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Through Women's Eyes The Development of Lijiang and Nakhi Cultural Change

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Through Women's Eyes
The Development of Lijiang and Nakhi Cultural Change

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Skidmore College, Class of 2014
Sit Yunnan, Spring 2013

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of the current state of Nakhi minority culture as practiced by Nakhi women living in the city of Lijiang and its surrounding areas. This analysis presents a historical assessment of the cultural, economic, historical, and political factors that have led to the creation of the Lijiang Old Town that we see today and the current state of Nakhi culture surrounding that development. As well, this paper presents a field assessment of the current state of Nakhi cultural practice in light of the internalized discourses of the Chinese state and the indigenous discourses of the Nakhi people, especially those related to the gendering and spatialization of Nakhi authenticity. This study was conducted using a qualitative interview methodology that entailed interviews of Nakhi women, the representatives of Nakhi culture in China and abroad, across generations and across Nakhi space to better understand Nakhi conceptualizations of Nakhi identity.

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Introduction

When I first entered the city of Lijiang in the summer of 2008, driving down the wide boulevards of New Town lined with apartment blocks, restaurants frying various Chinese cuisines, and an imposing statue of Mao Zedong clad in the simple clothes of the Revolution, hailing the Chinese people, I thought Lijiang was much like any other Chinese metropolis. However, just south of the effigy of the Chairman, I discovered a place that is still, even after this month of dedicated study,

simultaneously the most alluring part of the city of Lijiang and the most perplexing. This place is Lijiang Old Town (*Lijiang Gucheng*.) The five-word sentence that I most often heard associated with the purportedly ancient Old Town from the city's expatriates, Han Chinese tourists and store owners, and even a handful of the local Nakhi¹ minority people who call Lijiang their home and cultural center was, simply put, "This is Chinese Disney Land,"

And, unfortunately, this assessment is not far off the mark. Ever since a devastating earthquake in 1996, Lijiang Old Town has been developing exponentially into a tourist destination that attracts droves, numbering in the millions, of tourists annually from within China and from around the world. Foreign hotel corporations, fast food chains, like the KFC, Pizza Hut, and McDonalds franchises that are prominently placed at the entrance to the Old Town, their names emblazoned in Nakhi Dongba pictographic script and various and sundry small businesses peddling goods that are at best loosely related to the traditions of the Nakhi have all but overtaken the entirety of the Old Town. However, along with this explosion of capital inflows and tourist traffic, the Nakhi minority has experienced displacement, although mostly voluntary, from the Old Town that was once their own as well as cultural changes that are immediately apparent even when only taking a short stroll down Old Town's crowded *Sifang Jie* (Square Street.)

¹ I have chosen to use the spelling "Nakhi" instead of the Chinese *pinyin* spelling "Naxi" in this paper because the *pinyin* spelling refers to the state's politicized category created under the *minzu shibie* in 1954, not the ethnic identity. The political category, illogically, also includes the Moso, the Lolo, and even certain Han groups who consider themselves to be distinct from the label "Naxi" (See Chao 2008) As well, most Nakhi people I encountered used the former not the latter when using a Romanization to describe themselves.

Observing how Lijiang's Old Town has been transformed from a bustling trading center on the famed Tea Horse Caravan Road and the economic and cultural center of the former Nakhi Kingdom of the Mu Family to what some would call a tourist trap and what others would call a Chinese entrepreneur's dream begs the question: How exactly did Old Town happen? In my time this month in and around Lijiang Old Town, I strove to understand the people and the power relationships at the core of this metamorphosis, and the answers I unearthed were surprising. When I first came to Lijiang, I was tempted, as many Western visitors to Lijiang are, to conclude that a place like Lijiang, being as exploitative of a small, relatively traditional culture as it undeniably is, could only arise through a predatory relationship between the powerful, Han majority state and a weak, underrepresented Nakhi minority who are subject to the whims of the Chinese Communist Party and the market. However, this assumption was fundamentally shaken by my readings about and conversations with Nakhi people. Due to historical and cultural factors, the Nakhi have been complicit in, if not at the forefront of, this rebirth and repurposing of Lijiang's Old Town and the subsequent reshaping of their own culture.

In order to better understand these shifts that Nakhi society has undergone in the wake of Lijiang's development, I decided that speaking to the people who have become the representatives of Nakhi culture to the Chinese populous and to the international community as a whole would be the best method of conceptualizing the more drastic changes in Nakhi cultural expression and cultural practice. Those people are Nakhi women. Nakhi women have been a fascination of ethnographic and gender researchers since the days of Joseph Rock and Peter Goullart due to these women's

well-known economic power within their families, their deeply engrained work ethic, and their physical sturdiness relative to Nakhi men because of years of ceaseless labor. Nakhi women are truly powerful beings, and, as a result of that strength and of discursive processes of gendered Nakhi authenticity, they have become, in some ways, the symbolic vanguards of their own culture today.

I talked to and interviewed women across different generations and in different locations inside of and surrounding Lijiang in order to grasp the effects of development on Nakhi women and, by default, Nakhi society as a whole over time, as well as over space. Leaving Lijiang was critical to my research as the spatialization of development and investment related to the Old Town is heavily centralized, imbalanced, and not well distributed within Nakhi society. This has actually been a thread throughout Nakhi history with Lijiang being a trading post and waypoint on the Tea Horse Caravan Road, which will be discussed later. However, despite the somewhat poor dispersal of the benefits of development, I was able to unearth clear themes in Nakhi women's attitudes towards Lijiang's specific brand of development and cultural change that were indicative of the cultural effects of Lijiang's mushrooming growth and also indicative of the possible futures of Lijiang. These interviews also revealed the Chinese state and indigenous Nakhi discourses about cultural evolution and cultural preservation that are at work in the minds of Nakhi people in and around Lijiang that have additionally contributed to the reshaping of Nakhi identity.

Through my discussions with Nakhi women and other people in the communities of Lijiang, I have come to understand Lijiang in a far different way than I did previously. The tourism-oriented development of the Old Town is not a result of

state imposition on a less powerful minority group, nor is it purely the result of inexorable market forces overpowering cultural forces and values. The current state of Lijiang and its surrounding areas are more so an outcome of Nakhi history, Nakhi economic sensibilities, and Nakhi cultural factors, all of which will be discussed within the pages of this analysis. The Nakhi have internalized Chinese state discourses and created their own discourses, which have led to the chosen method of cultural preservation and modernization within Lijiang that is highly selective and market-oriented in some ways and more geared towards the preservation of deep-rooted Nakhi values in others. As stated above, Lijiang is a perplexing place, as intriguing as it is complex, and in this paper I will endeavor to demystify its multilayered complexities. I will do this while trying my utmost to do justice to the depth of insight that the many fascinating, noble Nakhi women who played the role of my informants in this process have revealed to me. The Nakhi people have given me a great deal, and I hope to give back to them by providing all who read this piece deeper understanding of Nakhi culture as it stands today.

Ancient History of the Lijiang Nakhi (Pre-History-Qing Dynasty)

Before turning to the current situation of the Nakhi people in and around Lijiang, it will be important for the purposes of this analysis to take a deep dive into the history of the Nakhi so as to understand the socio-historical, economic, and cultural factors that have created the Lijiang that exists today. The Nakhi, like certain Tibetan groups, the Bai people, and the Moso people, are direct descendents of the Qiang nomadic herding tribes, a group considered barbarians and enemies of the state

by the Chinese empire as early as the Shang Dynasty.² According to Sydney White, the Qiang groups who would later be known as the Nakhi began migrating south from the Qiang tribes' home in the Qinghai Plateau about 1,400 years ago during the reign of the Tang dynasty, which lasted from 618 C.E. until 907 C.E.³ However, Pedro Ceinos Arcones argues that the Qiang began a long, drawn out process of migration south from their herding grounds in the grasslands of the Qinghai Plateau beginning as early as 4,000 years ago, and the Nakhi's ancestors were perhaps a part of one of the later waves of southward movement.⁴ Arcones also logically asserts that, "The Naxi nationality is the result of the blending of different races and peoples, including aboriginal populations from northwest Yunnan, waves of Qiang migrants, tribes of Tibetan stock, and individuals of Mongolian, Bai, and Chinese origin," making sure to emphasize the importance of the heavily intertwined nature of most, if not all, ethnicities in northwest Yunnan and southwestern China in general.⁵

I was exposed to many separate accounts of how the Nakhi came to be settled in the fertile Lijiang basin, in the shadow of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, a mountain that still holds spiritual and ceremonial significance for the Nakhi living in and around Lijiang; many consider the mountain itself to be a god or animated with spirits of the Nakhi Dongba religion. Many scholars and Nakhi people claim that Lijiang was the original settling place of their Qiang ancestors and that the Lijiang basin is not only the beating heart of Nakhi economic life and the seat of Nakhi

² Arcones, Pedro Ceinos. *Sons of Heaven, Brothers of Nature: The Naxi of Southwest China*. Papers of the White Dragon: Kunming, China. 2012: 44.

³ White, Sydney D. "Fame and Sacrifice: The Gendered Construction of Naxi Identities." *Modern China*, Vol. 23, No. 3. July 2007: 300.

⁴ Arcones 2012: 45.

⁵ *Ibid*, 43.

political power, but also the starting point and origin of Nakhi culture. However, that last point is often contested among Nakhi people, especially in the areas surrounding Lijiang. One twenty five year old half-Nakhi, half-Bai informant from Qiao Tou, the town at the end of Tiger Leaping Gorge closest to Lijiang told me that his father told him Nakhi histories that say otherwise. He claimed that Sanba and its mystical geological formation, Baishuitai, as the origin of Dongba (*dongba de fa yuan di*.) was the true seat of Nakhi culture, citing his status as an eleventh generation Nakhi man on his father's side and traceable roots to the Qiang as his credentials. He claimed that a war called the White and Black War between the Nakhi and another group had caused many wealthy Nakhi to flee from the area surrounding Sanba and Zhongdian (Shangri-la) to the Lijiang basin and settle there permanently as a result of the basin's fertile soil and holy positioning at the foot of the mountain.⁶ Similarly, in a conversation that I had with a Nakhi music teacher at a primary school in Baisha, the teacher claimed that because Baisha had produced its own form of Nakhi music, much older and authentically Nakhi than the Han classical style played by Mr. Xuan Ke's famous Nakhi Ancient Music Orchestra in Old Town, Baisha should be considered "the center of Nakhi culture, of our most ancient culture."⁷ This disagreement on the true location of the origin of Nakhi traditional culture begins to elucidate Nakhi discourses of authenticity that will be discussed later in this paper.

However, despite this debate regarding the original settling place of the Nakhi and the birthplace of Nakhi-ness, Lijiang and Dayanzhen, the area now most commonly known as Lijiang Old Town, was undeniably the "historical and political

⁶ Male Nakhi –Bai *baoshe* driver in a discussion with the author, May 2013.

⁷ Male Baisha music teacher in a discussion with the author, May 2013.

heartland” for the Nakhi people.⁸ Dayanzhen sits at the center of the Lijiang basin and was home to Nakhi political powers and states of different forms. During the sixth and seventh centuries C.E., the Nakhi established a “statelet” that was the first of any discernable “historical relevance” that was founded by Nakhi-Qiang chieftains who were supposedly endowed with magical abilities and a connection to the spirit world, similar to that of a Dongba.⁹ This statelet and those that followed after were “[g]eographically sandwiched between the powerful non-Chinese Nanzhao state in the Dali basin to the south, the periodically powerful Tibetans in the mountains to the northwest, and the raid-prone Yi...peoples in the mountains to the northeast” making the Nakhi “quite conscious...of their relatively small population and consequent vulnerability.”¹⁰ The Nakhi were very adaptable to new power dynamics as a result of their positioning “between some of the most powerful empires of Aisa,” and thus possess, and arguably still do possess, “an astonishing ability to integrate foreign influences into their lives” and into their own culture, at least those that worked to their advantage and aided in their survival among military and economic giants.¹¹

An apt example of the skill with which the Nakhi can adapt to power shifts and cultural changes came with the decline of the Nanzhao Kingdom. The Nakhi people had remained subservient to the Nanzhao Kingdom of their neighboring Bai people, living as simple, tribal Yak herders until the overthrow of the Nanzhao in 902 C.E. by a “palatial rebellion.”¹² A ruling clan called Yang within the Nakhi fell out of power and favor due to their connections with the Nanzhao Kingdom, allowing the

⁸ White 2007: 300.

⁹ Arcones 2012: 46.

¹⁰ White 2007: 300-301.

¹¹ Arcones 2012: 43.

¹² Ibid, 51.

famous Mu family to become the leaders of a newly created Nakhi state. Then, with the arrival of Kublai Khan and a massive Mongolian army, his eyes set on the Nanzhao capital of Dali, in 1253, the Mu family sided with the Mongolians, giving the Mongolians access to the best mountain paths that could allow them to descend upon Dali without having to attempt to bypass the all but impassible natural boundary of Erhai Lake. The Nakhi had known the “Mongol custom of exterminating those who opposed them and reward[ing] those who help them” and that the Mongolians would eventually use their new positioning in Dali to attack the ever-encroaching Song Dynasty, so they welcomed the Mongolians with open arms, adapting perfectly to the situation for their own benefit.¹³

This Nakhi talent for adaptation and cultural adjustments continued under Mu family. The Mu Kingdom gained control of the Lijiang basin from the Pumi people, allowing the Nakhi to settle permanently in the area around Lijiang and Baisha and to make a shift from a nomadic herding lifestyle to a static, agricultural mode of existence.¹⁴ This allowed for the creation of wealth, of a more static culture, and of a political presence for the Nakhi, a presence that would not go unnoticed by the Chinese empire. The Nakhi Kingdom entered into a tributary relationship with the Mongolian Yuan Dynasty (C.E. 1206-1368) under the *tusi* system of self-governance with the Mu family being the contact between the Chinese empire and the Nakhi people.¹⁵ Despite the fact that “Chinese rule was nominal only”¹⁶ at this time, with power still resting with the Nakhi chiefs and the Mu, this change in the system of

¹³ Ibid, 53-55.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ White 2007: 301.

¹⁶ Arcones 2012: 58.

government brought about a class system that was “two-tiered” and comprised of “elites and commoners.”¹⁷ Such a system had never been formalized in Nakhi society prior to the entrance into the *tusi* arrangement. This was the first sign of Nakhi absorption of Chinese imperial values.

Chinese soldiers began to migrate south to Lijiang during the Ming (C.E. 1368-1644) and Qing (C.E.1644-1911) dynasties, likely to bolster the Chinese Empire’s administration of imperial governance in the area, facilitating the Nakhi people’s “[e]xposure to the influence of Chinese culture” mostly due to intermarriage between the Chinese soldiers and Nakhi women.¹⁸ Lijiang and the Nakhi people were, however, not “formally incorporated into the Chinese [E]mpire [until] 1723” under a system called *gaitu guiliu*, or “regular government.”¹⁹ In a conversation with two docents at a museum dedicated to a famous, local scholar, one of the first to study Dongba pictographic script, the female docent informed me that she considers *gaitu guiliu* to be the time period when the Nakhi common people began to accept Han Chinese influence of their own volition, not just Nakhi elites. “It was a very open time (*hen kai fang de shi dai*.) Before 1723, if you didn’t speak Nakhi language, then you couldn’t come to Lijiang.” She also went on to say that pre-*gaitu guiliu* Nakhi culture is “not remembered today and barely understood by most people,” perhaps with the exception of surviving ancient Dongba ritual practices.²⁰

The Nakhi truly have been so integrated with the culture of the Han Chinese that their culture and ceremonies are nearly indistinguishable from those of the Han in

¹⁷ White 2007: 301.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Female docent (museum in Old Town) in conversation with the author. May 2013.

Lijiang and its surrounding areas. White comments on this Nakhi cultural shift by stating that despite the numerous cultural influences that have been infused with Nakhi culture, from Chan and Nyingmapa Buddhism to Daoism to the clear influence of Tibetan Bon on the practice of Dongba, there is an ever present and “unmistakable legacy of Confucian practices despite widespread stereotypes...that [the] Lijiang Naxi are ‘matriarchal’” and matrilineal.²¹ Not only Confucian popular practice such as Confucian ceremonies and Han ancestor worship made their way into the Nakhi understanding of their own culture, but “Nakhi social organization, particularly gender practices,” were fundamentally restructured post-*gaitu guiliu*.²² White goes on to note that Chinese norms with regards to kinship and marriage such as “[p]atrilineal descent, ancestor veneration, and clan exogamy,²³ along with patrilocal residence” as well as the pre-Liberation practices of arranged marriages and “nonpatrilineally related cousin marriages” were all commonly practiced Confucian traditions within Nakhi society after 1723.²⁴ Nakhi women, after 1723 and prior to 1949, also experienced the same limited social status as Han Chinese women and were viewed as dirty, lowly beings compared to their upstanding, cultured male counterparts.

Thus began the mostly voluntary assimilation of the Nakhi into Chinese culture, much earlier and far less coerced than I had initially anticipated with my uneducated observations of Lijiang Old Town. The Nakhi’s historical positioning, raising a small kingdom among the great empires of Asia, engrained the Nakhi with

²¹ White 2007: 301.

²² Ibid.

²³ Clan exogamy is the practice of marrying outside one’s own community, tribe, or, in this case, one’s own clan. This means that daughters would have been married off to families in other Nakhi groups than her own family, likely to ensure genetic health of children.

²⁴ White 2007: 301-302.

the value of situational acculturation. By necessity, the Nakhi made themselves people who are ready to shape their culture and practices to the changing conditions of history as well as to the ebbs and flows of the political and economic status quo, so as to ensure their own survival as a people. The Nakhi were not forced to change, they adopted a more Han way of life in order to be in the good graces of Chinese imperial forces, to improve their own lives, and to be seen by such forces as a civilized, respectable people. This is not to say that the transition was smooth for all Nakhi people. For example, many young Nakhi lovers who were forced into arranged marriages would commit suicide in protest at places like Jade Dragon Snow Mountain as well as a peak closer to Lashi Hai where one informant that lovers would jump to their death to avoid such marriages. However, compared with other minorities of Yunnan and China in general, the Nakhi embraced these changes with open arms.²⁵

Modern History of the Lijiang Nakhi (1911-1978)

The Chinese Empire held the Nakhi in high esteem until the collapse of the Qing Dynasty as a result of the Republican Revolution of 1911. However, the Nakhi would soon need to adapt yet again. The Republican government began to create assimilationist plans so as to sure up the Chinese nation under one Marxist-Leninist-Maoist vanguard Party, one government, one mother national tongue, and one national culture at the direction of Dr. Sun Yat Sen and other Republican revolutionary thinkers. In 1912, at the behest of the national government and under the guidance of these plans for uniting China, the county government of Lijiang “organized a Chinese Language Society to teach Naxi men Chinese language” and a

²⁵ Male Nakhi horse riding tour guide in a discussion with the author. May 2013.

policy was made stating that any Nakhi man caught speaking his native tongue “would be fined one copper coin.”²⁶ This was not only the beginning of Nakhi assimilation into the Chinese nation state, but also the beginning of the drawing of much more distinct gender lines between Nakhi men and Nakhi women in terms of cultural practice and, later, Nakhi cultural authenticity.

After the 1927 purge of the Communists from the Guomindang in Shanghai, many Nakhi joined the ranks of the underground Communists movement. White claims that “some local estimates run as high as 90%” of the Nakhi population had direct involvement with the Communists just before Liberation in 1949 in “a...strategic move to jump on the [powerful] bandwagon of the obviously soon-to-be-victorious Communists”.²⁷ While this number is undoubtedly an overestimation, the fact that it is subject to such magnification shows that political participation and loyalty to the right cause is a point of pride for the Nakhi. White also confirms that the Nakhi’s history of “being enmeshed between powerful empires has [perhaps] contributed to this ethos” of adhering to the political, social, and economic status quo.²⁸ The Nakhi also participated directly in the War of Japanese Resistance after the 1936 Japanese capture of the Chinese Republican capital of Nanjing. The Tea Horse Caravan Road and the Nakhi’s role in the trading on the road was revived as an important trade route between India and Tibet, so “Lijiang became a prosperous city where banks and commercial enterprises were established and goods were forwarded to Dali and the rest of China.”²⁹ Baisha also became an important waypoint for the

²⁶ Arcones 2012: 67.

²⁷ White 2007: 302.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Arcones 2012: 67.

American Air Force's volunteer group, affectionately called the "Flying Tigers" by the Chinese and the Naxi, with General Joseph Stillwell's construction of the Baisha airport, just ten kilometers to the north of Dayanzhen.³⁰ This allowed the aerial transportation of military supplies from India over the formidable boundary of the Himalayas to the Chinese military and ensured Chinese victory over the Japanese invaders in China's southwest.

This skillful maneuvering during the Second World War and the Liberation won the Naxi a place of respect in the eyes of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people. As White relates, "The Central government views the Naxi as being both a 'relatively advanced' (*bijiao fada*) and... 'obedient' (*tinghua*) national minority" both as a result of their service of the nation and their relatively high level of assimilation into Han Chinese society.³¹ Emily Chao goes so far as to assert that Naxi scholars, specifically those located in the Lijiang basin and Lijiang Old Town, have attempted to "represent themselves as somehow outside the category of Naxi" venturing to be viewed as a "'sinicized' [*han hua*] ethnic minority" and to "[contest] their [political] categorization as non-Chinese."³²

In the Mao Era following the Second World War and the Liberation of 1949, the Naxi of Lijiang made additional strides to assert their firm position as members of the newly created Chinese communist state. According to White's understanding of the political situation in Lijiang during the Five Year Plans immediately following

³⁰ Ibid, 67-68.

³¹ White 2007: 302.

³² Chao, Emily. "Hegemony, Agency, and Re-presenting the Past: The Invention of Dongba Culture among the Naxi of Southwest China." *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*. Pgs. 208-239. Institute of East Asian Studies. Berkeley, CA. 1996. 232.

Liberation and well into the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s the Nakhi were “known for their zealousness in demonstrating adherence to the Communist Party status quo.”³³ Actions such as redistributing land *twice* and ascribing class labels to the citizenry of Lijiang *twice* demonstrate this zealousness quite nicely. White goes on to say “Han from Kunming who were ‘sent down to the countryside’ to Lijiang during the Cultural Revolution testify to the political excesses (even by Cultural Revolution standards) of the basin area,” and that the saying “Even before Beijing has made a move, Lijiang has already started (*Beijing hai mei dong, Lijiang yijing kashi le,*)” became a common turn of phrase when referring to the political swiftness of the Nakhi.³⁴

There are even vast amounts of evidence to suggest that the Nakhi used this zeal for maintaining the state’s political status quo to their own customs. According to my male informant in Qiao Tou, an elderly female informant in Haba, as well as the music teacher from Baisha and his Nakhi language teacher compatriot, the Cultural Revolution was a dark time of decline for the ritual practice of Dongba and other aspects of Nakhi culture. The driver from Qiao Tou mentioned that Dongba went underground in Sanba during the Cultural Revolution and that Dongba priests were no longer allowed to pass down their knowledge to their sons as tradition dictated, but many did so anyway in secret, even after being forced to burn their ritual manuscripts by Han and, presumably, Nakhi Red Guards.³⁵ My elderly female informant from Haba village related to me how there used to be a Dongba with an abundance of Dongba ritual manuscripts written in Dongba pictographs. She even recalled Haba

³³ White 2007: 302.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Male Nakhi-Bai *baoshe* driver in a discussion with the author. May 2013.

having a Lubu, a long since disappeared female form of a Dongba priest (although, according to Chao, the ritual practices of these women, also known as Sanbas, more closely resembled shamanism,)³⁶ as well as dancing to more traditional forms of Nakhi music with more traditional dance steps that have since been lost.³⁷ According to the two teachers in Baisha village, “During the Mao Era, there was a policy against the study of Dongba pictographs and Nakhi language, but since *Gaige Kaifang* in 1978, that policy has not been enforced.”³⁸ Due to the Nakhi’s zeal for political cooperation, many aspects of Nakhi history and culture were lost like seeds of tradition in a gust of Marxist and Morganian unilineal, evolutionist history, to the Chinese state’s and many pro-Socialist Nakhi people’s delight.

I do not wish, however, to paint the Nakhi people as a group of lackeys to any and every powerful force that crosses their path; that would be an unfair and incorrect portrayal of a people who have a specialty in intelligent political maneuvering. One prime example of the Nakhi rejecting a powerful, yet disadvantageous, force can be seen in their patent refusal to convert to Christianity when missionaries arrived in Lijiang in the 1940s. These proselytizers had made inroads with converting Han Chinese, some Tibetans, as well as other ethnic minority groups in Yunnan, such as the Hmong, known to the Chinese state as the Miao. However, not only were the Nakhi sensibilities with regards to religion and belief “departmentalized...with each religion serving some particular need,” but they believed that “it was best not to take

³⁶ Chao 1996: 218-219

³⁷ Elderly Woman (Haba guesthouse employee) in discussion with the author. May 2013

³⁸ Male Baisha music teacher and Male Baisha Nakhi language teacher in discussion with the author. May 2013.

chance on future joys but to enjoy oneself to the hilt whilst on this plane.”³⁹ The Nakhi decided that their own religious and spiritual traditions had brought them success as they stood, and, therefore rebuffed the Christian missionaries as unnecessary and, perhaps, as politically dangerous with the coming revolution. The Nakhi were not just bandwagon hoppers, there was always a method to their adaptation.

Nakhi Identity: Discourses of the State and Discourses of the Nakhi

Throughout these manifold, historical transitions into Chinese imperial, Han Chinese, and Chinese national power relationships and cultures, the Nakhi people have internalized many state discourses regarding their own position within Chinese society, all the while creating their own discourses of difference within Nakhi society, especially with regards to the spatialization of and the gendered nature of Nakhi authenticity. Chinese imperial discourses regarding the Nakhi, prior to the entrance of the Mu family into the system of *tusi*, mostly considered the Nakhi, and most other non-Han groups, to be barbarian outsiders, and a sort of “civilizing project” of the Confucian Chinese Empire.⁴⁰ Blake Stone-Banks explains the Confucian discourse of a hierarchy of peoples, which juxtaposed the Han Chinese and the proverbial others of China, such as the Nakhi, well by asserting the following:

The most civilized people (e.g. the scholar-officials who served the imperial state) had the greatest knowledge of relevant literary works. Non-Chinese were the furthest down on the Confucian scale of civilization because they did not have even an indirect acquaintance with the moral principles defined in

³⁹ Goullart, Peter. *The Forgotten Kingdom*. John Murray Publishers Ltd. London, UK. 1955. 84.

⁴⁰ Stone-Banks, Blake. “The *Minzu Shibie*: Equality and Evolution in Early CCP Minority Research and Policy (Spring 2000.)” *Ethnic Minority Issues in Yunnan*. Pgs. 48-69. Yunnan Fine Arts Publishing House. Kunming, China. 2004. 60-61.

the classics...[However,] [p]eople of other nationalities were not excluded from participating in the examination system or serving in China's government. Finally the approach of the Confucian standard of civilization was that the civilized world (Confucian China) was involved in a process of making the raw (*sheng*) cultures of the world more civilized. Even the Han dynasty's southern expansion involved great 'sinification' through intermarriage and cultural assimilation, legitimized by the idea that behavior determines civilization.⁴¹

The pre-Revolution Nakhi were assimilated into the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties under these very same Confucian principles of civilization, and, thus, according to their penchant for adeptly absorbing such cultural values, the Nakhi readily embraced this hierarchy of *sheng* cultures and the Han. Nakhi men, especially elites under the system of *tusi*, aggressively began making themselves models of Chinese culture and principle. Nakhi men all but abandoned their traditional dress (this dress can scarcely be seen being worn by men and only by those involved in the tourism industry in Lijiang today,) began adopting Han tastes in music, as evidenced by Xuan Ke's famous Nakhi orchestra that replicates the musical stylings of ancient imperial court composers, and studying Nakhi culture as well as Confucian texts. Academic endeavors became, what White calls "avenues to fame," fame being his conceptualization of the thirst for respect and admiration for which Nakhi men are well known. White even claims that simply affecting the manner, sophistication, and leisurely life of a Confucian scholar could gain even men of the lowest education and respect a certain amount of fame in his community.⁴² Nakhi women, however, did not make these strides towards sinicization. Nakhi women, despite their stereotypical standing as providers, laborers, and the seat of family capital, were considered to be

⁴¹ Ibid, 61.

⁴² White 2007: 316.

of low social status. Peter Goullart, a Russian-born researcher who made the journey to Lijiang in the 1940s, explains, “ [Nakhi] [w]omen may not sit in the presence of men or eat together with them. Also women never sleep in the upper rooms or remain there long. They are considered traditionally unclean creatures and it is not right for them to walk above their men’s heads.”⁴³ Nakhi women’s low status within their own culture, with the added “structural liminality” experienced by Han women prior to 1949, prevented them from integrating fully into Han Chinese traditions, aside from the newly established gender and marriage norms mentioned above into which the Nakhi people as a whole assimilated after 1723.⁴⁴

Peter Goullart’s famous work, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, is an invaluable resource for understanding Lijiang, the roles of Nakhi women, and the discourses at work in the lives of the Nakhi in the post-Republican Revolution and pre-Liberation eras due to his extensive research of Lijiang, alongside his more famous contemporary Joseph Rock, before being forced to leave the area in 1949. By the 1940s, “the Confucian ethics [had] superseded and modified the original Nakhi customs, but a few of the latter still [persisted],” demonstrating the extent to which the Nakhi had become fully incorporated into dominant Chinese sensibilities.⁴⁵ Women’s status had been lowered in some ways with the expansion of practices such as bride selling and the disposal of widows; although Goullart notes that the latter practice was already in decline. However, Goullart, with a certain amount of romantic hyperbole, recounts how the legendary strength of the Nakhi women had elevated their status, at least in economic sectors:

⁴³ Goullart 1955: 78.

⁴⁴ White 2007: 301-302.

⁴⁵ Goullart 1955: 78.

Continuous manual work was the women's lot. They did not revolt; they did not even protest. Instead, silently and persistently like the roots of growing trees, they slowly evolved themselves into a powerful race until they utterly enslaved their men. They learned all the intricacies of commerce and became merchants, land and exchange brokers, shopkeepers and traders. They encouraged their men to loaf, lounge, and to look after the babies. It is they who reaped the golden harvest of their enterprise, and their husbands and sons had to beg them for money, even if only a few pennies to buy cigarettes. It was the women who started courting men and they held them fast by the power of their money...Nothing could be obtained or bought in Likiang without women's intervention...Tibetan caravans [headed due North to Kunming along the Tea Horse Caravan Road], on arrival, surrendered their merchandise to the women for disposal, otherwise they ran a risk of heavy losses.⁴⁶

Essentially, the Nakhi women of the Lijiang basin, having been excluded from the realms of culture and education associated with the high Han and Confucian culture, began dominating the sphere of economics and holding the role of traders with the Tibetans on the Tea Horse Caravan Road. This role gave Nakhi women immense power within their own community, power that Nakhi men could only envy. However, due to Nakhi women's status as low, unclean beings and their persistent upholding of Nakhi female-oriented traditions, such as the wearing of their traditional Nakhi *yangpis*,⁴⁷ this power did not elevate them to the same point of respect and civilization as their husbands and sons within Confucian discourses of hierarchy, both the Han Chinese version and the tweaked Nakhi versions that arose as a result of assimilation, e.g. the Nakhi male obsession with education and fame.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 78-79.

⁴⁷ The *yangpi* is a sheepskin cape worn by all Nakhi women prior to 1949, which has been slowly but surely disappearing ever since. The cape is in the shape of the back of a frog's back and legs, symbolizing strength, and is emblazoned with seven woven stars and a large, white moon. The meaning of this cape will be discussed on the next page.

Instead, Nakhi women were seen as a more *sheng* manifestation of Nakhi culture, and, thus, were seen as more authentically Nakhi than their male counterparts. Within both Han and “popular local representations of Nakhi women,” due to the history of male education and sinicization, Nakhi women were seen as “traditional, illiterate, and backward in contrast to Naxi men, who [were] associated with Chinese practices, literacy, and civilization.”⁴⁸ Nakhi women began, more and more, to be associated with a discourse related to their lot as laborers and the bearers of the brunt of most burdens in Nakhi society. White refers to this indigenous Nakhi construction of female identity as a discourse of “[s]uffering, [s]acrifice, and [a]uthenticity.”⁴⁹ The wearing of the seven-star sheepskin cape (*qixin yangpi*) by a Nakhi woman is a physical representation of the Nakhi women’s bitter lot of endless work for her family at her own expense. The cape, as White aptly describes it, “serves a double metaphor: as padding for the literal and figurative burdens they bear and as a symbol of the stars that are still in the sky when they get up in the morning,” as well as the moon that has already risen when they return home from the fields or from her shop or trading post on *Si Fang Jie* in Dayanzhen.⁵⁰

This value of endless labor, physically represented in the *qixing yangpi*, has had a twofold implication for Nakhi female identity: Nakhi women have become enmeshed in a discourse of self-sacrifice through labor and have been even further distanced from Han women. By engaging in the *qixing* ideal of labor, “Nakhi women are demonstrating the depth of commitment to their families through literally giving their bodies to them,” which has consequently led many Nakhi women to live lives

⁴⁸ Chao 1996: 221.

⁴⁹ White 1997: 317.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

plagued by diseases of labor, e.g. arthritis, chronic headaches, and other chronic pain conditions, while their house-bound husbands stereotypically die of strokes, heart conditions, and liver failure, all diseases of leisure, a phenomenon that I myself witnessed still occurring today, as will be discussed later on.⁵¹ As well, this emphasis on Nakhi women's physical sturdiness caused even further bifurcation between the gender constructions of Han Chinese women and Nakhi women under Confucian discourses. Confucian "normative constructions of deficient female bodies" have permeated Han gender construction for thousands of years, but this discourse has made no inroads into Nakhi constructions of gender due to Nakhi women's traditional observance of their *qixing* inspired value of manual labor.⁵² Thus, Nakhi women, unlike Nakhi men, cannot be seen as equivalent or nearly so to their Han counterparts.

These Nakhi discourses, both the internalized Confucian discourses and the indigenous Nakhi discourses, survived Liberation and the Mao era despite the discourses' Confucian roots. The Chinese Communist Party wanted to bring China's ethnic minorities under the wing socialist state, instead of feudal, Confucian civilization, and, therefore, vehemently denied that their policies with regards to minority nationalities bore any connection to feudal, Confucian discourses of civilization. Stone-Banks, however, elucidates the continuity between the discourses of Maoist socialism and Confucianism stating, "Similarly, the CCP's justification for rescinding the promises of self-determination for minorities and for placing Han and Han-trained leaders in minority areas was largely based upon the premise that the

⁵¹ Ibid, 318.

⁵² Ibid.

Han would enculture the minority nationalities...Similar to Confucian civilizing projects, the CCP's aim was to help bring the minority nationalities up to the Han level of development."⁵³ Essentially, the modernizing force of Socialism supplanted the civilizing force of Confucianism, but the ethnic hierarchies of the Confucian discourse persisted nonetheless under Mao. This allowed for internal Nakhi discourses of the advanced sinicized Nakhi man and the hard-working, authentic, yet backward Nakhi woman to persist as well, meaning that the gendered nature of Nakhi identity would survive well into the era of Chinese Contemporary History; it survives, in some respects, even today.

The final discourse that warrants mention before we progress to understanding the development of Lijiang is the spatialization of Nakhi authenticity. Due to the relative sinicization of Nakhi people living in Dayanzhen and the most central areas of the Lijiang basin, Nakhi people residing, even in villages in areas as nearby as Bai Sha and Lashi Hai, both located less than an hour from Lijiang Old Town by public bus or by *baochē*, started to be seen as more authentically Nakhi, as better upholding core Nakhi traditions. White speaks to this spatialization in nearly the same dichotomizing terms that he applied to Nakhi discursive gender, stating, "If a 'basin Naxi-centric' geographical/spatial model...is conjured up...Dayanzhen, located at the center of the basin, is associated with progress, cleanliness, and a high degree of (equivalent to ideal Han) 'cultural' influence. Naxi villages of the basin, extending out from Dayanzhen...are associated with relative backwardness, relative uncleanliness, and relative lack of culture," as well as relative Nakhi-ness, illustrating

⁵³ Stone-Banks 2004: 61.

the importance of Han acculturation to Nakhi discourses of authenticity and hierarchy.⁵⁴

The presence of Han culture, however, is not the only cultural factor that has led to the creation of this spatialization discourse. The presence of Dongba ritual practitioners and Dongba ritual practice in outlying regions of the Nakhi domain is equally as important. I will address Chao's assertions about the uses of Dongba culture, a phrase to which she liberally applies quotation marks, for the development Lijiang in the next section, but it will be important to first understand this idea of spatialized authenticity and its link with the Dongbas. Chao claims that "[i]dentifying 'dongba culture' as the core of Naxi heritage has significant implications for the representation of the Naxi people. According to Naxi scholars [located in the Lijiang basin], the 'living representatives' of Naxi culture-the 'real Naxi'-can be found only in the mountain districts (*shan qu*) far from the influence of the Chinese."⁵⁵ This discursive separation of *shan qu* Nakhi and Nakhi living within the bound of Lijiang city (*Lijiang chengshi*), whom I will refer to henceforth as *chengshi* Nakhi, radiating outward from Dayanzhen out into the mountainous regions surrounding the Lijiang basin, created a deep rift in how both *chengshi* and *shanqu* Nakhi saw themselves within the States discourses of hierarchical civilization. In the Nakhi mind, those *shanqu* Nakhi living further from the cultural and economic center of Lijiang were less modernized and less civilized due to their deeper understanding of Dongba traditions, which the state viewed as feudal and superstitious, as well as their relatively low level of *han hua*. On the other hand, *chengshi* Nakhi were viewed by

⁵⁴ White 1997: 313.

⁵⁵ Chao 1996: 229-230.

the state as relatively advanced due to their disconnection from Nakhi tradition and their relatively high level of *han hua*. The Nakhi subsequently internalized this view of themselves as reified, thus creating a spectrum of advancement with male *chengshi* Nakhi as the ideal and *shanqu* Nakhi women as a form of Nakhi-ness to be at once avoided for their lack of Han culture and revered for their authentic Nakhi traditionalism. This spectrum of Nakhi identity would be further reified and its rifts deepened with the explosive development of Lijiang beginning in the Contemporary Era.

Contemporary History of the Lijiang Nakhi and Lijiang's Development (1978-Present)

After the turbulent end to the Mao Era following the Chairman's death in 1976, China, and, as a result, the Nakhi, began to embark on a wholly different path, the path of Deng Xiao Ping's 1978 Reform and Opening policies (*gaige kaifang*.) And the Nakhi people were very well positioned to capitalize on this new foray into the new world of market economics with Lijiang Old Town being their key resource.

Charles F. McKhann, although writing his article in 2001, late in Lijiang Old Town's journey to its current state of development, describes the appeal of Lijiang Old Town well, lying in the town's "maze of picturesque cobblestone lanes, lined with century-old wooden houses and storefronts [being] dissected by small, tree-lined canals, all flowing from a single spring."⁵⁶ Lijiang Old Town was a Nakhi town frozen in time, a well-maintained slice of Ming and Qing dynasty China, unique in the care that had been taken to preserve its essence, even in throughout the

⁵⁶ McKhann, Charles F. "Mass Tourism and Cultural Identity on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier: Reflections of a Participant-Observer." *SIT Minority Areas Field Excursion Readings*. SIT China. Kunming, China. 2001. 1.

destruction of tradition that typified the Cultural Revolution. This protection of Lijiang's physical past stemmed from the decision of the majority Naxi government of Lijiang city in the 1950s, "to preserve its Old Town, and to establish a separate 'New Town' section for modern buildings" while most cities at the time had bulldozed such old neighborhoods in exchange for the concrete skyscrapers and apartment blocks of Socialist modernity.⁵⁷ McKhann goes on to say that "[t]his decision has paid off in recent years, as mainly urban Han ('Chinese') tourists flock there to re-imagine the place of [their own] small town past," which, while being somewhat ironic, further demonstrates Naxi people's closeness to the Han.⁵⁸ In 1986, the Chinese State Council declared Lijiang Old Town a national treasure,⁵⁹ and, in 1994, "at the suggestion of China's Prime Minister and with the support of the former Naxi governor of Yunnan, Lijiang began to develop its potential within the tourism industry by enhancing and promoting its many scenic areas," further boosting Old Town's prospects as a future tourist destination.⁶⁰

However, the biggest strides the Naxi made towards making Old Town into the attraction that it has become came after February 1996 from an unexpected source: a massive earthquake. Much of Lijiang was destroyed by a quake registering at 7.0 on the Richter scale, which killed 322 people, injured 14,000 people, destroyed 186,000

⁵⁷ Ibid, 1-2.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁰ Bonner, Ann P. "The Preservation and Protection of Lijiang: Policy and Practice (Fall 1999)." *Ethnic Minority Issues in Yunnan*. Pgs. 125-142. Yunnan Fine Arts Publishing House. Kunming, China. 2004. 127.

homes, and displaced an additional 300,000 people from their homes.⁶¹ Under the leadership of the aforementioned former Nakhi governor, his name is He Zhiqiang, Lijiang began to rebuild, concentrating a large amount of resources on improving the devastated Old Town. According to McKhann, “[m]uch of the ‘rebuilding’ process actually involved a great deal of expansion (especially in tourism infrastructure.)”⁶² This rapid and aggressive expansion in the wake of the earthquake put Lijiang on an absolutely explosive trajectory. In 1997, UNESCO’s⁶³ World Heritage Committee pronounced Lijiang’s Old Town “an exceptional ancient town set in a dramatic landscape which represents the harmonious fusion of different cultural traditions to produce an urban landscape of outstanding quality,” and, thus, declared Lijiang as a UNESCO World Heritage site, which garnered additional funding and investment for the maintenance (read as “expansion and modernization”) of Old Town.⁶⁴ By the next year “a total of 2,010,000 tourists visited the area, 56,000 (5%) of whom were foreigners” generating an impressive “1.04 billion RMB” in that year alone.⁶⁵ Hotels, guesthouses, and other tourist accommodations spread like wildfire in and around the Old Town “[f]rom two in the late 1980s, the number of hotels...increased to nearly two dozen large hotels and several dozen small ones by the end of 1998” representing a large portion of tourism investment and revenue.⁶⁶ This expansion was accompanied by an increase in “numbers of restaurants, taxis and tour buses, tourism

⁶¹ “1996 Lijiang earthquake.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Last updated on May 2, 2013, Accessed on May 31, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996_Lijiang_earthquake.

⁶² McKhann 2001: 4.

⁶³ UNESCO is an acronym for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

⁶⁴ McKhann 2001: 5.

⁶⁵ Bonner 1999: 128.

⁶⁶ McKhann 2001: 3.

offices, new and improved roads, shops, banks, and nightclubs,” all markers of infrastructure, especially tourism infrastructure, development.⁶⁷ All of this rapid development of Lijiang brought massive benefits to the Nakhi people of Lijiang and the Lijiang basin, who generally approved of the move to develop the Old Town and supported the efforts with great pride at the national and international recognition their Old Town had garnered.

Although broad approval did exist within the Nakhi people involved, there were unforeseen consequences of the development that led some to question the trajectory that had been chosen for Old Town. The first problem that arose was one of Capitalism applied too passionately. As early as 1999, just two years after Old Town received the much coveted designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, “UNESCO’s own regional and cultural advisor for Asia and the Pacific was moved to admit that ‘Lijiang’s tourism growth is totally out of control,’ a slight at the backers of Old Town’s rapid growth, to say the very least.⁶⁸ Many projects like Lijiang’s Old Town that began to take off within the decade following Deng’s *Gaige Kaifang* policies were known for a certain degree of overzealousness, e.g. the sudden development of Deng’s famed SEZ’s was marred with many problems, regulatory and social in nature, and I believe this is what happened in Old Town. The zeal with which the Nakhi had approached the Republican Revolution, Communist Liberation, and the Cultural Revolution make the author suspicious that the “out of control” nature of Old Town’s expansion likely stemmed from an enthusiastic, perhaps overly so, application of free market approaches to modernization by the Nakhi.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The second major problem was the discourse that Lijiang was developed around and its tourism economy built upon. That discourse being, which Emily Chao loves to deride with quotes, the discourse of “Dongba culture.” The system of belief administered by Dongba ritual practitioners⁶⁹ within the culture of the Nakhi, along with the pictographic script employed by these practitioners for ritual incantations quickly became universalized symbols representing the whole of Nakhi culture to the Chinese populous and to the international community as a whole. How did this small aspect of Nakhi culture become an all-encompassing symbol for Nakhi-ness? This misrepresentation of the Nakhi that can be seen on every street, nay in every solitary shop, in Lijiang’s Old Town can be explained by the discourses of Nakhi identity discussed above; “Dongba culture” was an invention, a consequence of gendered and spatialized Nakhi authenticity.

Dongba pictographic script, the only surviving hieroglyphic language in the world according the Nakhi and Chinese scholars, was seen by many Nakhi government officials as an easily marketable and easily promoted aspect of Nakhi culture. A man who Chao refers to by the pseudonym Ma Borou, the first Party secretary of Lijiang, is the person most often credited with the “rise of Dongba culture” in the forms that it is observed and consumed in modern day Lijiang.⁷⁰ Under the direction of Ma Borou and others, despite the disappearance of Dongba in

⁶⁹ To call a Dongba a “priest” or a “shaman” is not a suitable or wholly correct description of the function of the Dongba within Nakhi society. Dongbas perform and oversee everyday religious and spiritual rituals, officiate ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, and also serve the functions of shamans and diviners. Essentially, all ritual and ceremonial aspects of Nakhi spiritual life are handled within the domain of the Dongba, thus my choice of the term “ritual practitioner.” Dongbas also do not generally hold high social or economic status in the same manner as priests, as they are generally common farmers.

⁷⁰ Chao 1996: 213.

the Lijiang basin during the Cultural Revolution, Dongba religion and its traditional script were “sanitized and secularized”⁷¹ into a form “that could be accepted by the Chinese state” and by the forces of the tourism industry under the socialist state.⁷² This sanitization and secularization was accomplished by removing the superstitious and backwards elements of Dongba, namely the removal of the chaotic, superstitious, and female figures of the Sanba, or the Lubu (shamanistic practitioners,) from the cannon of Dongba, and transforming Dongba into an academic pursuit reserved for highly educated Nakhi men at the Dongba Research Institute in Lijiang.⁷³ This sanitization also recreated the spatialization of Nakhi authenticity in that the academic pursuit of Dongba was isolated to the Dongba Research Institute, while the surviving practice of Dongba was relegated to the far reaches of the rural *shangqu* Nakhi.

Chao states that “Ma Borou was well aware of the prestige accorded written language in Chinese culture and its strong association with the Chinese concept of...civilization,” however, “[t]hese forms of writing...had been used exclusively by dongbas for ritual purposes and were generally unintelligible to the broader Naxi population” meaning that a form of writing that was only read by male Dongbas in the post-Mao Era (Nakhi language has no other traditional written form) was promoted as the core point of value in Nakhi culture, further excluding women from endeavors of high culture within Nakhi society.⁷⁴ This gendered distinction represents a continuation of the imperial discursive threads that marginalized Nakhi women into the realms of labor and economic in the past, and also represents a

⁷¹ Ibid, 208.

⁷² Ibid, 213.

⁷³ Ibid, 220-221.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 213.

wholly new fabrication of Nakhi culture for the sake of making Old Town more attractive to the state and to tourists. Evidence of this fabrication can be seen in the use of Dongba pictographs on any number of “shop signboards, letterhead, [and] tour company logos,”⁷⁵ as well as fast food restaurant and hotel signs, a high percentage of the pictographs being meaningless, even nonsensical, according to one scholar at the Dongba Research Institute.⁷⁶

As Chao aptly describes the state of “Dongba Culture” at the outset of Old Town’s development, “Thus, the promotion of dongba culture is not a grassroots phenomenon; it is not something that articulates a primordial sense of identity or way of life that has tenaciously survive the historical transformations since 1949 to suddenly percolate upward and manifest itself in the post-Mao era,”⁷⁷ only confirming McKhann’s assertion that, in modern China, tourism is a “top-down” endeavor.⁷⁸ Chao is correct that Nakhi Dongba is not linked to a “primordial sense of identity or way of life” for most Nakhi people, but this does not mean that it does not hold meaning in any way for the Nakhi, as I will discuss later in regards to my own observations.

The final drawback for the Nakhi of Lijiang that has arisen as a result of the Old Town’s development is a set of social ramifications for the local Nakhi people that lie outside of these imperial and modern discourses. With the expansion of tourism infrastructure and the exponential rise in tourist numbers, many Nakhi have left Lijiang’s Old Town in favor of the New Town. McKhann claims that this is

⁷⁵ McKhann 2001: 13.

⁷⁶ Male Dongba scholar (Dongba Research Institute) in discussion with the author. April 2013.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 216.

⁷⁸ McKhann 2001: 14.

simply due to the Nakhi of Old Town being “[f]ed up with the intrusive touristic gaze” that permeates Old Town, but the real reasons are far more complex.⁷⁹ In my own discussions with locals, I discovered that most buildings in Old Town are still owned by Nakhi locals, but these owners have chosen to play the role of landlord, allowing mostly Han Chinese, Tibetan, and Bai shop owners to rent space from which to sell faux Dongba paraphernalia and other souvenirs, as opposed to maintaining the Nakhi owned and operated “local tofu, noodle, leather goods, oil, and rice shops” that used to line the streets of Lijiang.⁸⁰ Li Guo Wu, a local Nakhi government minister who works for the Tourism Bureau, estimated to me that perhaps “as low as 20 or 30% of the shops in Old Town” are still owned and run by Nakhi women, although that statistic is probably somewhat high in reality (interestingly, neither the Tourism Bureau nor the Yu Long County Women’s Federation keep statistics on this matter.)⁸¹ Instead, most non-Nakhi owners are Han Chinese migrants to Lijiang from places like Zhejiang Province and China’s northeastern provinces.⁸² Aside from the Nakhi who were lucky enough to be able to rent their homes and shops, many Nakhi people have been priced out of the Old Town where real estate prices have absolutely skyrocketed.

Another social issue, faced exclusively by Nakhi women in Lijiang’s Old Town is rampant sexualization that did not exist to the same extent in Nakhi society prior to the development of Lijiang. MchKhann notes this sexualization in many

⁷⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Li Guo Wu (Lijiang Tourism Bureau minister) in discussion with the author. April 2013.

⁸² Yu Long County Women’s Federation Chairwoman in discussion with the author. May 2013.

Nakhi stage shows that take place in and around the Old Town in his account of a performance that takes place at the Dongba Palace:

In the performance, the *dongba*'s trumpets are ceremoniously proffered to him by two 'traditionally' dressed Naxi 'maidens'-a highly unlikely event in terms of historical *dongba* practice-which injects the scene with an aura of latent (patriarchal) sexuality. The feminization and eroticization of (especially southwestern) minorities in Han popular imagination has a long and well-documented history...In common with Moso cultural performances at Lugu Lake, the producers of the Dongba Palace show are clearly pandering to the audience desire.⁸³

This kind of sexual imagery, depicting Nakhi women as scantily clad sexual objects, can be seen throughout Lijiang in everything from "traditional" wood carvings to paintings, from advertisements to Dongba wind chimes. This sexualization has even become enshrined in Lijiang's protection policies. In its efforts to encourage Nakhi women to wear their traditional garb, the Lijiang government has made slight changes to the original design. Bonner notes these changes saying, "For example, the brightly colored belt that younger Naxi girls wear originates from Tibetan dress. Local officials added this to the dress to enhance its appearance as well as to give younger women a waistline, considering it more flattering than the original," a change that constitutes a concerted effort to sex up Nakhi girls for the sake of drawing the Han tourists' gaze.⁸⁴ This kind of sexual augmentation of Nakhi female dress can also be seen in the modern, gaudy, and form-revealing costumes worn by Nakhi women who will smilingly pose with tourists in front of Lijiang Old Town's northern gate and the adjacent water wheels. The sexual atmosphere in Lijiang is thick like Beijing's

⁸³ McKhann 2001: 12.

⁸⁴ Bonner 1999: 135.

smog, earning the Old Town yet another moniker in the minds of many tourists aside from the Disney Land reference: “the one night stand capital of China.”⁸⁵

The Lijiang Nakhi Today (Field Assessment of Nakhi Discourses Lijiang’s Development and Nakhi Cultural Change)

Lijiang has changed drastically since its days as the Nakhi Kingdom’s seat of power, culture, and economics. The explosive growth of the Contemporary Era has caused Lijiang to become an international tourist destination that attracts millions, but has also maintained age old imperial and early modern discourses of Nakhi identity and authenticity, no small feat to say the least. This has occurred as a result of the Nakhi people’s ability to culturally adjust, adapting advantageous changes to ensure their own survival. This long history of adjustment has led to the Lijiang that we see today and to the maintenance of the discourses that have been discussed and analyzed above.

But where do the Nakhi of Lijiang stand today? What is the state of Nakhi culture and its, supposedly, most authentic representatives, Nakhi women, now that the year is 2013? What has changed? What remains the same? Are Nakhi women’s lives informed by the same discourses from the past? Assessing and attempting to answer these questions was the mission of my field research in Lijiang and its surrounding areas, both *chengshi* and *shanqu*. The two main discourses that I wanted to assess were the gendering and spatialization of Nakhi identity and authenticity, which I found easy to assess through interviews with women beginning in Lijiang and expanding out in a rippling formation into the Lijiang basin area, until I had reached

⁸⁵ Welsh bar employee and musician (Lijiang Old Town) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

the furthest possible distance on which the development of Lijiang might still have an effect. I treated Old Town as my epicenter, Bai Sha as the first ripple, a village adjacent to Lashi Hai called Nanyao as the second ripple, a somewhat remote village called Da Ju on a plateau facing Tiger Leaping Gorge served as the third, and a small village on the Haba Snow Mountain side of Tiger Leaping Gorge simply called Haba village as the outer boundary of Lijiang Nakhi-ness. In each of these locales, I spoke to Nakhi men and women, as well as residents of other nationalities, e.g. Yi people and Han people, but the focus of my conversations was administering a standard interview to as many Nakhi women as possible, across these different spaces, but also across different age groups, which would help me get a baseline from which to gauge the effects of development over space and over time.⁸⁶ However, personal observations also played an important role in my understanding of this situation. I conceptualized attitudes towards development and physical manifestations of that development as indicating the positive and negative cultural effects of development, thus deciding to take the word of the people who know best and represent most clearly what it means to be Nakhi.

The Nakhi Women of Lijiang Old Town

As mentioned above, Nakhi women are actually somewhat hard to find within the confines of the originally Nakhi Old Town nowadays. Older Nakhi women are easily spotted, as many women over the ages forty or fifty years of age continue to wear more traditional *qi xing yang pi*'s, blue headdresses or, more commonly, blue

⁸⁶ See Appendix 2 for an outline of the standard interview questions asked.

Liberation hats (*jie fang mao zi*,)⁸⁷ maroon sweater vests, long grey or black slacks, simple black shoes, and, sometimes, a blue apron tied around their waist. Many of these women ran small vegetable stands or sold maps inside Old Town, having been exiled from their Old Town homes for one reason or another.

Younger Nakhi women, on the other hand, might as well be Han Chinese when it comes to clothing. Walking through Zhong Yi Market, the place to where the *Sifang Jie* market of Tea Horse Caravan Road fame was relocated, Nakhi women under the age of forty are indistinguishable from their Han, Bai, Tibetan and even some of their Yi counterparts because Nakhi women have adopted Han styles, which are, in turn, mostly Western styles. Not one solitary soul under the age of forty could be seen wearing a *yang pi*, except for the rare four or five year old playing dress up and women wearing the *yang pi* emblazoned with the UNESCO World Heritage Site emblem. These women are paid by the Old Town protection government to wear this flashy, sexed up version of Nakhi garb. I probably saw one Nakhi man, who wasn't working in a shop or tourist attraction, wearing traditional garb in my entire time in Lijiang.

In an interview I had with the head of the Cultural Preservation and Management office of Old Town, I began to get a sense of which discourses still existed in Nakhi life, at least in the eyes of the state. A Han female government official, married to a Bai man, shared many enlightening opinions with regards to Nakhi women with me, saying, “Nakhi men just like culture. Nakhi women work in

⁸⁷ Why wearing Mao's Liberation hats is a custom for Nakhi women is still somewhat of a mystery to me. My best guess is that it expresses Nakhi women's closeness to the Party, their hard work, and, perhaps, their similarity to the Han peasantry.

the fields and sell products while their men are at home. Here, Nakhi women rent their houses. They are really very clever. The development of Lijiang has opened up a lot more opportunities for them,” which is true. Nakhi women in Lijiang have higher educational attainment levels than any generation previous and than rural Nakhi women.⁸⁸

Her tone with regards to Nakhi women held certain sexual undertones. She referred to a Peter Goullart story, a story that I have not been able to find in *The Forgotten Kingdom*, saying, “There is a story of a Goullart seeing a Nakhi man relaxing on his horse while his wife works very hard in the fields. When Goullart asked the woman why she works so hard while her husband relaxes, she said, ‘No woman wants to stay with an exhausted husband at night. It’s better that I do this work.’” She also alluded to Nakhi women being better off wearing modern clothes or at least different versions of Nakhi clothing, saying, “Those clothes are not convenient. They get very hot. Wool clothing cannot show a girl’s beautiful body,” and, with reference to such cultural changes in Lijiang, she asserted, “Customs are very important. Ideas, hairstyles, and clothes can change, but maintaining customs is important. They would be stupid not to change. They would not be human,” adding a Marxist-Morganian social evolutionist tinge to the conversation; certain older, state discourses about minority nationalities are certainly alive and well.⁸⁹

In conversations I had with Nakhi women in Old Town, attitudes towards development were generally positive. One young woman that I met, aged into her mid-twenties, said, “Lijiang developed very quickly from 1996. It was a small town,

⁸⁸ Female Bai-Han official (Office of Cultural Preservation and Management) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

and, now, it is a world-class city.”⁹⁰ Although, according to a Han journalist friend of mine, this world-class status has come at a price. She said she had interviewed many people in Lijiang and she had discovered that “Lijiang’s development is unsustainable. Food and housing are very expensive, and prices are increasing. It is a tourist city. It is very difficult to live here. It’s almost impossible to live here without a lot of money.”⁹¹ A female shop owner, in about her eighties, running a stationary store near *Sifang Jie* told me that Lijiang was very poor before *Gaige Kaifang*, having lived in Old Town her whole life. While she seemed pleased with the improvements, she also lamented the Nakhi flight from Old Town. “I remember when everyone here spoke Nakhi, now we speak Chinese for the tourists.”⁹²

The themes of cultural preservation that arose in my conversations were very interesting. Nakhi language and the *qi xing* ideal of labor arose as the most important aspects of Nakhi culture for most women that I spoke to in Old Town. The same young woman from above told me, “We must preserve the Dongba pictographic script,” despite the fact that she could only read a few words and said she could not understand much if any more complex writing.⁹³ She and her friends do, however, speak Nakhi in their everyday life, only using Chinese with tourists. They said that the hard work of their ancestors was also something that they hoped to preserve in

⁹⁰ Female Nakhi scarf store employee (on vacation in Lashi Hai) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

⁹¹ Female journalist from Kunming (on assignment in Lijiang) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

⁹² Female Nakhi stationary store owner (Old Town) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

⁹³ Female Nakhi scarf store employee (on vacation in Lashi Hai) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

their own lives.⁹⁴ She went on to say that there has been a great deal of cultural change in Lijiang and that many Nakhi have a high degree of sinicized (*han hua*) tendencies. However, about these changes, she said, “I think the changes to Nakhi culture have been good. It’s not so traditional anymore. Nakhi people are more modern and open,” a wholly positive sentiment in her mind.⁹⁵

This positive attitude towards modernization and openness pervaded my conversations with Nakhi women in Lijiang. However, sometimes actions spoke louder than words. I encountered two stories of Nakhi women having difficulties adjusting to the openness of Old Town, specifically with regards to the openness of modern dating. Two expatriate friends of mine recounted stories of relationships with Nakhi women gone awry. The first was almost stabbed by his girlfriend when he attempted to break things off with her.⁹⁶ The second, a Nakhi woman in her thirties named Lily, who I once heard recount the following story at a bar with a surprising amount of nonchalance, openly admitted to having smashed bottles on the face of a Han woman who had rubbed her the wrong way by flirting with her Mexican bartender boyfriend.⁹⁷ I do not wish to generalize too hastily from these two stories, but I think it is safe to at least postulate that Nakhi women may be prone to problems of adjustment, especially to patriarchal systems of economic power in which they are no longer the dominant force. It is, however, too early to cast judgment on this issue. Nakhi women have just begun to accept modernity more openly, having just begun to adopt habits such as drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, activities that are

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ American bar employee (Old Town) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

⁹⁷ Lily (Nakhi bar customer) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

traditionally reserved for Nakhi men. This was a transition that Han women went through as well in the early twentieth century, and many Han women also had a great deal of trouble adjusting to modern power dynamics and behavioral expectations (see any Chinese soap opera about Shanghai's Golden Age for evidence of this phenomenon.)

I found some limited evidence of the spatialization discourse in Lijiang, which was generally closely tied to ideas regarding modernization, opening up, and *han hua*. The Bai minority Chairwoman of the Women's Federation of Yu Long County recounted to me how the rural Nakhi women whom she works with to improve village hygiene, female education, and childcare, "are more traditional and place a lot of importance on culture," as opposed to Lijiang residents.⁹⁸ I also heard this from Li Guo Wu's Nakhi female assistant who informed me that I would find "real Nakhi culture" in smaller villages outside of the influence of Lijiang.⁹⁹ It was interesting to me that these women, both in close and regular contact with rural Nakhi women, engaged in this somewhat stereotypical discourse. Li Go Wu's assistant, for example, had accompanied me to talk with the Cultural Preservation and Management official, and she had pushed back on the idea that Nakhi women still do all the work. "That's not really the case anymore. Because of the One-Child Policy, families are much smaller, and it doesn't make sense for women to do all the work when there is so much to be done."¹⁰⁰ The Chairwoman of the Women's Federation also chalked ideas like women doing all the work up to a old Nakhi legends, so I also assumed she

⁹⁸ Yu Long County Women's Federation Chairwoman in discussion with the author. May 2013.

⁹⁹ Li Guo Wu's assistant (Lijiang Tourism Bureau minister) in discussion with the author. April 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

would not make such a sweeping generalization of rural women. This illustrates the ever-present nature of these discourses of gender and spatialization in every day Nakhi life, at least in Lijiang.

Baisha Wan Xiao (Baisha Primary School)

Just outside of Lijiang, about half an hour by public bus, lays the village of Baisha. When I first arrived there, I felt like I was in another, newer, and less developed version of Lijiang's Old Town. The central part of the town was filled with Han Chinese and European tourists, perusing the offerings of an uncountable number of trinket shops selling Little Red Books, prayer beads, and, curiously, Egyptian and Native American statuettes. There were also a handful of high end cafes, halal restaurants for Hui minority visitors, and hostels, as well as traditional Nakhi homes advertised for rent, sometimes both in English and Chinese. Honestly, Baisha discouraged me because a functional farming village had been transformed into a marketable tourist destination that bore no feasible function for the actual residents of Baisha, all of whom seemed relatively poor and lived outside the town on the farms.

However, Baisha was home to one beacon of hope for Nakhi cultural survival, and that beacon shone brightly, just at the base of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain: the All-Baisha Primary School (*baisha wanxiao*.) I walked into the school around 3:00pm, not knowing what to expect to find there as I was acting on a tip from a Nakhi language teacher from the village of Nanyao. I was told that there was a compulsory Nakhi language class at All-Baisha Primary School, but that was the extent of what I had heard. As I passed the gate and wandered into the main quadrangle of the school, I saw a group of young boys dressed in the garb of a

Dongba, all milling around in the shade of some trees, waiting for direction from their teachers. These boys commenced their Dongba ritual dance class, and I got a first hand glimpse into the cutting-edge of Nakhi cultural preservation efforts.

One teacher founded this Nakhi culture curriculum at All-Baisha Primary School, a school that has a student body that is ninety-nine or ninety-eight percent Nakhi ten years ago, during the golden age of Lijiang's development. "We want to make sure these children can speak their mother tongue and their own culture because things are changing so quickly in this area."¹⁰¹ Their Nakhi language program is taught to children in grades three through six. These children are issued textbooks that teach Nakhi language using the Nakhi version of the *pin yin* system of Romanization, Dongba pictographic script that is representational, Dongba pictographic script that is more similar to Chinese characters in use, the international pronunciation system, as well as alongside Chinese characters. Children at all levels learn the language using all five of these systems. But, this curriculum is not just focused on teaching Nakhi language; it is about teaching Nakhi children about the depth of their own culture. The curriculum also includes Nakhi traditional music (mainly Baisha's own ancient style,) Dongba ritual dance as I saw being practiced on the playground, as well other forms of traditional Nakhi dance, and Dongba painting. The teacher spoke to the efficacy and purposes of classes like this:

Schools with these kinds of classes are very few. Our purpose is to preserve Nakhi culture and language for the future. Our method is not the best, but it works. Some students will become specialists if they find it interesting, but most will go on to do other things. At least they will all know their own language and understand their own culture. During the Mao Era, there was a

¹⁰¹ Male Baisha Nakhi language teacher in discussion with the author. May 2013.

policy against the study of Dongba culture, and much was lost during that period. We are trying to prevent that kind of loss in the future.¹⁰²

This program has a good amount of support from the Chinese state, in the form of approval from local Nakhi autonomous region's government. They make inspections to check on progress and, presumably, practice, but the teachers I talked to said that the government sees this program as a model for minority education. In relation to women, this kind of education is particularly advantageous. "Girls are learning Dongba rituals and Dongba script here as well, but its mostly boys, which is tradition," said the Nakhi language teacher. Allowing women to study Nakhi language and other aspects of Nakhi culture could aid Nakhi women in becoming more empowered within their communities by allowing them access a higher degree of education from an earlier age. And, democratizing Nakhi language in this way could also ensure the language's survival, especially considering that Nakhi traditions become more and more relevant and important to Nakhi women with every passing day and less and less important to the *han hua* Nakhi men of Lijiang. I decided that I needed to further investigate Nakhi education in *shanqu* areas, farther from Lijiang in order to better understand the preservation efforts with regards to language and the inclusion of Nakhi women in those efforts.

The Nakhi Women of Nanyao

Nanyao is a small village of about 1,800 residents, about an hour outside of Lijiang in the area surrounding Lashi Hai. The town is about 68% Nakhi, while the remaining 32% is entirely Yi minority people. The average annual income is just around 2,500 RMB, which is fairly high by rural China standards. When I first went

¹⁰² Ibid.

to Nanyao in 2008, the village was virtually untouched by tourism or any kind of development for that matter. Aside from a kindergarten, a primary school, and a handful of shops, the town was entirely made up of farming family houses and little else just five years ago.¹⁰³

Now, things have changed. There are solar-powered street lamps, added two years ago by a public works project, that light once dark roads. There are wide-landed highways leading to Nanyao, which more closely resembled dirt paths not so long ago. There are about double the number of convenience stores, a few tiny noodle and *liang fen*¹⁰⁴ shops, and even a mahjong parlor fitted with automatic shuffling tables. Still, one man I interviewed said to me, “ We [Nakhi] are a very backwards people. We’re at the level of development Americans experienced during 1800s,” a doubtful statement at best, but a sign of where some *shanqu* Nakhi see themselves on the ladder of Chinese society.¹⁰⁵

Since 2009, about 15,000 tourists per year pass through Nanyao, in the wake of the development of the road system, according to a local Yi minority official.¹⁰⁶ Many young people, about ten every year, go off to college from Nanyao, and then return to the area to find work in Lijiang or in other cities. However, they generally avoid work in the tourism industry due to their degree, but some do return to work the fields in Nanyao. There is a massive new Buddhist temple being built square in the middle of Nanyao by a private business owner, clearly a very rich man. He has

¹⁰³ Government official (Nanyao) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

¹⁰⁴ *Liang fen* is a traditional Nakhi dish made of a grey, gelatinous substance, derived from peas, that is somewhat similar to tofu in taste and texture. It is delicious when served with soy sauce and chili powder.

¹⁰⁵ A Nakhi man (horseback-riding tour guide) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Government official (Nanyao) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

erected the temple as a beacon to the Lashi Hai valley, encouraging tourists from far and wide to make the drive to Nanyao. Perhaps those college graduates will have a job in the temple's massive complex one day, and won't have to leave home for Lijiang.

The women of Nanyao are as hardworking as Nakhi women. The woman who I stayed with, the ever hospitable and welcoming Li Ayi,¹⁰⁷ Living with here and her family introduced me to Nanyao back in 2008, and she was happy to have me back again, and equally happy to introduce me to her cohort of women friends. She lives alone with her mother in-law now because both of her children attend college elsewhere, her son for automotive engineering and her daughter for medicine. Her husband died just four months ago of a heart condition, as did her father in-law some years before. She does not worry or grieve though, like a true Nakhi woman, she goes out into the fields every day to sacrifice herself through labor for her family, her *yang pi* shielding her from the bitterness and burdensomeness of life. Contrary to what people in Lijiang asserted, culture is of little concern to women like Li Ayi. In reality, she knows very little of her own culture. Like the residents of Lijiang whom I spoke to, she knows no Nakhi legends, knows no Nakhi history, does not have a Dongba in her area to administer ceremonies, and she only wears her fanciest Nakhi costume for holidays like the Lunar New Year and any time there is a dancing event in the village. As Li Ayi herself said, "In this area, we are all Lijiang people."¹⁰⁸

Despite this assertion that Lijiang and Nanyao are the same, Li Ayi also noted, "Our lives have changed very slowly as a result of development, but it has

¹⁰⁷ "Ayi" is a term of endearment used to address women older than oneself, generally of middle age. "Ayi" translates most closely to "auntie."

¹⁰⁸ Li Ayi (farmer in Nanyao) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

changed somewhat,” emphasizing the centralization of Lijiang’s wealth.¹⁰⁹ Also, unlike anyone that I met in Lijiang, Li Ayi’s mother in-law openly tried to assert, “Han and Nakhi are all the same! What difference does it really make?”¹¹⁰ All Nakhi people that I met in Lijiang, despite the Nakhi penchant for assimilation, never equated the Nakhi and the Han in this way, erasing boundaries of ethnicity altogether. I think this attitude likely stems from an internalized nationalist discourse, likely a product of having lived through the fanatic nationalism of the Mao Era and the Cultural Revolution. For those women that I spoke to in Nanyao who did see a clear difference between Nakhi and Han, similarly to the Nakhi women of Lijiang, language and core values of labor and sacrifice were the linchpin to which this sense of independent identity was tethered. Physical culture like clothes, aside from the *qi xing yang pi*, were not seen as cultural differentiators, partially due to the fact that many Nakhi women only wear these flashier, traditional clothes to celebrate Nakhi holidays, which have blended with Han festivals a great deal, and for national holidays such as International Labor Day (May 1st) and International Women’s Day (March 8th.) Nakhi female-centric customs, aside from language and labor, have either been inexorably intertwined with overarching Chinese Confucian and national traditions or have faded away entirely in Nanyao.

Another woman that I spoke to in Nanyao who helped elucidate the state of Nakhi culture and development in the village was the female owner of a *liang fen* and raw tofu stand in the center of town. The *liang fen* was only 3 RMB per bowl, so I spent a lot of time in her shop. She is aged into her sixties dawn, like most of her

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Li Ayi’s mother in-law (farmer in Nanyao) in discussion with author. May 2013.

friends of her age, a *qi xing yang pi*, a blue Liberation hat, a blue vest (the same shade as her hat,) and an apron to match. She speaks Nakhi in her daily life, so her Yunnan dialect has taken on a thick Nakhi accent, unintelligible to my untrained ear at times. However, I did manage to glean a great deal of information about her life from our conversation. She has lived in Nanyao for twenty-two years, having moved from a nearby village in order to open up her *liang fen* shop, and make a better living. She has done very well for herself. Two years ago she was able to travel for two weeks to Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou on her well-maintained savings. However, with the development of the Lashi Hai area, prices for the peas and soybeans necessary for her business have begun to rise. Because of the expense, she had to raise her prices from 2 RMB to 3 RMB per bowl of *liang fen*, a large increase in a village like Nanyao, and she allows her neighbors to barter equivalent weight of soybeans for tofu and equivalent weight in peas for *liang fen*. “It used to be just 2 RMB for a bowl of *liang fen* with all the spices and sauces, but now the peas are too expensive, deathly expensive,” she told with a shake of her head. With increased development have come increased difficulties in some respects, and this woman’s *liang fen* shop can attest to those difficulties.¹¹¹

As well, this one woman’s use of barter represents Nakhi traditional systems of reciprocity, especially between women. White illustrates this internal discourse of Nakhi gender roles in the following passage:

What is important to note about Naxi women’s “eating bitterness” role...is that it is an ethos of suffering and sacrifice that is not privatized and individualized but one that is acknowledged, valorized, and reified by family and other community members and also shared with other women

¹¹¹ Female Nakhi business owner (*liang fen* shop) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

(extrafamilial friends of the same general age.) Indeed, a Naxi woman's prestige is dependent on her ability to mobilize labor networks among other women. Naxi women gain fame from their "kindness" to the other women who are their...friends with whom they frequently exchange labor [and goods]...[*H*]uo *cuo*, or credit associations that operate primarily based on a metaphor of sisterhood, epitomize this emphasis on cooperation and shared labor among Naxi women.¹¹²

Such reciprocal arrangements of labor exist in many areas of China, within many ethnic minority societies, if just purely out of necessity due to the One Child Policy. However, this pact of sisterhood and mutual struggle is unique to Naxi women. I witnessed additional collaborative labor efforts of this sort alongside Li Ayi and her mother-in-law. Despite or perhaps, in the Naxi context of female self-sacrifice, as a result of their status as widows, Li Ayi and her mother-in-law spent many of their days not only tending to their own house and field chores, but toiling in the fields of their friends and relatives for a nominal sum of money, seedlings, or other necessary farm products.

One day the three of us ventured to a lower village, to the home of one of Li Ayi's close friends. While she and her mother-in-law helped the women of the other family plant corn and ready other fields for planting, I was sent off to help the father and eldest son of the family with their jobs as tour guides on a horseback-riding trail for Han tourists. Upon our respective returns, the family we were aiding cooked a meal for everyone, and then furnished Li Ayi and her mother-in-law with gifts of chili pepper seedlings as well as a few 100 RMB; even I received 100 RMB, despite my vehement refusal, for spending the day on the horse trail, likely only because I was indirectly enmeshed in the women's network for the day. This system of reciprocal

¹¹² White 1997: 319.

labor among women is an intriguing feature of Nakhi society, a cultural relic of the past that will no doubt survive into the future.

One of the other traditions that the Nakhi insist must be carried on into the future if they are to remain a people distinguishable from the Han Chinese majority is the continuation of Nakhi language. Nakhi language is alive and well in Nanyao and is spoken as the *lingua franca* among the Nakhi residents of the village as well as between the Nakhi and the Yi. Nakhi language has been well preserved through home teaching and everyday use, but Nanyao is somewhat special in that its primary school has a non-compulsory, bilingual program for Nakhi students, taught in grades one through six. The leader of the Nakhi language program told me the reasons behind not making the program compulsory, explaining, “ Because we have about fifty percent Nakhi students and fifty percent Yi students, it would be unfair for us to teach Nakhi language as a mandatory class to all of our students. Teaching Chinese is the fairest method. Therefore we only teach Nakhi language to talented students who want more advanced knowledge of their language. ”¹¹³

First through fourth grade students use a government issued textbook, which covers stories of Chinese history in Nakhi language, using three systems of learning to help students understand the meaning, namely a Nakhi language equivalent of the *pin yin* system of Romanization, the international pronunciation guide as well as Chinese characters. Fifth and sixth graders can opt to take a class based on a textbook issued by the Dongba Research Institute, which teaches Dongba pictographic script by retelling Nakhi history and Nakhi legends of the Dongba system of belief. “Very

¹¹³ Male Nakhi language teacher (Nanyao primary school) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

few students decide to study Nakhi language, but preserving Nakhi language is important for cultural preservation efforts,” especially because this class and the understanding of Dongba script is also offered to young girls, not just young boys, as tradition used to dictate with the father-son apprenticeships required of Dongba ritual practitioners.¹¹⁴ As stated before, imparting such knowledge to women may be the only way to ensure that certain aspects of Nakhi culture survive, due to the relative assimilation into Han culture of Nakhi men. Nakhi women could become vital vessels for Nakhi culture, instead of just its stereotypical representatives as can be seen in Lijiang.

Perhaps one of the most interesting informants that I encountered in Nanyao, an informant who gave me both an insider’s and an outsider’s view of the Nakhi in Nanyao, was a female Han shop owner. She had married a Nakhi man, and she had since been fully absorbed into the Nakhi community of Nanyao; I actually mistook her for Nakhi and was only tipped off in retrospect by her very standard Mandarin. She met and married her husband in another area of Yunnan, but they had moved to Nanyao thirty or more years prior. She was kind enough to describe her life in Nakhi society to me in great detail:

I have gotten used to Nakhi life. I have a daughter with a grandson in second grade. We’re all used to this life. She also married a Nakhi man. The Nakhi here have a very hard life. The Nakhi in Lijiang are very lucky. Our land is not as good as the land in Lijiang, and the Nakhi there are wealthier. However, in terms of culture, we are all the same. The same is true of the Han and the Nakhi, the only difference is our language...I started learning Nakhi language in 1979, I used it through interaction with my husband’s community. I would listen to people, and if I didn’t understand what they were saying, then I would use Chinese to ask them the meaning. I still have some trouble after

¹¹⁴ Male Nakhi language teacher (Nanyao primary school) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

thirty years. Nakhi is a very complicated language. I cannot read or write Dongba pictographs, but very few Nakhi can either.¹¹⁵

Her assertion that the Nakhi of Lijiang are the same as the *shanqu* Nakhi of Nanyao, and that the Nakhi and the Han are same aside from language, was consistent with Li Ayi and her mother-in-law's opinion, but in direct contradiction with the opinions of Nakhi living in Lijiang. As well, her comments about her knowledge of Nakhi language elucidate part of Emily Chao's argument with regards to the invention of "Dongba culture." While Dongba pictographs are connected to Nakhi language, there has never been a written form of Nakhi language used by the common people, until today with the use of Dongba script for everyday matters, as it is being taught in Nanyao's private school. Not only democratizing the use of Dongba script to women, but also to the Nakhi common people as a whole by making Dongba pictographs the common written language of the Nakhi people could be another way to further preservation efforts. However, this must be done in a way that does not simply reduce Dongba script to nonsensical transliterations of Chinese names or strings of representative images that never existed before, as is seen in Lijiang's Old Town.

When I asked the Nakhi-Han storeowner about her other experiences with Nakhi culture and the development of the area, she told me about Nakhi festivals that are still celebrated by Nanyao village. A handful of the festivals and holidays that she named were also Han Chinese festivals, such as the Mid-Autumn festival, the Spring festival, and Huo Ba festival, which was further indication of the absorption of Han traditions by the Nakhi. However, she also spoke to distinctly Nakhi traditions that

¹¹⁵ Female Nakhi-Han convenience store owner (Nanyao) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

are still relevant to her life. “I have a *qixing yangpi*, but I only wear it during the winter because it’s too hot otherwise. The *qixing* ideal is still the most important ideal for Nakhi women, young and old. You’re not a real [Nakhi] woman unless you have this ideal,” indicating how much of a core ideal *qixing* truly continues to be.¹¹⁶ In regards to development, she said, simply, “The changes have been too big. There are too many cars and too many big roads. We used to only eat corn before, but now we eat rice.”¹¹⁷ Despite these changes, however, she did not consider Nanyao to be a developed place, and insisted that Lijiang’s development has little to no effect on the development of Nanyao. “We’re too far from the city, we haven’t experienced much development. Our lives have changed, but there hasn’t been development, aside from more tourists, guesthouses, and increased incomes.”¹¹⁸ This further illustrates the centralization of Lijiang’s resources around Old Town, quite vividly considering that Nanyao is located only an hour from Zhong Yi market by *baoche*. There were clear differences between the Nakhi of Nanyao and the Nakhi of Old Town, but the differences, more and more seemed to be differences of class and wealth, not a deep cultural divide between *shanqu* Nakhi and *chengshi* Nakhi as discussed by Chao and White.

The Nakhi Women of Haba

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

My next destination on my journey away from Lijiang was a small village on the northern end of Tiger Leaping Gorge and at the foot of Haba Snow Mountain, simply called Haba Village. Haba is a town of 4,000 people, and it was originally an exclusively Nakhi village when it was founded hundreds of years ago. Now Haba's population is seventy percent Nakhi, with the other thirty percent being constituted of Lisu, Yi, Han, Tibetan, and Hui people. The average annual income per household in Haba hovers around 10,000 RMB to 20,000 RMB, which breaks down to an annual income of about 3,000 RMB to 4,000 RMB per person, making Haba's income slightly higher than that of Nanyao. A few thousand tourists a year, mostly higher income adventure tourists attempting to summit the more than 5,000 meter high Haba Snow Mountain, visit Haba per year, and there are four or five guesthouses for them all to stay in located in the central village. This tourism development has had educational benefits as I saw in Lijiang, Baisha, and Nanyao as well. Between forty and fifty students from Haba enroll in Chinese universities each year, most going to Zhongdian and Lijiang for their studies. However, most of those students do not go into the tourism industry after their graduation.¹¹⁹

Interestingly, Haba had begun its development a long time before Lijiang had even made its first major strides towards modernization. Haba was a commune during the Mao Era, and, thus, began Deng Xiao Ping's Four Modernizations immediately after the process of decollectivization in the late 1970s. However, considering that Lijiang is a waypoint for most tourists trying to access Haba, if they are not coming from Zhongdian to the north, I assumed the people there would voice a strong connection between the two areas. To the contrary, the doctor and his wife claimed,

¹¹⁹ Male Nakhi doctor (Haba village) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

“Lijiang is very wealthy and developed very quickly. We developed more slowly. Lijiang is Lijiang. Haba is Haba. Zhongdian is Zhongdian. There’s not much connection.”¹²⁰ Attitudes towards development in Haba were good across the board among both male and female Nakhi citizens. The doctor himself said, “Development is surely good,” seeming to concentrate on the economic benefits and ignoring any cultural consequences, an attitude that I found to be common in *shanqu* areas that were once very poor.¹²¹ The doctor’s wife commented, “I used to wear shoes made of corn husks, but things have been better since decollectivization and have improved very quickly in recent years.”¹²² The doctor, following this train of thought, said that Nakhi culture has not been changed by development, though he did readily admit that young people in Haba have experienced a large amount of *han hua*, but he did not seem to lament this change.

In Haba, unlike in Nanyao, Nakhi language is not the *lingua franca*. Nakhi people only speak Nakhi among themselves and with certain groups in the area that have a history of speaking the language. According to the male doctor that I spoke to about Haba’s demographic information, “Lisu people can speak Nakhi, but the Yi people, the Tibetans, the Han, [and the Hui] cannot,” meaning that Chinese is the language most often spoken in the village.¹²³ Much like the Nakhi of Nanyao, however, the doctor stated, “We cannot read or write Dongba pictographic script. We can only speak the language,” further supporting Chao’s assertions with relation to

¹²⁰ Male Nakhi doctor and his wife (Haba village) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

¹²¹ Male Nakhi doctor (Haba village) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

¹²² Female boss of a guesthouse (Haba village) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

the invention of “Dongba culture” but poking holes in the idea that *shanqu* Nakhi are closer to the traditions of that culture.¹²⁴ “There was a Dongba here before, but not any longer. Only the oldest people in our village remember him or know anything about Dongba. My wife and I know very little about it.”¹²⁵ They had learned Nakhi language at home, and said that only Chinese is taught in the primary school in Haba. Despite this lack of knowledge of Dongba and its language, people in Haba still believe that preserving these aspects of Nakhi culture is an important endeavor and that the most important piece of this preservation should be preserving the Dongba’s pictographic language.

The elderly Nakhi woman, whom I mentioned in the introduction of this paper remembering Haba’s Dongba and even the town Lubu (the now extinct female shaman of the Dongba religion,) stated that she thinks Haba’s culture has changed a great deal. “Each generation has been different. And each generation after today will be different.”¹²⁶ She sat in front of her daughter’s hostel, peeling garlic when I spoke to her. She wore the blue Liberation hat, a maroon sweater, a blue apron, and black slacks, in the style of Lijiang’s older Nakhi women. She did not wear a *qixing yangpi*, however, because it was very hot in Haba at the time, and she spent her days in the fields when she wasn’t assisting her daughter. I noticed that the *qixing yangpis* of Haba were quite different than those of the women in Lijiang, appearing woven, mostly without the seven stars, and with more brightly colorful weaving. I asked one woman about this difference, and she told me, “We make ours ourselves. The women

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Elderly Woman (Haba guesthouse employee) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

in Lijiang can buy one standard *yangpi*, but we can't afford those."¹²⁷ As for other more drastic cultural differences and changes, she states, "We used to do dances in town, dances that no one remembers. Much of our most traditional culture has changed and been forgotten."¹²⁸

She went on to tell me that she still owns and wears Nakhi traditional clothing for dancing that takes place on festival days, though the festival days that she named were May 1st, which is International Workers Day, a celebration of the international labor movement, and March 8th, or International Women's Day, as well as the Chinese Spring Festival. These are holidays that are promoted by the Chinese state, and have very little, if anything, to do with traditional Nakhi celebrations, demonstrating, yet again, the extent to which the Nakhi have been absorbed into Han Chinese culture and under discourses of the state. But she did not speak of this cultural change or integration into Han culture with any semblance of regret. She just spoke about in a matter of fact manner, perhaps with a wistful tinge of memory, seeming, like many Nakhi people I spoke to, to support and accept these changes as necessary for the modernization of the Nakhi people.

I did, however, meet one man who was more vehemently opposed to cultural change and was a staunch supporter of cultural preservation. This man was the *baоче* driver from Qiaotou whom I mentioned above. He is eleventh generation Nakhi on his father's side, has a Bai minority mother, and knew Nakhi history in more detail than anyone else I met in my time in and around Lijiang. He claimed, as stated in the early history section of this paper, that the Nakhi had originally settled in

¹²⁷ Female Nakhi horseback riding guide (Baishuitai) in discussion with the author May 2013.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Sanba, near Baishutai, and that the Lijiang Nakhi were people who had fled from a war between the Nakhi and another group. He went into great, frank detail about his opinion regarding the Nakhi of Lijiang:

Nakhi in Lijiang do not speak proper Nakhi language. Their tones are very chaotic, and people here cannot understand a word they are saying. They also use many loan words from Chinese, like Chinese numbers. Many Nakhi in Lijiang have become like Han people, but that has been happening for a long time. For example, Mr. Xuan Ke's orchestra in Lijiang Old Town plays ancient Han music, which shows that we Nakhi were becoming Han long ago. The Dongbas in Lijiang are not real. Dongba culture is alive and well in this area. There are many of the best practicing Dongbas near Sanba and Baishutai.¹²⁹

His negative opinions of the *chengshi* Nakhi of Lijiang Old Town and his positive opinions of the *shanqu* Nakhi further reinforces the discourse of difference and authenticity that was discussed by Chao. Most Nakhi I met did not emphasize these differences, so it was interesting to hear this contrary point of view. And in many ways, he's right. The Nakhi of Lijiang do borrow Chinese words on a daily basis, and do more closely resemble modern Han people than *shanqu* Nakhi. And his arguments about Dongba are undeniable. The Dongba of Lijiang is a performance for tourists, not an actual practice of the Nakhi spiritual tradition. He went on to say, quite pessimistically, "Without cultural preservation and preservation of our languages, I think, in one hundred years, many of these more traditional cultures will have disappeared altogether," lamenting Nakhi assimilation, as well as the assimilation of other minority nationalities. He was the first person I spoke to who had such a negative view of cultural assimilation and homogenization in Yunnan. It was

¹²⁹ Male Nakhi –Bai *baoshe* driver in a discussion with the author, May 2013.

encouraging to know that, like the teachers in Baisha, traditional Nakhi culture still has some defenders, despite the Nakhi tradition of cultural adaptation.

A Funeral in Daju

My next and final destination in my explorations of Nakhi culture's links with development was a small, more isolated village called Daju. Daju, like Haba is located at the northern end of Tiger Leaping Gorge, but it is located on the opposite side of the Yangtze River from Haba, accessible only by a small ferryboat when approaching from the north. Daju is one of about twenty smaller villages located on a plateau that overlooks the river and the gorge to the south, positioned perpendicularly to the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, an auspicious placement for its majority Nakhi population. I did not glean the same amount of demographic information while in Daju as in Nanyao and Haba, but the village is comprised almost solely of Nakhi and Han residents according to one guesthouse owner in town and his mother who works in his guesthouse. From what I observed, Daju was not as developed as Haba, but slightly more developed than Nanyao, though it was, no doubt a *shanqu* village. Daju attracts a large amount of tourists, Chinese and foreign, who hike Tiger Leaping Gorge, and has many guesthouses and other tourism infrastructures, including two daily buses that go directly to Lijiang from the town. Daju, however, does not have the same quality of roads and travel infrastructure that Nanyao and Haba have, and its people seem generally poorer, with most citizens being tobacco and wheat sharecroppers. As well, the people of Daju did not have the modern farm equipment that was common among the residents of Nanyao and some of the residents of Haba.

Plowing is done with cattle and water buffalo and planting is done almost entirely by hand.

My experience in Daju was also entirely unique as I was able to participate in a Nakhi funeral, an event that took up the majority of my time in the village and gave me a deep insight into surviving Nakhi cultural practice surrounding death and burial. The man who had died was an eighty-two year old, well-respected member of Daju's Nakhi community. The man's son told me, "He was a common man, but everyone knew him. That is why everyone in the village is participating today."¹³⁰ I arrived at the funeral at the outset of the funeral procession that lead to the burial ground high above the village, nestled in a small grove of shrubs and trees. While Nakhi funerary proceedings are dominated by Nakhi men, observing these customs allowed me to better understand Nakhi women's cultural expression during such events.

The procession began at the sight of the wake and banquet for the deceased with great fanfare and grief. Everyone participating wore white turban-like cloth hats, which is a Nakhi regional tradition. The women of the village exited the sight first wailing and crying uncontrollably. The bereaved women and two of the deceased man's sons, also visibly, physically wracked with grief, knelt on the ground forming what is called a human bridge (*ren qiao*) over which the coffin must pass. This is a reference to Dongba mythology, where a Nakhi person's soul must pass over a bridge of humans before being allowed entrance to the spirit world, a process that would also be officiated by a Dongba ritual practitioner were there still a man of such rank in Daju. The man's son, surprisingly young, in his mid-forties, considering his deep knowledge of the necessary steps to ensure his father's safe and correct passing,

¹³⁰ Nakhi man, son of the deceased (Daju) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

instead, performed the role of the Dongba. Erik Mueggler summarizes the processes of the funeral procession, stating:

A funeral procession made up entirely of men accompanies the coffin from [the main square of the village] to its burial site on the mountain; the deceased's eldest male descendent, the guide, walks in front of the coffin with a bamboo branch and two skin bags of food for the deceased and a crowd of male kin trail in its wake...[T]he female kin gather before the coffin arrives, the deceased's sisters, daughters, and wife kneeling on straw...As the bearers carry the coffin over the heads of the kneeling women they collapse on the ground, thrashing their arms and legs, wailing their kinship designation for the deceased and stories of their past experience with him or her...[Other] women...rush to the center and hold the wailing women down, and then, supporting them by the arms, guide them [away]...After the coffin has passed the *ren qiao*, the women return to the village, and the men go on to bury the coffin.¹³¹

This was the scene that I witnessed in Daju as well, with a few tweaks. Two of the sons of the dead man were included in the *ren qiao*, a bag made of the husks of a local plant replaced the skin bags, and there was no straw on which the women could kneel. As well, the funeral procession began from the house of the deceased where the wake had been held, not from a central square.

After the passing of the *ren qiao*, the women's role is significantly diminished in the procession. Men participating in the procession informed me, "Women have small hearts. They will worry,"¹³² alluding to a gendered discourse within Nakhi beliefs related to death that Mueggler also discovered when speaking to a Nakhi informant who told him, "Women cry easily, and people here believe that if anyone cries while burying the coffin, the dead person will have bad luck in the other world. This is a superstition.' Later, when the coffin was being buried, the same man said,

¹³¹ Mueggler, Erik. "Money, the Mountain, and State Power in a Naxi Village." *Modern China*. Vol. 17. No. 2. 1991: 220-221.

¹³² Nakhi man participating in funeral procession (Daju) in discussion with the author. May 2013.

“See how everyone is cheerful and some are laughing? This is out of respect for the dead.”¹³³ The men in Daju also laughed, smiled, and were generally jovial while escorting their deceased comrade to his final resting place. Women did, however, have one more role in the procession, which seemed to be of great import. This was to give offerings to the dead man and to the men in the funeral procession along the road before the men passed the limits of the village. The offerings were simple, mostly comprised of small snacks, fruit, alcohol, flowers, cigarettes, and tea, as well as the burning of incense and the bowing of heads as the coffin passed. The men would stop briefly, take what they wanted and then continue on their way to the mountain. The women would stand by the road, solemn faced, trays of cigarettes in hand before the procession passed, after which they would return to the banquet area to prepare the food for the mid-day meal and dinner. There were three such places where women made offerings of this kind before the procession became a solely male affair.

I saw the women’s role as the bearers and performers of grief in this process of burial to be yet another manifestation of Nakhi women’s bitter lot and their role of self-sacrifice for the community. Women were expected to voice grief and physically display that grief for the greater good of the community, so that men could keep their emotional reaction to death to themselves and properly perform the burial. By sacrificing their usually strong, stoic countenances, the Nakhi women of Daju facilitated the passing of a man into the next world, while upholding this age-old tradition.

When the Nakhi men and I had completed the burial on the mountainside, having made sure the man’s coffin was properly aligned with the Jade Dragon Snow

¹³³ Mueggler 1991: 221.

Mountain, and spent much time sitting and laughing together over bottles of beer and soda and cigarettes, we descended back into the village for the dual meal banquet. When we arrived, after having washed our hands of the earth and walking over a cleansing fire of ferns, removing the weighty essence of death from our bodies, we were greeted by bright eyed women serving full plates of meat, fish, vegetables, mushrooms, and tofu, as well as healthy servings of local white liquor and Dali beer. Men and women ate at separate tables, but everyone was happily exchanging stories of the deceased man and simply recounting the events of the day. Older Nakhi women sat around the edges of the banquet talking among themselves in hushed tones, matriarchs mourning the passing and celebrating the life of a patriarch and making plans for the future of their village. The meals soon ended, and the women of the village, having set up a stereo system, began to dance. These were not traditional dances, but they were dances that included the whole community that were set to Nakhi pop music and songs of the day. Men watched the women dance while smoking cigarettes and pipes, drinking beer, and talking the night away. The women danced in a circle, hand in hand, across generations, and celebrated the life of a man who had had great significance to all.

Conclusions

I saw this funeral, like the Nakhi, not simply as the passing of a man but also as the passing of bygone time and a bygone culture. However, like the Nakhi of Daju, I saw this passing is not cause for endless mourning and lamentation, but as a cause for the celebration of what is to come. As an older Nakhi man is committed to the ground, so to are the traditional knowledge and a traditional way of life that has

guided the Nakhi people to their current status as a respectable and lively national minority of China. Although this passing is cause for worry, the entrance of new cultural components of Nakhi culture and further integration of the Nakhi into Chinese national culture and modern culture is cause for celebration.

In my discussion with the Chairwoman of the Yu Long County Women's Federation, she said something that has resonated with me on a deep level, "We Nakhi are not *han hua*, we have become *quan qiu hua*," a phrase that roughly translates to assimilated into global culture, and this is a very profound affirmation of the current state of Nakhi culture for Nakhi women and for Nakhi people as a whole.¹³⁴ Because of the Nakhi's history of cultural assimilation by necessity, they have ascended, within Chinese state and indigenous Nakhi discourses, to a modern level of development that will allow them to survive as a people. While certain aspects of Nakhi culture have been lost to the winds of change and modernization, and there have indeed been missteps along this path as manifested in Lijiang Old Town's questionable representation of the Nakhi people, Nakhi culture still survives as obviously distinct from that of the Han Chinese. The Nakhi are a resilient people, always ready to make the changes within their society that need to be made, and this will not change, though the form of their culture will undoubtedly be reshaped.

External forces have formed the Nakhi, but this has been a voluntary process of change. The Nakhi have done away with some traditions, such as Dongba and certain parts of their old society, but this doing away was purposeful and imperative, especially during the Mao Era. Through the internalization of imperial and state

¹³⁴ Yu Long County Women's Federation Chairwoman in discussion with the author. May 2013.

discourses, the Nakhi made themselves in the image of the Chinese ideals that surrounded them, but mostly through the efforts of their women, have retained a great deal. The Nakhi speak their own language. The Nakhi are again learning to write their own unique pictographic script. The Nakhi have their own, deep-seated constructions of gender that will not likely change. And Nakhi women have their own ideas of what a woman's role in society should be, informed by the ideal physically represented in the *qixing yangpi*.

These aspects of Nakhi culture should be aggressively preserved, and there are Nakhi people, like the teachers in Baisha and Nanyao and the *baoche* driver in Qiaotou, who are giving voice to this cry for preservation. Changes should be made to the efforts to preserve these intrinsically Nakhi ideals, as many efforts being made at the moment in places like Old Town are insufficient and exploitative of Nakhi difference, but these changes will likely come from the Nakhi themselves. Lijiang Old Town is an unsustainable nightmare in terms of cultural preservation, but, soon, the Nakhi will realize this, likely when tourist numbers coming to Lijiang begin to shrink as a result of the poor strategies in use today, and the Nakhi will adapt as they always have.

I believe that if the Nakhi turn cultural preservation efforts over to the people who have become the representatives of Nakhi culture within China, Nakhi women, then this preservation will be accomplished more effectively. If Nakhi women are educated in their own language and history, which is just now beginning to happen again in the post-Mao Era, then Nakhi culture that the Nakhi wish to preserve has a fighting chance. Nakhi women today are not only the representatives of their culture

due to Nakhi discourses of gendered authenticity, but the most steadfast hope for the future of this culture. Nakhi women own Nakhi culture, now the Nakhi just have to allow women to be the arbiters of its preservation by giving them the necessary tools of education and empowerment. I have hope for the future of the Nakhi in and around Lijiang, but they will have to wake up to the problematic nature of the current status quo and invent new discourses that allow them to ensure the survival of those cultural aspects that are uniquely Nakhi.

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Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. Where are you from?

2. Are your father and mother both Nakhi?
 - a. Is your whole family Nakhi?
3. How long have you lived here?
 - a. What is your occupation?
4. What cultural differences are there between *shanqu* Nakhi and *chengshi* Nakhi?
5. What is your religion?
 - a. What connection do you have to Dongba?
 - b. What traditional Nakhi ceremonies do you practice?
 - c. Do you know any Nakhi legends or Nakhi history?
6. What language do you use in everyday life?
 - a. Did you study Nakhi in school or did you learn it at home?
7. Do you wear traditional Nakhi clothes?
 - a. When do you wear them?
8. In your family, who has a job? Who has the highest income?
9. Do Nakhi women still practice the *qixing* labor ideal?
 - a. What differences are there between young Nakhi women and older Nakhi women?
10. What is your opinion of the development of Lijiang and Lijiang Old Town?
 - a. In your opinion, how has this development changed Nakhi culture?

Appendix 3: Subjective Experience

The most interesting experience I had during my time researching this topic was, far and away, my participation in the funeral in Daju village. If you are trying to study the Nakhi and want to better understand their culture and gender roles, then you should try your best to attend a Nakhi funeral or a Nakhi wedding. These events are two of the few times in Nakhi life that are still steeped in more traditional Nakhi culture. The Nakhi were always very open towards me, and were happy to have me participate in the event, so don't worry about being shunned from such ceremonies.

Just be respectful, follow your respective gender role (these were clearly very important at the funeral,) and Nakhi people will likely welcome you with open arms. Be prepared to drink though. I was seeing double by the end of the night after all the toasts that people made with me. *Baijiu* is a cruel mistress of an alcohol, believe me you.