

THE ROLE OF NANZHAO HISTORY IN THE FORMATION OF BAI IDENTITY

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Interdisciplinary Studies Program:
Asian Studies
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

June 2008

“The Role of Nanzhao History in the Formation of Bai Identity,” a thesis prepared by Yuqing Yang in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Asian Studies. This thesis has been approved and accepted by:

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An Abstract of the Thesis of
Yuqing Yang for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Asian Studies
to be taken June 2008

Title: THE ROLE OF NANZHAO HISTORY IN THE FORMATION OF
BAI IDENTITY

Approved: _____

Dr. Ina Asim

Concentrating on the man-made scenery of a theme park in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture of China—Nanzhao Folk Island, this thesis explores the way in which the Bai people acquire an identity by sharing a common history that is actively re-created. The state designated minority status of the Bai has been made concrete first by the nationality classification project of the 1950s; then continued by ethnic tourism in the reform era. The history of the ancient Nanzhao Kingdom (649-902) is recounted and reenacted on the Nanzhao Folk Island following the ideological guideline for the creation and preservation of the historical unity of China. The landscape of the Nanzhao Folk Island reveals the interaction between the government's cultural strategy of promoting diversity and the negotiation initiated by the Bai people. The cultural forms on display derived from Nanzhao history are now the resource for a popular reflection of Bai identity.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In researching and writing this thesis, I have enjoyed support and kindness from my family, teachers and friends. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ina Asim for her guidance and patience. She has offered invaluable advice on everything I wrote, often through line-by-line editing. Without her, this thesis would not have been possible. Thanks also go to the committee members of my thesis, Dr. Kathie Carpenter and Dr. Xiaobo Su, for their suggestions and thoughtful comments for revision.

For my parents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. MOTHER SHAYI AND THE DISCOUSE OF ORIGIN OF THE BAI	10
The Legend of Mother Shayi and the Nanzhao Kingdom	12
The Nationality Classification Project and the History of the Bai	16
The Discourse of Origin of the Bai and the Nanzhao Kingdom	27
The Social Stage of Nanzhao and the Legend of Mother Shayi	33
III. THE INTERPRETATION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE TANG-NANZHAO-TIBET RELATIONSHIP	40
Yunnan in a Historical Setting before the Tang Dynasty	44
The Tang-Nanzhao-Tibet Triangular Relationship	49
The Contemporary Scholastic View of Nanzhao	63
IV. MANUFACTURING BAI CULTURE TO DISPLAY DIVERSITY	71
The Unique Buddhist Tradition of the Bai	73
The Authentic Patron Gods Worship	81
The Invented Bai Culture.....	89
VI. CONCLUSION	98
APPENDICES	101
A. RULERS OF THE NANZHAO KINGDOM	101
B. NANZHAO AND NEIGHBORING AREAS	102
C. ILLUSTRATIONS OF NANZHAO FOLK ISLAND	103
BIBLIOGRAPHY	105

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration	Page
1. Nanzhao Folk Island	103
2. The Statue of Mother Shayi	103
3. Nanzhao Summer Palace	104
4. The Statue of Guan Yin <i>Acuoye</i>	104
5. The Statue of Duan Zongbang	104

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I have known since I was a little girl that China is a unified country of diverse nationalities (*tongyi de duo minzu guojia* 统一的多民族国家) and that I am a Bai (白). I spent my childhood in the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture located in northwestern Yunnan and surrounding Lake Erhai (洱海). The Dali Prefecture was established on November 22, 1956, right after the Bai people were officially recognized as a minority nationality by the state. The term “autonomy” indicates that the Bai own a certain degree of self-determination in managing their local affairs. The 2000 census gave the total Bai population at 1,858,063¹, ranking them the fourteenth most populous among China’s 55 minority nationalities.² About 80% of the Bai are residence of Dali making up more than 30% of the local population.

I return to Dali every few years to visit my relatives. During my visit I was surprised to see the amazing speed at which the cultural terrain of Dali is being mapped through the increased sales of ethnic crafts, the springing up of Western style bars for the entertainment of tourists, and the expansion of theme parks centered around minority mythology, history, architecture and costume. Since the economic opening of China,

¹ The statistic is from *China Statistical Yearbook* (2003:48) compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics of China.

² The Bai are the second largest national minorities in Yunnan province.

cultural diversity has become a source for financial growth and the indigenous culture of national minorities has developed into a target for economic exploitation. There were times when I, standing at the center of the ancient town of Dali now boasting of a newly-sculpted dragon statue, was overwhelmed by a feeling that the authenticity of the Bai was ruined, since the dragon, in my understanding, was a Chinese Imperial emblem. I grew up immersed in China's orthodox education, and firmly believed that I am, first of all, a Chinese citizen, and only secondly a member of a national minority, but I would curiously develop a repulsive feeling when seeing my hometown ornamented by those artificial structures. Is it because I am a Bai, or does this mean I am in search of some kind of ethnic "authenticity" to distinguish myself from other nationalities just like tourists are searching for "the difference" of the Bai versus the majority of the Han?

Only recently did I accidentally bump into a book titled *A Collection of Dragon Mythology*³. I was shocked to learn that dragons are the protagonists in these folk tales of the Bai supposedly carried down from long ago. Some of the legends related to Buddhism register the mythological action of the Bodhisattra Guan Yin who, for example, combats a vicious dragon. At other times, dragons are personified to make contributions to the wellbeing or safety of the local community. Moreover, a dragon even appears in the creation myth of the Bai people. How ironic it was that I had been irritated by the dragon stature propped up in Dali deeming it an unauthentic emblem of commercial tourism. While lamenting my ignorance, I was equally confused by which

³ *A Collection of Dragon Mythology* (*Long Shenhua Chuanshuo* 龙神话传说) compiled by Yang Xiandian (杨宪典) et al. was published by Yunnan People's Press in 1985. The book was one of my favorites when I was little but somehow I forgot that the dragon is one of the most sacred figures in ancient folk tales of the Bai People. Moreover, I always believed that the dragon image of the Bai must be different from that of the Han, a point supported by some scholars.

elements are artificially imposed and which are original in the development of cultural tourism in Dali. My connection with the local community is, at best, tenuous, but I do not like my Bai identity being questioned. I cannot help but wonder where my sense of Bai identity comes from. Is it really so complicated or so important to comprehend the nature and causes of the Bai identity? Who is in the position to know and speak for the Bai? And what is the impact of cultural tourism on local people's consciousness of their identity? These questions will be addressed in this thesis by a study of the formation of Bai identity by means of concentrating on the scenery sites of a spot of cultural tourism.

The characteristic of Dali's tourism is to invoke local history to promote a town known for its ancient flavor. The most pronounced and common feature of various theme parks in Dali is that they are in one way or another related to the culture of the Nanzhao Kingdom (649-902) and the Dali Kingdom (937-1253), two ancient kingdoms historically centered in the Erhai region. Examples include Nanzhao Cultural Town and Dali Deva Naga Film Studio, as well as the theme park I will describe in detail, Nanzhao Folk Island (*Nanzhao Fengqing Dao* 南诏风情岛) situated on the northeastern shore of Lake Erhai. Note that I use the English word "folk" to translate *fengqing*⁴ on the grounds that it emphasizes the Bai people's traditional way of life and refers to the Bai as originators or carriers of their customs, beliefs, and arts that make up the distinctive culture of the Bai. To make the history and culture of the Bai explicit to the public, a modern replica of Nanzhao Culture, the Nanzhao Folk Island, is a window to offer a glimpse into how the history of Nanzhao is utilized to make a contemporary Bai identity.

⁴ Some translate it as "Nanzhao Love Island," which I think is inappropriate.

The purpose of formulating the historical distinctiveness of the Bai is to secure their control of tourist resources, yet the focus of the thesis is not on the economic effects of cultural tourism but on its implication in the imagination and construction of a Bai identity.

The potential of popular theme parks for revenue generating provides a partial explanation of the resurgence and visibility of minority cultures. Cultural tourism, apart from being viewed as a vibrant economic sector, can shed light on China's ethnic politics. The most salient theme parks in China featuring ethnic culture are China Folk Culture Villages (*Zhongguo Minsu Wenhua Cun* 中国民俗文化村) in Shenzhen and Chinese Ethnic Culture Park (*Zhonghua Minzu Yuan* 中华民族园) in Beijing opened respectively in 1991 and 1994. Both theme parks are playing the role of defining a national essence of the Chinese Nation (*Zhonghua Minzu*). The organizing theme of the man-made sceneries in these parks is to portray minorities as exotic members of a large harmonious family. Each of the life-sized villages representing the conditions and life style of selected minority groups normally consists of two or three of their typical dwellings. Folk traditions are joyfully performed inside their "households," where minorities in traditional ethnic garments are dancing, singing and smiling. In the words of Gladney, the setting up of this kind of theme parks is the expression of "the sorting out and establishment of paths of nationhood amid conflicting and intermeshed cultural phenomena." This process "is the means by which modern nation-states exert hegemonic discursive control, but it is a control that can never fully mask disorder and temporality of culture" (Gladney 2002:29). Ethnic theme parks transplanted into a non-minority region

as an entertainment facility in the capital or the economic development zone are the perpetuation of China's discourse of majority vs. minority on a national scale. The reduced visibility of the Han culture inside the theme parks and the dominant presence the Han occupy outside the parks mark the sharp contrast between the artificial celebration of minorities within the park and their peripheral existence in reality. The ethnic other is marginal in the political and economic realm but central to China's project of nationalism. Various ethnic cultures are appropriated as part of national culture serving as a foil of complementing contrast to the homogeneity of the Han, the majority population of the nation.

If theme parks in Dali are categorized as locally embedded, we may ask whether and in what way they are different from those transplanted as national showcases. Just like those parks in Beijing and Shenzhen, theme parks in Dali as a means of exploiting indigenous cultural resources are most often run by commercial enterprises in cooperation with the local government. Yet, local theme parks have more space to express their subjectivity within China's ideological context. Theme parks in Dali are usually devoted to construct a historical and cultural heritage shared by the Bai people, a heritage which would legitimize their status as an officially identified and recognized *minzu*. It is hard to overlook the agency of the Bai in constructing, defining and representing their own ethnic identity in formulating the landscape of local theme parks. What is made visible in theme parks is the local identity of Dali as shaped by the mobilization of regional cultural symbols. Designers of the theme parks rely on certain styles of imagined representation to create a narrative of Bai identity. Ethnicity, now a

resource of a popular sense of regional identity, becomes a generator of local people's pride. Through an examination of theme parks in Dali we can achieve an understanding of the interaction between the government's cultural strategies and the negotiating process of identity creation initiated by the Bai.

The Nanzhao Folk Island, originally named "Yuji Island (玉几岛),"⁵ is one of three natural islands in Lake Erhai. The island was exploited by a commercial company and began to accept tourists in 1999. From the top view, the island looks like an aircraft carrier. Countless natural sights cover the island embellished by caves, banyan trees, and white sand beaches. The island boasts eight manmade sites: the dock of Mother Shayi (*Shayi Mu* 沙壹母) group statues, seascape villas, a Guan Yin *Acuoye* Statue on the Luck of Yunnan (*Yunnan Fuxing* 云南福星) Square, the Nanzhao Summer Palace, the Square of the Patron Gods Culture, an amusement park on the beach, a rock formation of Lake Taihu, and the special view of the fishing families. What is striking is that non-ethnic elements, like, the beach park, villas and the Lake Taihu rock formation⁶ are included. Villas and the beach park are probably meant to cater to diverse tastes of tourists as a sign of the Island's embracement of the modern concept of tourism. Lake Taihu rocks are said to be found on the island, but the scenery as a representation of Han culture may suggest in a subtle way the acculturation of the Bai as Chinese. Despite these exceptions, the overall atmosphere of the island is filled with an air of ancient culture of Dali. In my

⁵ Nanzhao Folk Island is the name of the theme park, but it has come to represent the island.

⁶ Lake Taihu rocks are known for their beauty and are used for decorating traditional Chinese gardens. They have enjoyed popularity since the Tang dynasty.

virtual visit to the Island, I will unfold how the process of identity formation of the Bai was fused with the ethnic politics of the state.

Chapter II begins with introducing the Mother Shayi group statues on the Nanzhao Folk Island. The founders of the Nanzhao Kingdom adopted Mother Shayi, a legendary woman from the Ailao (哀劳) people, as the illustrious ancestor and took over the Ailao myths and legends as their own. The creation myth of the Nanzhao rulers leads us to the contemporary discourse on the origin of the Bai. Who are the Bai people? Did their ancestors found the Nanzhao Kingdom in the seventh century? The first question is probably the most important the nationality classification project in the 1950s needed to define. The argument concerning the second question tells the efforts of Chinese scholars to justify the legitimacy of the Bai as a national minority. An important component of the classification project was to write a history of the Bai. The statehood in history, the Nanzhao Kingdom, came to play the role of filling the contents of the category of the Bai. The classification project has a sustaining effect on the public perception of minorities, which is in many ways manifested in today's ethnic tourism.

The Nanzhao Summer Palace on the Island is an architectural structure incorporating cultural elements symbolizing Tang China, Tibet and Nanzhao. Chapter III attempts to reveal the design rationale of this architecture. In the reform era, the theory of anthropologist Fei Xiaotong (费孝通 1910-2005) with regard to the process of the formation of the Chinese Nation lends a strong support to the "pluralistic unity" of China. As the guideline of writing the history of national minorities, the theory paved the way for the visibility of ethnic diversity, for the most part, in minority regions. The

application of the theory can be best illustrated by the study of the Nanzhao-Tang-Tibet triangular relationship. The focus of Chinese scholars is on Nanzhao's historical association with Tang China under the overarching theoretical guidance of a history of Chinese culture unifying the Chinese people. Furthermore, the official narrative of the relationship between today's Yunnan and China's imperial dynasties will reveal how the notion of the continuity of a Chinese culture was exaggerated to the extent as unchanging and dominating in order to shape the contemporary historical imagination. Only recently did a few Chinese scholars begin to grant Nanzhao the independent status it once occupied. The factors will be discussed which may have contributed to a more open-minded scholastic atmosphere when it comes to explaining Nanzhao's dynamic role in history.

Chapter IV evolves around the statue of *Avalokiteśvara Acuoye*, or Guan Yin *Acuoye* on the Luck of Yunnan Square and the statues on the Patron Gods Square. There are two main religions practiced in the Erhai region: Buddhism and Worship of the Patron Gods. The religions preserve the memory of numerous legends, which were in many ways intertwined with historical figures of Nanzhao. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all differences between nationalities were repressed, including the ethnic religion. Yet over the past decade, there is a tendency of the Chinese government to accommodate diversity as a response to the needs of economical development in backward minority regions. With regard to the contradiction between the celebration of ethnic diversity and the state's preoccupation of creating an image of a unified nation, it is noteworthy that the revitalization of ethnic religions does not

necessarily mean the revival of their practice, but in many cases represents a form of stage show.

CHAPTER II

MOTHER SHAYI AND THE DISCOURSE OF ORIGIN OF THE BAI

A discussion of the emergence of a Bai sense of ethnic identity cannot leave out China's nationality classification project in the 1950s. Many of the concerns in the early efforts of writing the history of the Bai have remained central to the contemporary field of Bai studies. On the Nanzhao Folk Island, the history of the Bai valorized in service of the political and economic interests is in part based on the research carried out in the 1950s and early 1960s. Generally speaking, there were two major themes structuring the research on Bai history during that period. The first is the origin of the Bai people. Scholars sought to trace their origin by linking them to different names supposedly for the Bai in Chinese historical records. The second theme concerns the history of the Nanzhao Kingdom. This chapter will explore why the origin and the history of the Nanzhao Kingdom becomes central to the construction of a contemporary Bai identity.

The history of the Bai compiled during the classification project has constructed the official representation of what defines the Bai *minzu* as bound by their common history. Informed by traditional historiography, scholars presented different interpretations and understandings of the origin of the Bai. Though there were moments of debate and contention, the scholars never challenged the ideological underpinning of the classification project. The fundamental premise was to stand up for the unification of the

newly-founded nation-state. In the process of promulgating a history for each nationality, the Bai have gained a sense of belonging to their state designated status.

The writing and the dissemination of the history of the Bai are most often two separate processes. The research for the history-writing project of national minorities was first carried out during the classification project, and was not renewed until the 1980s, since the Cultural Revolution had claimed the disciplines of history and ethnology dangerous were bourgeois practice. Moreover, local schools in Dali barely offer courses in the language and history of the Bai, thus the details of scholarly work remain unknown by the ordinary people. Thanks to the conscious construction of a historical Dali, the history of Nanzhao is turned from lifeless events to visual architectures. Local theme parks attached with historical meanings can be viewed as a method of popularizing the knowledge collected in academic writing. Moreover, historical legends are widely adopted to embellish the scenery sites in local theme parks. The legends should be studied with more consideration, since chances are that there were actual historical events lying behind their production. Legends are interpreted and utilized differently at different time periods. In this chapter, the crucial question is what the historical legend has meant for those writing the history of the Bai and those designing cultural tourism. The scenery sites on the Island related with Nanzhao history and its legends can satisfy the desire of tourists for an “educational” tour, as well as our quest for the process of the formation of Bai identity.

The Legend of Mother Shayi and the Nanzhao Kingdom

Upon disembarking the ferry of the Island, we find ourselves at the dock of Mother Shayi group statues. The group statues portray an old legend related to the origin of the Bai people. Historian Yang Zhong (杨终) from the Eastern Han (25-220) recorded the legend of the origin of the “southwest barbarians” in his *History of the Ailao* (*History of the Ailao* 哀劳传), and similar contents appear in various later sources, such as the *Annals of Huayang* (*Huayang guozhi* 华阳国志)⁷. The statues on the island are based on the version of the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (*Hou Hanshu* 后汉书). The legend had it that:⁸

“A long time ago, there was a woman named Shayi living in the Ailao Mountain. She went fishing one day in a river and touched a piece of log which gave her a strange feeling and afterwards she was pregnant. The lady bore ten sons and when the children were older, she took them to go fishing in the same river. The log turned into a dragon who popped his head up from the river and asked the lady ‘If you have given birth to my sons, where are they?’ Nine of the ten boys got so scared when seeing the dragon that they ran away. Only the youngest stayed behind and climbed onto the back of the dragon who then gently licked his son. The mother consequently named the boy Jiulong (九隆) since the back was *jiu* in Ailao’s language, and to sit was *long*. When the sons grew up, Jiulong was elected as the king by his brothers because he had been licked by their father.

⁷ It is a book recording the history, geography and significant figures in the ancient southwest, written between 384-354 by Chang Qu (常璩) in the Eastern Jin.

⁸ My translation is based on the original texts cited by Lian Ruizhi (2007:55).

The brothers married the ten daughters of a family living at the foot of the Ailao Mountain, and this was how the Ailao people originated and began to flourish.”

It is noteworthy that the legend long predated the Nanzhao period. Then what is the significance of the legend of Mother Shayi in the Bai history? And what is its relationship with Nanzhao? Around the middle of the seventh century, six small kingdoms, the Six Zhao arose in the Erhai region. Among them, the Mengshe Zhao (蒙舍诏) is located furthest to the south and therefore called Nanzhao, meaning the “southern Zhao.”⁹ It ultimately unified the five other Zhao and established the unified Nanzhao Kingdom in 738. Since there are few written accounts of Nanzhao, what we can rely on is mostly traditional Chinese historiography. An extensive account of Nanzhao is the *Book of the Southern Barbarians* (*Man Shu* 蛮书)¹⁰, written by Tang scholar Fan Chuo (樊绰) in the 860s. Nanzhao was depicted as a well-organized state which ruled over many ethnic groups with the principal constituent group of Nanzhao being the Bai Man. The *New Book of Tang* (*Xin Tang Shu* 新唐书) notes that “They (the Nanzhao rulers) themselves say that they are Ailao descendants.¹¹” Even though the statement is endorsed by many as an obvious evidence of the Ailao origin of the Nanzhao king¹², some sources indicate skepticism of this link, for the features of Ailao and Nanzhao culture do not share distinct

⁹ In this thesis, the establishment of the Nanzhao Kingdom is considered as the founding of the Da Meng Kingdom (大蒙国) by the Mengshe Zhao in the year of 649.

¹⁰ “*Man*” was a common usage for barbarians in the south at the time.

¹¹ See Ma Yao (1998:444). Ma Yao points out that the comment made by the Nanzhao ruler is also recoded in the *Book of the Southern Barbarians* and other sources.

¹² For example, Fang Guoyu (1957b) and Liu Yuandong (1957).

similarities.¹³ For instance, Wang Jilin (1976), based on the term “they themselves say,” speculated that the founders of Nanzhao simply adopted the Ailao as illustrious ancestors and took over the Ailao myths as their own. Suppose the top stratum of the Nanzhao Kingdom was not related to the Ailao, what was their motive to make up the Ailao ancestry?

The Ailao people are believed to have lived in the Lancang River (Mekong) region during the end of the Warring States period and the Han dynasty. At least eight minority nationalities in China out of the official fifty five trace their ancestors to the Ailao people, though they boast slightly different versions of the Legend of Mother Shayi. Similar story lines not only appear in the minorities’ creation myth¹⁴, but in *The Biographies of Women (Lien Zhuan 列女传)* composed by Confucian scholar Liu Xiang (刘向 77BC—6BC) in the Han dynasty. The chapter of the Exemplary Mother recorded that Jian Di (简狄), the mother of the Shang’s ancestor Qi (契), became mysteriously pregnant after swallowing a five-colored egg dropped by a bird when Jian Di was bathing in a river.¹⁵ While legends are not history, these myths reflect people’s wish to create a mystery around the birth of a founding figure to underline his extraordinarily exceptional qualities. The main characters in those myths are usually the mothers of the founders and forefathers. Thus possibly these stories were invented at the beginning of patriarchal lineage in order to affirm and celebrate patriarchy.

¹³ See Wang Jilin (1976:2-6) who presents a comparison of two cultures.

¹⁴ Eberhard (1982:77) notes that in the *Hou Han Shu*, the Yelang people, an ethnic group in Han times in present day Guangxi province, had a origin myth in which a girl became pregnant after being touched by a piece of bamboo in a river.

¹⁵ See Mou (2004:36).

For the Nanzhao rulers, the primary function of the legend of Mother Shayi was to create symbols around which a local cultural identity can be formed and mobilized. When dealing with Tang China, Nanzhao rulers refer themselves as descendants of the Ailao people, thus situating themselves as the representative of a multiethnic society in Yunnan. The formation and stability of the Nanzhao Kingdom is based on the unification of a wide array of ethnic groups in the Erhai region. First of all, the mythical elements in this story confer supernatural power upon the ancestor of rulers and underscore the sanction of heaven. Secondly, we should note that the legend of Mother Shayi was recorded in Chinese historiography as a reference to the history of Southwestern Barbarians (Yi/夷). The affirmation of their ancestors by the Tang provided symbolic capital for the Nanzhao rulers in a place influenced by Chinese power. Thus the legendary history of Mother Shayi acted as a unifying power in integrating diverse ethnic groups in the Erhai region.

In the twenty first century, on a small island in Lake Erhai, the legend of Mother Shayi takes on a new role. The statue of Mother Shayi reveals the propensity of the designer of the Nanzhao Folk Island to depend on history in the form of genealogies and legends. Before we move on to discuss the role of Mother Shayi in cultural tourism, it is worthwhile to consider two critical issues for understanding Bai identity: Who are the Bai? And did their ancestors found the Nanzhao Kingdom in the seventh century?

The Nationality Classification Project and the History of the Bai

Bai was named Minjia (民家), literally meaning “the civilians,”¹⁶ before the classification project. In the first half of the twentieth century foreigners came into contact with the Minjia for whom the categorization of the people living in the Dali plain had to do with race. Flitzgerald notes in his *The Tower of Five Glories; a Study of the Min Chia of Ta Li, Yunnan* (1941) that the Minjia were not Chinese, even though they bore significant similarities with the Han. A contradictory comment has come across in Francis Hsu’s famous monograph, *Under the Ancestor’s shadow, Chinese culture and personality* (1948). The book makes little mention of the origin of the people living in the Dali plain. Hsu chose the West town of Dali¹⁷ as the site of his field research of a typical Chinese village. He noticed that everybody in the West town spoke Minjia as the mother tongue, and most men and fewer women spoke Chinese with a local accent. In his opinion, “whether West Towners are a mixture of Chinese and an earlier inhabitant of the region or are a pure group of earlier inhabitants which has taken to Chinese culture is not important”(1948:19). It was the social mobility and the inner structure of the local family that seemed to make the town an ideal representation of a Chinese village with age-old customs and rituals. Suppose that the Minjia in the Western town deserve the title of an ethnic group; then we can infer that they must have adopted a Han lifestyle.

¹⁶ There are discussions about the exact meaning of the “Min.” It could be derived from “ming” (明) as in “kunming” or “ming” (名) meaning, “those with names,” aristocrats. Fang Guoyu (1957a:12) notes that the term “Minjia” came into being at the end of the Ming dynasty for the purpose of distinguishing the local from Han military immigrants called the Junjia (军家).

¹⁷ A pseudonym of today’s Xizhou, a town (镇) of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture.

Hsu is not alone in viewing inhabitants of the Dali plain as non-Chinese. Half a century later, David Wu (1990) summarized in the results of his field research stating that there are no distinct differences between contemporary Bai villages and surrounding villages of the ethnic Chinese. Only through the government's classification project was a self-perception of Bai identity realized. In Wu's words, "the Bai villagers did not appear to be different in physical features, appearance, behavior, or custom from other ethnic Chinese villagers in the region" (2002:176). The only perceivable difference was language, and even so, the Bai language contained a large number of loanwords from Chinese.¹⁸ The difference between two Han groups, say Cantonese and Shanghainese, can be more striking than that between the Han and those minorities that lack a unique culture.

At first glance, David Wu's argument is well grounded. Anthropologists tend to identify ethnic groups by the presence of a list of cultural traits that differ from those of the Han and/or from those of neighboring ethnic groups. The key markers are those most easily observed and described, such as house style, costumes, customs etc. Even the name "Bai" was applied by others, rather than names previously used by the group itself. The category of Bai is one that has been constituted by outside observers. The identity within the population of the Bai is based on individuals' perceived commonalities with other members of the same group and their differences from others. As a result, to define the commonalities and the differences became a major task of the nationality classification project in the 1950s. What can speak for the difference of the Bai from other groups

¹⁸ The Bai language has classification difficulty. It is considered to be an independent branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, or a Tibetan-Burman language.

according to the definition of the classification project and unnoticed by David Wu relies on the nuanced difference between the definition of “ethnic group” and “nationality” in the Chinese context.

The Chinese word *minzu* was originally imported from Meiji Japan. Its usage in China has been full of ambiguity (Harrell:1995b), since nowadays it can comprehensively refer to the Chinese Nation, or to a single group identified as a part of the nation, say, the Han *minzu*, the Bai *minzu*. Due to the Russian influence in the 1950s, *minzu* was translated into English as “nationality.” According to Williams (1989), “ethnicity” stresses the self-perception of a group as possessing a different culture and a collective identity; while “nationality,” on the contrary, emphasizes the status of the groups as recognized by the state. Harrell notes that “*minzu* as used in China is really not an ethnic group” (1995b:102). The boundary of an ethnic group is fluid, yet *minzu* identity is rigidly fixed by the state. *Minzu* is an exclusive category in that one can be registered as Han or Bai upon being born even if having parents from different *minzu*.

In recent years, the problematic nature of the term *minzu* has given rise to a debate about the English terminology of choice. Some Chinese scholars are calling for replacing “nationality” with “ethnic group.” Yet the opposing voice insists that the counterpart of “ethnic group” in Chinese is *zuqun* (族群). Wu Xiaohua (2003) notes that the definition of “ethnic group” should be considered as a supplement to that of “nationality,” and the supplement can assist our studying of subgroups within a nationality. Xu Jiexun (2002) emphasizes the political attributes of the concept of “nationality” in comparison with the cultural connotation of “ethnic group.” An ethnic group can be a nationality but is not

necessarily so. By the same token, a nationality termed as an “ethnic group” can consist of several “ethnic groups.” It is noticeable that his opinion is quite in line with that of Williams. No wonder Xu further points out that the introduction of the concept “ethnic group” (*zuqun*) is a way to strengthen the communication between China’s anthropological research with Western academia. The clarification of the terminology on the part of Chinese scholars suggests implicitly that it is inappropriate to be particular about the classification project using Western anthropological principles.

Following this vein, an equation between “ethnic group” and “nationality” made by David Wu seems to be the source of his confusion. On top of that, he extends his argument to equate the status of minority sanctioned by the state with that of “Non-Chinese.” He notes that the Bai “previously claimed to be ethnic Chinese, now claim to be a minority—non-Chinese” (2002:177) based on Hsu’s observation in the 1940s that local people would feel slightly offended when being suggested that they were not Chinese. In other words, inhabitants of the Dali plain are Chinese, and were only categorized or designated as “non-Chinese,” no matter whether in the name of “nationality” or “ethnic group.” China is a unified country with 55 minorities, whose population is first of all citizens of the PRC and, only secondly, ethnic minorities, thus the “non-Chinese” assumption seems not applicable to the contemporary situation. But questions still remain: Were these people at one time Chinese prior to 1949? What was the place of them in China prior to 1949? And how did they relate to the Chinese? In order to address these questions, it would be beneficial to take into account the Bai people’s self perception of their identity. In the foreword of *Exploration of the History of*

the Bai Nationality in Dali, contemporary Bai scholar Zhang Xu (张旭 1912-2001) wrote about how he came to live his ethnic identity, or in other words, how he assumed the state designated role as a Bai, and was motivated to explore the history of the Bai.

Zhang Xu, in his childhood which he spent in the countryside of Dali, only knew two types of people: those who spoke Bai (Minjia) and those who spoke Chinese. Later in the elementary school he was taught about the “Republic of Five Peoples (*wuzu gonghe* 五族共和):” the Han, Man (Manchu), Meng (Mongolian), Hui (all Muslims in China), and Zang (Tibetan). He had never realized that there were so many fraternal nationalities (*xiongdi minzu* 兄弟民族) besides the five peoples until 1938 when attending a meeting in Yan’an.¹⁹ For the first time in his life, he was referred to as a member of the “fraternal nationality” by a Communist Party member. Zhang was deeply touched, yet at the same time he was overwhelmed by embarrassment due to his incapacity to name his own nationality, let alone its history. He notes that few of the ethnic groups living in the southwest frontier were clear about their ethnic category and history before the classification project.

The process of the self-realization and self-identification of Zhang Xu shows the politics of ethnic differentiation in the twentieth century. In Republican China, the “Five Peoples’ policy” brought up by Sun Yat-sen was intended to “imagine” a new China constituted by the Han *minzu* and other “internal foreigners” within its border. At moments of national crisis, the New Republic asserted the sovereignty over the subjects of the Qing Empire, namely Mongolia, Tibet and Xijiang, to counter the trend of disunity. By

¹⁹ Zhang Xu joined the Communist party in the same year. A minority cadre, he was appointed the vice governor of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture in 1979, and was once the president of the Academy of Nanzhao History.

incorporating various peoples, such as the Cantonese and the Northerners, under the umbrella of the Han *minzu*, Republican China erased differences between the majority to mobilize them to fight against Western colonialism and imperialism. As a result, Han *minzu* is an entirely modern phenomenon arising with the transition of China from a feudal empire to a modern nation-state.

The Communist Party inherited the strategy of de-emphasizing differences between the Han, and established, as early as the Yan'an period, its basic policy towards ethnic minorities, such as the equality of *minzu* and the autonomous rights of ethnic minorities. The Party had built relations with many minorities encountered during the Long-March (1934-1935), for example, in Guizhou and Yunnan province so that the importance of these frontier peoples was acknowledged. The Yan'an period witnessed not only the birth of the CCP's *minzu* theory, but the preliminary practice of its ethnic policy. The Han began to assume the role of the older brother. The metaphor of a family was created for the political necessity of enlisting the support of ethnic groups on the borders for the revolutionary cause.

Once the PRC was founded, maintaining the unity of the new nation at all costs was stressed. The theories formed in the Yan'an period remained constant in processing problems of the minority people. In the Constitution of 1954, minorities were granted rights of self-governance at different levels in autonomous regions. In order to assort minorities into manageable quantities so that each of them could be allocated seats in the National People's Congress, as well as funds and developmental projects, the nationality

classification project took off in 1956.²⁰ The project was based on Stalin's four characteristics of a nationality, namely, language, territory, economy and psychological nature manifested in a common culture. The metaphor of a family was invoked widely in order to illustrate how different nationalities, like related members of a large family, make individual contribution to the nation. Yet the membership in the family should be assigned by the state. In the areas of Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, the criteria worked reasonably well, since these people are territorially based, and more importantly, have recent independent statehood (Harrell: 2001). The Tibetans, for instance, well deserved a legitimate status as "non-Chinese" before the 1950s, while in the Southwest, where different ethnic groups live intermixed, there is still much dispute over whether particular nationalities were identified properly.

The classification project was conducted by state-authorized ethnologists, linguists, and anthropologists, most of whom, notably, were not members of a certain ethnic group, but it was their opinion that counted. Ethnologists relied heavily on "historical relatedness" of groups but not enough on local people's own wishes, especially when they found Stalin's standards inapplicable in the field. In most cases, physical and anthropometric data were not the sole criteria of the classification, which instead to a much larger extent depend upon linguistic and historical analysis. It was not until the 1980s that a few Chinese scholars began to question the premises of the nationality

²⁰ By 1955, there were more than four hundred different ethnic groups that registered the names by which they wished to be identified. The state decided to limit the number into a manageable quantity.

classification, at a time when the category had come to exist firmly in the minds of minorities.²¹

In spite of its limitation, the project is more a productive process than a repressive one. In the case of the Bai, Chinese bureaucracy was gradually introduced into the Erhai region after Kublai Khan conquered Yunnan in 1253. Attempts to civilize and culturally transform the indigenous people by instilling a Chinese socio-cosmological order have been going on since the Yuan dynasty. In the eighteenth century, schools were opened for boys to inculcate literacy and Chinese values as a means to incorporate the Minjia into the Qing Empire. One of the legacies of the imperial strategy is Hsu's observation that most Minjia men were able to speak Chinese while most women could only use Minjia. By now it is clear that David Wu's non-Chinese assumption of the Bai/Minjia did not give enough consideration to the historical setting, though he is right in affirming the influence of the classification project on people's consciousness of their ethnic identity. The Bai were often assumed as a homogenous group named Minjia, and only through the classification project were other branches of the Bai living in mountainous regions identified.²² Through a course of several decades, Minjia, Lemo (勒墨) and Nama (那马) people came to accept that Bai is the Chinese-language term for them, and that there are other kinds of Bai besides their own groups. The category of the Bai is far from irrelevant to their daily life today. Though the Bai and the Lemo may find their languages mutually

²¹ Zhang (1990) points out there were many disputes, but he did not question the premises of the classification project. Harrell (2001) questions the classification of the Yi nationality.

²² There are 129,000 Lemo people living in Nujiang, Yunnan province. Lemo is the name originally given by the Lisu people living in the same area, and the name used by themselves is Baini, Fenzi etc. There are also a few communities of Bai in Sichuan and Guizhou province.

unintelligible and their customs different, they have come to know through propaganda and media, that they share a common history. According to the common history compiled by the national government, the Lemo are a derivative branch of the Bai, who migrated from the Dali plain to settle in the mountains of Nujiang in ancient times. Zhang Xu (1990:1) mentions that the Lemo people referred to themselves as “the authentic Bai” (*zhen bairen* 真白人), while those living in the Dali plain are “the Han-Bai” (*han bairen* 汉白人). Moreover, the Lemo people are said to have preserved the true nature of the Bai since their language is hardly mixed with and influenced by other languages, and the reason, presumably, is their lack of contact with the outside world and their relative independence from imperial rules. Apparently, the existence of Bai subgroups is resonating with the aforementioned notion of “ethnic groups” constituting a nationality.

The Bai’s self perception was reinforced, if not invented, by concerted efforts of both Bai and Han scholars in the 1950s and early 1960s to legitimize the category of the Bai as an inseparable part of the classification project. Of central concern to those involved was the problem of who the Bai people were. The collection *The Origin and Formation of the Bai Nationality* published in 1957 contains contributions of 18 scholars and is dedicated to analyze how the features possessed by the Bai were in line with Stalin’s four-part definition of nationalities. Nevertheless, though the shaping of the Bai ethnicity was in favor of a Soviet designated format, the focus was on how the four characteristics of the Bai nationality were formed gradually over the course of history. Stalin’s definition of nationality was developed based on the model of the “full-fledged ethnicity” in European nations. Another theoretical base of the Soviet model that the

classification project used was Lewis Morgan's five stage evolution of human society—from primordial communism, slave, feudal, capitalist to socialist society.

A rigid application of the theory denied “nationality” to any pre-capitalist groups, which should instead be allocated into one of the three other stages of human organization, namely, clans (*shizu* 氏族), tribes (*buluo* 部落) and tribal federations (*buzu* 部族), but Mao Zedong argued in 1953 that “the scientific analysis (of ethnic groups) is permissible but, politically speaking, we should not go about making distinctions between which groups are *minzu* and which are *buzu*.”²³ Huang Guangxue and Shi Lianzhu (2005) note that China's nationalities may not comply with the stringent Stalinist notion, given that none of China's potential *minzu* had reached the capitalist stage, but their four characteristics are latent or manifest in varying degrees since they are advancing towards full-fledged ethnicity. In the words of Mullaney (2004b), Chinese scholars intentionally expanded upon “the connotative breadth of the term *minzu* itself.”

The requirement of acquiring a *minzu* status boils down to the “potential” of a group to evolve into a nationality. As a result, the classification was maneuvered to hinge on the unbroken line of the ethnicity rather than the current condition of a group. Chinese scholars meticulously working within the political paradigm of the project managed to enumerate the necessary components of an ethnic category— language, territory, common culture etc, but there were times when these items appeared not sufficient to mark a group's distinction from the other, or more frequently, a subgroup's similarity with the

²³ Mullaney (2004b) cites Huang Guangxue, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo de minzu gongzuo (shang)* (Ethnicity work in contemporary China, vol. 1 当代中国的民族工作, 上). Beijing: “Dangdai zhongguo” congshu bianji weiyuanhui (“Contemporary China” series editorial committee), 1993: 276.

other. Under the circumstances, the historical lineage gained prominence as a pronounced criterion for apprehending *minzu* identity in the classification project. The weight was shifted onto the continuity of a nationality, and this was precisely why the way of creating and defending a category of nationality was to write its history.

Ironically, voluminous scholarship on the historical lineage of the Bai presents a number of irreconcilable and disjunctive versions of their origin. As a matter of fact, there exists, among various voices, an opinion that ancestors of the Bai were Han migrants, though the viewpoint does not enjoy a wide audience. Generally speaking, the main debate centers on whether the Bai ancestors were indigenous to Yunnan or the Di/Qiang (氏/羌) migrants from northwest China. As noted above, historical records of the Bai are very sparse, thus the quest for beginnings relies heavily on legends and Chinese documentaries, such as the legend of Mother Shayi and its relationship with the origin of the Bai.

Thinking from another perspective, the inaccessibility of a commonly accepted “origin” of the Bai implies the productivity generated by diverse claims to origin. The statue of Mother Shayi on the Nanzhao Folk Island is a reflection of the discourse of origin that was a site of maneuver as early as the Nanzhao period. Likewise, debate concerning the issue of origin is a social process which involves the production, dissemination and acceptance of a speculation. Origin claims can ensure access to cultural resources which, in today’s cultural tourism, are equal to economic assets. It is against this background that the history of the Nanzhao Kingdom accumulates currency as a precious “cultural resource.” Nanzhao is seen by many as a time when the Bai

nationality began to come into being. What could be more decent than statehood in history to serve as a marker of the Bai category? The Bai people have been trying to make claims to power and prestige by virtue of their glorious history in the reconstruction of the Bai history.

The Discourse of Origin of the Bai and the Nanzhao Kingdom

The discussion of who were the peoples that made up the Nanzhao population took place prior to the founding of the PRC. According to Flitzgerald (1941), Minjia were the descendants of the ruler and population of Nanzhao. Yet quite a number of Western authors, those who wrote about the history of Nanzhao in the early decades of the last century, claim that Nanzhao was established by the Tai people. The Ailao, the people who inhabited southern Yunnan in the Han dynasty, were commonly thought to be the ancestors of the Tai.²⁴ Further, two or three words of Nanzhao, out of several dozens that have survived, happen to appear in the modern Thai language. The evidence most often quoted is the “Zhao” as in Nanzhao. “Zhao” possibly indicates “prince/king,” and a word in the Tai family language has the same meaning and a similar pronunciation. A strengthening conjecture supplements that the Tai people were driven from their

²⁴ The category “Tai” includes peoples in Thailand, Laos and Burma, southern China, northern Vietnam and northern India who speak languages belonging to the same language family, as well as the historical ancestors of all these peoples. Katherine Palmer Kaup brings up this concept in her *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China* (2000) that the Dai (傣), Buyi (布依), Shui (水), Dong (侗) and Li (黎) of China, Thai of Thailand, Lao of Laos, Nong of Vietnam, and Shan of Burma are ethnically all the “same” people. Nevertheless, the category of “Tai”, as argued by Keyes (1995:136), is a product of a “politics of culture” in the process of the making of national identities in modern states rather than a product of “objective linguistic characteristics.” “Thai” refers to citizens of the nation of Thailand or the Thai language i.e. the official language of Thailand. “Siamese” is the archaic term for Thailand and Thai language until the 1940s.

homeland, the Dali plain, by the Mongol conquest of the supposedly Tai Kingdom of Nanzhao and then settled in present day Thailand.

From about 1880 until World War II, Western scholars, missionaries, and colonial officials were engaged to identify and classify the diverse peoples of mainland Southeast Asia and southwest China to aid the expansion of Western power. Based on the approach that made language the primary criterion for classifying the Tai, Westerners adopted a “logic of race” to encompass all Tai-speaking people under the category of Tai. A French aristocrat named D’Hervey de Saint-Denys (1823-1893) seems to be the first to bring up the hypothesis of the Tai origin of the Nanzhao ruler, which was later embraced by other European scholars (Wang Jilin 1976:11). The theory was developed elaborately by W.A.R. Wood in his *A History of Siam* which came out in 1926. Wood refers to the relationship between Nanzhao and Tang China in the seventh century, when Nanzhao managed to occupy an independent position, to support his argument that the Chinese lost to the ancient Tai, thus their descendents ought to learn from the Siamese today. He further emphasizes that the Yunnanese had a strong Tai strain of blood. When the Thai nation was being constructed in the 1930s, the country’s leaders sought to reverse the process of colonialism, thus Thai scholars drew on the writings of Western scholars to construct a new genealogy for the Thai nation by tracing their origins to the Tai people in southwest China. The new genealogy set up a foundation for the pan-Thai movement intended for creating an empire uniting all the Tai speaking people. The putative Tai State of Nanzhao was made sacrosanct at one time in Thailand and was celebrated intensely. The movement faltered after the end of World War II, with its racist premises

being challenged, yet the pan-Thai contents are still incorporated in a somewhat “toned-down” form in school texts.

In the first half of the twentieth century, some Chinese scholars did accept the theory of the Tai origin, though Fang Guoyu (方国瑜 1903-1983), arguably the most eminent scholar on the history of Yunnan, expressed his suspicion of the theory as early as the 1930s.²⁵ In the face of the task of making a new unified national polity after 1949, the theory loaded with a political overtone, not surprisingly, was instantly regarded as a malicious intention of Western imperialism to threaten the security of the nation-state’s southwestern frontier. The hypothesis was deemed, at best, a tenuous and untenable piece in the discourse of orientalism. Among those who penned to combat the theory, Jiang Yingliang (1992)²⁶ made reference to a wide range of sources to prove that neither the ruler nor a sizable proportion of Nanzhao’s population were of Tai origin. To name a few of his points of evidence, the first one is the patronymic linkage system in the ruling class of Nanzhao. According to the *New Book of Tang*, the first syllable of each king’s name should adopt the last syllable of his father’s name, for example, Pi-luo-ge (皮逻阁) and Ge-luo-feng (阁逻凤).²⁷ This pattern is common to some Tibeto-Burmese groups but unknown among the Tai. Secondly, the list of surviving Nanzhao words are more identifiable with Lolo (today’s Yi 彝 nationality) but untraceable as a Tai language. Zhao

²⁵Lin Chaomin (1990: 15) points out that Fang Guoyu published two articles in 1939 to prove that Nanzhao is not founded by the Tai. Yang Kun (1957:1) notes that Ding Wenjiang, Ma Changshou and Liu Huixiang were among those who once accepted the theory. Nevertheless, Ma Changshou appears in the list of those who counter the theory, according to Wang Jilin (1976: 11).

²⁶ The article was first published in Oct. 1959 in *Journal of Yunnan University*.

²⁷ Their surname is Meng, so their names are Meng Pi-lo-ge and Meng Ge-luo-feng.

could have a meaning in the Tai family of language, but this could be a mere coincidence. Buckus (1981) also considers that single-handedly relying on one word is far from being a convincing argument. Finally, the surviving historical records lend no support to Nanzhao as a Tai polity, and no Tai legend or chronicle mentions Nanzhao or any of its rulers. In addition, Buckus notes that there was no mention in Chinese documents that a large number of people in the Dali plain were compelled by Mongols to move into the largely empty lands to the south.

There is little detailed information about the ethnic constitution in Nanzhao, such as descriptions of physical and linguistic characteristics. Our knowledge of these peoples is limited almost entirely to what the Chinese historiographers chose to write about them, which prevents a conclusive identification. Nowadays, it is commonly assumed that Nanzhao had a mixture of ethnic groups for sure, but the two primary groups that compose the population are the ancestors of today's Bai and Yi nationality. In other words, a combination of Wu Man "black barbarians" and Bai Man "white barbarians" peoples constituted the basic population of Nanzhao. The ancestors of the Tai people resided in the southern and eastern portions of the Nanzhao territory. That the Dali Kingdom was led by the Bai Man is widely accepted, but people are unsure about the racial hierarchy in Nanzhao. Some claimed it was ruled by a Bai Man elite with a Wu Man majority, or vice versa. The relevant information from ancient sources is contradictory. In the *New Book of Tang*, the rulers of the Six Zhao were referred to as a variant type of the Wu Man.²⁸ In the *Book of the Southern Barbarians*, the language of the Bai Man is described as the most

²⁸ See Li Yifu (1984:34).

accurate, meaning closer to the Chinese language. The language of the Mengshe Zhao ranked second, while the languages of the other Wu Man peoples were less intelligible to the Chinese. Restricted by limited sources, modern scholars adopt language as a gauge to measure the advanced level of the cultures of the Wu Man and the Bai Man. The Bai Man population is therefore inferred to have had more contact with the Chinese, thus having a more advanced culture. Moreover, the ruling groups of Nanzhao probably had been quite influenced by the Bai Man, given the fact that most of the official positions in the Nanzhao government were occupied by the Bai Man. Interestingly, Tibetan sources and a travel log of ancient Arabian merchants both note that the royal home of the Nanzhao was with the Bai Man.²⁹

Given that it is difficult or impossible to match the names of former peoples found in Chinese historical sources with the ethnic groups that must have existed at the time, we can only speculate that the Bai were identical with certain groups in history, but we are unable to tell whether particular sources were actually talking about them. Therefore, we cannot simply equate the Bai Man with the modern day Bai people, nor can we identify the Wu Man with the modern Yi people. Yet one of the tasks of the classification project was to trace an unbroken line of the past of the contemporary ethnic group, so the discourse of origin of the Bai had no other choice but take a firm standing in Chinese classics. The appearance of the different names of their supposed ancestry in Chinese documents lends continuity to their history.

²⁹ See Li Xiaocen (1997:172).

The prevalent view is that the Wu Man and the Bai Man have remained ethnically distinct till today, and they are the ancestors of today's Yi nationality and Bai nationality. The Bai are historically continuous and culturally homogeneous³⁰, only that they have different names all through history which can be found references in Chinese texts. At a time when the hypothesis of the Tai origin of Nanzhao was totally discarded, the discourse of origin began to rest on another arena, where Bai scholars and Yi scholars are producing separate claims to trace their ancestor to the founder of Nanzhao so that the history of Nanzhao can be internalized as the economic and political resource of the Bai or the Yi. In Weishan (巍山) county of Dali, an autonomous county of the Yi and Hui (回) nationality where Mengshe Zhao was located, players in a local orchestra, while playing "Nanzhao Palace music," all wear the costume of the Yi nationality as a subtle indication that the Nanzhao Kingdom was ruled by the ancestors of the Yi, i.e. the Wu Man. Yet on the Nanzhao Folk Island, tour guides are often local girls in traditional Bai costumes.³¹ Thus it seems, in this locality in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Nanzhao has been considered as the unquestionable historical stage of the Bai. As a matter of fact, other possibility of the formation of the contemporary Bai has been brought up by scholars such as Fang Guoyu (1957b) and Ma Yao (1998). According to them, the Bai Man and a branch of Wu Man have grown much closer to each other during the course of

³⁰ The Lemo and Nama people are considered as having preserved the ancient form of Bai culture, thus their existence does not challenge the assumption of the Bai as a culturally homogenous group.

³¹ The costume of the Bai is well-known in the memories of Chinese through a film titled *Five Golden Flowers* (1959). The film was a contribution to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. This romantic comedy set in the latter part of China's Great Leap Forward is considered a classic in PRC film history. All these years, tourists are drawn to Dali by this popular narrative that depicts Dali as a place where the Bai people lived idyllically in harmony with their traditions.

Nanzhao and Dali history, thus they both constituted the main body of today's Bai nationality.³²

The Social Stage of Nanzhao and the Legend of Mother Shayi

Another important dimension of the classification project was to scale the development of minority groups as phases based on the evolutionary thoughts of Morgan. Striving for modernity is the direction of the unified country with 56 nationalities, but the route of each nationality toward the destination is different, which is determined by its current social stage. The scaling helps justify the power of the center, the Han, which is near the modern end of the social trajectory upon which minorities should follow. The social stage of the Nanzhao Kingdom and the Dali Kingdom attracted a considerable number of scholarly publications in the 1950s. It seems that scholars were not only, if not less, concerned with which phase of society the Bai had reached at the time of the classification project, but the situation of their ancient kingdoms. Why did it matter to determine the social stage of the ancient kingdoms in the universal progression of history? And what is the contemporary effect of the discussion?

One of the central foci of research missions to determine the social stage was to discern the class structure in minority regions. Bai scholars and *minzu* cadres had been recruited by the Party. They were introduced to a new theoretical language and a new way of seeing themselves in the world and enjoined to turn a critical gaze on their own

³² In the Nanzhao period, the Bai Man elite had grown increasingly powerful, and the social hierarchy of the Kingdom consequently underwent change. The Bai Man gradually established the dominant position within Yunnan and founded the Dali kingdom.

group, which was seen as socially backward and hindered from advancement by a backward mode of production and worldview. They were asked to think about the theoretical status of their new identity. Together with Han scholars, they participated in the recording and writing of their history equipped with new theoretical tools and a strong grounding in Marxist-Leninist theory. They were determined to convince the minority people that the oppressed and exploited classes should fight against the exploiter. The stage evolution theory they were familiar with stressed that different sorts of class struggle conformed to corresponding social stages.

To define the class condition of the Minjia as that of peasants vs. landlords was only one aspect of the appropriation of a discourse of class struggle into the history of the Bai. In the 1950s, interests of scholars in the technology of ancestors of the Bai and their shifting modes of production were aimed to situate the Bai in the universal trajectory of social advancement. Since common economy was one of the characteristics to define a “nationality,” talking about the social stage of Nanzhao was to prove, from another perspective, that ancestors of today’s Bai had already exhibited a common economy of either a slave society or a semi-feudal society, depending on scholar’s different definition. At the time, Nanzhao had already lagged behind Tang China. The scaling of the Nanzhao Kingdom as a slave society confirms the “primitive perception” of the minority, the cultural assumption informing a social mode titled “backwardness.” Moreover, the assimilation with the ethnic Chinese has been going on for hundreds of years, thus scholars had to draw on the remote past to single out vestiges of the production mode of Nanzhao as a feature of their ethnicity. Finally, the scaling was a tool

to legitimize the difference between subgroups within a nationality, just as the Lemo people were seen as survivors of a social form that had existed earlier in history. In a word, knowledge of the history of their mode of production is especially useful in approving the necessity of the minority's participation in the socialist course. They must attain or at least approach superior culture.

The history of the Bai seemed to reveal that they were progressed from a primitive form of society. Mother Shayi, the alleged ancestor of the Nanzhao ruler, acts as a symbol of the "primitive" matriarchy, presumably the starting point of the history of the Bai. The statue of Mother Shayi on the Nanzhao Folk Island portrays an image of a pristine and independent woman. The group statues are placed in a pool, the miniature of the river in which Shayi went fishing. The bronze statue of the mother image is sitting on a big stone in the middle of the pool. Behind are ten sculpted stone columns representing her ten sons. Considerable detail has been sculpted, including long hair, deep eye sockets of the fisherwoman who has a strong body and a determined face. Probably in order to mark the primitivity of the legendary woman, the mother is nude except for a few pieces of seaweed. The image calls to mind what Gladney (2004) notes concerning the representation of unveiled minority women in China's popular culture. It is true that in the 1980s and early 1990s, nude minority images were more often seen in various types of arts form than the Han woman whose representations were normally more conservative. Western scholars are thus inclined to reify such contradictions as a way of the government to exoticize and eroticize minorities for the purpose of establishing the Han as a culturally more advanced majority. In imperial times, ethnic minorities were

regarded as peripheral and far away from a core Chinese culture, and frequently depicted under the category of “uncooked” as uncultured. Upon the founding of the PRC, they were no longer portrayed as barbarians but had been granted equal citizenship with the Han.

Nevertheless, the scaling of minorities intensified the persisting stereotype that peripheral peoples are ancient and stagnant in their development, given that most minorities do not exhibit the same level of social development as the more advanced Han. Their portrayals in public media or theme parks especially those transplanted type are committed to convey minorities’ colorfulness, sensuality and exotic customs. One of the most widely cited example of such representation is a mural put up in 1979 at the Beijing airport featuring a scene of Dai (傣) people’s Water Festival in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan. On the background of a green jungle, two Dai girls bathing nude among their dancing and working fellows arrested the eyeballs of the public. The mural was celebrated by Western media as China’s opening up in a real sense, since nude female bodies appeared on the wall in the public sphere. A journalist named Li Anding (李安定) wrote an article in which the healthy and undefiled bodies of the Dai girls were hailed as the embodiment of the Dai peoples’ purity and modesty.³³ Nevertheless, erotic images and public portrayals of sexuality turned out to be unacceptable by many. The part of the mural containing the bathing scene was covered up in March 1980. According to an interview with an artistic creator of the mural, Yuan Yunsheng (袁运生), those who expressed their objection to

³³ The interview of the authors of the mural and the content of Li Anding’s article are from a program made by China’s Central Television (CCTV) in 2007 available at: <http://dshyj.cctv.com/program/witness/topic/geography/C17480/20070626/107570.shtml> (accessed Jan 4, 2008).

the display of the mural were mostly the so-called intellectuals rather than the masses, as opposed to Gladney's observation that it was mainly the minority cadres who found the mural offensive.

As a matter of fact, minority women become an agent for the artists of the mural to repose their artistic ideal, an ideal seriously repressed during the Cultural Revolution. For the authority who approved the mural, the image of bathing minority girls acted as a marker of China's departure from its restricted past. Rather than intentionally erotizing the minorities, the motif was one of taking the minority image as an embodiment of the concept of modernity. I am afraid the minority and majority distinction may not be what caught the attention of most viewers; instead it was the extent to which the public can accept the non-traditional expression of arts. The debate did not center on the issue of the denigration of minority women as Gladney suggests, thus it was a majority discourse turning to images of minorities for "liberating" the minds of the majority. When erotic images and public portrayals of sexuality are now an acknowledged aspect of daily life, the once covered up part of the mural was uncovered in the 1990s, and it seems nobody makes any big fuss today. Chinese authority or media still evade or simply are not aware of how the minority representation in the mural might have hurt the feelings of minorities. Minority women have not been figured as subjects, since they are put at the periphery of the debate over the modernity vs. the past.

Now we move back to the statue of Mother Shayi. It should come as no surprise that people no longer make any comment on whether or not the nudity of Mother Shayi is appropriate. Moreover, minority groups were ranked along the five-stage evolutionary

scale so that some minorities were characterized by higher socioeconomic levels than others. Given that the Bai is a relatively “cultured minority,” they are rarely eroticized as sensual or primitive compared with minorities living in humid climate with the custom of bathing in the river. Yet a flavor of primitivity seems to be a must in an ethnic theme park, and probably this is the reason why the designer of the Nanzhao Folk Island resorts to a remote and legendary image to fulfill this requirement.

In the past decade, conservative ideas do not seem to be concrete when we learn that China’s new generation are, more than ever, craving for products fashionable, and aspire to be, not necessarily Westernized, but modern. In their dictionary, to search for the authentic is a way to escape the emptiness of modern life. The main audience of the Nanzhao Folk Island is not the Bai people themselves, but city dwellers obsessed with “authenticity” and “the real.” The legendary history of the Bai is the culture of the “other,” which has been recast as a vessel of meaning that the modern life seems to lack. The “other,” because it is located in times and space outside of the tourists’ concept of everyday life, comes to signify authenticity that the majority has lost touch with. Mother Shayi is rendered as a symbol of the tradition-bound past to which the minority people are generally related. The figure of Mother Shayi is the very first scenic spot that tourists encounter on the Island as if she is the guardian of the authenticity of the Bai. On the other hand, socialism, both Maoist and market-oriented, has created an astonishing uniformity in the landscape of China’s urban area. To combat the sameness generated by socialism, China’s modernity does not adopt a single track. As argued by Schein (2000), minority cultures serve to defend against the influx of Western values. Now that war,

revolution, and even communist ideals are things of the past, the Chinese are pondering over their own identity vis-à-vis the past and the rest of the world. From the 1980s, scholars set out to seek authentic and vibrant features in minority groups. In the trend of the growing fascination with ethnic culture, the otherness is represented, appropriated and commodified in tourist sites. The discourse of origin is rooted in academia, but manifest in different strata of society. The history of the Bai in the 1950s was a means of classification, but today the locals are utilizing it as a means of development. The Statue of Mother Shayi links the Bai to an ancient culture and has shaped the public's historical imagination.

CHAPTER III
THE INTERPRETATION AND REPRESENTATION OF
THE TANG-NANZHAO-TIBET RELATIONSHIP

In last chapter, Chinese scholars' efforts were examined in their defense of the category of the Bai nationality in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Closely linked to the task of tracing the ancestors of the Bai is the second issue critical to discuss their history, which is to position the Bai in relation to other groups, as well as a unified nation. The history of the Bai is mostly narrated in the context of China's dynasties through the lens of the contemporary preoccupation of national unity. In the reform era, the rewriting of the history of the Nanzhao Kingdom bespeaks the penchant of scholars for projecting current concerns onto the past. This kind of scholastic view is embedded in the most significant and grandiose architecture on the Nanzhao Folk Island—the Nanzhao Summer Palace.

The design of the Palace is an account of Chinese scholars' strategy in interpreting the history of Nanzhao. The facade of the Palace appears to be outlandish since it is a hybrid of the architectural style of Dali, the Tang dynasty³⁴ and Tibet. The designers are said to have consulted with dozens of specialists in order to reconstruct a Xanadu of the Nanzhao monarch conveying an air of historical realness. The Bai people

³⁴ The Tang Dynasty lasted from 618 to 907.

are fond of white³⁵, thus the overall framework is painted white and constructed in a way in accordance with the house structure supposedly popular in the Dali plain. The magnificent roof is easily recognizable as a shape of ancient China. Tibetan style windows and walls more or less add a flavor of exoticism to the whole architecture.

Tourists may wonder why the building does not look like anything encountered in the ancient town of Dali. Fortunately, tour guides are likely to introduce some historians' explanation of Dali as "the ancient town on the crossroad of Asian cultures." The Nanzhao Kingdom was a commercial interchange in the middle of the Yunnan-Tibetan Road and the Burma Road linking China with Burma, as well as a religion center where Buddhism flourished. The implication is that different cultures prevalent in the region have generated a culture as demonstrated by the Nanzhao Summer Palace inclusive of elements that are normally incompatible in civilian architectures. Tour guides may also introduce that the Palace looks like a military castle accommodating several observation posts, balefire stages and arrow buttresses as a reflection of the military might of the Nanzhao Kingdom. Unfortunately, the forty-five minutes spent on the Nanzhao Folk Island in a package tour is unlikely to reveal the real rationale behind the design of the Summer Palace of Nanzhao. The mission of this chapter is to discover the hidden rationale.

It is worthwhile to first take some time to search for the guideline of writing the history of minority nationalities in China. Fei Xiaotong, the preeminent anthropologist

³⁵ The Bai people prefer the color white. In the Dali region, their architecture is mainly painted white. Men wear white shirts and women like to wear white shirts and red waistcoats, and they used to add on a piece of sheepskin.

and sociologist, is best known for his theory of “pluralistic unity.” Fei delivered his famous speech titled *The Pattern of Pluralistic Unity of the Chinese Nation* in 1987 at the Hong Kong Chinese University.³⁶ Below is a summary of his theory. *Zhonghua Minzu* is a higher level category shared by every Chinese citizen; under the category is a solid foundation constituted by 56 nationalities. The higher level national identity surpasses the lower level ethnic identity of each nationality. The Chinese nation is not a simple accumulation of 56 nationalities; rather it is an entity of independent and inseparable nationalities bonded by common emotion and morale for its weal and woe. Nonetheless, the Han act as the cohesive force in the formation of the Chinese nationality. The higher level identity, i.e. the national identity, does not replace or exclude the lower levels of identity. Within the parameter of the coexistence of the two levels of identities, diversity and contradiction are recognized, and each nationality is allowed to develop their own features to form a society of multiple cultures and languages. In the 1990s, the theory was further developed by Fei to advocate the building of a harmonious society (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会). The concept of harmony is appealing against the background of the democratic movement in 1989, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the ethnic unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang in the late 1980s. Hence the concept of *hexie shehui* was instantly embraced by the CCP and today has achieved the status of a popular propaganda.

There is an outpouring of scholarly interest in Chinese ethnicity and China’s quest for a uniform national identity. When it comes to the majority/minority relationship, Western scholars call this process “assimilation”, while in China we talk about

³⁶ This theory is fully discussed in Fei Xiaotong (2003).

amalgamation (*ronghe* 融合) to suggest that a plurality of nationalities “naturally become a newly formed nationality after a process of historical development” during which they live together, and over a long period “influence and learn from each other” (Mackerras 1988: 52). It is easy to sense that the concept of *ronghe* is derived from Fei Xiaotong’s idea of the formation of the Chinese nationality. Thousands of years of *ronghe* have mixed the blood of China’s ethnic groups, pluralistic components of the nation. In applying the idea of *ronghe*, the focus of Chinese scholars is on the historical association of ethnic peoples with imperial China under the premise of Chinese culture unifying the Chinese people.

Another theory that holds weight here is “the holistic development of Chinese history” brought forward by Fang Guoyu. Fang notes that the history of China includes the history of the Han and the history of the minorities; the history of the period under a sole regime and the history of the period with several co-existent regimes; as well as the history of the regions under the direct rule of the imperial dynasty and the history of the regions over which the central court temporarily lost control (Yang 2003:195). These two theories constitute the guideline for writing the history of minority nationalities in the PRC. My interpretation of the guideline is that the process of *ronghe* took place in China, a historical entity over many centuries and throughout the core territory.

The construction of the Nanzhao Folk Island began in 1997, and two years later it was open to tourists. The time period suggests that the design of the Summer Palace cannot circumvent the guideline adhered to by scholars writing the history of Nanzhao. If the Palace merely aims at telling the story of a place on the route linking many Asian

cultures, why is that only the elements of Tibet and the Tang dynasty are demonstrated? I would say that our study of the way of writing the history of national minorities can be best assisted by the study of the Nanzhao-Tang-Tibet triangular relationship. But if we are to better understand the relationship, we must first understand Yunnan's particular historical and geographical experience itself.

Yunnan in a Historical Setting before the Tang Dynasty

Yunnan borders on Burma, Laos, Vietnam, and Tibet, and is close to Thailand and India. Yunnan was separated from China proper by the Jinsha River (upper Yangzi). It was Yunnan's geographical feature that decided its strategic significance. The transformation of Yunnan from a periphery area into part of China took endeavors of several dynasties. In conquering the frontier land of today's Yunnan, the Chinese have experienced joys and sorrows. It is accepted in China's academia that Yunnan became an organic part of China as early as Qin and Han times.³⁷ When talking about the Tang-Nanzhao-Tibet relationship, Chinese scholars like to emphasize that Nanzhao was within the domain of Tang China.³⁸ Their claim is a bit dubious since the southern barbarians had remained foreign groups in ancient historiography till the Mongol invasion in the mid-thirteenth century, when Yunnan was officially listed as a province of the Yuan dynasty. In the following narrative of Yunnan's history, we can see that before the Yuan dynasty China only managed to occupy parts of its territory at intervals.

³⁷ The Qin dynasty (221BC-206BC) & the Han dynasty (202BC-220)

³⁸ For example, the articles of Chen Sikun (1984), Fu Zhishang (2001) and Lin (1990) have all emphasized the point of view.

As early as the expansion of the state of Qin (秦) towards the first unification of China, the state of Chu (楚), the only rival of Qin located in the south, launched a campaign to integrate Central Yunnan.³⁹ According to the historiography from Han times, the Ailao Kingdom and the Dian Kingdom were the polities respectively in charge of western Yunnan and eastern Yunnan, preserved in the legend of Mother Shayi of western Yunnan in the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* and the legend of Zhuang Qiao (庄跷)⁴⁰ for eastern Yunnan. Zhuang, a Chu general, marched into the Dian Lake area⁴¹ with the original intention of containing the Qin's encroachment in the Chu area. But he never succeeded in this end since his way back to Chu was blocked by Qin's conquest of Ba (巴) and Shu (蜀)⁴² in 316 BC. Zhuang Qiao thereafter claimed himself as the King of Dian after taking over the Dian Kingdom. Zhuang Qiao brought into Yunnan the seeds of Chinese culture, and his rule, in the discourse of origin of the Bai, is cited to prove the Bai being the descendants of the Han. Yunnan's connection with Qin was established by the governor of *Shujun* (蜀郡) named Zhang Ruo (张若) who founded an administrative unit south to the Jinsha River in 285 BC.

After the collapse of the Qin dynasty, Yunnan was left unattended while China entered a chaotic period. 150 years later, a Han general, in conquering Yunnan, found that the Dian Lake area was still ruled by the descendants of Zhuang Qiao, though today we lack substantial sources to back up the discovery of the general. Yet by referring to

³⁹ The official historiography from Han times exerted a long-term influence on Yunnan's folklore.

⁴⁰ The story of Zhuang Qiao can be found in the *Shij*, the *Hou Huanshu*, and the *Huayang Guozhi*.

⁴¹ The lake is located in modern day Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan province.

⁴² The state of Ba and Shu were located in today's Sichuan.

Zhuang Qiao's campaign in the Warring States period, the Han were able to establish some connection with this alien land. This episode recorded in the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* reveals the Han's resurrected interests in Yunnan. Then what brought the area back into the eyes of the state in the central plain? Almost as a rule, the Han court was facing some trouble threatened by the Xiongnu (匈奴)⁴³ on its northern frontier and the Nanyue (南越)⁴⁴ on its southern frontier.

Emperor Wu (157BC-87BC) ascended the throne at a time the Han court had turned to the policy of marriage alliance (*Heqin* 和亲) to pursue peace with the Xiongnu and granted a virtually independent status to the Nanyue⁴⁵. The young Emperor was ambitious to erase potential threats from the neighboring regimes. In order to pave the way to reach the Nanyue region, Emperor Wu subjugated the Xi Yi (western barbarians) and the Nan Yi (southern barbarians) probably in today's Guizhou province, and the marginal area of modern Yunnan province. The enterprise to take over Nanyue turned out to be extremely manpower- and wealth-consuming due to the necessity of road building, as well as risky whenever the Xiongnu attacked from the north. From 126 B.C. on, Emperor Wu drew back from the south and devoted his energy to deal with the Xiongnu. It was not until Zhang Qian (张骞 ?-144BC) brought back reliable information from his mission to Central Asia that Emperor Wu shifted his attention back to the Southwestern

⁴³ A kingdom founded by nomads active in today's Inner Mongolia, Gansu and Xinjiang, as well as southern Siberia and western Manchuria.

⁴⁴ The Nanyue (the southern Yue) Kingdom was centered in modern Guangdong.

⁴⁵ The Han court recognized Zhao Tuo as the King of Southern Yue.

“barbarians.” According to the *Shiji*⁴⁶, by recognizing the Dian Kingdom as an alternative route to Central Asia, an expedition to the southwest was put on the agenda. The trading potential of the region was surely one of the considerations, but more importantly, its strategic location could help forge a “pincer attack” on the Xiongnu. Eventually, the king of Dian surrendered, but he was granted the title as the overlord to retain much of his power, although the territory was placed under an indirect control of four prefectures. The Eastern Han expanded its presence in the region. In the year of 69, the King of Ailao sent his son to the Han court asking to be included among the imperial subjects. Yongchang (永昌) prefecture was established to control west and southwest Yunnan. In all, though Han control over the area was pretty weak, but their policy to acknowledge the local chieftains’ authority set an example for subsequent Chinese dynasties.

From the early third century until the sixth century, several prefectures set up in the Han gained independence in Nanzhong (南中), an area including most of today’s Yunnan province. In order to obtain sufficient material for the state of Shu⁴⁷’s expansion, Zhuge Liang (诸葛亮 181-234) launched the Southern Expedition (*nanzheng* 南征) to win the support of local chieftains and people. Zhuge Liang was remembered in Yunnanese legends since his wise policy prevented provoking the local resistance and mobilized them. From the Three Kingdom Period till the Sui dynasty⁴⁸, native chieftains

⁴⁶ *Shiji*, *juan* 123, see Yang Bin (2004: 10)

⁴⁷ The Shu Han Kingdom established by Liu Bei is based in today’s Sichuan. Zhuge Liang was the prime minister of Liu Bei.

⁴⁸ The Sui dynasty lasted from 581 to 618.

(*yishuan* 夷帅) and large clans (*daxing* 大姓) had virtual autonomy. It seems no major dynasty in this period found compelling incentives to conquer or exploit this frontier region. By the mid-fourth century, the Cuan (爨) family rose up as the most powerful and wealthy among the local ruling clans.

In the late sixth century when China was united by the Sui, the interests of the Chinese in taking control of Sichuan was extended to Nanzhong, a place known for its rich natural resources. The Cuans submitted a tributary mission to the Sui court, and three nominal administrative units of the Sui were consequently created in northeastern Nanzhong. But in spite of the gestures of cooperation, the Cuans decided to resist the Chinese presence due to the brutality of Sui officials and soldiers.

At this juncture in the narrative of the history of Yunnan, it is important to reconsider the credibility of the claim that Yunnan remained an organic part of China since Qin and Han times. The local chieftains had come to receive Chinese official posts, and a Chinese presence was established through the Han's indirect control by setting up prefectures. Yet after the late third century in pre-Tang times, the Chinese were distracted with internal problems and the threats by northern steppe invaders. Apart from the disunity of China itself during the period, another important reason for the tenuous connection lies in the geographical location and features of Nanzhong. At times when there was no political base located in Sichuan, the Chinese state in the central plain would face great difficulties crossing the natural barrier constituted by mountains, jungles and rivers to conquer the region. Moreover, there was no pre-eminent power in today's Yunnan to unite the sparse clans.

As noted above, the Sui dynasty saw the revival of interests in Nanzhong since a unified China needed to elevate its imperial glory. The Sui launched several expeditions to Nanzhong to chastise the rebellious Cuan clan. The Sui court punished the members of the Cuan family but left their territory unattended, resulting in Nanzhong's detachment from China (*yu Zhongguo jue* 与中国决)⁴⁹. Yet the Sui army did manage to weaken the power of the Cuans, thus making possible the rapid growth of various local clans. Under the circumstances, the Six Zhao in the Erhai area appeared on the historical stage.

The Tang-Nanzhao-Tibet Triangular Relationship

Now we are about to examine the Tang-Nanzhao-Tibet relationship, a subject that has for years attracted many scholar's attention. Wang Jilin's *A study on the Nanzhao-Tang China relationship* (1976) and Charles Backus's *The Nanzhao Kingdom and Tang China's Southwestern Frontier* (1981) are the two monographs on the topic. The two scholars regard the Nanzhao Kingdom as an independent and vigorous political entity. In Chinese scholarship, the study mostly concentrates on justifying Nanzhao as a region or a vassal of Tang China. Part of the evidence they like to draw is how many times Nanzhao rulers sent tributary missions to the Tang court, and how many times they were rewarded with imperial titles.⁵⁰ During Nanzhao's 253 years' history, the Tang court conferred titles of nobility on ten out of its thirteen kings. In a nutshell, the whole narrative is evolving around the concept of "ronghe." This glossy and magnetizing culture of Tang

⁴⁹ Taiping Yulan (太平御览), Juan 791. See Yang Bin (2004: 18).

⁵⁰ To just name a few examples: Fu Zhishang (2001: 295), Chen Sikun (1984: 67) and Lin Chaomin (1990:10).

China speaks for the cohesive power of the Han. Because of their admiration for Tang culture, the Nanzhao people became tributary subjects to the great power.

Did the process of amalgamation truly happen? Undeniably yes. Not to mention Tang China, even in the Erhai region, interactions between different ethnic groups were accompanied by frequent intermarriages and cultural exchanges. The flourishing of the Erhai region indeed owed deeply to imported Chinese culture. Nevertheless, the current framework of China being a nation and Yunnan being one of its regions was imposed upon the narrative of the relationship between Tang China and the Nanzhao Kingdom. Nanzhao's accomplishment of consolidating Yunnan is classified as unity on a regional scale, which was said to have contributed to accomplish China's unified territorial integrity (Fu 2001). By being submissive to the Tang court, this regional regime—the Nanzhao Kingdom—benefited from and was civilized by the Tang. Tang China was undoubtedly a prosperous and mighty polity in Asia. Each year, the cosmopolitan Chang'an welcomed numerous foreign kings and emissaries coming to court. Under the Tang system, to pay tribute was a prerequisite for countries to have any form of connection with China, political, trade or otherwise. From the perspective of the Tang, tribute from admirers of the Celestial Kingdom was not necessarily a gesture of allegiance, but the recognition of China's advanced civilization and military dominance. Japan would be an example in point. In terms of receiving Tang China's official titles, the local chieftains could take advantage of this superior authority to deter their enemies, and to confirm their legitimacy in governing their native place. Therefore, whether or not

China had political leverage over its tributary needs to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

It is noticeable that by reading Chinese sources we get an impression of the dominating role of Tang China in the triangular relationship. Yet Chinese sources can be supplemented by the Tibetan annals discovered at Dunhuang⁵¹, which provide different versions of some historical events. Moreover, though the Nanzhao Kingdom left little about its own history, the Dehua (德化) inscription erected near the Nanzhao capital of Taihe (太和) city⁵² in 766 can expand our knowledge of this period of history.

Scholarship on the topic varies in the reliance on these three sets of sources. I would like to divide this period of history into three stages to refer to different interpretations of the triangular relationship.

The first stage can be described as the “honeymoon” between Nanzhao and the Tang court. The short-lived Sui dynasty, though exerting a big portion of its energy on unifying the hinterland, did make moves to pacify the Nanzhong area. Tang’s early policy showed a continuation of that attempt. The Tang adopted *Jimi* (羈縻) policy i.e. “loose reins policy” to control the frontier regions, a development of the strategy of the Han times, which is more a way of indirect control of the region by appointing hereditary local chiefs as administrators. The Tang court granted the top chief the title of “*wang* (王)” i.e. king or prince, and also allocated its official posts to different levels of

⁵¹ The Tibetan Annals covers the history from 650 to 763. It was published under the name *Dunhuang Ben Tubo Lishi Wenshu* (*The Tibetan Annals of the Dun Huang Version* 敦煌本吐蕃历史文书) by The Ethnic Publishing House in 1980.

⁵² Its site is in today’s Taihe village 7 kilometers away from the ancient Town of Dali. It is also called Dahe (大和).

local chiefs according to a Chinese hierarchy. The philosophy of the *Jimi* policy is to “bridle and halter” the barbarians by the “leash of Chinese moral superiority” (Schafer 1967: 71). Emperor Taizong (599-649) had this idea of “the Chinese and the Barbarians are a family (*huayi yijia* 华夷一家),” which exerted a fairly positive influence on the early Tang’s treatment of frontier ethnic groups. In terms of the boundedness of China, the Tang, as well as other imperial dynasties, believed that the Middle Kingdom ruled over “all under heaven.” It seems the belief percolates upward and manifests itself in the contemporary discussion of the historical boundaries of China.

The Tang court set up the Yaozhou Military Governorship (*Yaozhou Dudufu* 姚州都督府) to govern western Yunnan with the capital city in Yao’an (姚安), and the Erhai area was under its administration. Among the 32 prefectures in Yaozhou, the Shayi prefecture was placed in the Menshe Zhao, Luo-sheng-yan (逻盛炎), father of the first king of the unified Nanzhao Pi-luo-ge, was appointed the *Cishi* (刺史) of the Shayi prefecture (*zhou*州).⁵³ Xizhou Military Governorship (*Xizhou Dudufu* 嶲州都督府) was located in today’s Xichang of Sichuan, between Tibet and Nanzhao, hence assuming the responsibility of supervising the movement of the two regions. By establishing the *Jimi* prefecture and counties (*fu*府), a network of Tang institutions penetrated into the entire northeastern and central portions of today’s Yunnan province within a few decades of the Tang founding. The heads of the *Jimi zhou* and *fu*, namely the nominal representatives of Tang China, were not required to implement the rules and regulations of the central court.

⁵³ The name of the Shayi prefecture may suggest that the Meng family’s claim of Ailao ancestry was widely circulated and accepted at the time.

Moreover, they were not integrated into the tax system of Tang China. The economic exchange at official level mostly took the form of tributes and awards.

Following this trend, it seems that a direct Chinese administrative presence in Yunnan was foreseeable, merely a matter of time. Yet the rise of the Tibet Empire led to the adjustment of Tang China's southwestern frontier strategy. Along the years, China and Tibet had retained diplomatic contacts and tributary relationships. One of their peace alliances was realized by the marriage in 640 between Tang princess Wencheng (625-680) and the Tibetan king Songtsän Gampo (605?-650). Yet in the second half of the seventh century, hostility between Tang China and Tibet was growing now that Tibet turned into a threatening military power in Asia. Tibet not only competed with Tang China for territories in the northwest, but annexed several *Jimi* prefectures in western Sichuan. By 703, the Tibetans' influence has reached the Erhai region of today's northwestern Yunnan. A considerable number of clans, such as Songwai Man (松外蛮) and Kunming Man (昆明蛮), who previously submitted to Tang China, now gave their allegiance to Tibet and some even rebelled against the Tang time and again. Apparently, Tibet was aimed at building domination over the peoples and territories in Yunnan then under the charge of Tang's *Jimi* system.

The original motive of Tang China to go into the region was to establish communication through the Erhai region to India, meaning that trade and wealth were the stimulus. Since Tang China had too long a western frontier to effectively defend it against Tibet, Tibet's penetration into Yunnan urged the Tang court to cultivate an agent

to mobilize the local forces to contain Tibet's expansion. Mengshe Zhao⁵⁴ stood out as a promising candidate. In the preceding chapter, I mentioned Mengshe Zhao's consolidation of the Erhai region, which was not achieved overnight. Mengshe Zhao was not the most powerful at the very beginning, but it certainly had the most intelligent leaders.

What made the Mengshe Zhao the desirable candidate to help combat Tibet, the major adversary of Tang China? Its economic productivity and its loyalty to the Tang court are the two reasons Fang Tie (2005:294) lists. Yet the initiative of the Mengshe Zhao in forming the alliance must be noted. Only in its own interests did the Mengshe Zhao decide to appeal to and submit to the Tang court. It was more of an expedience. Though Mengshe Zhao's prosperous economy did ensure its strength in surviving in the fierce struggle, it is possible that the Tang court did not have much choice since most clans in the region had already joined the Tibetan camp.

Relying on the Tibetan annals, Bucks (1981) notes that Nanzhao was not at all innocent of any diplomatic contacts with Tibet as the Chinese sources often insist. Chinese scholars doubt the annals' reliability since such contacts are totally untraceable in Chinese sources. In any case, the Tibetans recorded the frequent emissary envoys from Nanzhao, who wanted to at least retain the semblance of cooperation with Tibet. Tibet's encroachment in the Erhai region threatened the virtual independence of Nanzhao. Nanzhao was thus caught in an awkward position between the two potent neighbors. The early Nanzhao kings chose to nurture a friendly relation with Tang China, while at the

⁵⁴ I have noted in last chapter that the Mengshe Zhao is also called Nanzhao due to its geographical position.

same time trying not to offend Tibet. When retaining full independence became an impossible task, the question arose whether there was a better way than maneuvering between Tibet and China, only at the expense of a portion of its autonomy? The incorporation of other five Zhao and the consolidation of the Erhai region were attributable to the leadership of the Nanzhao ruler Pi-luo-ge. Nevertheless, Tang China's support and Tibet's non-intervention were crucial for the accomplishment. Tibet may have been regretful for its lenience towards Nanzhao since the Tibetan force was soon driven off from the Erhai region by the Tang-Nanzhao alliance. Tibet thereafter turned to nurse the vestiges of the five Zhao which lost their lands to the Mengshe Zhao and joined the Tibetan sphere of influence. In 738, Pi-luo-ge was granted, the title King of Yunnan (*Yunnan Wang* 云南王) as a reward from the Tang court.

The second stage features the breakup of the Nanzhao-Tang alliance, followed by Nanzhao's alliance with Tibet. The event that triggered Tang's alarm of this small kingdom was the revelation of Nanzhao's ambition to take over eastern Yunnan. For Tang China, the initial consideration of fostering Nanzhao was to counter attack the increasing Tibetan power in the Erhai region. Yet the Nanzhao ruler was not satisfied with situating himself merely as the overlord of western Yunnan. The interests of Nanzhao and Tang China clashed in eastern Yunnan, where the Cuan family had been enjoying nominal independence. The Cuan area was pivotal to Tang China not only because of its strategic position in dealing with Tibet and Nanzhao, now a potential rival, but it ensured Tang China's access to its protectorate Annam⁵⁵. Attempting to take

⁵⁵ Annam refers to today's Vietnam, which was called Jiaozhi (交趾) at the time in Chinese historiography.

control of eastern Yunnan, Tang China's harsh treatment of the local people by heavy taxation and levy labors pushed the Cuan's into rebellion. When the Tang court and the Cuans both required Nanzhao to step into the situation, Pi-luo-ge grasped the opportunity to occupy the region piece by piece. The event foreshadowed Nanzhao's severing from Tang China. It was the lure of the salt production in eastern Yunnan that drove Nanzhao's annexation of the area. Yet underneath the surface, we can see that the formally cooperative ally of the Tang decided at the point to show its true intentions.

Ge-luo-feng, Pi-luo-ge's son, depopulated the Cuan area and forced 200,000 Bai Man people to settle in the Erhai region. Gu Yuejun (2006: 261) notes that the forced migration was a long time policy of Nanzhao for the purpose of preventing insurgence and investing labors to exploit its central areas. By the late 740s, the growth of Nanzhao influence deepened its dissent with the Tang court. The contention between Nanzhao and Tang China finally erupted because of the governor of Yaozhao, Zhang Qiantuo (张虔陀). According to the *New Book of Tang*, Zhang Qiantuo made many exploitative demands on Nanzhao, and even insulted Ge-luo-feng's wife who accompanied her husband on a trip to meet Tang officials in Sichuan.⁵⁶ Yet the Dehua inscription does not mention the incident with regard to Ge-luo-feng's wife, instead it lists six faults committed by Zhang Qiantuo. For instance, Zhang had tried to incite Tibet to "destroy" (*mie*灭) and the Cuans to seek revenge against Nanzhao, in addition to his overdue demand of taxes and labors.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ It is recorded in the *Nanzhao Zhuan* 南诏传 of the *New Book of the Tang*. See Fang Tie (2005:296).

⁵⁷ The contents of the Dehua Inscription are found in Wang (2005: 226).

Chinese historiography, as Bucks (1981:105) notes, is tempted to ascribe the frontier unrest to problematic personalities of frontier officials. When their exploitation extended beyond what the local people could bear, frontier incursions always followed. Yet in Zhang Qiantuo's case, it deserved special attention in that this Tang governor, though probably immoral himself, was at the same time an executor of the policy of the Tang court. A skein of intrigues arranged by Zhang was to fulfill the objective of the Tang court to weaken and alienate Nanzhao. Thus it is no wonder that Ge-luo-feng's petitions to the Tang court did not receive any positive response, which led to the open hostility between the two parties. In 750, Ge-luo-feng attacked Yaozhou, killed Zhang Qiantuo, and captured Yaozhou Military Governorship and its 32 *Jimi* prefectures.

In the early 750s, Tang officials in Sichuan launched several failing campaigns against Nanzhao. Facing the punitive attacks from the Tang, Ge-luo-feng still made efforts to repair the relationship with them. He made the following statement: "Tibetan armies are now pressing on the border, if you do not accept my apology, we will turn to Tibet; then the territory of Yunnan would no longer belong to the Tang."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Tang court answered the plea by a new round of expedition to Yunnan. Nanzhao immediately sent a tributary envoy to Tibet in 751. The Tibetans, not surprisingly, received Nanzhao's conversion with great pleasure. Ge-luo-feng was rewarded the title "*Zanpuzhong* (赞普钟)" i.e. *younger brother*, indicating Nanzhao as the allied "fraternal state." At the same time, Ge-luo-feng received the title "Eastern Emperor."

⁵⁸ From *the Nanzhao Zhuan of the Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tangshu 旧唐书)*. See Wang Wenguang (2005:227).

In 754, during the Tang era of Tianbao (天宝), Tang initiated an army of more than 100,000 troops marching into the Dali Plain. It turned out that the Tang army paid a high price for this new attempt to chastise the southwestern barbarians, in suffering from Yunnan's mountainous terrain and fluctuating climate. The entire army was almost wiped out and its general Li Mi (李宓) was reportedly drowned. The following year saw the An Lushan (安禄山 703-757) rebellion, and consequently the deterioration of the Tang dynasty. The Tang, in the short run, could not afford another major military act in the southwest. From the 750's on, Tibet took the opportunity to exploit the weakness and disorder of Tang China. Throughout the decade, Tang China lost to Tibet most of its possessions in central Asia, as well as Hexi (河西) and Longxi (陇西) in the northwest, two provinces known for their pastures. Tibet even briefly captured the capital of Tang China, Chang'an in the year of 763. Since the Tibetans always sent the troops of their allies and subordinated peoples to fight in the forefront, the Nanzhao army might have been involved in some of the campaigns, though there is no substantial evidence.

In 779, the combined forces of Tibet and Nanzhao, reportedly 100,000 soldiers in total, launched an aggressive campaign against Sichuan. Much of the territory of Sichuan fell into the hands of the allied army, which aroused great alarm in the Tang court. A famous Tang general named Li Sheng (李晟) was appointed with 9,000 troops to rescue Sichuan and his effective command led the progress of the campaign in favor of the Tang army. Tang's eventual success brought about friendly negotiations between Tibet and Tang China. Nonetheless, Nanzhao was blamed by the Tibetans for this ill-fated confrontation. Some Nanzhao generals along with involved Tibetan generals were

executed by the Tibetan court. The Nanzhao king at this period was the grandson of Ge-luo-feng, Yi-mou-xun (异牟寻)⁵⁹. He received a new title from Tibet “*Ridong Wang* (日东王)” i.e. “King of the region east of the Sun.” Compared with the previous “Eastern Emperor” of Ge-luo-feng, it implied the degrading status of the Nanzhao Kingdom from a “fraternal state” to nothing more than a vassal. Moreover, Tibet imposed upon Nanzhao heavy taxes and levies. Taking these factors into consideration, it is understandable that Yi-mou-xun would bear bitter resentments towards Tibet. As a matter of fact, when Ge-luo-feng put up the Dehua inscription in 766, his intention was to protest that breaking away from the Tang had not been a matter of choice. The Nanzhao leaders had foreseen that the situation could be only temporary, and the inscription served as a future attestation for his descendents to evade the responsibility.

The composer of the Dehua inscription was Zheng Hui (郑回), the Prime minister (*Qingping Guan* 清平官) of the Nanzhao king Yi-mou-xun. Zheng played an important role in resuming Nanzhao’s contact with Tang China. Zheng Hui, a Han himself, had been a Tang official, the magistrate of the Xilu (西泸) County in the Xizhou area. After being taken captive by the Nanzhao army, his talent and knowledge were recognized so as to become the private tutor of Yi-mou-xun. He persuaded his king to cut off from the exploitative Tibet and resume cooperative relations with Tang China. Looking from the Tang side, it suffered greatly from incessant internal rebellions during the last quarter of the eighth century, and the frontier pressure exerted by the Tibet-Nanzhao alliance undoubtedly was a big headache. Li Mi (李泌), the chief minister of the Tang court,

⁵⁹ His accession took place in 779.

proposed to Emperor Dezong (742-805) that a grand alliance between Tang China, the Uighurs, and Nanzhao should be formed in order to check Tibet.⁶⁰ As a result, the Tang court also looked forward to building rapprochement with Nanzhao. Though it took a great deal of hesitation on the part of Yi-mou-xun, he eventually decided to respond to the wishes of the Tang court. The two parties finally reached an agreement in the year of 794. Even though Nanzhao held grudges against Tibet, it was at this stage that Nanzhao, free from the confinement of Tang China, strengthened its internal development and greatly expanded its territory. By the time of 794, Nanzhao not only controlled the whole Cuan area in the east but reached today's northeast Guizhou; captured today's northern Yunnan that borders on Tibet in the northwest; as well as reached today's upper Burma in the south and India in the West.⁶¹ In the mutual agreement, Yi-mou-xun was granted the title "the King of Nanzhao." In comparison with the title of the "*Yunnan Wang*" before the battle of Tianbao, the new title allowed for considerably more political and cultural autonomy. The term "Yunnan" originally referred to regions surrounding Lake Erhai, but "Nanzhao" meant that the Tang court acknowledged Nanzhao's vast territory.

The third stage is a period filled with the ups and downs of the Tang-Nanzhao relationship. Generally speaking, most of the period saw the concomitance of Nanzhao Tang diplomatic exchanges and military confrontations.⁶² In the first half of the ninth

⁶⁰ From the *Zizhi Tongjian* (*Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 资治通鉴). Volume 233. See Fang Tie (2005:47).

⁶¹ The territory of Nanzhao by the year of 794 is described in the *Xin Tangshu*. See Wang Wenguang (2005: 221).

⁶² Bucks (1981: 105) notes that the Tang court suspended when the death of Nanzhao rulers were reported in 808 and 816 respectively. He also cites a Japanese monk who recorded that Nanzhao ranked first in the

century, Nanzhao took advantage of the temporal peace to concentrate on its inner construction of economy and institution. Nanzhao youths were sent as “hostages” to study in Chengdu under the request of the Nanzhao king Yi-mou-xun. Though Fang Tie (2005) views the hostage keeping as a duty of the Tang’s vassal of Nanzhao, Nanzhao youths after having studied in Chengdu played a significant role in disseminating Chinese culture in the Erhai area.⁶³

Unfortunately, the stable relation between Tang China and Nanzhao did not last long. The virtual power of Nanzhao fell into the hands of the chief minister and Regent Wang Cuodian (王嵯巔) who, after killing the eighth king of Nanzhao, set up a puppet king. The ambitious minister staged a raid against Sichuan from 829 to 830. The Nanzhao army took over three *Jimi* prefectures and even occupied the suburb of Chengdu. These areas were seriously plundered and devastated. As argued by Bucks (1981), the motive of the invasion by Nanzhao was not to take Sichuan but to push its frontier line further to the north. More importantly, their main mission was to rob the richness of Sichuan, textiles and other precious items. According to Ma Changshou’s (1961), Nanzhao was propelled by its eagerness to capture human beings to substantiate the quality of its slave stratum, given that thousands of craftsmen appeared in the list of the booty of Nanzhao. Resonating with the position of Nanzhao in Morgan’s evolutionary progression of society explained in Chapter II, the view of Ma implies that the warlike characteristic of Nanzhao is attributable to their backward social stage of a slave society.

foreign emissaries at the Tang court in 839, ahead of Japan and others. This piece of evidence revealed that Nanzhao was treated with more respect compared with the first alliance.

⁶³ The historical significance of Nanzhao youths studying in Chengdu will be discussed in the next chapter.

The plundering of Chengdu alarmed Tang China to secure its defensive ability in the following years. This time period also witnessed the growth of Nanzhao's strength and ambition during the tenth king of Nanzhao Feng-you (丰佑)'s reign.⁶⁴ In 832, Nanzhao plundered and destroyed its vassal, the Pyu Kingdom of upper Burma. Nanzhao extended its aggression to Guizhou, Guangxi and Annam, in addition to other small Kingdoms in mainland Southeast Asia. Fu Zhishang (2001:311) hails Nanzhao as the most powerful Kingdom (*guo* 国) in Southeast Asia in his article intended to argue for the regional status of Nanzhao in relation to Tang China. Fu on the one hand denies Nanzhao the status of an autonomous regime, but he nonetheless feels pride in the glorious history of Nanzhao. The self-contradiction in Fu's article has to do with his questionable premise of Nanzhao's unalterable status as a region of China.

From 859 to 860, the Nanzhao king Shi-long (世隆) claimed himself Emperor, and renamed his country the Dali (大理) Kingdom⁶⁵, symbolizing that Nanzhao refused to accept China's nominal suzerainty.⁶⁶ Shi-long launched a large-scale attack against the southwest frontier of Tang China. Later on, the Nanzhao-Tang relationship again attained rapprochement and the Tang court once approved Nanzhao's request for a marriage alliance and to address it as a "fraternal state" instead of a vassal, though the marriage alliance was never fulfilled. In the final decade of the Tang dynasty i.e. 897-907, no

⁶⁴ The title of "Feng-you" suggests that the king dropped the tradition of the patronymic linkage system to use the last syllable of his father's name as the first syllable of his name. The reason is supposedly due to the influence of Chinese culture.

⁶⁵ Note that it is different from the Dali (大理) Kingdom, the successor dynasty of Nanzhao.

⁶⁶ One of the episodes leading to Nanzhao's break down with the Tang court is that Shi-long refused to change his name which was against the taboo of using the character "Shi" as in the name of Emperor Taizong, Li Shiming. Thus in Tang sources, Shi-long is referred to as "Qiu-long" (酋龙).

diplomatic contact with the Erhai region was reported. In actuality, Nanzhao was equally devastated by years of warfare. The Nanzhao Kingdom was terminated by a usurper in the year of 902.

The Contemporary Scholastic View of Nanzhao

The outline of the Tang-Nanzhao-Tibet relationship may have partly explained the combination of cultural elements symbolizing Tang China, Tibet and Dali in the exterior of the Nanzhao Summer Palace. Yet there may still be confusion about the following questions: has the fusion of three elements transcended the Han centralism and is it a statement that acknowledges Nanzhao and Tibet as equal political regimes? Or is the roof of the Tang style still a subtle expression of the great culture and higher status of Tang China? I am unable to provide definite answers to these questions, though Tibet as a part of the PRC is surely a precondition for the demonstration of the Tibetan component as a reinforcement of the historical unity of China. What is equally certain is that the design apparently puts more weight on the cooperation between the three powers. I have noted above that the design of the Summer Palace of Nanzhao was based on the contributions and opinions of dozens of scholars. Thus to further clarify the representation of their complicated historical relationship in modern cultural tourism, we need to examine the contemporary scholastic view of Nanzhao.

The opposing binary of “the majority self” and “the minority other” is one of the favorite themes in much of Western scholarship dealing with Chinese ethnicity. As a matter of fact, the demarcation of the “other” is not a novelty and in the context of China

can be traced back to imperial times. “The We Group” and “the You Group” brought up by Li Ji (1926) is a useful category we can adopt here. The Chinese in the central plain are members of the family, while “the You Group” particularly refers to the “southern barbarians.” For instance, the marriage alliance that the Tang court promised to Nanzhao was never realized, since their request hurt the dignity of the Celestial Kingdom. No matter how “the You Group” was treated in reality, their history composed today is asked to comply with the national propaganda of building a harmonious society. Despite China’s incessant warfare with “the You Group” in history, the aforementioned two levels of identities brought up by Fei Xiaotong have been translated into the parallel between the nation and the region. All the diversities and contradictions occurred on the regional scale, and it was through integration and confrontation that “*ronghe*” of the Chinese people was made to happen.

Bucks never hesitates to speak highly of the dynamic role Nanzhao played in Asia’s political and military arena.

The Nanzhao Kingdom “seems to have manipulated its relationships with the Tibetan Kingdom and Tang China, always managing to maintain its basic independence from both. This was no mean achievement, considering that China and Tibet, the two strongest powers in East Asia, both had tenacious ambitions for the subjugation of this region. Moreover, in the process, Nanzhao had become a sophisticated and powerful state in its own right. (Bucks 1981: 100)

In the preface of the Chinese version of Bucks’ work, Yunnan scholar Lin Chaomin (1988) cautions the reader to be critical of Buck’ terminology of the Tang-Nanzhao “diplomatic relation.” He insists that Yunnan is a part of China as early as Qin and Han times. Though the region at times was not under China’s direct administrative control, economic and cultural communications were never discontinued, a fact that Lin sees as

proof that there was no “independence” in a real sense. As a matter of fact, this sort of logic was widely applied in Chinese scholarship dealing with the characteristics of the Nanzhao-Tang relationship. Its theoretical base can be traced to “the holistic development of Chinese history.” In summary, the holistic development has been realized by the integration, exchange and interdependence of economy, politics and culture among different peoples.

Nevertheless, Lin surely translates the work of an American scholar for a reason. The merits of Bucks’ work include his refutation of the theory of the Tai origin of the Nanzhao ruler. The second strength is his disapproval with China’s official historiography in attributing the cause of the fall of the Tang dynasty to Nanzhao. In the *New Book of Tang*, the Song historian Song Qi (宋祁 998-1061) reached the following conclusion, “the Tang dynasty was ended because of Huang Chao, but the root of disaster was grounded in Guilin (*Tang wang yu Huang Chao, er huo jiyu Guilin* 唐亡于黄巢, 而祸基于桂林).”⁶⁷ In the third stage of the triangular relationship, Tang China suffered severe pressure fighting Nanzhao in Annan, highlighted by Nanzhao’s occupation of Hanoi in 861 and 863, and the Tang’s reoccupy of Annan in 864. Under the circumstances, eight hundred soldiers were dispatched from Xuzhou⁶⁸ to serve in Guilin in 862 to strengthen the forces in the war with Nanzhao. When their supposed three-year service was expanded to six years, the homesick soldiers rose up in anger and marched back home, joined by thousands of impoverished peasants on the way. Though the

⁶⁷ From the *Nanzhao Zhuan* of the *New Book of Tang*. See Lin (1990:4). Guilin is in today’s Guangxi province bordering on Vietnam.

⁶⁸ In today’s Jiangsu province.

uprising was soon put down, it had ignited many other rebellions across the country, including the Huang Chao rebellion, often viewed as a more direct cause of the collapse of the Tang dynasty.

As Lin explains, Bucks's view coincidentally corresponds with his. Briefly speaking, they both maintain that the cause for the Tang decline lies in the internal problems of Tang China, economically and socially, although "the Nanzhao invasion of the south greatly exacerbated Tang troubles," and contributed "a great deal to the dynasty's decline" (Bucks 1981: 145). Those who accuse Nanzhao of carrying the main responsibility for having crippled Tang China are labeled by Lin as "feudal historians." The writing of the past by Song historians in the *New Book of Tang* is said to have been skewed by the terms and language of Song's wariness toward the "You Group." Modern historian Chen Yinke (陈寅恪1890-1969), based on his understanding of the inter-links between the "foreign Group" (*Waizu*外族) and the internal administration (*Neizheng*内政) of the Tang dynasty, saw Nanzhao as the root cause of the downfall of the Tang dynasty (Chen 1997).⁶⁹ In his point of view, a single "foreign group" not only remained in contact with Tang China, but associated in various ways with other "foreign groups," whose prosperity and downfall could affect the vicissitudes of the single "foreign group." Therefore, Tang China could not evade the chain or interlocking effects, only to be found rotating between taking advantage of and suffering from the decline and thriving of the foreign groups. The theory came out in the early 1940s in the context of the anti-Japanese War, thus its alluding connotation had tremendous influence at the time.

⁶⁹ Taiwan scholar Wang Jilin (1976) shares the view. He says that if there were no troubles in Annam, the finance of the Tang would not have had to suffer.

Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore the inner strife of Tang China, no decision of which side is to blame, Nanzhao or Tang China itself, will be given here. Nevertheless, though the above narration of the triangular relationship is at best abbreviated, we may still feel that Chen's explanation has to some extent touched on the key to understanding the issue, namely the interactions between the three parties. Note that Nanzhao in the history written after 1949 is not treated as a foreign group anymore. In the absence of an authoritative account of the past of the Bai themselves, their history is an account produced from the standpoint of China's dynasties. The triangular relationship is seen as a process that resulted in the pluralist unity of China. To position the ancestors of the Bai in relation to China's history help locate the Bai in terms of the territory of the Erhai region. Their interaction with other groups, especially the majority that came to be called the Han, lends continuity to this contemporary ethnic group. What is more relevant in the discussion of the triangular relationship is the implication of its ongoing formulation. Lin underscores Bucks' repudiation of the Song historians to stress that Nanzhao was not a vicious force obsessed with expansion and war. Our attention should not be distracted by the negative judgment of Nanzhao; instead its positive historical values should be publicized. Their long-term relationship with other groups is crucial to understand the identity of the Bai. To talk about the Bai as key players in Chinese history ensures them a distinctive identity.

Finally, the autonomous status Nanzhao once occupied was gradually acknowledged by Chinese scholars in the new millennium. *A History of Ethnic Relations in Southwest China* (Wang, Long, and Chen 2005:246) regards the claim of Shi-long as

Emperor of Nanzhao as the sign that Nanzhao's feudatory relations with Tang China ended. The new trend of the study of the southwest ethnic relations is described as follows: "the Nanzhao Kingdom and Dali Kingdom were previously considered as separatist regimes (*geju zhenquan* 割据政权). (The approach), at face value, is to stick up for unity, but is virtually a reflection of Han chauvinism (*da hanzu zhuyi* 大汉族主义). Now academia has reached consensus that the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdom have the same historical status as the Tang and Song dynasty, all of them being ethnic regimes held by different ethnic groups within the boundary of China. Ancient China encompasses regimes established by the Han, as well as by ethnic minorities" (Wang and Long 2003). It is noteworthy that the assumption of China's unbroken continuity is not challenged, and it is also doubtful that academia has reached the consensus Wang and Long describe since recent publications still show different opinions. Yet the comment amazingly reveals a more open-minded scholastic atmosphere in China when it comes to explaining the role of minorities in history. The theory of "pluralist diversity" has made room for voices that were repressed in the previous historical hegemony whose focus was exclusively on the contributions of the Han.

In this recent decade, local scholars, not necessarily Bai, are interested in celebrating local identity of Dali to boost regional development. Within the ideological contexts, they are attempting to empower the region by making critical use of the history of the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdom. They are working against the stereotyped images of backward minorities by presenting a cultured past created by the ancestors of the Bai people. These scholars are active producers of a new culture. This was made possible

mainly by the decentralization reforms since 1978 which has led up to dramatic changes in the central-regional relationship. The growing regionalism reflects territorial segmentation and competition. Scholars choose to reach back in history in quest of the intangible resources for development. Their endeavor on behalf of the local Bai is generating a clear regional image of Dali, and to some extent, Yunnan province. In part the elevation of the historical significance of ethnic groups in China's history has to do with the concern of the central government to make a good impression on the outside world

In conclusion, it is not far fetched to say that the design of the Nanzhao Summer Palace embodies an elevated judgment of Nanzhao. It acknowledges the independent status Nanzhao once occupied and that was not publicized until fairly recently after the construction of the Nanzhao Folk Island. The Nanzhao Summer Palace is an emblem of an emerging sense of regional subjectivity. We can find a manifestation of the "pluralistic diversity" in the ethnic theme parks created in Beijing and Shenzhen, where minority nationalities each have been assigned a spot to represent their lower levels of identity. Nonetheless, the investment of the state in displaying images of ethnic subjects has conveyed to minority intellectuals and cadres a message of "multicultural nationalism." The message was digested in local and regional theme parks, where the existing configuration of their history is undergoing reformulation. Again, the Nanzhao Summer Palace, by positioning the ancestors of the Bai in China's history, reflects the Bai's close connection with the Han and the Tibetans, as well as their historical existence as a separate group. Even though the ordinary Bai may not be familiar with the specifics of

the triangular relationship, fragments of this period of history distilled by the cultural tourism nonetheless stimulates a sense of pride among the Bai towards their ethnic identity. The pride has not only provided the basis for the solidarity of the Bai people but further translated into nationalism, since their glorious past was set in the context of Chinese history.

CHAPTER IV

MANUFACTURING BAI CULTURE TO DISPLAY DIVERSITY

In Chapter III, I introduced one aspect of the ideology of the “pluralistic unity” of the Chinese Nation. The bottom line of writing the history of national minorities, according to government’s objectives, should be to sustain the historical unity of China. Now we are shifting our sight to the characteristic of the “unity,” its modifier—“pluralistic.” The constitution of a multiethnic nation has long been charted by the state’s policy. Today, in part the envisioned has been translated as visible ethnic diversity. The juxtaposition of 48 live-sized villages of nationalities in the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing is to construct a miniature version of the Chinese Nation.⁷⁰ In China, minorities are assigned the responsibility of representing cultural diversity, given the assumption of the homogeneity of the Han majority. In drawing attention to China’s embracement of diversity, local cadres in Dali capitalize on the distinctiveness of the Bai nationality to create a Bai image desirable for the development of ethnic tourism. Ethnic cultures in minority regions, part and parcel of Chinese national culture, are attaining new meanings in the national reconstruction of a pluralistic society.

The interaction between Nanzhao, Tibet and Tang China has revealed the advantaged geographical position of the Erhai region in absorbing cultural nurture from

⁷⁰ There are eight more villages to be completed to constitute a family of 56 nationalities.

surrounding areas. Such a position calls to mind Francis Hsu's and David Wu's observation of the resemblance of contemporary Bai culture with that of the Han. Indeed, the region has a long history of cultural exchange with and borrowing from the Han Chinese, yet a high degree of acculturation does not prevent the Bai from searching ancient history for an identity commensurate with the state designated status. The accomplishment of their ancestors is the distinctiveness that today's ethnic tourism ferrets out to represent cultural diversity within the Chinese Nation. Thanks to selected aspects of Bai culture represented on the Nanzhao Folk Island, we are offered a chance to understand the essence of Bai culture, which the classification project of the 1950s did not articulate. This chapter will elaborate on what aspects of Bai culture are distilled from their past to make the place of Dali distinctive and its residents cultured by Han standards and, at the same time, authentically indigenous.

Cultural authenticity is a selling point of ethnic tourism. The statue of Mother Shayi is one of the signifiers of Bai authenticity presented on the Nanzhao Folk Island. What other parts of Bai culture are the "most" authentic, when there is no objective or tangible criterion of "authenticity," and culture varies in time and space? An authentic display of Bai culture makes the parks sites of maneuvering, in which Bai culture is transformed into a language for communicating with tourists from home and abroad. The production of authenticity entails a simplification of culture, a reduction into a set of iconic items. Which category of cultural icons is desirable for display depends on how well it can arouse a repercussion from viewers. Religion stands out as an appropriate medium in that there is a general understanding of its function. Religious rituals are

reflective of the collective spiritual outlook of a given group. Moreover, nuanced differences between religions or different sects of a religion are seen by many as a tool distinguishing one culture from another. In the tourist sites of Dali, the religion, as a cultural object, is taking on a new role to produce the distinctiveness of the Bai. Bai identity is made real colored by the religions the Bai have practiced for thousands of years and an archive of religious legends.

More importantly, it is the endorsement of the state for the expression of diversity that makes room for religion to represent ethnic diversity. Ethnic differences have been meticulously promoted since the differences can foster cultural curiosity needed for attracting tourists. Yet the effects of the mobilization of differences cannot be merely measured in economic terms. The enactment of difference is a process of cultural construction. The distinctiveness of the Bai is defined as rooted in their history, in the same way that the classification project resorted to history to categorize the Bai. The ethnic status of the Bai is filled with contents, though this time the agent differed from those used in the discourse on origin. Two scenery sites on Nanzhao Folk Island represent two kinds of religions practiced by local Bai, Buddhism and Patron Gods Worship.

The Unique Buddhist Tradition of the Bai

To the west of the statue of Mother Shayi, the statue of the Acarya *Avalokiteśvara* or Guan Yin *Acuoye* is standing on the square of the “Luck of Yunnan.” This statue, 17.56 meters high, is said to be the tallest white marble statue of Guan Yin in the world.

The image of the Guan Yin *Acuoye* is a male Bodhisattva with broad shoulders, a slender waist⁷¹ who is wearing a skirt and is ornamented by a jewelled collar, belt and armlets. It may come as a surprise to know that the naming of the Guan Yin as the “Luck of Yunnan” is indebted to the American scholar Helen B. Chapin. In her article *Yunnan Images of Avalokiteśvara* published in 1944, Chapin described in detail a special image of Guan Yin whose provenance had been traced to Yunnan. Compared with the same type of statue elsewhere, the Yunnan statue of Guan Yin shows strong Indian characteristics, Chinese affinity, as well as influences from Tibet, Nepal and Indo-China, but it is the position of the hands that makes the image unique. The Guan Yin *Acuoye* dressed in the style of an Indian Bodhisattva has his hands in a position termed “gesture of consolatory grace.”

Fitzgerald pointed out that Buddhism to the Minjia of Dali “is nothing more than the cult of Guan Yin” (1941:112). The unique image of Guan Yin sheds light on the importance of Buddhism in the history of the Bai. The initial creation of the statue can be traced to the Nanzhao era, though most of the bronze statues available for study today are dated to the Dali era (Chapin 1944).⁷² Because the statue of the divinity was regarded as a talisman by the royal house of the Dali Kingdom, and it was named the “Luck of Yunnan.” It was the “tutelary” of the Duan family to prolong and increase the “luck” of their kingdom.

⁷¹ The local name for it is “the slender waist Guan Yin.”

⁷² There are more than 20 bronze statues of the image in question in the world with almost half of them preserved by museums or collectors outside of China proper. It can be found in, for example, The San Diego Museum of Arts, Metropolitan Museum in New York, and The British Museum.

The first point noteworthy with regard to Chapin's clarification is her speculation linking the Siamese elements in the statue with the supposed Tai base of the ruler of Nanzhao. She further infers that the surname "Meng" of the Nanzhao rulers might be linked with the Siamese word *muong* i.e. town or city. The theory concerning the Tai origin of the Nanzhao King has been discussed in Chapter II, though it seems that few scholars take into consideration Chapin's argument as a defense of the theory or as questionable. Nonetheless, Chapin's observation once again confirms that the ancient Yunnan had been nurtured by many cultures.

The second point worth mentioning is the choice of the designer of the Nanzhao Folk Island to adopt the title "Luck of Yunnan" given by Chapin, an American scholar. As a matter of fact, Chapin's scholarship on the image has been highly regarded in Yunnan's academic community. In 1988, Lin Chaomin translated Bucks' work *The Nanzhao Kingdom and Tang China's Southwestern Frontier*, with a supplement of two articles by Chapin on the Yunnan Guan Yin. Their works are seen as emblems of the importance of Bai culture. The discourse of Chinese minorities occurs mainly within a context that is intensely national, in content and scope, but is not confined within China's borders. Scholarship on minorities has gradually formed part of an ongoing international dialogue. In this context, Dali's tourism is engaged to procure credits from the dialogue and attract more attention and investment from outside.

The last point to consider is whether the Meng family of the Nanzhao Kingdom also took the image of Guan Yin *Acuoye* as the "repository of their luck." There are reasons to believe that Buddhism took root in the Erhai region as early as the latter half of

the Nanzhao era. The Guan Yin *Acuoye* favored by the ruler of the Dali kingdom is believed to have been incarnated in an Indian monk, the monk ascribed with having brought Buddhism into the region. Notably, the Dalai Lama is the incarnation of *Avalokiteśvara* of the form of eight arms and heads. Tibet and Nanzhao's alliance from 752 to 789 was a time when intensive cultural exchange took place between the two regions. Even when Nanzhao had been in a honeymoon with Tang China, its covert contacts with Tibet, according to the Tibetan Annals, had never been severed. We do not know if their relationship can account for a similar thought-complex of the incarnation of *Avalokiteśvara* in the Erhai region, though observable likeness of the statue in question with Tibetan art suggests that Buddhism in Dali must have been charged with energies from Tibet.

Now an overview of the development of Buddhism in the region would lead us to comprehend the contemporary function of the Guan Yin statue. There are sources indicating the advent of Buddhism in the region to the Han dynasty (Xu 2005:261). *An Unofficial History of Nanzhao* (*Nanzhao Yeshi* 南诏野史) offers a different story—the Buddhist statues and scriptures brought back from Chang'an by the emissary of the Nanzhao King Sheng-luo-pi (盛逻皮) in the year of 714 marked the starting point of Buddhism in the Erhai region.⁷³ Yet the actual date is not all-important given that the religion did not automatically take root upon being introduced. From 799, the Nanzhao King Yi-mou-xun sent around 20 youths of aristocratic families to study in Chengdu,

⁷³ As cited by Zhang Xu (1990: 133) in his article *the Prevalence of Buddhism in Nanzhao and Dali, and the Rising of Bai Culture*. The *Nanzhao Yeshi* is an unofficial history of Nanzhao composed by Yang Sheng (杨慎) in 1550 and then revised by Hu Wei (胡蔚) in 1775.

where Esoteric Buddhism⁷⁴ was prevalent at the time. Within 60 years, over one thousand Nanzhao youths returned from Chengdu equipped with the knowledge of Chinese, and possibly that of Buddhism. In Tibet, Buddhism was banned by the king in 839, which gave rise to an inner state chaos lasting for almost a century and drove Indian monks in Tibet, together with Tibetan monks, to flee to Nanzhao. Emperor Wuzong of Tang (814-846) promulgated a similar edict in 841 forcing the secularization of monks, which resulted in an influx of Chinese monks into the Erhai region. These monks provided the seeds for Buddhism to sprout in Dali after the middle stage of Nanzhao.⁷⁵ Though the number of Indian monks was limited, they undoubtedly played an important role in the spread of Buddhism, considering the frequent cases of intermarriage between Indian monks and Nanzhao's aristocrats. The high status of Indian monks in Nanzhao indicates how fervently the Nanzhao rulers followed the religion. The fusion of royalty and Buddhism acted as the propeller of the profusion of Buddhist temples and statues. At the same time, the indoctrination of among the masses with Buddhist teachings in all possibility was to a certain extent due to the efforts of Chinese monks who had easier access into the region. Such a mixed influence is manifest in the temple of Chong Sheng (崇圣寺) built during the reign of the tenth Nanzhao King, Feng-you.⁷⁶ Though the temple was burned in the Muslim rebellion in the latter half of the 19th century (Fitzgerald: 112), today its three Tang style pagodas are still standing in Dali. Moreover,

⁷⁴ The Indian name for Esoteric Buddhism is Tantrism.

⁷⁵ Scriptures in Sanskrit have been excavated from archaeological sites in Dali. Sanskrit was wildly used in religious rituals in Dali times.

⁷⁶ The reign of Feng-you was from 823 to 859. A new temple of Chong Sheng was rebuilt and opened to the public in 2006. It is another attempt of rebuilding the Buddhist culture of Dali.

a vestige of the temple of Chong Sheng—“Rain-Copper Guan Yin,” which was ruined during the Cultural Revolution, looks similar to Guan Yin *Acuoye* with its strong Indian characteristics.

Legends of Guan Yin *Acuoye* provide some insight into why the reigning monarch of Nanzhao was attracted to Buddhism during the latter half of the Nanzhao era. Remember that the legend of Mother Shayi provided a noble ancestry for the Meng family that consolidated the region. Mother Shayi was a native icon; while Guan Yin *Acuoye* was an imported icon more powerful to underscore that the legitimacy of their rule was derived from the divinity of *Avalokiteśvara*. To get an idea of whether the statue praised so highly by the Duan family as a dynastic talisman had the same meaning for the house of Meng, we must turn to a long picture-scroll of Buddhist scenes called a *Roll of Pictures of Nanzhao* (*Nanzhao Tujian* 南诏图卷).⁷⁷ The scroll painted around the 12th century is believed to be a copy of the original dated 899. The image of Guan Yin which appears in the *Roll of Pictures of Nanzhao* is the same as the Bronze statues under study. Thus the scroll is often cited as a piece of evidence to date the appearance of the image in Yunnan before the year of 899 (Chapin 1944, Lian 2007). In *An Unofficial History of Nanzhao*, the legend illustrating one of the depictions in the scroll concerns the founding of the Nanzhao Kingdom. Xi-nu-luo (细奴逻), the first king of Nanzhao, ascended the throne and established the Da Meng Kingdom (Nanzhao) in 649 at the time when Tang China was ruled by Emperor Taizong. The legend describes how Guan Yin *Acuoye* manifested himself in the form of an old Indian monk begging for food at the foot of the

⁷⁷ The painting now is owned by the private collection in Japan called *Riben Jingdu Youlinguan* 日本京都有邻馆.

Wei Mountain where Xi-nu-luo and his son Luo-sheng-yan were ploughing the fields. When the wife and daughter-in-law of Xi-nu-luo were on their way of carrying food to the field for their husbands, they fed the hungry monk. After testing the kind-hearted women, the incarnated *Avalokiteśvara* made a prophecy that “Your descendants will follow one after another (on the throne).”

The legend mystifying the rise of the Meng family implies that they were bestowed with “Good Luck” by *Avalokiteśvara* himself. In other words, the prosperity of Nanzhao from the middle of the seventh century to 902 was blessed by the monk who was thus referred to as “the *Avalokiteśvara* who founded the Kingdom (建国观世音).” It is said that the model for metal statues cast in Nanzhao was according to the mental vision of an Indian monk in the seventh century. The version of the legend in *An Unofficial History of Nanzhao* might have been processed by the Duan family given the penchant of the twelfth century court to derive its prestige from their predecessors. Likewise, contemporary ethnic tourism in Dali also draws as much credit as possible from the great age of Nanzhao. The artistic achievements of the time, seen from the vestiges of Nanzhao temple architecture, sculpture, and painting, are all directly or indirectly linked Buddhist inspiration. In the words of Chapin, “Yunnan in Tang and Song times is a seat of a highly developed civilization, strongly influenced by Tang China, but by no means characterized by slavish imitation”(1944:181). The high evaluation of Nanzhao’s unique civilization coincides with the theme of the cultural tourism of Dali. On this account, the contemporary Bai view it worthwhile to rebuild their past glory.

The Yunnan image of Guan Yin testifies to the unique civilization owned by the ancestors of the Bai and symbolizes the distinctiveness of the Buddhist culture of Dali. In 1573, a scholar named Li Yuanyang (李元阳 1496—1580) described Dali as “the City of Miaoxiang (妙香城),” *gandahar* in Sanskrit, an Eden like kingdom located in ancient northern India. Legend had it that *Gandahar*, a Buddhist Kingdom presided by Buddhist masters, is filled with fragrance and its location is immune to external threats. Buddhism was the state religion of the Nanzhao Kingdom from the latter half of the ninth century and during the succeeding Dali Kingdom.⁷⁸ The practice of using Sanskrit to name the place of today’s Dali and the kingdom can be traced to the ninth century. The *New Book of Tang* records “Nanzhao can be called “*hetuo* (鹤拓).”⁷⁹ In light of Fang Guoyu’s research of phonology, “*hetuo*” is the translation of “*ganda*.” A devoted patron of Buddhism, the twelfth Nanzhao King Long-shun (隆舜) transplanted the Sanskrit word “*Ganda*” to rename and sanctify his Kingdom of Nanzhao. Nowadays, the title of “the Kingdom of Miaoxiang” has come to define the place identity of Dali as a cultured town. The dominant feature of Buddhism at Nanzhao times is the adoption of the doctrines and ideas of the Esoteric sect (密宗). Yet the development of the Chan sect (禅宗) in Dali has gained momentum since the Yuan dynasty, which, under the patronage of the government, had removed the Esoteric sect from its dominant position. Though the forms of Buddhism prevalent at Nanzhao times, which were imported from India and Tibet, never disappeared entirely, Buddhism in Dali as a practiced religion is dominantly Chan.

⁷⁸ After its development during the Nanzhao era, Buddhism was firmly embedded in the Dali Kingdom where nine out of twenty-two kings abdicated to become monks.

⁷⁹ See Lian (2007).

In spite of this, the representation of Buddhism in theme parks features an exotic affinity that may differentiate it from common practices of Chinese Buddhism (汉传佛教). The Buddhist icons with Indian characteristics are magnified to create a modern day *Gandahar*. It is in the context of the imagined “Miaoxiang city” that the statue of Guan Yin *Acuoye* becomes the most visible icon of the Buddhist culture of the Bai people.

The Authentic Patron Gods Worship

In front of the Summer Palace on the Nanzhao Folk Island, a group of copper statues on Patron Gods Square consists of five Gods from the indigenous religion of the Bai, the worship of Patron Gods. While Buddhism formed the language in which the local culture communicates with its surrounding areas, the Patron Gods Culture is seen as a pure, ethnic element of indigenous culture. As previously discussed, the key tenet of the 1950s classification project was to define discrete ethnic groups by strict boundaries. The contents of an ethnic category had to be distinct from others depending on certain exclusive ethnic markers. According to Yang Kun (1957:11), the common culture of the Bai consists of, in addition the language, their rituals and folklores. He only briefly mentions the temples of Patron Gods, but never uses the term “religion” to define Bai culture. Today, however, the Patron Gods Worship is hailed as the ethnic essence of the Bai since neither Mother Shayi nor Buddhism is powerful enough to conjure up the “quaint customs” possessed by the contemporary Bai.

Generally speaking, Patron Gods Worship includes the worship of totems, noble persons and ancestors. The first category of gods is associated with nature, such as sun,

moon and mountains. During the early years of the Nanzhao era, the worship of natural forces and ghosts governed people's spiritual world. Later on, following Buddhist practice, the cult of idols in constructed temples was adopted. While the worship of natural forces had to do with the concerns over harvest in an agrarian society, the second category of heroes and virtuous people may be an expression of people's likes and dislikes. The titles of the majority of the Patron Gods constitute a religious system distinct from Daoism and Buddhism. Shafer (1967: 95) mentions that "the formal recognition by the Tang court of the godly status of a considerable array of popularly honored soldiers and administrators began in 731."⁸⁰ I assume that the Patron Gods Worship was a transplant of the official pantheon of Tang China. This connection suggests that the framework of the Patron Gods Worship may not have originated from indigenous sources; instead, it was imported from Tang China and then incorporated in the contents of the indigenous worship. I will discuss later if such a connection jeopardizes the Patron Gods Worship as the "pure" ethnic marker of the Bai.

The most conspicuous statue on the Patron God Square is the Central Emperor of all Patron Gods, Feng-you's prime minister Duan Zongbang (段宗榜). According to *An Unofficial History of Nanzhao*, Burma was invaded by the Kingdom of Lion (what is now Sri Lanka) in 858. At the request of the Burmese king, Nanzhao dispatched an army led by Duan Zongbang to help Burma drive out the invaders. Note that there is, according to Bucks (1981:129), no such expedition recorded in Burmese or Sinhalese sources. Another achievement of Duan Zongbang, as the legend goes, was to reestablish the ruling

⁸⁰ For example, a general who commanded the Tang army to subdue Korean at the time of Emperor of Taizong was deified. As we will see, to deify war heroes is also a practice of Patron God Worship.

power of the Meng house, which had been grappled by the treacherous court minister, Wang Cuodian, a figure we have come across in last chapter. It is very hard to know the exact time period when a particular historical figure was deified as a Patron God, even if such legends convey some elements of truth with regard to the historical events the figure was involved in. Moreover, the legends of Patron Gods are mostly fabrications of later times seasoned by people's emotions and moral values. The Duan house of the Dali Kingdom, presumably, appealed to their ancestor Duan Zongbang, a minister of the Nanzhao King, because the figure is the emblem of the military and political strength of Nanzhao, as well as the loyalty of the Duan family to the Nanzhao monarch. Interestingly, Wang Cuodian is credited by Li Xiaoceng (1997) as a contributor to Nanzhao's history of technology based on the fact that the plundering of Chengdu and various kingdoms in Southeast Asia ⁸¹ under his command had won Nanzhao some key technologies and thousands of craftsmen. Many Buddhist architectural structures, such as the Temple of Chongsheng and the Jianchuan Grotto sites, would not have been accomplished without the contributions of these craftsmen.

Two historical figures that have been introduced in our discussion of the Tang-Nanzhao-Tibet relationship are among the Patron Gods presented on Nanzhao Folk Island. Zheng Hui, the wise minister of Yi-mou-xun, is credited with the title of "*qing guan*" i.e. upright official. The Tang general Li Mi is the god of "mountain spring." The special landmarks of the Dali plain, such as Lake Erhai and the Cang Mountain, have always been a source of pride for the Bai. Thus to link the mountain and lake with divine

⁸¹ These kingdoms are, for example, the Pyu Kingdom (骠国), the Nvwang Kingdom (女王国), the Kunlung Kingdom (昆仑国), the Minuo Kingdom (弥诺国), Zhenla (真腊, in today's Cambodia).

persons of importance is a reflection of the local's affection towards their natural landscape. As described in last chapter, the Tang army under the command of Li Mi was defeated by Nanzhao in the famous battle of Tianbao in 751. It seems curious that Li Mi was deified by his conqueror. One possible explanation is that the locals saw it necessary to placate the heroic Tang armies who died in the fierce battle. It is also possible that the ruler of Nanzhao ascribed the responsibilities of the battle of Tianbao to the corrupted Tang officials of the *Jimi* prefectures. Especially after Nanzhao's relationship with Tang China was restored, Tang generals and armies were regarded as heroes and further put up as Patron Gods commemorating Nanzhao's reluctant position in its previous confrontation with the Tang court. Within the legendary family tree of the Patron Gods, the grand daughter of Li Mi was arranged to be the wife of the grand son of Duan Zongbang. Every god has vivid personality and associated family members. A patron god named Zhang Yulin (张玉麟), a subordinate of Li Mi, is known for his kindness towards children, thus children are always brought along to worship him. Probably due to the influence of Confucianism, filial sons and chaste women were also elevated to the position of Gods. The world of Patron Gods resembles the world of the living. Gods have their joy and sorrow in the unseen world, a counterpart of mundane society.

The third category of worshipped characters is ancestors. Mother Shayi has never become a Patron God, but her story was transplanted onto the ruling house of the Nanzhao and the Dali Kingdom. The Goddess titled *Baijie Shengfei* (白姐圣妃)⁸² is the mother of the first Dali King *Duan Siping* (段思平). The lady touched in the river a piece

⁸² It is also written 柏洁圣妃.

of wood, the incarnation of a dragon, and consequently became pregnant. The components of water and dragon in the legend of Shayi were replicated time and again remaining as the core of this category of legends. The connotation of water is fertility and propagation. The value of women in the Erhai region was expressed through the sanctification of the mother of the king by virtue of conflating her image with Shayi. In another legend, an imperial consort of the Nanzhao King Feng-you was a pious Buddhist. She came across a dragon and became pregnant with the later King Shi-long. The commonplace of various versions of this legend embodies the indigenous wishes of the integration of a pious Buddhist female figure with the dragon, another reflection of the joining of royalty and Buddhism in Nanzhao. The seeming contradiction in the legend is solved by the combination of the worldly status of kingship inherited from the real father, and the assurance of the sacred order transmitted by the holy woman from the dragon father. Another set of legend elaborates on the historical event that Feng-you married his younger sister to an Indian monk. In light of the interpretation of Lian Ruizhi (2007), the princess is another version of Mother Shayi, and the Indian monk replaced the dragon when local legends were more and more subject to the influence of Buddhism.

Though the Nanzhao Folk Island is not a purely religious venue, the purpose of putting up the statue of Guan Yin *Acuoye* is to engender and fulfill the religious desires of visiting Buddhists, in addition to advertising the cultural and historical connotation of the Yunnan Guan Yin. Knowing the variations of the legend of Mother Shayi, it becomes obvious that the Buddhist Guan Yin is juxtaposed with the Patron Gods on the same tourist site because local legends of the Patron Gods have long been intertwined with

Buddhist culture. That Esoteric Buddhism could sustain in the Erhai region is due to its adaptation to the local environment. Nevertheless, the adaptation was a process of a long-term contest, not in the form of an actual war as had happened in Tibet⁸³, but a subconsciousness contest between the legendary gods. Guan Yin, the representative of the newly introduced Buddhist religion, was often found in legends defeating *Luosha* (罗刹) i.e. vicious ghosts, symbols of the native religion (Xu 2005: 271). Dali was turned into the fragrant “Miaoxiang City” after all ghosts were annihilated by Guan Yin. We can understand the dragon in the legend of Mother Shayi as a totem of worship. Yet in Buddhist legends, the manifestations of Guan Yin sometimes went about fooling or punishing the wicked dragon. The indigenous image of the dragon was enriched or in other words, supplanted by dragon characters more juicy and multifaceted, such as the dragon king, a Patron God, who would cause severe storms in winter across Lake Erhai. Buddhism began “displacing the earlier native religious orientation” of the Nanzhao Kingdom in the first half of the ninth century (Backus 1981:129). Yet the triumph of Buddhism did not erase the indigenous religion which has remained active. The indigenous religion packed elements of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism into the world of the Patron Gods. Given the existence of Patron Gods Worship side by side with Buddhism for such a long time, it does not come as a surprise that one statue on the Square is a Patron God derived from Buddhism. Nowadays, when the characteristics of Bai culture are depicted in light of their distinct belief, they are described as “all-embracing.” To answer the question posed above, the authenticity of Bai culture is not

⁸³ According to Xu (2005:187), there was violence involved in the contest between Tibetan’s indigenous religion *Bon* (苯教) and Buddhism when Buddhism was first introduced.

challenged even if the essence of Bai culture is not a pure form. A widely quoted explanation is that their creativity is reflected in their ability to assimilate and absorb different elements and then transform them into their own. The discourse of ethnicity in the reform era has greatly enriched the contents of Bai culture. The cultural tourism in Dali, though mainly stimulated by an economic impetus, is a continuation of the attempts of the classification project of the 1950s to spell out the common culture of the Bai. Nowadays, few tourists would doubt the identity of the Bai as an ethnic group in the face of a banquet of theme parks comprising of icons from different origins.

The highest white-marble statue of Guan Yin in the world and the Square of the Patron Gods Culture are on display as parts of Bai culture, but the acceptance of the two kinds of religious icons as the essence of Bai culture needs tailoring hinging on the value judgment placed upon them. The dominant feature of Buddhism in the region was the development of the Achili (阿叱力) sect, a branch of Esoteric Buddhism of the Mahayana school.⁸⁴ The monk in Esoteric Buddhism is referred to as Lama in Tibet, and Achili i.e. “master” or “guide” in Dali. In the Jianchuan grottoes site with its rock-cut sculptures⁸⁵, a Buddhist monk wearing a surplice was placed besides the fifth Nanzhao King Ge-luo-feng. According to the legend, the monk used witchcraft to help Nanzhao stand off the Tang army in the battle of Tianbao. Relying on the involvement of the monk in the battle, Zhang Xu suggests that Esoteric Buddhism was gaining popularity during

⁸⁴ The reason that the Esoteric Buddhism can sustain in Dali for so long a time is due to its integration with the indigenous religion. After the Esoteric sect disappeared in the central plain of imperial China, it was preserved in the Erhai region though inevitably more and more subjected to the influences of the Chan and Pure Land (淨土) Buddhism.

⁸⁵ The grottoes have the statues of the royal house of Nanzhao and those of Esoteric Buddhism. There are in total 16 grottoes distributed in three groups.

the early years of Nanzhao. The grottoes were carved probably from 850 (the eleventh year of the Nanzhao King Feng-you) to 1179 of the Dali regime (Liang 2002). The legends are mostly not trustworthy historical sources and, in some cases, may exhibit anachronistic problems. Though the storyline itself is suspect, those legends can definitely assist our study of history. The legend, for instance, does reveal a characteristic of the Achili sect. The Achili are often labeled with their frequent practice of sorcery. Because of this, the Achili sect did not enjoy a good reputation among contemporary Chinese scholars trained in socialist materialism. But in comparison to the supposed prototype of the Patron Gods Worship practiced by the Lemo people in Nujiang, it is “the lesser of two evils.”

The interpretation of the living culture practice of the Lemo people is that their worship of ghosts has persisted from an early stage of development, which, in the language of Morgan’s evolutionary theory, is equivalent to backwardness. Zhang Xu (1990:138) recorded how the Lemo people, before the liberation, were impoverished by continuous sacrifices offered to various kinds of ghosts. The life style of the traditional branch of the Bai, the Lemo people⁸⁶, marks a sharp contrast to the Minjia in the Dali plain who accepted the culture of Buddhism with the distillate of Indian and Chinese culture in the areas of philosophy, science, architecture, literature etc. The Patron Gods Worship is developed from its early form of ghost worshipping, thus it is also perceived as of another time on the opposite end of modernization. To fit it into the cultural tourism, Patron God Worship was transformed into the Patron Gods Culture. Its religious

⁸⁶ There are sources indicating the Lemo people as the “living fossils” of the Bai, an interpretation that the Lemo people might not agree with.

contents have been intentionally decomposed, while its connection with the glorious history of the Bai was highlighted. Likewise, a variety of religious rituals of the Achili sect that existed before were also sanitized to construct a Buddhist culture worthy for advertisement. The icons with historical weight, such as Guan Yin *Acuoye*, were subsumed and others deemed superstitious eradicated.

The Invented Bai Culture

In the 1940s, Hsu interviewed several local Minjia and found that the general structure of the world of spirits in their minds did not mark a distinct boundary between Buddhism, Daoism and Patron God Worship, and they could give “an astonishing number of names and titles of gods and goddess and described their life” (1948:143). Hsu went on to describe the exalted titles of a local patron god and his wife, but he did not go further to trace the exact identity of the patron gods encountered. Fortunately, Chinese scholar Xu Jiarui whose *History of Ancient Dali Culture* first published in 1947 provides us with a more complete picture of the worship of Patron Gods in the pre-1949 period. He counted 62 patron gods, with approximately each one of 71 villages in Dali plain having its own set of Patron Gods. These omnipotent Gods are the tutelary of the villagers. The villagers have developed a singular mythology around their own Patron God(s) who protect every aspect of their life.

Some forty years later, David Wu (1990), based on field research conducted in 1985, points out that his informants, including the village elders, had never heard of the

term *Benzhu* (本主), the Chinese term for Patron Gods.⁸⁷ Chances are that various legends cited in this paper have created you an impression that the legend is an obvious ethnic marker of the Bai nationality. However, in a Bai village⁸⁸, Wu found that none of the young or the old could recite or tell one such legend. It seems unlikely that nobody would remember the legends of the Patron Gods in the 1985 if they still knew “an astonishing number” in the 1940s. It is possible that the number of the informants for David Wu’s field work conducted within a village was limited. It is also possible that some people just did not want to reveal to foreigners their knowledge in religion. Whatever the case may be, David Wu’s observation still reflects that the legends of the Patron Gods have become a vague memory among the Bai people. The observation raises the question of what happened during these years that have, if not totally effaced, but diluted the local legends in people’s daily life. In the Maoist period, religions were attacked as one of the vestiges of the feudal past in order to liberate the masses from the shackles of the exploitative social system. The Cultural Revolution gave religions a devastating blow when many temples were demolished or partly damaged. Thus legends of Patron Gods in all possibility did not survive tenaciously various Communist campaigns among the local Bai. Because Patron Gods Worship does not have scriptures and clergy, its inheritance to a larger extent relies on the oral transmission of the legends from generation to generation. Then if the rich legends only exist in books and in the minds of scholars, and if Patron Gods Worship does not have much to do with the way in

⁸⁷ It seems Wu did not ask them if they knew about the Bai names for “Patron God,” say, “Wusen (武僧).”

⁸⁸ Only a pseudonym was given of the village.

which the contemporary Bai comprehend their identity, why do tourist sites in Dali bear such a strong sentiment towards it?

The promotion of the Patron Gods Culture is indebted to the investment of the reform regime into cultural diversity which marks a radical disjuncture from the Maoist period. In Maoist China, local differences, including those associated with religious practices, were superseded by a uniform socialist culture. Not until 1982 were Chinese citizens allowed to pursue their spiritual affairs when the new constitution was adopted with an article (number 36) on religious freedom. The adjustment of the focal point of the policies towards economic development loosened the state's monitoring of the realm of belief. The previous notion was that the allowance for diversity can be at odds with sensitive frontier relations, but controlled difference has been gradually viewed as a tool to stabilize the nation. The promotion of diversity is reflective of the reform regime's attempts to build a comprehensive form of governance that includes the rehabilitation of religious practices, a reform that is celebrated as the government's tolerance of diversity. When it comes to the perception of ethnic religions as primitive, officials and specialists still insist that superstition remains a serious problem. But different from the radical supporters of communist ideology, the reformers seem to be more concerned with the harmony of social order than with the actual belief of people. This is why scholars in the 1950s did not emphasize "religion" as a defining element of Bai culture, yet today the top items on the list of the makers of Bai culture are Patron Gods Worship and Buddhism.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Other areas include, for instance, music, architectures, festivals and special food.

On the other hand, the promotion of diversity is also a response to the social unevenness produced by the reform and opening up policies. In recent decades, scholars and officials were drawn to entertain tensions between the legacy of Mao's egalitarian ideology and Deng's socialist modernization project. In *Overcome by Modernity*, Harootunian (2000) presents a skillful analysis of the reaction of Japanese intellectuals to the problem of modernity in the early twentieth-century. By situating Japan's experience of modernity within a larger global process, Harootunian quoted the thoughts of a wide variety of thinkers; the majority of them saw the need to "overcome" the Western mode of modernity believing that the production of desire as a by-product of modernity would threaten Japan's historical culture. Japanese intellectuals expressed their concern with the malaise of modernity, the profound social unevenness or unbalance of the distribution of wealth which came hand in hand with the sudden transformation of the Japanese society, thus they sought to "overcome" the materialism and consumerism related to modernity. In the 1930's Japan, the invention of tradition⁹⁰ arose as a solution to the unevenness in the realms of economy, society, and politics. What has happened in China's reform era is what Harootunian predicted for Japan that the growth of some areas is always achieved at the expense of others. The unevenness is manifested in various aspects, for instance, the big gap in economic development between the eastern and the western part of China, between cities and rural places. Note that the majority of minority people are the inhabitants of the rural areas of China's vast west. The actual difference in economic

⁹⁰ The term "invented tradition" was defined by Eric Hobsbawm in the introduction of *The Invention of Tradition* (coedited with Terence Ranger) as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with ... a suitable past" (1983:1).

terms is a potential seed of unrest, which requires the support for development to be cast on the rural and the indigenous. To meet this requirement, the philosophy of building a harmonious society came into being. The concept of “harmony” put force by Fei Xiaotong in the 1990s is directly derived from Confucian values. Confucius’ concept of *he* (和) means genuine harmony in political and personal conduct. By the marriage of Confucianism with the market economy, the Chinese government intends to articulate its economic success in cultural terms. An essential social ethos would unite all the nationalities under the higher level of identity, “the Chinese Nation.” The ethos of Confucius’s *ren* (仁 *humaneness*) is critical to the formation of a harmonious society in which the marginalized groups, such as peasants, migrant workers, and minorities, will receive enhanced attention and hence be placated. From another perspective, the concept of “harmony” is attractive also because the rising regionalism makes it impossible for the central government to have a complete grip on the differences. As a result, the tolerance of differences on the part of the central government is a gesture of its governance of “*ren*.”

Having got a glimpse into the background of the promotion of diversity, we can move on to explore to what extent the revival of Patron Gods Culture is an invention of cultural tourism. First of all, there is considerable tenacity of religious rituals on the grassroots level, though it took time for people to revert back to their old ways. Mackerras (1988:56) notes that there are more temples in Dali in the 1980s than before the Cultural Revolution, according to a Bai cadre at the Central Institute of Nationalities. In the reform era, peasants in the Dali plain not only restored old temples of Patron Gods,

but innovatively added new figures into the family of Patron Gods. It seems that Maoist socialism did not wholly transform the consciousness and spiritual world of people. The inability of Bai villagers to narrate the legends does not conflict with their practicing the related rituals. I remember the celebration of a Bai festival in my childhood, though I did not know that its purpose was to worship the Patron God until I began my research for this thesis. My point is that these rituals are still meaningful to the Bai, though probably in a new way. Religious rituals are either simplified or transformed into commercial activities or festivals. Previously *Radix Puerariae*⁹¹ is offered to the Patron God as a sacrifice in a village, but now the event, though held at the same day each year, becomes a fair for trading *Radix Puerariae*. This trend is coherent with the orientation of the government supporting economic development and leading the population away from what the politicians consider superstitious practices.

Although the vitality of Patron Gods Worship cannot be denied, it is far from being a complete system of religion for the majority of the Bai, especially for those town-based dwellers. Just because its real meaning has become a vague memory, fragments of Patron Gods Worship are malleable. The possibility of transforming the Patron Gods Worship into the Patron Gods Culture lies in the fact that the worship is the relic of Bai history manifest in the present. Its smell of superstition is repressed, while its historical adherence reinforced. As Xu Jiarun (2005: 186) puts it, “the history of the Patron Gods of Dali is reflective of the whole span of the history of Dali.” It has preserved the totem worship of the pre-historical times, and integrated the history of the Nanzhao and Dali

⁹¹ A kind of plant used as snack or medicine.

kingdom. The copper statues of Patron Gods on the Nanzhao Folk Island are an artificial form of antiquity which distances the indigenous religion from its authentic existence in people's way of life. The Patron Gods Worship is making a symbolic comeback. In the process of the invention of tradition, through cultural production, the distance gives scholars a voice of authority to speak about the Bai past. Gripping the opportunity to articulate what is distinctively Bai, they sought to empower the Bai nationality. A Bai past imagined in terms of "primitive religious practices" corresponds to the depiction of the Bai as a "backward minority." But a depiction of the religion in terms of its historical connotation supports a re-representation of the present Bai people as a civilized minority.

At last, we need to consider the nature of diversity produced by cultural tourism. The image of ethnic diversity creates a rupture with the Maoist past of the ultimate goal of a unified population, yet nothing could challenge the premise of the unified country with 56 nationalities. The demonstration of diversity at tourist sites has no equal in the cultivation of diversity in a real sense. How to quell dissent has always been a primary concern of the Chinese government, but if these ethnic groups are given favorable policies and considerable attention, they are supposedly less likely to resist Han-Chinese hegemony. The government made special dispensations to minorities for their development, education and even childbearing. There are also official attempts to preserve their language and culture at a time when these heritages are already in danger. Yet the scope of realized diversity is defined by present political and economic concerns. The state capitalizes on the tension between regional diversity and national unity to create a positive pressure that keeps China's project of socialist reform moving forward.

Religion is allowed revitalization as a cultural form because the Bai do not have a recent state sovereignty. It is assumed that the historical instance of the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdom will merely intensify ethnic awareness and sentiment. Tibet and Xinjiang where religious practices are under a closer supervision will tell a different story. It is unlikely that, for instance, the state will readily meet the increased demand for Muslim schools in Xinjiang. Only if properly directed is “diversity” seen as potentially beneficial to the project of socialist reform. Ethnic tourism is promoted not only as a promise for minorities to achieve a government defined modernity but accepted by the minorities in the hope to keep their cultural heritage. Yet these policies seem to not yet have greatly improved either the minorities’ living standard or effectively preserved their culture. The fundamental problem is that the fostering of diversity does not address the “structural unevenness” in the economy and politics, the root cause of the poverty of minorities. As Tim Oakes notes, ethnic tourism “conspires to articulate core and peripheral modes of economic production and cultural production in a way which precludes an autonomous indigenous modernity in the periphery”(1998:141). Yunnan lags behind the eastern provinces in terms of economic capacity. The main challenge that Yunnan faces is its lack of one or several pillar industries. Even though the provincial tourism economy has grown quite rapidly and has gradually become the new support industry, the flourishing tourist sites merely sparsely dot the wide landscape inhabited by minorities. The state’s investment in infrastructure to facilitate the development of tourism comes hand in hand with the exploitation of natural resources of the region which are then processed in the eastern provinces. Chances are that outsiders may get a distorted picture of the situation

of the minorities who are seen giving happy entertainment performances at these refined localities. In most cases, ethnic tourism does not always produce external investment, as well as education and economic opportunities it promises. Ethnic tourism alone is not sufficient to improve productivity and competing power of Yunnan so as to efficiently alleviate poverty. Moreover, for instance, the construction of a historical and cultural town of Dali involves destruction project of old streets and civilian houses for the purpose of making room for tourist facilities. When culture has been commodified, tourism as a means of displaying diversity may turn out to be an unsustainable mode of development.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the role of Nanzhao history in the formation of the ethnic identity of the Bai people in the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture of China. Even though the Bai identity in pre-Communist times was not part of a collective consciousness of the people who were later classified as Bai, these people have acquired an identity by sharing a common history. In Dali, the history of the Bai has been recounted and reenacted in the flourishing ethnic tourism industry since the 1990s. By examining the man-made scenery on the Nanzhao Folk Island, this thesis has exposed some assumptions about the nature of Bai culture and history as they are expressed. The selected aspects of the features of the Bai people on the Nanzhao Folk Island, including their origin, history and religion, work together to disclose three levels of assumptions. The first one is that China is a unified country with diversity; the second one is that the Bai are a historically and culturally continuous ethnic group; and the last one is that the history of the Bai is associated with and has contributed to China's long and continuous civilization. The ideological assumptions upon which the landscape of the Nanzhao Folk Island is designed reveal the relationship between nationalism, scholarship and ethnic tourism. In addition, the three assumptions gained varying significance and sometimes subtle variations at different stages in the PRC era. Fitting within the context of the development of nationalist

ideologies, there is a shift of emphasis of China's minority policy from "a unifying country" to "unity in diversity." The shift is demonstrated in the tourist sites in Dali, where the regional and ethnic, the past and present are accommodated on the national stage.

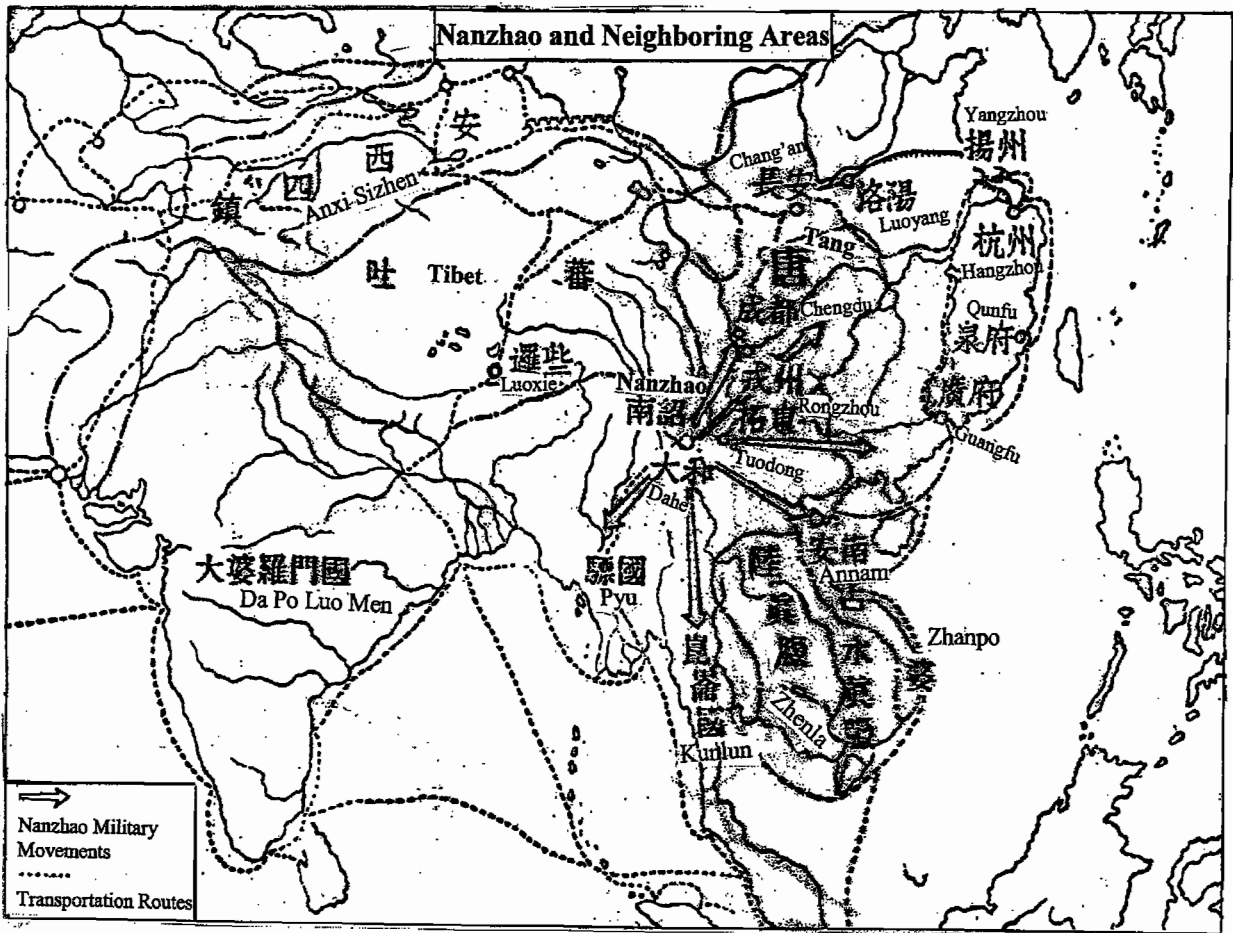
With regard to some Western scholars' suspicion of the existence of an ethnic identity of the Bai prior to the state's involvement, this thesis traced the historical trend that made the Erhai region an indigenous culture in the Non-Han southwest. Circulating throughout the history of the Bai is how their ancestors interact with the surrounding neighbors. The Summer Palace, Guan Yin *Acuoye* and the statues of Patron Gods all correspond to a form of a mixed culture. Though it is true that the Nanzhao Kingdom indeed resorted to alliances, trade and wars to procure Tang culture, some Chinese scholars may have exaggerated the Nanzhao people's admiration for Chinese culture and the influence of Tang China on the Erhai region. As we have seen, Buddhist culture from India and Tibet exerted a great influence on the Nanzhao Kingdom. Yet though the ancient Buddhist art exemplifies a unique culture of Nanzhao, the contemporary Bai have more or less adopted a Han lifestyle. If it were not for the sake of cultural tourism, icons of their ancient culture would not have had the opportunity to gain publicity. The fixing of traits and the manufacturing of summarized traditions on the scenery sites is a renewed effort of appealing to the past to justify the ethnic identity of the Bai, a continuation of the nationality classification project of the 1950s. In the midst of the changing political and economic environment since the 1980s, the varying interpretations of Nanzhao

history and its place in the history of China reflect a process of the negotiation of Bai identity.

The Nanzhao Folk Island is a modern product. It arises out of confronting other places in competition for business opportunities. Apart from the economic ends, diversity is displayed as a response to the state's advocacy of building a pluralist society. As pointed out by Chao (1996), diversity may be positively equated with authenticity, but the precursor or negative aspect of authenticity is backwardness. The statue of Mother Shayi resonates with the double vision of difference as both authenticity and backwardness. Even though the outlook of the statue caters to the tourist's pursuit of authenticity, it is not, after all, an image of a contemporary Bai woman. Moreover, the Summer Palace, Guan Yin *Acuoye* and the statues of Patron Gods all assert the Bai as a cultured minority. The scenery sites on the Nanzhao Folk Island can foster ethnic pride. The Bai people have come to think of themselves as part of a group with a glorious history. They are seeking to maintain a sense of ethnic identity with distinct and essential cultural traits and practices, even though the historical origins of these traits and practices may have long been lost.

APPENDIX A
RULERS OF THE NANZHAO KINGDOM

Name	Relation to predecessor	Reign Dates
1. Xi-nu-luo 细奴逻		649-674
2. Luo-cheng 逻盛	son	674-712
3. Sheng-luo-pi 盛逻皮	son	712-728
4. Pi-luo-ge 皮逻阁	son	728-748
5. Ge-luo-feng 阁逻凤	son	748-778
6. Yi-mou-xun 异牟寻	grandson	778-808
7. Xun-ge-quan 寻阁劝	son	808-809
8. Quan-long-sheng 劝龙晟	son	809-816
9. Quan-li-sheng 劝利晟	younger brother	816-823
10. Feng-you 丰祐	younger brother	823-859
11. Shi-long 世隆	son	859-877
12. Long-shun 隆舜	son	877-897
13. Shun-hua-zhen 舜化贞	son	897—902



NANZHAO AND NEIGHBORING AREAS

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

ILLUSTRATIONS OF NANZHAO FOLK ISLAND

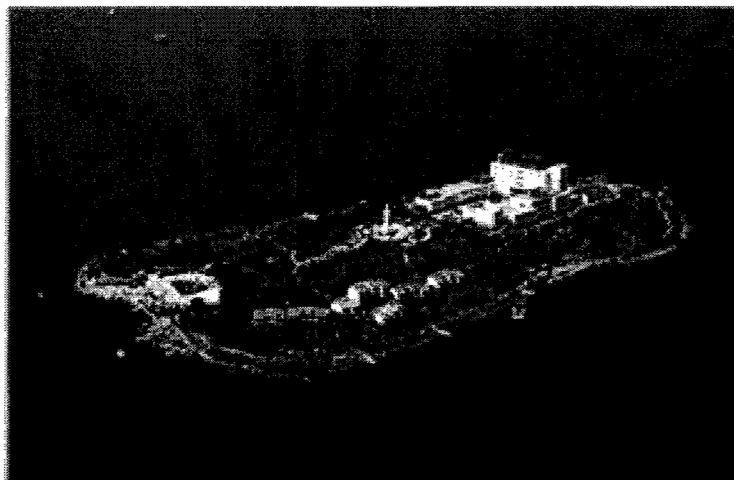


Figure 1: Nanzhao Folk Island



Figure 2: The Statue of Mother Shayi



Figure 3: Nanzhao Summer Palace



Figure 4: The Statue of Guan Yin *Acuoye*

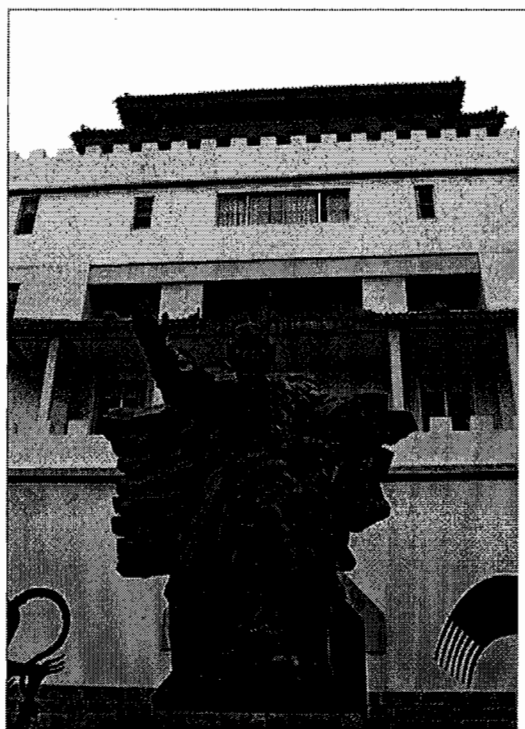


Figure 5: The Statue of Duan Zongbang

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