perspective to view wide-ranging social phenomena.

To some extent, the highly developed domestic tourism was initially generated by the government for the purpose of increasing domestic consumption in an attempt to counteract the impacts of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. The implementation of the extended holidays policies has greatly contributed to the success of Chinese domestic tourism development in its early stage. The current situation presents an excellent opportunity to investigate the economic, social and cultural impacts of domestic tourism

upon the minority ethnic groups.

The Chinese state's ethnic policy focuses primarily on issues of national security and the integration of national identity due to the strategic location and the large proportion of the territories in which the minorities reside. Under this fundamental circumstance, the government's cultural policy serves as an ideological mechanism to alleviate the conflicts between the majority and minority. The hierarchy discourse positions ethnic groups and their cultures in a vulnerable situation that expects them to move towards a more 'civilised' or 'modernised' society in keeping with the majority group and along the path of 'socialist' modernisation.

The government's ethnic and cultural policies are thus working together to ascertain that the minorities are under control. On the one hand, the ethnic policy gifts them a favourable treatment and accords them a measure of autonomy, whilst attempting to minimise demands for independence. On the other hand, the cultural policy downplays their cultural confidence in an attempt to claim a hierarchical leadership for the majority group, whilst at the same time according them some favourable recognition for authentic traditional culture, to be commodified for purposes of tourism development.

The studies carried out in various ethnic regions in China have demonstrated that tourism is not only the government's political and economic weapon to control those ethnic groups by generating production, sustaining consumption and investment, but also is encouraging those groups to display their identity and demands. Further detailed discussion regarding the Naxi in Lijiang region will be carried out in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4 The Naxi in Lijiang Region**

This chapter introduces the Naxi in Lijiang where the field study is situated. The first part of the discussion presents demographic data of the Naxi, including their history, administration, population, social structure, agriculture and economic profiles. The Naxi have been living in Lijiang for over 800 years. Most of the Naxi live by subsistence agriculture alone. Consequently, they are excluded from basic social provisions, which are only available for urban people. The second part of the discussion looks at the growth of tourism in Lijiang in the past decade, which has reached astonishing levels. This economic growth has dramatically changed the life of local residents in many aspects, becoming the engine for Lijiang's economy. The last section is a portrait of the Naxi and their dongba culture, viewed from an anthropological perspective. With the involvement of tourism, the dongba culture has become a prominent ethnic marker of the group in their contact with millions of domestic tourists.

### **4.1 Lijiang Demography**

#### **4.1.1 The History of the Naxi in Lijiang**

The Naxi are considered by a number of scholars as the descendants of the Shiqiang or Qiang, an ethnic group who dwelt in the northwest mountain area of China (Fang and He, 1981; He Sh.L., 2000; Jackson, 1979; Mathieu, 2003; McKhann, 1998). Around 1800-2000 years ago, the rising of Qin and the West Han Dynasty drove the ancestors of contemporary Naxi away from their hometown. They migrated from Gansu and Qinghai Provinces all the way down to Sichuan, and then finally settled down in Yunnan 1,400 years ago. The Naxi invasion in southern Sichuan and northern Yunnan provoked attacks

by the local powers, Tibet and Bai. A number of wars were waged by the Tibetans between 680 and 784 and the Bai (Nanshao Kingdom) between 784 and 794 respectively.

The first town to appear in Lijiang was in the late Tang Dynasty (618-907AD), initially called '*Guoben*', meaning 'a big granary' in the Naxi language, which reflected its economic importance in history. During the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368AD), the first local administration was established in 1253, after the town surrendered to Kublai Khan, the king of the Mongols, on his way to conquer Nanshao Kingdom. By offering military support to the Mongol king, the local governor (the Mu family), established their dominion. In 1278, the Lijiang Prefecture was first established (Yang and Bai, 1993; White, 1997). By establishing strategic rapport with the central states, such as the Mongols in 1253, the Han (the Ming Dynasty, 1368 –1644A D) in 1381 and the Manchu (the Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911AD) in 1659, the Naxi became one of the permanent dwellers in this region.

Gradually, Lijiang became a trading hub connecting the trade between India and Tibet. Most of the inhabitants were initially doing business with the tea-horse traders, who carried tea and salt from the south of Yunnan to Tibet and returned with Tibetan goods, which they sold to India. In order to indirectly govern the various ethnic groups in the northwest of Yunnan and especially to weaken the threat of attacks from Tibet, the Ming rulers delegated power to the Mu family in the capacity of local chieftains, to be known as Mu King. To show his loyalty, the first Mu King adopted the Chinese character '*mu*' as his surname and promoted Chinese Confucianism as the Naxi ruling class's doctrine. In addition, he also changed the name of the old town '*Guoben*' to a Mandarin name '*dayanzhen*'. The meaning of '*Da yan*' is 'great ink-stone', a description of the town's landform character; and the word '*zhen*' means 'town' in Mandarin (Mu, B., 2007: 22).

With the Ming emperors' support, the power of the Mu came to its golden age. The Mu family expanded its territory to Sichuan and once occupied the gateways to Tibet. However, in the Qing Dynasty, when Tibet was already under central government control, the Mu King's value to the integrity of the state declined. Their ruling was ultimately terminated during political reforms in 1723. The Mu King's 470 year long (1253-1723) hereditary dominion was replaced by '*liu guan zhi*', a system by which the central government appointed officials to administrate the area at regular time periods (White, 1997: 301).

Although the PRC was founded in 1949, the influence of the CCP did not come into being until the political movement in 1954 in Lijiang. From 1956 to 1976, a number of political campaigns including the Cultural Revolution, devastated the whole of China in political, social and cultural spheres, and Lijiang was not exempted from this political turbulence. In 1985, Lijiang was officially opened to foreign visitors, and in 1986, it was granted the title of National Famous Cultural Historic Town. After surviving a severe earthquake in 1996, Lijiang quickly recovered from this disaster and Dayanzhen obtained the status of World Heritage Site (WHS) awarded by UNESCO on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1997, for its 'important historic value of the buildings and the success in the preservation of the culture' (Su and Teo, 2008: 154-155). From then on, it has been visited by millions of tourists each year.

#### **4.1.2 Administration and Population**

In 1988, the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County was first established, consisting of 21 sub-counties and 3 towns, covering an area of 7,648 square kilometres. In 1994, another three neighbouring counties were merged with Lijiang and promoted together as Lijiang

Prefecture. The total administration area was expanded to 20,600 square kilometres. In October 2003, Yunnan provincial authority promoted the Lijiang Prefecture to Lijiang Region (1). The old Lijiang County was split into Dayan Old Town District, which is the political and administrative centre, and Yulong Naxi Autonomous County. Now the Lijiang Region covers one district and four counties, including 69 sub-counties, 346 administrative villages and 99 local offices. Among them, there are 11 towns and 22 minority autonomous sub-counties (The Year Book of Yunnan Economy, 2005: 87-89).

According to the China National Census Report in 2005, the total population of the Naxi was around 309,500, most of them living in Yunnan. Two-thirds of Naxi people actually live in the Lijiang Region (66.5%), where they accounted for 58.6% of the total population of the area. In Lijiang, apart from the Naxi, 24.43% consisted of ten other minority groups, and 16.97% were of Han nationality. Other Naxi were scattered around Zhongdian, Weixi, Deqin, Jianchuan and Lanping Counties. Outside Yunnan, some Naxi lived in Yanyuan, Yanbian and Muli Counties in Sichuan, and Mangkang County in Tibet (Street, 2005: 24; Mathieu, 2003: 1; White, 1998: 10). Yet by far the greater majority of this population is considered to be rural; within the Naxi dwelling regions, mainly/including the Old Town District and Yulong County, 83.72% of the total population or 270,915 people were living in rural areas and only 16.28% or 52,685 people were classified as 'non-rural' residents.

#### **4.1.3 Urban/Rural Dichotomy**

According to the latest China National Census investigated on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, 27% of the total population in Lijiang region were living in urban areas and 73% of them in rural areas. As indicated above, this distinction was more pronounced within the Naxi dwelling areas. Yet, such division goes beyond a basic urban/rural dichotomy; these figures do not

merely indicate spatial differences, but also imply significant disparities in socioeconomic and political circumstances.

In 1955, the central government implemented a '*hukou*' system, which meant 'household registration system' (Hussain, 2008). This policy was launched in Lijiang in 1956 for two reasons. First, to hold back a large number of rural migrants from moving into towns; and secondly, because some basic social provisions were extremely inadequate at the time. Scarce resources were therefore channelled towards urban areas, whilst rural residents were excluded from subsidised food supplies, social insurance, free medical treatment, better public health and hygiene facilities, employment opportunities and free mandatory education (9 years compulsory) (2). The household registration system ensured that rural populations were kept in their place, yet also perpetuated certain inequalities.

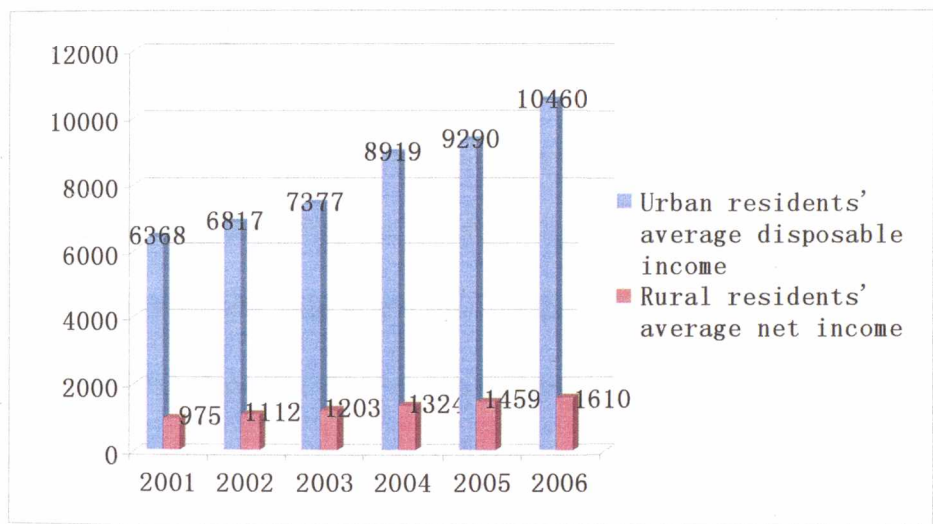
The economic difference between the rural and urban residents can be clearly identified from the huge gap in their income (see Figure 4-1). According to the researcher's investigation, the divergence was even larger in real life. The figures of 'Rural residents' average net income' published by Lijiang Statistics Bureau were not realistic. Farmers had to use their 'net income' to pay their living expenses such as their children's education fees, purchasing fertiliser and other agricultural materials; while the urban residents' disposable income was the figure after deducting their basic living expenses. The situation of this dichotomy was even more complicated in the social sphere. Unfortunately, there was no hard data available in China to quantify this inequality between rural and urban people regarding social provision.

Since 1997, the urban people's free medical care has been significantly affected when the central government decided to use public health insurance schemes to replace those



unaffordable free health services. The current situation in Lijiang's urban area varies from place to place. Basically, the residences' work units would pay the major part of the insurance, leaving the rest for the employees to pay themselves (data acquired in the fieldwork).

**Figure 4-1: Lijiang urban and rural residents' average income**



Source: Lijiang Annals of Statistics (2008: 37-39)

In 2007, the farmers in Lijiang were able to join the National Rural Area Insurance Plan, which entitled farmers who paid 10 RMB a year to have discounts from 30% to 70% on their medical treatment costs. Even this improvement could not significantly change the rural people's disadvantages in medical provision. For instance, in Jiaze Administrative Village, Ninglang County, about 200 kilometres northeast to Lijiang centre, 2,900 people have only one doctor and one assistant. This administrative village included 15 natural villages covering 110 square kilometres in a remote mountain region. The only public health practice was set up in the 1950s. Not only has it never been expanded since, but it was nearly closed down in the 1980s, simply because it could not make a profit (data acquired in the fieldwork).



#### 4.1.4 Agricultural Life

After the CCP came to power in 1949, the land belonged to the state or collective units, which rented the land to farmers working on it, and collected 'agricultural tax' as rental payment. The situation of agriculture in the vast countryside varies according to the geographic location, terrain, climate, vegetation, agricultural output and customs. Nevertheless, it was necessary to investigate some basic features of agricultural life so as to have a better understanding of this region in which the dongba culture is deeply rooted.

The farmers' agrarian life can be generally divided into peak-time and off-peak time according to agricultural activities. The peak-times are in April, May, August, September and October, while the other seven months are off-peak time. Basically, April and May is the time to plant corn or other economic crops such as tobacco, bean, etc. while in August, September and October is the time to harvest the crops and plant wheat and colza. The crops in the countryside are planted for two purposes. First is subsistence, which is to maintain sufficient food supply for the family, especially in terms of wheat, corn, potato and vegetables.

The second purpose of planting crops is for economic value, and varies from tobacco, beans and colza to fruits. Which one a family is going to plant depends on the local weather, temperature, nutrition of the earth, local sea level, the potential market value, necessary skills, facilities, and the farmers' confidence, labour and experience. The harvest of the economic crops is for sale in the markets for cash. This exchange is vital for an agricultural household. If a family fails to have substantial cash from this exchange in one year, they will have a hard time if there were a natural disaster in the following year.

However, each year's harvest is uncertain in the event of bad weather, natural disaster and

devalued market price.

As a result, the government keeps a close watch on such market trends for agricultural products, lest an economic shortfall ends up requiring further subsidies or other forms of help to rural residents who make up the majority of the population. The government regards a family's receipts from such market exchange as a key indicator of the farmers' situation in each year. The second part of farming is to ensure that the family have enough cash to buy necessities such as clothes, shoes, electronic goods, and many other industrial products that they cannot make themselves. In addition, they need to have cash to pay the bill for their children's education, and treatment for any illness. Consequently, the second part of the farming is extremely important to the family's welfare (data acquired in fieldwork).

#### **4.1.5 Economy**

Generally speaking, Lijiang's economy is largely constrained by its topographic features: only 5% of its territory is flat land, at an average of 3,000 metres above sea-level.

McKhann reflects:

‘At 3,000 metres, the economy is a fairly even mix of temperate crops and fruit trees and middle-altitude pastoralism. The breeding and sale of horses and mules to neighbouring lowland villages is an important source of cash.’ (1998: 30)

With these natural conditions, Lijiang's total output growth was only 1% between 1978 and 1988, ranking the last third in Yunnan Province. The local government once attempted to develop traditional agriculture in the early 1980s, but this effort halted for two reasons: the naturally low productivity of the land, and the mountainous topography, which is unsuitable for mechanised production (The Year Book of Yunnan Economy, 1999: 146).

By the late 1980s the government turned to developing manufacturing industries, which also ended in failures for another two reasons. One was that the majority of the local population lived in rural areas, whose living standards were too low to sustain massive consumption for mass-produced industrial goods. Secondly, high transport costs slower delivery considerably reduced the competitiveness of locally manufactured industrial goods in other areas. Not only did the government receive almost nothing from this industrial venture, but it was also seriously in debt due to the heavy investment at the start-up stage.

In 1998, the situation deteriorated further. The central government enacted a law to prohibit cutting forest resources, due to the consequences of a disastrous flood in Gold Sand River. Thereby, a number of forest enterprises in Lijiang were forced to close down. However, the forest industry used to account for 70% of the local finance since the 1960s, sustaining the local economy for three decades (The Year Book of Yunnan Economy, 1999: 145). Cornered by this unexpected situation and consecutive failed attempts, the Lijiang government was confronted with the need to find a new leading source for local finance. Under this circumstance, the local authority decided to develop tourism as the main supporting industry.

Over the past years, both the farmers and urban residents' lives have been considerably improved through the contribution of tourism development. The rural residents' net income and the urban residents' disposable income have increased (3) in the past few years (see Figure 4-1), showing that the rural residents' average income, though remaining at a comparatively low level, has steadily increased by 9% annually, from 975 RMB in 2001 to 1,610 RMB in 2006. According to the data obtained from the Old Town District,

the average income increase of the farmers in 2005 was 14.8%, much higher than the average rate for the whole region. In the meantime, the urban citizen's disposable income has progressively increased from 6368 RMB in 2001 to 10,460 RMB in 2006 with a stable annual growth of 8.7%.

## **4.2 The Growth of Tourism in Lijiang**

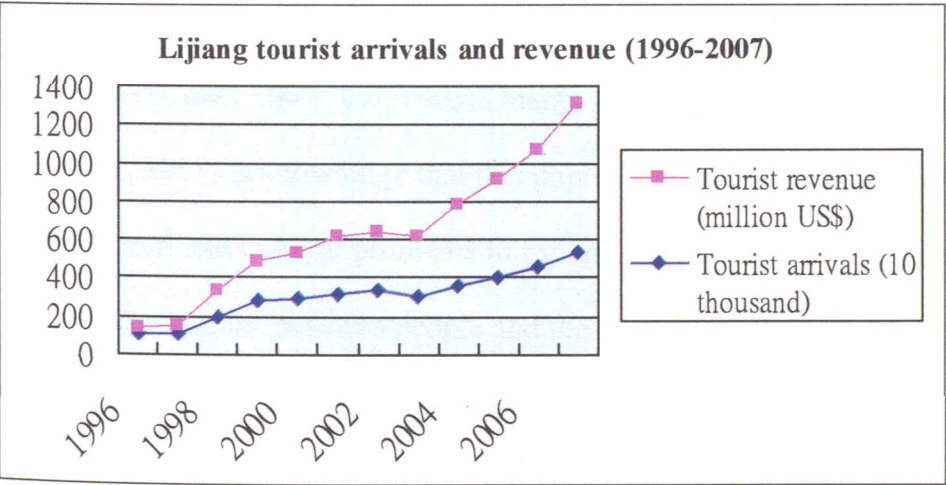
Lijiang's tourism development started in the mid 1990s. In 1994, the National Southwest Tourism Conference at the northwest of Yunnan played a major role in igniting tourism in Lijiang. The earthquake two years later to some extent served as the most important opportunity for the town to develop tourism business. The acquired WHS status was highly valued by the local government as the guideline to reconstruct the ancient town's damaged buildings and as a great chance to embrace tourism as a lucrative measure for conserving its music, dance, arts and crafts, as well as underpinning their economy (Li, Y., 2007: 3).

Indeed, tourism in Lijiang has achieved remarkable economic progress in the past ten years. According to McKhann (2001: 148-152), the tourist revenue and tourist arrivals have increased by 66 and 26 times respectively compared with the figures from nine years before. In 1995, both these figures were twice that of 1994, and this increase marked the prelude to a continuous rise. The year 1996 was a dividing line in terms of Lijiang's tourism development. Just one year later, the two figures went up to 1.1 million and 300 million RMB respectively.

Between 1996 and 2007, both the tourist arrivals and revenues of Lijiang's tourism development rose considerably. Lijiang was visited by 3.09 million tourists annually on

average. This upturned trend was shortly disturbed in 2003, when the SARS epidemic hit the whole country badly including Lijiang area (see Figure 4-2). In 1998, customers could stay at a presidential suite in a five-star hotel at a price of US\$ 1,000 per night, whereas the most expensive room in 1995 has been less than US\$ 20 per night. In 1999, the relocated local airport started to handle 4~6 flights a day, receiving tourists from Kunming, Guangzhou, Sichuan, Shanghai and Beijing. During the Spring Festival in 2000, Lijiang accommodated 15,000 tourists in just one day. The figure of individual contribution in GDP in 2002 had reached to US\$ 608, 9.5 times of the figure for the late 1980s (Zhang, H., 2003: 16). According to Lijiang Tourism Bureau (LTB), the latest figure of tourist arrivals and tourist revenue in 2007 were 5.31 million people and 5.8 billion RMB respectively.

**Figure 4-2: Lijiang tourism development**



Currency exchange rate in 2007: 15 Yuan = 2 US\$ = 1 GBP

Source: Lijiang Annals of Statistics (2008: 117-120)

According to LTB, McKhann (2001: 158) and Su and Teo (2008: 158), the major part of the visitors in Lijiang were the newly emerging Chinese affluent class, created by China's rapid economic growth in the previous twenty-five years. Most of them came from the east and south-east costal region, where the economy was relatively developed, had substantial disposable time, money and a strong desire to travel for pleasure.

In response to their huge demand, many locals started to rent or convert their houses into guesthouses, restaurants or souvenir shops; even the local market in the central square of the town has changed from selling vegetables and agricultural tools to selling souvenirs and daily necessities to tourists in order to cater for tourists' demands and shopping convenience. More public squares have been replaced with lawn enclosures, to present a nice-looking aspect to the tourist gaze (McKhann, 2001). According to Sofield and Li's study (1998), a number of associations and cultural groups have been established to promote various shows to tourists. Apart from these performances, villages that possess some cultural elements became the leading tourism products and attractions promoted by local government and the tourism bureau.

In spite of the economic achievement arising from the tourism industry, a number of researchers (Cater, 2000; Cai, 2005; Duang, 2000; McKhann, 2001; Sofield and Li, 1998; Zhang, H., 2003) acknowledge that this unprecedented rapid growth of tourism has caused various social and cultural problems in Lijiang. One of the most acute tensions was between the migrant business people and the locals over the respect owing to the traditional practices surviving in the preserved area. Meanwhile, due to the preservation regulations, no vehicle was allowed to drive through the preserved area, neither could modern building materials be used in maintaining such homes. These inconveniences in the old town were driving away many local residents from their homes. Similar effects following preservation orders in old towns have been reported elsewhere (Herzfeld, 1991).

In addition, McKhann's (2001: 152-154) research suggests that the distribution of tourism wealth in Lijiang was far from even. However, few of the writings (Cater, 2000; McKhann, 2001; Zhang, H., 2003) addressed the Naxi perception of tourism in depth, in particular

their views regarding the impact of tourism upon their culture and tradition. In relation to the tourism affected regions, few academic papers (Duang, 2000; Su and Teo, 2008; White, 1997) have reported on the situation in those vast mountain regions, which accounted for the major part of the Lijiang territory. Given that most of the tourist related activities were mainly restricted to a few selected tourist attractions in those areas, the influence of tourism could potentially permeate on a much broader scale in the vast rural areas, indicating that tourism could well be related to those farmers' concerns, expectations and worries for the future.

### **4.3 An Anthropological Account of the Naxi**

In relation to the position of the Naxi in PRC's political and cultural agenda, Hansen defines:

‘The Naxi are a very small ethnic group, they have no ethnic relations across national borders, and they have absolutely no aspirations to political independence. Their expressions of ethnicity, to the degree that they are directed by instrumentalist motives, seek to define the Naxi as a group that has adopted a lot from Han culture and language but has maintained its own culture.’ (1999: 86)

Since the Tang Dynasty, the Han literature has indifferently used ‘*Moso*’ to refer to several ethnic groups in Yunnan area, including the Naxi, the Rerkua, the Moso and the Meng. Literally, in most ancient Chinese documents, according to Guo and He (1999: 73), Naxi people have long been recorded as ‘*Moso*’ or ‘*Mosuo*’, and both these words, and ‘*Na xi*’ have long been used and accepted by Naxi people.

However, Mathieu (2003: 2) suggests that the word ‘*Moso*’ bears some derogatory meaning, conveying Han prejudice and tradition towards the minority. After 1949, the



central government of the PRC identified their official nationality as '*Naxi*', while the word '*Moso*' was given to another group, acknowledged as one branch under the name of Naxi. Unfortunately, this ethnic classification has triggered an enormous dispute between the two groups. The Moso totally disagree with the government's ethnic classification while the Naxi, some of whom feel shame to recognise the Moso as their relatives, who practise 'matrilineal descent and walking marriage', presumably because of the Moso negative reputation regarding their 'carefree' sexuality (McKhann, 2001: 162). Some anthropologists (Hsu, 1998a; McKhann, 2001; Mathieu, 2003; White, 1998) define Moso and Naxi into different ethnic groups, bearing some distinct cultural differences.

On the contrary, He, Sh.L. (2000: 104-105, 133) and Guo and He (1999: 9) argue that from an ethnic point of view, the Naxi split into three ethnic groups. Apart from the Naxi who mainly inhabit the Lijiang and Yongning Prefecture, the other two groups are Bai living in Dali and Mosuo dwelling by Lugu Lake. However, He, Sh.L. (2000) admits that Moso people living on the east side of Gold Sand River are different from the Naxi who resided on the west bank in language, dress and customs. In order not to cause too much confusion, this research will not take Moso people into account, the study will mainly focus on the Naxi in Lijiang only.

With regard to the portrait of the Naxi, White (1997, 1998) provides a depiction of the Naxi as seen from the other groups' perspective. They are distinguished by their neighbours as a group that eat dog meat, drink yak-butter tea, celebrate the Sanduo and the Torch Festival, practise dongba culture or religion, use Naxi herbal medicine, play ancient Naxi music, whose women wear a large sheep-coat and work extremely hard. At the same time, Naxi men would be glad to be regarded as 'warriors', 'hunters' and 'persuasive lovers'.



White's paper also divides the group into 'the Naxi in Lijiang basin' and 'the Naxi in mountainous areas'. The phrase of 'basin' stands for the area where the dongba culture had scarcely been practised for a long time, while the expression of 'mountain' symbolises the area that is well known for practising the dongba culture for centuries. In addition, the former is considered as more or less similar to Han, while the information on the latter is very limited, like more than that they speak Naxi language and practise traditional Naxi culture. White underlines that first and foremost, the Naxi is the majority group in Lijiang. They 'speak Naxi-hua (Naxi language) much as other Chinese citizens speak their respective dialects, and they eat distinctive Naxi foods much as other Chinese citizens eat their regional cuisines' (1997: 309-315; 1998: 18-19).

Apart from White's account, other scholars have made their contributions. Chao (1996), Jackson (1979), Mathieu (2003) and McKhann (1998) portray the group with close reference to their dongba culture. According to Chao's explanation (Chao, 1996: 212), the term 'dongba culture' is a recently contrived concept to refer to dongba religious practice. The term did not exist until 1981, when the Dongba Culture Research Institute (DCRI) was established in Lijiang. The phrase 'dongba culture' was an 'invention of tradition', proposed by a Naxi scholar in the 1980s to replace 'dongba religion' so as to free this religious heritage from PRC's strict suspicion of religion. Before long, the dongba religion was redefined as dongba culture by the state.

The traditional Naxi religious practice, dongba religion, is still being practised in many mountain areas in Lijiang. Mathieu (2003: 117) and several dongba interviewed for this study believe that the word of 'dongba' was a Tibetan loan word from '*stonpa*', meaning 'teacher'. Their abundant knowledge in practical life and the irreplaceable position in

religious affairs earn them extensive respect in the traditional Naxi mountain communities. As a result, the word 'dongba' in the Naxi language ultimately bears the meaning of 'wise man' or 'knowledgeable person'. Dongba is thus regarded by the Naxi community as the best representative of this religion. Hence, the locals generally use the word 'dongba' to name this practice.

Mathieu's (2003: 24) study highlights three remarkable features in the Naxi society. The first two are their mysterious pictographs and those thousands of manuscripts that were written in those characters, which are hardly understood by other people including the majority of the Naxi. The only group of the Naxi that can actually use them are those dongba who chant these scripts during ceremonies. The third notable event is the peculiar phenomenon of 'love suicide', which used to exist in the Naxi mountain region. Except for Mathieu, who suggests that 'love suicide' might relate to the Naxi patrilineal cross-cousin marriage model, others claim that this phenomenon was a resistance to the intrusion of Han Confucianism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A further detailed examination of these dongba cultural components within the context of tourism will be discussed in Chapter 7, 8 and 9 respectively.

The story of the Naxi can also be outlined in terms of their relationship with the Han. According to Hansen (1999: 296), the Naxi is characterised as a group with a higher level of education than other Chinese minorities, featuring a 'love of learning', 'cultured' and 'advanced' as their typical ethnic markers. Compared with other minorities in Yunnan, the Naxi are more 'obedient' and closer to the Han in many aspects. This similarity is analysed by Yang and Bai (1993: 20-21) and White (1998: 19-20) who both advise that in relation to other minorities and Han individuals who reside in the area, the situation of the Naxi identity is heavily shaped by the state's discourses of hierarchy and authenticity,

figuring ethnic culture in inferior position. The highly valued Han culture has become an abstract benchmark to assess the advancement of the Naxi culture. Most of the Naxi living in Lijiang are proud of their higher educational level than that of other minorities around them, and they would like to emphasise this fact that they are still keeping some ancient Confucian doctrines and customs that have been lost in the Han community, in order to demonstrate that they are more 'traditional' and then 'authentic' than the modern Han, so that they are 'advanced' and 'civilised'.

#### **4.4 Analysis and Discussion**

Since the Yuan Dynasty, the Naxi began to counterattack their neighbours' influence through cooperation with the central states. This mutual understanding between the Naxi and the central states in Ming and Qing Dynasties extended from political needs to cultural and social mixture. Credited by this long distance but efficient rapport with the central authorities, the Naxi became the dominant political and cultural power in Lijiang area for many centuries. The 470-year history of the Mu Kingdom was the time that the Naxi almost independently developed their cultural and social orders. However, the political reform imposed in 1723 changed their relationship with the central authority from a strategic partnership to a senior/junior affiliation. This political reform had far reaching consequences for Naxi society in many ways.

With regard to Lijiang's socioeconomic characteristics, the farmers' income is one issue that needs to be carefully examined. The economic gap (see Figure 4-1) could be much larger than figures suggest if several other factors are taken into account. The urban people's disposable income is the money that they can spend without seriously impinging on essential items such as food, education, housing and insurance. However, the rural

people's 'net income' is not really disposable as they need to use that money for buying fertilizer, paying their children's education fees or paying for their medical treatment if they are sick.

However, there are two factors endangering farmers' income from agricultural pursuits. One is the weather and the other is the market. When the farming is in grave danger, farmers have only two choices to get cash to buy rice and other necessities. One is selling their livestock, which is the last thing they would like to do, and the other is going out to work during the off-peak time. Consequently, in order to ensure obtaining enough cash, most of the farmers normally do part-time jobs in off-peak time. As most of them are low skill workers, the average per capita income is not higher than 4,000 RMB/person a year, far from substantial enough to free them from farming life. Therefore, they have to work alternate between working in town and working at home, depending on the season.

As far as the studies of the Naxi are concerned, White (1997, 1998) gives us an account of the Naxi from a non-Naxi perspective, emphasising what are the most eminent characteristics of the group, which is in line with Wood's (1997) argument that the ethnic study should concentrate on the 'ethnic boundary' rather than the 'cultural content' of the group. Nevertheless, the notions of 'Lijiang basin' and 'mountainous areas' are too weakly outlined to define Naxi identity. In addition, White's researches are mainly confined to the Lijiang basin, where the locals have been influenced by the Han culture. The situation of the Naxi living in the mountain regions, who are defined as 'real' Naxi, in particular in north and west direction, is largely unrecorded.

As a result, it is vital to have a further detailed account of the group's ethnic profile from inside. As the current dispute regarding the Naxi ethnicity indicates, neither the state

nor the minority group has reached a consensus on how to present this ethnic group. Hence, it is worth concentrating attention on the negotiations between state and minority group, and for these purposes a study of tourism and its impact on the region presents an excellent opportunity for examining such negotiations.

The current dilemma concerning the dongba culture of the Naxi and tourism development is that on the one hand, most of the anthropological studies focus on the mountain areas, where the local residents are believed to be more 'traditional'. Dongba culture has been recognised as the ethnic label of the group (Cater, 2000; Chao, 1996; Hansen, 1999; Mathieu, 2003; White, 1998). On the other hand, tourism related investigations are largely confined to the basin region, where most of the tourist activities take place. Very few articles purposely address the interrelationship between dongba culture and tourism indepth.

In regard to the influence of tourism upon dongba culture, it is just briefly depicted in the way that the dongba culture has been commodified by the tourism industry (Duang, 2000; McKhann, 2001; White, 1997, 1998; Yang, Ding and Ge, 2005; Zhang, B., 2005), or it has become a commodity and tourist attraction, consumed by national and international tourism (Hansen, 1999: 79; Chao, 1996: 226). Nevertheless, hardly any study examines the process of commodification in depth to answer the questions of how, why and to what extent it has been commodified.

Indeed, the situation is far from straightforward. Thus, on the one hand, Chao comments that 'today the dongba religion is safely dead for the vast majority of the Naxi population and is even declining in the remote mountain villages on the periphery of Naxi territory' (1996: 217). Moreover, the promotion of the dongba culture is associated with moving

backwards rather than towards modernisation. Yet, on the other hand, at a later stage, Mathieu notes that 'although in the 1990s, local authorities reinstated dongba practices, and political liberalisation and the tourist industry are fast reviving the Naxi tradition after a fashion, the dongba has been greatly diminished' (2003: 116). So dongba culture is far from dead, but how viable it is still remains to be seen.

Furthermore, the group of dongba, as the sole practitioners of the culture, have never been studied as an independent academic subject or group in their own right, rather than simply being valued as a group of translators of those mythical pictographs and manuscripts. No one has ever cared for their concerns, worries and their role in their families and communities. Consequently, the researcher would like to take this opportunity to undertake such a study of the dongba, at least in part. This study is therefore going to examine the interaction between the basin and mountain regions through the perspective and lens of current negotiation between dongba culture and tourism development. It would focus more attention on those local farmers who are living outside Dayanzhen, evaluating their way of life and attitudes towards the impacts of the tourism industry upon their community, tradition, culture and belief.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The history of the Naxi in Lijiang area and their population profile has indicated that the Naxi have a long history of sharing this land with other ethnic groups. Since the establishment of the PRC, the urban/rural division has become even more marked than ever, in terms of their social and economic situation, leaving the rural people in a very vulnerable situation. For those farmers, the biggest problem is not just the shortage of cash but the uncertainty of obtaining it from their agricultural work, which drives them to work

in urban region. This intensified social and economic conflict continues to play a part in the manner in which tourism development in Lijiang has unfolded.

Tourism in Lijiang began to develop almost simultaneously with the emergence of Chinese domestic tourism as a whole and the two are closely interlinked. By quickly responding to the emerging national policy, the Lijiang local government accurately grasped this opportunity to develop their tourism business, and their ancient town's World Heritage Site status optimised their growth at an astonishing level. Regarding this study, its strength lies more in the examination of the Naxi perception of tourism, in particular those Naxi farmers who live in the vast mountain regions, where their dongba culture has been rooted for centuries, becoming one of the most eye-catching features of their ethnic identity.

The role of the dongba culture in the construction of the Naxi ethnic identity is indeed closely associated with the involvement of the tourism industry. Those farmers' views, and in particular those dongba concerns and worries regarding tourism and the impacts upon their way of life should be taken into account to produce a modified model to appraise the critical connection between tourism and culture in Lijiang. In the next chapter, the methodological considerations concerning this study and relevant research methods will be explored in detail.

## Notes

1. The promoted 'Lijiang Region' is in Chinese called '*Lijiang Shi*', which means 'Lijiang city' in English. However, the word 'city' might confuse readers that this is an urban area. In fact, the majority of the Lijiang territory, 70%, is mountain region, and more than 70% of the inhabitants are classified by the authority as 'non-urban' residents. Therefore, the word '*Shi*' would be better understood as 'region' in this study. The change was due to a national administration plan, which intended to simplify overlapping administrative units at county and prefectural levels.
2. Although in theory all rural children should have 9-year-compulsory education, the situation in mountain area is that many pupils have to travel a few hours to go to school, so that they need to stay at school during week days. Consequently, their parents have to pay the schools a certain amount of money for their children's accommodation, food and administration.
3. In 1978, according to the Economic and Social Development Investigation in Lijiang, Yunnan (Xinhua News Network, 2008), the rural residents' net income and the urban residents' disposable income was only 66 RMB and 400 RMB respectively.



## **Chapter 5      Methodology**

This chapter evaluates the researcher's methodological concerns and assesses the research aims and objectives that the study has focused on. The key feature of this study is ethnography, using extensive and detailed descriptions obtained from fieldwork, unpacking social phenomena, e.g. people's behaviour, values and beliefs in the context of a very specific setting. The methods used for this study included participant observation, unstructured interviews, case study of several villages and historical analysis based on secondary data.

### **5.1 Methodological Considerations in the Social Sciences**

Generally speaking, methodology is the rational choice of the researchers, by which they can be led to their research journeys in pursuit of specific objectives. In the context of social sciences, methodology is featured as 'a set of ground rules' that share 'overriding consensus' in different academic fields (Dann, Nash and Pearce, 1988: 3-4). The value of methodology is underlined by Weber (1949: 115) as offering researchers 'reflective understanding' of the research methods and inviting them to consider their importance explicitly and consciously.

By and large, there are several perspectives in doing sociological study. The positivist view is often labelled as a 'traditional', 'macro' and 'structural' methodological stance, in which the society is often understood as an independent system, waiting to be explored and analysed by observation and experimentation. Sociology is more regarded as a branch of sciences, approached by the same methods as used in the natural sciences. A sociologist with this perspective would be more likely to focus on large-scale social investigations,

measurable in quantity; and to concentrate on the analysis of the structure of the society (Townley and Middleton, 1981: 20-22). Similarly, a functionalist perspective (Durkheim, 1982: 50-58) would consider that a sociologist should explain the function of each social phenomenon, such as conventions, social rules, religion, family, education and law. These 'social facts' should be treated as 'things', existing independently of individuals. Therefore, sociologists should not limit their investigation to aspects of individual human behavior but also extend to the collective aspects of the social life.

In contrast, Keat and Urry (1975: 5-30) argue that a social phenomenon should not be merely explained as an instance of a well-established regularity, but rather should reveal the causal explanation of the structures and mechanisms that might generate this observable phenomenon. The primary objective of science is explanation. And to do so, a realist sociologist needs to explain the phenomenon not only by making reference to those causal factors that engender the process of change, but also delivering an account of the process itself. To put it another way, the explanation in Keat and Urry's (1975) understanding, which is termed a realist perspective, should try to answer not only what-questions and how-questions, but also why-questions. One group representative of the realist group is conflict theorists, who observe the society as an entity consisting of individuals who belong to various social groups or classes, differentiated by their diverse needs, interests and goals. Their approach identifies conflict of interest as an inherent part of the structure of each society.

Unlike the conflict theorists, Baert (1998: 192-193) argues that the social sciences are different from the natural sciences in the character of the subject matter and the methods they use. Baert (1998), Bryman (2001) and McNeill (1981) emphasise that research should be focused on the context in which meanings are constructed, a major part of which is the

social context. Examination of the meanings, then, must be carried out within the exploration of the social context. This 'contextual understanding' is due to the objects in the social sciences – human beings, who can actively respond to their environment and changes around them. They are 'conscious, active, choice-making beings' (McNeill, 1981: 60). This requires a social scientist to put this character into their methodological consideration, providing extensive and detailed description from which the significance of people's behaviour can be evaluated appropriately (Ember, C.R. and Ember, M.R., 2001: 1-2). People's behaviour, values and beliefs should be unpacked in their own context. This feature entails a commitment to interpreting events and the social settings through 'the eyes of the people' that are being studied. Therefore, an empirical study is paramount in a social investigation.

Unfortunately, there is no simple way to discover people's attitudes and propositions. Most of the interpretive sociologists pay more attention to the underlying structures of the social settings, which are not essentially revealed through observations. As a result, they often rely on such research techniques as case studies, open-ended interviews, autobiographies, and participant observation. This interpretive understanding of sociology has not only encouraged the ethnographic study of minority groups and deviants in the past thirty years, but also tightened the relationship between sociology and anthropology. Anthropology is very close to this kind of sociology in some respects. For instance, it often examines a small-scale society in its culture, customs, rituals, institutions and values, through the means of ethnographic field work (Townley, 1981: 18).

In fact, Townley and Middleton (1981: 45-46) document that the development of sociology shows some major characters shifting from traditional sociology to alternative sociology, i.e. phenomenological and interpretive sociology, in many aspects. The research

perspective is generally from 'external' to 'internal', from 'static' to 'process', from 'quantitative' to 'qualitative', from 'macro' to 'micro', from 'causal explanation' to 'description', from 'experiment' to 'ethnography'. In addition, the research methods that are popular with positivists, such as 'survey', 'questionnaires' and 'scheduled interview', are in contrast to interpretive techniques, which are 'case study', 'observation/participant observation', and 'open-ended/unstructured interview'.

### **5.1.1 Ethnography**

In terms of constructing the 'contextual understanding' of a study, using qualitative approaches would therefore provide a researcher with a better chance of engaging with various social theories, philosophical debates, traditions and values, including the communications with research participants, audiences, sponsors, commissioners and examiners (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman, 2004: 1-7). The commonly used qualitative approaches regarding this study are ethnography, constituted by participant observation, unstructured interview, case study and historical analysis based on documents. In the process of applying these techniques, the researcher's past experience, personal aims and belief also play a part in this approach. The aims of research might just concentrate on understanding social phenomena to the extent that people's personal experience, interpretation of their actions and motivation become the major focus of the qualitative studies (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006: 314).

However, according to Bryman (1988: 73), there are several pitfalls that a researcher who uses a qualitative approach should try to avoid. In reference to this study, one of the problems is the interpretation of events from people's eyes (who is being studied). The other is the generalisation of case study, which is that the findings of many cases are

difficult to generalise beyond the confines of the case itself. Findings from a small number of cases may be considered as untypical or idiosyncratic. If qualitative research can truly interpret the events from the eyes of the locals, then consistent findings would be expected in another researcher's account based on the same research setting. Unfortunately, hardly two observers provide the same account from one social setting. Bryman (1988: 74-77) then explains the possible reasons for this problem are first, researchers cannot readily ensure whether they have a strategic position to unpack the research subjects; second, whether they have adequately understood the settings; and last, whether the interpretations are 'congruent with their subjects' understandings'.

To be able to interpret social settings through the locals' eyes, an ethnographic study should not just be limited to a description but also a reconstruction, creating a passage between the given social setting and the researcher's own experience, belief, knowledge and mentality (Delamont, 2004: 218). This denotes a consideration of what Geertz calls 'thick description':

'Ethnography is thick description. What the ethnographer is in fact faced with ... is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render.' (1977: 5-11)

Consequently, to present the natives' point of view in the research, the account should consist of three components: the native's vision, the ethnographer's interpretation of the native's vision and the construction of the ethnographer's interpretation based on his/her intellectual and cultural understanding, which thereby requires the researcher to understand the studied group's life, language, custom and tradition in depth.

As far as the problem of generalisation of case study is concerned, Denscombe (1998:

30-31) advocates that case study is characterised as illuminating the general by 'looking at the particular'. This approach situates the study where it naturally exists. It is not something that is artificially created for the research, but a natural setting prior to and continuing to exist after the study. This feature is in accordance with the obligation of ethnographic study, which is aiming to 'see as others see' (Flick 2002: 146). Moreover, this approach encourages a researcher to use other methods, i.e. interviews and observations, sources and data, to investigate the situation. Yin (2003: 19) also consents that case study does not demand a lot of control over the research events, providing context-dependent knowledge. Therefore, the case study is useful to reveal holistic and meaningful features of social events in real-life contexts.

By using multiple-cases and choosing 'typical' cases as solutions that represent the cluster of characteristics of the social settings, the reliability of the whole project will be increased (Bryman, 1988: 88-91). The strength of multiple-cases is that evidence from multiple cases is often regarded as more compelling, to the extent that the overall research is considered more robust. Similar or contrasting results could be stimulated so that the evaluation of propositions can be intensified from either extreme. Apparently, analytic conclusions that are produced individually from different cases are much more reliable than those from a single case. Last but not least, the sceptical fears about the single-case being limited by the uniqueness or artifactual condition will be blunt (Yin, 2003: 46-54).

### **5.1.2 Ethnography in This Study**

Based on the above discussions, the methodological inclination of this study will reflect an interpretive approach, analysing the social settings through the perspective of the local people that are being studied. As discussed above, this approach will enable the researcher

to understand what motivates people's behaviour and the meaning attached to it. The study will therefore concentrate on the delivery of an understanding by which a causal explanation of people's social activities would be interpreted in their social context. Thereby, the researcher will endeavour to construct a wide-ranging and comprehensive portrayal from which the implications of people's actions can be evaluated appropriately. As a result, ethnography will be most suitable in understanding how the Naxi, the subject of the study, view the world around them, in particular the advent of tourism in the last decade, and how they make sense of this business to further enhance their culture and life.

To fulfil this interpretive commitment, the researcher has spent seven months in the research area, participating in the Naxi social life, staying with Naxi farmers and craftsmen and observing their social and economic life in depth, watching things happen around them, listening when they talk, asking them questions and at the final step, analysing all the acquired data at a theoretical level. In this seven-month field study, the researcher has visited 42 Naxi families, all of which were associated with the dongba culture. The researcher also attended 12 cultural and religious occasions with permission, such as family parties, festivals, social gatherings, farming activities and one dongba funeral. All those informants' responses, behaviour and conversations have been noted carefully. This extensive contact with the locals has helped the researcher to establish a solid foothold on the social setting, and 'see as others see'.

During the field study, the researcher recorded each unexpected event (1) or incident generated from the people interviewed, the families stayed with and the villages observed. Every day, the researcher kept a notebook, pen, MP4, and a digital camera in pockets so that any relevant data or event could be recorded in the first place. All these daily collected data were then transferred into a Word document on a laptop computer so that a further

analysis could be promptly undertaken afterwards. To accomplish this ethnographic account, the researcher's interpretation mainly rests upon the data collected in the seven-month fieldwork in Lijiang, linking the acquired facts and figures, in English and Chinese literature, to Lijiang's historical, cultural and social contingencies. In addition, this ethnographic testimony is grounded in a theoretical framework in which the Naxi and their dongba culture could be evaluated in depth.

## 5.2 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the study is to provide a critical analysis of the relationship between the dongba culture and the tourism industry. More importantly, this account tries to elicit the natives' perspective. Nevertheless, this interpretive choice does not mean that the positivist or functionalist contributions in sociology will be ruled out from the researcher's consideration. In fact, there is no one perspective that can over-rule others completely. To accomplish this overall aim, the researcher needs to scrutinise the following four objectives respectively.

- Objective 1: To investigate the history, structure and current characteristics of tourism development in the ethnic area – Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China.
- Objective 2: To assess the role of the dongba culture in the Naxi traditional mountain rural society, and the major influence of tourism development upon their way of life.
- Objective 3: To examine the extent to which the dongba cultural elements, e.g. dongba, pictographs and handicrafts, figure as tourist assets in the tourism industry, and the process of commodification in relation to these cultural units.
- Objective 4: To scrutinise the dongba culture in the process of developing the Naxi identity in the light of the emergence of tourism as a major factor in Lijiang.

The first objective was examined through secondary data collection and analysis, from both English and Chinese documents, and in-depth interviews carried out in the field. For



the other three objectives, the research techniques included participant observation, case study, in-depth interview and ad hoc focus group. A detailed discussion of using these techniques is presented in the following section.

### **5.3 The Scoping of the Fieldstudy**

The researcher's ethnic identity is Han while the research area is mainly inhabited by the Naxi. Although most of them can speak Mandarin fluently, as the researcher does, the researcher still joined a workshop in the first month in Lijiang in order to quickly grasp some useful words and phrases in the local language. Therefore, the researcher started the fieldwork from Dayanzhen, where the researcher could partially rely on a number of existing contacts in Lijiang to offset the strangeness that the villagers might maintain when a researcher got into 'the field'.

The three study fields were chosen according to the aims and objectives mentioned above, conducted over seven months, from September 2007 to April 2008. They were:

Dayanzhen, Shuming and Xinzhu villages. Dayanzhen has been the cultural centre of the Naxi for many years, where most of the dongba cultural research bodies or institutes are located.

The first reason for choosing this old town was that it has been the central platform of Lijiang tourism in the past decade. This town included some small villages nearby, such as Baisha, Shuhe and Changhui Villages (see Figure 5-1), where many locals are engaged in tourism-related work (2). The characteristics of tourism could then be carefully observed.

Secondly, a number of dongba cultural handicrafts and commodities were selling in the

investigations in those two villages.

The second research place was Xinzhu Village, 145 kilometres west to Dayanzhen, where the dongba religion has existed for several centuries. Villagers living there have a very strong sense of this religion. It was therefore suitable for learning the traditional practice and its role in the Naxi farmers' real life. It was in this village that the researcher witnessed the sacrifice of the Propitiation of Heaven, which was the most important dongba ceremony, resumed after a fifty-year suspension since the 1950s. Although this village is geographically outside the tourism-affected regions, the link between the dongba culture and tourism is still substantial.

The third place to investigate was called Shuming Village in Tacheng County, 180 kilometres west of Dayanzhen. The reason for deciding on this place was that it has been selected as a model place by a local tourist company to restore the dongba practice. During the tourist peak season, there were more than twenty young dongba working at this tourist company. As a result, this village became an interesting place to look into the tourist influence upon those young dongba and the locals' attitude towards conserving the dongba arts and culture. Moreover, it was one of the ideal places to observe how the local government, enterprises and the mountain farmers manipulated tourism to define the meaning of dongba culture according to their political stance, economic concerns and the construction of ethnic identity.

Apart from these villages, owing to Professor He Limin's invitation (3), the researcher also visited Shuzhi, a little village in Ninglang County. It was due to this unplanned exploration that the researcher's understanding of the dongba culture was profoundly extended. The researcher found substantial information connecting the dongba kinship

development with the Naxi traditional cross-cousin marriage model.

During the first three months in Dayanzhen and other small villages nearby, such as Shuhe and Changshui Villages, the researcher interviewed about 30 Naxi people including craftsmen, farmers, scholars and officials. Their visions and attitudes towards Lijiang's tourism development and the impact of commodification upon the dongba culture have considerably deepened the researcher's knowledge of the research topic.

At a later stage, the researcher conducted another 37 interviews mainly located in Shuming and Xinzhu villages. Moreover, the rapport that the researcher had already established with the villagers in these two villages meant that he stood a better chance of gaining a fuller insight into their life, quickly grasping the basic information of the two villages, understanding their vision of the social changes around them, recognising their internal social structure and identifying the role of the dongba culture in their life.

## **5.4 Research Methods**

### **5.4.1 Desk Research on the Chinese Literature**

Apart from the ethnographic study in the research field, a substantial number of documents and reports was available. These reported the results of research carried out by local and overseas researchers. It was important to examine Chinese official papers, to determine the government's stance in promoting the Naxi to international and domestic tourists. Although the Naxi and their dongba culture have been widely evaluated by a number of scholars, such as Cater (2000), Chao (1996), Hsu (1998b), Jackson (1979, 1989), Jackson and Pan (1998), Mathieu (2003), McKhann (1998, 2001) and White (1997,

1998), there was also expected to be a substantial body of literature in Chinese, written by either Han or Naxi scholars. This expectation was fulfilled, to the enrichment of the desk research. Since the establishment of PRC in 1949, the Naxi and the dongba culture have never been far away from scholarly attention, except during the Cultural Revolution.

According to Piao, Guo and Li's (1999: 5-8) calculation, the Naxi and the dongba culture have been studied in the disciplines of anthropology, literature, arts, religion, sociology, philosophy and astronomy. Over ten important national and provincial subsidised research institutes have been established with the result that over one thousand academic articles have been published regarding this topic. Among them, the most productive writers were Li Lincan, Guo Dalie, He Zhiwu, Bai Gengsheng, Yang Fuquan, He Limin, Li Xi and Mu Lichun, and a large number of promising young researchers were also putting their efforts in this field. Even those foreign scholars and overseas Chinese researchers have fully acknowledged their appreciation in their publications for the indispensable assistance that they have received (4) during their field studies from some of these Naxi scholars, mentioned above.

Therefore, it was hard for the researcher to look at this issue without quoting some of these Naxi scholars' works. Moreover, some of these Naxi researchers agreed to be interviewed. As a result, it was necessary to include desk research on the Chinese literature into the study of this topic. In addition, this desk research included an evaluation of a large number of official documents and publications, such as the Lijiang County Annals, Lijiang City Annals, Lijiang Statistic, Yunnan Economy Year Book, The Year Book of China Tourism and so forth, which provided abundant demographic, social and economic data regarding the researched area and people.

#### 5.4.2 Participant Observation

3

During the seven-month field study, the researcher followed farmers working in the field at tasks such as harvesting their economic crops, selling livestock in the local market and exchanging agricultural harvest in the town area. The researcher participated in the life and work of some key performers of the dongba culture, such as senior old dongba, young dongba trainees, scholars studying dongba culture, and some Naxi craftsmen who were making or selling dongba cultural handicrafts. Some of the observations were developed beside the hearth, a unique social gathering corner in most of the Naxi families. This was the place where most of the family members exchanged their idea, discussing news and making important decisions.

The researcher also participated in a number of dongba cultural activities at some tourist attractions, to identify possible changes that might take place in the promotion of this culture to tourist. These research venues include Dongba Paper Shops, Dongba Cultural Museum, Dongba Culture Research Institute (DCRI) and some souvenir shops in Dayanzhen selling handicrafts. The researcher selected several handicraft shops in Dayanzhen and Shuhe Village (5) to measure the possible changes that had occurred in handicraft marketing as a result of the tourism development. The observations were carried out in four Naxi craftsmen's shops, by watching them doing business, chatting with them when they were free and helping them doing some labour such as loading raw materials and packaging their handicrafts. With these daily activities and personal involvement, the researcher learned their normal way of doing business, identified their practical difficulties and distinguished their pressures resulting from their competitors, clients, neighbours and families.

### **5.4.3 Case Study**

At Shuming Village, the researcher spent two months following a group of young dongba who commuted between the company they worked and the village, in an attempt to understand the role of a dongba in their community and the work units. The researcher also escorted them when they were learning dongba books at the company, working at the tourist shops and doing ceremonies in the village. Apart from that, the researcher chose several other cases to investigate the research objectives respectively. One of them was based in Shuhe Village.

In 2004, Shuhe village committee sold one part of the village to a real estate company to reproduce a new town following the layout of Dayanzhen, in an attempt to reproduce the economic success that Dayanzhen has achieved in tourism business. However, this tourism expansion caused some conflicts between the village committee, the commercial unit that was in charge of the promotion of the village in the tourism market, and local farmers who lost their land due to this expansion. The researcher stayed in the village for over a month to observe the locals doing business with tourists, organising entertainment during weekends and festivals, and coping with migrant business people. The researcher interviewed a number of village officials, farmers and business people to evaluate the conflicts between different social groups within the village.

### **5.4.4 In-depth Interview**

With regard to the research objectives, in-depth interviews with the locals have been used as a major method throughout the study. The total 67 interviewees were divided into two groups. The interview questions of the groups were constituted of some open-ended and

closed questions (see Appendix 5-1 and 5-2). Three of the questions asked in both groups were the same so that the researcher could compare the responses from the two groups. In order to protect the safety and interest of the interviewees, all of the responses were kept anonymously or with disguised names, except for the demographic information recorded for sex, age, occupation and residential location (see Appendix 5-3 and 5-4). All their quoted responses were translated by the researcher himself, and the references were coded numbers, e.g. G1-01 to G1-19, and G2-01 to G2-48 respectively.

The first group consisted of 19 Naxi artists, officials and scholars who were expected to have better knowledge of the dongba culture and the overall situation of tourism development in Lijiang region in the past decade. These respondents were found in a number of dongba culture research bodies and administration departments, such as Beijing Dongba Culture Research Centre, Dongba Culture Preservation Association (DCPA), Dayanzhen Resident Committees, Dongba Culture Palace, DCM, Sanyuan Village Dongba Schools, DCRI, Lijiang Culture and Tourism Institute of Yunnan University, Lijiang Minority Dance Performance Hall, LTB and Mu Palace.

Before the fieldwork, the researcher had contacted several local scholars, which helped the researcher get in touch with other scholars and officials with great ease. In addition, the researcher regularly attended a dongba pictography workshop organised by DCPA to pick up the local language. With the help of the chairman of the association, the researcher was quickly accepted by the local Naxi scholar academe, which in turn greatly helped the researcher to approach other interviewees in a 'snow-ball' manner.

The second group was made up of 48 Naxi people, including farmers, teachers, dongba, students and businessmen in the studied villages. The second group informants were

selected according to several criteria, such as whether they had some experience of tourism, e.g. owning or working at souvenir shops, restaurants or accommodation business; or had a relatively higher social status in the village; or had more experience and knowledge of making cultural handicrafts, or had more knowledge of dongba religion and history of Naxi people compared with other villagers, or those households that did not obtain benefits from this rapid economic growth, rather being significantly affected by it. The local resident committees in the Dayanzhen provided the researcher with the information for selecting some informants at the beginning. In this way he identified which one was the earliest Naxi guesthouse, which souvenir shop was relatively influential, or who was a well-known Naxi craftsman.

To select each interviewee ultimately, the researcher would open a brief conversation first or an informal chat with the potential informant to acquire some basic information of the interviewee and his/her family and so forth. After having stayed in the research area for a long time, such as two weeks or more, the researcher would then ask the permission of the targeted interviewees to conduct a formal interview, which often lasted around one hour or more. Some interviewees were interviewed more than once in order to have a better understanding of their point of view or deepen the researcher's knowledge regarding the research issues.

#### **5.4.5 Ad hoc Focus Groups**

Within the researched areas, interviewing farmers and shopkeepers in groups was a very useful and practical method. Shopkeepers in Dayanzhen were often staying and chatting with their neighbours when they were not busy in doing business. Using a focus group could divert their conversation smoothly into the research topics. The everyday forms of



discussion encouraged interviewees to express their feelings naturally. Likewise, interviewing farmers in groups in Xinzhu and Shuming villages<sup>4</sup> was also more workable when they were working with their family members. Those similar data could be quickly recorded once for all of them, rather than being elicited individual by individual. In addition, when using this method, it was also a good time to observe their interrelationships through their communication, negotiation, debate and persuasion among the interviewees.

Nevertheless, one problem of doing interviews in the field study, in particular in those remote villages, was that some villagers who first brought the researcher into the village, were likely to show other neighbours that the researcher was their 'guest' only, and any conversation or appointment should keep them noticed. This situation caused the researcher some slight difficulty in contacting other farmers freely.

In relation to this study, another problem was that as there had been few social workers or researchers living in these two villages before, the researcher's presence inevitably roused some farmers' curiosity to such an extent that some interviews were completed in several other farmers' presence. When an interview was taken at a certain family, it was very often that the respondent's family members participated in the conversation from time to time. Such extra participation did inspire the interviewee's viewpoint to some extent, but it sometimes inevitably interrupted the respondent's argument.

The third drawback of using this method was that some interviewees tended to dominate the conversation, leaving others in shadow. In response to these shortcomings of focus groups, the researcher was first very careful when selecting the interviewees joining the conversation, and second, did not do the interview until a 'sufficient rapport' was obtained

(Lett, 1989: 270). Moreover, the researcher was careful to encourage those interviewees who tended to be cut out of the conversation by asking them more questions and allowing them more time to respond. In this way the chances were increased that the group interview would more fairly reflect everyone's opinions.

## 5.5 Summary

By and large, to unpack social events and people's behaviour, values and beliefs in the context of the local environment requires researchers to conduct extensive field work from which a detailed description of the research setting can be established. As a result, the major methodological character of this study was ethnography, which demands the researcher to fortify the reliability of the study by using multiple cases and delivering 'thick description' as solutions to counteract some drawbacks of this approach.

By using participant observation, the naturalness of the settings was maintained at a relatively good level. With continued involvement, the researcher slowly infiltrated the Naxi social life, watching the dongba when they practised rituals, recording farmers' daily activities and mapping out each social event in full context. The case studies have been focused on the usage of the pictographs, the handicraft making procedure, the role of dongba in their community and the tourism sector, and the impact of the tourism upon other aspects of the dongba culture. Any identified change or situation was important to position this culture as tourism assets.

In addition, in-depth interviews have been used to obtain first-hand data on the attitude and perception of the Naxi regarding tourism development, their view of the dongba culture in their life and their ambitions to use dongba culture for the construction of their

ethnic identity within the tourism industry. Their answers were paramount for the researcher to analyse the function of the dongba culture as an ethnic character of the Naxi. Apart from the empirical study methods, the researcher employed a series of secondary data analyses before and after the seven-month field work.

The secondary data analysis helped the researcher to portray the overall picture of the history, structure and features of Lijiang's tourism development. With the acquired knowledge of the Naxi and the dongba culture, the researcher's own observations and the data acquired from the interviews, and the reconstruction of the researcher's understanding of the Naxi vision, it should ultimately be possible to establish the critical relationship between the dongba culture and tourism development.

In the following chapters, the acquired data from the field-study will be displayed and analysed respectively. The discussion starts from the examination of Lijiang's tourism development concentrating on its achievements, difficulties and problems. The discourses then progress to the study of the dongba culture from the past to the present in an attempt to identify the elements upon which the impacts of tourism were mainly situated. Two further chapters deal with the negotiations between the dongba culture and tourism through the examinations of handicraft making and the modification in ethnic identity.

## Notes

1. In January 2008, a catastrophic storm strongly attacked most of the southern part of China, and Yunnan was one of the provinces that were most severely affected. Although this unexpected disaster dislocated the researcher's planned journey, it did unveil the vulnerability of the farming life in the research area, which in turn deepened the researcher's understanding of the Naxi farmers' difficulties in real life.
2. Many farmers have either worked in some guesthouses, restaurants and tourist shops, or bought a taxicab to transport tourists. Most of them have lost their lands in the urbanisation or have simply rented their lands to other farmers.
3. Professor He Limin is the director of a government-fund project, selecting 30 young dongba living in mountain areas to improve their religious skills and understanding. He invited the researcher to accompany him to a number of small villages where the dongba culture was still kept vigorous.
4. Most of these scholars were hardly able to read the dongba manuscripts, which were written in the pictographs, so that they invited these mentioned Naxi scholars to assist their studies in various way, from translating the religious texts to interviewing senior dongba.
5. Shuhe Village, four miles away from Dayanzhen, is regarded by the locals as one extension of Dayanzhen.

## **Chapter 6 Tourism Development in Lijiang**

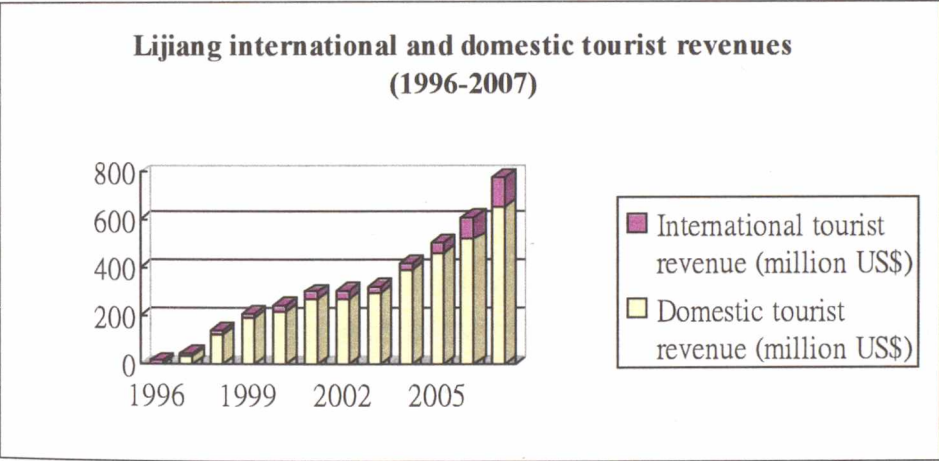
This chapter concentrates on Lijiang's tourism development, assessing its historical background, structure, current attributes and achieved progress. In addition it will examine the Naxi attitude towards this rapid economic growth and those problems arising in relation to their everyday life. The findings of this chapter suggest that on the one hand, Lijiang's government-run mass tourism generated extensive economic advances that have been overwhelmingly valued by the locals as the most efficient method to improve their economic situation in the shortest possible time. It also partially alleviates the unevenly distributed provision of social benefits pertaining to urban and rural areas. On the other hand, the process of implementing tourism policies and the consequent economic growth and rapid expansion in the rural region has provoked a number of conflicts. The conflicts arise between the government and the farmers who participate in this industry; between tourists and local residents who live in the affected regions; and between large commercial companies and small and private business players.

### **6.1 The Economic Growth of Tourism**

The astonishing economic accomplishments of Lijiang's tourism development in the past twelve years have already been discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter identifies the factors that lie behind this remarkable economic progress, connecting this economic growth with the local circumstances so that the profound significance of Lijiang's tourism can be unpacked appropriately in its social and cultural context. A detailed presentation of Lijiang's tourist arrivals and revenue (see Figure 6-1 and 6-2) indicates that the domestic tourism business has taken up the major part of the Lijiang's tourism market from the outset. As a result, most of the tourist products were packaged and promoted according to

these domestic tourists' travelling mode, consumer behaviour and personal interests. Nonetheless, by comparison, the foreign tourists provided greater returns and spent more money than domestic tourists. Therefore, apart from preserving the increase in the domestic tourism market, the local tourism authority made great efforts to attract more international tourists, with the result that the percentage of both foreign tourist arrivals and revenue increased continually in the past four years (see Figure 6-1 and 6-2).

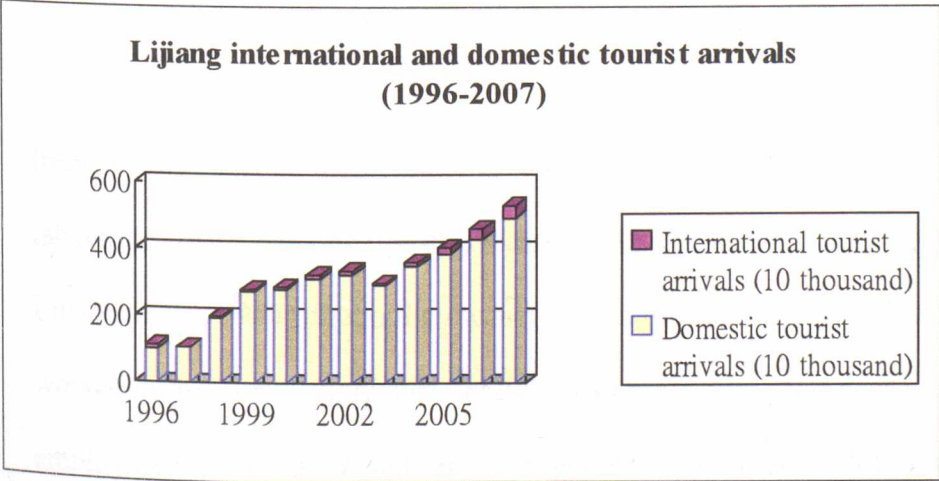
Figure 6-1: Lijiang tourism development



Currency exchange rate in 2007: 15 Yuan = 2 USD = 1 GBP

Source: LTB ([www.ljta.gov.cn](http://www.ljta.gov.cn))

Figure 6-2: Lijiang tourism development



Source: LTB ([www.ljta.gov.cn](http://www.ljta.gov.cn))

Thirdly, the economic growth was a reflection of the Chinese national situation. By and large, the Chinese economic development in the past 25 years has been GDP-oriented. Any industry making up to 5% or above of the local GDP would be defined by the local authority as a leading industry. Between 2000 and 2007, the percentage of the tourist revenue that accounted for Lijiang's GDP was increasing. This figure was 18.2% in 1995, but had reached to 48% in 2005 and 2006 respectively (Lijiang Annals of Statistics, 2008: 118). One official's comment was representative:

'Before the advent of the tourism industry, there was no other industry that had brought so much wealth to us. We did try to develop manufacturing industry as other places did, so that we could catch up with the national development... This failure awakened us that we have to consider our characteristics carefully, knowing our advantages and disadvantages. By comparison, tourism is the industry that most fits our situation. We have beautiful natural landscape, while most coastal areas have lost it in their economic growth. We also have a unique ethnic culture, such as the traditional dongba culture and Naxi ancient music, which are hardly found in any other place in China. For us, tourism is a hen that can produce golden eggs'. (G1-17)

Mainly propelled by the tourism business, Lijiang's tertiary industry has accounted for over a half of local gross output in 2005, and 70% of the local fiscal income was directly or indirectly from the tourism industry. This huge economic potential has been grasped by local governments at all levels to maximise their economic achievement.

In the labour market, the hospitality and catering industry, which was characterised as labour intensive, has greatly contributed to the decrease in the unemployment rate in Lijiang. Since 1997, due to the momentum of tourism, a large number of locals have worked in this service industry. In 2002, Lijiang's tourism industry had created 15,000 employment positions, which in return generated another 74,000 indirect positions, which meant one in four employment positions in Lijiang was related to tourism business (Lin,



2003: 15). According to the statistics (Lijiang Annals of Statistics, 2008: 59; Xinhua News Network, 2008), 16% of the 657,600 Lijiang labour force were associated with this industry. Within the Old Town District where most of the tourist activities were located, this figure was up to 41.6% of the total labour force. Each one million RMB of tourist consumption created 34.25 employment positions on average, and 13% of the local income was from the tourism industry.

By the end of 2004, there were 5,925 registered employees working in the accommodation and catering sectors. In addition, there were 3,778 private employers, accounting for a half of the total Lijiang's tourist entrepreneurs, creating job opportunities for another 8,954 people. By the end of 2007, there were 25 large travel companies; 185 hotels with 60,000 beds; 4,244 registered tour-guides; 6 coach companies having 525 vehicles with over 14,000 seats; and 21 tourist attractions. There were 40,000 employees directly working in the tourism industry, and over 100,000 people indirectly engaged in this business (Lijiang Annals of Statistics, 2008: 121-130; and data obtained from interviews).

## **6.2 The Role of Government**

The experience of Lijiang's tourism demonstrated that this economy was mainly controlled by local authorities in various aspects. It not only generated enormous economic benefits but also led to progress in social and cultural spheres. Owing to the long lasting growth of tourism in the past decade, Lijiang has created a friendly environment not only for the tourists who travel around this area, but also for the locals. According to the interviewed informants, especially those 7 informants working for the local government in different departments, the socio-cultural progress associated with the growth of tourism was mainly to be found via improvements in infrastructure



constructions, i.e. city planning and public services, transport, hygiene and medical services and facility provisions and cultural heritage preservation. Other benefits could be found in the increase in living standards, better administration and management, the alleviation of poverty in the rural area, and general advances in cultural and educational facilities.

In the first place, tourism development has significantly improved Lijiang's general environment. Over the past ten years, the government has invested over 500 million RMB on infrastructural projects, greatly improved the conditions in public health supply and facility provision, the communication system, power and water supply and the sewage system. A number of public facilities, such as hospitals, the telecommunication network and public transport across communities, which were initially established mainly for the convenience of tourists, have also greatly benefited the locals' life in many respects.

As the tourist revenue has significantly fortified the government's economic situation, becoming the local authority's new major fiscal resource, a number of heavy polluting enterprises, such as paper and brick manufacturing factories, which used to be the local government's financial income, were closed down by the government in an attempt to improve the general environment for the tourists and the locals. Villages in the vicinity of the old town were encouraged by the government to participate in tourism related business as well as in planting trees and orchards in order to create a friendlier environment, and were given subsidies to do so.

For instance, since the Lijiang government promoted the old town as their leading tourist destination in 1997, the general environment of the old town and its suburban areas has changed dramatically in many respects. After the old town was granted the status of a

WHS, Lijiang set up The Old Town Preservation Committee and a managerial organisation in charge of daily preservation works. Their duties ranged from raising preservation funds, to instituting preservation rules, monitoring various constructions or refurbishments and to promoting preservation awareness to all the permanent and temporary residents in the town. More than 320,000 square metres of untraditional buildings around the old town were removed. The Committee has licensed a number of residential buildings that possessed cultural and architectural values, and gave subsidies for maintenance and renovation work. The drinking water pipes, telephone and the Internet cables were installed underneath the old town's main streets, covering the whole area being preserved.

Secondly, this remarkable economic growth attracted a large number of public investments. A series of large infrastructural investments has been sponsored by the provincial and national funds. Apart from the Lijiang Airport, built in the late 1990s, a railway between Dali and Lijiang had been completed by the end of 2008, and a highway network, connecting Lijiang with other main tourist areas, across Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Tibet and Sichuan provinces, will be finished in the near future. These completions have significantly expanded Lijiang's accessibility to transportation, attracting more tourists to travel to Lijiang at a lower cost.

Thirdly, this economic development accelerated Lijiang's pace of moving towards a modern society. The huge tourism demand propelled the whole society consumption of increasing its telecommunication, transportation, accommodation, and leisure and catering industries. So far, the Lijiang government has extended its investment directions to city planning and construction, environmental protection, water and electricity supply, real estate, and cultural, leisure and recreational industries. In terms of communication with

other parts of the country, the tourism industry has played a predominant role. When Lijiang's tourism commenced, China entered the Information Technology era with so many of Lijiang's tourism businesses heavily relying on the Internet network from the outset.

The local government was forced to respond quickly to such changes by installing an e-business platform. The authority set up an electronic system in order to manage tourism operations, general management and balance sheet within the local area. This system can inspect most of the bookings and transactions of Lijiang's 3-5 star hotels, key tourist attractions, large registered travel companies, and other leading tourist enterprises so that the overall situation of the tourism business can easily be monitored and regulated. This in return accelerated the installation of many other modern facilities and provisions. Lijiang became the first city in China at the same administrative level that installed an e-platform, not only managing commercial businesses, but also administering public services. All the public regulations, news, data and announcements were updated online.

Last but not least, the advent of tourism considerably widened people's understanding of the role and function of their culture in a modern commodified world. The massive tourism market sustained a large number of cultural activities. After communicating with tourists from other provinces and other countries for several years, the Naxi became very proud of their history, tradition, less polluted natural landscape, traditional buildings and other cultural heritage. The increasing market demand has encouraged the Naxi community to develop their ethnic culture as a beneficial industry. A retired Naxi artist highlighted:

'Compared with the Han culture, the minority's culture used to be regarded as a 'sub-branch' of it or low-value in the academia. No one cares about our culture or

maybe don't even know that we have our own culture. However, the tourists like our culture and are surprised by the level and achievements that we have had... thanks to their appreciation and economic support, many laid-off artists and craftsmen were encouraged by this prospect to make their contribution to rejuvenate our arts and culture. Were it not for the tourism industry, we won't be able to let people be aware that we are a cultured ethnic group. The dongba culture especially the pictographs were the stars of our Naxi.' (G1-16)

With the support from the national finance, Lijiang has launched 565 projects at national and provincial levels helping minority groups to overcome their economic difficulties and problems in their life. According to the Lijiang government's calculation, from 2001 to 2006, Lijiang has attracted cultural related tourism investment of 2.7 billion RMB (He, Sh.Y., 2007: 8). Until the end of 2006, there were over 1,000 companies running cultural products ranging from ethnic dances, music, TV and movie programmes, handicraft making and various other cultural performances. This culture related market has accommodated more than 10,000 people working in it and rendered revenue from 30 million RMB in 2000 to 200 million RMB in 2005, accounting for 10% of the local finance.

This modified understanding of cultural affairs received acknowledgement from senior administration. In May 2003, the central state recognised this remarkable economic achievement in the cultural field as a good example of current reform initiatives. Lijiang was designated by the state as one of the nine cities in China implementing China's Cultural Affairs Reform, intended to reduce reliance on state-run cultural organisations. The current situation in China was that most of these cultural organisations were subsidised by state funds. This reform was exploring possible ways to make such organisations more financially independent of state subsidies. This acknowledgement from the central state stimulated the local government's confidence and accelerated their cultural and educational reforms.

In 2004, in order to train a large number of necessary cadres and useful personnel quickly, Lijiang government made several decisions. Firstly, it merged the local Normal School and the Lijiang Education College into Lijiang Senior Normal College; secondly, it merged the local School of Health, School of Finance and School of Agriculture into a new Lijiang Ethnic Technological College; and thirdly, by attracting private financial resources, it established a new Tourism and Cultural College at Yunnan University. These three newly established educational organisations have attracted and recruited a large number of professionals, e.g. scholars, professors and experts, working and living in Lijiang, which has in the long term enriched Lijiang's cultural and social diversity and strength.

Tourism was mostly perceived by the majority of the local interviewees as a very efficient method to promote their culture and Lijiang. Most of the interviewees saw dongba culture as a successful example of the way in which the tourism industry could help the preservation of local culture. Two interviewed residents acknowledged this fact:

'We actually didn't know about the dongba culture until ten years ago, though we've been living in Lijiang for nearly forty years. Now we are very proud of the fact that we have these marvellous pictographs and dongba... this is something that we can compete with the Han. Many of the modern Han have lost their tradition, but we still keep ours. It's really great.' (G2-04)

'Yes, we like tourists. A lot of my friends, relatives and classmates have been involved in this economy. As far as I know, some of them have bought new flats in the new town. Many of the tourists ask us what dongba culture is and where can see them. Well, actually we don't know much about it, but they certainly can find a few dongba in the tourist attractions and shops in the town. And if they like, they can buy a ticket to watch their performances...' (G2-05)

The growth of tourism has dramatically increased the locals' understanding of the dongba

culture. The sense of preserving the dongba culture was correspondingly multiplied with the involvement of tourism. (For further detailed discussions please see Chapter 9).

### **6.3 Changing Tourism: The Emergence of Packaged Tours**

According to most of the old town informants, the year 2003 was a dividing line in tourism development. Most of the interviewees regarded the tourists coming before that year or before year 2000 as ‘good’ tourists. In their memory, most of the tourists were individual tourists, travelling with an unscheduled timetable. Most of them stayed in Lijiang at least for several weeks, some of them even remained for months. At that time, there were very few hotels, so that most of the tourists lived in some local-owned guesthouse or with local families. Some of the interviewees preferred to categorise those tourists as their guests, because they refused to charge them for having food at their homes, though they accepted valuable gifts from tourists as courtesy. This gentle host/guest communication in most of the informants’ memory was depicted in a Naxi craftsman’s narrative:

‘In those days, those tourists were very kind, polite and cultured. I taught them how to write the pictographs, and I remember that a young guy wrote a letter to his girlfriend in the pictographs, telling her that he wanted to marry her. They later posted me a gift, when they married a year after. You know, I really didn’t know how much to charge him when he wanted to buy some of my carvings. I gave him a price, but he left more money under his pillow on the last day... I wish I could give something more to him if I could see him again.’ (G2-08)

Such positive host-tourist interactions as documented prior to mass tourism in Lijiang and well beyond have also been found in other tourist areas elsewhere, as indicated by Bouquet (1985) in her study in Devon in the early stages of tourism.

In 2003, however, due to the attack of SARS, Lijiang's tourist figures declined significantly (see Figure 6-1 and 6-2). The situation then changed considerably since 2004. In order to recover quickly from the economic setback, accelerating the tourist figures rapidly, the local government widely advertised Lijiang in a variety of media, including TV, national newspapers, the Internet and so forth. They also arranged to receive and entertain a number of high-ranking officials, whose news would be broadcast instantly as the top national news across the country. At this time, the packaged group-travel was targeted as the leading market. Consequently, the majority of the tourists, as mentioned above, were up to 80% packaged group-tourists.

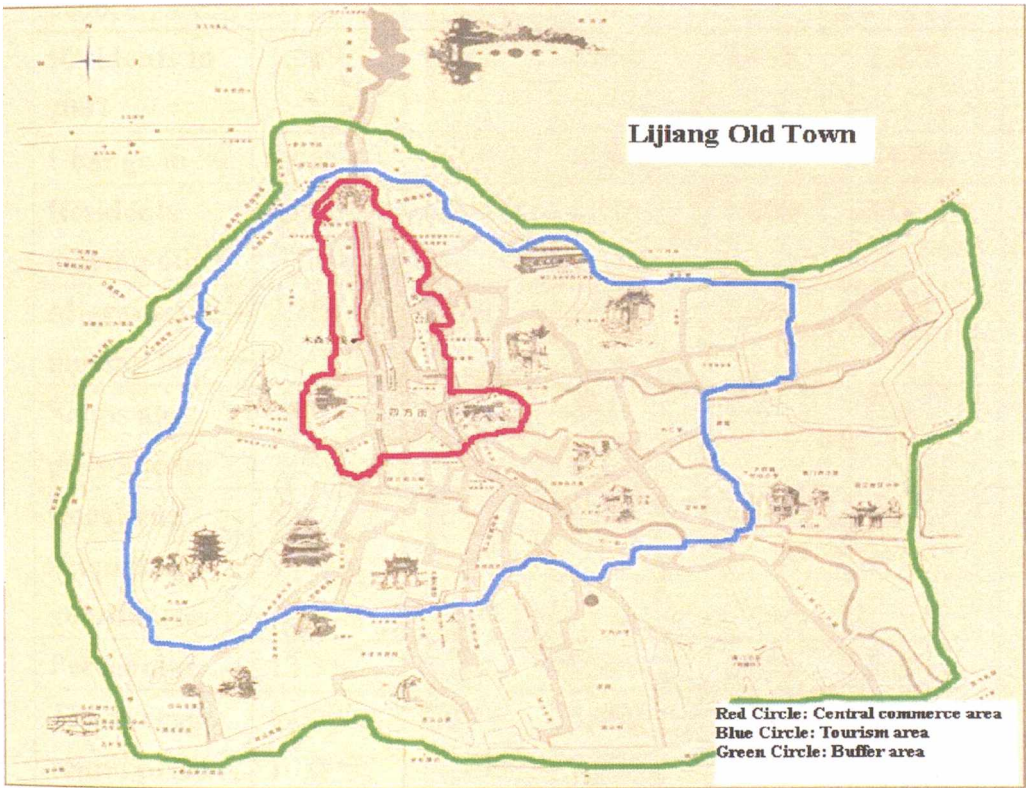
According to the researcher's own observations, the data acquired from five major Resident Committees in Dayanzhen (1) and the information obtained from interviews, there were several changes in relation to this highly scheduled travelling mode. The following map shows the green line marking the preserved area of Dayanzhen, the blue circle stands for the tourist area and the red one is the key commercial area where most of the guesthouses, restaurants, bars and shops are located (see Figure 6-3).

In the first place, although the majority of the packaged tourists were still staying in hotels or guesthouses, the ownership of these accommodation units has changed (see Table 6-1). Only 9% of the shops and guesthouses are run by the locals, while most of them are either operated or owned by migrant business people from other provinces and cities, e.g. Sichuan, Guangdong, Liaoning, Beijing and Shanghai. The committee staff reminded the researcher that the 9% local business ownership could be substantially lower, if one takes into account the fact that many shops and guesthouses were just registered as local-ownership in order to get economic subsidies from the authority. Consequently, the host/guest contact has changed to a guest/guest model. In a similar vein, a number of



studies have documented that within Chinese ethnic regions, the rapid increase in tourism has led to a decline in locally-owned business in favour of more commercially based businesses owned by the dominant Han group or incoming minority entrepreneurs, thereby squeezing out local community businesses (Oakes, 1995, 1998; Swain, 1995; Wen, 1998).

**Figure 6-3: Map of Lijiang Old Town (Dayanzhen)**



Source: Lijiang City Map, 2007

Secondly, according to LTB’s calculation in 2005, the average length that tourists stayed overnight in Lijiang was down to 3.27nights/per person. This limited time-budget constrained the tourists’ visiting mainly to central commercial and tourist areas, marked by the Red and Blue circles respectively, considerably smaller than the area that those individual travellers used to cover (2). Although there were still many locals living in Dayanzhen, most of them resided outside the Blue circle, which was hardly visited by those packaged group-tourists (see Figure 6-3). Under this circumstance, the touristic city



area was fairly restricted, much in the same way as Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) describe the manner in which the touristic city area tends to be confined to a very small area of town, excluding vast areas of the city.

**Table 6-1: The five residents committees in Dayanzhen (2006-2007)**

	Xinhua	Xinyi	Guangyi	Wuyi	Qiyi	Total
Residents in 2006	1,690	1,731	2,876	3,684	2,506	12,487
Residents in 2007	1,589	1,512	2,660	3,459	2,626	11,846
Change in %	-6%	-12.7%	-7.5%	-6.1%	+4.8%	-5.1%
Residents moving out	850	1,300	1,115	1,009	179	4,453
Migrants moving in	2,380	2,899	4,300	2,330	2,900	14,809
Shops and guesthouses	458	506	604	305	806	2,679
Local-run shops and guesthouses	62	31	60	45	44	242
Percentage	13.5%	6.1%	9.9%	14.8%	5.5%	9%
The average rental price (RMB)/per month	8,000-10,000 /10 sqm	9,000-11,000 / 10 sqm	5,000-7,500 / 10 sqm	7,000-8,500 / 10 sqm	8,000-10,000/ 10 sqm	-

Source: fieldwork data

The third change in relation to this package-group tourism was situated in the locals’ attitude towards the value of tourism. They no longer regarded them as ‘guests’. From selling food to charging tourists for staying an extra night, from charging tourists for taking a photo to selling the hosts’ personal belongings to tourists, the communication between the locals and the tourists was more focused on doing business. A local craftsman who was still residing in Dayanzhen commented:

‘Those grouped tourists have no respect to our culture and life. They just walk in the shop and snap a photo without asking permission. Unlike those tourists in the past, they don’t have an interest in talking to you. They don’t care about who you are, what you do and what you are selling. The only thing they would like to ask is the prices, and bargain, bargain and bargain.’ (G2-15)

Moreover, most of the local residents evaluated tourism only according to their economic benefits. In order to optimise this economic opportunity, they left the old town, renting their houses to migrant business people who could afford higher rental. The total population of these five residents committees (neighbourhoods) by the end of 2007 was 5.1% lower than the figure in 2006. The figure in the commercial area was nearly up to 13% (see Table 6-1). Yet, this figure was considered to be an under-estimate, as local officials speculated that the population in the commercial area might have increased by up to 90/95%. With a large number of migrants moving into the town, the town was increasingly home to migrants rather than to locals (3).

This has created a situation further distancing the tourist from an authentic contact with the local Naxi community. Hence, previous host/guest relationships and communications have been substantially weakened as a result of commercialisation. Similarly, Smith, V.L. (1989: 14) suggests that the move towards mass tourism has led to more stressful contact between hosts and guests; in Dayanzhen commercialisation has commodified host/guest relationships to the exclusion of more human to human contact. Tourists are now regarded by the Naxi more in terms of economic opportunity, even though contacts between Naxi and tourists are much reduced.

The last change was situated outside Lijiang, generated by this huge tourism market. Within one-day trip distance from the urban area, a number of villages have quickly

responded to this huge emerging market by forming various supply bases to mass-produce souvenirs and handicrafts sold to the tourists travelling in Lijiang. In order to save relevant cost, some of the products were made in quantity in large factories in Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang and other provinces, which were hundreds or even thousands of miles away. This mass production business model exerted a severe impact upon the local handicrafts and souvenirs market. This links in with issues of increased commodification and modernisation, which will be explored further in chapter 8.

#### **6.4 The Urban/Rural Divide**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the basic social structure in Lijiang was profoundly characterised by the distinctions between the rural and urban regions. This social dichotomy in Lijiang shows up not in their original household registrations, as the government requires, but also excludes the majority of the Naxi rural residents from enjoying many basic social benefits. This social and economic divergence has created a disparity between the people in these two regions, which eventually leads to various social, cultural and political disadvantages for rural people.

Unfortunately, the public data regarding this urban/rural divide were available only in the description of their economic difference, leaving other social disparities beyond clarification. As discussed in Chapter 4, the loss of rural resources has never been quantified in hard data by the government, leading to the illusion that progressive economic activity might alleviate social inequalities completely. The examination of the rural life in Lijiang demonstrates that not only did farmers not have the same social welfare as urban people; they were also facing the obscurity of low valued agricultural output and the uncertainty of getting cash from their harvest. In fact, the reality is that a

large number of rural employees work in urban areas, thereby highlighting significant urban/rural economic differences as well as inequalities in social provision. There were no data or information available to prove that those rural employees living in urban areas actually had access to the same provisions as urban citizens, since access is usually determined by formal registration rather than by residence. A similar situation is noticed in other studies (Hussain, 2008; Knight and Song, 2004).

With the involvement of tourism, the situation of this social division has been modified at different degrees across the regions. The unprecedented public investment in social infrastructure, which initially benefited the tourists, has seen many of the locals share the benefits, in particular those rural residents who live in tourist affected regions. With the exception of the provision of free education, which is still not available in rural areas, other indicators have shown significant progress (see Table 6-2).

**Table 6-2: Lijiang’s modified urban/rural dichotomy**

Social provisions	Urban regions	Rural regions (least-affected)	Tourism-affected rural regions
Food provision	Sufficient	Limited	Situation improved
Medical care	Largely free	Hardly available	Situation improved
Employment opportunity	Available	Not available	Available
Free education	Available	Not available	Not available
Public transport	Available	Not available	Situation improved

Source: fieldwork data

### 6.5 Emergent Problems and Difficulties

To fully portray the features of Lijiang’s tourism development, it is necessary not only to discuss its remarkable economic, social and cultural progress, but also to explore the

problems and difficulties ensuing from such vigorous economic activity. This extraordinary economic development has given rise to a number of questions. Is there any conflict between the managerial units and those managed groups? Has this economic development caused any negative impact upon some groups? The following two cases try to explore answers to these questions.

### **6.5.1 Case study: Public and Private Players**

The first case was regarding the conflicts that were generated by the implementation of Lijiang's tourism policies. Although the LTB and Lijiang government have installed a computing system to manage and monitor the tourism business in Lijiang area, the real situation was that many of the transactions were completed in cash, which implied that it was very hard for the government to inspect any leaking of the revenue through this system. In order to counterattack this problem, LTB and the Third Secretary Office of Lijiang government, which is the department in charge of Lijiang's foreign affairs and tourism development, have recently co-issued two new policies.

The first one is known as 'The Great Jade Dragon Policy' (TGJDP), in which the six main tourist attractions and Lijiang's largest tourist company, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain Tourism Ltd. Co., reached an agreement that all ticket selling would be inspected by one department, supervised by all members. The policy was put into practice on the first day of 2008. According to this policy, tourists needed to pay a fixed but discounted fee to access all the seven tourist attractions. No commission would be given to any tour-guide, driver or travel agency either in or outside Lijiang. This policy was a kind of promotion to bind major tourist attractions together in order to improve Lijiang's tourism image.

The second policy was dealing with complaints from individual tourists in Lijiang. Many of the tourists complained that they have been overcharged by privately-run minicab drivers, shops and guesthouses in Dayanzhen, which organised these trips around Lijiang. To provide qualified and standard services, the LTB and the Old Town Preservation Committee banned any person running shops, guesthouses and hotels in the old town from organising any individual tour travelling around Lijiang. They moved all such business to a newly established company called 'Lijiang Individual Tourist Information Centre'.

Regarding the responses to these two policies, the researcher interviewed 8 Naxi minicab drivers who have been doing individual tours in Lijiang for five years, and 5 shopkeepers selling tourist souvenirs in the old town. Six in eight minicab drivers admitted that their business has been severely affected after the two policies were put into practice. In addition, three of these eight minicab drivers were also running private guesthouses in Dayanzhen. For them, the impact of the two new policies was even harder. They complained that as the first policy (TGJDP) refused to pay commission to travel agencies, some of their business partners outside Lijiang became reluctant to promote Lijiang any longer as their leading travelling destination. This in return created a chain reaction in many private guesthouses, restaurants and shops owners whose business had considerably declined.

The conversations with those five shopkeepers in the old town demonstrated that TGJDP had a negative impact upon their business in the old town. Since the new policy came into being at the beginning of 2008, some private business owners have been out of business for several months on end. Their complaints focused on two aspects. To begin with, the policy of selling tickets for seven tourist attractions as a fixed non-refundable programme meant that much of the time of the tourists in the area was already programmed. During

their visit in Lijiang, for instance, they now had much less time for shopping in the old town. Some tour-guides pushed their clients away from the shops, right in front of the shopkeepers' eyes, with the explanation that they had run behind the schedule for visiting the tourist attractions.

Secondly, the decline in business increased the burden of shop owners who had to pay considerable rents every day without any compensation. Sometimes the interview with one shop owner caught other nearby shopkeepers' attention, thinking that the researcher was in fact a government inspector in plainclothes, and so they interrupted their own conversations in order to press their arguments. They strongly condemned the local government's irresponsible way of making policy decisions without consulting them. Some of the businessmen showed the researcher their record book to prove that they have had no business for many consecutive weeks. By the time the researcher left Lijiang by the end of April 2008, some of the shopkeepers were trying to organise negotiations with the local authority.

Moreover, all these 8 minicab drivers claimed that they used to be farmers living in the suburbs of the old town. Since their villages have been urbanised a few years ago, they lost their lands for good. The reason that they depended on doing the individual tours as their main means of living was that the local government had encouraged them to participate in the tourism business in the first place. Indeed, they had placed the money they had been given in compensation for loss of rural farming into the tourism market. Secondly, apart from working in the field in the past, they did not have any other living skill to live on. Unfortunately, the government's new policy legally deprived them of their right to use their vehicles and other facilities overnight, while these had been the major investments in their life. They argued that if they did not have enough business from this

market, they were soon going to face a very hard time, which they had never expected before. A minicab driver argued:

‘They (the government) used to encourage us to participate in the business of tourism, telling us that everyone needs to support this economic movement. Now, however, they don’t need us. We used to be farmers, living around the centre city. Our lands have gone and we have spent most of the money we got from selling the lands into this market. We’ve paid a lot of money for getting a licence to drive in the urban area. Now, what we can do with the van? Have they ever thought about us?’ (G2-22)

### **6.5.2 Case study: Tourism Expansion and Land Expropriation – Shuhe Village**

The next case is an examination of the development of tourism in Shuhe Village. Shuhe, was just four kilometres away from the old town, consisted of four natural villages – Longquan, Kaiwen, Huangshan and Zhongji, – with a total population of 9,957 people in 2,450 families. The core visiting part was confined to an area of 3 square kilometres, inhabited by 1,000 households. In 1997, the Shuhe old town was recognised as one important part of Dayanzhen when it was listed by UNESCO as one of the WHS. In May 2003, a new project was approved by the Lijiang authority to have a new ancient-style town built next to the core visiting area in Shuhe. A real estate company from Kunming, Dingye, signed a cooperation contract with the local authority. The project was planned to occupy 1,000 Mu of land, equal to 666.67 square kilometres (1 Mu = 666.67 square metres), and the total scheduled investment would cost 500 million RMB, due to be completed in five years.

This plan would proceed in two parts. The finished first part has cost 120 million RMB, including a 150,000 sqm buildings of shops, bars, guesthouses and hotels, theme parks and leisure areas, for renting or purchasing, a 1.1 kilometre-long road connecting Shuhe with



Dayanzhen, as well as 6 kilometre-long stone paved main streets in the village. It also included installing 7.1 kilometre-long underneath cable and pipe systems within the core visiting area of the village, including the cables of power, television and communication, water and drainage pipes system, and renovating a number of heritage sites and some residential buildings with historic values. The second part is under construction, including an international bar street, a number of high standard villas and several super five-star hotels, expected to be finished in 2010.

According to the report obtained from the Shuhe Village Committee and the conversations with the informants living in the village, this tourist project has achieved significant economic progress (4). Five informants from Shuhe confirmed that their average annual income has been increased by 4.38 times in the past three years. Meanwhile, the village has formed several Naxi music bands playing music for tourists as a free entertainment. This project was promoted by the local authority as a successful 'Shuhe Model', combining tourism development with rural social progress. It was praised by the Xinhua News agency, Lijiang Daily Newspaper and Lijiang Jade Dragon TV Station as a successful project from which the local farmers could get benefits, alleviating poverty, improving living standards and becoming a successful model influencing farmers living around to follow their way.

Despite this astonishing economic achievement, this project caused some disputes, which no interviewed officials would like to admit. According to the interviewed 11 local peasants, 9 of them confirmed that they were forced to sell their land to the local authority at, as they described, 'an unacceptable price'. The average price they sold was 15,000 RMB per Mu of land, whereas the price of each Mu sold in Dayanzhen suburb, just 4 or 6 kilometres away, was 70,000 RMB on average. When the researcher raised the question of

selling the land at low prices to the officers of the village committee, they kindly replied that the price was approved by the Lijiang government.

Though the researcher had stayed in the village for nearly two months, it was still very hard to get detailed information about how many farmers or families had been seriously affected by this project, because the village committee refused to provide relevant information, and suggested the researcher make enquiry to the Lijiang Old Town Preservation Bureau (5). Meanwhile, several local contacts have advised the researcher that the land issue was very sensitive and very hard to get first-hand information. In fact, since the second time the researcher tried to contact the Shuhe Village Committee regarding the exact number of farmers that lost land in this tourist project, the researcher has been kindly advised by an officer to 'focus on the positive aspects of the topic'. In addition, the committee advised that the researcher should be accompanied by local staff so that it would be more 'convenient' to conduct the research in the village.

Consequently, regarding the examination of the land issue in Shuhe, it can only concentrate on the data acquired from the interviewed 11 local farmers (6) and some incidental information obtained through other sources during the field work in Lijiang. Among those 11 farmers, 3 of them claimed that this project has seriously impacted on their lives. One farmer commented:

'We only got one third of the land left. It is not enough for us to make a living on that. And the compensation we got is not enough for us to live on.' (G2-12)

Although in China, no one privately owns land, farmers would get economic compensation if their land were expropriated by government. Apart from these three farmers, others mainly criticised the low price of selling the land to the government. They

were particularly angered by the fact that the government resold their land to a commercial company at a very high price without giving them a share. They thought that they have not been treated fairly, as they did not get enough profit from this land transaction. All informants told the researcher that their land was expropriated by the local government without any negotiation regarding the plan and the price. One farmer challenged:

‘The government sold our land without our permission. This is our means of living. Yet the central government has banned expropriating farmers’ land for commercial use. No one discussed this tourism project with us in advance. We did not have any information about this project until they told us how much land we need to sell. When they made this new rule, the only thing we could do is ‘to cut our feet (interest) to fit the shoes (policy).’ (G2-11)

Apart from the land issue in Shuhe, some other issues were raised by the shopkeepers who have either bought or rented shops or guesthouses, concerning the promotion strategies of Dingye Company, selling Shuhe as a tourist attraction. In 2004, according to the businessmen’s statements, the business was very good. Dingye advertised Shuhe in Kunming and other cities widely. Unfortunately, after more tourists came to the village, the company decided in August 2004 to charge visitors a 30 RMB entrance fee. Some shop owners revealed that this policy dramatically reduced the number of tourists. The shop owners in the old part of the village were particularly angry, saying that:

‘We came here much earlier than Dingye, they only joined in the development of the new part of the village. They didn’t build the old one at all, why do they have the right to charge the tourists? The village has been here for many hundred years. It should be free for all tourists.’ (G2-09)

In response to this, no sooner had the policy came into being, than the majority of the shopkeepers closed their shops to show their grievance. The dispute was partly resolved when a box office was erected outside each village entrance with a notice saying ‘welcome to pay entrance fee’. However, no one would stop visitors if they did not pay the

fee. Nevertheless, this notice has still reduced the number of visitors considerably. Some guesthouse owners have to inform their guests who are making online enquiry for accommodation that they do not need to pay an entrance fee to enter the village. For group tourists, the entrance fee is charged after they join the tour. As a result, the majority of visitors to Shuhe are group tourists.

With respect to this change, different businessmen have their own view. Those selling souvenirs, ethnic clothes and jade carvings were in favour of this strategy because Shuhe was still a less popular place and not many people knew about it. If they did not charge an entrance fee, then few travel companies, taxi drivers and local guides would like to promote Shuhe, since they would not receive the current commission from the ticket selling. Secondly, they challenged the contribution of individual tourists who normally stayed in Shuhe for a relatively longer period, but compared with those grouped tourists did not spend as much money on buying souvenirs. Their key purpose in coming to Lijiang was idling at the guesthouse and drinking a cup of tea or coffee. Therefore, the total limited spending of the individual tourists would not sustain Shuhe's current 300 shops. On the other hand, those businessmen in accommodation and catering strongly opposed this view, since most of the group tours stayed in Dayanzhen and not in Shuhe, whilst their time in Shuhe was too limited to have time to sit down and have a cup of tea.

In addition, when the business was more dependent on grouped tourists, another weakness appeared. Some souvenir shopkeepers complained that these tourists did not really have enough time to do their shopping. Moreover, shopkeepers who did not pay a commission to the tour-guides would find that their businesses were disturbed. This situation was reflected in many of the shopkeepers' conversations. One of them underlined:

‘Many of the grouped tourists don't have enough time at our shops. You don't

even have time to show them all you have. Especially those guides, if you don't tip them, you're hardly able to do business with the grouped tourists. So it's very strange, the village committee showed us that the total number of tourists is moving up, but our business is declining.' (G2-14)

For those shopkeepers whose business mainly depended on individual tourists, they strongly questioned another issue, which was the public transport development of Shuhe. Though Shuhe was 4 miles away from Dayan, there was no bus service between the two towns. The nearest bus stop was half an hour walking distance away. Two years ago, according to the informants, there used to be bus services, but the local taxi drivers disapproved. If individual tourists wanted to visit Shuhe from Dayan, they can only get in a minivan in Dayan, spending two RMB for a single trip.

At the moment, the transport between the two places was completely controlled by fewer than a hundred minivan drivers, who were all Shuhe farmers. The shop owners and drivers were in conflict regarding the public bus services. Drivers believed that if the bus service were available, then their business would disappear, whereas the shopkeepers argued that a bus service was a basic convenience that the local committee should provide to the tourists, and those minivans stood in the very way of attracting more tourists to Shuhe.

Meanwhile, those shopkeepers in the old part of the village had massive resentment towards the fact that Dingye was in charge of policy and management of the whole Shuhe Village. In reference to tourism promotion, Dingye decided that the new-built part of the village should take priority over the old part. As a result, since the opening of the new town in 2004, the number of tourists that enter Shuhe from the entrance at the old town declined significantly. This situation arose because Dingye, as the exclusive investor and the largest contributor for promoting the village, had the authority to design the visiting route for group tourists via the new town.

In order to convince the shopkeepers in the new part that the village was being visited by more tourists, and in order to respond positively to TGJDP, all the local tour guides in Lijiang have been instructed by the authority that from the first day of 2008, all tours must enter Shuhe from the main entrance of the new town, otherwise the tour guides would not get a stamp for reimbursement. The old town shopkeepers severely condemned this new policy. One shopkeeper emphasised:

‘This diversion is attempting to drive us away. We cannot do business in the old part of the village any longer. This policy is a serious discrimination that is treating us unfairly. Actually, our opening time is much shorter than those in the new part, because they have evening dancing parties at each summer evening. So they’ve got illumination until 11pm.’ (G2-10)

Nevertheless, the response of group tourists to this new arrangement was very interesting. In order to observe the tourists’ reaction, the researcher once stayed at the box office where the tour-guides needed to get the stamp and the main square where tourists often took a break. The following exchanges were often heard between tour-guides and their guests.

Tour guide: ‘Hi, everyone, this is the entrance of Shuhe, please take a photo here and I’ll be back in a minute.’

The leader (of the group): ‘But this is a new one! We thought it is an ancient village. You see, the brochure says...’

Tour guide: ‘Yes, it is. We see the new one first, and then go to the old one right behind it.’

The leader: ‘All right, I got it.’ Then, the leader turned to his members, saying: ‘Hi, guys, this is not the real one. We just go through it to see the old one behind it. Let’s hurry up!’

## 6.6 Analysis and Discussion

### 6.6.1 Reasons behind the Economic and Social Progress

As far as the Lijiang's economy was concerned, its geographical location and topographic features (see Chapter 4) largely constrained its ability and potential to develop traditional agriculture and industry. In terms of manufacturing, Lijiang did not have a sufficient base to provide for massive consumption, technical support, management and skilful workers and technicians. The local authority firmly believed that Lijiang had several advantages in developing the tourism business. As discussed above, these included the beautiful natural landscape, ethnic cultural heritage, attractive ancient buildings and the leisure environment created by the overall conditions. Therefore, tourism became the locomotive of the local economy, supported by the local authority with their political strength. This reflects Smith, V.L.'s (1989: 3) statement that 'the major stimulus' of developing tourism is its economic value.

In addition, Lijiang's demographic character has actually prepared a substantial labour force for the take-off of tourism development. This consisted of a large number of rural people whose living conditions were at very low level, and more importantly, who had substantial free time during the agricultural off-peak time. In return, the labour intensive character of the tourism industry accommodated those migrant farmers with a much broader employment outlet than was generally available (Lin, 2003; Xu, 2001). Gradually, people's economic situation in both urban and parts of rural areas has been significantly improved through this involvement of tourism.

Historically, during the preceding hundreds of years before the emergence of tourism

Lijiang had offered no industry that could bring so much wealth to this region. This explained why tourism was so warmly embraced by the local people at all levels. The majority of the 67 interviewees overwhelmingly focused on the benefits of tourism development and its economic success in the past decade. The officials welcome tourism, as it guaranteed that they would meet the economic target of the development that they must achieve; the inhabitants welcome it, as it provided considerable progress in their lives. The locals' active attitude was one of the key reasons to explain Lijiang's astonishing progress. The importance of the locals' positive attitude in terms of pushing tourism development has been noted in several studies based in Indonesia, Ghana and different ethnic regions in China (Hitchcock, 2000c; Teye, Sonmez and Sirakaya, 2002; Wu, Zh.J., 1997).

In relation to the Naxi positive vision of the development of tourism, Su and Teo note in their study in Lijiang:

'Tourism development would not have been so rapid if it had not been embraced by grassroots representatives as well. Interviews with these people revealed that they had considered the economic returns from tourism and that they believed that tourism can have a role in Naxi cultural revival and identity building.' (2008: 157)

By and large, Lijiang has benefited from this economic growth in many respects. The first value of the tourist income was that the government's financial strength has been substantially enriched. The second importance was that a number of social and economic constructions in the public sector have been carried out with the increasing financial power. The third function was the confidence engendered by such huge market potential for tourism growth. This has attracted a variety of investments either from the public sector, such as from the national or provincial finance, or from the private sector, such as Dingye Company. As examined above, the public investments, such as the Lijiang Airport, the



Dali-Lijiang Railway, the highway network and the rapidly developed real estate industry, were mainly based on the promising performance of Lijiang's tourism and its huge market potential.

After all, Lijiang's economic characteristics were largely associated with the growth of tourism in the past ten years. With tourism and the tertiary industry, which was mainly propelled by it, accounting for nearly half of the local GDP for years, the local economy has to some extent been shaped by the tourism industry: a problem in the tourism industry would be a considerable setback for Lijiang's economy. The strength of tourism in shaping the local economy is also discussed by Li, W.J. (2006: 136-137) and Michaud and Turner (2006) in their studies carried out in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve in China and in Sa Pa, a hill town in northern Vietnam respectively.

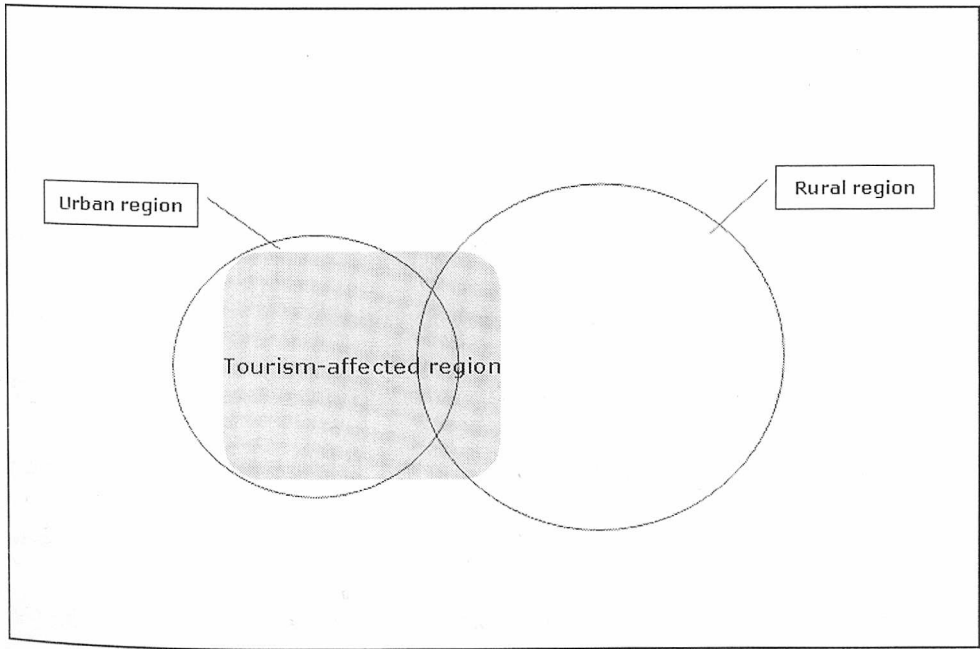
In social context, the profound value of this economic development lies at the point in which it intersects with the distribution of social wealth; social provision no longer follows exclusively previous political arrangements, in which urban residents were privileged over rural residents. Instead, distribution of resources now follows much more closely according to tourist demands and travelling characteristics, which across urban and rural boundary irregularly (see Figure 6-4). The attached Appendixes 6-1 and 6-2 clearly display the distinction between the tourism-affected and least affected regions in local public transport. The result of this movement was that more rural people were able to be involved in this expanded wealth distribution.

Therefore, the expansion of tourism was actually moving the society away from the previous urban/rural dichotomy and more towards a multilayered social layout consisting of a central urban area, an economically developed rural area and a more traditional rural

hinterland. The influence of Lijiang’s tourism in the social context suggested a clearer route for the comment that ‘tourists are agents of social change’ (Harrison, 2001a: 8). It also provided an updated account to other relevant research in which this social disparity in China’s minority regions has been explored (Wen, 1998; Swain, 1995; Oakes, 1997; White, 1998).

The nature of such uneven development has shifted from a simple urban/rural dichotomy to a more complex threefold division, along a continuum from more favoured urban area to least favoured rural and traditional hinterland. Moreover, such uneven development has also entailed a shift from more privileged Han and urban minority locals as against less privileged rural minority, to one in which there is now a four-part distinction between urban Han and urban minority, rural minority and incoming migrants all becoming involved in tourism business. This uneven development is increasingly shaped by forces of commercialisation, commodification, modernisation and globalisation.

**Figure 6-4: The distribution of tourism wealth**



Source: fieldwork data

## 6.6.2 Problems in Running Tourism

Analysis of the examples that have been discussed shows that the local government played a key role in running tourism, from making policy to managing operations. The government's role in running tourism business in developing countries has been examined in numerous studies. Some of the papers that have discussed this issue include Cater (2000), Fletcher (2005), Harrison (2001b), Lemcine (1989), Lew (2004) and Oakes (1995). The Lijiang government's economic-led tourism policy inevitably led to mass tourism, a highly scheduled travelling mode characterised by packaged group-tourists. It considerably constrained the host/guest communication. The impact of this commodified tourism upon the dongba culture of the Naxi will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

### *The Changes in Travelling Mode*

The major force pushing this transformation in travelling mode came from the local government's tourism policy, in which the economic contribution of tourism took precedence over other values. To ensure those large public-funded investment projects succeeded, the growth of tourism had to be sustained at a significant level so that the huge economic market potential would be achieved. The significance of tourism in China was not assessed by its social and cultural attributes, such as the host/guest communication or the influence upon the indigenous culture, but rather by its economic potential, as a number of researchers have acknowledged in their studies carried out in other minorities regions (Oakes, 1995, 1997; Swain, 1995; Sofield and Li, 1998). Under this circumstance, the easiest way to increase the tourist figures was to enlarge the domestic tourist arrivals by primarily targeting the large number of domestic grouped tourists.

The changes in travelling mode meant that the packaged group-tourists had limited time and space to communicate with the local community. The ability of such tourist to acquire insightful knowledge of the culture, history and other social features of areas they were visiting was largely affected. In Lijiang, although there were some tourist products arranging for tourists to visit local families, the major content of this kind of 'communication' was first, highly staged; second, normally within a curtailed one or two hours; and third, it has been modified by some travel companies to boost souvenir sales. With this highly scheduled communication, the locals' attitude towards tourists has changed, from getting to know each other in a normal everyday life model to simply doing business. This situation is reflected in Michaud and Turner (2006: 801) and Wood's (1984) studies showing that many of the tourists' experiences of local culture are through a selective, fixed time and manageable formats.

### ***Policy Implementation***

Many problems in other cases led to the conflict between the public and private sectors regarding the policies to be adopted in developing tourism and the distribution of tourism wealth. As discussed above, tourism in Lijiang was largely managed by local government in nearly all aspects, from making policy decisions to implementation, from marketing promotion to attracting investment. Under this circumstance, the role of the government provides a suitable starting point for examining ensuing conflicts and problems arising from tourism development.

TGJDP indicated that the government decided to counteract the 'leaking problem' so that the tourist revenue would be maintained. Unfortunately, the problem of 'paying commission' in Chinese tourism industry has been going on for many years, deeply rooted

in the industry at managerial and operational levels. Therefore, the implementation of this policy was facing the risk of being attacked by their business partners. According to the statistics released by LTB in 2008, the short-term result of the new policies was that the number of domestic tourists declined in the first month. However, it is too early to predict the long-term consequences of these new policies upon Lijiang's tourism development.

Reading the new policies from the other perspective, however, LTB has repeatedly announced that they are determined to put more effort into expanding international tourism, and this endeavour has led to consecutive increases in both international tourist arrivals and tourist revenue in the past four years (see Figures 6-1 and 6-2). Such new policies may well provide more space for the international tourists at the expense of decreasing the percentage of domestic tourism. Although an interviewed informant working at the LTB denied the possibility that Lijiang was going to move away from mass grouped domestic tourism, the second new policy sent the message out that the economic potential of individual travelling has been targeted by the LTB as a new source of tourism revenue. Inevitably, the implementation of these two new policies signalled that the LTB would move away from developing mass grouped tourism alone to operating equally both grouped and individual travelling.

Despite the strategic considerations of LTB, this movement caused a number of impacts upon those people running small and private businesses in the tourism market. For those shopkeepers, the total number of visitors has declined considerably, which has seriously affected turnover. Secondly, the time that grouped tourists spend on shopping in the old town has shortened, which has also affected their business. Given that it was hard to calculate the total losses to shopkeepers due to this new policy, the reality suggests shopkeepers had no efficient means of communicating on issues that jointly involved both

government and the private sector. The exclusion of locals' right to participate in planning, management and decision-making systems is regarded as a common practice in developing countries with top-down development cultures (Teye, Sonmez and Sirakaya, 2002: 670).

Those small business units, but in large numbers, did not have access to the decision making process, in which to express their concerns or simply protect their interests. It was difficult to deny the fact that the remarkable achievement that Lijiang's tourism has attained was due in large part to the local people's involvement and contribution to such a process. Moreover, it used to be the government that once encouraged them to participate in the tourism business in the early stage. Therefore, the government should have taken the responsibility of dealing appropriately with those private businessmen's economic difficulties. Likewise, Su and Teo underline the local authority's responsibility:

‘In order to accelerate tourism development, the Lijiang CCP secretary started wooing the private sector to get involved in Lijiang's tourism after 2000, especially in the development of hotels, cultural products and transportation.’  
(2008: 157)

### *Shuhe Case*

In respect to the problems generated from the tourism expansion in Shuhe, it would be more appropriate to examine the situation by putting the case into a broader social and political context. The land that the project has totally occupied accounts for between 1/5 and 1/7 of the local farming land, leaving enough land to the locals for farm use (7). This was the reason why the major complaint from those 11 farmers interviewed was not focused on the decline of living standards but on the low price that the local government gave to them in compensation.

The majority of the farmers in this case complained of the unfair treatment that they received from the local government. According to the PRC's relevant regulation, government was strictly prohibited from expropriating farmers' land for commercial usage. The conflict between farmers and local government regarding the land issue has been intensified since China entered the new millennium era. For more detailed discussions please refer to the studies carried out by Chen (2004: 17-29), Chen and Wu (2006), Gao (2004), Lu (2003: 48-54) and Zhu and Shen (2002: 102-109).

Apart from the land issue in Shuhe, the other conflicts were related to Dingye operations. The model of developing tourism in Shuhe mainly relied on a commercial unit, whose primary interest was inevitably concentrated on maximising its economic value. For instance, after selling out most of the properties in the market, they moved their attention on to new means of extracting revenue, namely charging tourists entrance fees, as a reward for their earlier marketing effort. Although this policy was halted by most of the shopkeepers, Dingye still managed to control the tourism business by concentrating on the group tourist market.

This was the reason that they kept an Entrance Fee notice-board outside the entrances to the village. With this notice-board, the most affected tourists were individual tourists, who did not know the struggles behind the scene. It considerably reduced the visiting of those individual tourists who were reluctant to pay the fee. Subsequently, the majority of the visitors in the village were group tourists, whose visiting was mainly under the arrangement of travel companies and the local authority. In addition, all group tourists had their own means of transport, thereby reducing tensions between the Dingye Company and the group of farmers who sought to control local transport between Dayanzhen and Shuhe.

Later, by diverting the visiting route, the company optimised their share of the tourism business at the expense of those shopkeepers in the old part of the village.

However, whilst Dingye had participated in the construction of the new section of the village, the local government had entrusted the company to promote the village as a whole, operating the village as a single firm. This disproportionate authority was challenged by those shopkeepers whose business mainly relied on individual tourists, and those in the old part of the village, who were in a vulnerable situation. This mixture of commercialised enterprise combined with administrative authority gave the company a new structure, unknown before, appearing to be a merger between authority and capital.

## **6.7 Summary**

This chapter has examined Lijiang's tourism development from several perspectives in order to review its social and economic achievements and existing problems. The historical background of Lijiang's economy has a profound legacy upon the growth of Lijiang's tourism. After many years of progressive growth, tourism and tourism related business have become a leading force in the economic profile of Lijiang, formerly heavily dependent on agriculture and low-skilled industry and now overwhelmingly relying on the service industry.

The presence of a large number of tourists coming from different places has enormously escalated the Naxi ethnic pride in their culture, history, life and natural environment. The locals value tourism as a window that has widened their horizon of the country and the world in many respects. With the substantial income from the tourism industry, the Naxi envisaged the economic value of their culture, which has drawn many people's attention in



a very short time.

In the social context, Lijiang's tourism has become a well-planned industry largely run by the government from the outset. Consequently, the nature of Lijiang's tourism bears the hallmark of the government's strategies for the area. The massive social infrastructural expansion in both urban and rural areas partially modified the traditional distribution of social provisions. With the involvement of tourism, more rural residents in particular those living in suburban areas, were included into an amended process allowing them to share in the provision of social benefits from which they had been previously excluded.

As far as the problems of Lijiang's tourism were concerned, they can be evaluated from two perspectives. To begin with, tourism was mainly planned and controlled by the government. Many conflicts were thus either caused by the government's policy or management without installing a negotiation process that could take into account the interests of the many players involved in the tourism business industry. Second, the primary purpose of developing tourism was to improve people's economic situation and social progress, which was mainly agreed by the government and the community as a whole. As a result, the distribution of tourism-related economic wealth would therefore become the major indicator for people to evaluate the changes that occurred.

Furthermore, the problems that took place in Shuhe indicated that tourism expansion could cause profound social consequences, which invited an examination of it against a broader social background. Although the government did possess the ownership of land, the real problem was that the public sector, and those commercial units which were playing a role on behalf of the public sector, need to be able to take a comprehensive outlook and so consider the interests of all private players in the tourism industry. Meanwhile, the growth

of tourism in Shuhe Village was one fragment of Lijiang's tourism development from which a closer examination could be applied. The mass packaged group-travel was not only manipulated by government to develop the local economy but also used to control it. This situation endorsed the inference made by McKhann (1998), Sofield and Li (1998), Wen (1998) and White (1998) that the government's influence upon tourism in minority regions is mostly attained through regulating investment, controlling production and sustaining consumption.

After examining the characteristics of Lijiang's tourism development, the next chapter will explore the role of the dongba culture in the mountain region, its very heartland, and the major influence of tourism upon this religious practice.

## Notes

1. The examined five committees accounted for 98% of the main tourist area, enclosed by the Blue circle (see Figure 6-3), accounting for 40-50% of the total old town inhabitants. Among them, the Xinhua and Xinyi Committees covered the full area of the red circle. All the data were collected from these five units. However, due to some practical problems, such as unnoticed movements, intensive mobility of inhabitants and unregistered migrant businessmen, some figures can only be 'speculated' by the committees' staff according to their working experience.
2. Many of the individual tourists often travelled much beyond the urban area, covering many of the researched mountain regions (see Figure 5-1).
3. This migration phenomenon has been discussed in a number of studies. For further detailed information please refer to Cai (2005), Duang (2000), McKhann (2001), Sofield and Li (1998) and Su and Teo (2008).
4. The annual income of the local farmers has increased from 800 RMB in 2002 to 4,500 RMB in 2007. By July 2006, just within the core preserving area, more than 180 households have rented their houses to migrant business people, acquiring a total 8 million RMB annual income. Around 90 families have been doing taxi business, transferring tourists between Dayanzhen and Shuhe. Just the new town project alone, has created 326 job positions for the local farmers working as cleaners, security guards, waiters and guides.
5. This suggestion was in fact a kind of excuse, as the officer at the preservation bureau confirmed to the researcher that the village committee did have the relevant information, and could show the researcher such figures on condition that the researcher would provide them with a senior department's reference letter.
6. The researcher also interviewed two village officers, but they denied the dispute regarding the land issue. Among those 11 farmers, five of them not only answered the questions regarding the land issue and tourism promotion in their village, but also accepted the researcher's interview concerning the questions that are listed in Appendix 5-2.
7. Based on the researcher's observation and information obtained in other areas, including the Shuhe Village, a farmer needed 1.2/1.5 Mu of land to live on at a very basic standard annually. The average amount of land that a family possessed in Lijiang

was between 5 and 7 Mu. Therefore, the total amount of land required by that the 1,000 families living in the core visiting area where the tourist project is mainly located is between 5,000 and 7,000 Mu.

## **Chapter 7 Dongba Culture and the Influence of Tourism**

This chapter examines the role of the dongba culture in Lijiang's mountain area where this religion is still being practised. The first part discusses the religion's historical characteristics, the social status of dongba in Naxi mountain communities, and the severe impact caused by the PRC's political movements. The discussion also addresses the impact of tourism promotion upon the Naxi peculiar 'love suicide' incidents, which were mainly associated with the Naxi traditional kinship restriction. The second part is an exploration of the impact of tourism development upon the growth of dongba schools. On the one hand, the tourism industry not only sustains the revival of this religion in mountain regions with financial support, but also increases the farmers' expectation of the economic potential of continuing such cultural inheritance. On the other hand, however, with the increase of tourism business, the traditional bond between dongba, their disciples, and the mountain communities has considerably shifted and loosened as a result.

### **7.1 Dongba Culture**

#### **7.1.1 The Historical Characteristics of the Religion**

Many of the characters in this religion were gradually developed over the past centuries, showing that some of the doctrines of this practice were actually an historical choice. The Naxi used to be a nomad group, whose early life was occupied with war and migration before they ultimately settled down in the Lijiang area. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Naxi were overwhelmingly defeated by the Tibetans, and Lijiang was once controlled by the Tibet for a very long time. This Tibetan influence has been acknowledged in a number of studies (Rock, 1947; Jackson, 1979; McKhann, 1998; Mathieu, 2003). It was very

likely that the Naxi religious life has borrowed extensively from traditional Tibetan practice and the Bon religion, which previously dominated Tibet before the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

According to the data collected from a number of dongba and Naxi scholars, the dongba religion was to some extent regarded by them as the partial result of this long-standing Tibetan influence. For instance, when the dongba presided over rituals, they started the chanting by 'we are bin bo...', '*bin bo*' means 'we are the priests of (bon practice)...' in the Tibetan language. The Tibetan called Lijiang '*sa da*', meaning 'our land or territory', and called the governor of Mu, '*sa da jiu bu*', meaning 'the governor or ruler of our land' in the Tibetan language. Furthermore, the size of the dongba manuscripts, the format, the way of writing, and some basic procedures of many rituals were extremely similar to those of Bon practice. Moreover, the establisher of Bon practice was called '*ding ba sin jiu*', while the name of the founder of dongba religion was called '*ding ba shi luo*'. This coincidence in their names demonstrates a close historical connection.

This Tibetan influence was reflected in the Propitiation of Heaven, which was the most important ritual in the dongba religion. According to the dongba books, this ritual was to advocate the doctrine of brotherhood between the Naxi, the Tibetan and the Bai. The preached rapport between these three ethnic groups in the dongba manuscripts was challenged by historical events (see Chapter 4). A senior dongba explained the Tibetan characteristic of the culture in the following account

'In history, we lost the wars with Tibetan, Bai and other neighbour groups, because we were a very small group in population, compared with our neighbours. A continuous wartime was not something that we could afford, and we realised that warfare won't bring us peace... To survive, we made up in our legend that we and the other two groups were brothers, hoping that we can share this land peacefully with our neighbours.' (G2-18)

In some communities in Ninglang County and Erya region (see Figure 5-1), which was regarded by the Naxi scholarship and the local community as the ‘untouched’ place of the tradition, farmers did not sacrifice the propitiation ritual, but rather held the sacrifice of ‘*ao bu*’, ‘*ao*’ meaning ‘victory’ and ‘*bu*’ meaning ‘god’ in the Naxi language. There was some evidence found in the fieldwork to support Jackson (1979), Rock (1947) and Mathieu’s (2003) argument that the dongba religion used to be characterised by many martial concerns. Unfortunately, many of these warrior traces had been ruled out from the ceremonies little by little. For instance, the Naxi used to hold warrior sacrifice, which was exclusively for the memorial of soldiers. This rite was banned after the reform movement in 1723, as it advocated martial power that the authority did not like. The ritual and relevant records were erased both from common practice and from the dongba books.

Therefore, it was possible to argue that the dongba religion was established between the late Song period (960 –1279AD) and the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, which happened to be the time that the Bon religion was declining in Tibetan territories. Since the Ming Dynasty, the dongba religion was gradually marginalised by the Mu King due to their political strategy of adopting the Han’s Confucianism as their dominant ideology. Subsequently, the dongba religion was pushed away from the central area in the Lijiang basin to remote mountain areas. The influence and power of this practice remained strong within many of the mountain communities, exercised regularly until the PRC came to power in 1949.

### **7.1.2 The Impact of the Political Movements in China (1954-1983)**

The marginalisation in the Ming Dynasty did not rule out this religion in the basin area until its prohibition in 1954. The government’s ban lasted over 25 years, exerting a

devastating impact upon this practice to the extent that it was only occasionally practised in some very remote mountain villages during this period. According to He and Guo's (1984: 145-155) research in 1982, there were only 180 dongba recognised in the population of 245,154 people, accounting for 0.08% of the whole group by the time. Whereas, there had been about 1,000 dongba living in this region before the establishment of the PRC.

In this study, among the 67 interviewees, 65 of them agreed that the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was the movement that caused most severe impact upon this religion. Five scholars claim that the most severe consequence of this political movement was the loss of belief, which meant that a whole generation did not believe in this religion at all. The current rate of Naxi people believing in this religion was fairly low. In the 1990s, according to the investigation carried out by the DCRI, very few of the Naxi living in the Lijiang basin claimed that they believed in this religion, nearly 80% of them even never knew of its existence at all.

Most of the interviewed farmers and dongba argued that the most severe impact of the government's ban lay in the fact that large quantities of precious dongba manuscripts were confiscated and destroyed. Nearly each interviewee could give the researcher several stories of their own about how the religion was affected during that period of time. An old dongba in his 80s showed the researcher ten manuscripts with over 250 years history, luckily saved by him during the Cultural Revolution (see Appendix 7-1). He recalled:

‘Before those Red Guards (1) came to my village, I hid these books in a mountain cave near my home. However, a few months later, after I took these books home, those young students returned to my village suddenly. I had no time and place to hide these books. All of a sudden, I just covered them with some papers, and placed a Mao Zedong porcelain statue on it. Luckily, no one would dare touch



Meanwhile, some old dongba were physically attacked by the Red Guards as ‘feudal remains’ and some of them were even imprisoned. They were totally deprived of the right to practise any religious ceremony at the time. An old dongba, who was a CCP member and the leader of his village, was imprisoned for two years. After 1983, he was glad that he could practice the religion again after twenty years. However, when the authorities informed him that his CCP membership was also reinstated at the same time, he wrote a letter in which he seriously informed the authority that he did not want that membership anymore. When the researcher asked him why he did that, he just shook his head without any comment.

Another consequence of the political ban came to light soon after the religion was allowed again. Although thousands of dongba manuscripts have been rescued by many dongba and Naxi farmers in one way or another, the contents of these books cannot be fully grasped without the explanations of those experienced dongba, most of whom had passed away by the 1990s. The reason for this situation was because some pictographs that appeared in books were only the symbols of the movement of the dongba in rituals. Without a help of a senior dongba in interpretation, a young dongba might be able to understand what they should do, but not exactly how to do it.

In the post-Mao era, the CCP advocated that China should be a multinational entity in order to maintain the integrity of the country. Therefore, the internal ethnic diversity has to be ‘presented’ within the state and such diversity must be kept in alive. In the light of this statement, some of the minority cultures were released from CCP’s suppression. In 1983, Mr. He Wanbao presided over a conference of dongba, signalling that this practice was no longer banned. Thirteen dongba were invited from Zhongdian, Baoshan and Taian

Counties (He and Guo, 1984: 146). This conference made a great contribution to the recovery of the dongba practice in remote areas. (For further detailed discussion regarding the PRC's post-Mao policies, please see Chapter 9).

### 7.1.3 Tourism Promotion – Explaining ‘Love Suicide’ as a Romantic Event

Since CCP modified its cultural and religious policies, this religious practice was resumed by a number of dongba in their villages without public attention. However, the earthquake in 1996 exposed the names of Lijiang and dongba culture and brought them into the public spotlight. People drew their attention to this ethnic group, and were fascinated by their mysterious dongba cult and the peculiar incident of ‘love suicide’ that they once practised. A number of films and TV plays grasped the image of this peculiar phenomenon to create Lijiang as a place where the local people, the Naxi, were so pure, emotional and heroic in the seeking of their true love that they would rather take their own lives than accept a compromised marriage with someone they did not love. This ‘romantic’ ethnic characteristic attracted many domestic tourists, in particular young people came to Lijiang out of curiosity.

One of the most popular TV plays was ‘*Yi Mi Yang Guang*’ or ‘One Meter of Sunshine’ in English. This TV play mainly depicted a young female Chinese white collar worker, who was employed at a joint-venture company in Shanghai, but came to Lijiang after she broke up with her lover, the owner of the company, who was married. She heard that ‘The Third Jade Dragon World’ was the paradise where those Naxi lovers who committed suicide would have gone, so she went to the place, according to the locals’ guidance, where those lovers jumped off the cliff, and took her own life. Later, her twin sister came to Lijiang looking for her. Her twin sister found her own ideal love at the very edge of the cliff where

she jumped off. The play was so popular across the country that many of the bars and guesthouses in the old town of Lijiang used the play's name and logo as their marketing tool to attract those young tourists who were deeply fond of the play. A number of venues within and outside the old town have become tourist attractions, especially sites where the play and other films were shot.

Another well-known programme was called 'Lijiang Impression', directed by Mr. Zhang Yimou who later became the general director of the Beijing Olympic Games Opening Ceremony in 2008. The Lijiang government decided to borrow Mr. Zhang's popular image to increase Lijiang's popularity at the national level so that they invited him to direct this outdoor musical drama. Lijiang became the first city in China that purposefully used film and musical drama to promote a city as a tourist attraction. This outdoor drama was so popular that it played daily during the peak season at the foot of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, becoming one of the key shows in Lijiang that nearly all the domestic group tourists would watch during their visit. The main content of this programme was the mysterious image of dongba, legends of the dongba culture, and unavoidably the story of 'love suicide'. With these cultural events and artists' effort, the Naxi and Lijiang have become closely connected with the image of 'romance', 'paradise', 'love' and 'adventure'.

Meanwhile, these romantic characteristics were expanded on enormously through the Internet. The images of the Naxi, the beautiful landscape of Lijiang, the mysterious dongba culture, the concept of 'The Third Jade Dragon World', 'love suicide' and other connected icons were extensively discussed and passed on by the Internet surfers. Their popularity proliferated in an unprecedented manner. Indeed, the late 1990s in China embraced the Information Technology era with a total of 300 million Internet users (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2009). The Internet Network played a predominant

part in broadcasting the information across the country.

Some guesthouse owners in Dayanzhen revealed that many of their young customers came to Lijiang to heal a 'sentimental injury'. One of them commented:

'Many young travellers came to Lijiang alone after they broke up with their lovers. They thought Lijiang as the most beautiful and romantic place in China where they could come to relax. Some of them told me that Lijiang was the best 'medicine' to cure their broken hearts. Many of them told me that they believed they could have romantic experience in Lijiang.' (G2-39)

To cope with the tourists' romantic expectations, most of the guesthouses, bars and restaurants advertised themselves as the place that tourists could find 'romantic adventure' and 'true love'. Later, this adventure scenario was vulgarised into looking for 'overnight sexual experience'. And Lijiang became one of the ideal 'romantic' rendezvous to meet up for those young Internet surfers who communicated on the Internet. Gradually, the old town where most of the tourists remained during their visit was full of red lamps hanging up outside the buildings alongside the main streets in order to highlight the romantic atmosphere (see Appendix 7-2). The tourism industry has appropriated the peculiar 'love suicide' scenario and 'romantic' image of the Naxi in Lijiang in order to promote it nationwide as a tourist destination.

Nevertheless, these commercial promotions give rise to a number of questions. Why did the Naxi use to practice 'love suicide'? Why did they stop doing it? What was the main reason that pushed those young Naxi to commit suicide? To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine the history of the most important ritual of the dongba religion and the role of dongba.

#### 7.1.4 Ritual and Kinship

This most important dongba ritual is called ‘The Propitiation of Heaven’, and it originated from the dongba creation myth. It is recorded in manuscripts that the first Naxi man, *Cong-ren-li-en*, married *Seng-he-bu-bei*, a heavenly girl who had a betrothal promise with her cousin, *Kou-lou-kou-xi*, her mother’s brother’s son. Except *Cong-ren-li-en*, the others were heavenly figures (see Appendix 7-3). Their kinship indicated a clear ‘patrilateral cross-cousin marriage’ model, which is identified by Fox in the following statement:

‘There is a rule that a girl should ideally marry into the group from which her mother came. That is, if A receives a woman from B in one generation, it should give one back in the next generation.’ (1967: 203)

Levi-Strauss (1969: 129) describes this marriage system as ‘the elementary formula for marriage by exchange.’ However, Graburn (1971: 213) notices that this kind of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage does not occur very frequently in many anthropological studies. This marriage model, which took place between two or more clans in different generations, denotes that the ‘wife-giver’s family takes precedence over the ‘wife-taker’s. In the next generation, their situation is reversed. In the researched areas, this was approved by the Naxi custom in both basin and mountain regions; the mother’s brother had the highest status in the family and his son had priority to marry his father’s sister’s daughter first. The local custom was that a girl would not be engaged by her family to anyone else unless her cousin gave up or did not marry her. If a girl fell in love with someone other than her cousin to whom she had been betrothed, her sentiment would not be accepted by the girl’s family.

According to the interviewed farmers in a number of villages and some Naxi scholars, this marriage model was deeply rooted in the Naxi society, in particular in rural areas where

the dongba religion had a stronger influence. The fact was documented that cross-cousin marriages accounted for half of the Naxi families before the 1950s, in particular in mountainous region (Lijiang County Annals, 2001: 153; Guo and He, 1999: 164-181). Though the marital law enacted in 1954 had officially banned such marriages, due to claims by the authorities that such marriages resulted in high rates of handicapped children, this marriage model remained popular in some very remote regions (2).

However, in the myth, *Seng-he-bu-bei* did not actually marry her betrothed cousin, but instead another man, *Cong-ren-li-en*, who was regarded as the ancestor of the Naxi group. Her marriage broke her parents' promise and provoked the anger of her uncle and her cousin. They used various means and methods to attack the earth where the man lived, e.g. floods, earthquakes, thunder and lightening, forcing him to bring his wife back to the heaven. After the marriage, they sent a messenger, the primitive image of dongba, to heaven to propitiate the *Seng-he-bu-bei*'s uncle for the first time. The main message was that the man decided not to give his wife back, instead offering his uncle-in-law a pig and a chicken to the uncle's son. In case any unexpected things happened, the man's wife was not present during the ceremony. Hence, no woman was allowed to step onto the ritual ground from then onwards. After sending the dongba to solve other problems another two times (3), the man decided to hold the ritual, the Propitiation of Heaven, annually from then on, to show his respect and appreciation.

#### **7.1.5 Cross-Cousin Marriage and 'Love Suicide'**

This marriage rule was not only opposed by farmers due to their fear of physiological problems, but also because of its associations with 'love suicide'. Mathieu (2003) believes that the phenomenon of 'love suicide' is related to the resistance to the arbitrary

‘contractual obligations’ in Leach’s (1971: 224) term. Mathieu suggests that:

‘When young Naxi engaged in illicit love, custom in the form of myth and moral obligation dictated that they commit suicide, and so they did. But if they did not, Naxi custom granted parents the authority to kill their own children. And if parents did not assume this responsibility, the entire Naxi community was poised to turn against them.....suicide played a juridical and structural role in supporting this marriage system’ (2003: 263-264)

Apart from Mathieu’s study, a number of theoretical debates have been sparked among scholars both at home and abroad. Generally speaking, Rock (1947), Guo and He (1999) and other interviewed Naxi scholars would prefer viewing the custom as a romantic myth, connecting it with young Naxi moral expectation. Chao (1996) and Hsu (1998a) are more inclined to agree with Jackson’s inference that this custom is the result of a clash of cultural values between the Naxi culture and Confucianism imposed by the Qing rulers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hsu also contends that:

‘The phenomenon of love suicide is regarded as one of the embodiments which shows the Naxi resentful feeling towards arranged marriages imposed by Manchu after 1723’. (1998a: 15-16)

However, this cultural clash theory cannot explain why this political reform did not trigger as many suicides as in other minority regions where the reform was introduced at the same time. Given the fact that it was possible that many other minority groups including the Han society had cross-cousin marriages at a certain rate at least in the nineteenth century, it was extremely doubtful that they had the same myth as the Naxi, in particular the curse that anyone who failed to complete the marriage circle between two clans would be punished by the god of heaven. Unfortunately, the Naxi had this legend and they firmly believed in it as a religion. In addition, the Confucianism was not introduced in the Lijiang region in the Qing but at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty. As a result, if Confucianism

had been the key reason that triggered the 'love suicide', then the rate should not have increased in the Qing, but during the Ming Dynasty, which was three hundred years earlier.

The correlation between the cross-cousin marriage and the 'love suicide' was also demonstrated by the implementation of the authority's regulation since the 1950s. This situation ceased dramatically after the government used legal force to rule out cross-cousin marriages from local custom. Although some of the Naxi families in mountain regions were still practising such marriages, the phenomenon of 'love suicide' was largely unknown afterwards, since violating the cross-cousin marriage rule now had legal sanction and approval.

Nevertheless, apart from the sentimental reason, none of these theories explains why a girl was so determined to refuse to marry her betrothed cousin. Did the role of 'love' play such a decisive role? In Mu, Ch.Y.'s (2005: 298-302) study in Jinshan, Huangshan and Labo Counties in Lijiang, she noticed that the figure of suicide-women was much larger than that of men, and women were more determined than men to commit suicide, some of them even forced their lovers to jump off the cliff first. Moreover, Mu, Ch.Y. interviewed a woman who survived from her failed suicide several decades before. Mu, Ch.Y. records:

'According to the survivor, the reason she decided to commit suicide was because her betrothed cousin was severely handicapped and could not even talk to her as a normal person. She got a lover after she grew up, but could not marry him. Later, her lover refused to commit suicide with her, so she jumped in a river on her own. After she was rescued, she was forced to leave Lijiang due to the huge social pressure.' (2005: 300)

Mu's study illustrated that 'love suicide' was not a phenomenon that was mainly caused by the desire of seeking love or sentiment as the phrase suggested, but rather provoked by the



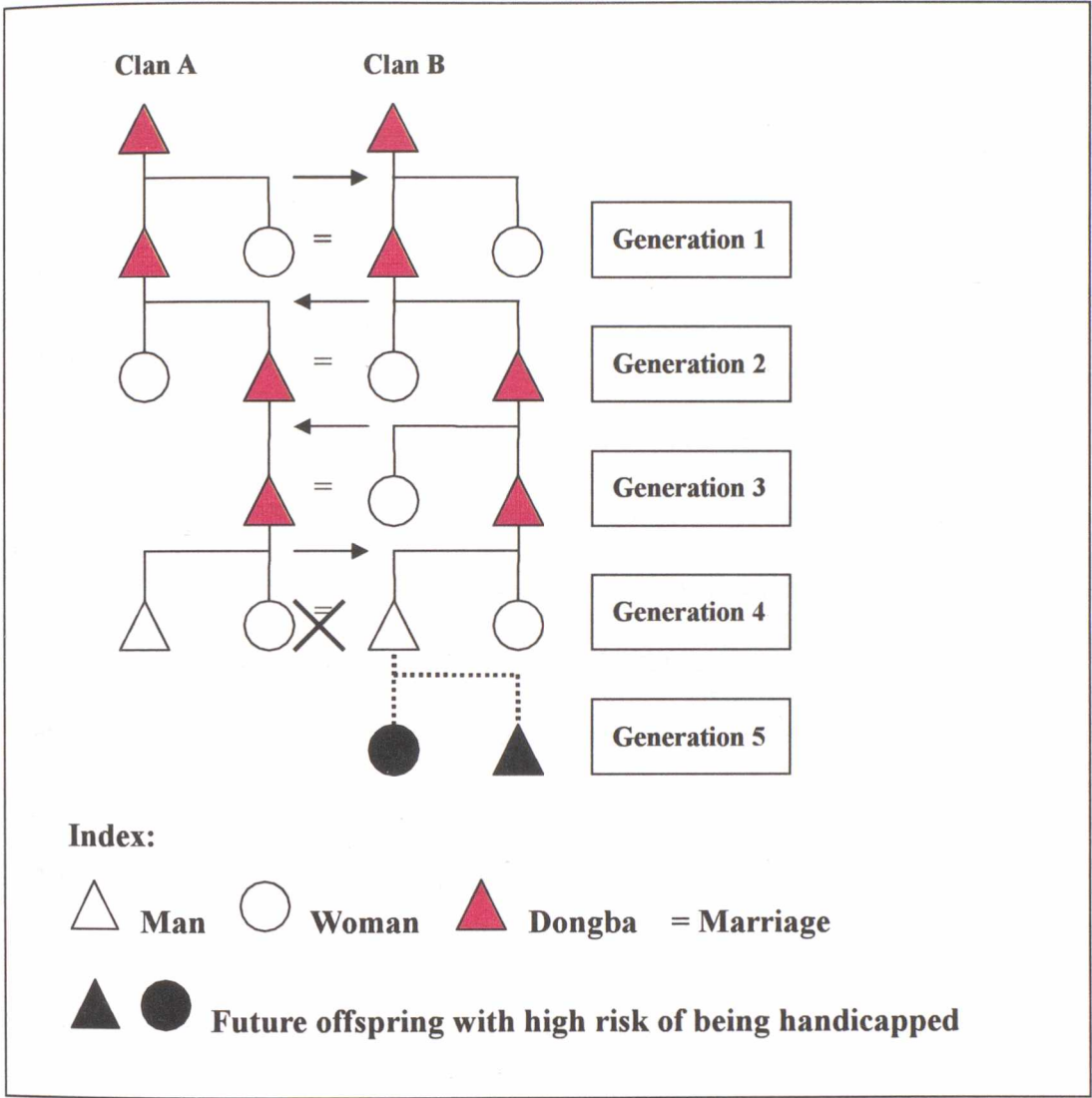
negative physiological consequence of cross-cousin marriage, which might appear, on average, every few generations.

#### **7.1.6 Cross-Cousin Marriage and Dongba Kinship**

Furthermore, a closer look at the applications of this cross-cousin marriage model in some dongba families indicated that this marriage model had special meaning to the development of the dongba religion. The researcher investigated some dongba families' genealogy on different scales. Their lineages showed a strong cross-cousin marriage character, and some of the family trees were broad enough to include 15 dongba in the last four generations across different clans. One of the typical examples was the following family tree of two dongba clans, which demonstrated that these two clans have been practising this tradition for three generations (see Figure 7-1). In order not to release people's private information, which was irrelevant to this study, and to exhibit the correlation between the two clans clearly, the researcher simplified the following diagram based on Fox's (1967: 205) pattern of cross-cousin marriage.

At the third generation, the woman who married her cousin confessed to the researcher that she was under pressure to betroth her 15-year-old daughter to her brother's 20-year-old son in the near future. Unfortunately, she stoutly rejected this potential betrothal by all means, despite the fact that her mother-in-law, who was also her father's sister, her father and her brother, had all put pressure upon her. The rule of 'passing women between clans' would then be unlikely to be carried out in the next generation. In fact, she underlined that the marriage with her cousin had taken place under an immense pressure from their both families.

Figure 7-1: Two dongba clans' family tree



Why was this woman so determined to object to this tradition? She admitted that there were two factors preventing her from carrying on this traditional marriage system. One was the marital law enacted by the national government in 1954, which prohibited this intermarriage from official registration. The other reason was the fear of producing handicapped offspring. For most of the interviewed Naxi, this marriage model was accepted on condition that it was carried over two generations. However, if it has been carried out for three generations, then it should be stopped. Otherwise, the offspring of the fourth generation would be in a high risk of being handicapped (see Figure 7-1). This fear was repeated by other interviewees in the researched areas.

The significance of this kinship model is that it denotes the conventional route of becoming a dongba. In the past, a young Naxi man who wanted to become a dongba had to start from doing an apprentice for a dongba who was his senior in kinship. Otherwise, his apprenticeship would be turned down for various reasons. Therefore, the chance of being dongba was subject to a man's kinship. This kinship legitimacy was proved by most of the interviewed senior and young dongba who proudly claimed that they were from a 'traditional dongba family' (4). Meanwhile, although this apprenticeship was free, it required the trainees to stay at the dongba master's home for over ten or even fifteen years, during which they spent most of the time together, farming and performing ceremonies. The survival of this practice has been largely dependent on this time consuming apprenticeship through kinship patterns from one generation to the next.

#### **7.1.7 The Duty and Power of Dongba**

Apart from holding the sacrifice of heaven, other rituals that dongba are usually in charge of include funerals, exorcisms, divination, healing injuries and some annual worships and festivals. In general, when a person dies, dongba are the only ones who are able to send his/her soul off back to Northern China from whence the Naxi originally migrated. It is a religious job exclusively for a man. When not doing a sacrifice or funeral, dongba do not wear their uniform, but just live like normal farmers. The position of a dongba in traditional Naxi mountain communities is like a part-time job. They are only on duty when a ritual is requested. Chao (1996: 209) notes that 'dongba were not part of an organised religious institution but rather were individual practitioners who performed a variety of rituals...'

When holding some large rituals, dongba often work in groups with others, most of whom are related to each other. The number of the groups varies according to the importance of the ritual, the family's religious attitude and economic ability. The group of dongba is usually led by an experienced senior dongba. Before holding the ritual, the dongba need to write some pictographs on wooden slates as notice to the invited gods and spirits, drawing some ghost figures on other slates in different shapes to show the host family that these are the monsters that stand in the way of the dead person's soul and that the dead person would have to pass through them.

During the ceremony, they begin to chant from manuscripts in order to first inform the lord of the dongba religion that they are doing everything according to the rules, and next invite some of the gods to stand on their side fighting with those ghosts. This is followed by singing songs to enhance their power. They perform a variety of dances to show respect to the gods and to scare away those ghosts who still refuse to go away from the path. Moreover, at the beginning and the end of each ritual, they sacrifice livestock to different gods to assure the host family that the ritual is genuinely valid.

To convince the host family that the gods have received the sacrifice or that the demons have been conquered, each ritual includes divination before and after the ceremony.

During some important sacrifices, a chicken fed by the host family is killed at the end of the practice in order to make an omen by looking at the patterns of the bone at the bottom of the head, when it is cut off. The ritual would not be valid if the chicken is bought from a market. Another function of the divination is to show the host family the place where the soul has gone, and to tell them the future of the whole family in the coming year. By looking at the carcass of the killed chicken, an experienced dongba would be able to tell the host family whether their future is auspicious or ominous (5).

The 'power' of the dongba varies according to his knowledge in many ways. Sometimes, a 'powerful' dongba needs to recognise some special herbs, because a better knowledge of the medicine would enhance the 'power' of a dongba, especially when seeking to save a dying person recovering from illness. An interviewed farmer once explained the power of dongba.

'Those so-called great or senior dongba need to be very good at chanting religious books. In addition, they need to be able to recite or write some books for themselves. Needless to say, if a dongba can heal a dying person, then he will be regarded as a 'magic' or 'powerful' dongba. In general, a dongba needs to be very knowledgeable. Farmers often go to consult their clan's dongba for various reasons, not only when someone is sick but also if their livestock is missing. A dongba is expected to know where to find the livestock by divining.' (G2-25)

One practical function of divination is for predicting or praying for favourable weather for the oncoming harvest. The timetable of the main religious activities is highly related to the Naxi agricultural calendar (see Appendix 7-4). Some very knowledgeable dongba can also tell an omen by looking at the stars. Usually, at each solar term, a dongba needs to make a divination on whether or not there would be rain on the coming day before arranging a ceremony. They also use this method to ensure that the right star is in an upright position during the ritual so that the dongba would get optimised power. Apparently, this method is extremely useful for the Naxi farming needs, e.g. when to plant the seeds and when to pick up the harvest on time. The frequency and timetable of the religious affairs are thus closely related to the farming needs.

On these important rituals, dongba are paid in kind, such as the head and skin of the livestock used during the ceremonies, some wine, meat and sugar. In an agricultural society, these goods were highly valued in Lijiang (Mueggler, 1991). In the visited

villages, each dongba had their own families that they served exclusively. Traditionally, a dongba did not serve all farmers of the village, but just his clan. A dongba would not touch another's business, as it was so closely bound up with the status, power, influence and economic benefits of the dongba. If a dongba is fully occupied by various requests each year, then he does not need to work in the fields any longer. The reward he gets from the 'customers' can ensure his life is lived at a very good level. A few well-known dongba then become full-time or professional religious workers.

An interviewed Naxi scholar concluded the role of dongba in the Naxi communities:

'Dongba are those knowledgeable farmer-priests who are well skilled in holding rituals, religious dances, literature, legends, traditional medicine and folk customs. They act as an intermediary between heaven, humanity and earth. The activities they practise are various, covering nearly all fields of the agrarian life, from weather forecast to praying for good harvest, from holding ancestral sacrifices to healing illness. They are one of the best representatives of the Naxi.' (G1-02)

## **7.2 Tourism Influence in the Development of Dongba Schools**

Nonetheless, the traditional bond between dongba and the rural communities was radically affected by the outside world. Since late 1990s, in response to the sad reality that many experienced senior dongba have passed away one after the other, and inspired by the popularity of dongba culture as a tourism attraction, the local government developed a new policy towards the preservation of this declining ethnic culture. This was to institute dongba schools, which were different from the traditional apprenticeship system involving dongba masters and their apprentices. The local government classified 6 counties as 'Traditional Dongba Culture Preservation Areas'. In these areas, a number of dongba schools were established. According to the government's registration in 2007, there were 12 or 13 dongba schools teaching rituals and book learning in these regions (6). Some of

these schools were partially sponsored by the government or foreign funds so that the trainees did not pay for their study and could also have free accommodation and food. For those schools that were financed solely by commercial or private sectors, the trainees who did not live nearby the schools sometimes needed to pay for their food and accommodation. The total length of this school study was between two and three years.

However, although the researcher went to visit 7 of these schools according to their registered addresses, 6 of them remained closed much of the year. The farmers living nearby those schools and the trainees staying at nearby homes told the researcher that the schools had been closed because the teachers had left for Lijiang. These schools were only occasionally opened when the teachers came home from the town and were on vacation.

This absence was due to several reasons. To begin with, since the 1990s, most of the experienced dongba have been either invited or hired by the research organisations in Lijiang. Their main duty has been to help those scholars translate the dongba manuscripts into Chinese or recording dongba dances by video cameras. Over the past twenty years, the DCRI and the DCM were the bodies that have hired most of the senior dongba from the rural area. Though these dongba have made remarkable contributions to the rescuing of the dongba literature, they have been actually disconnected from their communities much of the year, with one of the negative results being that most of the dongba schools that relied on their presence were running irregularly.

The second reason, which prevented these senior dongba going back to the rural homes, was the advent of tourism. Since 2000 onwards the dongba, and even those farmers who could read, write and explain the pictographs, were highly in demand by many tourist companies in urban area in Lijiang. These religious practitioners have been promoted by



the Lijiang government and the tourist industry as a unique ethnic feature of the Naxi group. Those senior dongba who helped the research bodies doing research were often paid by the companies to appear in front of tourists to show their dongba knowledge. This increasing commercial value lured those less experienced dongba to urban areas. Consequently, the urban areas became a magnet attracting dongba from various rural areas.

The third factor was on the trainees' side. The researcher visited the Dongba School in Changshui Village, which was founded in 1998. There were 15 students at the beginning, but nearly half of them have dropped out for various reasons, such as joining the army, working in other towns or cities, or busy running businesses, etc. According to the interviewed students who remained in the village, studying dongba knowledge required constant effort, time and determination, even though the course and textbooks were free. For some students, however, learning dongba knowledge was just a 'fun' thing to do or as an interest during their leisure time.

As time went by, those who hardly had time to practise this knowledge in real life were gradually giving up the study or simply lost interest. Most of the remaining students were associated with a tourism related business, which demonstrates the close connection between tourism and dongba culture (see Table 7-1). Those five students who worked in the tourism industry admitted that although the teacher was not able to give them lessons regularly, the practical value of this knowledge within the tourism sector has substantially sustained their study in many ways. The following two cases demonstrate the controversial influence of tourism upon the school study of young dongba in different aspects.



Table 7-1: Students at Changshui Dongba School

Students	Age	Residence	Occupations
1	37	Changshui	Making dongba handicrafts in Dayanzhen
2	29	Changshui	Selling dongba handicrafts in Dayanzhen
3	28	Changshui	Farmer
4	39	Guifeng	Village official
5	52	Changshui	Teacher
6	26	Sanyuan	Working at the Dongba Cultural Museum
7	28	Changshui	Selling dongba handicrafts in Dayanzhen
8	34	Changshui	Working at a tourist attraction as dongba

Source: fieldwork data

7.2.1 Dongba School in Yushuizhai

One of the dongba schools that the researcher has attended as an observer was the one run by Yushuizhai Tourism Company, established in 1997 in Lijiang. It was the second largest tourism company in Lijiang, owned by a Naxi businessman, who was also the chairman of the Association of Dongba Culture. The ‘village’ was just a theme park, constituted by several resituated traditional Naxi houses, figuring them as tourist attractions. All the Naxi that ‘lived’ in the houses were the company’s employees.

In 2004, the company established a department called ‘Traditional Dongba Culture Department’, recruiting more than 20 dongba trainees studying and working at the company. By the beginning of 2008, there were 17 in all, 1 senior dongba in his late 70s, 5 were classified by the company as experienced dongba with the title of ‘Dongba Master’ on their business cards, and others were 5 dongba and 11 dongba trainees. The age of those trainees was between 16 and 19 years old, 8 of them came from Shuming Village. All of them were from dongba families. The company offered them free accommodation, food, and 400 RMB each month as studentship until their study finished.

The training course at Yushuizhai lasted for two years. Usually the first year was a compact full-time study, from 8am to 5pm. The content included learning more than one thousand pictographs, eight simple dances and the basic rules of five main rituals. The first year of the study was intensive and demanding. After that, the trainees would be assessed by the company according to their achievement, learning ability and interest in this religion, so as to decide whether their study could proceed to the second year. The second year was mainly based on self-study, depending on their interest, e.g. dancing, drawing or holding rituals, and their ability to understanding this religion more broadly.

To help the dongba trainees to understand this practice physically and to provide an opportunity to exhibit the dongba culture to tourists within the village, the company has set up several places for practising some of the sacrifices regularly required in the main village rituals. On some important occasions, the senior dongba would lead some of the trainees to worship; at such times all the students were required to observe and participate attentively. This was the time that the trainees can exercise the knowledge they had learnt.

Nonetheless, this new option led to some results that the company did not expect. First of all, most of the trainees chose to stay in the town after their study, rather than going home as the company expected. In view of this situation, the company decided to keep such trainees on as regular employees, rather than risk losing them to rival tourist companies. In this manner trainees could carry on with their study on their own, whilst still being able to use the resources that the company had to offer.

In the second place, the motive and the seriousness of this school learning was really debatable. According to the friendly conversations with those trainees, in which they felt

more comfortable to discuss their real situation and the motives of learning, they all admitted that they were very proud of having a chance to learn the knowledge of the dongba culture. It was a popular trend in their villages. The following extract of their conversations was representative:

Trainee A: 'The advantage of being dongba is because my grandfather said that villagers will respect you in future. He used to learn dongba from his father when he was young, but then it was banned. And as my great-grandfather has passed away, so I can't learn from him.'

Trainee B: 'Yes, my father said if you can write the pictographs, you can read those dongba books. It tells you a lot of knowledge. And of course, you can find a good job with that knowledge.'

(Laughter)

Trainee C: 'Well, my uncle is also a dongba, and he is in Shanghai. He told me that we should go out from the village to see the outside world. It's really different from our mountain area. So, I come here, and it's great that I can learn the dongba knowledge.'

Among these 11 trainees, 7 of them admitted that this paid dongba course was a good opportunity for them to come to the town to see the outside world for the first time in their lives.

Yet others objected to this new method of teaching dongba culture, especially some senior dongba and the Naxi rural communities. They disagreed with the current way of training, which grouped some young dongba learning books and dances in intensive courses. The most important task that a dongba should learn, they emphasised, was the responsibility and commitment, which can only be acquired in real life. According to some old dongba in their 70s and 80s, being a dongba was not just being capable of writing pictographs, reading manuscripts or performing dances. The major task for them was to preside over religious ceremonies on behalf of the community in various situations, during which they can set up the communication passage between the human society and the world in which

the spirits reside. One of them emphasised:

‘This religious faith was very hard to learn quickly on a school course, let alone in two years time. This is not serious and I don’t think they really understand the meaning of the knowledge at this age. My apprenticeship took me twenty years, until my father died. He was a really good dongba. I remember very clearly that I was very scared when I saw a dead person lying in a room for the first time... Many years later, when my nephew, a very good boy died in an accident. I helped my father and other dongba at his funeral. It was the first time for myself that I could feel there is a spiritual world. I’m sure that boy went to the hometown peacefully... These are things that they can’t learn at school. It’s something that can only be learnt in real life.’ (G2-31)

These senior dongba emphasised that such an understanding required a profound and time-consuming communication between the dongba masters and their disciples in many aspects of their lives. The authority of a dongba master was not just established through the master passing on some knowledge to the disciple but through the very special relationship that develops between the two. Therefore, as they explained, a father-son or uncle-nephew kinship would escalate this relationship and authority with great ease. A normal teacher-student relationship, according to them, would hardly inspire the kind of awe and authority to which a traditional young disciple would be subjected.

However, this school study was welcomed by most of the young trainees. They argued that one of the advantages of the school study was that they could study fulltime. While in contrast, the traditional way of learning was only available in the evenings, as the dongba and their disciples have to go to the field to work during the daytime. As a result, the total amount of knowledge that a student acquired from school study in one year was considerably more than that of the traditional apprenticeship. For instance, some traditional dongba apprentices could only learn some 600 to 800 pictographs over a ten-year apprenticeship, whilst the students at dongba schools could learn more than a

thousand pictographs in their one-year of study.

Another advantage of this new mode of study was that the students had more than one teacher and several ‘assistants’ who had experience and knowledge helping them to understand the material. Meanwhile, they had some classmates with whom they could exchange feelings and understanding of the study. The third extra gain regarding the study at the Yushuizhai School was that trainees had regular chances to practise what they have learned, although not in a real life context. After all, the school study was not easy to put into practice, especially for those dongba who had less experience or financial resources for full time study. Nevertheless, the dongba school in Xinzhu Village offered yet another perspective in which to examine the link between tourism and the dongba culture, as we shall see next.

### **7.2.2 Dongba School in Xinzhu Village**

Another dongba school that the researcher tried to attend was in Xinzhu Village, which has been well-known for its dongba religion for centuries. Although the school remained closed during the fieldwork, the unremitting efforts of the local dongba in the whole process of setting up this institute demonstrated the close links between tourism and the culture in different aspects. In history, there were quite a few great dongba born in this village, e.g. He Yonggong (1824-1888), He Shijun (1860-1930), He Wenzhi (1907-1951) and He Cai (1917-1956).

The most eminent Chinese dongba-culture-scholar, the former director of Taiwan Palace Museum, Professor Li Lincan once studied the pictographs for eight months in He Wenzhi’s family in 1942. More than 1,700 dongba books and some invaluable religious

tools are restored in Lijiang Dongba Culture Museum. In addition, manuscripts transferred from this village are to be found in the museums of Lijiang, Kunming, Nanjing, Beijing, Taipei and Harvard University.

The restoration of the dongba culture in this village was largely inspired by Lijiang's tourism development. Since 2001, there have been several dongba working at DCRI and DCM either translating dongba manuscripts or practising dongba dances. During their spare time, they worked with some tourism companies in Lijiang, writing pictographs or engraving pictographic seals for tourists. In October 2004, after three years working in Lijiang, these dongba decided to establish a dongba school based in Xinzhu. One dongba recalled:

‘Initially, we just thought that Lijiang’s tourism market could offer us some jobs, so setting up a school would be very useful to attract more young trainees to study this religion. And then, the economic potential might in turn propel the revival of the religion in this area. We collected some money from each of our families, and built a few houses on a dilapidated courtyard.’ (G2-07)

They spent over 60,000 RMB to have the school established. Unfortunately, setting up a school was not as easy as they assumed. By the end of 2005, they were seriously in debt. They went to several public departments and some dongba cultural research bodies asking for financial aid. Nevertheless, hardly any of these organisations could give them substantial support. The school was then closed for nearly a year. All the trainees went home and teachers went to Lijiang to carry on their jobs in tourism. One of them opened a dongba handicraft shop at Shuhe Village.

To inspire the local farmers’ interest of this religion, they decided, in September 2007 to resume the Propitiation of Heaven at the beginning of the next year. This idea had a

positive response from a department of the Lijiang government. One dongba cultural association and the Xinzhu Village Committee sponsored this event with 15,000 RMB and 20,000 RMB respectively. A number of public departments promised to attend the ceremony.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008, 11 dongba in Xinzhu Village presided over the ritual after being banned by the authority for half a century (see Appendix: 7-5). According to the village committee's calculation and the researcher's own observation, over 3,000 people witnessed this historic moment of the Naxi group. There were two Lijiang's local TV stations and one more from Kunming, the provincial capital city, recorded this ceremony by video cameras. This ceremony was then broadcast on the two Lijiang TV Stations two days later. Over 30 officials and scholars from Lijiang, Kunming, Chengdu, Shanghai and Beijing were present.

This event has aroused remarkable response from the local farmers. In the following weeks after the ceremony, a few farmers from other villages in the vicinity decided to think about the possibility of hosting this practice. Some of them have contacted Xinzhu's dongba, asking them whether they would be available to do this ceremony in their villages next year. Some interviewed farmers claimed that they came from other villages, which took them seven hours of climbing over the mountains. One interviewee stated:

'I've never seen this ceremony before in my life. To be honest, I have no idea why I came to see this ceremony. It's just amazing. Since I heard of this news, I've been excited for a few weeks. I really want to know what is the sacrifice of heaven. I'm really pleased that I'm here.' (G2-40)

Another young farmer interrupted our conversation, saying:

'Because we are Naxi and the Naxi need to practice this ceremony annually. My

grandfather told me many times that the Naxi are the offspring of those who practised this ritual in the past. So, today, we are Naxi! It's just great!'

The activity went to the summit when the secretary of the Naxi Culture Association announced on behalf of the local authority that they would support Xinzhu Village with 200,000 RMB for the preservation of the dongba culture in the coming years. The school courtyard was completely submerged in people's dances, songs and laughter.

Seeing that the Dongba School has achieved amazing influence in the local area while also attracting many visitors from some big cities, some dongba and farmers have started to think of promoting this practice as a tourist asset. In the following weeks, it has become a popular topic among the farmers to discuss how to grasp this opportunity to benefit from this traditional practice. Those farmers who had experience of living or working in Lijiang convinced others by showing off their knowledge learned from the city that the dongba culture was the spotlight of tourism in Lijiang.

They claimed that the promotion of the dongba culture at Xinzhu would attract a lot of tourists coming to the village and, consequently, the farmers' living conditions would be greatly improved as it had improved the lives of those living in urban areas. One farmer carpenter who worked in Lijiang as a woodcarving craftsman stated:

'When I work at the shops, many tourists asked me where they can see the real dongba culture, because they don't like those commercial performances in the town. I told them that they can only go to some mountain areas to see something original. If we can do some promotion like those tourist companies did, I'm sure a lot of tourists would be very interested... They can stay in our village and look around, taking photos and buying souvenirs, etc. There will be a lot of opportunities to do some business with them.' (G2-45)

Meanwhile, this sensational event also inspired the ambition of the village committee to



accelerate infrastructural construction. Just two weeks after the event, the secretary of the village committee went to the county government, chasing the relevant senior departments to hasten the speed of constructing the main road leading from the village to the county town. The secretary explained:

‘It would be much faster to approve a public project in Lijiang, so long as it is related to tourism. I’m very confident that the village would stand a better chance of benefiting from the preservation project on condition that it can be associated with the economic development.’

Just one month later, further positive news inspired the farmers’ expectations. According to the Yunnan Provincial government, the largest national park in Yunnan, Laojunshan National Park will be established in the next 2 or 3 years. Xinzhu Village has been included in this national plan (7). There is a possibility that, according to one interviewed official, the dongba culture of this village will be promoted as one of the tourist attractions in this project. Villagers were extremely excited by this new plan, as they firmly believed if the national park were to be established, then their living conditions would be significantly improved, as had been the case for those in urban areas in the past ten years. The bumpy dusty road through the village would be paved by the government and many families alongside it would be able to offer a variety of services to tourists.

A farmer who had working experience in Lijiang was extremely confident that tourism would considerably contribute to the village’s economic progress:

‘We have a lot of valuable things for tourists to see. The only problem is the transport. It is so difficult to come and go. With this provincial plan, I’m sure the transport will be improved considerably. No transport, no tourism, then no better life.’ (G2-47)

Several dongba in this village looked forward to this project, hoping that this would offer

them substantial income not by working outside the village but by staying in the community. The leader of the Xinzhu Dongba School explained:

‘The dongba religion and the traditional Naxi custom would be the main treasures of this village. If the national park is established, it would attract many tourists’ attention gradually. We hope that the traditional bond between dongba and their kin fellows and disciples would be kept in a good condition by the participation of tourists and tourist related business.’ (G2-41)

### 7.3 Analysis and Discussion

Before the advent of tourism, most of the Naxi mountain communities credited dongba with a relatively higher social respect owing to their practical contribution to people’s everyday life. However, farmers’ religious requests were not sufficient to allocate them with a fixed position in the Naxi social divisions. Instead, the communities offered dongba with various food or valuable goods as ‘payment’ to acknowledge their efforts. In a traditional agrarian society, a well-known dongba who was often respected as ‘powerful’ or ‘magic’ could live on those valuable goods that were paid by villagers. However, in a changing world, the value of those agricultural products has declined. As a result, the acknowledgement that the dongba obtained from the communities, in a modern society, was more on social than on an economic level. This unbalanced situation led them to seek higher potential economic rewards elsewhere.

To some extent, the growth of tourism in Lijiang, as a meaningful metaphor of modernity in Harrison (2001a), Mackerras (1994), Oakes (1998) and Uriely’s (2005) sense, granted these ‘farmer-priests’ (Hsu, 1998a: 11) with a chance to maximise their personal social and economic conditions. In the perspective of those dongba, in particular many of the youth, they welcome this dislocation of the traditional bond between dongba and their rural

communities for the increase of mobility and the higher chance of working in other places. Such social changes have been conceptualised in a number of studies (Giddens, 1990; Wallerstein, 1995; Wheeler, 1999). However, for some senior dongba who retained a broader social concern, the external influence, especially the force of tourism was regarded as a 'threat' to the traditional religion and social convention (Buckley, 2004; Wang, 2000).

As far as the 'power' of dongba was concerned, although it was hard to testify in a scientific way whether the ritual on funeral was truly important for a dead person's soul, the success of such a ceremony was crucial indeed for the bereaved relatives, who took some comfort from such rituals. In addition, the ritual involving predictions or divinations were also very efficient for the dongba in maintaining their authority in the communities. One of the practical values of the dongba culture was in reference to helping the group cope with the farming difficulties caused by the natural environment. Hence, divination became one of the key measures on which to test the effectiveness of the work of the dongba.

Unfortunately, this feature happened to fall into CCP's category of 'backwardness', 'superstition' and 'feudal beliefs and practices' (Brodsgaard and Strand, 1998; McKhann, 1998; White, 1997), severely devastated in a series of political movements. This religion was nearly eliminated by these repressions. It was the most tragic chapter the religion had experienced. For the first time, many of the dongba skills and knowledge failed to be passed on to the next generation. The generation that grew up during the political ban became the missing link in the succession, as many of the old dongba died before passing their knowledge on to the younger generation. The brutal devastation of the Cultural Revolution was reflected in the following account.

‘Humiliation, insults, oppression, and an attempt at forced assimilation; destruction of the ecological equilibrium and ruinous exploitation; economic plundering of the minority regions; these were the consequences of the Cultural Revolution for the national minorities and their religions.’ (Heberer, 1989: 29)

In this regard, the school study started in the 1990s compensated for the huge shortage of dongba masters across the Lijiang region in some measure. Although the religious seriousness of the school learning has been compromised to some extent, the skills and some basic knowledge that the dongba trainees acquired at schools were much more intensive than that of the traditional way of study. To some extent, the school study has prepared a large number of young dongba trainees for the further development of this declining religious practice in the shortest possible time. The traditional apprenticeship has now been shortened to some training courses for people who would like to learn dongba knowledge, with the result that the depth and content of the study were far from enough for being a real dongba. Notwithstanding, the selection of dongba has for the first time in the dongba history been dramatically expanded from a restricted kinship pattern to a much broader social intake.

As far as the contribution of tourism was concerned, the Xinzhu case suggested that the increasing popularity of the dongba culture in the tourism-affected region has significantly modified farmers’ vision, encouraging them to establish a dongba school to preserve this declining culture. Although operating the school entailed the search for substantial financial backing, their enduring efforts have now paid off. In addition, they used religious events to inspire the local community to participate in the revival of the dongba culture. Such events aroused huge interest amongst farmers, who saw the economic potential in such religious revival and the infrastructural planning and investment that went along with it. Farmers began to appreciate the economic value of their cultural legacy, as noted in the

study in a small mountain village in northern Vietnam (Michaud and Turner, 2006) and in Ladakh, India (Michaud, 1991).

Although the Laojunshan National Park had not been established by the time the research was carried out, the future development in the village indicated similar potential benefits as could be found in the context of developments associated with the Komodo National Park in Indonesia, studied by Hitchcock (1992: 303-314). In the Indonesian case tourism played an important role in contributing to the local community's infrastructural development, employment provision, diversifying locals' economic structure, and strengthening their decision making power.

In regard to the school study in Yushuizhai Company, despite the fact that these young dongba were as yet not good enough for holding religious ceremonies in a rural area, they were welcomed by tourist companies, which generally ignored their limited religious attitude and ability. The tourism industry offered those dongba a chance to live on their religious knowledge and professional skills, which was witnessed in other minority regions in China (Zhang, King and Ap John, 1999; Wu, Zhu and Xu, 2000; Pan, 2002).

The expectation of dongba seeking higher economic value for their professional skills has been, to some extent, rewarded by the tourism industry, which was more interested in their economic potential. In the long run, such dongba trainees may well become a group of professional practitioners serving the mountain rural communities across the region. With this economic support, their professional skills would be strengthened to some extent. This illuminates that their exchange value took precedence over others, i.e. religious and cultural characters, which is in line with the debates concerning commodification of local cultures (Cohen, 1988, MacCannell, 1976, 1992; Goulding, 2000).

On the negative side, however, this movement has weakened the traditional link between dongba and their communities, since many dongba spend considerable time in urban areas, whilst new trainees have much looser ties to the rural areas. Secondly, the dongba masters' traditional authority upon their disciples has considerably diminished due to the loosened kinship ties between new style teacher and student. There should be some new power to ensure the quality of the dongba training in religious study. The next chapter will examine the commodification of dongba who worked in the tourism industry, further elaborating on the implications of such weaker links between the dongba and their rural communities.

After all, the influence of tourism in Lijiang was not just its strength in offering employment opportunities to the locals and developing the local economy in many aspects as documented in a number of studies (McKhann, 2001; Su and Teo, 2008; Zhang, H., 2003), but also exerted an invisible power in using a variety of mediums to promote the Naxi and Lijiang across the country for some commercial concerns.

The Naxi cross-cousin marriage was firmly anchored in the group's myth of origin, described in the dongba religion as the rule that should not be broken. This situation put the Naxi, especially the girls, under immense pressure, for anyone who refused such a marriage would not be accepted by the community. The theoretical premise for such inference is that the power of myth is often invoked as a means of maintaining social order alongside the application of the doctrine, tradition, custom and social convention, all playing the role of a 'legal charter of the community' (Malinowski, 1926: 40-44).

Moreover, Levi-Strauss notes that:

'Because cross-cousin marriage is an arbitrary regulation from the biological viewpoint, they have proceeded to assert that it is arbitrary in the absolute, whatever viewpoint is adopted.' (1969: 122)

Unfortunately, the ambiguous circumstances under which cross-cousin marriages actually took place were ignored by the tourism industry, which proceeded to adopt the myth to serve its own purposes and interests. The tourism industry was promoting this scenario by stressing the romantic facet for commercial purposes. Films, shows, TV programmes and even the decorations of the Dayanzhen were all visualising this 'romantic' version of the 'love suicide' myth. The attractiveness of the ethnic culture was shrunk to an exhibition in the orientation to 'indigenous fantasy' (Stanley, 1998: 180). The Naxi have to some extent been assigned a label of 'peculiar' or 'odd' in order to cater to the tourists' desire for seeking the exotic and romantic 'other' (Cohen, 1988; Graburn, 1984, Guan, 1989; Smith, V.L., 1989).

This situation reflects that the process of commodification not only targets the local community's land, labour and capital but also treats their history and culture as commodity (Greenwood, 1989; Yang, Wall and Smith, 2006). The commodification of local culture for touristic purposes is 'quite common all over the Third World and in the ethnic areas of both Western and Communist countries' (Cohen, 1988: 381). In this way, the meanings of the culture are represented both to internal and an external public, but in divergent manner; internal consumption of the dongba culture reinforces as a sense of ethnic identity, whilst external consumption of the same culture reinforces the process of commodification.

#### **7.4 Summary**

By and large, this chapter examines the dongba culture in an historical context as well as its general characteristics, together with some events and phenomena that have been drawn to the attention of academics in the past half a century. By focusing on the

apprenticeship of dongba, duty and life, and the commercial promotion of 'love suicide', the data obtained from the fieldwork is compared or linked to other previous studies so that the overall picture of the dongba culture, before and after the increase of tourism, is portrayed clearly.

To some extent, the religious rituals were the recorder of Naxi history, on which many major social changes have left their marks. Dongba participated in the progress of the religion, in which the kinship structure and cross-cousin marriage, was instituted as a principle for the Naxi as a whole, according to some informants, to cope with the shortage of population in the early stages. One of the consequences was the peculiar incident of 'love suicide', which was due to the pressure from this kinship model and ensuing physiological concerns. Furthermore, dongba clans actively complied with this rule by which their social status, religious power and influence were consolidated. The regular practice of this myth justified their existence and importance, depicting them as the messengers between the Heaven and the Naxi society.

Dongba can be regarded as a group of religious workers in the Naxi community but not in a stable 'full-time' position. Their power and influence in the mountain rural communities was established on the basis of their practical knowledge from which farmers could derive benefits in their social and cultural life. The passing-on of the knowledge was largely undertaken in a traditional time-consuming apprenticeship, in which each young apprentice had substantial opportunities to participate in every ritual in real life. In addition, the traditional way of learning structured by formal kinship patterns between the dongba master and his disciples in the pattern of father-son or uncle-nephew, which entailed the transmission of religious commitment.



By comparison, the PRC's political suppression had the most serious impact upon the continuity of the dongba religion. Subsequently, in response to the shortage of experienced dongba, the Naxi government and rural communities rapidly created a number of educational bodies to preserve this declining practice. This intensive school learning accelerated the revitalisation of the dongba culture most effectively. More Naxi youth who had interest in this traditional practice were given a more flexible option to fulfil their cultural ambition. However, one of the problems of this shortened group education was that the training courses mainly concentrated on the learning of skills, rather than its religious significance.

In terms of the influence of tourism, the cases in Xinzhu and Yushuizhai showed that the rural residents' sense of ethnic identity and image of their own culture were inspired by their involvement in tourism. They began to value their dongba culture and relevant resources as their main cultural property for economic reasons. The local farmers were also using the economic value of tourism to encourage the younger generation to participate in the recovery of this culture. Moreover, the substantial tourism related business sustained a number of young Naxi in their dongba study, thereby preserving a large number of promising professionals for future development.

However, when the economic value of dongba was widely appreciated by the tourism industry, their social value declined due to the loosening of traditional bond. By offering dongba a better-paid job in an urban area, the tourism industry has taken them away from their traditional community. Under this circumstance, some of the dongba schools, which were initially established for the purpose of preserving the dongba culture, have unintentionally ended up training a hybrid 'tourist-dongba'. Moreover, the tourism industry was taking advantage of some of the Naxi ethnic features to create more tourism

demand. With the current mode of operating tourism business in Lijiang, the dongba culture, including its history, context and power have been pressed into work on behalf of the tourism industry. More detailed information on the commercial impact of tourism upon dongba, the pictographs and handicrafts will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Notes

1. During the Cultural Revolution, many of the young high school students wore a red badge on their arms, claiming to be the guards of Mao Zedong. Hence, they were called 'red guards'.
2. One officer from the Xinzhu Committee admitted that the cross-cousin marriage existed in this large village before the liberation (1949) at a rate of one fourth or one fifth. According to the local farmers, around 10% of the 846 households in Xinzhu still have cross-cousin marriages.
3. Their children were handicapped, could not speak. Therefore, they sent dongba back asking for help. Later, their children could speak Tibetan, Naxi and Bai language, becoming the ancestors of these three ethnic groups respectively.
4. This means that there were dongba in their senior generations.
5. Some of these divining methods did not belong to the dongba alone. A few elderly Naxi men knew it as well but at different levels. During the fieldwork in the several villages, a few elder Naxi farmers were able to tell whether a trip into tomorrow would be appropriate by looking at the killed chicken legs or the egg in a bowl.
6. The full list was not available, some of the schools were located at Sanyuan Village, Wumu Village in Baoshan County, Xinzhu Village in Judian County, Taian, Dadong and Daju Counties.
7. Xinzhu Village has a hemlock, which is 36 meters high, 3.6 meters in diameter and 1,600 years old, regarded as the oldest hemlock in the world (Lijiang County Annals, 2001: 298). This was one of most important assets and reasons for the village to be included in the national park plan.

## **Chapter 8 The Commodification of Dongba Culture in the Tourism Industry**

This chapter examines the impact of the tourism industry upon the dongba and the dongba cultural elements, such as pictographs and handicrafts. It consists of two parts. The first part is mainly concerned with the commodification of tourism in connection with the dongba pictographs, manuscripts and handicrafts. The discourse between authenticity and commodification is associated with the pressures from the local government's tourism policy, the host/guest communication, the selling and production of the handicrafts and the locals' control of the handicrafts production. The second part moves the discussion to the circumstances of dongba. The process of commodification dichotomises the Naxi concepts of 'authentic' and 'tourist' (commodified) dongba in different groups. On the one hand, those 'tourist' dongba were devalued as tourist employees serving tourists, rather than the mountain farmers. On the other hand, their improved knowledge and understanding of the practice constructed them into a group of more 'authentic' religious practitioners in response to the Naxi religious demand in present and future times.

### **8.1 Dongba Handicrafts**

The dongba handicrafts, in the context of tourism, referred to those wooden slate carvings, dongba paper products, wooden figures used during rituals, dongba paintings and religious tools that were sold in the tourism market. Originally, these handicrafts were more or less associated with religious affairs, served as religious tools in rituals. During the time of the fieldwork, the pictographs were being used extensively in Lijiang by artists, craftsmen and businessmen, printed on various materials or items. The majority of the dongba handicrafts were products bearing these pictographs, whilst only a few shops were selling other forms of the dongba cultural artefacts in the market. By comparison, the unique

pictographs and those thousands of manuscripts written in these characters were the two popular features of the dongba culture that have been included in the World Memory Heritage List (WMHL) by UNESCO in 2003.

### 8.1.1 A Brief History of Dongba Pictographs and Manuscripts

The dongba pictograph was called '*sin jiu lu jiu*' in the Naxi language, meaning 'the markings of words engraved on wood and stone'. This showed that the pictographs were initially chiselled either on stone or wood. The large number of scripts written in the pictographs used by dongba during rituals was one of the key legacies of the dongba culture, identified by Fang and He (1981) and Li, L.C. (1945) as an encyclopaedia of the dongba culture. They were the main resource of the dongba culture knowledge. In many people's eyes, the pictographs were perhaps the most distinguished characteristic of the Naxi culture. There were about 1,400 pictographic characters in all; over 1,500 kinds of dongba scripts have been kept in a number of museums at home and abroad (Yang and Bai, 1993: 15).

The manuscripts, recording the history and myths of the Naxi, have been widely studied and translated into English, German, French, Russian and Japanese, by a number of scholars (Yang and Bai, 1993: 1-4). They were also the first part of the dongba culture that actually astonished the world. The importance of this character was praised by Jackson (1989: 133) claiming that although there was nothing remarkable about the Naxi, their pictographic books and other unique religious rituals made them the second most well known ethnic group in China, next to the Tibetan, who had been written about in the West.

In 1867, the earliest eleven pages of dongba books were brought to Paris, by a French

missionary, Pere Desgodins. In 1922, the John Rylands Library in Manchester purchased 135 copies from a British botanist, G. Forrest, becoming the owner of the largest collection of dongba books in the world at that time. The studies about the Naxi, in particular about dongba and those fascinating pictographic books, started from J. F. Rock, a self-educated botanist who spent about 25 years living in Lijiang between 1921 and 1949. Dr. Joseph Rock, first ventured to Lijiang in 1921 carrying out the earliest comprehensive cultural, linguistic and geographic studies of the Naxi region for Harvard University and is respected as the father of modern Naxi studies. His diaries, maps and photographs of the region became the legacy of the Naxi studies. His article was first published in the *National Geographic Magazine* in 1924 (Yang and Bai, 1993: 3-11). Jackson and Pan's (1998: 237) study showed that most dongba books were written in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to them, the main accomplishment of this practice during the period of the Qing Dynasty was the thousands of books of dongba scripts.

Meanwhile, some researches undertaken by He Ch.J. (2000), Yang and Bai (1993), Hsu (1998a) and McKhann (1998) have shown that the advent of the pictographs might have been even earlier than the Tang Dynasty, although the information was very limited regarding the books that were written earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This kind of uncertainty or confusion was very common in Naxi studies. Mathieu discloses:

The ethnohistory studies about the Naxi are either lacking in historical documents or the available data cannot shed a decisive light on the Naxi ancient history which is far beyond the recorded dates of events. (2003: 37)

Hsu (1998a: 16) suggested that these pictographs were used only by a small group of scholars, like dongba, who read it when practising funerals or other ceremonies. The ability to read all the pictographs required a proper training and a deep knowledge of the Naxi history, culture and custom. Fang and He (1981), and Li, L.C. (1945) proposed that

the dongba manuscripts were an improved type of carrier of the pictographs. During the field-study in Lijiang, an old dongba in Yushuizhai Company showed the researcher a book that he claimed had been handed down for 11 generations and of which he was the twelfth owner (see Appendix 8-1). The latest owner of the book wrote down his name sixty years ago. If each generation covered 20-25 years on average, then the history of that book might be between 260 and 310 years ( $20 \times 10 + 60 = 260$  or  $25 \times 10 + 60 = 310$ ), written between the early and middle 18<sup>th</sup> century, one century earlier than the estimation made by Jackson and Pan (1998).

As for the appearance of the more than a thousand of pictographs, it could take a very long time to trace their development (Mathieu, 2003). Nevertheless, some of them can still be briefly suggested. In the Naxi language, for instance, the words 'north' and 'south' were represented by the patterns of upper and lower stream (see Appendix 8-2). According to Li, L.C. (1945), these two characters might have been developed when the Naxi group were living alongside a river that is in a north-south direction. Therefore, he made a guess that the characters of 'north' and 'south' were created at the time period when the Naxi lived near the Tongtian River (see Figure 5-1), which flows from north to south.

According to the researcher's investigation at the villages alongside this river, the earliest time that the local farmers claimed a Naxi presence in the area was between 350 and 400 years ago. If their memory was correct, then it suggests that the time periods of the appearance of some of the pictographs could be more recent, as against the longer time frame proposed that the pictographs had appeared as early as in the Tang Dynasty, a thousand years ago (He Ch.J., 2000; Yang and Bai, 1993; Hsu, 1998a; McKhann, 1998).

### 8.1.2 The Pictographs in the Tourism Industry

Since the late 1990s, the word ‘dongba’ has become a commercial brand widely used by many businessmen in Lijiang in order to draw tourists’ attention. The dongba dance, rituals and dongba themselves had all been regarded as something that can be made a fortune from. The pictographs were indiscriminately printed on textiles, bags, key rings, hats, T-shirts, bowls, wooden slats, walls and anything that you can imagine. As these pictographs were not official characters used in the Naxi everyday lives, there was not a strict standard rule on how to write them. Some so-called new pictographs were created indiscriminately by the locals (1).

With respect to the methods of preserving the pictographs, there was a strong divergence within the Naxi academia in Lijiang. Some proposed that the ancient characters should be innovated so that the practicability would become higher, such as creating some new words by borrowing modern symbols, widely used in the world. It would be very interesting to show tourists around the world that these pictographs were still used by the Naxi in their everyday life. Others, on the other hand, totally disagreed with this proposal in that the value of these ancient words was located as keepers of Naxi history. Some interviewed Naxi scholars strongly questioned this undisciplined usage of the pictographs. One of them underlined:

‘Drawing some modern symbols or pictures was not the right way to preserve or develop these ancient characters. It is very necessary to have a professional body established to regulate this phenomenon. The pictographs should not be used casually without restriction and management, becoming someone or some group’s doll.’ (G1-03)

In Lijiang’s tourism market, not all businessmen running businesses knew the dongba



culture very well. To highlight their ‘Naxi characteristic’, they simply bought a Chinese-Pictograph Dictionary and translated the name of the shops on their own, unaware of the fact that the grammar of the Naxi language was different from that of Mandarin. Sometimes, the pictographs that they wrote were incorrect in many ways.

For instance, the word ‘love’ in the Naxi language consisted of a figure of man and a woman (see Appendix 8-3), but this character was wrongly drawn with putting three hairs on the figure of a man, which they thought would change the meaning to woman. In fact, the image of a man with three arrows meant ghost in the pictograph. Many Naxi scholars mocked this phenomenon that a man fell in love with a ghost. No wonder the modern love had caused many weird problems. More problematic pictographs were selected from the shop’s tablets written by the Han, Bai and other ethnic groups, or by some of the Naxi, from which it can be recognised how the pictographs were being misused (see Figures 8-1 to 8-6).

**Figure 8-1: Adapted pictographs**



**Illustration:**

The English of the logo is ‘Love Lounge’. The pictograph is wrongly written, meaning ‘drink’. There is no character meaning ‘love’, so the meanings of the English and pictograph are not identical.

Figure 8-2: Adapted pictographs



Illustration:

The Chinese on the tablet is saying ‘if you buy any phoney silverware, you will be given ten pieces of silverwares as compensation’. The English on the tablet is ‘One false silver you buy, ten times we compensate’. The pictographs from left to right mean ‘wrong’, ‘one’, ‘silver’, ‘ten’ and ‘house making silver’ respectively. The grammar of the pictographs is incorrect in the Naxi language. The meanings on the tablet in Chinese, English and pictographs are not at all identical.

Figure 8-3: Adapted pictographs



Illustration:

The Chinese on the tablet reads ‘Dongba Wood and Stone Carvings’. The English on the tablet says ‘Dongba Culture’. The pictographs from left to right are ‘dongba’, ‘tree’, ‘axe’, ‘saw’, ‘drill’ and ‘scraper’ respectively. The first and the third on the left, and the last on the right are incorrectly written. There is no word for ‘wood’ and ‘stone’, and the grammar is wrong in the Naxi language. The meanings on the tablet in Chinese, English and pictographs are not identical.



Figure 8-4: Adapted pictographs

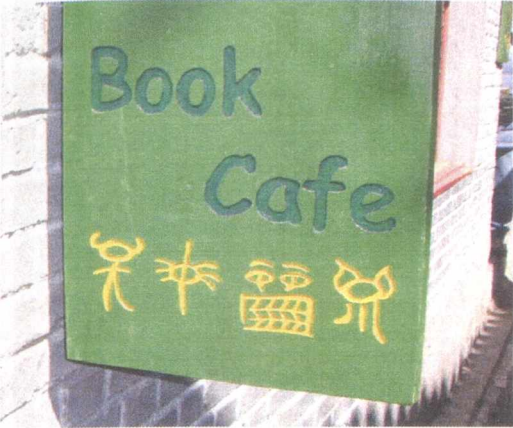


Illustration:

The English on the tablet is ‘Book Café’. The first two pictographs from left to right are ‘person’ and ‘wheat’ respectively, but the first one is incorrectly written. The third is a character combined with the character of ‘eyes’ and ‘book’, meaning ‘learn’ in the pictographs, but it is incorrectly written. And the last one is similar to the pictograph of ‘garlic’. The meanings on the tablet in English and pictographs are not identical.

Figure 8-5: Adapted pictographs



Illustration:

The Chinese on the tablet says ‘Qiu-zhi Bookstore’. The pictographs on the left from top to bottom are ‘elder’, ‘Chinese knot’, symbolising ‘good luck’ in the Naxi language, and ‘hand over’ respectively. The pictographs across the top are ‘leaking’, ‘top’ and ‘Lijiang’ respectively. The pictographs at the bottom mean ‘selling books’. The meanings on the tablet in Chinese and pictographs are not identical.

**Figure 8-6: Adapted pictographs**



**Illustration:**

The Chinese on the tablet announces ‘Individual Tourists Information Centre’. The English on the tablet says ‘Tourist Reception’. The pictographs from top to bottom are ‘walk’, ‘Naxi’, ‘travel’, ‘again’ and ‘house’ respectively. The grammar is incorrect in the Naxi language. The meanings on the tablet in Chinese, English and pictographs are not identical.

Meanwhile, the market in Dayanzhen had become the place for selling dongba manuscripts. There were some private businessmen who brought the dongba books to the market and sold them to the shopkeepers who were interested. The price for each book was about 50 RMB before 2006, and it went up to 200 RMB in 2007. If the book was thicker and it was complete, the price would be even higher. They targeted foreign tourists who were willing to pay 2/4,000 RMB for such books. Before the researcher left Lijiang in April 2008, a shopkeeper sold a set of books for doing the Propitiation of Heaven to a Japanese tourist for 6,000 RMB. Just a few days before the researcher left Lijiang, a brother of a dongba from a visited village had decided to sell his 258 copies of manuscripts to the market. These books were handed down from his father, a well-known old dongba who wrote those books one by one in fifty years. Although the books were not particular old, if they were purchased by several people, then it would be very hard to put them together again.

8.1.3 The Evolution of Dongba Handicrafts

When the pictographs have been used or valued as tourist commodities, disrespecting their religious, cultural and social values, those handicrafts that in reference to the characters were affected accordingly in this process of commodification. The following section discusses the evolution of the dongba cultural handicrafts according to Graburn’s (1984: 399) framework, in which he defines the development of indigenous handicrafts into functional, commercial and souvenir/novelty stages. The discussion is carried out by selecting several representative items at different stages (see Table 8-1). The main indicators of this evaluation focus on the changes of these handicrafts in their forms, content, functions and medium (Graburn, 1979: 5).

Table 8-1: Dongba handicrafts at different stages

Stages	Representatives	Characteristics
Functional Arts	Woodcarvings (Appendixes: 8-4, 8-5 and 8-6) Dongba paper made in DCRI (Appendix: 12A)	These were mainly made by dongba for religious purposes, i.e. holding rituals or writing manuscripts.
Commercial Arts	Woodcarvings (Appendixes: 8-7 and 8-9)	These were made by dongba for commercial purpose, with the content and aesthetic criteria being slightly modified.
Souvenir Arts	Woodcarvings (Appendixes: 8-10 and 8-11) Dongba paper sold in tourist shops (Appendix: 12B)	The makers of these handicrafts were too broad to be identified specifically. The items were made purely for selling to tourists, with significant changes in function, forms, meaning and medium.

## *Functional Arts*

In the Naxi language, the wooden slate was called '*kaul*', having two different shapes, one with a peaked-top and the other a flattened-top. The peaked-top one was the symbol of the frog head, used to sacrifice the spirits and gods (see Appendix 8-4); while the other one referred to the snake tail, used for the sacrifice of the ghosts. The Naxi had a long history of regarding frog, fish and snake as their protectors, so the wooden slate was actually a simplified tablet used in sacrifices. The top of the peaked one, for instance, was often drawn with sky, cloud, sun, moon and stars; in the middle, were images of god, ancestor and powerful beast; the bottom was sharpened so as to be inserted into the ground where the rituals were taking place. During the ceremonies, dongba would draw some simple pictographs on the wooden slates indicating the name of the spirits or ghosts, and the main functions of the slates. Therefore, He, Zh.W. (1992) estimates that wooden slates might be the earliest carrier on which the primitive forms of the pictographs appeared, as the name of the pictograph in the Naxi language '*sin jiu lu jiu*' suggested. '*Sin*' means 'wood' and '*jiu*' means 'markings of word'.

Other functional arts were the carved wooden figures (see Appendix 8-5), based on the myths of dongba culture, such as the guard of creatures, a great black bird, which was thought by the Naxi to be the most ferocious bird, ensuring them of a good harvest each year (see Appendix 8-6); and the god of Sanduo, the protector of Naxi and their most sacred Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, riding on a white horse, wearing white armour and holding a white spear.

Apart from these religious tools, one more form of functional arts was the paper called 'dongba paper' used by dongba to write manuscripts (see Appendix 12A). At the moment,



this kind of material was available only at DCRI, made by a dongba couple from Shuming Village, selling to dongba scholars and dongba. According to the dongba who made this paper, this traditional medium was made out of a flower called 'rao'. This flower grew in the valley area at 1,700 metres above sea level. It was very hard to find this kind of plant outside the altitudes of between 1,700 and 2,200 metres. One kilogram of the flower could produce only 10/12 papers in size of 24 x 57 cm. The Naxi in Ninglang also used bamboo as the raw material for making the paper.

The texture of the paper made from the flower 'rao' was very irregular, and the texture was relatively harder and imperishable. Therefore, the inscriptions written on this kind of paper would last for a very long time. The traditional way of pounding was by manpower only, using a wooden stick to stir and pounding it with pestle for a couple of hours. The dongba working at the institute could make only 25 pieces of paper maximum in one day. The whole procedure was time-consuming and labour-intensive.

### *Commercial Arts*

In the late 1990s, the town was full of amateur artists, professional painters and professors of arts from Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and other cities, who wanted to present their art to the public and learn the Naxi arts from the locals. Their artistic inspiration was largely motivated by the dongba culture in different ways. At the beginning, they came to Lijiang and sold their previous works to make a living. Later, they began to draw their attention on anything that was associated with the Naxi and the dongba culture. Most of these migrant artists were fascinated by the pictographs. They (and the local artists) developed various adaptations and transfigurations of these characters, filling the incisions with pigments in different colours. This large group of professional artists promoted the Naxi arts and

culture all over the country, infused with some modern Han Chinese elements.

Before 2003, the majority of the genres of the handicrafts were mainly related to the dongba religious activities (see Appendix 8-7). The handicrafts were then swiftly expanded to a broader content. The Naxi have a long history of using woodcarvings to decorate their houses. Almost every Naxi family is very fond of putting various carvings on their eaves, windows, doors and furniture. The widely used material of these carvings was a kind of wood called ‘cuckoo wood’, which was available in many places. Most of the local carpenters were very skilful in engraving a variety of patterns. Apart from the dongba culture related images, other popular patterns were often associated with the Naxi everyday life. For instance, fish was worshipped by the Naxi as the god of water, helping them guard against fire. Therefore, each Naxi building usually had a wooden fish hanging at either side of the roof (see Appendix 8-8). Consequently, many woodcarvings were related to a number of artistic forms of fish, purchased not only by the locals who used it to decorate their houses but also by some individual tourists (see Appendix 8-9).

### *Souvenir Arts*

To some extent, the popularity of selling woodcarvings was the result of tourism development. According to the memory of several Naxi craftsmen, the increase of tourism attracted many Naxi craftsmen and carpenters coming to Dayanzhen, Tourist purchases and appreciation had greatly encouraged the growth of ethnic arts and culture. These Naxi craftsmen felt that their culture was accepted and understood by the tourists at that time. At this stage, the religious value of the handicrafts was considerably reduced in several aspects.



To begin with, most of the woodcarving souvenirs were painted in bright colour, which was a significant difference between functional and souvenir arts (see Appendix 8-10). Secondly, the size of the items was much smaller than the originals so that it could be more easily carried by tourists. Thirdly, most of the souvenirs were carved on square wooden plates so that it would be convenient to hang up as indoor decorations. At later stages, the sizes and materials of these wooden plates were mostly standardised, making it easier for raw material suppliers to distribute their mass-produced products more widely.

Another example of the process of commodification was manifest in the production of dongba paper (see Appendix 12B). The papers sold in the shops of Dongba Paper Company (DPC) were souvenirs, including postcards, calendars and notebooks. The divergence between the traditional and souvenir items was evident in colour, quality and fabric (compare Appendix 12A and B). These souvenirs showed a much more regular texture than the traditional ones made in DCRI.

The researcher brought the DPC's paper to a paper manufacturer in Beijing, and the worker over there ascertained that the ingredients of this paper included used paper, chopped grass and pulp. In addition, the raw materials were possibly ground by machine, which means it was an industrial product. As a result, the quality of the paper was much softer and more suitable for printing. This information was in accordance with the data acquired from other informants in Lijiang that some parts of the paper sold in the DPC shops were not locally made but manufactured and transferred from Heqing County.

Encouraged by huge sale to tourists, before 2003 more than a hundred shops sold local handmade woodcarvings in Dayanzhen. Each shop employed three or five Naxi craftsmen to do the carvings. According to the interviewed Naxi craftsmen's memory and the

Dayanzhen Old Town Administration's registration, there were 200/300 Naxi craftsmen and artists working at various handicraft shops. In order to improve their carving ability and the artistic values, some of these Naxi craftsmen volunteered to go to DCM and DCRI for 6 to 12 months to learn about dongba culture and its traditional arts.

Many Naxi craftsmen still had very good memories of the stage between 1990 and 2003. A 40-year-old Naxi artist who has been operating a woodcarving shop for over nine years recalled:

‘Before 2003, the situation was quite easy to make a living by selling woodcarvings. You could carve what you liked and put it in the shop. At the time, the tourists and artists could exchange their feelings about arts by talking in the shops for several nights on end. No tourist, at that time, would be blamed for not buying anything after a long conversation. What the customers and shopkeepers both enjoyed was the genuine talks rather than the business. What they (tourists) were searching was tranquillity, simplicity and the nature of life.’ (G2-35)

He emphasised that it took time for a customer to appreciate his works before bringing one home, and the type of travelling at the time, unscheduled travelling, made it possible.

To cope with the arrival of the large number of domestic tourists, many patterns of the woodcarvings switched to those more closely associated with the Han-imitated culture, such as the character of ‘happiness’ (see Appendix 8-11), four plants ‘plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum’ which represented the four virtues of mankind in the traditional Chinese culture. In order to cater for these Han tourists’ satisfaction or desire, the meanings of the handicrafts were reinterpreted. For instance, the meaning of fish was redefined as ‘bringing the buyers wealth and good luck’. The image of the ‘frog map’ was also become popular, welcomed by many Han Chinese tourists, who assumed this ‘frog map’ to be closely connected with the philosophy of Daoism.

#### 8.1.4 The Pressure of the Tourism Market

After 2003, as discussed in Chapter 6, the majority of the tourists arrived in Lijiang were in groups, which considerably changed the type of travelling in many ways. The group tourists' various preferences, habits and tastes considerably influenced the types of the tourist arts and crafts. What was selling in the old town were tea from Fujian Province, T-shirts from Zhejiang Province, silverware from Heqing County, Yunnan, leather bags from Hunan Province and jade carvings from Ruili Prefecture, Yunnan. All of them boasted that they were made in Lijiang. To convince the tourists that the carvings were all hand made in shops, all shopkeepers hired some employees sitting on a stool pretending to do some engravings. This situation was reflected in Street's study in Dayanzhen:

'Since 2000, the Old Town has moved from selling authentic souvenirs to brash, gaudy products with little relevance to Lijiang. The majority of shops sell jewellery and tea. Many shops look identical and chain stores selling dried fish/meat deny any individuality...Mass tourism (in particular catering for the indigenous tourist market) has helped influence the types of businesses and as a result pushed the local community's needs to one side.' (2003: 37)

This group travelling mode enforced most of the shopkeepers to engage in an intense price competition. As a result, shopkeepers began to sell mass produced souvenirs, low quality products or even phoney products, which damaged the destination's reputation (Li, J., 2003: 61). In this regard, one Naxi scholar pointed out that:

'The transformation in the tourist arts and handicrafts selling in the old town was in accordance with that of the tourists coming to Lijiang. The profit of selling a piece of woodcarving was much lower than that of a piece of jade carving or a bottle of tea. Those migrant business people who sell teapots or T-shirts were then able to increase the rental price purposely in order to drive away those local shopkeepers.' (G1-10)

Another powerful factor that influenced the handicraft market was the ever-increasing rental price. Lijiang has been targeted by various business companies across the country as a place selling their souvenirs to tourists. The increase in rental price between 2002 and 2004 had the effect of attracting a large number of migrant business companies into Dayanzhen. Most of these companies were selling mass-produced products manufactured in supply bases around Lijiang.

For instance, one piece of wood slate that sold at 120/150 RMB in Dayanzhen cost only 50/70 RMB each in the mass production bases in Jianchuan (2) and Heqing (see Figure 5-1). It took just 10 days for a workshop over there to finish 150/300 pieces of woodcarving in similar sizes to those mentioned above (see Appendix 8-9). The productivity of each workshop could be dramatically increased further by working together with others in the village. As a result, the mass-produced souvenirs dramatically decreased the retail price of the souvenir market. A piece of woodcarving that sold for 1,000 RMB a few years ago now costs only 100 RMB in 2008.

In addition, the Yunnan provincial government had a plan to develop Heqing, another county 45 kilometres away from Lijiang, into the largest handicraft production centre (3) in Southwest China, manufacturing a variety of handicrafts. The products manufactured from this village had not sold just to Dayanzhen and other places in China, but also made their way to Thailand, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Japan and U.S.A. The production of woodcarvings had formed a business triangle in the tourism market. The raw material was mainly transported from Judian County in Lijiang to Jianchuan, where it was carved in large quantity. These semi-finished products were then transferred to the shops in Dayanzhen for either retail or wholesale sale. The cash acquired in transaction was then used to purchase more raw materials in Judian for the next cycle. This well organised mass

production line was able to outplay any family-run business that attempted to compete with it.

To cope with this rental pressure, local craftsmen based in family-run businesses had to decrease their prices considerably, extend their working hours so as to increase production, or use softer wood so that the carving could be completed more quickly. Moreover, they had to simplify the contents, style and genres of the carvings in an attempt to shorten the production process. However, it took about one or two days to finish a piece of wood carving in the size of 20cm X 60cm, which was sold between 120 and 160 RMB in the market. Even a very skilful craftsman would not be able to finish five pieces of carving in one week. Under this circumstance, a family-run business shop would not be able to cover the current monthly rental (see Table 6-1). Thus, within a few years, few of the Naxi craftsmen could survive such intensive competition from migrant businesses in respect to manufacturing speed, quantity and price of making and selling handicrafts.

One more change concerned the engraving. As the characters had to be engraved by knife, and the work must be finished as soon as the makers can, many craftsmen broke down the pictographs into a few symbols. Those much-curved lines have been straightened up in order to make it easier to complete. As a result, the pictographs in some craftsmen's hands have become a number of straight-line, arc-line, dot, triangle and circle. The consequence of this phenomenon was that even an experienced dongba would hardly be able to read those so-called pictographs that are engraved on these wooden plates.

This mass production business mode make it easy for migrant companies from other parts of the country (4) to take over the shops in Dayanzhen one after the other. The room for the local handicraftsmen was greatly reduced. Those local craftsmen and artists began to

worry about how to survive such intensified competition. They were burdened with the problems of what to sell, when to sell and how to sell. One of the interviewed craftsmen recalled:

‘After so many migrants came to Lijiang, it was not you who decided what to sell in the market. In fact, through the conversation with some tourists, I can feel that even tourists don’t have much choice what to buy from here. Most of them know that these souvenirs are not made in Lijiang. They don’t like it either, but this market has been grasped by those large business companies. Many of them were not in Yunnan. Lijiang is now nothing but a big shopping mall.’ (G2-16)

Making woodcarving for those Naxi craftsmen has changed from expressing their personal expressions and aesthetic feelings to maintaining the means of survival. Between 2004 and 2005, many local craftsmen had to retreat from the central commercial area to marginal corners, where the rental price was much lower. After another year, most of them were either back in their home villages or had changed their occupation. Among these craftsmen, some of them were dongba, who were later employed by tourist companies for their religious skills. By the time the fieldwork was carried out, most of those over 200 local craftsmen had left the town. According to the interviewees and the researcher’s own calculation, fewer than 20 of them were still working in Dayanzhen.

One of the consequences of the marginal-profit handicrafts market was that the craftsmen lost interest in making designs that were time-consuming. Furthermore, as soon as they put a new piece of work in their shops, not more than a week later reproduced copies would appear in other shops in the streets nearby, at a much cheaper price. This was the other reason that devastated the craftsmen’s enthusiasm for designing. They felt that they were competing with other shopkeepers in an unfair market. For these reasons, many Naxi artists gave up doing business in the old town.

One Naxi artist, who was still struggling in Dayanzhen, relying on either making some wooden tablets for the government or selling modern dongba paintings, commented:

‘It is a great pity that we lost so many Naxi craftsmen, under the attack of rapidly increased rental price. They are actually one of the most important sources of development of our ethnic arts. They left the old town very reluctantly. Now, if anyone still wants to sell something genuinely designed, he not only needs to take the risk of being plagiarised, but also needs to find a place where the rental was not very pressing. As a matter of fact, our government should take more actions to preserve our ethnic culture and arts.’ (G1-15)

## 8.2 Dongba in the Tourism Industry

The commodification of the dongba culture has occurred not just in the evolution of handicrafts, but is also seen in the process of packaging dongba as tourist assets.

According to the Lijiang authority’s figure in late 2007 and the researcher’s calculation at the beginning of 2008, there were about 80/100 farmers who were treated as dongba in Dayanzhen, more than half of them working in the tourism industry. The majority of these dongba were graduated from the one- or two-year courses run by dongba schools in different counties. Their main duties were sitting in the tourist souvenir shops or reception rooms writing the pictographs for tourists (see Table 8-2). Most of these dongba would have a small Chinese-Pictograph Dictionary at hand, explaining for them some of the most popular pictographs in mandarin.

Their duty also included helping the shop assistants to sell some dongba handicrafts, such as postcards and calendars illustrating dongba manuscripts, woodcarvings, stone seals with engraved pictographs and so forth. In some places such as the DCM and Yushuizhai, where there was enough outdoor space, the dongba working there were often expected to perform some religious dances when a large number of tourists arrived. At some other

tourist attractions, the jobs for the dongba could be even simpler, just wearing some ‘good looking’ costumes and hats, taking photos with the oncoming tourists on request (see Appendix 8-13).

According to the dongba culture research bodies, out of the 100 dongba, only 10 were familiar with the main dongba texts. The figure of being capable of presiding over important rituals or understanding their practice in great depth was even lower. One senior dongba once commented on these ‘tourist-dongba’:

‘Most of these so-called dongba in the tourism industry just got one or two years study at schools. Although they can write very beautiful pictographs, hardly any of them has any real experience of doing rituals in real life. They are very suitable for tourists, but it might take a very long time for them to become really qualified dongba. Their ability and knowledge needs to be examined by the Naxi community not just by the tourists.’ (G2-28)

**Table 8-2: Dongba working in some major tourist companies**

Tourist company	No. of dongba	Main duty
DCM	3	Writing pictographs
Dongba Palace	3	Dancing, taking photos
Dongba Paper Co.	13	Writing pictographs
Dongba Valley Co.	4	Writing pictographs
Wenshenyuan	4	Dancing and writing pictographs
Yushuizhai	18	Presenting rituals and dances
Yuzhuqingtian	4	Dancing
Other companies	10	Writing pictographs
Total	59	

Source: fieldwork data

Although the tourism industry has offered many job opportunities for those dongba coming from the rural area, their working situation was not secure. Most of these dongba



were employed as a 'marketing tool' to attract tourist attention. To optimise the business turnover, most of the shops in Dayanzhen opened 13 to 14 hours a day, and seven days a week. The right of working on 8-hour a day was impossible to attain. In addition, their positions were not secured by contracts. Some interviewed dongba confirmed that their employers could dismiss them without a formal reason, and none of them could get any compensation for redundancy at the off-peak season of the tourism industry. Moreover, some employers were not in favour of letting their dongba employees go home on frequent visits to preside over religious rituals on request, especially since the frequency of such requests was irregular and unpredictable.

As discussed in Chapter 7, it was very likely that a dongba could be busy in holding rituals for one or two months without a break. However, some tourist employers strongly objected to such practices. One of them told the researcher that:

'I don't think they are real dongba. They are just farmers who have some religious knowledge, capable of writing pictographs. There is no one can prove their status. Even if they are recognised as dongba, it is difficult to ascertain whether they are going home for religious purpose only. For our concern, an employee should obey the company's regulation as others do without a difference.' (G2-23)

On the contrary, nearly all the interviewed dongba working at tourist firms defended themselves by stating that their managers did not fully understand why a funeral must be presided over by a dongba. Even at Yushuizhai, the friendliest company concerning the dongba religious commitment, six senior dongba working over there were not satisfied with the company's policy. They argued that each staff only had four days off each month and any day more than that, their salary would be reduced by 15 RMB per day. According to them, holding a normal ritual at their home villages could normally take them a week (5).

Another reason that intensified this timetable conflict is the harvest time in rural area, which happens also to be the peak season of the tourism industry in Lijiang. Farmers need to go home in May, August, September and October in order to participate in a number of agricultural activities (see Appendix 7-1). The significance of agricultural work was explained in Chapter 4, as it is vital for sustaining the whole family in the coming year. This situation would hardly change unless the farmers had substantial income from other sources to cover the annual cost of living, which was very unlikely to happen for most of the dongba in Lijiang (6).

Consequently, this coincidence in timetable led to a number of conflicts and arguments between farmers working at tourist companies and their employers. Several interviewees who had the experience of hiring dongba complained to the researcher that it was very hard to find 'full-time' staff working twelve months a year. This conflict in timetable was more obvious in the case of dongba whose position was hard to refill at short notice and who also needed to leave more frequently than other staff due to their religious commitment.

### **8.2.1 Tourism Related Impacts upon the Dongba Religion**

Before the increase in tourism, many of the dongba by then were living in the countryside, whilst the most of the senior dongba had been invited by the research institutes to move into town. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, the economic value generated by the tourism industry lured a large number of dongba remaining in rural areas to town areas. One of the results was that the rural areas had been deserted without having enough dongba to look after the locals' religious demand. For instance, the funeral that the

researcher once happened to attend was postponed several times, waiting for the dongba who were responsible for handling it, but who were working in various towns at the time. The coffin was kept in the main room of the house for six days. This situation has been strongly criticised by farmers. One of them commented:

‘The dongba used to be our spiritual leaders, helping us at any time when we were in trouble, such as when someone was sick or even passed away suddenly. They had the knowledge we needed, and we fully trusted them without any question. More importantly, they had the mind to help their folk without any excuse and delay. Nowadays, unfortunately, tourism makes them very popular and they all have very good jobs. We are happy for them, but what we are not happy about is that sometimes some dongba seem to care more about their income than our real needs. They are always busy in the town and spend too much time to serving the tourists rather than us.’ (G2-37)

This absence automatically led to another problem in villages. As many dongba were not available in the villages, their kinsmen had to turn to other dongba who were able to offer their services during some emergency cases, such as a sudden death. Yet, this was not in accordance with tradition, since the soul of one’s kin could only be conveyed by the dongba belonging to the same kinship group. According to the theory of an old dongba:

‘If the ghosts that stand in the way had not been driven away completely, the soul might not be able to arrive at their final destination safely. However, I know of some dongba who were not able to go home at each request because they work in town. If they asked for leave too often, then they might lose their jobs. That is a real problem.’ (G2-28)

Indeed, it was the prospect of earning money as a result of the tourism trade that inspired more and more locals to start to learn the dongba knowledge. However, their motive and way of study were quite different from the past. As examined in Chapter 7, being a dongba in some people’s eyes was not just a religious role any longer, but was often valued as a good chance of having a well-paid job in the tourism industry. One farmer challenged:

‘Although they do learn something, neither do they like to learn it in depth nor do they learn it as a belief. Are they prepared to serve the community with their knowledge for the whole of their lives, as a traditional dongba would do?’ (G2-42)

Moreover, with the increasing fever of developing ‘ethnic tourism’ in the tourism market, some companies arranged groups to visit villages and invited some dongba to do some paid performances. The dongba rituals have been promoted at various commercial performances in many of the tourist attractions. The context and procedure used to be strictly regulated according to the dongba books, but have now been shortened to fit in with the tourists’ interest and time limit. Both interviewed dongba and scholars claimed that many of these changes were not satisfactory.

This commodification has affected the way some young dongba understand the religion. An old dongba who used to teach at a dongba school explained that when he taught students some dances that were used in funerals, many young disciples seemed quite interested in the body gestures and movements, rather than concentrating their attention on the nature of the dance. He added that it was quite difficult to let the students seriously identify the difference between a ‘dance’ and a ‘fight’:

‘Some of these dances were in fact an embodiment that dongba were seeking to combat those ghosts who were obstructing the passage. Suppose the dongba did the dance casually, just imitating the gestures and movements without seriously fulfilling its religious meanings, the ultimate consequence of the ceremony could be a disaster. On these occasions, a competent dongba who fully attended the commitment would feel very exhausted and tired after the performance, not just physically but also mentally. It was a real battle not a show.’ (G2-30)

Furthermore, the changes in the motivation, behaviour and knowledge of these ‘new’ dongba had exerted some influence upon some Naxi farmers’ attitude towards their religion. In some visited villages, the duty of dongba was mocked by the farmers as

simply a means of ‘making money’ from the services that they provided, rather than undertaking religious affairs for their folks. In some places, people began to pay dongba with cash for their religious services, which had never happened before. An old farmer in his 70s expressed:

‘It is a serious question whether those dongba believe in this religion as such or just see it as a means of living. I saw a dongba even answered a phone call with his mobile phone in the middle of the ritual. I just don’t know how to express my feeling...’ (G2-34)

Despite the problems discussed above, the tourism industry has sustained the study of a number of young dongba in different ways. Most of the young dongba emphasised that the advantage of working at tourist companies was that they could have more time to study the dongba knowledge, which has become their means of living, differentiated them from other farmers. One of the interviewed young dongba from Changshui Dongba School (see Table 7-1) ascertained:

‘Were it not for working in the tourism industry, I have had to drop out of the course. Sometimes, the tourists’ enquiries gave me a lot of confidence and reasons to carry on my study. Many of my classmates have quit the study, because they didn’t get the chance to practise it in real life. Although the tourism industry hardly offers me this chance either, but it shows me that this is something valuable. I’m really happy to explain to tourists about the history of the dongba culture...’ (G2-32)

Furthermore, the tourism industry has dramatically improved the lives of many dongba, and their perspective and understanding of the religion. Looking at the connection between the tourism industry and the dongba culture in the broader region, i.e. across the whole Lijiang area or even across the provincial borders, there was one effect that could profoundly benefit the long-term development of the dongba culture. It was that the tourism industry has generated an unprecedented amount of communication between the

dongba from Lijiang, Sichuan Province and other areas where the Naxi dwell. It was to some extent the industry that had invited them to meet each other, sharing their understanding of the dongba culture, exchanging their values and knowledge, and broadening their perspective regarding the study of the dongba culture and relevant skills. This cross-regional communication had never happened before. As a dongba working at DCM reflected:

‘Were it not for coming to Lijiang, I would not be able to meet so many senior dongba in my life. Although I could not study the skills of each old dongba completely, a few hours’ talk had dramatically deepened my understanding. It is the opportunity of living in Lijiang that gives me the chance to see so many traditional manuscripts. You cannot know how important this has been to my knowledge of the religion. I come from a very remote mountain village. I’m the only one in my village that can work in the town area. Most of my fellows came here but went home later, because they couldn’t find a job here. I’m so proud of being a dongba, and will get the most out of the work here.’ (G2-33)

### **8.2.2 The Changes in the Life of Shi Dongba**

The following section is an example to illustrate the changes happened in some young dongba lives. Shi dongba, who is 37 years old, lived in Ninglang County, which is often valued by the Naxi scholars and farmers as the area that the dongba culture has kept in an ‘untouched’ condition. He once worked at a tourist company in Lijiang in 2006 for a couple of months. After he came home from Lijiang, he began to control the business of cable crossing on the Tongtian River, which was the only access to the outside world. Each person across the river by that cable needed to pay him 4 RMB. Meanwhile, his understanding of the religion changed considerably.

He realised that on the one hand, the religion was highly invaluable and meaningful. At least, the experience in Lijiang convinced him that the government and many dongba

research bodies supported this practice very much. After coming home, he accepted another two disciples in the village and spent longer time on studying the dongba manuscripts. He also went to some dongba home to get his books back, because these books, in his updated perspective, had become his invaluable property.

On the other hand, he noticed that for those urban inhabitants, tourists and researchers, the country life and the dongba culture had assumed special significance and he could draw some profit from it. Therefore, apart from hosting several visiting scholars, who investigated the situation of the dongba culture around his county, he began to look forward to arrange some tourists coming from Beijing and Shanghai in the summer of 2008. Shi would charge them for escorting them, for food and accommodation. Visits of this kind, according to him, would bring about some advantages for his reputation in the little village.

The local farmers adored him for his wide connections to the outside world, regarding him as the guy ‘who had the brain and courage to do many new things’. Based on the researcher’s observation at the little village, the life of Shi dongba was at the best level in his village. His home was the only one with a TV set, satellite receiver and electric power. He even erected a mini waterpower station beside his home.

## **8.3 Analysis and Discussion**

### **8.3.1 The Impacts on Handicrafts**

When the dongba culture was popularised by the tourism industry, its relevant elements were also under the spotlight of the Naxi community, which had not happened before. The

tourism industry made it possible for the pictographs to be used in the ordinary lives of the Naxi for the first time. However, the examples provided (see Figures 8-1 to 8-6) suggested that many of the pictographs were being reproduced randomly. The primary value of the pictographs for most of the businessmen was the mysterious characteristic from which they could make a profit. Cohen (1988: 381) highlights that 'the emerging genre of 'tourist arts' is perhaps the most salient example of the commoditisation of a range of cultural products through tourism.'

The changes in the dongba handicrafts commenced from the host/guest relationship shifting from the 'intense interaction' tourism to 'superficial contacts' or even 'non-contacts' of organised mass tourism in Smith, V.L.'s (1989: 10-15) sense. At the early stage of Lijiang's tourism, the slowly developed backpacking travelling created a relatively relaxed environment for those Naxi craftsmen who had substantial space to develop their aesthetic feelings in the market. At the later stage, however, the over-rapidly developed mass tourism correspondingly generated a mass produced handicrafts business.

With the arrival of a large number of domestic tourists, more genres of the handicrafts were put on Han-preferred artistic patterns, characteristics and interpretations. As Gill (1979: 103-105) notes the local artists and craftsmen have to deal with the pressures from acculturation to the dominant group. This cultural assimilation transformation in tourist arts, according to Graburn (1984: 401), will arise 'when the minority society is under heavy pressure from the dominant outside world.'

According to interviewed local craftsmen, most of the tourists who consumed these products hardly cared or were even able to identify the errors displayed above. Maduro (1979: 243) underlines that the consumption by tourists who were little equipped with



knowledge to appreciate the meaning of the handicrafts was unlikely to make any lasting contribution to the development of local arts and handicrafts.

However, as the negotiation between authenticity and commodification in this study was focused on the perspective of the Naxi, rather than the ones of the tourists, the discussion of the tourists' vision and attitude on those semi-produced and non-local handmade handicrafts was beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, the researcher was not demonstrating in this study that those tourists were 'careless' or not 'authentic' seekers. The fact was that the accuracy of the pictographs was considerably neglected and locally-made handicrafts were replaced by non-local made semi-industrial products.

In order to monopolise the market in Dayanzhen, migrant businessmen selling mass produced products pushed up the rental prices purposely with a result that most of the local shopkeepers had to use the major part of the profit to cover rent, tax, salary and cash flow. The latter gradually lost the ability to offer 'alleged authentic' handmade products to tourists. The market pressure gravely affected the artistic level and styles of the handicrafts that were sold in the market to such an extent that the majority of the dongba handicrafts and paintings consisted of nothing more than drawing some pictographs on the items or colouring characters.

Under this huge market stress, most of the local craftsmen were under pressure to complete a carving quickly, rather than thinking of its aesthetic value. Many of them had to speed up their production by reducing the complexity of the contents, standardising the patterns, using softer materials and extending their working time. It was at this stage that the 'alleged authenticity' of the traditional dongba cultural handicrafts, in those Naxi craftsmen's point of view, was considerably compromised.

Similar situations are discussed by Lathrap (1979: 207) and Stromberg (1979: 162) in their studies in Peru and USA respectively. Hitchcock (2000a: 11) also documents that ‘by working within these widely accepted genres, the makers of souvenirs modify their work, often adopting a set of symbols that are assumed to be meaningful to tourists.’ In addition, Graburn elaborates this transformation in the following account:

‘Tourist art traditions not only modify ethnic traditions of cultural expression, but also affect both the back-stage and front-stage behaviour of the tourees – the host ethnic groups who make or sell the material items... The local people start to make near exact replicas just for sale, adhering to near traditional forms and designs which satisfy their own aesthetic traditions and guarantee some form of ‘authenticity’ to the buyers... though the basic motifs and/or forms of the traditional art may persist, the size and complexity may diminish and the materials and format may change drastically... The conditions for these events include: the willingness of the producers to depart from traditional rules, often because of economic push and pull factors, and the breakdown of traditional roles of the artist allowing others to enter and compete.’ (1984: 394-400)

From the Naxi point of view, in particular those Naxi handicraftsmen, their attitude was clearly divergent between the early and later stages of tourism development. As discussed above, both the locals and migrants participated in the reproduction of the pictographs at different levels since the beginning of tourism development. A large number of the Naxi were not familiar with these characters either. Even many of the Naxi officers who were in charge of regulating the writings of the pictographs in the tourism market did not fully understand the characters. These characters have never been used widely by the Naxi at large for practical purposes in real life for centuries. In addition, the variety of regional differences in writing the dongba manuscripts was so diverse that it was difficult to establish a clear standard for their usage, which indirectly gave some people an excuse to write the characters indiscriminately.

However, when the local handicraftsmen were largely marginalised from the tourism market in Dayanzhen in 2003, they began to strongly criticise those handicrafts bearing reproduced pictographs that were 'not genuine' or 'not traditional' dongba cultural handicrafts. This situation illustrated that the transformation of ethnic tourist arts is associated with the locals' control of the production of the handicrafts (Graburn, 1984: 393). Although the commodification could, to some extent, strengthen the competitiveness of local handicrafts (Wall and Xie, 2005: 19), this process should be subjected to the control of the local community (Yang, Wall and Smith, 2006: 768).

To scrutinise the reason that the local production was squeezed out from the tourism market, it was necessary to take into account the local government's performance in controlling the increase of rental prices in the old town. Although all the interviewed government officials claimed that the local government had spared no effort to protect the local ethnic artists to enable them to stay in the old town, they emphasised that it was the market that pushed them away. They claimed that the government had subsidised some valuable Naxi artists and craftsmen to stay in the old town.

However, this favourable policy was seen in a different light by the interviewed Naxi artists. One of them who accepted the government's subsidy stated that this policy was to subsidise local artists who opened a shop in the old town by giving them 50% discount in rent in the first year. This policy greatly enhanced the enthusiasm of some artists at the beginning. Nevertheless, this discount was reduced to one-third and one-fourth on the second and the third years respectively. On the fourth year, the subsidy was down to zero. The government's explanation was 'let the artists grow up in the market.' The artists admitted that after the government's subsidy had gradually vanished, they had to change

the content and style of the products severely so as to cater for the tourists' interests.

Before long, the goods that they sold were not what they wanted to sell but rather what the tourists were willing to buy.

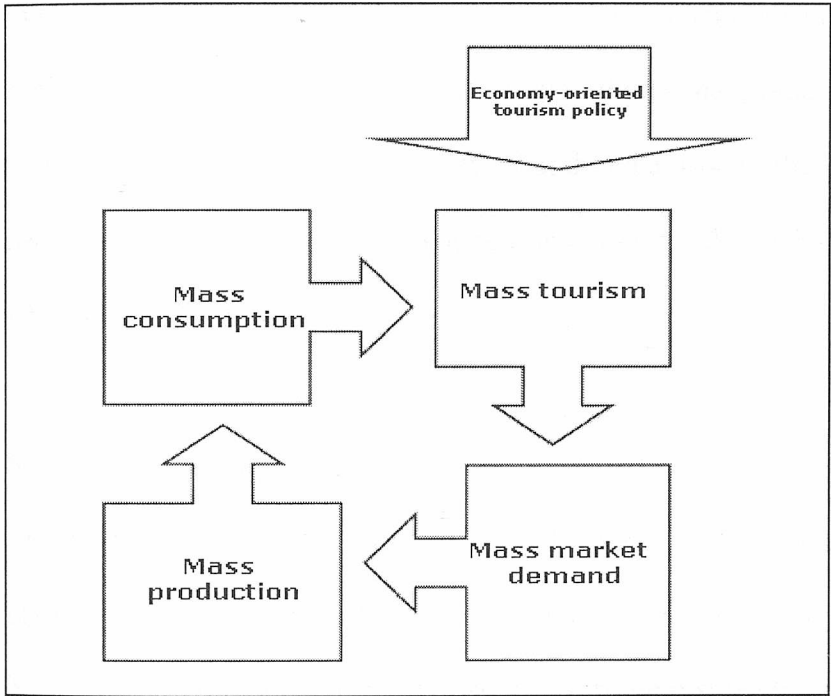
A few informants criticised the authority's *laissez-faire* policy as being to some extent responsible for the soaring rental prices. Within the very central commercial area, 10/15% of houses were owned by the government. The government had the ability to rent these houses to the local artists at a relatively lower price in order to keep them there and balance the increase of the rental at the same time. However, this advice was not accepted by the authority. There were many local informants who had stated to the researcher that many officials owned houses in the old town as other local residences did, so an ever increasing rental was certainly in the interest of every local inhabitant, including those officials. This information provided a new perspective to evaluate the fact why the local authority was reluctant to change their policy and lend more support to local artists.

The relationship between the government's mass tourism policy (discussed in Chapter 6) and the commodification of the dongba cultural handicrafts can be inferred from the following diagram (see Figure 8-7). The economy-led policy resulted in the development of mass tourism in which the economic value could be rapidly optimised. Immediately, these mass domestic tourists created a mass demand in the handicrafts market, which affected the way of making handicrafts. Subsequently, the mass produced souvenirs were dumped onto the market in order to maintain a mass consumption from which the mass production business model could be sustained. In return, when the economy in Dayanzhen came to rely mostly on mass consumption, the government, shopkeepers and other involved organisations would stand to benefit from such an economy, encouraging the further development of mass tourism, from which mass consumption could be guaranteed.

Harrison further comments:

‘When a specific service sector devoted to the mass consumption of travel emerged, roughly parallel to the development of mass production in the industrial sector.’ (2001a: 9)

**Figure 8-7: Tourism policy and the production of handicrafts**



Source: fieldwork data

**8.3.2 The Impacts on Dongba**

In the first place, the process of commodifying dongba as tourist assets seemed to use the commercial preferences to select the ‘right’ dongba according to the market value and interest. The primary ability of working in the tourism industry was writing the pictographs, rather than the talent of holding rituals and the serious attitude concerning religious commitment as suggested in Chapter 7. Some dongba complained that overall, those dongba who were likely to be accepted by the tourism market were expected to

adjust their attention to writing pictographs and catering for the market demand.

Consequently, the tourism industry, with its economic power, was diverting the attention of many young dongba from 'fulfilling their religious commitment' to 'improving the handwriting' without concerning themselves with meaning; from staying in the rural area to working in the urban place; from learning it from their fathers or uncles as apprentices in twenty years to learning it from their school teachers as students in two years. Some senior dongba began to worry about the possibility that gradually, the application of the dongba cultural skills and knowledge that dongba used in the tourism industry might become a benchmark for some young dongba in deciding what they needed to learn and what they did not.

Secondly, the strength of tourism was also manifest in the influence of the dongba rituals. This impact was enhanced by the fact that Lijiang was one of the cities in China that was undertaking reforms in cultural affairs. Many public-run cultural organisations had become commercial enterprises, losing government subsidies that they received previously. Consequently, they targeted the popular dongba culture as a lucrative resource to make a profit from the tourism industry. As a result, many commercial organisations involved in the tourism market promoted the dongba culture as a variety of commercial performances. In this regard, Cohen criticises:

'In many parts of the Third World, rituals, ceremonies, and folk arts may all be subjected to commoditisation. Moreover, since the process is frequently initiated by culture-brokers and touristic entrepreneurs from outside the local community, it may well lead to the exploitation of the locals and of their cultural resources by outsiders...what used to be religiously meaningful ritual for an internal public, may become a culturally significant self-representation before an external public.'  
(1988: 381-382)

With this consistent involvement, both some Naxi scholars and senior dongba concerned that this religion would inevitably become raw material for commercial products, being preserved according to the market value. If this situation continued, it would not only affect the attitude of young dongba towards this practice, but also impact upon the belief of the farmers at large. The seriousness of the rituals would be possibly compromised if the dongba did not focus their attention on the nature of the rituals, rather than concentrating on audience satisfaction. A number of young dongba who graduated from dongba schools were subsequently confronted with a pressure of being devalued by senior dongba and some local farmers as 'tourist' or 'commodified' dongba. A Naxi scholar critically observed that the dongba culture was seemingly turning into a popular form of entertainment whilst its essence has been neglected.

On the other side of the debate, however, the presence of tourism has invited a brand effect to the dongba culture. Dongba have become a kind of cultural sightseeing, one of the most visible icons of the dongba culture with such a result that the popularity of the culture has enormously risen on a much broader scale. Before the development of tourism, dongba culture was only confined within the Naxi academia, now it has been talked and discussed in many parts of the country. As discussed in Chapter 6, the majority of the Naxi in Lijiang basin area would not have heard of the dongba culture, were it not for the appearance of tourism. Based on the data provided by the Lijiang authority, it was estimated that 15/20% of the economic revenue of Lijiang was associated with the dongba culture.

The visibility of the culture was dramatically increased within the context of tourism. In addition, the increase of tourism not only offered many dongba employment opportunities in a variety of tourist enterprises, significantly improving their economic situation, but also provided them with a variety of opportunities to improve their theoretical

understanding of the religion. As a result, the popularity of the culture has greatly consolidated the confidence of those young dongba.

In addition, the conflict on timetable within the tourist companies has given rise to the attention to developing a clear standard in Lijiang to judge the ability and identification of dongba, or to distinguish a dongba noticeably from a farmer who simply had some basic dongba cultural knowledge. In tradition, the ability of a dongba was diverse due to the process of learning in a different manner, length, content and procedure. This conflict in the tourism industry was actually appealing that the dongba should be recognised by the local communities with a specific and stable status. The unique character of dongba working in the tourism market should be widely recognised within the industry. They should be given the privilege of serving their country folk in the first place in order to minimise such conflict.

In response to the label of 'tourist' or 'commodified' dongba, many of the young dongba argued that working at tourist companies has changed them from being 'part-time priests' to professional performers of religious affairs. Most of the interviewed dongba acknowledged that the first advantage of working in the tourism industry was the relatively stable income, compared with the situation of agricultural work. Secondly, they had more time to study the literature.

Compared with those traditional dongba, they spent a longer time studying dongba manuscripts and discussing relevant theories. In addition, the cross-regional communications have been dramatically increased with a large number of dongba working in town areas. Especially for those dongba who lived in the rural areas, which were less accessible by transport, the tourism industry offered them a broader space and better



chance to communicate with other practitioners, with whom they could exchange ideas, doubts, theories and understanding of the religion.

To some extent, some of the critiques of the changes in the dongba culture have to be evaluated not just within the context of tourism. A few interviewed senior dongba admitted that it should be noted that society had moved into a modern time, when people's living pace had become much faster than it used to be. Villagers had less time to practise religion than they used to. Compared with the life in the past, farmers were not restricted to their homes any longer, but worked in towns and other places. They would expect that the rituals could be shortened in order to save time. Moreover, more farmers began to judge the rituals with their increasing 'modern' vision. They did not fully accept that these rituals were 'valid' or 'scientific' as they used to do. These lend weight to the argument that with an increase of social and economic development, the commodification of dongba cannot be assessed solely on the side of dongba, but also be scrutinised in the light of the changes on the side of the farmers and the community as a whole.

#### **8.4 Summary**

The reviewed history of the pictographs and manuscripts demonstrated that they were closely interrelated. The pictographs were greatly developed in the process of writing numerous manuscripts by the group of dongba over past centuries. It was obvious that dongba had been involved in the progress of the pictographs and manuscripts. The dongba culture had gifted the Naxi people to be valued as one of the minority ethnic groups in China that owned an indigenous system of writing, literature and integrated ethnic cultural values.

However, arguably, this fame arrived too rapidly, with the result that the pictographs had either been scratched indiscriminately on a variety of tourist souvenirs or written randomly as mysterious symbols to satisfy the tourists' curiosity. As a consequence, it was felt by many dongba authorities that it was necessary to institute a clear-cut writing standard for anyone using it for commercial purposes, on the grounds that, if this were not done, the messy scratched pictographs would exert a long-term impact upon this ancient hieroglyph.

The commodification in the handicrafts market has turned Dayanzhen into a big shopping mall selling mass-produced souvenirs made in many parts of the county, labelled as 'locally made'. This process was triggered by the government's policy to develop mass tourism rapidly. This strategy shifted the host/guest communication and interaction from 'extensive' to 'superficial', which in return affected the selling and production of authentic dongba cultural handicrafts in the tourism market. The local craftsmen were exposed to the commercial competition without enough protection for maintaining their ability to produce locally-made handicrafts. In addition, the local authority did not fully intervene in the rise of rental prices, leaving the traditional handicrafts business swamped by mass-produced souvenirs.

Gradually, when the production of the handicrafts in Dayanzhen was dominated by semi-industrial products, the local craftsmen, who were mainly based on family-run business, lost the control of selling 'alleged authentic' local made handicrafts to tourists. This setback subsequently impacted their vision and attitude on the authenticity of the handicrafts (Nason, 1984: 423), not just made by migrant craftsmen but also made by themselves. This circumstance denoted that the links between authenticity and commodification in reference to the dongba cultural handicrafts were sensitive to the local government's concerned policy, the host/guest interaction, the production and selling of

the items, and the locals' control of the business.

By comparison, the commodification of dongba (farmer-priests) displayed a divergent feature in the perspectives of different Naxi. On the one aspect, the 'authenticity' of those dongba working in the tourism industry was challenged by either some senior dongba or many mountain farmers. The disputes were mainly concentrated on their study of the religion in content, depth, style and preference for the economic attractions of the tourist industry. Their religious value was reduced to writing pictographs or performing dances on requests for tourists. They were more valuable to tourists and researchers than to local farmers. Moreover, in the process of being commodified as tourist assets, the previous religious essence of the rituals was compromised.

On the other aspect, from the perspective of those 'tourist-dongba', this process has sustained them with regular payments and longer time to study the dongba texts. The improved economic situation attracted more locals to learn this culture, at least with an expectation to have a relatively stable occupation. Their working situation in the tourism industry led to a consideration to establish a professional body by which the religious status of dongba could be clearly identified in the near future. Meanwhile, the unprecedented extensive cross-regional intercommunications between dongba from different parts of the countryside had substantially improved the unevenly developed dongba culture. Furthermore, the profound social, cultural and economic progress in Lijiang's rural and urban areas has modified the ways of consuming religion rituals. As a result, these circumstances should be included into the conversation of the commodification of dongba as tourist assets.

## Notes

1. They argued that it would normally take them one day to go home and another day for coming back, and plus three to four days for the ritual, on average.
2. The average income of the majority of the dongba working in the tourism industry was between 400 and 600 RMB per month.
3. For instance, in a golf course in Lijiang, a new 'pictograph' was created that the pictographic word 'human' was holding a golf pole, representing a new word of 'golf' in Naxi pictograph.
4. Jianchuan was 70 kilometres from Lijiang, with a total population of 167,300 people, of whom 91.6% were Bai. It took only two and a half hours by bus to Lijiang. In Jianchuan, there were currently more than 7,000 carpenters, including 1,000 women, working across the province with a total output of 41 million RMB in 2006.
5. As early as in 1998, the Heqing Village Committee had invested over 30 million RMB to improve the road leading to Dayanzhen. A 37,000 square meter tourist souvenir wholesale market was opened to the public in 2004, visited by 3.45 million tourists ever since.
6. Most of these migrant businessmen were coming from Sichuan, Guangxi, Guandong, Hunan and Zhejiang Provinces.

## **Chapter 9 The Preservation of the Dongba Culture in Lijiang**

This chapter examines the role of the government and the tourism industry with regard to the preservation of the dongba culture, and the responses from the Naxi scholars, town and mountain residents. The local government has used its power to preserve the dongba culture according to its national cultural and religious policies. Meanwhile, the tourism industry, especially the local tourist enterprises, as the major locomotive of the local economic development, not only used its economic power to encourage the locals to maintain their tradition, but also promote the dongba culture in compliance with the preferences of the tourism industry. The Naxi farmers, as the subject of the preservation, had their own visions and preferences in their use of tourism as a means to reinforce dongba culture and at the same time strengthened their economic achievements and ethnic identification accordingly.

### **9.1 The Development of the Government's Policy**

Although the Cultural Revolution has been terminated for three decades, the authority's political influence is still in place. The government's early post-cultural revolution policy, between 1983 and 1997, played a major part in preserving this culture. For the government's concern, minorities' culture should be 'preserved' in a good condition so that the cultural diversity of PRC, as a multiethnic country, would be fulfilled. The framework of these national cultural policies dictated that the religious character of the dongba culture needed to be neglected (Heberer, 1989; Richter, 1989; Brodsgaard and Strand, 1998; McKhann, 1998; Sofield and Li, 1998; Mackerras, 2003). The importance of the dongba culture in this period of time was thus mostly focused on exploring the academic value of those religious manuscripts and pictographs, which were singled out as

the most valuable components of this culture.

Under this circumstance, Lijiang government established DCRI in 1981 to rescue those religious manuscripts, and record and translate the texts into Chinese. It became the leading research institute in China concerning the study of dongba culture. Since the onset of its establishment, the institute has hired over twenty dongba, 11 of them being the most eminent 'great dongba' in Lijiang, helping the research fellows to translate several hundreds of copies of the manuscripts, and recording dances and songs used in rituals. With their participations, the institute successfully published the book of *A Hundred Volumes of Dongba Classic Literatures* in 2004.

Meanwhile, the government actively supported the idea of including the pictographs into the public education curriculum and promoting these characters in other cultural organisations. They regarded it as a good scheme to preserve this culture in a long-term perspective. Since 1995, DCM has run ten dongba training courses, selecting young farmers who had stronger religious background to join these courses. In 1999, Ms Huang Linna started to organise pictograph classes in primary and middle schools in Lijiang. By 2003, a number of dongba pictographs classes have been operating in locals' educational bodies at different levels.

By comparison, before the appearance of tourism in 1997, the demand for resuming religious rituals was regarded by the local authority as 'unnecessary', because those rituals were classified as 'superstition'. Those dongba who once created the manuscripts in practice were invited by the institute to work as 'research assistants'. Others though received virtually no economic or social aid from the government. The researcher once visited an 82-year-old dongba in Shuming, whose grandfather and father were both

dongba. He picked up the dongba practice in the village after the practice was resumed in 1983. His daughter-in-law claimed that DCRI once wanted to invite him to work in the institute, but he was not able to do so due to his illness. After that, despite his deteriorating health, no official came to see him.

The state's role in redefining custom is well recognised in Southeast Asian studies (Wood, 1984: 368). In regard to the different situations in dongba, rituals, pictographs and manuscripts, 5 out of the 6 interviewed officials asserted that the pictographs and manuscripts were the key element of this culture, while the superstitious elements occurring in some rituals should be eliminated from the contents of the dongba culture.

One of them insisted:

‘Preserving the dongba culture doesn’t dictate the practice of the rituals. Most of the rituals were dealing with spirits, ghosts and demons, which do not exist at all. Have you seen any ghost? Where are they? If we promote those rituals widely, how do we respond to other superstitious activities in other regions?’ (G1-11)

On the contrary, the only one official who disagreed with this statement acknowledged:

‘The dongba culture is a traditional religious practice formed in the long history of the Naxi. Be it superstitious or not, it is a part of the Naxi culture and should be respected in its own right. Besides, it is necessary to distinguish those superstitious activities from folk customs. We’ve got serious lessons to learn from the Cultural Revolution that it was wrong to assume that all folk religious practices were superstition.’ (G1-07)

After 1997, the preservation works were closely associated with the involvement of tourism. The tourism industry was specifically targeted by the authority as an efficient medium to promote the dongba culture widely. Dongba were elevated from part-time priests who practise ‘superstitious practice’ to ethnic cultural practitioners, becoming the most eye-catching figures in the eyes of tourists. Within the researched area, many useful

books and tools were kept in museum exhibition rooms, tourist attractions or research institutes, displaying the cultural value of the dongba culture to tourists. Moreover, encouraged by the remarkable achievements obtained from Dayanzhen's WHS status in the tourism industry, the local authority successfully promoted the dongba manuscripts into the list of the World Memory Heritage in August 2003.

Meanwhile, a number of villages were classified by the authority as 'Dongba Cultural Protection Area' and irregularly received some 'cultural fund' from the local county governments. Prompted by the tourism industry, practising religious rituals was for the first time perceived by the government as a restoration of the dongba culture. At this stage, however, the preservation project was simplified as transferring a certain amount of money to those designated village committees. Nevertheless, many village cadres recalled that there was no clear instruction explaining to them how to use the 'cultural fund' that they received, except that they were advised by some senior officers in private not just to keep holding religious rituals but more importantly to improve the economic situation. One village committee member commented:

'The senior leaders would be very interested in hearing that our economic situation has been significantly improved after we received the fund. As a result, some cadres didn't use the fund but counted it as the village's economic revenue and reported back to the senior department in the next year. Some senior officers in-charge of the project, just left some money at our committee without showing much attention to our life, practical difficulties and problems.' (G2-38)

Although all interviewed officials claimed that the preservation of the dongba culture should take precedence over economic development, they did not hide their inclination. One official's attitude was typical to explain the government's preference:

'It is right to preserve this indigenous culture, but the best way to preserve it is to learn something useful and new. To develop is the best way to preserve. Although



in theory, preserving traditional culture should have privilege over economic activities, in practice it is far more urgent for every one of us to catch up with the national social and economic modernisation. It is to some extent meaningless that you keeping some valuable things when you remain in poverty.’ (G1-09)

## 9.2 The Role of the Social Elite – Naxi Scholars

However, the government’s policy received different responses from the Naxi scholars, and the residents in town and rural mountain areas. As far as the scholars were concerned, they were the group in the Naxi community having the highest sense of cultural consciousness and self-determination. They were also the group that firstly raised attention to the dongba religion by contriving the phrase of ‘dongba culture’ so as to rescue the indigenous culture from the state’s religious censorship, and strongly proposed to make full use of tourism as a method to promote this culture (Chao, 1996; McKhann, 1998; Mathieu, 2003). The importance of the Naxi elite was acknowledged in several studies. Hansen elaborates:

‘The educated Naxi elite consist of a comparatively large number of people, many of whom hold prestigious and influential positions in Kuming or Lijiang. They are employed at all levels of government in Yunnan Province and Lijiang County, and considering the relatively small number of Naxi, many are influential teachers and researchers... They have a well-developed network through groups such as the Society for Naxi Culture and so are able to organise themselves and express demands within the politically acceptable national framework.’ (1999: 84)

Nearly half of the 13 interviewed scholars and artists in Group One disputed the policy on the preservation of the dongba culture. Four of the scholars argued that this culture has become an academic topic that is only practised within museums and institutes. Those dongba books were just parts of the practice, used for assisting dongba to conduct rituals in the right way. Some meanings in the books were hardly understandable without seeing the rituals practised in real life. One of them stressed:

‘More than a quarter of a century has passed, all the senior dongba that once worked at the DCRI have passed away one after the other without being able to harvest a qualified dongba in the new generation. Many of the young dongba who studied at the institute could only read and write pictographs without fully grasping the ability of holding rituals in real life.’ (G1-03)

Despite the fact that the pictographs were widely studied by scholars, the keystone of this culture or religion was the rituals that were practised in the rural regions. Therefore, resumption of the rituals was vital for the preservation project. In addition, five scholars appealed that the preservation should rely on maintaining the country in an ‘untouched’ state, which means that dongba should be kept in their home villages so that the root of this religion would be preserved, and the influence of the commodification, manifested in the tourism industry, would be reduced to the minimum level. One of them highlighted:

‘One of the consequences of the government’s policy was the division between the rural communities and dongba. The farmers’ religious demands and needs were hardly satisfied, compared to the past. Besides, the extensive collection of the dongba books, tools and religious items had caused shortages of these items in rural areas. In order to cope with this circumstance, some dongba had to either shorten the rituals, or borrow each others’ books. Moreover, as the religious role of dongba was ruled out from their main duty in the tourism industry, the increasing fame of the culture did not deepen or enhance the religious belief of young dongba. Dongba should really stay in villages rather than in towns.’ (G1-10)

However, the attitude of the Naxi academia with regard to the government’s policy was not identical. Apart from the above scholars who advocated that more attention and effort should be placed on the work of encouraging dongba to practise religious rituals in real life, others’ stance was in compliance with the government’s position, underlining that the dongba practice should be preserved in a ‘cultural’ spectrum. More efforts should be given to those ‘cultural components’ such as the pictographs, manuscripts, the dances, the

handicrafts and paintings, whilst the religious attribute of this custom should be downplayed so as to keep a distance from the association of religion.

As far as the role of tourism was concerned, they emphasised that the dongba culture provided the Naxi with a unique ethnic characteristic that hardly any other ethnic group possessed. By embracing the dongba culture as the leading ethnic character of the group, these Naxi scholars, as one of the most influential representatives of the Naxi social elite, strongly proposed that the Naxi was an advanced group as much as the Han. Some of them argued that the pictographs should be called 'Naxi pictographs' rather than 'dongba pictographs'. They believed it as one of the best icons to construct the ethnic identity for the whole group. One of them advocated:

'Although the dongba culture is influenced by other civilisations, it is the most valuable cultural property of our Naxi. The pictographs are the most valuable treasure of our group. We are a small ethnic group in population size but not in the context of the cultural achievements... We have three WHS, more than any other minority group (1). The value of the dongba culture shows that we are as great as the Han, the Tibetan and others.' (G1-12)

### **9.3 The Responses of the Naxi Residents**

#### **9.3.1 Urban Area**

The advent of tourism in Lijiang has significantly increased the Naxi sense of ethnic pride and self-confidence of being Naxi. By comparison, the majority of the interviewees living in urban areas and suburban villages had a stronger sense of maintaining their ethnic characteristics such as cloth, architecture, language, custom and religion than others living in remote mountain areas. They were much more proud of the Naxi history, legend, arts and culture. Hardly did any interviewed town dweller challenge the government's cultural

policy. The dongba culture was valued by most of the interviewees as one of their ethnic characteristics to stand out from the influence of tourists, most of whom were Han Chinese. A guesthouse owner stated:

‘We don’t believe in dongba religion, but I like to put some pictographs in rooms as decorations. To be honest, I don’t really know these words, but many of my customers like it very much. I think, for them, these characters symbolise Lijiang and Naxi.’ (G2-17)

Meanwhile, the considerably improved economic situation of the Naxi has given some of them a certain confidence to measure people living in poverty as ‘backward’ or ‘lazy’. In the conversations with many interviewees, the concept of ‘poverty’ was very often connected with ‘backward’ and ‘*mei you wen hua*’, which means ‘do not have culture’ whereas the dongba culture and progressed economic situation convinced them that the Naxi were ‘cultured’ and so an ‘advanced’ group in the context of the economy and culture (Hansen, 1999; Mackerras, 1994, 2005; Sofield, 2000).

As discussed in previous chapters, Lijiang’s tourism has promoted the pictographs and other elements of the dongba culture as the most prominent ethnic difference between the Naxi and other groups. There was an increasing popularity for learning the pictographs in Lijiang urban areas, in particular those Naxi youth who had higher educational background or people working at some cultural and tourist related organisations, such as teachers, tourist employees, public servants, scholars, artists and craftsmen. Their positive attitude toward the dongba culture was reflected in the following comment:

‘The dongba culture has been extinct for several decades in the basin area. It is tourism that invited it back... I think every Naxi needs to learn the pictographs, especially our younger generation. It is the legacy of our whole group. We should be proud of the fact that we have our own characters and religion.’ (G2-03)

Apart from learning the pictographs, the town residents and farmers living in suburbs began to invite dongba to participate in their daily life to enhance their ethnic status in the context of large numbers of Han tourists. Dongba were not just holding funerals or practising the annual ceremonies, but also present at wedding, new house building and other celebration occasions. It became very popular in Lijiang to pay dongba to hold wedding ceremonies. In some occasions, the bridegroom family invited a group of dongba not only to preside over the ceremony but also to perform some dances, which were used to pray for longevity in the traditional dongba ceremonies.

This change was rapidly grasped by some tourist companies. They have promoted some ‘wedding package tours’ to attract young tourists joining the wedding ceremony presided over by a dongba. A Naxi scholar consented to this phenomenon with the following comment:

‘This is an interesting modified application of the ancient dongba culture in a modern society. Although some people criticise that this is a commodification of the dongba culture, it could enhance people’s interest to know the dongba culture.’ (G1-13)

### **9.3.2 Rural Mountain Areas**

In the vast rural areas especially the researched mountain villages, the dongba culture was understood mainly as a religious practice. According to the researcher’s observation, the religion was still believed by many of the farmers within the researched areas. Each dongba ceremony that was held in the villages could cause sensational effect among farmers living nearby. The real value of the dongba culture, in the farmers’ understanding, was the religious force of the practice, such as the divining power and the dances that could get rid of demons and ghosts or bring good fortune for them. Unfortunately, this was

the very part that the authority attempted to peel off from the vocabulary of the dongba culture. A farmer argued:

‘We don’t know much about ‘dongba culture’. That is a name given by the government. What we have is the dongba religion. Although not everyone believes in it, we need it when we worship and sacrifice at different times in each year. I would say, it is a part of our life.’ (G2-40)

In addition, many farmers perceived the dongba culture as a valuable cultural resource by which they could improve their economic situation with the help of tourism related business. As a result, the government’s over simplified preservation effort provoked some negative views in a number of villages. One of them pointed out:

‘On the one hand, they (government) gave us money to preserve the culture. On the other hand, they took away most of the books and tools, and kept them in museums. It is as if the religious affairs are nothing more than giving us some money. They don’t care whether you practise it or not...We decided if they don’t pay that money next year, we won’t hold the rituals any longer.’ (G2-47)

In response to the growing influence from the tourism industry, the mountain communities gradually classified the dongba culture into ‘those performed in town for tourists’ as ‘changed dongba culture’, and ‘the practice that we have’ as ‘traditional dongba culture’ categories respectively, in order to keep a distance from the negative impact. They constantly emphasised to the tourists whom they met either in town or villages that the performances they watched in the urban area were ‘commodified tourism products’. The ‘real’ dongba culture was only available in mountain regions. As a farmer-craftsman stated:

‘We have nowhere to argue what is the real dongba culture. We like to show people (tourists) what it is all about, however, the tourists’ understanding of the dongba culture has been restricted to the conversation with those so-called dongba who sit in the souvenir shops and tourist attractions. I’ve advised them

that if they want to know the original dongba culture, they need to go to the mountain region.’ (G2-45)

In Group Two, 76% of the interviewees living in the mountain regions agreed that the current dongba culture was different from the traditional one. The differences according to their comments were mainly focused on the behaviour and attitude of dongba, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Moreover, farmers automatically connected poor behaviour of these dongba with the increase of tourism in Lijiang, arguing that it was tourism that changed these dongba and the dongba culture.

Within the mountain regions, people were gradually learning to take advantage of the fact that many traditional Naxi practices, customs and other cultural elements in their area were relatively highly valued by the tourism market. They claimed themselves as ‘traditional Naxi’, to stand out from those Naxi whose living environment has been profoundly urbanised or assimilated by the overwhelming social and economic reform movements.

In the contact with tourists, they emphasised that they were ‘real’ Naxi, which might give them a better reputation than those ‘urbanised’ Naxi. They argued that the difference between the ‘real’ and ‘urbanised’ Naxi was located at the place that the former was more traditional and the latter was closer to the Han culture. The key characteristics of the ‘urbanised’ Naxi, according to this comparison, were situated in various aspects. For instance, they did not practice annual worship and other dongba rituals. Furthermore, their windows were decorated by too many Han style patterns. On the contrary, the key features of the ‘real’ Naxi were rooted in the fact that they practised the dongba religion, including the hearths where they worshipped the ancestors and the gods at each meal.

### 9.3.3 Revised Government Policy

In response to the pressures from academia, the communities and the tourism industry, the Lijiang government announced in December 2005 a comprehensive policy to preserve the dongba culture. The updated preservation project was divided into five categories:

1. those manuscripts published or written before 1966
2. Naxi dongba characters (pictographs), music, dances, paintings, sculptures, dresses, historic architecture, venues and places
3. Naxi dongba and their knowledge and skills
4. custom and folk activities that possess dongba cultural characteristics
5. other valuable events or items of the dongba culture.

Source: Guo, Liu and He (2005: 2)

It was the first time that dongba and dongba cultural rituals were included in the government's preservation project. In 2008, the Lijiang government proposed a series of programmes in order to protect the Naxi ethnic culture. It allocated 10 million RMB cultural funds from the annual revenue. The project covered three parts, including the general management, ethnic culture and the tourism sector, determined to take into account the major problems and difficulties. One of the leading aims of this plan was to accelerate the management of preservation in rural areas.

Between February and May of the year, the Lijiang municipality held a workshop for 30 dongba coming from 25 remote mountain villages across Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces. Each of them had free accommodation, food and round-trip transport. In order to encourage them to come to study, they were given 20 RMB each day during their study. An officer-in-charge of the programme related:

‘It’s a big event in the history of the dongba culture, which has never happened before. The programme will help the government to grasp an overview of the



culture in the vast mountain regions. It's useful for us to develop the preservation policy in the near future. It also promotes the communications of the dongba living in different regions and widens their knowledge and skills of this religion.' (G1-06)

The criteria for selecting students were first, that the student should not only know dongba religion, but also have experience of practising certain of rituals in villages. In addition, the candidates' age should be between 20 and 40 years old. Thirdly, the candidates should have stronger organising ability and willingness to promote the dongba religion in their own areas. They would be expected to be the potential teachers in the regions, helping other dongba nearby to study. Finally, the students should go back home rather than remaining at the city.

#### **9.4 The Involvement of Tourist Enterprise – Shuming Project**

Apart from the government's involvement, the tourism industry also played a vital role in the Shuming preservation project. Yushuizhai was one of the enterprises trying to use the commercial power to preserve the dongba culture at village level. They chose Shuming Village as an invaluable place to encourage farmers to be more interested in their traditional culture and practice, alongside their daily agricultural farming. Yushuizhai reached an agreement with 800 farmers in the village in June 2006 that each family that followed the regulation would be rewarded economically. The company also bought 30 Mu of land on a hill of the village to prepare for the coming of tourists. The secretary of the company claimed:

‘We are Naxi entrepreneurs, not like those migrant merchants who come here only for making money. We have the responsibility to develop tourism in the long term. We realise that the dongba culture is not only our ethnic group's cultural treasure, but also is an invaluable resource in the tourism-related business. We want to maintain the cultural and environmental situation in this village

(Shuming), and will advertise it as an authentic dongba cultural site in the tourism market. We hope this will significantly improve the locals' general environment in a long-term perspective.' (G2-06)

#### 9.4.1 The Preservation Plan

According to the preservation rule, a family that abided by the regulation would obtain 50 RMB a month or 600 RMB a year in total. All the 173 families were organised in 6 groups. The leader of each group would have 60 RMB a month as payment for their work, and would have another 1500 RMB by the end of the year as bonus if the group's situation met the requirements in good condition. The preservation requirements:

1. to protect the woods from irresponsible cutting
2. not to cut family-owned trees until this has been reported to the village committee and had been acquired permission
3. to oppose strongly any illegal cutting, transporting and selling of woods. Anyone who stopped or reported such breach of law will be rewarded
4. to protect water sources, avoiding any violent digging or cutting nearby
5. to keep the environment clean, including not littering
6. to maintain the public transport system free from blocking, not obstructing the public road with building materials or other items
7. to obey traditional habits, maintaining dongba custom and culture
8. to maintain traditional habitations, clothes, festivals, and the practice in traditional weddings and funerals
9. to respect the elders and children alike; treat women and men equally; keep the family and neighbourhood in harmony, helping each other.

The company explained to the farmers that in future a lot of tourists would come to visit the village for its well-preserved natural resources, traditional buildings and the dongba culture, so that each family should expend their effort to keep the traditional features such as clothing, hearths, pictographic signs and religious rituals. Therefore, every farmer had the responsibility not to cut the forest, keeping it in good condition. According to the dongba doctrine, the key attribute of the practice was the friendly neighbourhood, which

was not only between the Naxi, the Tibetan and Bai, but also between mankind and the natural world, e.g. trees, river, mountains and all other natural substances. The humans and nature should treat each other kindly. Humans should not hunt too many animals or cut down too many trees, which were beyond their normal usage, otherwise, they would be punished by nature.

In the first year, this rule was followed by the majority of the farmers. According to the company's record in 2007, the average of the economic reward of each family out of 173 was 35 RMB each month. The total input of the company was around 7,000 RMB.

However, after one year, no tourist appeared in this area and even the road that led to the county town was not finished. Many farmers lost interest in the project. A few farmers opposed the rules because they could not cut trees and sell to smugglers, from which they could make profit. Some even went to the extreme of burning the woods to damage the company's 'tourist resource'. One leader of a group was once beaten by those smugglers when he tried to stop them cutting trees.

After realising that environmental protection was not an issue that a commercial company could really afford to manage alone, the company decided to revise the rules in order to avoid further injuries to staff. The new version of the rules did not cover the matter of cutting woods. Apart from that, the company organised members from 150 families to visit a number of tourist attractions in Lijiang, including the company itself, in an attempt to convince the farmers that it was very important and invaluable to maintain traditional culture and natural resources in good condition. In addition, in order to restore farmers' interest in the dongba practice, the company subsidised the village to resume some rituals that had not been held for half a century.

On 1st July 2007, the company enrolled 8 young dongba trainees studying at the company. Each trainee had two years of course work learning dongba dances, pictographs and rituals, with 400 RMB each month as studentship allowance. To alleviate the difficulty of the living expense, the company begun to purchase local agricultural products from local farmers with a price that was higher than the local market value. By the end of 2007, the company spent another 10,000 RMB to improve some parts of the irrigation system in the village in order to help the locals increase their agricultural productivity.

Unfortunately, the attitude of the villagers towards the project became more and more dissatisfied after the project proceeded for more than a year. An increasing number of villagers became indifferent to the involvement of Yushuizhai. From 70% of the farmers strongly supporting the company's policy in the first year, 60% of them opposed it by early 2008. Eight out of ten local dongba considered the company's plan was after all a very good attempt. Nevertheless, one of them questioned:

‘Such a project should not be promoted by an enterprise alone. It should be carried out with the support from local government. The way they (the company) are marking each family's performance in preserving the dongba culture and then paying them with money was as if doing business with us.’ (G2-34)

Among the farmers' complaints, the most pressing concern was the 20-kilometre long road leading to the county town, which was the only access that they fully relied on to sell their harvest to the market. The company spent 60,000 RMB and organised farmers to have a 4-kilometre part of the road paved, which belonged to the village committee's responsibility. However, the other part that should have been finished by the county government was postponed. According to one officer from the local county, they had had a plan to build the road a few years ago, but it was postponed due to the problem of a dam project along the Gold Sand River (2). This unexpected situation put Yushuizhai and

Shaming farmers into a very awkward situation.

Farmers used to really appreciate what the company did, such as paving the road and helping them to improve the irrigation system. However, when the company left the road unfinished, they began to question the company's motive, thinking that the company was just seeking commercial profit. Several farmers complained to the researcher that the reason the company suspended the roadwork on the second year was that they realised that the major part of the road (16 kilometres long) was unlikely to be started in the following years. Thus, the company would face such an embarrassment that even if they had finished the 4-kilometre-long section of the road construction as planned, it would still be impossible for them to give tourists access to the village.

Whether this complaint was true or not, the company's influence declined in the village after the roadwork was suspended. By the end of April 2008, when the researcher left the village, the brief paved road was in an unusable condition, severely damaged by those fully loaded smuggling trucks. Since there was no hope of developing tourism in the near future, some farmers went back to the old ways of cutting trees randomly. Even the rapport between the company and the county authority has been affected.

Apart from the problem that the locals could not have a free access to the outside world, the practical value of preserving the traditional culture was challenged by the smuggling business of selling woods illegally. This situation was caused by several factors. To begin with, in 1998 the government totally closed down the forestry business, to protect the environment. Secondly, the demand for using wood to decorating guesthouses, shops, bars and restaurants increased significantly since the advent of tourism in late of 1990s. More businessmen decided to refurbish their premises in the traditional way in order to maintain

the ethnic character. A guesthouse runner in Dayanzhen confirmed:

‘Within the preservation area, no one is allowed to use modern material to build their houses, especially the outside. You can only use wood, mud bricks or other traditional stuff. The price of a piece of wooden pillar rises up enormously since I came here. And now it is the trend to decorate the rooms with wood everywhere, such as floor, windows, doors and roof... To be honest, you would be bankrupt if you purchase the material (wood) in the normal market...’ (G2-17)

Thirdly, the selling of mass-produced woodcarvings in the handicraft market, as discussed in Chapter 8, also increased the demand for wood. The northwest of Lijiang, where Shuming village was located, became one of the largest wood smuggling markets. Consequently, the gap between demand and supply in the market was so huge that the smuggling business became very popular, to such an extent that each county and sub-county government had to seek to curb it with great force and vigour.

Although the interviewed officers from the county government claimed that most of the smugglers were ‘from places outside Lijiang’, this smuggling business closely involved the participation of local farmers as well. In the local smuggling market, seven cubes of wooden pillars would be equivalent to 3,000 RMB, which was much more attractive than the 50 RMB/per month reward from the tourist company. Local farmers were involved in this business not only through cutting and selling their own trees (3), but also through renting their vehicles to smugglers as means of transport. The local government had difficulty in dealing with these smuggling vehicles. An officer from the Tacheng County revealed:

‘Some vehicles are purposely purchased by smugglers for doing transport. We can detain all these vehicles as long as we catch them. However, some others are owned by local farmers. It is very difficult for us to detain all of them for good as the law regulates, because if we do so, then those families’ agricultural transport would be affected. We can only fine these owners and release them after 24 hours,

but we know for sure, the moment they drive away that they will do it again...’

According to the interviewees from Yushuizhai, the company tried to use economic reward to encourage the local villagers to preserve their traditional culture and the environment. However, the smuggling business in this area has totally diverted farmers’ attention. Although making money from it is dangerous, the economic rewards are so huge that they have decided to take the risk, whilst the economic reward offered by the tourist company is tiny by comparison.

#### **9.4.2 The Hearth – Reconstructing the Naxi Culture**

With Yushuizhai’s effort and economic support, about 25 out of 173 families in Shuming Village have reconstructed their hearths into the traditional style, and more families were thinking to follow. More importantly, when a family decided to pull down their old wooden cottage, which had stood through nearly a hundred years’ history, making room for building a new house, the director of the project immediately reported this case to the company. After the company failed to persuade the family to keep the old house by offering them some compensation, the company eventually bought the house completely and moved it to a safer place. The director affirmed:

‘This house is invaluable not just for the Naxi but also for tourists in future. If they want to know the Naxi traditional architecture, it is the best exhibit in this region. We are planning to build a little museum to exhibit the dongba culture in this village. By then, this wooden cottage would be very useful, because it not only maintained the traditional hearth, but also kept the most old style of windows and door, which is hardly seen in other places.’ (G2-06)

For most of the mountain Naxi families, the hearth was very important in their everyday life (Hsu, 1998b). In the researched Tacheng to Ninglang counties, the traditional Naxi

buildings were wooden cottages, and it would be extremely cold in wintertime without a fire (4). In the early stage, when they were living in the wild, sitting around the fire was the only way to hold back the beasts and withstand the cold. Therefore, the hearth gradually became the sacred place for the Naxi. No one would allow putting dirty or used things in it.

Nearly all the indoor activities took place around the hearth. During daytime, it was the social centre of each family, except for outdoor activities, i.e. farming or feeding cattle. The family would normally join together, from boiling water to cooking food, from receiving guests from other places to chatting with neighbours, from passing on local news to discussing important social changes, the majority of the daily life took place around it (see Appendix 9-1).

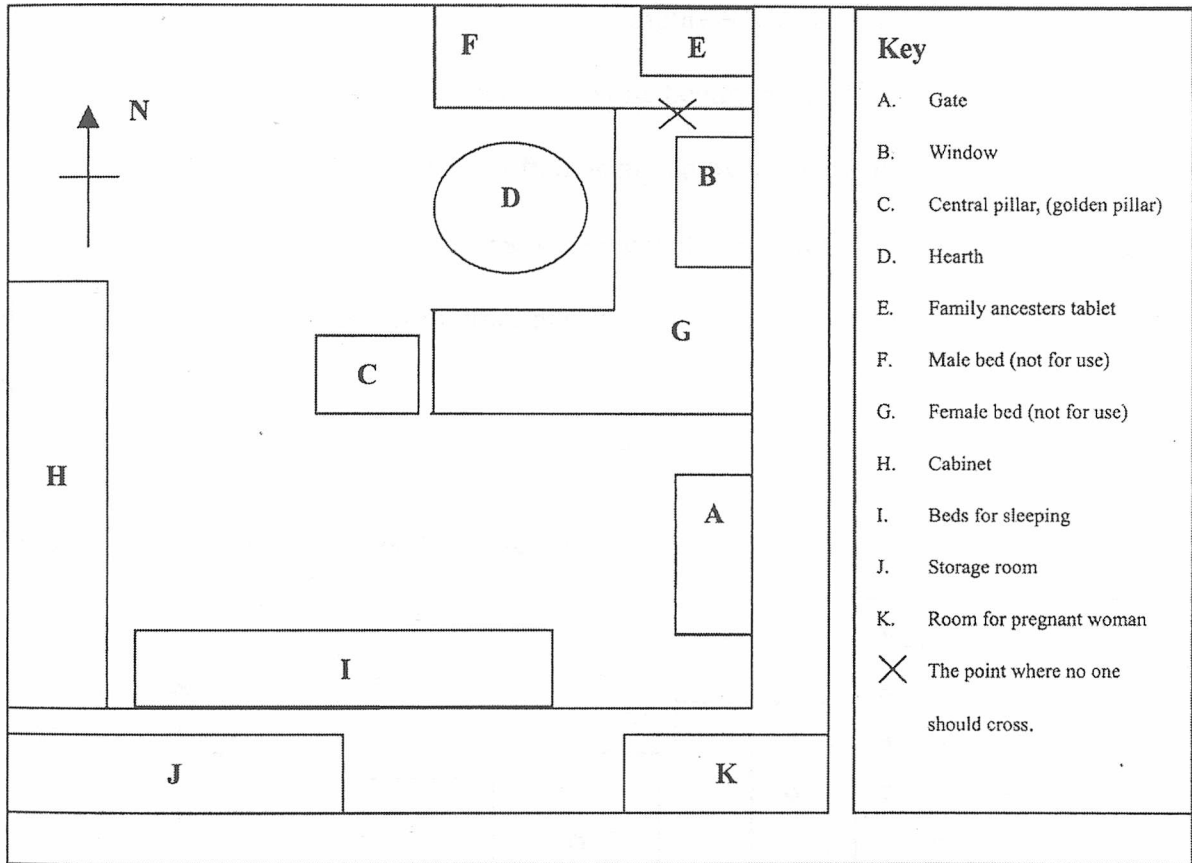
At night, it was the place where the whole family slept beside it. With regard to this study, a dongba would place his working tools and manuscripts on a table beside the hearth, where the ancestors' tablet was situated as well. The hearth became the place for everyone to know whether this was the family of a dongba. The more religious tools and manuscripts on the sacred table, the higher the reputation the dongba would have. In addition, the hearth provides a suitable place to observe changes in the dongba culture and Naxi society, watching their social status and the relationship to each other.

Apart from observing the daily activities that take place around the hearth, the hearths at different villages also provided the researcher with a unique point from which to compare changes in Naxi customs and traditions in different regions. In the layout of the hearth in Shuming and Xinzhu (see Figure 9-1), the letter 'E' indicates the place where the family's ancestors' tablet is kept, so that the closer a person can sit beside the place of 'E', the



higher the social status s/he would enjoy. Therefore, the place that was between ‘E’ and ‘B’, the window, was the place that the host of the family would sit. However, if the guest either enjoyed higher status in the village or was older than the host, or sometimes had a very close relationship with the host, the guest was often invited to sit close to ‘E’ area.

**Figure 9-1: Layout of a house in Lijiang Basin (Shuming and Xinzhu)**



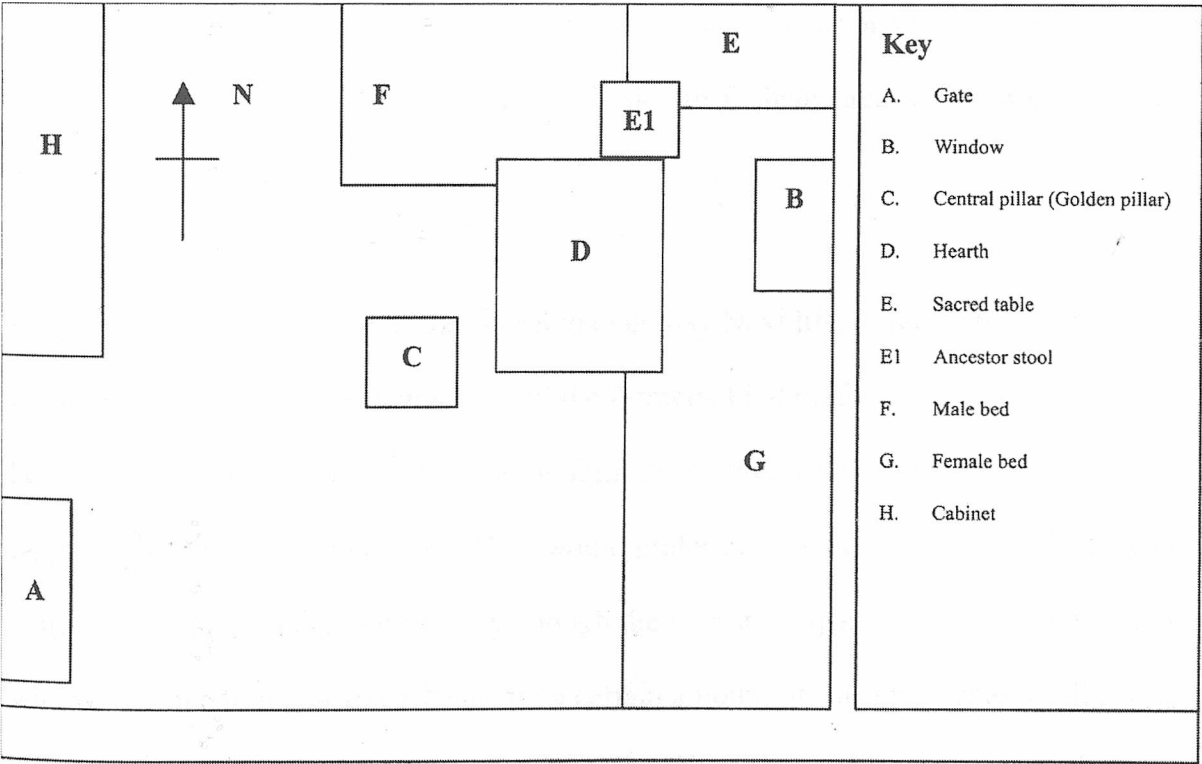
Source: fieldwork data

Compared with the hearths in Ninglang County, the hearths in Shuming and Xinzhu villages were still the centres of the family during the daytime, but no one slept there any longer (see Appendix 9-2). Farmers in these two villages had begun to sleep at one end of the room, as indicated with the letter ‘I’ (see Figure 9-1). Although the male and female beds remained almost the same, one interesting custom in these two villages was that no one was allowed to walk through from the direction of ‘G’ to ‘F’ or vice versa. No farmer

in the villages could explain the reason very clearly, they simply just considered it as their tradition or custom.

However, this tradition was reflected in another way in the villages in Ninglang County, from where according to Guo and He (1999: Appendix), the Naxi migrated to Tacheng County a few hundred years ago. There was a little stone stool ‘E1’, beside the hearth, the letter ‘D’ and the family’s sacred table ‘E’ (see Figure 9-2). Each time, the housewife would put a little food on the stool before anyone began to eat. That stool was called ‘the chair of the ancestors’. The stool was often occupied by some meat, ham or other food, which indicated that the family’s ancestors were well respected. Even the gifts or money that the family members got from other places were also placed on the table first before being used.

Figure 9-2: Layout of a house in Ninglang



Source: fieldwork data

According to the dongba in Ninglang County, no one should walk through the space between the letter 'E', 'E1' and 'D', because the gods and goddess that sacrificed by the family on the table, the ancestors of the family respected on the stool and the sacred fire were somehow connected. By comparison, it can be found that the point of 'the chair of the ancestors', indicated by the letter 'E1' in Figure 9-2 has disappeared in Figure 9-1. Consequently, it was possible to deduce that it was the disappeared 'E1' in Figure 9-2 that blocked the passage between 'F' and 'G' in Figure 9-1.

This was an important trace recording the change of Naxi custom from a relatively primitive type to a modified one. A similar situation has been acknowledged by Bourdieu (1979) in his study in Algeria, in which the space and function of the houses are associated with the locals' gender, age and social status. Moreover, in Shuming and Xinzhu villages, no one presented food to ancestors before each meal. Even the sacred table for gods and goddess in Ninglang region has become substantially smaller, turning into a little bamboo basket containing 'the Family God'. Therefore, the sacred table and the ancestors' chair in Ninglang region were reduced to a bamboo basket in Tacheng area, which was closer to the urban area of Lijiang.

Despite the important value of the hearth in everyday Naxi life, to reconstruct it in traditional style was not welcomed by all the farmers. First of all, as the traditional style hearth required using a lot of wood, some farmers were very reluctant to cut their family-owned trees for this usage. They would prefer to keep their trees for selling in the market (5) to make a profit. Secondly, though the tourist company offered those families who would like to reconstruct the hearth a certain amount of subsidy, farmers still had a negative feeling that this reconstruction would hardly improve their economic situation. Thirdly, some farmers perceived that reconstructing the hearth in traditional style would

signal a 'moving backward'. Some farmers argued with the company-designated leader of the project that they did not understand the practical value of going back to the old style.

In fact, most of the traditional hearths in the village were pulled down just five years ago. They thought the current style of the hearth, which was constructed of cement and ceramic tiles, was very modern, easy to clean and made the room larger (see Appendix 9-3). Having the hearth reconstructed in traditional style gave them a sense of going backward, connected with the negative experience of a life of poverty in the past. A number of farmers, especially those young villagers, strongly disapproved of the idea of 'going back'. One of the most representative complaints was the following:

'We don't think it is right to go back. The life should go forward. We should have the right to live in modern houses as other citizens do. If there is anyone who likes to live in wooden cottages, sitting beside the hearth, then let them stay there.' (G2-29)

Another farmer argued emotionally:

'We don't really believe in the dongba culture any longer. We used to pray for a good harvest each year, but it never worked. It never made us richer or having a better life...it is a superstition and the government has already banned it a long time ago, why do we need to resume it? ...we do it only for the sack of money.' (G2-20)

Most of the interviewees confirmed to the researcher that they did not object to the idea of restoring the traditional custom for tourism, but what they were reluctant to accept was the inconveniences or unnecessary changes that arose from such restoration. Some of them stressed that they would not consider rebuilding the hearth were it not for the sake of obtaining some economic benefit.

### 9.4.3 Discussion of the Case Study

Apart from saving a few traditional Naxi houses in the process, the positive effect of the Shuming Project was that some of the families have indeed restored their hearth in the traditional Naxi style, which used to be the social centre of the families. A number of villagers' sense of preserving the dongba culture has been awakened. After the company organised for them to visit Lijiang, some farmers were strongly convinced that so long as they kept their culture and natural environment in good condition, they would be rewarded economically by tourism.

Unfortunately, as this cooperation rested upon potential economic returns, the commercially-driven preservation project became vulnerable when the outlook was no longer so promising. The major disagreement between the company and the farmers was that the company saw the restoration of dongba culture in a traditional state as both necessary and pressing. The director of Yushuizhai Company confessed that they have been aware of this urgency for the sake of tourism development in Lijiang over the past decade. However, this vision required a broader perspective on dongba culture, perceiving it as the cultural treasure of the Naxi as a whole.

Nevertheless, back in the villages, the farmers were less likely to see such preservation as pressing unless it would generate substantial economic returns. They were initially motivated by the promise of economic potential, hoping for improved living standards, as happened in Lijiang urban areas. However, when they realised that the tourism business was hardly likely to reach them in the near future, they lost their interest in participating in the project. By the time the fieldwork finished in April 2008, the situation in Shuming did not show any significant change. It is then necessary to carry out a follow-up study to

examine whether the farmers' behaviour and thinking have changed considerably after the tourism business started booming.

Given that the company did encourage the farmers' enthusiasm by offering a number of economic subsidies, such as organising visits to widen their outlook, recruiting young dongba apprentices and purchasing agricultural products with better prices, the disproportionate economic potential from the smuggling business considerably diminished the company's effectiveness.

Ironically, the prevalence of the smuggling business was largely reinforced by the increase of tourism business in the Lijiang basin region. The growth of tourism in Lijiang urban and suburban areas escalated the locals' desire to preserve their ethnic culture in a more 'traditional' style. One of the results of this cultural fever was the boom in using large quantities of wood to decorate the buildings and in making wooden handicrafts, which in return spiralled the demand for selling woods on the black market. As a result, this strengthened smuggling business outplayed the influence of tourist companies in the mountain region, despite the company's intention of preserving the traditional culture in the long-term.

## **9.5 Analysis and Discussion**

### **9.5.1 The Key Players of the Preservation**

The preservation of the dongba culture was led by three forces – the government, the tourism industry and the Naxi – but pulling in different directions. From the government's perspective, in order to model the dongba culture according to the national cultural policy,

they encouraged scholars to carry out most of the academic studies in institutes or museums, rather than in the villages where the dongba lived in real life. This demonstrated the government's view that the value of dongba culture did not lie with the religious commitment of a dongba to the community, but lay rather in their ability to translate the pictographs into Chinese for academic research. The dongba were thus invited, or tempted, to live in urban regions with a number of economic benefits.

The local government's economy-centred preference was deeply associated with the vigorous economic campaigns across the country in the past quarter of a century (Yang and Bramwell, 2008). This continuous economic development has greatly influenced people's vision to such an extent that anything that was associated with wealth and economic affluence was referred to as 'advanced' and 'modern'; 'modernity' has given way to 'modernisation'; 'poverty' was labelled as 'backward' (Mackerras, 2003; White, 1997, 1998). The socio-cultural values of a group or a community were by and large defined according to their commercial potential.

Under such circumstances, the Naxi and the local government were ready to embrace anything that could change their economic situation. This was the rationale for those Naxi officials who said that 'it is meaningless to preserve some valuable things when you remain in poverty'. They firmly believed the process of getting rid of poverty was the quickest way to become 'modern' and 'advanced', as Oakes' (1998) study reflects in Guizhou Province. The primary task of each local authority was the need to achieve economic progress.

In Lijiang, the government's power was not just exerted directly upon the community through the implementation of policies and through published documents, but also situated

in the position of social elites who controlled a major part of the resources in social and cultural realms. The relationship between the government and the scholars was relatively close. For instance, many leaders of academic groups or associations were retired officials. Most of these groups were actually sponsored by public funds. One scholar explained that one of the advantages of this situation was that their 'voice' could be easily heard by the authority.

Indeed, on the one hand, the Naxi scholars were the agents of the government, implementing government's policy accordingly. On the other hand, they were the group in Lijiang that possessed a certain degree of influence to advise the government to amend their policies. After implementing the government's policy for over ten years, they realised that those dongba graduated from DCRI's training courses were more like researchers than religious practitioners. This situation reminded them that the literature study of the manuscripts could not substitute for the practical work in real life. As the practice of rituals was not widely encouraged in the past ten years, certain parts of the manuscripts were often overlooked. They also advised that the neglect of the religious aspects of dongba culture gave no regard to the situation in rural areas, where the government's efforts in cultural affairs were largely confined to a blurred sense of economic value.

In terms of the government's modified policy of trying to retain the dongba in rural communities, it would be hard to make an overall assessment as yet. A detailed follow-up evaluation regarding this ambitious plan would be invaluable to the examination of the dongba culture in the near future. At the moment, this change is confronted with the altered urban/rural division, as discussed in Chapter 6. The farmers' life has been affected to a greater or less degree by the extensive economic progress across the country.

According to the latest report of China's migrant workers done by the National Population



and Family Planning Commission of China, over 200 million farmers moved away from the countryside to towns and cities in order to find a job (Song, 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 7, it was the unbalanced situation of a dongba in social and economic aspects that pushed them to look for a better economic reward with their religious profession. They could work anywhere and they would earn more than from farming. How could the government then persuade these farmer-priests to remain in the countryside while other farmers work in town? Furthermore, preserving the dongba religion does not dictate that those dongba should be held back from the general social progress. As discussed in Chapter 8, if dongba did not have sufficient knowledge of the changing world, how could they be in tune with the religious needs of their country folk, whose expectation are constantly changing?

Compared with the government's blurred cultural policy in rural area, a number of tourist enterprises have played their part actively, connecting the cultural preservation initiatives with the farmers' economic expectations, in an attempt to create a friendlier environment not only for the farmers but also for the tourism market. The Shuming case illustrated that the key obstacle that impeded the project from moving forward was the divergent interests of company and farmers. The company's long-term considerations failed to obtain farmers' full interest and support. In contrast to town residents, few of the farmers perceived that the primary value of the dongba culture lay in reinforcing ethnic identity; instead, they valued the culture solely for its economic prospects.

The discussion of whether the hearth should be reconstructed in traditional style enriched the understanding of the Naxi viewpoint regarding the social changes that were happening around them. At least, the debates showed that some of the Shuming farmers disagreed

with the company imposed philosophy that the more traditional the better. Although the changes of the hearth found in different villages were not caused by tourism, it was a very important venue and opportunity to observe the Naxi social activities. To some extent, the hearth and its related cultural transformations were witnesses to the social progress of the group in different places at different times, providing an account of the Naxi socio-cultural change on a broader scale. With the oncoming influence of tourism, it could be used as an interesting gauge to observe the potential impact of tourism in future.

### **9.5.2 The Construction of the Naxi Ethnic Identity**

With regard to the dongba culture, the perspective of the Naxi differed from that of both the government and the private sector. For the town residents and farmers living in suburbs, their motive was not completely confined by the central government's policy: they were rather more concerned with using the dongba culture to enrich the mundane realities of their everyday life in a practical sense, such as showing respect to the people who had passed away, creating amusement and assurance for newly married couples and obtaining a stronger safety sense in the process of building houses. In this regard, the role of dongba in the Naxi community has changed from communicating between the spiritual world and the human society to fulfilling locals' cultural and ethnic ambitions. Their views on the commercialisation of the dongba culture depended on the question of whether the change of the culture had caused any inconvenience in their lives.

For most of the Naxi in this area, few of them seriously believed in the practice of the culture as a religion. In regard to the meaning of the dongba culture to the Naxi, Hansen elaborated in his study ten years ago:

‘Most Naxi today mention ‘dongba’ or ‘dongba culture’ as a major ‘Naxi feature’.

This is not because dongba culture, as such, plays an important role in most Naxi villages, but because the educated Naxi elite's formulation and strong voicing of Naxi identity is spreading into the countryside, where the same elite is regarded with respect and approval, as were the Confucian educated elite before them.' (1999: 83)

However, the growth of tourism in the past ten years has modified Hansen's (1999) account to the extent that the dongba culture plays an important role in the cultural life of the Naxi now living in tourism-affected regions. The meaning of the culture has been strengthened by the presence of a large number of domestic tourists. Most of the Naxi living in this region have begun to stress the cultural features of the practice to strengthen their ethnic identity in the face of tourists. To some extent, tourism and its related economic and social progress have offered them a new benchmark in constructing their ethnic identity. The image of dongba and their presence is recognised by a larger group of the Naxi as an ethnic icon. Their influence has cut across regions, at different levels. It was the first time in Naxi history that the dongba culture had become a cultural property belonging to the ethnic group as a whole.

In a similar vein, the revival of dongba culture has modified relations between the majority and the minority group. In China, the Han has been the dominant group in social, political and cultural aspects for centuries, not just because of its population size but also due to the transmission of Confucianism (McKhann, 1998; Brodsgaard and Strand, 1998). The dongba culture was the very part that maintained their ethnic difference clearly, distinguishing them from the cultural influence of the majority group. The tourism industry promoted the Naxi as a group that was still using a living pictographic system, one used for centuries in the countryside. Their cultural position has been elevated from an 'inferior' group to 'superior' group in the government's cultural grade (White, 1998: 19). With the involvement of the tourism industry, the Naxi cultural confidence has been

expanded to national level.

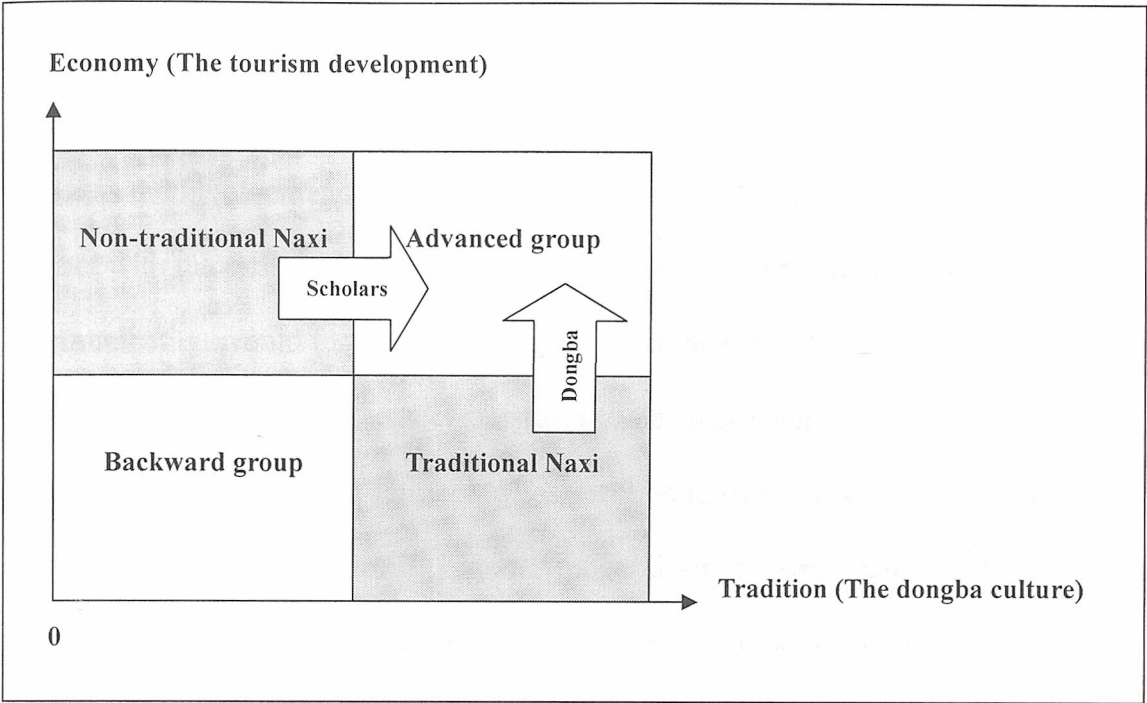
In regard to the majority of the mountain farmers, they were the part of the Naxi that seriously believed in the practice as a religion. What they really were concerned about was the affected aspects of the practice, such as the shortened rituals, shortage of manuscripts and tools, the missed religious requests and the attitude and skills of young dongba in holding rituals. The presence of tourists or tourism related business would hardly affect their attitudes towards dongba culture as religious practice. They regarded dongba culture not as a cultural concept but rather as a living element in their everyday life, enabling them to deal with everyday. Therefore, the debates of whether the dongba culture should be preserved or how to carry it out conveyed less practical value to them. In terms of the preservation aspect, they were more concerned about optimising economic profit from this practice in order to improve their economic situation.

When the tourism industry entered its commercial stage, commodifying the culture as commercial products, it took little interest in its long-term social consequence. The mountain farmers kept a distance from this process of commodification by emphasising the contents of ‘authenticity’ and so influencing the tourists’ understanding of dongba culture. Although they did not possess many social, political and cultural resources to define the meaning of the dongba culture, they had the advantage of being closer to the traditional way of life. Currently, from the perspective of many of the mountain Naxi, the ‘real’ or ‘traditional’ dongba culture was to be found in the countryside, while the dongba culture in urban areas was highly commercialised. The division of authenticity and commodification of the dongba culture was one of the pressures that prompted the local government to modify their preservation policy.

Moreover, the label of being an 'advanced group', claimed by many Naxi elite, was also adopted by the mountain Naxi, who pointed out that this concept should not only apply to those urbanised Naxi, but should also apply to those whose economic situation was vulnerable but whose cultural practice was in an 'authentic' state. The growth of tourism and the dongba culture have thus progressively formed a matrix in which the situation of the Naxi can be examined along two dimensions (see Figure 9-3). On the vertical axis, the economic situation of the Naxi was briefly divided by tourism development into relatively well and less developed areas. On the horizontal dimension, the situation of the dongba culture split the Naxi into 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' categories. On the one hand are those 'traditional' Naxi living in the rural area. Those people were well known for the dongba culture, but their economic situation was considerably lower. On the other hand, those 'non-traditional' Naxi dwelled in more affluent areas, though in a less 'authentic' manner.

This matrix indicated that to become an 'advanced group', the 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' Naxi need to make a movement to elevate their 'cultural advance' correspondingly. On the one hand, for those Naxi who displayed 'traditional' features, they would be tempted to upgrade their economic situation in an attempt to prove their 'advanced' qualities. An example of this group was those dongba who preferred to work in the town area where their economic condition would be considerably improved. It also included those young Naxi farmers who went to dongba schools to learn dongba knowledge and skills in order to become members of this group. On the other hand, those Naxi, whose economic situation was relatively higher, might wish to progress towards the 'advanced group' by enriching their knowledge of dongba culture. This group featured those Naxi scholars and young Naxi who were interested in learning the pictographs to be closer to the 'advanced' level on cultural dimension.

Figure 9-3 The Naxi economy/tradition matrix



Source: fieldwork data

9.6 Summary

There was no coherent agreement between the government, tourism enterprises and the Naxi concerning the preservation of the dongba culture. In this regard, the Naxi academia was an efficient catalyst connecting the government and the farmers. With their participation, both the government’s policy and the farmers’ responses could be communicated in such a way as to minimise conflict. In respect to the preservation aspect, the lesson learnt from the government’s former policies was that the most important issue centred round the recovery of the rituals in real life.

Without resuming those dongba rituals, neither the practice nor the contents of the manuscripts could be preserved or understood appropriately. The key thing that should be dealt with is not to reduce the mobility of dongba but to maintain the communication

between the dongba and their community vigorously. As a result, the improvement of the living conditions of dongba would be a more urgent and efficient means of implementing the government's cultural aspirations.

As far as the involvement of tourist enterprises is concerned, they should sustain a closer contact with the farmers so that mutual understanding can be reached. A vigorous communication would fortify their ability to fulfil their initiatives and optimise their economic power. It would be necessary to include an efficient economic campaign in the preservation project so that farmers, whose economic situation still remained in a relatively poor condition, would have a stronger desire to participate in the preservation scheme. Moreover, it was necessary to take into account factors not just within but also outside the preservation area.

By comparison, the Naxi living in the tourism-affected regions were closer to the Naxi scholars' stance, viewing the dongba culture as a valuable cultural bonus for the whole group. Tourism offered this group of Naxi a broader arena in which to express their cultural confidence (Wood, 1984, 1997; MacCannell, 1984). Likewise, the popularity of this culture gifted them a better chance to stand out from the majority Han group, reducing somewhat the majority group's cultural supremacy. White's (1998) 'hierarchy' and 'authenticity' discourse was thus applied by the Naxi to improve their position in relation to other ethnic groups. From the Yuan to Qing Dynasties, they used to rely on the closer tie with the central government in order to counteract other groups' influence. Now, tourism and the dongba culture strengthened their favourable status in a hierarchical structure to the extent that they can now claim to be an advanced group in economic and cultural terms.

To those Naxi living in mountain regions, the dongba culture had a dual value. First and foremost, it was mainly believed in as a religion. This practice had more practical meaning to them than to those Naxi scholars and officials who grasped a variety of resources to define their culture according to their interests. In addition, many of the mountain Naxi sought some tangible economic advantage from the preservation of the dongba culture. One lesson learned from the Shuming case demonstrated that it should not be taken for granted that all the Naxi would agree to preserve the dongba culture without having substantial economic rewards. Secondly, the reality that they were the main group of Naxi that were keeping the dongba practice in an 'authentic' sense promoted them to being part of the 'advanced' or 'cultured' group (Hansen, 1999: 309; Mackerras, 2003: 4; McKhann, 1998: 24; White, 1998: 16).

Last but not least, the change of the hearth in different areas showed that the significance of this tradition has gradually declined in the Naxi society in the process of moving from mountain to basin regions. This situation should receive more attention from the local government when developing tourism in these areas in future. It also reminded us that the preservation of the dongba culture should be deployed on a broader scale, in which the aspects of the culture in different historical periods could be integrated. Hence, an anthropological study within the context of tourism should be further broadened so as to focus not only on the impact of tourism in the past but also to help pre-plan any potential influence of tourism in the future.



## Notes

1. Within the area of Lijiang, there are two WHS, which are The Old Town of Lijiang and Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Area; and on the WMHL, the Dongba Pictograph Manuscripts, which is unparalleled by any other groups in China (Zhang, B., 2005: 509).
2. If the dam project was approved eventually, its location would be very close to this region; the lower part of the Yilong Administrative Village, including Shuming, would be partially submerged if the project went ahead.
3. In Lijiang, the ownership of the forestry was shared by the national, provincial and local governments, and village committees, at different percentages. Therefore, each rural family was allocated a number of trees as their own property. However, selling these 'family-owned' properties was strictly controlled by a number of rules and regulations, drawn up by the authority to slow down the rate at which forests were being cut.
4. During the night, when the fire was out, it was freezing even inside the cottage. In the mountain area, the Naxi were very skilful in keeping the fire not completely out overnight, otherwise they either had to light the fire again, which was very difficult without a lighter in the old days, or more often than not turn to their neighbour to borrow a fire.
5. There was no normal market in Lijiang for farmers to sell their trees. They could only sell the trees to those smugglers as discussed previously.

## **Chapter 10 Conclusion of the Thesis**

The chapter consists of three sections. In the first place, the research aims and objectives, research methods and major findings are summarised. Moreover, the strengths and contributions of the paper are also emphasised. In the second section, the major issues that arose from this study are discussed in an attempt to develop a theoretical framework for the relationship between the dongba culture and Lijiang's tourism development. The characteristics of economic growth in the area are assessed in their major socio-economic contributions, difficulties and problems. The discussion will focus on the articulation between authenticity and commodification, the discourses on ethnicity, in which the Naxi use dongba culture to enhance their ethnic identity in respect to both locals and tourists. The third section proposes some recommendations for the further development of the dongba culture, the Naxi social and economic progress and academic studies in the near future.

### **10.1 Summary of the Study**

#### **10.1.1 Aims and Objectives**

The fundamental objective requires the researcher to establish a possible causal explanation between the revival of dongba culture and the growth of tourism. The first objective was generally to examine the context of tourism, in which dongba culture has been promoted as one of the cultural tourist attractions of the Naxi in the context of mass packaged domestic tourism. Although the dongba culture has been studied in a number of academic fields, it has not been positioned within debates on current tourism development, which has been one of the most vigorous economic sectors in China in the past twenty

years. In addition, much of the literature concerning Chinese tourism development has mainly focused on international tourism, leaving the influence and performance of domestic tourism without any in-depth examination. This study demonstrates that Lijiang's domestic tourism did play a vital role in the promotion of the Naxi dongba culture, indeed the dominant packaged tours were closely related to the process of commodification of dongba culture.

The second objective was to evaluate the meaning of dongba culture to Naxi traditional rural communities, in particular in mountain regions where it was still being practised by the local farmers. In addition, this objective opens up a discussion about the influence of tourism in an attempt to identify the relationship between indigenous culture and local economic development. To fulfil this objective, the study explored the situation in a few mountain villages, revealing the close relationship between Naxi kinship, the myth of the religion, the peculiar incident of 'love suicide' and the role of dongba respectively.

Another effect of tourism was the weakening of traditional bonds between dongba, their disciples and their traditional communities.

The third objective was to examine the situations of dongba cultural items figuring as tourist assets, and the impact of commodification upon these cultural elements. This involved the study of the group of dongba working in the tourism industry, discussing the conflict between working as tourism employees and religious practitioners. In addition, attention was drawn to the usage of pictographs in the tourism sector and the evolution of the dongba cultural handicrafts. In regard to the process of commodification, the discourse was mainly focused on the dongba and those mass-produced handicrafts linked to the tourism industry.

The fourth objective was to scrutinise the function of the dongba culture as a marker of the Naxi ethnic identity within the context of tourism. This objective was attained by assessing the definitions of the dongba culture in different Naxi social groups. The study evaluated the government's policy and strategy towards such religious practice. It also discussed the farmers' reactions and activities. Although they had less political and social resources to define this practice, their involvement in tourism opened up an outlet for them in which to present themselves and their ethnic status in a more favourable light and more in accordance with their own choosing. Moreover, the research also included a study of their participation in tourist enterprise, allowing them to combine the economic potential of the dongba culture with farmers everyday lives. In addition, local tourist enterprises were also interviewed concerning their activities and the influence this was having on dongba culture. The completion of the objective indicated that a better understanding of tourism was vital for the construction of ethnic identity.

### **10.1.2 Research Methods**

In terms of doing this ethnographical study, the researcher has constructed the interpretation of the research setting based on the locals' perspective and vision. To fulfil this methodological concern, the researcher has carefully selected research venues to ascertain standing at a strategic position. In addition, by applying 'thick description' in Geertz's (1977) term and choosing typical and multiple cases, the reliability of the study was maintained for an understanding of the local situation.

The first research venue, Dayanzhen, provided the study with an opportunity to have a closer look at the circumstances in which tourism and dongba culture intertwined with each other. It was the place where most of the domestic tourists had their first sight of

dongba and purchased dongba cultural handicrafts as souvenirs. Meanwhile, it was also the location where dongba were most visible in playing a role that represented their ethnic culture. The second and the third research places, Shuming and Xinzhu villages, offered the researcher a site to examine the dongba culture in a relatively traditional condition so that the impact of tourism could be compared accordingly.

In addition, the study focused on examining the social settings in which dongba culture was expressed and the social and cultural meanings attached to such involvement. A number of in-depth interviews and participant observations have been carried out in the research venues so that the locals' vision, attitude and understanding of tourism development and the dongba culture were explored carefully. Moreover, the reliability and generalisation of the social setting were kept in their natural state by choosing several typical and multiple cases. In this regard, the cases carried out in Dayanzhen, Shuhe, Shuming and Xinzhu presented the study with abundant data and figures to unpack the research issues through the perspective of the farmers, dongba, dongba trainees, shopkeepers, handicraftsmen and tourist entrepreneurs respectively.

With regard to the research methods involved, in-depth interviews and observations were carried out throughout the fieldwork. In this ethnographical study, interviews were not only used as the method to collect information and data from the local interviewees, but also exercised as a useful technique for generating or rectifying relevant research inquiries. The process of the study was thus kept closer to the social circumstances in real life. In addition, the method of ad hoc focus groups was a practical technique in doing ethnographical study in both the rural and urban areas under certain circumstances. By using this method, some interviewees were seen in their natural surroundings, thereby avoiding the influence of any undue artificial features of research.

Apart from in-depth interviews, observation was useful in a number of circumstances. By using this method, the researcher carefully recorded many religious rituals, gatherings, family activities and other social events. As a result, the profound values of the dongba culture and tourism development in Naxi communities in different areas were extensively documented. Furthermore, using observation in this ethnographic study was also invaluable in the process of doing interviews. The significance of the in-depth interview was therefore deepened through a better understanding of the relationship between the interviewees and their friends, neighbours, relatives and business competitors.

### **10.1.3 Main Findings**

The major character of Lijiang's tourism was that of government-run mass tourism. The tourism industry has been managed by the local government as the main economic engine to enable local economic and social development to catch up with national trends. The contribution of Lijiang's tourism was not only in the provision of a base for improving the economic situation of local residents but also in some degree of modification of China's urban/rural dichotomised social structure by distributing more socio-economic benefits to the rural areas. A number of rural farmers were able to benefit from this economic growth and social modification. Nevertheless, this improvement was mainly restricted to suburban areas, leaving the vast remote mountainous region for subsequent economic expansion.

Meanwhile, tourism development in Lijiang was one of the strongest metaphors for modernity. On the one hand, both rural and urban Naxi have had a very high geographic mobility in terms of working and living in places other than their homes. This increasing mobility liberated those dongba from serving their own villagers to working as religious practitioners for the whole ethnic group. In addition, the social and economic benefits

reaped in the process of modernisation have given them a higher sense of optimising what they have. At the same time, their understanding and perception of their own culture and identity have also been broadened and deepened in conversations with domestic tourists from other parts of the country. On the other hand, however, a number of traditional social and cultural features were facing serious challenges as a result of such developments. The long-established bond between dongba and their communities was seriously weakened through the new economic opportunities. In addition, the time-consuming apprenticeship of learning to be dongba was largely replaced by school study.

Inevitably, this substantial economic growth has focused people's attention more on their economic benefits than on other aspects. Tourism, perceived as a resource by different social classes within this ethnic group, gave rise to new forms of competition in which they struggled for economic benefits and social positions. On the one hand, the positive attitude of the Naxi in most social levels towards economic progress was one of the driving forces behind its success. On the other hand, the uneven distribution of such economic achievement and wealth became the major issue that led to most of the conflicts in Lijiang.

One of the major reasons behind these economic disputes was that Lijiang's tourism development and decision-making system, according to which relevant assets and resources were distributed, was not flexible enough to include most of the key players in this process. This reduced the opportunity of achieving some kind of balance in negative and positive impacts impinging on the different social groups involved. This institutional shortage is likely to create obstacles to any further advances in the development of Lijiang's tourism.

In relation to the second objective, the root and heartland of dongba culture lay in the religious practice still being carried out in Lijiang's mountain area. Dongba were a group of religious workers dealing with their clan farmers' religious needs on request, such as the death, illness, sacrifices to various gods and goddesses who might protect people's work and life. The major influence of tourism upon this religious practice was contradictory.

On the positive side, the dongba culture has become well known in Lijiang's urban area, where hardly any of the locals had previously heard of this practice prior to the advent of tourism. It has now been accepted by many of the urban Naxi as their cultural property and heritage. In addition, learning pictographs has become a popular trend in both urban and rural areas. These religious characters were for the first time no longer the exclusive preserve of a few dongba, but have come to be used by a wider group of the Naxi. Moreover, some of the dongba working in the tourism industry have a stronger sense for and more time in which to study the religious texts. Lijiang became the central place where most of the dongba assembled and worked together. As a result, the cross-regional communication between them was strengthened and accelerated.

On the negative side, however, the link between dongba and their communities was destabilised. The rural residents' religious requests were neglected due to the fact that many dongba worked in the tourism industry in the town area. Moreover, the study of this religion has been modified in its content, depth, length, style and connections to the real world. Nevertheless, the Naxi were flexible and active in dealing with these changes in their lives, taking advantage of these events to promote their traditional culture. Some dongba have noticed the consequences of the destabilised connection between dongba and rural communities. They emphasised that tourists should be encouraged to go to the rural



area where the religion was practised in everyday life. In addition, when many senior dongba left the rural area for various reasons, a number of young dongba trainees carried on their study at dongba schools.

The advantage of this school education was first that the students could undertake full-time study of the dongba cultural knowledge. Second, they could have more opportunity to discuss their study with more teachers and schoolmates so that their understanding of this culture was widened. The disadvantage of this new model of learning, however, was that the religious value of this practice has been compromised. By comparison, the religious commitment was difficult to establish firmly within a two-year period of school study, compared with the much more time-consuming apprenticeship. Moreover, many of the trainees were learning such knowledge less with a view to becoming religious practitioners and more with the intention of working in the tourism industry.

Moreover, the impact of tourism was also displayed in promoting Lijiang as a 'romantic' place where some locals used to commit suicide for the sake of true love. In fact, these incidents were mainly caused by the Naxi traditional cross-cousin marriage model, which was a vital factor affecting the dongba tradition in the Naxi society (Mathieu, 2003; Mu, 2005). This commercial promotion was labelling the ethnic group as 'romantic', 'primitive', 'mysterious' and 'peculiar' in order to fulfil marketing needs, which could be regarded as an 'intangible' effect of the tourism industry upon the local society and culture.

In terms of figuring as tourist assets, the dongba culture appeared under different guises. First of all, many dongba were singled out from the rural community, working as living tourist attractions, writing pictographs and performing dances for tourists. The impact was

manifest in the conflict between working as tourist employees and acting as religious practitioners in the rural community. Although it was the government's religious policy that initially isolated dongba from their community, the involvement of tourism intensified this separation. In addition, the requirements of the tourism industry demanded that the dongba concentrate their attention on writing pictographs, which in return affected the study motives, styles and circumstances of many young dongba.

Secondly, the pictographs have become popular icons of the ethnic group, not only learned by many Naxi rural and urban youth as a popular trend, but also engraved on souvenirs. However, this rapidly increased mass tourism development encouraged a mass production model in which the huge economic potential of the market could be optimised. Thus, the handmade ethnic arts and crafts products were replaced by mass produced commercial souvenirs in the competition for providing souvenirs in large quantity with competitive prices. Consequently, the pictographs were treated as a kind of outlandish drawings to attract tourists' attention. These characters were scratched randomly on a variety of items, with accuracy and seriousness considerably compromised.

In the third place, the tourism industry was promoting some dongba rituals as commercial performances, in which the religious value and solemnity have been ignored. The context and procedure for these performances were modified not according to their religious attributes but according to the tourists' interest and time schedule. One of the long-term consequences of this situation was that some young dongba put their attention and interest more on the dance movements and the audience satisfaction than on the nature of the rituals. Some senior dongba have warned that performing dances with inadequate attitude would cause disastrous effects to some rituals.

As far as the Naxi ethnic construction was concerned, the influence of tourism development showed that both the local authority and academia paid their close attention to the dongba culture, promoting it as an alternative cultural benchmark to identify local ethnic characteristics and cultural heritage, distinguishing it from the majority Han civilisation. This is in sharp contrast to previous attitudes, which sought to stress closer similarities between Naxi ethnic culture and the majority Han culture (Hansen, 1999; Hsu, 1998b; Mathieu, 2003; White, 1997, 1998). Gradually, the dongba culture was valued as a common ethnic property shared by most of the Naxi. As a result, the Naxi cultural confidence was not based on the majority group's cultural features any longer but focused on their own cultural strengths. The dongba culture gave the Naxi an ethnic identity that enabled them to stand out from the shadow of the majority Han influence.

Both the local government and the Naxi mountain rural communities used the tourism industry to define the context of dongba culture according to their different purposes. On the government side, they borrowed the tourism industry's economic force to commodify dongba culture by sanitising the religious character from the cultural content. On the community side, however, the process of commodification increased their cultural confidence to the extent that they were able to practise the dongba culture according to its original functions and use, thereby maintaining their practical needs and way of life. They therefore self identified the dongba culture into 'traditional' and 'commercial' categories, in order to keep a distance from the commercial impact of tourism.

To some extent, it was the religious feature of the dongba culture that maintained their perception of 'authenticity' as against the sense of 'commodification' more closely associated with tourism. The Naxi efforts in reclaiming their cultural heritage indicated that to successfully utilise tourism as a means of constructing ethnic identity, a profound

understanding of tourism was necessary.

#### **10.1.4 Limitations of the Study**

By and large, the main purposes of the research have been achieved. To get an overall picture of the dongba culture in the tourism sector, a survey-based study in Lijiang could be considered as another method to define the dongba culture within the context of tourism. Though the researcher has interviewed a few Chinese tourists, the sample was not big enough to assess the circumstances significantly. As it has been previously emphasised, this study was concentrating on the Naxi opinions and perspective concerning their understanding of dongba culture and tourism development in their everyday life. As a result, the information from the tourists' side was excluded from this study as a research focus.

Moreover, after the researcher arrived in the field, several planned research places could not be successfully investigated for a number of reasons. First of all, the researcher initially planned to go to Baishui Village, which was regarded by the Naxi farmers and scholars as the birthplace of the dongba culture. Although the researcher tried to approach the village via public and private transport, a number of road works blocked the access for much of the time. Consequently, the researcher had to give up doing research in this village.

Secondly, regarding the Shuhe case, the researcher's enquiries were constrained to a few local farmers due to the sensitive nature of the land issue. The local village committee refused to provide detailed information of those farmers who had been affected by the land exploitation due to the tourism project. The researcher did not obtain any hard evidence

concerning the price at which the local government sold the land to the commercial company, thereby weakening the case presented by the farmers and reported in Chapter 6.

In the third place, the researcher was not able to take photos of those pictographs that were poorly engraved on a variety of souvenirs, because hardly anyone was allowed to take any photographs in Dayanzhen due to the craftsmen's fear of plagiarism in the tourism market.

#### **10.1.5 Strengths and Contributions**

One of the anthropological contributions of this study was the identified implications of the Naxi traditional cross-cousin marriage model. In the first place, this marriage model was closely associated with the Naxi peculiar 'love suicide' incidents. This phenomenon was not a resistance to the invasion of Confucianism in the Qing Dynasty as suggested by Jackson (1979), Jackson and Pan (1998), Chao (1996) and Hsu (1998a). Rather, it was provoked by the physiological shortcomings of practising this marriage model in the long term (Mathieu, 2003: 352; Mu, 2005: 300). In addition, the scenario of 'love suicide' was taken advantage of by tourism promotion for commercial purposes, which demonstrated different implications of the culture in social and economic aspects.

Secondly, this marriage model was practised by many dongba families, whose interrelationship and religious influence were to some extent fortified correspondingly.

Within the researched areas, this kinship pattern was also the route for young dongba apprentices to follow in order to become a dongba. However, when this traditional apprenticeship is facing the risk of being replaced by modern school study, it is too early to predict any long-term consequence of this change to the dongba culture and the Naxi rural communities.

Another contribution of this study in the Naxi culture was the identification of changes made to the traditional hearth in different areas. Although these changes were not related to the impact of tourism development, they did reveal a historical and cultural connection between groups living in different areas. In fact, they were a missing link in the Naxi culture and history over a long period of social development. Meanwhile, the examination of these changes of the hearth set up a cultural gauge for the study of potential influences of tourism development in the future, and proved the 'usefulness' of anthropological studies in China (Graburn, 2001: 74).

As far as the dongba culture was concerned, the strength of this study was first situated in examining the perspective presented by the dongba themselves and their role in practising their religion in the context of everyday life, rather than focusing solely on the academic study of their manuscripts. Although this group of farmer-priests have been mentioned in a number of academic papers (Chao, 1996; Fang and He, 1981; Guo and He, 1999; Hsu, 1998a; Jackson, 1979, 1989; Mathieu, 2003; McKhann, 1998; Rock, 1947; White 1997, 1998), for the first time they actually became the central focus of research, in which their kinship structure, religious commitment to the rural community, economic potential to the tourism industry and interrelationship with their disciples and colleagues were explored.

In reference to the study of Lijiang's tourism development, the contribution of this study was that it did not just list the remarkable economic achievements that had been previously mentioned in the literature, but also connected them with Lijiang's social, economic and geographical background, so that the reasons for this economic growth could be understood more deeply. Moreover, the study also drew attention to the social contribution to the modification of the urban/rural dichotomy, which had not been previously explicitly addressed. It demonstrated that modern mass tourism was one of the

powerful agencies of modernity as a number of studies suggested (Harrison, 2001a; Mackerras, 1994; Oakes, 1998; Uriely, 2005). The inference of this study would be useful in assessing the influence of tourism development in Chinese rural areas more generally, especially in ethnic regions.

In addition, the importance of domestic tourism in ethnic regions was also addressed in connection with the manner in which the Naxi ethnic construction was affected by the commodification of local cultural property. This study noticed the correlation between highly commodified packaged group-travel and the commodification of ethnic culture. This scheduled mass travelling mode resulted in the commodification of the locals' culture, shortened the host/guest communication (Smith, V.L., 1989); and immensely simplified cultural explanation (Graburn, 1984). Furthermore, this mass-market demand triggered a mass production of handicraft, which in return encouraged a mass consumption of the handicrafts in the tourism market. As a result, the highly commercialised tourism accelerated the commodification of dongba culture.

Last but not least, based on several studies concerning the cultural hierarchical grade between Chinese majority and minority groups (Hansen, 1999; Mackerras, 2003, 2005; White, 1997, 1998), the study developed a matrix from which different groups of the Naxi were examined according to their ethnic culture and economic situation. It demonstrated that by promoting the indigenous culture and optimising the economic benefit of tourism, the ethnic group could stand a better chance of redressing some of the adverse effects of the state's unequal treatment of urban and rural areas in terms of cultural and economic provision. This was one of the routes used by ethnic groups to help them escape any political restrictions imposed upon them whilst at the same time minimising adverse effects of tourism (Hitchcock, 2000b; Oakes, 1997; Wood, 1997).

## **10.2 Tourism and Culture – Issues Raised in the Study**

Admittedly, the Naxi, with their efforts, have optimised the benefits of tourism in social, cultural and economic aspects. Apart from the summarised findings that are listed above, there are still a few issues that need to be discussed explicitly. These issues relate to the influence of modernity in this Chinese ethnic region, the Naxi vision of the negotiation of authenticity and commodification, and the development of ethnicity within the context of tourism.

### **10.2.1 Tourism and Modernity**

Whilst Giddens (1990) suggests a unilineal path towards modernity, which leads to changes in the traditional order, loss of traditional culture or its commodification, this study has highlighted a more flexible response to the effects of tourism. In Lijiang, tourism was the most visible expression of modernity. Lijiang's government-run economic process proposed a large number of infrastructural investments, which have brought an unprecedented improvement to the local social and economic environment.

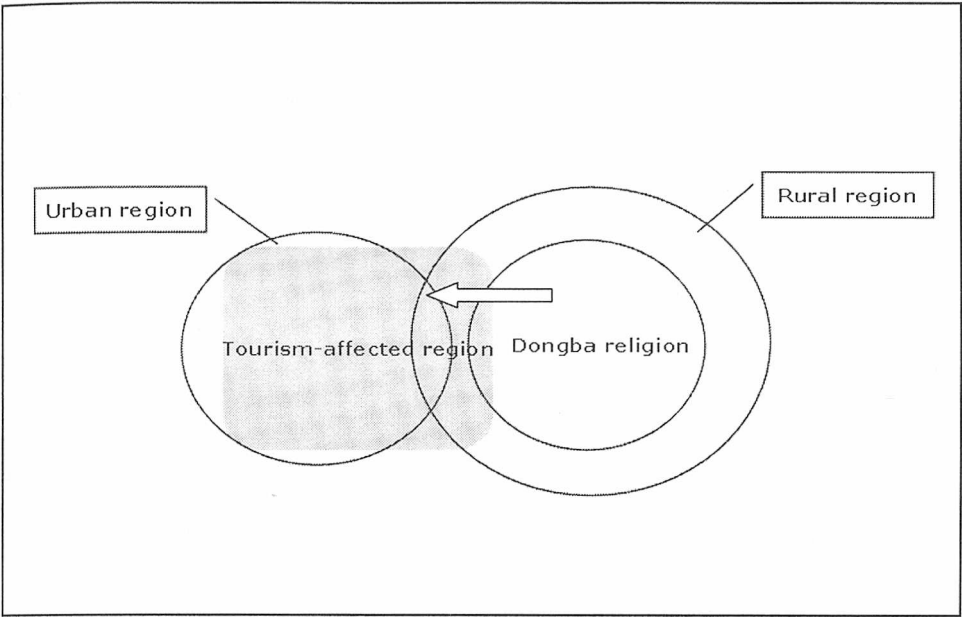
The advantages of tourism were repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews with the locals. Apart from Lijiang's economic improvement (Duang, 2000; He, Sh.Y., 2007; Li, Y., 2007; McKhann, 2001; Sofield, 2000; Street, 2005; Su and Teo, 2008; Zhang, 2003;), this study showed that many geographic, social and cultural aspects became much less restricted and restrictive as well. The highly developed tourism industry and associated modern progress in transport, information, communication and infrastructural developments considerably altered the traditional order in Lijiang.



To begin with, the physical access to Lijiang from other parts of China was opened up. With more than ten years' growth, the connection with the outside world has been significantly expanded. Lijiang is now connected with other parts of China not only by buses and coaches, but also by trains and air flights. The improvement in transport has greatly uplifted locals' living standard in many aspects. The improved accessibility required a large number of new technologies, information, ideas, fashions, modern inspirations and migrant business people, all of which have considerably influenced local horizons. The urban area has been transformed into one of the more comfortable modern places to live in China.

The second restriction to be relaxed has been the division between rural and urban societies. On the one hand, the tourism industry has considerably modified the urban/rural dichotomy. On the other hand, the rapidly enlarged economic distance between the two regions attracted thousands of farmers to move from rural to urban areas (see Graph 10-1, the arrow indicates farmers' movement). In Lijiang, the tourism industry absorbed many workers from rural areas, which is unprecedented. The uncertainty of obtaining cash from farming activities encouraged a large number of farmers to work in urban regions to secure their needs in cash. Among this migration were the group of dongba, who were both farmers and part-time religious workers and now were employed by a number of tourist enterprises for their religious knowledge and relevant skills. Thus, the mobility of farmers has been increased greatly, reaffirming Giddens' (1991) model of modernisation disrupting the traditional order.

**Graph 10-1: Tourism and dongba culture**



Source: fieldwork data

In the third place, the traditional connection between individual farmers and the rural communities is also affected, demonstrating that modernity brought a second chance to individuals and gave them another choice in their social life (Giddens, 1991). The traditional bond between each individual, between individual and community, have been both affected by the enormous social developments to such an extent that it becomes very difficult to maintain these traditional orders.

In an intermediate situation, not too far from the areas of main tourist attractions, this destabilised traditional bond still holds some influence on the situation of the dongba whose religious commitment to their kinsfolk impedes their ability to work in the tourism industry on a full-time basis. Yet, the response to such a situation indicates a more flexible approach to modernity. The low attendance rate of dongba in their place of tourism employment in return means a deterioration of their commercial value in the tourism market and a loss of their employers' confidence in them, reducing their payment rate subsequently.

Therefore, some dongba are torn between the modern and the traditional order. On the one hand, they acquire higher economic reward from a modern society, freeing them from their traditional rural life. On the other hand, however, their religious role in traditional community demands that they return to their villages on request, adding some new uncertainty in their life in the modern world.

Compared with White (1997), who ascertained that Chinese modernity was marked by economic progress in Chinese ethnic regions, the case of Lijiang denoted that the results of this social movement should be examined in more depth. In the first place, this social improvement was not purposely installed for the interest of those rural residents dwelling in the affected area but initially for the convenience of those tourists travelling around.

Secondly, this social expansion was still largely limited to areas immediately surrounding the urban area. The radiation of the tourist related facilities and consequent improvements was limited. Indeed, for those remote mountain farmers there is still a very long way to go before they are included into the benefits bestowed by the tourism industry. In the more remote areas still untouched by tourism, dongba culture survives as a living practice but under severe economic hardship. This situation suggests that the tourism strategy was not implemented entirely in line with the local economic situation *per se*, but according to the characteristics of tourism business in the first place and only secondly according to the political considerations of government.

In reference to McKhann (1998), Sofield and Li (1998), Wen (1998) and White (1998) concerning the role of tourism in Chinese ethnic regions, it could be said that the tourism industry has enhanced the dual influence of economic progress and modernity in the Lijiang area. In this regard, Lijiang's tourism development not only displayed its remarkable impact on socio-economic matters and ways of thinking (Harrison, 2001a;

Mackerras, 1994; Oakes, 1998; Uriely, 2005), but also exhibited its impact on technological advancements in communication skills, transportation, distribution channels and commodities and information circulation (Daher, 2000; Fayed and Fletcher, 2002; Wahab and Cooper, 2001; Xu, 2001).

Despite the fact that for the most part the revenue from tourism benefits the urban areas (McKhann, 2001; Su and Teo, 2008), tourism related social modification has significantly alleviated the disparity between some rural people and urban residents. One of the reasons for this improvement is the fact that the majority of the tourists were domestic tourists, who had a better chance to travel to China's remote and rural areas, which indirectly expanded the distribution of social benefits (Wen, 1998). The growth of domestic tourism did improve Lijiang's infrastructural system successfully, installing a large number of public and private investments (Oakes, 1998; Wu, Zhu and Xu, 2000). This progress indicated that when tourism was proposed on a large scale and over a long period of time, the influence of the public sector upon such expansion would give way to the needs of the tourism industry itself, which was hardly in line with the government's initial preference.

With regard to the existing problems and difficulties due to the growth of Lijiang's tourism, most of these are related to the political constraints still in place. The intense economic changes did not lead to substantial political reform. The current institutional system in Lijiang's tourism development was too inflexible to respond adequately to various incidents. In Lijiang, the responsibility for economic growth lay at various levels of government. As a result, local tourism strategy combined a cluster of different political, social and economic considerations. In this respect, this rigid political institution became a liability in the way of a community's social progress (Tisdell, 1997: 1370).

This rigid institution demonstrates that the development of Chinese tourism in minority areas is not entirely designed to serve the needs of ethnic groups (Lew, 2004; Oakes, 1997; Swain, 1990). The ethnic group could only optimise their economic interests when their interest was not in conflict with that of the government. This economic growth, though embraced through the active participation of a large number of small and private business enterprises, was exclusively under the government's control, especially in regard to the regulation of investments as well as the control over production and consumption, as has been amply documented in a number of studies in other Chinese ethnic regions (McKhann, 1998; Sofield and Li, 1998; Wen, 1998; White, 1998). Until the political structure has been amended by substantial reforms, the condition of Lijiang's tourism will not be much modified.

### **10.2.2 Authenticity and Commodification**

Compared with other literature discussing authenticity and commodification (Cohen, 1988; Goulding, 2000; Greenwood, 1989; Harrison, 2001b; Hitchcock, 2000a; Handler and Linnekin, 1984), this study focused on the perspectives of the local community. The links between these two concepts were displayed in three aspects. In the first place, many mountain Naxi used the concept of authenticity as a method to offset the influence of commodification. Secondly, the local craftsmen's vision on 'authenticity' was altered according to the influence of commodification on their control of the handicraft production (Clarke, 2000: 24). In the third place, the understanding of what was 'authentic' dongba was divergent between those senior dongba and mountain farmers on the one side, and those young dongba whose 'authenticity' was challenged by the former group on the other side.

For many Naxi farmers in the mountain region, the concept of 'dongba culture' was hardly heard of before the advent of tourism. What they practised was just the dongba religion. The main contents of the dongba culture, as far as they were concerned, were those rituals and ceremonies, presided over by dongba living in the village or in the vicinity. The tradition of this practice denoted that the dongba should live in villages to look after their kin fellows' religious requests. Therefore, when many dongba left them to work in towns, farmers labelled them as 'tourist' or 'commodified' dongba in order to differentiate them from those who did not.

By highlighting the religious characteristic as the core value of the dongba culture in tourism, the mountain farmers interpreted the content of this discourse with their own vocabulary. Tourism was thus involved in the struggle of defining what and who is 'authentic' (Greenwood, 1989). The notion of 'authenticity' inspired the locals to defy the impact of the commodification of their culture. The higher the commodification of the cultural property is, the stronger the sense of preserving the culture in the context of authenticity. This mirrored the situation found in a number of studies carried out in other Chinese ethnic regions. On the one hand, the major characteristic of the tourism industry was the commodification of ethnic culture (Wen, 1998; Oakes, 1995, 1998; MacCannell, 1984; Swain, 1995). On the other hand, ethnic groups retained a strong will to identify with their ethnic status and cultural characteristics (Lemcine, 1989; Swain, 1995; Xie, 2003; Oakes, 1998).

With reference to the changes in handicrafts, the study indicated that the local handicraftsmen's perception of 'authenticity' would be affected by a number of factors, which were the host/guest interaction, the production of the handicrafts and their control of this production. It suggested that the examination of ethnic arts should not only pay

attention to the audience, the function and the characteristics of the handicrafts (Graburn, 1979), but also include the local handicraftsmen's position in the tourism market.

The handmade dongba tourist arts did symbolise the ethnic group's tradition, history, social progress, dignity and pride, and all given cultural expression (Costa and Livio 1995; Graburn, 1979, 1984; Litrell, Anderson and Brown, 1993), but this appreciation demanded that tourists spend substantial time to communicate with the local craftsmen or even to some extent participate in the production process to get an insider view. Unfortunately, this requirement was the very part that Lijiang's mass tourism left out after the switch to mass tourism in 2003.

In relation to the debates of 'commodified' and 'traditional' dongba, the Naxi divergent perceptions gave rise to a consideration that the discourse of authenticity and commodification should not be observed in a static state. On the one aspect, those dongba who graduated from dongba schools and worked in the tourism industry were derogated by some senior dongba and Naxi farmers in terms of their motivation in studying, and their practical experience and understanding of the religion in essence. On the other aspect, they were the religious practitioners working across the region for the first time in the Naxi history. They quickly picked up the basic knowledge of the religion after it had been banned for half a century, and demonstrated the value of the religion not just to the ethnic group alone but also in front of the people coming from different parts of the country. They worked together on the basis not of kinship connection but of their common understanding of the religion.

If the tradition or practice was something symbolically constructed in the present (Wu, D.Y.H., 1989: 12), not a 'thing' that handed down from the past' (Handler and Linnekin,

1984: 276), then the discussion of the 'authenticity' of these young dongba should accommodate the changing situation in the past, the present and the future. The correlation between authenticity and commodification exhibited that the authenticity of the dongba culture resided in the differing Naxi interpretations of their culture, which should be opened for reassessment in the light of debates over a long period (Cohen, 1988; Harrison, 2001a; Handler and Linnekin, 1984; Hitchcock, 2000b; Xie, 2003). The changing contexts of the dongba culture dwelled between past and present, present and future, between the Naxi economic and socio-cultural concerns and between the group of Naxi who regularly practised it and those who did not.

### **10.2.3 The Development of the Naxi Ethnic Identity**

Before the increase in tourism, the Naxi differentiated themselves from other ethnic groups living nearby, i.e. Bai, Pumi, Tibetan and Yi, by highlighting their closeness to the Han culture, such as 'love for learning', 'higher educational attendance', being 'obedient' and 'cultured' (White, 1997: 309-311; Hansen, 1999: 296), in order to stand in a preferential ethnic position compared with these groups.

However, this situation changed considerably after a large number of Han tourists travelled to Lijiang. The Naxi were confronted with the necessity of presenting their ethnic identity not mainly to their neighbourhood any longer but to the tourists, most of whom had travelled from other parts of the country. They then suffered pressure from modern mass tourism, functioning as a powerful shaper of ethnic identity and requiring them to identify themselves as being different from the Han majority (MacCannell, 1984). This acknowledges that the development of ethnicity in a modern changing world is pushed by modernity and globalisation (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). The process of globalisation



brings people who used to live far apart closer together through migration or tourism; as a result, ethnic boundaries assume greater importance. In the case of the Naxi, dongba culture now assumes great importance.

In this regard, the contents of the dongba culture provided them with a means of downplaying their similarity with the Han. The tourism industry was thus highly valued by both the urban and rural Naxi as the leading force in the rejuvenation of the dongba culture. The majority of the interviewed Naxi people were very proud of identifying the fact that they were the offspring of some dongba. By comparison, the Naxi living in tourism-affected areas had a stronger sense of ethnic pride and self-confidence than those living in less travelled regions. The increase of their cultural confidence was to a certain degree in line with the progress of their economic improvement (Wu, D.Y.H., 1989). Learning the dongba culture became very popular among many of the Naxi youth, who were confident that the dongba culture and tourism could be combined positively. An upsurge of various dongba cultural products, such as literature, handicrafts, dances and performances was accelerated by tourism.

With the growth of tourism and the stimulation of the dongba culture set in train by the influx of tourists, the ethnic division of the Naxi group has been modified beyond White's (1997, 1998) account, which was based on geographical features. The group could be classified, within the cultural sphere, into two sub-groups, which were 'traditional Naxi' who practised the dongba culture regularly, and 'less traditional Naxi' who did not practise the culture. Because the tourism industry generated migration between rural and urban regions, a geographical term was no longer suitable for dividing the group even in a metaphoric sense.

Moreover, the Naxi ethnic construction was changing in relation to the travelling mode of the Han tourists. When the tourists' travelling time was shortened from staying in Lijiang for several months, down to several weeks, and then finally to several days, the locals had shorter time and lower interest to present and explain their ethnic characteristics explicitly. Their ethnic exhibition has been reduced to a commercial showcase to satisfy the tourists' travelling expectation (MacCannell, 1976). The content of these communications has been simplified, shortened and romanticised in order to cope with the tourists' limited time budget.

The correlation between the tourism industry and dongba culture demonstrates that both of them should be treated as a living force in Hitchcock's (2000d) sense. Moreover, this interrelationship can be identified into a three-step process. At first, when they were moving in identical directions, the economic value of the dongba culture coincided with the economic interests of the tourism industry; this was a period in which the Naxi sought to optimise their social benefits and ethnic construction respectively. But then tourism and dongba culture soon began to move in opposite directions, when ethnic and social considerations on the part of the dongba took on new meanings for them. The last step saw an increasing separation between the needs of the tourism industry and the economic interests of local Naxi businesses and craftsmen, now increasingly competing against the mass production mode of incoming enterprises.

This situation demonstrates that even the locals have consciously realised that their culture and tourism would hardly be able to move in the same direction, although the continued attraction of economic benefits to be derived from tourism business might delay any imminent break. This explains the tourists' contradictory contribution to indigenous culture. When the locals have realised that the negative impact of tourism prevailed over

its positive contribution, they would attempt to keep their dignity in ethnic and cultural aspects, but maintain the connection with tourism in the pressure of enhancing economic benefits only (Linnekin, 1997). As a result, when dongba culture and tourism diverge, issues of 'authenticity' might come to be played out in an attempt to reassert a certain measure of control (Oakes, 1998).

### **10.3 Recommendations**

#### **10.3.1 For the Naxi**

The Naxi should set up tangible economic and social achievement objectives for the preservation of culture and tradition. Such preservation needs to be operated according to two chief aims. The achieved economic improvement should be partially regarded as a financial preparation for a better social understanding of the culture and tradition. Further economic movements should not be accelerated until the social value of the tradition and culture has been appreciated by the group as a whole. The group members' better appreciation will then make a contribution for developing further economic movement with a long-term consideration. It is then possible to downplay the negative impacts of the possible commodification to a minimal level.

If it is agreed that it is the farmers' religious requests that have kept this practice alive for several centuries on end, then in future, such preservation might rely on the initiative of dongba to persuade farmers of the importance and advantage of practising this religion. Consequently, dongba, especially those who live in poverty, need to be subsidised by the government to such an extent that they can be freed from the necessity of seeking alternative work. Thus, they will then be able to concentrate their energy and attention on

the study and practice of the religion.

### **10.3.2 For Dongba Culture**

Seen from a broader perspective, the preservation of dongba culture demands the construction of a friendly environment in the Naxi everyday life. If the religious aspect of this culture is isolated from the culture, it will not be preserved, as it should be. The preservation works should not be limited to the culture per se, but to all other areas of people's life. The practice needs to encourage the community to catch up with any possible social and economic changes that are taking place in the society. To put it another way, the tradition, culture and religion are and must remain at the core of all their daily activities, such as cooking, working, farming, communication and so forth.

The major part of the current preservation of dongba culture concentrates on the pictographs and texts, with no regard for their roles in the context of real life. Little attention has been given to exploring its new value in the construction of social development. The preservation of this traditional culture in rural areas should not keep the culture from necessary social changes but instead should help in its transformation, by maintaining strong links between society and its culture. In future, the work should not just focus on its attributes in the past, but also give more considerations to its values in contemporary time (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000; Grimwade and Carter, 2000).

The cultural legacy of the group should not just be presented to tourists, but more importantly to the ethnic group members themselves, emphasising its practical value to the community as a whole so that the group will keep it as a major part of their contemporary life. Consequently, this traditional culture would then be able to play its part in the society

as it used to do. In response to the economic development that is manifest around the country, the benefits of the dongba culture can be identified as tangible, intangible, commercial and none-commercial, and all of these values need to be constantly presented to its members.

### **10.3.3 For Tourism Development**

Apart from focusing on economic achievement, the local authority, which is the leading player in Lijiang's tourism development, should also take into account the relevant social and cultural consequences of the growth of mass tourism. The authority should take it as their responsibility to establish a professional body to clearly identify those farmer-priests – dongba – acknowledging their religious and social status, not just in the rural communities but also in the tourism industry. In addition, this organisation should have the authority to regulate the usage of the pictographs in tourism sector, so that the long-term negative impact of the shoddy production of these characters will be reduced.

Moreover, the authority should fully realise the serious consequence of those small and private business enterprises who lost business. It would be understandable to open a discussion dealing with these people's difficulties. The government should have the responsibility to provide an outlet for them to divert their investment in an attempt to minimise their losses to a certain level. They should be encouraged and trained by the government to keep up with Lijiang's general development so that their interest and passion would not be excluded from further advances in tourism.

#### 10.3.4 For Further Studies

More practical research needs to be carried out in the vast countryside so as to understand what the farmers worry about, care for and look forward to. The group's life, work and social changes need to be taken into account to define the development of the practice. Further studies would be expected to take into account the tourists' perspective and influence, though this should not be used to guide the local on how to promote the dongba culture to tourists, but rather to improve the host/guest communications.

Moreover, continuous examinations are very necessary to evaluate the potential development of the dongba culture and tourism business in the near future. Those Naxi farmers' life, work, outlook, value and ideology regarding the preservation of the dongba culture in the face of tourism, and the possible long-term impacts on the traditional apprenticeship of becoming a dongba should all be explored in a prolonged manner.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix 5-1: Interview questions (Group 1)**

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee No. \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male / Female

Highest Education Level:

Primary School / Middle School / High School / Undergraduate / Graduate or above

Occupation:

Artist / Dancer / Musician / Official / Scholar / or Others: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you think of the relationship between the tourism and the dongba culture?
2. What do you think of the tourist activities in the life of Naxi?  
Do you think they cause any problem? Yes / No  
If yes, can you explain it what sort of problems?
3. What is your opinion regarding to the issue of preserving the dongba culture?
4. What is the role of the tourism in the preservation of the dongba culture?  
Do you think it is important? Yes / No  
If yes, what are the important things?
5. How could the dongba culture be packaged as a tourist attraction?
6. What is your idea if you compare the current dongba culture with the one in the past?  
Do you think they are different? Yes / No  
If yes, can you explain in which ways?
7. What is the value of the dongba religion in the dongba culture?
8. What is the role of Naxi people in preserving the dongba culture?
9. Do you believe in dongba religion? Yes / No

**Appendix 5-2: Interview questions (Group 2)**

**No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewee No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex:** Male/Female

**Highest Education Level:**

Primary School, Middle school, High school, Undergraduate, Graduate or above

**Occupation:**

Businessman, Dongba, Employee, Farmer, Worker, or Others: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Has tourism brought about any change in your daily life?
2. What do you think of the tourists?
3. What is the role of the dongba culture in your life?
4. Is there anything in the dongba culture that you care about?
5. What is the role of the tourism in the preservation of the dongba culture?
6. What is your idea if you compare the current dongba culture with the one in the past?  
Do you think they are different? Yes / No  
If yes, can you explain in which ways?
7. If you think that the current dongba culture has changed, does the change cause any impact upon your life? Yes / No  
If yes, can you explain in which way?
8. Do you believe in dongba religion? Yes / No

Appendix 5-3: Interviewees data (Group 1)

No.	Sex	Age	Occupations	Locations
01	M	33	Scholar	Dayanzhen
02	M	45	Scholar	Dayanzhen
03	F	55	Scholar	Dayanzhen
04	F	39	Scholar	Beijing
05	M	41	Musician	Dayanzhen
06	F	37	Official	Dayanzhen
07	M	53	Official	Shuhe
08	M	53	Scholar	Dayanzhen
09	F	53	Official	Dayanzhen
10	M	53	Scholar	Dayanzhen
11	M	55	Official	Kunming
12	M	35	Scholar	Dayanzhen
13	M	55	Scholar	Dayanzhen
14	M	60	Official	Dayanzhen
15	F	60	Artist	Dayanzhen
16	M	60	Artist	Dayanzhen
17	M	60	Official	Dayanzhen
18	M	63	Musician	Shuhe
19	M	66	Scholar	Kunming

**Appendix 5-4: Interviewees data (Group 2)**

No.	Sex	Age	Occupations	Locations
01	F	35	Guesthouse owner/Shopkeeper	Dayanzhen
02	M	37	Minicab driver	Dayanzhen
03	M	27	Farmer/Shopkeeper	Dayanzhen
04	M	39	Farmer/Shopkeeper	Dayanzhen
05	F	41	Farmer/Shopkeeper	Dayanzhen
06	M	45	Businessman	Dayanzhen
07	M	46	Dongba	Xinzhu
08	M	54	Craftsman	Dayanzhen
09	M	62	Shopkeeper	Shuhe
10	M	58	Shopkeeper	Shuhe
11	M	54	Farmer/Minicab driver	Shuhe
12	F	58	Farmer	Shuhe
13	F	34	Minicab driver/Tour-guide	Dayanzhen
14	F	36	Shopkeeper	Shuhe
15	M	38	Craftsman/Shopkeeper	Dayanzhen
16	F	44	Craftsman	Dayanzhen
17	F	49	Guesthouse owner/Minicab driver	Dayanzhen
18	M	65	Dongba	Xinzhu
19	M	40	Minicab driver	Dayanzhen
20	M	25	Farmer	Shuming
21	F	42	Minicab driver	Dayanzhen
22	F	31	Guesthouse owner/Minicab driver	Dayanzhen
23	M	31	Businessman	Dayanzhen
24	M	36	Farmer	Shuming
25	M	61	Farmer	Shuming
26	M	81	Dongba	Shuzhi
27	M	46	Farmer	Xinzhu
28	M	66	Dongba	Xinzhu
29	M	35	Farmer	Shuming
30	M	65	Dongba	Xinzhu
31	M	83	Dongba	Shuming
32	M	36	Dongba	Changshui
33	M	34	Dongba	Baoshan
34	M	73	Dongba	Shuming
35	M	40	Artist/Shopkeeper	Dayanzhen

36	M	53	Farmer	Shuming
37	M	54	Farmer	Shuming
38	M	48	Village officer	Shuming
39	M	52	Guesthouse owner/Minicab driver	Dayanzhen
40	M	27	Farmer	Xinzhu
41	M	52	Dongba	Xinzhu
42	F	45	Farmer	Xinzhu
43	F	44	Farmer	Shuming
44	F	27	Tour-guide	Dayanzhen
45	M	43	Carpenter	Xinzhu
46	F	49	Farmer	Shuming
47	M	33	Farmer	Xinzhu
48	M	52	Farmer	Shuming

**Appendix 6-1: Local transport in tourism-affected region**



**Appendix 6-2: Local transport in least-affected region**

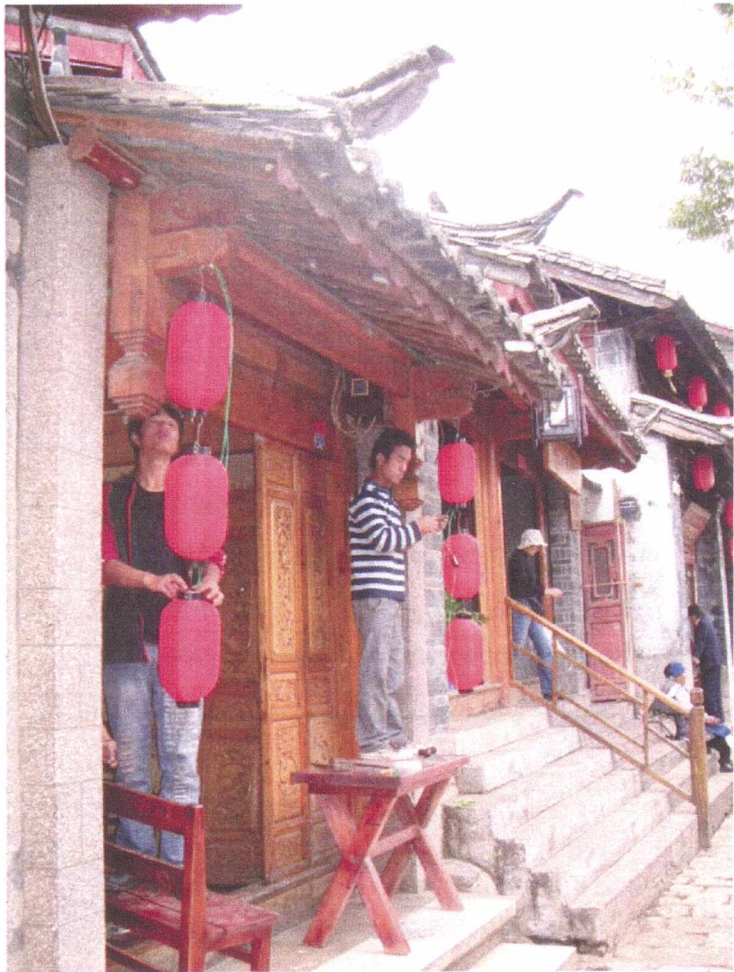




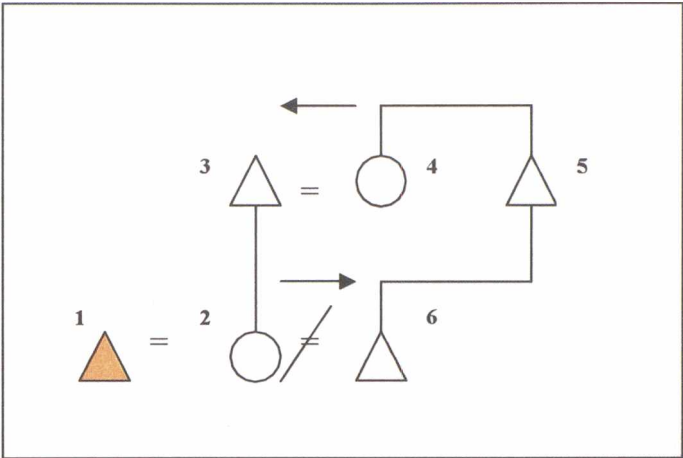
**Appendix 7-1: Dongba manuscripts**



**Appendix 7-2: Guesthouses in Dayanzhen**



Appendix 7-3: The kinship diagram of the Propitiation of Heaven



Index:

△ Man      ○ Woman      = Marriage

- 1. Cong-ren-li-en-zong  
A human, the Naxi's ancestor, 'zong' means man in the Naxi language
- 2. Seng-he-bu-bei-mi  
Zi-la-a-pu and Cei-ke-a-zi's daughter, who had engaged herself to her mother's brother's son Kou-lou-kou-xi, but eventually married Naxi's ancestor Cong-ren-li-en, 'mi' means woman in the Naxi language
- 3. Zi-la-a-pu  
The man's father-in-law, 'a-pu' means grandfather in the Naxi language
- 4. Cei-ke-a-zi  
The man's mother-in-law, 'a-zi' means grandmother in the Naxi language
- 5. Mu-zi-kou-lou  
Cei-ke-a-zi's brother, who made a 'deal' with Zi-la
- 6. Kou-lou-kou-xi  
Mu-zi-kou-lou's son, who has priority to marry his father's sister, Cei-ke-a-zi's daughter

Appendix 7-4: The calendar of Naxi farmers various activities

	Agricultural activity	Social activity	Religious activity	Economic activity
Feb.	The first month in Chinese lunar calendar Collecting manure, firewood, tools,	Celebrating the Spring Festival and preparing for the coming work season.	Sacrifice of Heaven / Su / War God / the Kitchen God / the God of Mountain	Ready for going out to work
Mar.	seeds for the coming of Spring	Farming at daytime, after the sunset chatting with friends and neighbor, watching television. It is also the time for young dongba learning the practice with their teachers.	Sacrifice of Sanduo / Su / Ancestor / the Kitchen God / the God of Mountain	Working outside the village
Apr.	Loosing the field, and moving the manure to the field		Sacrifice of Su	
May	Harvesting the winter wheat and planting the corn, bean, tobacco or other economic crops			Need to be at home for the harvesting of crops
Jun.	Weeding and fertilizing			Working outside the village
Jul.	Baking tobacco		Sacrifice of Sanduo / Heaven / the God of Mountain / Ancestor / the God of Grain	
Aug.	Baking tobacco and selecting wheat seeds		Sacrifice of Sanduo / the God of Mountain, and the Earth	
Sep.	Harvesting bean, corn Planting the winter wheat	Having a break, erecting new house, killing the Year Pig and attending parties	Sacrifice of Mountain	Need to be at home for the harvesting of crops
Oct.	Basking corn Selling economic crops		Sacrifice of Grain	
Nov.	Having a break and preparing for new year		Sacrifice of the God of Earth	Working outside the village and preparing to go home for the Spring Festival
Dec.	Preparing commodities for the Spring Festival and being to collect manure, firewood, etc.		Sacrifice of Ancestor / the God of Livestock	
Jan.			Sacrifice of the Kitchen God	Going home for holiday



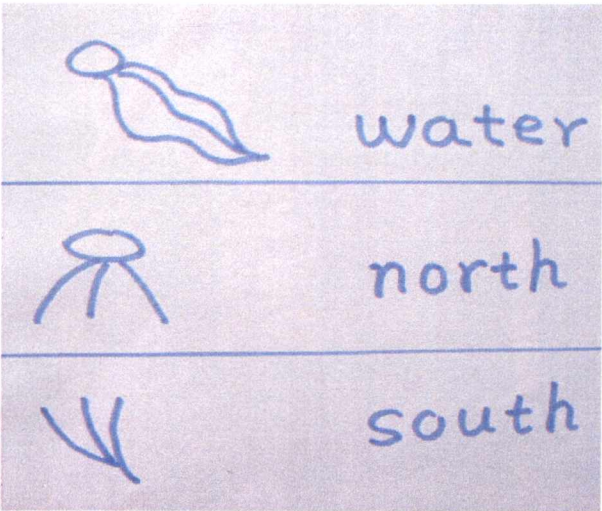
**Appendix 7-5: The Propitiation of Heaven in Xinzhu Village**



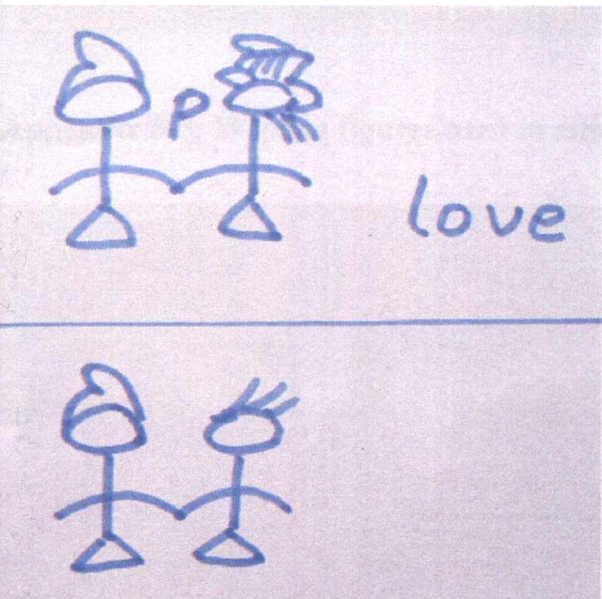
**Appendix 8-1: 12-generation-long dongba manuscripts**



**Appendix 8-2: The pictographs of ‘water’, ‘north’ and ‘south’**



**Appendix 8-3: The pictograph of ‘love’ and its adaptation**





**Appendix 8-4: Peaked-head wooden slates**



**Appendix 8-5: Wooden figures used in rituals**



**Appendix 8-6: The Guard of the Creatures**



**Appendix 8-7: Commercial arts – wooden figures**

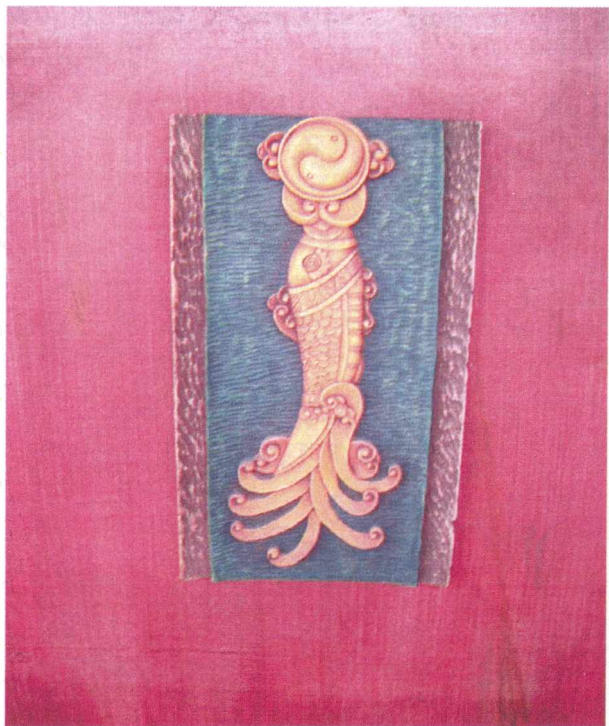




**Appendix 8-8: Wooden fish hanging at the side of roof**



**Appendix 8-9: Commercial arts – woodcarving**





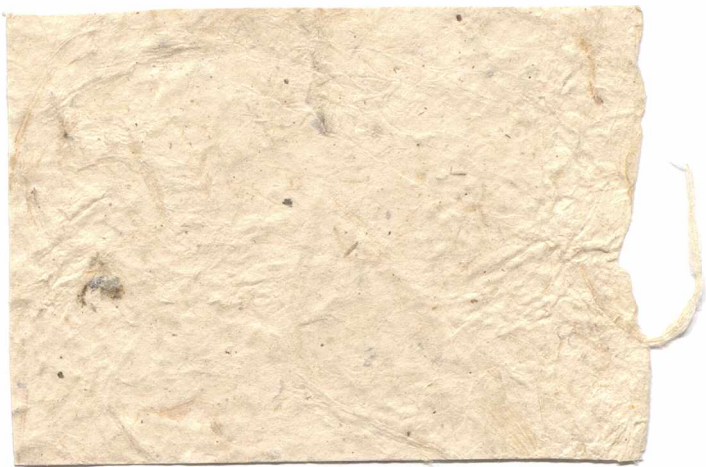
**Appendix 8-10: Souvenir – wooden slates**



**Appendix 8-11: Souvenir – woodcarving with Chinese character**



**Appendix 12A: Attached material**



**Appendix 12B: Attached material**





**Appendix 8-13: Dongba in handicrafts shop**



**Appendix 9-1: Traditional Naxi hearth**



**Appendix 9-2: The hearth in Shuming Village**



**Appendix 9-3: A modified hearth in Shuming Village**

