

**A HISTORY AND
ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF
THE ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF THE
SINO-TIBETAN BORDERLAND—
NAXI AND MOSUO**

BY CHRISTINE MATHIEU

**A HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY
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NAXI AND MOSUO**

Christine Mathieu

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To my family

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Preface

This is a remarkable book on an important and fascinating topic, and I am honored at the invitation to write a preface for it.

In recent years there has been a spate of books dealing with particular ethnic minorities in China. Each of these takes a different approach, depending on the special characteristics of the particular ethnic group under discussion. Most of them attempt to contribute to ethnographic theory. China has a multiplicity of ethnic groups, even though the 2000 census showed the majority Han at about 91.5 per cent of the total population. China being still by far the world's most populous country, this leaves the ethnic minorities with well over 100 million people, which is more than the total population of all but a few countries. And world history since the last decades of the twentieth century can leave us in no doubt about the importance of ethnicity as a topic.

This book focuses on a people called the Naxi, who live in north-western Yunnan Province around Lijiang, a region taken over by the Qing Manchu Empire in 1723 and part of China ever since. There are several special points about this people. One is that according to official typology, the Naxi include a people called Mosuo, but many Mosuo and quite a few others believe that the Mosuo should be classified as a separate people. Secondly, the Mosuo are still matrilinear, although the Naxi are not. And thirdly, the Naxi have a unique religion called Dongba, which includes a manuscript tradition.

According to Mathieu the issue of Mosuo ethnic identity is much less

important to the Mosuo elite at the beginning of the twenty-first century than it was a decade before. This point is itself interesting for what it tells us about the role of ethnic identification in contemporary China. But it still raises issues about the official classification of ethnic groups. Indeed, one of the points that struck me as most interesting about Mathieu's account was the persistence of cultural and linguistic differences within groups even when those, as for example the Naxi, are perfectly happy with their present classification.

But while this book has a great deal to say about the present circumstances of the Mosuo and Naxi, its true focus is on history. Its major objective is to recover some of the processes that transformed these formally independent tribes oriented towards Tibet into feudal subjects of the Chinese empire. The secondary objective is to explore the ethnic and historical relationship between the Naxi and Mosuo. Central to this project is a pair of sixteenth-century chronicles on the history of the Mu family, the most eminent clan in the history of the Naxi. Mathieu's interpretation and analysis of these chronicles puts the hitherto obscure Sino-Tibetan southwestern frontier in a new historical light. This makes a significant contribution to Chinese and Himalayan studies.

One thing I really admire about the approach taken in this book is the author's take on anthropological and historical theory. Mathieu weaves her analysis in and out of established theories and disciplines, history, anthropology, religious studies, linguistics and archeology. She never allows any one theoretical approach to dominate, let alone get in the way of, her passion for a sensible and sensitive understanding of the history and present circumstances of the Naxi and Mosuo. Yet, there is enormous theoretical understanding here. And there are significant contributions to theory, especially in the area of state formation, kinship and gender studies.

The fact that the Mosuo are matrilinear has attracted them to scholars both in China itself and the West, especially because of the importance gender studies have taken on over the last few decades. Mathieu steers her interpretation through

the maze of leads that arise from pre-1723 societies, Confucian and Tibetan notions of gender to come up with a new interpretation of the role of women in inheritance rules and the family among the Naxi and the Mosuo, and the status of women in society more generally.

The Dongba religion and manuscripts raise fascinating questions of origin and diffusion. Once again the author considers a host of factors that may have led to the development and spread of the Dongba tradition. But she is in no doubt about the age of this culture and that books in Dongba pictographic script go back well beyond the Manchu takeover of 1723 to as early as the time when the Mongols were in power, which in this region was from 1253 to 1381.

One of the most famous, and controversial, aspects of the history of the Naxi of the Lijiang plain is the custom of love suicide. Parents who made marriage promises on behalf of their children committed them totally. The young people could not escape betrothal through elopement or divorce, which meant that only death could release them. So young people who fell in love with anybody other than the betrothed had no recourse except suicide to escape the promise their parents had made for them. While this custom is more or less dead, a few cases were found in the 1990s, and there are young Naxi people who still find it romantic. Mathieu proposes a strikingly different interpretation of this practice from those put forward by previous scholarship.

But I shall resist offering further explanation. It is hardly the job of the preface-writer to add explanation to the author's topics, when the writer has herself fulfilled this role so thoroughly. I hope these brief comments on some of the wealth of fascinating topics addressed in this book entice the reader for what is to come. If they do so, then I can feel I have done my job adequately.

Colin Mackerras,
Brisbane, Australia.
January 2003

Foreword

Whilst major events and dates in the history of the southwestern Sino-Tibetan frontier are relatively well known, the internal processes that translated centuries of Chinese indirect rule into local politics rest with the mysteries of an unwritten history. This is the history of the people of northwest Yunnan, among whom figure the ethnically dominant Naxi and Mosuo, but also Yi, Lisu, and Pumi. Following the Communist revolution of 1949, Chinese scholars have attempted to reconstruct local ethnic histories according to a Marxist dialectic that stressed the evolution of the frontier from tribal to feudal and finally into the contemporary organization of official nationality groups and autonomous regions. This book attempts to reconstruct the history of the southern China-Tibet borderland through an anthropological reading of textual sources, local and imperial historiography, as well as religious ceremonial texts and oral tradition. The present study has one major objective: to try and recover some of the processes that transformed what were independent tribes oriented towards Tibet into vassal subjects of the Chinese empire. Then, it also has a secondary objective which follows from the former: to explore the ethnic and historical relationship between the Naxi and the Mosuo, a topic that has intrigued scholars East and West for almost a century and upon which no consensus has yet been reached.

As the field of Mosuo and Naxi studies is still relatively new, I have chosen to provide a full theoretical discussion in Chapter I, following an introduction of Naxi and Mosuo societies and related anthropological and historical studies.

The present short introduction, therefore, is meant to situate the study in the context of research conditions and sources.

This book is a revision of my doctoral dissertation, *Lost Kingdoms and Forgotten tribes* (Australia, Murdoch University, 1997). Research for this book therefore began in 1988 with my doctoral candidature. In the course of a decade, this project has taken me from the library at Murdoch University in West Australia to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., by way of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Of course, it has also taken me to China, for a period of thirty months and several study trips undertaken between September 1989 and 1998. The present study when compared with the original dissertation benefits from the maturation of thinking, recent publications and field research by my colleagues in the field of Naxi and Mosuo studies, as well as further field studies on my part.

In the last ten years, China and Yunnan especially have undergone so many transformations that it is hard to appreciate how difficult it was to conduct anthropological fieldwork in the early 1990s. As other graduate students who came to Naxi studies in the period between the tragic events of Tiananmen in 1989, and the opening of northern Yunnan to international tourism and investment in 1993, I found Mosuo country closed to both visitors and scholars who were not of Chinese birth. Thankfully, Chinese-born scholars Cai Hua and Shih Chuan-kang who were respectively students in Paris and at Stanford were then residing in Yongning. A few years later, their researches resulted in invaluable ethnographies.

Where foreign scholars were concerned, the next best thing to doing fieldwork in Yongning, was to take up residence in Lijiang and to study Naxi society and culture. But even there, foreign scholars were placed under considerable restrictions. They were required to live in town, and in designated hotels; they were not allowed to venture further than a bicycle ride or a return day trip on the bus. As it turned out, bureaucratic imperatives which are too convoluted to be explained here required that I should be based in Kunming,

and to limit my research interests to seminars and tutorials at the Academy of Social Sciences.

On the positive side, formal tuition at the Academy was a wonderful opportunity to share the knowledge of scholars who had decades of research experience, who were themselves Naxi and, in the unique case of Lamu Gatusa, Mosuo. Study at the Academy also allowed me to discuss ideas that were not in print, as well as to examine and evaluate the academic discourse in this field of 'minority nationality studies' – a process fundamental to the textual analysis which I pursue in this book.

Not surprisingly, I also felt frustrated both at the limitations imposed on my own research opportunities, and at the restrictive living conditions which were aggravated by a pervading climate of suspicion and control. But as Xunzi noted of human nature, it usually hungers for what it does not have. In my own case, stress proved quite an incentive. I decided to make the most of my circumstances and to welcome whatever opportunity for learning presented itself. I eagerly took all the information that came my way. I happily cultivated the company I was fortunate to keep among the many minority people who lived in the provincial capital, and among the many scholars (Chinese and foreign) who resided in Kunming or were simply passing through on their way to, and back from fieldwork and whose own areas of expertise lay with different nationality groups, namely Yi, Miao, Pumi, Dai, Hui, Lisu and so forth. Consequently, residence in Kunming resulted in my becoming thoroughly proficient in the bibliography and various personal and political issues at stake in formal Naxi and Mosuo scholarship. It also resulted in the translations of Yi, Dai, and Pumi creation mythology which I indulged in when I had nothing else to do, and not least in a wealth of eclectic information and impressions. All of those were to prove invaluable to the comparative method I was to pursue in this ethnohistorical project.

On a very specific note, residence in Kunming also gave me the opportunity to engage in original research on the Mosuo Daba religion. Aside from a period

of field research (see below), Mosuo scholar Lamu Gatusa and I spent incalculable hours and about six months reviewing and analyzing Daba literature. This resulted in the translation into English of about one tenth of what Gatusa believes to be the entire Daba corpus from the region of Labei. This work was very important. Although the Daba religious tradition had not been documented at all outside China and very little had been published about it in Chinese language, Chinese and Western scholars had assumed that the Mosuo Daba was a simpler, oral version of the Naxi Dongba. Thanks to this work, I came to question this assumption, and consequently, to question everything else that had been assumed about the historical connections between the Naxi and the Mosuo. Perhaps more importantly, research in Daba religion initiated me into the metaphorical universe of the Mosuo and led to the discovery that in traditional northern Yunnan, all that is meaningful is allegorical, poetic, and musical. In turn, this discovery provided me with the very lens through which I began reading not only the Naxi Dongba texts, but also Naxi historiography itself. But this stroke of good fortune, I owe to He Zhonghua, Wang Shuwu and Guo Dalie at the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming for 'assigning' me to Lamu Gatusa who is not an economic historian or a political scientist but a prize winning poet and a dedicated scholar who has now spent twenty years collecting the songs and religious literature of his people.

Of course, I also took every opportunity to travel to those places that were not closed to foreign visitors. Thus, I spent time in Xishuangbanna and in southern Sichuan. I also spent a great deal of time in Dali where I visited the landmarks of the former Nanzhao kingdom, as well as the temples and the houses of Bai friends. Between 1989 and 1998, I also spent many weeks in Lijiang county, in the towns and villages of Minyin, Fengke and Judian. And I did eventually get to experience Mosuo society first-hand. At the end of 1990, my teachers at the Academy obtained a special permission to allow me to undertake a field trip to the Mosuo patrilineal villages of the Jinshajiang region

in company of Lamu Gatusa. When Yongning first opened to foreign tourism in 1992, I was able to visit for ten days with a special permit. Then, in August 1993 when Yongning was unconditionally opened to foreigners, I returned for three weeks. In 1998, I went back to Labei with Lamu Gatusa and we trekked across a very large territory from the banks of the Yangzi to Yongning town, Lake Lugu and Zuosuo. Back in Lijiang also in 1998, I undertook an iconographic research of Dongba religious art and ritual performance in collaboration with Mr. He Limin from the Dongba Research Institute. In 2000, I spent three months interviewing Mosuo celebrity Yang Erche Namu for the writing of her childhood memoir which we co-authored under the title *Leaving Mother Lake* (Little, Brown and Cie., 2003).

Where communication is concerned, in 1991, I used Mandarin to which people often answered in the local Chinese dialect or in Mosuo. When I had troubles understanding, Gatusa interpreted into standard modern Chinese, never losing patience with my curiosity or our interlocutor(s) who nodded in approval and corrected him as they saw fit. Young people for their part spoke standard Chinese. By 1992, I had no problem understanding the local Chinese spoken by men of all ages, but communication in Mosuo which is the language of most older women still required intermediaries. The same language conditions applied in Lijiang.

Today, I feel extremely fortunate to have visited both the plain and the hill regions of Yongning both before and after the development of local tourism. The weeks spent in Labei especially gave me the opportunity to experience a section of Mosuo society that had not been documented at all in Western scholarship and that had barely been touched upon by Chinese ethnology. I began to appreciate the socio-cultural distances which are apparent in Mosuo society itself, as well as the differences which distinguish Mosuo society in Labei and Naxi society in Fengke, where the Naxi and the Mosuo are thought to be culturally and socially the closest. I cannot put in words the impact which the time spent in Labei had on me, or the gratitude I owe to Lamu Gatusa and

his family for their kindness and what they taught me of a different way of perceiving the world. I learned so much. Lamu Gatusa was the trusted one, and I was trusted by proxy, so that we worked from morning to night from the second day of our arrival.

Evidently, the ethnographic data presented in this book are obtained from several sources: pre and post-1949 Western and Chinese studies by Lamu Gatusa, Charles McKhann, Sydney White, Shih Chuan-kang, Cai Hua, Eileen Walsh, Guo Dalie, He Zhiwu, He Zhonghua, Yang Fuquan, Zhu Baotian, as well as my own field research and report anthropology from expatriate Mosuo and Naxi in Kunming.

Although my own field research was not in the league of ethnographic work, its importance to the present study cannot be underestimated. Fieldwork allowed me to visit significant historical and mythological landmarks in Dali, Lijiang, Yongning, Ninglang and Muli. Residence in villages gave me the opportunity to ask questions as well as to evaluate ethnographic studies and theories through direct observation, informal conversations and formal interviews. It also afforded me personal experience of the various religious traditions and their attendant rituals, libations to the ancestors and cults of various deities, curing ceremonies, housewarmings, and funerals. I have watched Daba, Dongba, Zheda (Mosuo shaman), Suni (Yi shaman) perform. I have also interviewed Mosuo and Naxi religious specialists, including not only Daba and Dongba, but also Buddhist monks of the Gelug-pa and Karma-pa. I have measured the time it took to rebuild the Yongning lamasery destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. I have heard the rhythm of everyday life in the morning, the evening bells and the Buddhist prayers, and experienced the terrain, the seasons, the scent of burning artemisia and incense, the flickering of butter lamps, the time it takes to walk to the nearest medical outpost, the songs and dances, and the differences which one recognizes immediately between Mosuo and Naxi and cannot be understood on paper.

Where textual sources are concerned, information is above all sorely

limited. Isolated details concerning the tribal people of northwest Yunnan are found here and there in Chinese chronicles beginning with Sima Qian's *Shi Ji* [Memoirs of the Historian]. On the Tibetan side, the pre-Buddhist chronicle (the *Dunhuang Annals*) also comments on Lijiang and its peoples. But none of these amounts to very much and very little is known of Naxi and Mosuo histories prior to 1381 and the Ming conquest of Yunnan.

From the middle Ming period, however, the feudal lords of Lijiang began keeping official records of their successions, marriages and most significant deeds. But here again, lies a problem, for there are two genealogical chronicles pertaining to the family history of the Lijiang Mu chiefs and those are filled with discrepancies. As I shall try to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, however, these documents are crucial to the reconstruction of Naxi history in spite of, or rather because of, their disparate mythological contents and blatant contradictions.

Unfortunately, the history of the Mosuo is much more obscure. The feudal lords of Yongning and of other 'Mosuo' peripheries also kept genealogical records, but those were first compiled during the Qing period, in some cases, as late as the 19th century. Presumably, a number of other and older documents perished in the destruction of the local temples and feudal residences that took place during the Cultural Revolution.

Although I am proficient in spoken and in written modern Chinese, I do not have the training of the philologist to evaluate classical Chinese sources. What is more, I have no knowledge of Tibetan beyond notions of its grammatical structures. Consequently, although I have read the original Chinese sources, I have relied on classic translations of Tibetan and Chinese primary sources by well-known specialists: J.F. Rock, E. Chavannes, G.H. Luce, J. Legge, C. Sainson, P. Pelliot, R.A. Stein, G. Tucci, H. Hoffman, C.R. Backus, and so forth. On this note, however, I must express my gratitude to my friend Zeng Shi for spending many hours helping me read in original Chinese the textual records pertaining to Lijiang and reproduced in the *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* series

[Research into the social history of the Lijiang Naxi nationality]) as well as the 1545 genealogical Chronicle of the Mu family photographed and reproduced by Rock in his *Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of South-West China*.

Given its many limitations, this book is but one step in the field of Yunnanese history. Nonetheless, I do hope that it will have made a worthwhile contribution to this field of research, which has captivated a significant part of my life by now.

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been written without the help and support of many people. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all those who spent their precious time discussing ideas and problems and all those who permitted me to enter their private world to gather ethnographic information or to benefit from their friendship. Not least, I wish to thank those individuals and institutions who provided me with the material means to undertake this extraordinary journey.

Thus, I thank my country of adoption for providing me with a university education. I thank the Australian government and Murdoch University for granting me three scholarships and supporting my doctoral research. I also thank my thesis supervisors, Dr. Mark Berger, Dr. Carol Warren, Prof. David Goodman for their intellectual enthusiasm and respective sense of humor. I thank Prof. Eric Ten Raa who taught me as an undergraduate student at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia, for encouraging me to take up Chinese, and for reading my field notes, Dr. Barrie Machin, Dr. Roberto Ciarla of Is.M.E.O. (Rome), Dr. Alec McHoul at Murdoch University, Dr. Anne McLaren at Latrobe University, Dr. Antonia Finnane at Melbourne University, Prof. Lu Binghong of the Beijing Language Institute who first taught me Chinese and who suggested that I do research in northwest Yunnan. I would also like to thank Dr. Amphay Doré of the C.N.R.S. (Paris), for discussing methods in ethnohistory in Kunming. I thank my peers for their encouragement: Dr. Carolyn Brewer, Anne-Marie Metcalf, Dr. Sally Sargison,

and Dr. Tanya McIntyre. I thank the Asian Cultural Council in New York for providing a fellowship to return to China in 1998, and Cindy Ho my comrade in that adventure, for years of enthusiasm and hard work, and her passion for the study of Dongba culture and art. I also thank filmmaker Nancy Tong, for both her sense of humor and her camera work. Finally, I thank Professor Michael Oppitz of Zurich University, Dr. Elizabeth Hsü of Cambridge University, Prof. Colin Mackerras of Griffith University and Dr. David Bradley of La Trobe University for their appreciation and generous comments on my doctoral dissertation.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the scholars in China, the scholars at the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming: first of all, my dear friend and colleague Mr. Lamu Gatusa, and then Mr. Guo Dalie, Ms He Zhonghua, Mr. Wang Shuwu, Mr. Li Guowen, and Mr. Yang Fuquan, and also Mr. Li Kunsheng and Mr. Zhu Baotian of the Provincial Museum, with whom I worked happily for many months and who offered me friendship and hospitality. I thank the scholars at the Dongba Research Institute, Mr. He Limin, Mr. He Jingsheng, Ms Xi Yuhua, and Mr. Li Jinchun, as well as Dongba He Jigui. I also thank Prof. Mao Zhaoxi of Zhejiang University and Prof. Zeng of the History Department at Hangzhou University who arranged for my contacts at the Academy of Social Sciences in Yunnan.

I honor the memories of Mr. He Zhiwu of the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming and Dr. David Rindos of the Archaeology Department at the University of Western Australia who were committed scholars and teachers.

I thank the many wonderful persons whom I met in Lijiang, in Yongning, in Dali and other places, my teachers and fellow foreign students at the University of Hangzhou and the University of Zhejiang, my room-mates at the University Hotel in Kunming, for making the years so fulfilling, for taking care of me when I was sick, and not least for sharing their knowledge and experience with so much generosity. For reasons of privacy and space, I may not list everyone. But I sincerely thank the Lamu family, Zaji, Sun Ling, He Jiangyu, Xiao Wang,

Li Hong, Xiao San, Teachers Zhu, Alex, Wendy, Wade, Teresa, Elena, Tim, Crystal, Anne-Maude Dougoud, Oumar Badéré, Paola Zuin, Matt Forney, Yang Erche Namu, Adrian Gormley, Eric Boudot, Jean-Noël Posner, Maria-Cristina Martinetto, Simonetta Focaccia, Fabienne, Peter Shotwell, Monica Bianchi, and Liu Iwadate. Finally, I thank my parents, Gustave and Lucienne Mathieu, my children Euro and Cassis, and my husband Ari for everything.

Glossary and Definitions

nationality (*minzu*): refers to the official post-1949 administrative/ethnic category which currently defines the Chinese state as a multinational state of fifty-six nationalities.

minority nationality (*shaoshuminzu*): means any Chinese nationality which is not Han.

Naxi Nationality: refers to the official category which includes both Naxi and Mosuo; people living on both sides of the Yangzi in Lijiang and Yongning and who acknowledge themselves as Naxi, Nahi, Nari and Naze.

Naxi: refers to the people identified as members of the Naxi Nationality who live on the western banks of the Yangzi, i.e. Lijiang, and who acknowledge themselves as Naxi and as Nahi.

Mosuo People: refers to the official category which comprises the Mosuo of Yongning, people who, between 1956 and the mid-1980s, were officially identified as eastern Naxi.

Mosuo: people of Yongning and Zuosuo who acknowledge themselves as Mosuo and Nari. These do not include the people of Guabie and other eastern regions, who acknowledge themselves as Nari and Mongol, but not as Mosuo.

Mo-so: refers to the populations of Yongning and Lijiang between the 13th century and 1949 who today would be officially classed as Naxi, Mosuo or Mongol.

Mo-so Zhao (Mo-so Kingdom), also Yue-xi Zhao: a tribal kingdom of Tang dynasty Yunnan believed to be the ancestor state of the Naxi Nationality. The Mo-so Zhao was conquered by the dominant Nanzhao (Southern Kingdom) circa 750 A.D. [see map 4].

Nanzhao (Southern Kingdom): Yunnanese kingdom, an ally and a rival of Tang China founded in the 7th C A.D. by the Meng family. At its height, Nanzhao influence extended from Yunnan into Burma. The Nanzhao was influenced by Chinese, Qiang, Burmic and Indian civilizational modes [see map 4].

Dali Kingdom: Yunnanese kingdom centered on Dali and founded in the 10th century by the Duan family, after the fall of Nanzhao. The Duan remained in control of the Dali Kingdom after the conquest by Kublai Khan in 1253. They were deposed by the Ming emperor in 1381.

ethnic group: a group which identifies itself as such, and is one among other groups dwelling within a larger state polity.

people: a group whose members share a set of core customs and a common language and who may or may not be confined to a specific political territory.

state: a self-identified political unit organized militarily to defend itself and/or its territory (hence also tribal state).

tribe (buluo): a large group unified by kinship and affinal associations.

lineage (zu): a descent group whose members claim a founding ancestor.

clan (zhi): a large descent group whose claim to an original ancestor is remote and fictionalized.

ruling family: immediate relatives of the chief, as well as persons included in his ancestral line and in his line of descent.

caste: an endogamous, prestige and occupational category ascribed by birth, within a rigid hierarchical social system. In the present study, the notion of caste is derived from the social system described in ethnographic reports of Nuosu society (northwest Yunnan/ southwest Sichuan).

chief: the head of a group of people who share in his ancestral claims and are thus connected to him by bonds of kinship.

divine king: the head of an archaic state whose position is not only (or no longer) legitimated by kinship links but by virtue of religion and ritual. The divine king is the sole mediator of cosmic and chthonic rulings.

Chronology of Events

- 109 B.C.** Han invasion of northwest Yunnan.
- 225 A.D.** The Mo-sha tribes appear in the Chinese records in connection with the region of Yanyuan. The Mo-sha are defeated by Zhuge Liang.
- 618-624** Tang invasion and occupation of northwest Yunnan including Lijiang and the valleys of the Jinshajiang.
- c. 630** Invasion of Yongning plain by Niyuewu of the He tribe.
- c. 650** Establishment of the Nanzhao (Meng She Zhao) and five other kingdoms around Dali including the Mo-so Zhao.
- 670** Tibetan push into northwest Yunnan.
- 703** Tibetans occupy Lijiang.
- 748** Nanzhao King Kolofeng succeeds Piloko. With the backing of the Tang empire, he defeats and conquers the other five kingdoms of the Erhai, including the Mo-so Zhao. The Mo-so tribes are dispersed and handed over to Nanzhao.
- 750/751** Nanzhao defeats the Tang and defects to Tibet.
- 794** Nanzhao and the Lijiang chief defeat the Tibetans in Judian and Nanzhao returns to the Tang.
- c.800** Nanzhao converts to Buddhism.
- 835/840** Religious conflicts in Tibet and China between Buddhists and native religious elements (Bon, Confucianism, Taoism).
- 902** A court intrigue destroys the Nanzhao royal clan (800 people) and

thus ends Nanzhao rule. After a violent inter-regnum period, Nanzhao is succeeded by the Dali Kingdom.

- 937** Duan Siping founds the Dali Kingdom.
- 1253** Mongol invasion of Yunnan, followed by the dismissal and execution of the He chiefs of Yongning and Zhongdian.
- 1276** The Mongols confirm the Lijiang chiefs as supreme chiefs over the tribes of Lijiang, Judian, Weixi, Heqing, Yongsheng, Fengke and Yongning.
- 1381** Ming conquest of Yunnan.
- 1382** End of the Dali Kingdom and Duan rule in Yunnan. The Ming emperor confirms the hereditary rule of the Mu in Lijiang and the Ah in Yongning, and shifts Yongning out of the military and administrative rule of the Lijiang chiefs.
- 1400-1600** Military expansion by the Lijiang chiefs. The Mu conquer the hill regions imposing corvée labor, tribute payment and military conscription. They settle garrisoned villages among the conquered people. By 1600, the Mu control territories reaching to Litang in Sichuan and with those, China's southern gateways to Tibet.
- 1406** Yongning is established as a native prefecture (*fu*).
- 1600** The Mu chief converts to Karma-pa Buddhism.
- 1659** Qing conquest of Yunnan.
- 1700** The Yongning chief allegedly converts to the Gelug-pa. He also loses the territories of Qiansuo and Zuosuo in Muli.
- 1723** Ah Zheli, a relative of the Mu family, leads a delegation to Kunming demanding that the Mu be removed from office. The Qing court annexes Lijiang into the imperial administrative system (*gaitugui*). The Naxi adopt Han marriage and funeral rites.
- 1855-1875** Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan, with much destruction in Lijiang.
- 1911** The Republic.

- 1937-1945** Sino-Japanese war. A period of relative economic and intellectual expansion for Lijiang as government and universities move west and trade roads in the east are blocked.
- 1949** Foundation of the People's Republic of China. The Mo-so people of Lijiang are formally identified as a nationality group under their traditional name of Naxi (Naxi Nationality/*Naxizu*). The central government bans religious practice throughout China.
- 1956** The People's Liberation Army 'liberates' Yongning and the Yi Liangshan region. The end of feudal rule in Yongning is followed by the 'Democratic Reform' (*Minzu Gaige*). The eastern Mo-so join the Naxi Nationality. Their political and administrative center is transferred to Ninglang Yi Autonomous County seat.
- 1958-1960** The Great Leap Forward causes mass starvation throughout China. Period of *Minzu Xue* (social science research) in Yongning: Chinese scholars discover Mosuo matrilineal society.
- 1966-1976** The Cultural Revolution. In peripheral regions, ethnic policy makes way for the class struggle. The Naxi communist elite is purged. Red Guards desecrate and destroy the temples in Lijiang in Yongning. Burning of the Dongba books. Official policy requires the matrilineal Mosuo to marry.
- 1980s** Deng Xiaoping and the Open Door Policy. Economic development and social normalization begin. In Yongning, people return to their traditional way of life.
- 1985** Lijiang is officially opened to foreign visitors.
- 1988** The people of Yongning obtain the official title of Mosuo People.
- 1989** Restoration of temples in Lijiang. Reconstruction of the Yongning lamasery begins. Tian'anmen massacre.
- 1992** Yongning is conditionally opened to foreign tourism.
- 1993** The peripheral regions of Lijiang, Zhongdian and Yongning are fully opened to foreign tourism.

- 1994-1995** Airport opens in Lijiang. Development of tourism at Lake Lugu.
- 1996** Earthquake in Lijiang, hundreds of fatalities, thousands of people are injured and left homeless.
- 1997** Lijiang is rebuilt. Expansion of tourism and other industries.
- 2002** Open air rock concert in Lijiang. Expansion of ethno-tourism in Lijiang and Yongning.

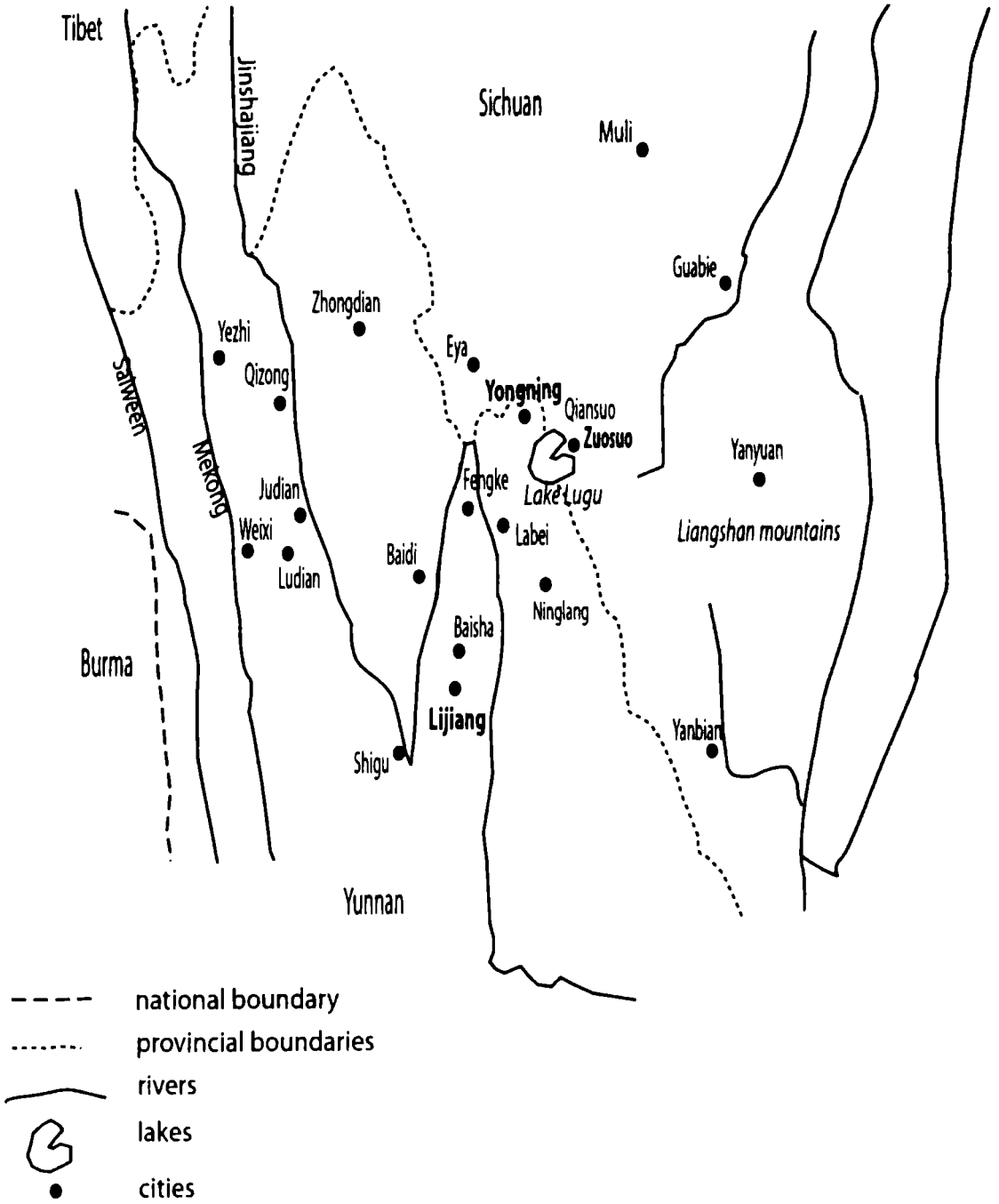
Guide to Spelling and Pronunciation

The spelling of foreign words in this book is guided by a desire to make reading both accurate and accessible. Except for citations and words for which usage is already established in English, I have used Chinese *pinyin* without tone marks to transcribe all Chinese words. I have provided original Chinese characters where confusion could arise or as required by the discussion. For the spelling of Tibetan words, I have used the simplest orthography available, modeling on Rolf Stein's *Tibetan Civilization*, London, Faber and Faber, 1972. Unless required by analysis, I have transcribed both Naxi and Mosuo words by using Naxi *pinyin* from which I have omitted the tone marks (q, f, and l) indicating falling, rising and high tones. Where English language publications have already established standards, Naxi and Mosuo words are given according to those standards. Thus, I write Dongba rather than Naxi *pinyin*: Dobba/ IPA [toba]; Dingba Shilo rather than Naxi *pinyin*: Dibba Shilo/ IPA [tiba]; and Daba rather than Naxi *pinyin*: dDaba/ IPA [daba].

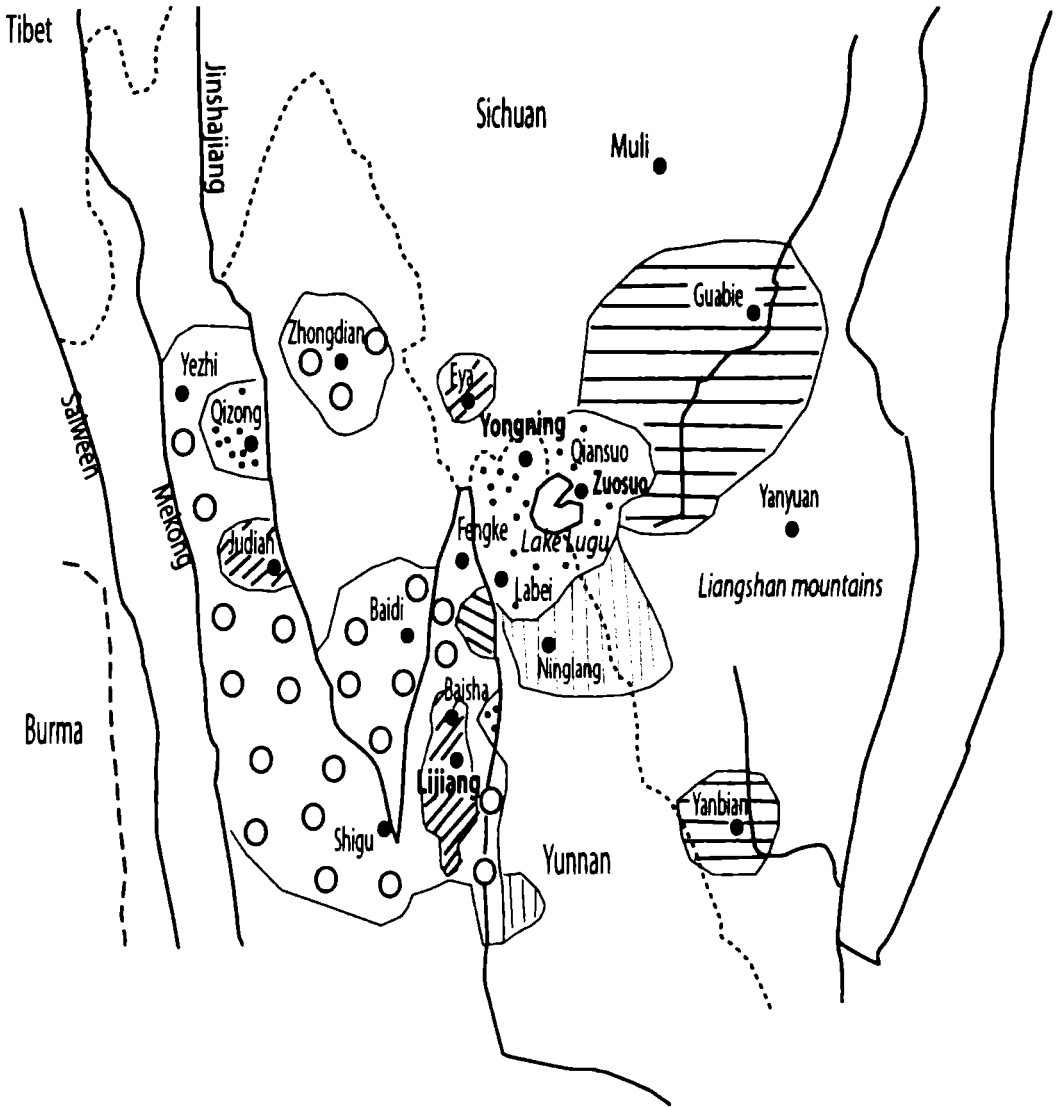
Naxi	b	p	bb	m	t(w)	d	t	dd	n	l
Mandarin	b	p		m	f(w)	d	t		n	l
IPA	p	p'	b	m	f(w)	t	t'	d	n	l
	g	k	gg	ng	h	j	q	jj	ni	x(y)
	g	k		(ng)	h	j	q			x(y)
	k	k'	g	ŋ	h	tə	tə'	dʒ	ŋ	ʐ(ʒ)
	z	c	zz	s	ss	zh	ch	rh	sh	r
	z	c		s		zh	ch		sh	r
	ts	ts'	dz	s	z	tʂ	tʂ'	dʒ	ʂ	ʐ
	i	u	iu	a	o	e	v	ee	er	ei
	i	u	ü	a	o	e	v		er	ei
	i	u	y	a	o	ə	v	ɯ	ər	e
	ai	iei	iai	ia	ie	ui	uai	ua	ue	
	ai	ie	(ian)	ia	(iou)	uei	uai	ua		
	æ	ie	iæ	ia	iə	uei	uæ	ua	uə	

Map 1

NAXI AND MOSUO TERRITORIES

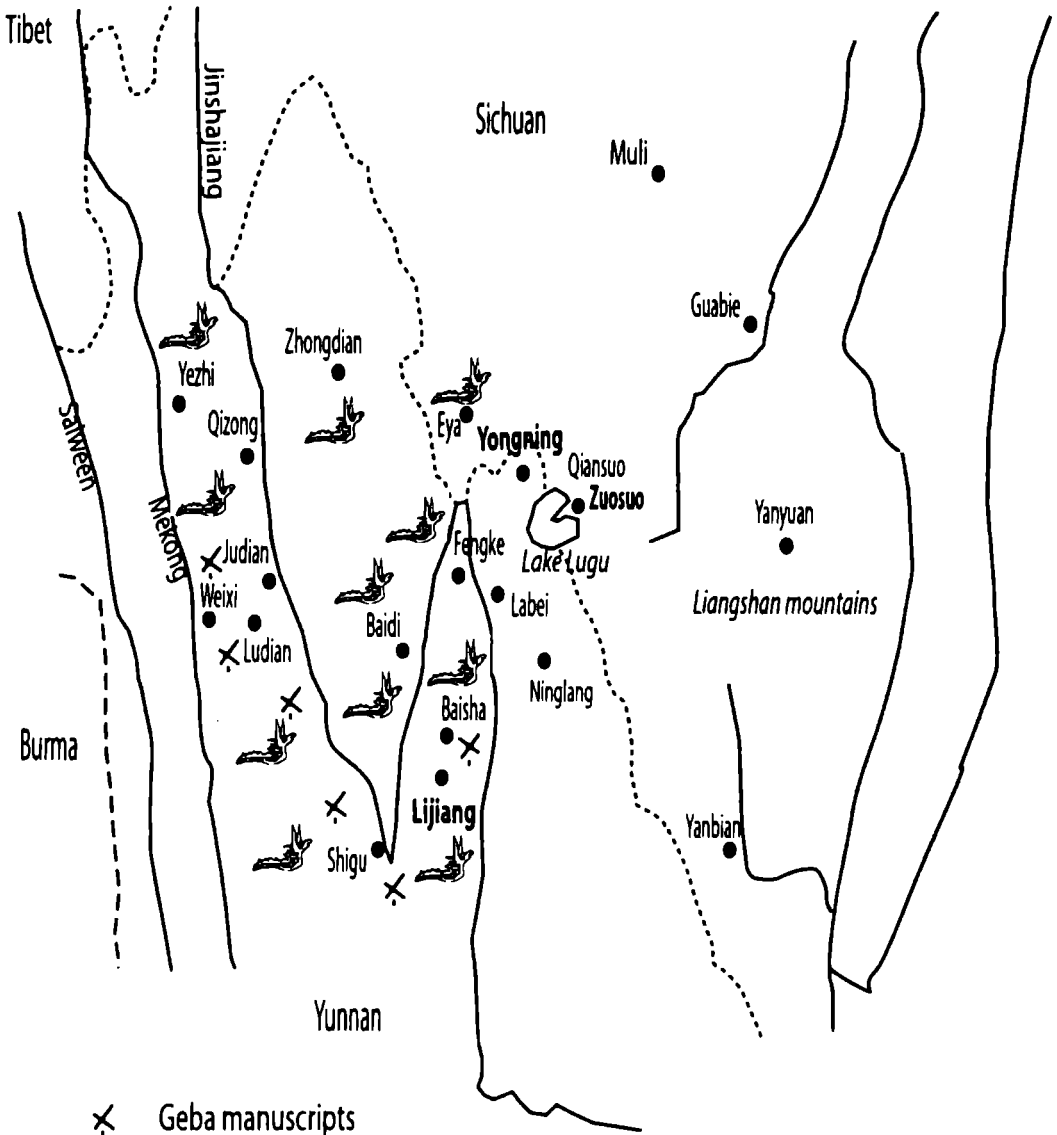



Map 2 NAXI and MOSUO DIALECTS



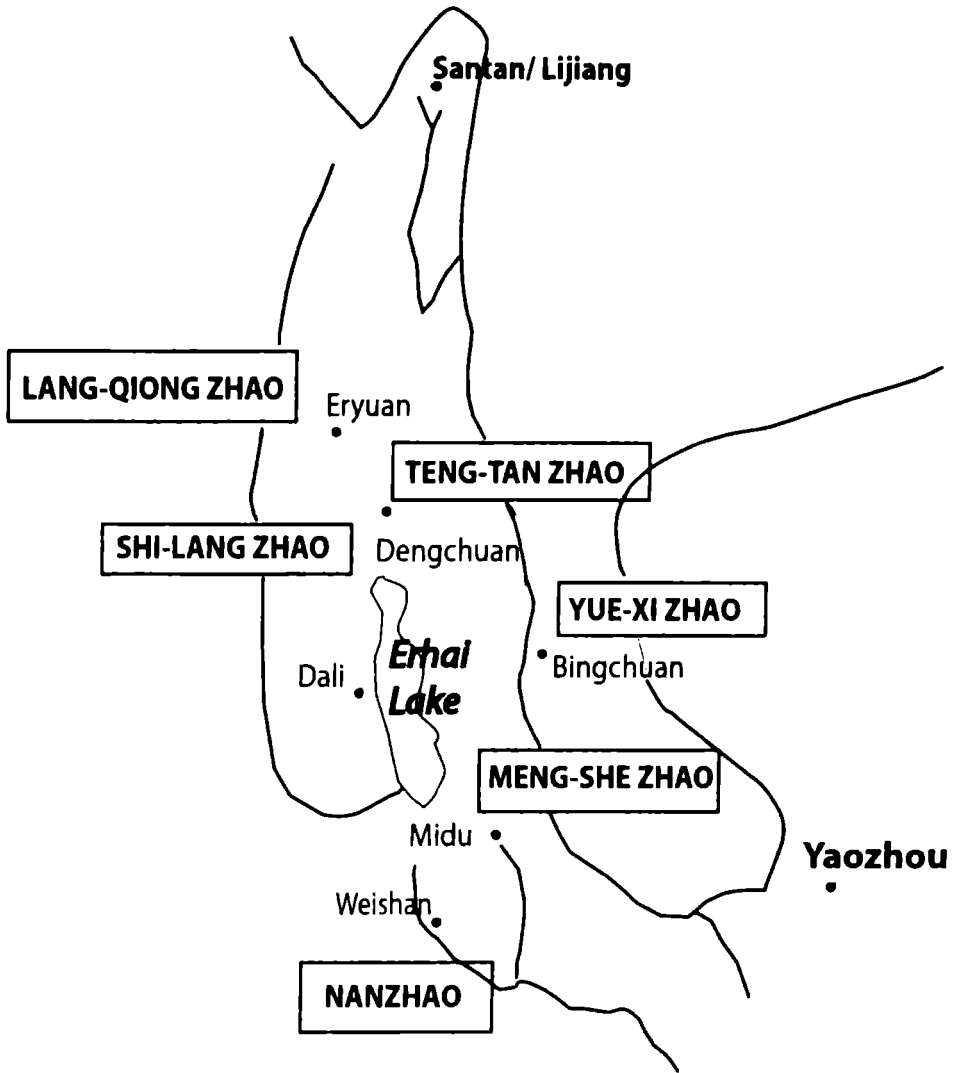
- /// Dayanzheng dialect (Lijiang town)
- OO Lijiang dialect
- // Baoshan dialect
- Yongning dialect
- Guabie dialect
- | | | Beigu dialect

Map 3 NAXI MANUSCRIPTS



- ✕ Geba manuscripts
-  Pictographic manuscripts

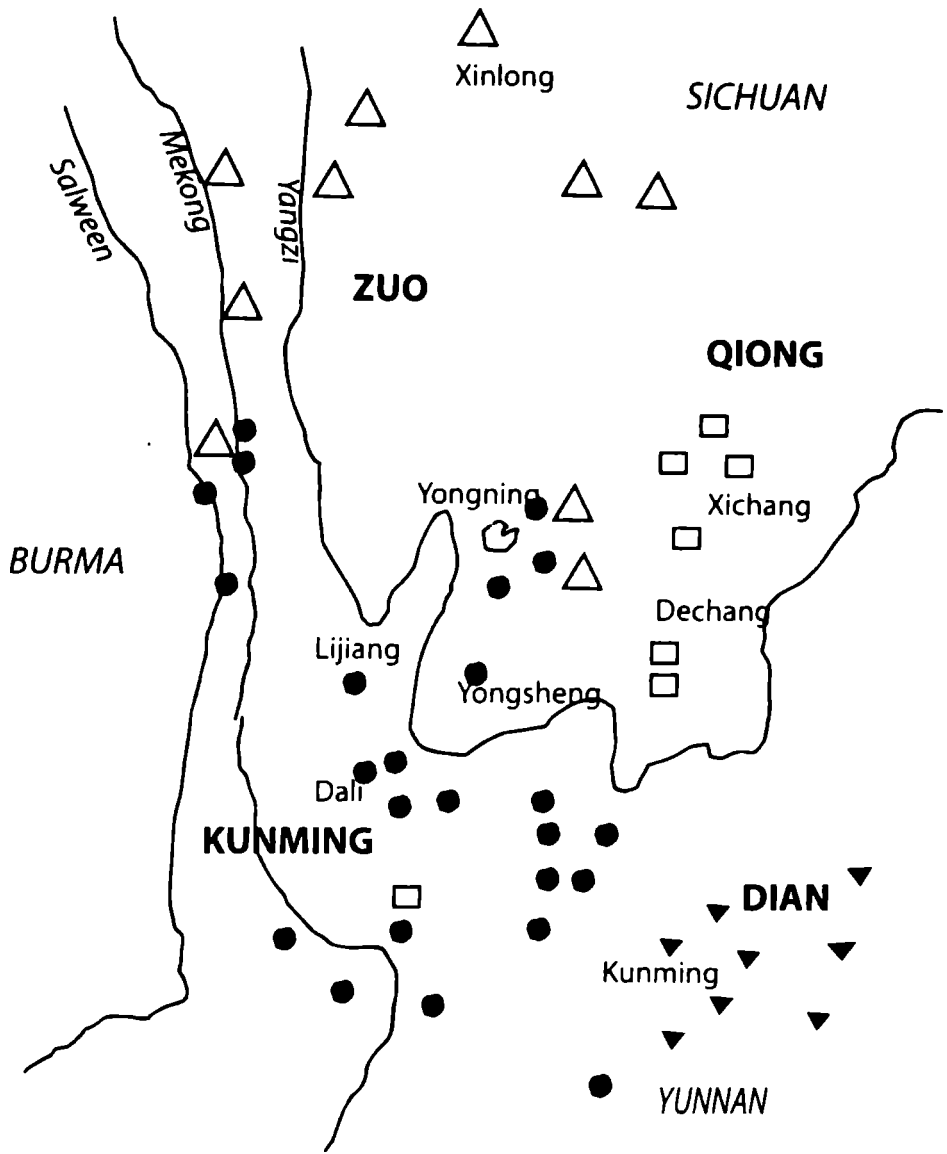
Map 4 THE SIX KINGDOMS



zhao

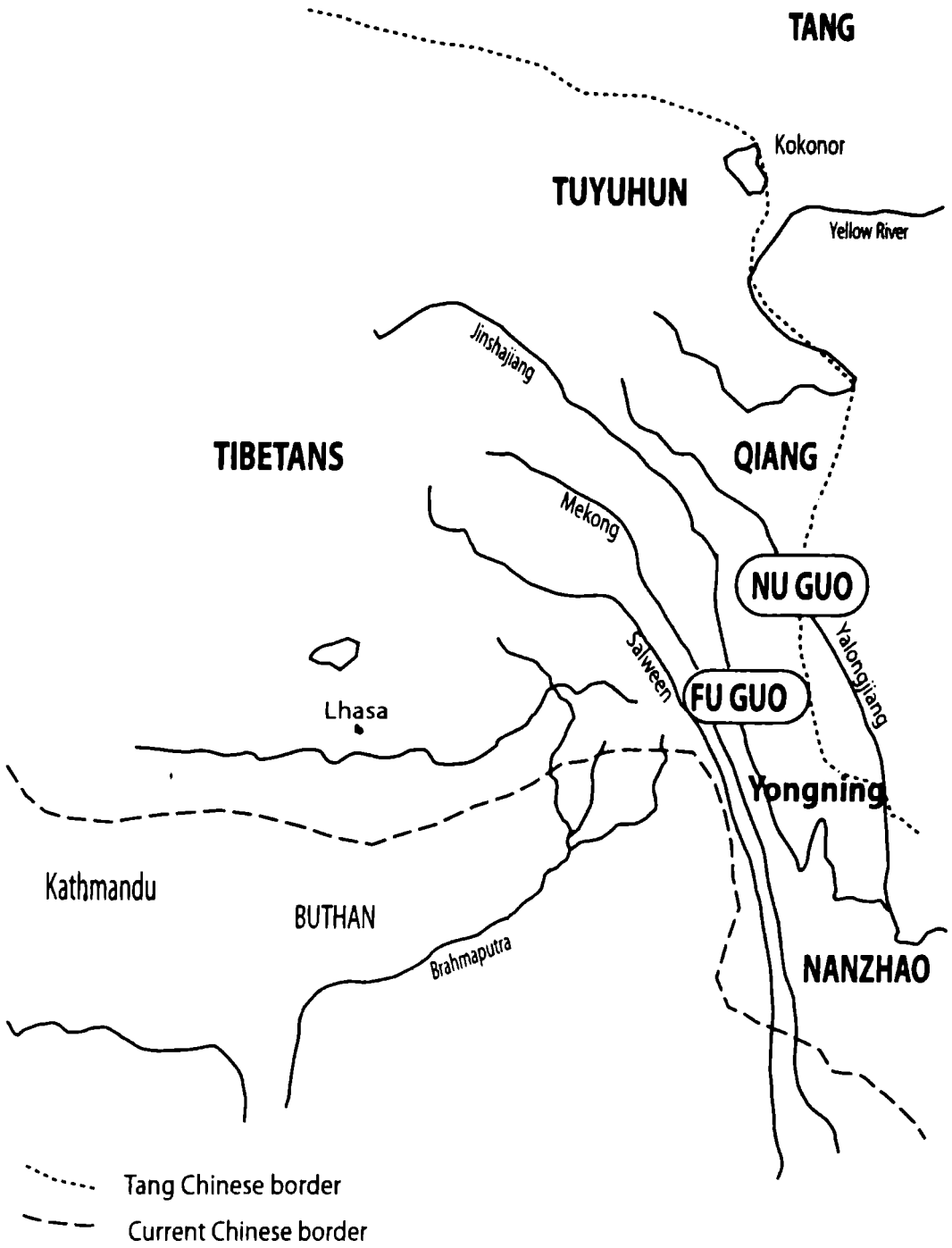
one of six kingdoms of the Erhai region

Map 5 ANCIENT SITES AND ANCIENT TRIBES



- △ Slab tomb culture associated with the ZUO
- Earth graves associated with the KUNMING
- Slab tombs, multiple graves of the QIONG
- ▼ Dian culture

Map 6 NU GUO and FU GUO



The Naxi Scripts



The pictographic script

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The Geba script

Chapter I

Introduction: Matrilineality and the Making Of the Naxi Nationality

In this first chapter, I introduce Naxi and Mosuo societies, and a discussion of the role which Chinese social sciences in general and historiography in particular have played in establishing contemporary Mosuo and Naxi ethnic boundaries. I follow with a discussion of what the paradigms Naxi and Mosuo mean in Western scholarship, and the methodological and theoretical issues which shape this study.

Introducing the Naxi Nationality and its peoples

The Naxi live in Lijiang District (*Lijiang Diqu*) in northwest Yunnan, on both sides of the Jinshajiang (Gold Sands River) as the Yangzi is known in these parts. They number about 309,500 people, and are for the great majority settled in Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County, with fewer numbers in Zhongdian, Weixi, Deqin, Jianchuan and Lanping counties.¹ East of the river, about 30,000 Nari/Naze and Nahu live in Ninglang County in Yunnan, as well as in Muli and Yanyuan counties in Sichuan where they are officially classed as members of the Mongol Nationality.² Only Nari speakers of the Yongning dialect acknowledge themselves both as Nari and Mosuo, irrespectively of whether they belong to the Naxi, or Mongol category (see maps 1 and 2).³ The Mosuo are the largest ethnic group in Yongning among Han, Yi, Pumi, Tibetan, Zhuang and Lisu.

The Jinshajiang has divided the peoples of Lijiang and Yongning for centuries, at least since 1381, when the Ming court enfeoffed the Mu family in Lijiang and the Ah (also Ngue) in Yongning. The Mu ruled Lijiang until its annexation by the Qing court in 1723.⁴ On the eastern banks of the river, the Chinese administration maintained the feudal system until 1956, after which the People's Liberation Army (PLA)⁵ removed the Yongning aristocracy,⁵ and the Mo-so masses elected to become members of the Naxi Nationality, one of forty-six official ethnic categories which, at this time, formalized the Chinese multinational state (*duo minzu guojia*).⁶

Mosuo and Naxi are both ancient names of the Lijiang and Yongning peoples. The name Mo-so (Mosuo) has a relatively long history. It is found as Mo-sha in the Chinese records of the 3rd century where it describes a tribe dwelling in Yanyuan (Sichuan). Then, from the 14th century until 1949, the word Mo-so was used by the Chinese to refer to the politically dominant, or majority ethnic population of Yongning and Lijiang.⁷ In their own tradition, and especially in their respective religious literature, however, neither Naxi nor Mosuo speak of themselves as Mo-so. Instead, both people call themselves Na: Naxi and Nahi in Lijiang, and Nari (also transcribed as Naze) in Yongning. The Naxi in particular despise the name Mo-so, believing it to be a derogatory term sustained by Han prejudice and tradition. Thus, in 1949, when the central authorities of the People's Republic of China identified the Mo-so people of Lijiang as an official Nationality, they acknowledged them under the name Naxi.⁸ And in 1956, when the Yongning Mo-so were in turn 'liberated', it made sense to all concerned that they too ought to become members of the Naxi Nationality (*Naxizu*).

But ten years of socialist experimentation (collectivization followed by the Great Leap Forward), another decade of brutal misery during the Great Cultural Revolution, and, as we shall see, the vagaries of Marxist social science resulted in the 1980s in what was described in Communist China as a 'contradiction' (*maodun*) between the Lijiang and the Yongning Naxi – and a demand by the latter to be recognized as a distinct and official nationality under their own title of

Mosuo Nationality (*Mosuo*zu). By then, Mosuo cadres could explain that in 1956 the people elected to become Naxi because ‘they didn’t know [better]’ (*laobaixing bu zhidao*). The Mosuo, they now said, are not Naxi and never have been: they do not look like the Naxi,⁹ they do not speak the same language as the Naxi, they do not have the same religious traditions, the same songs, cuisine, etiquette, dress, or even the same family systems. For the Mosuo are a ‘matrilineal people’ and the Naxi are patrilineal.

In 1988, the central authorities worked out a compromise by granting the Yongning Naxi the unique title of Mosuo People, a Branch of the Naxi Nationality (*Mosuo Ren, Naxizu de Yi Zhi*). And in 1992, the Mosuo once again petitioned the government for a review of their official ethnic status, and lost. Nevertheless, with their position as Mosuo People, and in the wake of accelerating economic and social liberalization, the Mosuo have been increasingly treated as a *de facto* nationality. In 2003, few people (Chinese or foreign) would ever confuse them with Naxi. In the past few years consequently, Mosuo concerns for full nationality recognition have receded. Today, issues of identity take second place to issues of territorial management and economic development.¹⁰

The process of nationality identification and the case of the Mosuo

Since much has already been written on the inconsistencies of the process of nationality identification in the PRC,¹¹ I shall comment only briefly. There is a general agreement in Chinese studies outside China that the official ‘nationality’ or *minzu* category cannot simply be translated as ‘ethnic group’. Hsieh writes that ‘there are no ethnic groups in China because the minzu category created by the authorities is a sort of scientific grouping that has no relevance to the people concerned.’¹² According to Heberer, the problem facing Chinese policy regarding the identification of ethnic groups partly results from the paucity of concepts at hand for Chinese policy makers. He argues that ‘the Chinese language has never distinguished among peoples, nation, nationality, and ethnos. All these entities are lumped together under the single term “minzu”. This causes definition

problems... It is only since the 1980s that Chinese social scientists have been laboring to give this term a more precise definition.'¹³ Yet, as Colin Mackerras explains, 'the term *minzu* has been defined in different ways during the twentieth century. The precise definition adopted has always been closely related to policy'.¹⁴ In fact, the term *minzu* raises questions of definition because, on the one hand, it bears upon the perennial problem of what constitutes ethnicity and, on the other, because it raises the question of what the *minzu* does for the Chinese state.

The word *minzu* literally means 'people-lineage'. It may be translated in English either by 'nation', 'nationality' or 'ethnic group' or by 'race' as Mackerras uses the term in *China's Minorities*.¹⁵ Indeed, in Chinese, *minzu* stands in opposition to other words which for their part translate nation as country, in particular, *Guojia* or 'state-family', *Zuguo* or 'ancestral land', and *Woguo* which means 'my country' or 'our country'. Not insignificantly, the *minzu* is an administrative category devised on the basis of various older and historically enduring entities which the Chinese historical record may, at various stages, have described as *guo*, like the Tibetans, the Manchu, or the Mongols who once formed nations in the full sense of the term: that is, political collectives in control of states and territories.

Territoriality establishes a crucial difference between the kindred types expressed in *minzu* and *guojia* because, on the one hand, the *minzu* have no exclusive or overriding economic, administrative or military claims to any territory, but on the other, state policy (regional autonomy) formally acknowledges that some *minzu*, as for example the Tibetans, the Mongols, or the Naxi have traditional rights of occupancy. At times, territoriality also defines the boundaries of ethnic identification, since ethnic persons who settle permanently in predominantly urban centers are subject to the same rules as Han people.

The *minzu* therefore speaks for a notion of 'lineage' or 'race' and the rights of groups to perpetuate themselves, but it also speaks for a particular process of regionalization concerned with the management of state territory. We shall see

that in Yunnan, this process of regionalization has deep roots in the history of Chinese imperial expansion, beginning in 109 B.C. with the conquest by Han Wudi.

Where Naxi and Mosuo identity is concerned, the Chinese had for centuries referred to the people of Lijiang and Yongning by the name Mo-so. Thus, historiography and administrative practices had already established a genealogical basis upon which the Mosuo could be recognized as Naxi. But one cannot discount that the identification of the people of Yongning as Naxi in the mid-1950s also made political sense.

In 1949, the process of nationality identification had two major objectives: to acknowledge and grant political equality to existing national groups (as for example, the Tibetans, Mongols, and Manchus) and to identify and recognize on the same terms the smaller ethnic groups who had been marginalized by the former Republican and Imperial governments. The Communist authorities planned on identifying these smaller groups through a process of 'scientific' classification, a revised Stalinist model that took into account language, territory, economy, culture, history, and the principle of self-identification. But at the onset of Communist rule, when hundreds of groups petitioned for nationality recognition, the process of identification was speedily rationalized on the basis of criteria that rarely fulfilled the ideal model or ever involved all categories at once. This in turn resulted in the identification of fifty-three nationality groups by the early 1960s.¹⁶ In the late 1970s, when the dust had settled and the number of minority nationalities (*shaoshuminzu*) had reached the current fifty-five, various people had been grouped under the same nationality banner although they lived in different territories, and/or spoke diverse languages as for example, the Dai, and the Yi. As Hsieh Shih-chung explains, for all its claims to science, nationality identification seems to have amounted to institutionalizing existing Han folk theories on non-Han peoples.¹⁷

This apparently *ad hoc* enterprise can be understood partly as a response to the unexpected and overwhelming number of demands for nationality

identification. But undoubtedly it was also largely motivated by the urgency to forge national union and to consolidate the frontier in the face of local and international opposition. Many among the frontier peoples were deeply suspicious that Communism was an excuse for renewed Han expansion. The Tibetans were resisting fiercely, especially in neighboring Kham. There were threats of a Pan-Tai movement from Thailand and of a Nationalist resistance sustained by foreign powers from nearby Burma.¹⁸ In 1956, PLA cadres exhorted the Mosuo to join an existing nationality group and, in particular, to take up membership in the Naxi nationality. PLA pressure is better understood in the context of frontier politics, and not least 1950s Sino-Tibetan relations.

Today, political concerns in Yunnan are of an entirely different order but government priorities remain focused on containing ethnic groups within the fifty-six official categories which have made up the Chinese nation since 1978. Nationality cadres and ethnologists explain (in conversation) that the central authorities are resisting the demands of hundreds of smaller ethnic groups who are dissatisfied with their current nationality status. Fearful to reopen the nationality identification process on any larger scale, the government seeks middle grounds: as for example, the title of People (*Ren*) given to the Mosuo. Towards this end also, the authorities offer ethnic groups the option to relocate to a nationality of their choice within existing categories.¹⁹ Hence, the Mosuo of Yongning could elect to become Mongols like the Mosuo of Muli did, if their cadres were not adamant that the Mosuo are no more Mongol than they are Naxi.

The Naxi Nationality in the light of Chinese social sciences

Several Mosuo requests for nationality identification have been rejected by the authorities, on the grounds that the Mosuo and the Naxi are the same people and that the differences between them are superficial, temporal consequences of uneven historical development.²⁰ Indeed, historiography and ethnological theory have played a major role in shaping Mosuo ethnic destiny. Generally speaking, in the early 1990s, Chinese scholars tended to believe that Mosuo demands for

nationality status were opportunistic rather than motivated by ethnic sentiment. In conversation, they pointed out that the Naxi were classed as a 'developed nationality' and that, given their current economic and educational standards, the Mosuo would qualify as 'un-developed' and therefore become entitled to government subsidies and priority programs in education and health.²¹ According to one scholar also, the proof that the Mosuo and the Naxi were indeed grouped as one nationality on the basis of scientific criteria was evidenced by the fact that Mosuo sexual behavior caused the Naxi to 'lose face', and that the Naxi, therefore, had nothing to gain by claiming the Mosuo among their own. Certainly, from discussions with older informants in Lijiang, Mosuo sexual mores were not all up to the moral standards of some local Naxi. But then again, everything has a context, and today there are prominent personalities in Lijiang who claim that the Naxi were once matriarchal and practiced free love, just like the Mosuo do today, because this is a story relished by tourists and their guidebooks.²²

Evidently, from the perspective of Western anthropology there is much to object to the idea that the Mosuo and the Naxi should be classed as one ethnic group on the basis of a common historical origin and discrete cultural similarities. More-over, by contrast to Chinese Marxist social science which benefits from a unifying theory, anthropology has produced an overabundance of models of what constitutes ethnicity, identity and group boundaries. So many in fact, that as Sherry Ortner writes, 'the "ethnicity" industry is too vast and too amorphous' to be explored in great detail.'²³ But whatever the controversies surrounding ethnicity in anthropological theory (and to which I will come back in Conclusion), there is a general agreement that ethnicity is somehow dependent upon a group's consciousness of 'being ethnic' – a consciousness of having a common ancestry, of being solidary in the face of the outside, of wishing for continuity in descending generations.²⁴ Rather than argue that the Mosuo and the Naxi are the same people because they are descended from the same tribe and still present a given number of common cultural traits, Western anthropologists would examine causes and processes, why and how, the Mosuo regard themselves as a people

(*minzu*) in their own right and one distinct from the Naxi. Post-49 Chinese social science, however, served the state and the Marxist scientific project of national reconstruction. Not surprisingly, therefore, when it came to identifying ethnic boundaries, Chinese scholars were far more interested in providing objective, rational criteria than in processes of self-identification.²⁵

During a tutorial class taken in 1990, Naxi linguist He Zhiwu laid out the criteria that made the Mosuo a branch of the Naxi nationality, as follows: nomenclature, common language, common religion, common mythology, dress styles, kinship, and a common matrilineal origin. I shall review and critique each of those in the following pages.

Common Nomenclature

The Mosuo and the Naxi have long been described in the Han historical records under the single ethnonym Mo-so, and both people call themselves Na. The Mosuo name Nari is the Yongning dialect equivalent of the name Naxi. The words *ri* and *xi* mean ‘people’, and *na* means ‘great’. Hence, whether they are Mo-so or Na, the Mosuo and the Naxi have always shared the same name.

He Zhiwu, of course, is mostly correct, except that the *na* in Naxi and Nari does not only mean ‘great’ but ‘black’. And this is significant because the Naxi and the Mosuo are only two of many more Yunnanese ethnic groups who acknowledge themselves as either Black or White people. For example, some Yi groups call themselves Nasu. The Naxi and Nari’s immediate neighbors in Liangshan call themselves Nuosu (Nosu) – also meaning Black. The people of Dali are called Bai, meaning White.²⁶ And then again, there is among the Naxi a reluctance to admit that Naxi and its derivatives, such as Nahi mean something along the line of ‘black people’ even though *na* does indeed mean *black* (as well as *great*) in both Naxi and Mosuo languages. He Zhiwu in fact also objected, and other Naxi scholars agree with his position, that the *na* in Naxi could not possibly mean Black because ‘black’ always has negative connotations in the Naxi worldview. In Naxi cosmogony, Black represents evil and stands in opposition to

White and goodness. The Naxi religious manuscripts also associate Black with the social category of ‘serfs’ and ‘slaves’ (*wu*). Finally, He Zhiwu pointed out that *na* could not mean Black because Naxi syntax would require the adjective *na* to precede the noun *xi*. Black people would be Xi-na. But this grammatical argument is especially unconvincing, since the word order Na-xi is wrong whether Na means ‘black’ or ‘great’, since both ‘great’ and ‘black’ are adjectives. Incidentally, even in the name Nuosu, the standard Yi word order (noun + adjective) is inverted.²⁷ The Mosuo, for their part, appear just as reluctant to acknowledge themselves as ‘Black People’ as the Naxi are. As it was explained to me, the *na* in Nari means great, not black, *unlike the na in Naxi*.

Common Language

Mosuo and Naxi languages are Tibeto-Burman languages of the Yi language branch and dialects of the same tongue.²⁸ Chinese linguists (including Naxi scholars Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu) have identified six dialects of Naxi, divided on either side of the Jinshajiang as Western and Eastern dialects. The Eastern dialects (Mosuo) are said to have kept more archaic and original elements than the Chinese influenced dialect of Naxi spoken in the Lijiang region (see map 2.).

In actuality, there is still a fair amount of controversy regarding the linguistic classification of Naxi, and in particular, there is a lot more research to be done on the eastern dialects – that is, on the Mosuo dialects.²⁹ And even though He Zhiwu maintained that Naxi and Mosuo languages are closely related, he conceded a 60 percent vocabulary divergence between both languages as well as substantial syntactical differences.

Importantly, while Naxi and Mosuo languages are closely related, they are also sufficiently distinct that Naxi and Mosuo will switch to Chinese to communicate with each other.³⁰ In James Matisoff’s words, Southeast Asia (and the latter can stretch to include Yunnan) is ‘one of the most diverse and complex linguistic areas of the world, where hundreds of languages and dialects teem in symbiotic profusion’, and where the value of linguistic difference is no doubt

relative to how the speakers concerned view things.³¹ Now one could object that some Naxi dialects are not readily intelligible to other Naxi speakers, and that the difference between Mosuo and Naxi is therefore one dialectical difference among others. This, however, would ignore that even Chinese linguists do in fact class the various Naxi and Nari dialects, as western and eastern dialects and therefore along the Naxi-Mosuo divide. It would also ignore that Mosuo, unlike Naxi, is intelligible throughout Mosuo territory.

Mutual intelligibility of course is not of itself proof or disproof of national or ethnic boundaries (e.g. the controversies and acrimony surrounding British, Australian and US English) but the linguistic division between Mosuo and Naxi may have some relevance to Naxi and Mosuo ethnic identities. As Edmund Leach puts it, to speak the language of one's neighbors is to express solidarity with them and not to speak it is to mark one's difference.³² At the very least, Naxi and Mosuo linguistic differences suggest historical complexity. For example, the Naxi in Lijiang plain say that they do not understand other Naxi from Fengke or Baidi because these people are, unlike themselves, the 'real Naxi' (*zhende Naxizu*). But in Fengke, people say that the 'real' Naxi are somewhere else, for example, in Lijiang basin, whilst Fengke people do not understand the speech of Naxi who live in more distant regions, as for example, in Judian.

From my own encounters in Lijiang basin and beyond, a surprising number of people seem to believe that they *became* Naxi during the course of history, mostly during the Ming dynasty, but also in times as recent as the post-1949 period. By contrast, I have never spoken with any Mosuo (including in Labei) who thought the 'real' Mosuo were other than themselves. I have also been told that although each Mosuo village has a 'different language' (*butong yuyan*), all Mosuo can communicate with each other.

Common Religion

Mosuo and Naxi religions are versions of one another. The Mosuo Daba is a primitive, animistic, and oral version of the Naxi tradition. By contrast, the Naxi

Dongba is a written tradition, with two scripts: one pictographic, the other syllabic (see plate). The Dongba has become highly syncretic over time and reflects several civilizational influences: Bonpo, Taoist, and Buddhist.

In actuality, the connections (historical and otherwise) between Mosuo Daba religion and Naxi Dongba are far from clear. The Daba and Dongba have different rituals and pantheons. They also have distinct founding ancestors. Pre and post-1949 Western and Chinese scholars simply took for granted that the Dongba and Daba were versions of one another without substantiating their positions. Systematic studies of the Mosuo Daba only began in the mid-1980s when Mosuo scholar Lamu Gatusa began fieldwork under the auspices of the Lijiang Yishu Guan (Lijiang Art Office), and continued in the 1990s under those of the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming. Lamu Gatusa has now published a substantial volume of his work but the latter still awaits translation into English. At this stage, the most extensive documentation of Daba religion in English is contained in several chapters (one of which my own) in *Naxi and Moso Ethnography* by Michael Oppitz and Elizabeth Hsu (1998).

Common Mythology

Naxi and Mosuo share the same creation mythology with the minor difference that Mosuo mythology reflects the matrilineal structure of Mosuo society. But to say that Mosuo and Naxi mythologies are basically the same is to miss the point that in mythology, apparently minor differences can have something to do with history. As Lévi-Strauss writes, 'the manner in which rituals and their foundation myths are opposed from one tribe to another ... reflects the double evidence of the distinct historical origin of each tribe anxious to preserve its individuality, and of a practice which this history itself has lead both peoples to share'.³³

Dress Styles

Today, Mosuo and Naxi dress very differently but, He Zhiwu argued, before Lijiang was annexed by the Qing emperor in 1723, Naxi women wore long skirts

like Mosuo women and even today, in more remote areas such as Fengke, Naxi women still dress in such fashion. In fact, that Naxi women wore skirts until 1723 does not mean that they ever dressed like Mosuo. Today, the feminine costume of Fengke is readily identifiable as Fengke Naxi rather than Mosuo (even to the untrained eye of the foreigner). From another perspective, I may add that Naxi women in Zhongdian dress in Tibetan fashion whilst Tibetan women in Yongning dress in Mosuo fashion. In pre-1949 Minyin, some Naxi women wore short pleated skirts in Miao fashion.³⁴

Kinship

Although the Mosuo are matrilineal and the Naxi patrilineal, they have the same 'clan' names, Ma, He, Se and Ye. But again, the issue is not so simple. The four Naxi clan names, Se, Ye, He and Ma do not find four cognates among the Mosuo. There are Ya and Hu among the Mosuo who match the Naxi Ye and He and, at a stretch, the Mosuo Xi may be the same as the Naxi clan name Se but the Mosuo also have names like Ngue, Co, and Bu which are not found in Lijiang. The question is, in any case, what do these so-called clan names mean given that even when they know whether they are He, Ya, etc. neither Naxi nor Mosuo can explain where these names come from, and what function they ever served?³⁵

Matrilineality

The Naxi are patrilineal, but they were not so in the relatively distant past. According to He Zhiwu, the Naxi evolved out of matrilineal kinship at some stage of the Tang dynasty. Nevertheless, Naxi kinship terminology and practices have kept some archaic features as for example the high status position of the maternal uncle which prove that they were once just like the Mosuo.

The high status of maternal uncles in Naxi society cannot be taken as proof of a former matrilineality. For maternal uncles also hold a special position among the Naxi's Tibeto-Burman speaking neighbors (Nuosu, Kachin, Labei Mosuo, and so forth) who are not matrilineal. As to the supposed matrilineal past of the Naxi,

one could object that, at least where Chinese social science is concerned, matrilineality hardly amounts to any kind of historical evidence because socio-evolutionist theory makes matrilineality a universal stage of historical development. According to this perspective, all nationalities, including the Han, were once matrilineal.

As the discussion below will show, the idea that humanity begins in a universal matriarchal stage has acquired such a mythical quality in Chinese Marxist constructs that matrilineality is precisely what makes sense of all Mosuo and Naxi socio-cultural differences. Matrilineality has become a trope for 'backwardness' and is thus sufficient proof that Mosuo language is an archaic version of Naxi, that the Mosuo Daba religion is a primitive oral version of the Naxi Dongba, and that Fengke women dress in 'Mosuo fashion' because this is how Naxi women once dressed.

Socio-evolution, history and the multinational discourse

Aside from the ten years of the Cultural Revolution when the central authorities abandoned their ethnic policy, the Communist polity has worked hard to consolidate a mutualist relationship between ethnic identity and Chinese nationalism. Through the creation of new ethnic elites and the prioritization of health programs, educational and economic development, the central authorities have established multi-faceted bureaucratic and economic linkages between the nationalities and the state.³⁶ At the level of 'super-structure', they have ensured that formal education and propaganda foster means of thinking 'Chineseness' in terms other than 'Han-ness'. As every modern Chinese knows: 'China is a nation of many nationalities' (*Zhongguo shi ge duo minzu da Guojia*). Perhaps, not so surprisingly, the production of historical meanings has played a major role in this project of national definition. For history is the 'mythomoteur'³⁷ of Chinese civilization.³⁸

Up until the mid-1990s, however, when Chinese scholars spoke of history, they were almost always speaking of a 'scientific history' grounded in the theory

(or doctrine) of historical materialism. According to this Chinese Marxist historical discourse, all Chinese people (ethnic minorities and the Han majority) trace their origins to the same ancient tribes. All Chinese peoples belong to the 'great Chinese family of many nationalities' (*Zhongguo duo minzu da jiating*), and all have the same ancestors.³⁹ The Han therefore are not a special race of people and the peripheral people are as Chinese as the Han. The difference between them is a matter of historical development which, for various reasons, left peripheral people out on the margins of Chinese civilization.⁴⁰

Seen through the prism of historical materialism, Chinese national history evokes the mythical dialectics explored by Lévi-Strauss. In the socio-evolutionist scheme, the ancestors of the Chinese begin in the exclusive feminine principle of the primitive and sexually promiscuous matrilineal commune which Chinese archaeologists believe is evidenced in the finds excavated at Yangshao. These ancestors then developed by the agency of a patriarchal anti-thesis which is evidenced in another archaeological site, this time at Longshan. From the patrilineal primitive commune of Liangshan, the ancestors of the Chinese progressed to the stage of tribalism (Shang and other tribes) which for its part is evidenced by more archaeological finds as well as the written record. They may now progress through to the feudal and imperial ages – the Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasty when the Han nationality first distinguishes itself from the other ancestral tribes. History eventually achieves synthesis and permanence with the Socialist stage where gender equality becomes a metaphor for other equalities of class and ethnicity.⁴¹ Hence, scientism and Marxist temporalities ensure that Sacred Time remains the legitimizing principle of the Chinese body politic. Historical materialism has revoked the eternal returns of the Imperial cycles mandated by Heaven and announced the birth of a new humanity.⁴²

And in all of this, the Mosuo were to discover that their matrilineal society represented a first, exceedingly backward domain that lay beyond history and consequently beyond the terms of nationality recognition. But the metaphor of gender is only one discursive element guiding Chinese historiography.

Discursive trends in Chinese national history

Adopting Sydney White's seminal work on Naxi medical discourses, it is helpful to identify three discursive trends in contemporary Chinese social science and ethnic studies: the discourse of modernization (evolution and progress), the discourse of salvation (the historic role of the Chinese Communist Party – CCP) and that of authenticity (the place of worthwhile *Chinese* achievements in Chinese history).⁴³

The discourse of modernization holds that the economic, cultural and educational backwardness which plagues, if not always defines, the ethnic (non-Han) condition is the consequence of a cruel and unjust history for which classes of oppressors, namely Han chauvinists and ethnic elites, must take responsibility. Minority nationalities are not lesser Chinese so much as they are less fortunate Chinese and the differences between the Han majority nationality and the other minority nationalities are temporal. They are not innate and not racial. This first stage in the ethical construction of the modern Chinese nation also announces the role played by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) in the salvation of all Chinese peoples. The original Chinese tribes were for the great (Han) majority rescued from an abject past by the inevitable march of progress, whilst others were forgotten at different stages of development until the CCP liberated them. At this point, however, the promise of social, economic and political emancipation cannot avoid taking Han economic and political centers for measure, and warp the egalitarianism of the revolutionary vision. The discourse of modernization and Communist salvation apply to all of China's peoples equally but it also makes China's peoples conditionally equal. Above all, it bridges new concepts with age old prejudices and renews with the millennia old civilizational project: whereas the Chinese once brought civilization to the barbarians on the peripheries, the CCP brings modernization to 'undeveloped' nationalities (*bu fazhan minzu*).

The modern historical discourse, however, does not always situate the past at the lowest rung of the prestige ladder. Few people in China seem to resist the temptation to remind 'foreign friends' that China was far more developed than the

‘West’ for several thousand of years, that China has a very long history, the longest in the world, five thousand years of it.⁴⁴ In Maoist China, authentic Chinese practices, especially health practices as for example acupuncture were extolled as having a scientific merit of their own, and as being superior to foreign knowledge precisely because of their great antiquity in the Chinese world. Under Deng the development of capitalist practices and the import of foreign capital were rationalized as ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’. Appeals to national pride come in many shapes and the discourse of Chinese authenticity anchors greater national identities to more traditional centers, and mitigates the foreignness of a modernization dependent on outside technologies, capital and knowledge (Marxism, and modern science).⁴⁵

Meanwhile, from the perspective of the ethnic peripheries, the discourse of Chinese authenticity perpetuates the contradictory dynamics that promote the egalitarian ethos of the Chinese communist state whilst they also reproduce traditional prestige hierarchies.

On the one hand, this discourse promotes greater nationalism by redefining China’s great past and civilization as *Chinese* rather than Han, and by establishing the Chineseness of non-Han peoples in opposition to the foreignness of the *waiguo ren*, literally, the ‘people outside the country’. And from my own experience in Yunnan, it appears that the Communists have been successful in creating national consciousness (a consciousness of being Chinese) above ethnic consciousness.

On the other hand, it is also generally true that minority people (even when they fully acknowledge themselves as Chinese) are very much conscious that the Han have more of a stake in ‘Chinese civilization’ than any other Chinese nationality. Quite aside from issues of Han chauvinism and prejudice, it remains that whilst peripheral people are working their way towards a modernization that proceeds from urban and Han majority centers, they cannot help but having a sense that ‘Han-ness’ somehow holds the yardstick by which they may gauge their own standards of development – that they may well be considered as ‘Han in

waiting'. At any rate, it is this scaling which allows town dwelling Naxi to express the view that they are more Civilized than the Mosuo, because they are more Sinicized.

At the same time, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the discourse of national authenticity is so pervasive that it fosters duplication and in turn allows ethnic peoples, and especially the less Sinicized among them, to revalorize their own traditions. In northern Yunnan, therefore, issues of matrilineality and sexual freedom have shifted ground over the past twenty years, out of the temporal abyss of the socio-evolutionist scheme into the light of a worthy Mosuo authenticity. Already in the early 1990s, Asu Daling (of Yi origin, and head of the county government in Ninglang) made a public statement to the effect that Mosuo customs of sexual freedom and matrilineality amounted to 'a peculiar way of life which has some rational elements so that it has been able to survive till this day ... The county government should respect the Mosuo people's freedom to preserve or change their customs.'⁴⁶ Incidentally, the last sentence was a direct reference to Article Four of the Chinese Constitution which guarantees the different nationalities the 'right to preserve or reform their customs'.

Nationality histories and nationality boundaries

In the 1950s, the Communist government embarked on a massive social research project in the ethnic peripheries (*minzu xue*: nationalities studies) with the object of facilitating the eventual implementation of socialist reform among non-Han people (*minzu gongzuo*: work among the nationalities). At this same period, the authorities asked social scientists to produce 'brief' or 'simple histories' (*Jian Shi*) for each official nationality. The ideological underpinnings of the 'brief histories' are shameless: social science was to contribute to the new order and intellectual dissent was impossible or severely (even fatally) punished.⁴⁷ The *Naxizu Jian Shi* [Brief history of the Naxi Nationality] was itself published in 1963, five years after the anti-rightist campaign and in the wake of the disasters of the Great Leap Forward. In Lijiang, as in other places in China, many people died

of starvation, but the *Naxizu Jian Shi* like all other *Jian Shi* exalted the benevolent and legitimate relations between the Communist state and its ethnic minorities, and not least, the progress made under the centrally planned economy.

Contrived, misguided or cynical as the early historiographies may now appear even in China,⁴⁸ they have played a significant part in reifying ethnic and nationality boundaries. Because, for all the criteria invoked, nationality classification is more often than not based on the notion that a nationality is above all an ‘historically evolved stable community’.⁴⁹ Nationality historiography establishes the most likely genealogy of the nationality category whilst it also rationalizes its historical development through the various phases of historical materialism. The nationality is thus ‘scientifically objectified’ and the legitimacy of the official classification is confirmed.

One should not be surprised that Mosuo history involves only a few pages of the *Brief History of the Naxi Nationality* and that there is no *Brief History of the Mosuo People* because the Mosuo’s history is that of the Naxi Nationality. Post-Liberation Chinese ethnology, in fact, took things a step further, for it expected Mosuo society to exemplify the living past of humanity itself.

Scaling ‘advanced’ and ‘primitive’ Naxi: the ethnogenesis of the Mosuo People

Socio-evolutionary theory informs standard descriptions of the Naxi Nationality as an educated (*you jiaoyu*) and developed (*fazhan*) nationality. As people in Lijiang will explain with an evident degree of self-satisfaction, ‘the Naxi have always followed the Han’. Their elites wisely submitted to the Ming in the 14th century, then to the Qing in the 17th.⁵⁰ In 1946, the Lijiang Naxi founded their own clandestine branch of the CCP and in 1949, they ‘liberated’ themselves five months before the Liberation of Kunming (Yunnan-fu).⁵¹ Yet, for all the pride they take in their Sinicization and in their having been at the vanguard of Chinese history, the Lijiang Naxi (elite and others) also perceive themselves as heirs to a local, worthwhile and authentic tradition. As a famous proverb explains, ‘Han Chinese are dog eaters’ (*Hazzi kee shee zzi*), a statement which testifies of times

when the Naxi were themselves in a position to exclude the Han from their rituals. Indeed, the Naxi do not eat dogs because such habits offend their gods.⁵² In short, even if the Naxi are a civilized (Sinicized) people and ‘among the better educated nationalities of China’,⁵³ they are also a unique people with certain cultural icons to prove this claim: food taboos, a Sacrifice to Heaven, Dongba religion, a local blend of Taoist music, and so forth.⁵⁴

Naxi participation in the Chinese (Confucian, Republican and Communist) educational projects insured that the Naxi ethnic discourse was produced by Naxi scholars (notably linguist and historian Fang Guoyu) as early as 1949. By contrast, the Mosuo ethnic discourse has its origins in the experience of *minzu xue* and until just over a decade ago when the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming recruited Mosuo scholar Lamu Gatusa, it was produced by other nationality scholars.⁵⁵

During the period of Nationality Studies in Yongning (1958-1962), Chinese social science discovered the Mosuo ‘matrilineal/matriarchy’⁵⁶ and with it an extraordinary ‘fossil society’ (*huashi shehui*) that had apparently survived from the dawn of time and would give historians the opportunity to illustrate, expand upon and refine Engels’ theory of state formation.⁵⁷ Statistical research showed that Mosuo society although dominated by matrilineal kinship, in actual fact comprised, a number of patrilineal families and others whose mixed genealogies were at the time described as ‘patriarchal-matriarchal’.⁵⁸ Mosuo society, therefore, could be compared to one of those specimens most sought after in the biological sciences because it was at a *transitional* stage between matriarchy and patriarchy. A few decades later, a new generation of Western trained anthropologists – Cai Hua, Shih Chuan-kang, and Susanne Knödel – would conclude that Marxist scholars had misinterpreted Mosuo kinship and that Mosuo society is overwhelmingly matrilineal.

In the 1950s, however, socio-evolutionary theory had left Chinese scholars in no doubt that the apparently mixed descent systems they had discovered in Yongning meant that Mosuo matriarchy was already evolving towards patriarchy.

And it followed that, Communist policy helping, the Mosuo could enter the stage of pairing marriage within a relatively short time.⁵⁹

Early publications on Mosuo culture and society are imbued with what now appear as astounding expectations of primitivity, conjured to situate Mosuo customs in a temporal, civilizational and moral framework which ultimately celebrates a triumphant Socialist stage, Han civilization and its satellite causes such as Nazi Sinicization. Scholars expanded at some length on the evolutionary discrepancies between the Mosuo and the Nazi: on the one hand, emphasizing the inherently simple (*jiandan*) character of Mosuo technologies, standards of commerce, architecture and handicrafts, whilst on the other, they credited Han and Nazi influence for whatever sign of 'progress' could be recognized in Mosuo society. For example, ethnologists explained that:

Agriculture is one the most significant economic activities of the Mosuo. As regards agricultural production, the Mosuo ordinarily make use of iron tools. They reached the stage of plowing cultivation early [in their history]. In more recent times, however, under the influence of the Han and of the Nazi people of Lijiang, some people have begun to acquire new skills in technologies and economics...

... Although they mostly make use of iron tools... the Mosuo cannot produce these few iron tools themselves, and in the past, they obtained them from the Han regions of Ninglang and Yanyuan, or from the Nazi region of Lijiang.⁶⁰

With the result that whereas ethnology seemed to confirm for everyone else that Mosuo society was an aspect of the Nazi's past, it convinced the Mosuo that they wanted nothing to do with the Nazi.⁶¹

Chinese scholars, however, work in the context of *realpolitik* and when in the 1980s, Deng opened China's doors to the outside world, foreign capital and academic exchange, notions of progress and modernization acquired a disposition unimaginable under Mao. After a decade of liberalization, historians were experimenting with new constructs, and ethnologists were beginning to question the criteria for nationality identification.⁶² At the same time, nationality studies became dominated by scholars of ethnic background. These scholars have done a

lot to shift the temporal stakes in the evolutionary discourse to benefit not only the exigencies of objective research but also their collective dignity.⁶³

There are now fewer ready-made ideas to explain the origins of Mosuo matriarchy, the fate of the matrilineal system, and the civilizational drawbacks of sexual freedom. Naxi scholar He Zhonghua questions the very notion that matrilineality reflects a former matriarchal power. Even among those who did fieldwork in Yongning in the 1960s, some scholars now believe that they misinterpreted Mosuo culture and society. They point out that in spite of several decades of government campaigns, in spite also of widespread education (over 70 percent of the Mosuo population has now received at least primary school education and what it brings, Chinese language, Chinese studies and moral education), the Mosuo still practice the 'walking marriage' (*zouhun*)⁶⁴ – because they evidently perceive some advantage in this way of life. The Mosuo, it now appears, are not unlike China's 'foreign friends' (*Mosuo Ren gen waiguo pengyou yi yang*), they can have sexual freedom and development.

Hypotheses on Mosuo temporalities have also become diversified, as some scholars now argue that the matrilineal system is ancient and others that it is recent, and each contributes an individual subtext to the Mosuo historical narrative. Some old school scholars, for example Wang Chengquan, maintain that the antiquity of the matrilineal system is evidenced in the Mosuo (and Naxi)'s ethnic origins in the Qiang tribes⁶⁵ of whom as early as the Han period, Chinese observers wrote that they 'know their mothers but not their fathers' (*zhi qi mu bu zhi qi fu*).⁶⁶ The next generation (Zao Weiyang, Wang Deyang, Luo Rengui) argues that Mosuo matrilineality is a late development, a consequence of extraordinary historical, ecological and economic circumstances.⁶⁷ In an interesting reversal of roles, Mosuo scholar Lamu Gatusa sides with the old school.

Like Wang Chengquan, Lamu Gatusa invokes the historical record and disputes that matrilineality is a fundamental and ancient characteristic of Mosuo culture and society. He argues that the Mosuo have had to deal with similar

historical, ecological and economic contingencies as all their neighbors and asks why then should the Mosuo be the only ones to have developed a matrilineal system.⁶⁸ But in Lamu Gatusa's argument, matrilineality is no longer an anomalous aspect of the distant matriarchal past, it is a cultural icon that takes on the same authenticating value as China's own antiquity. Matrilineality now represents the Mosuo collective as a unique group with a claim to a specific and, indeed, very long Mosuo history.

On the basis of his fieldwork in Yongning at the end of the 1980s, Shih Chuan-kang explained that the Mosuo had internalized notions of backwardness as regards matrilineality, but that they were also very much aware that matrilineality was the most obvious social characteristic that stood between them and the Naxi.⁶⁹ In the early 1990s, expatriate Mosuo in Kunming were themselves of the opinion that if Mosuo kinship originated in the dawn of time, so be it! Did not China's own past begin in the farthest antiquity?

'People say that the Mosuo are backward because of the matrilineal system. But, you see, they don't stop to think that this system which is the oldest kinship system in human history has survived in the modern world, and that it functions in the modern world, because it gives people great happiness... Mosuo families don't fight; women have high status, sometimes higher than men. The problem with the Han is that they are male chauvinists and it really upsets them to see women in charge of families'. Then, someone added: 'Anyhow, ancient does not mean primitive. The Han too are ancient people.' (Field notes January 1992)

That matrilineality has now assumed a worthwhile mythological dimension in Yongning is without doubt. Although one does come across persons (usually younger people educated in the cities) who may have mixed feelings about visiting relationships and matrilineality, or indeed who are ashamed of the old traditions, any casual visitor to Lake Lugu will immediately gauge the phenomenal contribution which the 'myth of matriarchy' is making to local economic development. Eileen Walsh, who has studied the management and effects of tourism in Yongning, explains that ethno-tourism reinforces Mosuo

cultural self-esteem and boosts local confidence that matrilineality does have extraordinary and inherent value.⁷⁰

Stevan Harrell has written of the Chinese multinational project that ‘insofar as civilizing projects are wholly or partially successful, they include the participation of the peripheral peoples. And as long as the peripheral peoples agree, at least on the surface, to the terms of definition and scaling imposed by the civilizers, the civilizees will be granted a voice to speak to themselves and the world about the success of the project. In this sense, the answer to whether the subaltern can speak is that the subaltern can speak on the sufferance of the civilizer.’⁷¹ The conversations quoted above, however, make the point that even as the ‘civilizees’ must learn to speak the language of the ‘civilizers’, they will still attempt to say what they want to say. And what this book will show is that peripheral people have had centuries of practice in the language of their civilizers, and that issues of internal mediation in the face of external imposition have been a dominant and constant theme in Naxi and Mosuo history. It will also confirm a theme dear to Marshall Sahlins, that cultures are both resilient and persistent, even as their resilience is intrinsically dependent upon their capacity for transformation.

Having covered the place of matrilineality and Naxi and Mosuo ethnic constructs on the Chinese side of scholarship, we may now turn to what the paradigms ‘Naxi’, ‘Mosuo’ and ‘matrilineality’ hold for Western ethnohistorical constructs – which takes us a long way away from socio-evolutionism and modern Chinese politics, to theories of gender transformation, political economy, and post-modern concerns with unequal power relations and colonial projects. It also takes us to other mythical realms, such as Eliade identified in ‘the myth of the noble savage’, in other words, the search for a golden moment in human history.⁷²

Western scholarship: The Han impact, pictographs, kinship and suicide

If Chinese scholarship defines the Mosuo and Naxi civilizational standards on an upward scale of Sinicization, in the ‘West’, Joseph Rock, Anthony Jackson and

more recently, Emily Chao have argued that Mosuo society speaks for a happier Naxi past and that (pre-1949) Naxi customs testify to the destructive impact of the Han imperial and civilizing projects on frontier peoples.⁷³ And where these scholars are concerned, the common ethnic origin of the Mosuo and the Naxi is both evidence for, and proof of, the severity of post-1723 Naxi social dysfunction. And whereas Chinese scholars look upon Mosuo society as an evolutionary anomaly, Jackson holds that it is the Naxi who are at odds with the ethnographic record:

There are three remarkable features of Na-khi society; their matrilineal tendencies,⁷⁴ their high suicide rate and their pictographic writing. This peculiar combination of attributes makes them unique, not only among the various ethnic minorities which inhabit southern China, but also in the ethnographic record.⁷⁵

Jackson argues that these ‘three remarkable features’ are historically interrelated and can be explained from the vantage point of a single socio-cultural condition and a single event: that the *common* people among the Naxi lived in a matrilineal system until the Manchu annexed Lijiang in 1723.⁷⁶ After 1723, he explains, imperial magistrates introduced new inheritance rules, compulsory betrothal and premarital chastity, and banned women from the ritual sphere. The consequent transformation of matrilineal Naxi society into a patriarchal domain became catastrophic as women refused to marry and began to commit suicide in ever increasing numbers.⁷⁷ Suicide, in turn, strengthened the position of the emerging male Dongba priests who took the opportunity to devise ever more sophisticated funeral rites and in the course of it all, to invent the pictographic script so as to enhance their mystique.

Jackson’s thesis has made little impact upon Chinese scholarship. Naxi scholars, evidently, do not object to the idea of a matrilineal and Mosuo past for Lijiang but they argue that this is very ancient history and that the Naxi entered the stage of patrilineality, monogamous marriage and patriarchy about a thousand years before 1723.⁷⁸ Outside China, Jackson’s ideas have also been contested.

Charles McKhann has dismissed Jackson's matrilineal hypothesis on the basis that it is founded on 'discredited 19th century evolutionist theory' and 'no historical evidence'.⁷⁹ Shih Chuan-kang has also criticized Jackson for his lack of historical data.⁸⁰ Others in the field of Yunnanese studies, however, admit in conversation that Jackson's thesis 'makes sense'. And in 1990, Emily Chao presented an ethnohistorical essay on the Naxi love suicide custom that built directly on Jackson's work.⁸¹

Certainly, Jackson's methodology raises some issues. To begin with, there is a problem with sources. Since Jackson is not a Sinologist and since he was also writing in the 1970s and had no opportunity for field research, he relied exclusively on secondary sources and principally on Rock's work: both his translations of Naxi religious manuscripts⁸² and his *Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China* (ANKSWC) – a monumental collection of geographical data and annotated translations from the historical record. Rock, however, provided very limited ethnographic information, especially where the Mosuo were concerned. Of the latter, in fact, all he had to say adds up to a few paragraphs to the effect that Mosuo women took lovers as they pleased, that they owned the property and that Mosuo moral standards were low but that the Mosuo did not commit suicide like the Naxi.⁸³

In fact, Jackson obtained most of his information on Mosuo society from a study by Russian ethnologist Reshetov.⁸⁴ But this piece was second-hand, derived from Chinese field studies of the 1960s⁸⁵ and, at least as far as Jackson's use of the data indicates, it was not especially accurate. For example, Jackson takes it from Reshetov that the Mosuo practiced patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, but more recent ethnographic research by He Zhonghua, Lamu Gatusa, McKhann, Shih's and my own field inquiries confirm that this form of marriage was a Naxi custom more typically found in the basin region. While it is the case that in matrilineal Yongning the incest taboo forbids sexual relations with matrilineal relatives up to four degrees and altogether ignores patrilineal ones entirely, this prohibition applies to both men and women and in no way indicates the direction

of marriage exchange. None of the Mosuo take wives exclusively on the patrilineal side. From the perspective of a male ego, patrilineal Mosuo marry bilaterally and matrilineal Mosuo, preferably, do not marry at all (see Chapters VI and VII).

If lack of data is simply one of the hazards of ethnohistory and not least of post-1949 Sinology, Jackson also ignored some important historical details. Although he took into account the more significant dates in Naxi history, such as the annexation of Lijiang in 1723, he made too little of the wealth of information given in Rock's ANKSWC and did not exploit other useful historical sources. Then, whilst he remained convinced that the key to Naxi social history lay with the less than adequately documented Mosuo, he did not test this central hypothesis against the ethnographic documentation available on the social organizations of the Naxi's other neighbors: the Tibeto-Burman speaking Yi (Lolo/Nuosu), Kachins, and Nagas. This oversight allowed him to construct arguments which were questionable even in the 1970s. For example, Jackson maintained that the patronymic linkage system of the Naxi made sense in a matrilineal system without any discussion of available data which argued to the contrary that this naming system is a common one among patrilineal Tibeto-Burman speakers.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Jackson produced the first synthesis on Naxi history against great odds and with an evident passion for his subject. Jackson's work in other words put into order a formidable mass of previously unorganized and very obscure data. Thus, I owe Jackson a tremendous debt: the identification of a key issue in the problematics of Naxi culture and history – that Naxi pictographs, patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and love suicide do call for an historical explanation, and that this explanation has relevance for Mosuo history.

Aims and objectives of the present study

Summing up the state of current knowledge about Mosuo and Naxi social histories and cultures, McKhann writes that 'We are left ... with the none-too-

clear picture that the Naxi and the Mosuo are either distinct peoples, or that they are the same people, but that one or the other of them has gained or lost something over time.⁸⁷ In other words, we are left pondering the historical relationship between the Mosuo and the Naxi, and the historical origins of their customs. The thesis pursued in this book addresses this problem and makes its object the recovery of the contingencies that helped shape Naxi and Mosuo traditions.

In the following chapters, I will ask a new set of questions and propose a substantial re-orientation of the problems raised by previous scholarship. Although Chinese scholars have contributed enormously to the field, and indeed have done much of the groundwork on which I build my own hypotheses, their studies have been extremely limited by ideological and political imperatives. On the other hand, the 'myth of the noble savage' has led Western anthropologists to construe a 'pre-Chinese' Naxi history (i.e. pre-1723) as 'cold history' and with it an original Naxi tradition that would have remained largely unchanged for centuries, if not millennia.⁸⁸ The approach I favor is a standard ethnohistorical method, based in multidisciplinary studies in anthropology including pre and post-1949 scholarship and original field research, as well as in comparative religion, archaeology and history. As mentioned in the Foreword, my ethnographic and historical sources are broad ranging, concerned not only with Naxi and Mosuo but also with all neighboring people, as well as the larger polities of China, Tibet and Burma. Although I rely on my own resources and skills to read modern Chinese sources, where classical Chinese texts and Tibetan primary sources are concerned, I have used the translations, reviews and critiques in both English and French by specialists in the field. For sources specifically concerned with Yunnan, I have made the effort to check original texts when possible, but nevertheless used translations by J.F. Rock, E. Chavannes, G.H. Luce, C. Sainson, and C.R. Backus.

The present study therefore is in many respects a work of synthesis which builds upon existing scholarship: Chinese scholarship, Jackson's *Na-khi Religion*,

and not least Joseph Rock's *Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China*. For although Rock never made any serious attempt to reconstruct Naxi history, his ANKSWC remains the most complete source of data available to scholars in Naxi studies. In fact, Chinese scholars also rely on the ANKSWC as a primary source of information on Naxi history. And yet, I must add that even this present study does not propose "A History of the Naxi and Mosuo" but eight exploratory essays based on the analysis and interpretation of historical and ceremonial texts and kinship theory.

Nevertheless, this study is innovative on two counts: in its proposed findings and in its approach to the sources. On the first count, this book eventually paints a very different picture of Naxi and Mosuo ethnic history, and presents entirely new explanations for the development of Naxi marriage customs and origins of the pictographic script. This book also makes the point that anthropological theory needs to take seriously the idea that matriarchal societies can exist and have existed. In fact, I will propose that the Mosuo have a genealogical connection to an ancient queendom described in the Chinese histories of the Sui and Tang dynasties. On the second count, that of methods and approach to the field, this study is the first attempt at elucidating the *local* historical record, in particular the two biographical *Chronicles of the Mu Family* who ruled Lijiang from the time of the Mongol conquest in the 13th century until the annexation of Lijiang by the Manchu in 1723. These two chronicles, which were initially compiled in the 16th century, are a precious and indeed unique example of local historiography. They provide a wealth of apparently disparate data on the successions, marriages, magical and political undertakings of the Naxi overlords. Yet, both Western and Chinese scholars have made limited and cautious use of these documents on the grounds that their mythical overtones and blatant discrepancies limit their historical credibility and usefulness. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate that the Mu Chronicles are crucial to the reconstruction of the history of the region and that they become quite intelligible when they are read from the perspective of Naxi magic and symbolism.

To sum up, this book asks many new questions and provides what I believe to be not only new answers but, more importantly, plausible ones. Ultimately, however, even this study must be limited by research experience, skills, and the elusive nature of truth, and specifically, the nature of this particular truth process which is ethnohistory. Because the latter consists of putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle for which there is no pre-existing picture and about which we can only be sure of two things, that many pieces are missing, and that we shall never know how many. A great deal of work still needs to be done and scholars will have a lot more to say about Nazi history in the future.⁸⁹ And of course, it is likely that not all will agree with me.

Methodological considerations

Those who confuse curiosity with history have in mind a most erroneous notion. History is not the accumulation of all sorts of events which happened in the past. It is a science of society.... A few years ago, the word 'sociology' was invented. The word 'history' had the same meaning and said the same thing, at least to those who understood it. History is the science of social facts, sociology itself. (Fustel de Coulanges 1889)⁹⁰

Although social anthropology can be said to originate in an 'anti-history', with the synchronic method of Malinowski's functionalism, and in response to the grand historical theories of evolutionists and diffusionists, historical studies have a substantial genealogy in anthropology even in the British school, where functionalist-structuralism long dominated the scene. But if Fustel de Coulanges thought of history as a 'science of social facts', Evans-Pritchard believed that social anthropology was 'closer to certain kinds of history than to the natural sciences'.⁹¹ This study will make the point that anthropological history is also very much related to literary studies.

Briefly put, in any project of historical reconstruction, a degree of intuitive deduction is both unavoidable and desirable, but certain pitfalls must be avoided. Firstly, although I attempt to explain the development of Nazi history as a process of transformation from tribal to feudal, I refrain from construing temporal

linearity as 'evolutionary logic'.⁹² For example, it is not because oral traditions usually precede written traditions that the Mosuo Daba is necessarily an older version of the Naxi Dongba. Before anything else, one must demonstrate that both traditions are in fact related, and how. Secondly, I avoid two types of causal reasoning. The first type seeks causes on the basis of perceived effects and a law of ethnographic averages, as for example, arguing that because maternal uncles always have high status in matrilineal societies, the high status position of Naxi maternal uncles is proof of a former matrilineal stage.⁹³ The second type presumes that historical contingencies have a logic all of their own and are necessarily connected in a chain of actions and reactions. In other words, reasoning that 'if this happened, then, that would have surely followed' – for example, taking for granted that since the Naxi adopted Chinese marriage rituals and funeral rites after the Qing court annexed Lijiang, they also adopted the moral values that went with those. The methodological approach taken in this study rests with the idea that if ethnohistory is to have any worth, historical reconstruction requires the support of evidence that is verifiable in ethnographic precedent *and* the historical record.

On the other hand, no historical record is ever just readable because it is never free from ideology or underlying agenda. Reading the Chinese historical record, however, necessitates more than exercising one's critical faculties. It requires *a priori* knowledge of specific literary conventions. True historical productions, that is, narratives consciously situated in historical time and as time markers, such as imperial historiographies, travel stories, genealogies, memorials, and so forth, often reproduce stereotypical descriptions of characters, or of particular events. As Burton Watson cautions, it is 'important that the student of Chinese history and culture should recognize ... conventional patterns rather than mistaking them for unique behavior'.⁹⁴ The poetics of Chinese history certainly found a place in Lijiang, as for example, on the stone drum of Shigu commemorating the Naxi's glorious victory over the Tibetans (dated 1548). Here, entire sentences are modeled upon, or lifted straight from original Chinese texts written centuries

before, like the *Yi Jing*, or the *Xian Han Shu*,⁹⁵ with the result that the Tibetans figure as Xiongnu (Huns) and the high mountain terrain of the Naxi-Tibetan battlefield as a sandy desert.⁹⁶ In other words, the historian must never forget that in this part of the world, history is real because it is allegoric, because life makes sense in a constant cycle of eternal returns, and not least, because, as Marshall Sahlins puts it, cultural knowledge is such that events are never new but ‘immediately perceived in the received order of structure’.⁹⁷

The present study approaches the historical record in light of the symbolic and ritual narratives that gave it shape as well as those which the record itself intended to perpetuate. From this perspective, mythology establishes the terms upon which events and persons are bestowed power and meaning. The historian, therefore, must not lose track of the fact that myth shapes history, as *it should be*. On the other hand, myths may well intend to cloak history in mystery, but they are not subterfuges for historical facts, they are symbolic contexts which confirm events as political facts and mystery as a source of power. And it is only in this sense that Naxi mythology can make the local historical record coherent.

Theoretical considerations

In 1984, Sherry Ortner remarked that anthropologists’ increasing interest in history was ‘an extremely important development for the field as a whole’ because history is essential to our understanding of ‘how society and culture ... are produced and reproduced through human *intention* and action’.⁹⁸ My emphasis, because there lies a major theoretical issue for social science, and an issue that is especially relevant to the present study – because *I intend to explain social change and the development of Naxi custom by way of political history*.

Although it is not a fashionable approach, I do not suggest a reading of Naxi texts from any specific theoretical perspective. Nor will I develop a novel theoretical approach. Just as my methodology is based in a comparative approach, my theoretical approach is flexible. Anthropology has accumulated a century’s worth of theoretical perspectives on almost every known society and

culture, and the present book, which is interested in asking more questions than it can possibly answer, makes full use of this wealth of ideas and paradigms. In the following chapters, I will find use for functionalism, post-structuralism, interpretive and practice theories, and even an antiquated study like Frazer's *Golden Bough*. And whilst this book does address post-modern issues of ideology, gender, power relations and textual deconstruction, it is foremost concerned with recovering Naxi feudal history, and finding explanations for the historical transformation of the old Yunnanese tribal system. On this count, structuralist models and explanations of phenomena as systems – and in particular, the works of the great anthropologists Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach – have central stage.

Tribal Lijiang

The history of northwest Yunnan is anything but 'cold'. Squeezed between the Chinese, various 'barbarians', and the Tibetans, local populations are frequently at war, periodically devastated and displaced, and serially colonized (including by the Mongols). Until the feudal period (1381-1723/1956), the political and social unit characteristic of the non-Han populations of northwest Yunnan is the *buluo*, for which the standard English translation is 'tribe'. A more literal and more anthropologically interesting translation would be 'descent segment'. The Chinese historical record relates that 'hundreds' of such *buluo* inhabited northwest Yunnan and thus suggests tribal organizations not unlike those still found in modern Southeast Asia, and in particular, among the Naxi's neighbors in the contemporary period:⁹⁹ Kachins, Naga, Lisu. Naxi mythological tradition and the Chinese historical record relate numerous details which support this hypothesis: for example, that the Mo-so engaged in frequent feuding, that they burned forests to clear fields, and that they held feasts of merit¹⁰⁰ which are characteristic features of neighboring highland tribal societies.

In actual fact, there is nothing revolutionary in the proposition that Naxi society was tribal until the 14th century or so, because Chinese scholarship also

makes this point. The difference between my position and that of Naxi scholars rests with our respective understanding of what constitutes 'historical evolution' and the consequences of the latter for reconstructing the contexts and contingencies that transformed tribal Lijiang and Yongning into feudal realms.

Feudal Lijiang

Giuseppe Tucci wrote that Tibetan history can be reduced to 'the vicissitudes of families (...), it is never the history of a people. The people suffers it, but takes no part, it submits to it.'¹⁰¹ The same may be said of Naxi and Mosuo feudal histories. To use Sahlins' words, Naxi history is 'heroic history',¹⁰² a history that belongs to the most influential groups. And the most influential Naxi group is the Mu whose sons were established by the Chinese emperors as feudal overlords.

Befittingly, the Mu's personal history begins with the story of the creation of the world, and thus places the Mu's own origins at the very beginning of time, and what Friedman calls 'the highest level of the community's genealogical structure'.¹⁰³ For when the Mu chief makes a direct and monopolizing blood claim in the original founding ancestor who begot the Naxi race, his bloodline becomes the source of all posterity and prosperity. At this point, as Sahlins writes, the chief gathers his people unto his own genealogy and the life of his community unto himself – his marriages become 'inter-tribal alliances, his ceremonial exchanges, trade, injuries to himself are cause for war'.¹⁰⁴

Yet, as Leach concludes in his *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, the transition from tribal to feudal modes may not be a simple one to make:

The Kachin polity is, as it were, only half a step removed from that of the Shans which resembles what we understand in Europe by the term feudalism. The transition from Kachin-type organisation to Shan-type organisation involves the substitution of a straight landlord-tenant relationship for a relationship based on either common lineage or affinal dependence. On the evidence of this book it is a difficult transition to make and one would like to know whether other peoples at other times have dealt with similar political choices in the same way.¹⁰⁵

The Naxi historical record (the Mu genealogical chronicles) confirms that the Lijiang chiefs gathered their people unto their persons in the course of a long and murderous battle. In fact, it took the Mu 'kings' the better part of two centuries (1400-1600) to secure the hill territories and bring the various hill tribes under the ritual, fiscal and military control of Lijiang. And, as we shall see, whilst the people did not readily submit to history, they certainly suffered it.

At this point in the discussion, however, it is necessary to qualify the usage of 'feudal' or 'feudalism' in this book. For these are controversial terms, and since Marxist theory implies by feudalism a transitional stage between slave society and capitalism.¹⁰⁶ So let us go back to Leach, and the idea that feudalism implies first of all a landlord-tenant relationship and with this, a specific relationship to the land and the people inhabiting it.

The Naxi *Tusi* (native chieftain) owned a great deal of land. According to the *Lijiang Prefectural Records* compiled in 1743, the Mu held hereditary estates of about 5000 acres. In addition, they controlled another 2500 acres of cultivated fields and, with those, 500 households (2340 people). Chinese scholars estimate from those numbers that 22 percent of the Lijiang people were once bonded to agricultural labor.¹⁰⁷ And since this leaves out 78 percent of the population, Lijiang society was evidently not based in 'relations of production' dependent upon serfdom.

In the same vein, the historical record makes plain that the economy was not based only, or even principally, in agricultural production. From times that antedate even the Tang period, the people of northwest Yunnan engaged in long distance trade. They mined silver in the mountains and drew gold from the rivers in the valleys. They collected medicinal and aphrodisiacal products from the forests, and they raised horses and herded cattle and goats in mountain meadows. And they continued to do so under the rule of the Mu family because these activities were *essential* to the feudal economy, providing the chiefs not only with much personal wealth but also with the payment of yearly tribute which the ruling family owed to the imperial court.¹⁰⁸

The local historical record gives no information on how aristocrats, commoners and tribal people (the 78 percent of the population who happened not to be bonded to the Mu's estate) managed their land, but it does clarify that even under the rule of the Mu chiefs, land was transferable. Thus, we learn from their genealogical chronicles that by 1723, part of the Mu's manorial lands had been mortgaged, and some had been sold off.¹⁰⁹

All of this strongly suggests that prior to 1723, Lijiang society was founded on a system of land tenure which European medievalists would be reluctant to call 'feudal'. What is more, since Lijiang territorial relations appear to have maintained the continuity of local kin communities, Marxist theorists would be well placed to object that the Lijiang 'feudal system' was an 'Asiatic mode of production'. In fact, insofar as (I argue) Naxi territorial rights and political subordination were expressed in myth and ritual, Ming dynasty Lijiang fits Friedman's definition of the Asiatic mode of production and especially the emphasis which he places on the indivisibility of the political and ritual sphere.¹¹⁰ Still, I choose the word 'feudalism' above the concept of the Asiatic mode of production for several reasons. The first is that the term feudalism is relatively neutral.¹¹¹ The second is that feudalism implies the overlord's exclusive and encompassing right to territorial occupancy even if, as was the case for the Lijiang Mu, this right is based in ritual surplus, rather than direct land management. Finally, I choose feudalism for what the idea stresses of a political relationship between vassal and suzerain, and the importance of the military experience. The Mu chiefs were feudal lords above all because they were vassals of the Chinese emperor. Military service played a crucial role in the development of feudal administration and polity. To guard China's borders and find the resources to pay yearly tribute to the court, the Mu engaged in perpetual conquest, and as they went about pacifying, unifying, taxing and conscripting, they expanded their dominion over a large territory, all the way into Sichuan – until 1723, when the Qing court removed them from office and thus put an end to the Naxi Kingdom.

Feudal transformations and structural contradictions

Leach proposed that Kachin tribal organization developed into a Shan-type feudal organization with the transformation of a former system based in 'either common lineage or affinal dependence'. This is important. For if tribal formations are structured upon types of marriage alliances, and feudal organizations upon other sorts of structures, something necessarily happens to the tribal system of lineage and affinal dependence. This theoretical issue underscores one of the central ideas presented in this book, notably that Naxi marriage rules (preferential patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and love suicide) arose with, and contributed to the transformation of tribal Lijiang into a feudal domain.

Now, Leach writes that egalitarian tribal societies (Kachin Gumlao) can be transformed into class tribal societies where lineage provides the structure for asymmetrical social organization (Kachin Gumsa) and eventually for feudal systems (Shan) as a result of structural processes, the dynamics of which find their limits within the society itself. Thus, the structural shift between tribal and feudal happens (or doesn't) as a consequence of the dynamics inherent in existing social structures. In other words, Leach seeks political transformation in structure rather than ideological force – with the result that, as James Peacock comments, '[although] Leach's study [of Kachin society] forcefully refutes that primitive society is static, it does not demonstrate that primitive mythology can provoke radical evolutionary change'.¹¹²

In a similar vein to Leach, Friedman argues that tribal systems evolve towards hierarchization and class formation (Gumsa) and towards the Asiatic mode of production (Shan/Chinese Shang or Zhou formations) or alternatively devolve towards autonomous, egalitarian formations (Gumlao, Naga formations) as a result of internal dynamics produced by *systemic contradictions* and the ecological limits of the system itself.¹¹³ Friedman also suggests that the 'internal properties' which motor social transformations can be apprehended when methodology transcends the 'false dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony', (the methods that oppose history and anthropology) by shifting the object of

analysis to the 'system of social reproduction'.¹¹⁴ This too is an important point, because where Nazi ethnohistory is concerned, previous studies have largely fallen into two camps, 1) anthropological historical reconstructions which cannot be sustained in light of the historical record, or 2) historical reconstructions based on the written record which are extremely narrow and do not take us very far beyond well known dates and events, and Marxist truisms on stage development.

Social transformation and political will

As far as this book is concerned, Friedman's system of social reproduction is to be found in kinship and in the ideological structures that legitimizes kinship – that is mythology, ritual and, more broadly speaking, custom. As to the 'false dichotomy' between synchrony and diachrony, it is transcended by an ethnohistorical method which gives as much weight to the historical as to the ethnographic record. Therefore, where my approach distances itself from Friedman's Marxist-structuralist model is with the emphasis that I place on broader state politics and personal agency rather than on 'internal properties'. What I propose is an explanation for social change that takes place in political history, that is *in real time* and by the conscious agency of political will and exigencies.

Still, I must stress that I do not by any means suggest that society is free from system or that social systems do not have powerful dynamics of their own, or even that history is 'lawless', but rather I will attempt to demonstrate, in the vein taken by practice theorists like Ortner, 'that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction.'¹¹⁵ Indeed, even Marx believed that 'men make their own histories' even if, as Foucault wrote a century or so later, 'they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does.'¹¹⁶ And in fact, even Ortner cautions that the 'irony' of the practice model is that 'although actors' intentions are accorded central place in the model ... major social change does not for the most part come about as intended consequences of action, however rational action

may have been. Setting out to conceive children with superior mana by sleeping with British sailors, Hawaiian women became agents of the spirit of capitalism in their society'.¹¹⁷ But whilst I agree with the view that action will inevitably have unintended consequences, and that subjects in any social setting cannot have control or forbearance of all the results of their actions, I will also maintain that even traditional subjects may act to radically transform the social system in which they live, and may do so willfully and purposefully.

There is a limit to the usefulness of the Hawaiian model of social change.¹¹⁸ In the case of northern Yunnan especially, there are major differences between the Hawaiians and the Naxi, the most obvious being that the Hawaiians were island people whilst the Naxi's ancestors dwelt at the intersection of highly civilized, economically complex and competing realms – China, Tibet and Yunnan, not to mention the far reaching influence of southeast and south Asia. Keeping this in mind, it should not surprise that whereas Hawaiian women initiated social change when they slept with British sailors with the idea of enhancing traditional objectives, the Naxi chiefs initiated social change by purposefully manipulating key elements of tradition – kinship, mythology and ritual.

To sum up, this book proposes that, in a given social system, and under certain circumstances, traditional actors may be as aware as anthropological theorists that they can institute radical social change by 'modifying the system one way or the other', as for example, by shifting the system of inheritance to the first born from the last born or by substituting patrilineal cross-cousin marriage for matrilineal alliance. And this is important because it implies that traditional actors can in fact set out to reshape their society through the agency of traditional structures and traditional ideological modes, or what Peacock would reckon as 'primitive mythology'.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter II begins with an analysis of the genealogical records of the Mu family. The discussion establishes their significance to the recovery of Naxi history, and

especially, to the recovery of past cultural schemes regarding the legitimacy of kingship succession and territorial appropriation. This chapter concludes that during the first half of the 16th century, the Mu made a turn towards Confucianism, Chinese civilization and a stricter patrilineal ideology but nonetheless remained attached to their own definitions of kingship.

Chapter III addresses the question of the history of Bon in Lijiang and its relevance to Naxi Dongba religion. Whereas Jackson holds that the Dongba is a relatively recent tradition and essentially a peasant or folk practice, I propose that the Dongba originates in a syncretism of Bon and Taoism and a Tibetan royal ritual attached to the Mu house.

Chapter IV reviews the characteristic features of Naxi Dongba religion in light of Chinese and Western theories regarding the origins and age of the Naxi pictographic and syllabic scripts. Here, I conclude that the Naxi manuscript tradition antedates the annexation of Lijiang in 1723, that the Naxi already had pictographic books during the Mongol period and, on a more cautious note, that the syllabic script may have originated in the Tang period.

Chapter V focuses on the socio-political circumstances that may have favored the development of the pictographic manuscripts. Here, I explore a theory currently held in China according to which the Dongba pictographs originate in rock art. But whereas Naxi scholars explain that the pictographs simply evolved from a local and ancient 'primitive religion', I argue that the connection between rock art and Naxi pictographs (their diffusion, if not their invention) rests with the Naga cults, and the politics of conquest which the Mu house pursued among peripheral tribal peoples.

With Chapter VI, the book broaches the question of the origins of the Naxi love suicide custom and issues of gender and kinship transformation. Here, I contest Rock, Jackson and Chao's theories that Naxi marriage customs originate with Confucianism. I also take issue with the premise that love suicide was symptomatic of social dysfunction and propose instead that suicide played a juridical role in consolidating preferential patrilineal cross-cousin marriage.

Chapter VII returns to Jackson's work and his theory on the socio-historical origins of the Naxi patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, his core argument on the Mosuo past of the Lijiang Naxi. The discussion concentrates on the historical and ethnographic viability of the hypothetical tribal models that Jackson deduces from his analysis of Naxi cosmology. At this point, I meet Jackson halfway, conceding that from the perspective of structure at least, a case can be made that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage could have sustained a Naxi federation, but that from the perspective of the historical and ethnographic record, such a federation could not have involved the Mosuo. I then return to the genealogies of the Lijiang chiefs and argue that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and Dongba mythical constructions played a role in the marriage alliances of the Mu overlords during the first stages of feudal rule (1400 - 1520).

Chapter VIII concludes on the topic of kinship and love suicide. Analysis of Naxi kinship terminology corroborates a proposition outlined in Chapters VI and VII, that the Naxi patrilineal cross-cousin marriage system is not symptomatic of a shift from matrilineality to patrilineality but the end result of a structural reform from matrilineal or bilateral marriage exchange, and inter-tribal marriage. I suggest that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and especially Naxi strict betrothal rules continued to regulate the exchange of women from the Ming period onwards, as an ever growing number of Han immigrants moved into Naxi society, demanding land and wives.

The final chapter, Chapter IX, addresses the issue of Naxi and Mosuo ethnic origins and genealogy. I begin with a review of the various historical theories on the origins of the Naxi Nationality (Naxi and Mosuo) and the difficulties involved in the interpretation of the historical data. I then argue that Naxi and Mosuo cannot be descended from an original greater Mo-so tribe which was transformed into 'Han influenced Naxi' and 'Tibetan influenced Mosuo' but from a number of people who for their part arrived in Lijiang and Yongning at different periods and from different places. I conclude that Naxi and Mosuo ethnic boundaries were shaped entirely by the feudal experience.

¹According to the 2000 census. These numbers include the Mosuo who live in Ninglang county (app. 17,000) but not the people on the other side of Lake Lugu, in Sichuan province. For demographic figures in Yunnan, see Colin Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, Cambridge University Press, 2001; and China Year Book.

²In the *Muli Zangzu Zizhixian Gaikuang* [Survey of Muli Tibetan Autonomous County], Sichuan Minzu Chubanshe, 1985, p. 32, it is noted that the 'Muli Mongol nationality includes "Nari" and "Shui Tian", who are a branch of the same people who live in Yongning and whom the Han know as Mosuo.

³For an overview of the significant differences which distinguish the Yongning Mosuo and the Nari in the regions of Yanyuan and Muli counties (culture, kinship, language, and self-identity), see Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2001, pp. 216-238.

⁴The administrative and military measure which ended indirect rule in ethnic regions is given in Chinese as *gaituguilu*. *Gaituguilu* means literally: 'Change the locals and return to the current' - in other words, change the local rulers and return the land and its people to the main stream of Chinese bureaucracy and administration. For more details on the history of *Gaituguilu* in Southwest China (Guizhou as well as Yunnan), see C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century*, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 24-28.

⁵In 1956, the People's Liberation Army (who included Naxi troops) consolidated northwest Yunnan (Tibetan Zhongdian and the Yi Liangshan regions). The Communists left Lijiang and passed by Yongning on the way to Liangshan. They met with armed resistance at the crossing of the Jinshajiang but the struggle was quickly over with apparently few casualties - or so I was told by locals, because none of the textual accounts dealing with the 'Democratic Reform' of Yongning mention any of this. In any case, once the army had 'liberated' Yongning, the Communists abolished feudal rule and redistributed the land. Then, they removed the chief and prominent aristocrats to Kunming, and the Living Buddha to Ninglang. The Yongning chief allegedly died of natural causes shortly after these events.

⁶The number of Chinese nationalities (*minzu*) was set at the current fifty-six when the Jino were officially acknowledged in 1978. Fifty-five nationalities are also defined as *minority* nationalities (*shaoshuminzu*). Today, the Han nationality makes up a little over 91 per cent of the total Chinese population. See Mackerras, *Handbook of Contemporary China*, Ch. 9.

⁷Both words Mosuo and Mo-so are pronounced in the same way and they are written with the same characters in Chinese, although there are a number of variants in the original records. The spelling Mosuo is modern Chinese *pinyin* and therefore post-dates 1949. I make the best of this distinction by using Mo-so to refer to the ethnic category given in pre-1949 records and which includes the people of Lijiang as well as those of Yongning, whilst I reserve the word Mosuo to speak exclusively of the current Mosuo category, the Mosuo People of Yongning.

⁸This title was formally requested on behalf of the Naxi people by Naxi historian Fang Guoyu.

⁹I may confirm that a number of people among the Mosuo do exhibit striking physical differences from the Naxi: such as thick curly black hair and strong noses which the Mosuo themselves customarily describe as 'Yak noses', and that physical anthropology is as ethically and theoretically unacceptable in modern Chinese ethnic studies as it is in Western social anthropology.

¹⁰In 1998, when I returned to Yongning for a field trip with Lamu Gatusa, people seemed more concerned about their relations with the Yi authorities in nearby Ninglang county, upon whom the Mosuo are 'dependent' than issues of nationality status. Tamy Blumenfield and Eileen Walsh who have recently revisited Yongning confirmed in private communication that this trend is continuing (Fall 2002).

¹¹S. Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Provinces*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1995; C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, 1994; T. Heberer, *China and Its National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation?* Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1989; M. Deal, "The Question of Nationalities in Twentieth century China", *Journal of Ethnic Studies*

(12:3) 1984, pp. 22-53; G.V. H. Moseley, *The Consolidation of the South China Frontier*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1973.

¹²Hsieh Shi-chung, *Ethnic and Political Adaptation and Ethnic Change of the Sipsong Panna Dai: An Ethnographic Analysis*, Ph.D. Thesis University of Washington, 1989 Ph.D. thesis University of Washington, 1989, p. 21.

¹³T. Heberer, *China and Its National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation?* p. 30.

¹⁴C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, p. 7.

¹⁵Stevan Harrell writes that in post-Liberation Chinese ethnology, 'race is out; language and culture are in as the primordial characteristics that originally define a group and constitute its basic essence.' S. Harrell, "The History of the History of the Yi", in Stevan Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 1995, pp. 63-91, p. 81. This is quite correct insofar as Chinese ethnology does not construct its theory on the basis of *zhongzu* or 'race' as is meant when speaking of Caucasian, or White or Black in the US context, or the biological category of 19th century social scientism. However, insofar as Chinese ethnology does emphasize the antiquity and historical continuity of current nationality at the expense of self-identification and political process (as Harrell also notes [ibid, p. 83]), Chinese ethnology in fact stresses ethnicity in the old fashion sense of the word 'race', that is, 'a group of persons related by common descent or heredity' as the common usage definition is given in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*.

¹⁶For an insider view on the problems of nationality identification, see Fei Hsiao-t'ung, "Ethnic Identification in China", in Fei Hsiao-t'ung, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, Beijing, New World Press, 1981, pp. 60-77. Note also that Fei was criticized and branded as a reactionary for his work on nationality identification - for 'helping to destroy minorities unity'. See G.E. Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China from Malinowski to Mao*, Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 191.

¹⁷Hsieh writes: 'The Han had interacted with the non-Han peoples in each area for a very long time. The former had developed a set of naming systems to designate the latter whom the Han felt were different. The CCP did nothing new but give an unchangeable name to every particular group or category of people. For example, they put all non-Han people who were originally classified as a hundred kinds of Luoluo (Lolo) into one category, naming them Yizu or Yi nationality: Minjia becoming Baizu or Bai Nationality.' Hsieh Shih-chung, *Ethnic-political Adaptation and Ethnic Change*, pp. 20-21; also Hsieh Shih-chung, "On the Dynamics of Tai/Dai-Lue Ethnicity, an ethnohistorical Analysis", in S. Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontier*, pp. 301-328.

¹⁸M. Deal, "The Question of Nationalities in Twentieth Century China"; D.J. Solinger, *Regional Government and Political Integration in Southwest China 1949-1954*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1977; G.V.H. Moseley, *The Consolidation of the South China Frontier*, 1973.

¹⁹This policy creates anxiety in some circles. Since even among ethnic people, the different nationalities assume status differences, higher status groups risk dispossessing others of what they regard as precious numbers as some groups allegedly are seeking to recruit others within their ranks.

²⁰See also what were once standard explanations in the tourist brochure by Tang Zhilu and Jin Juotong, *Lijiang*, Beijing, New World Press, 1988, p. 30: 'The Naxi are one of China's many minority nationalities with a long and brilliant history and culture, centered on Lijiang County. The Naxi used to be called "Moxie" or "Mosuo." After the People's Republic was founded in 1949 the name Naxi was applied to the whole nationality. The Naxi people of the western, or Dayan linguistic district call themselves Naxi while those living in the eastern linguistic district, centered in Yongning in Ninglang County, call themselves "Mosuo". There are many differences between the two Naxi tribes in the aspects of economics and culture due to their unbalanced social development.' Or Wu Zelin, "From Pairing to Marriage: The Changing Marriage System of the Naxi Nationality in Yongning", in *China's Minority Nationalities* (I), Beijing, Great Wall Books, 1984, p. 108.

²¹For details regarding Chinese economic policies towards the minority nationalities in the period 1949 to the present day, see C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, pp. 199-232.

²²Tourism in Lijiang has exploded beyond belief and especially since the opening of the local airport in 1996. Lijiang is now a major center for both Chinese and international tourism, receiving hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The industry has made a tremendous impact on the local economy and local culture. Tourism, not surprisingly, also plays a part in 'rewriting' Naxi history and culture. For a better appreciation of the effects and workings of tourism in northwest Yunnan, see Charles McKhann, "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Observations and Reflections on Tourism Development in Lijiang, China", in Tang Chee Beng, Sidney Cheung and Yang Hui (eds.), *Tourism, Anthropology, and China*, Bangkok, White Lotus Press, 2001.

²³S.B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties", *Comparative Studies in Anthropology and History*, (26:1), 1984, pp. 126-165, p. 143.

²⁴See the classic studies by C. Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution. Primordial sentiments and civil politics" in C. Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963, pp. 105-158, and F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1969; and for reviews on the evolution of the debates on ethnicity in anthropological theory: C.G. Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1) 1987, pp. 24-55. Also Hsieh Shih-chung, *Ethnic-political Adaptation and Ethnic Change of the Sipsong Panna Dai*.

²⁵See also C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", in S. Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, who objects that Chinese ethnology is inconsistent because the Stalinist criteria which provide the model for ethnic identification do not fit the case of the Mosuo and the Naxi.

²⁶As to what White and Black mean nobody really knows. The *Man Shu* explains that White and Black Barbarians are geographic categories: White in the west and Black in the east. Black and White, however, also refer to social categories (castes) in some societies, such as Thai, Mongol and Yi. Among the Yi, Black denotes the superior social category, among the Mongols, White does.

²⁷See also Shih Chuan-kang on the vicissitudes of the name Na in Yongning. Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso: Sexual Union, Household Organization, Ethnicity and Gender in a Matrilineal Duolocal Society in Southwest China*, Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1993, pp. 17-19.

²⁸See Ma Yin (ed.), *China's Minority Nationalities*, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1989, p. 449.

²⁹According to David Bradley, Naxi should not be included in the Loloish branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages. Bradley argues that Naxi should be grouped within the core Qiangic languages and that it appears to be transitional between Qiangic and Burmic. See D. Bradley, "Naxi and Proto-Burmese-Lolo", *LTBA* 1979, and D. Bradley, "The Northeastern Tibeto-Burman Languages", in G.V. H. Moseley (ed.), *Atlas of the World's Languages*, London, Routledge, 1994. According to Harald Bockman, Chinese linguist Sun Hongkai is of the opinion that Naxi is a link-language between Qiangic and Loloish. See H. Bockman, *Naxi Studies in China*, Research Report, Oslo University, 1987, p. 9.

³⁰One does get told at the Academy of Social Sciences that Mosuo and Naxi can communicate by using their own languages. Tami Blumenfield has confirmed that Mosuo friends who visited Lijiang with her were able to understand the gist of conversations in Naxi but that Naxi could not understand Mosuo (personal communication fall 2002). Personally, I have witnessed Naxi and Mosuo use Chinese to speak with each other, as Rock and Shih have also done. J.F. Rock, "The Zhima Funeral Ceremony of the Na-khi of Southwestern China" (ZM), *Studia Instituti Anthropos*, Vol. IX, Vienna, Modling, 1955, p. 2; Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 23.

³¹J.A. Matisoff, "Linguistic Diversity and Language Contact", in J. Mckinnon and W. Bhruksasri (eds.), *Highlanders of Thailand*, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 56-86, pp. 57-58.

³²E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1954, p. 52.

³³C. Lévi-Strauss, "Rites et mythes de peuples voisins", in T.O. Beidelman (ed.), *The Translation of Culture*, London, Tavistok, 1971, pp. 161-177, p.176 [my translation from French].

³⁴See J.F. Rock: ANKSWC, plate 97, A Na-khi Woman from Mba-yi-wua (Minyin).

³⁵This is common knowledge at the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming. As McKhann also explains: 'all Naxi can name their clans, but no one can tell how they know, what it means, or why.' See C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", p. 58, note 34.

³⁶For more details on this process, see S. Harrell, "Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them", in S. Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, pp. 3-36; p. 34, and in the same volume, R.A. Litzinger, "Making Histories: Contending Conceptions of the Yao Past", pp. 117-139. For a history of post-1949 elite formations in Lijiang, see S. Davant White, *Medical Discourses, Naxi Identities, and the State: Transformations in Socialist China*, Ph.D. Thesis, U.C. Berkeley, 1993.

³⁷This term is A.D. Smith's. The *mythomoteur* is that essential shared knowledge without which 'a group cannot define itself, to itself and to others, and cannot inspire or guide collective action'. A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 25.

³⁸History has long served the Chinese state, and post-1949, it has served it well beyond its multinational agenda. See the collection edited by Jonathan Unger, *Using the Past to Serve the Present, Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China*; Armonk, N.Y., M.E. Sharpe, 1993.

³⁹Or almost all - for it is also acknowledged that some groups migrated to China, as for example the Koreans. For a perspective on the standard historical and ethnological treatment of minority nationalities in Chinese scholarship, see Ma Yin (ed.), *China's Minority Nationalities*, 1989, especially the introduction: "The People's Republic of China, A Unified Multi-national State", pp. 1-38. Ma Yin explains that the Chinese nation 'came into existence, through the merger of the Xia, Zhou and Shang [China's early dynastic rulers] with the Qiang, Rong, Kuniyi, Miao and Man peoples' (pp. 10-11). It is from the Qiang, Rong, Kuniyi, Miao and Man that almost all current Chinese nationalities are allegedly descended.

⁴⁰Shih Chuan-kang, in his article "The Origin of Marriage among the Moso and Empire-Building in Late Imperial China" argues that to equate Sinicization with 'Hanization' is oversimplifying things, see: <http://www.anthro.uiuc.edu/workshop/Shih.html> (2002).

⁴¹For example, see the first chapters in Bai Shouyi, *An Outline History of China*, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1982. I may add that during the years which I spent in China, aside from a few scholars, I did not find anyone who questioned the veracity of historical stage development. I was particularly struck by the faith which this model conjured during conversations with students who had been involved in the Democracy movement of 1989 and who argued that Communism was failing because China had bypassed the stage of Bourgeois Capitalism.

⁴²And from east to west, there is only one time in China, that of the political centre: Beijing time.

⁴³Refer to Sydney White's thesis: *Medical Discourses*. The model which I present above, however, is adapted. It is a purer historical model and does not altogether match White's categories. White examines how dichotomous modes in the state discourse affect, and are in turn appropriated, by the Naxi towards their own ethnic constructions and prestige competitions. She identifies these modes as discourses of Authenticity and discourses of Hierarchy. The discourse of Authenticity speaks for 1) the tolerance of cultural diversity (the legacy of Lenin and Stalin's nationality policy), and 2) the incorporation of 'tradition' into modernity (the legacy of the Maoist era). The discourse of Hierarchy speaks for 1) Socialist modernity (the legacy of Marxist, Leninist, Maoist thought); 2) unilinear social evolutionism (the legacy of Engels and Soviet ethnology); and 3) the 'civilizing discourse' (the legacy of the Confucian state).

⁴⁴The Communists, incidentally, did not invent this discourse. Marcel Granet (who resided in China between 1911 and 1913) wrote: 'The Chinese situate the founders of their civilization about the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. On this point, as on many others, they show great moderation. But one will find it more difficult to believe them when they maintain that their civilization has been created at once, that it was pure from its beginnings, and that the imperial idea originates in the first stages, like all their institutions and their arts.' M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, Paris, Société d'Édition des Belles Lettres, 1952, pp. 44-45 [my translation from

French]. I may add that from the Chinese vantage point, China's antiquity (and thus its civilization) is juxtaposed to the historical shallowness of 'Western countries' (*Xifang Guojia*) which are for their part largely represented by the USA.

⁴⁵There is a lot more to say about the means by which the Chinese historical discourse rationalizes the foreign-ness of social and technological development and eventually appropriates the latter into its own civilizational constructs. Note for example, how Bai Shouyi describes the technological advances in the West in the passive voice: 'In 1784, the steam engine was invented, and the invention ... ushered the era of modern industry in Western Europe.' And, how, by contrast, he authors Chinese inventions: 'In science and technology, Wu Qixun, Zou Boqi and Zheng Fuguang made contributions' etc.. Or 'The propagation of Western science by the Jesuits at the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing dynasties had very little impact on Chinese society as a whole. The real job was done by scholars like Shanlan (1810-1882), who spread Western Science by their systematic studies in the 1860s.' Bai Shouyi, *An Outline History of China*, pp. 420, 456, 464. From the perspective of the ordinary person, Western technology is owed to China by right because the Chinese gave the West the means to scientific development in the first place, as for example, gunpowder, the compass, and the printing press. Perhaps this throws a little light on the attitude of Chinese authorities towards Western intellectual property rights.

⁴⁶*China Daily*, April 1991.

⁴⁷One should at no point underestimate the suffering of Chinese intellectuals and the terrible conditions under which they had to live, work and think at different periods post-1949. Anthropologists were specifically targeted in the anti-rightist campaign of 1957-1958 and again in the Cultural Revolution when anthropology disappeared altogether as a discipline. See G. E. Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China from Malinowski to Mao*, 1994.

⁴⁸The *Jian Shi* were updated in the 1980s with far more stress placed on socio-cultural data than the successes of the economy under Mao.

⁴⁹Quoted from the journal *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* [Social Sciences in Yunnan] (3) 1982, p. 37, in T. Heberer, *China and its Nationality Minorities*, p. 33.

⁵⁰For each dynasty established its rule over Yunnan through decisive military campaigns. The Ming campaign allegedly made casualties in the hundreds of thousands.

⁵¹For more details on Naxi revolutionary history, see S.D. White, *Medical Discourses*, pp. 114-122.

⁵²The same goes for the Mosuo and the Yi, perhaps other northwest Yunnanese as well but I do not know. Sunis and Mosuo shamans (Zhedas, Somas) usually ensure that no one in the audience has eaten dog or horse flesh before they call on their gods who, as Suni Abuzefa explained to me 'would not tolerate such filth.' In Chapter VIII, I come back to the implications of this proverb for the history of Naxi-Han relations.

⁵³The Naxi do not benefit from the preferential treatment granted to minority nationality people for university entrance etc. The first Confucian schools were established in Lijiang in the 15th century and in the 1930s, Lijiang boasted the 'number two' secondary school in Yunnan, the number one being in Kunming.

⁵⁴Note that all the above were proscribed following the Revolution until the mid 1980s.

⁵⁵Stevan Harrell addresses the vicissitudes surrounding the issues of 'who represents the Mosuo' in his book: *Ways of Being Ethnic*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2001, pp. 239, 260. He notes that Mosuo (Naze) have been represented by Chinese and foreign scholars, but does not mention Mosuo academician Lamu Gatusa.

⁵⁶Chinese ethnology does not always distinguish between the two terms.

⁵⁷See especially Yan Ruxian and Song Zhaolin, *Yongning Naxizu de Muxi Zhi* [the matrilineal System of the Naxi nationality in Yongning], Kunming Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1983. Note also that Marx coined the term 'fossil society' to refer to China.

⁵⁸In some parts of Yongning about half the households surveyed reckoned descent bilaterally and around 6 percent patrilineally. See *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu Shehui Ji Muxizhi Diaocha* [Research into the social and matrilineal system of the Naxi nationality of Yongning,

Ninglang Yi Autonomous County], Vol. 2, Kunming, Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988, pp. 42-43 and pp. 291-294. These data were collected in the period of *Minzu Xue* (1958-1962).

⁵⁹Ultimately, social science was not responsible for the shape that socialist reform took in Yongning, for already by 1954 the authorities were no longer viewing the southwest in all of its particularities (see D.J. Solinger, *Regional Government and Political integration in Southwest China 1949-1954*, pp. 82-107). In the 1960s, the Mosuo were expected to begin marching in step with the rest of the country: people were to take their meals in collective kitchens, and to watch movies intended to warn them against STD. Mosuo sexuality was then defined as a public health problem and education teams were doing their best to proselytize on the superiority of monogamous pairing marriage, at least until angry people burned the cinema to the ground. The Cultural Revolution marked the worst period by far in post-1956 Mosuo history, when the authorities saw to it that punitive disincentives should force the Yongning people to change their backward customs. Unless people presented marriage licenses, they could not be issued ration tickets for rice, flour and other basic necessities. The Mosuo eventually gave in to these pressures, and many married. However, in the post-Mao years, most people went back to their previous way of life. According to Shih, the marriage policy had only marginal effects on eventual formal marriage statistics, altogether affecting 13 per cent of Mosuo families (see Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 52, and Susanne Knödel, "Yongning Moso Kinship and Chinese State Power", in M. Oppitz and E. Hsu (eds.), *Naxi and Moso Ethnography*, Zürich, Völkerkundemuseum, 1998, pp. 47-67). Sexual freedom and matrilineality, however, were not the only 'backward practices' under attack. The Red Guards destroyed the temples, lamaseries, the residences of the traditional Mosuo chiefs (including the beautiful house on the island of Nioropu with the huge glass panes that had come 'all the way from America' – actually on mule back from Kunming. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 426). Today, myth making restitutes local prestige: some people now explain that there was no STD in Yongning in 1956, because the botanist explorer Dr. Rock had already cured the people by giving them penicillin. Loke Boshi (Dr. Rock) in fact is a sexual metaphor in his own right in Yongning, for not only did he cure the Mosuo of STD, but he allegedly fathered a few blond haired children. Although, according to Sutton, Rock's biographer, this would be quite unlikely because Rock was 'pathologically' shy of women. S.B. Sutton, *In China's Border Provinces: The Turbulent Career of Joseph Rock Botanist Explorer*, New York, Hasting House, 1974.

⁶⁰See the chapter entitled: "The State Of Productive Forces", in *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu Shehui Ji Muxizhi Diaocha* Vol. 2, pp. 4,5 [my translation from Chinese].

⁶¹I may add that although the Mosuo harbor resentment towards the Naxi and the Han as abstract categories, I have not met anyone who despised people on principle, just because they are Naxi or Han. There was a tendency among informants to conclude every discussion of ethnic or national difference with a 'People are people, there are good ones and bad ones' (*ren shi ren, you de hao de, ye you bu hao de*).

⁶²See Huang Shupin, "Minzu Shibie Ji Qi Lilun Yiyi" [Ethnic identification and its theoretical significance], *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue* (1) 1989, pp. 107-116, as mentioned in C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", p. 39. Also for a discussion on the decline of unilinear evolutionary models in Chinese social sciences see: S. Feuchtwant and Wang Mingming, "The Politics of Culture as a Contest of Histories: Representations of Chinese Popular Religion", in *Dialectical Anthropology* (16) 1991, pp. 351-372.

⁶³Yi scholar Lu Yin explains after Bai Shouyi's *Outline History of China* (Chinese title: *Zhongguo Tongzhi*) that the Chinese past lies with its origins among the minority nationalities, and confirms in Mao's words that not only has 'the Han nation been shaped by the blood of every nationality' but Han culture itself emerged from 'the splendid cultures of the minority nationalities'. Lu Yin, *Yizu Xingzhan Xue* [The astrology of the Yi nationality], Kunming, Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴The term 'walking marriage' is a direct translation of the Chinese word *zouhun* which is itself an adaptation of the Mosuo word *Sese* which means 'walk/walk'. *Sese* relationships are not marriage, however, but sexual relationships entered upon by the people concerned, for the time they deem

worthwhile. *Sese* (walk/walk) relationships are thus called because they involve men visiting their lovers' houses at night and returning to their maternal house in the morning. These relationships are the norm in Yongning, and far more common than formal marriages. In the early 1990s, Chinese scholars liked to stress that the Mosuo had fewer partners than they used to have now that they had realized that their former habits were 'unhygienic' (*bu weisheng*). Note also that Shih refers to *Sese* relationships as *Tisese*.

⁶⁵The Qiang are mentioned in the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty (1500 B.C.-1000 B.C.) and are therefore among the most ancient peoples of China. As mentioned above, Chinese scholars believe that evidence for Qiang matrilineality is found in historical records which tell that the Qiang 'knew their mothers but not their fathers'. The Chinese record also reports the mass migration of the Qiang towards the south and their settlement in what is today Sichuan between the 5th and 3rd centuries B.C. Chinese scholars therefore believe that the Qiang tribes continued south and settled in Yunnan at this same period. Some Chinese archaeologists, however, argue that the Qiang were in northwest Yunnan in times as ancient as 1000 B.C. Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Minzu Kaogu* [The archaeology of the southwestern peoples of China], Kunming, Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1990, 'Introduction', esp. pp. 4-5. K.C. Chang is more cautious on the question of the Qiang settlements of Sichuan and Yunnan than Chinese scholars. See K.C. Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977, p. 450.

⁶⁶Wang Chengquan, 'Ye Lun Naxi Muxizhi he Azhu Hun De Qiyuan' [In answer to "On the origins of the matrilineal system and the Azhu marriage system of the Naxi nationality of Yongning"], *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (4) 1989, pp. 64-75.

⁶⁷See, Zao Weiyang, 'Yongning Naxizu Muxizhi He Azhu Hun Qiyuan Wenti Shangque' [On the Origins of the matrilineal system and the Azhu style of marriage of the Naxi nationality of Yongning], *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (2) 1987, pp. 39-45. Zao, inspired by Rock's work, argues that Mosuo matrilineality is the product of deep changes in family and gender roles which came about as Lamaism required that a quarter of the Mosuo male population remain celibate. Wang Deyang and Luo Rengui, 'Zouhun Zhi Zhi Mi' [On the enigma of the marriage by visit system], *Minzu Tuanjie* (7) 1991. Wang and Luo explain that Mosuo matrilineality developed as a result of economic necessity: the caravan trade pulled men away from the family and thus shifted gender roles, eventually displacing the central figure of the father in favor of the mother. Geographic isolation helped preserve this system into the 20th century.

⁶⁸Lamu Gatusa, 'Ye Tan Zouhun Zhi Zhi Mi' [In answer to: On the enigma of the marriage by visit system], *Minzu Minjian Wenxue Shuan Yue Kang* (5) 1992.

⁶⁹Shih Chuan-kang, *The Mo-so*, p. 237.

⁷⁰To see how tourism works in revalorizing matrilineality and visiting relationships, see Eileen Rose Walsh's Ph.D. Dissertation, *The Mosuo - Beyond the Myths of Matriarchy: gender transformation and economic development*, Temple University, 2001.

⁷¹S. Harrell, "Civilizing projects and the Reaction to Them", 1995, p. 34.

⁷²M. Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, Glasgow, Fontana Press, 1977, Chapter III.

⁷³J.F. Rock, "The Romance of Ka-ma-gyu-mi-gkyi", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*. XXXIX, Hanoi, 1939; and J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe of the China-Tibet Borderland*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963; A. Jackson, "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs among the Na-khi", *Ethnos* (36) 1971, pp. 52-93; A. Jackson, "The Descent of Man, Incest, and the Naming of Sons: Manifest and Latent Meanings in a Na-khi text", in Roy Willis (ed.), *The Interpretation of Symbolism*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1975; A. Jackson, *Na-khi Religion*, La Hague, Mouton, 1979; and E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual, And Gender Transformation Among The Naxi", *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* (9) Spring 1990, pp. 61-73.

⁷⁴Jackson identified the Naxi's matrilineal tendencies in their unusual patrilineal cross-cousin marriage system, the high status position of maternal uncles, kinship terminology, and finally, creation mythology and its incest stories.

⁷⁵A. Jackson, *Na-khi Religion*, p. 28

⁷⁶Jackson did not contest that the Naxi chiefs themselves traced their ancestry and descendants patrilineally. His proposition is reasonable in light of the social organization of pre-1956 Yongning where the chiefly family was patrilineal and the common people of the plain were matrilineal.

⁷⁷There are no available statistics on Naxi love suicide. That suicide held a customary place in Lijiang and that it was exceedingly common, however, is confirmed by Naxi ritual and mythology and numerous observers including post-1949 Chinese ethnologists. Peter Goullart, a contemporary of Rock who lived in Lijiang for ten years, also wrote on the frequency of suicide among the Naxi. P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, London, John Murray, 1954, pp. 156-179. Chapters VI, VII, VIII address the question of love suicide.

⁷⁸He Zhiwu, "Cong Xiangxing Wen Dongba Jing Kan Naxizu Shehui Lishi Fazhan de Ji Ge Wenti" [On a few questions of the evolution and the social history of the Naxi nationality from the perspective of the Dongba pictographs and manuscripts], in Guo Dalie and Yang Shiguang (eds.), *Dongba Wenhua Lunji* [A collection of essays on Dongba culture], Kunming, Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985, pp. 189-222.

⁷⁹C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, Chicago University Ph. D. thesis, 1992, p. 364. I would argue that Jackson's thesis reflects some of the concerns of 1970s feminism and political economy rather than social Darwinism.

⁸⁰Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 28

⁸¹E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual, and Gender Transformation among the Naxi", 1990, pp. 61-73.

⁸²See the bibliography for the list of Rock's monographs on Naxi Dongba literature.

⁸³J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 391.

⁸⁴A.M. Reshetov, *Matrilineal Organisation among the Na-khi* (Mo-so), Moscow, 1964 (this reference is obtained from Jackson's bibliography).

⁸⁵According to Shih Chuan-kang, Reshetov studied in China between 1958 and 1961 but he did not visit Yongning. See C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", p. 55, note 29.

⁸⁶See Lo Ch'ang-p'ei, "The Genealogical Patronymic Linkage System of the Tibeto-Burman Speaking Tribes", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (8), 1945, pp. 349-363.

⁸⁷C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", p. 59.

⁸⁸Even Shih Chuan-kang writes: '[after 1956] the Mosuo have witnessed social changes that are more drastic and fundamental than what the society had undergone in millennia'. Shih Chuan-kang, *The Mo-so*, p. 4.

⁸⁹Much work still awaits research. For example, although the entire Dongba corpus was translated into Chinese by 1994, the textual content of the manuscripts remains to be analyzed. And one can think of many research projects: comparative studies of Dongba, Daba and Pumi Dibba ceremonial texts, as well as a comparative linguistic analysis of Dongba, Daba and Dibba languages. A compilation of Dongba genealogical histories would be extremely useful to attempt tracing the historical and spatial (i.e. political) development of the Dongba tradition in Lijiang. A compilation of the genealogies of various families around Lijiang would also be useful in reconstructing former marriage patterns, times of settlement and the ethnic origins of settlers.

⁹⁰N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, Paris, Hachette, 1889, Introduction to Vol. 4, p. IV [my translation from French].

⁹¹See V.W. Turner, "An Anthropological Approach to the Icelandic Saga", in T.O. Beidelman, *The Translation of Culture*, London, Tavistock, 1971, pp. 349-374. In which Victor Turner also welcomes the 'stream of historical studies by anthropologists' which surfaced in the 1960s. Turner explains that the 'synchronic method' had led to an unnecessary devaluation of historical research in anthropology. Evans-Pritchard, of course, wrote history brilliantly. See for example, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949.

⁹²As McKhann suggests, plausible alternatives to current theories of Mosuo-Naxi history 'can be constructed on the basis of the limited historical and ethnographic evidence that we now possess... Most of all we need to look more closely at indigenous Mosuo and Naxi models of cosmos and society, and at the same time divorce our questions about structure and history from the antiquated

propositions of Morganian evolutionism'. C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationality Question", pp. 60-61.

⁹³As Lévi-Strauss argued, the position of maternal uncles may be more relative to the status assumed by fathers than to filiation, and avunculates are found in patrilineal as well as in matrilineal societies. See C. Lévi-Strauss, "L'analyse structurale en linguistique et en anthropologie" in C. Lévi-Strauss, *L'anthropologie structurale*, Paris, Plon, 1990, pp. 43-69, p. 54.

⁹⁴B. Watson, "Some Remarks on Early Chinese Historical Works", in G. Kao (ed.), *The Translation of Things Past: Chinese History and Historiography*, Hong Kong, The Chinese University, Seattle, Renditions Books, 1982, p. 39. Also M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, Paris, Société d' Editions Des Belles Lettres, 1959, pp. 44-46.

⁹⁵Chavannes's annotated translation in E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Li-kiang", *T'oung Pao* (13) 1912, pp. 564-653.

⁹⁶Ibid, pp. 643-644.

⁹⁷M. Sahlins, "Other Times, Other Customs: The Anthropology of History", *American Anthropologist* (3) 1985, pp. 517-541, p. 528.

⁹⁸S.B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (26:1) 1984, pp. 126-165, p.159 and p.158.

⁹⁹By 'contemporary' is meant the 20th century as well as the beginning of this century, and unless otherwise specified, includes the Republican period.

¹⁰⁰You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Shiqi de Naxizu he Lisuzu" [The Naxi and Lisu nationalities during the Yuan, Ming and Qing periods] *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (3) 1986, pp. 61-65.

¹⁰¹G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Rome, Liberia dello Stato, 1949, p. 7.

¹⁰²M. Sahlins, "Other Times, Other Customs: The Anthropology of History", p. 518.

¹⁰³J. Friedman, "Tribes, States, and Transformations", in M. Bloch (ed.), *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology*, London, Malaby Press, 1975, pp. 161-202, p. 174.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, London, The Athlone Press, 1981, p. 288.

¹⁰⁶See E. Lederer, "Feudalism as a structure and Form of Society" in *Studia Historica Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae* (68) 1968. And for a more challenging critique: A. Guérreau, *Le féodalisme: un horizon théorique*, Paris, Le Sycomore, 1980.

¹⁰⁷*Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 28-30.

¹⁰⁸*Yunnan Ge Minzu Jingji Fazhan Shi* [the history of the economic development of all the nationalities], Kunming, Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989, pp. 267-311. Also see the details given in the Genealogical Chronicles of the Mu Family, in J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 87-153.

¹⁰⁹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 149-150. Confirmed by Guo Dalie in private communication (Kunming 1991).

¹¹⁰M. Godelier, "The Concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and Marxist Models of Social Evolution", in D. Seddon (ed.), *Relations of Production*. London, Cass, 1978, pp. 209-257; J. Friedman, "Tribes, States and Transformations", pp. 161-202.

¹¹¹For a discussion on the controversies of the terms Asiatic Mode of Production and feudalism, see P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London, New Left Books, 1978.

¹¹²J. Peacock, *Consciousness and Change*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1975, p. 46.

¹¹³J. Friedman, "Tribes, States and Transformations".

¹¹⁴Ibid, p. 162.

¹¹⁵S.B. Ortner, "Theory and Anthropology since the Sixties", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (26:1) 1984, pp. 126-165, p. 159. And S.B. Ortner, *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism*, Princeton University Press, 1989, "Introduction".

¹¹⁶Respectively quoted by McKhann and Ortner, in McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities question", p. 61; and S.B. Ortner, "Anthropological Theory since the Sixties", p. 157, note 18.

¹¹⁷S.B. Ortner, "Anthropological Theory since the Sixties", p. 157.

¹¹⁸Sahlins' model was also favored by Emily Chao in her article, "Suicide, Ritual and Gender Transformation", see Ch. VI in this book.

Chapter II

Divine Kings and Courteous Vassals: The Genealogical Chronicles of the Naxi Chiefs

Introduction

As Marshall Sahlins writes 'Heroic History' implies the 'presence of divinity amongst men', and a historical practice that is inseparable from divine action because divine kingship creates the human and cosmic order.¹ Naxi history is heroic history. The Mu chiefs rule by divine order and their genealogy begins with the creation of the cosmic order itself. Or at least, one of the Mu genealogies does, for history has endowed the Naxi people with two 'royal' genealogical chronicles, each telling its own story about the Mu's ancestors.

This chapter compares and analyses the Mu Chronicles in light of the Dongba mythical tradition, comparative mythology, the imperial historical record, and kinship theory. It argues that the chronological and narrative discrepancies in these documents announce the historic transformation of the Celestial Mu in the mid 16th century, from 'magicians as kings'² who 'knew both their mothers and fathers' into vassal kings of the Chinese emperor who 'knew only their fathers'.

The genealogies of the Naxi chiefs: an introduction to their peculiarities

The history of the ruling family of Lijiang (? - 1723) has passed to posterity in five genealogical lists and two biographical chronicles. And it is well worth

relating how these records came to the attention of modern scholars for what this story reveals of the complications they have raised for Naxi history.

It all began at the turn of the 20th century, with French Tibetologist Jacques Bacot who obtained a copy of the *Genealogical Chronicle of the Mu Family* in Lijiang, where he visited the descendants of the former Naxi royal family. When he returned to Paris, Bacot handed the Chronicle over to Edouard Chavannes who subsequently published a translation and an analysis of this and other documents, firstly in *T'oung Pao* as: 'Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Likiang', in 1912, and then in *Les Mo-so*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1913.

This genealogical Chronicle was in fact also a biographical record of the Mu successions from the first ancestor who had allegedly arrived in Lijiang in the 12th century, to the last Mu descendant in the modern period. It had first been compiled by the chief Mu Gong and prefaced by the famous Confucian scholar Yang Shen³ in 1545 whilst later entries had been rigorously kept up by his descendants. Strangely, however, in 1545, Mu Gong and Yang Shen had each provided a *different* list of ancestors. Yang Shen's list therefore had fourteen more ancestors than Mu Gong's, and whilst according to Mu Gong, the first ancestor was a man named Yeye who lived in the period 1105-1125 A.D., according to Yang Shen, the first ancestor was named Yegunian and lived in the Tang dynasty circa 618 A.D.

Then, to complicate things, Chavannes discovered in the process of further research that, according to official historiography (the *Yuan History*), imperial scholars had given the descendant Mai Liang as the twenty-third descendant from an original ancestor named Yeguzha. And since Mai Liang was listed as the eighteenth descendant from Yegunian in Yang Shen's list, Chavannes concluded that the imperial record implied the existence of yet another genealogy with five more ancestors and a founding ancestor named Yeguzha rather than Yegunian.⁴

We may now look at the two lists of ancestors given by Mu Gong and Yang Shen in the Chronicle compiled in 1545.

Mu Gong's ancestors (1545)**YEYE 1105***Nian-bao Ah-cong (1253)*

Ah-cong Ah-liang

Ah-liang Ah-hu

Ah-hu Ah-lie

Ah-lie Ah-jia

Ah-jia Ah-de/Mu De (1381)

Mu Chu

Mu Tu

Mu Se

Mu Qin

Mu Tai

Mu Ding`

MU GONG (1545)**Yang Shen's list (1545)****YEGUNIAN 618 A.D.**

Qiu Yang

Yang Gu

Gu Ju

Ju Meng

Meng Wang

Wang Wan

Wan Nei

Nei Ge

Ge Tu

Tu Jun

Lun Ju

Ju Xi

Xi Cuo

Cuo Luo

Luo Mai

Mai Cong (1253)**Liang Hu # 23 in the Y-S**

Hu Liang

Liang Jia

Mu De (1381)

Mu Chu

Mu Tu

Mu Se

Mu Qin

Mu Tai

Mu Ding

MU GONG

And if this were not confusing enough, three decades after Chavannes published this 1545 Chronicle, another scholar, Lo Ch'ang-p'ei, introduced yet *another* genealogy of the Lijiang rulers in an article entitled "The Genealogical Patronymic Linkage System of the Tibeto-Burman Speaking Tribes". And here, the Mu genealogy figured alongside another twelve genealogical records related to various chieftains and important Yunnanese families which Lo had discovered in Dali. This new list, interestingly, had the same number of entries as Yang

Shen's list, but here the Mu descendants had four syllable names whereas in Yang Shen's the names were shorter, with only two syllables. Thus, curiously, it seemed that Yang Shen had abbreviated the names of the Mu chiefs. Then, two years after Lo Ch'ang-p'ei, in 1947, Joseph Rock produced the last (known) piece of this genealogical puzzle when he published the *Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China* (ANKSWC) and with it not only a *fifth* genealogical list but also another Chronicle. Rock wrote in the ANKSWC that the Mu descendants had presented him with this other Chronicle after he had inquired about the discrepancies in Yang Shen and Mu Gong's lists. And interestingly, although this Chronicle was dated 1516 and was therefore an *earlier* record, the same Naxi chief Mu Gong was also responsible for its initial compilation. But here, Mu Gong had provided a longer list of ancestors, which not only matched Yang Shen's list (as well as Lo Ch'ang-p'ei's), but also traced the Mu's origins beyond Yegunian through to twelve mythical ancestors and to the Dongba creation story itself.

In 1947, Rock claimed that the mystery of Chavannes' 1545 Chronicle was now solved. Mu Gong's 1516 Chronicle, he wrote, was an earlier and more complete record. But actually, Rock had left out some important questions, for if Yang Shen's list was the correct one, and if the *earlier* Chronicle was the more complete record, then why had Mu Gong bothered to write a second Chronicle that shortened his genealogy by several centuries?⁵

The Naxi Creation Myth

Although Rock did not think to question Mu Gong's motivation for compiling two contradictory genealogical chronicles, he did solve another important mystery. The 1516 Chronicle began in several lines of gibberish, written in Chinese characters that made no sense even to the Mu descendants. Rock discovered that these opening lines were in actual fact recounting the origins of the universe according to the Dongba tradition and *in Naxi language*. In other words, in 1516, Mu Gong had set out to reconstruct his family history from the

origins of time and the universe as given by the Dongba tradition. And so, before we begin exploring the Mu genealogical Chronicles, we shall begin where Mu Gong began, with the Naxi creation myth.

The Naxi creation myth is above all a ritual text. It is best understood as a magic formula where the power of the Word replays and consequently recreates the origins of the world, reproducing the good things of life (such as the Naxi people) and holding the bad ones at bay (such as ghosts and demons). In its integral form, this story is a poem chanted in five-syllable verse. It is a marvelous and lengthy epic, combining moments of majestic drama with pathos, suspense and humor and such literary qualities to which the synopsis I present below cannot do justice.

In the beginning, the Universe emerges out of vapors, light, sounds and cosmic eggs of opposite nature. The god Ddu and the goddess Sei hatch out of nine pairs of good eggs, along with the Big and Small chiefs, and the Pu (Dongba) and the Pa (female diviner) and other good persons including the Ji and Co people. In the following generation, the ghosts and demons hatch out of nine pairs of bad eggs.

After this, the sky and the earth must be separated, a difficult project which is eventually accomplished by nine brothers and seven sisters. The Universe, however, is not stable until Junasiluo Mountain is built. The peak of Junasiluo holds the heavens steady and its foot stops the earth from shaking. After the construction of Junasiluo, the first nine ancestors appear.

The first ancestor is Mee-ssa Cu-cu, i.e. Celestial Cu-cu, the ninth ancestor is Cosseilee'ee – the hero of the Naxi creation myth. Cosseilee'ee has five brothers and six sisters and since there is no one else in the world, the brothers and sisters become husbands and wives. Lee'ee⁶ himself does not marry his sister but the incestuous marriage of his brothers and sisters pollute the entire world.

Note: At this point, the six brothers are suddenly reduced to three and the sisters disappear from the plot altogether.

Cosseilee'ee's two brothers Jigu and Kuagu are going to plow the fields, as they apparently do everyday. But Kuagu and Jigu encroach onto the territories of the gods Ddu and Sei (male and female principle) and to add insult to injury, they accidentally wound the god Ddu's grandfather and the goddess Sei's grandmother. The good Cosseilee'ee

offers to help treat the gods' wounds. Then, the gods announce that a great flood is about to occur because Cosseilee'ee 's brothers and sisters committed incest. A new earth and a new sky must appear in place of this polluted world. Since Cosseilee'ee was kind to the gods, he may escape from the flood but his two brothers will perish. Cosseilee'ee prepares for the flood by entering a leather bag.

He takes with him a baby dog, a baby chicken, a baby goat, and seeds for the next world. The flood begins. Cosseilee'ee floats in his bag, whilst his brothers die with the rest of humanity. Once the waters have receded, Cosseilee'ee comes out of the bag onto a deserted earth. He feels desperately lonely. Unless he finds a mate, there can be no further generations.

Eventually, Lee'ee obtains from the gods a chance to meet three sky princesses. One has vertical eyes, another has oblique eyes and the last has horizontal eyes. The gods advise him to choose the woman with the horizontal eyes because she is kind hearted. Lee'ee, however, thinks beauty is more interesting than kindness and he takes the woman with the vertical eyes. But their union cannot bring forth a new generation. Instead the sky woman gives birth to trees and animals.

Lee'ee then goes to the sky to seek a wife, just as the sky princess Coheibubami is descending to the earth to look for a husband. They meet at the place where White and Black merge, fall in love, and return to heaven.

Meanwhile, Coheibubami's father, the heavenly god Apu has smelt human flesh and decided to sharpen his knife. Cosseilee'ee is saved by Coheibubami who pleads with her heavenly father, asking him to keep Lee'ee as a serf. But Lee'ee himself has other ambitions and he asks Apu to give him Coheibubami in marriage. Apu is outraged and decides to take revenge. He pretends to go along with Cosseilee'ee's demands and on the pretense of exacting bride-service, he puts him through a series of impossible trials. Cosseilee'ee must cut, burn and then seed 99 forests in three nights. He must also accompany the god Apu on a fishing trip and then a hunting expedition where Apu attempts to kill him. Thanks to Coheibubami who gives Cosseilee'ee the correct magic formulae, Cosseilee'ee succeeds in all the tasks and only narrowly escapes his would-be father-in-law's murderous plots. Nevertheless, each time Lee'ee goes to claim the hand of his beloved, the god Apu answers: 'I cannot give you my daughter. If you are clever, if you are capable...' and imposes yet another trial on Lee'ee. Finally, Cosseilee'ee succeeds in the most difficult enterprise, the milking of a tiger.⁷ At last, Apu reluctantly agrees to the union. Lee'ee and Cohei take with them domesticated animals and the seeds of a hundred plants, and descend upon the earth by climbing down the golden rope and the silver staircase. With the help of the gods Ddu and Sei, they arrive safely via the top of Junasiluo Mountain.

The final details told in Naxi creation mythology may differ according to the priest who is telling the story, and also according to the ceremonial purpose which the myth serves. The version given below is told on the occasion of the Sacrifice to Heaven.

Lee'ee and Cohei return to the earth but they cannot have any children until they learn to sacrifice to Heaven. Later, Cohei gives birth to three sons who cannot speak until more is learned from the gods. When the sons finally speak, they each utter a sentence in Tibetan, Naxi and Bai and they become the ancestors of the three peoples. All three prosper and revere their own gods. The Tibetans and the Bai worship their Buddhist gods, the Naxi worship their ancestors and Heaven. Six generation later, their descendant Ge-lai-qi performs the Sacrifice to Heaven and he is blessed with four sons, each of whom becomes the founder of one the four Naxi clans: the Se, Ye, He and Ma.⁸

And in the twentieth century, the Mu family claimed to be descended from the Ye clan.

Naxi cosmogony in the light of comparison⁹

The Naxi creation myth begins with the formation of the cosmos and the transformation of all things, and ends with the establishment of the Naxi people as the middle brothers between the Tibetans and the Bai, and ultimately with the founders of the four Naxi clans. Moreover, the position of the three sons, in agreement with Naxi inheritance rules which favor first and last born sons,¹⁰ establishes the Naxi in a lesser prestige position *vis à vis* the Bai and the Tibetan. According to Naxi scholars, this and a great many other details suggest that the Naxi creation myth dates from the Tang dynasty – when the Naxi ruling house was subject to both the royal houses of Tibet and Nanzhao. On this point, I believe Chinese scholars to be correct. However, that the Naxi creation myth possibly originated in the Tang period does not preclude that adjustments were perhaps made in more recent times.

From the perspective of comparative mythology, the Naxi creation story shares many elements with the creation myths of neighboring peoples. Creation

stories beginning with **cosmic eggs** are common to Qiang legends and ancient Chinese mythology. All Yunnanese and some Qiang myths tell stories of **floods and incest**. In fact, Cosseilee'ee and his two brothers have counterparts in the Mosuo and Nuosu creation myths. Lee'ee's escape in the **leather bag** is paralleled in other Yunnanese myths, and notably Dai, Pumi and Yi creation myths where 'humanity' escapes from the flood inside a **gourd**. And perhaps with the leather bag, the Naxi myth substitutes a masculine object for a feminine principle, for the Yunnanese and Southeast Asians worship the gourd as the 'mother body', in other words, as the universal womb. The leather bag, for its part, recalls the inflated skin rafts the Naxi used to cross the Yangzi until the 1950s. These are very ancient for they are mentioned in the records of the Tang dynasty and Lijiang tradition has it that they were used to ferry the invading Mongols across the Jinshajiang in 1253.

Tales of **earthly men marrying sky princesses** as well as their reverse where Naxi princesses marry sky princes, are found among the Tibetans, the Burmese, the Yunnanese and other people of Southeast Asia for whom they enshrine dynastic change. Then also, the Naxi myth recalls the Tibetan historical tradition which explains that the first kings commuted between heaven and earth by climbing a rope or a ladder (the Mu rope). Interestingly, Cosseilee'ee's trials also evoke the trials which the seventh century Tibetan minister Gar allegedly underwent when he traveled to the Chinese imperial court to claim princess Wen Chang on behalf of his King Songtsen Gampo.¹¹ And to mention only a few more comparative elements, the **Ddu and Sei** gods are reminiscent of the Chinese **Yin and Yang**; they also find a counterpart in the Mongol male and female shaman deities, the ancestors of the different Mongol clans. The woman with the vertical eyes who gives birth to the trees and animals plays a part in some Yi creation myths. The **magic formulae** which Coheibubami teaches to Cosseilee'ee recall contemporary increase magic practiced by the Lisu.

In sum, the Naxi Creation Myth is what Lévi-Strauss calls a piece of *bricolage*. It is made up of conventional and limited constituent parts because it is

the order of the narrative and the relative position of the parts that matter. On this score, the Naxi myth does present a unique order of things with its incest story, for the latter *inverts* the moral and sacred order which incest and the flood assume in the cosmogonies of neighboring peoples. For example, in the Nuosu myth, the wounding of the gods sparks the flood,¹² whilst in all other Yunnanese myths, incest comes after the flood when it is *positively* sanctioned by the gods. By contrast, in the Naxi myth, the wounding of the gods causes the death of Co's brothers, and *incest causes the flood*.

This discrepancy between Naxi and other Yunnanese creation stories, in fact, was also noted by Naxi scholar Yang Fuquan. But Yang concludes that Yunnanese incest stories prove Engels' theory of the matriarchal past and original group marriage whilst the Naxi's incest story is evidence of a later, more developed and Confucian zed vision by which the Naxi passed judgment on primitive social forms.¹³ In a not dissimilar vein, Jackson argues that Naxi incest stories are products of Confucian revisionism by which the Dongba priests sought to eliminate the Naxi matrilineal past. We shall see in this chapter and again in Chapter VII that there is a lot more to Naxi incest mythology than Yang Fuquan or Jackson's theories suggest. Meanwhile, I shall agree with both Yang and Jackson that the Naxi incest story does seem to be something of a revision, because it very obviously breaks the plot whereas the rest of the narrative although in all appearance layered and syncretic, is reasonably coherent.

The first ancestors: Yegunian and Yeye

As I mentioned above, in the 20th century, the Mu descendants claimed that they were issued from the Ye clan, one of the four clans of Naxi fathered by Gelatin Qiu, the sixth descendant from the mythical ancestor Cosseilee'ee.¹⁴ And whilst Mu Gong wrote in his first Chronicle that his ancestral history began in 618, and in the second Chronicle that it began in 1105, on both occasions, he maintained that his first ancestor had the name Ye – Yegunian in the first Chronicle, and Yeye in the second.

Now, if we examine the first Chronicle, we see that in 1516 Mu Gong traced his family genealogy to the Dongba story of creation, and in particular to twelve mythical ancestors before his first historic ancestor Yegunian. And if we compare these genealogies in the Dongba tradition and in the Mu Chronicle, we see that in the Dongba myth, there are nine ancestors and that Cosseilee'ee is number nine, whereas in the Chronicle, there are twelve legendary ancestors and Co is number seven. Still, in spite of these discrepancies, Mu Gong's mythical genealogy does match that given in the Dongba myth when both make Ge-lai-qiu the sixth generation after Co, the last of the list, and the father the four Naxi clans. Now, it is also important to note that according to the *Yuan History*, the ancestor Mee-ssa Cu-cu (who is Mee-re Ce-ce in the myth) was in fact a real life character who dwelt in Judian sometime between the 3rd and 5th centuries A.D.¹⁵

First ancestors in the creation story

1- He-she He-gu
 He-gu Mee-gu
 Mee-gu Mee-re
4 -Mee-re Ce-ce
 Ce-ce Ce-yu
 Ce-yu Cu-jiu
 Jiu-se-ji
 Ji-se-co
9 - Cosseilee'ee
 2sd generation
 3rd generation
 4th generation
 5ft generation
6th Ge-lai-qiu

In the Mu Chronicle (1516)

1 - Mee-ssa Cu-cu
 Cu-cu Cu-yu
 Cu-yu Cu-diu
 Diu-yu Diu-ze
 Diu-ze Zi-ze
 Zi-ze Co-ssei
7 -Cosseilee'ee
 Lee-ee No-o
 No-o Na-ba-pu
 Pa-pu O
 O Ge-lai
12 - Ge-la Qiu

But even if Mee-ssa Cu-cu is a true historical figure, we can be sure that Mu Gong's legendary list is at least as concerned with the magic of numbers as it is with history. Indeed, in the Naxi religious tradition, the numbers twelve, nine and seven are loaded with calendrical, cosmic and ritual connotations. There are twelve ancestors in the legendary genealogy of the Naxi chiefs (as there are in

many Yi genealogies¹⁶) because 'twelve' is a calendrical and therefore *cosmic* convention. In other words, the twelve ancestors establish Time.

So, perhaps the first question we need to ask is, if Ge-lai-qiū is number six from Cosseilee'ee in both the myth and the Chronicle, why did Mu Gong make him the *seventh* rather than the *ninth* ancestor as he is in the myth? And the most obvious answer to this question is that Mu Gong made Cosseilee'ee the seventh to signify the flood, because *seven*, in the Dongba as in other traditions, and in particular, in Southeast Asian and South Asian traditions, is an archetypal lunar number associated with water and regeneration.¹⁷ Interestingly, when he revised this Chronicle in 1545, Mu Gong did not bother to situate his genealogical origins in the Dongba story of creation. Yet, he lingered in the mythic past, and traditional archetypes when he explained that his first ancestor Yeye arrived in Lijiang upon great torrents of water. For the flood itself signifies dynastic change. But let us now take a look at the two genealogical lists which Mu Gong wrote in his first and his second Chronicle.

The Genealogies of the Mu Family

FIRST CHRONICLE

1516

Mythical ancestors

Mee-ssa Cu-cu

Cu-cu Cu-yu

Cu-yu Cu-diu

Diu-yu Diu-ze

Diu-ze Zi-ze

Zi-ze Co-ssei

Cosseilee'ee

The hero of the flood in the mythology, and father of the three sons: the Tibetan,

Naxi and Bai

SECOND CHRONICLE

1545

Lee-ee No-o

No-o Na-ba-pu

Pa-pu O

O Ge-lai

Ge-lai-qiu *who fathered the four clans of Naxi: Se, Ye, Ma, and He.*

TANG DYNASTY (618)

(Historic ancestors)

First generation

Yegunian (618-624)

*followed by six generations according to the preface by Zhang Shichun and
seventeen generations according to Mu Gong himself*

Tibetan period (670)

Qiu Yang'

NANZHAO (751 (?) - 902)

Yang-yin Du-gu

Du-gu La-gu

La-gu Pu-meng

Pu-meng Pu-wang

Pu-wang La-wang

La-wang Xi-nei

Xi-nei Xi-ge

Xi-ge La-tu

La-tu Ngue-jun

Ngue-jun Mou-ju

Mou-ju Mou-xi

SONG DYNASTY (960-1253)

Mou-xi Mou-cuo

Mou-cuo Mou-luo (1105).....**YEYE** (1101/1125)

Mou-luo Mou-bao

From the Second generation to the 6th generation***Mou-bao Ah-cong***(1253).....***Nian-bao Ah-cong*****MONGOL PERIOD (1276-1381)**

Ah-cong Ah-liang

Ah-cong Ah-liang

Ah-liang Ah-hu

Ah-liang Ah-hu

Ah-hu Ah-lie

Ah-hu Ah-lie

Ah-lie Ah-jia

Ah-lie Ah-jia

Ah-jia Ah-de/Mu De (1381)

Ah-jia Ah-de/Mu

MING DYNASTY(1381-1644)

Mu Chu (Ah-de Ah-chu)

Mu Chu

Mu Tu (Ah-chu Ah-tu)

Mu Tu

Mu Sen (Ah-tu Ah-di)

Mu Sen

Mu Qin (Ah-di Ah-xi)

Mu Qin

Mu Tai (Ah-xi Ah-ya)

Mu Tai

Mu Ding (Ah-ya Ah-qiu)

Mu Ding

Mu Gong (Ah-qiu Ah-gong)

Mu Gong

Mu Gao (Ah-gong Ah-mu)

Mu Gao

Mu Dong (Ah-mu Ah-du)

Mu Dong

Mu Wang (Ah-du Ah-sheng)

Mu Wang

Mu Qing (Ah-sheng Ah-zhai)

Mu Qing

Mu Zeng (Ah-zhai Ah-si)

Mu Zeng

QING DYNASTY (1644-1723)

Mu Yi (Ah-si Ah-chun)	Mu Yi
Mu Jing (Ah-chun Ah-su)	Mu Jing
Mu Yao (Ah-su Ah-wei)	Mu Yao
Mu Xing (Ah-wei Ah-hui)	Mu Xing
Mu Zhong (Ah-hui Ah-zhu)	Mu Zhong

As we see, the names of each ancestor before the Mu are connected to one another in a chain whereby the second syllable which stands for the father's name, becomes the first syllable of the name in the following generation which is the son's name: Du-gu **La-ju**, **La-ju** *Pu-meng*, *Pu-meng* Pu-wan, etc. This patronymic chain is typical of other T-B speakers of Yunnan and Burma.¹⁸ One should note that it is easily adjustable. Indeed, the last three Mu ancestors of the Qing period did not succeed one another from father to son, but from uncle to nephew and the name patterns show no evidence of this.¹⁹ Therefore, it is of some interest that the name Yegunian breaks the patronymic chain between Ge-lai-qiu and Qiu Yang.

The mysterious origins of the Mu ancestors

As Chavannes and Rock remarked, the Mu genealogies are peculiar. Not only are there two first ancestors born six centuries apart, but there are also some apparently inexplicable generational gaps. Thus, in the 1516 Chronicle, we find four Mou ancestors during the Song, a period that lasts 293 years. Then, we find that Mu Gong called his seventeenth ancestor after Yegunian the second generation, whilst he titled this part of the genealogy: From the second to the sixth generation, which in fact anticipates his 1545 revision where the Mongol Yeye is given as the first ancestor and Mou-bao Ah-cong the second. Except that in the revised Chronicle, Mou-bao Ah-cong is called Nian-bao Ah-cong. As Rock wrote in the ANKSWC, 'The records do not appear to be authentic'.²⁰

And yet, given that the records were official documents legitimizing the successions of the Mu overlords, we ought to consider that perhaps there is more to these peculiarities than bad arithmetic. And since at least the first Chronicle begin in mythic reckoning signified by cosmological numbering, it follows that myth and numerology may be key elements in this puzzle.

Taking the latter for premise, let us begin by looking a little more closely at Yegunian. His dates correspond to the Tang conquest of 618-624 A.D. which brought Lijiang into the Chinese administration, until the Tibetans invaded in 670.²¹ As we saw above, Yegunian is inserted between the last legendary ancestor Ge-lai-qiu and the next historical figure Qiu Yang, but he breaks the father-son linkage.²² At first glance, Yegunian is a Chinese word which means 'Old Generation', and it is not usually a personal name. Thus, Yegunian seems a device to give the Lijiang chiefs an ancestral stake in the Tang and Chinese administration.²³ In fact, we can be quite sure that this was Mu Gong's intention because the Mu descendants themselves said as much in several inscriptions left on various Lijiang stela. As the chief Mu Zhong (1723) wrote: 'Since nothing is known about Yegunian, we respectfully call our first ancestor Qiu Yang.'²⁴

Likewise, Yeye (the first ancestor in the 1545 Chronicle) seems to have no more of a personal name than Yegunian. Yeye is Chinese for 'grand-father' and the name does not conform to the other name patterns in the genealogy. It is also odd that Yeye should have arrived 150 years before Kublai's invasion if, indeed, he was a Mongol. Just as strangely, although the first and second Chronicles match from the Mongol invasion, in the 1545 version, the word Nian 年 has replaced the name Mou 牟.

Now, Rock believed this discrepancy to be a simple error because the two characters are similar and may be easily confused.²⁵ This is not impossible, but an error is not something we should take for granted. The Chronicle was an official document, and entering correct names was likely to be of some importance to the compilers. Furthermore, we know that this second Chronicle was prefaced by Yang Shen who was an eminent Confucian scholar, and that

Yang Shen's own list of ancestors was based on the 1516 list, and therefore that Yang Shen had read the name Mou, not Nian, in the first Chronicle. And indeed, the name Mou is also conspicuously absent from Yang Shen's list, where it has been replaced by the name Mai.

Thus, we can only conclude that in 1545, when Mu Gong rewrote his genealogy, he *purposefully* removed all his Tang and Song ancestors except for one, Mou-bao Ah-cong whose name he altered to Nian-bao Ah-cong, whilst Yang Shen himself altered Mou to Mai. And so, the question is: why should both Mu Gong and Yang Shen have wished to do this? But before we move onto to exploring their possible motives, we need to return to the Chronicles and review some important biographical details.²⁶

The Chronicles Of The Mu Family: Some Biographical Details

FIRST CHRONICLE (1516)

Note that until the Mongol period, the dates which Mu Gong provides to situate his ancestors correspond to the successions of Chinese emperors. Note also that the periods announced as Yue-sui Zhao, Zuo-guo Zhao, Yue-xi Zhao and Mo-so Zhao correspond to historic tribal kingdoms of northwest Yunnan but not to true historical periods. Hence, the Yue-sui and Zuo-guo should be dated circa the first century A.D. Then, whereas the Yue-xi and Mo-so Zhao were contemporary in 'real life', we read in the Man Shu (Book of Southern Barbarians) that the Yue-xi Zhao was also called Mo-so Zhao and that it was destroyed by the Nanzhao (Southern Kingdom) during the 8th century.

The 12 legendary ancestors

Mee-ssa Cu-cu

Cu-cu Cu-yu

Cu-yu Cu-diu

Diu-yu Diu-ze

Diu-ze Zi-ze

Zi-ze Co-ssei

Cosseilee'ee *who fathered the three sons, the Tibetan, Naxi and Bai*

Lee-ee No-o

No-o Na-ba-pu

Pa-pu O

O Ge-lai

Ge-lai-qiu *who fathered the four clans of Naxi Se, Ye, Ma and He.*

Yue-sui Zhao

FIRST GENERATION

Yegunian (618)

Zuo-guo Zhao

Qiu-yang (674) was Governor of Santan.
married Mi-jun-xi-shu

Yang-yin Du-gu (713/741) *married* A-hui.

Gu became the governor of Santien (Satham/Lijiang) and turned his allegiance to the Nanzhao kingdom. He commanded the vanguard of Nanzhao troops when Nanzhao rebelled against the Tang emperor, and was promoted to the position of Zong-du Yuan-shuai (viceroy and generalissimo).

Du-gu La-ju (751) *married* A-yao

Ju acquired merit on behalf of Nanzhao and was thus confirmed in his father's position as viceroy and generalissimo

La-ju Pu-meng (785) *married* Tie-nu

Meng was appointed by the Chinese emperor.

Pu-meng Pu-wang (787/795) *married* Qie-qie-yu-lu-lu

Wang betrayed Nanzhao, then joined with the Chinese and defecting Nanzhao troops and defeated the Tibetans.

Pu-Wang La-wan *married* Ge-yu 0-lv-nnu

La-wan Xi-nei (806-820) *married* Han-nu

Yue-xi Zhao

Xi-nei Xi-ge (827-835) *married* Pu-mi

Xi-ge La-tu (863) *married* Ge-nu

La-tu Ngue-Jun (902) *married* Xian-lu.

At this time, in Dali Zheng Mai-si killed the heir to the king of Nanzhao and the entire Meng family (800 persons). Then, he usurped the throne. Meanwhile, in Lijiang, the chief La-gu Ngue-jun had six sons who were named Mou-ju, Mou-dao, Mou-gu, Mou-dai, Mou-lai and Mou-tong who each became the chief of a clan.

(Song Period)

Ngue-jun Mou-ju *married* Ju-zhong

Mou-ju Mou-xi (998-1022) *married* Jiao

Mo-so Zhao

Mou-xi Mou-cuo (1054-1055) *married* Yu-li

Mou-cuo Mou-luo (1111-1117) *married* La-mu

Mou-luo Mou-bao *married* Nu

From The Second Generation To The Sixth Generation

(Mongol period)

Mou-bao Ah-cong (1253)

married Qiu of the Xiantao family

Mou-bao Ah-cong could read at the age of seven even though he had never been taught. When he had grown up, he learned to speak the languages of the different tribes and invented the local *wenzi* (literature/scripts/books). He also learned the languages of the birds and animals and it was believed that he possessed supernatural powers. During an altercation between Mou-bao Ah-cong and the king of Dali, a sacred book dropped from the sky onto the horn of a dragon. People fetched the book but they could not understand it, so they took it to Mou-bao Ah-cong. Thereupon Ah-cong made a prophecy, that the Mongols would soon come and subdue the king of Dali. While Mou-bao Ah-cong was still alive, the different clans were disunited, but afterwards, they saw his wisdom, sincerity and fame and they recognized him as their supreme chief.

THIRD GENERATION

Ah-cong Ah-liang (1253- ?)*married* Yu-xian, daughter of Gan-uo Mu-tu.

Ah-cong Ah-liang met the Mongols at Fengke and was thereupon appointed to rule over the tribes of Lijiang.

FOURTH GENERATION

Ah-liang Ah-hu (1272-1340/or 1347)*married* Lamu daughter of He-hui He-mi

Ah-liang Ah-hu was appointed by the Mongol court to rule over the tribes of Lijiang, Yongsheng, Heqing, Langju (around present day Ninglang), Yongning, Tong An Zhou, Baoshan Zhou (Fengke), and Lanzhou.

FIFTH GENERATION

Ah-hu Ah-lie (1347)*married* Zhang-men Ah-jia, daughter of La-ba La-tu

SIXTH GENERATION

Ah-lie Ah-jia (1356)*married* Zhu-mu, daughter of the Mongol family Hu-yi Pu-duFrom The Seventh To The Fourteenth GenerationAh-jia Ah-de (- 1382) **Mu De.***married* She, daughter of He Lu-geRequested the family name Mu from the Chinese Emperor.²⁷

EIGHTH GENERATION

Ah-de Ah-chu (1383-1426) **Mu Chu***married* Ah-shi-sa daughter of Ah Xian

NINTH GENERATION

Ah-chu Ah-tu (1419-1433) **Mu Tu***married* Zhi-fu, daughter of Gao Zhong

TENTH GENERATION

Ah-tu Ah-di (1434-1442) **Mu Sen***married* Li daughter of Ah Su

ELEVENTH GENERATION

Ah-di Ah-xi (1442-1485) **Mu Qin**
married Shun, daughter of Gao

TWELFTH GENERATION

Ah-xi Ah-ya (1485-1502) **Mu Tai**
married Gui, daughter of Ah

Mu Tai was born with supernatural powers and thus fulfilled a prophecy. Mou-bao Ah-cong had warned that he should be reborn eleven generations later. Mu Tai was Mou-bao Ah-cong's reincarnation.²⁸

THIRTEENTH GENERATION

Ah-ya Ah-Qiu (1503-1526) **Mu Ding**
married Xiang, daughter of Gao

FOURTEENTH GENERATION

Ah-Qiu Ah-Gong (1527-1553) **Mu Gong**
married Meng, daughter of Feng

Mu Gong was the first of the chiefs to compile the Chronicles

After Mu Gong the various ancestors up until the last chief Mu Zhong are announced under the following titles: 'From the 15th to the 19th generation', and 'From the 20th to the 24th generations'.

SECOND CHRONICLE (1545)

FIRST ANCESTOR

Yeye

Yeye arrived in Lijiang between 1101 and 1125. He was originally a Mongol from the Western Regions. As a holy man, he had first lived in a cave of the Kunlun mountains where he practiced meditation. Then, there arose a great torrent of water that carried him into the Jinshajiang. When the Lijiang barbarians first saw him, they immediately recognized that he was an unusual man and made him their chief. He married a woman from the Xiantao family, the daughter of one of five Lijiang chiefs. They had a son whom they named **Ah-cong** and who was adopted as a son-in-law by the chief **Nian-luo Nian-bao**.

SECOND GENERATION

Nian-bao Ah-cong

THIRD GENERATION

Ah-cong Ah-liang

FOURTH GENERATION

Ah-liang Ah-hu

And so forth, except that in this second Chronicle Mu Gong also dispensed of the supernatural details he attributed to Mu Tai, the 12th descendant.

Close reading of the Mu Chronicles

As mentioned above, quite aside from the problem of the two first ancestors, both Chronicles give grounds to dispute the successions that took place during the Song period, between the fall of Nanzhao (902) and the arrival of the Mongols (1253) – the first Chronicle by providing untenable generation gaps, the second by removing the Song ancestors altogether, including the name Mou. Then, we also find that in the second Chronicle Ah Cong is no longer Mou-luo Mou-bao's son, but his son-in-law, whilst Yeye marries the Xiantao woman who was given as Ah-cong's wife in the first Chronicle.

The Chronicles also confront us with other types of discrepancies to do with historical chronology. Notably, in the first Chronicle, Mu Gong calls the Mou 'dynasty' Mo-so Zhao (Mo-so Kingdom) after the historic Yunnanese kingdom which had been destroyed by Nanzhao three centuries before. On the other hand, both Chronicles make Ah-cong the second generation and confirm that the Mongol invasion ushered yet a new generation of chiefs. And indeed, Naxi oral tradition would confirm the second Chronicle for it holds that the chief Mai Zhong (aliases Mou-bao Ah-cong, Nian-bao Ah-cong, and Ah-cong) was none other than the son of Kublai.²⁹ And then, there is another problem: whilst both

the first Chronicle and the preface to the second Chronicle agree that the Mu's ancestors came to Lijiang in the 7th century, the 1545 version provided by Mu Gong would have thus believe that his ancestor was a Mongol who first arrived in Lijiang during the Song dynasty and thus a century or so before the Mongol invasion. And indeed, we find something of interest in this latter proposition, because although contemporary Chinese scholars take the view that the Naxi's ancestors conquered Lijiang during the Tang dynasty, the *Ming History* reports that the Mo-so took Lijiang during the Song period.³⁰ But if the *Mo-so* arrived in Lijiang during the Song, then why did Mu Gong insist that Yeye was a Mongol? Mu Gong's two Chronicles can be compared and summarized as follows:

- 1) In the 1516 Chronicle, Mu Gong establishes that the Mu are the natural rulers of Lijiang and that their claims to kingship begin in the deepest autochtony as well as in the Chinese imperial realm. The Mu's ancestors lived in times before time, at the beginning of the Universe, and have succeeded each other through centuries of history and turmoil. The Mu family can trace its historic ancestry back to the Tang (Yegunian), through the Tibetan period (Qiu Yang), the Nanzhao kingdom (from Yang-yin Dugu to La-tu Ngue-ju), the Dali Kingdom (Mou-ju Mou-xi), and the Mongols (Ah-cong Ah-liang).³¹
- 2) In the 1545 Chronicle, Mu Gong concedes the Mongol origins of the Mu family. For the Mu patriline begins with a Mongol who married the daughter of a local chieftain. But evidently, Mu Gong is also mixing two stories here because his first Mongol ancestor came to Lijiang sometime during the Song period which, in the first Chronicle, he calls the Mo-so Kingdom – one of five kingdoms destroyed by Nanzhao.

All of this suggests that in 1545 Mu Gong revised his family history under a set of imperatives which differed from those that had guided his first compilation in 1516. At the most superficial level, we may conclude that in the first Chronicle, Mu Gong validated the history of his ancestors in mythology whilst in the second,

he validated his ancestors' mythic destiny in something approaching historical truth, either his Mongol ancestry, or his ancestors' conquest of Lijiang in the Song period. But, if this were all there was to the Mu Chronicles, why would Yang Shen have bothered to reproduce the longer genealogical list that Mu Gong had drawn in 1516? And why couldn't Mu Gong decide on which ancestor truly represented his family's origins: the Mongol who (we must assume) came with Kublai or the Mo-so who conquered Lijiang in Song times?

The Mu chiefs and their Ye ancestors

In fact, if the persona of Yeye confirms that Mu Gong acknowledged his Mongol ancestry, Yeye's dates suggest that the Mu chief was also attached to the idea that his ancestors had arrived in Lijiang during the Song period. Meanwhile, the name Yeye, which is neither Mongol nor 'Mo-so' also suggests that Mu Gong was especially attached to the name Ye (refer to Yegunian).

Now, according to tradition, the Naxi chiefs had no patronyms before the Ming emperor bestowed upon them the name Mu, in 1381. As Lo Ch'ang-p'ei's sources explain, 'The Mo-so have no names and no surnames. They use the last word of the name of the grandfather and that of the name of the father together with a new word to form their own name.'³² But even if the ancient Naxi had no patronyms as such, they had clan names. And given that among the clans of Lijiang we find the name Ma which is a transliteration of the Naxi Mei [me], whilst both Mei and Mu mean 'tree' (*mei* figures in Naxi cosmology as a sacred tree, and *mu* simply means tree in Chinese), it seems strange that the Mu descendants should have claimed descent from the Ye. We find more reason to suspect that the Mu chiefs should belong to the Ma (Mei) rather than the Ye clan in the historical record. For according to the *Yuan History* which was compiled two centuries before Mu Gong's Chronicles, the Lijiang chiefs at the time of the Mongol conquest were named Mai Liang and Mai Hu.³³ And as we will see in the next chapter and as we have already seen from Yang Shen's preface, Mai, Mou, Mu, Ma and Mei are all interchangeable.

A brief look at the Ye clan

While the *Yuan History* explains that the ancestor Yegunian was a Mo-so, and the second Chronicle that Yeye was a Mongol, the name Ye appears Chinese. First of all, because both Yegunian and Yeye are Chinese words, and secondly because Ye is a Naxi adaptation of Yang, also a Chinese name. Or alternatively, Yang is a Chinese adaptation of Ye, a Naxi/Mosuo name. Either way, Yang is interchangeable with Ye or Ya in contemporary Naxi and Mosuo, whilst Ye and Ya are readily transcribed as Yang into Chinese. In other words, if the Chinese names Mu, Ma and Mai are interchangeable with the Naxi name Mei, the Naxi name Ye, the Mosuo name Ya and the Chinese patronym Yang are also interchangeable.

The name Yang appears immediately after Yegunian with the ancestor Qiu Yang whom the Mu Chronicles describe as a Tang military official. But then again, given that Qiu Yang's name does not conform to the rest of the name pattern, it is possible that he is no more of a real ancestor as Yegunian and that he too is a device to connect Yang-yin Du-gu to the mythical Ge-lai-qiu. At any rate, if Qiu Yang was a Tang official, the date attached to his name (670) does not fit.³⁴ For the year 670 corresponds not to the Tang invasion of northern Yunnan, but to the *Tibetan* conquest of Satham (Lijiang). And whilst Qiu Yang may not be a real ancestor, the dates and biographical entries which Mu Gong provides for his son Yang-yin Du-gu would attach the latter to the Nanzhao kingdom rather than to China or Tibet.³⁵

In actual fact, the dates given for Yegunian, Qiu Yang and Yang-yin Du-gu suggest that something is not quite right with these first ancestors – or at least that something is not 'historically correct'. To begin with, the dates are inconsistent, for there are several discrepancies between My Gong's and Yang Shen's list. Secondly, the generation gaps which these dates indicate are too great to show natural successions. What these dates do therefore is signpost not actual successions so much as political connections between the Mu ancestors and significant historical events.

Mu Gong's list (1516)*Yegunian* (618) – the Tang conquest*Qiu Yang* (670) – Tibetan conquest*Yang-yin Du-gu* (713-741)

Nanzhao defeats the Mo-so Zhao

Du-gu La-ju (751)

Alliance of Nanzhao and Tibet against

Tang. La-ju earns merit on behalf

of Nanzhao.³⁷**Yang Shen's list (1545)***Yang-yin Du-gu* (742-755)Nanzhao allies with Tibet.³⁶

In 1516 Mu Gong was eager to connect his family history to the historic Mo-so Zhao, which had been destroyed by Nanzhao with Tang approval – and in fact, he will also call the dynasty headed by his Mou ancestors further down the genealogy, the Mo-so Zhao.³⁸ But Yang Shen shifted Yang-yin Du-gu's date to correspond with Nanzhao's alliance with Tibet and their combined annexation of Lijiang. Thus, in 1545, both Yang Shen and Mu Gong avoided making reference to the Mo-so Zhao – the former by changing Yang-yin Du-gu's dates, and the latter by removing his Mou ancestors and the Mo-so dynasty from the genealogy.

Yang Shen and Mu Gong's lists compared

We saw above that the name patterns in the Mu Chronicles of the Lijiang chiefs link the father's name to that of his son. And that such a patronymic linkage system is a typical Tibeto-Burman naming system. In the light of comparison, however, the Mu naming system is not quite up to the T-B standard. In 1945, Lo Ch'ang-p'ei published thirteen T-B genealogies, with among those the genealogy of the Mu family. Of these thirteen lists, all have names composed in three and sometimes two syllables. There are only two exceptions to this: the genealogy of the Lolo house of An which has eighty-four generations and adopts a four syllable naming system on the forty-seventh, and the genealogy of the Lijiang chiefs which also has four syllable names. The Mu naming pattern is therefore not unique, but it certainly appears to have been unusual.

Now, we have also seen that in his preface to the second Chronicle, Yang Shen gave an alternate list to Mu Gong's, and that this list corresponded to the

1516 list, as well as Lo Ch'ang-p'ei's list . And so it did, except for two things:

1) the names given in Yang Shen's prefatorial list are all made up of two syllables instead of four, and

2) Yang Shen enters the name Mai where Mu Gong had written Mou.

And if we place the genealogy given by Yang Shen next to Mu Gong's 1516 list, something of great interest transpires.

YANG SHEN'S LIST 1545

Yegunian
Qiu Yang
Yang Gu
Gu Ju
Ju Meng
Meng Wang
Wang Wan
Wan Nei
Nei Ge
Ge Tu
Tu Jun
Jun Ju

Ju Xi
Xi Cuo
Cuo Luo
Luo Mai
Mai Cong

Cong Liang
Liang Hu
Hu Liang
Liang Jia
Mu De

MU GONG'S LIST 1516

Yegunian
Qiu Yang
Yang-yin Du-gu
Du-gu La-ju
La-ju Pu-meng
Pu-meng Pu -wang
Pu-wang La-wan
La-wan Xi-nei
Xi-nei Xi-ge
Xi-ge La-tu
La-tu Ngue-jun
Ngue-jun Mou-ju

Mou-ju Mou-xi
Mou-xi Mou-cuo
Mou-cuo Mou-luo
Mou-luo Mou-bao
Mou-bao *Ah*-cong

Ah-cong *Ah*-liang
Ah-liang *Ah*-hu
Ah-hu *Ah* Liang
Ah-liang *Ah*-jia
(*Ah*-jia *Ah*-de) **Mu De**

And so forth, with all the Mu ancestors until the 24th generation.

These lists make clear that from Yang Shen's perspective, two syllables in these four syllable names were redundant. And indeed, we can see that syllables one and three are not needed to carry the patrilineal link. We can also see that these redundant first and third syllables occur in a pattern until the name Mou comes on

the scene and the pattern changes, and then the pattern again changes with the chief Ah De (Mu De). For after Mu De, all the chiefs will be called Mu. But what is truly fascinating with the early four syllable names is that all the syllables Yang Shen did away with happens to correspond to the name of a clan of northwest Yunnan. Xi is the name of a Mosuo clan, allegedly the Mosuo equivalent of Se, Ngue was the name of the Mosuo aristocracy, La was the name of the chieftains of the old Zuosuo in present day Muli.³⁹ Meanwhile, Pu is also the name of the people the Mo-so supposedly displaced when they invaded Lijiang.

The best possible explanation for the four syllable name pattern in the early part of the Mu genealogy is that this naming pattern is a hybrid system combining Tibeto-Burman and Tibetan practices. Like all traditional T-B names, these Naxi names indicate father-son linkages, but they also act like ancient Tibetan names which put the mother's name in front of the father's – in other words, syllables one and three stand for *the clan names of in-laws*.⁴⁰ The names of the earlier Lijiang chiefs therefore are formed from the names of their mothers and fathers, then the names of their wives and their own personal name, e.g.: Mo-Fa Wi-ego.⁴¹ That Mu Gong provided the first names and not the family names of the chiefs' wives during all the generations before Mou-bao Ah-cong also confirms this proposition.⁴² And that Yang Shen discarded these first and third syllables whilst he kept the second and fourth syllables likewise makes this point – syllables 1 and 3 are unnecessary because they do not carry a paternal link but indicate maternal and affinal linkages.

If I am correct, the genealogy now implies that the various clans of northwest Yunnan entered into marriage alliances with the Lijiang chiefs, and preferably on the basis of matrilateral alliances, because in between the La marriages, the clan names of spouses and mothers are repeated twice, indicating that a chief marries into his mother's lineage group in the second generation. The first part of the Mu genealogy therefore points to a system of tribal confederation based on alternative matrilateral alliances where the high status group (the chief's group) was the wife

taking group as was done among the Tibetans, and whereby also, one specific clan – the La – appears to have held a privileged position. So the next questions are: Which clan did the wife-takers (i.e. the Lijiang chiefs) belong to? And why did the La hold precedence in these matrimonial affairs?

Unless we wish to speculate, we have to assume that the Mu genealogical list, at least until 902 (the fall of Nanzhao) originates with the Ye/Yang clan and therefore belong to the Ye/Yang clan. In any case this is entirely in keeping with tradition since the Mu chiefs claimed to belong to the Ye clan – they were descended from two ancestors named Ye, and acknowledged their first ancestor in the persona of Qiu Yang. But the first two ancestors after Yegunian, Qiu Yang and Yang-yin Du-gu are peculiar. Qiu Yang has an odd name and he establishes a connection to the legendary ancestor Ge-lai-qiu, the mythic father of the four Naxi clans and none other than the mythic founder of the Qiang tribes.⁴³ Thus, we need to question Qiu Yang's 'historicity'. For his part Yang-yin Du-gu is also interesting. Given that he is allegedly Qiu Yang's son, we can take it that the Yang part of his name infers the patrilineal link. But this implies that in the name Yang-yin Du-gu, Yang is in the position which I believe to be occupied by mothers' names in the next generations. That the usual order of things (Mo-Fa Wi-ego) is inverted seems confirmed by these two syllables Yang-yin 陽音 which suggest a pun on Yin-Yang 陰陽 – the Chinese masculine and feminine cosmic principles. In other words, if we do look at Yang-yin Du-gu's name from left to right *which is the direction followed by the Dongba scripts*, Yang-yin is *Yin-Yang* backwards.

Now, when I first proposed this reading of the name Yang-yin Du-gu in my Ph.D. dissertation (1997), one examiner expressed dismay and objected that there were no grounds to interpret the names of the Mu ancestors beyond their literal meaning. In short, Yang-yin Du-gu is 'just a name'. But in actual fact, the name Yang-yin Du-gu even at its surface level appears to reflect Naxi cosmological reckoning. The Chinese characters Yang-yin Du-gu 陽音都谷 mean 'Yang- voice/sound City-valley'. So looking at the first part of the name,

if Yang may indeed stand for the masculine principle, the word voice/sound evokes the Naxi myth of origins. For in the very beginnings of time, 'after the egg of Reality appeared, there was a transformation and the *voice* (or sound) and breath of the one who could call appeared. The *voice* was good and the breath was good.' As to the second part of the name, 'city and valley' represent a set of territorial opposites which between them encompass the political geography of ancient Yunnan. For the people one could hope to conquer and unify dwelt in the river valleys and the cities, as opposed to the mountains and forested regions where the wild and unsubordinated tribes and brigands lived.⁴⁴ Yang-yin Du-gu's name, at a literal level of meaning therefore appears to speak to sacred time and to territorial space – and as we shall see again and again in the next chapters, *sacred time and sacred space are fundamentals of politics as religion*.

The reverse reading of Yang-Yin Du-gu as Du-gu Yin-yang which I am suggesting is also entirely justified by the fact that, in China, homophonic puns are very much part of traditional worldview and discourses. All classes of people engage in word play, through the memorization of *chengyu* (proverbs), but also through spontaneous punning. Word puns are also made evident in ritual. For example, as a dear friend, who is an illiterate peasant woman of the Sani nationality, explained to me when she invited me to her house for New Year, I was welcome to bring some apples because the word for apple *ping-guo* 蘋果 is a homophone of *ping guo* 平 國 which means 'peaceful country'. Chinese, both in its oral and written forms, lends itself to double-entendre and to layered meanings with cosmic, magical, humorous, satirical references. There can be no doubt that the 1516 Chronicle must be read on several levels: historical, political, and magical. For it is this layered construction that makes it not only an official record, but a *sacred* text imbued with cosmic power. Seen in this perspective, the Chronicles compiled by Mu Gong are crammed with symbolic meanings, and these textual underlay are not the 'true' or 'real' meaning of the text, so much as they are an integral part of it. In this context, personal names simply provide another opportunity to add cosmic value.

To come back to the discussion, therefore, Yang-Yin – when it is read backwards – evokes Yin-Yang, the female-male principle which is at the source of all creation. Importantly, this female-male dyad is also reflected in the Naxi gods Du and Sei of the creation story, and it is also a feature of the Tibetan royal genealogy. And Du-gu read backwards gives *gudu* which sounds very much like the characters *gudu* meaning lonely 孤獨 – the very adjective used in the Dongba creation myth to describe Coseilee’ee, the hero who survived the flood, the last and first man on the earth who went to heaven searching for a wife. And indeed, Coseilee’ee was lonely because he is the archetype of the orphan who marries a woman not of his own kind (he is the earth man, she is a sky princess) and becomes the founder of a new race upon a new earth. Conversely, Yang-yin Du-gu is Yin-yang Du-gu because he too is ‘alone and lonely’ not only like Coseilee’ee, the mythical Naxi ancestor, but also like that other Mu ancestor, the Mongol Yeye who arrived alone and on torrents of water (2sd Chronicle). Yang-yin Du-gu is lonely because he has no ancestors, because *he is new in the place*. In other words, Yang-yin Du-gu is a first ancestor because he conquered Lijiang. And we can be sure, given the dates and biographical details in the Chronicle and other sources (see Chapter IX), that he did so on behalf of Nanzhao.

Meanwhile, the story of the mythic orphan is shorthanded in cosmic numerology. Mu Gong explains that there were eleven generations before Yegunian (i.e. Yegunian is number twelve), and six generations from Yegunian to Qiu Yang⁴⁵ This cosmic pattern based on a series of six is repeated in the six Mou before Mou-bao Ah-cong who heralds the Mongols, and the six generations before Mu De who was the first Naxi chief to bear the name Mu and heralds the Ming dynasty. In fact, on closer observation, we see that in the Mu Chronicles, every major political upheaval is preceded by a series of six ancestors, or an inferred six generations. Now, as Rock remarked in the ANKSWC, ‘the time which elapsed between [between Yegunian and Qiu Yang] is only about 56 years....The records do not appear to be authentic; this seems to be confirmed by the memorial stone in the Mu burial ground that nothing is known about

Yegunian'.⁴⁶ But Rock missed the point that Mu Gong was making history by replaying the myth of creation, and enshrining his genealogy in cryptic and magical truths. What Mu Gong is signifying with these six ancestors before Qiu Yang is not a true number of ancestors but a cosmic event that resonates with the beginnings of time, and announces dynastic change.

From Yang-yin Du-gu, we may now move on to the next ancestor, Du-gu La-ju who initiates the name patterns up to the Song period and the 'Mo-so Zhao'. Du-gu La-ju, if my theory on Naxi name patterns is correct, married into the La family. And this name La is also of special interest, because:


- 1) it is the name of the first in-laws, and
- 2) it is repeated throughout the next successions in an idiosyncratic way. For the name La re-appears every fourth generation where it indicates a patrilineal marriage alliance between the Lijiang chief and a woman on his FFF's side.

Now, the word La means Tiger in the languages of the Naxi, Mosuo, Yi and Pumi whilst all these people as well as the Chinese, the Qiang and the Tibetans consider the Tiger a symbol of kingship.⁴⁷ It is quite possible that the La were a 'royal' lineage among local tribes, or alternatively, that La was the totemic title given to the ruling clan. But what I am suggesting here is that Du-gu La-ju's marriage to the La legitimized the Yang/Nanzhao conquest of Lijiang. For marriages have made sense of conquest and dynastic transfers all over the world, and the historical record confirms that Yunnan is no exception (refer to such marriages in the *Man Shu*). Seen in this light, however, the regular La alliances which occur every four generations also suggest that native influence in political matters persisted beyond Nanzhao conquest. And it is most likely not a coincidence that we find the La family installed as native chiefs of Zuosuo after the territory seceded from Yongning in the 18th century.

Given the dates and the symbolic values attached to the first two ancestors (Yang-yin Du-gu and Du-gu La-ju), given also that Mu Gong clearly implicates them with Nanzhao's military efforts (refer to the biographical details above), we

can conclude that the Yang did not only ally themselves with Nanzhao but in fact arrived in Lijiang at the vanguard of Nanzhao troops, and that (Yang) Du-gu La-ju consolidated Nanzhao occupation when he married a chief's daughter, a daughter of the La /Tiger ruling clan – just as the Mongol Yeye or indeed his son (since both versions exist) ⁴⁸ will be adopted as a son-in-law by the local chief Nian-luo Nian-bao *alias* Mou-bao Ah-cong. As to the La, they were more than likely of the Jang tribes who had been conquered by the Tibetans in 703, and brought into their tribute system. The Jang were a branch of Qiang (see Chapter IX), and indeed, as Rock first discovered, there are many linguistic and cultural connections between the Naxi and the Qiang. And Mu Gong himself claimed that his ancestor Qiu Yang was the son of Ge-lai-Qiu, the mythic founding ancestor of the Qiang tribes.

Of course, we must not lose track of the fact that the Mu genealogies necessarily speak for what its contributors Mu Gong and Yang Shen wished to have happened at least as much as what did actually happen. But I shall return to the question of history and what may have happened, as well as to the question of who conquered Lijiang and when, in Chapter IX.

Further down the Mu genealogy, and keeping to the model of analysis, the break between the fall of Nanzhao and the Mou successions suggests (although we shall see below that there is more to this story) that the Mou *replaced* the Yang/Ye. In fact, one should pay close attention to the character used for the name Mou 牟 since the latter can mean 'to take', 'to encroach on' or 'to obtain'. The Dongba pictographs also sustain the hypothesis that the Mou in fact succeeded the Ye, as well as the hypothesis that the Mu chiefs were themselves of the Ma clan and not the Ye. For the Dongbas represent the clan name Ye as  or wilted leaves, and the clan name Ma as a sacred Dongba tree, which for its part is not wilted but healthy.⁴⁹ And indeed, the word Mu 木 means no less than 'tree' in Chinese.



The clan name Mei

The proposition that the Mou conquered Lijiang is in agreement with the Yuan imperial record which relates that the Mo-so conquered Lijiang during the Song dynasty. It is also confirmed by the chief Mu Yao who wrote in 1648, that his ancestors had 'succeeded one another as the rulers of this district for 27 generations, and their family ... descended for 32 generations to the present Mu Yao.'⁵⁰ Thirty-two and even twenty-seven generations from 1648 take us into the Song period (I come back to this below). Finally, there is one last reason to believe that the Mou conquered Lijiang during the Song and thus succeeded the Ye/Yang rather than they were descended from them in the patriline. The dates Mu Gong gives for La-tu Ngue-jun who allegedly fathered the Mou chiefs correspond to a major political upheaval in northwest Yunnan, the murder of the entire Meng ruling family of Nanzhao (800 people) and the subsequent fall of the kingdom. Meanwhile, the claims that the Mu chiefs belonged to the Ye clan are clearer. The Mu did have ancestral connections to the Ye, *through conquest and marriage*. In other words, the Mu were descended from the Ye on the maternal, affinal side.

But why didn't Mu Gong simply write that the Mou had conquered Lijiang? In fact, we can see that at no point in his 1516 genealogical record did Mu Gong ever make explicit any violent dynastic change or any marriages initiated by conquest – in particular, he seems to have glossed over the Mongol conquest which we know from the historical record did happen. Thus, he wrote that the chief Ah Liang had welcomed the Mongol troops and that he had been rewarded by Kublai with the title of Civil Governor and other such honors. It is only in the second Chronicle that Mu Gong mentions the marriage of the Mongol Yeye to Nian-luo Nian-bao's daughter – whilst he has substituted the syllable Nian for the previous Mou. In Chapter IX, I will explain that Mu Gong had political interests in underplaying his family connections to the Mongols whom the Ming had defeated after a protracted and bloody war. For the moment, however, I will point out that if my reading of the first Chronicle is correct, Mu Gong in actual fact did make conquest and marriage explicit by way of a cosmic narrative. Again, the

magical nature of this first Chronicle may not be perceived as a subterfuge for history, but rather as an empowered version of history suited to the Mu's own position as divine kings. And we should not have any doubt that this narrative was accessible to those who were versed in the magic of numbers and mythology. That most of these magical and numerical references disappear in the 1545 revised Chronicle confirms the accessibility of the cosmic and numerological history which Mu Gong had first compiled in 1516.

The secrets of the Mu family

The second Chronicle was the *official* Chronicle of the Lijiang kings. It is to this second genealogy that the great historian Yang Shen put his name. It is also this second genealogy which the Mu descendants showed to interested folk and which they bothered to keep up into the 20th century, for the first Chronicle ends in 1723 with the last official Mu chief. The first Chronicle was a private record, and by the 20th century, its mysteries were truly forgotten, including, as we saw above, the fact that it began in Naxi language and with the Naxi creation myth.

Evidently, none of the three genealogical lists proposed by Mu Gong and Yang Shen is 'historically' genuine. In the first Chronicle, Mu Gong adjusts the number of generations around Qiu Yang, goes astray during the Song, and then again fixes the generation gap in the early Mongol period. By contrast, Yang Shen provides an unbroken patriline from Yegunian to Mu Gong but his genealogy gives an average generational gap of thirty-eight years. This is almost twice the average found in the successions after Mu De, as well as in the successions given in the genealogy of Nanzhao, and that of the Yongning chiefs which average about twenty years per generation. As for Mu Gong's second Chronicle, the Mongol Yeye seems pure fiction.

But there is one point on which Mu Gong's second list and Yang Shen's do agree – the point at which both lists remove all traces of the name Mou and the period of time given as Mo-so Zhao in the first Chronicle. So that we may now ask a much more specific question about the Mu Chronicles: What was wrong

with *the Mou ancestors* that both Mu Gong and Yang Shen should have wished to do away with them by 1545?

Let us go back to the first Chronicle and the list of ancestors. As mentioned above, at the time of La-tu Ngue-jun, something of major importance occurred in the region: Zheng Mai-si had the entire Meng family murdered and made himself King of Nanzhao. Zheng, however, only ruled for eight years, after which the Duan family founded the Kingdom of Dali. The name Mou comes on the scene at about this time, when La-gu Ngue-jun allegedly breaks with Dali. Ngue-jun and his wife, Mu Gong writes, produced six sons, each headed a clan name Mou. And from then on, the clan names La, Xi, Pu disappear from the genealogy, whilst the particle Mou appears at the place indicating mothers and wives, in *all* succeeding generations.

But if those other clan names disappear, the chiefs still have four syllable names – which implies, from the perspective of the earlier genealogy, that La-tu Ngue-jun's successors **Mou-ju Mou-xi, Mou-xi Mou-cuo, Mou-cuo Mou-luo** and **Mou-luo Mou-bao** took wives who had the same clan names as their mothers. In other words, the chiefs married women from only one clan, and thus ended the old tribal federation based on the intermarriages of the various local clans. That this was what Mu Gong meant to say is confirmed in the entry on Mou-bao Ah-Cong where it is said that until Ah-cong's time, the various tribes had been disunited. Interestingly, as Chinese scholars point out, the Yuan record shows that the Song period was a time of stability and economic growth for the Lijiang basin and Yunnan generally. Thus, in the absence of other data, we cannot assume that 'the tribes were disunited' because Lijiang was in a state of tribal anarchy.⁵¹ And so it is safer to presume that when Nanzhao fell, the tribal federation that had expanded across northwest Yunnan under the control of the Yang clan of Lijiang also fell apart. The Mou (Mo-so) tribes then conquered Lijiang, but they controlled a much smaller territory than their predecessors had done, whilst the original tribes (the La, Xi, etc) reclaimed their own territories. In fact, this reading of the Mu Chronicle is entirely consistent with the information

given in the historical record and which relates that, after the fall of Nanzhao, the Pu recovered their land and in turn, they were conquered by the Mo-so.⁵²

Coming back to La-tu Ngue-jun, we also find the particle Ngue. The name Ngue in fact is the clan name of the former Mosuo aristocracy. And the presence of the Ngue at this stage of the genealogy does suggest another interpretation for these Song dynasty successions, because Ngue comes just before the genealogy speaks of six sons named Mou who each headed a clan, and the name pattern shows that the Mou chiefs married wives who not only had the same clan names as themselves but also the same clan names as their mothers. That the wives themselves were of the Mou clan is confirmed by the fact that Mu Gong provides only their personal names and not the names of their fathers, just as he had done with the wives prior to the fall of Nanzhao. By contrast, he will provide the names of the wives' fathers from the first generation of chiefs who bear the name Ah further down the genealogy. Hence, the Mou wives could well be clan sisters or they could simply be sisters and not wives at all, as would happen in matrilineal Yongning where the Mosuo do not marry. As I will now explain, there is also a matrilineal hint in the name Mo-so.

Chinese scholars believe that the Mo-so make their first appearance in the historical record as Mo-sha a 3rd century tribe who dwelt in Yanyuan. This is entirely possible since, even today, the region of Yanyuan is inhabited by Yi (Nuosu) and Nari (Mongols/formerly identified as Mo-so). Thus, the particle *sha* would be a precursor of *so*. Again, this is quite possible since in modern Naxi, the word Mo-so is sometimes given as Mo-sha or even Ma-sha, as well as Mo-sa and Ma-sa. Now, neither *sha*, *sa*, nor *so* have meaning in Chinese, but *sha* does mean something in Tibetan where it denotes matrilineal descent either through one's mother or through one's in-laws.⁵³ In other words, the Mo-*sha* would be people descended from the Mo lineage on *their mothers' side*. If Mo-so is indeed derived from Mo-sha, then it is possible that the Mou succeeded each other through their matriline. In this case, it is also possible that these successions were not from fathers to sons but from maternal uncles and uterine nephews, and if this

were so, that the particle Mou indicates not the names of wives, but the names of maternal aunts and sisters.⁵⁴

But the solution may not be so neat. For there is the Naxi creation myth which not only announces the Mu genealogy, but also tells us that Cosseilee'ee had five brothers who could not fight nor capture wives, who married their own sisters, and that the stench of incest polluted the sky, the earth, the tall mountains and the deep valleys, and that a new earth and a new sky had to appear before a new generation could again live upon the earth. A new generation fathered by the good Cosseilee'ee who had pleased the gods. And indeed, after the Mou, come the Mongols and with them a new generation of chiefs who carry the name Ah.

When seen in the light of Dongba mythology, the first Chronicle suggests that the name patterns carried by the Mou chiefs imply that the latter 'married their sisters'. And if this were true, the Mou would not be a unique case in the history of royalty. But in fact, as already discussed, these 'incestuous' Mou alliances could mean a number of things: that the Mou married endogamously (women of the same clan), or that the Mou did not marry at all and inherited their position from uncle to nephew. And then again, if the Naxi chiefs were of the Ye clan (as Mu Gong and Yang Shen insisted in the second Chronicle) then the clan name Mou patterns would only indicate that the Ye married matrilaterally and only into the Mou clan which would imply an exclusive and restricted system of matrilateral alliance but not incest. And it may well be that this was the reason why Mu Gong insisted on calling his Song ancestor Yeye rather than Mou in the second Chronicle.

So far, the reading I have made of the Mu chronicles confirms that between 751 and 902, Lijiang was under the political control of the Ye (or Yang) clan, originally from Nanzhao (probably Baiman), that the Mou clan (the Mo-so tribe) arrived in Lijiang after the fall of Nanzhao, whilst the Mongols followed in the 13th century and installed the Ah. I have also pointed out that the arrival of the Yang, Mou and Mongols correspond in the genealogy to distinct name patterns and that conquest therefore had an effect on the marriage alliances that regulated

political relations in Lijiang. So, under Nanzhao, the people of Lijiang were federated on the basis of a system of marriage alliances according to which the Lijiang chiefs married matrilaterally for two generations and patrilaterally with the La clan at each interval. Then, with the arrival of the Mou, everything changed. The Mou appeared to have married other Mou and the tribes of Lijiang were disunited – very much like Cosseilee'ee's five brothers who could not fight and capture wives and married their sisters.

It seems to me that the correspondences between the series of six ancestors, the dubious marriage alliances of the Mou, and flood archetype suggest that Mu Gong rather than implicating the matrilineal successions of his ancestors in actual historical terms (or as well as doing so), *intended* the Mou period to be viewed through the prism of incest mythology – because incest mythology justified the next lot of alliances, the marriage of the conquering Mongol to the local chief's daughter, following which the tribes of northwest Yunnan were once again united.

The Mongol connection and Naxi patronyms

According to the second Chronicle, the Mongol origin of the Mu family lies with Mou-bao Ah-cong's son or rather with his son-in-law Ah-liang (or Mai Liang) who allegedly met Kublai's troops at the crossing of the Jinshajiang, rather than in the Mongol Yeye who arrived in Lijiang a hundred years before the Mongol invasion. And in light of all that has been discussed so far, it seems that Yeye is a device to compress history.⁵⁵ Since the second Chronicle tells that two ancestors married the daughters of local chieftains: Yeye circa 1125 but also Ah-cong circa 1253, it is reasonable to conclude that the stories of Yeye and Ah-cong are short-hand versions of what the imperial records relate of the history of conquest in Lijiang, notably, that the Mo-so conquered Lijiang during the Song dynasty, and that the Mongols came in 1253. Then, since the second Chronicle relates that both Yeye and Ah-cong married local women, it is also reasonable to assume that Mu Gong was implying here that he was descended in a direct patriline from a Mongol officer (as oral tradition maintains) and that he was

related to the Ye on the maternal side through his ancestors' marriages. And the nice thing about relating his ancestral origins to the Ye was that it took his ancestral line all the way back to Yang-yin Du-gu (in fact the fictitious Yegunian), whilst it made the Mou connections inconsequential.

Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that either Mou, Mo or Mai was the correct name of the Lijiang chiefs at the time of the Mongol invasion, for this is confirmed by the imperial record, as well as the first Chronicle. After the Mongols, however, the Lijiang chiefs were named Ah, and although the genealogy again exhibits the same pattern as it did under the Mou (e.g. Ah-liang Ah-hu, Ah-hu Ah-lie etc.) there is no doubt that Ah is here a patronymic particle. To begin with, it is with the Ah chiefs that Mu Gong begins to indicate the paternal names (father's names) of his ancestors' wives – although of course, since these names have four syllables, they may say more about original affinal relationships than about the wives' actual patriline. Importantly, the Mu descendants also kept the name Ah in their private record (the first Chronicle) even after they took the name Mu in 1381.

Following Rock, McKhann raises the issue of whence the Lijiang chiefs may have obtained the name Ah, and like Rock, he suggests that the Naxi chiefs received this name from the Mongols. McKhann proposes that Ah may represent 'the beginning usage of a lexical device to mark membership in what had become a ruling lineage'.⁵⁶ He reports that according to Naxi oral tradition, the Lijiang chiefs obtained the name Ah in Beijing and that the word Ah designates relatives of superior ranks among the Naxi.⁵⁷ But perhaps the answer is simpler: that there were so many Ah families in northwest Yunnan because Kublai Khan did not leave one officer but an occupying force.⁵⁸

In fact, there is also a mythical explanation for the name patterns of the Mongol period. As noted, those are on the same model as the Mou, and as for the Mou, there are six generations of Ah chiefs before the last one Ah-jia Ah-de (also Mu-de). And indeed, the seventh ancestor, Ah-de also heralds a dynastic change. He is the first to be invested by the Ming emperor and to bear the name Mu, and

he too will initiate a new series of marriage patterns. However, I will come back to Mu De in Chapter VII.

But if we have come a long way towards deciphering Mu Gong's two chronicles, there remains at least one mystery to solve. For as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the *Yuan History* implies that Mu Gong's 1516 genealogical list and Yang Shen's should have included five more ancestors.

The missing five ancestors: myth, incest and Confucianism

If there were five ancestors missing from the Mu genealogy before the Yuan dynasty, the question is where could they fit? For there are two great gaps in the 1516 genealogy. The first is at the start of the Tang period and the second at the start of the Song – the genealogy officially begins with Yegunian in 618, but begins to show credible successions from Du-gu La-ju in 751 whilst the Mou generations are so distant from each other that they are historically untenable.

If we believe the Naxi chief Mu Yao, however, the missing five ancestors most certainly lived during the Song dynasty and they were most likely of the Mou clan. For Mu Yao wrote in 1548 that his ancestors came to Lijiang during the Song period and that twenty-seven ancestors had succeeded each other legally, whilst there were a total of thirty-two generations to himself. The difference between thirty-two and twenty-seven of course is five.

And in fact, the answer to the question of the missing ancestors appears to have been solved by Mu Gong himself, for the latter provides the names of six Mou sons at the time of La-gu Ngue-jun [**Mou-ju**, Mou-dao, Mou-gu, Mou-dai, Mou-lai and Mou-tong], and then the names of six chiefs who succeeded one another [Ngue-jun **Mou-ju**, Mou-ju Mou-xi, Mou-xi Mou-cuo, Mou-cuo Mou-luo, Mou-luo Mou-bao and Mou-bao Ah-cong]. And since the name Mou-Ju appears twice, Mu Gong gives us not twelve but eleven Mou ancestors: six of whom appear in succession and five who do not. The missing five are therefore Mou-dao, Mou-gu, Mou-dai, Mou-lai and Mou-tong.

But now that we have solved the mystery of the missing five ancestors, there

is something else to say about the Mou and the Mo-so Zhao. Coming back to Mu Yao's thirty-two ancestors, and averaging twenty-two years or twenty years per generation,⁵⁹ thirty generations from 1648 would place the original Mou sometime between 944 and 1008 A.D., a date which in the first Chronicle corresponds to the first chief with the double Mou syllable name, Mou-ju Mou-xi (998-1022). Twenty-seven generations and average gaps of twenty-two and twenty years on the other hand take us to a period between 1054 and 1108. The first date corresponds to the beginning of the Mo-so Zhao, the second to the arrival of Yeye in the second chronicle (1105-1125). Thus, it appears that Mu Gong used the same method as I just used to date the generations that had preceded him and arrived in Lijiang in the course of the Song dynasty. But as it turns out, the year 1054 is not just any year. This year marks an event of enormous significance in the cosmic histories of the Asian world, a stellar explosion which, according to the records of Chinese and Japanese astrologers, burned for twenty-three days. In the Tibetan tradition, in fact, 1054 also marks the death of the great saint Atisa who brought Buddhism back to Tibet. Mu Gong was certainly multiplying his family's cosmic connections by placing the beginnings of his Mo-so Zhao in 1054.

Meanwhile, the dates 1105-1125 (which correspond to Yeye) confirm that Mu Gong was especially attached to the idea that only six Mou should have preceded the Mongols. We can be sure of this because even though the Mou were entirely scrapped from the second chronicle, Yeye's dates roughly add up to six generations before the Mongol invasion.⁶⁰ This is a very important point because it implies that incest mythology is featured in both Mu Chronicles though in the second, it is exceedingly cryptic.

And undoubtedly, we need to turn to Yang Shen to explain Mu Gong's efforts to wipe his Mou origins from his ancestral record. Yang Shen was a brilliant Confucian whose moral uprightness earned him a near fatal caning and his subsequent banishment to Yunnan in 1524. Once in exile, Yang Shen began instructing the Barbarians in the love and respect of the Emperor and his was such

a dedicated enterprise that Yunnanese tradition credits him with having brought Confucianism and Civilization to the frontier.⁶¹

Now, the Mo-so Barbarians had surely heard of Confucius before the famous Hanlin scholar arrived in their midst because the first Confucian schools were established in Lijiang a hundred years before Yang Shen, but this is one more reason to believe that Yang Shen's influence on his friend Mu Gong was profound. Between the Confucian and the 'Naxi' worldview, there was a universe of difference implicated in the meaning of incest. To the Mu chief, incest spoke of times before times, when the universe was thrown into chaos and it had been made right again through the marriage of the earth man and the heavenly princess. But in the world of Confucian civilization, 'incest' spoke of illegitimate marriages and therefore of illegitimate successions.

Conclusion

The discrepancies in Mu Gong's ancestral stories may be explained in the following manner. In the first Chronicle, Mu Gong set out to establish the continuity of his ancestry through the Ye clan and the Tang period, and all the way to the first man who had survived the flood, the hero Cosseilee'ee. Mu Gong stressed father-son successions through the patronymic linkage system from the Ye/Yang/Nanzhao, to the Mou/Mo-so, and finally to the Ah/Mongols whilst the affinal relationships his ancestors had initiated by conquest were made explicit by the name patterns carried by the descending chiefs and their wives, and cosmic numerology.

In the second Chronicle, under the influence of the Confucian Yang Shen, Mu Gong removed most magical manifestations. He also removed his ancestral connections to the Mongol conquest, whilst at the same time, he stressed his Mongol ancestry in a direct patriline. But the trouble was, this Confucian rectitude, which did away with the Mou ancestors and incest mythology, significantly reduced Mu Gong's cosmic connections. And of course, it also shortened his genealogical claims, since not only did this legitimate patriline

remove the Mou successions, it also severed Mu Gong's connections to the original Ye clan. In the end, therefore, Mu Gong settled for a trick. He collapsed history and mythology into one single ancestor, the Mongol Yeye, a holy man who arrived in the Song [i.e. Mou/Mo-so] period on great torrents of water [i.e. the flood], six generations [i.e. incestuous alliances] before Kublai invaded Lijiang. Yang Shen tactfully completed (or undid) Mu Gong's work by providing a list of ancestors from whose names all references to mothers and wives had been expunged, and by stressing the 'true' origins of the Mu in the ancestor Yegunian, who had come to Lijiang at the time of the Tang conquest.

But if this second Chronicle strongly suggests that Mu Gong was eager to become a devoted and righteous vassal of the Chinese imperial court, Yeye's story implies that the Naxi chief remained attached to an older worldview. And as we shall see in the next chapter, Mu Gong had good reasons to wish to hold onto this ancient order of things because it confirmed that the Mu were, within their realm, every bit as celestial as the Chinese emperors.

¹M. Sahlins, "Other Times, Other Customs", p. 518.

²To use Frazer's term. J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Hertfordshire Wordsworth Editions, 1993 (1911-1915), pp. 83-91.

³Yang Shen is more famous for his compilation of the *Nanzhao Ye Shi* [Unofficial history of Nanzhao] - 1550.

⁴E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Li-kiang", *T'oung Pao* (13) 1912, p. 568, note 4. From the *Yuan Shi*, Ch. LXI, p. 4. Chavannes notes: 'The *Yuan History* assumes a different list from Yang Shen's and perhaps one more exact because we have had the opportunity to note that Yang Shen's list seems to have gaps' [my translation from French]. This passage from the *Yuan Shi* is reproduced in *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 205.

⁵See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 67-75.

⁶The original text often abbreviates Cosseilee'ee to Lee'ee. The same goes for the names Zela Apu, and Coheibubami which are abbreviated to Apu and Cohei. Sometimes also Cosseilee'ee and Coheibubami become Co and Cei respectively.

⁷The magic formulae which Cosseilee'ee uses to perform the tasks required by Apu are at the core of the transformative powers of the myth. The magic involved in this case is associated with agricultural techniques and consists of placing one of the instruments destined to do the work, i.e. an ax to cut down the trees, a bucket to collect seeds etc. in the forest, then in the fields etc. Today, the Lisu practice a ritual of increase magic which makes use of this same principle. See the *Lisuzu Jian Shi*, p. 9.

⁸For a complete translation of the creation myth as it pertains to the Sacrifice to Heaven, refer to McKhann's doctoral work, in C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*; and also J.F. Rock, MBC.

The synopsis above is based on the creation story reproduced in *Naxi Dongba Guji Yi Ju* [The Dongba manuscripts, translated and annotated], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1986, pp. 151-279 which was produced by the Lijiang Dongba Research Institute, in original Naxi and Chinese translations (pictographs, IPA transcription, literal and free translations).

⁹This comparative analysis is based on first hand interviews with scholars at the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming, field informants and published articles and books, including: *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian* [Encyclopaedia of the religions and mythologies of the Chinese nationalities], Xuefan Chubanshe, 1990; R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*; Faber and Faber, 1972 (1962); also R.A. Stein, *Les tribus des marches sino-tibétaines*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1959; G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 1949; H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1956; S. C. Das, *Contributions on the Religion and History of Tibet*, New Delhi, Manjusri Publishing House, 1970; M. Granet, *La civilisation chinoise*, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, 1922; E.T.C. Warner, *Myths and Legends of China*, Singapore, Graham Brash (PTE) LTD, 1991 (1922); *Lisuzu Jian Shi* [Brief history of the Lisu nationality], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1983; *Pumizu Jian Shi* [Brief history of the Pumi nationality], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988; *Daizu Chuanshiji* [The creation myth of the Dai people], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989; Liu Xiaoxing, *Muti Zhongpai* [Worship of the great mother], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1990; *Yizu Chuanshiji* [The creation story of the Yi nationality], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1990; S. Pollard, *In Unknown China*, London, Seeley, Service and Company, 1921, pp. 261-256; G.P. De Fleurette, "La Légende du déluge chez les Lolos", *Société de Géographie de l'Est* (31:4) 1911, pp. 400-401; M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris, Payot, 1991 (1949); H.Q. Quaritch Wales, *Prehistory and Religion in South-east Asia*, London, Bernard Quaritch Ltd., 1957.

¹⁰The first son succeeds his father as head of the family, the last inherits the paternal home - for more details, see Chapter VI.

¹¹These legends and stories are found among many peoples of the Sino-Tibetan border. S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, p. 34; and R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, pp. 74-75

¹²As would happen in real life among the Kachins in case of the wounding of a chief. See E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, p. 90.

¹³Yang Fuquan, "Naxizu de Gudai Shenhua Yu Gudai Jiating" [Ancient Naxi mythology and family], in Guo Dalie and Yang Sheguang (eds.), *Dongba Wenhua Lunji* [Collected essays on Dongba culture], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985, pp. 231-244.

¹⁴J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 85-86. Confirmed by He Zhiwu and Guo Dalie (Kunming 1990)

¹⁵According to the *Naxizu Jian Shi*, the *Da Yuan Yi Tongzhi* relates that the chief He Zi of Yongning who was deposed by the Mongols in 1253 was the thirty-eighth descendant of a Meng-Za Cucu - *Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 7, 17-18. Chinese scholars thus establish a genealogical connection between the 13th century He chiefs of Yongning and the Lijiang chiefs. *Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 7. Chapter IX addresses this issue.

¹⁶S. Harrell, "The History of the History of the Yi Nationality", in S. Harrell (ed.) *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 1995, pp. 84-85.

¹⁷We shall see more of the magic number seven in this chapter and especially in Chapter VII,

¹⁸See Lo Ch'ang-p'ei, "The Genealogical patronymic linkage system of the Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes", pp. 349-363. Also P. Pelliot, "Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde", *Bulletin de L'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tome IV, 1904, Hanoi, pp. 131-413.

¹⁹See the biographical details pertaining to the last Mu ancestors in J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 137-145.

²⁰J.F. Rock, ANKSWC. p. 87, footnote 1.

²¹*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 19. Also P. Pelliot (transl.), *Histoire ancienne du Tibet*, Paris, Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1961, p. 29.

²²Naxi scholars make the same observation, see *Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 17.

²³Yegunian, however, is known as Yeguzha in the *Yuan Shi*. See E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Li-kiang", p. 602, and J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 87. We come back to Yeguzha in Chapter IX.

²⁴Inscription on the stone tablet at the Mu cemetery, written in 1725 by Mu Zhong, quoted in English translation from J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 70. I will come back to Yegunian in Chapter IX and show that he is none other than Yang-yin Du-gu.

²⁵J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 71.

²⁶For the complete details, see Rock's ANKSWC, and Chavannes' "Documents historiques et relatifs à Li-kiang."

²⁷From then on the Mu formed a royal class, their collaterals and descendants from the third to the 5th generation retained the name Ah and all the common people were named He. Guo Dalie and He Zhiwu (Kunming 1991); also J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 86.

²⁸See the original text photographed by Rock, ANKSWC, plate 22 and E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", pp. 622-623.

²⁹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 74. Confirmed in fieldwork.

³⁰We come back to this history in Chapter IX.

³¹As is noted in the preface to the first Mu Chronicle: 'Throughout these generations [of Mu chiefs], many dynasties such as the T'ang, Wu Tai, Sung, and Yuan, had succeeded each other, but the changes could neither influence nor impede the growth of the Mu family'; see J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 67.

³²Lo Ch'ang P'ei, "The genealogical Patronymic Linkage System", p. 352. Yang Shen also wrote that the Mu chiefs had no family names until the Ming dynasty, see J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 67.

³³The *Lijiang Prefectural Records* (18th century) explain that the Lijiang chiefs were of the Ye clan but they also give the chief Mou-bao Ah Cong as Mai Cong and his son as Mai Liang. E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 569, and J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 74, and 85, 195-196. Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shiliao Biannian" [Annalistic records of the Naxi nationality] in *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 217.

³⁴*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 20.

³⁵In fact there was a prominent Bai or Di clan named Yang attached to the Nanzhao. G.H. Luce and Ch'en Yee Sein (transl.), *Man Shu (Book of Southern Barbarians)* Ithaca, Cornell University, 1961, p. 53. Also Chen Lufan, "The Nanzhao Kingdom: a State not Founded but the Thai People", in Chen Lufan (ed.), *Whence Came the Thai Race?* Yunnan Guoji Wenhua Chubanshe, 1990, pp. 173-228, p. 183; C.R. Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom*, Ph.D. Thesis Princeton University, 1977, p. 78; and W. Eberhard, *Local Cultures of South and East China*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1968, pp. 53-54.

³⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 87-88, also note 1.

³⁷Refer to the timeline provided at the start of the thesis. Chapter IX returns to these historical details.

³⁸Note that the dates above are taken from C.R. Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom, the Naxizu Jian Shi*, and P. Pelliot (transl.), *Histoire ancienne du Tibet*, 1961.

³⁹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 465

⁴⁰Early Tibetans carried the names of their mothers and fathers in that order. S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, p. 29.

⁴¹Naxi scholarship in fact confirms this analysis. In the *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 21, it is said that the four syllable name of the Naxi indicates the names of mothers and fathers (and as can be expected, it is also said that these four syllable names speak for a former transitional stage between matrilineality and patrilineality). Also, p. 32, it is written that a long time ago, Naxi names were formed by using the Mother and Father's names. However, the authors give no more detail than this and I have never seen or heard any explanation of the Mu genealogy along those lines. As far as the *Naxizu Jian Shi* is concerned, Naxi patrilineality and patriarchy begin with the Tang successions. *Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 18.

⁴²Refer above, to the biographical details given in the Chronicle. The wives all have the title A-Shih followed by what appears to be their personal name. Only one wife has a four syllable name, and the first syllable is Mi meaning monkey. The monkey is also a totemic ancestor of the Qiang tribes. The rest of the name appears meaningless and is of course transliteration of a Naxi name.

⁴³See J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 9.

⁴⁴For a review of the tribes inhabiting the wild domains in ancient Yunnan, see the *Man Shu*.

⁴⁵J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 87, and the *Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 17.

⁴⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 87, note 1.

⁴⁷See relevant entries in the *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian*.

⁴⁸About Yeye, Rock wrote: 'Apparently, the entire story of the arrival of Yeh-yeh is a myth. He probably never existed. The Li-chiang fu chih lueh [Prefectural Records of Lijiang] states that Mai-tsung, which is the equivalent of A-tsung, arrived in Li-chiang at the end of the Sung dynasty, that is, at the end of the reign of Emperor Li Tsung, about 1253. It also relates that he was a native of Hsi Yu (Central Asia), and that the natives of Li-chiang elected him as their chief. Thus he could not have been the son of Yeh-yeh. In another place in the same record it is said that he was Yeh-yeh's son and when seven years old could read etc.' J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 74, note 13.

⁴⁹Noted by Rock in the ANKSWC, pp. 85-86 and confirmed by He Pingzheng at the Dongba Research Institute in Lijiang, 1991.

⁵⁰J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 160.

⁵¹*Naxizu Jian Shi*; pp. 25-26.

⁵²This is according to the Yuan History and other local later records. I deal with the details of the written records and their implications for Naxi history in Chapter IX.

⁵³See R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*; p. 41. The name Mu (Mou/Me) has also close connections with the Bonpo tradition and the early Tibetan Royal House who traced their ancestry through the maternal line - see Chapter III.

⁵⁴Note that according to Lévi-Strauss Tibeto-Burman speakers - Yi, Nagas and Kachins - share a number of common traits and notably the right of female lineages to succeed. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967 (1949), p. 379.

⁵⁵Refer to note 49.

⁵⁶C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 387.

⁵⁷*Ibid*, p. 388.

⁵⁸He Zhiwu argued that Kublai could not have left officers in Lijiang because he would not have bothered wasting troops on 'such an insignificant region'. At no time of its history, however, was Lijiang insignificant. On the contrary, it has always been a very important frontier. The conquest of Yunnan (Dali) was a crucial strategic move for Kublai because it blocked the Song emperor's escape to the west. The establishment of a garrisoned fiefdom in Lijiang kept the defeated yet powerful kingdom of Dali in check.

⁵⁹Chinese historians take an average of twenty-five years per generation (see, for example, *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 205, for how scholars calculate Yegunian's dates on the basis of the Mu genealogy given in the *Yuan History*). This is too great a gap. Royal genealogies were established on the basis of primogeniture or even fraternal successions and none of the genealogies of the chiefs of northwest Yunnan average twenty-five years per generation. Over a short period (five to six generations), the gap may be greater or smaller, for example, the Yongning chiefs averaged seventeen years per generation between the 14th and 16th centuries. Over a long period of time, the average gap is usually of twenty-one years per generation.

⁶⁰Supposing that the six Mou generations are real, going from 1253, and taking twenty to twenty-two years per generation, one gets to 1133 or 1121, or roughly Yeye's dates (1105-1125).

⁶¹A biography of Yang Shen is given in Chapter 192 of the *Ming Shi* (Ming History), see E. Chavannes, "Camille Sainson, *Nan-chao ye-she*, Bulletin critique", *T'oung Pao* (5) 1904, pp. 473-481; J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 163-169. For more details, see L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, Vol. II, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1976, pp. 1531-1535.

Chapter III

Between Heaven And Earth: The Lords Of Mu

And the History of Bon in Lijiang

Introduction

The Chinese court imposed feudalism in Lijiang and in Yongning when it initiated the relationships of vassalage between the Ming emperor and the Mu and Ah chiefs. But the northern Yunnanese tribes had been subject to the military might of Han, Tang, Tibetan, Nanzhao and Mongols, and the threat of military violence, persistent as it may have remained under the Ming, cannot of itself account for the evolution and reproduction of feudalism there. The Ming court could not obtain the 'hierarchical solidarity'¹ that typified imperial relations. From the Chinese point of view, the reason for appointing hereditary native magistrates was that direct rule was not manageable. As the magistrate Zhang Zhishun wrote in his preface to the first genealogical Chronicle of the Mu family (1516):

Owing to bad communications and natural barriers, this land (Li-chiang) is separated far from Imperial rule. Thus it is advisable to make the native leader of this people their ruler. He is given an official seal by the Emperor and also the hereditary right to control the land and its people. His political principles would have to suit the customs of his people. Such privileges are not accorded simply as a reward for merit acquired, but form part of a special policy of the government applied to

suit the circumstances of the people. This means that their customs and manners are so different from ours, that the Emperor is obliged to allow the native rulers to maintain their hereditary rights.²

The Imperial court, in other words, enfeoffed the Mu and other local chieftains for the expressed purpose of managing a territory and the people within it. The Naxi overlord was thus a Chinese magistrate established by Imperial might and whose descendants succeeded him by Imperial grace. His duty to the Imperial Court was to present himself at the capital to receive his mandate of succession, and from then on, to pay tribute and guard the frontier. But to keep up his end of the bargain, the overlord needed to pacify, unify and restructure the tribal realm. He also needed to promote himself above the other tribal chiefs, and to become a ‘sacred king’ in the eyes of his people.

In the last chapter, we saw that Mu Gong reconstructed his family history according to a set of cosmic considerations which found their reflection, if not their origin, in Dongba mythology. The reading which I proposed of the Mu Chronicles is entirely new in Naxi scholarship, and that this should be the case derives in part from the assumption made by previous scholars that the Dongba was always a ‘people’s tradition’.³ This chapter probes the history of the Dongba in light of political and religious history, Naxi symbols of kingship, and the organizational structures of the Dongba clergy. Here, I argue that the Dongba was once upon a time a royal tradition, centered upon the divine Mu chiefs.

The mystery of Bon and the Dongba’s origins

Throughout history, Lijiang was a relatively narrow frontier but nonetheless an important buffer zone, and the diversity of religions found there reflects past political fortunes. Temples and priests came to Lijiang with diplomacy, conquest, immigration, with local expansion into nearby tribal territories – and eventually with Western imperialism (although Christianity had little success among the Naxi). Until 1949, all sorts of religious practices co-existed.

Like most people in most parts of China, the Naxi worshipped sacred trees, rocks, grottoes, and fresh water pools; they sought the advice of soothsayers and mediums; some prayed to Confucius and others to the goddess Songzi Niang Niang; Taoist priests conducted marriage rituals and Chinese Buddhist monks attended at funerals (sometimes the other way around, or both). Eclecticism thus defined the Naxi religious scene. So much so, that even the Dongba, in spite of having the double uniqueness of being authentically Naxi and of possessing a pictographic script, is like most folk traditions in China, highly syncretic, having drawn from the different creeds which settled in Lijiang: Lamaism⁴, Taoism, Chinese Buddhism and Bon.

The problem for scholars is that although Bon evidently had a profound influence on the Dongba tradition, unlike the other sources of Dongba inspiration, it is also conspicuously absent from the contemporary Naxi religious scene. There are no Bonpo priests among the Naxi, and whereas Confucian, Taoist, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist temples can all be found in Lijiang, there is no physical evidence of Bonpo temples or shrines anywhere. The historical record is likewise silent. Magistrates, geographers and historians (Chinese and local) have commented on tribal rituals, the practices of the Lolo (Yi) and Mo-so tribes, and on the 'civilized' traditions like Confucianism and Buddhism but they have said nothing of a Bon tradition. And yet, the reformed Bon, with a single temple and a few very old attending lamas, is still alive although barely, in the Nari territory of Zuosuo. But Zuosuo came under the jurisdiction of Yongning in the 14th century and then seceded in the 18th century at about the same time as the Yongning *Tusi* allegedly converted to Lamaism (since according to local Mosuo tradition, the Yongning chief converted in 1700). And to complicate matters, although there is Bon in Zuosuo, there are no Dongbas there. There are only Dabas who have no pictographic books. And finally, there are also Dabas in the Na territories of Yanyuan but no Bonpos.

The Lijiang Dongba therefore confronts scholars with a number of historical questions, notably: how and when did Bon arrive among the Naxi, why did it

disappear from Lijiang, and, especially, how and why did it survive in the Dongba, a folk tradition with a unique pictographic script?

Bon and the Dongba: the opinions of the scholars

Rock described the Dongba as ‘in its greater part pure Bon’⁵ and argued that the Naxi tradition was an example of the oldest, pre-Buddhist Bon. Indeed, insofar as there is a universal agreement among Western and Chinese scholars that the ancient Tibetan aristocratic clans (who were Bonpo) were descended from the Qiang tribes, and insofar as the northwestern Yunnanese, including the Naxi and Mosuo, have close ties to the Qiang, one should *expect* to find Bon among the Naxi. If, of course, one had a more precise notion of what this ancient Bon was, for the Bon which scholars know today and the Bon which one finds in Zuosuo is the systematized religion that modeled itself on Buddhism.⁶

In fact, Rock identified the Dongba as a Bon tradition because he could draw comparisons between Naxi religion and the *post-Buddhist* Bon.⁷ He argued that the Dongba gods have a place in the Bon pantheon, that a number of Dongba ceremonial texts are nothing else than Bon sutras transcribed into Naxi (for example the Naxi Naga Cults), and finally that the founder of the Dongba religion, Dibba Shilo, is none other than Shenrab Mibo, the founder of the systematized (or reformed) Bon. Rock explained that the Naxi cannot pronounce [r], or end consonants, and thus made Shenrab into Shela, or Shilo.⁸ And indeed, there are many other parallels between Shenrab and Shilo besides the similarities between their names and which can be found in the mythology and ritual of both Dongba and Bon. And that Shilo is modeled on Shenrab is one place where all scholars agree with Rock. However, since the cult of Shenrab is believed to have developed in the 8th century and in response to Buddhism,⁹ it follows that even if Bon had been the religion of the Naxi from very early in their history, which in Rock’s scheme leads us into the pre-Christian era,¹⁰ the cult of Dibba Shilo could not have come to Lijiang before the 8th century.

The connections between the cult of Shenrab and the Dongba led Jackson to

posit that the Bonpos could not have arrived in Lijiang before the 14th century because the reformation of Bon was not ‘completed’ until this period.¹¹ According to Jackson, the reformed Bon tradition would have then flourished among both the Naxi and the Mosuo until the Naxi chief Mu Zeng converted to Karma-pa Lamaism in 1600, and the Yongning chief to Gelug-pa Lamaism in 1700 upon which, the Bonpos would have been proscribed from all Mo-so territories. Jackson speculates that Bon practices survived in the folk traditions of the Naxi because the Karma-pa was disinterested in disorganized folk practices. He also speculates that the Yongning chief banned the Bonpos at a most opportune time, when on the other side of the Yangzi, the Mu chiefs were fast losing control of their realm and were thus too weak to stop the proscribed Yongning Bonpos from taking refuge in Lijiang. Thus, the Dongba emerged from the Bonpos’ demise.

These reconstructions, however, are based on very thin historical evidence: the conversion of the Lijiang chief to Karma-pa Lamaism in 1600 and that of the Yongning chief to the Gelug-pa in 1700. Furthermore, Jackson’s dating of the Reformed Bon is arbitrary and the rest is highly speculative.

The systematization of Bon practices and teachings goes well beyond the compilation of a Bon Canon in the 14th century. Importantly for the present discussion, systemization also began relatively early. The first Bon manuscripts date from the 8th century and the first Bon monasteries from the end of the 9th.¹² On the local side of things, it is not impossible that the Yongning chief did proscribe Bonpos as Jackson maintains. The local record does say that before the Yongning Tusi converted to Lamaism, the locals practiced the Black Bon, and as we have seen, there are no Bon-pos in Yongning. There are Bonpos only in Zuosuo, which seceded from Yongning at about the time of the Yongning chief’s official conversion, but there is no written evidence that either in Yongning or Lijiang, the Bonpos were persecuted. In addition, as we shall see later, there are grounds to believe that the Yongning chiefs converted to Buddhism in the 17th century rather than the 18th.¹³

But the weakness in Jackson's proposition does not lie with the theory of a proscription of Bon rituals so much as with the leaps which he makes by supposing that persecution only occurred in Yongning, and by assuming that the Bonpos who would have migrated to Lijiang would have turned into Dongbas 'somehow'. Meanwhile, the presence of non-literate Dabas, Zhedas and Somas in contemporary Yongning suggests that proscribed Bonpos would not have needed to take refuge in Lijiang to turn themselves into diminished monks with no temples. They could have done this just by staying where they were. And of course, proscribed Bonpos rather than taking refuge in Lijiang, could have migrated to Zuosuo where they could have contributed to a thriving Bon church.

Unlike Western scholars, Naxi scholars are more interested in confirming the syncretic quality of the Dongba than its origins in Bon. They are especially concerned with atavistic elements which may be taken as evidence of the 'primitive religion' (*yuanshi zongjiao*) and by extension, of the antiquity of the Dongba tradition.¹⁴ It is not that Naxi scholars disagree that Bon answers for much of the Dongba ritual but that they argue that the Dongba is an *authentic* Naxi tradition that absorbed many other religious practices, including Bon.¹⁵ Nevertheless, they explain that the Bonpos most likely arrived in Lijiang during the course of the 7th or 8th centuries when northwest Yunnan was under Tibetan (and Nanzhao) control.¹⁶ Naxi historian Guo Dalie suggests that the arrival of Bon in Lijiang may be traced through the Tibetan annals to two alleged Bonpo migrations to the frontiers of Tibet: the first at the end of the 8th century when the Buddhist king Trhisong Detsen banished the Bonpos, the second at the end of the 9th century, when Bon was back in royal favor and a Bon mission was allegedly sent to the frontiers.¹⁷ But Guo Dalie draws here directly from Helmut Hoffman's studies.

Hoffman's interest in the Dongba, on the other hand, lies with the history of the conflicts between Bon and Buddhism rather than with the history of Bon in Lijiang. In fact, Hoffman proposes in passing that Rock's work on the Dongba may corroborate the reliability of the Tibetan historical tradition. In other words,

the Dongba may be evidence that the 9th century Bon mission did indeed take place.¹⁸ So going back to Rock, the latter explained that, according to the Tibetan historical tradition, the Bonpos were banished to Jang-mo, near present day Litang and that both the words Jang and Mo are associated with the Lijiang tribes. For Jang is the ancient Tibetan name of the people of Lijiang and Yongning, and Mo seems connected to the name Mo-so. Rock writes: 'It is worth noting that the country of the Jang up to the 16th century extended to within forty miles of Li-thang and south to Li-chiang within the Yangtze loop'.¹⁹

To sum up, therefore, it appears that a Bon mission may have been sent from Tibet to northwest Yunnan in the 9th century, and therefore before the fall of Nanzhao.

The early religious history of Lijiang

To better appreciate the possibility that Bon may have arrived in Lijiang from Nanzhao time, however, it is worth exploring what is known of the history of the other religious traditions in Yunnan, and notably Taoism and Buddhism.

Taoism

In contemporary Lijiang, Taoism is mostly represented by the Dongjing sect and especially the Dongjing music school which respectively emerged in the Chinese interior during the Southern Song period (12th century) and the Ming (15th century). Chinese scholars explain that Taoism arrived in Lijiang during the Ming dynasty under the patronage of the Mu chiefs who, among other things, commissioned artists to paint Taoist gods on the murals of their most important temple, the Dabaoji. They also explain that Taoism and other Chinese cults came with the many Han Chinese artisans, merchants and peasant-soldiers who settled in Lijiang during the Late Imperial period (1500- 1911).²⁰

Taoism, however, may well have a more ancient (if interrupted) history in Lijiang, because, as Chinese scholars see it, Taoism and shamanism provided Nanzhao with a state ritual and a political apparatus, until circa 830 A.D.²¹ For

Nanzhao political organization was vested in a hierarchy of shaman chiefs called 'lords of the ghosts', and in 794 A.D., King Yimuxun of Nanzhao consecrated the Lijiang Yulongshan²² as the Northern Sacred Peak of Nanzhao and with it the Beiyo temple (what is today the Saddo temple) according to the Taoist rites.²³ One should note, however, that Taoism can imply a variety of practices and teachings, many of those would be better described as aspects of the popular religion, and that, like the other religions of China and Tibet, it has evolved over time. So that in the 9th century, many so-called Taoist practices may not have been very different from the magical practices of the so-called old Bon, which for its part was already modeling itself on Buddhism, whilst in Tibet, Buddhism was likewise assimilating Bon practices.²⁴

Buddhism

According to Chinese scholarship, Chinese Buddhism arrived in Lijiang during the Yuan dynasty and was evidenced by the construction of the Jinshan and Donglin temples.²⁵ By contrast, Tibetan Buddhism (Karma-pa) did not become influential in Lijiang until the 17th century. This is of some importance to the respective political histories of the Naxi and the Mosuo because local tradition reports that Saskya-pa lamas settled in Yongning during the Mongol dynasty. The early history of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism in Lijiang and Yongning confirm what is already known of the area, that northern Yunnan was both oriented towards Tibetan civilization but also towards the Dali kingdom. The construction of Chinese Buddhist temples in Lijiang during the Yuan period therefore would stress an ancient civilizational and political continuity between Dali and Lijiang which may not be found in Yongning. As I shall now explain, however, in spite of the evidence of temple construction, the tribes of Lijiang appear to have had little interest in Buddhism for a long time after the Yuan dynasty.

According to Chinese scholar You Zhong, the records of the Yuan dynasty relate that three types of people lived in Lijiang during the 13th and 14th

centuries, Mo-so, Lolo and Lisu,²⁶ and that each had their own ritual practice. Importantly, neither of those was Buddhist. The Lolo had shamans (*wushi*) who were more than likely the same lords of the ghosts described earlier in reference to the Nanzhao kingdom. The Mo-so for their part made great feasts and worshipped heaven on top of mountains.²⁷ In all appearance, things were no different in the 15th century, for the *Jingtai Yunnan Tu Jing Zhishu* [A graphic account of Yunnan compiled in the period Jingtai] explains that: ‘The Lijiang Moxie do not worship god or Buddha but only ascend to the mountain to offer sacrifices to the sky.’²⁸ A hundred years later, however, we learn from the *Nanzhao Ye Shi* (1550/1575) that Lamaism had made converts in northwest Yunnan and neighboring regions. There were then two types of Lamas, Yellow (the Gelug-pa) and Red (Karma-pa?); the Yellow lamas were far more numerous and powerful than the others. The lamas had recruited Mo-so people to work on their lands as serfs.²⁹

These details help us place Mu Zeng’s conversion to the Karma-pa into political context. In the course of the 16th century, the Tibetan theocracy fast expanded under the rule of the Gelug-pa, pushing into eastern Tibet and crushing the Bon and Red sects.³⁰ On the other side of the frontier, the Naxi kingdom was then at its apogee. By 1600, Mu Zeng controlled the territories from Lijiang to Litang, and with those, China’s southern gateways into Tibet. Thus, Mu Zeng’s conversion to the Red Church underscores the state of Naxi-Tibetan politics in the 17th century and confirms that the ‘Mo-so’ tribes on either side of the Jinshajiang were already drawn into distinct and opposite civilizational camps.

But if Gelug-pa Lamaism became the dominant creed of Yongning and Muli, the Karma-pa had no such success among the Naxi, except in the regions which eventually came under Tibetan control *after* the Chinese annexation of 1723 (Zhongdian and Weixi). By the turn of the 20th century, even though the Karma-pa had benefited from royal patronage under Mu Zeng and his descendants, and imperial favor under the Qing,³¹ it was virtually moribund, whilst the Chinese cults (Confucianism, Taoism, Chinese popular religion,

Chinese Buddhism) and the Dongba dominated the Naxi religious scene.³² The little that is known of Naxi religious history, therefore, suggests that the Naxi were long resistant to Buddhism. Buddhism seems to have made little impact on the rituals of the Lijiang tribes even after the construction of the first temples in the Yuan dynasty, whilst the construction of these temples itself came more than four centuries after Buddhism had become the official religion of Nanzhao who were the overlords of the Lijiang chiefs. In contrast to Lijiang, the Erhai plain in Dali is strewn with Buddhist pagodas, temples and art dating from the late Tang and the Song periods.

The Nanzhao embraced Buddhism whole-heartedly, and so much so, that in 835, they banished the Taoists.³³ And in light of these events, it is interesting to note that the Mu Chronicle comments on the strained relations between Dali and Lijiang between 827 and the Mongol invasion.³⁴ Mu Gong wrote that during the period 827-835, the Nanzhao rebelled once again against the Tang and broke relations with the empire, after which it became more and more difficult for Nanzhao to control the Lijiang chief Xi-nei Xi-ge.³⁵ In other words, Mu Gong implied that Lijiang-Nanzhao relations became strained after 835 on account of Nanzhao-Tang relations and by extension, on account of his ancestors' loyalty to the Chinese empire. However, if Nanzhao-Tang relations hit a slump in 829 following a catastrophic Nanzhao raid on Chengdu, Nanzhao never again openly rebelled against the Tang whilst they continued sending embassies to the Chinese court throughout the 830s and the 840s.³⁶ It is very likely that the difficulties between Xi-nei Xi-ge and the Nanzhao were about something other than Nanzhao-Tang relations, and in view of the political mood which suffused the Sino-Tibetan world at this epoch, that religion was involved.

According to the famous Nanzhao stele, *Nanzhao Dehua Pian* (766), the Nanzhao had been 'open to all three religions' and welcomed 'all guests from north, south, west, and east'.³⁷ But this tolerant attitude seems to have waned in the first decades of the 9th century, for although Indian and Chinese Buddhism have both left their mark on Yunnanese art and architecture, Chinese Buddhism

prevailed as the Nanzhao state ritual. Then, as we saw above, in 836, the Nanzhao allegedly banished the Taoists, and at about this period also, a Bon mission was sent from Tibet to the land of Jang. Indeed, the most formidable struggles which were to ever take place between Buddhists and traditional religious elements (Confucians, Taoists and Bonpos) were beginning to rage in both Tibet and China. Thus, in 836, the Taoists were banished from Nanzhao, whilst between 836 and 842, Buddhists and Bonpos brought the Tibetan royal house to collapse, and in 845 the emperor Wu Zong implemented a massive and definitive repression of Buddhism (and other foreign creeds) throughout China. By 845, Dali was entirely Buddhist, Tibet had largely reverted to Bon but was no longer a unified polity, and China was Confucian.

The problem remains to establish whether a religious conflict between Nanzhao and Lijiang would have involved Bonpos and Buddhists, or Taoists and Buddhists, or even Taoists, Bonpos, and Buddhists.

Evidence for a Tang dynasty penetration of the sect of Shenrab into Lijiang may be summed up as follows:

- 1) At least some of the peoples of Lijiang were of Qiang origins and the Qiang have Bonpo connections;
- 2) Lijiang is adjacent to a region of Tibet which has long been dominated by Bon and remains so even in the present day (as for example, the territory of Zuosuo in Muli);
- 3) The Tibetan historical tradition notes the banishment of Bonpos to the frontiers and notably to Jang-mo in the 8th century as well as missionary activities in the 9th century while Jang-mo is Satham, which is Lijiang;
- 4) The Lijiang chiefs did not convert to Buddhism when their Nanzhao suzerains did so in 836, and there developed tensions between the two powers at this same period.³⁸

There is therefore circumstantial evidence to argue that Bon has an ancient presence in northern Yunnan. But if the Bonpos were sent to Lijiang in the 8th

century, Lijiang was itself conquered by Taoist Nanzhao at this same period. And as we saw in the last chapter, under Nanzhao occupation (750-902), the Lijiang chiefs were of the Yang clan, and therefore more likely Baiman or Wuman attached to Nanzhao and more likely Taoists than Bonpos and adepts of the sect of Shenrab. Therefore, it is very possible that even if Bon came to northwest Yunnan during the 8th or the 9th centuries, it did not become a universal creed, and it did not become the religion of the dominant Ye/Yang clan. But, as I shall argue next, it is also more than likely that Shenrab's Bon was the religion of the Mo-so tribes who allegedly conquered Lijiang in the Song dynasty.

Symbols of kingship: Bon and the Mu family

In *Les tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines* (1959), Rolf Stein wrote that the six legendary tribes of the Tibetan aristocracy had a correspondence in real lineages of the Sino-Tibetan frontier, except for one, the dMu (pronounced Mu):

The religious character of these dmu (sic) is well known. They are connected to Heaven and to the Bonpos...[But] their presence in the list of the tribes poses a very complex problem. Aside one lineage from Glin (the Mu, dMu, rMu) in the [Gesar] epic, I know of no historical use of this word as an ethnic referent, whereas all the other names on this list are found in the nomenclature of real ethnic groups... The founder of Bon, indeed, is himself well connected in the genealogy of the Mu lineage, but again, the Mu are here divine characters who have come from Heaven... The king of Jang (Lijiang Mo-so) is also the "lord of rMu" but... the only real element would be the name Mu which the Lijiang chiefs took from 1382. However, the name Mu is a Chinese surname and it seems that it has no connection with our dMus.³⁹

Stein was correct. The surname Mu was conferred upon the Naxi chiefs by the Ming emperors, but he dismissed the connection between the Naxi and the Tibetan Mu too readily – because he was misled by Rock who, characteristically, took the local historical tradition too literally. Of course, the Lijiang chiefs had obtained their name Mu, and its character 木 from the Chinese. However, we

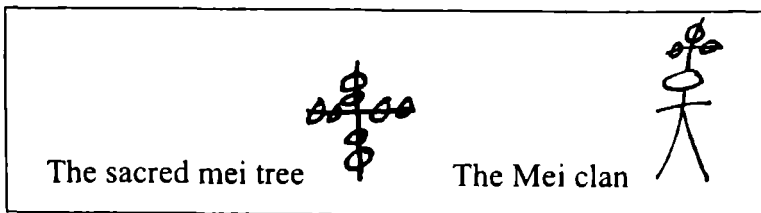
also know from the Mu Chronicle and other records that a number of families in northwest Yunnan had the name Ah and that during the Ming and Qing, many of these families recovered their former 'names' like the Ji, Pu or La.⁴⁰ And whilst on the subject of patronyms, it is worth noting that there arose during the Yuan and Ming periods a movement among influential scholars to oppose the granting of Chinese names to non-Chinese and to reconstitute former names to those who had adopted Chinese surnames. The reason for insisting on the use of ethnically identifiable patronyms was explained and decried by scholar Chen Yuan as intent on preventing the 'mixing of races.'⁴¹

Now, before the Mongol conquest, the Mo-so chiefs of Lijiang were called Mou, and it would appear that from the perspective of phonetic correspondence, the name Mu simply reconstituted this ancient name. It is strange that Rock overlooked this possibility because it is especially obvious. What is more, three decades before the publication of the ANKSWC, Chavannes had given an insightful discussion on the topic of the family names of the Lijiang chiefs. Briefly, Chavannes obtained from the *Yuan Shi* [Yuan History] that the ancient name of the Lijiang chiefs was Mai,⁴² and from the *Nanzhao Ye Shi*, that the characters Mai 麥 and Mu 木 were interchangeable. Thus, he concluded that the patronym Mu was derived from this more ancient name Mai and that both names came from the ethnic referent Mo-so.⁴³ Chavannes could not have made the association between Mu 木 and Mou 牟, and Mou and Mo-so because he had only seen the second Chronicle in which Mu Gong had replaced Mou 牟 with Nian 年 and otherwise removed all trace of the 'Mo-so Zhao'. On the other hand, Rock had all the clues and he had read Chavannes, because he made a point of correcting the latter's errors in the ANKSWC.

Naxi tradition explains that the name Mu 木 is a Chinese transliteration of the Naxi *Mee* meaning 'celestial/ heaven'. The sound [ee] is impossible to transcribe in Chinese (or for that matter in either French or English) and thus produces the many variations on the name of the Lijiang chiefs (Mai, Mou, Me) which were encountered through the records until the name Mu eventually

settled the issue. Now, McKhann has explained that the name Mu, by making the Lijiang chiefs 'celestial', allowed the latter to model themselves on the heavenly Chinese emperors.⁴⁴ But it seems far more appropriate to explain the Mu's heavenly connections in light of the Tibetan royal tradition. In Tibet, the Mu signifies a heavenly lineage and the heavenly rope which allows the kings to commute between heaven and earth.

As Stein pointed out, the Lijiang Mu chief was also the lord of Mu, and we can be certain that the Naxi Mu did derive their names from heaven and the heavenly rope just as the Tibetan kings. Indeed, the word Mu 木 in Chinese simply means 'tree' but in the context of Dongba cosmology this tree acquires an undeniable mythological dimension, for it cannot be just any tree. The Lijiang Mu is *the Tree* - the sacred Mei [me], which the Dongba explains stands on top of Junasiluo (the cosmic mountain), the *axis mundi*, the pillar between heaven and earth. In the same vein, the Naxi clan name Mei [me] is represented by the same tree, which again confirms the argument proposed in the previous chapter about the origins of the Mu in the Mei clan. Hence Mu does mean Mei and tree, whilst it can be included to mean Mee (celestial) by virtue of homophony. In other words, Mu is both Mei and Mee. We cannot doubt this because the pun inherent in the ideograph Mu 木 embodies the very meaning of the Tibetan Mu. It signifies a royal and heavenly lineage and a heavenly 'tree/ rope/ ladder' connecting the kings to heaven.



In Chapter II, I suggested that the endogamous Mou marriages might be imbued with mythic significance rather than historical value. The present analysis confirms this proposition, for the Tibetan tradition tells that the first seven kings were connected to heaven through the Mu rope and through their heavenly wives and heavenly mothers.⁴⁵ And we can surmise that in the first

Chronicle, there were six Mo-so chiefs, or chiefs who were Mou through their matriline, because the Mu's notions of kingship were derived from the Tibetan royal tradition and the ancient Bon ritual.

The Mu and Shenrab Mibo

Significantly for Naxi religious history, Stein not only established connections between the name Mu and the Tibetan royal lineage but also between the name Mu and the founder of Bon, Shenrab Mibo, for the Bon tradition tells that Shenrab himself is attached to a branch of the Mu lineage.⁴⁶ What is more, Stein argues that the Tibetan records refer to a Zanzun (Shenrab's country) that is unmistakably situated on the eastern frontier,⁴⁷ and that at some stage or other, either Zanzun, the ruling lineage, or members of the royal lineage may have been transferred to the east. He adds that the Qiang tribes commonly take the name Mu/Mi/Me meaning heaven, words which the Chinese translate as Mo and the Tibetans as Mu, and that we should not be surprised therefore to find a Zanzun, Heavenly Mu and Bonpo practitioners among the Qiang of the eastern frontier.⁴⁸ Evidently, the names Mou, Me, Mo-so and Mu can all be associated with the Mo-so who are themselves found on the eastern borders of Tibet and among the Qiang tribes, just as the name Jang-Mo is itself associated with the banishment of the Bonpos in the 8th century. Could there be any connection between the Lijiang Mu and the relocation of a Mu lineage in an eastern Zanzun? And especially could there be a connection between the Lijiang Mo-so, Zanzun and the Tibetan royal house?

Unfortunately, there are too many pieces of the puzzle missing to begin answering this question. But what we can be quite certain of, is that, at an early stage of its history, the Naxi Dongba tradition was entirely connected with the ruling Mu family of Lijiang. At the very least, we ought to conclude that the Lijiang chiefs of the late Yuan period were Bonpo, since in 1381 and at the first opportunity, the chief Ah-jia Ah-de (1311-1390) took the name **Mu De**. However, since I argued that the name Mu was itself derived from the former

clan designation Mou, it may be that Bon, the religion of Shenrab, was specifically the religion of the Mo-so tribes (Mou clans) who allegedly conquered the Lijiang plain in the Song period.

The demise of Bon in Lijiang

As we saw above, Jackson believes that there is no sign of a high Reform Bon in contemporary Lijiang because the Karma-pa suppressed the Bonpos after the conversion of Mu Zeng in 1600. Naxi scholars, on the other hand, hold that while Lamaism possibly imposed some restrictions on local Dongba practices (and here they mean a native Dongba practice that had absorbed Bon),⁴⁹ the local historical record says nothing of a Bonpo proscription.

On the other hand, if we look at the historical record, we see that both Chinese and Tibetan historiographers confirm that the Bonpos of eastern Tibet were subjected to severe armed repression by the Gelug-pa on one side and by the Chinese on the other in 1642, and that Chinese persecution of Bon continued into the 18th century.⁵⁰ Thus, it seems that in the mid-17th century, Bon was unpopular on both sides of the Tibet-China border. And so it could well be that already in 1600, the Sinicized Mu felt that their political, if not spiritual, interest rested with curbing their own Bon rituals, and thus converted to Karma-pa Lamaism. But while the general political climate may have played a part in the Mu conversion to Tibetan Buddhism, it remains that a 'small Bon tradition', i.e. the Dongba, seems to have received the patronage of the Mu family well into the 20th century.⁵¹

Naxi oral tradition relates many stories regarding how Dibba Shilo (Shenrab) came to Lijiang. According to one of those, Dibba Shilo originally lived in Lhasa where he headed a religion that was a branch of Lamaism. In a series of contests, he lost out to the lamas and moved to Lijiang where he founded the Dongba religion. In other versions, Dibba Shilo is said to have lived on Junasiluo Mountain and to have lost out to the lamas because his magic was inferior. Not surprisingly, the Dongbas tell a more prestigious story. When

Dibba Shilo was in heaven, the lamas mistreated him, refusing him good food, and other ignominies. Dibba Shilo then made two great winds, a White Wind and a Black Wind (typical Bonpo oppositions) which blew the pages of the lamas' books in every direction. After this, the lamas had to beg Dibba Shilo to help them put their books in order. Once he had helped the lamas, Dibba Shilo came to earth to rescue the people from a terrible demoness, and after he had done this, he taught his disciples.⁵²

Stories of a conflict between folk practitioners and learned monks are common across the Himalayas. As Michael Oppitz and other scholars have noted, such stories reflect both a historical confrontation and ongoing asymmetrical relations between Buddhism and the older traditions.⁵³

Taking this into account, what is truly interesting about both the folk and Dongba stories is that they converge on the idea that the Dongba came to Lijiang in the wake of conflicts which took place between lamas and Dibba Shilo, *somewhere else*. Read at their most literal level, therefore, these stories appear to confirm that the Bonpos came to Lijiang in the wake of religious conflicts in Tibet proper. Lin Xiangxiao, however, argues that some of the Naxi stories mention specifically the founder of the Black Hat sect of the Nyingma-pa (1407) who is regarded by contemporary Lijiang lamas as the founder of their own order.⁵⁴ Therefore, it appears that at least some Naxi stories speak of more recent events than the original struggles between Buddhists and Bonpos in the 8th and 9th centuries. Or perhaps, that these Naxi stories speak of recent *as well as* ancient events.

At any rate, all these stories agree that Dibba Shilo ended up in Lijiang because although he took something of a battering in the process, he somehow got the better of the lamas. Which, given the respective places occupied by the Dongba and Lamaism in contemporary Lijiang, seems historically appropriate.⁵⁵

At this point, it is useful to turn to the physical record, and in particular to the Mu's most important temple, the royal temple of Baisha. The Dabaoji (the Great Treasure) is today especially famous for its most unusual and very fine murals.

These are unique in China representing Taoist and Buddhist gods side by side, then also blending local, as well as Tibetan Lamaist and Chinese Buddhist styles and motifs. Naxi scholars date the Dabaoji to the 14th century but Rock (who believed it was a Karma-pa temple) held that according to the *Yunnan Tongzhi* (Yunnan annals) the Dabaoji was built between 1580 and 1596.⁵⁶ In any case, whatever its exact dates, the construction of the Dabaoji precedes the conversion of Mu Zeng to Lamaism (although in the second case it is extremely close), and *its murals outlived him*. Of apparent significance to the history of Bon in Lijiang is the fact that amidst the different religious schools depicted in the Dabaoji murals, the Reformed Bon looks absent but the Dongba itself is there.⁵⁷

The temple of the Mu kings with its all encompassing iconography and located as it is in the centre of other temples in the Baisha plain tells that by the late Ming period, the Mu ruled over, and for, all the creeds in their realm. As Friedman explains of the office of sacred kingship in the South Asian tradition and feudal China:

The chief who becomes a sacred king naturally appropriates all of the community rituals. This is certainly the case for pre-Han China, where all shrines were housed in the royal compound. The head of the state climbs a good deal further up the ancestral hierarchy - he is no longer the representative of the community to the gods, but descended from the heavens as the representative of the gods of the community.⁵⁸

If by the turn of the 17th century, the Lijiang chiefs were established as sacred kings and 'lords of the soil', in all evidence, the higher traditions like Taoism and Tibetan Buddhism were also firmly established in the royal precinct.

The fact that there are no Bon temples in contemporary Lijiang strongly suggests that the Lijiang Bonpos had been chiefs and lineage heads as were the Tibetan Bonpos *before* Lamaist influence began turning them into monks at the end of the 9th century. We shall see below that the Dongba manuscript tradition also contributes evidence toward this proposition. In other words, to argue that Bon had sustained a 'royal tradition' in Lijiang in no way implies that the Lijiang

Bon was not a tribal, clan or family tradition. And this, certainly, is to validate Rock's evaluation of the Dongba *manuscript* tradition as a survival of, if not of the pre-Buddhist Bon, at least a very ancient Bon.

Of course, at any stage before the 16th century, Bonpos, holy men, or monks no doubt traveled to Lijiang from neighboring Tibet and the interior of China. And we should not discount the possibility that the Reformed Bon was once active in Lijiang as was suggested by Jackson.⁵⁹ For there still are Reformed Bonpos in nearby Zuosuo, as well as one Bon temple, and indeed Dongba lore tells many stories of powerful Dongbas who came to Lijiang from Tibet, some of whom were even murdered by the jealous Mu chiefs.⁶⁰

But to explain that the Dongba emerged out of the demise of a Reformed Bon (Jackson), or that the Dongba absorbed Lamaism through contact as it absorbed Bon and other religious practices (Chinese scholarship) is to assume that the Dongba was only ever what it is today – that is, a rather disorganized folk practice. And this approach, indeed, ignores important facts. It ignores, for example, the mythological connections the Mu established between their own genealogy and Dongba lore. And it also ignores that in Lijiang the Mu kept Dongbas in their service even in the contemporary period (until 1949). That the Naxi chiefs were personally involved with the Dongba gives us reasons to suspect that the Mu could have played an active part in influencing its ritual and mythology. In fact, we know that the Mu chiefs were not averse to involving themselves in religious innovations because we read in the first Chronicle that the Buddhist chief Mu Zeng 'printed many Tibetan Buddhist books to teach the tribal people on the frontier'.⁶¹

On Dongba Organization

Dongba organization is now a somewhat *ad hoc* family and village based affair. The Dongbas do not form a priestly class, they are part-time specialists who work in the fields like other people. None the less, the Dongbas charge small fees to compensate for lost work and, in the past, depending on their popularity

or the time of the year, they could be kept busy enough to look like full-time professionals. Since the tradition is usually passed on from father to son, or uncle to nephew, particular families were also known as 'Dongba clans' (*Dongba jiazu*) and even today, some villages in the Lijiang plain are known to local people as Dongba villages (*Dongba cun*) because of influential Dongba families who once lived there – for there are no 'live' Dongba villages today.

Although basically anarchistic and prone to local variations, the Dongba does have a measure of standardization. Dongbas begin to train at a very young age, when they are about seven or eight years old. They are initiated at the age of eighteen once they are capable of performing at least five entire ceremonies for which they must have memorized the texts of two hundred volumes,⁶² and after they have trained for a few months with the Dongbas at Baidi, at the most sacred Dongba site in what is today Zhongdian Tibetan Autonomous County (map 1). Up until 1949 also, the Dongba exhibited a measure of hierarchy. Naxi priests were formally invested as Great and Small Dongbas according to their level of training, and truly exceptional Dongbas were acknowledged as Dongba Kings. Again the Baidi site was of significance, for all Great Dongbas trained there. Great Dongbas knew many more ceremonies than the Small Dongbas and they made use of a wider range of ritual objects. In addition, the Great Dongbas distinguished themselves from the Small Dongbas by their ritual dress, for only they were entitled to wear white capes. The last is an interesting detail because white is one of the ritual colors of the Tibetan Bonpos (as well as blue), and white capes are the distinguishing mark of the Mongolian shaman.

Five decades after the revolution, there are very few Great Dongbas in Lijiang, if indeed there are any, and everyone (ordinary folk, priests and scholars) agrees that contemporary priests know less and less of their tradition. Although in the 1990s, local authorities reinstated Dongba practices, and political liberalization and the tourist industry are fast reviving the Naxi tradition after a fashion, the Dongba has been greatly diminished. At the onset of Liberation, the Communists proscribed all religious activity and no more Dongbas were trained,

at least officially. Then, thousands of manuscripts were burned during the Cultural Revolution and more ceremonies were forgotten. But if we are to believe pre-1949 observers (Rock, Goullart and Chinese administrator Wang Tuzhui⁶³), the Dongba was already a dying tradition in the 1930s – the priests understood little beyond the rote learning of their rituals and most ceremonies were obsolete.

And yet, moribund as the Naxi tradition may have appeared in the 1930s, it remains that there were then hundreds of thousands of Dongba books in Lijiang, and there were hundreds of Dongbas. Indeed, all Naxi villages had at least one Dongba and usually more because Dongba ceremonies not unlike Lamaist ceremonies often involve several specialists. Hence, to say that the Dongba was already in full decline before 1949 needs qualifying, because the Naxi tradition was evidently doing well in some respects. Rather, it seems appropriate to say that up until 1949, the Naxi had maintained a fundamental interest in their old tradition whatever shape the latter had assumed.

Dongba titles

Chinese scholars believe that the name Dongba is derived from the Tibetan *sTonpa*, which means ‘teacher’ and that it became customary after Lamaism became influential in Lijiang. Indeed, today all Naxi ‘priests’ (the ritual practitioners who use pictographic books) go by the title of Dongba. But in the manuscripts, the Naxi priests assume various names depending on the ritual role they are performing and the name Dongba is not one of them. The name Dongba in actual fact is entirely absent from the Naxi manuscripts. The titles that appear in the manuscripts are:

- 1) Leebu (Rock’s transcription: Lhu-bu) which is a title used by priests when they *sign* manuscripts;
- 2) Ddahe which is the title of the priest who performs at funerals;
- 3) Xiusui, the title of the priest who performs at the Sacrifice to Heaven;⁶⁴
- 4) Pubbu, which is the most common title and which Rock transcribed as

- Bompo*, and which resembles *Bonpo*. *Pubbu*, however, is a native word. *Pu* means 'to chant' and *bbu* means 'to separate', that is to separate the ghosts from the living, because the *Pubbu*'s function is to exorcize,⁶⁵ and
- 5) The *Pa* always accompanies the *Pu* and is a diviner. The *Pa*, unlike the other practitioners is always a woman.
 - 6) The *Sani* are depicted as shamans with loose long hair who go into trance. Unlike the *Pa* medium, however, the *Sani* appears to act alone.

In sum, there are some telling discrepancies between the *Dongba* such as it was practiced in *Lijiang* before the revolution of 1949, and as it appears in the manuscripts.

Of all the titles above, four have survived in contemporary *Lijiang*: *Ddahe*, *Xiusui*, *Leebu*, and *Sani*, except that the *Leebus* are no longer associated with the *Dongba* religion, but with freelance shamans. These freelance shamans are also called *Sani*, but never to their faces as they strongly object to the title. The feminine form *Sanime* (hag, witch) is considered especially derogatory. But I will say more about these modern *Leebu* shortly. For the moment, it is enough to point out that the most frequent title given to the *Naxi* priests in the manuscripts, *Pubbu* and that of his partner, the *Pa*, are no longer in use. The *Pubbu* has been entirely absorbed into the title of *Dongba*, whilst the *Pa* has altogether disappeared. For not only contemporary *Dongbas* no longer perform in pairs with diviners, but the *Dongba* religion has no female practitioners at all.

In the meantime, the pair *Pubbu* and *Pa* recalls other practitioners found among the *Mosuo*, the *Yi* and the old *Mongol* tribes.

Mosuo tradition

Mosuo Daba tradition holds that in former times, but within living memory, they too had *Pv Daba* and *Pa Daba*, respectively priests and mediums/diviners. Both types of *Daba* were males but perhaps they were not always so – for the *Pa* is associated with the feminine number seven, and the *Pv* with the masculine number nine. The *Mosuo* have no *Sunis* or *Sanis* but *Zhedas* and *Somas*.⁶⁶

Yi tradition

The Yi tradition involves the cooperation of a Bimo priest (always male) and a Suni diviner (who is either male or female). The words Suni and Sani appear to be cognates. And for what the information is worth, it is interesting to note that contemporary Naxi are much more familiar with the name Sani than with the name Pa.⁶⁷

Mongol tradition

Mongolian shamanic tradition is founded on the complementary offices of male and female shamans whose tutelary deities represent the father and mother of their people.⁶⁸ The Pubbu-Pa partnership and Dongba cosmogony are reminiscent of the Mongol paradigm. Dongba tradition holds that at the beginning of times, the god Ddu and the goddess Sei hatched from a pair of eggs, and shortly afterwards, the Pubbu and Pa hatched from the same brood, thus the Pubbu and the Pa are descendants of the original male and female deities.

In that time there was no chief; there were no houses; there were no oxen to plow with; there were no spears to plant into the ground; there was no armor; there were no Pu [Dongba] and no Pa [female diviner]. One generation passed, Eeyueema ah! He flew high to the sky and pecked at three white clouds to build a nest, then he flew low to the earth and picked three blades of grass to build a nest. He laid nine pairs of eggs.

- One pair changed into the gods Per and Se.
- One pair changed into the gods Gao and Wu.
- One pair changed into the gods He and Hen.
- One pair changed into the god Ddu and the goddess Sei.
- One pair changed into the capable one and the intelligent one.
- One pair changed into the god of measures and the god of weights.
- One pair changed into the Big Chief [zzi] and the Small Chief [lee].
- One pair changed into the Pu and the Pa.
- One pair changed into the Ji and the Co peoples.
- One pair changed into Black and White peoples.⁶⁹

Mongol tradition associates shamans with chieftains and so does the Dongba manuscript tradition. The Pubbu and the Pa, the *Ka*, and other magistrates and

chiefs are all represented with a dress while other persons are drawn as simple stick figures with only the headdress to denote gender, position, occupation, or tribal affiliation.⁷⁰

That the Pubbu-Pa partnership finds cognates in neighboring traditions confirms Naxi scholars' opinion that the name Dongba is the produce of more recent developments and derives from Tibetan Buddhism (hence, Dongba=*sTonpa*). However, I should add that Chinese scholars also argue that the names Dongba and Daba are related. Now, the Mosuo say that the *dda* in Daba means 'to cut' or 'to engrave', and that it refers to the practice of notching out wooden sticks which the Dabas do for memorization (a similar principle to using rosary beads). On the other hand, it is not impossible that even the word Daba is derived from the Tibetan *sTonpa*, because the Mosuo (and the Naxi) have subsumed a number of linguistic imports within their own cosmological definitions. For example, the Mosuo have adopted the Chinese *Bagua* (the Eight Trigrams) as *Bakua*, which now means the 'Frog that Opens the Eight Doors' (*Ba* in Mosuo means 'frog' and *kua* means 'door').⁷¹ Nevertheless, the briefest comparison with neighboring creeds confirms that the Dongba (as it is depicted in the manuscript tradition) belongs to an old ritual complex that would find common elements in Bon and so-called Taoist practices, as well as Mongol and Yi Bimo traditions. Hence, we may leave the issue of the origins of the word Dongba and come back to the question which dominates Jackson's thesis. How old is the Dongba tradition?

The obsolescence of many ceremonies, what the manuscripts reveal of former gender ritual roles and former Dongba titles, and as we shall see later, what the manuscripts also reveal of an ancient political and social organization, confirm that the Naxi tradition has deep historical roots and that the Dongba we know today bears witness to the passage of history. Jackson's theory that the Dongba is an 18th century invention must be qualified. The Dongba may well have acquired its present shape in relatively recent times, but the matrix from

which it originates, the 'Pubbu-Pa' tradition expressed in the manuscripts, is certainly much older. Given this, we may start thinking of the history of Bon in Lijiang, not so much as a search for a defunct high Bonpo tradition, but as a search for a reformed small Bon tradition. In other words, rather than ask what happened to the Bonpos in Lijiang, we should ask how and why did the Pubbu become Dongba? As I shall now explain, Dongba genealogies would provide a good place to start inquiring.

Dongba genealogies

When the Dongbas begin a ritual, they first call on Dibba Shilo, the founder of their religion, then on their personal gods and finally on the generations of Dongbas who have preceded their own teachers. Hence, a statistical compilation of Dongba generational histories would yield very important data for a historical reconstruction of the Dongba's evolution. Unfortunately, Naxi scholars have no such information and it was quite out of the question that I should undertake a project on this scale whilst I was in Lijiang. From the piece-meal information which I gathered, Dongba generational histories appear uneven and relatively shallow.

According to He Pingzheng and Li Jingsheng of the Dongba Research Institute, a long genealogy would be around fifteen teacher ancestors and the longest Dongba genealogy they knew about had twenty-five generations. Most Dongbas, however, would count ten or so generations. Among the Dongbas at the Research Institute, He Jigui from Minyin claimed the longest genealogy with nineteen generations. The late Ludian Dongba had the shortest with only seven generations. Counting from 1950, and taking twenty-two years as an average generation gap, seven generations take us into the Qing period, after the annexation of Lijiang, towards the second part of the 18th century. Ten generations take us to 1830, a few years after the annexation of Lijiang, and Twenty-five generations into the mid-15th century and the Ming period. He Jigui's genealogy leads to the 16th century.

These data are far too incomplete to permit a hypothesis, because, as I already mentioned, there were hundreds of Dongbas in Lijiang, but they do contrast with what Lamu Gatusa knows of Daba generations. Those are much more even and much longer, between thirty-five and forty, taking us into the late Song period by a conservative estimate of twenty years per generation. Should the shorter Dongba genealogies (ten or so generations) be representative, they may well indicate an exponential growth of Dongba initiations after the Qing annexation of Lijiang. Ideally, some effort should be made to document Dongba genealogies. If Dongba genealogies correspond to specific locations, they may point to patterns of diffusion, and if the genealogies are randomly distributed and appear to culminate in the Late Imperial period, then a specific historical explanation may be in order, as for example, a reform under Lamaism, or a 'take off' of a folk tradition in the wake of the annexation of Lijiang and the removal of the Mu chiefs – or indeed, both because one ought to remember that the Karma-pa was very influential in Lijiang during the 18th century.

Meanwhile, the depth disproportion between Dongba and Daba genealogies raises an important issue as regards the historical connection between the two traditions. At first glance, the longer Daba genealogies would support the various theories that maintain that the Mosuo Daba is itself a version of the Dongba. These longer Daba genealogies would also lend a degree of support to Jackson's reconstruction of Naxi religious history. But then again, as I explain below, the connections between the Dongba and the Daba do not appear to stem from simple linearity.

The Mosuo Daba tradition

Comprehensive studies of the Daba religion were initiated in China with the work of Lamu Gatusa, whilst in Western scholarship, virtually nothing was known of this tradition until Oppitz and Hsu's *Naxi and Moso Ethnography* in 1998.⁷² Yet, almost all scholars (beginning with Rock) have assumed that the Daba and the Dongba are versions of one another, with the difference that

Chinese scholars tended to assume that the Daba is a simpler, oral tradition devoid of the Bon elements which characterize the Naxi tradition, whilst Rock and after him Jackson believed the Daba to be a 'degenerated' Bon/Dongba tradition. Rock, in particular, believed that the Daba was a half-forgotten version of the Dongba because the Dabas had lost their books to the Gelug-pa lamas. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly review some of the more salient aspect of the Daba tradition, as the latter was found in Labei in the early 1990s.

The Dabas are free agents, like the Dongbas. No one initiates them, and there is no formal Daba church. According to Daba Lamu Gasso, however, In the past, the Daba priesthood was far more organized than it is now:⁷³ the Dabas not only studied with their fathers but they were formally ordained, and there were then three levels of clergy:

- The Haba; the highest Daba. The Haba 'taught' the other Dabas, and he appointed them to office. The Haba had Tibetan books, he was a psychopomp and had powerful magical powers. Lamu Gasso explained that the Dabas are now free agents because there are no more Habas.
- The Pa-Daba; the diviner. He sees the ghosts who cause illness and other troubles. The Pa-Daba, however, cannot exorcize the ghost, or communicate with them. All he can do is see and report to the next level Daba;
- The Pv-Daba; the incantator. The Pv-Daba knows how to chant the texts to exorcize the ghost.

That the Mosuo Pv and Pa Dabas find cognates in the Naxi Pu and Pa of the manuscript tradition does suggest that the Daba and Dongba originate in a common tradition. And perhaps this more ancient matrix itself lies with the Haba.

The Haba and their relevance to the history of the Mosuo Daba tradition

Daba Lamu Gasso explained that there were no more Haba in Yongning because 'after Liberation, it was all finished' (*Jiefanghou, dou wan le*). Indeed, there

may be something in this, because Rock reported that a Haba (Ha-pa) sect of ancient 'sorcerers' practiced in Yongning and Muli in the 1940s but he explained that these priests were associated with the Pumi who call them Ts'amba, and he said nothing of their possible connections to the Mosuo Daba.⁷⁴ Chinese scholarship on the other hand, informs us that the Pumi call their priests Hangui but says nothing of their being connected to a higher literate order.⁷⁵ Evidently, something is amiss between Rock and Chinese scholars.

The systematic comparative study of Pumi, Mosuo and Naxi religions would be of great interest to the history of the three peoples, their religious traditions and, not least, the history of the ancient Bon. In the meantime, however, we may glean from current scholarship the following information. Pumi tradition relates that the Hangui once had five sects but that only three can now be found. The Pumi also say that in former times, their Hangui priests were called Dibba and that they were always women. The founder of the Dibba tradition is Badi Lamu, the 'mother Tiger of the place of the Ba people'. The *ba* of Badi Lamu means 'Pumi', *di* means 'place', and *lamu* means 'mother tiger'.⁷⁶ The name Dibba of course also recalls the first part of the famous Naxi name Dibba Shilo. Now, as mentioned above, Rock believed that Shilo stood for Shenrab, but he did not explain the Dibba part of the name, because he transcribed Dibba Shilo and Dto-mba i.e. Dongba (IPA: [toba]) Shilo. Thus he simply assumed that the first part of Shilo's name was the title of the Naxi priest. In fact, according to Naxi Dongba tradition, Dibba Shilo counts among his different wives, the mother tiger, Lamu. Did Dibba Shilo marry the Lamu of the place of the Ba (Pumi) because he too was new in the region? We shall see in the next chapter that the story which recounts the origins of Dibba Shilo also replays the archetypal events of arrival, marriage and territorial transfer.

Coming back to the Haba, they have not altogether disappeared from the Daba scene. Guo Dalie and He Zhiwu (1985) mention that a Haba sect is currently active in Hong Qiao, Ninglang County. They confirm that the Haba priests keep Tibetan books and 'Buddha' icons and that they specialize in rituals

dealing with gods and ghosts whilst they leave weddings, ancestor worship and healing to the Dabas. He and Guo classify this Haba sect as a Daba sect, and both Haba and Daba as offshoots of the Dongba.⁷⁷ Should one clarify that this classification informs the Naxi discourse of authenticity rather than evolutionary theory? Since, after all, the Haba have books and a real script and the Dongbas have 'primitive pictographs'.

Supposing that the Daba was 'from the start' associated with the Haba, Daba genealogies, which average 35 to 40 and sometimes more, sustain Rock's claim that the Haba originated in the times of Padmasambhava (8th century A.D.).⁷⁸ Taking 20, 25, or 30 years as average generation gaps, the Daba would have been established in Yongning between the 8th century at the earliest and the 12th at the latest, thus some time between the Tang dynasty when the region was under Tibetan control, and the Mongol invasion. Thus, the Daba itself may be proof of the so-called Bon mission to Jang-mo.

Daba genealogies in Labei, however, do not support Rock's claims that the Dongba and the Daba were both founded by Dibba Shilo whom the Tibetans know as Shenrab Mibo.⁷⁹ According to Lamu Gatusa, in Labei and Yongning, the Dabas are quite sure that Shilo was not the founder of *their* tradition and explain that the Naxi received Dibba Shilo from Tibet whilst the Mosuo went to fetch their first Daba 'where the rivers meet the sea'. The founder of the Labei Daba is Mulu Abaddu, the Great Heaven, and the first Daba is given as Mabuzzeru. On the other hand in Muli, where the Bon religion is still active, the Daba believe that the founder of their religion is Yajiadomashila or Shela and that the first Daba was a man named Abama. The name Shela certainly recalls the Naxi Shilo and thus Tibetan Shenrab Mibo, but the Muli Daba say that Shela means Iron Tiger (*she*= iron, *la*=tiger).⁸⁰

That the Daba was founded by Mulu Abaddu rather than Dibba Shilo, and that it is also closely connected to the literate Haba sect, argues that at least some among the Dabas never adhered to the Dongba, either as a simpler, oral version (Naxi scholars) or a degenerated one (Rock/Jackson). Which, of course, does

not mean that in some distant times, the Haba never had influence among the Lijiang tribes or that 'Bon' never had followers among the Yongning peoples. The Mosuo Pv and Pa evidently have some connections to the Dongba Pu and Pa and the fact is that Mabuzzeru and Dibba Shilo find a place in both traditions. The Dabas call Dibba Shilo, Dobba Shair. They consider him a celestial though relatively marginal Daba and invoke him during the *Ggassubv*, an exorcism to expel the ghost who gives dysentery to people, and especially to children. In parallel, according to Rock, the Dongbas know a Meebbozzissu whom the Eya Dongbas call Mabuzeshu, i.e. Mabuzzeru. The Dongbas look upon Meebbozzissu as a celestial Dongba, and whilst they sometimes place him on the cover of their manuscripts, they relate nothing of his origins. No doubt Meebbozzissu's presence among the 2200 or so Dongba gods is of some interest to Mosuo and Naxi religious and political history⁸¹ but, unless or until proven otherwise, it is reasonable to assume that although the Lijiang Dongba and the Labei Daba belong to a common ritual complex, and may well have influenced one another, they are distinct sects, each claiming its own founder.⁸²

Importantly also, contemporary Dongba and Daba play a role in marking ethnic boundaries between Naxi and Mosuo. Both religions (as also the Yi Bimo tradition) are based in a specific concept of the after-life, ancestor worship, lineage, outsider and insider relations, and their consequences for health, wealth and fertility. Simply put, Mosuo and Naxi traditions hold that health and fertility are for the most part bestowed by ancestor spirits while misfortunes of all sorts, including sickness and droughts, are caused by ghosts who, for their part, are the souls of dead outsiders. In fact, ancestors too can cause misfortune but generally speaking of a lesser degree. In addition, ancestral souls have a ghost or *ce* aspect, because all souls must necessarily stand as outsiders to non-relatives. This insider/outsider dichotomy is also graded: the most dangerous ghosts are those with whom one has the least kin connection. When Naxi or Mosuo get sick, they may call upon knowledgeable persons to provide them with various medicines and supernatural treatment in order to deal with the ghosts who cause

sickness. Quite logically, when ghosts are involved, Naxi and Mosuo may call on any outsider shaman or diviner to help deal with ghosts: Suni, Leebu, etc, as well as Buddhist or Taoist priests. But in rituals where the help of ancestors is requested, then Naxi and Mosuo will only call on their respective practitioners: either Dongba or Daba, and also quite logically, Dongba or Daba who happen to be a relative. Dongbas, Dabas and Bimos unlike diviners and shamans are *keepers of genealogies* and their loyalty therefore is to the souls of their own ancestors. *Dongbas, Dabas and Bimos cannot serve people who do not share common ancestors.* And importantly, that Mosuo and Naxi draw such clear a line between Dongba and Daba on the basis of genealogical ideals strongly argues that the distinction between Daba and Dongba traditions has a significant historical depth and that religion is here is a powerful ethnic marker.

Contemporary Naxi Religious Practitioners, Dongbas and Leebus

Like the ancient Bonpos, the Dongbas have no temples and no monasteries. For this reason, scholars are sometimes reluctant to call them priests, preferring terms like shamans or even sorcerers (Rock, Jackson). I refer to the Dongbas and other ritual specialists like the Mosuo Daba and the Yi Bimo as priests following Leach,⁸³ and to other practitioners as shamans following Eliade. Above all, a shaman is an individual capable of trance states.

While it does happen on occasion that a Dongba doubles up as a shaman, the Dongba office does not depend on the gift of ecstasy. The Dongbas do not 'fly' or 'go underground', they cannot communicate directly with spirits or gods, and they are neither mediums nor psychopomps. The Dongbas call on the gods, exorcize ghosts, rescue souls from hell and guide the dead to the ancestral lands by virtue of the power of tradition and liturgy. Nevertheless, the Naxi do have shamans whom ordinary folk and Dongbas call Sani. The Sani, for their part, call themselves Leebu (Rock's Lhu-bu), and no one would dare address them to their face as anything else, because the word Sani, and especially its feminine counterpart *Sanime* (the suffix *me* is feminine) is today a common insult like

'hag' or 'witch' in English. The word Leebu, however, means 'wife of the Lee' which Rock translates as wife of the Naga (also wife of *Lhu*, if using the Tibetan term). And strange to say, but by Rock's time, the wives of the Lee were all men.⁸⁴

Unlike the Dongbas, the Leebus can go into trance or semi-trance states. According to Dongba He Jigui, the Leebus can see ghosts and go underground, and, in some cases, they are gifted enough to communicate directly with the ghosts and to perform exorcisms. Some Leebus may also accomplish truly extraordinary feats, like putting their hands in boiling oil. Yet, common folk and Dongbas also explain that the Naxi have few powerful shamans, unlike the Lisu, the Yi and the Han (and often in that order).

Today, Leebus may be admired or despised on account of their gifts or one's own philosophical convictions. Indeed, although some persons are fascinated by the supernatural, others (and this is true especially for the older generation) look upon anything religious as sheer quackery. The Dongbas at the Dongba Research Institute also had mixed feelings about the Leebus, and they were quick to point out that the latter had no books and could not read. An interesting attitude given that the manuscripts bear witness to the fact that, once upon a time, the Dongbas themselves assumed the title of Leebus – when they signed their manuscripts. So, did the Leebus once own manuscripts, or did they simply usurp an older 'Dongba' title?

Leebus and their gods

Until 1949, it fell on the mountain god Saddo to invest the Leebus and sort out the gifted from the hysterics or charlatans. Rock, who had little empathy for mysteries of a higher order gave the following account of a Leebu initiation ceremony:

The individual who is to become a Llubu usually begins to act like one possessed, and if he is from the Lijiang district, he will dance all the way ... [to] the Ssan-ddo temple which he will enter and, there gyrate before the image of Ssan-ddo sitting on a white stone. Above ... Ssan-ddo hang a number of red scarves on a rope. The Na-khi

firmly believe that should Ssan-ddo approve of the epileptic maniac, one of the red scarves will drop on him.⁸⁵

Thus, unlike the Dongbas, the Leebus are not attached to Dibba Shilo but to Saddo, the divine spirit of the Yulongshan, the Jade Dragon Mountain that towers over Lijiang plain.

But Saddo is himself of marginal importance to the Dongbas. Indeed, Dongbas do not worship Saddo and according to the scholars at the Dongba Research Institute, Saddo is not even mentioned in the Dongba manuscripts. For his part, Rock claimed to have come across very rare and very old pictographic manuscripts that were dedicated to Saddo but no one knew what the texts were about.⁸⁶ This is all very interesting since Saddo is allegedly the 'national' god of the Naxi people and the Dongba is supposedly the 'national' religion. And so, the question arises as to what Saddo might be to the Naxi that Dibba Shilo is not, or the other way around.

Saddo is an old god, known to the Tibetans as Satham, king of Jang who fought with Gesar in the famous legend.⁸⁷ Naxi oral tradition relates that the spirit of Saddo descended from Gyade in northeastern Tibet (Qiang country) and that it settled upon the Yulongshan 'a long time ago'.⁸⁸ According to He Zhiwu, Saddo was neglected during the Tang and Song periods and was reinstated as a *genius loci* under the Mongols and upon the unification of the Naxi.⁸⁹ The historical record confirms at least the second half of He's proposition, since it is written in a Ming dynasty document that the Naxi tribes happily submitted to the Mu ruling house after Saddo visited the chief Mou-bao Ah-cong and turned into a white rock.⁹⁰ Leaving for the moment the question of when Saddo may in fact have descended upon the Yulongshan,⁹¹ it is evident that whatever his origins, the mountain god is connected to the royal cult and Naxi tribal unification.

And we can turn to ancient Chinese political ideology to make sense of these connections, because the latter would teach that the Virtuous King avoids war, as his virtue is manifest in the voluntary submission of barbarians and conquered

peoples⁹² whilst, in Marcel Granet's words, it is by 'erecting a cairn on a famous mountain that Chinese generals took possession of Barbarian lands'.⁹³ In fact, Saddo's *rock* also recalls the traditions of neighboring Tibeto-Burmans who erect menhirs to mark the establishment of treaties and the foundation of chiefdoms, and in particular, another famous Yunnanese rock connected with divinity and conquest, Guanyin's rock, which the Goddess of Mercy allegedly carried to Yeyu (Dali) when she met the invading Han soldiers in 109 B.C. and thus obtained peace for the people.⁹⁴

Thus, it appears that although Saddo has little if anything to do with either the Dongba or Bon, both he and Dibba Shilo certainly have to do with the royal ritual and Mu territoriality. In fact, the two gods assume a complementarity that is readily identifiable in light of Chinese ancient history and civilization. As Maspéro explained, in ancient (feudal) times, the Chinese politico-ritual sphere was divided north and south and governed by two gods: the north was held by the public god, associated with the *place* and signified by a tree and a sacred grove, whilst in the south dwelt the private god, the personal deity, and ancestor god of the ruler himself (the chieftain, the king, the feudal lord).⁹⁵ Lijiang territorial cosmologies in all appearance operated on this very principle because the Dongba tradition reserves the north for the worship of the ancestors, god trees, the sacred grove dedicated to the Sacrifice to Heaven and the god Saddo, whilst Dibba Shilo is said to reside in the south. Whilst Dibba Shilo, the founder of the religious tradition connected to the Mu's own genealogy, was the Mu's personal and ancestor god, not unlike Shenrab Mibo was himself connected to the sacred Mu genealogy of the Tibetan kings.⁹⁶

And if Saddo is the public god and Dibba Shilo is the private god, the god of the Mu kings, the divide between Dongbas and Leebus aligns itself entirely logically. The Dongbas, as heirs of Dibba Shilo, speak for the Naxi genealogy, the Naxi *race* and its ties to the ruler, whilst the Leebus, as devotees of the god Saddo, speak for the *place*, the soil and its guardian spirit with which 'men' (the Mu and their people) must negotiate because it is not of their making. Seen from

this perspective, Leebu is the ‘rightful’ name of the Naxi shamans, for Saddo being the god of the place, is associated with the natural world, with the making of rain and droughts, and with the original spirit inhabitants of the land, the *Lee*, the Naxi Naga spirits.⁹⁷ As we shall see in Chapter VIII, women and especially wives, *bu*, are traditional mediators. Hence, the Leebus are those who mediate between the politicized world of kings and men and the spirit world of the place which kings and men occupy. In this sense, it is perhaps enough for the Leebus to be symbolic women.

Yet, none of this explains why there were no women practitioners *whatsoever* amongst contemporary Naxi and especially why there were no Pa, the female diviners who are constant companions of the Pubbu in the Dongba manuscripts. Neither does the above explain why the Naxi priests should have signed their manuscripts by using the title of Leebu. I address the first set of issues below, and the second in Chapter V.

What happened to Naxi female shamans?

Looking at the Dongba manuscripts from the perspective of the contemporary religious scene, it is clear that the Naxi clergy once assumed a very different shape, because none of the contemporary Naxi practitioners figures in the Dongba books. As we saw, in the manuscripts, the Naxi priest is called Pubbu and he is usually depicted in company of a woman diviner called Pa. Then, although the Naxi priests signed some of their books as Leebu, there are no Leebus in the manuscripts. But interestingly, there are Sanis, shamans (perhaps shamanesses⁹⁸) who unlike the Pa perform alone, whilst, as we saw above, today’s shamans strongly reject this name and call themselves Leebu. As we have also seen, the Pubbu, Pa and Sani of the Dongba manuscripts recall the practitioners found in the Mosuo, Yi, and Mongol traditions.

Now, Jackson argues that the disappearance of the Naxi Pa, the exclusive masculinity of the modern Sani and the incongruity of his chosen name, Leebu (wife of the Naga) resulted from, and testified to, the gender warfare which took

place in post-1723 Lijiang. Thus, he contends that the reforms to patrilineality and patriarchy, which he assumes the Manchu administration imposed on the Naxi, were matched by radical changes in the ritual sphere, and in particular, that the Qing magistrates proscribed women practitioners.

I agree with Jackson that the masculinity of the Dongba ritual sphere cannot be attributed to a general cultural aversion to *female* practitioners. Because, if in Rock's time all the Leebus were men, in the 1990s, from what I saw for myself and what I was told, Naxi shamans are now almost always women.⁹⁹ The most logical explanation for this recent gender reversal lies with the Communist proscriptions of folk practices which were enforced between 1950 and at least 1985. The new rules removed both Dongbas and Leebus from the public scene, but at the same time, they removed the institutions which decided upon the investiture of 'shamans' (the Saddo test). Evidently, women were quick to find their place in the new order and to find a willing clientele.

At any rate, Jackson's theory is circular. He assumes that Manchu patriarchal reforms can explain the disappearance of women shamans from the Naxi ritual scene, while, in turn, he takes the disappearance of women shamans as proof that Lijiang was subjected to a patriarchal reform after 1723. His major premise is also based on an undefended assumption: that the Pubbu themselves wished to take the opportunity of securing their own ritual position against their female *competitors*. There is little in the manuscripts that can justify this position. The Dongba books depict the Pubbu and the Pa in an essential and obligatory complementarity, not as rivals. Typically, the manuscripts refer to the diviner (Pa) as 'the intelligent one' and the priest (Pubbu) as 'the capable one'. If they were left to their own devices, therefore, the diviner could not act and the priest could not see. Jackson's analysis, indeed, significantly misconstrues this fact: that pre-1949 male Leebus could not be equated to the Pa of the manuscripts, *even if they were women*. For the Pa and the Pubbu were constant and apparently equal partners whilst today's Leebu is an occasional partner of inferior status.

In fact, the disappearance of the Pa involved the removal of the *Pa office* itself and not only the removal of women from office. The Pa, however, are not the only protagonists of the Naxi manuscripts who were nowhere to be found in Republican Lijiang. The Dongba books speak of indigenous magistrates, like the Zzi and Dee, Sepi (landlords, but also the name of the aristocratic clan of Yongning), serfs (wu), Black and White castes/tribes (Na and Per), and so forth, none of which had a place in contemporary Lijiang (pre-1949). So one could argue that the Pubbu and Pa disappeared along with these other categories in sweeping reforms which involved more than gender, such as, for example may have occurred when the Qing annexed Lijiang and dismantled the manorial apparatus. But one cannot assume that the organization of the Naxi kingdom remained unchanged throughout the four centuries of the Mu's rule. Even if we agree for the sake of argument that women practitioners were formally proscribed, it remains to be shown that the Qing magistrates were responsible for this rather than the Naxi chiefs themselves. After all, the latter Mu chiefs, as enthusiastic Confucians and Buddhists, did not adhere to schools of thoughts which were especially favorable to women.

Which brings us to another point, and one that was entirely out of Jackson's reach in the 1970s. Jackson's theory, indeed, finds no support in ethnographic data and comparative analysis. For other people besides the Naxi came under direct Qing rule, a number of whom lived in Lijiang, and yet, it seems that only the Naxi had no women practitioners. The Sinicized Bai, the Lisu and the Han all had women mediums and shamans, just as they do today. On the other hand, if we turn to the Mu territories which did not come under Qing rule in the 18th century, such as Eya, a feudal enclave established by Mu Zeng around the turn of the 17th century and which survived into the 20th century until 1956, we find that there are no Pubbu and Pa there either, but indeed, male Dongbas who have pictographic books just like the Dongbas have in Lijiang.¹⁰⁰ And just as importantly, not only did the Eya people not come under Qing administrative rule but they came under the domination of the Gelug-pa chiefs of Muli. In other

words, whether they lived in territories dominated by Gelug-pa, Karma-pa, or Confucian magistrates, the Naxi had Dongbas and manuscripts, and the Mosuo had Daba and no manuscripts (more on this next chapter). Hence, there are grounds to believe that the Pubbu and Pa were replaced by Dongbas before the Qing annexation, and at least by Mu Zeng's times. We may now draw the discussion towards a conclusion.

Dongba history: a tentative reconstruction

Given the discussion above, I will now present a tentative reconstruction of the history of Bon in Lijiang. At the start of the Ming dynasty, the Lijiang chiefs requested the official name Mu from the Chinese emperor and thus established the legitimacy of their rule in symbols of kingship derived from a Bon ritual of the sect of Shenrab Mibo, the Naxi Dibba Shilo. It is very possible that this cult in fact arrived with their ancestors during the Song period. From the Ming onwards, changing political and civilizational contingencies impressed upon the Mu chiefs the desire or the necessity (or both) to adopt philosophical and religious notions of a 'higher' kind. Confucianism promoted the Lijiang chiefs in the imperial order, the adoption of Taoism and other Chinese cults gave them access to, and control of, the rituals of the various Sinicized people and the many Han immigrants who settled in their realm (refer to Ch. VIII). Mu Zeng's conversion to Karma-pa Lamaism in 1600 gave him allies among the people he conquered in Tibetan territories, as well as among those who dwelt in the narrowing buffer zone which separated the Naxi kingdom from a resurgent and fast expanding Tibetan state under the rule of the Gelug-pa. Hence, it is likely that Mu Zeng himself fostered a reform of the local Bon tradition, and 'printed many Tibetan Buddhist books to teach the tribal people on the frontier'.¹⁰¹ Over the next decade, as Bon became increasingly unpopular in China and Tibet, the local Dongba tradition further distanced itself from Bon, the Pubbu were now called Dongba, in imitation of Lamaist teachers, and many ceremonies and rituals were abandoned. Meanwhile, the Karma-pa made a limited impact on the

common folk, whilst the Chinese cults (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucianism and the popular religion) became increasingly influential. But it was not until the Mu were removed from office in 1723, that the Dongba truly came unto its own as a folk tradition.

Conclusion

This chapter achieves on the surface, a synthesis of current theories. Like Rock, I am of the opinion that the Dongba begins in an old, pre-monastic and pre-literate Bon which possibly arrived in Lijiang at some stage of the Tang period. Like Naxi scholars, I explain that the Dongba was at its apogee during the feudal period, and like Jackson, that the Dongba probably had a new lease of life after 1723 when it found itself unfettered by higher authorities. My analysis, however, departs from Rock's where I conclude that the Dongba did not decline naturally so much as it was purposefully reformed under Mu aegis, when the Bon ritual was transformed into the contemporary Dongba. My analysis also departs from the work of Chinese scholars with the argument that the Dongba did not begin as a simple folk tradition but indeed originates with an ancient Tibetan royal tradition. Finally, it departs from Jackson's work for all the reasons listed above, and from the point at which I argue that Dongba gender transformation is better explained in light of the Lamaist impact than that of Qing administrative policies and the reform of Naxi matrilineal structures (but I shall come back to this issue in Chapter VIII).

In addressing the religious history of Lijiang, two points should be given consideration. The first lies with the fact that even as the Naxi adhered to the Chinese cults and other creeds, like Tibetan Buddhism for example (Black, White, or Red Hats), the Dongba remained a universal and prominent practice in Lijiang, even in the most Sinicized regions and right up until the mid-20th century. The second consideration rests with the fact that the Naxi people did not convert to Lamaism with their chief, unlike happened in Yongning. This, indeed, suggests that the transformation of the old Pubbu ceremonies into

Dongba effected the equivalent of a conversion.

Therefore, whereas Jackson argues that Bon disappeared from Yongning and Lijiang in the wake of a Lamaist repression, and that the Bon and Buddhist elements in the Dongba result of *ad hoc* teachings having made their way into the local folk tradition, I propose that at a particular historical juncture, Bon began metamorphosing as Dongba, a sect of Lamaism under the auspices of the Lijiang ruling family. In the course of history, many Dongba rituals were abandoned, the Pubbu-Pa partnership was dissolved, new concepts and motifs were adopted, but the Dongba remained a sect of Shenrab most likely because Shenrab was the personal god of the Naxi chiefs, because Shenrab was the true ancestor.

Having said as much, I may add that the transformation of Bon into Dongba possibly encountered local resistance: we will see in the next chapters that there is evidence of conflict and resistance between the Mu house and famous Dongbas. It is also likely that the Dongba tradition, even if it were once upon a time more organized than it is today, always showed a degree of local variety. But the point made here, is that Bon never truly disappeared from Lijiang and that it had the support of the Mu family, right up until the mid-20th century.

We saw in Chapter II that Mu Gong reconciled Confucian expectations to more traditional definitions by collapsing historical and mythological Truth within the cryptic persona of Yeye. It seems that Mu Zeng and his descendants dealt with Lamaism in a similar fashion, that they 'rewrote' the Bon as Dongba but nevertheless kept something of essential worth from the original story, namely, Dibba Shilo's story, because Dibba Shilo was the Mu's personal connection to Heaven.

¹Again the term is Sahlins', see M. Sahlins, "Other Times, Other Customs: The Anthropology of History", p. 522. 'We need a notion of "hierarchical solidarity" to go alongside Durkheim's mechanical and organic types. In the heroic societies, the coherence of the members or

subgroups is not so much due to their similarity (mechanical solidarity) or their complementarity (organic solidarity) as to their common submission to the ruling power.'

²Translated by J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 67.

³As He Zhiwu writes: 'there is no question that the manuscript tradition begins with the folk and oral tradition' [my translation from Chinese]. He Zhiwu, "Shilun Xiangxing Wenzi de Tedian", in Guo Dalie and Yang Shiguang (eds.), *Dongba Wenhua Lunji* [Collected essays on Dongba literature], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985, p. 161.

⁴Today, the term Tibetan Buddhism is felt preferable to Lamaism. However, I use the word Lamaism throughout this book to clearly distinguish the Tibetan from the Chinese tradition.

⁵J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 15.

⁶In this chapter and the next, I make use of Hoffman's terminology: 'Systematized' or 'Reformed Bon' and 'old Bon', with the understanding that, as David Snellgrove qualifies: 'Such a distinction is perhaps useful so long as we do not think in the clear-cut terms of pure indigenous *bon* and Buddhist influenced *bon*. The historical development of *bon* has been far more complex. It is a composite growth where native and foreign elements of all kinds are mingled together.' D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, p. 1, note 2. In fact, Hoffman himself explains that the ancient Bon was part of a greater system which included Mongolian shamanism. H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*; London, Allen and Unwin, 1956, pp. 19-27.

⁷As Rolf Stein explains: 'amongst [the Na-khi] is found, not the ancient or primitive Bon but Bon assimilated to a Lamaist school'. R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 241.

⁸Rock wrote about this in all his work and I need not quote specifically. He Zhiwu confirms Rock's claims and linguistic explanations in He Zhiwu, "Dongba Jiao He Dongba Wenhua" [Dongba religion and Dongba culture], in Guo Dalie and Yang Shiguang (eds.), *Dongba Wenhua Lunji* [Collected essays on Dongba literature], 1985, p. 27.

⁹Snellgrove writes 'It is generally accepted that the story of *gSenrab*'s life is a deliberate fabrication, for which the inspiration was the life of *Sakyamuni*.' D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine ways of Bon*, p. 15, note 1. He adds that before Buddhism, the Tibetan religion did not have the name Bon, though Bon was the name of priests. For his part, Stein refers to pre-Buddhist indigenous Tibetan practices as 'the nameless religion'. See R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, 1972. See also H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, pp. 19-27; note, however, that according to Philippe Cornu, the Bonpos themselves place Shenrab in the 4th century B.C. See P. Cornu, *L'astrologie tibétaine*, Paris, Editions des Djinnis, 1990, p. 17.

¹⁰Rock believed that the Naxi arrived in Lijiang in 24 A.D.; Chapter IX looks at the details.

¹¹A. Jackson, *Na-khi Religion*, p. 53.

¹²D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, pp. 1-21. H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, pp. 44, 98.

¹³According to current Chinese scholarship, the Zhamie Gelug-pa temple in Yongning was built in 1556, see Shih Chuan-kang, *The Mo-so*, p. 181. Also from about 1550, the Daba genealogy of the Yongning chiefs shows that the chief abandoned the old Mo-so names and adopted Tibetan names (see chapter IX pp. 396, 405). In 1700, the political fortunes of the Gelug-pa were fast receding (in 1706, the Qing army was occupying Lhasa). On the political history of the Gelug-pa, see H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, pp. 168-181.

¹⁴See for example the collection, "Naxizu Yuanshi Zongjiao Ji Shehui Sixiang Xueshu Yanjiu Lunwen Ji" [Researches into Naxi animism and social thought] in *Lijiang Zhiyan* (6:11) 1989.

¹⁵From seminars with Guo Dalie in 1991 and Guo Dalie, "Lun Naxizu Dongba Jiao Yu Zangzu Ben Jiao Guanxi" [On the Naxi Dongba and its relation to the Tibetan Bon] Internal publication, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences. 1993. Lin Xiangshao, "Dibba Shilo de Shidai Kao" [On dating Dibba Shilo's generation], in *Lijiang Zhiyan* (6:11) 1989, pp. 103.

¹⁶Lin Xiangxiao, *ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁷Guo Dalie, "Lun Naxizu Dongba Jiao Yu Zangzu Ben Jiao Guanxi".

¹⁸H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, p. 96.

¹⁹J. F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 2.

²⁰Song Enchang, "Dali He Lijiang Daojiao Gaikuang" [A survey of Taoism in Dali and Lijiang], in *Yunnan Minzu Minsu He Zongjiao Diaocha* [An investigation into the customs and religions of the peoples of Yunnan], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985, pp. 119-122.

²¹Chen Lufan, "A preliminary Analysis of the Important Cultural Relics of the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms", in Chen Lufan (ed.), *Whence came the Thai Race*, pp. 201-203 and pp. 229-259.

²²The Jade Dragon Mountain which towers over Lijiang plain. The Yulongshan is also the god Saddo, the Naxi national god.

²³Chen Lufan, "The Nanzhao Kingdom: A State not Founded by the Thai People", in Chen Lufan (ed.), pp. 200-201. Also C. Sainson (transl.), *Nan-tchao Ye -Che; Histoire particulière du Nan-tchao*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1909, p. 48.

²⁴See R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, pp. 229, 240-241; and R. A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines*, p. 29 note 69. Peter Goullart also commented on the similarities between the Bonpos and some Taoists. P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 140. Incidentally, the Qiang were active in the Taoist movement of the Yellow Turbans in the 2nd century A.D.. See Bai Shouyi, *An outline History of China*, p. 158. Also W. Eberhard, *A History of China*, Los Angeles, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966, p. 101. On early Taoist practices, see also Jacques Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, Bangkok, White Lotus Co. Ltd., 1982.

²⁵Guo Dalie and Wang Shuwu (Kunming 1991).

²⁶You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Sheqi de Naxizu he Lisuzu" [The Naxi and Lisu nationalities during the Yuan, Ming and Qing periods], *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (3) 1986, pp. 61-65; According to Chavannes's translation of the *Yuan History* (Ch. 61), the tribal people of Lijiang were the Lolo, Mo and So. E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 611.

²⁷You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Sheqi de Naxizu he Lisuzu", p. 63.

²⁸Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 180 [Shih's translation from Chinese].

²⁹C. Sainson, *Nan-tchao Ye-Che*, p. 187. And Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 18, who confirms that this is the earliest record of the establishment of Lamaism in the region.

³⁰H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, pp. 174-175.

³¹The Manchu favored the Karma-pa. In Naxi country, the imperial administration commissioned the construction of three Karma-pa lamaseries and smaller temples after the annexation of Lijiang: Zhiyunsi (1727); Weifengsi (1733); Pujisi (post-1743). In 1876, the Qing administration also undertook the reconstruction of the Karma-pa Jietolin lamasery which was first built in 1621-1627 but had been destroyed by a fire. Mu Zeng commissioned the smaller Karma-pa temples at Baisha and, according to the *Yunnan Tongzhi*, the Dabaoji temple was built between 1580 and 1646. The Yufengsi was built in 1573-1619. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 205-210.

³²J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 209; J. Siguret, *Territoires et populations des confins du Yunnan*, Beijing, Henri Vetch, 1937, pp. 48-49.

³³Chen Lufan, "The Nanzhao Kingdom: a State not Founded by the Thai People", pp. 226-227, note 64.

³⁴The *Naxizu Jian Shi* also comments on this and explains that during the Song period, Lijiang grew more powerful and independent from Dali due to the economic development of the region from a pastoralist economy to an agricultural one and thus began consolidating the feudal system. *Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 25-26.

³⁵J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 90. Of Xi-nei Xi-ge Mu Gong writes: In the reign of Wen Zong (827-835), the Nanzhao Kingdom rebelled against the Imperial court, and invaded several districts of the state of Shu. Thenceforward, it had not more connection with the empire. Ge still maintained his throne as King of Yue-xi Zhao (Lijiang) but from now on, it became more and more difficult to control him, and he was therefore left to himself. The Nanzhao kingdom merely tried to keep him in restraint.

³⁶C.R. Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and Frontier Policy in Southwest China during the Sui and Tang Period*, Ph. D. Thesis Princeton University 1978, pp. 166-188. (Published as C.R. Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Frontier*, Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³⁷Chen Lufan, *Whence Came The Thai Race*, p. 201. See original Chinese - *kai san jiao, bing si men* - p. 51. Note that Chinese scholars do not know what these three religions were but they suspect that two of them were Taoism and Buddhism.

³⁸King Trhisong Detsen (755-797) championed Buddhism and it was in the latter part of his reign that the Bonpos were banished to the frontiers.

³⁹R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines*, pp. 51-52 [my translation from French].

⁴⁰See the Chronicles of the chiefs of Lijiang and Wusuo in Rock's ANKSWC, Volumes I and II.

⁴¹Ch'en Yuan (translated and annotated by Ch'ien Hsing-hai and L. Carrington Goodrich), "Western and Central Asians under the Mongols, their transformation into Chinese", *Monumenta Serica Monograph XV*, UCLA, 1966, pp. 236-238.

⁴²E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Li-kiang" in J. Bacot, *Les Mo-so* (1913), p. 131

⁴³E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Li-kiang" *T'oung Pao* (13) 1912, p. 569 n.3 (from now unless (1913) is specified, all quotes from Chavannes, "Documents historiques" are from the *T'oung Pao* article).

⁴⁴C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 389.

⁴⁵S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, p. 28.

⁴⁶R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, p. 55.

⁴⁷This may seem strange but there are other examples from the Tibetan and Chinese records of places which are doubled up east and west; for example, there was a Western and an Eastern Kingdom of Women on either side of Tibet. See R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, pp. 28-31. There were also two India, one where it should be and the other was none other than Yunnan. See P. Pelliot, "Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du VIII siècle", *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (IV) 1904, p. 161.

⁴⁸R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, p. 25.

⁴⁹He Zhiwu and Guo Dalie, "Dongba Jiao de Paixi He Xian Zhuang" [Dongba schools and the contemporary scene], in Guo Dali et al (eds.), p. 53.

⁵⁰H. Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, pp. 174-175.

⁵¹The Mu kept Dongbas in their service even in Rock's times. J.F. Rock, NNCRC, 148-149. Confirmed by He Zhiwu, Kunming 1990. Dongbas also served the Naxi feudal lords of Eya, *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, p. 99.

⁵²Lin Xiangxiao, "Dibba Shilo de Shidai Kao" [An inquiry into the life and contemporaries of Dibba Shilo], *Naxizu Yuanshi Zongjiao Ji Shehui Sixiang Xueshu* [Studies in society and the Primitive religion of the Naxi nationality] in *Lijiang Zhiyan* (6:11) 1989, p. 98; *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Da Cidian*, p. 501; J.F. Rock, MBC, the Introduction. I return to the story of the origins of Dibba Shilo in Chapter V.

⁵³See Oppitz, "Ritual Drums of the Naxi in the Light of Their Origin Stories" in M. Oppitz and E. Hsu, *Naxi and Moso Ethnography*, pp. 311, 344.

⁵⁴Lin Xiangxiao, "Dibba Shilo de Shidai Kao", pp. 98-99. Lin thus implicates the Nyingma-pa and not the Karma-pa in the religious history of Lijiang. A number of Naxi scholars, including Lan Wei, Guo Dalie, He Zhiwu, Li Jingsheng, support the hypothesis that the original Lamaism of Lijiang was of the Black Hats sect of the Nyingma-pa, or at least that there is a possibility that such was the case (from personal interviews conducted in 1991). According to Lin Xiangxiao, it was the section of the Black Hats of the Nyingma-pa who first entered Lijiang and displaced the Bonpos. Lin Xiangxiao, "Dibba Shilo de Shidai Kao", pp. 100-101; and He Zhiwu and Guo Dalie, "Dongba Jiao de Paixi He Xian Zhuang" [Contemporary practices and schools of the Dongba religion], in Guo Dalie and Yang Shiguang (eds.), 1985, pp. 38-54.

⁵⁵Note that according to the first Chronicle, the personal archives of the Mu family were destroyed by the Qing authorities in 1723 (J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 152). Perhaps, we would know more about the religious history of Lijiang if they had not.

⁵⁶J. F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 210.

⁵⁷In the shape of dancing Dongbas. It may be objected that Dongba art outside the pictographic tradition is Lamaist art and that stylistically speaking it should be near impossible to distinguish a dancing Bonpo from a dancing Dongba but the representations of the Dabaoji murals draw from the pictographs. Unfortunately, I have no photographs to prove this point because it is strictly forbidden to take photographs at the Dabaoji temple. I may add that I have not made in depth research at this temple although I have visited it on numerous occasions the last time in August 1993. I was to begin an iconographic research when I fell ill with hepatitis in 1992. It is worth keeping the issue of Bon iconography at the Dabaoji open, because the scholars at the Academy and Mr. Zhu Baotian of the Yunnan Provincial Museum are not altogether positive that no Bon god at all is represented in these murals. However, no mention of Bon gods is made in the chapter dedicated to the Dabaoji murals in *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, Vol. 2 [An investigation into the social history of the Naxi nationality] Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1986. Chapter entitled "Ming Dai Lijiang Bihua" [The murals of Ming dynasty Lijiang], pp. 68-72.

⁵⁸J. Friedman, "Tribes, States and Transformations", p. 96. Also P. Hinton, "Karen Territorial Spirits in Ethnographic, Historical and Political Context With Some Interpretations", in *Proceedings of the 4th international Conference on Thai Studies*, Vol. III, 1990, pp. 95-107.

⁵⁹Jackson raises an interesting problem regarding the history of Karma-pa temples in Lijiang. He points out that some of the Lijiang Karma-pa lamaseries and temples were built upon pre-existing temples and thus concludes that these former sites could not have been anything else but Bon temples. A. Jackson, "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs", pp. 86-87. Indeed, the Yufengsi lamasery (16th century) is known in Lijiang to have been built on an older temple site although no one I asked knew what school of thought it possibly belonged to. Thus, perhaps it was once a Bon temple. Could the Dabaoji temple - the royal temple - have been built upon a Bonpo temple? Perhaps. At any rate, the Dabaoji draws its architecture from China, and (much of) its iconography from Lamaism.

⁶⁰See Chapter V.

⁶¹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 160.

⁶²This statement needs qualifying. The pictographic manuscripts are not written as such because the pictographs act as mnemonic devices. Hence, the Dongba pictographic manuscripts cannot really be read unless they have been memorized (See Chapter IV). In the southern regions, where the Dongbas also make use of the syllabic Geba script, initiates should be proficient in 'reading' both types of books.

⁶³See J. Siguret (transl.), *Territoires et Populations du Confin du Yunnan*, pp. 45-49.

⁶⁴This information was confirmed by He Zhiwu at the Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming and by the scholar translators at the Dongba Research Institute in Lijiang, notably Xi Yuhua, He Pingzheng and Li Jingsheng. Note that the Xiusui who attends at the grander rituals of the Sacrifice to Heaven is a specialist and cannot be an exorcist. C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 43 and 71.

⁶⁵According to Snellgrove the word Bon as it relates to the Tibetan priests is connected to the verb *hbod-pa* which means to invoke, whilst Bon in the sense of Bon religion is connected to *bod* which means 'Tibet', and possibly *sa-bon* which means 'seed'. 'The original meaning may be "autochthonous", and may have been used for "the people of the homeland".' D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, p. 20, note 2. Also M. Lalou, "Tibétain Ancien Bod/Bon", *Journal Asiatique*, 1953, pp. 275-276.

⁶⁶Refer to appendices 2, 3, and 4, for more details.

⁶⁷Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu* [A dictionary of Naxi pictographs], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1981, p. 216, pictograph 526 notes that 'outside the Dongba manuscripts, [the Pa] is also known as Sani'. Confirmed in fieldwork, as well as with He Pingzheng, and Dongba He Jigui at the Dongba Research Institute.

⁶⁸W. Heissig, *The Religions of Mongolia*; London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, pp. 6-9.

⁶⁹*Naxizu Dongba Guji Yi Zhu* [the Dongba manuscripts, translated and annotated], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1986, pp. 150-274.

⁷⁰Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, pp. 213-216, pictographs 511 to 526. J.F. Rock also comments on the fact that in the manuscripts, the chiefs wear the same dress as the Dongbas, see J. F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 737.

⁷¹The frog is a very important god in Mosuo cosmology. It is associated with floods and renewal. See the Mosuo creation myth in Appendix.

⁷²Refer to Chapter I.

⁷³Shih Chuan-kang who obtained his information about the Daba on the Sichuanese side of Lake Lugu explains that the Daba has no hierarchy. Shih makes no mention of its connections to the Haba. Perhaps the priest he interviewed did not volunteer the information, or perhaps, the Daba in this part of the world has long lost the ties to the Haba, or alternatively, never had them. Shih Chuan-kang, *The Mo-so*, p. 167.

⁷⁴See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 389.

⁷⁵*Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian*, pp. 516-517.

⁷⁶Ba was also the name of the native rulers of Yousuo, one of the Wusuo territories formally attached to Yongning (until 1710) on the Sichuanese side of Lake Lugu. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 466-470. Otherwise, the name Ba is associated with an ancient Sichuanese people who worshipped the Tiger (and had their own script).

⁷⁷He Zhiwu and Guo Dalie, "Dongbajiao de Paixi He Xianzhuang", pp. 39-40.

⁷⁸J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 389.

⁷⁹Rock reported that the founder of the Daba was Dto-mba Shilo whom the Moso called Ti-mba Shera, "Contributions to the Shamanism of the Tibetan-Chinese Borderland", *Anthropos* 54, pp. 776-818, p. 803.

⁸⁰See *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, 1987, p. 239.

⁸¹J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 54, note 103.

⁸²There are many other significant differences between Labei Daba and Naxi Dongba, such as gender references, ceremonial calendar, the place given to mountain spiritess, etc. For a comparison of Dongba and Daba, see C. Mathieu, "Moso Religious Specialists" in Oppitz and Hsu (1998), pp. 209-234.

⁸³E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, pp. 200-201.

⁸⁴Jackson used this fact as circumstantial evidence for his thesis on the patrilineal and patriarchal reforms of post-1723 Lijiang.

⁸⁵J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe*, p. 42.

⁸⁶J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 143.

⁸⁷According to Rock, Gesar could have lived in the 4th or 5th century, or even earlier. J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 191-192. The name Gesar is said to be derived from the Roman name Caesar and therefore may be very ancient, though where exactly the connection between Caesar and Tibet lies is not known. Ling, the country of Gesar is in Kham, and it was in existence at least from the 12th century. R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, pp. 278-281, p. 77. Note that a Roman embassy made contacts with the Chinese in Vietnam in 166 A.D. C.P. Fitzgerald, *A Short Cultural History*, London, Barrie and Jenkins, 1976, pp. 196-201.

⁸⁸J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 193.

⁸⁹Kunming 1990.

⁹⁰J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 193-194; see the sub-section, *The Pei-yo Temple manuscript*. Also He Zhiwu (Kunming 1991).

⁹¹I explore this question in Chapter IX.

⁹²M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, pp. 90-91. Meanwhile, Guo Dalie notes that Naxi oral tradition relates that 'Mai Zhong Mai Liang are (is ?) good at killing people', Guo Dalie, 'Naxizu Shiliao Biannian', p. 217. Voluntary submission to centralized rule is a recurring theme in the Chinese historical record. As Guan Xuexuan, the author of the *Lijiang Prefectural records* (1743) wrote: 'Why did the Barbarians apply for Naturalization in 1723? ... they had been attracted by the Imperial Benevolence as animals are attracted by sweet grass.' [Rock's translation], see, J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 46.

⁹³M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, p. 112 [my translation from French].

⁹⁴See C. Sainson, *Nan-ichao Ye Che*, p. 207. There are other versions. The following was told to me in Dali in 1993. When Guanyin heard that the Han soldiers were on their way to Yeyu, she changed herself into an old woman, picked up a huge rock and slung it over her shoulder. Then she walked off to meet the enemy. When the soldiers saw that such an old woman could carry such an enormous rock they became terrified, dropped everything and ran. Thus, Guanyin won the day for the ancestors of the people of Dali. The stories of Guanyin's rock, however, keep to four essential elements - the Han soldiers, the rock, the old woman, and Guanyin. As we shall see in this and subsequent chapters, women are traditional mediators, and they are also associated with the original spirits of the place, hence, women should figure in stories of conquest.

⁹⁵H. Maspéro, *Les religions chinoises, mélanges postumes* (I), Paris, Publications du Musée Guimet, 1950, p. 169. Note also that Maspéro identified similar symbolic relations in the territorial motifs of contemporary Black Thai. See, J.A. Placzek, "Black Thai Symbols of State and Leadership" in *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Thai Studies* Vol. 3, Kunming Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990, pp. 48-68, pp. 53-54.

⁹⁶In Baisha, interestingly, the Mu's own *Meebiu* was oriented west, not north - in other words to the Tibetan high point, but also directly toward the mountain god Saddo who is on the Western side.

⁹⁷J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 198. On this point also, it is interesting to note, as Rock did, that the Gyade people from among whom Satham is supposed to have originated are also called 'Kyung-po-pa', on account of their worshipping the Kyung (the Garuda) - because the Garuda whom the Naxi call Kaikee, and the Nagas whom they call Lee, are complementary aspects of one mythology. *Ibid*, p. 193, note 21.

⁹⁸I specify 'perhaps' because although it has been taken for granted that the Sani in the pictograph is a woman, this is not at all evident. The Naxi pictograph depicts the Sani with loose long hair as is common to Himalayan shamans in trance and since shamans of both sexes may have long hair, and since Sani actually has a feminine form in Sanime, the pictograph is not obviously gendered. In the case of the Pa, it is clear that a woman is meant because of the headdress.

⁹⁹Also S.D. White, *Medical Discourse*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁰See *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* [Research in the social history of the Naxi nationality of Sichuan Province], Sichuan Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 1987, pp. 117-125.

¹⁰¹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 160.

Chapter IV

On The Origins Of The Dongba Manuscripts

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore current theories on the origins of the Naxi manuscripts and the ‘invention’ of the two Naxi scripts, the famous pictographs and the syllabic Geba. Once again, scholars disagree on just about everything, from how old the scripts are to their sequential relation. Chinese scholars and Rock contend that the pictographs are millennia old, and Jackson that they are but a few hundred. And whilst Chinese scholars assume that a pictographic script must necessarily precede a syllabic script, Bacot, Rock and Jackson are of the opinion that the syllabic Geba is older than the pictographs. In the following discussion, I will evaluate these debates from the perspective of political history and stylistic analysis. I will conclude that the syllabic script possibly did precede the invention of the pictographic manuscripts, whilst the pictographs were probably already in used if not during the Mongol period, in times not far removed from it.

The local tradition and the origins of the Dongba books

The Naxi historical tradition attributes the invention of the local books or scripts to the ancestor Mou-bao Ah-cong (according to the first Mu Chronicle and the *Yuan yi Tongzhi*) or even to Yeye (according to the 18th century *Lijiang Prefectural Records*).¹ Thus, quite aside from the discrepancies in these details,

tradition implicates both the transition from the Mou to the Mongols, and the Naxi ruling house in the invention of the Naxi books. The problem is, however, that the Naxi have two types of books, pictographic and syllabic and neither the *Mu Chronicles* nor the other records specify which books Mou-bao Ah-cong actually invented.

As can be expected, the Dongbas also have something to say about the origins of their books. They explain that the word Geba means 'disciple' because the Geba script was taught to the disciples of Dibba Shilo whilst the pictographic script, called *Sijiuliujiu* or 'wood record-stone record', was taught to their ancestors by a reincarnation of Dibba Shilo who resided at the sacred cave of Baidi. So, we shall start our enquiry in Baidi.

Baidi and other sacred sites

The Dongbas hold some natural features and spaces as sacred and among those, the Baidi caves and waterfalls. As we saw in the last chapter, Dongbas are fully initiated after they have studied with the Great Dongbas of Baidi. Baidi is perhaps the most significant Dongba sacred site, although it is not the only Shilo site in Naxi territory. There is another important Shilo cave at Wenbi peak nearer to Lijiang town.

Naxi scholars accept traditional claims that the pictographic script was propagated from Baidi but they also argue that the true Dongba centre, in other words, where the book tradition was most developed and where the greatest numbers of Dongbas lived, was in Baisha, the capital of the Lijiang chiefs. He Zhiwu reconciled this apparent contradiction by explaining that the Dongba originated in Baidi under specific circumstances but was disseminated and truly developed in Baisha (the ancient ritual and political centre of the Mu family), not unlike Buddhism began in northern India and flourished in China, Tibet and Japan.² From my own perspective, however, that the Dongba had its true evolutionary center in Baisha only confirms that the manuscript tradition, like the Dongba tradition itself, was also connected to the ruling Mu family.

Baidi and its adjoining sacred caves and water falls, in fact, was also of some importance to the Mu chiefs. For Mu Gao, Mu Gong's son, visited the sacred cave in 1554, and he himself consecrated it to 'Shili, a traveling monk who had resided there 500 years before'³, in other words, in 1054, the date of the establishment of Mu Gong's Mo-so Zhao. Interestingly, however, these ancient connections between Baidi, the Mo-so Zhao of the first Chronicle and the Mu ruling house had been well and truly forgotten by the 20th century. For Fang Guoyu *discovered* Mu Gao's writing in 1935 whilst Rock missed it altogether⁴, and, as far as I am aware, no scholar has commented so far on the political implications of the date at Shilo's cave, 1054.

There are other sacred sites in Lijiang besides the Shilo sites, some of which are not associated with the Dongbas although they are also known to them. For example, there are small 'men's caves' and next to them, larger 'women's caves', also called 'Guanyin caves', concerned with fertility and health where common folk and shamans and diviners come to pray. Then, there are 'tiger caves', although there may be no more tigers in them (as it was for the cave which I was shown) and Dragon pools. If a natural spring is significant enough, there will be a Dragon temple in the immediate vicinity. In the past (before 1949), girls and women were not allowed to bathe in Dragon pools for fear that they would pollute them, but today gender relations 'have evolved' and women can swim in the women's side, the one furthest away from the actual spring. Sometimes, near the pools, there are also sacred rocks to which people pray for good health and protection, as well as phallic stones to which people pray for fertility. And social change in these parts demonstrates that *plus ça change et plus c'est la même chose*, for nowadays there are also small benches near the water where lovers can sit in the cover of the night.

Chinese scholars would describe all these caves and natural springs as sites of the 'primitive religion' (*yuanshi zongjiao*), and they would assume their religious significance to antedate the Bon⁵ content of the Dongba. As I will explain in the next chapter, however, there are grounds to believe that the sacredness of Baidi

not only antedates Bon but the Dongba itself as well as the Dongba books, and not least, Mu Gao's visit to the area in 1554.

The Dongba books: a description

The Naxi books in all evidence draw from the Lamaist or the Reformed Bon tradition, because these are Tibetan books. They consist of elongated pages bound between a back and front cover and stitched on the left hand side. The text, whether pictographic or Geba, reads from left to right. Even when it is written in columns like Chinese, the Geba retains the left to right direction like Tibetan and other Sanskrit related scripts. As to their contents, the Dongba manuscripts record ritual liturgy. They can be classified into three broad categories: ceremonial books, index books (recording the books needed for which ceremonies as well as which paraphernalia), and divination.

Ceremonial books are foremost concerned with fertility maximization (obtaining *Nee* and *O* - which Rock translates as 'semen and vaginal fluids') and in a similar vein as the neighboring Mosuo Daba and Yi Bimo, with ancestor worship, exorcisms, divination, astrology, medicine, funerals, marriages, and so forth. Funeral ceremonies dedicated to chiefs and Pubbu, and manuscripts relating the origins of Naxi weapons and armor, however, also testify to a prestigious and stately past. There are also perhaps two hundred or so Geba manuscripts⁶ that consist of magic formulae now incomprehensible even to the Dongbas who read them.⁷ As we shall see below, the majority of Dongbas could only read the pictographs, and it is possible that these Geba books are the repository of ancient cults which originally had nothing to do with the Dongba. But in the absence of other data, it may also be that these Geba books testify to an unsuccessful attempt at spreading new rituals in Lijiang.

To sum up, the Dongba manuscripts are not concerned with doctrine or esoteric knowledge, which prompted Jackson to remark that 'From what we know of the Nine Ways of Bon, only two ways were ever used by the *dto-mbas*: the way of the shen of prediction and the way of the shen of the visual world. All the other

seven ways dealing with ethical teachings are missing, which is not surprising *when there was no priesthood to maintain and reinforce such ideas*⁸ (my italics). Jackson implies here that there was no priesthood because the Bonpos had been proscribed. Yet, could it not be better argued that the Dongba only represents the first two ways of Bon because the Naxi Bon tradition is very old, as Rock maintained? For Snellgrove explains that the first two shens are the oldest.⁹

Number of books

The classification of the Dongba corpus is complicated by the duplication of numerous sets of sub-ceremonies and local variations. Jackson estimates that the Dongba corpus can be rationalized into 133 *complete* ceremonies,¹⁰ Rock counted 2000, and the scholars at the Dongba Research Institute about 1000.¹¹ The larger numbers undoubtedly argue for the Dongba's antiquity and its continuing vitality over the course of history. And what a thousand or so ceremonies also imply, of course, are thousands of books.

Before 1949, Rock collected more than 7000, which he sold to museums and libraries in Europe and the United States. Chinese scholars (Li Lincan in particular) likewise contributed thousands of books to library collections.¹² Altogether, the libraries of Nanjing, Beijing, Kunming and Lijiang hold more than 20,000 Dongba manuscripts. But these collections represent only a fraction of the books that were found in Lijiang before the Cultural Revolution. The Dongbas copied their manuscripts with the zeal of Buddhists in pursuit of merit (often using printing blocks) and even ordinary people kept Dongba books, like they kept Buddhist ones, for good fortune.¹³ Great Dongbas commonly owned two to three thousand books and small Dongbas about five or six hundred. According to He Pingzheng, there could be as many as 10,000 books in a single village.¹⁴

The Dongba writing systems

Today, Communism and the tourist industry have secularized the Dongba pictographs and facilitated their use as a calligraphic script in imitation of

Chinese. And the speed at which Dongba calligraphy had proliferated between 1989 and 1993 attests to the ease with which enterprising individuals can master this writing system. But if the pictographs are simple enough to learn, the Dongba manuscripts remain inaccessible to non-initiates.

As a rule, Dongba rituals are chanted in rhythmic patterns and rimes, and they are not written in their entirety. The pictographs therefore do not act as a script but as mnemonic devices. In a more recent article, Anthony Jackson and Pan Anshi have made the point that whilst Dongba texts are not entirely impossible to decipher, their exact content is not readily available to non-initiates.¹⁵ Furthermore, they note that the mnemonic function of the pictographs and the combination of poetic rhythm and rimes all stress the significance of oral transmission. This may indeed point to the oral origin of Dongba rituals (as Pan Anshi states), or rather it may stress the secret-sacred character of the Naxi religious script. In other words, Dongba liturgy may be written down in simple cartoons, but its contents are only accessible to its priests.

Meanwhile, the Naxi pictographic script is far from primitive. It may condense actions cartoon strip style or represent concrete values (as tradition puts it, one draws a tree for the word tree and a rock for the word rock), a function which Naxi linguists class as *tuhua* or 'drawing'. But more often than not, the pictographs are used phonetically, or are organized in a rebus principle. Naxi scholars explain this function as *xiangxing wenzi* or pictographic writing. In sum, the Naxi pictographs are more than simple icons, and they are linguistically specific. All this adds up to corroborate the general agreement that the pictographs were a local invention (see below).

The Dongbas use about 1000 standard pictographs although there are minor stylistic differences between Dongbas and according to locality.¹⁶ That the pictographs are sufficiently standardized to behave like a true writing system, in any case, we know from their contemporary secular usage, but also from the books which Rock found among the Zherkhin people near Eya, who used the pictographs syllabically.¹⁷ The Dongba pictographs have also proved sufficiently

systematized for Naxi engineer He Jiangyu to devise a computer program for inputting and retrieving Dongba pictures by isolating radicals (*bushou*) in imitation of Chinese.¹⁸

The Geba, for its part, draws from four sources: Chinese characters, idiosyncratic graphs, Yi-like characters, and simplified pictographs. The phonetic values of the Geba are not fixed. Each Dongba tends to prefer one set of symbols over another, and symbols can have a number of phonetic values, or a phonetic value can be signified by a number of graphs.¹⁹ Whereas the pictographs are a universal Dongba script, however, the Geba is not widely distributed. It is found only in the southern part of Naxi territory, in Lijiang town and surrounding plain region, and the Judian/Weixi area. The Geba, unlike the Dongba, also had a secular use (see below). Finally, neither pictographs nor Geba are used by the Mosuo or the Na people of Yanyuan (see map 3).

Current theories on the origins of the Naxi manuscripts

All scholars agree that the Naxi pictographs are indigenous to Lijiang but not all agree on when, or how, they were invented, or whether they preceded or followed the invention of the Geba. In fact, the question of which of the Naxi scripts came first drives most theories on the origins of the Naxi manuscript tradition.

The evolutionary theory holds that the pictographs are ancient and that the Geba derives from the pictographs, former animistic practices and rock painting rituals (He Limin, contemporary Chinese scholarship).

The migration theory explains that the distribution of the Naxi manuscripts reflects the original migration of the Mo-so tribes (Li Lincan; this theory is also popular with Naxi scholars).

The ancient Bon theory argues that the Geba script came first, that it was an ancient Bon script known to the Naxi before they migrated to northwest Yunnan.

The pictographs were invented later, and *in situ*, but at a very early date (Bacot, Rock).

The matrilineal theory holds that the Geba came first and that the pictographic script was invented in the last two hundred years or so, in the wake of the Manchu annexation (Jackson).

As we shall see, there is almost as much incoherence within each proposition as disparity between them.

The evolutionary theory

He Limin's discovery of numerous rock art sites in the valley of the Jinshajiang between 1991 and 1993 has confirmed for Naxi scholars that the Dongba and its pictographic tradition are authentic Naxi productions which begin in the primitive religion and with the Naxi's most remote ancestors. But I shall come back to rock art and the Naxi pictographic tradition in Chapter V, because there are more possibilities in this for the reconstruction of Naxi political and ritual history than the evolutionary interpretation allows for. Meanwhile it is enough to explain that according to current Naxi scholarship, the Naxi developed each of their scripts when their society reached a certain stage of development.

Chinese scholars are of the opinion that the Naxi most likely invented the pictographic script during Tang times. But it is important to note that this conjecture is deduced from Marxist evolutionist theory rather than historical or archaeological data. The reasoning here goes as follows: the Naxi emerged from their original primitive tribal state under Tibetan and Nanzhao occupation. They probably began writing books using simple pictographs when they entered the stage of slave society and developed sufficient technology and a priestly class. They invented the more evolved Geba syllabic script during the times of Mou-bao Ah-cong, in the Song rather than the Mongol period, when they had reached a certain level of civilization, as for example, when they had mastered techniques in

agriculture and irrigation.²⁰ Naxi scholars also argue that numerous stylistic correspondences between the Geba and the pictographs prove beyond doubt that the Geba evolved locally, from the pictographs.²¹ They explain that the development of the Geba was slow and never quite complete, so that this script never managed to replace the pictographs in the more remote regions.²²

In the meantime, the theory of the indigenous origins of the Geba script is a point of contention in Chinese scholarship. For some Yi scholars have suggested, in the same vein as Rock, that the Geba is derived from the same source as the Yi scripts, and yet others that it is derived from the ancient Sichuanese Ba script.²³ Pan Anshi has also drawn attention to the connections between the Dongba and Yi Bimo traditions, and made a compelling presentation of identical Yi and Geba characters.²⁴

From my own perspective, the development of the Geba script cannot be sufficiently explained in the light of an evolutionary process. For there are *some* correlations between pictographs and Geba, but for the most part, the Geba draws from Chinese characters and other graphs (Yi and others) that have no obvious connections to the pictographs.

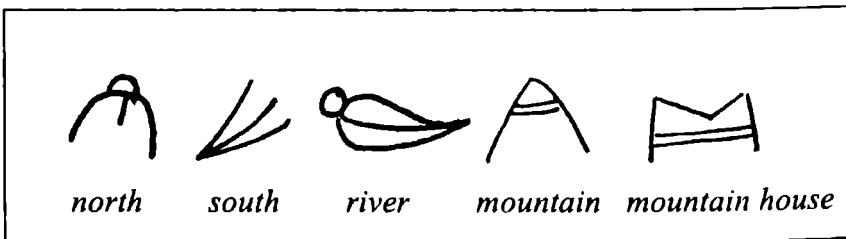
Importantly, Naxi scholars are not all averse to the idea that the Geba is derived from Chinese rather than Yi characters. Some specialists may even explain that the Geba evolved *into* and *just like* Chinese characters from primitive ideographs. Indeed, whereas to an average Han Chinese²⁵ or an average foreign anthropologist, the Geba immediately calls to mind the old Chinese characters found on oracle bones, when Naxi linguists engage in comparative graphology, it is not the Geba but the pictographs which they compare with the ideographs on the oracle bone records.²⁶ Thus, Naxi scholars infer an authentic Naxi developmental process that runs parallel to the Chinese civilizational paradigm.

The migration theory

Pre-Liberation Chinese scholar Li Lincan has suggested that the distribution of the Naxi manuscripts reflects the original migration of the Mo-so tribes.

According to this theory, the Naxi's ancestors first settled in Muli (present day Pumi/Mosuo territory) and then migrated to Lijiang where they invented the books. Li rests his case on the fact that there are no books in Mosuo territories (i.e. the oldest settlements) and on a stylistic analysis of the pictographic symbols representing north, south, rivers, mountains and houses.

Naxi cosmology makes north the high point and south the low point, whilst the Naxi pictographs for north and south are in the shape of the two ends of the symbol for river. Li Lincan holds that this is so because the Naxi once lived in an environment where rivers ran in a north/south direction (from high to low). And Li points out that the pictograph for mountain does not match the geography of Lijiang, for this symbol is tall and rounded whilst, by contrast, the mountain range of the Lijiang plain is jagged, having the distinct shape of a dragon (which is why it is named the Yulongshan, the Jade Dragon Mountain). In a similar line of reasoning, Li also contends that some of the houses depicted in the Dongba manuscripts have flat terraces below the gabled roofs, architectural features which are not found in Lijiang basin but in the northern parts of Naxi country and notably in Eya (in present day Muli county).



Li argues that these three characteristics, rivers running north/south, tall and rounded mountains and terraced houses, are all found in Muli. He concludes that the Mo-so first lived in Muli and that this experience is reflected in their pictographs.²⁷ To explain why the Yongning people do not have books whilst the Lijiang people do, he suggests that the Mo-so tribe originally formed two branches and that one branch migrated west to Lijiang, where these Mo-so invented the pictographic script.²⁸

Although it is very likely that among the Naxi's ancestors some did originate

from the region of Muli (see Chapter IX), Li Lincan's analysis is far too literal. High north and low south are features of the Naxi, and more generally speaking East Asian and Central Asian cosmological complex, and the Naxi pictographs for mountains and rivers are not graphic representations so much as they are sexually symbolic.

In the Dongba worldview, the mountain is associated with the masculine domain and the number 9, and the pictograph for mountain is thus tall and rounded because it depicts a phallus. Likewise the river, which is a typically feminine symbol associated with the number 7, is a vulva.²⁹ Now, whereas Li argues that the pictographic reflect a geographical reality where rivers flows north/south, it seems more appropriate to say that the pictographic representation of the north/south axis in the Dongba manuscripts is a river and/or a vulva symbol. In the Naxi worldview, not only are rivers associated with women, the flow of life, and therefore vulvas, but the north is itself the feminine cardinal point, the womb of the world so to speak, and the place where ancestors come from and go back to. Hence, the Dongba groups women, water, rivers, north and the high point together.³⁰

As for the shape of Naxi houses, one could argue that the Lijiang plain became more Sinicized in the course of centuries, and that architectural styles changed with time. But, in fact, according to Fang and He's dictionary, out of 23 symbols representing houses and various dwellings only three have the shape Li's analysis stresses, and those apply specifically to stockade settlements, and to mountain houses, where terraces are a necessity because one needs to get on top of the platform to gain a view of what or who may be approaching.³¹ In other words, the type of house that Li Lincan discusses applies specifically to places like Eya in Muli. And Eya is not an old Mosuo settlement, it was garrisoned by the Naxi in relatively modern times, at the turn of the 17th century, and at the height of the Mu's military power.

Although, Li Lincan's theory contradicts the theory that Dongba religion originates in Baidi, it has had some resonance with contemporary Naxi scholars.³²

The migration theory is, of course, well suited to current discourses on the civilizational relationship between the archaic Mosuo and the more evolved Naxi. The earliest settlements (Yongning/Muli) have no script at all, the later settlements (Lijiang county and bordering regions) have the pictographs and finally, the more developed Naxi political centers have the syllabic script.

Undoubtedly, these evolutionary notions also override common sense – for, quite aside from the objections which I raised above, the connections which Li makes between the distribution of the Naxi books and the Naxi's alleged migrations do not add up. Logic demands that the geography of Muli would have influenced the development of the Naxi pictographs because the Naxi invented their script when they were living in Muli, not after they had left. Li's theory implies that there are no books in present day Mosuo country because the Naxi took their books with them when they migrated to Lijiang; which also implies that where there are no books northeast of the Jinshajiang, the people are not Naxi. But this, Li Lincan does not argue. On the contrary, the absence of books among the Mosuo proves that the Mosuo are an older branch of the Naxi nationality and that they settled in Muli and Yongning a very long time ago.

The position of Naxi scholars on Li Lincan's migration theory is best understood when Naxi ethnic sentiments are taken into consideration. This theory suits the evolutionary discourse but it also suits deeper traditional notions, the mythology which has held for centuries that 'the Naxi come from the north.' Thus, current ethnohistorical theories on the origins of the Dongba, Naxi migrations and Naxi-Mosuo civilizational development, also explain the distance between Naxi and Mosuo in light of the poetics of Naxi tradition. From the perspective of a much longer *durée*, one cannot help recognize in these scholastic productions something of Mu Gong's own work.³³

The pre-Buddhist Bon theory

Bacot and Rock, in contrast to contemporary Chinese scholars, were of the opinion that the Naxi had brought the Geba script with them when they migrated

from northeast Tibet, and *before* they invented the pictographic script. Bacot suggested that the Naxi syllabic script was an ancient pre-Buddhist Tibetan script.³⁴ Bacot, of course, knew that according to Tibetan tradition, Buddhism had brought writing to Tibet but he pointed out that the Tibetans had adopted a literate tradition at extraordinary speed, and that they had long been surrounded by literate peoples.³⁵ Rock duly noted that the Geba resembled Chinese and Lolo (Yi) characters, and concluded that the Geba had been replaced by the pictographs.³⁶

In fact, the proposition that the Geba was perhaps derived from an ancient Qiang script is not far-fetched. The Qiang tribes of the Zhou period used Chinese characters to divine from oracle bones, and both the Tibetans and the Naxi (at least some of them) are descended from these same ancient Qiang.³⁷ What is more, the ancient Ba people of southwest Sichuan who were neighbors of the Qiang and whose customs seem to have had much in common with those of the Qiang also had a script. Some Chinese scholars have even suggested a possible connection between the Geba script and Ba writing.³⁸ Hence, the Geba script could well have its origins in one among several ancient scripts of the western Chinese frontier which have now entirely disappeared. For Rock, at any rate, the pictographic script had been invented after the Geba, after the Naxi had settled in Lijiang. Thus, all the plants and animals depicted in the Naxi books were found locally, except for three: the unicorn (or rhinoceros), the camel and the elephant which he believed the Naxi had invented following their contacts with the Mongols.³⁹ Nonetheless, Rock dismissed as mythological sham the claim that Mou-bao Ah-cong had invented the pictographs. Where he was concerned, the pictographs were as ancient as the Naxi's occupation of the Lijiang plain, an event which he dated to the Western Han dynasty (24 A.D.).⁴⁰

The matrilineal theory

Jackson argues that the Geba was the first Naxi script but, unlike Rock, he credits the story of Mou-bao Ah-cong with some sort of historical basis and concludes

that the Naxi obtained the Geba from the Mongols. Jackson otherwise contends that the pictographs were invented in the wake of post-1723 patriarchal reforms, when unprecedented levels of female suicide and a corresponding demand for specialist funeral rites gave the Dongbas an incentive to boost their ritual practices. Jackson deduced this theory from the following premises:

- The longest and most frequently performed Dongba rituals in pre-Liberation Lijiang were funeral rites dedicated to suicides;
- the distribution of the pictographic script confirms that the Dongba ritual is a relatively unsophisticated peasant tradition which spread throughout Naxi territory, because unlike the Geba, the pictographs were not dialect based;
- most Dongba books are not dated and when they are, most are dated post-1875;
- the oldest manuscript dealing with the suicide rites is dated 1851, and
- the oldest *uncontroversial* date on any Dongba manuscript is 1703. Indeed, Rock claimed a particular old set of manuscripts (Naga manuscripts) dated from the Seventh Cycle of the Water Rooster Year which he placed in 1573 and attributed to famous Dongba known as the Dto-la brothers. But this date, Jackson argues, is not tenable.⁴¹

In a more recent article written with Pan Anshi (1998), Jackson also argues for the relatively recent invention of the pictographs on the basis of a stylistic analysis of pictographic books. Jackson and Pan propose that various manuscripts which Rock had attributed to the Dto-la brothers were in fact written by several Dongbas, and attempt to classify these and other manuscripts according to several schools.⁴² Here, Jackson suggests that the Dongba priests were Lamaist monks who had fled the devastation of the Muslim rebellion rather than Bon monks who had been proscribed under Lamaism, but the gist of his argument remains unchanged. The pictographs are a recent invention, and evidence for this lies with the fact that most manuscripts are dated post the Muslim rebellion of 1875.

Jackson and Pan's analysis is impressive and it is also convincing insofar as they make the point that the styles of the manuscripts seem to reflect the hands of

various Dongbas and attached schools of Dongbaism. However, their core argument, that books which are identical and have the same title should not be attributed to the same Dongba, but to a disciple, is not acceptable. This position is entirely conjectural and left undefended. For Jackson and Pan take for premise that 'unless one argues that some *dtô-mbà* (sic) were writing books for sale' the Dongbas would not have needed to write a book twice. In fact, it is well known that Dongbas copied their books. The Dongbas and scholars at the Dongba Research Institute in Lijiang, and scholars He Zhiwu and Zhu Baotian have all commented on this. But from what I was told by villagers in the Lijiang plain, Dongbas also made copies for sale which ordinary folk purchased, owned and collected for good fortune, just as they collected Buddhist and Taoist books and inscriptions.

That the Dongbas were actively writing and copying books and even innovating with the pictographs during the Qing period, however, is an entirely reasonable proposition sustained by the work of contemporary Chinese scholars Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an. Dong and Lei have pointed to numerous details in Naxi ceremonial texts which could not have made their way into the books before the Qing dynasty.⁴³ But even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that some books were written during the Qing dynasty, before we can justify the *invention* of the tradition itself to such circumstances as the increase in female suicides or the devastation of the Muslim rebellion, we need to explain why the Dongbas should have bothered to write *hundreds* of ceremonial books which they never used, or did not even know how 'to read'. We also need to explain why Dongba manuscripts are found in places far removed from the Qing dynasty administration, in places like Eya where the Naxi are descended from soldiers garrisoned by Mu Zeng in the early 17th century,⁴⁴ why the Dongba texts should be filled with details that evidently belong to a former religious, social and political order, and, finally why the Dongba manuscripts should be written in an archaic Naxi language. For He Pingzheng and other scholars, and Dongbas at the Dongba Research Institute are adamant that Dongba language is reasonably

uniform and that in actual fact, all Dongba texts are composed in the same language and this whether they are written in Geba or pictographs. This is hugely important because it argues not only for a substantial standardization of the Naxi tradition, but also for its diffusion from the old political center.

According to He Zhiwu, Dongba language is an archaic language with vocabulary and morphological associations closer to contemporary Mosuo and local Yi dialects than to contemporary Western Naxi dialects. Dongba language also reflects numerous Chinese loan words including Chinese archaisms.⁴⁵ He Zhiwu's analysis thus confirms for Naxi scholars that Dongba language begins with the common and primitive Mosuo past. But it seems reasonable to suggest that more work needs to be done on comparing Daba, Dibba (Pumi), Dongba and Bimo languages before we understand what these linguistic connections may imply for Naxi and Mosuo history, for Chinese loan words are a characteristic feature of the Lijiang plain dialect. Indeed, He Zhiwu's linguistic research not only suggests a historical link between Naxi and contemporary Mosuo and Yi, it also argues that the Dongba is indeed ancient, and that Dongba liturgy did not begin in Baidi but in the Lijiang basin, in other words in the old feudal center. That the phonetic Geba and the mnemonic Dongba make use of the same language (see below) also support this conclusion.

But then again, it is not as though Jackson does not have a point. Because if it is reasonable to argue that the Dongba is an ancient and mostly obsolete tradition, how do we explain that so many Naxi books were in fact written or copied in the later part of the 19th century?

In fact, the apparent proliferation of Dongba manuscripts in the second half of the 19th century may find several explanations. For example, it may be an indication that the Naxi were keeping pace with the technological and cultural developments which were taking place in the Chinese interior at this same period. For many Dongba books were not copied by hand but printed by wood-block techniques. Wood-block printing was flourishing all over China, and book copying was then in vogue even in such far away places as the Mongol regions.⁴⁶

Furthermore, it may be that, as Jackson also notes, the apparent mass production of Dongba books after 1875 finds a specific explanation in the fact that this year marks the end of the Muslim Rebellion, the civil war which tore Yunnan apart for twenty years. The Muslim Rebellion brought chaos to Lijiang. The Chinese magistrates were forced to flee their posts by Naxi peasants who took their place, many lives were lost and a great deal of property was destroyed including some of the local lamaseries.⁴⁷ Hence, it is possible that with peace returning to Lijiang, religion and the arts underwent a renaissance (just as happened in the 1990s) and Dongbas entered into a particularly creative period. Finally, it is also possible that Dongba tradition was boosted by the open and generalized rebellion against Qing domination, alongside other native and ethnic markers.

What is interesting in all this, of course, is that most of the Dongba books held in library collections are not dated. And so the question arises as to the possible age of those other, undated, books. Now, Jackson takes the position that there is no reason to think that the undated books could be older than the dated book. But without more reliable and scientific dating methods, we have no means of knowing this either way. So that among the few conclusions which we may possibly reach on this issue the most logical is that the Dongbas adopted the practice of dating their books relatively recently.

At any rate, there are practical problems with basing any argument regarding the age of the Naxi books in library collections, even if dating techniques could be used, because the books in these collections may not be representative of original Dongba libraries. As we have seen, the collections now held in Western and Chinese libraries represent a fraction of the books that were found in Lijiang before 1949 and especially before the autodafé of the Cultural Revolution. In addition, and as Jackson himself noted, 90 percent of these books are copies.⁴⁸ So, it is also worth considering that collectors obtained copies and relatively recent manuscripts because these had less local value than older books.

This conjecture is supported by current practices. Today, Dongbas make copies of their ritual books for scholars and tourists because they are reluctant to

part with their old manuscripts, and they are especially reluctant to part with their teachers' books. Of course, one could argue that the market economy and tourist interest in old things have some effect on the Dongbas' resistance to parting with their old books, or that because old books are now so rare, the Dongbas do not want to lose them. But this it to overlook the fact that ritual books have *ritual* value and that not all books (especially when there are thousands available) can be expected to have equivalent worth. As Zhu Baotian, He Limin and Dongba He Jigui related to me, even in the 1960s, when the Dongba tradition had been proscribed by the authorities and Dongbas were likely to think that they would never again perform their ceremonies, Naxi scholars obtained *copies* because the Dongbas were loath to give away their old books, their teachers' books and the manuscripts they used on a regular basis. Thus, Rock could boast of having acquired a number of very valuable manuscripts when he secured an entire Dongba library from the descendant of a Dongba family of Baisha, a modern man who had no interest in old, dust collecting things.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, most of this collection was lost during the Second World War.

As we saw above, Jackson's last objection pertains to the date on Rock's Naga manuscript, the Seventh Cycle of the Water Rooster year, or 1573, the oldest date found so far on any Dongba book. Stylistically speaking, this is either a standard Tibetan date or a standard Mongol date and perhaps Rock knew something about the dating system of the Dongba manuscripts which we do not know because he overlooked either possibility in favor of a Chinese date without giving any explanation. We know that Rock took 1573 from the Chinese calendar because if the 7th cycle is Tibetan, then the date is 1393 and if the cycle is Mongol, then the date should be 1630. As to the Chinese calendar, there is only one Water- Rooster year that matches a seventh imperial cycle (1573) but this cycle does not really exist because it marks the emperor Mu Zong's death and thus corresponds to the first cycle of the next emperor, Shen Zong.

Hence, Jackson is entirely justified to find himself at odds with Rock on this point. The date does not appear correct because, not only is this seventh cycle a

dubious one, but a Chinese date should also identify the imperial cycle. In fact, the date is in Tibetan or Mongol style. But Jackson also rejects the possibility that the manuscript has a Mongol date (1630) or a Tibetan one (1393). In the first case, the objection seems reasonable for Jackson argues that the Naxi had no reason to use a Mongol dating system three centuries after the Mongols had left Yunnan. Now, according to Walther Heissig, Mongol influence lasted in China well into the 15th century, especially in the Western regions, but I do agree that by the 17th century (1630), cultural influences in Lijiang were dominated by Tibetan and Confucian modes, not Mongol ones.⁵⁰ Jackson's argument weakens, although it is worth heeding, when he adds that in any case, if the date is Mongol, it is likely to be inaccurate because Mongol cycles were especially poorly kept.⁵¹ And his proposition is no longer acceptable when he argues that: a) 1573 cannot be the right date because it does not fit in with the rest of his research [see Oppitz and Hsu, 1998]; b) when he argues that if the date is Tibetan (1393), it cannot be right because the Naga manuscripts are too well preserved to be this old; and c) when he resolves the Naga dating problem by suggesting a brand new calendrical cycle beginning with the Ming conquest of Yunnan in 1381 which places Rock's Naga manuscript in 1750 or as late as 1810.

My objection to the first proposition almost goes without saying: if something so blatantly contradicts other findings and conclusions, the next move is not to dismiss the troublesome evidence, but to reconsider the theory, or at least to acknowledge that the theory leaves some issues unresolved. As far as proposition b) is concerned, if the Naga books look too new to have been produced in the 14th century, it is perhaps because they were copied with their contents and original dates included.⁵² And as for proposition c), the problem with Jackson's new cycle is that it proposes a dating system for which there exists no historical precedent or record.⁵³ And this is not only unacceptable because there exists no such calendrical cycle as far as anyone knows, but because Jackson says nothing about the symbiotic relationship between Time and Politics in imperial China, and thus does not take into account the full implications of his proposition.

In China, the production of an accurate and centralized calendar was evidence of the emperor (the Son of Heaven)'s legitimate position as a mediator of universal harmonies and hierarchies. As Soothill wrote: 'a multiplicity of calendars would have been disastrous ... the acceptance of the calendar by the feudal lords was a vital proof of their loyalty. If each feudal lord were to produce his own calendar, his ritual and spiritual allegiance would vanish also.'⁵⁴ Indeed, since we cannot be sure of what this Water-Rooster year stands for, the most interesting thing about it is that it looks Tibetan, because a Tibetan date implies that in *14th century* Lijiang, two temporal discourses were in order: that of the Son of Heaven and that of the Lord of Mu.

Before closing this discussion, it is worth adding something else about Rock's Naga manuscripts. Rock owned other books (some, incidentally, written in Geba) by the same Dongba who wrote his Naga book, one of the Dto-la brothers, and at least in one of those other manuscripts, this same Dongba gave his genealogical history as thirteen generations of teachers.⁵⁵ Now, as Jackson points out, these thirteen generations may have more of a symbolic than an historical value since the number thirteen represents the number of heavens in Bon and Taoist cosmology. But it is interesting that if we take Rock's date, 1573, as a starting point and we base a generational countdown on the official genealogical record of the Lijiang chiefs, we come to Ah-cong Ah-liang the son of Mou-bao Ah-cong and the date 1253, which, according to the Mu Chronicles is one generation removed from the invention of the manuscript tradition.⁵⁶ Should Rock's Naga book have been written in the 14th century (i.e. should the date be Tibetan), the Dongba's generations would send us back to an equally interesting period, the 12th, or at the earliest, the 11th century, that is the Song period and the settlement of the Mou chiefs in the Lijiang plain.

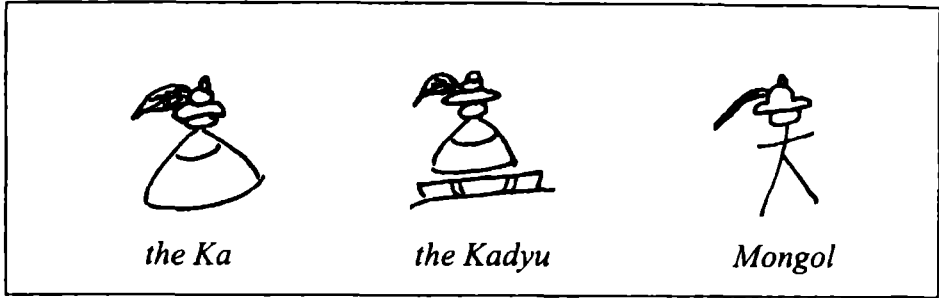
An ethnohistorical perspective on the Dongba books

The discussion above has evidently come on side of the theory that the Naxi pictographic books are not a recent invention, although we are far from having

resolved how old the tradition might be. As we shall now see, there is reasonable evidence that the 'Dongbas' were already writing pictographic manuscripts during the Mongol period (1253-1381) or at least, that they were writing pictographic books at a period when Mongol influence was still dominant.

The Mongols have made a lasting impression on Naxi tradition. Kublai's passage through Lijiang is well remembered in the oral tradition. The Naxi have also inherited various customs from the Mongols, for example, their hot pot, the Naxi 'national' dish, which is none other than the Mongolian hot pot. And Mongol influences are also found in the Dongba tradition. One of the most significant Naxi ancestors and a prominent character in many Naxi manuscripts (including the older Naga books) is Mee-lu-ddu-zi who, according to Rock, is also the Mongol national god, Abughan (the White Old Man).⁵⁷ The Naxi manuscripts represent Mee-lu-ddu-zi herding his yak and sheep and tell that he lived in a yurt. Some of the manuscripts relating to the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven also place Mee-lu-ddu-zi at the centre, between heaven and earth,⁵⁸ at the place otherwise occupied by the *Ka*, the Naxi feudal lord.

Clearly also, some pictographs could not have come into the Dongba's repertoire if the Naxi had not had significant contacts with the Mongols. As we have already seen, Rock argued somewhat dubiously that three Naxi pictographs were specifically of Mongol origins: the unicorn (rhinoceros), the camel and the elephant. Two others pictographs, however, show unquestionable Mongol influence: the symbol representing the overlord or emperor, the Naxi *Ka*, and that representing the imperial capital, *Kadiu*. For the word *Ka* is derived from none other than the Mongol word Khan, and the pictographic symbols for *Ka* and *Kadiu* make use of the same pictograph as that signifying Mongol (*Gelo*).⁵⁹ We cannot doubt this connection because the Geba symbol for *Ka* is also derived from the pictograph. There is no reason to think that the Naxi should have adopted these symbols before the Mongol invasion, or long afterwards when the emperor was either Han or Manchu, or when the Naxi chiefs were wholeheartedly oriented towards China.



As noted above, the Dongba manuscripts also comment on a social organization that disappeared during the Ming dynasty. According to the manuscript tradition, there are four tribes in the centre, the Per, Na, Boa, and Wu (White, Black, Boa [Pumi] and Wu [serfs]) who have for neighbors Gelo (Mongols) in the north, Lebv (Bai) in the south, Tibetans in the west and Han in the east.⁶⁰ For Rock, that the Naxi manuscripts spoke of neighboring Mongols (also Golog)⁶¹ in the north was proof that the Naxi had once lived in the grass plains of northeast Tibet. This may be so, but how then should we explain the Bai in the south? It seems rather that the Dongba manuscripts talk of the Naxi being surrounded by Mongols, Han, Bai and Tibetans because at some stage of history, these people were the most significant Naxi neighbors. And this implies a period beginning in the Yuan and extending into several centuries, because the Mongols remained central players in Sino-Tibetan political and military relations until the 18th century.

Thankfully, other elements allow us to narrow this time frame. The Per, Na, Boa and Wu, as He Zhiwu explained, also formed a prestige order. Thus, the pictographs depicting the Na people represent servants with black faces and the word Wu was also the lowest category in the Yongning feudal system (serfs, according to Chinese scholars). The Boa (today's Pumi nationality) were a despised category even in the 1940s.⁶² The four tribes of Naxi, therefore, suggest a caste system⁶³ on the same model as was still found among their Nuosu neighbors (Yi nationality in Ninglang county) in 1956. In Lijiang, however, this caste system would antedate the middle Ming period. For we know that feudal Lijiang, not unlike feudal Yongning, was organized on a three-tiered class system

that was pyramidically ordered and downwardly mobile. Unlike in Liangshan where the dominant Black caste comprised a number of lineages, and where caste membership was (relatively) permanent, feudal Lijiang was ordered upon the reproduction of the Mu lineage. Relatives of the chief to the third degree had the name Mu, relatives to the fifth degree had the name Ah, and after this, everyone had the name He, unless one belonged to the Boa or Wu categories. Chinese scholars know that this system was already in place in the 16th century from descriptions of Lijiang society made by the famous Han traveler Xu Xiake.⁶⁴ Given what the Dongba books say about the Naxi living between Mongols, Han, Bai and Tibetans, given also that the Mongols themselves organized their people as superior White and inferior Black tribes, and that they named the Lijiang people (i.e. the dominant Mo-so tribes) Chahanjang or White Jang,⁶⁵ the order White, Black, Boa and Wu would fit well with Mongol definitions.

To sum up, like Naxi scholars, I am of the opinion that the textual content of the manuscripts and associated pictographs reflect something of the times in which they were written. A number of details indicate that the Naxi were already writing pictographs before the social system that distinguished between White and Black categories was transformed into a class society, and that the Mongol experience made an impact on the development of Naxi pictographs. This, however, does not mean that the Naxi were not writing pictographs before the Mongol period. Nor does it prove that the Naxi pictographic manuscripts were invented during the Mongol period. But at the very least, it argues that the Naxi were writing pictographic manuscripts at a period when Mongol cultural icons and the old tribal caste system were still identifiable in Lijiang. This implies a period antedating the 16th century. Now, if we take into account the Dtola brother's manuscript and its Water-Rooster date, then we should also consider that the Naxi were already writing pictographic manuscripts in the 14th century. But before we reach this conclusion, we also must consider another detail of importance – the distribution of Dongba and Daba in northern Yunnan. For, as we have seen, there are pictographic books only where there are Dongba. In none

of the other Na territories do the Daba have books. This is important because if we consider the possibility that the Dongba and Daba perhaps originate from a common matrix (Haba?) then the absence of manuscripts in the region where the Haba and Daba are found suggests that the pictographs may have been invented not only in Lijiang, and not only from the political center, but at a time when the Lijiang chiefs no longer had jurisdiction over Yongning and Yanyuan – i.e. post 14th century.

On the origins of the Geba

If the physical record does little to enlighten us on the age of the pictographs, it is not altogether silent regarding the Geba. To begin with, Rock claimed that he had found Geba manuscripts dated from the early Ming period.⁶⁶ Then, in 1934, Fang Guoyu stumbled upon a stele in the number five district of Lijiang which bore three inscriptions, respectively written in Chinese, Tibetan and Geba. This stone memorialized the final construction of a bridge and was dated the 47th year, Wanli, Ji Wei – in other words, 1619.⁶⁷ Hence, we know that the Geba script was used in Lijiang in the early 17th century, and that it was used as an official script alongside Chinese and Tibetan.

As to other records, according to Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, the Ming dynasty *Yunnan Tongzhi* (Annals of Yunnan) comment on the writing of Mai Zhong (Mou-bao Ah-cong) on a stele at Baisha, explaining that it is impossible to decipher because it is written in *fan zi*. Fang and He argue that *fan zi* stands for ‘Western Barbarian script’ (*fan* was used by the Chinese to refer to the tribes of the western frontier) and thus refers to the Geba script.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, Mai Zhong’s writing is no longer visible. The stele has been smoothed by the passage of time and there is no way to ascertain that the *fan zi* was indeed Geba. However, supposing that the only Western Barbarian script in which Mai Zhong could have written was a Naxi script, and not a Tibetan one, and therefore that it was either the pictographs or the Geba, Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu were more than likely correct to conclude that this *fan zi* was the Geba. The pictographs are

simple pictures and they may not readily deserve the reference of *zi*, writing. In the same vein, given that the pictographs, as far as we know, were a purely religious script and especially a religious script contained in books, and given that Fang and He did come across a stele with Geba writing whilst there exist no such precedent for the pictographs, then it is quite reasonable to conclude that Mai Zhong's writing was Geba, and that the Geba therefore was already used in Lijiang at the end of the Song period.

Having so quickly exhausted the physical and historical record, we may now turn to comparative analysis. I begin with an old question, that of the correspondences between the Geba script and the Yi scripts.

Is the Geba a Yi script?

Generally speaking, Naxi scholars strongly object to the proposition that the Geba is derived from the Yi scripts, and argue that there is too little stylistic correspondence between the two writing systems. Still, they do not deny that there are some correspondences and overlaps between the Yi and the Geba scripts. Other scholars (Rock and Pan Anshi included) are more enthusiastic about the number of overlaps between Geba and Yi.⁶⁹ And I shall note the following discrepancies and correspondences between the two scripts:

- Although many of the Geba and Yi characters do not match, both the Geba and the Yi scripts have this in common that they also draw from Chinese characters;
- The Geba and the Yi scripts are both written from left to right;
- Yi books are sometimes formatted like the Geba books on the Tibetan model,⁷⁰ but these are extremely rare and most Yi books come as Chinese scrolls bound in leather covers;
- The Geba script is syllabic and the Yi scripts are mostly ideographic;
- The Geba, like the Yi scripts, had a secular use but there are no extant genealogies or other records written in Geba as there exist for Yi genealogies.

None of this proves that the Geba originated from the same source as the various Yi scripts, but the reverse is also true, for none of the above can prove the contrary, that the Geba did not originate from the same source as the Yi scripts, and that it was not subjected to substantial historical and local transformations. But the Yi tradition is not the only tradition worth comparing with the Geba, since the Geba books are, in all appearance, Tibetan books.

The Geba and the Tibetan books have this in common: the shape of the manuscripts (leaves stitched on the left hand side), the reading sequence from left to right, and the fact that both are syllabic. Some Geba writing, though not all, also attempts to look Tibetan by superimposing Tibetan vowels onto the script, but this is a later development and we may dispense with it. These vowels cannot be implicated in the invention of the script or that of the books because they have no functional usage (they cannot be read) and they are not a universal feature of the Geba books. Rock explained that these decorative vowels were claimed as a personal innovation by one Dongba family of the Baisha plain.⁷¹

There is at least one interesting question that has not been asked about the Geba. Why would the Naxi manuscripts which, in their external forms and in the direction of writing are Tibetan, use characters derived from Chinese rather than Sanskrit? In other words, why do the Geba books that try so hard to look Tibetan not use a Tibetan script? We can suspect that some Chinese characters possibly made their way into the Geba in more recent times, especially the symbols which have either or both the semantic and phonetic values of Mandarin Chinese. But how does one answer for the use of Chinese characters which have neither semantic nor phonetic correspondence in Mandarin?

Books that look Tibetan but have a 'Chinese' looking script imply that the style of the script preceded the shape of the books, in other words, that the Geba was around before Tibetan/Sanskrit came on the scene. And in the context of the religious history of the western Chinese frontier, this would suggest that the Geba was around before the Tibetan traditions (Bon and Buddhism) made their mark on Lijiang. In other words, the Geba and with it some Dongba rituals would

originate in a Chinese influenced cultural matrix rather than a Tibetan one. Pan Anshi's observation that a number of Dongba rituals are identical to Yi Bimo rituals supports this proposition. Now, interestingly, Naxi tradition holds that the Geba script was invented by (or taught to) Dibba Shilo's *disciples*, and not to Shilo himself. Meanwhile, Shilo's disciples are themselves known as Dizhi Geba. *Dizhi* is the Naxi rendition of the Chinese word *dizi* which means pupil/disciple, whilst Geba means to 'rise to the dance' – in other words, Dibba Shilo's *dizi* are the disciples who rise to the dance. But here again we find a synthesis between a Chinese term and a local element.

Chinese scholars believe that the Naxi syllabic script dates from the Song period but they come to this proposition on the basis of socio-evolutionary theory, not an ethnohistorical method. Where Chinese scholarship is concerned since the Geba is derived from the pictographs which for their part were invented during the Tang, then it is likely that the Geba was developed at the next civilizational stage, which is the Song period. But we know at least this much of the development of writing in Song dynasty Yunnan, that the religious and political elites of Dali used both Chinese and Sanskrit, and that Chinese characters in particular were used for the purpose of writing Bai language, a language which although Chinese influenced, is not Chinese.⁷² We also know from an early Dali Kingdom inscription (971 A.D.) of the antiquity and significance of writing in columns from *left to right* among the Southern tribes.⁷³ Finally, we know that the Yi scripts are very ancient, allegedly dating from about 550 A.D.⁷⁴ In other words, there is evidence that several scripts and various adaptations of Chinese were found in Yunnan early in the Song period.

But, as I shall explain below, it is not a stretch of the imagination to suspect that the Geba antedates the Song and that it may have been a Nanzhao script, or rather one script amongst other Nanzhao (Yi) scripts. From the *Man Shu* (Book of Southern Barbarians), we learn the following:

- Nanzhao military command relied on *written communication* to order local tribes into battle;⁷⁵

- The administration of the Nanzhao kingdom was dominated by Sinicized Baiman who spoke a language closely related to Chinese;
- The Wuman (Black tribes) did not speak Chinese.

Hence, the Nanzhao used indigenous scripts to communicate in indigenous languages (Wuman and Baiman). And the Nanzhao, of course, included Lijiang.

The Geba manuscripts are found in what were once significant Nanzhao frontiers: Judian was Nanzhao's gateway to Tibet and one of its most important military outposts, Lijiang was Nanzhao's northern 'capital'. One may object that Weixi and Ludian which both have Geba books were not occupied by the Naxi until relatively recent times (late Ming period). However, my argument relates not only to time but also to space. Since both these places are in the immediate geographic proximity of Judian and Lijiang town, it is understandable that the Geba script should have spread to these regions. Indeed, there are no Geba manuscripts in Eya although the Naxi people there are descended from soldiers permanently garrisoned by Mu Zeng (1587-1646)⁷⁶ when we know the Geba was used in Lijiang (1619). Thus, it may be that there are no Geba books in Eya because the pictographic books made better ritual, cosmological and political sense to the Dongbas who moved to these parts with the Mu garrison in the late 16th century than the Geba books did.

The proposition that the Geba script originated with the Nanzhao underscores that the distribution of the pictographic and Geba books should not be sought in 'practical' or temporal models only. Jackson argues that dialect differences checked the spread of the Geba in the northern parts of Lijiang, but Dongba language is 'uniform', whether it is written in Geba or pictographs. He Zhiwu held that the Geba failed to compete with the pictographs because it is incoherent and ineffective but this raises the question of why the syllabic books should prove more difficult to read than the others, since the Dongba manuscripts are memorized, and especially why this difficulty should have affected the northern Dongbas and not the southern ones who lived closer to the political center. Rock's theory that the Geba had fallen into disuse gradually and was now half-

forgotten likewise does not answer to why the Dongba's memory should be split between the older political centers and the colonized peripheries.

All these theories ignore one relatively basic element: that books and especially sacred books enshrine a specific type of knowledge and power. In the early 1990s, the Dongbas at the Research Institute who could read both scripts stressed their prestige advantage over the Dongbas who could only read the pictographs. Thus, it is likely that the pictographs spread beyond the political centers and into the peripheries of the Mu kingdom because they had a ritual advantage or a ritual function which the Geba did not have. In other words, whichever of the two Naxi scripts came first, we can be quite sure that the reason(s) why the Naxi have two scripts were not purely linguistic.

So, which books did Mou-bao Ah-cong (alias Yeye) invent?

In conclusion to the discussion above, I shall propose that the ancestors of the Naxi possibly wrote their books in Geba before they began writing in pictographs. For the Geba may be a variety of Yi script that came to Lijiang during Nanzhao times, and possibly earlier. This implies that part of the Dongba ritual would antedate the cult of Shenrab and would also explain the correspondences between Dongba and Yi Bimo ceremonies. The Geba would originate with the 'Sinicized' people of Yunnan (Lolo/Wuman and Baiman) rather than with the Tibetan influenced 'Mo-so' and their chiefs (who as I argued in previous chapters) were specifically connected with Bon and the cult of Shenrab. And, indeed, with the Mo-so, we come back to the Mou and in particular to Mou-bao Ah-cong whom tradition credits with the invention of the 'local books' (*shu*) or the invention of the local *wenzi* which can mean either 'characters', 'script(s)' or 'literature'.⁷⁷ But here is also the first problem, which is one of translation, because if *wenzi* means script or characters, then perhaps the question is, which script did Mu Gong invent? And then again, perhaps not, because *wenzi* could just as well be a plural form, and we have no way of knowing if *wenzi* means 'script' or 'scripts'. In short, too many pieces of the puzzle are missing to fill in the picture.

Still, there are other interesting questions surrounding Mou-bao Ah-cong. Because we should not forget that it is the 16th century chief Mu Gong who credited Ah-cong with the invention of the local books. And it is worth asking what 'local books' and the ancestor Ah-cong himself represented for his descendant. To begin with, we know from the Ming historical record that Ah-cong wrote in a 'Western Barbarian script'. Had Mu Gong seen his ancestor's writing?

In Mu Gong's genealogy, Mou-bao Ah-cong stands out from among all the Mu ancestors as the greatest of all chiefs. He is the shaman chief, the great sage and holy man who learned the languages of the different tribes and who also unified the tribes of Lijiang. He is also the last of the Mou chiefs before the Mongol period, a transitional figure between the old Mo-so world and the new world initiated by the Mongol conquest and upheld by the Ming. So, it seems to me that either Mu Gong credited Mou-bao Ah-cong with the invention of the local books/scripts, because he knew or believed that his great ancestor had indeed invented the local books (either Geba or pictographs), or because he wished to connect the pictographic manuscript to Ah-Cong's greatness, to the last Mou before the Mongols, *and* especially to the unification of the Lijiang tribes. And then again, what we cannot miss in this story is that when Mu Gong removed the name Mou from his second Chronicle, he made the Mongol Yeye into a holy man and Ah-cong into Yeye's son but he did not credit Yeye or Ah-cong with the invention of the local book tradition. In the second Chronicle, Mu Gong said nothing at all about the invention of the local books.

Conclusion

Ethnohistorical debates on the origins of the Naxi manuscripts have been concerned with situating the invention of the Naxi scripts in time, and in particular, with explaining their sequential relationship. In this chapter, I have argued that the Dongba manuscript tradition is very old and that the pictographic script was in use in Lijiang by the early Ming period or at least at a time when

Mongol influence was still present in Lijiang. I have also suggested that the Geba and pictographs are not derived from each other, and that the Geba script is likely to be the oldest of the two scripts, originating with the Nanzhao. At the end of this chapter, however, the discussion has arrived at a different historical perspective regarding the origins of the Naxi books. My questions are no longer entirely concerned with the problem of Time, and which of the scripts came first, but with that of Space, the relationship which each of the Naxi scripts may claim in relation to the people who once occupied the regions where one or both of the scripts are used. This brings us to Chapter V and the theory that the Dongba pictographic manuscripts were inspired from a rock art tradition found in the peripheral regions of Lijiang.

¹See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p.74, note 15.

²He Zhiwu and Guo Dalie, "Dongba Jiao De Paixi He Xianzhuang", pp. 49-50.

³See Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, pp. 40,41.

⁴Rock makes no mention of Mu Gao's writing in his description of the Baidi cave in the ANKSWC. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 267.

⁵Note that unless otherwise specified, Bon now refers to the sect of Shenrab.

⁶He Zhiwu, "Naxizu de Gu Wenzi He Dongba Jing Leibie" [On a classification of the Naxi Dongba scripts and manuscripts], in Guo (ed.) 1985, p. 159.

⁷Rock believed that the Geba mantras were Naxi renditions from Sanskrit originals and that this was why they were so totally unintelligible. J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 72.

⁸A. Jackson, *Na-khi Religion*, p. 69.

⁹D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, Introduction, especially, pp. 4,9,16.

¹⁰A. Jackson, *Nakhi Religion*, p. 26.

¹¹See J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe*, Wiesbaden 1963, p. 44.

¹²For the details of books and their collectors in library collections of Western Europe and the USA, see A. Jackson, *Na-khi Religion*, pp. 23-24.

¹³Hence, Mr. and Mrs. Li explained that they used to own Dongba books and all sorts of other 'fo' books (sacred books), but lost them during the Cultural Revolution. Interestingly, Mr. Li says that his ancestors were Han Chinese immigrants who settled in Lijiang during the Ming dynasty.

¹⁴Lijiang 1991. We are far from Jackson's estimates: 'The actual library of a dto-mba would probably not exceed a couple of hundred texts, which is quite a modest figure'. A. Jackson, *Nakhi Religion*, p. 26.

¹⁵A. Jackson and Pan Anshi, "The Authors of Naxi Ritual Texts", in Oppitz and Hsu, pp. 237-274, and p. 237. And Pan Anshi, "The Translation of Naxi Religious Texts" also in Oppitz and Hsu pp. 275-309.

¹⁶The Zhongdian style tends to be more influenced by Lamaist iconography than the Lijiang style. The Malimasa style (which is typical of the Mosuo population of Qizong) is more immediately distinguishable than other Dongba styles. Note also that He Zhiwu stresses the 'instability' of the Naxi pictographs, and points to the fact that one word may be drawn in a few fashions. However, He compares Dongba symbols with Chinese characters where the number and order of strokes are

essential. The Dongba pictographs are far less abstract than Chinese characters and they can accommodate greater variations without much difficulty. See He Zhiwu, "Shilun Naxizu Xiangxing Wenzi de Tedian" [A discussion of the characteristic features of the Naxi pictographs], in Guo (ed.), pp. 136-154, p. 151. Note also that the Mosuo people of Qizong are immigrants who settled in the region at some stage of the 18th century - hence their name Malimasa, or Malimasha which means 'Muli Mo-so'.

¹⁷J.F. Rock, "The Zherkhin Tribe and their Religious Literature", *Monumenta Serica* (3), 1938.

¹⁸He Jiangyu, "Programming the Naxi pictographs for computer inputting and retrieving", unpublished. when Jiangyu and I translated this article into English in November 1990, and it is now available in both English and Italian from Dr. Roberto Ciarla, Is.M.E.O. Rome.

¹⁹See Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxizu Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, pp. 357-480.

²⁰He Zhiwu, "Cong Xiangxing Wenzi Dongba Jing Kan Naxizu Shehui Lishi Fazhan De Ji Ge Wenti" [An analysis of the evolution of the social history of the Naxi nationality from the perspective of the Dongba pictographs], in Guo (ed.), pp. 200-213. He identifies Naxi society as a 'slave society' from the details of the pictographic manuscripts which speak of serfs, landlords, etc.

²¹From interviews with Li Jingsheng and other scholars at the Dongba Research Institute and the Academy of Social Sciences in 1991. Also see He Zhiwu, "Naxizu de Gu Wenzi he Dongba Jing Leibie" [On the classification of the Dongba classics and ancient Naxi scripts], in Guo (ed.), pp. 155-172, pp. 158-159, and Fang Guoyu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, pp. 41-53.

²²Ibid.

²³Information from the scholars at the Dongba Research Institute 1991. See also S.F. Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 47-48.

²⁴Pan Anshi, "Translations of Naxi Religious Texts," in Oppitz and Hsu, p. 276.

²⁵All the Chinese friends who have seen examples of the Geba immediately invoke the script on the oracle bones, whilst the pictographs are immediately recognized as *tuhua* 'drawing'.

²⁶See for example, Li Jingsheng, "Naxi Dongba Wenhua Yu Jiaguwen de Bijiao Yanjiu" [Comparative research in the Naxi Dongba literature and oracle bone inscriptions], in Guo (ed.), pp. 118-135. This is not to say that there are no comparisons to be made between the Naxi pictographs and the ancient Han Chinese ideographs. But it is worth stressing that in the analysis above, for example, Li illustrates his case on the basis of a number of particularly abstract pictographs which are also part of the Geba repertoire.

²⁷Li Lincan, "Lun Mo-sozu Xiangxing Wenzi De Fayuan Di" [On the origins of the Mo-so pictographs], in Guo (ed.), pp. 471-476 and pp. 472-473

²⁸Li Lincan, "Lun Mo-sozu Xiangxing Wenzi De Fayuan Di", p. 474.

²⁹When I inquired to He Pingzheng at the Dongba Research Institute, he readily acknowledged that my sexual symbolic reading of the pictographs was quite correct, and yet, such interpretations are never given in publications or anywhere else. There is a marked tendency in Chinese scholarship to treat the pictographs as a primitive writing system, and as Fang and He explain in their dictionary, the pictographic script is called 'Stone record, wood record' because the Naxi draw a stone to mean the word stone and a tree to mean the word tree. Hence, the analytical discourse is dominated by materialist interpretations whilst the possibility of a symbolic discussion is sorely limited if not entirely neglected. Fang and He, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, p. 37.

³⁰Dongba cosmography is here opposite to its Chinese counterpart which makes the high point south and Yang.

³¹Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*; pp. 297-301, and p. 566.

³²For a review of Li Lincan's work and an evaluation of his hypothesis see Guo Dalie, ""Naxizu Xiangxing Wenzi Pu" de Tese" [Characteristics of the "Dictionary of the Naxi Pictographs"], in Guo (ed.), pp. 445, 464.

³³Not all scholars interested in Dongba research are themselves Naxi and among those, Bai and Han scholars Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an argue that the Dongba book tradition truly came into

its own during feudal times and that much of it dates from the later Ming period and the Qing dynasty. See, Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an, "Naxizu Dongba Jiao Diaocha" [Research in the Naxi Dongba religions], in *Yunnan Minzu Minsu he Zongjiao Diaocha*, 1985, pp. 244-274.

³⁴The idea was originally that of Terrien de Lacouperie. Lacouperie otherwise gained notoriety on account of two books, *The Cradle of the Shan Race* (1885) and *Amongst the Shans* (1887) where he proposed that the Shans were the first race of China, whilst the Chinese would have migrated from Babylon circa 2300 BC. The cradle of the Shan race, for its part, was in Sichuan and south of Shaanxi. Lacouperie's work led to the theory that the Thais had been pushed south by the Chinese over many centuries until they eventually settled in Yunnan. Kublai would have forced their last and massive southward migration. During the 1950s, this theory (which is taken as standard history in Thailand) fueled tensions between the Thais and the Chinese Communists who feared that a pan-Thai movement among the Dai minorities in Xishuangbanna would threaten state integrity. Today, political attitudes have relaxed but Chinese authorities have spent a great deal of energy and money on researches into Dai and Yunnanese history and archaeology to 'debunk' these notions – see the four volumes of the *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Thai Studies*, Kunming 1990. For a rather ferocious Chinese denunciation of Lacouperie, Chen Lufan, *Whence Came the Thai Race?* 1990, and for a persuasive ethnohistorical discussion of a Tai foundation of Nanzhao, see Amphay Doré's contribution to the Thai conference series: "Did the Thai People Contribute to the Foundation of the Nanzhao kingdom?" Incidentally, the Naxi name of Minyin, a town north of Lijiang, is *Baiyi wa*, which means the 'place of the Dai'.

³⁵J. Bacot, *Les Mo-so*, pp. 66-67.

³⁶ANKSWC, pp. 91, among other sources.

³⁷See E.G. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times", in D.N. Keightley, *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*, Los Angeles, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, pp. 411-466 and p. 414. Pulleyblank holds that the Chinese script was not used by non-Han peoples before the 4th century A.D. so that as far as the Qiang using Chinese characters, the question is whether or not the Qiang had already adopted a Chinese language. Pulleyblank also comments on the fact that contemporary ethnic groups descended from these ancient Qiang tribes such as the Yi and Naxi still practice scapulimancy.

³⁸See S.F. Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China*, 1992, pp. 47-78. According to Edwin Pulleyblank, the Ba people are more than likely the ancestors of the Miao-Yao groups than of the Tibeto-Burmans like the Naxi. However, Pulleyblank also notes that from a cultural perspective, both people share some common characteristics, and notably Tiger worship. E.G. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and their Neighbors", pp. 426-427. I may add that the Pangu myths, Gu magic and dog worship which are characteristic elements of Miao culture are also found among the Naxi.

³⁹J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Nakhi Tribe*, p. 42. Aside from the camel, however, Rock's Mongol connection is rather weak. Rock believed that the Naxi would have first seen elephants when they went to Burma to fight on Kublai's behalf. That may be so, but the Naxi may not have had to go as far as Burma to find elephants because there were wild elephants sighted in Dali even in the 14th century. See H. Wiens, *China's March Towards the Tropics*, Hamden, Connecticut, The Shoe String Press, 1954, p. 65.

⁴⁰See the introduction to J.F. Rock, *A Na-khi-English Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, Rome, I.S.M.E.O., 1963. Refer to Chapter IX for why Rock believed that 24 A.D. was the date at which the Naxi arrived in their present territory.

⁴¹A. Jackson, "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs", pp. 78-92.

⁴²See Jackson and Pan, "Authors of Naxi Ritual Books" in Oppitz and Hsu, pp. 327-273.

⁴³Dong Shaoyu and Hei Hong'an, "Naxizu Dongba Jiao Diaocha", p. 250.

⁴⁴See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 403-404; also J.F. Rock, "The Zherkhin Tribe", and the *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, pp. 72-74.

⁴⁵He Zhiwu, "Naxizu Dongba Yuyan Shixi" [An analysis of the Dongba language of the Naxi nationality], in Guo (ed.), pp. 76-90. Also He Zhiwu, "Cong Xiangxing Wen Dongba Jing Kan Naxizu Shehui Lishi Fazhan de Ji Ge Wenti", pp. 218-222.

⁴⁶W. Heissig, *A Lost Civilization, The Mongols Rediscovered*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1966, p. 159.

⁴⁷J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 208, 231, 302, 390, 411. In the same vein, we can expect that in a century or so, a great many Dongba books will be dated post-1993.

⁴⁸A. Jackson, "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs", p. 90.

⁴⁹J.F. Rock, NNCRC, Introduction.

⁵⁰W. Heissig, *A Lost Civilization*, pp. 20-21.

⁵¹A. Jackson, *Na-khi Religion*, pp. 27-53; "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs", p. 78; and also "Mo-so Magical Texts", *The John Rylands Library*, 1965, pp. 165-166.

⁵²Carol Warren informs me that this is in fact standard practice in Balinese text copying (personal communication, 1995).

⁵³As for note 43.

⁵⁴W.E. Soothill, *The Hall Of Light*, New York, Philosophical Library 1952. p. 52. On the Chinese calendar and the almanac, see M. Palmer ed., *T'ung Shu: the Ancient Chinese Almanac*, Boston, Shambhala, 1986. For the politics of calendar and cosmography, see M. Granet. *La pensée chinoise*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1991 (1934). And for connections between the Chinese calendar, political order and graphology, E.G. Pulleyblank, "The Ganzhi as Phonograms and their Application to the Calendar", *Early China* (16), 1991.

⁵⁵J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 72, note 182.

⁵⁶As Jackson also comments in "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs"; pp. 78-79, and "Mo-so Magical Texts", pp. 165-166.

⁵⁷J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe*, p. 18; also, J.F. Rock, NNCRC, notably p. 27 (there are other mentions); J.F. Rock, DNFC, p. 3.

⁵⁸J.F. Rock, DNFC, p. 43.

⁵⁹He Zhiwu explained that the Naxi word *Ka* was a loan word from a classical Chinese term for emperor: *Ke Han*. But the *Mathews' Dictionary* notes *Ko Han* (Wade Giles orthography) as a transliteration for Khan, a Mongol chief. He Zhiwu's apparent lack of discernment may reflect an ideological blind spot whereas one treats as Chinese what is part of China's legitimate and official history. He Zhiwu, "Naxizu Dongba Jing Yuyan Shixi"[An analysis of Naxi Dongba language], in Guo (ed.), p. 81; and *Mathews' Dictionary*, *Ko Han*, No 3381/(a), p. 506.

⁶⁰J.F. Rock, DNFC, pp. 2-3. Rock gives the Naxi word Gelo as either Mongol or Golog. Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu give Gelo as Mongols, see Fang and He, *Naxi Xianxin Wenzhi Jian Pu*, No 552.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²See P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*.

⁶³Refer to the definitions given at the beginning of the thesis.

⁶⁴Guo Dalie, and He Zhiwu (Seminars, Kunming, 1991). Xu is also quoted in the *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, Vol. 2, p. 52. I come back to the caste/feudal organization of Lijiang and Xu in Chapter VIII.

⁶⁵J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 60; E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 615, note 2.

⁶⁶J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 72, note 182; and J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 17.

⁶⁷Unfortunately, this stone was blown up during roadwork, some time during the Cultural Revolution (He Zhiwu, Kunming 1990).

⁶⁸See Fang and He, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzhi Pu*, pp. 52-53; also He Zhiwu, "Naxizu de Geba Wenzhi He Dongba Jing Leibie", p. 157.

⁶⁹I base this statement on discussions which I had with Li Jingsheng and He Zhiwu on this topic and a comparative review of the Geba symbols as they are given in Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu's *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzhi Pu*, and the Yi dictionaries prepared by D'Ollone, *Ecritures des peuples non chinois de la Chine, (Mission D'Ollone 1906-1909)*, Paris, Ernest Leroux Editeur, 1912. My own comparative analysis is not conclusive. Pan Anshi draws a table of perfectly overlapping Yi and Geba symbols, but the table is short. See Pan Anshi, "The Translation of Naxi Religious Texts", p. 276.

⁷⁰Personal communication from David Bradley who was shown such books when he visited Yunnan in 1995.

⁷¹J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 72, note 182.

⁷²This may be worth stressing because it is generally agreed that Chinese characters were exported east (to Japan and Korea) and not west among the Tibeto-Burmese. See F. Coulmas, *The Writing Systems of the World*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1989, p. 112.112.

⁷³See E. Chavannes, "Quatre Inscriptions du Yunnan (Mission du Commandant D'Ollone)", *Journal Asiatique* (4) 1909, p. 42. Chavannes translates the text from a stele discovered in the region of Wuding by the D'Ollone mission. This inscription is dated 971 A.D. – relatively early in the dynasty of the Duan family (937-1381) who, according to Chinese scholars, were Bai, unlike the Nanzhao Meng family who were Wuman (Black barbarians from whom the Yi are allegedly descended). Now, left to right writing is connected with Sanskrit rather than Chinese, and it is interesting that although Chinese is used on this stele, the writing keeps to this direction, especially in view of the fact that Buddhism in Dali was far more Chinese influenced than Indian. In my opinion the direction of writing is connected with calendrical considerations, the course of the sun being clockwise or left to right, that of the moon anti-clockwise right to left. The Yi have a solar/stellar calendar.

⁷⁴Feng Han-yi and J.K. Shryock, "The historical Origins of the Lolo", *Harvard Journal of Oriental Studies* (3: 63-127) 1938, p. 63. David Bradley proposes that the Yi scripts were most likely developed under the Cuan rulers, and thus at the latest in the Nanzhao period D. Bradley, "Yi Language Questionnaire", unpublished manuscript, Melbourne, La Trobe University, 1995. p. 5.

⁷⁵G.H. Luce, *The Man Shu*, Ch. IX, p. 82.

⁷⁶See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 403-404.; also J.F. Rock, "The Zherkhin Tribe...", and the *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, pp. 72-74.

⁷⁷ According to the Yuan imperial record, Mai Zhong would have invented the local books (*shu*). In the Mu Chronicle, he is said to have invented the local *wenzi*, which means characters, writing or literature. See, He Zhiwu, "Naxizu de Guwen he Dongbajing Leisi" in He Zhiwu's *Dongba Wenhua Lunji* (Anthology of Dongba Literature), pp. 155-178 and pp. 155, 156

Chapter V

Rock Art, Pictographs and the Foundation of Feudal Dominion

Introduction

In the last chapter, I concluded that at least some of the Lijiang tribes wrote books and especially pictographic books either by or not long after the 14th century. In this chapter, I take up with another theory attached to the invention of the Naxi pictographic manuscripts: that the pictographic script, the *wood record-stone record*, evolved from a primitive rock and bark painting tradition. However, whereas this theory gives Chinese scholars grounds to argue for a 'natural' process of evolution, I argue that the origins of the Dongba script in rock art lies with the Naxi Naga cults and the colonizing of the peripheries begun in Mongol times and pursued throughout the Ming period.

The Dongba Pictographs, a rock art tradition?

Rock and Jackson questioned what current Chinese scholarship tends very much to take for granted – the sequential relationship of the Dongba scripts – the question of which of the Naxi scripts came first. And this question is well worth asking, even if we do not necessarily expect to answer it, because it leads to other places of interest. If the Geba is derived from the pictographs, then all is well in the best of evolutionary worlds, but if the Geba preceded or if it

originated independently from the pictographs, the issue is no longer how or why the Dongba became a literate tradition but why the Dongbas wrote their books as *picture* stories. In fact, whatever the origins of the Geba, and whichever way one turns, this has to be *the* question. Because the Dongbas obviously chose to write in pictures since their books are derived from a Tibetan tradition which for its part has a real script, and since the tribes of Lijiang had long been in contact with literate people, be those Yunnanese, Chinese, Burmese, and Indians.

Between 1991 and 1993, Naxi scholar He Limin discovered numerous rock paintings in the valleys and hills of Lijiang, including Baidi where the Dongbas say their tradition originates. He Limin and others now hold these discoveries as proof that the Dongba ‘wood and stone record’ originates in rock art and the primitive rituals of the Naxi’s more remote ancestors.¹

In China, rock art is associated with hunter-gatherers but also with the great pastoralist corridors of the north and northwest including the high Tibetan plateau. Until at least the late Ming dynasty, the hill regions of Lijiang were peopled by hunter-gatherers (Lisu and Yemen) while the valleys of the Jinshajiang and the plain region were home to pastoralist Mo-so and Lolo.² But if in all appearance there are grounds to connect the ‘ancestors’ of the Naxi nationality with a rock art tradition even within a not so distant past, it remains to establish that rock art did in turn lead to the development of a pictographic script and how.

For Naxi scholars this issue is not especially complicated because it fits comfortably with a socio-evolutionist scheme. The pictographic script would have evolved from primitive rock art to primitive hieroglyphics when social conditions permitted; when society was sufficiently stratified that the need for specialist priests arose and when technology made possible the use of paper, and so forth.

Yet, even from an evolutionary point of view, there remain a few missing links. And the first of those lies with the fact that only the Naxi took this

evolutionary step even though there is rock art on both sides of the Jinshajiang including in Mosuo territories, and this, especially from the perspective held by Chinese scholars who maintain that both Dongba and Daba began as one tradition. Unless, of course, Chinese scholars are wrong, and the Mosuo Dabas also had books, in some distant past, as Rock believed.

Was the Daba a literate tradition?

There are two sets of opinion on the subject of why the Daba is an oral tradition: that of Naxi scholars, which explains that the Daba is an oral tradition because it is a more primitive version of the Dongba,³ and Rock's and Jackson's according to which the Daba was once Dongba, and Bon, and literate and the Daba lost their (pictographic/ syllabic?) books to the Gelug-pa lamas.

Clearly, if the Dabas do not have books, it is as a result of political history. The Dabas are well aware of the literate traditions of the lamas, and those of their neighbors, the Naxi Dongba and the Yi Bimo.⁴ The Dabas could have copied the Dongbas' books like the Mosuo priests who live in Naxi territories (Qizong) have done.⁵ In other words, the Dabas could have had a literate tradition if their religious and political elite had wished it so.

As I explained in Chapter III, before 1956 the Daba was possibly attached to the Haba sect, an old Tibetan and literate tradition, and one could argue therefore, that the Mosuo tradition is (was) in fact a literate tradition and that there is little reason to assume that the lower Daba levels (the Pv and Pa) ever did have books. But then again, given that aside from what I have written on the subject, nothing seems to be known of the associations between the Haba and the Daba, the question of whether the Dabas did or did not have books at some former stage is worth exploring a little further, especially because the Dabas themselves claim that they had books and that they lost those, indeed, because of the lamas.

One day, the Emperor (i.e. the chief)'s mother fell sick and the best lamas and Dabas in the land were called upon to come and cure her. The lama and the Daba then set off together for the palace. They

walked on, feeling unfriendly for most of the day, for the lama who had more food and more knowledge than the Daba looked down on his traveling companion. At night, they stopped for some food. They put down their things and lit a fire, and before long the Daba fell asleep.

In the meantime, the lama decided to use the Daba's gong as a hot plate to cook baba (flat bread), and the Daba's bell to boil water for the tea. When the Daba woke up from his peaceful sleep, he discovered the outrage and became furious. Without stopping to think, he reached for his ritual knife and threw it at the lama, wounding him on the hand. In turn, the injured lama hurled the hot gong at the Daba's legs. This is why today, lamas always keep one hand covered by a long sleeve, and why Dabas dance as though they are lame.⁶

Later again, the Daba and the lama argued as to who was the smartest. The Daba then made a bet: that he could remember everything that was written on his parchments and that he would not need books. Thereupon, he proceeded to boil his books (they were made from cow hide)⁷ and to eat them. Later, when he needed to remember his texts, all he had to do was to take a drink of wine and the words came back from his stomach to his head. This is why the Dabas sometimes indulge in a fair bit of drinking when they perform rituals.

In the end, the Daba cured the mother's sickness and when the Emperor divided the tasks which the lamas and the Dabas would perform, he allotted the curing of illness to the Dabas, and the performance of funerals to the lamas.⁸

This story speaks not only of the Daba's former books but of the unequal relationship between Dabas and lamas. In feudal times, every family in the Yongning plain, whatever its social class membership, sent at least one son to study in Tibet and whilst Lamaism did not do away with class distinctions (except in very special cases of reincarnation) all lamas none the less returned from Lhasa as holy men and literate practitioners. By comparison, the Dabas looked parochial. Evidently, the above story restitutes to the Dabas a prestige which they cannot match when faced with Lamaist practices, because to have books and to control the funeral rites is of a much higher ritual, theological and political order than to conduct exorcisms and to have no books.

The Daba story makes a good argument towards its own cause, proving that ultimately no one wants to die, not even the emperor's mother, and that Daba practices are much better at keeping people alive than Lamaism. In the same

vein, the Dabas may not read, but they are far more clever and self-sufficient than the lamas, for their memory is in their own stomach – a magical feast which the lama cannot match. This story also follows a familiar *mythologique*, like the story that explains the elephant's long nose, or the spots on the giraffe, in other words, stories that explain what is, rather than what happened. Thus, the story of the Daba books explains not only why the Dabas have no books but why the Daba dances the lame step of Yu, why the lama covers his arm, as well as why the lama has the privilege of presiding over funeral rites.

The problem is, moreover, that before we hypothesize that the Daba may have had books *à la* Dongba, we need some kind of evidence that the Daba was not from the start an oral tradition. So, far we know that the Dongba itself has a powerful oral component. And on the Mosuo side of things, the word Daba implies an oral tradition – the first syllable *dda* means 'to notch' and refers to the mnemonic technique of notching of wooden sticks.⁹ And although the Daba is now surrounded by literate religions, oral traditions were the norm in the Himalayan regions until Buddhism brought books along. Stories of lost books, even stories of books that were eaten, are found in many other places where lamas competed and won against local and apparently oral traditions.¹⁰

One should also have some reservations as regards the intolerance of the Gelug-pa in Yongning which both Rock and Jackson assumed *de facto*. It may be that Bonpos were banned from Yongning but the facts are that until Rock's times, the Gelug-pa shared its turf with the Nyingma-pa, with the Haba, the Dabas, and 'non-denominational' shamans and diviners. As to the history of Bon among the Mosuo, all that is known about it at this point is what Rock partly translated and partly summarized from the personal records of the Yongning chiefs, without indicating where the first exercise began and the other stopped. According to Rock's summary, the Yongning people were adherents of the 'Black Bon sect or Shamanism' until they were converted by the Gelug-pa¹¹ and we ought to ask what was meant by Black Bon, since Bon, like Taoism, tends to encompass anything that cannot be recognized as Buddhist or

Confucian. In particular, we ought to ask where the Haba and Daba may have fitted in all of this, since those are not sects of Shenrab Mibo and yet may not be readily classed as Buddhist. Certainly, the Reformed Bon can still be found in Zuosuo (present day Muli), a sub-magistracy of the Yongning Tusi until 1710 but the Dabas in these parts have no books either. And then again, perhaps we should also take into account that even before 1710, Zuosuo had a distinct status from other territories in Yongning and that the Zuosuo chiefs were not, like other Yongning sub-magistrates, consanguinal relatives of the Tusi but their in-laws.¹²

At any rate, Chinese field research in Muli confirms that some of the more significant differences between the Dongba and the Daba and, in particular, the difference between having books and not having books, do not seem to depend on the dominance of Gelug-pa, Confucianism, Bon or Karma-pa. The former feudal domains of Muli including Zuosuo have been outside the direct political control of Yongning since around 1710, and in the case of Eya, outside the control of the Lijiang chiefs since 1723. And yet, the people from Lijiang, Yongning, and extending into the regions of Guabie, Yanbian and Yanyuan acknowledge themselves as *either* Naxi or Mosuo or Nari (Mongols) and the Naxi have Dongbas and books, and the others have Dabas and no books whatever dominant tradition they live under.¹³ In other words, the Dongbas are entirely connected with the Naxi and have books wherever they happen to be, including the territories which belonged to Lijiang until 1723 and passed to the authority of the Lamaist (Gelug-pa) Muli Tusi,¹⁴ whilst the Na of Yanyuan and the Mosuo have no books unless they happen to live in Naxi territory (Qizong).¹⁵

Thus, when we look at the map of northern Yunnan, we find that the only people with Dongba books are those who lived in the old Naxi kingdom, and that outside the oldest Naxi territories of the Lijiang plain, the only people who have pictographic books specifically were those who lived in the territories which the Mu family controlled and/ or acquired during the Ming dynasty and

early Qing period. For the territories of Zuosuo, Qiansuo, Housuo and Yousuo in the east of Yongning (a region including today's Guabie and Yanyuan) were then placed under the rule of the Yongning chiefs who eventually found them unmanageable and gave them up.¹⁶ The distribution of the Dongba manuscripts therefore implies that the Dongba and the pictographic books served Naxi feudal politics specifically.

From Rock art to pictographs

While the distribution of the Naxi manuscripts suggests the expansion of the Dongba during the Ming period, the pictographs themselves may, as Naxi scholar He Limin contends, begin in rock art. He Limin's theory and his discovery of rock art in Lijiang in 1993 was a stupendous event for my own research. For I had begun to pursue the possibility that the Naxi pictographs originated in rock art independently, in 1990. And whilst engaged in pursuing this line of enquiry, I had also discovered that Hans Jansen had already compared the Dongba manuscript tradition to Ojibwa bark and rock painting in 1970. The Ojibwa priests drew the records of ceremonies and important events on rock and, interestingly, they too used the pictures as mnemonic devices. Even more interesting, the bark paintings were reproductions of the rock paintings, and evidently their purpose was book like: the shaman chief could carry the bark drawings wherever the people went to hunt or to war.¹⁷

Indeed, much of the Dongba pictographic repertoire reflects conventions found almost universally in rock art, but also conventions found in the rock art of other parts of Yunnan, in particular Cangyuan.¹⁸ These conventions are:

- The marking of animal facial features and by contrast, the representation of people as mostly stick figures without facial features;
- The accent on head-dress;
- The clear definition of hands marking all five fingers;
- The emphasis placed on disembodied limbs;
- Profile depictions of animals, contrasted with

- people who are facing viewers;
- The ordering of number strokes;
- The symbol for the sun.

He Limin's discovery confirmed that in Lijiang rock art is typified by the over-representation of animal figures as is the Dongba pictographic script. He also maintains that he found rock art depictions of people identical to those found in the pictographs.¹⁹

Thus, in addition to all the associations which can be pinned on the name 'wood record/stone record' (wood and stone are connected to the ancestors, flesh and bone relatives, ritual objects and deities, 'one draws a tree to signify tree, and a rock to signify rock', etc.), and given the fact that the Naxi made paper from tree bark, it is not far-fetched to propose that the name *Sijiuliujiu* can be taken literally to mean 'bark and rock painting'. And above all, what a rock art tradition implies for the Dongba books, is that the Naxi did not stumble upon pictographic writing, but chose to write in pictures because pictures had a sacredness of their own.

But if the above is reasonable, the question remains how did rock art turn into pictographs? Perhaps the step from rock art to pictographs is only a small one. Bonpos and in their wake, lamas, have strong connections to the natural world and among other things to the sacredness of caves and rocks. Buddhism too has a great tradition of cave and rock paintings, inscriptions and carvings, and both Buddhists and Bonpos spent time in caves, to purify themselves and gain cosmic knowledge and power. What is more, connections between mnemonic and picture reading, and Buddhist and Bon practices can also be established since lamas and Bonpos used images (painted scrolls and murals) in oral recitations. Also on a very specific note, there is historical evidence that rock art served a state purpose among the Mongols who sacrificed to the mountain dragon spirits, and painted and wrote on cliffs to promulgate their codes of law.²⁰ Then, we also know that in the 13th and 15th centuries, the Mongols wrote on stripped bark, wooden boards and sometimes also on cured

animal skin.²¹ And finally, we know from the historical record that the Mo-so tribes of the Yuan period held sacrifices to heaven at the peaks of the mountain, whilst the rock art is also found at the peaks.

In other words, there are cosmological, archaeological and historical connections between pastoralists and/or hunters, shamanist traditions and rock paintings on the one hand, and between Bonpo practices, caves, rocks and visual arts on the other as well as with Mongol law, and the historic practices of the Mo-so tribes under Mongol rule and during the early Ming period.

The missing link

When Naxi scholar He Limin went into the Lijiang hills looking for rock art, he first looked for cliff faces and caves in proximity of known Dongba and other popular sacred sites, then he asked local shepherds if they knew of any paintings in these regions, and finally, he and other informants actually walked and climbed to places intuitively deemed likely sites.²² He Limin had to look for sites because none had any current ritual usage, some were known to the locals who had come across them whilst herding their goats but the great majority were unknown. None held any meaning for local people and more importantly, none held any meaning for the local Dongbas. Thus, in all evidence, the sites had long been abandoned. And this necessarily brings us to the next question: can 'a process of natural evolution' and the passage of time reasonably explain the religious and cultural rupture between actual rock art and Dongba practice?

Any theory seeking to explain the historical connections between rock art and the Naxi pictographs must ultimately depend on the age of the paintings. There is rock art all over Yunnan and Sichuan and some of it is very old. The Cangyuan rock sites, for example, are believed to be 3000 years old.²³ Should the Lijiang paintings prove this ancient, it may be quite a different matter to explain how the Naxi's ancestors transferred rock art into pictographs than if the sites are just a few hundred years old. But whatever carbon dating will reveal of the age of these paintings, and whoever the original custodians may have been,

the problem with establishing that rock art did lead to pictographs lies with establishing how and why the rock painting tradition stopped while a ritual continuity was maintained through pictographic books. In other words, why would the Mo-so tribes and their Bonpo chiefs have abandoned their rock paintings after inventing a pictographic script that reproduced them?

Two things make doubtful the possibility of a simple cultural continuity (or natural evolution) between the Naxi pictographs and the rock art found in Naxi territories. The first, as I have already mentioned, rests with the need to explain why only the people of Lijiang and none of their neighbors, including the Mosuo on the other side of the Jinshajiang would have thought of transferring rock art into Tibetan books. The second, and I believe this is the crucial question, lies with the ritual discontinuity between rock art sites and Dongba practice. The great majority of the Lijiang rock art sites were unknown to both the local people and to the Dongbas, and not one of those sites is considered sacred. This is so, in spite of the concerns which the Dongba and the other popular cults in Lijiang maintain as regards the natural world, in other words, in spite of the sacredness of the tiger caves, the Dragon pools, the phallic stones, sacred groves, and so forth. If the Dongba pictographs did originate in rock art, the rupture between rock art sites and Dongba practice implies one thing: that the pictographs originate in sacred sites that were *not* originally Dongba sacred sites. And this hypothesis, in turn, takes us to the very core of Naxi history – because from the perspective of feudal Lijiang, rock art lay with the peripheries, in the wooded hills of the ‘natural’ unpoliticized world which the Mu’s military efforts were to bring within the world of men, to be taxed, levied for corvée and military conscription.

Pictographs in the Naxi political order

The Dongba pictographs present some striking characteristics:

- The pictographic script reflects Mongol influences.
- Dongba language suggests that the original centre of the Dongba

tradition was in the Lijiang plain – i.e., the Mu political centre.

- Naxi tradition holds that the Dongba manuscript tradition originated in Baidi.
- The manuscript tradition was most developed in the Baisha plain.
- The pictographs recall a rock painting tradition that we know to have flourished in the political periphery, the hills and river valleys of Lijiang territory.
- There is rock art in Mosuo as well as in Naxi country but neither people have a living tradition of rock art and only the Naxi have pictographs.
- The pictographs are a Naxi artifact but they are associated with Naxi *territory* as much as with the Naxi people themselves since the Qizong Mosuo, the Zherkhin and other smaller tribes of the Lijiang region also have pictographic books.²⁴
- The Dongba books are found in territories that came under the rule of the Lijiang chiefs during the Ming period: Baidi, Zhongdian, Eya, Weixi, Qizong.
- The pictographic script is a ritual script only, and carry a religious tradition associated with the Mu chiefs.
- The pictographic tradition carries a common ritual language into regions where distinct tribal groups long resisted feudalization, peoples who spoke different languages and had different ritual practices (Lolo, Lisu, and so forth).

Taken together, these characteristics suggest that the Dongba tradition sustained a ritual and therefore a political connection between the centre at Baisha and the Lijiang tribes in the peripheries. They may also suggest a missionary effort. However, the fact that rock art is specifically associated with the mountains and therefore with the political peripheries whilst the pictographic tradition itself is associated with the political center suggests that the Mu chiefs used the pictographic manuscripts to establish a unified ritual in places where the people were not 'Naxi' and where there was rock art. And this raises the question not

only of how but *why* in Lijiang, rock art should have been turned into a pictographic script.

We shall now see that oral tradition most definitely associates the history of the pictographs with the political conflicts that took place between the Mu family and the people of the periphery, in particular, with the people of Baidi whence the pictographs are said to have originated.

The holy man of Baidi and the invention of the pictographic script.

As we saw in Chapter IV, the Dongbas say that they obtained the pictographic manuscripts in days long forgotten, from a reincarnation of Dibba Shilo who came to reside in the sacred cave of Baidi. And interestingly, this story implies that the Dongba pictographs did not originate in Baidi but that *they came to Baidi*. Other versions relating to these ancient events tell that the holy man who taught the Dongbas how to write pictographs was called Ah-mi, and that he was a local man who had gone to Tibet to learn the rituals of the lamas and returned to Baidi. One Ah-mi legend goes as follows:²⁵

Once upon a time there lived a man by the name of Ah-mi. He was a descendant of the Ye clan. Ah-mi had two brothers, one was called Ah-mi Yu-lei, the other Ah-mi Ci-da. They both lived in Baidi from where they preached the Dongba.²⁶ One day, the brothers went to Tibet to study the sacred texts. Once in Tibet, however, the Ah-mi brothers found out that all their teacher would allow them to do was to take care of the horses. The brothers then trained very hard until they became excellent horsemen, after which they stole the sacred texts and galloped back to Baidi. Since they had learned to ride so well they had no trouble escaping from their Tibetan pursuers.

Ah-mi Yu-lei crossed the Jinshajiang and settled in Lijiang where he began to preach. He soon earned the love and favor of the people and threatened the Mu chief's power. One day, he learned that the Mu chief was planning to harm him so he flew over the Yulongshan (Lijiang's sacred mountain). Eventually, the Mu chief poisoned Ah-mi Yu-lei and his generals.²⁷ Then, after Yu-lei's death, some of the great Dongbas began to preach. Among these great Dongbas was Ah-mi Shilo.

Meanwhile, Ah-mi Ci-da escaped from the pursuing Tibetans and went in hiding in Baidi. He found the cave and soon hid all the books and paraphernalia that he had stolen in Tibet. Then, after some time, his books

and all his ritual objects turned into stone. Since he no longer had any Tibetan books, Ah-mi Ci-da studied the Dongba books. After he had spent such a long time cut off from the world, with only beasts and birds for companions, he learned all the Dongba books and also the language of the birds and he became the greatest Dongba ever. From this time onwards, he also began to use the pictographic script. He was the first to do so.

After Ah-mi Ci-da died, his body turned into stone and Baidi became a sacred cave for the other Dongbas.²⁸

The story of the Ah-mi brothers can be broken down as follows:

- The Ah-mi brothers are of the Ye clan and they are opposed to the Mu (this incidentally supports the analysis of the Mu genealogy which I gave in Chapter II, that the Mu 's origins do not lie with the Ye clan).
- The Ah-mi brothers *stole* the sacred texts. This is an important mythological relation. On the one hand, stealing makes explicit the sacredness of a knowledge that cannot be given or bought. On the other, the act of stealing re-establishes power asymmetries between the original keeper of the knowledge and the one who has acquired it.
- The story of the Ah-mi brothers' theft stresses both the indigenous and the foreign character of the Dongba, its debt to the greater Tibetan tradition as well as to local intelligence and courage.
- The Ah-mi brothers' story stresses the antagonism between the Mu and the people of Baidi, as well as the antagonism between the people of Baidi and the Tibetans. When the story makes Baidi a place of refuge between Tibet and the Lijiang Mu, however, it inverts political reality. In the story, Ah-mi Ci-da has tricked the Tibetans and he is safe from the vengeful Mu but in real life (i.e. in the historical record), the Tibetans raided the people of Baidi and the Mu chiefs conquered them.
- Ah-mi Ci-da studies the Dongba because he has lost his Tibetan books. Again, the story acknowledges that the Dongba has significant links to the Tibetan tradition (note that the latter is either Bon or Buddhism in contemporary minds) but Ah-mi Ci-da's power owes to the metamorphosis of his Tibetan books and ritual objects, and his own

emergence as a superior Dongba: i.e. a local man, not a superior lama, and not a Tibetan.

- Ah-mi invented the pictographs during the rule of the Mu chiefs. This part of the story confirms that the feudalization of the periphery had something to do with the ‘invention’ of the Dongba manuscripts.
- Ah-mi invented the pictographs as he resisted the Mu chiefs, whilst his own story recalls almost verbatim the legend attached to the great Mu ancestor, Mou-bao Ah-cong who lived in a cave, learned the languages of the local tribes and the birds, and invented the local books.
- Baidi became sacred to the Dongba *after* Ah-mi Ci-da’s death.

Taken at a literal level, this Ah-mi story tells that the Mu appropriated the manuscript tradition from the local tribes, rather than they disseminated it among the local tribes. The story of Ah-mi Ci-da is evidently engaged in prestige restitution, not unlike the story of the Daba books, and it must be noted that this Ah-mi Ci-da’s story is part of the local oral folklore. It is not featured in the Dongba manuscripts, and it is not therefore an “official” Dongba version, although it is a favorite story in post-1949 Chinese scholarship because from the perspective of Marxist scholars, this narrative highlights the “class struggle”. The Dongba version of the invention of the script for its part relates that a reincarnation of Dibba Shilo taught the Dongbas how to write pictographs from the cave at Baidi. But what we can take away from the legends of Baidi is that oral tradition stresses the invention of the pictographs in context of a conflict opposing the Baidi people and the Mu.²⁹ This is important because, as we shall now see, Baidi was very much in the periphery of the Mu territory and a center of local resistance until quite late in the Ming dynasty.

Lijiang tradition maintains that it is in Baidi that the ‘real Naxi’ live³⁰ and yet, according to contemporary Chinese ethnographic studies, the Naxi represent only 55 percent of the local population whilst they readily explain that their ancestors came to this region about twenty generations ago from Lijiang. Counting twenty-five years per generation, this takes us into the later part of the

15th century, at the time of the first Mu conquests.³¹ Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that Baidi was part of Naxi territory before this period because the Chinese historical records of the Yuan and Ming dynasty make clear that the forested hills and valleys in the north of what is today Lijiang prefecture, including Baidi, were for the most part the home of Lisu tribes.³² So, perhaps the people of Baidi are the 'real Naxi' because it is in Baidi that the original people lived, the people who were there first, before the Naxi settled in their midst, and the Mu colonized their land.

Meanwhile, the Mu chiefs' interest in this region had several underpinnings. Officially (i.e. according to the Chronicles), the Mu were engaged in suppressing banditry. No doubt also, the Mu were interested in bringing these peripheral areas into their tribute and corvée system. Then, the Mu were also driven by military necessity and the desire to secure a buffer zone between Lijiang and Tibetan Kham. Mu incursions into the region of Zhongdian and Baidi begin in the Yuan period, but the area came under final control in the later 16th century – in other words, after a very long and bloody struggle. The Chronicles of the Mu chiefs relate the conquest of each village, the submission of local chiefs, the imposition of tribute, the number of laboring men obtained for corvée, the punishment of rebels and Tibetans, the numbers of heads chopped off, and the establishment of garrisoned villages.³³

Now, in light of the argument made in the last chapter, if the pictographic script was not already used by the Naxi during the Yuan period (1253-1381), its invention cannot be far removed from it. And certainly, if the date on Rock's Dtola manuscript is correct, the Naxi would have been writing pictographic books before the 16th century.

Nevertheless, the legends and the centrality of Baidi to the Dongba do suggest a connection between the colonization of the peripheries in feudal times and the dissemination of the pictographic script. From all accounts, Baidi was a center of ongoing resistance to feudal rule. And from everything else that is known about Baidi, it was also a very important and ancient sacred site which,

we can safely assume, did not originally belong to the Dongba, for rock paintings have been discovered here. And no doubt, from the Mu perspective, securing and annexing the sacred sites at Baidi went hand in hand with territorial conquest. Thus, in the first half of the 16th century, Mu Gong and his son Mu Gao pacified the Tibetan frontier at Zhongdian, and consolidated their hold on Baidi. One year after his father's death in 1553, Mu Gao dedicated the Baidi cave to Shili, a reincarnation of a holy man whose own residence in this cave he dated 1054, in other words, to the foundation of the Mo-so kingdom itself.

Territorial conquest and cosmic rulings

The Mu feudal realm was above all a military realm. The Mu were constantly involved in warfare, conscripting soldiers to wage imperial campaigns, or pacifying tribal regions in an ongoing project of territorial expansion. The Dongba not surprisingly reflects a military ethos, and Dongba mythology is also very much concerned with the acquisition of spiritual power that accompanies territorial transfer.

In *Chinese Civilization*, Marcel Granet wrote the following on the dance of Yu the Great:

The man who dances is identified with the Holy Place, the abode of the animal emblem from which he takes the emblems which are symbolical. He possesses ... the holy place which is haunted in animal form, by the soul of an ancestor, and where the birth of a son may be obtained. But in order that the Chieftain, while he dances, may be identified with his emblem, that an intimate union may take place between him and the Holy Place, a sacrifice must be made to complete the dance. The victim is the dancer's wife.³⁴

We find the themes of marriage, sacrifice, the acquisition of sacred space and descendants in Dibba Shilo's own story.

The Birth of Dibba Shilo

In the days when there were nine suns and thirteen moons,³⁵ Dibba Shilo was born from the side of his mother for he was a god and could not be born like an ordinary mortal. From the beginning, Dibba Shilo could frighten away the ghosts and therefore he ascended to the 18th level of Heaven.³⁶

Once he was in Heaven, he learned to read books from the lamas. One day, a gust of wind blew, and the pages of the books flew in every direction but Dibba Shilo put them back together. Meanwhile, the land below had become so troubled by ghosts and demons that people had no peace and they sent for Dibba Shilo. He descended upon the earth on his white horse³⁷ followed by his 360 disciples.³⁸ There, he suppressed the demons and Nagas to the four directions.

After he had suppressed the demons, Dibba Shilo came to the land of the demoness Simi-mee dDako Soma.³⁹ Shilo asked to marry her, for if she did not, the white yak of his maternal uncles and the white horse of his father would die.⁴⁰ She had nine pots, nine sickles, nine ropes and nine trees⁴¹ and Shilo asked her to throw those away, after which he could make her his wife. Simi-mee dDako Soma did as he asked and she became Shilo's wife.⁴²

Then, people fell ill, and Dibba Shilo set off on his white horse to cure them.⁴³ As he was leaving, his wife asked him to refuse any payment for his services, for this certainly would make her sick. Shilo agreed and left. He cured the people and refused to be paid. However, his clients feared that the cure would fail if they did not pay, and they secretly tied a turquoise under the mane of Shilo's horse. Shilo went home and found that his wife was ill and in much pain. They had a great argument when Simi-mee dDa-ko Soma accused him of receiving payment for his services and he denied it. She told him to go look under his horse's mane and he discovered the turquoise. But Shilo was now more furious than ever and he resolved to dispatch his wife.

Shilo sent his 360 disciples to kill his demon-wife. She was cremated and her ashes put in an urn but she was not quite dead and went on to curse Shilo. For his part, Dibba Shilo had lost his powers. He fetched a Tibetan Lama, a Bai Buddhist monk and a Naxi Dongba⁴⁴ to perform the correct funeral ritual. They placed black stones at the foot of the black trees⁴⁵ and the demoness could rest. Dibba Shilo then recovered his perfection.⁴⁶

Granet believed that the story of Yu the Great announced the transfer of ritual power from a traditional hierogamy to an exclusive masculine practice in the

ancient Chinese world.⁴⁷ But if this is so, it is because the dance and the sacrifice of the wife effects and completes the transfer of the place and descendants. The survival of Dibba Shilo's ancestors, and by extension, the eventual emergence of his descendants (since they are to occupy this same space⁴⁸) depend upon the transfer of the demoness' space, local knowledge and magical powers, because Dibba Shilo is new to the place.

I shall soon explain how in a larger cosmological context, not only Dibba Shilo's own story but a whole series of Naga cults likewise involved the transfer of space to secure descendants for the colonizers. But first, it will be useful to consider the mythological requirements which conquest and dynastic changes imposed upon Yunnanese history in general.

In Yunnan, like in many other parts of the world, dynastic change was ritually legitimized through the marriage of the conqueror to a local princess, i.e. the chief's or king's daughter or even his widow.⁴⁹ These marriages were mythologically enshrined as they were in Southeast Asian kingship in stories of heavenly princesses marrying earthly men or the opposite, stories of heavenly gods marrying Naga princesses, all of this very much in the same vein as the heavenly Dibba Shilo marries his earthly demon wife.⁵⁰ The transfer of the heavenly princess (the king's daughter) to the conqueror or to his son who for his part is the earth-man (since he is to become the lord of the soil) heralds the transfer of the king's peoples and the king's land. Thus, in Naxi mythology also, Cosseilee'ee, the earth-man, married the heavenly princess Coheibubami, whilst in Naxi history, the Mongol Yeye married a local chief's daughter. With Cosseilee'ee and Coheibubami's marriage brand new 'races' (*zu*) of people emerge, and among them the Naxi race itself, whilst in real life, the tribes of Lijiang were unified.

Evidently, in consecrating the beginning of a new 'race', mythological and royal marriages legitimize conquest by nullifying its initial aggression. But that such unions should produce common descendants only partly explains the mechanism of territorial transfer. The point here is that the marriage of the

king's daughter and the conqueror looks as much to the past as it does to the future.

Above all, the marriage of the king's daughter implies the transfer of original ancestral souls (in other words the rightful owners of the place) to her husband so that the ancestors of the defeated king become the conqueror's. In fact, such marriages do appear to have taken place at particular junctures in the history of the Mu family (ref. Chapter II). But mythologically and ritually speaking (and this in very much in line with the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss), things work in reverse of nature: the marriage of the king's daughter *requires* the transfer of her ancestors because it is the transfer of ancestors which validates marriage. And this is so because, from the perspective of Dongba worldview as opposed to that of biology, it is the ancestors who grant fertility and descendants. Thus, when the Naxi ancestor Cosseilee'ee married the sky princess Coheibubami against her own father's wish, their union produced no descendants until Lee'ee learned to perform the correct sacrifices to *her* ancestors, in this case the Sacrifice to Heaven. And following in these mythic footsteps, the Naxi people sacrifice to heaven, earth and the Ka (the chief and/or the emperor) twice a year to obtain *nee* and *o*, descendants, health, and good harvests.⁵¹ But we come to a different sort of ethos when conquest takes place in the 'wild' regions, the tribal frontiers where there are no kings and therefore no kings' daughters to be had. When the wife is not a sky princess, when she is not a king's daughter, she may be sacrificed and the original spirits, the ghosts that haunt her abode, cannot be appropriated. They must be suppressed and exorcized. And this, I shall presently argue, was the story of the Mu chiefs' dealings with the peoples of the 'wild' tribal peripheries, the domain of the mountain god, the realm of the *lee* – the Naxi Nagas.

The Naxi Naga cults

Dongba cosmology relates that the *lee* or as Rock described them, the Naga spirits, are the 'first occupants' of the land whilst the Naxi are the descendants

of one father and two mothers, one of whom was a serpent demoness, a *lee* or Nagi from the wild regions.⁵² Dongba cults of the *lee* spirits are concerned with three things: payment for encroaching on their territories, for causing sickness and drought, and worship in order to obtain powers of fertility.

We read in Rock's translation of the Dong Naga cults:

If it were not for Dto-mba Shi-lo and the Garuda, then the Nagas and Dragons could not be repaid, and medicine could not be given them, nor nnu and o (semen and vaginal fluid: i.e. fertility) could be asked of them; neither could the thousands of generations of Ssu-ndo (serpent demons who cause illness) be chased out; nor could the Nagas be suppressed.⁵³

In the light of the symbolism at work in the dance of Yu, the animal emblem of the Naxi holy place is the *lee*, the serpent spirit that embodies the soul of the ancestor from whom descendants can be obtained. The Naxi Naga cults also echo Thai territorial cults, of which J. A. Placzek writes:

(Thai) territorial and social hierarchy is dependent upon an ordinal and chronological hierarchy: much of the religious behaviour of South East Asians and of the Black Thais ... can be subsumed under the notion of "respect for those who have gone before". ... In many cases, I suspect, a sort of generalized deference to all such previous inhabitants underlies the tradition of paying respect for the spirit of the place.⁵⁴

At this point, I may stress that territorial cults, or rather cults given to the spirits of the land are found in one shape or another in other places in the world,⁵⁵ and may not always imply the history which I am about to assign to the Naxi Naga cults. Thai territorial cults, evidently, are foremost concerned with the worship of local spirits. The Naxi cults, by contrast, are not so much about deference as they are about fear, pay-back and suppression. The Nagas are the dangerous ghosts of the thousands of generations who preceded the Naxi – and they are dangerous because they are *other people's ghosts*, and not the souls of the Naxi's ancestors. Indeed, this is an important boundary because the danger

associated with the souls of the dead is commensurate with the degree of kinship relation and estrangement. In other words, the greater the degree of estrangement, the more dangerous the ghost. Thus, it was explained to me in Labei that in the Daba religion, the most dangerous ghosts are the Daji ghosts, whilst the name Daji actually refers to a real life clan of Nuosu (Yi). On the Lijiang side of things, Nagas can make all sorts of mischief, they can cause drought and sickness and they can steal people's souls. The Dongbas (Pubbu) must compensate them, and suppress them, like they compensate and suppress all ghosts, to stop them from causing harm. But the Nagas are unlike other ghosts in that they, as the original spirits and custodians of the place, also grant fertility – *like ancestral souls*. The Dongbas, therefore, must also repay and offer cults to the Nagas towards this end, to be forgiven for encroaching on their territory by cultivating the land, uprooting trees, etc. in other words by imposing on the Nagas' land, the injury of farming.⁵⁶ Thus, in their purer religious dimension, the Naga cults are cults given to the spirits of the mountains and wilderness, and cults rendered to permit the establishment of people upon new lands. But Naga cults have also broader political definitions, concerned specifically with territorial expansion. And so we read in the *Nine Ways of Bon* that 'fertile fields and good harvests, extant of royal power and *spread of dominion*, although some half (of such effects) is ordained by previous action (viz. karmic effect), the other half comes from the powerful "lords of the soil" – so you must attend to the "lords of the soil", the serpents and the furies.'⁵⁷ In the same vein, the Mongols buried war captives, their horses and cattle (though not their women who could become mothers of Mongol men) at the foot of *painted rocks* and in offering to the Dragons, i.e. the mountain spirits.⁵⁸ I have italicized the phrase 'painted rocks' because, as we shall see below, Lijiang rock art also establishes significant connections to the Dragons and Snakes, mountain spirits and water custodians.

The Naxi Nagas are spirits of the land attached to trees, rocks, rivers, but we could only ignore the probability that they were once perceived as real ghosts

and therefore the souls of real people, and in particular the people who once lived in the wilderness, the original inhabitants of Naxi territory. Indeed, to insist on the metaphorical or symbolic value of Dongba representations of Naga spirits as opposed to the 'real life' value of Naga representations, we would need to argue that the Naxi did (do) not really believe in ghosts and in the power of ancestral souls to grant fertility, that myth, ritual and magic did (do) not make the real world intelligible, and that the Lijiang hills had no human inhabitants before the Mu settled garrisoned villages in these parts during the Ming dynasty.⁵⁹ And this would be an untenable position.

And whilst speaking of ghosts, we should also note that in Dongba ritual, as in the rituals of most people in Southeast Asia, the transformation of a soul into an ancestor requires two funerals and it is only with the second that the soul becomes an ancestor. In the Naxi context specifically, the first ritual only achieves to send the recently dead (and dangerous) soul underground *in the shape of a snake* where hopefully it remains, at a distance from the living until the Dongba performs the second funeral that will send it to the ancestral land.⁶⁰

In Naxi cosmology therefore, it is only a very small step to situate real life people in the context of the ghosts which they are bound to become and the ghosts of the relatives which already hang about them. And when concepts of ghosthood mix with real life ethnicity, they actualize a familiar ethnocentric theme – that of the monstrous Other. Such concepts on alterity are clearly articulated in the Chinese historical record.⁶¹

According to Yang Shen's *Unofficial History of Nanzhao (Nanzhao Ye Shi)* written in the 16th century, there were dozens of strange human species lurking in the wooded hills of northwest Yunnan and in the imagination of the civilized: people who eat bees and rats and copulate with monkeys, people whose speech sounds like the language of the birds, who make nests up in the trees or live in holes in the ground.⁶² Close to the Naxi, there were the *Di Yang Gui*, or Di Yang Ghosts who were said to be a branch of the Pu, the same people whom the Mo-so tribes had reputedly ousted from Lijiang plain and forced into the

surrounding hills. The Di Yang Ghosts *used wood and stone to make magic*,⁶³ and changed into demons and at night sneaked into houses to eat small children. Those ‘who can see them’ must beat them so that they will return to their human shape, they must take their sweeping brushes away and tie them up. In this way, the ghosts will give up their wealth, just as Nagas do when they are tied up. One can also marry their women, but one must watch out for their poisonous ways.

Given the fantastic quality of the historical record, the Dongba Naga manuscripts read like historiography when they relate that the Mu and Ee ghosts (Mun Ghugh in Rock) fought with the people at Fengke, that they were so stupid that the people tricked them into wearing armor made of tree leaves and helmets made from gourds, and into carrying swords cut from hemp stalks. The Mu and Ee, we are told, were killed and their bodies were left to rot. Then, the Dongba was called to exorcize the *si* (Naga/mountain spirits) so that the people could be given ‘protection, long life, *nnu* (*nee*) and *o*, and prosperity.’⁶⁴ Should we assume that the Mu and Ee take their shape after reality or that reality is fashioned after ghosts, or that this distinction is worth insisting upon when we also read in the *Nanzhao Ye Shi* that the Qiu Ren who lived in the snow mountains of Lijiang wore clothes made of leaves?⁶⁵ And should we assume that it is only a matter of metaphorical usage that the Mu and Ee ghosts figure in the Naxi creation myth as a first generation of misfits before the dawn of Humanity – that is the Naxi people, the descendants of Cosseilee’ee and his heavenly wife? The conquest and colonization of new territories required that the souls of the previous occupants, the souls of their dead ancestors, warriors and shamans, the guardian spirits of their sacred sites be pacified and ritually appropriated by the conqueror. There is little doubt that the Naga cults could have provided the Mu with this ritual adjustment.⁶⁶

Rock art and Nagas

Rock wrote in the *Na-khi Naga Cults* that, in Lijiang, snakes make their

appearance with the rainy season which begins in late spring and lasts throughout the summer and that it may be why the Naxi hold serpent spirits responsible for rain.⁶⁷ Now, rock art, like snakes, also comes alive with the approach of rain. For example, in northwest Australia, the Wandjina rock art paintings literally announce the rain when increasing levels of humidity react with the pigments of the paintings causing them to change color and expand across the rock surface. It is possible that changing atmospheric conditions cause (or caused) a similar phenomenon in the Lijiang rock art, and certainly this suggestion should be investigated. Lijiang is not subject to the extreme dryness of the Australian northwest, but (and this was also noted by Rock⁶⁸) it does experience strongly contrasting seasons, and notably a dry period between November and June (hence the Naxi's concerns with droughts) and an extremely wet monsoon in the summer months. If seasonal changes affected the rock art of Lijiang, local peoples were no doubt aware that the resurgence of snakes and the transformation of rock paintings corresponded, and that they had significant links to rain making and to the passing of seasons. In any case, rock art and water are connected in Lijiang, for all the rock art sites found so far are either in close proximity to water, or oriented towards water.⁶⁹ So could we not infer that at some stage of history, local people believed that whatever animated the paintings of animals on the rock faces was the very same thing that gave life to their counterpart in 'real life', deer, mountain goats, and so forth, and that this had to do with the (snake) spirits of the mountain and their power to let flow or withhold life giving water?

Nagas and Wild tribes

The Naxi have a few words by which they designate Naga spirits, in particular *lu*, also *leemee* (Rock's Lumun)⁷⁰ and then also *lv* and *lee*, which mean dragon. There are also entire clans of Nagas (the Si, Nyi, Dtu, Ssaw-ndaw and Lu clans for example)⁷¹ as well as regional Nagas just as there are clans of people in 'real life'. Now, among the wild people (*Ye Ren*) who inhabited the hill and forest

regions of Lijiang until the middle Ming dynasty, there were Lisu and wild Lisu (*Ye Lisu*) who, in the Yuan dynasty records, are also called *Luman* (Lu barbarians).⁷² The word Lisu in Naxi is Leesi. It is sometimes identical to the word meaning Naga and other times it differs from the *lee* and *si* Naga spirits by a tone difference on *si*. The Naga *lee* and the first syllable of the Lisu Lee are both *Lee* (2) but the Naga *si* is [si] (4) whilst the Lisu Si is either [si] (1) or [si] (4).⁷³ The phonetic correspondences between *lee si*, *leemee* (Lumun), Leesi, Lisu and Luman are, to say the least, striking. Also of interest, are the phonetic correspondences between the Se clan [Naxi pinyin Si⁽⁴⁾] descendants of the first son, and the life god Si.

In his *Na-khi Naga Cults*, Rock explained that the Naxi Naga clans found their equivalent in Tibetan Bonpo demonology: the Dongba *Nyi* are the Tibetan *gNyang* who live on trees, the *Dtu* are the Tibetan *gTod* 'pronounced To, who dwell on rocks and cliffs' and the *Ssa-ndaw* are 'the typical earth owners, the Tibetan Sa-bdag.'⁷⁴ Rock explained that *lee* (also *lv*) which means dragon is probably derived from the Chinese *long* (dragon).⁷⁵ In fact, the pictograph for *lee* clearly depicts a dragon (see p. 207). Rock also found the etymology of *si* (also Se/Ssu) challenging enough that he dedicated a sub-section to its explanation:

As to the Na-khi term for Naga, the Tibetan Klu, we find that they possess two such terms, one Ssu [si] which occurs only in their literature, and another Llu-mun which is colloquially used, but is also found in manuscripts, but only rarely. The name Ssu for Naga has greatly puzzled me, and none of the Dto-mbas or Na-khi priests was able to explain the word or its meaning. Ssu is the general term for all the Nagas Not until I examined Professor Tucci's beautiful work *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* did the meaning of the term Ssu become clear. There I found in Volume II, Appendix 2, references to a type or class of demons called Se or bSe. It is also the name of a tribe, and Sarat Chandra Das in his *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 1273 b, mentions a demon of the sa-bdag class Se-bdud, now nearly all sa-bdag are Nagas, and the Na-khi call such sa-bdag shi-szi meaning spirit snake, mountain gods are also thus termed,⁷⁶ On page 714 b of Tucci's work there is mentioned Se-hphang nag-po one of the most famous Klu of Tibetan

demonology. According to Tucci this Naga demon is also called Srog-dkar rgyal-po, now the syllable srog, pronounced sog which is the word for “life” is rendered in Na-khi ssu=life ... and there also exists in Na-khi literature a Ssu-p’er gyi-bbu, the last three syllables being a translation of the Tibetan dkar rgyal-po=white king. There is also a Ssu-ma-na-bpu a Naga considered to be the mother (not in a physical sense) of all the Ssu and Nyi Nagas ..., and Sarat Chandra Das’ Se-bdud has its counterpart in the Na-khi Ssu-ddv-na-bpu ..., the word ddv being equivalent to the Tibetan bdud, and like the latter represents a clan of demons

There is now no doubt that the Tibetan Se and the Na-khi Ssu [*Si*] are identical. This conclusion is further strengthened by Tucci’s remark (*l.c.*, p. 715 *a*) “probably the name of these Se, bSe or bSve should be linked with the Hsi-hsia word szu ..., which according to Chinese sources corresponds to Wu ...wizard, shaman”. It is well known that the Na-khi and the Hsi-hsia languages are related, and that they have many words in common (see Laufer, *The Hsi-hsia Language in T’oung Pao*, 1916, p. 68, no. 138).⁷⁷

Quite aside from enlightening us as to why Rock’s prose often got the better of his editors,⁷⁸ this passage supports the hypothesis that the Naga *si* do have real life counterparts. It also confirms that the Naxi *si* is not only a serpent spirit but specifically a mountain spirit. As Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu’s dictionary explains: the *si* is a mountain god (*shan shen*). The word *Se* which the Naxi pictographic *si* depicts as a snake, also recalls the word for snake in Chinese, *she*, which in the southern pronunciation is *se*.⁷⁹

Indeed, it is not very far-fetched to argue that the terms, *lee* and *si* would extend to the tribal name Lisu (Leesi) to describe the ‘Dragons and Snakes’ who once dwelt in the wild regions, the ancient Chinese *Huangfu*:

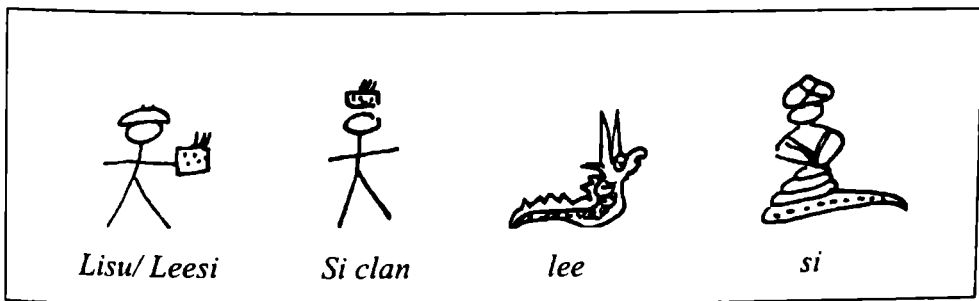
Five hundred li, the most remote, constituted the wild domain (Huangfu). Three hundred li were occupied by the tribes of Man; two hundred li by the criminals undergoing the greater banishment [wu bai li huangfu; san bai li man; er bai li liu]. (James Legge transl.)⁸⁰

To which Rock added:

The five hundred li Huangfu are the last of the domains. It was called Huangfu with reference we may suppose to the rude character of the inhabitants and the wildness of the country. It extended five hundred li in every direction beyond the fourth domain.⁸¹

According to the 18th century Chinese administrator Guan Xuexuan who compiled the *Lijiang Prefectural Records*, Lijiang was also once upon a distant time part of the *Huangfu*.⁸² For the *Huangfu* is to be found wherever the world is unpoliticized, unritualized and where humanity is not only barbarian (*man*), but indistinguishable from the natural world inhabited by animals and wild spirits.

That the word Lisu is a Chinese back-loan or a Sinicized approximation of a cognate term the etymology of which is derived from the same place as *long* and *she*, or the Tibetan *klu* and *se* or T-B terms such as the Naxi *lee* and *si* does make sense. Firstly, no one so far has provided an etymology for the word Lisu. Secondly, the Chinese characters used for the words Lisu 栗 栗 and also Suli 粟 粟 have no particular meaning in Chinese (Li 栗 means chestnut tree and is also a Chinese surname; Su 粟 means millet and is likewise a Chinese surname). Transliterations of foreign words into Chinese commonly end up written as meaningless characters. Thirdly, in the Tang dynasty records, the Lisu are given as Suli⁸³ which (if Su and Li are respectively snakes and dragons) restores the classical word order. And finally, the name Suli refers to a



people of the Sino-Tibetan borderland, a region once associated with the *Huangfu*.

Further evidence that the name Lisu may be derived from the cosmographic complex of the ancient Chinese and Tibetan worlds rests with the likelihood that the Qiang tribes had adopted something of Chinese language even before the Zhou dynasty. According to Edwin Pulleyblank, the Qiang used oracle bones

and the Chinese script during the Shang period (1500 B.C. - 1000 B.C.) because they most likely had adopted a Chinese language. Pulleyblank also recognizes in the Naxi and the Lolo (who include the Lisu) the heirs of these ancient Qiang tribes.⁸⁴ Now, one may object that the word *su* among the northwest Yunnanese and especially among the Yi groups is used generically, as for example, the Nuosu of Liangshan. And indeed, it is generally accepted that *su* simply means 'people' but the semantic correspondence between *su* and 'people' may well be secondary to the original meaning of *snake*. This suggestion finds a parallel in the term *man*, which in Chinese referred at once to a python and to the southern barbarians (e.g. Mo-so man, Puzu man, etc.). And *man* was also used by the same barbarians when they referred to themselves.⁸⁵ That aboriginal groups adopt ethnic names that were originally derogatory is nothing new, for this has happened all over the world. In fact, we know from the Dongba manuscripts that the Naxi once upon a time saw themselves as Na and Wu, Black and Slaves, and middle brothers of the Tibetans and Bai, or in other words, as people with no status and no rights of inheritance. And of course, today, the Mosuo request a name that is thoroughly despised in Lijiang.

The Leesi tribes of Lijiang and the Dongba *lee si* (Naga spirits) have the following attributes in common: both inhabit the mountain and forest regions, both are associated with hunting (the Lisu were hunters, expert with the cross bow)⁸⁶ and with medicine and fertility (even today Mosuo people readily explain that the best aphrodisiacs are obtained from the Lisu). More associations between hunters, snakes, medicine, and the peripheries can be found in the historical records, and in the practices and beliefs of the Lisu, Yi and the Naxi. Thus, Marco Polo's account of the region of Karajang (Dali) focuses on one essential theme: the hunt and trade of snakes and crocodiles, the serpents whose flesh when eaten cures anyone of any illness.⁸⁷ The Lisu also have dragon cults but no snake cults, but this is not the case of the Liangshan Nuosu who are allegedly their closest ethnic relatives⁸⁸ and who worship snakes in connection with fertility and hierogamic powers.⁸⁹

According to Chinese scholarship, the names Su and Li appear in the Chinese records for the first time with Fan Cho's *Man Shu* (863), hence sometime after the worst of the Sino-Tibetan wars of the 7th and 8th centuries. At this time, the Su and the Li lived in territories northwest of Lijiang, on the Tibeto-Sichuanese border.⁹⁰ According to the Yuan dynasty record, four centuries later, the Lisu were living in the same regions and more precisely in Zhongdian, Weixi etc., in other words in the forested mountains northwest of Lijiang. And it is among these people and other wild tribes that the Mu chiefs sought to establish buffer territories between the Naxi and the Tibetans. It is also in his ancient tribal wilderness that rock art is found.

Naga spirits, rock art and pictographs

The points made above lead to the conclusion that the Naxi pictographic script originates in the rock art tradition of the people the Mu chiefs conquered. But the key to the connection between rock art and pictographs rests with another link – the link between warfare, Naga cults, and the souls of the first occupants.

At this point it is once again useful to present the data in point form:

- Both the Bon and Mongol traditions connect the cult of Nagas to territorial conquest. The Mongols buried war captives, their horses and cattle at the foot of painted rocks in offering to the Dragons, the mountain spirits.⁹¹
- The Mu conquered territories in the wild domain inhabited by wild tribes, and notably Lisu or Leesi tribes.
- There is a linguistic connection between Lisu and *leesi* (Naga) spirits because both words are derived from *lee* and *si* which mean dragons and snake spirits.
- There is a cultural connection between Lisu and *leesi*: both are said to possess fertility medicine.
- *Leesi* are the ancestral souls of the wild domain.
- The Dongba must pacify the *leesi* when new lands are established.

- The Naxi Naga cults are all written in pictographic texts.
- The pictographic manuscripts are found in all Naxi areas, including all the areas conquered by the Mu during the Ming dynasty.
- The Naxi priests used to refer to themselves as *leebu* when they signed pictographic scripts, whilst the writers of Geba were once known as *dizi geba*. *Leebu* means ‘wife of the *lee*’ because the *leebu* are mediators between the ‘civilized’ world of men and the world of the wild mountain spirits.
- Rock art is found at the top of mountains, and near water whilst the *lee* spirits are likewise associated with mountains and mountain springs.
- Rock art is found in the territories associated with the Leesi (Lisu) tribes.

All of this supports the theory that the Naxi pictographs originate in the local rock art, Naga cults and the conquest of the tribal periphery but none of this provides us with the missing link, the means to establish how rock drawings did become pictographic symbols written in books. It is my belief, however, that more pieces of this puzzle can be found in the comparative elements between two Naxi Naga cults and their Mosuo counterpart, the *Remugubv*.

The Battle at Haba, and Naxi and Mosuo Naga cults

Mu Gong wrote in his 1516 Chronicle that in the year 1487, under the reign of his ancestor Mu Tai, a terrible battle took place in the mountains near the mouth of the Haba river (Zhongdian/Baidi region) on which occasion eighty-five people were taken prisoners and decapitated.⁹² It is in this same Haba valley that the Naxi offer a yearly cult to the *leesi* and the Garuda (*Kaikee*) on the eighth day of the second moon.⁹³ Now, according to Rock, the ceremony performed here is the *Si Ggv* which he believed to be pure Bon.⁹⁴ In the *Si Ggv*, the Naxi invite the Nagas and propitiate them to be granted fertility, descendants, wealth and health. Importantly, there exists a counterpart to the Naxi Naga cults in the Mosuo *Remugubv* which I was fortunate enough to

witness and record in Labei in 1991. During the *Remugubv*, the Daba chants of how a long time ago, the property was unequally divided between two brothers, how Remugu the mountain god and patron of the snake Zhessewoper received all the wild animals whilst Palassu 'who represents humanity' only obtained the domesticated beasts, and how the Eagle God(dess) Zhechegarmi (the Garuda) helped Palassu. The brothers then went to war in the mountains. When peace was finally made between Remugu and Palassu, the Mosuo received the rules of hunting (hunting taboos). The text given below was translated into English with the help of Lamu Gatusa in 1991.

The Remugubv

A long, long time ago, when the sky was shaking
 And the earth was unstable,
 The cliffs were rolling
 And the trees could walk.
 In the world there were only Remugu and Palassu.
 They were very rich
 For the things that can fly, walk and grow
 Were all theirs.
 The brothers were close
 But they had an argument because of the animals and the plants.
 They argued about who owned the sky and the earth.
 They fought over who owned the animals and the birds.
 The sky god Abaddu
 In order to make peace between them.
 Came to adjudicate.
 Remugu is very clever,
 His children are the snake, the frog and the eagle.
 Palassu is very honest,
 His children are all hunters.

When the animals were divided,
 Remugu represented the Mountain God
 To represent humanity,
 There were the hunters.
 The sky god Abaddu came to adjudicate
 But he was partial.
 He took the side of the mountain god.
 He made things difficult for the people.

The sky and the earth were not shared equally.
 The houses and the things of the household were not divided fairly.
 The animals who can walk were not shared in the same way.
 The animals who can fly were not shared equally.
 Palassu of the earth, ah,
 Of the animals who can fly
 Only received the rooster who could crow.
 He only received the pig who can turn over the earth,
 He only received the cat who can climb the trees,
 He only received the cows and the goats who have hooves split in two.
 He only received the horse who can gallop.
 Remugu received all the mountain animals,
 He received seven types of walking animals.
 He received nine types of flying animals.
 All the animals with hooves, he took them all.
 All the animals with wings, he took them all.

The hunter was not satisfied.
 He wished to take back the animals that walk and those that fly.
 But the sky god Abaddu
 Became even more partial.
 He gave Remugu the wild female ox, and the wild female horse.
 He gave Remugu the female musk deer and the female tiger.
 As for Palassu of the earth,
 He only received the baby horse and the baby goat.

As the hunter led the baby horse and the baby goat,
 He thought and thought and the more he thought, the more angry and desolate
 he became.
 In his heart, he could not accept what had been done and wished for revenge.
 He resolved to fight to settle things.

The hunter could fight.
 He began to twine the hemp string for his cross-bow.
 With the yellow wood from the forest he made the bow.
 With the bamboo, he made his arrows.
 When he had made the bow and arrow,
 He walked off towards the mountain.
 He made havoc at the place of the god Remugu.
 He brought chaps to the place where the birds perched and the animals grazed.
 He came to the place where Remugu's horses were eating.
 He made the black and yellow horse fight one another.
 He came to the place where Remugu's pigs were feeding.
 He made the black and white pig attack each other.
 He came to the place where Remugu's birds were perched

He made them peck at each other.
 He came to the place where Remugu's oxen were grazing
 He made the yellow ox and the black one rush at each other.

Remugu was furious.
 He sent his child snake Zhessewoper
 To block the water holes in the mountains.
 The place where people lived dried up.
 Palassu went to plead with the eagle god Zhechegarmi.
 Zhechegarmi flew high into the sky.
 She⁹⁵ flew down on the snake and grabbed him.
 Then she dropped him in the sea.⁹⁶

When the snake dropped into the water
 The waters sprang high up
 And then fell upon the earth.
 So that the sky rained and the earth was wet.

Remugu then sent his shepherds
 To pursue the hunter in the mountains,
 To find the hunter near the rivers.
 In the winter, the hunter fled to the peak of the mountains.
 The sky snowed heavily.
 So the hunter could not hide at the mountain peak.
 In the summer, the hunter fled to the river valley.
 The sky rained heavily,
 And the hunter could not hide there.
 In the autumn, the hunter escaped to the forest.
 The trees were losing their leaves.
 So the hunter could not hide there.

The hunter whistled three times
 But he did not hear any echo.
 The hunter called out to his relatives
 But he heard no answer.

The hunter had nowhere to hide.
 He arrived at the mountain spring
 But Remugu's shepherds were hiding in the waters.
 They caught the hunter and took him away.
 They hung him above the hearth.
 The smoke of the fire suffocated him.
 The heat of the fire cracked his skin.
 The hunter died.
 He stopped breathing.

To honor the memory of the hunter,
We must not kill animals near mountain springs when we go hunting.

After the hunter died,
Palassu was not happy.
He led all the hunters into the mountains
To make war against Remugu.
There was chaos in the world.
Until Majjayalu came to make peace.
He decided that there was no need to redistribute the animals
But that Palassu could go and hunt in the mountains.
From then on, Remugu and Palassu were at peace.
Palassu knew the rules of hunting.

The *Remugubv* is performed every year in the second moon. This ritual commemorates the battle that took place between the eagle god (or Garuda) and the snake (note that the Daba word for snake is *meebvzh*, which means ‘sky worm’, whilst it is *luna* in everyday Mosuo). The *Remugubv* also commemorates the original sharing of the land between humanity and the mountain god: when humanity lost the wild animals and had to settle for the domesticated animals. From this moment already, we see that the Mosuo ‘Naga’ cult diverges substantially from the Naxi ones, for the dominant theme is not about the encroachment of farming upon wild lands, but the hunters’ territorial marginalization, and subjugation into an agricultural mode of production. Unlike the Naxi Naga cult which opposes humanity to the natural world (trees, springs, mountains, etc.) the *Remugubv* opposes hunters and shepherds. From an historical perspective, it is important to note that in Yongning as in Lijiang, the rules of hunting (i.e. which animals could be hunted when and where and which could not) were established not only by Remugu but also by the feudal lord, for hunting contributed significantly to tribute and tax. Indeed, the *Remugubv* is telling the very opposite story of the Naxi Naga cult or rather, it is telling the *other side* of the story.

In the Mosuo cult, the eagle/Garuda defeats the snake/Naga just as happens in the Naxi and Tibetan cults, but in the Mosuo case, humanity does not win

against the mountain god. Unlike the Naxi stories which relate that the people defeated the Nagas, left their bodies to rot and the Dongbas to take care of exorcizing their ghosts, the *Remugubv* relates the death of a hero and recounts the story of an unsatisfactory peace accepted after defeat. Importantly, although Remugu is said to have given the Mosuo the rules of hunting, when the Mosuo do hunt, they don't sacrifice to Remugu. They sacrifice to Zaggala, the god with a rabbit face.⁹⁷ In Mosuo folklore, meanwhile, the rabbit is the trickster who stands up to the Tiger, king of beasts. For the rabbit represents the common folk, those who are numerous and without teeth, those who look the same and from amongst whom the Tiger cannot distinguish.

At the end of the *Remugubv*, when the Daba chants about the peace made between Palassu and his brother Remugu, he shares out a flour *dtorma* shaped like a pig between all the people present, keeping the head for himself, in the same fashion as Mosuo hunters share out the meat of the animal they catch in the hunt. According to tradition, the *dtorma* represents the wild pig which was offered in sacrifice when peace was made between the two brothers. Given the bloody history of the region, it is not unreasonable to believe that once upon a time, such a pig was shared between defeated hunters and the pastoralists and agriculturalists who settled among them.

The *Remugubv* is performed only in the hills of Labei. Perhaps in the rest of Mosuo country, this cult was forgotten in the wake of Gelug-pa teachings and practices. But perhaps, the *Remugubv* is found among the people of Labei and nowhere else in Yongning, because the people of Labei immigrated to these parts and brought this ritual with them. Or perhaps the *Remugubv* is found there because the people of Labei are hill dwellers whose ancestors resisted the political domination of the political centers. Whichever way, the *Si Ggv* held in Haba and the Mosuo *Remugubv* in Labei both relate ancient battles. And we know from the historical records that real life battles did take place in those hills, and indeed that a terrible battle took place in Haba in 1487. And when we read the Mosuo and Naxi ritual texts side by side, we can only conclude that the

Mosuo text relates the other side of the Naxi Naga stories, the side that lost out. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that the Naxi Naga cult and the *Remugubv* tell the two sides of the same story. That is, the story of the colonization of the tribal periphery.

Both rituals are held at about the same time, with the *Remugubv* taking place at any time during the second lunar month and the Naxi Naga cult, on the eighth day of the second month. The Mu Chronicle provides no specific date for the Haba battle but the order of events given in the record makes it likely to have taken place in the first half, if not in the beginning of the year. More importantly, however, the eighth day of the second month connects the Haba Naga cult to the Lijiang cult of Saddo, the god of the place and patron of Leebus (Naxi shaman), for Saddo's festival is held on this very day. Now, it is believed that Saddo was born in a sheep year and the Saddo festival therefore takes on particular significance on sheep years,⁹⁸ and perhaps it is also significant that the year 1487 which marks the terrible battle at Haba happens to be a sheep-fire year (*Tibetan* calendar).

Meanwhile, we also read in the 1516 Chronicle that the chief Mu Tai who waged the mighty war in Haba was himself none other than a reincarnation of Mou-bao Ah-cong and that 'he was so gifted that he too could read the books his ancestor had invented'.⁹⁹ With Mu Tai and the Haba campaign, therefore, we find a saintly reincarnation, a yearly Naga cult and the local books, whilst in Baidi, we find yet another series of military campaign, another yearly Naga cult, a holy man (Ah-mi) who taught the pictographic books, a holy reincarnation of Shili, the founder of Naxi religion and the Mu chiefs' personal god, whilst Shili himself had visited this cave in 1054, at the foundation of the Mo-so kingdom. And in Baidi, the Dongbas dedicate the 8th day of the second moon not only to the Nagas but specifically to the commemoration of Dibba Shilo's residence in the cave.¹⁰⁰ For Shilo, Rock tells us, 'acts as a go-between between the Nagas and the people'.¹⁰¹ In Baidi also, we find sacred pools and rocks and forgotten rock art.

Chinese scholars Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an believe that in Baidi, the dedication of the 8th day of the second moon to the cult of Dibba Shilo originated in the primitive nature worship dedicated to water custodians.¹⁰² I will conclude instead that the foundation of the Shilo cult at Baidi has its origins in the Mu colonization, and that it can be dated to the year 1554 and to Mu Gao's visit to the cave. In the same vein, I shall date the origins of the Haba Naga cult to the terrible battle that took place there in 1487. I shall also stress the point that in Lijiang, history is a contingency of eternal returns because a long time ago, the Bonpo chiefs had offered sacrifice to the god of the place and of the sacred mountain to obtain a king for those who did not have one, and that is how the first king of Tibet, gNa-khri-bcan-po descended from heaven via the sacred mountain.¹⁰³

Custom, Ritual and Law

The discussion I have so far put forward regarding the *Remugubv* and Naxi Naga cults underscores the indivisibility of the religious and temporal sphere in ancient Lijiang. Here society and political relations take shape in context of a broader religious vision which defines and rules not only the relationships between people, between the Naxi themselves, and the Naxi and their neighbors, but also between people and the natural world. Geo-cosmography is fundamental to this perception of Time and Space. The universe is the "World of the People". It consists of the politicized world at the center which is ordered by cosmic ruling and where *ritual and kings* mediate between heaven and earth, between Time and Space, ensuring the return of seasons and the crops, the fertility of ancestors and the continuity of their descendants. On the margins of this world are the unpoliticized domains of the natural world, inhabited by wild beasts and the "wild tribes" who speak like the birds and mate with animals, and then also their ancestral serpent spirits who have it in their powers to withhold life giving water from the mountain springs, to cause droughts and send disease into the World of the People.

In this world where all that is ordered is ultimately aligned on a cosmic and religious vision, ritual is central to human and political relations because ritual has the power to bridge the material and divine realm, and therefore to transform social relations. I have already put forward that in the Tibetan and Yunnanese traditions, Naga cults were essential to conquest because they effected the transfer of territory and ancestor souls to new occupiers. I may now add that some rituals, such as the *Remugubv* also sealed defeats and submission. Seen in historical *and* sociocultural terms, rituals like the Naga cults and *Remugubv* do not only commemorate ancient events (the war and final peace making between hunters and pastoralists and local spirits) but reaffirm the peace making process as an eternal return, on a yearly basis, from generation after generation.

That ritual shapes social consensus is very much a given in anthropological theory, but what I am stressing here is the concrete and objective aspect of this anthropological fact. Much of the literature focuses on ritual as transformative and integrative social action, actualized by largely unconscious processes at both verbal and non-verbal levels. In this, however, anthropological interest is above all concerned with the workings of symbolic processes on the individual and the group.¹⁰⁴ What I am stressing here by contrast, is ritual as a concrete political event and a concrete political process. The *Remugubv* establishes the rules of hunting, whilst the Naxi cults ensure the transfer of powers of fertility and wealth. Historically speaking therefore, these rituals not only sealed both sides of a socio-ritual *status quo* that had been initiated by warfare but also ensured that the *status quo* was maintained in time. Ritual shaped the language of superior force into the non-verbal and poetic language of gods, spirits, and nature, and transformed relations of unequal strength into relationships of consent that were self-regulatory, and cosmically legitimized – so much so that their human origins were not so much obscured as entirely forgotten.

The Mu Chronicles and the invention of the Naxi books

Except for a small note in the Ming records to the effect that Mou-bao Ah-cong wrote in the script of a 'Western Barbarian' imperial historians ignored the Dongba books until the Qing period. But the Chronicles of the Mu Family mention the book tradition on three occasions:

- 1) Mu Gong wrote in 1516 that the chief Mou-bao Ah-Cong (1253) could already read at the age of seven and that he invented the local 'literature'.
- 2) Also in 1516, Mu Gong wrote that the chief Mu Tai who ruled 1488-1503 was the reincarnation of Mou-bao Ah-cong, that he was so great a shaman that he also could read the books his great ancestor had invented.¹⁰⁵
- 3) In a supplementary note to the Chronicle, it is also written that the 17th century chief Mu Zeng 'printed many Tibetan Buddhist books to teach religion to the tribal peoples'.¹⁰⁶

The 16th century chiefs were undoubtedly concerned with the books and the Dongba tradition. Not only did Mu Gong write about the local books on two occasions, but his son Mu Gao went to Baidi to dedicate the sacred cave to Shilo in 1554, one year after Mu Gong's death and at a time when Zhongdian had been pacified yet once again. As we saw earlier, Mu Gao wrote that Shili had resided in the cave 500 years before – or 1054, which is the date of the foundation of the Mo-so Zhao, the dynasty of the Mou ancestors, and again, as we saw, the date 1054 has cosmic rather than strictly speaking, historical significance, but it is precisely that which matters. The date 1054 establishes a sacred relationship between Shilo, the Mou ancestors, their Mu descendants, Heaven, Baidi, its people and the pictographs, because the Dongba, the pictographic books and the politicization of the peripheral regions went together.

Interestingly, neither Chronicle mentions Mu Gao's visit to Baidi although much else was written, including the tribute paid, the executions of rebels, the

villages established, the honors received by the chiefs, the wives they took and the children (sons) they had. Thus, we must assume that ‘Dongba’ diplomacy, in other words, *native* techniques in social and political control and what those implied regarding the divinity of the Celestial Mu, were of no interest to official historiography. By 1545, Mu Gong himself underplayed the magical elements his family history. Thus, his Confucianized Chronicle says nothing of Yeye inventing the books or of Mu Tai’s supernatural abilities. Likewise, Mu Zeng’s efforts at ‘Buddhist’ book printing are only mentioned in a colophon. Hence, here again, we find that even as the Mu became increasingly Sinicized, they steered the course of history between the outward looking Confucian discourse of the imperial state and the traditional discourse of myths and magic that made sense of internal politics.

Nevertheless, that Mu Gong and Mu Gao were concerned with the local books and the cult of Shilo, and that he should have credited Mu Tai’s supernatural abilities and his knowledge of the books confirms that the manuscript tradition played an important part in the ritual of the Mu realm. In fact, one cannot resist the thought that Mu Tai rather than Mou-Bao Ah-cong may have invented the pictographic books. As we saw above, Mongol influence was still strong in the early Ming, although, of course, if the date on Rock’s Naga manuscript is 1393, then clearly this manuscript antedates Mu Tai. But perhaps what is of real interest here is that the oldest dated book we know of should be a Naga book – because if the first pictographic books were dedicated to the Naga cults, then we could explain how rock art turned in pictographic books. Rock paintings of animals and things were imbued with the life force that animates the material world, and the pictographs transferred this life force onto book pages. And so Leebus signed their manuscripts, and so the Leesi and their spirit ancestors gave up their wealth and granted descendants upon their conquerors.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the Naxi pictographs, the Naxi Naga cults, in other words, the cults of the *lee* (dragons) and *si* (snakes) spirits, the colonization of the ‘wild’ unpoliticized periphery and its people, and finally rock art are historically interconnected. Thus, I proposed that the Naxi chose to write in pictures because pictures were imbued with a sacredness which writing did not have, and which had already been established in rock art. As to the other points, I argued that rock art, snakes and dragons are all associated with water and the mountain (the wild regions), that the name Lisu which in Naxi is Leesi is a cognate of the Naxi *lee* and *si* spirits, of the Tibetan *klu* and *se*, and the Chinese *long* and *she* which mean dragons and snakes, and which in ancient Chinese cosmography also referred to the wild things of the ‘unpoliticized’ domain. To this, I have added that Lijiang tradition holds that the pictographic script began in the Baidi/Zhongdian periphery which was home to wild tribes and among them the Lisu, until the Mu campaigns of the Ming dynasty. I have also brought to bear on the argument the fact that in former times, the Dongbas called themselves Leebu when they signed pictographic books, and that Leebu means ‘wife of the *lee*’.

This discussion presented in this chapter, therefore, holds that the Naxi pictographic script – whenever it may have been invented – played a crucial role at that particular historical juncture when the Mu chiefs colonized that Other domain, the political periphery that belonged not to the Naxi chief but to the mountain god and the spirits of the wilderness. This argument is founded on one elementary principle: in a world ordered according to the rules of cosmic hierarchies and harmonies, territory cannot just be taken, it must be transacted.

As we saw in Chapter II, the conqueror must marry the king’s or the chief’s daughter, but if the territory is an unpoliticized, ‘wild’ place – which from the perspective of the colonizer, is a place with no king and therefore with no king’s daughter to be had – then, the original spirits and custodians, the Dragons and Snakes, must be compensated and exorcized so that the colonizers may prosper and reproduce themselves. Historically, what is important here is that the spirits

of the place should be indistinguishable from the ghosts of the first occupiers, the souls of their dead ancestors and the souls which they will themselves become. Both the Mongol and the Tibetan traditions can be invoked to exemplify this politico-ritual process, for both traditions associate the cults of local spirits with conquest and the expansion of territory. In the context of Naxi history, the combination of Mongol and Bon traditions is embodied in the personae of Yeye, Mou-bao Ah-cong, and Ah-Cong's reincarnation, Mu Tai.

The arguments which I presented above imply that the history of the Naxi pictographic script did not result of a natural process of evolution, whilst the diffusion of the pictographic tradition had nothing to do with the original migration of the Mo-so tribe or with the alleged gender intrigues of the Qing administration. Rather, the pictographic books originate in the ritual transfer of territory, local spirits and their sacred representations (rock art) to the Mu rulers. For the Mu conquered by force and ruled by ritual, and the pictographs had an advantage the Geba did not have: they embodied and contained the *lee*, the guardian spirits of the land who granted or withheld life giving water, good health and illness, wealth and fertility.

¹He Limin, "Jinshajiang Yanhua Faxian Ji" [A report of the discovery of rock art in the region of the Jinshajiang] *Minzu Gongzuo*, October Issue 1993, pp. 43-36. Also He Limin, "Jinshajiang Yanhua de Faxian He Chutan" [Preliminary findings on the discovery of rock art in the region of the Jinshajiang]: *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (5) 1993, pp. 73-80. And for the first report on the rock art of Lijiang, He Shangli, "Zhari De Dixing Ji Yanhua" [The topography of Zhari and rock art], *Dixing Fangzhi* (1) 1991, pp. 60-61.

²You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Sheqi de Naxizu He Lisuzu". In this context, "hunting and gathering people" will include people who lived by collecting and trading native forest products, medicinal herbs, musk, and other aphrodisiacs. The trade between hill tribes and Tibetans is attested as early as the *Man Shu*, and the Mu genealogies make constant reference to native products. The hills of northwest Yunnan are still exploited today for these purposes.

³Zhu Baotian is the exception. Zhu has written on the discovery of a stone bearing pictographic symbols similar to the Lijiang pictographs in the region of Muli. Zhu Baotian, Original title missing [the distribution and diffusion of the Naxi pictographs: new research on the question] *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (3) 1984, pp. 74-76. However, the symbols which Zhu describes are the eight Buddhist symbols (the knot, conch, etc.) and although these have found their way into the Naxi pictographic manuscripts, they cannot be claimed as Dongba pictographs.

⁴Some Dabas are not altogether without 'writing': In Muli, the Dabas use a small number of pictographs for divination purposes. The Mosuo also make use of a few abstract symbols when

they build houses, marking each log specifically to indicate which row it belongs to as well as its destined orientation. To argue that these symbols may be all that the Mosuo have left of a former writing system, however, would be stretching the point as these are very rudimentary.

⁵The people of Qizong speak a Mosuo language and are said to have come from Muli in the late Ming period when, oral history has it, they were deported by Mu Ceng. They are known to the Naxi as *Malimasa*: Muli Mosuo. *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* [Research into the social history of the Naxi nationality] Vol. III, Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988, pp. 33-34.

⁶Taoist priests also dance this lame step, called the step of Yu.

⁷In some stories, the books are made of pig skin, but never of paper.

⁸All Mosuo are subject to Lamaist funeral rites. The Daba performs part of the rituals but the last person in the cremation grounds must be a lama. How many lamas perform at a Mosuo funeral and the extent of their involvement depends mostly on the economic situation of the family of the deceased.

⁹Rock suggested that *Da* (*dda*) was derived from the Tibetan word *zlas* which is pronounced *de* and means incantation, while *pa* would mean 'one who mutters incantations'. See, J.F. Rock, "Contributions to the Shamanism of the Tibetan-Chinese Borderland", *Anthropos*, p. 805. Rock may be right since loan words can be rationalized within existing linguistic systems.

¹⁰S.R. Munford, *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal*; University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, p. 53. Also M. Oppitz, "Ritual Drums of the Naxi", in Oppitz and Hsu (1998), pp. 311-342.

¹¹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 356.

¹²J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 356, 420-421. Also the *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* confirms that the La family of Zuosuo were not members of the Ngue clan (the clan of the Yongning Tusi), p. 156.

¹³See *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, pp. 72-75, pp. 155-156, pp. 239-246.

¹⁴J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 356-357.

¹⁵See note 5.

¹⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 361.

¹⁷H. Jansen, *Sign, Symbol and Script*, London, Allen and Unwin 1970, pp. 194, 47. Incidentally, Ojibwas and Naxi also shared a similar approach in their musical traditions. See F.R. Burton, *American Primitive Music*, New York, Moffat, Yard, 1909 (1902), p. 107.

¹⁸See *Yuanshi Ren Xinmu Zhong de Shijie* [The worldview of primitive people], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1986, pp. 383-391; and for a pictorial survey of the rock art of China, Jiang Zenming, *Timeless History, The Rock Art of China*, Beijing, New World Press, 1991.

¹⁹He Limin, "Jinshajiang Yanhua de Faxian He Chutan" 1993. Mr. He Limin kindly showed me the (unpublished) photographic records in 1993.

²⁰V.A. Riazanovskii, *Customary Law of the Mongol Tribes*, Harbin, Artistic Printing House, 1929, pp. 36-39.

²¹W. Heissig, *A Lost Civilization*, pp. 244-249, also p. 254.

²²Personal communication, Lijiang 1993.

²³*Yuanshi Renxin Muzhong de Shijie*; [On the worldviews of primitive man], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1986, p. 383.

²⁴Also the Lulu tribe of Lijiang (which Rock mentioned on a number of occasions) had pictographic books and Dongbas although the Lulu spoke a different language from the Naxi. See J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 10 note 3; and J.F. Rock, 'Studies in Na-khi Literature', in *Bulletin de L'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* (3) 1937, p. 47.

²⁵Note that this is oral tradition and not a Dongba text.

²⁶Other versions make one of the Ah-mi's a 'reincarnation' or a descendant of the other. In these stories, the first Ah-mi is sometimes said to have moved to Baidi from Lijiang basin where he was a serf of the Mu chiefs. See Dong Shaoyu, "Naxizu Dongba Jiao Diaocha", pp. 271-273.

²⁷In another version, this was the fate of the other Ah-mi. Ibid.

²⁸Translated and slightly condensed from *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Yu Shenhua Da Cidian* (Encyclopedia of the Religions and Mythologies of the Chinese peoples), Shanghai, Xuefan Chubanshe, 1990, p. 495.

²⁹The people of Baidi have ritualized some of their experiences with conquest. During the Sacrifice to Heaven, as the participants are about to offer the sacrificial pig to Heaven, they drop everything they do and call out: 'The soldiers of the Mongol King are coming', they run to hide away for a while and return to complete the Sacrifice later. According to Li Lincan's informants, this part of the ritual is a historical re-enactment. McKhann comments that the 'event in question can only refer to the Mongol conquest of the Naqxi ...in 1253' and concludes that Li's informants tell an unlikely story because the Mongols invaded Naxi territory in the 9th lunar month, which is not a Sacrifice to Heaven month. C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 201. McKhann takes his dates from Rossabi (1988), but according to Rock's translation of the relevant passages of the *Yuan Shi*, the Mongols did not arrive in Yunnan but in Sichuan on the 9th moon. Then, they crossed the Dadu river on the 10th and they were in Lijiang by the 11th month (December). See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 93-95. December is a Sacrifice to Heaven month. More significantly, however, one should not assume that 'The soldiers of the Mongol King are coming' must refer to the Mongol invasion for this is just as likely to refer to the Lijiang chiefs as to Kublai. Between 1253 and 1381, the Lijiang chiefs were Mongols by extension since their successions were legitimized by the Mongols. The Lijiang chiefs and the Mongols also acted in unison to subdue the different clans of the Lijiang region during the 14th century. Finally, it is also likely that the Naxi chiefs were known as Mongols throughout the Yuan period and very possibly, for sometime afterwards. After all, the Yongning chiefs referred to themselves as Mongols into modern times.

³⁰Which is how the people of Lijiang speak, something already observed by Bacot at the turn of the century. See J. Bacot, *Les Mo-so*, p. 5.

³¹*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, Vol. II, p. 21. The authors conclude (as I do) that the ancestors of the people they interviewed arrived in Baidi during the Ming period at the time of the Mu conquest of the region. Yet, one paragraph above, they write that the Naxi no doubt settled in Baidi during the 6th or 7th centuries A.D. Also, note that in this case averaging 25 years per generation is justified since we are not dealing with personal genealogies based on primogeniture, as are the genealogies of the chiefs.

³²You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Dai de Naxizu He Lisuzu"; also see *Lisuzu Jian Shi*, pp. 16-17.

³³See Rock's translation of the Mu Chronicles in the ANKSWC; also the *Lisuzu Jian Shi*, pp. 16-19 and the *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. II, pp. 21, 22.

³⁴M. Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, pp. 189-190.

³⁵Possibly a reference to a former solar/lunar calendar. The Liangshan Yi count solar weeks on 9 days, 36 days a month, 10 months a year. The 13 moons may stand for the 13th intercalary month of the Tibetan lunar calendar.

³⁶Buddhist heaven, the Bon and the Taoist heavens have 13 levels.

³⁷The white horse is an important symbol in Qiang, Tibetan and Mongol symbology. The patron god of the Naxi, Saddo also rides a white horse as does the Goddess Gamu, patron deity of the Mosuo.

³⁸A calendrical reference, 360 is a sacred number for Bonpos and Buddhists and it is the standard number for Shilo's disciples.

³⁹Soma is the title of the Mosuo shamans who, in contrast to Shilo's wife, deal only with gods, not demons.

⁴⁰The white yak and the white horse are standard terms for maternal and paternal kin among the Qiang and the Tibetans. Evidently, the message Dibaba Shilo is giving here is that a marriage alliance is necessary for the continuation of his own line (for his ancestors will die if he himself has no descendants and his ancestors have no place to rest), so he is justifying the conquest of the demoness' territory. Note also that maternal ancestors precede paternal ancestors.

⁴¹Instruments to collect forest products and therefore, most likely medicine; i.e. magic/healing powers and knowledge. The Lijiang hills have long been famous for their medicinal plants and

other forest products. In the *Man Shu* (863), Fan Cho commented that the Tibetans came to Lijiang to trade with the hill aboriginals. See G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, Ch. 7.

⁴²In other words, the demoness loses her powers then marries Shilo.

⁴³Shilo now does the curing, not his demon wife.

⁴⁴A reference to the three powers of Tibet, Dali and Lijiang. This particular allusion is likely to date from the Mongol period. Buddhism was adopted by Nanzhao circa 800, the Tibetans did not begin to recover Buddhism after the collapse of their royal house (842) before 1050. It is really under the Mongols that Buddhism was established as a temporal power once and for all in Tibet, and that the Bai, Naxi and Tibetans stood as three distinct, internally unified vassal states, while the Tibetans and Bai were both Buddhist and the Naxi were not. Dali was annexed by the Ming in 1381 and this was the end of royal Buddhism there.

⁴⁵Today, the Naxi put stones at the foot of trees in the graveyards. The rocks are said to house the soul of the dead, while the tree allows the soul to commute between heaven and earth. The stones and trees are black because they are associated with evil.

⁴⁶Synopsis from the translation of the Dongba manuscripts in J. F. Rock, "The Birth and Origin of Dto-mba Shi-lo, the founder of Mo-so Shamanism", *Artibus Asiae* (7), 1937. Also summarized in *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian*, p. 494.

⁴⁷M. Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, p. 189-190.

⁴⁸On the powers of the dead to impart fertility to their descendants, see S.E. Thompson: "Death, Food, and Fertility" in J.L. Watson and E.S. Rawski (eds.), *Death Rituals in Late Imperial and Modern China*, Berkeley, University of California Press; 1988. pp. 71-109. Also M. Bloch, "Death, Women and Power", in M. Bloch and M. Parry (eds.), *Death and Regeneration*; Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 211-230.

⁴⁹When Cao Pi succeeded the Han emperor and established a new dynasty in 220 A.D., he sacrificed to Heaven and married Han Xiandi's two daughters, just as emperor Yao had married the daughters of Shun. C.P. Fitzgerald, *A Cultural history of China*, pp. 258-259; also see the genealogy of the early Tibetan kings in S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, p. 28. The Yunnanese tradition relates that the first king of Yunnan, Ren Guo (who was invested in the wake of the Han conquest) was the son of Asoka and of a celestial princess. The first king of Nanzhao, Xinuluo, also married a king's daughter and thus established his own kingdom, the Meng She Zhao, or Nanzhao. C. Sainson, *Nan-ichao Ye-che*, pp. 29, 31,33.

⁵⁰See also K.W. Bolle, "In Defense of Evhemerus" in J. Puhvel (ed.): *Myth and Law Among the Indo-Europeans*, Berkeley University Press, 1970, p.35.

⁵¹See Chapter VIII for more details on the Sacrifice to Heaven.

⁵²J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 176, also p. 13.

⁵³J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 98.

⁵⁴J.A. Placzek, "Black Thai Symbols of State and Leadership", p. 64.

⁵⁵See, for example, C. Warren, *Adat and Dinas, Balinese Communities in the Indonesian State*, Oxford University Press 1993, pp. 36-61, Chapter entitled, "Earth, Death and Citizenship".

⁵⁶See J.F. Rock, NNCRC.

⁵⁷D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, pp. 12 and 199.

⁵⁸V.A. Riazanovskii, *Customary Law of the Mongol Tribes*, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁹See in the same vein, H.G. Quaritch Wales, *Prehistory and Religion in South-East Asia*, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1957, p. 144.

⁶⁰Information from Dongbas He Jigui and He Yuncai, Lijiang, 1991.

⁶¹See F. Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*; Stanford University Press, 1992. And for a psychoanalytical evaluation of the phenomenon, R. Mathieu, *Études sur la mythologie et l'éthnologie de la Chine ancienne*, Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983, pp. XLV, XLVI.

⁶²C. Sainson, *Nan-ichao Ye-Che*, pp. 171-190.

⁶³Could this refer to a native practice of bark and rock paintings?

⁶⁴J.F. Rock, NNCRC, pp. 119-120.

⁶⁵C. Sainson, *Nan-ichao Ye Che*, p. 171.

⁶⁶There are examples all over the world of ritual and mythological adjustments needed to legitimize conquest in alien territories. For example, the difficulty of settling conquered sites when original populations have been entirely destroyed is documented in north American literature. Indeed, who takes care of the ghosts? Ojibwa chief George Copway thus wrote: 'My great-grand-father was the first who ventured to settle at Rice Lake, after the Ojibway nation defeated the Hurons.... He must have been a very daring adventurer - a warrior - for no one would have ventured to go and settle down on the land from which they had just driven the Hurons Here he lived ... enduring the unpleasant idea that he lived in the land of bones.' G. Copway: *Recollection of a Forest Life*, London, C. Gilpin, 1847; pp. 7-9. Note that in the Australian Aboriginal context immigration alone requires the transfer of sacred sites and myths. For example, in Laverton West Australia, immigrants are integrated into the community when they are formally adopted as relatives by autochthonous families, and when they are given myths and access to local sacred sites (fieldwork 1994). In Lijiang, immigrants obtained the right to marry into the Naxi community and thus became Naxi by participating in the Sacrifice to Heaven (more on this in Chapters VII and VIII).

⁶⁷J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 8.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹See He Limin, "Jinshajiang Yanhua de Faxian he Chutan", p. 75.

⁷⁰See Fang and He's dictionary, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, picts. 1303, 1303, pp. 356, 357.

⁷¹Aside from the Si clan, all transcriptions follow Rock's.

⁷²You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Sheqi de Naxizu He Lisuzu", pp. 63.

⁷³Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, picts 1302, 1303, pp. 356 and 551, p. 222.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, picts. 1392, 1303, p. 356; J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p. 11.

⁷⁶See *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*, pict. 1302, p. 356.

⁷⁷Ibid, pp. 11, 12.

⁷⁸William Simpich, Rock's editor at the *National Geographic* once commented: 'Apparently, he has never learned to write with a view of holding reader interest to the end ... Added to this basic defect, his sentences often include six or eight lines and without expressing a complete thought. ... he complains that we "change his meaning". If this ever occurred, it was because no one could tell *what* he meant.' S.B. Sutton, *In China's Border Provinces: the Turbulent career of Joseph Rock Botanist Explorer*, p. 200.

⁷⁹Note that the word for snake in Naxi is *ri*. Edwin Pulleyblank reconstructs the Early Middle Chinese (6th Century A.D.) pronunciation of *she* as [ri]. E.G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1991.

⁸⁰J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. III, Part I, p. 147; quoted in J. F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 63

⁸¹J.F. Rock, *ibid*, p. 63, see also J. Gernet, *La Chine ancienne*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, pp. 38-39.

⁸²J.F. Rock, *ibid*, p. 63.

⁸³The *Man Shu* speaks of a Su and Li, the tribe with two surnames [Su Li Liang Xing] - G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 44. Note that the *Lisuzu Jian Shi* quotes from the *Man Shu* but modernizes the word order to Lisu, see p. 13.

⁸⁴E.G. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and their Neighbors", in D.N. Keightly (ed.), *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*, p. 421.

⁸⁵*Matthew's Chinese English Dictionary*, character 4343, p. 613; H. Wiens, *China's March Towards the Tropics*, pp. 35, 36.

⁸⁶*Lisuzu Jian Shi*, p. 16; see also You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Sheqi de Naxizu he Lisuzu", p. 64.

⁸⁷Marco Polo, *The Travels*, New York, Grosset and Dunlop (no date), pp. 174-176.

⁸⁸See *Lisuzu Jian Shi*, pp. 9-12. Also I. De Beauclair, *Tribal Cultures of Southwest China*, Taipei, The Oriental Cultural Service, 1970, p. 3. A.Y. Dessaint, *Minorities of South-West China*, New Haven, HRAF Press, 1980.

⁸⁹In January 1992, the Yunnan Provincial Museum held an exhibition of Liangshan Yi cultural artifacts and art as part of the National Art Festival. The exhibits had never been shown before and even local Yi scholars were surprised at the prominent place of snakes in the exhibition. Most striking of all were the female, male snake sculptures which were described in the official tags as Yin and Yang and fertility symbols.

⁹⁰*Lisuzu Jian Shi*, pp. 13-22; also Wang Hengjie, *Lisuzu* [the Lisu nationality], Kunming Minzu Chubanshe, 1987, pp. 15-16.

⁹¹V.A. Riazanovskii, *Customary Law of the Mongol Tribes*, pp. 36-37.

⁹²J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 111. Baidi was "closed to foreigners" when I was doing fieldwork in Lijiang. Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an, "Naxizu Dongba Jiao Diaocha" pp. 263- 268, confirm that a Naga cult takes place in Baidi region on the 8th day of the 2nd lunar month.

⁹³J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 262.

⁹⁴J.F. Rock, NNCRC, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁵I use the feminine pronoun because Zhechegarmi ends with the feminine suffix *mi* and at other times, the eagle god is said to lay eggs. However, it is important to note that the Mosuo are not concerned with the gender of this god.

⁹⁶In another version (told by Lamu Gasso), she drops the snake on the earth and his skin cracks - which is why today all snakes have scales.

⁹⁷See C. Mathieu, "Moso Religious Specialists" in Oppitz and Hsu (1998), pp. 209-234.

⁹⁸J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 197.

⁹⁹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 113-114.

¹⁰⁰Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an, "Naxizu Dongba Jiao Diaocha", p. 268.

¹⁰¹J.F. Rock, NNCRC, p.10.

¹⁰²Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an, "Naxizu Dongba Diaocha", p. 268.

¹⁰³See R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennnes*, p 64 and S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, pp. 27-28; also M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁴For an overview, see W. A Lessa and E.Z. Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion, an anthropological approach*, Harper and Row, 1979, Chapter Five: "The Symbolic Analysis of Ritual", the classic articles by Edmund Leach, Victor Turner, Roy Rappaport, William Lessa and E. von Vogt, Renato Rosaldo, Robert Lowie, J.S. Slotkin, etc. pp. 220-300. Also, Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*, Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000 Chapter 2, "Myth, Ritual, Symbolism and Taboo", articles by Victor Turner, Daniel Gordon, and Raymond Firth.

¹⁰⁵See Chavannes's translation in: "Documents géographiques et historiques relatifs à Li-kiang" and the photographed reproduction of the original Chinese text in J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, Vol. I.

¹⁰⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 160.

Chapter VI

Love and Marriage: A Comparative Review of Kinship Diversity in Northern Yunnan

Introduction

By the turn of the 20th century, the Mu kingdom was long gone. The Dongba had lost many of its ceremonies, and its priests were in all appearance becoming more ignorant. Yet, one Dongba ceremony was still flourishing in Lijiang basin – the funeral rites dedicated to the souls of people who had committed love suicide. Generally speaking, Chinese and Western scholars agree that the Dongba played a major role in upholding the Naxi love suicide custom if only because it provided the mythological model which inspired young people to kill themselves – the beautiful and tragic story of Kamagumiki, the first Naxi girl who committed love suicide. But this is where consensus stops, for when it comes to explaining the historical origins of the suicide custom, there is once again much divergence of opinion.

Rock, Jackson and Chao argue that love suicide resulted of the Confucianization of Naxi custom under the Qing administration, whilst Goullart blamed the Naxi feudal lords themselves. Naxi scholars object that the love suicide custom has deep roots in Naxi culture and history. They agree that love suicides most likely increased under Qing administration, but that the latter exacerbated rather than initiated the problem.

In this chapter, I explore the theory that the Naxi love suicide custom attests to the matrilineal past of Naxi society and to the Naxi's origins in Mosuo society. In the light of comparison, and in particular, in the light of the marriage customs of the patrilineal Mosuo people of Labei, I will conclude that Confucianism and the Qing administration did not invent marriage for the Naxi, and, after Durkheim, that suicide is not always evidence of social dysfunction.

The Naxi love suicide custom

Until 1949, the Naxi who lived in the Lijiang plain (things were far more relaxed in the hill regions) were famous in Yunnan for their custom of love suicide, the *Yuvu*. In these darker ages, the Naxi betrothed their children at an early age, sometimes even before they were born. A betrothal promise could not be broken, brides had to be chaste, elopement was impossible, as was divorce, and only death could undo the original commitment made between intermarrying families. Paradoxically, in spite of its apparently strict sexual-moral code, Naxi society provided young people with many opportunities to relate to persons of the opposite sex, and in fact *encouraged* cross-sexual friendships among the young.¹ Not surprisingly, therefore, many adolescents fell in love and entered into illicit sexual relationships. They met on the alpine forests where young men herded their goats, and young women collected firewood. They also met at the festivals punctuating the year with merriment and dancing. A girl, it is true, was not supposed to ever go out alone, but her chaperone easily turned into a partner in crime.² Courtship began with a tune from the *Kaguoguo*, the bamboo Jaw's harp³. The boy played soft notes to entice the girl, and she played back to him. They met in secret until her pregnancy became obvious, and time came to end it all up on the mountain with a rope or poison. One morning, before daybreak, the girl prepared a food hamper. Dressed in her best clothes, the lovers met and went off together, as though they were going on a picnic, towards the Jade Dragon Mountain. There, they chose a beautiful spot where they lived until their food supplies ran out and they finally took their lives.

After the lovers had died, their bereaved relatives appealed to the Dongbas to preside at the funeral rites and send their souls on a happier journey. The Dongba(s) then performed the *Herlelukee* ceremony, chanting the *Romance of Kamagumiki* from the sacred manuscripts, and recalling the mythical story of the first lovers who had committed suicide. The *Herlelukee* took the souls of suicide to the place where the Naxi ancestors dwell and thus exorcized the dangerous suicide ghosts out of the community.⁴

Naxi love suicides were part of communal experience and highly ritualized. More often than not, several couples took their lives together, and so many young people died that according to Rock not one family in Lijiang plain had been spared from love suicide. Yet, no one who saw the lovers walk towards the mountain and certain death ever attempted to stop them, not even their parents, for what could they have done about the broken betrothal promise? In fact, should parents have found their children only half dead, they may have finished them off themselves, or else the whole community would have turned against them.⁵

The opinions of the scholars

Rock and his contemporary Peter Goullart blamed compulsory betrothal and the Dongbas for the Naxi love suicide custom. As they saw it (and indeed both Goullart and Rock were eye-witnesses), during the funeral rites, the Dongbas told a romantic and tragic story which had much appeal for the young, and led them to believe that at worst, the souls of suicides were to roam with the wind, for ever free, for ever young and for ever in love. Love suicide thus offered an attractive alternative to the life of hard work and drudgery which young women faced in marriage. History has partly validated Rock and Goullart's positions, because love suicide disappeared after the Communists introduced and enforced free choice marriage, and banned Dongba rituals. Both Rock and Goullart, however, also attempted to explain the Naxi love suicide custom beyond its psycho-cultural manifestation and from a socio-historical perspective.

Where history was concerned, Rock believed that the Naxi suicide custom had resulted from the changes brought by the naturalization of Lijiang in 1723. He surmised that in former times, the Naxi were probably like their Mosuo neighbors who practice 'free love' and among whom suicide is unknown. When the Manchu annexed Lijiang, they brought with them compulsory betrothal and expectations of female chastity and with this, they brought despair to Naxi country, causing an ever increasing number of young women to kill themselves. Goullart likewise believed that at some stage the Naxi had had a custom of free love not only like the Mosuo but also like the Tibetans. But in contrast to Rock, Goullart thought that the Naxi chiefs themselves had imposed rules of arranged marriage and Confucian virtue upon the Naxi.⁶

Jackson's own historical reconstruction of the Naxi love suicides devolves from Rock's ideas. Hence, Jackson takes for granted that the Manchu brought child betrothal and pre-marital chastity to the Naxi, but he takes things quite a bit further than Rock, proposing that the Qing administration forced a far reaching transformation of the Naxi gender system from matrilineality to patrilineality. We have already seen how Jackson tied this theory to the invention of the Naxi pictographs and to the history of Bon in Lijiang and Yongning, and I shall not reiterate. It will be enough to recall that Jackson's argument hinges on the premise that the former matrilineality of Naxi society is attested by the common ethnicity of the Mosuo and the Naxi.

In an article published in 1990, Emily Chao followed in Jackson's wake and took it that the key to understanding Naxi suicides lay with a comparison of Naxi and Mosuo societies. Modeling her argument on Marshall Sahlins' concept of 'structure and conjuncture',⁷ she built an interesting argument explaining that the introduction of Confucian expectations in 1723 Lijiang resulted in a clash of cultural values whereby the Naxi (who were once Mosuo) adopted patrilineality, compulsory betrothals and chastity, but nevertheless allowed the young to continue with the social freedom that had been the norm in the former matrilineal society. Meanwhile the myth attached to the suicide rituals provided young

people with a romantic inspiration for their actions and helped perpetuate love suicide in the Naxi community. Chao concluded that Naxi love suicides could be understood as 'acts of indigenous resistance in the face of cultural incorporation and gender transformation'.⁸

Naxi scholars and as we shall see, the present writer, do not disagree with Rock, Jackson or Chao as far as explaining the socio-psychological causes of the Naxi love suicide custom. He Zhonghua, for example, stresses the romantic appeal which the custom had for Naxi youth and the generational tensions that surrounded love suicide.⁹ Other scholars also invoke the contradictions inherent in the life styles of the young and the moral expectations placed upon them. They also take into consideration the surveillance of Naxi families under the Chinese administrative system, and the difficulties involved in returning bride-price if betrothal arrangements were broken, and finally the impossibility of divorce (mostly because of economic reasons).¹⁰ When it comes to the historical causes of the Naxi love suicide custom, however, Naxi scholars disagree. Like Jackson and Chao, they are convinced that the Naxi's remote origins lie with Mosuo society, but they argue that matrilineality had nothing to do with the Naxi love suicide custom. While they agree that direct imperial administration reinforced Confucian mores among the Naxi, they object that there is no evidence either from written or oral history to substantiate the theory that the love suicide custom originated after the annexation of Lijiang.¹¹

Now, ethnic sentiment may well play a role in the position of Naxi scholars on the history of love suicide. But their objection that oral history says nothing of the origins of Naxi *Yuvu* during the Qing period is worth heeding. As we have seen, even when official records provided very little information on local culture, oral history usually has plenty to say, even if what it does say more often than not is of metaphorical or essential value. Thus, local tradition relates stories of resistance to feudal rule, as well as the Mongol origins of the Mu chiefs. So that what is interesting here, is that oral tradition insists that the *love suicide custom is an old Naxi custom*. In Lijiang, during the early 1990s, Naxi scholars agreed with

popular opinion that the custom was tainted with 'feudal notions' (*fengjian sixiang*), but that it had deep roots in Naxi poetics, not Confucian oppression.

At any rate, Naxi scholars are not alone in objecting to Jackson's theory. For example, Shih Chuan-kang (1993) and Charles McKhann (1992) disagree with Jackson's entire thesis (neither mentions Chao's article). Both question that the Naxi were ever matrilineal and Shih, in particular, that the Naxi were ever Mosuo. Shih argues that the more ancient Chinese historical records dealing with Yunnan and notably the *Hou Han Shu* (History of the Later Han, Ch. 86) prove that patrilineality in Lijiang dates as far back as the Common Era.¹² For his part, McKhann argues that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage that typifies Naxi marriage custom is not a Chinese practice.¹³ In fact, McKhann sees little point in explaining the Naxi love suicide custom in terms of 'a dissonance involving past and present forms of Naqxi (sic) social organization' and argues that a 'better explanation involves [the] consideration of the social transformation of the individual as he/she moved from an unmarried state to a married state ... romance and marriage are wholly different things. The fact that parents and elders ... exerted a controlling influence over the latter in traditional Naqxi society does not preclude a general cultural interest in the other.'¹⁴

McKhann's objection is reasonable because the Naxi love suicide custom undoubtedly assumed its full dimension in the context of Naxi youth culture and generational tensions. And in fact, love suicide still holds some attraction for the young today, and although it is a thing of the past, the custom has not altogether disappeared. Five couples were found hanging in 1962 and a couple took their lives near Lijiang town in 1990.¹⁵ As my young Naxi friend Y. told me in 1992: 'Some people still commit suicide if their parents don't want them to marry... I would never dare, I'd be too scared but I think it's very romantic. All the old people think it is really shameful but we, the young people, all think it is very romantic.'¹⁶

However, that sociologically and culturally speaking, Naxi love suicides should be examined in the context of generational relationships, sexual politics

and gender constructs does not preclude the possibility that the custom has an historical origin, and one which may be of some interest to Naxi and Mosuo social history.

Briefly, I fully agree with Chao that pre-marital chastity was not sustainable in Lijiang because it coexisted with other practices (youthful social freedom/ gender roles and generational tensions) that could not accommodate it. I also agree with Chao that Naxi gender constructs were redefined in the course of history in a process that increasingly marginalized women from ritual and political life. But I am not convinced that love suicide resulted of the acceptance of a moral code that was imposed on the Naxi by Qing magistrates. Firstly, one ought to problematize what Rock, Jackson and Chao's theories mostly take for granted, and ask why if women's virtue and Confucianism were what was at stake in the Naxi love suicide custom, Naxi society never made the connection between types of social behavior and sexual morality, a connection which in the context of chastity obsessed Chinese society was very much and very consciously articulated in the custom of bound feet and especially, in the strict enforcement of gender segregation. Perhaps suicide did rewrite the moral code of Naxi society to preserve the integrity of the male line as the Chinese understood it, but this instance of 'structure of conjuncture' needs to be demonstrated.

A brief critique of current theories

Jackson and Chao take Rock's word for it that the Naxi who lived in the more remote hill regions and especially the Fengke region (which borders Mosuo territories) practiced free love *like the Mosuo*, to bolster their case for the Naxi matrilineal past. But Jackson's theory on the Naxi love suicide custom suffers from lack of data on Mosuo society. For example, because Jackson depended on Reshetov's study, he was under the impression that the Mosuo practiced patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. But in actuality, neither the matrilineal nor the patrilineal Mosuo do so, whilst patrilateral cross-cousin marriage was the norm for the Naxi. Unfortunately, since Jackson had no access to the field, he had no

means of anticipating the complexity of kinship patterns found in contemporary Mosuo and Naxi societies.

Understandably, Jackson's comparative base was too narrow. But in his desire to make sense of Naxi society via Mosuo society, he ignored the Naxi's other neighbors and notably the Nuosu of Liangshan, even though he was aware from the data available to him that the Naxi and Nuosu had a lot in common.¹⁷ And his single focus on the Mosuo allowed him to develop an argument based on the premise that only the Naxi had suicide customs and only the Mosuo had sexual freedom, while in fact, it is a fair statement that almost all Tibeto-Burman speakers have suicide customs, that most have pre-marital sexual freedom, and that (at least as far as the Naxi's neighbors are concerned) these same peoples are organized on the basis of avunculates and patrilineal systems, not matrilineality.

Jackson, at times, also misrepresents his sources. For example, he makes no distinction between the suicide of single women and the suicide of lovers, even though what appeared culturally specific about the Naxi was the ritual suicide of lovers, for the suicide of women was nothing new in the Chinese world.¹⁸ On another count, he misreads Rock's explanations of the function which the suicide funeral rites served in Naxi society. In the opening pages of his *Romance of K'a-ma-gyu-mi-gkyi*, Rock implied that love suicide allowed young people to enter an eternal life of bliss and youth and Jackson constructed from this that love suicide led lovers to a kind of lovers' paradise. But Rock clarifies on p. 5 of *The Romance of K'a-ma-gyu-mi-gkyi* that although young people entered such a paradisiacal existence on the point of death, the *Herlelukee* ceremony itself was conducted in order to send the souls of the lovers to the land of the ancestors. Goullart also wrote on this: 'They (the souls of the lovers) were usually saved by their living relatives or parents who ordered the *dtombas* to perform a Harlallu ceremony which ultimately opened the gates of the ancestral paradise for them to enter.'¹⁹ This detail makes a world of difference. A paradise for lovers implies an essentially romantic and personal resolution of illicit love, but the ancestral land establishes that suicide rehabilitated lovers to their *social* community.

Jackson's paradisiacal after-life, in turn, found its way into Chao's article alongside a tendency to take as facts what were hypothetical statements in original sources. For example, Chao writes: 'When the Chinese occupied the city of Lijiang in 1723, they instituted a number of changes that were to permanently reorder Naxi gender relations. These included the practice of marriage, child betrothal, exclusive male inheritance, patrilineal descent, as well as penalties for adultery and unwed pregnancy.' She cites Rock (1963: 31, 33) Goullart (1955:153) and Jackson (1971:70). However, Rock (1963: 31, 33) does not provide any sources to justify his treatment of Naxi social history under the Qing administration. Goullart (1955:153) did not blame the Qing administration for the introduction of compulsory betrothal and chastity into Lijiang but the Confucianized 'Na-khi rulers' themselves. And Jackson's treatment of Naxi social history is in all evidence interpretative.

Methodologically speaking also, additional data on the kinship system of the Labei Mosuo (these were not available to Jackson or to Chao) make clear that to look to the Mosuo for proof of an original matrilineal Naxi society is not a simple given. Indeed, the Labei Mosuo are the Naxi's closest neighbors, and although they did not come under the direct administration of Qing officials, they too are patrilineal .

Naxi kinship and Mosuo patrilineality.

The Mosuo are famous for the matrilineal way of life of the people settled in Yongning plain and at Lake Lugu and Chinese scholars, so far, have paid little attention to the patrilineal people of the hills. Lamu Gatusa and, for a very short period in 1990, He Zhonghua conducted fieldwork in Labei but He Zhonghua's short term in the field did not result in any publications whilst Lamu Gatusa's publications have mostly focused on religion.

When the Academy of Social Sciences settled that I should do some field research in the valleys of the Jinshajiang rather than Yongning, I was a little disappointed. I had wanted to see the 'real Mosuo' – the matrilineal people of

Yongning rather than the patrilineal people of Labei whom I believed were like the Naxi. Put simply, the hill Mosuo looked quite a bit like the Fengke Naxi – their houses are similar, their dress style as well; the hill Mosuo are patrilineal and the Fengke Naxi practice ‘free love’. This seemed enough to settle the case that the hill Mosuo and the Fengke Naxi are link populations between the Mosuo and the Naxi, or that the hill Mosuo are like the Naxi, or that Fengke Naxi are like the Mosuo.

Yet, according to Lamu Gatusa and He Zhonghua, Labei was *the* place to do fieldwork. Patrilineal Mosuo society was not Naxi, not even Fengke Naxi. The similarities were there, but there were significant differences as well. Fengke Naxi dress, it was true, resembled Mosuo dress in that it was closer to the Mosuo style than to the Lijiang Naxi style. Fengke women wear skirts, not trousers *à la* Chinese, but Fengke dress is not quite in Labei style. Fengke houses, although quite similar to Mosuo houses from the exterior, were like most Naxi houses centered on the central pole that upholds heaven, the *Meedv*, while Labei houses were like all Mosuo houses supported by two poles, in this case a ‘man’s pole’ and a ‘woman’s pole’ (*Jimi* and *Domi*).

Where kinship, sexual morality and gender roles were concerned, there were other details and other contradictions. In Labei, the place of honor at the hearth (on the left hand-side) was the place of both parents while, in Fengke, women did not sit at the hearth at all (unless they were anthropologists²⁰). Then, as Rock had noted fifty years before, the Fengke Naxi practiced ‘free love’ but in Labei, the Mosuo were less relaxed about young people’s sexual affairs. At first glance, Fengke Naxi and Labei Mosuo societies warned against simple equations. The Mosuo were less inclined towards sexual freedom than the people of Fengke and yet, they seemed more gender egalitarian than their Naxi neighbors.

In Fengke, young people pursue love relationships freely without any plans or obligations to marry their partners. If a woman has children as a result of a love affair, she simply takes those with her into her husband’s family when she marries although their father is not her husband. It is also not uncommon for couples

destined to marry to have sexual relationships without taking up joint residence if family circumstances do not permit the expense of a marriage ritual, or the expense of building a new house. Couples meet in the evening, men visit their 'wives' and children and return to the paternal home in the morning.

Such patterns of relations quite understandably have inspired Chinese scholars to describe Fengke sexual practices as 'like the Mosuo', and by Mosuo they mean the people of Yongning among whom visiting sexual relationships are institutionalized. Yet, there are substantial structural and ideological differences between the kinship systems of the Fengke Naxi, Labei Mosuo, and Yongning Mosuo.²¹ In Labei, young people are free to enter into sexual relationships as they please (with discretion) and to choose their own spouses, but Labei parents do not expect young women to bear the children of fathers who are not prepared to become husbands. Simply speaking, sexual relations take place between cross-cousins (either matrilineal or patrilineal) and without adult interference, but young men are obliged to marry their pregnant lovers. In Yongning, sexual relations are freer because children remain with their mothers and paternity is largely irrelevant. In Fengke, Naxi society accommodates patrilineality with sexual freedom, as well as a gender asymmetry that does not favor women. In addition, studies by Naxi scholars who conducted fieldwork in this region during the 1950s make clear that 'free love' does not imply 'free choice marriage' as Rock believed. In Fengke, parents arranged marriages for their children, even though men and women remained free to take lovers before and after they married.²²

Labei marriage customs²³

In Labei, once lovers establish a stable relationship or, alternatively, once the young woman is pregnant, they may announce their intention to marry to their respective parents. The latter usually have had some idea that things were shaping as such but they have ignored the entire period of courtship.²⁴

Unlike Han Chinese, Naxi and Yi, Labei Mosuo do not make use of a go-

between to represent themselves to their intended in-laws but go knock on the door in person. The first visit which the boy's parents pay to the girl's is called *Kuatuzhexi* which means 'taking words with beer' [*kua*: lips/words; *tu*: speak; *zhe*: beer/wine; *xi*: to want, to take]. These are the words pronounced by the girl's parents to show agreement to the boy's parents' request. This first visit is a relatively low-key affair, outwardly impromptu. The boy's parents bring a little tea and beer and, at some stage in the evening, both sides formally agree to the betrothal by speaking in prescribed metaphors.

The next visit happens a few weeks later. It is called *Kuazezhete*, which means 'drinking beer and speaking words to bring together (in this case the houses of the boy and the girl)' [*kua*: lips; *ze*: bring together; *zhe*: beer; *te* drink]. This second 'beer' is a grand occasion. The boy's parents have invited their intended daughter-in-law's maternal relatives (especially her maternal uncles) as well as her father's brothers. During the course of the evening, the boy's parents will ask each of the girl's relatives that they formally consent to her marriage, which they do as a matter of course. Theoretically, it is possible for a relative to object to the proposed marriage, but even if the objection came from a maternal uncle, it would not be sufficient to cancel the match. For all intents and purpose, dissent announces a person's wish to withhold responsibility for the outcome of the marriage and thus ensures that he or she will have no obligations if things end in divorce or other catastrophe. Once everyone has agreed, an approximate date is fixed – the final date being dependent upon the calculations of the Daba. If the young woman is pregnant, the marriage will take place after the birth of the baby, for the Mosuo explain that marriage is a powerful emotional event that could adversely affect the unborn child. The date of the wedding also depends on the financial situation of the respective families and on the time of the year. Typically, marriages take place in winter when the agricultural season is still slack and food does not risk going bad because of the heat.

The wedding is called *Chumire* [*chumi*: spouse; *re*: to get] or if it is uxori-local: *Zhete* [*zhe*: beer; *te*: drink]. However, only a virilocal marriage

requires an elaborate ritual, because the gods of the house are attached to women, not men. Mosuo wedding celebrations take place at the bride's house and the groom's house, as among other peoples of the Himalaya.

The wedding party sets up in the morning from the groom's house. It is headed by a go-between, and the guests follow, carrying presents and the food for the banquet, leading farm animals (a pig, a few goats, and if they are wealthy and ostentatious, a cow) to be given to the girl's family. The groom's parents do not accompany their son and relatives to the bride's house. They remain at home where a Daba begins to chant prayers (the *Sebutu*). At the same time as the wedding party leaves from the boy's side, a second Daba begins to chant inside the girl's house. The Dabas chant to appease the gods so that, on the boy's side, they will accept the bride and on the girl's side, they will not attempt to follow her to her new home. The synchronization of the two Dabas may be surprisingly exact, as the bride and groom may not live very far from each other. In fact, if they are from the same village, they may even be neighbors.

When the guests arrive at the bride's house, they first give the food to the girl's mother who, in turn, delegates the tasks of making offerings to the ancestors and preparing food for the guests to male and female relatives (although the food is almost exclusively handled by the women). The groom's relatives then hand over the presents to the go-between who gives them to each of the girl's relatives. Finally, the go-between hands over the wedding dress to the two bridesmaids, or matrons, (*qiumi*/ kinswomen of the bride who are chosen in accordance with the compatibility of their zodiacal sign with that of the bride) who take it to the bride. The bride must refuse to wear it, shed tears and cry out that she does not want to leave her parents' house. It is up to the groom's FZ and his MZ as well as the bridesmaids to convince her to change into her new clothes.

In the meantime, preparations for the banquet have been made and two tables are dressed in the courtyard where the groom's people and the bride's will take their respective places. The bride's side has the place of honor on the left-hand side, the groom's the place reserved for guests – the right hand-side. The bride's

relatives arrive at the banquet without being called (unlike the Fengke Naxi who would have to be fetched, Mosuo informants specify). At the head of the tables sit the Dabas or anyone with a good voice and a sharp wit and next to them, the bride's brothers and maternal uncles, and also her paternal aunts. The guest of honor is the bride's older brother because he will become her children's maternal uncle. The girl's parents are inside the house: they will not come out until all the wedding guests have left. Marriage is a telescopic affair, a woman is not given by her parents but by her brothers who now have a pledge to the next generation.

The wedding banquet provides guests with entertainment, the best part of it is a singing contest between the two persons sitting at the head of the tables. The singers jest with each other, improvising, throwing lighthearted insults couched in traditional metaphors to the appreciative laughter of the guests. The rule of the game is that the girl's side should have the last word (i.e. get the most laughs) and the trick for the boy's side is to lose while putting up a good fight. Lamu Gatusa explains that this jesting confirms the higher status of the woman's side, and that this is in keeping with the matrilineal ethos of Mosuo society at large. In fact, I shall argue in subsequent chapters that Mosuo patrilineal society does have matrilineal tendencies but for the moment, I will only point out that the respective roles of wife-takers and wife-givers at the Labei wedding banquet mostly confirm the place of Mosuo marriage customs among other Tibeto-Burman speakers among whom the high status group is the wife giving group.

Once the banquet and the song contests are over, the wedding party leaves. The bride's paternal aunt leads, she is followed by the go-between, the bride's brothers, the bride herself, two bridesmaids (or matrons), the groom, then all the other relatives. The wedding party does not carry gifts this time around, although people take a little tea, salt and money to offer to the boy's parents.

If the bride's parents are well off, they may give a few female animals to the boy's family but not on the wedding day because this would bring bad luck. In any case, informants assured me, no one had been this well off for some time.

Once the party arrives at the boy's house and whilst still in the courtyard, the

Daba begins to chant the names of all the past generations of ancestors (which includes male and female ancestors). The go-between then calls on the parents to open their doors and the gates of the sacred mandala. She says: 'The god of good fortune has returned, the house gods have returned, the girl's god has returned. Please open the doors! Open the wooden gate in the east, the iron gate in the west, the water gate in the north, the fire gate in the south!'

The boy's parents open the doors. The couple offers three kowtows to the place of the ancestors, the hearth god Zabbala, and to the fire god. A guest (anyone can do this) then places two dtorma effigies on the rafters between the male and female posts of the house and the Daba anoints the foreheads of all the people present with a little butter. He begins with the oldest people of the house, the bride, her husband, then his brothers and sisters, according to age not sex.

The Daba blesses the wedding party in the name of the Great Heaven Mulu Abaddu and wishes the bride to have so many children as to fill ten villages. After which, he hands her a set of keys to symbolize that she will manage the household. For, interestingly, whereas in matrilineal Yongning both men and women may be Dabu (household managers), in patrilineal Labei, the Dabu is always a woman. Another banquet takes place with the girls' brothers and her maternal uncle(s) at the seat of honor, again underscoring the high status position of the woman's side, the wife-givers. The night ends in dancing and singing until the last guest leaves. The family invokes the gods one last time to ensure their benevolence and the ritual is closed. The bride cannot return to her parents' house for three days and her parents cannot visit her during this period.

Marriage by capture

The people of Labei say that before 1956, they also performed 'marriage by capture' and that they did this very often. Such marriages were and are still popular because they involve a minimum of fuss. No gifts are exchanged, there is no banquet and therefore no money needs to be spent. Mostly, it is an affair between young people in which uncles and parents do not participate.

The groom and a few friends (boys and girls) quietly leave their house or village and make their way to the bride's – she has been waiting outside the outer walls for them. The girls who came with the groom accompany her into her home under pretense of fetching something or other. Once in the house, they help her change into new clothes. Then, they all leave to meet the groom. Friends and relatives of the bride, in the meantime, wait on the outskirts of the village, ready to ambush the wedding party. They stage a mock fight, they throw water and mud at the groom's party but nevertheless let the bride go.

According to Rock, marriage by capture was not a rare occurrence among the Naxi who argued that, after all, Cosseilee'ee himself stole his wife from Heaven.²⁵ Naxi scholars, however, say that marriage by capture was rare²⁶ and that it was dependent on a number of relatively standard reasons – when parents were concerned that their children were engaged in a love affair likely to result in suicide, when they could not afford to pay bride-price, when affines had fallen out and were no longer willing to honor the betrothal practices. But marriage by capture almost always took place before betrothal arrangements had been finalized and always with the knowledge and approval of the boy's own family, for one could not capture a bride who was not acceptable to one's parents. At any rate, in Labei, marriage by capture was a cheap alternative to a wedding feast. In Lijiang, marriage by capture provided a face saving solution to the intolerable demands which the patrilineal cross-cousin marriage prescription placed on the community. But, according to Naxi scholars, it was also at times a matter of true 'bride stealing' followed by serious retaliation against the guilty party.²⁷

Comment

The formal marriage ritual of the Labei Mosuo stresses a relative equality of status between men and women. The ritual is male dominated, insofar as brothers and maternal uncles give the bride away, but the bride herself is in a higher status position than her husband, while the groom's own relatives are graded according to age not gender. The Mosuo bride is brought into her new house as its new

mistress. She is given the keys to the store rooms; and indeed once she and her husband come to manage the house on their own, she will sit at the place of honor near the hearth as her husband's equal. In patrilineal Labei, interestingly, the *Dabu* who is responsible for household management is always a woman, whilst in matrilineal Yongning both men and women can be *Dabu*. Labei marriage customs, however, also reflect the importance of matrilineal and maternal kin among the Mosuo. The most significant persons in one's family are one's mother and one's mother's brothers, among whom the eldest brother takes precedence, and wife-givers take precedence over wife-takers.

On the basis of the genealogies of the Yongning rulers, Shih Chuan-kang has argued that the Mosuo began adopting patrilineality and especially *marriage* as an elite practice, beginning with the ruling family, and under pressure from the Qing emperors.²⁸ In fact, I shall examine Shih's proposition more closely in Chapter IX. For the moment, it will be enough to say that Labei marriage rituals were not derived from Chinese customs. They can be described as belonging to the 'beer betrothals' of other Himalayan peoples and which are found as far west as Laddakh, while some structural details also connect them to the Tibeto-Burman complex (as for example, the absence of parents at the marriage feast).

Before 1949, in Lijiang town and in many parts of Lijiang plain, the Naxi observed what have been described as Chinese rituals, but in the peripheries, Naxi marriage rituals were and even today still are quite similar to the marriage rituals held in Labei.²⁹ This suggests that although Han Chinese customs made a profound impact upon the marriage rituals of the plain people, the Chinese did not invent marriage for the Naxi.

The point made here is highly relevant to Naxi and Mosuo social histories because Labei customs, as well as Fengke and Zhongdian customs, give indigenous alternatives to the Chinese marriage styles of the Lijiang plain as well as to the customs of sexual freedom of the Yongning plain. And importantly, these alternatives although they are marked by strong avuncular tendencies, are nonetheless expressed as patrilineality.

The genealogy of the Lamu family

Genealogical charts can be difficult to obtain in Labei, and I am very grateful to Lamu Gatusa for providing me with his family's genealogy which he obtained from his father (Daba) Lamu Gasso. Ordinary people do not usually know much about their ancestors above three generations or so, and genealogy keeping is the Daba's responsibility. The Dabas, however, are reluctant to let non-relatives get hold of ancestral histories because the ancestors play central roles in matters of health, wealth, and reproduction.³⁰ At any rate, even if they are willing to discuss the issue, the Dabas do not always know the relationships in which ancestors stood in regard to one another. On their own, personal names do not always make clear the generations they are attached to, and it is also impossible to tell at times whether the names are of female or male ancestors.

For reasons of privacy, I do not provide the genealogy here but simply describe it. The Lamu family originated with an unknown female ancestor who had four sons from four different fathers. These sons were the ancestors Azze, Jiasso, Zzala, and Rasse Addu. The Lamu family is descended from the ancestor Azze. Each founded an exogamous *seze*, the lineage segment in Mosuo society. These four intermarrying *seze* allegedly settled the village of Colowo in Labei six generations ago (circa 1800) Azze and Jiasso moved to their present residence a little way from Colowo. Interestingly, this story is a reversal of Naxi stories of kinship origins which usually explain that intermarrying clans or lineages are issued from one original father and several mothers. This Labei reversal may point to a dominant matrilineal ethos, if not, as Lamu Gatusa and other Chinese scholars see it, a former matrilineal system (see Chapter IX, on this point). Importantly, the genealogy does not clarify whence the name Lamu may have come from or when it came into use, or indeed, if it were carried by all Azze's descendants. The genealogy also indicates a preponderance of daughters. A fourth generation ancestor, father of Yodderput, married two sisters, Jiaculamu and Sonami who came from the village of Wasialo about 20kms from Colowo. This sister marriage was arranged.

In appearance all the daughters married out, except for Gatusa's grandmother Yodderput and Gatusa's own sister Adai. Yodderput had one child by Sonambu who was a second degree patrilineal cross-cousin. This was a relationship out of wedlock. From another sexual relationship, she had another son whose father is unknown. Eventually, Yodderput took in a husband Abesso who moved in with her, uxori locally. Thus, Gatusa's patriline was carried through his grandmother's uxori local marriage.

At Gatusa's generation, his brother-in-law Jiaa has also moved in uxori locally and he is also his wife Adai's patrilineal cross-cousin. Jiaa's father died when he was still a small boy and Gatusa's father Lamu Gasso took responsibility for bringing him up, a responsibility which he assumed for being Jiaa's second maternal uncle and out of affection for the boy. Jiaa and Adai spent their childhood together and it was no surprise to anyone when they fell in love. Although they are cross-cousins, their marriage was not a family arrangement. Lamu Gatusa explained that Jiaa is Adai's cross-cousin because Jiaa is 'Gemi's sister's son', unwittingly stressing the prominence of the older brother (Lamu Gatusa himself is an older brother). When Jiaa's mother died, the couple moved with Lamu Gasso and Lamu Gatuya, in other words, his wife's family. Thus, the marriage of Jiaa and Adai is only incidentally uxori local. Still the Lamu genealogy reveals that on two succeeding generations, the line of descent passed through daughters engaged in out of wedlock relationships and/or uxori local marriages. When seen in context of the mythical first female ancestor, these events suggest that even in patrilineal Labeli, descent and residence patterns are flexible.

A comparative overview of Naxi and Mosuo family names and rules of inheritance

Mosuo social organization whether in patrilineal Labeli or matrilineal Yongning begins with the household and the village. Above these, there is a large social group called the *seze*, a lineage branch which may comprise up to 30 households.

In Yongning, members of a *seze* are related by maternal ties whilst in Labei, they are related patrilineally, although, as we saw above, the *unknown* first ancestor is also a woman. In Labei, people of the same *seze* cannot intermarry and must avoid any discussion pertaining to sexual matters. They have a number of reciprocal obligations and responsibilities: they attend the same funerals and weddings, they will provide labor to help build houses, or work on irrigation channels. Cosmologically, the ancestors of one's *seze* make relatively friendly ghosts, whilst those of other *seze* make dangerous ones.³¹ In Yongning, the *seze* does not necessarily establish rules of sexual exogamy because *seze*, although they are ideally matrilineal often need to recruit outside members to balance fertility and gender ratios. Thus, the rule of exogamy applies to maternal relatives to the third degree.³²

Now, not all people belonging to the same *seze* have the same surname even though all are allegedly related through one common ancestor. Lamu Gatusa explains that the Labei Mosuo take on their fathers' names, and wives their husbands' until too many people have the same surname and things begin to get confusing. Somebody then decides to change surnames. Changes of surname are said to be motivated by fame: if a man accomplishes extraordinary deeds, or becomes renown for his intelligence or kindness etc., his sons (his oldest son especially) may decide to take on his personal name as a new surname. Should Lamu Gatusa wish to, he may use his father Lamu Gasso's personal name as his new surname, in which case he becomes Gasso Gatusa and his daughter Gasso Bimalucu. By contrast to Labei, in Yongning, people say that they have no family names but only personal names. Yet, they do have common surnames such as Acha, Akonabu, etc. which are derived from the personal name of the original founder of the house (woman or man) and then passed down in the maternal line. This is also done by the Qiang³³ as well as the Naxi people in Eya, although in this case not through the matriline.³⁴ Then, Yongning Mosuo also have old clan names, such as Ya, Xi, Hu, etc. which they may use when transcribing their names into Chinese (in which case, Ya becomes Yang as

already mentioned). Thus, whether in Labei or Yongning, Mosuo family names are quite distinct those which we know (so far) to have applied in Lijiang, notably the father-son linkage system, the four syllable system, the quasi-universal surname He of the Ming, and Chinese style family names such as Yang, Mu, Wang, Gao, Guo, Li, etc. which the Naxi adopted (and as far as Han immigrants were concerned, reclaimed) after the Qing annexation and which are still in common usage today.

Rules of property, like family names, are also quite different for the Mosuo and the Naxi. In Labei, property is inherited patrilineally like surnames, and since daughters eventually end up in someone else's house, Mosuo custom favors sons and especially the oldest son. This does not mean that the latter inherits at the expense of his younger siblings so much as it establishes his higher status. The death of the parents alone, indeed, does not necessarily decide on the division of a household. Rather households divide according to how well people live together, how many people are in the family and how big the house is, how many spouses and grandchildren can be accommodated. It is usual (though not obligatory) for younger brothers to establish separate households when they marry (by which time, it must be noted, they may already be fathers), and it is at this point that they claim their share of family property. The eldest brother is then obliged to give a share of the animals, tools etc., and help provide labor as well as finances for the construction of the new house, as far as can be afforded by all.³⁵ Finally, if, as mentioned above, Labei rules of inheritance ignore married daughters, they do not disadvantage mothers, for mothers take their place in the ancestral lines. The house and fields belong to both parents equally and when one dies the other inherits, irrespective of gender.

In Lijiang basin, residence and inheritance rules were (and still are) quite different. To begin with, before 1949, although aging mothers were secure in their sons' homes, formal inheritance rules did not protect widows.³⁶ Today, in contrast to the Mosuo, the Naxi practice ultimogeniture and before 1949, they favored a double inheritance system which kept the parental home for the last

born son but designated the first born as heir to his father's social position. Finally, unlike the Mosuo, the Naxi forbid married brothers to remain under the same roof, and older brothers *must* therefore receive their share of the family property when they marry – which evidently means that marriage is an expensive affair.

The Naxi's neighbors tend to favor either the first born as do the Mosuo, Tibetans, Lisu and Han, or the last born, as for example, the Liangshan Nuosu³⁷ or both the oldest and the youngest sons as do the Kachins. Kachin oldest and youngest sons are, like Naxi sons, privileged *vis à vis* middle sons, but in reverse of the Naxi, the youngest inherits his father's social position.³⁸ Naxi inheritance customs, it is worth noting, find cognates in Mongol ones. For some Mongol groups likewise forbid married brothers to remain under the same (tent) roof,³⁹ and under the code of law of Genghis Khan, eldest sons succeeded their fathers, but the youngest were to stay with their parents and inherited their property.⁴⁰ And whilst on the topic of Mongol law, it is worth noting that the latter was exceedingly strict regarding sexual behavior. Brides were supposed to be virgins and if they were not, betrothal arrangements could be broken; adulterers were executed.⁴¹ Now, if we believe Marco Polo, Mongol sexual morality never made much of an impact on the Yunnanese or the Tibetans whose customs caused the Venetian much astonishment.⁴² But then again, Marco Polo does not appear to have visited Lijiang (Satham).

Inheritance rules and sexual politics

Jackson argues that the Qing administration imposed new inheritance rules, pre-marital chastity and child betrothal in Lijiang, and that each of these became cogs in the repressive gender system which drove Naxi women to commit suicide. As we saw above, however, Naxi inheritance rules are not Confucian. And, since the Dongba tradition comments on the unenviable position of the Naxi as the middle son between his older Tibetan brother and his younger Bai brother, we have some reason to believe that Naxi inheritance rules are as old as some pictographic

books and thus have a reasonable historical depth. I shall presently dispute that the ideal Naxi family is no more Confucian than Naxi inheritance rules, and that pre-marital sexual freedom does not necessarily equate with free-choice marriage.

The Confucian ethos upholds the ideal of an indivisible large family unit and the precedence of the oldest male and although the Naxi do give precedence to fathers over maternal uncles, and to oldest sons over younger ones (after a fashion), Naxi family structures violate the Confucian ethos at almost every opportunity. To begin with, Naxi custom prohibits married brothers from living under the same roof, thus canceling out the ideal of the large Confucian family. Then, Naxi married couples usually consist of an older wife and a younger husband - who may be five or ten years his wife's junior, so that the Naxi family also breaches the Confucian hierarchies that ideally rule gender. It is almost unthinkable for traditional Chinese (men or women) that a man be younger or shorter than his wife.⁴³ Finally, Naxi custom favors marriage to FZD, a preference not especially favored by Confucians.

From a broader comparative perspective, the most anti-Confucian characteristic of Yunnanese rules of inheritance lies with *ultimogeniture* – of which, as we have seen, the Naxi also practice a variant. In the Tibeto-Burman context, this custom allows for the structural accommodation of pre-marital sexual relationships. Since first born do not count, it is not infrequent for women to have children of their own and to bring those into their husband's families upon their marriage. *Ultimogeniture* may even profit from pre-marital sexual freedom since this custom allows men to marry women who have *proved* their fertility. Rock wrote the following on sexual mores in Fengke and other far away places:

In La-pao [Fengke] ... it is no disgrace for a woman to have illegitimate children. When a woman marries (for the first time) her illegitimate children follow her to her husband's home later on. In other districts, often twelve year old girls are given in marriage. After she has remained with her husband one or two months, the bride returns to her parents. She can only return again to her husband if she has given birth to one or two children. If she remains childless, she cannot... return to her husband.⁴⁴

It may be that the double expectation of primogeniture and ultimogeniture among the Naxi of the Lijiang basin complicated the issue of pre-marital sexual freedom, since in this system first born do count, as indeed, they count among the Mosuo of Labei. Any society, however, must adapt its practice to its ideals according to its ability or willingness to prioritize conflicting moral codes and political, social and economic imperatives. Overall, the peoples of Yunnan have proved that rules of inheritance and rules of descent can accommodate youthful sexuality as well as Sinicization and compulsory betrothal. For example, the Bai of Dali, whose marriage customs and family structures are almost indistinguishable from those of the Han Chinese, allowed young lovers to elope and to forgo betrothal commitments.⁴⁵ Among the Bai of Eryuan County, it was customary for husbands and wives who had been betrothed by their respective families to have extra-marital affairs without either partner raising any objection. Patrilineality was preserved in that children born to the woman were automatically her husband's (who-ever the biological father may have been). And interestingly for what it confirms of Marco Polo's 13th century account on Yunnanese attitudes towards sex, these Bai men acquired social status proportionately to the number of lovers their wives were desirable enough to attract.⁴⁶

No specific social function can explain adequately the interconnection between sexual behavior and rules of marriage in the Tibeto-Burman and Tibetan worlds. This does not mean that marriage practices in these parts serve no social function or that they have no political consequences, far from it, but that there are simply too many variations to deduce general laws between sexual behavior, descent systems, inheritance patterns and marriage rules. Contrarily to what Rock and Jackson have assumed, in northwest Yunnan pre-marital sexual freedom does not always imply free-choice marriage whilst, in turn, less permissive sexual practices can be more conducive to free-choice marriage. In practice, stricter expectations of sexual conduct may force parents to accept their children's chosen partners although in other (or ideal) circumstances they would prefer to make

betrothal arrangements themselves. When a young woman becomes pregnant outside formal marriage arrangements and thus risks becoming unmarriageable, more often than not, her lover must assume responsibility for the child he has conceived. In other words, pre-marital pregnancy presents families with a *fait accompli* which can only result in marriage. This is how things work in relatively permissive Labei society, but this was (is) also a fact of life in the patriarchal and chastity obsessed Mediterranean world. In the case of the Mosuo, primogeniture accommodates sexual freedom as well as cross-cousin marriage preference because Mosuo villages are not exogamous units. Thus, so long as young people do not enter into relationships deemed incestuous (with parallel cousins or within the *seze*), they are bound to have affairs with people who can be counted as some sort of cross-cousins and therefore persons who are eligible. As Sahlins wrote of the Fijians: 'All ... marry their cross-cousins. Not because the people who are so related marry but because the people who marry are so related.'⁴⁷ By contrast, the aristocratic Liangshan Nuosu encouraged sexual relationships between young people (of the same caste), but they did not allow these affairs or the pregnancies resulting from them to determine marriage.⁴⁸ Marriage articulated inter-clan politics and could not be decided on the basis of individual and natural affection. Marriage was the political business of families and lineages.⁴⁹

Now, pre-marital sexual freedom can always complicate social relations because it usually implies *children* (or at least, it always risks doing so), and with this, social reproduction. Seen from this perspective, pre-marital sexual freedom can threaten the reproduction of political apparatuses which are based on lineage affiliations and the plays of prestige and family honor, or in Bourdieu's terms, the social practices which procure the symbolic capital of the family. For sexual freedom necessarily raises the question of what is done with children born on the 'outside', what do those children inherit, and who can they, in turn, marry?

In Labei, if for any reason marriage was not an option, an unmarried mother stayed at home until such time as she found a man prepared to live uxorilocally. Her children belonged to her father's family. In Dali, elopement dissolved formal

betrothal arrangements. In Fengke, a bride takes her children with her into her husband's family. In Zhongdian, men must marry women they have made pregnant, as is done in Labei, but if for one reason or another, they cannot (if they are already married, for example), custom obliges them to give financial and other help to raise their children.⁵⁰ In Eya, permissive attitudes towards pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations instituted a system of "visiting relationships" on the same line as is found in Fengke and Yongning, but feudal law forbade women to give birth to children conceived out of formal wedlock within the house. Such children were to be born near mountain springs or in mountain caves, in other words in the 'wild' where they belonged. Often, they were abandoned to the elements.⁵¹ Looking beyond northern Yunnan at other T-B. groups, the Kachins arranged that illegitimate children (i.e. children born before bride-price has been paid) be retained by maternal uncles.⁵² The Lisu of Thailand, legitimize children by imposing a fine on the natural father and obtaining that the child bear his father's name. If on the other hand, a woman is left a "single mother", she is ostracized by the community and her child will remain *clanless* until he or she has grown up. At this time he or she will seek adoption into a clan other than the maternal clan in order to become a full member of the Lisu community.⁵³

To sum up this discussion, we may conclude that although Naxi inheritance rules and marriage patterns were not Confucian, Lijiang Naxi were nonetheless at significant odds with their neighbors, for the latter found many ways of managing the tensions between sex and marriage, whereas in Lijiang, the Naxi resorted to suicide.

Suicide: a question of despair or one of honor?

As Rock, Goullart, Jackson and Chao have written, the Mosuo do not commit suicide, although it would be more appropriate to say that suicide among the Mosuo is extremely rare. It is also correct that in Labei, the Mosuo practice free-choice marriage, and that the people of Yongning have a custom of free love. However, the Mosuo are no less sheltered from despair than anyone else. They

too suffer heartbreak, loss of face, painful illnesses, bankruptcy,⁵⁴ etc., and in fact, they too have suicide ghosts. So, as Durkheim wrote in *Le Suicide*, 'Since suicide is, by virtue of its essential element, a social phenomenon, it is appropriate to seek its place among other social phenomena. The first and most important question which must be raised regarding this subject is whether suicide ought to be classed with acts which [public] morality condones, or those which it proscribes'.⁵⁵

In Labei, I learned that the Mosuo do not commit suicide (or hardly ever) because suicide (and not only love suicide but any self-inflicted death) is not *permitted* in Mosuo society. Mosuo custom which was enforced by the feudal lord until 1956 prohibits suicide by proscribing funeral rites. In Yongning, people who have taken their own lives cannot under any circumstance receive any funeral rite not even the kind of ritual exorcism or cultural arrangements which would neutralize and perhaps eventually deify a dangerous ghost in the Chinese context. By contrast, Naxi suicides (all of them, not only love suicides) had the benefit of a ceremony which exorcized their spirit and allowed them to enter the ancestral land where their dead relatives awaited them. In other words, suicide was 'criminalized' in Mosuo society, whereas it was positively sanctioned in Naxi society.

If the Mosuo do not commit suicide, many of the Naxi's other neighbors do. The Lisu,⁵⁶ the Han and the Yi have customs of suicide. Yi suicides, in particular, are of great interest to Naxi social history. In traditional Liangshan society, quite aside from all the painful experiences that may drive anyone in any place to end their life, people also killed themselves after arguments, and as a means to obtain revenge. Yi women were said to be especially poised to committing suicide or to threaten suicide with the knowledge that their death or the threat of it would stir their brothers and kinsmen to take up arm on their behalf. According to Alain Dessaint, suicide and the threat of suicide were the cause of numerous blood feuds.⁵⁷ And perhaps, indeed, this is why feudal rule, which could ill afford the disruptive politics of vendetta, prohibited suicide among the Mosuo.

Importantly, love suicide was also not unknown among the Yi whose young

people could enjoy sexual freedom so long as they did not break the strict rules of caste endogamy. According to D'Ollone's reports on the Liangshan Yi (1906-1909), Lin Yueh-hua (1947) and contemporary Chinese scholarship, Nuosu lovers who broke these rules were expected to commit suicide. Lin in particular explains that where a man from a lower caste had sexual relations with a woman from a higher caste, he was to throw himself off a cliff or leap into a river, and the woman was expected to hang herself or take poison.⁵⁸ These three methods: jumping off a cliff, hanging or taking poison are also enunciated in the Naxi love suicide mythology.

Suicide, of course, plays a juridical role in many societies, as an alternative to execution and as Malinowski explained, even when suicide is not a 'means of administering justice', it can nonetheless provide 'a means of keeping the native to the strict observance of the law.'⁵⁹ Unchaste brides had two choices in Lijiang: to take their own lives, in which case their lovers were honor bound to die with them, or be killed by their parents. Love suicide therefore was in place of an execution but since it was expressed in ritual form, it made the requirements of 'law' self-regulatory, exemplary and a matter of profoundly moral and thus collective principle. For suicide *was not perceived as a punishment*, but as an honorable way out, a return to one's kin and the ancestors, that was mythologically sanctioned. To quote from Malinowski, suicide afforded 'the accused and the oppressed ... a means of escape and rehabilitation.'⁶⁰

That love suicide was the socially responsible thing to do in pre-1949 Lijiang society is unquestionable. As Goullart put it: 'It was only in death that the lovers were forgiven by their sorrowing families and it was usual for the Harlallu ceremony to be a joint one.'⁶¹ In other words, the *Herlelukee* achieved what forbidden love could not and which marriage does: it joined two families together with the approval of the ancestors. Suicide and its attending rituals thus served and upheld the status quo. So that the question remains to determine whether the status quo was a matter of conformity to the Confucian moral code, or of conformity to Naxi tradition.

Myth, sexual morality and customary law

Chao, following Sahlins' analysis of Captain Cook's arrival among the Hawaiians, writes that Kamagumiki's suicide 'can be interpreted as a "mythical incident", re-experienced by young Naxi women and men who committed suicide in 'analogous circumstances'.⁶² She adds, however, that the 'suicide of young men and women ... cannot fully be explained by the existence of an evocative precedent', and concludes that the incidence of suicide should be understood in terms of tensions created by two 'coexisting cultural scripts or values'.⁶³ After the Chinese takeover, changes in the gender system had the 'greatest impact on the lives of women, particularly adolescent women, because adolescence was the time traditional expectations were first put at risk. Predictably, most suicides occurred at that age when young people reached the threshold of sexual activity.'⁶⁴

Chao argues that Confucian values were inadequately assimilated into Naxi society because in all appearance they made little impact on the everyday practices of the common folk, therefore, setting the young to court disaster, so to speak. Women maintained a significant degree of economic and public freedom while young men were poised to becoming resentful of the authority which Confucianism extended to their fathers. She speculates that whereas in the past, Naxi boys had been free to choose their own lovers (and had found prestige in their sexual prowess as Mosuo boys do today), they now had to marry the women of their parents' choice.

Thus, Chao concludes that Confucianism engineered the following contradictions in Lijiang society: it devalued the position of women but did not address women's public role, and it transformed relations between younger men and older men but nevertheless failed to redefine Naxi concepts of manhood all of which, in the end, encouraged the young to rebel against parental values. In part, her analysis finds support in the work of Sydney White who likewise argues that there exists a powerful cultural continuity between traditional (folkloric and religious) descriptions of Naxi men 'as warriors, hunters, herdsman, and persuasive lovers'⁶⁵ and current notions of the ideal Naxi male.⁶⁶ To my mind, however,

Chao's reconstruction takes for granted what is a substantial historical issue: how and why the Naxi should have espoused Confucian values so partially.

Now, Marshall Sahlins explains that a structure of conjuncture is 'a set of historical relationships that at once reproduce the traditional cultural categories and give them new values out of the pragmatic context'.⁶⁷ He adds that 'a structure of conjuncture' is related to Giddens's definition of 'social action', a 'double structural determination of intentions grounded in a cultural scheme and the unintended consequences arising from recuperation in other projects and scheme'.⁶⁸ Whatever its historical origins, love suicide was without a doubt recuperated into 'traditional' schemes because (as noted by McKhann and He Zhonghua) in the 20th century, Naxi sexual morality had at least as much to say about Naxi inter-generational relations as about a historical conflict between two 'cultural scripts'. Even today, one sees a blatant contradiction between ideals of sexual morality and the public display of ritual courtship in the streets of Lijiang where adolescent love establishes a conspicuous conspiracy. Should parents find out that their children engage in sexual intimacy, they may beat them but the fact is before they got to that point, they would need to be placed face to face with the facts, because they would not of themselves attempt to find out.

Importantly, the youthful sexual assertions which Naxi society maintains in the blind spots of public decency inform a cultural complex that extends beyond Naxi social and geographic boundaries. As we just saw, in Labei unmarried pregnant women are not disgraced, but here too, public decency requires that adolescents be secretive around their own relatives. In fact, even in Yongning new or casual lovers are expected to act with discretion. According to He Zhonghua, a similar selective blindness affects the minority nationalities among whom adolescent boys and girls *are expected* to sleep together in 'young people's houses'. It is strictly taboo for parents and other married adults to speak about the houses in question or even to look in their direction.⁶⁹ Hence, the apparent double standard between public propriety and youthful sexual behavior may be explained not as an historical contradiction, so much as a) an aspect of the incest taboo, and b) a generational

construct that distinguishes adolescent social and cultural modes from those governing adults.

If Naxi gender definitions must be understood socio-historically, they must be explored in context of the historical record as well as that of comparative ethnology. From the perspective of the historical record, Naxi gender roles reflect the fact that Lijiang was for centuries a martial society.⁷⁰ From times at least as early as the Common Era until the Qing annexation (the Mu's last campaign into Tibet was in 1720), life in northwest Yunnan was defined by war and the readiness to take up arms, from inter-tribal and inter-clan warfare, raiding and vendetta, to the frontier campaigns undertaken by Chinese, Tibetans, Mongols and Manchu. According to the Chinese records, the 18th century chief Mu Zeng could raise an army of one hundred thousand men.⁷¹ Given that the total Naxi population of Lijiang district in 1953 was around 143,000,⁷² such numbers look like standard exaggeration, but they give some idea that every man capable of bearing arms was to do so at the command of the Mu chiefs. The military experience in Lijiang had to have important consequences for gender definitions and we should not be surprised that Naxi gender roles find cognates in other martial societies on China's periphery. Naxi society, like the old Mongol society, turned men into warriors and women into civilian men.⁷³ In addition, the economy of Lijiang even in feudal times was based on long distance travel and the caravan trade. Between the demands of the military and those of the economy, even if it had wished for it, Naxi society would have found it difficult to institutionalize the segregation of the sexes and the division of labor idealized in the Chinese interior.

Interestingly, even as military and economic considerations go some way towards explaining why Confucian proprieties may not have found fertile ground in Lijiang, they also make the love suicide custom look more egalitarian than Confucian. Because girls may have had less choice in the matter than boys, but for both parties, suicide was an act of atonement, honor and fearlessness. As my young friend put it: 'Love suicide is very romantic, but I would never dare to do it, I would be too scared.'

Myths, modeling and social action

Kamagumiki's story spoke to Nazi romantic imagination but it provided much more than inspiration. It expected, or demanded, action. It is a truism to say that *any* social action begins in the collective imaginary, but as Eliade writes, the inspirational value of sacred stories in societies defined by religion and mythology can be absolute. In certain contexts, people see myth 'as the only valid revelation of reality' and it is because it is 'real and sacred that the myth becomes exemplary and consequently repeatable'.⁷⁴ Or, as Chao pertinently quotes from Sahlins: 'events are hardly unique or new but immediately perceived in the received order of structure as identical with the original' or mythical experience.⁷⁵ Myth provides a script for action not only because it provides intelligibility but because storied behaviors are *expected* to be transferred into social and moral action. The *Romance of Kamagumiki* establishes a mythical precedent in an undetermined past, the truth of which is coeval to the suicide ritual itself. In Eliade's *illo tempore*, Kamagumiki took her life and that of her lover and because of this, any young woman who finds herself in Kamagumiki's position knows what path she must walk. The only path there is.

In the opening text of Kamagumiki story, the Dongba begins with this statement.⁷⁶ 'If it were not for silver, there would be nothing to match gold with. If it were not for the turquoise, there would be nothing to match coral with. If it were not for the pine tree, there would be nothing to match the oak tree with. If it were not for the son of the e-ggv (father-in-law [FZH]), the daughter of the aunt could not be bought.' These are the rules of marriage. They have been set by mythical ultimacy and are inescapable. The Dongba then goes on to chant:

Kamagumiki laments: "I have now no companion, but the house god has not yet come to drive me from my home;⁷⁷ happy couples have lived together as well as unhappy ones. A boy gave me a small mirror and a girl gave him a bracelet.⁷⁸ To me, Kamagumiki, he gave a load to carry in my body, I became the recipient of a bundle to fill my arms."

Kamagumiki asks the crow to be her messenger, to send words to her parents-in-law that she has not had illicit intercourse with a boy,⁷⁹ to

please send the Pumi servant to come and meet her with her dowry. Her parents-in-law answer her plea: they do not believe anything she has said, they explain: You are but a bad bunch of grass, you are but a leper! I will not put your trousseau in the bridal trunk, I will not come for your dowry. You copulated with a green snake, you carry the rope to hang yourself with. Go and find your own husband!⁶⁰

Kamagumiki has no husband to find, she has nothing else to do but to prepare herself to die. She leaves for the mountain and contemplates her imminent fate: she considers drowning herself but her heart fails at the thought. As the Dongba chants: 'She did not wish to die.' She considers hanging herself on a tree, but her heart once again grows faint; she does not wish to die. She puts on her golden shoes and looks down the white cliff, but her face likewise grows pure white; for she does not wish to die.

Kamagumiki makes her way to the oak tree, and there she hangs herself.

Her lover Zhiboyulaper was herding his goats in the alpine meadows when he found her body. Her body was dead but her soul was not and she asked him: I sent you all these messages, did you not receive them? Zhiboyulaper answered that he had, but he could not come to her: in the summer, it rained too heavily, in the winter, it was too cold... finally, he admits that he had not wished to follow her.

Zhiboyulaper wept, he asked: if I put the breath of a goat into your mouth, will you be able to speak again? If I give you turquoise and coral eyes, will you be able to see again? If I attach the roots of the pine and the oak, will you be able to walk? If I put silver and gold teeth in your mouth will you be able to laugh again?

Kamagumiki answers that no, she will never speak, never walk, never see and never laugh again. Then she cries out: will the beasts and birds of prey devour my body? Please Zhiboyulaper, take your sword and cut down the rope, light a funeral pyre and burn my body. Burn me until my bones have turned white and my body has turned to embers and soot.

Zhiboyulaper did not dare to do as she said. He was frightened.⁶¹ He pleaded with her to wait until the next season, but she would not hear it. Finally he asked: will you think wicked thoughts, will you liberate the demons behind the livestock and behind the grain? To which she answers that she will do nothing evil.

Zhiboyulaper believed that Kamagumiki told the truth. He drew his sword and cut off the rope. He covered her body with his white cape,⁶² he lit the funeral pyre and cremated her, until her bones were white and her body turned to embers and soot. Then, Kamagumiki took the rope that she had used to hang herself and tied it around Zhiboyulaper's neck.⁶³

Kamagumiki's story is extremely moving but it is not simply speaking a tale of romance and tragic love. Kamagumiki does not die because she wishes to be united with her lover in an eternal embrace. She dies because her designated parents-in-law refuse to accept her into their household, because she is pregnant to someone other than their son. Above all, Kamagumiki does not die because she does not want to marry her betrothed. Quite the contrary, not only does she never suggest breaking off the betrothal, she begs her in-laws for forgiveness, to send the horse and the Pumi to come and fetch her. Indeed, Kamagumiki dies with fear; she did not wish to die, her heart grows faint, her face turns white. She dies *because she has to*, and if it were not for her powers of persuasion, she would die alone. Kamagumiki's lover mourns her, his grief and his love are his undoing: he cuts her body down and her ghost kills him. The moral of this story is that a pregnant girl must die to atone for her wrong-doing while her lover dies for the sake of his beloved. As Goullart observed: '[among the Naxi] a bastard was a disgrace of unparalleled proportions. The girl would be killed by her parents anyway, and the only escape was suicide in which her lover was honour bound to join.'⁸⁴ And Kamagumiki's story also makes plain that parents-in-law have no business accepting an unchaste bride.

This last moral teaching may well imply that Kamagumiki's suicide proscribed a more permissive custom. When seen against the customs of the Eya and Zhongdian Naxi, the Lisu and the Labei Mosuo, Tibetans and Kachins, who expect natural fathers or maternal families to raise children born out of wedlock, the 'message' of Kamagumiki's story appears at odds with neighboring mores. But the problem with mythological reasoning is that is not always 'reasonable', causal and logical, but rather analogous, and archetypal. So, perhaps the message of the myth is not to be understood solely as a moral narrative advocating chastity, but also as an admonition of what a correct marriage is. As the Dongba chants in the opening of the romance of Kamagumiki,

If it were not for silver, there would be nothing to match gold with. If it were not for the turquoise, there would be nothing to match coral with.

If it were not for the pine tree, there would be nothing to match the oak tree with. If it were not for the son of the e-ggv (father-in-law [FZH]), the daughter of the aunt could not be bought.

And this, indeed, puts the love suicide custom into an entirely different light. Because, from this angle, we can see that if young Naxi had not followed Kamagumiki's example, Naxi society would not have had a patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescription. In other words, the Naxi had a custom of exclusive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage because they had the means to enforce mandatory betrothals. This also means that love suicide must be understood not as an act of despair or rebellion, but as a *legal* boundary.

Now, since the idea of myth as legal charter is a functionalist one and functionalism has become increasingly suspect in anthropological theory, I will briefly clarify my present position. Malinowski discovered that myth justified social order by calling upon tradition and times gone by, and thus concluded that myth represented the 'legal charter of the community'.⁸⁵ But for Malinowski, myth *functioned* as law, rather than it codified it. Or, as Josselin de Jong explains, Malinowski 'identified primitive law with a system of social mechanisms built up roundabout the principle of reciprocity'.⁸⁶ Marcel Mauss, in a similar vein to Malinowski, also argued that customary law is to be found not only in myth, but also in proverbs, popular sayings, tales, and so forth. But as Mauss noted, there are, even in traditional societies, persons who know the rules and who will function as jurists in situations where there is 'perfect consciousness of customary law to concrete cases'.⁸⁷ Now, quite aside from the usual criticism addressed to functionalist theory, Josselin de Jong objects to Malinowski and Mauss' propositions that 'In this argument customary law stands for: 1. uncodified rules of conduct or modes of conduct taken into account by modern jurisprudence; 2. formulated or unformulated rules of conduct or modes of behavior or a mixture of both in primitive society; in fact, it has become practically meaningless.'⁸⁸ For as far as Josselin de Jong sees it, the issue lies with the difficulty of giving 'a

definition of a cultural phenomenon of law sufficiently narrow to exclude custom and sufficiently wide to allow for the baffling variety of ways in which the principles of legality may manifest itself⁸⁹

The problem with speaking of customary law, as Dundes and Dundes also note, lies with the word custom itself, since custom includes all sorts of traditional behavior that may have no direct bearing on law: 'All folk law is customary in the sense that it is traditional, but not all custom is law'. For example, Dundes and Dundes point out that catching the bride's bouquet is a custom but it is not a law as such, or that a gentleman rising from his seat is likewise acting in a customary manner but is not acting out of a legal obligation.⁹⁰

Such, of course, is the case. However, to say that customary law implies both custom and forms of jurisprudence, as Malinowski and Mauss maintain, is not a true contradiction. One can distinguish custom from jurisprudence insofar as custom is an accumulation of various rules, unconscious habits and moral principles, whilst jurisprudence institutionalizes third-party intervention to enforce the rule. Custom implies habit, a mechanistic process, and self-regulation, the things one does because that is the way things are done. Law by contrast implies conscious action undertaken to ensure that things are done the way they are supposed to be done. Dundes and Dundes and Josselin de Jong have difficulties reconciling custom, customary law, and law because they do not place enough stress on what I see as two fundamental social facts: that custom is made up of things which are invested with *varying degrees of importance*, and that custom is also maintained by social sanction. In a pre-modern social setting, breaking with custom will always appear unnatural and, depending on the degree of importance accorded to the particular custom, deviance from the norm may be curbed by admonition, ridicule, ostracism, violence, magic, and ultimately jurisprudence – so that custom and jurisprudence are not to be found on different planes but on a continuum of social integration and coercion. Dundes and Dundes take an especially

narrow view of custom by reducing it to its distinct elements, and ignoring historical development. It is correct that catching the bride's bouquet does not involve law as such, but this is only one ritual element of the wedding whilst the wedding itself is a matter of law. In the same vein, although it is 'customary' and therefore not a legal obligation for a gentleman to stand for a lady, this symbolic behavior is only part of a much greater complex of gender behaviors that are (were) governed by law.

Customary law is in fact a useful term because it does include two elements of socio-cultural coercion: custom, which implies the force of habit, self-regulated morality and the accumulation of prescribed behaviors over time, whilst law implies the potential for formalized sanction. When young Naxi engaged in illicit love, custom in the form of myth and moral obligation dictated that they commit suicide, and so they did. But if they did not, Naxi custom granted parents the authority to kill their own children. And if parents did not assume this responsibility, the entire Naxi community was poised to turn against them. The Naxi *Yuvu* therefore fell in the category of customary law, for it embodied habit, coercion and third-party sanction.

Conclusion

Rock, Jackson and Chao's theories explain that the Naxi love suicide custom evolved as a result of a clash of cultures. Naxi youth committed suicide because the Naxi were made to adopt Chinese inheritance rules, Confucian standards of morality, and customs of child betrothal. By contrast, I have suggested that Naxi filiation and customs of inheritance are befitting of the Tibeto-Burman and Tibetan social complex rather than Confucian ideals. On the basis of comparative ethnology, I have also demonstrated that one cannot draw straightforward connections between Sinicization, sexual freedom and marriage practices. The Naxi's most Sinicized neighbors, the Bai, did not have a custom of love suicide whilst the Nuosu, the least Sinicized, did. Finally, whereas Rock, Jackson and Chao have seen in the Naxi love suicide custom evidence of despair and social

dysfunction, I have argued that suicide played a juridical and structural role in supporting Naxi marriage rules. In other words, love suicide *instituted* exclusive patrilineal cross-cousin marriage among the Naxi. But we shall see in the next chapter that there is a lot more to say about Naxi patrilineal cross-cousin marriage.

¹He Zhonghua (1991). As Rock and Goullart documented and as can be seen today in Lijiang, Naxi youth, like other youth in Yunnan, court collectively, as the young ritually cruise the street in lines of young men and young women.

²Today, in the Naxi villages of the Lijiang plain pre-marital sexual relationships are not at all uncommon although they are officially denounced. Whereas illegitimate pregnancies would once upon a time have led to suicide, however, they now lead to marriage and, for a short while, to some gossip in the community. My friend B (then 24 years old) reported that everyone of her classmates had married because of pregnancy, except for one girl who had had an abortion and subsequently become the object of scandal and ostracism. B herself had had a few boyfriends but she had been very lucky because she had not become pregnant. The last thing B. wanted was to get married: who needs marriage for love? She asked: all a wife does is serve her husband and her children. May-be she would marry one day, with the right person, may-be a Naxi man, may-be a Han Chinese, may-be a foreign man. She added with a laugh that a foreigner would be better because she would get to travel.

³When Naxi boys and girls play the Jaw's Harp they actually sing words into the tune (a standard love tune). Speech surrogate music for courting is found among many Tibeto-Burman groups and southeast Asians although different people may use other instruments, such as the gourd reed organ. On speech surrogates and music, see D. Bradley, "Speech through Music: The Sino-Tibetan Gourd Reed Organ", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (12:3) 1979, pp. 535-540.

⁴P. Goullart's explanation and documentation of the Naxi suicide rites and custom is more enlightening than Rock's, but Rock provides the Dongba manuscripts. I have used both these writers' work, what I gathered myself from informants and what Naxi scholars (He Zhonghua, He Zhiwu, Lan Wei) and Dongba He Jigui have told me, in order to construct this chapter.

⁵J.F. Rock, "The Romance of Ka-ma-gyu-mi-gkyi" *Bulletin de L'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, XXXIV, 1, Hanoi, 1937, p.7. Rock wrote that couples who failed in their suicide attempts would be put in jail and ostracized. According to Peter Goullart, however, would-be suicides took no chance of failure because their parents may have killed them if they failed. P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pp. 152-153. Informants in Lijiang and Naxi scholar He Zhonghua confirmed that the Naxi would have killed couples who failed in their suicide attempts.

⁶P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 153.

⁷M. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, Chicago University Press, 1985, p. 125.

⁸E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual and Gender Transformation among the Naxi", *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* (9) 1990.

⁹Kunming 1991.

¹⁰*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, pp. 46, 47.

¹¹Personal interviews with He Zhonghua, Lan Wei, Li Jingsheng, He Zhiwu, 1991.

¹²Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 28.

¹³C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 363.

¹⁴*Ibid*, pp. 364-365.

¹⁵The first case was recounted to me by Naxi scholar He Zhonghua and it is a well known case. The second case, I learned from a scholar who was based in Beijing and from young people in Lijiang town. There may have been other cases of love suicide which I did not hear about, but love suicide is certainly no longer the norm in Lijiang.

¹⁶Y. was then 23 years old. When Naxi lovers are confronted with the disapproval of their parents, they may elope. I have been given the following description of elopement (there may be other ways of doing things). The lovers run away for a night and return to the girl's parental home in the morning. The boy lights a string of fire crackers for everyone to hear, including the neighbors, and the marriage is official. Naxi parents who disapprove of their children's boyfriends or girlfriends live in fear of elopement. McKhann comments on the negative impact which elopement has on the politics of bones in modern Naxi society in his thesis, C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bones*, p. 368. I may add, however, that it is very difficult for young couples to elope if both sets of parents are against the match: for where will they go? and what will life be like? Y.'s parents objected to her marriage plans because her boyfriend was from a very poor family. They had no personal grievance against him but they did not want their daughter to live a miserable life. Once Y. pointed out her friend's mother to me at one of the markets in Lijiang, and the poor woman did look destitute. In fact, Y.'s parents were prepared to accept the marriage on one condition only, that the boy would move in with them as a son-in-law. Unfortunately, he could not do this because he was an only son, his father had died and his sisters were not healthy. He would have to take care of his family, otherwise who would? Eventually, Y. left to live in Kunming, she got a job and sent for her boyfriend. When he came to visit her, however, he broke off the relationship because he felt too ashamed of his economic situation. She felt betrayed. She had done everything for them to be together, how could he let his pride decide of their fate? When I asked her why they had not eloped, she answered that she could not have done this to her parents, because it would have shamed them. Her parents had always been kind, they had sacrificed a lot for her education (Y. was a high school graduate).

¹⁷Jackson makes allusions to the similarities between the Naxi and the Lolo throughout his thesis. In fact, some scholars outside China class the Naxi as a Yi people. See A.Y. Dessaint, *Minorities of Southwest China*, New Haven, HRAF Press, 1980. Inez de Beauclair categorizes the Naxi as Wuman with the Lolo (Yi), and not as Qiang. I. de Beauclair, *Tribal Cultures of Southwest China*, Taipei, The Oriental Cultural Service, 1970, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸Which is not to say that in Lijiang only lovers took their lives. According to Goullart, 80 percent of suicides in pre-1949 Lijiang were love suicides but there were many other suicide cases involving desperate married women and men. Such suicides were not ritual suicides and by contrast to love suicides, they often took place inside the house. P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pp. 152.153. According to the scholars at the Academy of Social Sciences, the Naxi still have a tendency to commit suicide although they no longer commit love suicide. Whenever I asked about this in Lijiang and Kunming (and often I did not need to ask specifically, but only to broach the topic) I was told that 'The Naxi commit suicide all the time'.

¹⁹P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pp. 151, 152.

²⁰Hence, social context establishes gender values in northwest Yunnan rather than notions about the essential nature of gender.

²¹By Yongning Mosuo is meant the people who live in the plain regions including Lugu Lake.

²²*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 1, p.76.

²³What follows is 'report anthropology' from Lamu Gatusa, and other Mosuo friends in Labei.

²⁴This has something to do with the incest taboo which prohibits talking about sex or singing, humming or whistling of love tunes within earshot of relatives. But it also has to do with social and generational propriety. Discretion serves another function in the view of the people concerned: whilst a sexual relationship remains private, nobody has any obligations to anybody (so long as the girl is not pregnant). In other words, if you don't see it and you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist – thus, it will be of no consequence if the young couple splits up. By contrast, a love relationship that is not private begins to look like a marriage and this, by definition, is a

public affair. Young lovers do not always wish for marriage and therefore like to keep their love affairs private.

²⁵J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 80, note 204.

²⁶*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 44.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸See Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 85. Also, Shih Chuan-kang, "The Origin of Marriage among the Moso and Empire-Building in Late Imperial China".

²⁹See C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bones*, and the *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2.

³⁰Paul and Elaine Lewis mention that the Mien (Yao) are reluctant to part with ancestral lists for the same reasons. P. and E. Lewis, *Peoples of the Golden Triangle, Six Tribes in Thailand*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1984, p. 150.

³¹See C. Mathieu, "Moso Religious Specialists".

³²S. Knödel, "Moso Kinship and State Power" in Oppitz and Hsu, pp. 47-65, p. 50.

³³*Mao Wen Qiangzu Zizhixian Gaikua* [A survey of Maowen Qiang autonomous county], Sichuan Minzu Chubanshe, 1985, pp. 22-23.

³⁴*Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, p. 99.

³⁵Note that I am only dealing with ideal and juridical notions. People readily admit that the division of property does not always proceed without bitterness - as happened in the story of Remugu and Palassu (ref. Chapter III). In fact, people explain the conflict between the brothers Remugu and Palassu as one between moral and juridical ideals on the one hand, and everyday, unfair practices, petty jealousy and matters of personal character on the other. Fraternal conflict is a common theme in other Himalayan social relations. See S.B. Ortner, *High Religion*, p. 33. According to Leach, of course, fraternal conflict is the *modus operandi* of Kachin social relations, ref. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*.

³⁶Both Rock and Goullart explain that if in theory a son could dispose of his widowed mother, in real life this was unlikely. Goullart writes that it 'occurred rarely' and was 'condemned as depravity'. See P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 79; also J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi tribe*, p. 33.

³⁷C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Kinship Structures*, p. 379. Ultimogeniture may have been an ancient Qiang practice. The Chinese annals of the Han dynasty report that the Qiang 'ate their first born' (see R. Mathieu, *Etudes sur la mythologie et l'éthnologie de la Chine ancienne*, p. 40, note 4; also W. Eberhard, *Local Cultures of South and East China*, p. 135).

³⁸E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, p. 261.

³⁹The Khala Mongols of Western Outer-Mongolia believe that it is not proper for married brothers to share the same tent. Like the Naxi, they also practice ultimogeniture although there are exceptions. Note that in this particular case, illegitimate children belong to their mothers' families, as they do among the Labei Mosuo. H.H. Vreeland, *Mongol Community and Kinship*, New Haven, 1957, pp. 72, 90.

⁴⁰V.A. Riazanovskii, *Customary Law of the Mongol tribes*, p. 59. This system of inheritance possibly served as an old age pension.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 64-67.

⁴²M. Polo, *The Travels*, pp. 171-176, also mentioned in J. Bacot, *Les Mo-so*, p. 10.

⁴³This does not mean that it never happens, but that such matches are certainly not ideal and they are not the norm. Incidentally, Mosuo men regard Han attitudes towards age and physical stature as 'feudal' (*fengjian*) and 'sexist' (*da nanzi zhuyi*) for they themselves care little for such things. But Mosuo women are quick to clarify that for their part they prefer tall and handsome men.

⁴⁴J.F. Rock, "The Romance of Ka-ma-gyu-mi-gkyi", p. 1, note 1.

⁴⁵C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Tower of Five Glories*, London, Cresset, 1941.

⁴⁶See Gao Fayuan, Dai Youde and He Zhonghua (eds.), *Zhongguo Xinan Shaoshuminzu Daode Yanjiu* [Research into the morals of the minority nationalities of southwest China], Yunnan Minzu Chubanshe, 1990, pp. 57-58. Individual contributors are cited on the first page but not in connection with their articles.

⁴⁷M. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, p. 27.

⁴⁸Lin Yueh-hua, *The Lolo of Liangshan*, New Haven, HRAF Press, 1961 (1947), Chapter 5.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 25.

⁵¹*Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, p. 87.

⁵²C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, pp. 260-261.

⁵³P. and E. Lewis, *Peoples of the Golden Triangle*, p. 269.

⁵⁴Which are common causes of suicide in other Asian societies, see Lee A. Headley (ed.), *Suicide in Asia and the Near-East*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1983.

⁵⁵E. Durkheim, *Le Suicide*, Paris 1930, p. 369 [my translation from French].

⁵⁶According to P. and E. Lewis, the Lisu in Thailand have higher rates of suicide than any of the other groups. They cite three examples (the last is a case example) – suicide may result from despair, but also from frustration and anger. See P. and E. Lewis, *Peoples of the Golden Triangle*, p. 270.

⁵⁷A.Y. Dessaint, *Minorities of Southwest China*, p. 30.

⁵⁸D'Ollone, *In Forbidden China*, p. 62; Lin Yueh-hua, *The Lolos of Liangshan*, p. 70; Song Enchang, "Xiao Liangshan Yizu Hunyin He Xisu Diaocha" [Research into the customs and marriages of the Yi nationality of Xiao Liangshan] in *Yunnan Minzu Minsu He Zongjiao Diaocha*, pp. 17-27, 21. Song explains that lower caste men who had sexual relations with higher caste women were burned to death. The woman was expected to commit suicide. In cases of men having sexual relations with women from lower castes, the penalty need not always apply but according to Lin Yueh-hua (p. 71), the children from such illegitimate relations were known as 'Yellow Bones' as opposed to Black or White Bones and were ostracized by the people of either caste. Pollard also recorded the suicide of a young couple in the Liangshan. See S. Pollard, *In Unknown China*, p. 187;

⁵⁹B. Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, London, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co Ltd, 1932, p. 98.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 157.

⁶²E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual, and Gender Transformation", pp. 65-66.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵The concept of Naxi men as persuasive lovers is also used by Emily Chao. This refers to what Chao identifies as a recent development in the Lijiang basin whereby young men persuade young women to elope with them. See S.D. White, *Medical Discourses*, p. 300.

⁶⁶See S.D. White, *Medical Discourses*, pp. 299-300.

⁶⁷M. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, p. 125.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹He Zhonghua (Kunming 1991), also Gao Fayuan et al, *Zhongguo Xinan Shaoshuminzu Daode Yanjiu*.

⁷⁰Chavannes made the following comments on the role played by war imagery in the worldview of the peoples of Lijiang: '... epigraphic texts, in truth, are not very explicit when they come to the historical events to which they allude; they are, however, very enlightening for what they reveal of the warlike character of the people who dictated them; these are triumphant songs celebrating the long journeys spent on horseback, the routing of enemies, the heads that roll like chopped up bamboo, the streams of blood and their smell on which the victor becomes drunk; after which the swords dance, brandished in such a way that they seem to have a supernatural life. We were not used to encountering such accents in Chinese poetry and we feel here an epic breath coming from somewhere which is not China.' See E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques relatifs à Li-kiang", p. 572. See also J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, and P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 81. The *Naxizu Jian Shi* likewise defines feudal Lijiang as a militarist organization and quotes the traditional proverb 'When [the peasants] are together they are soldiers, when they are dispersed, they are commoners.' See *Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 31.

⁷¹Ibid (*Naxizu Jian Shi*)

⁷²C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, p. 239.

⁷³The Great Yassa of Genghis Khan decreed that women were to do *men's* work whilst men were at the front. V.A. Riazanovskii, *Customary Law of the Mongol Tribes*, p. 58.

⁷⁴M. Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, pp. 33, 23.

⁷⁵E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual and Gender transformation", p. 62; M. Sahllins, *Islands of History*, p. 58; and M. Sahllins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, Chicago University Press, 1981, p. 14.

⁷⁶Note that all Dongba texts will not be identical. This synopsis is based on Rock's "The Romance of Ka-ma-gyu-mi-gkyi". The quote is from pp. 47-48.

⁷⁷I.e. 'I am not yet married'.

⁷⁸Small presents exchanged by lovers during courtship.

⁷⁹This is ritual denial.

⁸⁰Thus, no ritual can repair what Kamagumiki has done by having sexual intercourse with a boy who was not her betrothed. The words 'trousseau', 'dowry', etc. are taken from Rock. It may be more accurate to regard the trousseau as bride-price.

⁸¹He was afraid that if he cut the rope she would harm him because Kamagumiki had committed suicide and she was now a dangerous suicide ghost.

⁸²Note that Mosuo custom expects brothers who attend their sisters' funerals to lay their cape upon the coffin before cremation.

⁸³Note that before and after telling the story of Kamagumiki, the Dongba exorcises the demons of suicide.

⁸⁴P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 154.

⁸⁵B. Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, New York, Norton Company, 1926, especially pp. 39-44.

⁸⁶J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, "Customary Law: A Confusing Fiction", in A. Dundes Renteln and A. Dundes, *Folk Law: Essays in the Theory of Lex Non Scripta*, New York, London, Garland Publishing Inc., 1994.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰A. Dundes Renteln and A. Dundes, "What is Folk Law?" in *Folk Law: Essays in The Theory of Lex Non Scripta*, pp. 1-5, pp. 5,6.

Chapter VII
Marriage and the Transformation of Naxi Polity
in the Ming Dynasty

Introduction

In the last chapter, I proposed that the love suicide custom instituted traditional Naxi marriage customs rather than Confucian mores. In this chapter, I will focus on some of the historical issues raised by Jackson regarding the patrilineal cross-cousin marriage prescription. Jackson holds that the Naxi marriage system once organized the Lijiang Naxi and the Yongning Mosuo into two intermarrying matrilineal moieties, and that evidence towards this theory can be found in the creation story told during the Sacrifice to Heaven.¹ The Sacrifice to Heaven is not performed by the Mosuo and Jackson's theory contends that this is so because the Sacrifice to Heaven is itself a relatively recent phenomenon among the Naxi (post 1723) as most things that distinguish contemporary Naxi and Mosuo societies.

According to Emily Chao, Jackson's reconstruction amounts to an 'exhaustive discussion on the common background of the [Mosuo and Naxi]'.² Indeed, even Naxi scholars who argue that the Naxi have long left the matriarchal stage, recognize matrilineal survivals in Naxi kinship practices and mythology, and believe that the Naxi and Mosuo once shared the same clan structures. In the following pages, I will propose that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage sustained the feudalization of the Lijiang tribes, and did not involve the Yongning people or

matrilineality. I will also argue that current ethnohistorical theories regarding Naxi creation mythology, its accompanying ritual, the Sacrifice to Heaven, and their relevance to the Naxi kinship system miss the significant point that these were above all concerned with Naxi allegiances to the feudal realm. In fact, this chapter suggests that the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescription begins with the Mu genealogy.

Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage and the politics of blood lines

The comparative advantages of the three types of cross-cousin marriages (matrilateral, bilateral and patrilateral) have been thoroughly explored by Lévi-Strauss (though not without considerable controversy) and, for our present purpose, may be briefly summarized as follows. Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage perpetuates political and social asymmetries but allows for large political alliances on a circuit. Bilateral cross-cousin marriage institutes a restricted and egalitarian form of exchange usually between two groups. And patrilateral cross-cousin marriage establishes marriage alliances between at least three groups on the basis of alternate generations.³

In this latter type of marriage, group A is wife giver to B who is wife giver to C who is wife giver to A in one generation and vice versa in the second. Thus, each wife-giving group is in turn a wife-taking group in relation to the same groups A, B and C with the result that status asymmetries cannot crystallize. In such a system, wife-takers have precedence over wife-givers but prestige becomes individuated. From the bride's perspective, it is focused on the person of the Mother's Brother whilst from the groom's it is focused on his own father. Either way, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage reinforces patrilineal privilege, but it is the individual that counts here rather than groups. Prescriptive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is therefore in appearance so politically restrictive that some anthropologists have doubts that in 'real life', it can exist.⁴

The notion of 'prescriptive marriage', evidently, has been the subject of wide controversy in anthropological literature but there is little doubt that Naxi

patrilateral cross-cousin marriage practices were prescriptive.⁵ Although, marriage was certainly constrained by demography and circumstances, and as we have seen in Chapter VI, the Naxi sometimes took a short cut and 'stole' their brides, the principle by which men had priority over their sisters' daughters was fixed. In fact, the betrothal system was more than a device by which nieces automatically went to their MBS, it was a privilege that granted maternal uncles the right to decide as to whom their nieces could marry.⁶ So that, in this sense, wife-takers were also wife-givers.

In 1969, G. Prunner wrote an interesting speculative essay on Naxi kinship where he argued – on the basis of Naxi kinship terminology and the pictographs – that the Naxi were a patrilineal people who practiced cross-cousin marriage as did the majority of their neighbors. In Prunner's perspective, the odd ones out were the Mosuo for being in all appearance the only matrilineal people in the region.⁷ But Prunner did not suspect that the Naxi practiced exclusive (or preferential) patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. Nor should he have done so. For this form of marriage is not found among any of the Naxi's Tibeto-Burman neighbors: the Kachins marry matrilaterally, the Yi and Labei Mosuo marry bilaterally. And preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is neither a Tibetan nor a Chinese practice. From the Tibetan and Chinese perspectives, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage implies the 'return of bone and flesh' and thus risks 'piercing the bones'.⁸ Indeed, the Naxi seem very much at odds in this context, because their own neighbors show so many tendencies towards marriage to MBD rather than to FZD that both Paul Benedict and Lévi-Strauss have surmised that *matrilateral cross-cousin alliance* was once a universal form of marriage exchange among the Chinese, Tibetans and Tibeto-Burmans.⁹

As we shall see in this chapter and the next, mythological deconstruction and kinship theory suggest that among the Naxi, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage in fact replaced other types of marriage alliance, matrilateral or bilateral, rather than they support Jackson's theory on the transformation of Naxi society from matrilineality to patrilineality. But before we begin examining this possibility, it

is worthwhile exploring Jackson's own analysis of Naxi cosmogony and his reconstruction of the original Naxi/Mosuo matrilineal tribe.

Mythical genealogies and the matrilineal moiety theory

From the Dongba manuscripts and the Mu Chronicles, we know that there were once four clans of Naxi (Se, Ye, Ma and He) who were the sons of the 6th generation descendant after Coseeilee'ee, the ancestor Ge-lai-qiu who was the last of the legendary ancestors:

Legendary ancestors (Mu Chronicle of 1516) and the four clans of Naxi

Mee-ssa Cu-cu

Cu-cu Cu-yu

Cu-yu Cu-diu

Diu-yu Diu-ze

Diu-ze Zi-ze

Zi-ze Co-ssei

Cosseilee'eeThe hero of the flood

who fathered the three sons: the Tibetan, the Naxi and the Bai

Lee-ee No-o

No-o Na-ba-pu

Pa-pu O

O Ge-lai

Ge-lai-qiu

who fathered the four clans of Naxi: Se, Ye, Ma and He – in this order.

From the Dongba tradition, we also know that there were 'four tribes in the centre': the Per (White), Na (Black), Boa and Wu who had for neighbors the Gelo in the north (Mongols), the Tibetans in the west, the Han in the east and the Bai in the south.¹⁰ That these four tribes formed a prestige order is certain. As I have

already mentioned, it is also possible that, at some stage, this prestige order had to do with a caste system, by which I mean a social category defined in relation to another (or others) by status asymmetry, occupation and *strict endogamy* such as was found among the Nuosu.¹¹ Jackson's theory, however, argues that the Black and White tribes, rather than being prestige and endogamous categories, once organized the four Naxi clans into a moiety system on the basis of patrilineal cross-cousin marriage prescription, matrilineality and avuncular residence. This system would have divided the Naxi people on both sides of the Yangzi with the White on the Yongning side and the Black on the Lijiang side.

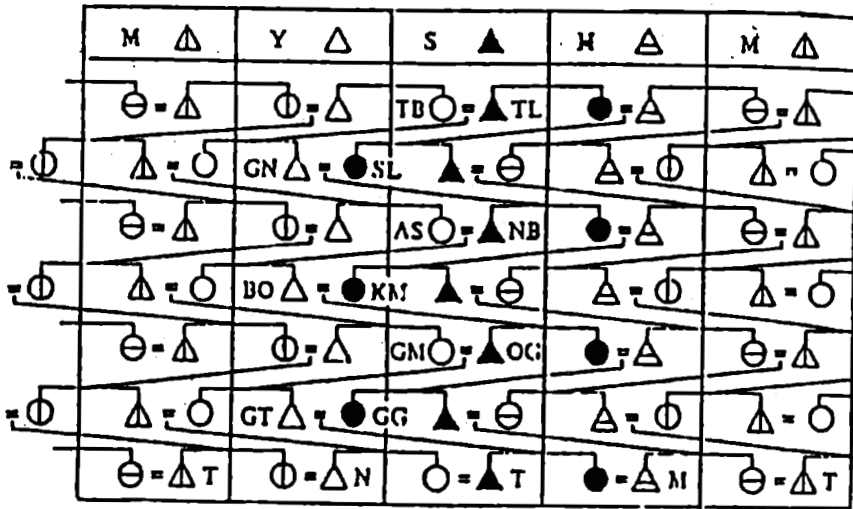
To construct his theory, Jackson first lists the genealogies of the mythical ancestors and their wives, as they are given in a manuscript pertaining to the Sacrifice to Heaven and translated by Rock.¹²

Muan-za Ts'u-ts'u (Mee-ssa Cu-cu)	<i>married</i>	K'o-ddv Mun-ssu
Ts'u-Ts'u Ts'u-yu	<i>married</i>	Dta-ts'a Ts'a-ssu
Ts'u-dyu Dgyu-za	<i>married</i>	A-dzi A-ssu
Dgyu-za Dzi-za	<i>married</i>	K'wa-dtv Mber-ssu
Dzi-za Ts's-za	<i>married</i>	Ghugh-khu La-ssu
Ts'o-za Lu-ghugh (Cosseilee'ee)	<i>married</i>	Ts'a-khu bu-bu-mi (Coheibubami)
Ghugh-khuh Non	<i>married</i>	Ssu-t'a La-lv
Non Ba-po	<i>married</i>	A-dzi Ssu-lv
Ba-po O	<i>married</i>	K'wua-dtv Mber-lv
O Gwa-lo	<i>married</i>	Gyi-ssu Mun-lv
Gkaw-la Ts'u (Ge-lai-qiu)	<i>married</i>	Gyi-mi Mun-lv

All ssu women are celestial and all lv women are terrestrial. Ssu and lv are equivalent to Si and Lee or Lv and mean snakes and dragons.

Then, he proposes the following model:¹³

Jackson's model (fig. 1)



Jackson explains that 'while only two avuncular groups (Ye and Se) are involved in the Na-khi genealogy, it is necessary to have four groups in order to generate symmetry with regard to residence after marriage.'¹⁴

Jackson's model is truly impressive, but it is not entirely convincing. First, since it assumes the intermarriage of the four clans of Naxi from the very start, it ignores the myth's own definitions. Naxi cosmogony explains that Cossilee'ee had three sons: a Tibetan, a Naxi and a Bai, not four, and that the four clans begin after Ge-lai-qiu. Of course, I am not raising a question of history but the possibility that the sequential position of the four clans is not incidental. We find the four clans after the sixth generation Ge-lai-qiu in both the myths and the Mu genealogy, and we can suspect that at least as far as the Mu genealogy is concerned, its author Mu Gong gave some thought to the correct order of things. That we may not know what this sequence means does not justify discounting it from the analysis.

Indeed, it may be that the four sons are not only brothers but succeeding generations because, in between the first generation ancestor Yegunian and the second Mou-bao Ah-cong, there are four Zhaos, i.e. kingdoms.

Ge-lai-qiu who fathered the four clans of Naxi: Se, Ye, Ma and He

Yue-sui Zhao

FIRST GENERATION

Yegunian (618)

Zuo-guo Zhao

Qiu-yang (674) *married* Mi-jun-xi-shu.

etc.

Yue-xi Zhao

Xi-nei Xi-ge (827-835) *married* Pu-mi

etc.

Mo-so Zhao

Mou-xi Mou-cuo (1054-1055) *married* Yu-li

etc.

SECOND GENERATION

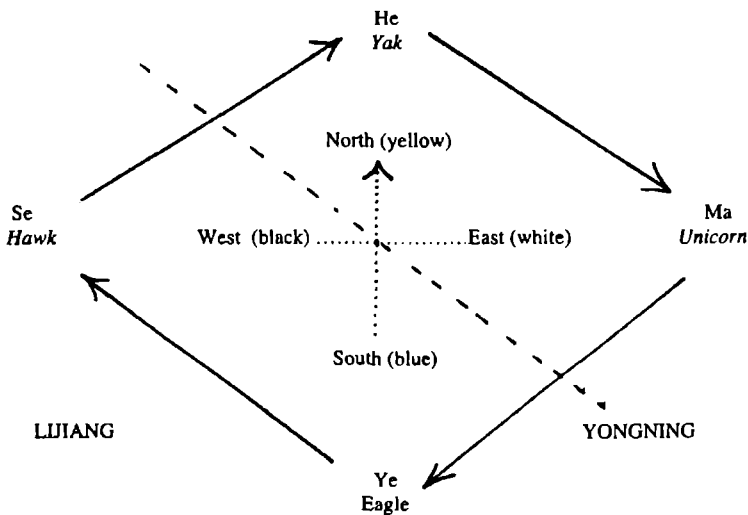
Mou-bao Ah-cong (-1253)

From the perspective of the historical record, Jackson's model runs into another problem. Whilst the Dongba manuscripts talk of four clans of Naxi, the four names, Se, Ye, Ma and He do not at any time between the Tang period and the Ming dynasty account for all the names that can be found in the official documentation relating to the peoples of Lijiang, for such names as La, Pu, Gao and Ah also appear in the records. Though it may be that these other names were not 'Naxi', they nonetheless caution that the four sons of Ge-lai-qiu could belong to a cosmological frame of reference that may not be connected to the historic Naxi in a straightforward manner.

One can also object that Jackson arbitrarily posits that the founder of the Se clan is a direct descendant of Cosseilee'ee, the founder of the Ye clan a direct descendant of Coheibubami, the founder of the He a descendant of Cosseilee'ee's sister and that of the Ma, a descendant of Coheibubami's brother. Yet, Jackson

argues that this symmetry is modeled upon Dongba cosmology which holds that the He and the Ma, and the Ye and the Se went in pairs, that the He and the Ma lived in the north and the Se and Ye in the Lijiang plain. Taking for premise that the Naxi and the Mosuo clans are the same and that the Dongba associates the following colors and therefore the cardinal points to each of the clans: Se = Black (west); Ye = Blue/green (south); He = Yellow (north); and Ma = White (east), Jackson transposes the names of the Naxi clans (totemic emblems etc.) onto the map of northwest Yunnan, with Black and White each dwelling east and west of the river. In doing so, he is able to turn the Lijiang Naxi into a Black (Ya and Se) moiety and the Yongning Mosuo into a White one (He and Ma).

Jackson's proposition (fig. 2)



In response to Jackson's reconstruction, McKhann agrees that Dongba cosmology suggests that the Naxi were once organized in a moiety system, but cautions that there are 'no historical data' to confirm this hypothesis.¹⁵ And indeed, Jackson's theory is weak because he works both inductively and deductively on the basis of a single set of mythical data. Given my own approach to mythology and textual deconstruction, of course, I am not about to contest that myth can provide grounds for deducing ethnohistorical hypotheses. But as Burrige writes, 'there are few

purposes a myth will not adequately serve.¹⁶ So, if we must use mythology to formulate *historical* hypotheses, we need to test those against other types of evidence, the broader the range the better: the historical record, genealogical research, comparative studies, archaeological finds, kinship theory and so forth. As things stand, in fact, Jackson's construct does find a degree of support in the historical record. For the Tang dynasty *Man Shu* reports that at the end of the 9th century, Mo-so tribes lived in the river valleys of the Jinshajiang which was also called Mo-sojiang. And these Mo-so dwelt in a region north of Lijiang plain.¹⁷

When we come to the Yuan record, however, things are a bit more complicated. On the one hand, imperial history confirms that in the 13th century the He tribes lived north of Lijiang plain, in Fengke, Judian and Yongning,¹⁸ but on the other, it also suggests that White and Black clans were not neatly arranged on each side of the Jinshajiang as Jackson would have it. For the Mongols called the Fengke He and the Lijiang Mou 'White Jang' and both of those lived on the Lijiang side of the Yangzi.

But perhaps the main challenge to Jackson's proposition lies with current ethnographic data. Because, although much has been made of the four common clan names of the Naxi and Mosuo, the Yongning Mosuo have six clans, Xi, Hu, Ya, Ngue, Co and Bu. And the clan names which they and the Naxi share are not Se, Ye, Ma and He, but Ye (Ya) and Co. The Co, indeed, are given in the Naxi creation myth as the first people along with the Ji people. Meanwhile, it is not exactly clear why the Mosuo Xi should be equated to the Naxi Se, or the Hu to the He since Mosuo and Naxi languages are capable of producing and distinguishing between all these names without recurring to phonetic approximation. As for the others, the Ngue, Ma and Bu, they are missing from one side of the river or the other. Finally, the Yongning clans are not paired like the Lijiang clans. Whereas among the Naxi, the clans are paired as Ma/He and Se/Ye, among the Mosuo, they are paired as Hu/Xi and Ya/Ngue.

It is reasonable to object that if the Naxi and the Mosuo were ever organized as two intermarrying moieties, Mosuo and Naxi clans would have corresponded

and more to the point they would have been paired in the same order. This does not mean that the people on either side of the Jinshajiang never were involved in greater tribal formations. In fact, the analysis which I made of the Mu Chronicles in Chapter II argues to the contrary that the tribes of Lijiang and Yongning were apparently federated during the Tang period when Lijiang was under Nanzhao control. But the various Yongning and Lijiang clan names do imply that the four names Se, Ye, Ma and He are specifically attached to the Lijiang Naxi and therefore more than likely to a period that involved the political organization of the Lijiang people and not that of the people of Yongning.

Given what has been discussed in previous chapters, it seems that if the people of Lijiang were ever organized on the basis of a Black and White moiety system, the above four clans, and *preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage*, they must have been so at some stage of the earlier Ming period, because:

- During the Tang, the names of the Lijiang and Yongning clans were Xi, La, Ye, Ji, Pu, etc., and not Ye, Se, He and Ma; and these clans married matrilaterally for two successive generations whilst in alternate generations they married into the La clan;
- During the Song, the Lijiang tribes were 'disunited';
- Under the Mongols, the tribes of Yongning were subject to the Lijiang chief; and
- during the mid-16th century, the people of Lijiang were organized into three classes, the Mu, Ah and He.¹⁹

Now, if we look at Jackson's model from a *cosmological* rather than a geographical perspective, the color scheme which the Dongba tradition applies to the four Naxi clans puts the four sons of Ge-lai-qiu at some interesting compass points. By placing the Ma and He in the north and the east, the Dongba tradition implies that the Ma and He are the true ancestral clans of the Naxi. As we saw in Chapters II, and V, the Dongba tradition does not confuse the Mu or the Ma with the Ye. The pictographs depict the Ma clan as a healthy tree and the Ye as wilted

leaves, and Dongba oral history opposes the Ye clan in the hills to the Mu ruling house in Baisha. The place which the Ma and He occupy in the Dongba mandala is also all the more interesting in light of the fact that during the Ming period, the Mu eventually absorbed all the Naxi clan names into either Mu, Ah and He.

Suggestions for a moiety four-section system, and Black and White categories

Although I have objected to Jackson's theory on a number of points, the moiety hypothesis is worth pursuing at least on the Lijiang side of the Yangzi, precisely because the Naxi manuscripts do speak of four clans that go in pairs and one tribe. First, however, if we are going to argue that White and Black categories can be matched to the four clans as Jackson proposes, then the principles of co-residence and intermarriage which he suggests in fig. 1 need to be adjusted.

In a four-section moiety system based on patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, each of four groups is part of a two way exchange system wherein two groups never marry. We can expect that if the Naxi were once upon a time organized on such lines, mythology would somehow define marriageable or/and prohibited categories. Thus, Ma and He, and Se and Ye go in pairs and live in the same place because either they marry or they do not. But if Ma and He, and Ye and Se are intermarrying pairs, then they can no longer make up exogamous moieties or marry patrilineally, because intermarrying pairs must marry bilaterally. Therefore, if we must explain the custom of patrilineal cross-cousin marriage as a moiety system which involved the intermarriage of the four Naxi clans, it seems that from the perspective of mythology and kinship theory, the best interpretation for the pairing of the four clans is one that makes co-residence signify a marriage prohibition.

That the Naxi were once organized on the basis of four sections, two moieties, patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, co-residence defining non-marriageable categories and *patrilineality* is not impossible because the Munda system described by Lévi-Strauss in his *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* offers a suitable ethnographic precedent.²⁰

The Munda system

	A2 \triangle	B1 \triangle	B2 \blacktriangle	A1 \triangle	A2 \triangle
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$
\circ	$\triangle = \bullet$	$\blacktriangle = \ominus$	$\triangle = \oplus$	$\triangle = \circ$	$\triangle = \bullet$
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$
\circ	$\triangle = \bullet$	$\blacktriangle = \ominus$	$\triangle = \oplus$	$\triangle = \circ$	$\triangle = \bullet$
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$
\circ	$\triangle = \bullet$	$\blacktriangle = \ominus$	$\triangle = \oplus$	$\triangle = \circ$	$\triangle = \bullet$
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$

A2 and B2, and A1 and B1 are co-residents and are also known as Big and Small chiefs. If we replace these categories with the names Se, Ye, He and Ma, positioning each pair as non-marriageable groups, we see that this model fits.

The Naxi tribe ?

	Ma \triangle	Se \triangle	He \blacktriangle	Ye \triangle	Ma \triangle
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$
\circ	$\triangle = \bullet$	$\blacktriangle = \ominus$	$\triangle = \oplus$	$\triangle = \circ$	$\triangle = \bullet$
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$
\circ	$\triangle = \bullet$	$\blacktriangle = \ominus$	$\triangle = \oplus$	$\triangle = \circ$	$\triangle = \bullet$
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$
\circ	$\triangle = \bullet$	$\blacktriangle = \ominus$	$\triangle = \oplus$	$\triangle = \circ$	$\triangle = \bullet$
	$\ominus = \triangle$	$\oplus = \triangle$	$\circ = \blacktriangle$	$\bullet = \triangle$	$\ominus = \triangle$

Interestingly, Australian kinship systems make clear that moieties and section systems can accommodate patrilineal and matrilineal descent at the same time. For example, sections can be inherited from Father whilst moiety membership comes from Mother, or vice versa.²¹ Given what was discussed in Chapter II regarding name formations in the early Mu genealogy, one should consider that a Naxi moiety and section system could well have been bilateral.

At any rate, given the paucity of the historical record, the proposed models are interesting above all for what they show of structural possibilities. We see that in the above scheme, Ma marries Ye and Se, but never He; while Se marries Ma and He, but never Ye. Everyone is therefore related but marriage prohibitions are established between Ma and He and Ye and Se. Looking at things in the manner of Lévi-Strauss, Naxi totemic emblems appear to support this hypothesis. Using Naxi traditional classification, the yak and the unicorn (rhinoceros)²² are both 'hoofed animals', while the hawk and the eagle are both 'animals that fly'; but the rhinoceros and the eagle are wild beasts associated with the domains on high and rain making, while the other two animals are domesticated and associated with the human level. The rhinoceros horn connects it to the heavens, thunder and rain making,²³ while the eagle flies high in the sky, rests at the top of the mountain where it sharpens its claws and causes lightening. The eagle also brings rain when it fights with the snake who causes droughts.²⁴ In contrast, the yak is bred for its wool, milk, and meat and may be used to transport goods, the hawk is used for hunting and rests on the human hand.

In other words, Naxi totemic emblems pair the clans in such a way as to match the Big Chief, Small Chief alignment of the Munda system – by opposing symbols of kingship (rhinoceros/eagle) and symbols of domesticity (yak/hawk) whilst the opposition between the hoofed animals (rhino and yak) and the animals with claws (eagle/hawk) in turn cross-cuts these categories in a diametric opposition to match the White and Black divide. The latter, however, brings us back to the question of the prestige order suggested in the Dongba line up Per, Na, Boa and Wu.

From castes to moieties?

As we have seen, Dongba tradition orders Black and White tribes as prestige categories. Therefore, if we are to postulate (as Jackson does) that the Ma and He were White and the other two were Black, and that the distinction was important, should we not assume that once upon a [Nanzhao/ Dali/ Mongol (?)] time, the Ma and He, and Se and Ye were intermarrying clans within endogamous White and Black categories, rather than complementary and intermarrying moieties? Indeed, this would be far more in keeping with Tibeto-Burman habits than the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage because two intermarrying clans must marry bilaterally, not patrilaterally.²⁵ It seems to me that if the models above must be conjured up to make sense of the relation between exclusive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, Black and White tribes, pairs of clans and the making of the Naxi tribe, the question to ask is whether exclusive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage could have challenged pre-existing marriage practices and thus the very structure of a former caste system based on bilateral marriage exchange. For this would certainly have contributed to transforming the tribal system into a feudal realm whereby the system of marriage alliance and its accompanying politics had been substantially curbed. Such a proposition finds a hint of support in the Naxi creation myth:

Before all the things of the creation and the good people appeared, the wag tail was the first to emerge, ah!. The wag tail wanted to be entirely white to become the ancestor of the birds, but this he could not do. There was a black spot on his chest, and the wagtail could not be the pure white ancestor of the birds.

One generation passed and the crow appeared. The black crow, ah! He wanted to be entirely black to become the ancestor of the birds, but this he could not do. There were three white feathers on his body and the crow could not become the pure black ancestor of the birds.

Then another generation passed, and the white butterfly wanted to be the pure white ancestor of the insects, but the butterfly was born at the wrong time of the year, he could not live during the three months of winter. The cold wind blew and when the butterfly arrived at the top of the mountain, the wind quickly killed him. This was the time when dying by floating on the wind arose.

Now, another generation passed and the black ant appeared. The black ant ah! the black ant wanted to be the pure black ancestor of the

insects. But the ant was born at the wrong time of the year, he could not live in the three months of summer. His waist was thin and weak and when the ferocious waters flooded the river, the ant drowned. This was the time when dying by drowning arose.

This part of the creation story appears to be a later addition. It is inserted between the creation of the sacred mountain Junasiluo which holds heaven and earth steady, and the appearance of the first ancestors – the nine ancestors, then the five who commit incest – and it contributes nothing to the plot. In addition, Black and White in this extract have none of the moral attributes which they assume in other parts of the creation myth where Black is always associated with evil and White with good. Only on two other occasions are Black and White thus devoid of moral significance: when the Black and White people emerge out of the nine pairs of eggs (although they are themselves number 10, hence again hinting that some of the Black and White elements may have been inserted into Naxi cosmology at a later date), and when Cossilee'ee, the post-flood Naxi hero and his heavenly wife Coheibubami meet for the first time at the place where Black and White meet.²⁶

The passage quoted above is undoubtedly concerned with descent. It is about the passing of the first generations before the things of the creation and the nine Naxi ancestors appear. What is being said here is that white and black purity is impossible, that a pure ancestral line, which also implies a pure line of descent, is impossible. Now, one can interpret this on a number of levels. First of all this Black/White problematic recalls the spot of white in Yin and the spot of black in Yang, it is a symbol of the Tao, the eternal life force. One can also put this passage in the barest structuralist terms and see here a *general* charter towards the necessity of marriage: that no lineage is pure because each must mix, because marriage is necessary to the continuity of existence. Then, one can also see in this, a literal statement that marriage *between white and black* is a necessity.

This interpretation in turn finds some support in the references to 'death by floating in the wind', and 'death by drowning', which may speak of former funeral practices (in particular, cremation and water burial) and thus imply distinct tribal groups, or castes. In fact, oral tradition in Eya and Yongning relates

that the cremation rituals of the Na (Black) people replaced the water burial of the Tibetans and the ground burial of the Han. The historical and archaeological record also associates cremation with the Nanzhao Black (Wuman) tribes, and ground burial with the White (Baiman) who buried their dead 'like the Han'.²⁷

The interesting thing here is that whereas a caste system would have split Ma and He (White) from Ye and Se (Black), a moiety four-section system would have introduced a marriage prohibition between Ma and He and between Se and Ye. Hence, this new arrangement would have broken the social and political dynamics of the caste system by inverting caste endogamy, but it would not have done away with the prestige order that made White precede Black.

To sum up, the model which I have reconstructed on the basis of Jackson's proposition argues that, *in theory*, the Naxi could have been organized on the basis of patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, two moieties and four sections (either patrilineal or matrilineal or both) during the early Ming period when the Mu chiefs began transforming the Mo-so tribal federation into a feudal realm.

Ideally, genealogical research tracing the patterns of marriage, residence and migrations of the Naxi families in Lijiang district would help substantiate the hypothesis that clan intermarriage did provide a basis for re-structuring Naxi society. For example, the Naxi of the village of Kemu (Zhongdian) claim that they are descended from people of the Ma, He and Ye clans who settled in these parts twenty generations ago.²⁸ If one counts twenty-five or twenty years per generation, this brings the original settlement at some date around 1460. This information adds to our knowledge that 1) the Mu organized at least one settlement on the basis of three clan residence, the number of groups needed to sustain patrilineal marriage alliances though not the right groups to sustain the marriage prohibitions implied in a moiety system based on the pairing of Ma and He and Ye and Se; and 2) if we can assume that the settlement of these three clans is not coincidental, that some among the Naxi had not yet lost their clan names, and that clan membership was proving useful to social engineering. A collection of such data could allow historians to establish certain patterns and either build

upon, or discard the hypotheses given above. What we know at this stage, at any rate, is that Naxi lineage segments are not localized but spread all over Naxi territory, whilst Naxi villages comprise intermarrying families. Hence, although Naxi society is very much concerned with the politics of its patrilineages (Co/bones) the village dominates social relations.²⁹ In other words, in Naxi territory, *place* takes precedence over lineage, and this indeed is a necessary stage in feudal development (more in Ch. VIII).

Having said as much, I may add that when considering both the heterogeneity of language and habits found in contemporary Lijiang and the tumultuous history of the region, we have grounds to suspect that the organization of the Naxi tribe, or rather that of the Mu kingdom, was possibly never characterized by neatness. Importantly, however, a tribal federation cum kingdom may not have required *universal* marriage rules so much as it would have needed to impose new marriage rules on politically significant families. European feudal history, of course, testifies to this proposition. Closer to the ancestors of the Naxi and Mosuo, Mongol federations were themselves based on the prescriptive marriages of a number of dominant families towards which less important families were obligated to contribute bride-price.³⁰ We shall see below that in fact, there is evidence of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage in the genealogy of the early Ming dynasty Mu chiefs. But before we examine the royal record, we turn once again to the Creation Story, incest and all. This time, we also look at its associated ritual, the Sacrifice to Heaven.

Incest, the flood and the legendary ancestors

In the perspective of contemporary Chinese scholars and Marxist socio-evolutionary theory, incest mythology testifies to primitive times when sexual union took place in the consanguinal family and women ruled. Where Jackson is concerned, incest mythology speaks for the Naxi's origin in the Mo-so matrilineal tribe.

Jackson holds that Naxi mythology establishes incest in hindsight, from the

perspective of a patrilineal people *looking back* onto a custom of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage practiced in a matrilineal system:³¹

If the flood destroyed the earth and its inhabitants, where did T'so's sons take their wives from? This myth wisely omits the flood and makes no comment: the answer to this problem would be embarrassingly clear. Other myths, however, face up to this problem For example, Ts'o is alleged to have committed incest with his sister and this was partly responsible for the flood. The third post-flood ancestor commits incest with his mother. The fifth post-flood ancestor has incestuous relations with both his mother and his sister, while his son marries a woman whose name is suspiciously like his mother's. At this point the genealogy breaks down and we are given the names of the latter's sons who are the founders of the four Naxi clans.' Why is it that the first, third and fifth post-flood ancestors allegedly commit incest and not the others?³²

He continues:

If one examines the complete genealogy of the Na-khi it will be seen that there are certain patterns in the naming of women apart from the *Ssu/Lv* distinction ... Thus the name Ts'a occurs in the 5th pre-flood and the 3rd post-flood generation, K'wua-dtv occurs in the 8th pre-flood generation³³ and the 3rd post-flood generation. The common feature in each case is that the pre-flood women are the great-great-grand-mothers (MMMMM) of the husbands of the post-flood women. How is this connected with the alleged incest of the 1st, 3rd, and 5th post-flood ancestors with their sisters or mothers? A solution to this problem is given if the Na-khi genealogy is taken to be a record of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage in a matrilineal system. If one begins with a pair of ancestors then one finds that the woman's daughter's daughter marries the man's sons' son and this pattern repeats itself in alternate generations. Hence the first and third generations are lineally related, so are the fifth, seventh, ninth and so on.³⁴

Jackson's propositions are questionable. Firstly, one can object that, given the diversity of the linguistic, cultural and ritual scene of northwest Yunnan, it is not surprising that neither incest nor the flood figure in all the creation stories told in Naxi country.³⁵ As Leach wrote of myth among neighboring Kachins, it can be a

'language of argument' rather than 'a chorus of harmony'.³⁶ Or as Dundes explains, a folk tradition necessarily implies a diversity of stories, myths, songs and so forth.³⁷ In other words, the different versions of the Naxi creation story do not justify a conspiracy theory. Secondly, the notion of a 'complete genealogy' is over-enthusiastic because the names of the ancestors between Mee-ssa Cu-cu, Cosseilee'ee and Ge-lai-qiu change with the different myths as do the names of their wives except, as Rock puts it, for 'one or two, as in the case of the important, what might be called post-flood ancestor, Ts'o-dze Llu-ghugh [Cosseilee'ee]'.³⁸ In fact, the genealogy given in the 1516 Chronicle, which we can take to represent an official version, makes the post-Cosseilee'ee, second generation maternal ancestor Wu-mi Wu-dzi, and the third Gyi-mi-Gyi-t'a-la-lv – which means that the name of only one female ancestor is repeated in the post-Cosseilee'ee list, K'wa-dtv Mber-ssu who becomes K'wa-dtv Mber-lv. Above all, Jackson ignores that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage necessarily implies that women marry into the same families as their grandmothers married into, and that alternate generations will duplicate each other whether in a patrilineal or a matrilineal system.

Another concern, and here the problem is very much a result of not having had access to the field, Jackson constructs his argument on what may be a particularly unusual version of the incest story. From the three myths which I personally translated, the work of Rock, McKhann, and Naxi scholars, and the stories I was told by the Dongbas at the Institute in Lijiang, incest always takes place before the flood, not after. Incest *causes* the flood.³⁹ Clearly, none of this implies that Jackson's version is 'wrong' or that it does not merit an explanation, but the exception cannot be expected to sustain a general theory.

As I noted above and in Chapter II, the significance of incest in the Naxi myth rests with the fact that it takes place *before* the flood and is thus negatively sanctioned, whereas in neighboring cosmologies incest happens *after* the flood and is given the approval of the gods. What I shall propose therefore is that in Naxi cosmology, incest opposes two types of marriage relations, pre-flood and

post-flood marriages, and that flood mythology therefore establishes a boundary between two types of marriage relations. Rather than assuming that Naxi mythology is attempting to write itself out of a shameful history, therefore, I shall assume that incest is here a juridical notion and that this creation story once established a *taboo* on a particular type of marriage. Since patrilateral cross-cousin marriage was the ideal among contemporary Naxi, and matrilateral or bilateral alliance the norm among all of the Naxi's neighbors, I shall also hypothesize that Naxi cosmology holds that 'wrong marriages' are matrilateral or bilateral ones and 'correct' marriages are about marrying patrilateral cross-cousins.

The Naxi creation myth relates that Cosseilee'ee was the ninth ancestor and that he had six sisters and five brothers who committed incest, after which came the flood.

The three drops of dew changed into three yellow seas. Then the nine ancestors of humanity appeared:

He-she He-gu
 He-gu- Mee-gu
 Mee-gu Mee-re
 Mee-re Ce-ce
 Ce-cee Ce-yu
 Ce-yu Cu-jiu
 Jiu-se-ji
 Ji-se-co
 Cosseilee'ee.

Cosseilee'ee had five brothers and six sisters. Lee'ee's brothers could not go to war to capture wives, Lee'ee's sisters had no husbands. And Lee'ee's brothers married their sisters.

The number nine is typically associated with men and befits a patriline even if patrilineality is here somewhat irrelevant, since this was a family of six brothers and six sisters who did not marry into other groups, because the brothers could not go to war to capture wives (so much for affinal relations in *illo tempore*). Now, if we look at the list above, we see that two things distinguish the first six

ancestors: they have four syllable names and at alternate generations, the names repeat syllables one and three. From number seven, the names have three syllables like other Tibeto-Burman names. We may bear in mind that although the genealogy totals nine ancestors, the seventh marks a change in the naming patterns because, as we saw in Chapter II, Coseilee'ee is the *seventh* ancestor in the Mu genealogy, not the ninth, and because the number seven is the agent of change.

Now, if the four syllable naming pattern is based on Mother's name, Father's name, Wife's name and personal name, where-ever syllables 1 (Mo) = 3 (Wi), the name pattern indicates a matrilineal alliance. Thus, contemporary Naxi custom (patrilineality and patrilineal cross-cousin marriage exchange) would command that in a correct genealogy a man should have a different name pattern from his father and his own son, but the same name pattern as his grandfather. It would also command that the cycle of names alternate in such a way that would *never* duplicate the first and third syllable in one generation. If, once upon a time, the Naxi readily identified marriage alliances on the basis of the four syllable name patterns, then, they must have recognized that the first five ancestors in the mythical list had married matrilineally – because they had taken wives whose names were the same as their mothers' (the men's mothers that is). In other words, the Naxi would have learned from their mythology that incest was about matrilineal alliances. This marriage sanctions, however, cannot have applied only to the common people but had to have involved elite families – for it was the marriages of elite families that defined the politics of the community. And since we have no reason to doubt that flood mythology was important to the Mu chiefs (the royal genealogy began with the Dongba creation story), we can conclude that the proscription of matrilineal alliances was of some importance to the Mu's own marriage alliances.

The Sacrifice to Heaven, floods and dynastic cycles

The Naxi creation myth relates that when Coseilee'ee learned to sacrifice to

Heaven, his sons were given speech. Thus, the eldest spoke Tibetan, the middle son spoke Naxi and the third spoke Bai. But it was the sixth Naxi descendant Ge-lai-qiu who learned to perform the *Meebiu* in the truly correct manner, and who was rewarded with four sons, each of whom founded the four clans of Naxi. Since these ancient times, therefore, the Naxi have worshipped Heaven, Earth and the *Ka* (the chief or emperor) to obtain *Nee* and *O* (sexual powers and many descendants), long life, good harvests, health for themselves and for their animals.

The Sacrifice to Heaven takes place at least twice a year, on New Year (first month) and on the seventh month, and among some Naxi groups up to five times a year.⁴⁰ Save odd places, such as Ludian, only men attend to this ritual because the *Meebiu* is dedicated to the reproduction of the Naxi patriline.⁴¹ The *Meebiu* is performed at designated sacred groves called *Meebiu Ta*, which are situated on the northern side of villages, the orientation consecrated to the ancestors, the high point, Heaven, and the gods. The only exception is the *Meebiu Ta* at Baisha, the residence of the Mu chiefs, which is on the western side. *Meebiu* symbolism focuses on series of threes, three heavens and three earths, three brothers, three generations in heaven and three generations on earth. The *Meebiu Ta* has three terraces, there are three god trees, two oaks representing Heaven and Earth and in the middle the Juniper representing the *Ka*, the mediator between Heaven and Earth.

McKhann argues that the Sacrifice to Heaven is 'a sacrifice made to the matrilineal "flesh" ancestors ... the providers of women who make biological and social reproduction possible'.⁴² And both he and Jackson hold that the sets of three involved in *Meebiu* symbolism have a structural connection with the three patrilineal required for exclusive patrilineal cross-cousin marriage exchange.⁴³ Indeed, according to McKhann's informants, the Sacrifice to Heaven once established for the Naxi the families with whom they could marry or not - those who did or did not partake in the Sacrifice to Heaven.⁴⁴ One should note, nonetheless, that all Naxi sacrifice to Heaven and that the Mosuo do not, but also that not all Naxi marry patrilineal cross-cousins (as for example, the people of

Eya and Zhongdian). McKhann explains that current typologies classify the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven as 1) primitive worship, 2) ancestor worship and 3) an imperial cult. Post-Liberation Naxi scholars and Rock stress 3) and 1), Jackson's theory is a variation on 1). For his part, McKhann describes his interpretation as a variant on 2), for his thesis stresses the kinship orientation of the Sacrifice to Heaven. The historical proposition given below makes all three categories equally relevant.

Briefly, Naxi scholars explain that the *Meebiu* has its origins in the 'primitive religion' (animism), that in the course of many centuries, it developed into a ritual related to ancestor worship, and eventually into an imperial cult. In the same vein, Rock argued that the *Meebiu* was the oldest Naxi ritual and that it preceded Bon. He explained that the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven is almost identical to the Sacrifice to Heaven performed by contemporary Qiang because it originated in times when the Naxi were still roaming the grasslands of north-east Tibet among the various Qiang tribes. According to Rock, the Naxi *Meebiu* had become Sinicized and had eventually been transformed into an imperial cult.⁴⁵ Rock's proposition found support in a comparative study by Rudolph Rahman according to which, counterparts to the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven are to be found in the lunar cults of pastoralists and nomadic peoples of the Chinese borderlands and Central Asia. Closer to home, Rahman pointed out that the Yi had a ritual very similar to the Sacrifice to Heaven,⁴⁶ which somewhat undermines the lunar theory, however, since Yi cosmology and calendar are based on stellar and solar reckoning.⁴⁷

Post-1949, Jackson's study implies that the Sacrifice to Heaven is a relatively recent ritual dedicated to the Chinese emperor.⁴⁸ McKhann's work, for its part, focuses on a structural-functional analysis of the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven in contemporary (pre-Liberation) Naxi society, not ethnohistory. McKhann holds that the Sacrifice to Heaven is a *total social phenomenon* in the sense Mauss gave this concept; the *Meebiu* is about biological, cosmological, social and political reproduction, including the reproduction of the Naxi patrilineal cross-cousin marriage preferences.⁴⁹ As far as history is concerned, McKhann is of the opinion

that the association of the middle god tree with the King/Chief or Emperor (the *Ka*) is a relatively recent innovation ‘which reflects the history of the incorporation of the Naxi into the Chinese state’, but he also suggests that *Ka* worship was first dedicated to the feudal chief rather than, or as well as, the Chinese emperor.⁵⁰ Thus, unlike other scholars, McKhann suggests that *Ka* worship may be a feudal cult rather than – or as well as – an imperial cult.

I shall argue below that Naxi cosmogony and the Sacrifice to Heaven belong today to a purer religious domain and to a folk tradition that obscure royal *and* Chinese origins, and that the Sacrifice to Heaven once motored Naxi political history rather than it evolved alongside it.

The Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven and the Chinese feudal tradition

There can be no doubt that Naxi cosmogony speaks for a royal tradition because the marriages of heaven and earth and the primordial flood are archetypal symbols of kingship among Tibetans, Yunnanese and South Asians.⁵¹ As Eliade puts it, ‘the fusion of contrary principles is found each time an attempt is made at formulating divinity’ and ‘new dynasties emerge from the mythical marriages that abolish polarity’. Flood mythology likewise signifies ‘a regression into primordial unity’ to be followed by the inauguration of ‘a new dynasty and a new historical cycle’.⁵² But if Naxi cosmogony resonates with the traditions of Tibet, Yunnan and South Asia, there are grounds to believe that the *Meebiu* begins with the Chinese tradition.

The *Meebiu* reflects the economic and political modes of a sedentary, agriculturalist people who came under Chinese influence. Even in the peripheries which were the least Sinicized and which came under Tibetan rule after 1723, as for example Baidi, the Naxi sacrifice to Heaven and Earth at the change of seasons in tune with the Chinese agricultural calendar, they pray for descendants, long life and *grain*, the central offering is not a sheep or a goat but indeed a sow, offered to Heaven in return for a wife,⁵³ in the same vein as Han Chinese rituals associate pork flesh with paying debt to affinal kin.⁵⁴

As we saw above, all Naxi participate in the Sacrifice to Heaven. However, not all Naxi do so at the same time, and not all participants have equal status.⁵⁵ The Naxi perform *Meebiu* according to their membership in specific factions, the most important of which are the *Pudv*, the *Gvhui*, *Gvshai* and *Gvzzai*. As McKhann explains, the *Pudv* is associated with the grain basket which is used to make offerings to the ancestors, the *Hui* with 'a chest for storing grain', the *Zzai* with agriculturalists and herdsman, and the *Shai* with people who married into the Naxi community.⁵⁶ In other words, all those factions are associated with modes of production relating for the most part to agriculture. Only the *Shai* faction is not determined on the basis of economic production, for its members were people who married into the Naxi community. In other words, where the members of the *Shai* faction are concerned, participation at the Sacrifice to Heaven stresses their 'naturalization' into the Naxi community.

According to McKhann's informants, the Sacrifice to Heaven factions have no structural connections with the four Naxi clans, Se, Ye, Ma and He, whilst the *Pudv* is the largest and the oldest faction.⁵⁷ But Rock reported that in one of his manuscripts (No 1194), it is said that the oldest faction is the *Gvhui* to which the Ye clan belonged, and that the *Pudv* and the *Gvzzai* belonged to the Se clan.⁵⁸ This is important. Indeed, that the Ye were allegedly the first to have performed the *Meebiu* makes the point, even if the point should turn out to be metaphorical rather than historical, that the *Meebiu* begins with the 'original' chiefs and with the Sinicized tradition. In light of the analysis which I have made so far on the entrance of Bon into Lijiang, this detail confirms Rock's assertion that the *Meebiu* was not originally a Bon ritual.⁵⁹

There is a general agreement in Naxi studies that the pervasive Chinese elements that are now found in the *Meebiu* and the stress which this ritual places on agriculture were grafted upon an original and more primitive ritual, and are thus the result of a process of Sinicization which most likely began in the Ming period.⁶⁰ And certainly, the worship of trees and stones in open groves does not only find cognates in the cults of Central Asians and other nomadic peoples, as

Rahman pointed out, but is part of a very ancient world culture.⁶¹ However, the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven is so strikingly reminiscent of ancient Chinese rites associated with the *She* (which Granet calls the holy place, the abode of the king and of the emperor) that one really ought to consider the possibility that the reason why the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven presents so many Chinese elements is because it was Chinese to begin with. In Ancient China, *She* grounds defined the fief, they established the feudal lord as lord of the soil, as mediator of heavenly and earthly destinies and representative of the emperor. The *She* rituals just like the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven were held on earth terraces (called *tan* whilst the Naxi terraces are called *ta*), facing north, and set in natural groves; they too involved a sacrificial stone and god trees, and they too focused on prayers to Heaven (Shangdi, the Lord Above, and other heavenly gods), Earth, the god of grains, and ancestors.⁶² In some of the manuscripts translated by Rock, the Juniper (the central god tree) does not represent the *Ka* (i.e. the Mongol Khan) but the *Hä*, a name which Rock translates as God and presumes to antedate *Ka* worship.⁶³ But this *Hä* could well be a Naxi transliteration of the Chinese *Hou* 后 the classical meanings of which are king or emperor.⁶⁴

It may be stretching the imagination to suggest a historical continuity between the rituals of border peoples such as the Qiang and the Naxi and times as ancient as the Zhou dynasty, or three millennia or so ago. But we do not need to look so far to seek the origins of the *Meebiu* in the Chinese rites dedicated to the holy place. For there are other continuities between Ancient China and the feudal peripheries of Imperial China, as for example the spring dances, or the organization of manorial estates on the *Jin* system (nine partitions) all of which suggests that the Zhou provided the Chinese emperors with *models* for the feudal organization of peripheral people.⁶⁵

If the *Meebiu* was from the beginning (when-ever that may have been) a cult dedicated to a political order centered on a Chief, vassal of the Chinese court and his domain, it may be that the connections between the Naxi and Qiang rituals do not lie with the Qiang origins of the Naxi but rather with the feudal history of both

peoples and especially the history of their vassalage to China. This proposition is not altogether clear because it is undeniable that there are significant connections between the Naxi and the Qiang (as for example the ancestor Ge-lai Qiu⁶⁶) and to which I will return in Chapter IX, but the Qiang chiefs were also enfeoffed by the Chinese court throughout history and notably by the Ming emperors.⁶⁷

Today, the Sacrifice to Heaven is a territorial cult, dedicated to ancestors, the village and mountain gods, held in the peripheral regions of Lijiang. However, there is no doubt that it once played a significant role in the ritual apparatus of the Mu kingdom. For not only is this ritual dedicated to the *Ka*, but it was still performed under the auspices of the Mu descendants in feudal Eya in the 1950s. The Sacrifice to Heaven mediates between Time (affinal ancestors, original spirits) and Space (the feudal realm) in order to obtain the right of occupancy, that is the reproduction of autochthony in the line of descent. As Granet explained, there is in Chinese thought a 'substantial identity between the Race and the Soil ... [which] has remained at the heart of religious institutions and public rights'.⁶⁸ But if the *Meebiu* was an Imperial rite, and if it was modeled on the *She* rites, then it not only established the 'Naxi race' (the Mo-so) as the people of the Mu chief, and the Mu chief as the representative of the emperor, it also placed the Mu's realm inside the Empire. In other words, *the Sacrifice to Heaven was to Space what the Calendar was to Time*, and was therefore fundamental not only to Mu rule but to Imperial dominion. Again, in Granet's words, 'When he received the investiture which allowed him to erect upon his land, an altar dedicated to the earth *à la* Chinese [the *She*], a chief became at once a Chinese and a lord. He did not receive a domain in exchange for a pledge of fidelity, he did not obtain imminent rights upon his domain by virtue of a guarantee of protection, he did not enfeoff himself to the Son of Heaven. He declared that he and his land had entered into Chinese discipline and civilization.'⁶⁹

One should note that the first Mosuo chief confirmed by the Ming emperor (1381) was named Pudv Keji, for Pudv is the name of the largest Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven faction. Indeed, it may be that the Mosuo also performed the Sacrifice to

Heaven at some stage of their history. And in fact, the Labei Mosuo do worship their ancestors as three god trees, two chestnut trees and a cypress tree in the middle even today. But Mosuo symbols of state and hierarchy have long rested with Lamaism and the Tibetan civilizational sphere. Just as interestingly, *Pudv* is the name of the Sacrifice to Heaven faction of Baidi as well as that of the dominant group in Eya, regions which the Mu chiefs settled in the Ming period. This suggests that the *Pudv* also had to do with the Mu chief's own territorial expansion.⁷⁰

Royal genealogies, incest and taboo

Having 'established' that the Sacrifice to Heaven, like creation mythology, had something to do with the Mu ruling house, we may now bring the issue of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage to bear upon the Mu genealogy itself.

The legendary ancestors in the Mu genealogical Chronicle (1516)

Ancestors who married heavenly wives who were Si spirits (Nagi)

Mee-ssa Cu-cu

Cu-cu Cu-yu

Cu-yu Cu-diu

Diu-yu Diu-ze

Diu-ze Zi-ze

Zi-ze Co-ssei

Cosseilee'ee *who fathered the three sons, the Tibetan, the Naxi and the Bai*

Ancestors who married earthly wives who were Lv spirits (Dragons)

Lee-ee No-o

No-o Na-ba-pu

Pa-pu O

O Ge-lai

Ge-lai-qiu *who fathered the four clans of Naxi: Si, Ye, Ma and He,*

In this official version, twelve legendary ancestors establish cosmic Time and thus announce the Mu's cosmic destiny. Here too, Cosseilee'ee is the seventh and not the ninth as he is in the myth. Seven is a feminine number and speaks for a matriline, in this case, a heavenly line of grandmother Nagi, because Cosseilee'ee himself is descended from celestial women and all the ancestors before him have married sky princesses. Cosseilee'ee is the last to marry a celestial serpent woman. After him his descendants and their wives are all of the earth and the wives are dragons.

This story establishes the symbols of Mu kingship in Tibetan and South Asian fashion. Celestial marriages and matrilineality justify the genealogies of the first seven kings of Tibet⁷¹ whilst the marriage of the king to the Nagi justifies the dynastic traditions of South Asia.⁷² The distinction between the serpent and the dragon wives to which corresponds the division between pre-flood and post-flood ancestors also draws a distinction between the domain of the wilderness and that of civilization, for the snakes are spirits of the natural world and the dragon is a symbol of kingship, of a *mediated* nature.

That the number seven is especially attached to Heaven and the feminine ancestry of the royal house explains in part what the number nine is doing in the myth. Seven and nine are *opposites*. They are feminine and masculine, rivers and mountains, heavenly and earthly. This scheme makes the myth and the Sacrifice to Heaven a charter for the people who belong to the Mu ruler who is himself descended from Cosseilee'ee who survived the flood and successfully mediated between heaven and earth, Time past and Time present. Indeed, the Mu chief is lord of the soil and founder of Time to come in future generations.

As far as history is concerned, the point not to be missed here is that Mu Gong omitted all these mythological references (as well as all his Tang and Song dynasty ancestors) from his 1545 Chronicle. And between the genealogy of the legendary twelve ancestors in the 1516 Chronicle, the genealogies in the creation myths, the Mu's historic genealogies and the discrepancies in the two Chronicles,

there is a knot, the unraveling of which goes a long way to making sense of Naxi political legitimacy and of the making of the Naxi kingdom.

The 1516 Chronicle starts with the Naxi creation story and Tibetan (or even Bonpo) and other definitions of royal legitimacy because in 1516, the Mu chiefs and their people were still attached to symbols of leadership and state which were not all Chinese. As I explained in Chapter II, there is a convergence between Naxi creation mythology and history as it is told in the 1516 Mu genealogy (in other words, the Mu genealogy is laid out according to mythical and ritual principles).

- 1) in the myth, five brothers married their six sisters;
- 1) there are six Mou ancestors and five married matrilaterally;

- 2) with the sixth brother came the flood;
- 2) with the sixth Mou ancestor came the Mongols;

- 3) after the flood came a brand new earth and a brand new sky;
- 3) after the Mongols came a brand new political and territorial order;

- 4) after the flood the earth man married a sky woman;
- 4) after the Mongol conquest, Ah-liang married a chief's daughter;

- 5) with Cosseilee'ee's marriage, a brand new generation emerged on the earth: Cosseilee'ee and his wife Coheibubami had three sons, the first was a Tibetan, the second a Naxi and the third a Bai;
- 5) Mou-bao Ah-cong was officially the 'second generation' and his son Ah-liang was given jurisdiction over the people who lived between Tibet and Dali.

So that if incest caused the flood and the flood brought the Mongols, incest

justified the succession of the Mongol invaders. And Mu Gong had six Mou ancestors because the myth speaks of six ancestors who committed incest, that is who married endogamously. Importantly, taboo should not to be confused with shame, for it is a sacred indictment and as such it has a place in the royal genealogy. Indeed, we can suspect that marriage taboos *should begin* in the royal genealogy. But there is a lot more to the number six than the successions of the Mou chiefs.

Six announces the end of a series and new beginnings in the numbers one, two, or seven. First, we see that in the myth, the name of the seventh ancestor ends a list featuring a four syllable naming pattern. In the legendary genealogy, Cosseilee'ee himself is number seven, whilst there are six descendants between Cosseilee'ee and Yegunian who is given as the *First Generation*. In the historic genealogy, there are six Mou chiefs, the sixth ushers Mou-bao Ah-cong, the ancestor officially designated as the *Second Generation*. But Mou-bao Ah-cong's own son, Ah-cong Ah-liang, is the seventh in line from the first Mou Chief, and the first after the Mongols. Thus cosmologically speaking, Ah Liang also survived the flood. For seven is the lunar number *par excellence*. It is the agent of change and renewal, associated with the four phases of the moon, water, floods, death and rebirth, and of course women and all that they embody of these things. And if we look at the sub-headings of the Mu genealogy (1516), we see that numerical correspondences also connect the Mu's ancestors to Imperial dynastic cycles.

Yue-sui Zhao

(first generation: Yegunian- 618) Tang invasion

Zuo-guo Zhao

(Qiu Yang c 670) Tibetan invasion/Nanzhao aegis

Yue-xi Zhao

(Xi-nei Xi-ge c.827-835) Split between Nanzhao and Lijiang

Mo-so Zhao

(Mou-xi Mou-cuo c.1054-1055) Mou chiefs rule Lijiang

From the second to the sixth generation

(Mou-bao-Ah-cong 1253) The Mongol period

From the seventh to the fourteenth generation

(Mu De 1381, to Mu Gong who first wrote the Chronicles) The Ming period

From the fifteenth generation to the nineteenth generation

(Mu Gao 1556) The Ming period

From the twentieth to the twenty fourth generation

(Mu Yi who acceded in 1624, submitted to the invading Qing in 1659 to Mu Chong who was deposed in 1723) The Qing period

And we see that the *official* number seven in this genealogy is Mu De, the overlord confirmed by the first Ming emperor.

The number seven: Mu De

The historic seventh is Mu De, and this is no coincidence because whatever justifies Mu De's position in the genealogy, it is not natural succession. Mu De is actually the twenty-second from Yegunian and the eleventh Mou descendant (or the twenty-seventh from Yegunian, and the sixteenth Mou if we take into account the missing five ancestors). In addition, although the six generations of the Mongol periods span a reasonably natural 129 years, the gap between Ah Liang and Ah-hu is of 75 years which suggests that at least one ancestor was removed from this part of the list as well.

We can only conclude that Mu Gong made Mu De (Ah-jia Ah-de) the seventh because he signifies the end and a new beginning. He is the last of the Mongol chiefs and he is also the first to be confirmed by the Ming. Perhaps more importantly, he is also the first to carry the patronym Mu. But, he is also the seventh and heavenly because seven is feminine and he has retrieved the celestial name Mu from his *maternal ancestors*, the lineage into which the Mongol Ah chief had married. Mu Gong is thus stacking the cosmological stakes because in

making Mu De the sixth Ah, the seventh Mou and the seventh generation from Yegunian, he is replaying the original myth of creation by equating the first ancestor invested by the Ming with Cosseilee'ee, a new flood and a new dynastic cycle. And it is true that with the Ming invasion come such changes as the 'Naxi' have not seen since the last flood, with the Mongols. But there is more to Mu De than a change of imperial dynasty.

The Seventh Generation

Ah-jia Ah-de (- 1382) Mu De.

married She, daughter of *He* Lu-ge

Eighth Generation

Ah-de Ah-chu (1383-1426) Mu Chu

married Ah-shi-sa daughter of *Ah* Mu (Mu Xian)

Ninth Generation

Ah-chu Ah-tu (1416-1433) Mu Tu

married Zhi-fu, daughter of *Gao* Zhong

Tenth Generation

Ah-tu Ah-di (1434-1442) Mu Sen

married Li daughter of *Ah* Su

Eleventh Generation

Ah-di Ah-xi (1442-1485) Mu Qin

married Shun, daughter of *Gao*

Twelfth Generation

Ah-xi Ah-ya (1485-1502) Mu Tai

who was the reincarnation of Mou-bao Ah-cong and could read the local books

married Gui, daughter of *Ah*

Thirteenth Generation

Ah-ya Ah-Qiu (1503-1526) Mu Ding

married Xiang, daughter of *Gao*

Fourteenth Generation

Ah-Qiu Ah-Gong (1527-1553) Mu Gong

married Meng, daughter of *Feng* whose family name was *Ah* until 1488 when it was changed to Feng by imperial order⁷³

Tradition holds that the Naxi began to carry patronyms at the time of the Ming conquest and we see that the genealogy confirms this. From Mu De, not only do the chiefs themselves have a patronym, but none of their wives have fathers who bear four syllable names. The Ming conquest therefore instituted the adoption of Chinese surnames among the Naxi (at least for those influential families who married into the Mu line). But we cannot miss the fact that from the eighth to the fourteenth generation, or a period of 150 years, the Lijiang chiefs married women who were called Gao and Ah, and thus took wives who had the same names as their own grandmothers in alternate generations – because this certainly looks like patrilineal cross-cousin marriage.⁷⁴

Let us look at the ancestors of the Yuan period (before Mu De) and especially the names of their fathers-in-law.

Mou-bao Ah-cong (-1253)

married Qiu daughter of the Xiantao family⁷⁵

Ah-cong Ah-liang (1253-) *married* Yu-xian, daughter of Gan-luo Mu-tu.
Ah-cong Ah-liang met the Mongols at Fengke

Ah-liang Ah-hu (1272-1340/or 1347)

married Lamu daughter of He-hui He-mi

Ah-hu Ah-lie (1347)

married Zhang-men Ah-jia, daughter of La-ba La-tu

Ah-lie Ah-jia (1356)

married Zhu-mu, daughter of the Mongol family Hu-yi Pu-du

Ah-jia Ah-de (- 1382) **Mu De**

married She, daughter of He Lu-ge

Eighth Generation

Ah-de Ah-chu (1383-1426) **Mu Chu**

married Ah-shi-sa daughter of *Ah* Mu (Mu Xian)

Ninth Generation

Ah-chu Ah-tu (1416-1433) **Mu Tu**

married Zhi-fu, daughter of *Gao* Zhong

During the Yuan, all the chiefs are named Ah, and as I explained in Chapter II, these Ah particles are an indication of rank inherited patrilineally and in appearance specifically associated with the Mongols. By contrast to the chiefs' names, the wives' fathers' names are entirely consistent with the name patterns found in the early part of the Mu genealogy. And there is no reason to believe that these four syllable names functioned like the Ah particles because unlike those which run Ah-x Ah-y, the patterns governing syllables 1 and 3 in those wives' fathers' names are not consistent. As we see, there is a He-hui He-mi but also a Hu-yi Pu-du, as well as a Gan-luo Mu-tu.⁷⁶ If we take Hu-yi Pu-du, the four-syllable name would indicate that his father married a Hu woman and he himself married a Pu woman. The name He-hui He-mi by contrast would indicate a two-generation alliance with the He and therefore matrilineal alliance. In other words, these names would confirm that influential Naxi families including the ruling family practiced matrilineal and bilateral alliance until the Ming period, and more precisely until Mu Chu or Mu Tu's marriages.

Now, although from Mu Chu (the eighth generation), the chiefs marry only Gao or Ah women, Mu Chu's own marriage antedates the Ming conquest because his first son Ah-tu (Mu Tu) was born in 1364. Thus, Mu Chu was married *before* 1381. This is very important because the genealogy would indicate that patrilineal alliances began with Mu Tu and with the first opportunity for change after the Ming conquest. But again, it is very likely that Mu Gong also intended even this part of his genealogy to be read at a cosmological level. Because patrilineal cross-cousin marriage starts with Mu Tu who is the *ninth* generation, and as we know Cosseilee'ee is number nine in the mythology.

Patrilineal exchange, incest and the making of a Confucian genealogy

If we look further down the Mu genealogy, we see that the ancestors who followed Mu Gao (the fifteenth) no longer married into the Ah families.

From The Fifteenth To The Nineteenth Generation

Mu Gao married into the Zuo family⁷⁷

Mu Dong married into the Gao family

Mu Wang married into the Luo family

Mu Qing married into the Luo family

Mu Zeng married into the Lu family, officials at Wuding⁷⁸

From The Twentieth To The Twenty-Fourth Generation

Mu Yi married into the Lu family

Mu Jing had no heir but he married into the Tao family whose former name was Ah⁷⁹

Mu Yao married into the Gao family

Mu Xing married into the Lu family

Mu Zhong (who was Mu Xing's nephew) married into the Gao family

As explained above, the sub-headings of Mu Gong's Chronicle mark political upheaval and dynastic changes except at first glance for the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Generation which like the Seventh to the Fourteenth is part of the Ming period. Indeed, the Zuo-guo Zhao begins with the Tibetan invasion and continues with Nanzhao aegis, the Yue-xi Zhao ushers a period of relative independence from Nanzhao which, I suggested in Chapter III, may find an explanation in the Lijiang chiefs' resistance to Buddhism; the Mo-so Zhao tags the fall of Nanzhao and the arrival of the Mou; the Second Generation that of the Mongol conquest. The Seventh Generation identifies the Ming conquest and the Twentieth Generation marks the Qing invasion. But what is significant about the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Generation? Essentially, that it comes after Mu Gong who first compiled the Chronicles, and that the marriage alliances now break the pattern which was set after Mu De.

In fact, Mu Gong himself married Meng, daughter of *Feng*, but the Feng had been called *Ah* until 1488.⁸⁰ The Feng were also a magisterial family outside the

Mu's own domain.⁸¹ And from Mu Gao, the Mu chiefs never again marry into the Ah and Gao families on alternate generations, even though, in the Qing period, the Mu chiefs once again contracted marriages with only two families and at alternate generations, the Lu and the Gao (who were not Lijiang families).

So why did the Mu chiefs after Mu Gong abandon the system of patrilineal alliances? The most logical explanation here is that the Confucian Mu Gong had become aware that something about the Ah marriages was not right. In fact, we can be quite sure of this because in the revised and official version (the 1545 Chronicle), not only did Mu Gong remove the name Mou from his genealogy but he also removed all the Ah after Mu De. In this second genealogy, all the chiefs after Mu De are simply given as Mu.⁸² Thus, we can be quite sure that it was not so much his ancestors' patrilineal alliances that bothered Mu Gong so much as their apparent breach of the Chinese rule governing *surname exogamy*. Indeed, after Mu Gong, the Mu descendants kept up *two genealogical records*. In the official version, only the name Mu appeared in the genealogy, but in the unofficial Chronicle, the Mu chiefs recorded their names in Chinese fashion (Mu) as well in old 'Naxi' fashion, with the old patronymic linkage system (Ah-father Ah-son) and this until the last Mu ancestor Mu Zhong who was also Ah-hui Ah-chu (1723).

In Chapter II, I suggested that the Confucian scholar Yang Shen had possibly inspired Mu Gong to write a second and modified version of his genealogical record. I shall now suggest that Yang Shen may also have influenced the Mu's marriage alliances. Yang Shen was exiled to Yunnan in 1524 when Mu Gong's son, Mu Gao, was only nine years old. Mu Gao's first son Mu Dong (Ah Dong) was born in 1534.⁸³ Given that Mu Gao was then nineteen years old, it is likely that his own marriage had not taken place so many years before 1534. Thus, several years after Yang Shen arrived in Yunnan, Mu Gong arranged that his son's marriage conform to the Confucian rule of surname exogamy unlike his own ancestors who at every alternate generation beginning with Mu Chu had married women who had the same family name as they had. This decision, it

seems, had a lasting impact on the next generations because although the chiefs returned to taking wives from only two families in the Qing period, they never again married women who had the name Ah. Or at least, they never married women whose official name was Ah.

And seen from this perspective, it may be that Jackson's unusual version of the creation myth and its post-flood incest stories had something to do with the marriages between Mu De, the seventh after the Mongols, and Mu Gao who happened to be Mu De's seventh generation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Naxi mythology and ritual inspired the history of the Lijiang ruling house itself. This does not mean that ritual and mythology had nothing to contribute to the worldview of the broader community, or that religion held no charter for Naxi collective behavior. Up to a point, connections between myth, ritual and elite history can be established because the Mu genealogical Chronicles and other records provide data that are historically contextualized. Unfortunately, no such information is available for the people who were not of royal blood, be they aristocrats or common folk: traders, soldiers, craftsmen, and those yet lower on the social scale.

In the first part of this chapter, I explored Jackson's theory on Naxi mythology and tribal formations, and argued that a patrilineal cross-cousin marriage system could have organized the Naxi (though not the Mosuo) into a four-section system, based on two moieties and patrilineal descent and thus helped restructure the caste system which the Mongols had favored. This argument was almost entirely based on kinship theory and comparative ethnography, but it also found substantial support in the analysis of the Mu genealogical Chronicles. Although the 1516 Mu genealogy does little to enlighten us on a possible moiety system, it does confirm that from 1400 (approximate time of Mu Tu's marriage), the Mu married women from Ah and Gao families in alternate generations and that the Mu chiefs of the early Ming

dynasty therefore married patrilaterally. The Mu genealogy, however, also indicates that these patrilateral arrangements ended in the mid-16th century, with the marriage of Mu Gong's son Mu Gao. As I explained, under the influence of Yang Shen, Mu Gong seems to have become conscious of the fact that his ancestors' marriages did not conform with Confucian propriety, not so much because they were patrilateral alliances but because they breached the rule of surname exogamy. Indeed, the Mu returned to marrying women from only two families (the Lu and Gao) and at alternate generations during the Qing period. Meanwhile throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Lijiang chiefs kept up two parallel genealogical records, the official Chronicle revised by Mu Gong and Yang Shen which followed Confucian prescriptions, and a private record (the 1516 Chronicle) where names were entered in the old Naxi fashion. Thus, here again, we see that even at such a late period as the 18th century, when the Mu chiefs were thoroughly acquainted with Confucian propriety, they remained attached to more ancient symbolic and cultural behaviors which were not Chinese.

¹In particular, see A. Jackson, "The Descent of Man, Incest, and the Naming of Sons: Manifest and Latent Meanings in a Na-khi text", in R. Willis (ed.), *The Interpretation of Symbolism*, London, Malaby Press 1975, pp. 23-43.

²E. Chao, "Gender Transformation", p. 64.

³See also K.C. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual*, pp. 28, 29, on the three types of cross-cousin marriage in ancient China and their political implications.

⁴For the controversies on the social and political implications of the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, see D. Maybury-Lewis, "Prescriptive Marriage Systems", in J. Goody (ed.), *Kinship: Selected Readings*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971.

⁵In their manual on research practices, Alan Barnard and Anthony Good have recommended that before a marriage custom is described as prescriptive, terminology, institutionalized exchange preferences and behavioral practices should be examined separately. A. Barnard and A. Good, *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship*, Academic Press, 1984, p. 100. Lévi-Strauss explains that prescriptive marriage should be regarded as 'prescriptive at the model level' and 'preferential at the level of reality', because of demographic reasons. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures*, p. xxxiii (1969 edition). Naxi scholars confirm that in Lijiang, the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage was a matter of *rule* and that it met with very few exceptions in 'real life'. *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, pp. 43-44.

⁶*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, pp. 43-44.

⁷G. Prunner, "The Kinship System of the Na-khi (SW China) as Seen in Their Pictographic Script", *Ethnos* (34) 1969, pp. 100-106.

- ⁸C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Kinship Structures*, p. 449. See also H.G. Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979, pp. 22-24.
- ⁹P.K. Benedict, "Tibetan and Chinese Kinship Terms", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 1941, pp. 313-337. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Kinship Structures*, p. 371.
- ¹⁰J.F. Rock, NDNF, pp. 2-3.
- ¹¹Again, refer to the definition given at the start of the thesis.
- ¹²Manuscript No 5134, translated in J. F. Rock, MBC, pp. 73-90.
- ¹³A. Jackson, "The Descent of Man, Incest, and the Naming of Sons", pp. 23-43.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 61.
- ¹⁶K.O.L. Burridge, "Lévi-Strauss and Myth" in M. Banton and E. Leach (eds.): *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, London, Tavistok, 1967, p. 103.
- ¹⁷*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 23 (from the *Man Shu*). See also G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, pp. 18-19.
- ¹⁸*Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 26-27; also E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques", p. 610. Naxi scholars likewise comment on the fact that Naxi oral tradition and the *Man Shu* establish some parallels regarding the places where the four tribes or clans of Naxi once dwelt. *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, Vol. 2, pp. 31-32
- ¹⁹*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 31.
- ²⁰C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures*, pp. 426-427.
- ²¹See Ronald and Catherine Berndt, *The World of the First Australians*.
- ²²According to Fang and He's dictionary, the *Si* is a rhinoceros. *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzi Pu*; p. 187, pict. 383. Rock thought that either translation was appropriate. *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe*, p. 43. Note, that rhinoceros hides were used by the south westerners to make armor. G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 72. Also, ref. Lolo armors at the Musée de l' Homme, Paris.
- ²³Fan Cho writes in the *Man Shu* that whenever the Yunnanese capture rhinoceroses and kill them, the heavens pour rain and cause violent crashes of thunder. G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 72.
- ²⁴As Daba and Dongba mythologies explain.
- ²⁵The Big Chief (Zzi), Small Chief (Lee) found in the Naxi manuscripts, and the reports of 13th century writer Li Jing according to whom, the Mo-so chiefs held big feasts, also recall Angami Naga dual organizations, according to which two clans headed by representatives of original founder brothers, the founder and co-founder of the clans, intermarry. See J. Jacobs, *The Nagas*, pp. 65-66.
- ²⁶Or as McKhann explains, where wife-takers and wife-givers meet, between Heaven and Earth. See C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 200.
- ²⁷G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 73; also Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Minzu Kaogu* [The archaeology of the peoples of Southwest China] Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1990, pp. 92-93.
- ²⁸*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 21.
- ²⁹Ibid, pp. 31-33.
- ³⁰V.A. Riazanovskii, *Customary Law of the Mongol Tribes*, p. 289.
- ³¹A. Jackson, "The Descent of Man, Incest, and the Naming of Sons", pp. 29-30.
- ³²Ibid, pp. 32-33.
- ³³Jackson counted the egg of Creation as a first ancestor and two other mythic ancestors - Gu-za and La-za - before Mee-ssa Cu-cu, thus making Cosseilee'ee the tenth. Co is either the 9th or the 7th depending on where the generations come from: the creation myth or the Mu Chronicle. Jackson, however, does mention that in other versions of the myth, Cosseilee'ee is the 7th.
- ³⁴Ibid, p. 35.
- ³⁵Rock explained that there are many stories told about Cosseilee'ee and that not all involve incest or the flood. J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 72.
- ³⁶E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, p. 278.
- ³⁷A. Dundes Renteln and A. Dundes, "What is Folk Law?" See pp. 5,6.
- ³⁸J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 76.
- ³⁹The wounding of the gods may, of course, be the original cause of the flood since that part of the story is common to the Mosuo, Nuosu and Naxi myths..

⁴⁰For the sake of convenience I treat the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven in the present tense although it has been banned since 1949 and is only beginning to resurface in those parts of Lijiang which are less exposed to the eye of the authorities.

⁴¹I come back to the question of gender and the Sacrifice to Heaven in the next chapter.

⁴²C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 31. Note that McKhann's doctoral thesis is entirely devoted to the analysis of the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 188-189; and A. Jackson, "The Descent of Man, Incest, and the Naming of Sons", pp. 20-30.

⁴⁴C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", p. 56.

⁴⁵See J.F. Rock, MBC, "Introduction", and the *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian*, pp. 525, 526. The priest who officiates at the *Meebiu* is a specialist called the Xiusui. His office entails particular responsibilities and restrictions: the Xiusui cannot deal with exorcisms or conduct funerals. Also the Xiusui is chosen by a 'council' of Dongbas on the basis of divination, and 'elected' for life. C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 66-70. Rock explained that although the Naxi sacrifice to Heaven on the 1st, 4th, 7th, 10th and 12th months, and the Qiang sacrifice on the 1st, the 5th, and the 10th months, the rituals are very similar, involving god trees and sacred stones, sacred groves, etc., the names of which are almost identical in Naxi and Qiang. He pointed many other mythical and ritual connections between contemporary Qiang and the Naxi, as for example, that the Naxi acknowledge the Qiang's first ancestor Ge-lai Qiu as one of their last legendary ancestors and the father of the four clans of Naxi. J.F. Rock, MBC, Introduction, p. 6.

⁴⁶R. Rahman, "Remarks On the Sacrifice to Heaven of the Na-khi and Other Tribes of Southwest China", *Monumenta Serica* (13), Beijing 1948, pp. 395-408.

⁴⁷Lu Yin, *Yizu Xingzhan Xue* [On the astrology of the Yi nationality], 1989.

⁴⁸See C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 141-143; Dong Shaoyu and Lei Hong'an, "Naxizu Dongba Jiao Diaocha", pp. 260-263.

⁴⁹C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bone*, Introduction.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 140-142

⁵¹M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris, Payot, 1991 (1949), pp. 179-184. Also J. Przyluski, "La princesse à l'odeur de poisson et la Nagi dans les traditions de l'Asie Orientale", *Études Asiatiques* (2) 1925, pp. 265-284.

⁵²M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, p. 181.

⁵³C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 150-151.

⁵⁴S. E. Thompson, "Death, Food, and Fertility", in J.L. Watson and E.S. Rawski, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988, pp. 71-108.

⁵⁵In Lijiang, status differences between the Sacrifice to Heaven factions may have disappeared but not so in Muli where feudal rule was maintained until 1956. Here, according to the *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, there are two factions, *Pudu* (*Pudv*) and *Gusu* (*Gvshai*) the faction of the people who married into the Naxi community. The local chief belonged to the *Pudv* and this faction, not surprisingly had more prestige than the other. *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, p. 121.

⁵⁶This is an important point to which I come back in the next chapter because we see here that the Sacrifice to Heaven helped assimilate immigrants (most of whom were Han Chinese) into the Naxi community.

⁵⁷C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 50-61.

⁵⁸See J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 10, note 3 and p. 59, note 127; also C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 50-54.

⁵⁹The *Gvhui* perform on the 9th day, the *Gvzai* on the seventh and the *Pudv* on the 3rd day of the first month. J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 11. Hence also, the *Gvhui* are more closely connected to the original patriline since they claim the number nine.

⁶⁰J.F. Rock, MBC, Introduction, also p. 83, note 209.

⁶¹See Shun-shen Ling's review in "Origins of the *She* In Ancient China", *Bulletin of Ethnology, Academia Sinica* (17) 1953, pp. 36-44.

⁶²Ibid. Note also that Thai rituals connected with land and political hierarchies have likewise been compared to these ancient Chinese rites. J.A. Placzek, "Black Thai Symbols of State and Leadership", 1990, pp. 48-68. Dang Nghiem Van, "The Lac Muong (territorial pillar) A Powerful Fetish of Thai Seigneurs", 1990, pp. 69-82.

⁶³J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 142, note 241.

⁶⁴Mathews' character 2144, p. 320.

⁶⁵M. Granet, "Coutumes matrimoniales de la Chine antique", *T'oung Pao* (13) 1912, pp. 516-558; See J.K. Shryock, "Ch'ien Ting's Account of the Marriage Customs of the Chiefs of Yunnan and Kueichou", *American Anthropologist* (35) 1934, pp. 524-547.

⁶⁶See note 43 this chapter.

⁶⁷Maowen Qiangzu *Zhizixian Gaikua*, p. 14.

⁶⁸M. Granet, *Études Sociologiques*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1953, pp. 192-193, and 197-198, also quoted in M. Éliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, pp. 168-169.

⁶⁹M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, pp. 112-113.

⁷⁰Refer to footnote 28, Chapter V. Rock also noted the fact that the first part of the name Pudv Geji was distinctly Naxi and referred to the Sacrifice to Heaven faction. ANKSWC, p. 364.

⁷¹S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, p. 45.

⁷²See M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, pp. 180-181, and J. Przyluski, "La princesse à l'odeur de poisson".

⁷³J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 117, note 78.

⁷⁴Note that these were first wives, that is wives whose sons were in line for succession, for the Mu were polygamous.

⁷⁵In the second Chronicle, Yeye is said to have married the daughter of Xian-tao Ah-gu.

⁷⁶Assuming that there is no reason to take things for granted, it is worth noting that the name Yuxian 于先 who is Gan-luo Mu-tu's daughter, literally means 'at first' or 'at the first generation'. It is also interesting that the name Gan does not appear anywhere else in the Mu genealogies or the genealogies of Yongning. In the second Chronicle, Mu Gong also turned Gan-luo Mu-tu into Gan-luo Mu-du, one of the five chiefs of the Lijiang plain. If we look at the characters in the name Gan-luo Mu-tu 干羅木土 we find that Gan represents the heavenly stems (which in the ancient Chinese tradition is also connected with matrilines) whilst Mu stands for Tree, and Tu for Earth, adding to the suspicion that Gan-luo Mu-Tu may be cryptic. Luo, however, does not fit in this series in any obvious manner since it means: a net for catching birds; to catch birds with a net; to display; to sift; a kind of gauze; or twelve – although, something in the allusion to the bird net may connect the syllable *luo* to the shamanic powers of Ah-liang's father who could speak the language of the birds, and there may be an astrological allusion in the number twelve. On the other hand, *luo* also has a phonetic correlation in another *luo* 落 which means 'to descend'. Does the name Gan-luo Mu-tu (Heavenly stem/matriline – descended Tree-earth) embody Naxi cosmogony? From the point of view of magic, of course, the more meanings implied in a word, the more powerful the word becomes. The closest phonetic approximation of Gan in Naxi is *go* whilst *luo* is *lo*, which respectively mean hill and river valley – another interesting connection perhaps since hills and river valleys stand for masculine and feminine in Dongba cosmology. See Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Xiangxing Wenzhi Pu* [A dictionary of Naxi pictographs], Picts. 95 and 103.

⁷⁷Zuo was a gentleman scholar, a native magistrate and a close friend of Mu Gong. Both were admirers of Yang Shen. With a man named Zhang, Mu Gong, and Zuo were known as the Three Famous Mountain Scholars. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 156 (Colophon to the Chronicle).

⁷⁸Though according to Rock, there never was such an official family. The Wuding magistrates were called Feng, and as we saw above, they once had the name Ah. J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 135, note 124.

⁷⁹Ibid, p. 137, note 126.

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 117, note 78.

⁸¹The Mu also took secondary wives from families outside Lijiang. Incidentally, Mu Gong would help quash a rebellion staged by his in-laws, the Feng family in 1528, thirteen years after the birth of his first son Mu Gao. J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 115-116.

⁸²See the photographed reproduction in the ANKSWC.

⁸³ANKSWC, pp. 120-121.

Chapter VIII

Love Suicide, Political resistance and the Persistence of Custom

Introduction

This chapter continues exploring the issues which prescriptive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage raises for Naxi history and for the history of the love suicide custom. This time, however, we look at the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescription from the perspective of kinship theory and gender transformation. The analysis proposed corroborates the hypothesis outlined in Chapter VII, that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage replaced matrilateral or bilateral exchange. It also argues that this shift played a significant role in controlling vendetta by curbing the scope of Naxi marriage politics, and removing issues of women's welfare from inter-clan relations. In other words, this chapter makes the point that structural formations initiated by feudalism answer for the position of women in Naxi society *as well as* Confucianism and, we shall see, Lamaism.

As we saw in the last chapter, there are more than one version of the creation myth and more than one version of the Sacrifice to Heaven, and many things passed between Mu Tu's marriage in 1400 and the dismissal of the last feudal chief Mu Zong in 1723. There is no reason to assume that either the history of Naxi gender transformation or that of Naxi inter-clan relations need to be situated within a single time frame or derived from a single cause. In other words, the first

efforts at feudalization may not explain why by the late Qing period and early 20th century, patrilineal cross-cousin marriage was not practiced by the Naxi peoples of the periphery (as for example in Zhongdian or Eya), but was the norm among the more Sinicized Naxi of the Lijiang basin including among them, the descendants of Han Chinese settlers who acknowledged themselves as Naxi because they participated in the Sacrifice to Heaven and they married Naxi women.

Jackson and Chao's theories explain that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and suicide are found in the Sinicized Lijiang basin because this is where direct Qing rule was influential and where patriarchal expectations conflicted with local culture. Yet, the history of Naxi love suicide has to be more complicated than this because, among other things, Chinese influence in Lijiang did not begin with the annexation of 1723 but with the Confucianized Mu chiefs, and not least, with the many Han immigrants who began to settle in Lijiang during the late feudal period. Today, between 20 and 40 percent of the population of southern Lijiang are believed to be descended from Ming dynasty Han immigrants who married into the Naxi community. This suggests that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and love suicide played a role in the history of Han and Naxi intermarriage.

Naxi kinship structures in the light of comparison

Of Naxi traditional Naxi names, Jackson writes:

Consider first the binary naming system. It is an unusual practice for naming sons even though it was adopted by the royal house of the Nan-chao What could have been its function? It seems too clumsy a method for tracing descent but if considered in terms of patrilineal cross-cousin marriage then the system becomes an elegant device for telling a girl whom she ought to marry, viz. that man who has the same name as her protector - her mother's brother. ... The bias of this system favours a matrilineal kinship network and until recently the Naxi had no patronymics but only clan names.¹

In fact, the binary naming system is not unusual but the norm among the Yunnanese. And that this patronymic linkage system is not a clumsy method for

tracing patrilineal descent is illustrated by the Mu chiefs' own genealogy, as well as others, as for example, the genealogy of the Yi house of An (northeast Yunnan) that lists a total of 84 uninterrupted father-son linkages.² And if Jackson is correct to argue that within the framework of a patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescription, the binary naming system would allow a girl to recognize the men who were possible marriage partners, he does not take into consideration that this would be so whether in a matrilineal or a patrilineal society. And in fact, the opposite argument can also be made, that in a patrilineal system, the binary naming system would accommodate expectations of matrilateral exchange where from a woman's point of view, her MB's name would indicate the men she could *not* marry. In other words, there is a far more convincing argument that the binary naming system is the norm among (patrilineal) Tibeto-Burman speakers because Tibeto-Burman societies were once organized on the basis of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage as Lévi-Strauss proposed.

The following grids give short comparative tables of Mosuo and Naxi kinship terminology in light of Tibetan and Nuosu terms of reference.³ These data are based on information collected during fieldwork, Paul Benedict's "Tibetan and Chinese Kinship Terms",⁴ Lin Yueh-hua's tables⁵ and McKhann's.⁶ Under the Nuosu column, I have also added 'Other Tibeto-Burman' terms for more general reference. These are drawn from Benedict's work and J.P. Mills'. Mills' discussion of Naga kinship terminology and practices has also been of much use to the analysis which I propose following the tables.⁷

Note that (L) refers to Labei only, (Y) to Yongning only. I dispense with most Tibetan terms in the generations below M and F because these are too diverse to be of use in this comparative analysis.

THE OLDER GENERATION

KIN CATEGORY	MOSUO	NAXI	TIBETAN	NUOSU & other TB
MMMM	ddala	ezzee		a-dzu
FFFF		e-kv		apu
MMM	ase	zzee-zzee e-mu e-zzee		
FFF		pv-pv		apu
MM	azhe (L) ayi (Y)	e-zzee	phy rmo	ama
FF	aper (L)	e-pv	mes-po apo	apu
M	ami	e-mei	ma a-ma	amo
F	adda abo (ref)	e-see a-bo	a-pha a-ta	ata (child) abu (adult) abe (ref)
MZ	amiddee amidzhi *	e-ni	a-ma	mogni ami
FZ	ani (L)	e-ni	a-ne	aba ninei
MB	awu **	e-ggv	a-wa	ogni agu
FB	aboddee (L) abodzhi*	e-bbu e-se***	a-gu	dada/ pupi

* amiddee and amidzhi: big and small mother

* aboddee and abodzhi: big and small father

** awu is also used for father in Yongning.

*** does not figure in Mckhann's table

EGO'S GENERATION

KIN CATEGORY	MOSUO	NAXI	TIBETAN	NUOSU & other TB
OZ	amiu	mei-mei	a-che scrin	vi-mo
YZ	gumi	ggu-mei	srin-mo	gnimo
OB	ame	e-bbu	phu ajo	vio-ii
YoB	gesse	ggee-ssee	nono	vio-ii
MBD	amiu gumi	e-ggv/nii mi	bu-mo	o-zie a-sa
MBS	ame gessee	e-ggv/nii-sso	bu-ts'a	o-zie a-sa
MZD	amiu gumi	e-ggv/nii mi		madzgnimo
MZS	ame gesse	e-ggv/nii sso		madzgnimo
FZD	amiu gumi	e-ggv/nii mi		o-zie a-sa
FZS	ame gesse	e-ggv/nii sso		o-zie a-sa
FBD	amiu gumi	e-bbu mi		madzgnimo
FBS	ame gesse	e-bbu sso		madzgnimo

THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS

KIN CATEGORY	MOSUO	NAXI	TIBETAN	NUOSU & other TB
D	mi	mei		ami
S	ssu	ssu		zin
DD	rumi	lv-mei		sa'erma
DS	ruwu	lv-bbv		sa'erbu
SD	rumi	lv-mei		ar-ma
SS	ruwu	lv-bbv		ar-bu
ZD	zeimei	zzei-mei		gnimo ami
ZS	zeiwu	zze-ee	tsa-wo in Laddakh	gnimo azin
BD	mi	zzei-mei		ami-du
BS	ssu	zze-ee	tsa-wo in Laddakh	zin-du

According to McKhann, Naxi kinship is foremost preoccupied with the politics of Co'o or 'Bone' [paternal] and Na or 'Flesh' [maternal] relatives, he writes:

although recognized throughout the entire system, the distinction between "bone" and "flesh" is terminologically indicated on the 0 and +1 generations [M/F; B/Z], quite possibly because it is in these generations that figure most importantly in reckoning cousin marriages. Of the five terms applying to the +1 generation, only that for "father" (*e-seeq*) defines a unique "kin type" The solidarity of the patrilineal 'bone' is reflected in the opposition between the classificatory terms "*e-bbu*" (FB, but also the more distant collateral "bone" males in the +1 generation) and "*e-ggv*" (MB, FZH, MZH, and other male "flesh" collaterals in the +1 generation) ... "bone uncles"

and “flesh uncles”. A similar opposition between the terms “*e-mej*” (M, FBW, and the wife of other “bone uncles”) and “*e-nji*” (MZ, FZ, MBW), and the wives of other “flesh uncles”) points again to the idea that a woman’s position in society is ultimately reckoned in relation to the “bone” into which she marries, not that into which she is born.⁸

The comparative tables above support McKhann’s analysis, for they show that Naxi kin terminology shifts the general T-B interest in stressing marriageable and non-marriageable categories to an emphasis on ‘Bone’, in other words an emphasis on patrilineal and male kin. Naxi terminology puts MZ (*e-ni*) in the same category as FZ (*e-ni*) whereas in Mosuo, Yi and Naga terminology, MZ is equated with Mother (*ami*), and therefore non-marriageable categories. In contrast, Naxi terminology reserves *ami* for FBW. In the same vein, Naxi terminology gives FBS and FBD as *e-bbu*, but MZD, MZS, MBD, MBS, FZD and FZS as *e-ggv*, distinguishing between the children of Father’s Bone (the children of Father’s male relatives) and other cousins. Naxi terminology otherwise does not distinguish between parallel and cross-cousins who are related on Mother’s side. Then, whereas Naxi terminology makes FZ = MZ = MBW = *ani*, Yi terminology makes FZ = *aba*, MZ = *ami* and MBW = *nini*.⁹

Naxi kinship terminology thus reflects a powerful generational paradigm since: MB = FZH = MZH; FZ = MZ = MBW; MBD = FZD = MZD. This is structurally consistent with the requirements of prescriptive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. As Maybury-Lewis has observed, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescriptions are workable only in social systems which make clear which groups may be wife-takers and which may be wife-givers *vis à vis* ego ‘in a particular generation’¹⁰ since at each generation, wife-takers become wife-givers and vice versa on the next. And incidentally, generational clarification is also structurally consistent with the requirements of a moiety system.

A comparison of the kinship terms used for Ego’s cousins in Eya, Lijiang and Labei supports the theory that the patrilineal concerns of Lijiang terminology lie with patrilateral alliance rather than descent.

KIN CATEGORY	EYA <i>Naxi</i>	LIJIANG <i>Naxi</i>	LABELI <i>Mosuo</i>	NUOSU
FZD	mei-mei	e-ggv nii mi	amiu gumi	o zie a sa
FZS	e-bbu	e-ggv nii sso	ame gesse	o zie a sa
FBD	mei-mei	<i>e-bbu mi</i>	amiu gumi	madzgnimo
FBS	e-bbu	<i>e-bbu sso</i>	ame gesse	madzgnimo
MZD	mei-mei	e-ggv nii mi	amiu gumi	madzgnimo
MZS	e-bbu	e-ggv nii sso	ame gesse	madzgnimo
MBD	<i>gu-mei</i>	eggv-niimi	amiu gumi	o zie a sa
MBS	<i>ge-ze</i>	eggv nii sso	ame gesse	o zie a sa

This table shows that Eya terminology stresses **matrilateral** kin (flesh) since only category which is not *e-bbu* and *mei-mei* is MBD and MBS.¹¹ We see that by contrast, Lijiang terminology reserves the *e-bbu* category for **paternal** (both parallel and cross-cousins). Labeli kin terms do not differentiate between any type of cousins (parallel, cross-cousin, matrilateral or patrilateral) or for that matter between cousins and brothers and sisters, and Nuosu terminology clearly reflects a bilateral exchange system: for both types of cross-cousins are distinguished from parallel ones.

If Jackson maintains that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage can only make sense in a matrilineal system, Lévi-Strauss makes clear that this type of exchange

implies the closest possible tie between patrilineal kin, and the 'safest of marriage arrangements compatible with the incest prohibition.'¹² Or in McKhann's words, it is the 'next best thing to incest'¹³ because it is the next best thing to no marriage at all, as happens in Yongning.

Exclusive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage in fact stresses the continuity of the line between father and son at the same time as it devalues the relationship between fathers and daughters, and the role played by wife-givers since daughters *must* go to their maternal uncle. By contrast, Maybury-Lewis explains of the Kachin *matrilateral* cross-cousin marriage prescription that it is not so interested in designating obligatory partners so much as in the prohibition of certain partners, for Kachin practice allows men to marry women who are not cross-cousins but it forbids them to take women from groups designated as wife-takers to ego's group.¹⁴ Indeed, what is at stake in marriage prescriptions is the *direction* of marriage exchange and to use Bourdieu's term, the prestige capital that goes with it. Exclusive patrilateral cross-cousin marriage constrains the prestige capital of wife-takers because it does not allow the direction of exchange to project beyond a generation, so that intermarrying groups cannot assume a permanent position *vis à vis* one another. This also means that the prestige capital of the wife-takers is concentrated on the person of the maternal uncle rather than on the maternal uncle's group. But in turn the sea-saw effect involved in this type of exchange creates a virtual parallel descent system, for women are always projected into their own mothers' families. Or as the Naxi put it, 'Bone begets bone and flesh begets flesh'. And this, as I shall argue below, could have had profound consequences for Naxi gender relations and tribal politics

Avuncular privilege, feuds and the status of women

Comparative analysis raises a number of interesting possibilities as regards the history of Naxi gender relations and tribal politics. According to pre-Liberation observers, in patrilineal Liangshan, Nuosu women had far higher status than Naxi women; they could inherit land and chiefly offices and they always retained rights

and privileges in their fathers and brothers' families. Nuosu women unlike Naxi women could divorce their husbands and return to the parental home. If they were mistreated in their husbands' families, they could call their brothers to the rescue, and if necessary, to avenge them.¹⁵

Where marriage was concerned, Nuosu women appear to have spearheaded the interests of their own kin (brothers) rather than they were mere chattels transferred between groups of male relatives. The description which the missionary Samuel Clarke gave of Liangshan marriage rituals illustrates the conquering ethos which marriage seems to have implied in this part of the world:

The [marriage] negotiations being concluded, preparations are made for escorting the bride to her new home. Being heavily veiled, she is supported on horseback by her brothers, while her near relatives, all fully armed, attend her. On arriving at the bridegroom's house, there is a scuffle. The veil is snatched from the bride's face by her kinsmen who do their utmost to throw it on the roof, to signify that she will rule over the occupants when she enters. The bridegroom's people, on the contrary, do all they can to trample it down on the doorstep as an indication of the rigour to which the newcomer will be subjected to the ruling head of the house. Much blood is sometimes shed, and people are often seriously injured in these skirmishes.¹⁶

Until 1956, Liangshan society was characterized by inter-clan co-operation matched by inter-clan antagonism and frequent feuding¹⁷ and if we are to believe pre-Liberation observers, aside from generational vendetta the cause of which had long been forgotten or reinvented, feuds were mostly fought over women.¹⁸ According to pre-Liberation scholars, Hsu I-tang (1944) and Lin Yueh-Hua (1947), fights over women occurred when widows refused to marry in the levirate or in cases of divorce (which could be initiated by either men or women), because of the restitution of dowries and other properties, and because of adultery.¹⁹ Yi women could also be overly concerned with matters of etiquette, and there is a story that a Nuosu woman once started a feud when she committed suicide after her husband had let out gas in her presence.²⁰

Evidently, the threat of revenge helped ensure that Nuosu daughters-in-law

and wives were content and that Nuosu gender relations were reasonably egalitarian. But in nearby Burma, the Naga also provide a helpful example of the relationship between marriage and feud in clan based societies. The Naga were extremely reluctant to spill the blood of fellow villagers, but were regularly engaged in two types of warfare and head taking, raiding in which case the object was economical, and feuding which was politically motivated. Feuding increased warriors' prestige and repaid previous fatalities. Importantly for the present discussion, Nagas specifically engaged in feuding with those villages in which they intermarried. Thus, the relationship between feuding villages was a reciprocal relationship which involved, in Julian Jacobs' words, 'the exchange positively of women and negatively of heads'.²¹ Leach likewise stresses the Kachin perspective that marriage engages in-laws in a relationship of cooperation and antagonism.²² Closer to the Naxi, the Mosuo justify matrilineality and 'walking marriage' from a striking political perspective. As they explain, people born of the same mother do not fight, whilst 'flesh against bone hurts'. In other words, trouble comes with affines and the best way to avoid trouble is to avoid marriage.

From the Naxi creation myth, we learn that in some distant past, marriage and warfare went together in the Naxi worldview, for Cosseilee'ee's brothers and sisters committed incest because 'they could not go to war or capture wives'. The historical record also confirms that until the mid-16th century, the Mo-so frequently fought to the death in bloody feuds *and* that women played a juridical and ritual role in these politics. For women could end the fighting by stepping in between the warring men.²³ And we can surmise that Naxi women could stop the fighting because like the ancient Sabines they placed themselves between their brothers and their husbands.

Although culture and structure undoubtedly involve 'habit', not all traditional societies must necessarily develop as a result of unconscious processes. In other words, I do not agree with Robin Fox that 'societies do not plan their institutions' and 'are built on accidental foundations'.²⁴ As I mentioned in the last chapter,

Mongol federations were quite purposefully organized on the basis of specific intermarriage prescriptions. From the perspective of the overlords of Yongning and Lijiang, the old tribal ways and their affinal relations *à la* T-B were not compatible with the feudal project. Feudalism required that the Mu chiefs make a monopolizing blood claim on their people and their territories. To be effective, to command order, to collect tribute, to conscript soldiers, the ruling patriline (the line of the *Ka*) needed to establish itself as the source of all authority, posterity and prosperity. The centralized rule of the feudal overlord thus depended on the submission of other tribal chiefs and their families, and could not exist alongside tribal politics. For the latter were highly unstable, founded in reciprocal and egalitarian relations as well as independent and competing interests. Thus, feuding which was the political language of tribal organization and the counterpart to its marriage alliances, was highly disruptive and always carried the potential for degenerating into full-scale warfare.

We know that latter emperors, and in particular the Qing emperors were very much concerned with abolishing tribal warfare among peripheral people. From 1657, the Qing court began pressuring native and Chinese magistrates to rid the peripheries of blood feuds, and prohibited non-Han people from carrying weapons.²⁵ But we have some idea that the Mu chiefs had already addressed themselves to the abolition of blood justice by this date, for it is written in the *Ming Shi* [Ming History] (compiled between 1672-1755):

Of all the aboriginal chiefs of Yunnan, the Mu family of Lijiang more than any other knows the *Shi Jing* and the *Zhou Jing*, loves the rites and observes justice.²⁶

Indeed, we ought to suspect that amidst the numerous battles which the Mu fought in the hills against rebel 'thieves' and 'brigands' some had to do with traditional tribal economics and politics: that is raiding and vendetta.

In the last chapter, I suggested that preferential patrilineal cross-cousin marriage may have helped transformed Naxi society from a caste based society *à la* Nuosu into an other sort of organization better suited to feudal rule. Patrilineal

cross-cousin marriage (with all the political restrictions that this system implies) and the organization of villages as intermarrying communities undermined the very structures that organized and legitimated tribal warfare, the potential for large scale marriage alliances and inter-village relations of debt and reciprocity. Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage no doubt also went some way towards curbing vendetta carried out on behalf of women.

In the Liangshan, Nuosu men went to war over women because Nuosu women, unlike Naxi women, retained rights and authority in their original families. In Naxi society, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage meant that women were owed to their Mother's Brother's families even before they were born. So, quite logically, once women left their families to marry into their maternal uncles' families, they left for good, because a woman's true family was her husband's family. Or at least, this is how things looked from the perspective of the men in the women's natal patriline, because everyday practices and ritual suggest that women did not really belong to their husbands' families either. In traditional society, Naxi women do not sit at the hearth near their husbands because, as McKhann notes, Naxi sitting arrangements not only stress male precedence but the precedence of bone over flesh relations. Hence, Naxi men may share the sacred side of the hearth (on the left hand-side, the ancestral side) with their patrilateral male kin, brothers and cousins, but not with their matrilateral male cousins.²⁷ Naxi women therefore *embody* the principle of affinity and since men make ancestors and women do not, as Rock put it, 'Man (male) is considered as equal to a deity, while a woman has no standing whatever.'²⁸ As we shall see below, Chao argues that the marginalization of Naxi women from lineage politics was a result of Confucian intrusion into Naxi society, but in fact patrilateral cross-cousin marriage was itself sufficient to marginalizing women from political relations.

Patriline, women and ritual defilement

The position of women in Naxi society (especially in Lijiang town) is in appearance ambiguous. On the one hand, women play a central role in economic

life, and on this count occupy a prominent place in the public sphere. As women tend to do throughout Southeast Asia and in Tibet, Naxi women run the markets, work in the fields, butcher animals, hire their labor in construction work, manage cooperatives, etc. In Lijiang, women also play a very significant role in the domestic sphere because they usually hold the purse strings. Sydney White describes Naxi gender constructs as paradigms of ‘fame’ (men) and ‘self-sacrifice’ (women), ‘consumption’ (men) and ‘production’ (women). Naxi women derive prestige from cooperation with other women and self-sacrifice in labor, whilst Naxi men gain ‘fame’ from competition, fearlessness and idleness.²⁹

Before 1949, Naxi women were (and although things are improving, they still are today³⁰) less educated than men, and they had no access to those occupations or even the lack of, such as leisure and gentlemanly scholarship, by which Naxi men sought prestige. Women could not inherit property, they were barred from all sorts of activities because they were ritually defiled; they could not swim in fresh water pools, eat in the company of men, give birth inside the house, etc. They did not partake in the Sacrifice to Heaven, and as we know, there were no Pa (female diviners) or Sanime (shamanesses) in pre-1949 Lijiang. Thus, in the 1940s, Rock and Goullart described Naxi women as both victims and amazons. In somewhat the same vein, Naxi scholars explain that women were oppressed (*yapo*) in the ‘old society’ (*jiu shehui*) and that nowhere was their social status reflective of their dominant economic role – which is a puzzling fact from a Marxist perspective.

In the light of comparison, the socio-economic role assumed by Naxi women is not really unique. Wherever one goes in northwest Yunnan, women work at home, in the fields and often in the markets, and they work more than men. Naxi women in Lijiang town play a particularly prominent role in local businesses but on this score, they are not so different from Tibetan women.³¹ What is beyond argument, is that a woman’s lot is a hard one just about anywhere in rural Yunnan including in matrilineal Yongning, so that what truly distinguished Naxi women in ‘traditional’ Lijiang was their inordinately low ritual status. This is especially

striking. By contrast, Sinicized Bai women are not responsible for the daily rituals given to the ancestors in the family home (rituals dedicated to the patriline), but they dominate public and temple worship almost exclusively.³² Tibetan women, unlike Naxi women, can enter the Buddhist Sangha.

Chao, like Jackson, believes that notions of women's ritual defilement went hand in hand with their exclusion from lineage politics following the annexation of Lijiang in 1723. For Chao, the Sacrifice to Heaven in particular, 'epitomizes women's exclusion from the lineage and generates a powerful message about the danger of women attempting to participate in ritual and lineage affairs'.³³ A message so powerful that it leads to women's exclusion from all rituals (hence the disappearance of the Pa, and the exclusion of women from the Sani or Leebu office) – because women are so defiled that they are not powerful enough to confront what the ritual specialist must, by definition, be powerful enough to control.³⁴ Chao speculates that whereas in the past, women who exhibited signs of shamanic ability made suitable candidates for the Pa and Sani offices, after 1723 women with the same symptoms were thought to be possessed and in need of exorcism.

Drawing from Sahlins' 'structure of conjuncture', Chao argues that the Sacrifice to Heaven devalues the matrilineal principle via the reinterpretation of traditional Naxi cultural categories. Thus, Chinese values were not 'merely grafted onto Naxi ritual' but absorbed within traditional categories which for their part assumed the new values. Confucianism granted Naxi men a privileged legal status which allowed them 'to reinterpret Naxi cultural categories and cosmology to reflect changes in practices instituted by the Chinese that also supported their own pragmatic interests'.³⁵ She writes:

In Naxi creation myths the ancestors of the Naxi came out of eggs, representing early matrilineal lines that fell out of heaven (Rock 1972). Post Chinese³⁶ Naxi symbolism identifies heaven as a masculine domain associated with fathers, which may be interpreted as serving to usurp the original generative and creative role of the founding matrilineal lines (primal eggs). If fathers are successfully associated with heaven, then

patrilines emerge transformed as the source of the original ancestors of the Naxi people.³⁷

This argument, however, ignores that in Dongba cosmology, gender symbolism, as all symbolism, is not so much object oriented as *context situated*. For example, the Dongba generally associates rocks with 'bone' and wood with 'flesh', but in the food sharing ceremony of the Sacrifice to Heaven, trees are masculine, standing as gigantic penises while rocks (split white rocks in particular) represent female sexual organs.³⁸ At other times but still during the same Sacrifice to Heaven ceremony, the god trees stand for maternal uncles as well as paternal aunts. The Dongba associates fathers with Heaven when it associates patrilines with ancestors and gods, as opposed to ghosts and Naga spirits in the world below (a Bonpo concept). The Dongba, however, will associate affines and therefore maternal families with Heaven when it is engaged in establishing the regeneration of the patrilines on earth, the land of the living where marriage takes care of reproduction. In this case, the significant association is with the earth, and the patrilines' right of occupancy. Again, this is Lévi-Strauss' idea of *bricolage*. Myth is expressed by a limited number of symbols because what really matters is the relation which symbols assume regarding one another, not only the shape which the symbols take.

Of course, it would be absurd to argue that the Dongba was never subjected to outside influence and reinterpretations but we ought to attempt explaining which symbolic categories may be Chinese, and which may be post-1723 imports, and to demonstrate why and how original categories did favor women's cause in the first place. As it is, Chao takes for granted that eggs signify matrilineal and in turn an original matrilineal system, whilst she defines matrilineal in 'post-Chinese symbology' as 'the source of females who take lovers, refuse to marry, and produce illegitimate children'.³⁹ Yet, according to McKhann, the primal egg is not a feminine symbol but a symbol of a perfect and undifferentiated unity – a post-chaos, pre-gendered stage. And in fact, the Naxi egg of creation hatches a hermaphrodite rooster who lays nine pairs of eggs, and with those, the dual

principle involved in reproduction. Even if we consider for argument's sake that the primal principle, the egg, may be feminine, this needs not imply matrilineality. As the Mosuo put it, everyone knows that one can only be born of Mother *but* all Yunnanese creation myths begin with a feminine principle,⁴⁰ as does the communist version of Chinese national history.

From a social anthropological perspective also, matrilineal lines may not imply matrilineality so much as affinal line (Wife's and Mother's family) and they are least of all likely to refer to unwed mothers. Even among the more tolerant of the Naxi's neighbors, children are no more their mothers' children, in or out of wedlock, than their mothers are themselves their own persons. People are social beings who belong to a particular household, who are the descendants of particular ancestors, and so forth. Matrilineal lines (mother-daughter lines) may be despised but they are necessary to the process of biological and *social* reproduction. Illicit lovers who are doomed to commit suicide on the mountain, in the 'wild domain', are not.

Women, taboo and the Sacrifice to Heaven

The most idiosyncratic of Naxi gender taboos (i.e. a taboo that is indigenous and not Chinese) forbids women to place themselves above men's heads. This includes spending time in the upper rooms of the house, stepping across men's bedding, and climbing on the roofs of houses. The last, the roof taboo, is striking for its cross-cultural discordance.⁴¹ In patrilineal Mosuo territory, *everyone* (women and men) spends a great deal of time on housetops because in a high mountain environment, this is the best way to gain a view of anything.

The roof taboo is enunciated on the occasion of the Sacrifice to Heaven, when the Dongba finishes chanting the *Descent of Co (Cobbersa)* - the Naxi creation story. The following summary (my summary) is taken from Rock's manuscript, No. 5134.⁴²

When Cosseilee'ee and his wife Coheibubami descended on the earth, they could not conceive children for three years and three months.

Cosseilee'ee then sent three messengers to heaven to obtain fertility from his father and mother-in-law. They, however, would not help. So the Bat hid on top of the roof of their house and when the heavenly Apu and his heavenly wife came out in the evening to chat, he listened to Apu explain how Cosseilee'ee should have performed the Sacrifice to Heaven if he wished for children. The Bat returned and told Co. After this, Cosseilee'ee performed the *Meebiu*, and he had three sons (the Tibetan, the Naxi and the Bai). Only the Naxi, the middle son (the son who cannot inherit - as the myth stipulates) sacrifices to Heaven as it should be done. After Cosseilee'ee, six generations descended but only Ge-lai-qiu, the sixth, performed the *Meebiu* and he was rewarded with four sons: the Se, Ye, He and Ma.⁴³

After this, the Dongba chants (Rock's translation):

The Ssu and Yu [Se and Ye] did not separate, they wanted to be rich and rode on horseback, so they went to Yi-gv-du (Li-chiang) to dwell. Ho and Ma [He and Ma] did not separate, they liked the hot sun so they went to Zherdu [river valley on both sides of the Yangzi] to dwell. As the father walks so the son follows in his footsteps, as the mother walks in the old valley, so does the daughter follows, so that the custom may not be lost. As the grand-father sacrificed to Heaven, so does the grand-child; as the father sacrificed to Heaven, so does the son. The grandfather teaches the grand-child, and the father the son. It is not the custom for a woman to climb up to the roof of the house.⁴⁴

In other words, custom demands that men teach their sons how to perform the Sacrifice to Heaven like Cosseilee'ee did, and that women not go on the roof of the house as the Bat did, to find out how it is done.

McKhann analyses this passage as follows: 'All [this] would seem to refer to the practice of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. Fathers and sons live in the same place, as do a man and his sister's daughter's sons. The top of the roof is a place between heaven and earth, wife-givers and wife-takers and the implication is that married women should not come between their husbands and their natal families'.⁴⁵ Perhaps, indeed, this is why the antagonisms between affines are played out over the roof of wife-takers in Nuosu marriage rituals. I may add to McKhann's interpretation that the sentence 'As the mother walks, so follows the

daughter' also fits well with the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescription which requires that daughters marry into their own mothers' families. Or as the Naxi put it, that 'bone beget bone' and 'flesh beget flesh'.

The passage given above, however, not only lends itself to a structuralist exegesis, but to an interpretation in the vein of Eliade's history of religion. To say that women should not access the roof of the house is to say that they should not access higher places where by definition gods and ancestors dwell. In both Himalayan and Chinese ritual, roofs, souls and gods go together (roofs are especially important in funerals and soul recalling rituals) because the roof is between heaven and earth.⁴⁶ In Mosuo ritual, the roof assumes a significant role in the yearly worship of the ancestors when the Dabu (senior woman or man, depending on the household) ascends atop of the house to place nine juniper branches there, facing north, to lead the ancestral souls back home.⁴⁷ Among the Akha whose cosmology is in many regards similar to that of the Naxi, the ancestral shrine is located in the roof.⁴⁸ The Naxi also associate roofs with spirits and ancestors, so that when a Naxi person dies, a male relative climbs on top of the house to take out a few tiles and let down a rope ladder for the soul to ascend.

To sum up, if women have no place on the roof of the house, it is because they have no business communicating with the gods and the ancestors, a prohibition that makes sense of patrilineality but also of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage where women walk where their mothers walked precisely because matrilineal lines are never ancestral lines. By turning matrilineal lines into parallel lines, preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage makes women play bodies to men's ancestral souls, because it places women in the middle, where they remain indispensable to earthly reproductions and celestially inconsequential.

Although the ethos which generated the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage (or was eventually generated by it) does indeed converge with Confucian notions on the position of women, the social dynamic which this form of marriage involves nonetheless placed Naxi women and Naxi patrilineal lines in temporal and spatial terms which are quite different from Han customs. In Han China, marriage did not lock

patrilines into a system of alternate prestige positions and continuing debt towards affines, for women were absorbed into the reproductions of their husband's lineages. Mothers' names were entered in the ancestral register and their sons carried on the patriline. Daughters were in turn given away, sometimes to unknown families and preferably to families who were not closely related on the paternal side. Then, since Han villages unlike Naxi villages were lineage based and therefore exogamous, Han daughters could also end up some physical distance away from their original family. In *ideal terms*, therefore, Han Chinese daughters, unlike Naxi daughters, were truly disposable.⁴⁹

Having clarified the position of Naxi women in the kinship structure, we may now return to the position of women in ritual life and in historical perspective.

The Sacrifice to Heaven in historical perspective

Chinese observers have mentioned the Mo-so Sacrifice to Heaven from times as early as the Mongol period, and the earliest record makes clear that in former times, Lijiang women did have a place in public ritual. Yuan dynasty writer Li Jing relates that on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, the Mo-so ascended the mountain in crowds of men and women, that there was much singing, dancing and merriment.⁵⁰ In the next dynasty, however, Ming commentators write that the Mo-so climb the mountain to sacrifice to Heaven on the fifth of the first month, that they offer pigs and goats. They do not mention women's participation in this ritual nor do they note their absence.⁵¹ By the late Ming, the famous Chinese traveler Xu Xiake (1586-1647) describes the Sacrifice to Heaven as a localized ritual taking place in villages, not on hillsides. Like his predecessors, Xu Xiake does not mention the participation of women. According to Xu, the Sacrifice to Heaven took place between the first day and the twentieth of the first month.⁵² Finally, late 19th century commentators relate that the Naxi invite the Dongba to perform a ritual where god trees preside, to worship their ancestors. Again no mention is made of women one way or another.⁵³

Naxi scholars are of the opinion that between the descriptions by Li Jing and

the others, the differences are matters of historical evolution but the ritual is essentially the same.⁵⁴ Comparative ethnography, however, raises some doubt about this interpretation. That in the more distant past, the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven took place on the mountain is not impossible because the Qiang ritual (which as Rock argued is almost identical to that of the Naxi's) also takes place on hillsides⁵⁵ and perhaps more importantly, so does the Sacrifice to Heaven practiced by the Naxi people of Eya.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the Qiang ritual is, like the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven, based on the performance of village collectives, and it is also *only performed by men*. Meanwhile, in Eya people have *two* mountain festivals – one of which involves the participation of both men and women. This festival is specifically dedicated to the worship of the mountain deity and takes place between the first and fifteenth day of the first month.⁵⁷ The other is the Sacrifice to Heaven as the latter is performed by the Naxi in Lijiang.

The mountain ritual described by Li Jing therefore may not be an original version of the *Meebiu* but *another* festival specifically dedicated to mountain worship, as is still practiced not only in Eya but all over Mosuo country. In fact, it is highly possible that this mountain festival anticipates the contemporary Naxi Naga cult dedicated to the mountain god Saddo, the patron deity of Lijiang, rather than the Sacrifice to Heaven. And if such is the case, then it would appear that the Sacrifice to Heaven as it is known today (with the offering of pigs etc.) was first recorded by Ming writers and not by Li Jing and therefore that the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven originated in Ming times.

What we can be sure of, in any case, is that Lijiang women played a more active ritual role during the Yuan dynasty than they did in pre-1949 Lijiang. In light of Li Jing's comments, those of Xu Xiake, and what is known today of the rituals performed in the peripheries of Lijiang, we may also suspect that women did not partake in the Sacrifice to Heaven rituals of the Ming period. Up to a point, we can infer the latter from the fact that Han commentators do not mention the presence of women. Now, of course, since women are ignored altogether, and neither their absence nor their presence is recorded, we cannot be sure that they

are not mentioned because they were not there. But we ought to question which situation a Ming dynasty Han commentator was likely to take for granted: the presence or the absence of women at a public ritual? Ming dynasty worldview was neo-Confucian, sexually conservative and perennially concerned with the desire to segregate the sexes. So, it seems more reasonable to suppose that Ming dynasty writers said nothing about women at the Sacrifice to Heaven simply because women were not there. We can also presume that should women and men have both participated in these rituals, commentators may have remarked on the merriment, dancing and singing which, in a previous century, had not escaped Li Jing.

Beyond the interpretation of scant historical records, ethnography clarifies that the Sacrifice to Heaven is an exclusive male ritual in the Naxi peripheries that were conquered in Ming times and which did not come under direct imperial rule. This also implies that the proscription of women from the *Meebiu* antedates the Qing dynasty, and certainly that it antedates the annexation of Lijiang in 1723.

On this note, there is at least one exception to the exclusion of women from the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven, and it is found in Ludian,⁵⁸ which is certainly interesting in view of the fact that Ludian did come under direct Qing rule. Moreover, the Ludian *Meebiu*, like others in the southern regions of Lijiang, was also performed without the master of ceremony (the *Xiusui*)⁵⁹ because, as McKhann explains, the southern rituals were more Sinicized than the rituals north of Lijiang.⁶⁰ This, however, would suggest that in some cases where direct imperial administration helped erode the performance of the Sacrifice to Heaven among the Naxi, it also helped erode gender roles. In other words, such a line of argument suggests that the women of Ludian participate in the Sacrifice to Heaven because the Sacrifice to Heaven was not performed there according to Naxi tradition. To sum up, therefore, we find the following elements pertaining to ritual and gender in Lijiang history:

- In the Yuan dynasty, the Mo-so had a mountain festival in which both men and women participated.

- In the early Ming dynasty, the Mo-so had a mountain festival that resembled the Sacrifice to Heaven and probably did not include women.
- In the latter Ming dynasty, the Mo-so had a version of the Sacrifice to Heaven that was performed locally, and very much resembled contemporary rituals.
- Today, the Naxi in Eya have two mountains festivals, only one of which is the Sacrifice to Heaven.
- Contemporary Naxi in Lijiang have a mountain festival dedicated to Saddo and Naga spirits, as well as Sacrifice to Heaven rituals.
- Naxi Naga cults are Bon/Dongba cults.
- The Sacrifice to Heaven is not originally a Bon cult, and originates in the Chinese imperial ritual.
- The Naxi in Lijiang practice patrilateral cross-cousin marriage and partake in the Sacrifice to Heaven in which women cannot participate.
- The Naxi in the peripheries have sacrifice to Heaven in which women cannot participate but do not practice patrilateral cross-cousin marriage.

These details suggest the following: the Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven is an imperial cult that originates in Ming times with the investiture of the Mu chiefs by the Ming emperor. The older mountain sacrifice may have been replaced by the Saddo cult, but more importantly, the Saddo cult as a Naga cult belongs to the Bon/Tibetan ritual. That all Naxi Sacrifice to Heaven even though not all of them practice patrilateral cross-cousin marriage or love suicide, on the other hand, implies that the Sacrifice to Heaven and Naxi marriage prescriptions are a matter of local convergence. And that the Sacrifice to Heaven implicates patrilateral cross-cousin marriage where the Naxi happen to have this custom but not in other places confirms that the original focus of this ritual was at least as concerned with making explicit the dominion of the Mu chiefs as it was with establishing marriage rules. Finally, the Sacrifice to Heaven never includes women (except in Ludian), no matter who the Naxi happen to marry and whether or not they

practiced love suicide and patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, suggests that the gender rules governing the Sacrifice to Heaven have a rationale all of their own.

Ritual defilement, and the disappearance of Naxi women shaman

Chao writes: 'If we consider that femaleness in most post-Chinese Naxi ritual came to be associated with the very things that require purification, namely mothers or pregnant women, and the evil spirits of suicide victims, then the exclusion of women from the Sacrifice to Heaven is understandable'.⁶¹ Thus, she explains that Confucianism so debased women that it eventually shifted them out of their traditional roles as shamanesses and diviners. In my opinion, however, it remains to be demonstrated that the proscription of women from the Sacrifice to Heaven is a sufficient explanation for the disappearance of the Pa and female Sani and, in turn, how all of this relates to the love suicide custom. A good place to begin is with the boundaries of ritual purity which are imposed on the master of ceremony at the Sacrifice to Heaven.

The master of ceremony, the Xiusui, works to ensure the reproduction of cosmic and social harmonies and hierarchies. In other words, the Xiusui mediates a great active principle which has to do with biological reproduction on a grand scale, namely the re-creation of the human world and especially the world of men, as the latter is embodied in the reproduction of Naxi patriline. The ritual restrictions imposed on the Xiusui therefore target those activities which *social reproduction* (which is concerned with the continuity of the 'race' and the patriline) tries so hard to defeat and which inevitably come with *individuated biological reproduction*. And those activities are specifically the domain of women, namely birth, sickness and death. The Xiusui cannot ever perform exorcisms, contact the ghostly outsider souls who cause sickness and other calamities, and he never performs at funeral rites. If he must attend a funeral (as for example the funeral of a close relative), he eats separately from the other guests. As I shall explain below, these prohibitions make the point that Naxi cosmological beliefs could well have prohibited women from the Sacrifice to

Heaven and yet favored their participation in divinatory rituals, because individual birth and death are specifically of women's making and ghosts, *not gods*, were within the Pa's ritual sphere.

The Dongba manuscript tradition associates women with the number seven, the lunar number and agent of change, and with rivers. It also associates the river with the passage of time, with the separation between the living and the dead. In the manuscripts, the pictograph for the river is a vulva; the river lies north/south, beginning with the feminine cardinal point; north, as we have seen, is the womb of the world, the place where the Naxi people come from and where the dead (at least some of them)⁶² return to. To this set of associations, the Dongba manuscripts oppose men, the number nine, and mountains shaped as phalluses. Now, as Evans-Pritchard explained of allegory and poetics in Nuer religious thought, symbolism does not imply that 'A is B, but that A and B have something in common in relation to C'.⁶³ This can be said of the number seven and other symbols which Naxi cosmology associates with the feminine. It is not that these things represent women, but that women and these things have something in common. The common element between them lies with their capacity to 'bring forth', to bring life, change, transformation. In the same vein, the common element between men, the number nine, and the mountain is constancy and immobility. None of this suggests a matrilineal descent system. Indeed, Naxi symbolism converges with Chinese thought insofar as the latter also associates women with the number seven and rivers, and men with the number nine and mountains.⁶⁴ However, whereas Han worldview constructs women as symbols of interiority and passivity,⁶⁵ in the Naxi worldview, the feminine embodies the principle of change – for women flow from one patriline to another, as the river flows between life and death; women come and go, as the heavens from which they are obtained are in constant flux.

None of this should ignore that all sorts of Chinese notions regarding the polluting powers of women made their way into Lijiang society. Rather the point made here is that the Dongba most likely made associations between women,

birth and death even before the Pa disappeared from the ritual scene. What is important in this reasoning is that it implies no inherent contradiction in the belief that women are by nature unsuited to partake in the Sacrifice to Heaven whilst they are by nature suited to communicating with the spirit world. Patrilineality, in fact, would predispose women to mediate with ghosts, because ghosts are by definition the souls of outsiders, just as women are outsiders.⁶⁶ We find a living example of this principle in nearby Dali, where it falls on women and mostly on Yin days to visit the temple of the God of Walls and Ditches, just outside the old city walls, to offer sacrifices to the lost souls of hell.

Naxi women belong to the lower spheres (closer to the underworld) and men to the higher ones (closer to the celestial sphere) and women should not walk above men's heads because this would be tantamount to turning the world upside down. A world turned upside down, incidentally, is *the* metaphor for death in Daba cosmology. As the Daba chants at the funeral rite:

In my dream, it was daytime but the sky was black,
 In my dream, it was nighttime but the light was shining on the horizon,
 In my dream, it was nighttime but the sun rose into the black sky...
 The rivers cannot stop flowing,
 But in my dream, the rivers stopped flowing.
 The bridge cannot break,
 But in my dream, the bridge had broken..
 The road cannot break,
 But in my dream, the road was broken.
 The white goose flies high into the clouds,
 But in my dream, the white goose had sunk to the ground.
 The mountain stands tall against the sky,
 But in my dream, the mountain had toppled over...

Importantly for the present argument, we have no reason to doubt that Naxi gender symbolism is at least as old as the pictographic manuscripts from which we learn that women Pa once accompanied men Pubbu. Meanwhile, to argue as I have done that women's proximity to the world beyond predisposes them to shamanic activities whilst it also helps justify their absence from ritual activities concerned with the celestial reproduction of patriline, does make sense of a

Dongba practice that had room for women diviners (Pa) but no place for women at the Sacrifice to Heaven. Therefore (ritually and cosmologically speaking) no logical connection can be established between the prohibition of women from the Sacrifice to Heaven and the disappearance of the Pa. But if this is the case, how and why were Naxi women eventually proscribed from the entire Naxi ritual scene?

It may be tempting to explain the disappearance of the female Pa from the perspective of post-1723 developments, but then, how do we explain that there are no Pa anywhere in Naxi country, not even in Eya or Weixi, places which were outside the direct jurisdiction of the Qing court? How do we explain that in pre-1949 Lijiang, the Naxi apparently had not female practitioners at all, but the Han, Lisu and Yi had female mediums and 'shamanesses'? Just as intriguing, there are only male Dabas in Yongning and Muli, although the Mosuo Dabas talk about a former female Pa, and the Pumi likewise believe that they once had priestesses called Dibba. How do we explain that Mosuo informants believe that there were shamanesses in living memory, gifted individuals invested by local monks and who were not part of the institutionalized religions, Daba and Haba? How do we explain that women partake in none of the institutionalized religions of Yongning, Muli and Lijiang? For there are not even Buddhist nuns in Mosuo territories. The Confucian connection in all this is not obvious at all. On the other hand, as I already pointed out in Chapter III, Naxi, Mosuo and Pumi traditions have this in common, that their respective feudal lords converted to Tibetan Buddhism. Could it be that these Buddhist overlords provide a better explanation for the disappearance of female ritual specialists than Qing administrators? After all, 'not to listen to the words of women' figures among the sixteen moral virtues which, according to the Lamaist historical tradition, King Songtsen Gampo required of his converted Buddhist subjects.⁶⁷ But if this is the case, we cannot ignore the possibility that these Buddhist feudal lords were at least as concerned with removing the offices of medium and diviner which played such a fundamental part in the local 'Bon' organizations, as they were with the political

and social marginalization of women. That contemporary Soma and Zheda (who may be either women or men) in Yongning are invested by the Living Buddha and that in Lijiang, the Leebus were likewise invested by Dongbas show the interest which institutionalized religion took not so much in women but in individuals capable of trance states and of direct contact with the world beyond. The suppression of the Pa office in actual fact went along with the suppression of the Pubbu – it went together with the transformation of the Naxi Pubbu priests into Dongba.

Pre-1949 Naxi gender relations seem to have evolved against several contexts. During the Ming dynasty, the Mu chiefs tackled the problem of blood justice by instituting kinship rules that marginalized women from intertribal politics. When drastic notions about women's chastity and loyalty to patriline were coming into fashion in the Chinese interior,⁶⁸ Mu Gong became increasingly concerned with Confucian proprieties. Then, in 1627, the Buddhist convert Mu Zeng requested the emperor's permission to build an arch to the glory of his widowed mother's chastity.⁶⁹ And even as the Mu expanded their dominion into southern Sichuan, increasing numbers of Han Chinese immigrants began settling among the Naxi, bringing with them the Chinese cults and, no doubt, something of Han cultural values.

Sinicization and love suicide under the Qing administration

Jackson argues that the Naxi began committing love suicide in a relatively recent period. He points out that the manuscripts dealing with the suicide rituals appear to be more recent than other Dongba books, that the earliest date given on any love suicide manuscript is 1851 and, much more importantly from my own perspective, that Rock had not found any suicide manuscripts written by the Dongba who had produced his Naga books, the oldest manuscripts in his collection.⁷⁰ In addition, Jackson argues, the suicide custom is connected with the Chinese; the Naxi of the plain region committed suicide, had expectations of pre-marital chastity, strict betrothal practices, and the Lijiang plain is undoubtedly

connected with the Han Chinese. It was in the plain that the Sinicized elite lived, and that Han immigrants had settled in ever increasing numbers. Finally, it was also in the Lijiang plain that direct Qing administration took effect, since unlike the Mu chiefs, the Qing officials did not extend their authority very far into the peripheral hill regions.

It is well known in Chinese studies that in the course of the Late Imperial Period (1500-1911), the Ming and after them the Qing authorities made concerted efforts to standardize marriage and funeral rites throughout the empire.⁷¹ Lijiang was not exempted from these developments. All scholars agree that after 1723, the Naxi adopted Chinese surnames, Chinese funeral rites,⁷² and Chinese marriage rituals, and that after 1723, Naxi women began wearing trousers *à la* Chinese which signaled the Naxi's readiness to intermarry with the Han (except in Fengke and other far away places, including Eya, where women still wear skirts today). And many things which the Naxi take for granted and to be their own (often because such things are not found among their less Sinicized Tibeto-Burman neighbors) are Han in origin, even the hell scroll of the Dongba seems to have a counterpart in the Chinese cults.

Unlike Rock and Jackson, Naxi scholars believe that the Sinicization of Naxi custom resulted from very early contacts with Han society, dating from the Ming period, and that although Han immigration increased after 1723, Sinicization was not a matter of official policy.⁷³ This position is not altogether credible, however, because it ignores that Qing policy fostered Han settlement among frontier people with the very object of civilizing them.⁷⁴ On the other hand, Rock, Jackson and Chao's theories do ignore that Han influence in Lijiang well antedates 1723. And if the impact of direct imperial rule on Qing dynasty Lijiang should not be underestimated, the historical connection between suicide, marriage rules and Sinicization appears complex, because the Naxi may have adopted Chinese marriage rituals, but as we saw in Chapter VI, they did not adopt Confucian ideals regarding age and gender precedence, Chinese ideals of marriage exogamy, Chinese rules of inheritance, or Chinese rules of sexual segregation.

Confucianism, Naxi sexual morality and the historical record

What the records of the imperial administration have to say on official efforts to 'civilize' (read Sinicized) the Naxi after 1723 does not amount to much, although we know that such efforts were made. In the first half of the 18th century, the Qing court began applying pressures on native administrators to conform to Confucian ideals and in the 17th and 18th centuries, several imperial edicts were issued stipulating that only first sons born of legitimate wives would succeed their fathers.⁷⁵ Qing policy certainly affected the political structures of northwest Yunnan. In Yongning, the names of legitimate wives begin to appear in the official genealogical Chronicle of the Ah family around 1740. Whilst on the periphery of Lijiang, the Naxi made a final transition to Chinese style patriarchy when the women chiefs of Yezhi adopted the Chinese system of succession in 1738. And this indeed, is proof that the Qing administration effected a reform to patrilineality among the Naxi because the 'Wang' family of Yezhi were matrilineal.⁷⁶ But then again, Yezhi was on the outer limits of the Mu territories, and love suicide is not a feature of local culture in these parts.

I shall come back to the issue of matrilineality and matriarchy in the next chapter. In the meantime, I will simply remark on the fact that the women chiefs of Yezhi submitted to the Chinese system of patrification whilst their people did not develop a custom of love suicide does not take away from that other fact, that in the 18th century, there was already a considerable degree of Sinicization and Confucianization closer to Lijiang town where there was love suicide.

Chinese influence in Lijiang basin has considerable depth, going as far back as the 8th century AD and the thoroughly developed and partly Sinicized Nanzhao kingdom. Chinese influence is also reflected in the archaism of Dongba language and possibly in the Geba script itself. But it cannot be doubted that Lijiang became increasingly Sinicized during the Ming dynasty. For not only did numerous Han Chinese settle in Lijiang at this time, but the Naxi also imported many Chinese civilizational schemes, notably Taoism (both religion and music) and Chinese Buddhism, Chinese style architecture, and so forth. So much so that

as early as 1418, the imperial superintendent Pang Wenyou had recommended that Confucian schools be opened in Lijiang because 'the prefecture had long submitted itself to the influences of civilization'.⁷⁷

In 1743, the magistrate in charge of Lijiang prefecture, Guan Xuexuan (who had acceded to office in 1736) took the time to compile the first and only prefectural records of Lijiang (*Lijiang Fu Zhi Lu*). It is of some interest to Naxi social history that he should have explained in the same breath that he had relied on the archives of the local gentry to compile these records, and yet, that he had great reservations as to the standards of civilization of the people in his jurisdiction.⁷⁸ This is what Guan Xuexuan had to say about his magistracy:

The great enterprise of turning a frontier, barren and desolate, into a civilized country within a short space of time, can never be accomplished by one or two subjects of our Imperial Court. In order to accomplish this arduous task, it is first necessary to appoint a reputable subject, well-experienced (sic) in governing, as magistrate of the chief city, one who, through careful management and deep study, will educate the people and correct their customs. Only then will our excellent culture of hundreds of thousands of generations, find root in that land, grow luxuriantly, and unfold its first brilliant flower He dared not say that he had established anything for these people, but that the bright future and the hopes of Li-chiang will certainly depend upon future capable magistrates of superior quality.⁷⁹

No doubt, Guan Xuexuan was underestimating his achievements; after all the chiefs of Yezhi had adopted the Chinese inheritance system, and the Naxi (at least those closer to Lijiang town) had begun to marry and to bury their dead in Chinese fashion. But we cannot be sure that Guan's self-effacement was only a matter of standard civility. What we do know, on the other hand, is that other imperial officials in nearby places did not fail to document their achievements among uncivilized tribes people. For example, the imperial magistrate in charge of Yanyuan county between 1821-1850 did not fail to relate in his County Records (*Yanyuan Xian Zhi*) that he had imposed the *Bao Jia* system as well as marriage rules upon the people under his jurisdiction.⁸⁰ The Naxi, for their part,

came under the Bao Jia system under the Republic⁸¹ and, if in the 18th century Guan Xuexuan attempted to impose marriage reforms in Lijiang, he kept silent about it. Could this silence be due to the fact that for all their efforts, Guan and later Qing officials were not very successful in dealing with Naxi marriage customs and sexual morality? The testimony of the French explorer Bonin who passed through Lijiang in 1897 certainly indicates that the Naxi fell short of meeting Confucian standards of sexual proprieties. Bonin writes:

[Lijiang is] famous in all of Yunnan for the hospitality of the local women, Chinese authorities, apparently concerned about the virtue of the populations they administer, attempted in vain to bring about some order ...At the time of my visit two notices had been posted at the Chinese prefectural gates. The first warned that twenty five strokes of the stick would be applied to whomever was found walking the streets after nightfall in search of adventures. The second doubled the punishment for fathers who failed to marry their daughters when they were of age.⁸²

Guan Xuexuan's admission that to civilize the Naxi would take time and effort 'rings true'. For all the syncretism which typifies Naxi culture in the Lijiang plain, the Naxi have proved exceptionally resistant to a number of civilizing projects which apparently did not suit them. The Karma-pa did not make a lasting impact on the religious life of the Lijiang basin, Christian missionaries made almost no converts among the Naxi. Today, we cannot miss the cultural continuities which are found in Lijiang and those resurfacing eighty years after the end of the imperial system, and four decades after what must count as one of the most dramatic time breaks in Chinese history.⁸³

According to Chao, Guan's comments are proof that the Mu chiefs 'had not been successful in controlling or Sinicizing the Naxi prior to the mid-1700's'.⁸⁴ But she may be judging too fast. In 1912, Jacques Bacot had remarked that the Naxi had no culture of their own and were just like the Chinese.⁸⁵ Yet two decades later, another Chinese official, Wang Tuzhui who visited Lijiang in the 1930s was deploring the fact that Chinese immigration had failed to civilize the

Naxi and that, in Lijiang, it was the Han who had become barbarians.⁸⁶ Thus, in the 1930s as in 1743, Chinese officials were shocked at Naxi cultural standards, and this quite in spite of the fact that at both periods the Naxi were evidently Sinicized. Would Guan and Wang have agreed upon what it was that defined the Naxi as barbarians?

We know from Rock and Goullart that the public freedom of Naxi women appeared scandalous to the Han Chinese of the 1930s and 40s. And women's public freedom certainly bore witness to the fact that after more than two centuries of direct rule, Chinese civilization had failed to impose upon the Naxi what most Han Chinese would have regarded as essential to Confucian propriety – some degree of segregation between the sexes. And of course, the public freedom enjoyed by Naxi women and love suicide also went together.

Intermarriage, Sinicization and ethnic resistance

We need not look only to Qing officials to try and evaluate the history of Naxi Confucianization, or Naxi sexual politics. We have seen that beginning with Mu Gong, the Lijiang chiefs became enthusiastic Confucians and that Mu Zeng had some regard for female chastity, but we can also look to another significant source of Sinicization – the Han Chinese immigrants whose descendants, according to McKhann, account for 25 to 40 per cent of the people in parts of southern Lijiang.⁸⁷

According to Naxi scholarship, most of the Han who settled in Lijiang during the Ming period came from eastern China, Nanjing especially, from where they were sent off by imperial order to come and work as peasants on the Mu estates, and serve as soldiers when needed. In addition, the Mu chiefs invited numerous Han craftsmen, traders, scholars, and Taoist and Buddhist priests to settle in Lijiang. We can suspect that there always was a measure of immigration into Lijiang, but large scale Han immigration began in the course of the 16th century and possibly peaked in Qing times between 1657 and 1776, as it did in other parts of the southwest (Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou).⁸⁸

Chao brings attention to the likely impact which the settlement of large numbers

of Han Chinese soldiers would have had on Naxi demography as well as on the local custom. She argues that these Han soldiers were single men who expected to marry into the Naxi community and succeeded in marginalizing poorer Naxi men from the marriage process. She also speculates that expanding economics would have become crucial issues in Naxi marriage politics after 1723 because the caravan trade was beginning to boom with the opium trade.⁸⁹ She adds,

the disproportionate number of Naxi men relative to women meant that not all Naxi men were ensured wives (Goullart 1955: 79; Rock: 1963: 40). The shortage of Naxi women, created by Chinese soldiers marrying in, resulted in child betrothals, which were arranged marriages made with wealthier families capable of coming up with bride-price. Therefore, the Chinese instituted practice of child betrothal may have also led to the formation of a class of young men who lacked access to women. As Rock points out, suicide was most prevalent among shepherd boys or rural youths. ... Young Naxi men who spoke Chinese and lived in Lijiang, a market center, were probably more than likely to have engaged in long-distance trade. Assuming that this was the case, Naxi men living in urban areas were more likely to have been wealthier than rural youth and may have lacked similar incentives to commit suicide.⁹⁰

This proposition is problematic. To begin with, it is overly speculative, dependent on too many 'ifs'. Then, it also makes too little of the fact that there was not only much Chinese influence in Lijiang before the 18th century but that there was also a significant degree of economic diversity. The Mu kingdom was a very large and gentrified realm, and it was also wealthy. The caravan trade, especially, is very old. Even before the Common Era, the people of northwest Yunnan specialized in long distance trade and, no less significantly, in controlling the trade roads. At least as early as the 9th century, the Chinese records have told of the trade in medicinal and aphrodisiacal products, gold, silver, and copper from northwest Yunnan and Lijiang in particular. But it may well be that the Qing annexation which destroyed the manorial system and repatriated hundreds of peasants to their home villages, contributed to a momentary recession rather than it set off a booming opium and caravan trade.⁹¹ Finally, Chao's linguistic speculation is not appropriate because even in places as far away as Labei and

Fengke, men speak Chinese and formal education plays no part in this. This Chinese is not an educated Chinese, but a trade language and a lingua franca.

Nevertheless, the point which Chao raises regarding the impact of Han immigration on Naxi gender demographics is very important, because Han colonization of the peripheries was based on a policy of intermarriages between Han men and ethnic women, and the Qing did bring more soldiers to occupy Lijiang after its annexation.⁹² In fact, even if not all late Ming and Qing dynasty Han settlers were peasant-soldiers, but some were merchants and craftsmen, they most likely were single men because even at the end of the 19th century, the imperial court did not allow Han women to emigrate to peripheral regions.⁹³ There is no reason to believe that the mass immigration of single men into Naxi territory did not cause tensions, for immigrants needed both land and women.

The point Chao makes regarding gender demographics in Lijiang, however, is also very important. Quite aside from the historical issue of Han male immigration to Lijiang, Naxi society even today seems beset by perceptions of a demographic imbalance in favor of males. Goullart and Rock both noted the fact that Naxi men seem to significantly outnumber Naxi women. And perhaps, Naxi conjugal arrangements also suggest a strategic adaptation to this apparently chronic shortage of brides. Naxi custom prohibits husbands and wives from sleeping in the same room, thus forcing husbands to visit their wives during the night. This is a unique practice, found only among the Naxi and for which scholars and local tradition have no explanation. Rock and Goullart simply took note of the fact. He Zhonghua has considered the possibility that it may have something to do with the Mosuo 'walking marriage'.⁹⁴ She may well be right, for the Naxi are the only ones among their T-B neighbors to have such a custom. But there is another possible explanation. Officially, the Naxi are monogamous (*yi fu yi qi*), but the custom of husbands and wives sleeping in separate beds does allow for 'visiting relations', and perhaps therefore a tacit polyandry. I may add that I probably would never have thought of this but for an incident during fieldwork. My friend S. asked me whether I agreed that she was most likely the

true daughter of her father's middle (and younger) brother rather than her father's daughter. As she saw it, her uncle had never married and like any other man he had needs. How could he live his entire adult life without sex? Her uncle had always been especially kind to her and had shown more concern for her welfare than he had done for her siblings. This story may well be unique to this particular family. However, before 1956 (I was assured), wife sharing between brothers was permitted in Labei. Here, custom allowed younger brothers to have access to their older brother's wife, but not the other way around. Labei Mosuo, like the Naxi, are not formally polyandrous, and Mosuo sexual rules mostly provided a temporary sexual partner for the brother who was not ultimately responsible for the lineage and whom the parents were the least concerned to marry off. But Naxi people do practice polyandry when they live in Tibetan territory (Zhongdian or Muli).

Polyandry, however, has more to do with preserving the integrity of property than it has with shortages of marriageable women. And indeed, in Lijiang, marriage was an expensive affair. For Naxi custom required not only bride-price but it also forbade (and still forbids) married brothers from living under the same roof. This puts a lot of pressure on parents who must find the means to build a new house at the marriage of each son.

Now, according to Goullart, Naxi brides fetched a high price because Naxi men outnumbered women about five to four and were thus 'lucky to find a wife at all'.⁹⁵ We can guess that Goullart took some literary license when he wrote of the bride market in Lijiang because Naxi scholars (and I also have been told this by older people in Lijiang) explain that bride-price was more often than not contingent upon what the maternal uncle could afford to pay.⁹⁶ Or as Rock put it: 'brides were usually bought, and, as they were cousins, they were cheaper than girls from unrelated families'.⁹⁷ And of course, structurally and mythically speaking, the Naxi betrothal system intended to keep Naxi girls for their maternal uncles' sons, not to sell them off to the highest bidder.

Goullart's comments, however, are somewhat validated by stories told in

Lijiang (and confirmed by Guo Dalie) according to which, 'in the past', Naxi brides were especially prized by Han men because they were much more hard-working than Han women. Han men allegedly came to Lijiang from as far east as Hangzhou to obtain Naxi women *in secret*, because Naxi custom did not approve of Naxi-Han intermarriages. Whether such things really happened I do not know,⁹⁸ but these stories, like other stories from Naxi oral tradition, illustrate *essential* truths about Naxi notions of gender, ethnicity and Han-Naxi relations. Representations of women contribute a great deal to the identities of Chinese ethnic people, even for the more Sinicized among them.

Unlike men who will dress *à la* Chinese if they are Naxi or *à la* Tibetan if they are Mosuo (or in other words wear the outer emblems of political integration and submission), women wear ethnic dress. Women therefore signify ethnic continuity and ethnic people primarily identify themselves through women because women are the biological means of their social reproductions.⁹⁹ And where their respective women are concerned, whereas the Mosuo pride themselves on their beautiful women, the Naxi identify themselves through their hard working, self-sacrificing wives and mothers.

The story above therefore is part of this particular ethnic lore. To say that Han men came all the way from Hangzhou (the other side of the country, and as far as one can go, and in fact from the very provinces Han immigrants did come from) to buy hard-working Naxi women in secret is another way of saying that the Han had something to *envy* the Naxi for. But then again, these stories also imply that when the 'wrong' people buy brides, it is as bad as stealing them. Interestingly, I was told by informants who traced their origins to Ming dynasty Han immigrants, that the first generations who had settled in Lijiang had married Bai women from Dali and it was their descendants who had married Naxi women. Which was how, informants also explained, over several generations their ancestors had become entirely assimilated as Naxi. Indeed, it is not impossible that among the Han immigrants, some gained access to Naxi brides only after they were able to offer their own daughters on the 'bride market'.¹⁰⁰

Ethnic integration: Sinicizing the Naxi and Barbarizing the Han

One of the most popular Naxi proverbs, the first words which any mischievous Naxi will teach a foreigner are ‘the Han are dog eaters’ (*Hazze kee shee zze*). And this, we can certainly take to originate in such times when Han eating habits proscribed their participation in Naxi rituals. For Naxi, Mosuo and Yi have strict taboos regarding the eating of dogs, horses and frogs, and no self-respecting Dongba, Daba or Bimo will conduct a ritual in presence of someone who has been polluted by eating these animals.¹⁰¹ But as we saw above, participation in the Sacrifice to Heaven, and membership into the *Shai* faction established the families of Han immigrants with whom the Naxi were willing to intermarry. Since the Han did partake in the Sacrifice to Heaven and since they also married into Naxi families, we can suspect that they also ‘stopped eating dogs’. In other words, in Lijiang, the Han who wished to marry Naxi women submitted to Naxi ritual exigencies, and therefore today the descendants of Ming dynasty Han migrants can explain that their ancestors *became* Naxi because they married Naxi women (*Women zuxian he Naxizu funü jiehun, zuihou biancheng le Naxizu*). And the fact is Han settlers learned to speak Naxi, married according to Naxi rules, accepted Naxi rules of inheritance, and we can surmise, adapted to the gender roles which Naxi society prescribed. Whilst Lijiang men went to war, to trade in far away places, to work in mines and to prospect for gold in the river valleys of the Jinshajiang, or simply laid about town, Lijiang women, whether they were the wives or daughters of Han settlers or of local people, worked in the fields, ran the butcher shops and the markets and, in short, spent time in the streets and other public places with a freedom that would have been very much frowned upon in Confucian China.

And yet, as we saw above, we cannot ignore the apparent fact that Han immigrants also retained and must have helped disseminate a great many cultural traits in Lijiang. So many, indeed, that to those on the outside, to the Mosuo, the Pumi or the Yi, the ‘Naxi are just like the Han’ (*Naxizu he Hanzu dou yi yang, or Naxizu, gen Hanzu yi yang, mei you shenme qubie*). Significantly, among the typically Han customs which at least some of the descendants of Han immigrants

held onto, was the keeping of genealogical scrolls and rituals pertaining to Han style ancestor worship.¹⁰² In other words, whilst in public, Han settlers partook in rituals dedicated to Heaven and to the Naxi ancestors, in private, they honored their own ancestors according to Chinese ritual. So the question arises as to whether Han immigrants valued their Naxi wives with the same attachment to Han standards as they did their ancestors and descendants, since after all, chaste brides were the only brides who could be 'bought' in Lijiang society.

It is certainly reasonable to presume that expectations of pre-marital chastity made their way into Naxi society as a result of Chinese education, examples set by the elite *and* contact with Han immigrants, for all these represent powerful contingencies for innovation and cross-acculturation. But if we cannot question that all these factors had to influence Naxi values, we ought to distinguish between two types of acculturation, one that is epiphenomenal and largely the result of continuing contact, modeling and exchange, and the other that is intentional. Both processes may be equally dependent on the greater political environment, begin on either side of the contact experience and have either positive or destructive results. The difference between the two, however, lies with the fact that the first needs not be instituted whilst the second is precisely a matter of institution, of active political maneuvering intent on bringing about new standards.

From the perspective of Jackson or Chao's theories, expectations of premarital chastity were imposed on the Naxi when Confucian magistrates imposed marriage rituals, and the high rate of love suicides therefore can be explained in light of a clash of values between Han immigrant mores and already existing Naxi practices. In this scheme, love suicide assumes a psychological dimension and results of the impossible contradiction between ideals of premarital chastity and a deeply entrenched practice of social and sexual freedom. Jackson's and especially Chao's theories are undeniably reasonable but they do leave out a significant element: that Naxi social practices and ideals were entirely *convergent* when they identified love suicide not only with pre-marital chastity, but also with patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. And indeed, it was Naxi customary law (Dongba ritual and mythology)

and not the Confucian *li* that guaranteed patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, a type of marriage that was not Chinese, and that ensured that when Han men married Naxi women, their sons became Naxi. So, perhaps the answer to the Naxi love suicide custom is not to be found with the Han immigrants but with the Naxi themselves. And at this point, I shall return to another set of comparisons, between the Naxi and their Nuosu neighbors.

In spite of much noted gender equality, the Nuosu did not treat all their children equally but distinguished between the children born of lower caste women and Black Bone men and those born of Black Bone women and lower caste men. The first became 'Yellow Bones' – pariahs, people in social limbo – but the others were preferably not given the chance to appear into the world of the living and their potential parents were often compelled to commit suicide.¹⁰³ Children born of love relationships which involved men and women from the correct castes, by contrast, followed their mothers to live with their in-laws where they assumed a lesser status than their half-siblings but nevertheless a socially viable existence. Nuosu society thus defined illegitimacy as an act of sexual reproduction, that is the reproduction of certain men, that ruined for good, women who were destined to reproduce another class of men. The mixed offspring of an upper caste man might live whilst that of a lower caste man had no such luck, because sexual reproduction is bound by, and in turn generates, *social* reproduction. Lower caste men who slept with the women who belonged to higher caste men endangered social reproduction because they crossed the social boundaries by which sex and marriage establish and reproduce *privilege*.

In Lijiang, social reproduction (the reproduction of the Naxi patriline) was not vested in caste, but in an avuncular privilege defined and guaranteed by patrilateral cross-cousin exchange. Love suicide therefore quashed sexual relations which did not fall within the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage prescription – matrilateral alliances, or marriage by capture or even marriage by purchase. Seen from this perspective, love suicide did not result of institutional change, it was the very thing that *instituted* Naxi marriage rules. And these marriage rules, we may guess, were

well guarded because their perceived benefits were greater than the casualties they produced.

In previous chapters, I proposed that preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage was modeled on an elite practice (Mu marriages) and that it contributed to the detribalization of Lijiang. I also pointed out that in the 16th century, the Mu chiefs switched from marrying with women from two families and in alternate generations, and I suggested that the Mu stopped marrying patrilaterally. This, however, need no imply that the Naxi of the Lijiang plain also stopped marrying their patrilateral cross-cousins.

Naxi kinship terminology and mythology testify to the depth and entrenchment of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, whilst even the Mu genealogical Chronicles make clear that the Mu chiefs, Confucianized as they may have been, never broke off completely with local custom.

Immigration, intermarriage, land and the politics of feud

We can expect that in feudal times, the Mu chiefs encouraged Han immigrants to adopt local custom because, as we have seen in previous chapters, for all their Confucianization, the Mu remained attached to more local and traditional ritual definitions. The participation of Han descendants in the Sacrifice to Heaven, and their subsequent integration into the commoner He class imply their naturalization into Naxi society. But one should not forget that wherever Han peasants settled, they necessarily entered into competition with local people over land and women. From comparative study, we can surmise that even under feudal rule, Han immigration was cause for tension in Lijiang just as it was in other ethnic regions. Indeed, we know that the Yongning chiefs went to extremes to discourage Han peasants from settling on their territory. They forbade the Mosuo from growing rice and fully cultivating the plain to make their land less attractive.¹⁰⁴ And outsiders who settled in Yongning did so by entering the serf category (Wu), at the bottom of the social ladder, where people had the least access to land.

Han-tribal relations, however, were played out in different ways in different

places. For example, Colin Mackerras explains that among the Bouyu, Han settlement (during the Qing period) introduced a different type of land tenure whereby land could be bought and sold, which undermined the power base and wealth of the Bouyu aristocracy.¹⁰⁵ Recent Mongol history (under the Republic) also testifies of the social disruption that followed Han immigration into feudal ethnic areas. Heissig writes: 'The Mongol princes, little kings by the grace of China ... slaves as they were to the attractions of Chinese culture, a life of luxury and more often than not, to opium ... tried to get as much as they possibly could for themselves out of the Chinese expansion and land-hunger. Many of them sold estates to the Chinese, in order to be able to maintain a feudal standard of living that was on the way out. But the Mongolian people grumbled in secret, suffered and hoped.'¹⁰⁶ According to Eberhard, the apparent sexual laxity of non-Han customs in the peripheral regions allowed Han Chinese men to lay claims on local women. Simply speaking, Han men claimed for wives the women whom they impregnated, and backed their claims with bride-prices and compensatory payments which local men could not match.¹⁰⁷

There is no written evidence that Han immigrants thus dispossessed Naxi men, but, as we saw, the local folklore tells stories about how, in the past, Han men came to Lijiang to buy hard-working Naxi women in secret. Interestingly, preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is not practiced in some of the peripheral regions which the Mu chiefs conquered in the late Ming period, and it is also absent from some of the older regions, such as Fengke. But it was practiced in Baoshan, a garrisoned town founded during the Ming, and settled by both Naxi and Han soldiers. Thus it seems that patrilateral cross-cousin marriage could have played a part in managing inter-tribal relations generally, *including* Han-Naxi intermarriages.

We do know that as recently as the 1940s, Han Chinese men were discouraged to 'steal' Naxi brides. According to Goullart, the Naxi were keen on keeping 'Nakhi girls for the Nakhi boys and nobody else', and a Bai or Chinese who misread the social permissiveness of Lijiang and 'tried to flirt with a Nakhi girl, went in danger of his life and, as a matter of fact, many were killed by the jealous

Nakhi men.¹⁰⁸ Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage may not have kept 'Nakhi girls for Nakhi boys and nobody else', but it did lower bride-price to accommodate marriage to FZD, and it did favor local patriline by returning brides to the families from which mothers had been obtained. And in the meantime, of course, romantic imagination and the belief in the after-life also ensured that love suicide reproduced not only the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage but itself, for the young were all too often ready to opt for love and death rather than abide by the marriage rule.

Conclusion

The theory that the Naxi began committing love suicide as a result of direct imperial rule suffers from a misconstrued notion that the Naxi were isolated from the Chinese world until 1723. No doubt, the annexation of Lijiang brought far-reaching changes to the Naxi but Lijiang had long been influenced by Chinese civilization. Between the Naxi and the Han, there was no shock of contact as occurred between the Hawaiians and Captain Cook. By 1723, the Naxi elite had experienced several centuries of Confucianization.

Over the last three chapters, I have emphasized the juridical aspects of myth and ritual rather than the socio-psychological processes that allow for the transmutation of myth and ritual into social actions. I have also proposed that love suicide may have very ancient roots in Lijiang, the deepest lying with incest prohibitions and breaches of caste endogamy, *à la* Nuosu. In early feudal times, love suicide helped curb tribal politics by sanctioning patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, a restrictive form of alliance that neutralized tribal formations and helped contained tribal warfare. In later feudal times, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage helped assimilate large numbers of Han immigrants into Naxi society. After Lijiang came under direct Qing administration in 1723, Naxi marriage conservatism more than likely hardened, for the colonization of the peripheries was based in policies of assimilation and intermarriage between Han men and local women, and the cultural assimilation of local population into Chinese ritual modes. Thus, the more Han soldiers and immigrants arrived in Lijiang, the more tenaciously the Naxi clung

onto their marriage custom with the result that by the 20th century, not only had patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, strict betrothal rules and accompanying love suicide managed to keep Naxi girls for Naxi boys but they had become essential aspects of Naxi custom and social morality.

To sum up, the love suicide custom and Naxi kinship peculiarities *were* products of imperial politics. But if love suicide fixed Naxi sexual values in a shape that could pass for Confucian expectations in the eyes of foreign observers, this tragic custom never looked Chinese to the Naxi. As people in Lijiang explain it, *Yuvu* was not only very romantic, it was also a Naxi custom (*Shi Naxizu gudai wenhua*), it was 'very old' (*hen jiu, hen jiu*), and it already existed 'at least in the Ming dynasty' (*Ming dai yijing you*) and the proof of this is that the love suicide was written in the Dongba manuscripts (*Dongba jing you ah!*). And importantly, the Naxi love suicide custom never looked very Confucian to the Chinese officials whose business it was to be versed in Confucian practice.

According to Emily Chao, Naxi love suicides should be understood as acts of indigenous resistance resulting of 'cultural incorporation and gender transformation'. By this she means that Naxi women opted for death rather than submitted to the demands of Confucian ideology. In fact, if love suicides were acts of indigenous resistance, they were indirectly so. The real locus of Naxi resistance rested with what the love suicide custom sanctioned: patrilateral cross-cousin marriage and strict betrothal promises that guarded the Naxi against an immigration process that threatened not only their cultural assimilation (for the Naxi had already adopted many Chinese customs) but the reproduction of their patriline.

¹A. Jackson, "The Descent of Man, Incest, and the Naming of Sons", p. 33

²Lo Ch'ang P'ei, "The genealogical Patronymic Linkage System", p. 356. This genealogy takes us back to the Han dynasty (circa 10 A.D.), perhaps even earlier.

³The Labei Mosuo make no difference between terms of reference and terms of address. The Naxi address all cousins as brother and sister.

⁴P.K. Benedict, "Tibetan and Chinese Kinship Terms", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (6) 1941, pp. 313-337.

⁵Lin Yueh-hua, *The Lolo of Liangshan*, Appendix.

- ⁶C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bones*, p. 312. Note that I leave out the tone markers (q, l, f) to simplify reading and comparison.
- ⁷J.P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, London, Macmillan, 1937, pp. 135-138.
- ⁸C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 316.
- ⁹C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures*, p. 375.
- ¹⁰D. Maybury-Lewis, "Prescriptive Marriage Systems", p. 209.
- ¹¹Today the matrimonial arrangements of the Eya people are in the same vein as they are for the people of Muli and reflect Tibetan influence - monogamy, polygyny, polyandry and 'walking marriage' are all practiced there. Marriage is only prohibited between brothers and sisters, and between parallel paternal cousins who are related within two degrees. However, tradition has it that things were not always like this, and that once upon a time, the people of Eya were forbidden to marry any kind of cousin under two degrees of relationship. See *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shihui Lishi Diaocha* [Research into the social history of the Naxi nationality of Sichuan Province], p. 80.
- ¹²C. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Kinship Structure*, p. 451.
- ¹³C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bones*, p. 316.
- ¹⁴See D. Maybury-Lewis, "Prescriptive marriage Systems", p. 202.
- ¹⁵Stevan Harrell also comments on the equal status of Nuosu women before liberation and notes that the reports of these early observers are at odds with the position which Nuosu women assume today, specifically in the field of formal education and in public life in general. See Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, pp. 98-99. Incidentally, it is also the case that Mosuo women seem to have fallen behind men post liberation. For example, in pre-liberation Yongning, women of the aristocratic class could hold public office whilst there are virtually no female cadres in contemporary Yongning.
- ¹⁶S.R. Clarke, *Among the Tribes of Southwest China*, Taipei, Ch'eng Wen Publishing Company, 1970 (1911), p. 131.
- ¹⁷For a review of contemporary clan and caste organization in Nuosu society, see, Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, pp. 90-99.
- ¹⁸According to Alain Dessaint's analysis of pre-1956 ethnographic material concerned with the Liangshan, feuds resulted from 'arguments over women, insults to black Bone men or women, murder, theft (of slaves or horses), and defaulting on a debt.' A.Y. Dessaint, *Minorities of Southwest China*, p. 31.
- ¹⁹Ibid, p. 30, also Lin Yueh-hua, *The Lolo of Liang Shan*, p. 82.
- ²⁰Told by Alain Dessaint in *Minorities of Southwest China*, p. 30.
- ²¹Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas*, Thames and Hudson, 1990, p. 138.
- ²²This is also noted by Jacobs, *ibid*.
- ²³C. Sainson, *Nan-tchao Ye -Che*, pp. 180-181; also You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Shiqi de Naxizu he Lisuzu", p. 61. Yang Shen may have copied this information from earlier records (the *Yunnan Zhilue* in particular) because as Wiens cautions, when dealing with non-Han peoples, Chinese historiographers often duplicated previous records without adding any details. J.H. Wiens, *China's March Towards the Tropics*, p. 31. The *Nanzhao Ye Shi* contributes at least one contemporary detail when it relates that some of the Moxie could read and went to school (see C. Sainson, *Nanzhao Ye Shi*).
- ²⁴R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective*, New York, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983 (1967), p. 139.
- ²⁵W. Eberhard, *China's Minorities: Yesterday and Today*, p. 141.
- ²⁶E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 641 [my translation from French]
- ²⁷C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bones*, p. 253.
- ²⁸J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 78, note 199.
- ²⁹S.D. White, *Medical Discourses*, Chapter 8, "Fame and Sacrifice". *Beyond the Clouds* (1991), a National Geographic documentary series dedicated to Lijiang, unwittingly exposes this dichotomy. The narrator explains the murder of a teenager in a gang fight as arising from the 'growing unemployment' caused by the recent policies on economic liberalization, against a background of images showing idle young men hanging about at the billiard bar and the

discotheque, and follow up images of exceedingly busy women of all ages, including old women, working in shops, markets, etc. carrying enormous loads on their backs, carting tiles out of kilns. However, there is one area in which Naxi women do compete (fiercely) for fame in the same mode as that which White describes for men - singing. Women sing on all sorts of public occasions, and at local and provincial competitions, as well as the karaoke bars, tourist hangouts, etc. and will miss no opportunity to show off their talent if they have it. Famous singers command respect and authority, for songs express the very soul of the community.

³⁰*The Population Atlas of China*, Oxford University Press, 1987, gives the following figures for literacy in Lijiang: 60 years old and over - 90 % of women are illiterate as opposed to 70 % of men, 40 years old - 60% of women are illiterate as opposed to 30% men, and 15 years old, 15% women are illiterate as opposed to 5% men.

³¹See W.W. Rockhill, *Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1895, p. 682; and C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, p. 108.

³²Whether it is a matter of praying to local gods, gods of the Chinese pantheon or Bodhisattva Guanyin, god trees or rocks (fertility stones) and whether it is praying for the release of ancestral souls, or for fertility and health. The prominent role which Bai women assume in the religious sphere was also noted by Charles Fitzgerald. See C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Tower of Five Glories*.

³³Chao, "Suicide, Ritual, and Gender Transformation", p. 71.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

³⁵E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual, and Gender Transformation", p. 70.

³⁶Chao takes for granted that all gender reforms in Naxi society occurred post-1723.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸J.F. Rock, MBC, pp. 90,91.

³⁹E. Chao, "Suicide, Ritual, and Gender Transformation", p. 71.

⁴⁰See Liu Xiaoxing, *Muti Zongpai* [Worship of the maternal body], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1990; an essay on the significance of the gourd as the Mother Body in Yi symbolism, and in the mythology and rituals of other Yunnanese. As I mentioned in Chapter II, in the story of the flood, the Naxi creation myth does away with the gourd and replaces it with a leather bag. This may be a case of substituting a masculine object for a feminine one. As I explained also, it may have to do with signifying the Mongol conquest, since the Mongol Yeye came to Lijiang on great torrents of water and the Mongol troops crossed the Jinshajiang on inflated leather rafts - in which case, the substitution is indeed gendered, for the Mongols gave the Mu (and all their people) a new patriline.

⁴¹I take the notion of discordance from C. Lévi-Strauss, "La notion d'archaïsme en ethnologie", in C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Plon, Paris, 1985 (1862), p.139.

⁴²J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 88. Rock described manuscript 5134 as 'ancient'. This seems an appropriate evaluation. This manuscript mentions that the Bai use elephants as pack animals, an interesting comment because the Burmese rather than the Bai have been famous for the use they make of elephants. According to modern Chinese scholarship, the historical record does not seem to have a lot to say about pack elephants being used in Dali, but speaks of excellent transport horses. See *Yunnan Ge Minzu Jingji Fazhan Shi* [Economic history of the Yunnanese nationalities], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989. As already mentioned, according to Wiens, the last reports of *wild* elephants in the southern regions of Dali was in 1388. H. J. Wiens, *China's March towards the Tropics*, p. 65.

⁴³J.F. Rock, MBC, p. 88.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, p. 262.

⁴⁶Connections between souls and roofs are also made by the Han Chinese. See W. Eberhard, *Local Cultures Of South And East China*, pp. 155 and 159.

⁴⁷Yan Ruxian and Song Zhaolin, "Tan Naxizu de Muxizhi Yu Yidu" *Minzu Yanjiu* (3) 1981, pp. 17-25, p. 22.

⁴⁸Note also that Akha keep the ancestral shrine in the *women's* part of the roof, although they are patrilineal. D.E. Tooker, "Some Continuities in the Communication of Hierarchy in Tai (Dai) and

Non-Tai (Akha/Hani) Groups", *4th International Conference on Tai Studies*, pp. 83-94; pp. 84 and 86. Also, P. and E. Lewis, *Peoples of the Golden Triangle*, p. 222.

⁴⁹In practice, of course, people may well seek whatever is to their advantage within degrees of social or legal acceptability, and therefore accommodate custom to circumstance. The Han also married cross-cousins and first cousins, though preferably on the mother's side. In real life also, unless Han women had been sent to marry men in far away place, they could retain strong ties to their family of origins - this, however, was not the ideal and, according to the historical record and Chinese literature, was often a source of conflict, if not disaster. On marriage, women and politics, see Cao Xueqin's *Dream of The Red Chamber*.

⁵⁰Quoted from the *Yunnan Tongzhi* in You Zhong, "Yuan, Ming, Qing Sheqi De Naxizu He Lisuzu", p. 61.

⁵¹*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, Vol. 2, p. 52.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian*, pp. 525-526.

⁵⁶All references to Naxi religious practices in Muli are obtained from the *Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, pp. 24-28, 118-126, 128-131.

⁵⁷The mountain festivals also recall the spring dances of ancient China. Marcel Granet explained that these festivals had survived into contemporary times among peripheral Chinese peoples, as for example, among the Yi and Miao groups. M. Granet, "Coutumes matrimoniales de la Chine antique".

⁵⁸C.F. McKhann, *Fleshing the Bones*, p. 79.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶¹E. Chao, "Gender Transformation", p. 71.

⁶²Note that Mosuo women give birth in a special room of the house and that it is in this same room that the dying or the dead are placed. In Mosuo burial custom as well, the dead are bound in a fetal position, ready to be reborn.

⁶³E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956, p. 142.

⁶⁴See M. Granet, *La pensée chinoise*.

⁶⁵A. H. Black, "Gender and Cosmology in Chinese Correlative Thinking", in C. Walker Bynum, S. Harrell, and P. Richman, *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, Boston, Boston Press 1986, pp. 166-195.

⁶⁶In an interesting survey of Taiwanese villagers' encounters with ghosts, Harrell found that men saw ghosts rather than women, and that the ghosts men saw were either foreign men or women. In light of his informants' interpretations, Harrell explains that Taiwanese men harbor much guilt and fear towards women, for they understand that women, like ghosts, get a bad deal and are out for revenge. Men fear women because they are outsiders and intruders into the kinship system. Harrell does not define ghosts as outsiders, as I do above, but nevertheless the ghosts in his survey were either women or foreigners. S. Harrell, "Men, Women and Ghosts in Taiwanese Society", in C. Walker Bynum et al, *Gender and Religion*, pp. 97-115, pp. 110-115.

⁶⁷Shih-Yü Yü Li, "Tibetan Folk-Law", in A. Dundes Renteln and A. Dundes, *Folk Law: Essays in the Theory of Lex Non Scripta*, pp. 514-537, p. 514. Also, S.C. Das, *Contributions on Tibet*, p. 33.

⁶⁸See K. Carlitz, "Desire, Danger, and the Body: Stories of Women's Virtue in Late Ming China" in C. Gilmartin, *Engendering China, Women, Culture and the State*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994. Also T. Kellerher, "Confucianism", in K.K. Young (ed.), *Women in World religions*, New York, University of New York Press, 1987.

⁶⁹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 128.

⁷⁰A. Jackson, "Kinship, Suicide and Pictographs", p. 78.

⁷¹See J.L. Watson and E.S. Rawski, *Death Ritual in Later Imperial and Modern China*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988.

⁷²The *Lijiang Prefectural Records* comment that the Naxi practiced cremation. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 215. The first Mu grave is dated 1727 (ANKSWC, p. 70).

⁷³*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, Vol. 2, pp. 29-45

⁷⁴W. Eberhard, *China's Minorities: Yesterday and Today*, Belmont, California, 1982, pp. 120-141. Also S. Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*.

⁷⁵Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, pp. 75-76. The Mosuo chief Ah Henfeng realized that his own birth had not been properly reported to the imperial authorities when he had to compile his official genealogy to submit to the emperor circa 1878. It must have been quite a worry for him to find that he could not name his forefathers' wives before the 18th century (about six decades after the Qing conquest of Yunnan). See Ah Henfeng's records in J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, especially p. 375. Also see Cai Hua, *The Na: A Society without Fathers or Husbands*, Zone Books, New York, 2000, pp. 365-383.

⁷⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 308-313. Chapter IX looks at the chiefs of Yezhi in more detail.

⁷⁷Reported in the *Ming Shi (Ming History)* Ch. 314. Translated into French by Chavannes in "Documents Historiques", p. 638.

⁷⁸J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 45-47.

⁷⁹Rock's translation in the ANKSWC, pp. 45-47.

⁸⁰Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 235.

⁸¹Information from Guo Dalie (Kunming 1991).

⁸²J. Bacot, *Les Mo-so*, p.11 [my translation from French]. I have no doubt that Bonin was exaggerating the frivolity of Naxi women. This comment should be viewed in the same light as those made by foreign tourists in Lijiang who believe that Naxi society is sexually open and Naxi women are matriarchs.

⁸³This is one of the major points made by S. D. White in *Medical Discourses*.

⁸⁴E. Chao, "Gender Transformation", p. 63.

⁸⁵J. Bacot, *Les Mo-so*, p. 10.

⁸⁶J. Siguret, *Confins du Yunnan*, pp. 42, 43.

⁸⁷C. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*, pp. 390-391.

⁸⁸J. Lee, "Food Supply and Population growth in South West China, 1250-1850." *Journal of Asiatic Studies* (41:4) 1982, pp. 711-746.

⁸⁹The role of opium in 18th century Yunnanese trade is not clear. According to Shryock, tobacco rather than opium was used in China and Yunnan during the early Qing period. However, the first imperial edict condemning the use of opium dates from 1729. J.H. Shryock, "Ch'en Ting's Account of the Marriage Customs of the Chiefs of Yunnan and Kueichou", pp. 524-526.

⁹⁰E. Chao, "Gender Transformation", p. 69.

⁹¹In 1723, the Qing authorities destroyed the manorial system. At the start of the Qing dynasty, the Mu 'owned' 500 households or 2344 people - or 22% of the total Lijiang population. The Mu also owned one quarter of cultivated and grazing lands. In Lijiang, unlike in Yongning, land was transferable and we are told in the Mu Chronicles that by 1723, part of the Mu's estate had been mortgaged and part of it had already been sold off. Guo Dalie explains that the annexation of Lijiang did not greatly alter economic relations between the various classes of people. Those who had worked on the Mu's private lands and offices were sent back to their native villages and whereas in the past they worked as serfs, they now hired themselves as tenant farmers. According to the Mu Chronicles, the Mu's former grazing lands were not redistributed but rented out by the Qing administration and profits were used for public purposes. *Yunnan Ge Minzu Jingji Fazhan Shi*, pp. 267-311; *Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 29, 30, also J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 149-150.

⁹²See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 150.

⁹³According to William Rockhill, in the 1890s, all the Chinese who moved to Tibet, whether they were traders or soldiers were men who were expected to take local wives. Marriage settled the men for good because they feared that their wives who had 'big feet' would not be acceptable in the Han Chinese community if they ever returned. W.W. Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas*, New York Century Co, 1891.

⁹⁴See He Zhonghua, *Zhongguo Xinan Shaoshuminzu Daode Yanjiu*, p. 67.

⁹⁵ P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 79.

⁹⁶ *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 43. Among the Kachins also, bride-price is adjusted to suit the economic situation of wife-takers. E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, p. 151.

⁹⁷ J.F. Rock, "The Romance of Ka-ma-gyu-mig-kyi", p. 49.

⁹⁸ In light of what Rockhill wrote on Han-Tibetan marriages, it seems unlikely that Han men would have come all the way across China to Lijiang to buy Naxi women with 'big feet'. See footnote 94.

⁹⁹ See C. Mathieu, "History and other Metaphors: Han-Mosuo relations since 1956" in A. Finnane and A. McLaren, *Dress, Sex and Text in Chinese Culture*, Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1999, pp. 81-106. esp. pp. 96-97.

¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, I only became aware of this possibility well after I left China, and I have no further evidence to corroborate this point. Scholars with interest in Naxi history, however, may care to investigate the family histories of Naxi who trace their origins to Han dynasty settlers, to see where first wives came from.

¹⁰¹ At best a person so defiled may have to go through a series of rituals etc. to be purified, at worst, he or she will be ostracized permanently. Of course, whether a person may or may not qualify for purification also has to do with the person in question. Hence, when I admitted that I had consumed dog flesh (about three mouthfuls, about two years ago to make my Han friends happy), the Zheda decided that I had already atoned for my sins because it was only a little bit, under special circumstances and already some time ago.

¹⁰² I have no statistical data to corroborate how widespread this practice was.

¹⁰³ Refer to Chapter VI.

¹⁰⁴ J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 388. Rock explains: 'The most important part of Yung-ning from an agricultural standpoint, is of course its plain, which today supports 300 families, although 1,000 families could subsist there if rice were cultivated, and all arable land were utilized. Only half of the plain is now under cultivation, and rice is prohibited from being sown for political reasons.' In personal communication Professor Wang Shuwu confirmed that the cultivation of rice was prohibited by the Yongning Tusi to discourage Han immigration. As the Mosuo proverb tells, 'The Nari (i.e. Mosuo) depend on the caravan trail for their wealth, the Han depend on the earth'.

¹⁰⁵ C. Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, pp. 25, 26.

¹⁰⁶ W. Heissig, *A Lost Civilization*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰⁷ W. Eberhard, *China's Minorities: Yesterday and Today*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁸ P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pp. 173-174. Goullart also tells the story of a Chinese man who was ambushed and shot in the cheek by Naxi men because he had openly flirted with a Naxi woman. Today, it is not rare to hear Naxi women say that they would like to marry Han men rather than Naxi men, because a Han husband would not expect his wife to work as hard as a Naxi husband would. Note that marriage preferences between ethnic minorities are perceived by the people concerned as usually hypergamic. It is more acceptable for a man than for a woman to marry into a minority which is considered of lesser status than their own. Degrees of ethnic prestige are for the most part 'agreed' upon degrees of Sinicization, or 'development'. The Han Chinese are at the top of this ladder. This prestige scale, however, may not be validated among the larger nationalities who like the Tibetans, the Hui, and the Mongols traditionally regard themselves as equal to the Han.

Chapter IX

On The Genealogy of the Naxi Nationality

Introduction

Although Chinese scholars agree that no nationality is the product of one original tribe but that of political history, migration and intermarriage, nationality historiography is very much concerned with establishing ethnic boundaries in specific genealogies. To this end, the standard Naxi history, the *Naxizu Jian Shi* [Brief history of the Naxi nationality] follows two paths: first, it explores the history of human occupation in Lijiang and Yongning where it seeks the Naxi's ancestry in an old autochthony, and then, it focuses on the historical whereabouts of the Mo-so tribe(s). At this point, the *NJS* treats territory and descent as aspects of a single narrative and subsumes the history of various peoples into that of the Mo-so tribe. In this final chapter, I review previous historical theories on the origins and early history of the Naxi Nationality. Here, I contend that the historical record, myth and archaeology suggest that the Naxi and the Mosuo share some common ancestors rather than they have a common ancestry, and that matrilineality is especially relevant to Mosuo rather than to Naxi ethnic history.

On the remote origins of the Naxi nationality

There are three theories pertaining to the more remote origins of the Naxi, and as we shall see, none of these is entirely satisfactory:

- 1) The Naxi are descended from the Maoniu and the state of Zuo (*NJS*);
- 2) The Naxi arrived in Yongning in 24 A.D. (Rock);
- 3) The Naxi are descendants of the Bai Lang tribes of c. 70 A.D. (Zhang Zengqi).

The Maoniu tribe theory

Before the Chinese Emperor Han Wudi invaded Yunnan in 109 B.C. (to secure the southern trade routes to India), Lijiang and Yongning belonged to a tribal state known to the Chinese as Zuo. The word 'Zuo' means 'to twist' and the Zuo were people who had a technique of rope making by twisting bamboo fibers – in other words, the Zuo made bamboo ropes and lived within the country of bamboo rope bridges. According to the *NJS*, east of Zuo, in the region of contemporary Xichang in Sichuan, the land belonged to the Qiong, and then, south of Zuo, in what is now Dali, the Yeyu or Kunming and Sui tribes dwelt (see map 5). Chinese scholars explain that the Zuo, Qiong and Kunming were not really 'states' (*guo*) as the record may induce one to believe, but confederations of various Qiang, Di and other tribes, whilst each of these larger groups derived its name from a (demographically or politically) dominant tribe. But whereas the *NJS* explains that the ancestors of the Naxi nationality were Qiang just like the Zuo, their two thousand year old source compiled by the great historian Sima Qian actually states that the Zuo were Di tribes.¹

The *NJS* otherwise deduces from Sima Qian's *Shi Ji* [Memoirs of the Historian] that, in 109 B.C., the Zuo, Qiong and Kunming were also at different stages of development. The Zuo lived in settled communities and had a mixed economy of farming and pastoralism. The Qiong were farmers and organized in townships, under the rule of four kings. The Kunming were transhumant pastoralists who shifted their habitat between the mountain slopes and the river valleys following the seasons.² Or as Rock described in his inimitable style, 'in K'unming, there existed neither a prince nor a chief, but they understood stealing and robbing, and murdered messengers from the Court of Han at every

opportunity'.³ The archaeological record indicates that the Zuo, Qiong and Kunming were not only distinguished by their political and economic organization but also by their burial customs: the Zuo built stone slab tombs, whilst the Kunming and Sui had earth graves, whilst in Qiong country, a people called Pu built larger slab tombs and practiced multiple burial. These Pu burials are also found in other parts of Yunnan.⁴

The *NJS* likewise mentions that the Pu were a tribe or clan of Qiong, whilst the Zuo tribes included Mao tribes and also Maoniu Yi or Maoniu Qiang (Yak barbarians or Yak Qiang). And according to the authors of the *NJS*, either the Mao or the Maoniu are likely to be the ancestors of the Mo-so tribes because there is a homophonic correspondence between the word *Mao* and the name *Mo-so*.⁵ Yet, since Sima Qian relates that the name of the people of Dian was Mi-mo, the historical record also warns that phonetic associations should be approached with caution.⁶ The proposition that Mo-so is derived from Mao, indeed, raises the question of why Chinese chroniclers should have discarded Mao or Maoniu to take up with Mo-so, when Mo-so has no meaning at all in Chinese and Mao does.⁷ This theory also raises the issue of why the Maoniu should figure in the 3rd century *San Guo Zhi Yi* [The records of the Three Kingdoms] as both contemporaries of, and distinguishable from, a tribal group of Yanyuan called Mo-sha Yi – which the same *NJS* argues was the ancestral tribe of the Mo-so.⁸ And the Maoniu hypothesis seems further undermined when, some pages later, the *NJS* contradicts itself by explaining that the Maoniu and the Mo-sha were in fact federated rather than they were one tribe.⁹

Naxi historian Guo Dalie makes a more convincing argument for the Maoniu origins of the Naxi nationality in the *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* (Vol. 2) by comparing the records,¹⁰ but in the end, Guo concludes that the Maoniu are the ancestors of a number of people, including the Lisu, Nu, Du Long, Lahu and others, rather than the ancestors of the Naxi specifically.¹¹

Such inconsistencies, of course, are part and parcel of any theory that must be dependent on very little data, but the Maoniu origins of the Naxi also fits in with

the general conservative approach taken by the *NJS*. To say that the Naxi begin with the Maoniu Qiang is to say that things are the way they are because they always have been so, and therefore because this is the way things should be. Post-Mao studies for their part are more diversified. Hence, although in 1991, He Zhiwu was still convinced of the standard *NJS* theory and of the Mao and Mo phonetic association,¹² some scholars now argue that the Bai Lang and not the Maoniu are the ancestors of the Naxi nationality, whilst others, like Guo Dalie, readily explain that the history of Mo-so settlement in Lijiang truly begins in the Tang period.

The theory of a 24 A.D. Mo-so conquest

Rock believed that the Mo-so had conquered Yongning in 24 A.D. because the *Dianxi* [Dian Commentary], compiled in 1807, relates that in 24 A.D. the Mo-so chief Niyuewu invaded Yongning and dispersed the Tufans (Tibetans).¹³ The *Dianxi*, however, seems to be confusing two sets of events and characters. On the one hand, the words Mo-so and Tufans do not appear in the Chinese historical record before the 7th century, and on the other, the Yuan annals explain that Niyuewu invaded Yongning and chased the Tufans thirty-one generations before the Mongol invasion, in other words, sometime in the 7th century A.D.¹⁴

Nevertheless, northern Yunnan and in particular Yongning was most likely invaded c. 24 A.D. This date indeed concurs with one of the most destructive periods of Chinese history, the decades of the usurper Wang Mang. Widespread foreign and civil wars were then causing massive movements of population as thousands of garrisoned soldiers and peasants fled before the shrinking western frontier. What is today Sichuan was at the epicenter of the catastrophe. And the archaeological record confirms that these events were felt in what is now northwest Yunnan/ southwest Sichuan. For after 24 A.D., the thousand year old tomb building culture of the Zuo was suddenly replaced by the earth graves culture of the Kunming and Sui tribes, and, in the north east, by the tomb building culture of the Han.¹⁵ In other words, Yongning (i.e. northwest Yunnan) was conquered in

24 A.D. not by the Mo-so and their chief Niyuewu, but by the Kunming and Sui from what is today Dali.¹⁶

The Bai Lang tribes theory

The Bai Lang (White Wolves) and 'hundreds of other tribes' first appear in the Chinese records when they submit to the Eastern Han circa 70 A.D. This event occasioned the composition of the *Bai Lang Songs* (a poem eulogizing the emperor) that was recorded in Chinese translation and in a transcription of the original language using Chinese characters. Chinese linguists (among whom Naxi linguist Fang Guoyu) have identified the language of the *Songs* as a Tibeto-Burman language related to Naxi but also to Yi, Lisu and Pumi. According to W.S. Coblin and David Bradley, Bai Lang seems a (now dead) Xifan language, either Qiang or northeast Tibeto-Burman.¹⁷

The linguistic correspondences between Bai Lang and Naxi certainly suggest that the Naxi have some relationship to the Bai Lang. The *NJS*, therefore, explains that the Bai Lang lived in the old Zuo territories alongside the Maoniui and among whom they had migrated because they were attracted by the propitious conditions which the Han conquest had brought to northwest Yunnan.¹⁸ The *Songs*, in fact, conjure up the Bai Lang as refugees. They relate that they came to make their submission to the emperor on foot, carrying their children and old people on their backs, and that they had lived in awful conditions, at high altitude in places where food was difficult to obtain.¹⁹

Guo Dalie resolves the Maoniui/Bai Lang question with usual diplomacy, by suggesting that the Bai Lang were a branch of the Maoniui.²⁰ Other scholars, like archaeologist Zhang Zengqi, on the other hand, argue that the Bai Lang were the true ancestors of the Naxi and that the Maoniui and the Bai Lang ought not to be confused. According to Zhang, since the Bai Lang spoke a language close to Naxi, and since they lived in the old Zuo region, they, and not the Maoniui, were responsible for the individual slab-tomb culture which distinguished the old Zuo territories from the Kunming and the Qiong.²¹

Such arguments leave a lot unanswered, however, because the Bai Lang enter Chinese history a least two decades *after* the end of the Zuo – since they submitted to the Han emperor in the period Yongping (58-75 A.D.) and the Zuo ended circa 24 A.D. What is more, the Han records confirm that the Bai Lang came from regions ‘beyond Wen Shan’ (beyond the Zuo) and ‘where the calendar had not been established’, in other words, territories which had not been previously occupied by the Han.²² This is not to say that the Naxi nationality cannot claim an origin in the Bai Lang tribes, but that the Bai Lang may not be counted among the Zuo. Wen Shan, for its part, was the territory of the Ran and Meng tribes.²³

Having thus settled the problems of the early history of the Naxi nationality, we may now move onto the issues concerning the history of the Mo-so tribe itself.

On the origins of the Mo-so tribe

The *NJS* explains that the Mo-so first appear in the historical record during the 3rd century A.D. under the name Mo-sha. The Mo-sha were then settled in Yanyuan where they exploited salt mines. In 225 A.D., they ‘rebelled’ against the kingdom of Shu with the rest of the Southern tribes (including the Maoniu) and were consequently defeated by Zhuge Liang who killed their chief and appropriated their mines. Nothing more is heard of the Mo-sha after this date, until the Tang dynasty, when the Chinese records speak of Mo-so tribes dwelling beyond Judian and in southwest Sichuan, of Mo tribes in the valleys of the Jinshajiang, and of a Yue-xi also called Mo-so Zhao somewhere in the vicinity of Dali – one of six rival kingdoms of Western Yunnan and the last to be absorbed by Nanzhao in the mid-7th century. Rock believed that the Mo-so Zhao was actually Lijiang, but contemporary historians (Chinese and Western) agree that the Mo-so Zhao was centered upon present day Bingchuan, whilst various Mo-so tribes also dwelt north, in the region of Yongsheng (in areas called Yaozhou and Songwai).²⁴

In fact, the relationship between the Tang dynasty Mo-so and the people of Yongning and Lijiang basin is rather unclear, since the name Mo-so is never directly associated with either places until the Yuan period. Guo Dalie therefore

proposes that the Mo-so were split into two branches, one branch was that of the Yue-xi/Mo-so Zhao of Bingchuan which was headed by Yu Zeng who fought against Nanzhao, and the other was the Lijiang branch headed by the Mu ancestor Yang-yin Du-gu who fought on behalf of Nanzhao.²⁵

Before we begin exploring this proposition, however, it is worth considering the historical record of Lijiang and Yongning, and in particular the record of conquests. For the latter suggests that there are many opportunities for historians to become confused as well as many opportunities for the Naxi and the Mosuo not to claim their ancestry in the Mo-so tribes only.²⁶

109 B.C	Han invasion of the Zuo (<i>Shi Ji</i>).
24 A.D.	End of Zuo culture (archaeological record/tomb culture).
c.70 A.D	Submission of the Bai Lang (<i>Hou Han Shu</i>).
225 A.D	Zhuge Liang defeats the Yunnanese tribal confederacy of the Maoniui which opposes Shu. He kills the chief of the Mo-sha Yi and annexes their mines (<i>San Guo Zhi Yi</i>).
3rd-6th Centuries	Invasion of Yongning and Lijiang by the Western Qiang (<i>Dianxi</i>). ²⁷ Ancestor Meng Cu-cu arrives in Lijiang (<i>Da Yuan yi Tongzhi</i> , Mu Chronicles).
618-624	Tang invasion and occupation of northwest Yunnan including Lijiang and the Jinsha valleys (<i>Jiu Tang Shu</i> and <i>Xin Tang Shu</i>); the Mo-so Yeguzha takes Lijiang from the Pu (<i>Yuan Shi</i>).
c. 630	(31 generations before 1253 Mo-so barbarian Niyuewu moved from Judian to Yongning which he took from the Tibetans (<i>Yuan Shi</i>).
730	The Tibetans occupy Lijiang and northwest Yunnan (Dunhuang Tibetan Annals). ²⁸
748	King of Nanzhao (Meng She Zhao) Kolofeng succeeds Piloko. He has defeated and conquered the other five Zhao, including the Yue-xi Mo-so Zhao whose tribes have been handed over to Nanzhao and dispersed.
755	Nanzhao defects to Tibet (Dehua Stele/ Tang histories).

758	The Tibetans occupy the old Zuo territories (Tang Histories). ²⁹
794	Nanzhao and the Lijiang chief defeat the Tibetans, Nanzhao deports the Mo-so settled beyond Judian and establishes garrisons in this same region (Tang Histories/ <i>Man Shu</i> / Mu Chronicles).
850	Twenty generations before 1253, the He tribes move from Yongning plain and settle in Fengke (<i>Da Yuan yi Tongzhi</i>).
902/906	Nanzhao falls and four years later, so does the Tang dynasty. In northern Yunnan the Pu recover the Lijiang plain (<i>Du Shi Fang Yu Zhi Yao</i>). ³⁰
c. 950 (?) 1054/ 1125	The Mou, or Mo-so arrive in Lijiang and take the land from the Pu (<i>Ming Shi</i> and the Mu Chronicles).
1253	The Mongol invasion, followed by the dismissal and execution of the He chiefs of Yongning and Judian (Yuan history). The Mongols establish the Mou/ Ah (i.e. the Mo-so) as supreme chiefs of the tribes of Lijiang, Judian, Weixi, and Yongning.
1381	Ming conquest of Yunnan. The emperor confirms the hereditary rule of the Mu in Lijiang and the Ah (Ngue) in Yongning and shifts Yongning out of the Lijiang chiefs' administration (<i>Ming Shi</i>).
1406	Yongning is established as a native prefecture <i>fu</i> (Records of Yongbei [Yongsheng]).
1659	The Manchu invade Yunnan.
1723	The Qing emperor annexes Lijiang.

This chronology also corroborates what Bradley has to say of Naxi language, that it is Qiangic *and* transitional with Burmic *and* related to Loloish.³¹ We shall see below that Naxi and Mosuo mythologies likewise suggest that the ancestors of the Naxi nationality did not all come from the same place at the same time.

Stories of migration according to Mosuo and Naxi mythology

If according to their respective mythologies, the first Naxi and Mosuo ancestors came from the north, they do not seem to have done so under the same

circumstances. What the Daba relates of the Mosuo's arrival in Labei echoes the *Bai Lang Songs*:

We the Nassonami (*Na* sons and daughters) live here
 We did not come here blown by the winds
 We came here on our own feet.
 In the past, we lived in deep virgin forests,
 Then torrential rains hit at us.
 The thunder and the lightning urged us on
 And it was in this way that we came so far away.³²
 The adults carrying the small children,
 Holding each other by the hand, we walked on.
 We walked to Crow Mountain
 We heard the call of the crows
 It was not a good omen
 We did not dare to stop there
 We arrived in Akua
 The mountains were high and people were so cold
 Nothing could grow there.
 Again, facing south, we walked.
 We walked to a three way crossing in the road
 We chose the path going south.
 When we arrived at the Jinshajiang,
 We could not live there in the sand

Upon which the Na ancestors tried out each side of the mountain, east, west and south and finally settled where they now are ...

We walked to the place where we now live
 The rooster crowed
 The trees germinated.
 We stopped here.
 The mountain gods willed us to live here
 The mountain gods protect us.³³

By contrast, Naxi mythology relates Cosseilee'ee's glorious descent from Heaven, and how Cosseilee'ee and Coheibubami erected a victory stake when they arrived on earth. On a more realistic note, the Dongba manuscripts say that their ancestors lived in caves, that they took food from the Pu, and eventually took the Pu's land and the Pu took refuge into the hills.³⁴ Indeed, the name of the Mu's

capital is Baisha, a Chinese rendition of the Naxi Boashi which means 'the place where the Boa (Pu/Pumi) died.'

Chinese scholars believe that the Naxi took Lijiang from the Pu during the Tang dynasty at the time of the ancestor Yegunian (618) – for the Yuan annals tell that the chief Mai Liang (who in the Chronicles is given as either Mou-bao Ah-cong's son or his son-in-law) was the twenty-third generation descendant from Yeguzha who conquered Santan, where the Puxie man had dwelt.³⁵ Counting twenty years per generation, Yeguzha would have lived circa 790 A.D., taking twenty-two years per generation circa 748 A.D., and counting twenty-five years per generation as Chinese scholars do, circa 678 A.D. We shall come back to Yeguzha's story because, as we have seen in previous chapters, the 17th century chief Mu Yao believed that his ancestors had arrived in Lijiang during the Song period, and so did the compilers of the Ming History.³⁶ As for the Dongba's perspective on the Pu, Rock writes:

In a book of the Dto na k'ö ceremony called T'u lü it speaks of the P'u as follows (...) Translated, this reads: Before the birds were, the trees had been born, before the Dzi (Na-khi are meant) had settled, the P'u were settled; where the P'u were settled it was unnecessary to look for food (elsewhere), neither did the birds have to look for a roost. In another manuscript called O-yu-ngv-szi-yi of the Zhi-mä funeral ceremony it relates that the P'u ate raw meat and that they also ate their dead. That the P'u must have been a very primitive people is borne out by the present living of their descendants in Muli [Rock means the Pumi]... I have observed them eating carrion honey combed by maggots of the thickness and size of a man's finger.³⁷

The Naxi manuscripts suggest that the Pu once paid tribute to the 'Naxi' (as Leach proposed was the case in nearby Burma between Kachins and plain dwellers) or even that the 'Naxi' raided the Pu for their food. Translated to the historical record, the manuscript tradition suggests that, before the Mo-so took Lijiang from the Pu, they lived within raiding distance. As for the Pu eating their dead, it is not altogether impossible. Such funerary practices have been reported in New Guinea and Australia. According to William Rockhill, European travelers of the 13th and

14th centuries commented that the Tibetans 'devour the bodies of their dead parents' but, as Rockhill also warns: 'Charges of cannibalism against a remote people only known to the informants of the writer of a narrative by hearsay are not uncommon... It is probably the result of a jumbled up account of the true method of disposing of the dead.'³⁸ If the Pu did not actually eat their dead, then the passage above may indicate that they ate fish whilst those who were looking on practiced water burial. This suggestion is based on the fact that many modern Mosuo do not eat fish because, they explain, *eating fish is like eating corpses* discarded in rivers during water burial. Yet, all Mosuo practice cremation. When asked to explain what they mean by fearing to eat corpses, they answer that a long time ago, people did practice water burial and that even today some of the Yongning people dispose of the ashes of the dead in Lake Lugu. They also explain that the fish eating Mosuo among them have been 'influenced by the Han' or by 'the Naxi'.

That the original people of northwest Yunnan should have been fish eaters makes sense. We know from Marco Polo's comments on the Karajang (people of Yachi, either present day Dali or Kunming) that fishing was a prized occupation of the Yunnanese in the 13th century.³⁹ Today, fishing remains central to the local economy at Erhai Lake and to the diet of the Bai people. And that some people in Yongning once practiced water burial is attested by the Daba tradition which relates that cremation became universal among the Nari (Mosuo), after it replaced the ground burial of the Han and the water burial of the Tibetans.

A long time ago, a Na (Mosuo/Black) woman gave birth to three sons. The father of the oldest was Tibetan, that of the middle son was Han and that of the youngest was a Na. When the mother died, the three sons argued about how they should conduct the funeral rites. The oldest said that the mother should be given a water burial, the middle one that she should be given a ground burial and the third that she should be cremated.

While they were arguing, a small bee came buzzing about them. 'What are you arguing about? I can help you find a solution.' It said. But the oldest boy exclaimed: 'How dare a small insect interfere in the business of people? I will kill you!' And the boy caught the bee and

chopped it in half. The head of the bee kept flying but its body dropped to the bottom of the sea (lake). The bee, however, had been sent by Heaven who was now beginning to worry and sent an old white bearded grand-father to see what was going on.⁴⁰

The old man immediately smelt the blood of the bee and became angry. When he arrived at the brothers' house, he saw the blood on the door step and said: 'Whose blood is this?' To which the older brother replied: 'It's the blood of a ghost', but the old man did not believe him and replied: 'This is not the blood of a ghost, it is the blood of a bee. Where did you throw the body?' The oldest son tried to hide but the youngest who could not tell lies explained to the old man what had happened.

When he heard the story, the old man asked the boys to go look for the bee's body and bring it back, but only the youngest made any effort and finally brought back the two parts of the bee. The bee then buzzed around complaining about the way it looked without a tail and just a head but the old man comforted it and with a gold thread and a silver needle, stitched it back together. Now, the bee was prettier than ever and it was really happy.

Afterwards, the old man sent the bee back to Heaven to get his orders and when the bee returned, it told the boys that they should cremate the mother, like the youngest son had said. From this time on, the Na (Mosuo) have cremated their dead.⁴¹

In a similar vein, Naxi tradition in Eya tells that there were once four sons: a Naxi, a Tibetan, a Han and a Pumi, who each had an idea of how to perform their parents' funeral (note by contrast, the matrilineal bend of the Mosuo story). The Naxi cremated their internal organs, the Tibetan took their arms and legs and threw them in the river *for the fish to eat*, the Pumi took their heads, placed them on a tree and let the birds eat them, and the Han buried what was left of their remains.⁴²

Cremation probably became a universal practice in northern Yunnan under Mongol influence. The archaeological record for its part shows that cremation (funerary urns containing cremated remains) appears progressively in Lijiang beginning in the Tang and Song period.⁴³ As for the historical record, it is written in the *Man Shu* that the Nanzhao Wuman (the Black tribes) cremated their dead and the Baiman (the Whites) buried theirs like the Han.⁴⁴ In other words, historically speaking, cremation is specifically attached to the Black (Wuman/Na) and Mongols. From all of this, it may be that the authors of the manuscripts who

described the Pu eating their dead were themselves Tibetans who practiced water burial.

Of course, we need to consider the possibility that the ancestors of the Naxi and Mosuo had different funeral rites not solely on the basis of their belonging to different ethnic categories – Tibetan, Bai, Lolo, Han, and so forth – but because of social stratification. After all, even among the Tibetans, water burial is the prerogative of the poor whilst cremation is that of the lamas.⁴⁵ In the Nanzhao, the Blacks cremated their dead and they were the dominant class, and the Whites buried theirs and were of lower rank. According to Eberhard, however, ethnicity was itself a basis for social stratification – what he calls ‘superstratification’.⁴⁶ This seems confirmed by the *Man Shu* which relates that the Black and White tribes did not speak the same language. The Yuan record likewise appears to distinguish tribal/ethnic groups rather than classes of people when it speaks of Mo-so, Lolo and Lisu.⁴⁷ The Lolo tribes, we are told, had shaman chiefs as had been characteristic of the Nanzhao.⁴⁸ By contrast, the Mo-so had no shamans but their chiefs slaughtered animals and invited many guests, hence we can suspect that the Mo-so held great feasts or ‘potlatch’.⁴⁹ These great feasts played a significant role in the institution of chiefdom among Tibeto-Burman speakers such as the Nagas and the Kachins.⁵⁰ According to the *Prefectural Records of Yongsheng* (Yongbei), Lolo tribes – who had been vassals of Nanzhao – lived at Lake Lugu (that is, where the lake actually is) until the Mongols pacified the region in 1272, and the chief Lolo chief Pu De submitted to Kublai.⁵¹ In fact, the chief who submitted to Kublai was called He Zi, not Pu De, whilst Pude Geji submitted to the Ming emperor. But it is interesting that the writer of the records does not class Pude as a Mo-so.

Hence myths, the historical record, and archaeology confirm that the ‘early’ history of northwest Yunnan is both complex and obscure, typified by conquest and migration, and that even at the time of the Mongol invasion when, according to Mu Gong, the various tribes had recognized Mou-bao Ah-cong’s genius and willingly submitted to unification, the ethnic scene was not homogenous. The

details above, however, not only confirm that the Naxi and Mosuo find their ancestors amongst Tibetans, Tibeto-Burman speakers and Sinicized people but give us a reasonable idea of when these various people moved into the area, and thus confirm the reading which I made of the Mu genealogical Chronicle in Chapter II. We may now take a closer look at the history of the Mo-so tribe and its arrival in Lijiang.

The historical record and the Mo-so tribe

The *NJS* explains that the Mo-so enter the Chinese records, the *San Guo Zhi* (the annals of the Three Kingdoms) in the 3rd century A.D., where they are mentioned as Mo-sha Yi (i.e. Mo-sha barbarians) and in connection with the region of Yanyuan in Sichuan. After which, as we saw above, nothing more is heard about the Mo-sha until they reappear as Mo-so, and in connection with the Mo-so Zhao in the Tang records. The author of the *Man Shu*, Fan Cho, had the following to say about the Yue-xi/ Mo-so Zhao (see map 4.):

Yüe-hsi one Chao. It is also called Mo-so Chao. The tribe inhabits the old Yüe-hsi-chou of Pin-chü, 1 day stage distant from Nang-Ts'ung mountain. There was an unruly clansman, Chang Hsun-ch'iu....

He was a Pai Man (White Man). During the Chêng-yüan period (785-804 A.D.), he committed adultery with the wife of Po Ch'ung, lord of the Chao. Thereupon he secretly murdered Po Ch'ung. The Chieh-tu of Chien-nan who was patrolling the frontier, on arriving at Yao-chou, summoned (Chang) Hsun-ch'iu and flogged him to death. Then he handed over the various tribes, together with the land, and united them with Nan-chao.⁵² Yü-tsêng, son of Po Ch'ung's elder brother, took off his family and followers and fled, (taking with him) the descended To-ch'iao.⁵³ ...

To the northeast, he crossed the Lu, and made his (new) domain at Lung-k'a-shan, 120 li square. On all sides, he was surrounded by stone cliffs. The land as a whole was called Shang-shê. Yü-tseng's tribe was called Yang-to. They lived north-east of the river (ho). Afterwards, Mêng Kuei-i shut off Lu-ch'êng (the city of the Lu), and pressed hard on Yü-tsêng. Twice he fought him and twice he was defeated. His eldest son Ko-lo-fêng, volunteered to lead the troops. So he attacked and

destroyed Yang-to [Yu Zeng's tribe]. Yü-tsêng threw himself in the Lu-shui and died. Several days passed before they recovered his corpse. At the same time they got the To-ch'iao.'⁵⁴

And this to say about the Mo tribes.

Mo Man. They are a tribal clan of the Wu Man (Black Man). Above and below T'ieh-ch'iao (Iron Bridge [also Judian]), as far as Ta p'ò. Hsiao-p'ò (Great and Little P'ò), San-t'an-lan [Lijiang], K'un-ch'ih (Lake of K'un) [Kunming] and other ch'uan (river valleys) -- all are places where they live. The land abounds in cattle and sheep. Every family has a flock of sheep. Throughout their lives they never wash their hands or faces. Men and women all wear sheep-skins. Their custom is to like drinking liquor, and singing and dancing. This tribe was originally the common people of the tribes of Yao-chou. When Nan-chao suddenly attacked and destroyed T'ieh-ch'iao [794] and the various cities of K'un-ch'ih etc., whenever they took prisoners a full ten thousand households, they would divide them up and place them under the control of both sides ... of K'un ch'uan and the old land of the Western Ts'uan.⁵⁵

As for the Mo-so man, all Fan Cho wrote is that they lived beyond Tie Qiao and the Shi barbarians (i.e. beyond Judian) and that they intermarried with both the Nanzhao and the Yue-xi Zhao.⁵⁶ Other records also speak of the Mo and the So as two tribes.⁵⁷

The names Mo-sha, Mo-so and Mo-so Zhao in the written record

Chinese scholars agree that the names Mo-sha, Mo-so, Mo-xie, Mo and Mo-so Zhao are all related and that all relate to the ethnic genealogy of the Naxi nationality and the Mosuo people. They point out that Mo-so has no inherent meaning in Chinese which suggests that it is derived from an indigenous word whilst 'so', 'xie', and 'sha' are variations of transliteration.

Interestingly, contemporary Naxi and Mosuo make no claims to either Mo-sha, Mo-xie, or Mo-so. The Naxi take offense at being called Mosuo, and the Mosuo request this name in order to distinguish themselves from the Naxi. The name Mo-so does not occur in the Dongba manuscripts or in the Daba corpus. The

Naxi and the Mosuo call themselves Na (Naxi, Nahi, Nari) and otherwise call each other ‘people of such and such place’, as for example Lüxi – people of Lü (Yongning).⁵⁸ But ‘Mo-so’ does figure prominently in the Mu genealogy where it announces the last of four periods before the Mongol invasion – the Mo-so Zhao of the Mou chiefs which had become so problematic to Mu Gong in 1545 that he removed it altogether from his genealogy.

As we saw, in Chapter II, however, the other strange thing about Mu Gong’s Mo-so Zhao, and in fact not only the Mo-so Zhao but the other three Zhao, is that these ‘kingdoms’ do not correspond to historic chronology. The Yue-sui, Zuo-guo, Yue-xi and Mo-so Zhao all antedate the periods which Mu Gong attributes to them. And in particular, if we are to believe Fan Cho – or at least what can be ascertained from Fan Cho’s record – the Yue-xi and Mo-so Zhao, which succeed each other in the Mu genealogy, should be one Zhao, and ought to have been defunct by the mid-8th century.⁵⁹ So what are the four Zhao of the Mu Chronicle about? The simplest and most cautious answer here is that Mu Gong was doing his best to attach his genealogy to the history of the place which his family had conquered. This, however, needs to be understood in politico-ritual terms: the Mu genealogy being a divine genealogy must encompass and include all the ancestors of the place. Hence Mu Gong seeks his ancestry in the Yue-sui and Zuo-guo, the tribes described by Sima Qian over a thousand years before Mu Gong’s own ancestors arrived in Lijiang.

Setting aside the Mu Chronicle and coming back to the whereabouts of the name Mo-so in the other records, we come to the name Mo-sha which Chinese scholars believe was eventually replaced by Mo-so. As we saw in Chapter II, although neither *so* nor *sha* have any meaning in Chinese, *sha* indicates matrilineal descent or in-law status in Tibetan.⁶⁰ Hence, according to Stein, the Mu-sha Ga of the region of Songzhou were Ga people who married into the Mu family.⁶¹ And in the same vein, ‘king Khri-lde gcug-brtan obtains from his wife Jan-mo Khri-bcun (originally from Jan – Lijiang) a son called Jan-sha⁶² IHa-dbon (uterine nephew of Jan/people of Lijiang).’⁶³ The Naxi themselves, in fact, speak of Mali Masa – i.e.

Muli Mosuo. Could it be that the name Mo-so means Celestial on the mother's side? Or was the Yue-xi also known as Mo-so Zhao because its kings intermarried with the Mo-so? In other words, were the Yue-xi also known as Mo-so Zhao because they were Mo sons-in-law?

Interestingly, two documents written respectively in 880 A.D. and in 982 A.D. by Persian traders mention the names Musha and Musa, kingdoms of the Tibetan frontier typified by tall, fortified towers, and enemies of Nanzhao.⁶⁴ These details, of course, do not solve the problem of wherefrom the name Mo-so originates, but they confirm the lack of clarity in the dyad Yue-xi/Mo-so Zhao, as well as the opposition between Mo-so and Nanzhao and therefore, between Mo-so and the tribes of Lijiang, the Yang, La, Xi, Pu, etc. who were under Nanzhao control until the destruction of the Meng family at the beginning of the 10th century.

The Mo tribes, and the Mo-so and Yue-xi Zhao

As we saw above, the *Man Shu* relates that there were many Mo tribes living in Lijiang as well as Mo-so tribes living beyond Judian. And according to the *NJS*, these were the same people. In fact, the *NJS* argues that Fan Cho's commentary is *proof* that the Mo-so had already settled in the region of Yanyuan and Yongsheng and the valleys of the Yangzi (Jinshajiang) by the mid-7th century.⁶⁵ Chinese scholars may be right, but two things make this conclusion questionable: the first is that Fan Cho, the author of the *Man Shu*, does treat the Mo-so and Mo tribes as distinct peoples, and the other is that he gives the Yue-xi/Mo-so Zhao as White barbarians and the Mo as Black.

Now, scholars need to be very cautious when approaching the historical record. For there is untold potential for error and confusion. Indeed, the record is made especially unintelligible by the practice of referring to various groups by the name of a dominant group, or by referring to groups by the name of a previous and illustrious ancestor, and by referring to groups according to the names established by the original occupants of a given territory. According to Stein, for example, the name Hor was first given to the Uygurs around 800 A.D., but in the 13th century,

it was taken over by the Mongols of Genghis Khan when they conquered Kham.⁶⁶ In a similar vein, according to Maung Htin, Chinese chronicles referred to the Burmese as Pyu until the 13th century, although the Pyu Kingdom had been destroyed by Nanzhao in the mid 9th century.⁶⁷ Then, there is the problem that much of the written record was compiled a long time after the fact, sometimes centuries later on the basis of original documents or oral histories which were likely to be misunderstood or distorted. Where Yunnan is concerned, there is also a specific problem with establishing geography. For the names of places are also associated with various ancient tribes which apparently shifted territories as warfare and opportunity permitted, and the names of cities and even rivers are also duplicated. Thus, at various periods, the name Kunming is found in several places at once, not only in Yunnan but also in Sichuan. The name Li Shui (which is also identified as Mo-sojiang) can speak for the Jinshajiang as well as for Mekong.⁶⁸ In addition, people and places may be known by several names depending on whose point of view chroniclers are espousing. Until its full integration into the Chinese empire under the Mongols and especially the Ming, Yunnan was very much part of Indian influenced Southeast Asia, and many of the names found even in the Chinese record are actually transcriptions of Sanskritized names transposed from India to Burma and Yunnan. Yunnan being in the north of this 'new India' is therefore given as Gandahar in the records of Burma, which Paul Pelliot believes explains the name Karajang by which Kublai called the Black tribes of Yunnan.⁶⁹

Last, but not least, there is the problem of retracing the genealogy of a people on the basis of homophonic correspondence. This problem is made especially difficult by the monosyllabic and bisyllabic nature of Chinese language. Many of the names which we encounter in the written record are Chinese transliterations and therefore approximations of native words. And where the Mo-so are concerned, the record confronts historians with an over-abundance of *M-initialed* names: Meng, Mo, Mai, Mi, Mu, Ma are found not only in Yunnan but also in Sichuan and Tibet. According to Rolf Stein, *M-initialed* clan names have long been associated with the Qiang for whom they mean things like 'heaven' or

(ancestral) 'monkey', or even 'person'.⁷⁰ Thus, more than 2000 years ago, the people of Dian were already known as Mi-mo and they were Meng tribes north of Zuo.⁷¹ The Cuan family who dominated Yunnan before the foundation of the Meng She Zhao (Nanzhao) under Meng Xinuluo, also claimed to be issued from a Mi clan.⁷² And the family name Meng, as in Meng She Zhao and Meng Xinuluo, is likewise a Chinese rendition of an original *M-initialed* word which means celestial. The same thing in fact goes for the legendary Mee-ssa Cu-cu, the Naxi Celestial Cu-cu, who is given in Chinese historiography as Meng Cu-cu.⁷³ And as we saw in Chapters II and III, there are also correspondences between the Mu family of Lijiang and celestial kingship (the Lijiang chiefs are Mu). Thus, we should be especially aware of the fact that *M-initialed* names are very often associated with kingship and totemic monkeys and very much confuse the issue of which 'Mo' may relate specifically to the Mo-so.

When they establish the genealogy of the Naxi in the old Yue-xi/Mo-so Zhao Chinese scholars work their way back through a number of records beginning with the *Man Shu*. I shall now review this position and try to keep details as clear as possible.

After Bo Chong of the Yue-xi Zhao was murdered c.750 and his tribes were handed over to Nanzhao, his fraternal nephew Yu Zeng fled to Shuangshe (present-day Yanbian). Shuangshe, however, was also the name of a rebel chief of the region of Songwai (Yongsheng) who had been defeated by the Tang in 648.⁷⁴ In 648, after Shuangshe's demise, the Tang had invested the chiefs Meng and He to govern the Songwai tribes. Meng and He had then unified ten tribes belonging to Weizhou and seven others belonging to Moxian in the northern region of Yaozhou. After which, they had themselves rebelled against the Chinese. Meng and He were in turn defeated in 654⁷⁵ but the Tang subsequently lost the Songwai region to the Tibetans, at the end of the 7th century.⁷⁶

From the events given above, Chinese scholars conclude that in the 7th century, the Mo-so inhabited a territory which stretched from Bingchuan to Yongsheng, which puts them in the geographic proximity of Yaozhou, although not actually in

Yaozhou, and thus makes sense of Fan Cho's explanation that the Mo were originally from Yaozhou. Perhaps Chinese scholars are correct, but Fan Cho nowhere suggests that the Mo tribes, the common people who had been deported from Yaozhou by the Nanzhao were in charge of Lijiang in 863.

The ethnic history of the Sino-Tibetan borderland is undoubtedly complicated by the fact that the people of this frontier were for centuries territorially and politically mobile. In the Nanzhao period, the various tribes of Yunnan were scattered amongst various groups and moved across vast territories, migrating to different places for all sorts of reasons. The Nanzhao conducted numerous deportations, and warfare caused tribes to move and then regroup in different places where they formed new alliances. But historical reconstruction is also complicated by the fact that the record is particularly unclear and chronology often inaccurate. For example, Fan Cho relates that Nanzhao defeated Yu Zeng in the period between 785-804, but according to the famous Nanzhao Stele (*Nanzhao Dehua Shi*) which is itself dated 766, the Nanzhao king Kolofeng succeeded his father Piloko (also known as Meng Guiyi) in 748 and he had already defeated Yu Zeng.⁷⁷ Thus, when we read of Mo tribes living in Judian, Santan, etc. all the way to Kunchi (present day Kunming), we should keep in mind that Fan Cho compiled the *Man Shu* in 863, over a century after the defeat of the Yue-xi Zhao, and seventy years or so after Nanzhao defeated the Tibetan at Tie Qiao (Judian) and allegedly deported the various tribes to places all over 'the old land of the Western Ts'uan'.

Nevertheless, taking all this into account, the *Man Shu* gives us no reason to place the Mo-so in Lijiang basin in the Tang dynasty. Fan Cho associates the name Mo-so with the Yue-xi Zhao, Bo Chong, Yu Zeng, Bingchuan, and Yongsheng. All these were enemies of Nanzhao until 748, and all of them are outside Lijiang. The *Man Shu* also associates the name Mo-so with people who live beyond Judian in Tibetan country. In 794, the Nanzhao rebelled against Tibet, and as the *Mu Chronicle* relates, they were defeated with the help of the Lijiang chief. According to Fan Cho, the Nanzhao then deported the Mo-so and other

peoples (among them the Shi, and Shun) as far as Kunchi (Kunming) and established garrisons in their place.⁷⁸ The *Jiu Tang Shu* (Old Tang History) would confirm that the Mo-so were not yet in Lijiang at this period and that they were allied to the Tibetans, for it relates that in 802, a thousand Mo-xie families in the dependence of the Tibetan held city of Kunming in Sichuan made their submission to the Chinese Emperor.⁷⁹ Importantly, it appears that Chinese scholars in late Imperial times also believed that the Mo-so were not in Lijiang basin in Nanzhao times. For example, the 19th century *Dianxi* says that Lijiang became the Circuit of Lijiang (*Lijiang Lu*) during the Yuan dynasty, and that during the Han, Sui and Tang dynasties, it was the western border of the Yue-sui Jun – to the north of which lived the Mo-so in the Yue-xi Zhao.⁸⁰

In fact, as I mentioned above, contemporary Naxi historians do not believe that the Lijiang Mu house is descended from the Yue-xi, Mo-so Zhao. Rather, Guo Dalie proposes that the Mo-so tribes must have made up two branches. The first branch was Yu Zeng's who fought Nanzhao, and the second was Yang Gu's (Yang-yin Du-gu) who figures in the genealogy of the Lijiang chiefs, because he lived in Lijiang and fought on behalf on Nanzhao.⁸¹ On the other hand, the name Yang is also associated with Yu Zeng since his own tribe was also called Yang-to, and we know that there were Yang tribes among the various Songwaiman.⁸² But then again, Yang is a common clan name found not only all over China but all along the Sino-Tibetan borderland as well as Yunnan, and we do not know what Yang-to stood for.⁸³ And yet again, the *Man Shu* and other Tang annals make the Mo a tribe of Wuman, and the Yunnanese Yang a clan of Baiman.⁸⁴

Guo arrives at the hypothesis that the Mo-so had split into two branches by 750 on the basis of what the *Yuan Shi Dili Zhi* [Yuan History, compiled in the 14th century] has to say regarding Lijiang and its Mo-so chief, Mai Liang whom it also gives as the twenty-third generation from Yeguzha. According to this record, 'the Puxie man lived there [in Santan, i.e. Lijiang], afterwards the Mo-so man Yeguzha conquered the land by force and held it'.⁸⁵ By which is meant, as Guo also notes, Yeguzha's descendants. The same record then explains that the chief of Yongning

– He Zi – was a Mo-so man, the thirty-first descendant from Niyuewu, and that the He people of Baoshan or Fengke were likewise Mo-so whose ancestors had come from Loutou (present day Yongning) twenty generations before the Mongol invasion.⁸⁶ According to the *Da Yuan Yi Tongzhi*, He Zi claimed that his ancestor Niyuewu was the eighth generation descendant from Meng Cu-cu who for his part had settled in Judian. And indeed, the 13th century chiefs of Judian were also named He: He Die and He Shi.⁸⁷ Since Meng Cu-cu figures in the Mu genealogy (he is the first legendary ancestor Mee-ssa Cu-cu) Guo concludes that the chiefs of Lijiang, Baoshan, Yongning, and Judian were all Mo-so and that all were descended from the original chief Meng Cu-cu.⁸⁸ But if this sounds reasonable, a substantial problem with Guo's conclusion lies with the chief Mu Yao's assertion that his ancestors arrived in Lijiang thirty-two generations before 1648, that is between 944 and 1008 A.D. a date which, in the first Chronicle, corresponds to the first ancestor with the double Mou syllable name (Mou-ju Mou-xi, 998-1020). For why would Mu Yao seek his founding ancestor in the Song period if he were descended from the Jang who settled Satham perhaps even before the 5th century? And why would Mee-ssa Cu-cu, the ancestor claimed by He Zi, He Die and He Shi figure as a legendary ancestor rather than a historic ancestor in the Mu genealogy?

Let's go back to the fact that when the Yuan record speaks of Yeguzha taking the land from the Pu, it is speaking of Yeguzha's *descendants*, among whom figures Mai Zhong who met Kublai in 1253. Mai Zhong who was the twenty-third descendant from Yeguzha. Now, it is well worth questioning the current reading Chinese scholars make of this text. All scholars agree that according to the *Yuan History*, the Mo-so (descendants of) Yeguzha invaded the Lijiang plain and took it from the Pu – whilst according to Mu Gong, the Mu's first historical ancestor was Yegunian 爺古年 not Yeguzha 爺古乍 – hence, Guo Dalie explains that *zha 乍* is an error.⁸⁹ But as we saw in Chapter II, in the Mu genealogy, Yegunian breaks the patronymic chain and is such a dubious character that his descendants admitted knowing nothing about him.⁹⁰ So that, if there is an error, it is likely to be Mu Gong's, rather than the *Yuan History*'s.

Now, when it is not attached to the name Yegu, the character *zha* 乍 is an adverb and it means ‘at first’ or ‘suddenly’. So that, if we were not to take for granted that the Mo-so man who conquered Lijiang had a three syllable name *à la* Chinese but assumed that he had a two syllable name *à la* Yunnanese as did He Shi, He Die, Yu Zeng, Mai Liang, etc., the sentence ‘*Puxie man suo ju, qi hou Moso man Yeguzha duo er you zhi*’ would read ‘*Puxie man suo ju, qi hou Moso man Yegu zha duo er you zhi*’ – in other words, ‘the Pu lived there, until the Mo-so barbarian Yegu *suddenly* conquered the land and held it’. In which case, Yegu may be none other than Yang Gu – i.e. Yang-yin Du-gu – the ‘son’ of Qiu Yang who allegedly lived between 740 and 751, and therefore twenty-three generations before Mai Zhong and the Mongols. And as we saw, Yang Gu’s own dates vary. Mu Gong places him either at the time of Nanzhao’s defeat of the Yue-xi/Mo-so Zhao (according to the first Chronicle), or when Nanzhao defected to Tibet (according to Yang Shen in the second Chronicle). But that Mai Zhong should have given Yegu (Yang Gu) as his original ancestor fits in with the claims made by Mu Gong in 1516 that the royal line begins with the Ye clan.

Also according to the Yuan records, the ancestor Niyuewu who conquered Yongning and chased the Tufans thirty-one generations before He Zi submitted to Kublai, was himself the eighth descendant from Meng Cu-cu who for his part lived in Judian.⁹¹ This information puts Cu-cu around 450 A.D. According to the much more recent *Lijiang Prefectural Records*, however, Cu-cu would have conquered Lijiang during the Song dynasty.⁹² So again, this is only possible if we understand that Cu-cu here means Cu-cu’s descendants.

Now, as I argued above, Mai Zhong was not a descendant of Cu-cu, but of Yang Gu and only through marriage, and it seems to me that the best possible answer here is to count Meng Cu-cu as a celestial ancestor transferred to Mai Liang’s genealogy by the Yang themselves. In which case, the He chiefs of Yongning, Fengke and Judian were Mo-so because they were related to Mai Zhong through marriage and conquest, and not least, because the compilers of the Yuan and Ming histories called them Mo-so retrospectively.

In fact, the sequence of conquest and marriages which I argued made sense of the Mu genealogy (ref to Chapter II) also resolves the contradictory information gleaned from the Chinese record according to which Yegu took the land from the Pu at the time of Nanzhao, and again in the Song dynasty, whilst the 5th century Cu-cu also took the land from the Pu in the Song. For the record is no longer contradictory if we understand that Mai Zhong was descended from Yang Gu and Meng Cu-cu by virtue of the affinal ties established by sequential conquest – because the marriage of the conqueror to the local princess ensured the transfer of her ancestors to his genealogy.

But if Mai Zhong and the He chiefs were not exactly (patrilineally) descended from Meng Cu-cu, then who were they? So far, historians have been concerned with locating the peregrinations of the name Mo-so through the Chinese historical record. The analysis which I made of the Mu genealogy in Chapter II and the line of argument taken in this chapter imply that the clan names of Lijiang and Yongning are connected to particular events and particular groups. For example, I suggested that the La clan was one of the original Qiang/Jang/Pumi tribes of Lijiang – and indeed although the La chiefs of Zuosuo were allegedly Mo-so, their majority population was not Mo-so (Naxi or Nari) but Xifan (Pumi). Given these contingencies, it is worth seeking the whereabouts of Mosuo and Naxi *clan names* in both the Chinese and Tibetan records and not only the name Mo-so.

The clan names of Yongning and Lijiang certainly suggest interesting historical connections. For example, according to Lamu Gatusa, the people of Labei acknowledge themselves as Co (one of the clans whose own ancestral road was lost). The word Co makes up the first syllable of both the Naxi and the Mosuo first ancestors: respectively, Cosseilee'ee and Codeiliusso. Co in Mosuo means to twist, as in twisting hemp or bamboo fibers for rope making. In other words, Lamu Gatusa explains, the word Co means the same as Zuo, and the Zuo were the first people. And there are other interesting possibilities, because we shall see below that the names He, Hu and Ngue do provide other pieces of the puzzle which is the history of the Naxi Nationality, and the Mosuo People.

On the Ethnic Origins of the He clan

Rock suggested that the ancestors of the Naxi may have had connections to the Fu Guo, a Qiang kingdom adjoining Muli on the Yangzi (see map 6.), and (which the Tibetans called Biu⁹³) on the basis that the Fu made use of the same armor in their funeral ceremonies as the Mosuo and the Naxi.⁹⁴ There is a phonetic correspondence between the He clan and the Fu. The names of the chiefs of Judian, Fengke and Yongning were recorded in the Chinese annals as He but as far as the Mongols were concerned (as opposed to Chinese historiographers), the He chiefs were Hu. For the Mongols had renamed Fengke, Cha-han *Hu-lu-han*, which the Mu later rewrote as *He-lo-ke*.⁹⁵ The distinction between He and Hu may be significant because as we have already seen, the Mosuo also have a clan name Hu. In actual fact, the Mosuo pronounce this name Fu, since [h] and [f] are interchangeable in southern Chinese dialects (whereas northern Yunnanese make [h] into [f], eastern Chinese make [f] into [h]). As for other connections between the Fu Kingdom and the Yongning Hu/Fu, it may be of interest that the road which leads to Seba'anawa, the ancestral land of the Fengke people (He clan) and of the Yongning Hu and Xi clans, stops at a place north of Muli.

Other details also confirm the confusion between Fu and He/Hu, as well as they confuse other issues. For example, the 19th century *Dianxi* relates that the region of Jujing Zhou (Judian) belonged to the Fu and Lu tribe until the Mo-so took it from them in 794 and the land passed to Nanzhao.⁹⁶ But according to the reconstruction which I made above, it was not the Mo-so but the Yang clan who took this region on behalf of Nanzhao. But then again, the *Dianxi* is probably using the name Mo-so retrospectively and implying that the *ancestors* of the Mo-so (and in this precise case the ancestors of the Naxi) took Judian from the Fu and Lu tribes.

Finally, it is worth noting that when recounting the defeat of Judian by the Mo-so under Nanzhao, later Chinese chroniclers substitute the name Pu for Fu. According to Rock's translation of the *Du Shi Fang Yu Zhi Yao*, 'in ancient days [Jüjing zhou] was the land of the Hsi-fan [Pumi]. In the Tang dynasty it was the

Lop'o-chiu-t'an. The P'u and Lu tribes dwelt there. Afterwards, the Mo-so tribe captured their territory by force'⁹⁷

More information relating to the He is to be found on the Yongning side of things, and in this instance, the data seem to connect them to the Pumi. In a recent article, Shih builds a very interesting argument for the Pumi (Xifan) origins of the Yongning ruling house based on the observation that the Pumi enjoyed a special ritual relationship with the Yongning *Tusi*. When the Yongning chief died, a delegation of Pumi would present itself at the official palace and interrogate the succeeding chief and all the surviving family. Shih also writes that the succeeding chief would address the Pumi leader as 'brother'.⁹⁸ In addition to this ritual of succession, Shih discusses a special privilege held by the Pumi called 'spreading the knot' and which entitled them to stage a rebellion if the Chief or any of his officials misbehaved. Spreading the knot allowed the Pumi rebels to search and loot the residence of the offending official or even the chief's palace itself. In case of a lower official, the chief would not interfere. Should his own house be the target of Pumi rebellion, however, the chief was obliged to apologize for his wrongdoing. Shih notes: 'The interesting point of this unusual custom is that, on the one hand, this privilege was exclusive to the Xifan [Pumi] and actions against the Chief's rule from any other ethnic group including the Moso [Mosuo] would be relentlessly suppressed; on the other, the Xifan rebels would voluntarily limit their goal of redressing the injustice or misconduct and never sought to overthrow the chief.'⁹⁹ Shih also quotes from ethnographer Zhou Rucheng who conducted fieldwork in Yongning in 1936 that this ritual was called *Siken* whilst the Pumi family who conducted the interrogation was called He. Explanations for the ritual, meanwhile, were said to rest with the 'meritorious contribution' which the He's ancestors had made to the Yongning chief's family.¹⁰⁰

The participation of this He family at the death and succession rituals of the Yongning chiefs is very much reminiscent of the funeral rites called *Nishike* (the brother mourns his sister) conducted by the people of Labei and which was recorded and documented by Lamu Gatusa when we did fieldwork in 1991. Shih

also notes this similarity between *Siken* and a former traditional Mosuo funeral rite which he gives as *Sike*. 'According to my Mosuo informants, *Sike* was a ritual performed in traditional times exclusively at the death of a woman who used to practice marriage instead of *tisese*.... [when] the natal family of the deceased woman would come to the bereaved household to interrogate her husband and other survivors.'¹⁰¹

In Labei, funeral rites proceed in several sections and over several days, but the *Nishike* cannot take place until the woman's brother has arrived to interrogate her surviving family, so as to ensure that the departed did indeed die of a natural death. *Nishike* ritualizes an antagonistic dialogue between the brother-in-law and his sister's family, and further confirms the superiority of the wife-givers which was established at the time of the wedding ceremony.

Now, Shih writes that among the Mosuo commoners *Sike* was 'reflective of the grudging relationship between wife-givers and wife-taker, the dramatic ritual at the Chief's residence did not have any bearings on woman-exchange. The latter was not performed at the death of a sister or wife. The bereaved succeeding chief did not see the Xifan as his affined but rather, as made clear in his address to them, his brothers... At the ritual in the Chief's residence, the "Xifan troops" were to reassert their blood tie with the Yongning Chief.'¹⁰² For Shih has concluded that the 'meritorious contribution' made to the Yongning chief was 'nothing less than the very first chieftain in the line of succession.'¹⁰³

On the western side of the Yangzi, however, Naxi tradition strongly refutes the idea that the Pumi arrived with the Mongols. The Naxi readily associate the Pumi with the people given as Pu and also Boa in the manuscripts, and the manuscripts are clear: before the Naxi (*dzi*) arrived, the Pu were there. I have also been told by Mosuo informants that the Pumi were in Yongning before any of the other ethnic groups arrived there, including the Mosuo. According to Chinese ethnologist also, in Muli, Pumi oral tradition relates that the first people were Pumi and that Nari magistrates (i.e. Mosuo) came later to administer them.¹⁰⁴ And if indeed the Mosuo chiefs were originally Pumi, it is difficult to explain why the Ngue, a

Mosuo (Nari) clan rather than a Pumi clan should have constituted Mosuo aristocracy. Therefore, rather than proposing that the Pumi's meritorious contribution to the chief's genealogy was a first chief who arrived with the Mongols, I will propose that the Pumi contributed a wife to the conquering Mongol chief who for his part bestowed the family name Ah on his descendants, just as happened in Lijiang. The *Siken*, therefore, *would* commemorate the original marriage, and more than likely the death of this first wife who had transferred her ancestors and with the latter, her people and their territorial rights to the invading Mongols troops. That the name of the Pumi family concerned with *Siken* should be He fits in so well with what I have discussed so far of the history of the region that one hardly dares to believe it.

Shih's discovery of the *Siken* ritual is truly important. For we know from Naxi tradition that the Pumi, the Boa and the Pu are 'the same people'. And if the He family involved in the *Siken* once contributed a wife to the conquering Mongols, it follows that the tribes whose chiefs He Zi, He Die and He Shi submitted to (or were executed by) Kublai in the 13th century were the ancestors of the people who today call themselves Pumi, and therefore, that the He chiefs were not so much Mo-so as they were Pumi, in other words, Pu.

The Pumi's origins in the Pu and He clans would clarify the Qiang-Naxi connections which so preoccupied Rock and which have now long been recognized in Dongba mythology and Naxi linguistics. For Chinese and other scholars have established the Pumi's primary ethnic and linguistic relationship with the Qiang.¹⁰⁵ But what I am suggesting now goes quite a step further, for I am implying that the Pumi's ancestors were the people known to the Tibetans and the Mongols as Jang – the people whose patron warrior god Satham had settled upon the Jade Dragon Mountain a long time ago, and who claimed among their own ancestors Ge-lai-qiu who for his part figures in the Mu genealogy as a legendary ancestor – i.e. a heavenly ancestor whom the rulers of Lijiang had inherited through marriage and their matriline. The Pumi thus provide a crucial clue with which to reconstruct the chronology of succession of northern Yunnan.

c. 5th C

Invasion of Yongning and Lijiang by Meng Cu-cu chief of the Western Qiang (Pumi) whom the Tibetans know as Jang. The spirit of Satham who fought against Gesar in the land of Ling [Kham] descends upon the Jade Dragon Mountain. Lijiang becomes Satham, the land of Jang.

618-624

Tang invasion of Santan [Satham/Lijiang]. The Tang either chase the Tufans [Tibetans] away and with them the Jang. Or they confirm the King of Jang as a vassal. The events of 630 A.D. point to the second scenario (see below).

c. 630

Meng Cu-cu's descendant, the chief Niyuewu [Jang/Qiang/Pumi] moves from Judian to Yongning and chases the Tubo [Tibetans].

730

The Tibetans chase the Chinese from Lijiang, and the Jang [Qiang/Pumi] are confirmed in Satham (Lijiang) as vassals of the Tibetan king.

748

King of Nanzhao Kolofeng succeeds Piloko. He has defeated and conquered the other five Zhao, including the Yue-xi Mo-so Zhao whose tribes have been handed over to Nanzhao and dispersed. There are now Mo tribes in Lijiang and Mo-so tribes beyond Judian, both of which are in Jang territory, and under Tibetan aegis.

755

Nanzhao defects to Tibet and together they defeat the Chinese. In Lijiang, the Jang [Qiang/Pumi] fight the Tang alongside Nanzhao and Tibet. Tibetan control of Lijiang is re-affirmed.

794

Nanzhao defeats the Tibetans and push into Tibetan territory beyond Judian. Yang Gu takes the land of the Pu (Jang/ Pumi) by force. The transfer of territory is consecrated by his marriage to a woman of the defeated La family. Nanzhao King Yimuxun completes this territorial transfer when he makes the Jade Dragon Mountain the northern sacred peak of Nanzhao.

c. 830

He (Pumi) clans move from Yongning plain and settle in Fengke

902

Nanzhao falls. The Pu [He/Jang/Qiang/Pumi] re-conquer Lijiang plain.

1054/ 1125

The Mou or Mo-so tribes take Lijiang plain from the Pu [Pumi], but they do not subdue Judian, Fengke or Yongning. The tribes of northern Yunnan are disunited.

1253

The Mongols conquer Lijiang and Yongning where they leave officers named Ah in charge of local garrisons and administration. The Mongols also depose the He [Pumi] chief of Yongning and execute the He [Pumi] chiefs of Judian who did not submit. In Lijiang, the Mongols marry Ah Liang to a daughter of the Mo-so chief Mai Zhong who submitted. Ah Liang is given jurisdiction over all the tribes of Lijiang, Judian, Weixi, and Yongning. The He tribes of Lijiang and Yongning make their submission to the Lijiang chief Ah Liang. The spirit of Saddo shows itself to the Lijiang chief. Tribal and territorial transfer is completed.

On the origins of the Mou chiefs.

Unfortunately, this reconstruction does not enlighten us any further on the ethnic origins of the Mou chiefs who arrived in Lijiang during the Song dynasty. Now, we know that during the Tang period, Yunnanese politics were above all concerned with the hegemonic ambitions of the Tang and Tibetans whilst the Nanzhao leaned to one side or the other according to the times, perceived threats and opportunities, but the Nanzhao were always more partial to China than to Tibet. In fact, even the conquest of the other five Zhao was initiated by Nanzhao after they had received the approval of the Tang.

From the Tibetan historical record, we also know that between the 7th and 8th centuries, Satham (Lijiang) was conquered by Tibet on several occasions, and that each time, the king of Jang was confirmed as a vassal of the Tibetan court. And if we look at the chronology given above, we see that by contrast, when the Nanzhao defeated the Tibetans, they took Lijiang from the Pu and installed the Yang. Hence, the Jang/Pu and Tibetan politics go together, whilst the Yang go together with Nanzhao. But what about the Mou?

Supposing that the names Mou and Mo-so do go together as Mu Gong would have us believe, we see that the pattern of Mo-so settlement, dispersal and regrouping also points to their attachment to Tibet. The Mo-sha, Mo-xie, Mo-so

Zhao, Mo-so man all dwelt in southern Sichuan and northern Yunnan either in Qiang territories or territories which had at some time been occupied and taken and retaken by the Tibetans. When Nanzhao attacks the Mo-so Zhao, the Mo-so seek refuge in Tibetan territory (Shuangshe and beyond Judian), and when the Tang attack the Tibetans in Judian, the Mo-so are defeated and dispersed. The destiny of the Mo-so tribes is entirely consistent with the political and territorial oppositions that confront not only Tibet and Nanzhao but also Tibet and China, and each time, the Mo-so are on the Tibetan side. Interestingly, even at the time of the Mongol conquest, we see that the Mo-so chiefs of Lijiang emulate the Tibetans and indeed, unlike the He chiefs of Judian and Yongning, readily submit to Kublai. But who were the Mo-so? Were they another group of Qiang? Tibetans? Lolo or Baiman (for the Mo-so Zhao was one of the six kingdoms of Cuan/Yunnan)? Were the Mo-so at the vanguard of Tibetan frontier politics, or were they independent tribes who took the opportunity to grab a new territory after the fall of Nanzhao? And saw yet another opportunity, at the time of the Mongol conquest?

On the Mongol origins of the Naxi nationality

Any discussion of the genealogy of the Naxi nationality and Mosuo people eventually leads to the Mongols. For the Mu chiefs of Lijiang, the Ah chiefs of Yongning and the La chiefs of Zuosuo all claimed to be descended from Mongol officers left by Kublai Khan. Today, the people of Zuosuo and especially the Nari of the eastern regions of Muli are classed as Mongols. And according to Harrell the eastern Nari unlike the people of Yongning and Zuosuo reject the name Mosuo.¹⁰⁶ Also according to Harrell, the Nari's claim to a Mongol ancestry is not novel and well antedates post-1949 Communist ethnic policy.¹⁰⁷ But if, as Harrell also explains, these Mongols ancestors were thoroughly assimilated into Nari, there is no denying the historical connection.¹⁰⁸ We know that the Mongols invaded and left troops behind. We also know that Mongols remained influential in Sichuan and northern Yunnan well into the 15th century. The Mongols, as we have seen in previous chapters, contributed a few cultural items to northern

Yunnan: the Naxi hot pot, a few pictographs, the tents used by Naxi and Mosuo herdsmen, aspects of mythology and ritual in Daba and Dongba lore. And yet, aside from a few vocabulary items, the Mongols made no lasting linguistic impact on the region, and left no genealogical trace beyond the family name Ah. And interestingly so, they did not leave even one personal name to mark their passage. Not even the names of the first officers Kublai had allegedly married to local women have passed to posterity, for aside from Yeye, which as we have seen is not a real name, not one Mongol name appears in the combined genealogies of the Na chiefs of northern Yunnan and southern Sichuan.

Shih, of course, also notes this fact, and points out that there are several villages and places in Sichuan and Yunnan where by contrast to the Nari, people claim to be descended from Mongols and can substantiate this claim.¹⁰⁹ The answer to the puzzle of the Mongol origins of the Na, therefore, may be that the bulk of the troops which Kublai left behind and perhaps even the officers themselves, were not so much Mongols as they came with the Mongols, as Shih suggests. For the Mongols recruited shock troops wherever they passed. And they passed through Sichuan (Xifan territory) and so the historical record mentions the presence of Xifan troops among the tens of thousands that made up Kublai's army. Now, on the grounds that in contemporary northern Yunnan the term Xifan is a derogatory ethnic name given to the Pumi, Shih concludes that the Xifan who came with Kublai were Pumi, as was the original Mosuo chief (ref. above discussion). However, from the perspective of the Chinese historical record, the Xifan are 'western barbarians' and the category includes not only Pumi but also, Qiang and Tibetans, and indeed Mo-so.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, there is also a simple explanation besides matrilineality for the absence of Mongol names from the genealogies of the various Mo-so chiefs. Except for the two genealogies of the Lijiang Mu chiefs, all the genealogies of the Mo-so chiefs begin at the time of imperial investiture, whether by the Ming or Qing emperors. Thus, the Yongning genealogy starts with Pudv Geji, the first chief appointed by the Ming emperor. And whilst it is logical that none begins

with the first Mongol chief, it does not necessarily follow that the first chief on the list should have a Mo-so name rather than a Mongol name. Furthermore, we can suspect that whilst they were still under Mongol administration, the feudal lords of Lijiang were possibly eager to stress their Mongol connections rather than to understate them.

Now, we know beyond doubt that Mongol influence was still going strong in Yunnan in 1381, at the time of the Ming conquest. Yunnan was one of the last Mongol strongholds and there were pockets of Mongol resistance and bloody warfare there until the end of the 14th century. According to Harrell, Mongol rebels even sought refuge in Muli in present day Nari territories after a final defeat in 1398.¹¹¹ Still, given the claims made by all the Mo-so chiefs that they were descended from Mongols, the absence of Mongol names from their genealogies raises some questions, even if those do not necessarily pertain to matrilineality.

In fact, the genealogy of the Lijiang chiefs shows that the Mu purposefully underplayed their Mongol connections, just as, eventually, they would underplay their Mo-so connections (by removing the name Mou from the revised genealogy). In the 1516 Chronicle, Mu Gong sought his family origins in creation mythology. Then, with the ancestor Yegunian, he connected his genealogy to the Tang conquest of Yunnan and therefore to the Chinese dynasty that provided the civilizational model for the Ming. In 1545 he conceded his Mongol origins. But he made his ancestor Yeye a holy man who lived in a cave, and who arrived in Lijiang over a hundred years before Kublai, alone and on torrents of water. In other words, Mu Gong underplayed not so much his Mongol blood as the connections of his patriline to the Mongol *conquest*. And the best explanation here is that in both the 1516 and the 1545 Chronicles, Mu Gong was doing his best to comply with the civilizational and political requirements of the Ming court.

We have no reason to believe that Mu Gong's ancestor Ah-jia Ah-de who was the first chief appointed by the Ming emperor, was any less inclined to understate his Mongol connections. For the Ming did not simply succeed the Yuan, they drove out the Mongols after a long and bloody war, and the first decades of the

new dynasty were especially brutal. Emperor Taizu established his own administration after purging the bureaucracy of more than 70,000 lives. In Yunnan, the Ming conquest made casualties in the hundreds of thousands. Ah-jia Ah-de not only willingly submitted to the conquering Ming troops but he requested of the emperor the family name Mu, whilst the people of Lijiang (at least the influential families) adopted the custom of Chinese surnames. By the mid-15th century, the first Confucian school was established in Lijiang, and by the 16th, the Mu chiefs were themselves accomplished Confucians. Indeed, even under the policy of indirect rule, the Ming pursued a campaign of colonization and Sinicization in the peripheries. The feudal lords of northern Yunnan owed not only their political success but their very survival to their ability to balance local interests against the demands of the Chinese court. Given the enmity between Chinese and Mongols, the Lijiang Mu (beginning with Mu De) had made a wise political choice by stressing the maternal and native aspect of their names and genealogies at the expense of their Mongol patriline.

If we turn to the genealogy of the Yongning overlords, however, we see that the first chief invested by the Ming was called Pudv Geji, and it is the Pudv part of the name as well as the four syllables that produce the impression of a Mo-so name. But in actual fact, Pudv is not a clan name. It is a name designating a ritual faction pertaining to the Sacrifice to Heaven whilst the Sacrifice to Heaven is itself connected with imperial and feudal dominion. Thus, I am very much inclined to conclude that the first Mosuo chief has the name Pudv Geji because he did just as the Lijiang chief Ah-jia Ah-de did: he submitted to the invading Ming, and agreed to the Chinese terms of his investiture, including its ritual terms.

Looking at the rest of their genealogy, we see that the Yongning chiefs retained the name Ah but that the latter was used as a family name in Chinese fashion. By the fourth generation from Geji, the names of the Ah chiefs are all in Chinese style in the official genealogy (Ah Ju, Ah Chao, etc.). Interestingly, the chiefs' names are in T-B style in the *Daba genealogy* (Luluyiyi, Zibulu, Lubibu, Yansiyan, Yanlumutu, Mutuditu, etc) up until Yamaa - who was the first to be invested by

the Qing, and who was the first to have a wife attached to his name. After Yamaa, the chiefs have Tibetan names and the father-son linkage pattern is no longer evident.¹¹²

I will come back shortly to what this change in the name pattern implies, but for the moment, I will only point out that whilst the Yongning chiefs' official names stress Chinese civilizational modes, the T-B names in the Daba genealogy stress not only native but *pre-Mongol* cultural ties. Cai Hua presents an interesting, although perhaps not entirely clear argument to the effect that the marriage patterns of the Ah chiefs of Yongning reflected the political influence of maternal families and therefore a local matrilineal ethos.¹¹³ But the assimilation of Mongols into local Mo-so families can be explained without taking into account any matrilineal custom. As I suggested in Chapter II, even after the conquest by Nanzhao, the patterns of marriage alliances (which I argued are evidenced in the Mu genealogy) stress in-law relations, and therefore the ongoing political significance of native clans. Thus, the political continuity of local families, Mongol numerical inferiority, the nomadic norms of their society which were not especially well suited to sedentary political management are all sufficient to explain the eventual assimilation of the Mongols into local societies, whether or not the people of Yongning or Lijiang were matrilineal.

On the origins of the Ngue clan and the Mosuo aristocracy

There is another clan name associated with the Mo-so tribes which is well worth investigating – the Ngue of matrilineal Yongning. The name Ngue in fact appears in Mu Gong's genealogy with the ancestor La-tu Ngue-jun upon the fall of Nanzhao, and immediately before the Mou dynasty, the Mo-so Zhao and its apparently incestuous and matrilineal successions.¹¹⁴ The name Ngue, however, also appears in the Tang records dealing with the queens of Nü Guo, a matrilineal-matriarchal state the borders of which adjoined present day Muli.¹¹⁵ But before we explore possible links between the Ngue and the Nü Guo, we must consider what matrilineality means in the context of present-day Mosuo society and culture.

Mother-right and the Mosuo people

Whilst contemporary popular media go about trumpeting the Mosuo matriarchal paradise, there is a reverse trend among Western scholars to question the very matrilineal character of Mosuo society, and to dismiss the latter as a product of misguided Marxist evolutionary schemes. McKhann for example argues that the Mosuo rather than being matrilineal are not unlike Kham Tibetans who recognize descent bilaterally and do not care for questions of legitimacy.¹¹⁶ In a similar vein, Elizabeth Hsu objects that 'lineage' does not provide a useful category of analysis by which to understand Mosuo social organization. She argues that the 'house' is truly the basic unit of social organization and not the lineage.¹¹⁷ Chinese social scientists in fact have produced dozens of genealogies which on the surface show that matrilineality is a trend rather than the rule even among the plain dwelling commoner Mosuo.¹¹⁸ In 1956, a study of six villages and 95 households showed that unilineal matrilineal descent (genealogical cases where no fathers at all were involved) accounted for 45.3 per cent of surveyed families while 'matriarchal/patriarchal families' (where fathers appeared in the genealogy as well as mothers) made up 49.5 per cent; and patrilineal families accounted for the remaining 5.2 per cent.¹¹⁹ But to conclude from these data that matrilineality is a product of the Marxist-Engelian imagination and/or contemporary popular media is to ignore that in the 1930s and 40s, Rock and Goullart were describing the Mosuo in terms not so dissimilar to post-49 perceptions. Thus, Goullart wrote of the Mosuo, that 'The arrival of a certain matriarchic tribe, living about seven caravan days north of Likiang (sic), always created a furor...',¹²⁰ and Rock commented on the low moral standards of Yongning, and the astounding number of 'bastard' children who didn't even know the word father.¹²¹ What is more, Chinese observers have commented on the peculiar sexual customs and matrilineal tendencies of the Sino-Tibetan border people for several centuries.¹²² Western scholars are certainly correct to stress comparable *practices* between Mosuo and other Tibetans, but they cannot do so at the expense of identifying the *ideal* moral and structural patterns inherent in Mosuo kinship.

As Susanne Knödel has demonstrated, even when the Mosuo live in apparently ambilineal households, they continue to stress the legitimacy of matrilineal ties above paternal ties. In addition, incest boundaries are established on the basis of matrilineal connections, prohibiting sexual relations between matrilineal cousins up to the third degree whilst even first-degree cousins on the patrilineal side are not considered relations.¹²³ Then, as Shih also comments, what characterizes Mosuo society is the ‘cultural belief in consanguinity’.¹²⁴ From my own experience, in Yongning or Labei, any Mosuo of the *older* generation will confirm that the ideal household is a matrilineal one – a family who does not divide and who is held together by ties of consanguinity.

Chinese scholars are also quite justified to argue that matrilineality served the Yongning feudal system. In light of the analysis which I made of the Naxi love suicide custom, we can guess that matrilineality and the institution of visiting relationships (*sese*) were at least as advantageous to Yongning feudal rule as patrilineal cross-cousin marriage had been to the Mu chiefs, because *sese* was not the closest thing to no marriage, it was no marriage. In actual fact, feudal law upheld the ideal *and* the practice of the indivisible family. It did this through material incentives that levied corvée labor on the basis of households and not individuals; through the rules governing property division that penalized women and encouraged them to remain in the maternal households;¹²⁵ through the dissemination of formal proverbs reminiscent of the Indonesian Adat – for example, ‘Flesh against flesh is soft, flesh against bone will bruise’ and ‘Chickens hatched out of the same brood do not fight, the children of one mother are united’; and not least by upholding an official cult to the patron Goddess Gamu. For the Mosuo are alone among their neighbors to have a guardian mother goddess rather than a patron warrior god (e.g. Saddo). Incidentally, Daba religion is also far less interested in gender complementarity than the Dongba is.¹²⁶

But perhaps, the matrilineal ethos is nowhere more evident than in Mosuo creation mythology.

*The Mosuo creation story*¹²⁷

At the beginning of time, when the earth and the sky had just been formed and the moon and the sun had not appeared, there was no light, there were no stars, and no clouds. Later there were nine suns¹²⁸ and the earth was scorched until eight suns burned themselves out and only one sun remained, then there were nine moons and everything in the world froze until eight of the moons melted away and only one moon remained.¹²⁹ Then humanity appeared on the earth. The sky god came to the world then the sky goddess Gugumi, and they had children: in the sky there was a race of gods and on the earth were the children of the gods. Gugumi gave birth to three sons.¹³⁰

One morning, the sons found a great frog ruining the fields they had cultivated: using magic, the frog had returned the fields to their original state, not one furrow could be seen, the earth had returned to grass.¹³¹ The elder and middle brothers rushed to beat the frog but the younger one, Codeiliusso, protected him. The frog was a friendly god frog who had come to warn the brothers of the coming of a great flood.¹³² The resentful frog then proceeded to tell Codeiliusso how to escape the disaster and to trick his two brothers so that they should perish.¹³³

Codeiliusso survived the flood and he was the last man on earth. His two brothers had drowned. Codeiliusso was lonely and he wandered the empty earth at a loss. He went to seek the advice of his relative the mountain god. The god told him to go and defeat the evil that was taking place in the mountain. Codeiliusso shot an evil demon and rescued a kind hearted god. The kind hearted god told Codeiliusso he could find a mate at the lake where the sky women would come to bathe on new year's eve.¹³⁴

Codeiliusso went to the lake. He met the sky princess Mumigugumi¹³⁵ and her two sisters under the moon light. He followed her to heaven to marry her. But the old Sky Mother¹³⁶ complained of the stench of humanity. Mumigugumi tried to cover for her lover by explaining that this was not the smell of a human but the smell of sweat from the horse carrying loads, the smell of sweat from the ox plowing the fields. But the Heavenly Mother was not fooled: she argued that there are no roads in heaven and no fields. Mumigugumi had to admit that she had brought Codeiliusso to the sky. When the Sky Mother discovered that Co intended to marry her daughter, she replied: "You are of the race of the earth, we are of the race of the gods, now how can sky and earth be united? How can water and fire bind together?"

Nonetheless, she pretended to agree to his request, on condition that he worked to obtain his bride. She then devised superhuman tasks to lose

him,¹³⁷ instructing him to cut down nine entire forests in one day, burn, then clear the debris for seeding in the following days. Finally, the Heavenly Mother asked Co to squeeze three drops of a She-tiger's milk.¹³⁸ Every time, the earth man outwitted his would-be Mother-in-Law by following the instruction of Mumigugumi who knew the magic formula.¹³⁹ The Sky Mother eventually agreed to the marriage but she had one last trick up her sleeve. She turned her three daughters into a she-snake, a she-tiger and a she-leopard and announced that Co had to choose between them. Left to his own devices, Co, trembling with terror, chose the least frightful of the beasts: the snake.¹⁴⁰

Unfortunately, the snake was Mumigugumi's sister, Mumijajiami. Codeiliusso then left the sky and his old love Mumigugumi, to descend to the earth with his wife Mumijajiami. Mumijajiami built a house and wove hemp cloth while Co plowed and seeded the fields with the seeds his wife had stolen from heaven. Meanwhile Mumigugumi watched from the sky. She saw the green crops, and her heart grew dark with resentment at the thought of her sister's and Co's happiness. Mumigugumi who had first loved Codeiliusso wanted to take her revenge upon her sister and her faithless lover.¹⁴¹

She too descended upon the earth and then changed herself into a wild ox. She trampled and wrecked the fields Codeiliusso has planted. Codeiliusso in turn pursued her into the deepest part of the forest. Then, when he had come very far from home, Mumigugumi regained her natural form.

The sky princess seduced Codeiliusso with sweet foods and caused him to fall into a long enchanted sleep. After this, she changed herself into a male monkey and went back to visit her sister. She tricked her lonely sister into marrying her and following her to the mountain¹⁴² where they lived of wild fruit, and dressed with the leaves of the trees - until Mumijajiami could not bear it any longer and went back to her house.

Mumijajiami gave birth to two little half monkeys (a boy and a girl). Her sister Mumigugumi was satisfied and thus resumed her heavenly shape and returned to the sky.¹⁴³ Codeiliusso woke up.

Codeiliusso was long in the tooth and his hair had gone white. He went home to find his beloved wife, but he was too old to father humanity. When he saw Mumijajiami's little monkeys, he was filled with horror and pity but he had no choice. He had to accept this unlikely progeny as his own. Codeiliusso brought a pot of hot water to the boil and poured it over the little children, scalding the monkey hair off their bodies, and thus transformed them into human beings. The generations of humanity descended one after the other from this first brother and sister.¹⁴⁴

Scholars generally agree that the Mosuo creation myth is a simpler version of the Naxi genesis: the hero Codeiliusso is a cognate of Cosseilee'ee and much of the myth develops along similar lines. Yet, Lamu Gatusa objects that the Mosuo creation myth owes only in part to the Naxi myth, that it is filled with details which are authentically Mosuo and which are not Naxi, and of course, that it reflects a very different social ethos from the Naxi myth. And Lamu Gatusa is correct, because the Mosuo creation myth is devoid of the gender dualism which typifies the Naxi story and it radically feminizes not only the Naxi but other Yunnanese mythological standards. No other Yunnanese myth grants so much space or importance to female protagonists, and so little to males.

The Mosuo creation myth stresses a feminine worldview. In this tale, women are powerful, kind, mean, cruel, patient, cunning, etc. They have knowledge, they have power, they make magic, invent agriculture, build houses, harvest, and weave clothes. In other word, women embody not only the divine but also all that is civilized. Men by contrast are stupid and nasty (Co's brothers) or if worthy, as Co is, they are helpless. Although Codeiliusso somehow has the last word when he *humanizes* the little monkeys, the Mosuo creation myth is, as Shih Chuan-kang puts it, a 'gynocentric tale'.¹⁴⁵

Analysis, however, should not stop here, because Codeiliusso's sexual impotence signals much more than an ambivalent view of the male as procreator. Indeed, at no point does the myth deny that procreation requires the pairing of male and female. The first coupling of the god and goddess at the beginning of time establishes this fact, the sisterly marriage also obliges Mumigugumi's temporary transformation into a *male* monkey, and in the end, humanity is descended from the union of male and female, the original brother and sister pair. Codeiliusso's impotence does not result of the fact that as a *male*, he cannot act as generatrix. To the contrary, Codeiliusso has to be tricked out of sexual intercourse so that he will not father humanity.

These paradigms of gender and power do not find any clear reflection in Labei patrilineal society, or even in the matrilineal plain society where men dominate the

political and the religious scene. But it may be that this matrilineal model is more intelligible when it is seen spatially, since Mosuo society opposes a largely matrilineal centre to a patrilineal periphery. It may also be that this matrilineal model is *historically* intelligible, since the feudal system made chiefs and aristocrats into living gods.¹⁴⁶

Mosuo cosmogony explains the origins of the Mosuo people but it does not define humanity as a universal category. From the very beginning, humanity (Co and his brothers) belongs to a category of people bonded to the earth and to agricultural labor who stand in opposition to heavenly beings who are themselves defined by magic and knowledge and therefore *not work*, and especially not agricultural work. As the heavenly mother puts it, the sweat of labor and of the caravan trail cannot pollute heaven because in heaven there are neither fields nor roads. In the context of feudal Yongning, therefore, the Mosuo creation myth was not so much about the creation of the Mosuo people as it was about the creation of the Mosuo *common* people, *Sseika* and *Wu* classes, whose purpose was to pay tax and feed aristocrats whose divinity was confirmed by the very fact that they never tilled the fields or led the horses on the caravan trail.

The Mosuo myth, in other words, settles social boundaries. It obtains Mosuo class subjugations through language acts which recall Umberto Eco's thesis on the correspondences between ideology, force and power – ideology takes shape as the 'Power born from it becomes truly a network of consensus, beginning from below, because the relationships of strength have been transformed into symbolic relationships'.¹⁴⁷

The symbolic relationships that establish relations of strength and power in Mosuo society are expressed as epic marriage relations between the descendants of earth men and heavenly women whose merging genealogy is to be entirely matrilineal, for the people have a heavenly mother and grandmother but half-measures for fathers (monkey and Co), and no grand-father. As we saw in Chapter VIII, Mosuo kinship terminology supports this matrilineal ideal because even in patrilineal Labei, the Mosuo have not kin terms to express paternal antecedence

beyond living relatives (FF) whilst maternal ancestors are referenced to the fourth generation above M: MMMM. In addition, these relationships are encrypted in the ritual language associated with treaty, in the very name Codeiliusso. For Codeiliusso means the 'Son of the Great Stone of the Co people' [*dei* = big; *liu* = stone; *sso* = son], and thus calls to mind the menhir traditions which among the Tibetans, Tibeto-Burmans and Southeast Asians mark the establishment of chiefdoms and treaties. In fact, Co's name recalls two famous Yunnanese stones associated with conquest and tribal unification, the Guanyin stone and Saddo's rock.¹⁴⁸

But if myth assumes a relationship between heaven and maternal ancestors, and real life assumes a relationship between divinity and aristocracy, it remains that in modern times, the Mosuo ruling house was neither dominated by women nor matrilineal. Now, Zhan Chengxu argues that the Yongning feudal lords only adopted patrilineality in 1381 after the Ming conquest of Yunnan. But Zhan reckons on the original matrilineality of the Yongning chiefs for the wrong reasons by *assuming* the latter on the basis of socio-evolutionary law.¹⁴⁹

A better case is made by Shih Chuan-kang and Cai Hua. On the basis of the genealogical list of the Mosuo chiefs memorized by the Daba, both scholars conclude that the Mosuo rulers inherited their position matrilineally and did not marry until the 17th century. They argue that the names of wives only appear in the genealogy after the Qing court mandated patrilineal filiation, primogeniture and the officialization of first wives in a series of imperial edicts, beginning in the 17th century.¹⁵⁰ Cai Hua very convincingly cites the Ming edict which by contrast to the Qing rulings allowed native chieftains to succeed each other according to local traditions, including from uncle to nephew, i.e. *matrilineally*.¹⁵¹ Cai Hua and Shih's proposition finally finds support not only in the absence of wives' names from the genealogy but in the strikingly messy order of successions, passing from brother to brother and uncle to nephew as well as from father to son.¹⁵²

But if Cai and Shih sound convincing, we cannot ignore local tradition which relates that the Yongning Tusi married his daughters to his sub-magistrates at least

on occasions and that the Lijiang and Yongning chiefs intermarried. Lijiang tradition, in fact, tells of an especially famous and disastrous marriage between the 16th century Lijiang chief Mu Ding's sister and the Yongning chief.¹⁵³

There are certainly some interesting things about the genealogy of the Yongning chief. The first is the introduction of wives' names from the chief Yamaa, in the Daba genealogy. As we saw above, Cai Hua and Shih both argue that this is evidence that up until Yamaa (1658), the Yongning chiefs did not marry and their successions were in fact matrilineal, passing from uncle to uterine nephew. But there is a problem with this proposition: if the Qing were responsible for the introduction of wives' names in the Daba genealogy, and therefore invented marriage for the Yongning chiefs, then how do we explain that in the *official* Chinese language genealogy, the names of wives do not appear until the mid-18th century after a last Imperial edict stipulating the primacy of first born sons by first wives, and therefore a century after Yamaa?¹⁵⁴ Seen from this perspective, Cai Hua and Shih's theory fails to convince. For if anyone of the two genealogies should reflect the Qing edict, we would expect the official list to do so, not the Daba one.

In fact, if we look at the Daba genealogy, we see that from Yamaa, the chiefs not only have wives, but also Tibetan names which means that they abandoned the T-B naming pattern that among their neighbors shows the patrilineal link. So, perhaps the wives' names are introduced at this point, when Tibetan names appear because Tibetan names do not show patrification. But then again, if this were all there was to that question, why would the names of wives appear in the official genealogy in the *next* century?

And indeed, perhaps the solution to this question is that rather than inheriting their position from father to son, the Yongning chiefs did inherit their position from uncle to nephew as Cai and Shih suggest, but if this is the case, we have to consider the possibility that the names of the women introduced after Yamaa may not be the names of wives but the names of sisters. On the other hand, what the appearance of Tibetan names in this royal genealogy does tell us, is that the

conversion of the Yongning chiefs to Tibetan Buddhism took place before the official date of 1700.

Another interesting thing about the Yongning chiefs' genealogies, is that neither the Chinese nor the Daba lists mention the ancestors of the Mongol period (1253-1381), not even the name of the officer whom Kublai allegedly charged with replacing He Zi figures in the genealogy. That the Mosuo chiefs' *official* genealogy begins with the Ming conquest and the confirmation of the chief Pudv Geji makes sense. The Yuan dynasty ancestors were not recorded in the official genealogy because the Ming invested Geji, not his ancestors. However, the Dabas, whose lore was hardly of interest to the Qing imperial record, also count the genealogy of the chief from Pudv Geji, in other words, they too make Geji a *founding* ancestor. And yet, Geji had to belong to a local and reasonably influential lineage, and one would expect any influential lineage to know something of its genealogy. The chief He Zi, for example, knew that he was thirty-first in line from Niyuewu. More importantly, the chief Mu Yao knew that his own ancestors had arrived in Lijiang five generations before they had ruled the region.

How far-fetched is it to suggest that, prior to the Ming period (if not the Qing), the Mosuo were perhaps not ruled by male chiefs who inherited their positions from father to son? In fact, not very. For we know that some people in the Sino-Tibetan borderland were familiar with both matrilineality and women's rule. As Chinese scholars point out the ancient Qiang tribes were people who 'knew their mothers but not their fathers'. And closer to our own times, there were women chiefs on the periphery of Lijiang and the Tibetan regions, in Yezhi until 1736.

The genealogical records of the Yezhi chiefs (written in 1918) relate that in 1737/1738, the chief He Niang and her daughter-in-law, the lieutenant Zhi Min, requested that the tribal system be replaced by a Chinese system. From this time onwards, the Yezhi chiefs had the name Wang and after the accession of He Niang's daughter Wang Ah-zhi, they were all males. The genealogical records of the Wang family only note three female chiefs altogether, two of them

immediately before the administrative reform to the Chinese system (He Niang and Zhi Min) and these two, we are told, succeeded their husbands. But the said husbands cannot have been too relevant because the chronicler fails to provide even one of their names whilst of the woman chief Wang Ah-zhi, he simply notes that she inherited the hereditary position 'like her mother' and does not bother to mention any marriage at all. What is more, the genealogy shows that even after they adopted the Chinese system, the Wang succeeded each other in a disorderly fashion from father to son or brother to brother, whilst they also adopted son-in-laws and sent some of their own sons to marry uxorilocally.¹⁵⁵

Granted, we ought to heed Peter Hinton's caution that 'matrilineages are ... widely distributed and variable. The variations are far better explained by linking them to economic factors, and contingent differences in relations between the sexes, than by simple assertions that they are customary features of a particular ethnic group.'¹⁵⁶ But the fact that there were matrilineal groups and women chiefs in the peripheries of Lijiang does validate the proposition that not only matrilineality but matriarchy has a very ancient history in this part of the world. But of course, we already know about matriarchy from the Sui and Tang historians' reports on the Country of Women.

The Eastern Country of Women

Up until a certain time in the Tang dynasty, there existed two 'Countries of Women' on either side of Tibet, one in the west and the other in the east.¹⁵⁷ The Eastern Country of Women, the Dong Nü Guo, disappeared from the Chinese historical record after the 9th century. Fortunately, the Sui and Tang records describe the Dong Nü Guo in some detail; they give its boundaries, the names of its rulers, and also the names of vassal tribes. The southern frontiers of the Nü Guo bordered the Bai Lang tribes and its capital was in the valley of the Yalongjiang.¹⁵⁸ In other words, the Nü Guo was immediately north of present day Muli, now Pumi (Xifan) territory and which belonged to Yongning until 1710. Rolf Stein in fact places the Nü Guo immediately above Fu Guo (ref. map 6).¹⁵⁹

From Rockhill's translation of the *Tang Shu* (Bk. 122), we read:

[the Nü Guo] has eighty towns, and it is ruled over by a woman who resides in the K'ang-yen valley, a narrow precipitous gorge around which flows the Jo Sui [Yalongjiang] in a southerly direction. There are over 40,000 families and 10,000 soldiers. The sovereign is styled Pin Chin and the officials called Kao-pa-li, are like our Tsai-Hsiang (ministers of state). They depute men to perform all outside duties, and these are thence known as "women's deputies" (ling nü kuan). From the interior (of the palace) the men receive and transmit the orders.

The sovereign has near her person several hundred women, and once every five days there is a council of state

The women do not esteem highly the men, and rich ones have always men-servants who arrange their hair and paint their faces with black clay (t'u). The men do also the fighting and till the soil. The sons take the family name of their mother Their domestic animals comprise sheep and horses. Gold is found here. Their customs closely resemble those of Hindustan [Yunnan]¹⁶⁰ ... Our 11th moon is their first. ... they sacrifice men or monkeys.¹⁶¹

Other details from various records¹⁶² relate that the Country of Women had an occasional king, that a Queen's brother was a minister of state, and otherwise provide some information on economy and politics; the Nü Guo produced musk, cinnabar, copper and gold, yaks, and salt and it was said to have waged frequent wars with neighboring Tangxiang and India, by which Yunnan is meant and by implication, Nanzhao (ref. p. 386).

We find the following connections between the matrilineal Yongning Mosuo and the Dong Nü Guo: geographic proximity, including a network of river valleys connecting Nü Guo and Mo-sha/Mo-so territories. Then, we find among the Mosuo a matrilineal social ideal and in the Nü Guo a matrilineal/matriarchal state. We also find the name Ngue (Ngo) in the Tang records, for a Ngue queen paid tribute to the Chinese Tang 唐 emperor in 692 A.D.¹⁶³ This same name Ngue even appears in the first Mu Chronicle with the ancestor La-tu Ngue-jun whose immediate descendants herald the 'Mo-so Zhao', the Mou and their apparently incestuous and matrilineal successions.¹⁶⁴ Also, the *Sui History* relates that the first queen of Nü Guo to pay tribute to the Chinese court (the Sui dynasty, 581-618

A.D.) was of the Supi family. The word Supi, which gives the Nü Guo its Tibetan name of Sumpa, is likewise found among the Mosuo where it designates the aristocracy. And interestingly, although the word Supi does not belong to contemporary Lijiang, it is found in the Naxi Dongba manuscripts where it means landlord and aristocrat.¹⁶⁵

And perhaps even another detail from Mosuo creation mythology connects the Mosuo to the Nü Guo. As we saw above, the name of the Mosuo aristocracy Ngue is recorded in the Tang annals dealing with the Nü Guo. But this is a simplification because the full name of this queen was Tang Ngue and she was one of several queens and ministers of state to bear the name Tang 湯.¹⁶⁶ The others were Tang Pang (607-622), Tang Liang (686), and Tang Zhao (741).¹⁶⁷ what is more, Stein has suggested that Tang is none other than the Sinicized name of an important Tibetan or Qiang clan, the Ton.¹⁶⁸

But even if Chinese chroniclers were only transcribing Tang from Ton, they were not writing at random. For the name Tang 湯 is that of the founder of Shang dynasty (1500-1000 B.C.). There is no need to seek an actual historical connection between the Tang of Nü Guo and the first Chinese dynasty because it was customary to create fictive genealogical links between Barbarian vassals and illustrious Chinese families. But the name Tang seems especially fitting, for both Granet and K-C. Chang have proposed that Shang successions were dependent on the matrilineal links between maternal uncles and sororal nephews.¹⁶⁹

So, what can be made of the fact that there are Ngue in Mosuo country but apparently no Tang or Ton? Interestingly, a secondary meaning of Tang is 'to scald' with hot water, whilst scalding is the very thing the hero Codeiliusso did when he turned his wife's monkey children into human beings. Could it be that the name 'Tang/scald' did in fact make its way to Yongning with the pun intended? Now, I admit that this proposition may be stretching the point, as my friend Eileen Walsh has objected in conversation, but then again, the names Mu and Ye and their pictographs were also absorbed into Naxi tradition by way of homophony, punning, and corresponding Chinese meanings.

Conclusion

In the ANKSWC, Rock suggested that the Mo-so and not the Naxi had first lived among the Pu (circa 24 A.D.) and that the Naxi had come later, chased the Pu from Lijiang and intermarried with the Mo. Both the Na and the Mo had then become indistinguishable.¹⁷⁰ Rock admitted that his proposition was conjectural, but that he had arrived at the conclusion that the Mosuo and the Naxi could not have been the same tribe ‘after much thought and research’ – though he did not specify what thought and what research in particular.¹⁷¹ Whatever his reasons, however, Rock had an idea that the Mosuo and the Naxi could not be the same ‘historical’ people.

What this chapter has done is show the limited usefulness of the ethnic referents Naxi, Mosuo and Mo-so when discussing the ethnic history of northern Yunnan. Contemporary Naxi and Mosuo are not descended from an original Mo-so tribe or from two original tribes, rather, they are descended from various peoples who settled in northern Yunnan at different periods and under different circumstances, people whom the Mongols would have categorized as *Nanzi* (southerners) – and maybe here lies another possible etymology for the names Naxi, Nari, Nahi, etc. What may not be doubted is that the Naxi and Mosuo have their origins in several *buluo*, lineage segments, connected to the Qiang, Wuman and Di tribes (in other words to ancient Qiangic, Burmic and Tibeto-Burman speakers) and whose political boundaries were mostly determined by the states which they served – from the 7th century onwards: Tibet, Nanzhao, the Dali Kingdom, Yuan, Ming and Qing China. Current ethnic boundaries for their part are the product of several centuries of centralized organization under feudal rule.

The discussion I have presented in this last chapter confirmed, developed and complemented the thesis begun in Chapter II with the analysis of the Mu Chronicles. Thus, I have proposed that the legendary ancestors of the Lijiang chiefs belonged to the Pu tribe whose descendants today are known as Pumi as well as Mosuo and Naxi. The Pu were Qiang or Jang (Tibetan) who had conquered Lijiang (Satham/Santan) during the 5th century. Pu clans included, among others, the names La and He. In the 8th century, the Pu were conquered by

the Nanzhao whose own troops were made up of Baiman and Wuman and whose descendants are today known as Naxi, Yi (Lolo and Nuosu) and Lisu. Their clan names included Yang and Guo among others. After the fall of Nanzhao, the Pu reconquered their land but they in turn lost Lijiang plain to the Mo-so, a Qiang people originating in southern Sichuan and whose tribes by the 10th century included Qiang (Mo clan and Mo-sha/Mo-xie/Mo-so tribes and perhaps also Ngue) as well as Wuman and/or Baiman (Yue-xi Zhao/ Yang clan). The Ngue for their part were Qiang attached to the Dong Nü Guo, the Eastern Country of Women, who migrated south in the wake of frontier and religious conflicts at the end of the Tang dynasty. The Mo-so and Jang were in turn conquered by the Mongols whose clan names included the aristocratic Ah and who were culturally and politically assimilated into the local population. Then, after the Mongols, came the Chinese.

When discussing the ethnic origins of the Naxi nationality, one should also take into account the other names found in this part of the world – Co, Bu, Ji, whose own claims to northern Yunnan are perhaps more ancient, originating in the old Zuo, Sui and Bai Lang tribes. And finally one should also consider another ethnic layer including Han and consisting of immigrants, refugees, serfs obtained from neighboring tribal peoples, or slaves brought back from raids or military campaigns, and who were absorbed in the commoner and serf categories during feudal times.

To sum up, therefore, the name Mo-so appears to have had a limited use as a term of self-reference but nonetheless passed into general Chinese usage to describe the tribes of northern Yunnan who, for a period of 128 years during the Yuan dynasty, were unified under the ritual and political control of the Mo-so chiefs of Lijiang, and who included Tibetans, Jang (Qiang), Wuman, Baiman, and of course Mongols. Under the Lijiang Mongol/Mou chiefs the Mo-so tribes were organized into four castes – **Per** (the White ruling caste which included the Mou/Mu, possibly other prominent affinal relatives of the Mou and certainly the Mongol Ah), **Na** (the Black caste possibly comprising Black and White tribes descendant of Nanzhao, as well as the more influential families descended from

the Jang), **Boa** (commoners, lower class and demoted persons descended from the Jang), and **Wu** (absorbed, impoverished and demoted persons). The tribes who resisted the ritual and political control of the Lijiang chiefs were known as **Lisu** (who according to the Chinese histories were another type of Lolo) but also **Lhuman** (dragons and snakes), brigands, **Di Yang** ghosts, and so forth, as well as **Pu** (who according to the Dongba tradition, fled to the hills after the dzi took their land).

Under feudal rule, and Tibetan and Chinese aegis, original tribal distinctions were eroded through conquest, intermarriage, linguistic assimilation, whilst original tribal identities were fused by the agency of religion (creation mythology, Dongba, Daba, Lamaism, the Sacrifice to Heaven). Eventually, as the old clans lost their political functions, their origins and purpose were forgotten, and the people of Lijiang and Yongning emerged into bounded and *relatively* homogenous groups based in distinct territories, in possession of their own languages, religions, cuisine, dress, songs, kinship systems, and so forth. And yet, even as the social organization of feudal Lijiang and Yongning shaped proto-Naxi and proto-Mosuo ethnic identities, feudalism did not altogether blur all former tribal distinctions with the result that today, the people who inhabit the territories of the ancient Zuo do not simply identify themselves as Naxi, Nahi, and Nari, but also as Mongols, Pumi, Nuosu, and Lisu. Meanwhile, their official titles are Mongol Nationality (Zuosuo/Muli), Pumi Nationality, Yi Nationality, Lisu Nationality, Naxi Nationality and Mosuo People, a branch of the Naxi Nationality.

¹*Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 3-5; also Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Minzu Kaogu*, Introduction, esp. pp. 4-5. For translations of the records of Sima Qian on the Southwestern Barbarians, see E. Chavannes (transl.), *Les mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien* (Vol. II), Paris, Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1967 and B. Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (Vol. II), New York, Columbia University Press, 1961.

²*Ibid.*

³J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 49.

⁴Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Minzu Kaogu*, pp. 19-23, 72-78.

⁵This theory was first enunciated by Fang Guoyu's. See Fang Guoyu and He Zhiwu, *Naxi Dongba Wenzhi Pu* [a dictionary of the Naxi Dongba pictographs], Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1981.

⁶B. Watson (transl.), *Records of the Grand Historian*, p. 291.

⁷A similar objection is raised by Shih Chuan-Kang in *The Moso*, pp. 16-17.

⁸*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 16.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Guo Dalie, 'Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian' [Annalistic records of the Naxi nationality], *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 204.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 203, 204.

¹²Personal communication Kunming, 1990.

¹³J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 359.

¹⁴*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 7; "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", p. 205, also E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques", p. 610.

¹⁵Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Minzu Kaogu*, p. 92. Zhang Zengqi argues that the Kunming and Sui progressively colonized the Zuo. However, the Zuo culture disappeared far too quickly and at the wrong period (Wang Mang) to sustain this hypothesis without more data and a very good argument.

¹⁶Note that according to the *Lijiang Prefectural Records* (1743), during the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 24 A.D.), Lijiang would have belonged to the Yue-sui Jun, and that after 618, its name was changed from Ding-zuo xian to Kunming, and that in its early history also, the region of Lijiang was known as Sui Kunming. J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 63-65.

¹⁷W.S. Coblin, "A New Study of the Pai-Lang Songs", *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, 1979, pp. 179-206; D. Bradley, "Yi Language Questionnaire", (unpublished) Melbourne, Latrobe University, 1995, p. 5.

¹⁸*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 15. Actually, the authors of the *NJS* shed some doubt on this piece of propaganda when they explain in the following paragraphs that the Maoniu rebelled against the Han in 123 A.D. because of the terrible conditions which the empire imposed on them.

¹⁹See the translation of the relevant passage of the *Hou Han Shu* in W.S. Coblin, 'A New Study of the Pai-Lang Songs'; also on the Bai Lang Songs, Ma Xueling and Du Qingsha, 'Bai Lang Ger Yanjiu' [research into the Bai Lang Songs], *Minzu Yuwen* (5), 1982.

²⁰*Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* Vol. 2, p. 204.

²¹Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Minzu Kaogu*, pp. 80, 91.

²²W.S. Coblin, "A New Study of the Pai Lang Songs", p. 181.

²³J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 49, note 1.

²⁴See C.R. Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom*, p. 85. M. Blackmore: "The Rise of Nanzhao", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (1:2) Sept. 1990, pp. 46-61.

²⁵Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", p. 207.

²⁶All the dates listed below are confirmed in both Rock's ANKSWC and the *NJS*, except for those specific to the Tibetan annals and some details of the *Jiu Tang Shu*, as I indicate in the following endnotes. I have also referenced the primary sources which Rock translated or discussed in the ANKSWC when these are not mentioned in the *NJS*.

²⁷J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 65.

²⁸The Tibetan annals clarify that tribute was paid by the people of Satham (the Jan) and that the latter were conquered in 703. See Chang Kun, "An Analysis of the Tun-huang Tibetan Annals", *Journal of Oriental Studies* (5) 1959/60, pp. 123-174, p. 147; Also J. Bacot et al, *Documents de Touen-Houang relatifs à L'histoire du Tibet*, Paris, 1940, p. 40, p. 149.

²⁹In the *Old Tang History*, it is said that the Zuo territories which then lay between the Tibetans, the Qiang and the Di fell to the Tibetans after the period 758-760, in other words after Nanzhao's defection to Tibet. It would appear that the Zuo territories are in this case, the territories north of Lijiang. See P. Pelliot, *Histoire ancienne du Tibet*, p. 29.

³⁰See the translation of the relevant passage in J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 180-181.

³¹See D. Bradley, "Nashi and Proto-Burmese-Lolo".

³²According to Lamu Gatusa: this sentence makes explicit that the Mosuo had to move because life became too difficult where they were living previously. Personal communication, Kunming 1991.

³³Extract from the *Sebutu* - which the Daba chants at weddings, and at the birth of children and horses, translated from Chinese with the help of Lamu Gatusa who collected the original text in Labei.

³⁴J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe*, pp. 11-12.

³⁵Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", pp. 205-206, E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 568.

³⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 161. Also E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 636.

³⁷J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 471; also J.F. Rock, *The Life and Culture of the Na-khi Tribe*, pp. 11-12.

³⁸W.W. Rockhill, *Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet*, pp. 727-728. Rockhill nevertheless quotes from an eye witness account that the Tibetans cooked and ate the head of their dead fathers, p. 684.

³⁹M. Polo, *The Travels*, p. 173.

⁴⁰Could it be that the old man with the white beard was Abughan, the white old man, national god of the Mongols?

⁴¹Story collected in Labei by Lamu Gatusa.

⁴²Sichuan Sheng, *Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, pp. 111-112.

⁴³Zhang Zengqi, *Zhongguo Xinan Kaogu*, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁴See G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 79; also Feng Han-yi and J.K. Shryock, "The historical Origins of the Lolo", p. 123.

⁴⁵W.W. Rockhill, *Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet*, pp. 728-729.

⁴⁶W. Eberhard, *Chinese Minorities, Yesterday and Today*, p. 77.

⁴⁷See You Zhong, "Yuan Ming Qing Sheqi de Naxizu He Lisuzu", p. 61.

⁴⁸The Nanzhao state apparatus was organized on a hierarchy of chieftain/ sorcerers called Gui Zhu, 'lords of the ghosts'. See Chen Lufan, *Whence Came the Thai Race*, pp. 200-201. It may be that the Naxi Pubbu and Pa, and the Daba Pv and Pa originate in the Nanzhao tradition as would the Yi Bimo and Sani.

⁴⁹I am using the word potlatch after Eugene Cooper. As Cooper writes: 'potlatch type societies are those in which rank is present, and in which rank is inherited (here I employ the term rank in the technical sense in which Fried defines the term, i.e. as referring to social orders in which there are fewer positions of valued status than people capable of filling them, but in which access to strategic resources may not yet have become unequal (Fried: 1967: 110). However, succession to positions of rank must be validated by a ceremony at which a large scale distribution of goods (a potlatch) is made to the guests by their hosts, and in which acceptance of gifts and witnessing of the ceremony constitutes an acknowledgment of succession.' E. Cooper, "The Potlatch in Ancient China", *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica* (51:155-185) 1981, p. 158.

⁵⁰See J. Jacobs, *The Nagas*, pp. 77-82; E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, pp. 118-119.

⁵¹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 416; from the records of Yongbei and the *Yuan Shi Dili Zhi* [the geographical records of the *Mongol History*].

⁵²These dates are not consistent with what else Fan Cho has to say about the Yue-xi Zhao. I come back to this point in the next paragraphs.

⁵³The *De Qiao* was a sacred halberd, it became part of the Nanzhao's ceremonial paraphernalia after the death of Yu Zeng. On the Nanzhao stele, Kolofeng attributed Yu Zeng's confidence to the possession of the *De Qiao*. See E. Chavannes, "Une inscription du royaume de Nan-tchao", p. 402.

⁵⁴G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 24.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷E. Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 611, and J.F. Rock, *A Na-khi-English Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Introduction.

⁵⁸For the myriad variations of local names as they are given from the perspective of both Mosuo and Naxi and their various neighbors, refer to Rock's ANKSWC.

⁵⁹According to Backus, in fact, the Yue-xi - Mo-so Zhao, was defeated by Nanzhao in 732. See C.R. Backus, *The History of Nan-chao*, Chapters II and III.

⁶⁰R. A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, p. 49 note 137. The usage of the *sha* suffix is also noted by Tucci in G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p. 679 note 7.

⁶¹R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, p. 49.

⁶²Note that I have transcribed Stein's original (French) Tibetan spelling *cha* as *sha* (*ch = sh*).

⁶³R.A. Stein, *ibid* [my translation from French].

⁶⁴Thus the record names, 'T.rsul [Pyu/Burma], Musha and Mayd' and also 'T.sul, Musa and Manak [Miniak?]. G.H. Luce, "The Ancient Pyu", *Journal of Burma Research Society* (5: 27) 1937, pp. 239-253; pp. 241-242. In 832, Nanzhao 'plundered the Pyu capital, taking prisoner over 3000 persons, they banished them into servitude at Chetung (present day Kunming) ...and told them to fend for themselves. Their sons and grandsons are still there (in 863) subsisting on fish and insects. These are the remnants of their tribe.' See p. 252.

⁶⁵*Naxizu Jian Shi*, pp. 22-24.

⁶⁶R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 34.

⁶⁷Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 30.

⁶⁸See P. Pelliot, "Deux Itinéraires de la Chine au Tibet", pp. 157, 158.

⁶⁹*Ibid*.

⁷⁰See Stein's discussion on the words Mu and Mi in Tibetan, Qiang and Xixia in R. A. Stein, *Les tribus des marches sino-tibétaines*, pp. 64-65

⁷¹From Sima Qian's *Memoirs*.

⁷²R.A. Stein, "Chronique bibliographique", *Journal Asiatique* (240) 1952, pp. 79-106, p. 84.

⁷³See Chavannes's translation of Chapter 314, p. 4 on the extract concerning Lijiang, in Chavannes, "Documents historiques et géographiques", p. 636.

⁷⁴*Ibid*.

⁷⁵*Ibid*.

⁷⁶*Ibid*.

⁷⁷See Chavannes's reproduction and transcription of this text in "Une inscription du royaume de Nan-tchao", *Journal Asiatique*, 1900, pp. 381-450, pp. 401-404.

⁷⁸G.H. Luce, *Man Shu*, p. 57.

⁷⁹P. Pelliot (transl.), *Histoire ancienne du Tibet*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1961, p. 65. (translation of the *Jiu Tang Shu* [Old Tang History] Chapter 196).

⁸⁰J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 65. *Dianxi* Vol. I, fols. 26b-27b.

⁸¹Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", p. 207.

⁸²C.R. Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom*, p. 78; and W. Eberhard, *Local Cultures of South and East China*, pp. 53-54.

⁸³The *to* in Yang-to means to fall.

⁸⁴*Man Shu*, Ch. V, and Chen Lufan, *Whence Came the Thai Race*, p. 215.

⁸⁵Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", p. 206.

⁸⁶*Ibid*.

⁸⁷*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 7

⁸⁸Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", p. 206

⁸⁹Guo Dalie, "Naxizu Shi Liao Biannian", p. 206

⁹⁰Inscription on the stone tablet at the Mu cemetery, written in 1725 by Mu Zhong, see J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 70.

⁹¹*Naxizu Jian Shi*, p. 7

⁹²J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 63.

⁹³R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, pp. 80-81

⁹⁴See J.F. Rock, DNFC, p. 6. and J.F. Rock, "Zhima Funeral", p. 8.

⁹⁵J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 234 (from the *Yi-tong Zhi*).

⁹⁶J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 290.

⁹⁷Rock's translation from the *Du Shi Fang Yu Zhi Yao*, Ch. 117, fol. 21a. See J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 290 note 27.

⁹⁸Shih Chuan-kang, "The Origin of Marriage among the Moso and Empire-building in Late Imperial China", pp. 7-8.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴*Sichuan Sheng Naxizu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁵Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, pp. 208-215.

¹⁰⁶Ibid, p. 222.

¹⁰⁷Ibid, p. 218.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, pp. 236-237.

¹⁰⁹Shih Chuan-kang, "The Origin of Marriage among the Moso and Empire-building in Late Imperial China", p. 5.

¹¹⁰In Rock's words also: the term His-fan may be regarded as a generic one comprising several tribes, and simply means Barbarians of the West. ANKSWC, p. 358.

¹¹¹Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, pp. 236-237.

¹¹²See Cai Hua, *A Society without Fathers or Husbands*, p. 367.

¹¹³Ibid, Chapter 12.

¹¹⁴J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 89.

¹¹⁵R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, pp. 44-45.

¹¹⁶C.F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question", pp. 58-59. See also Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, Chapters on the Naze.

¹¹⁷Elizabeth Hsu, 'Moso Houses', in Oppitz and Hsu eds.

¹¹⁸See the *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu Shehui Ji Qi Muxi Zhi Diaocha* (Vol. 2), pp. 43-450, and 266-278.

¹¹⁹Ibid, pp. 42-43.

¹²⁰For more on the topic of Naxi perceptions of the Mosuo in Peter Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pp. 49-59.

¹²¹J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 391.

¹²²Cai Hua, *A Society without Fathers or Husbands*, pp. 19-21.

¹²³S. Knödel, "Yongning Moso Kinship and Chinese State Power", in Oppitz and Hsu eds.

¹²⁴Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, p. 100.

¹²⁵Ibid, p. 99.

¹²⁶See C. Mathieu, "Moso Religious Specialists", and relevant appendices in C. Mathieu, *Lost Kingdoms and Forgotten Tribes*, Ph.D. thesis, Murdoch University, Australia, 1997.

¹²⁷See the integral translation given in Appendix.

¹²⁸The number of suns recalls the story of the archer Yi which according to Wolfram Eberhard may have its origins in the neighborhood of the Ba culture, an ancient culture of eastern Sichuan. See W. Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, pp. 80-87.

¹²⁹The Naxi myth speaks of seven moons in opposition to nine suns, and makes sun and moon a gendered opposition. The numbers of suns and moons at the onset of any creation myths are calendrical references indicating the establishment of apparently natural but nonetheless organized time (and eventually the establishment of political order), moving from the situation of excess which typifies time before time to the balance of night and day. The number seven is a typically lunar week and the Mosuo Daba does on other occasions associate seven/women/ and moon. The symmetrical usage of the number nine in this case comments on the little attention which the Daba pays to gender. The Dabas, in fact, use two sets of words for moon and sun, Nima - Dawa which is Tibetan, and Nidi - Hlini which is Mosuo, the first makes the moon feminine and the sun masculine, the second makes the moon masculine and the sun feminine. The Labei Dabas ordinarily use Nima - Dawa (i.e. Tibetan).

masculine, the second makes the moon masculine and the sun feminine. The Labei Dabas ordinarily use Nima - Dawa (i.e. Tibetan).

¹³⁰The birth of the three sons and what happens to them afterwards also forms the main plot of the Yi myths of the Liangshan mountains, the Mosuo's neighbors. The birth of the three sons ends the Naxi creation myth. The turning over of the fields to grassland suggests a change of economic production from agriculture to pastoralism.

¹³¹The Naxi creation myth follows this same plot but there are only two brothers.

¹³²The flood is central to all Yunnanese myths. The frog is a significant mythical motif of Altaic and also southern Chinese cultures. The frog is a lunar animal associated with floods, disaster and regeneration. Although the frog plays a part in Naxi mythological thought, it has none of the importance which the Mosuo give it. In the Naxi creation story, the animal that upturns the brothers' field is a pig but the pig is also a lunar animal. See C. Hentze, *Mythes et symboles lunaires*, Antwerp, Editions de Sikkel, 1932, p. 28.

¹³³This motif supports the principle of ultimogeniture just as it does in the Naxi and Yi myths. Patrilineal Mosuo, however, observe rules of primogeniture.

¹³⁴Lakes relate to female fertility.

¹³⁵Mumigugumi means the woman with the 'vertical eyes'. Mumigugumi's sister is Mumijajiami and she has horizontal eyes. The same references appear in the Naxi creation myth and the first mythical ancestor of the Yi of northwest Yunnan was also a human being with vertical eyes. See *Yizu Chuanshi Shi* [The history of the creation of the Yi nationality], p. 17.

¹³⁶The Sky Mother does not appear in the stories of the Mosuo's neighbors. As we saw, in the Naxi's story, the sky princess has a father and a mother but only the father has a role to play in this heavenly courtship.

¹³⁷This part of the plot actually occupies a great deal of time in the original version of the myth as each of the task is explained and the magic formula disclosed.

¹³⁸As we have seen, the Tiger motif is a very ancient motif of the Western regions.

¹³⁹This gender differentiation is a very common motif in myths and folk tales all over the world. The Mosuo version of this particular archetype is interesting because the sky women will never relinquish or transfer their magic or their power to Codeiliusso.

¹⁴⁰In Qiang and Mosuo symbology tigers and leopards are associated with royalty and aristocracy. The snake is associated with fertility, rain and autochthony. Here, Codeiliusso marries the snake, or in other words, the Naxi princess and thus establishes his right to occupancy.

¹⁴¹This is an interesting counterpoint to Mosuo sexual etiquette which discourages jealousy.

¹⁴²Legends of monkey ancestors are found among the Yi, the Naxi, the Tibetans, and other southern peoples. The Qiang tribes of the Country of Women also sacrificed monkeys (see below in the text). See also G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, pp. 711-171 and pp. 730-742. According to Eberhard, the monkey was the totemic emblem of the Yang clan; W. Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, pp. 50-54. This is interesting because Yongning tradition connects the Ngue with the Ya (Yang). By contrast, although Naxi tradition does associate ancestors and monkeys, the creation myth itself makes no mention of monkey ancestors. Instead creation begins from cosmic eggs – but as I have argued, the chiefs who eventually ruled Lijiang were Mu, not Yang and both the name Mu and cosmic eggs are typically associated with Bonpo and therefore Tibetan beliefs.

¹⁴³According to Shih, in some of the Mosuo legends (as opposed to the Daba texts), Codeiliusso wakes up and kills the monkey. See Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, pp. 173-173.

¹⁴⁴This brother and sister pair is a common theme in the Yunnanese and southeast Asian creation myths. It is not part of the Naxi cycle which ends with the birth of three brothers.

¹⁴⁵Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, pp. 172-174.

¹⁴⁶Note that the integral version of the myth allows for another level of interpretation, which for its part, would reconstruct the status asymmetry between wife-givers and wife-takers. Any myth, however, ought to have numerous levels of meaning, and a structural analysis in the vein of Lévi-Strauss confirms the Mosuo creation myth as a matrilineal charter.

¹⁴⁷U. Eco, 'Language, Power, Force', in *Travels in Hyperreality*, Picador, 1987, pp. 239-255; p. 247.

¹⁴⁸R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 200; also J.H. Hutton, "The Meaning and Method of the Erection of Monoliths by the Naga Tribes", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (52) 1922; and refer to note 77 in Chapter III.

¹⁴⁹Zhan Chengxu, 'Matriarchal/Patriarchal Families of the Naxi Nationality', *Social Sciences in China* (3:1) 1982, pp. 140-155 and pp. 150-151; also Yan Ruxian and Song Zhaolin, *Yongning Naxizu de Muxizhi*, pp. 328-329.

¹⁵⁰Shih Chuan-kang, *The Moso*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁵¹Cai Hua, *A Society without Fathers or Husbands*, pp. 365-383.

¹⁵²J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 364, 377.

¹⁵³This marriage alliance is famous because it led to a war between Yongning and Lijiang. Lijiang tradition relates that the chiefs of Yongning and Lijiang use to intermarry and that Mu Ding's sister Mu Zhixian and the Yongning chief Ah Zhuo concocted a plot to invade Lijiang. The Yongning troops made up of Lüxi (Mosuo) and Xifan were defeated by the Naxi who then built a tumulus of piled up rocks, each stone counting for the decapitated head of a Lüxi and Xifan, to mark the place of their victory. This place is also known as Boashi, the place where the Pumi died, as is Baisha. J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p. 221, note 8. Rock comments that Naxi tradition is confusing, but this doubling up of names is well suited to a mythical worldview where events are interpreted in light of others, and (Sahlins') analogous circumstances. The same applies to the historical record. Incidentally, the Dongba manuscripts pertaining to the *War of Black and White* allegedly commemorate this war. The Mu Chronicles report that the Lijiang chief Mu Ding invaded Yongning territory in 1521 and 1522 confirming oral tradition. J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 114-115.

¹⁵⁴See the translation of the genealogical records of the Yongning chiefs in J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 364-377.

¹⁵⁵J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 308-313.

¹⁵⁶P. Hinton, "Do the Karen Really Exist?" in J. McKinnon and W. Bhruksasri, *Highlanders of Thailand*, 1983, pp. 158-168 and p. 161.

¹⁵⁷There were other places noted in the Tibetan records as doubled up east and west, see: R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, pp. 28-31. The Tibetans and the Chinese records also speak of two India, one which was where it should be and the other which was none other than Yunnan. See P. Pelliot, "Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du VIII siècle", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* (IV) 1904, p. 161.

¹⁵⁸See W. W. Rockhill, *In the Land of the Lamas*, pp. 337-340 for translations of the Chinese reports on the Nü Guo from the Sui and Tang Histories.

¹⁵⁹See Rolf Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, Plate II entitled "Ancient Tibet and neighbouring areas".

¹⁶⁰Refer to page 386.

¹⁶¹See W.W. Rockhill, *In the Land of the Lamas*, pp. 337-340 for the complete text as well as a translation of the relevant passage of the *Sui Shu* (Bk. 83).

¹⁶²R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, pp. 42-45.

¹⁶³Ibid. pp. 44-45. The character given in the Tang record for the queen of Nü Guo is 佉, which in current Chinese ethnological practice is sometimes used to designate the Wu (serf category) of Yongning, whilst the aristocratic Ngue clan is then given as 武. In either case, of course, the choice rests with the Chinese because both those characters are transliterations of non-Chinese words. However, as I mentioned above, the name Ngue 佉, figures in the genealogy of the Mu chiefs, and here, Mu Gong used the same character as the Tang record ascribes to the Ngue queen of Nü Guo.

¹⁶⁴See Ch. II and also J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, p.89.

¹⁶⁵Fang and He, Naxi dictionary

¹⁶⁶In fact, the *Sui History* relates that the first queen of Nü Guo to pay tribute to the Chinese court (the Sui dynasty, 581-618 A.D.) was of the Supi family. The word Supi (Tibetan Sumpa) is found among the Mosuo, where it designates the aristocracy. But the Yi and the Naxi (manuscripts) also

make use of this word to designate the upper stratum of society so it would appear that Supi was is not truly a clan or tribal name but a caste designation.

¹⁶⁷R.A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes*, p. 45

¹⁶⁸Ibid, note 121; also R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, map II, p. 86.

¹⁶⁹See M. Granet, *La civilization chinoise*, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, 1929, pp. 247-250. Also K.C. Chang, *Early Chinese Civilization*, Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 95-99. Note that the name Tang 唐 also appears in the records of the Han dynasty in connection with the Bai Lang tribes. Here (circa 70 A.D.), the Bai Lang Tang 唐 is written with the same character as that which will be given to the Chinese Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907). According to Pulleyblank and Karlgren, it was then pronounced Dang. See W.S. Coblin, "A New Study of the Pai-Lang Songs", p. 181. E.G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese*, p. 301; B. Karlgren, *Grammatica Serica, Script in Phonetics in Chinese and Sino-Japanese*, Gothenburg, Elanders Boktryckeri, 1940, p. 310. It is possible that the Tibetan Ton and Don, the Bai Lang Tang and the Nü Guo Tang are all connected. In the *Hou Han Shu*, the Bai Lang are also associated with the drug of immortality as was the Xi Wangmu, the Queen Mother of the Western regions.

¹⁷⁰J.F. Rock, ANKSWC, pp. 180-181.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

Conclusion

The object of this study was twofold: to explore the history of Naxi custom in context of the political transformation of the Sino-Tibetan frontier, and to explore the ethnic relationship between the Mosuo and the Naxi.

Where the first objective is concerned, careful analysis of the historical, mythological and ethnographic record has shown that feudal organization and with it, Naxi socio-cultural idiosyncrasies, were shaped by the Lijiang chiefs as they steered the course of history between two sets of constraints, on the one hand, the externally directed discourse of Confucianism and Chinese civilization, and on the other, the internal discourse of marriage alliances, magic and local ritual that spoke for internal legitimacy, and which belong to a broad and layered local context: Himalayan, Tibetan, Loloish and Burmic. Hence, whereas previous ethnohistorical theories made sense of the development of Naxi cultural specificities (religious manuscripts, marriage rules and ritual suicides) by treating those as persistent elements of an ancient folk tradition, this study argued that Naxi folklore does not begin with custom or culture but with *institutions* which were once intended to contain the folk within the feudal realm, and the feudal realm within the Imperial polity.

Whereas Chinese social science perceives in Mosuo matrilineal traits evidence of a former universal matriarchal stage, and whereas Western anthropology dismisses the concept of matriarchy as a figment of socio-evolutionary scientism and New Age feminism, this book makes the point that the Mosuo probably do

have a matriarchal past in the 7th century Nü Guo of the Sino-Tibetan borderland. This, however, confirms neither Marxian socio-evolutionism nor New Age utopianism. For the Nü Guo were no peaceful agrarian worshippers of Gaïa, but iron smelters, horse riders and warriors, and if current Qiang and T-B traditions are any indication, they were more than likely sky worshippers.

Meanwhile, in the light of comparison, Naxi socio-cultural idiosyncrasies are nothing less than variations on the cosmological and political modes of their neighbors. Naxi cosmogony (the story of the flood and original incest) has counterparts in Yi, Dai, Mosuo and Tibetan legends and creation myths but for the shifts which it operates to legitimize the Mu's own genealogy and the history of their ancestors' marriage alliances. Naxi marriage relations maintain the idealized position of the Maternal Uncle as is done in neighboring T-B societies, but the Naxi marriage system shifts the rules of alliance from matrilateral or bilateral cross-cousin marriage to preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage with far reaching consequences for social hierarchies, the politics of vendetta, and not least, gender relations. In fact, there can be no doubt that Naxi socio-cultural idiosyncrasies result of strategic, intentional, political adaptations, for religious traditions, kinship structures, and languages in northern Yunnan match the territorial and political boundaries established under feudal rule.

This book has proposed that when dealing with social change, anthropological theory needs to give personality and political will a place in the analytical method. As Sahlins writes, 'I am not suggesting some Neolithic great man theory of history. Nor do I speak of "charisma" - unless it be the "routinized charisma" that structurally amplifies a personal effect by transmission along the lines of established relationships'.¹ But on the other hand, it seems to me that the point at which the system institutes particular individuals (as emperors, tribal chiefs, magistrates, military officials, peasants, incarnate Lamas etc.), the psychological and intellectual disposition of persons does matter because it is at the three way juncture of Time, Society and Personality, that history and in its wake society gain a measure of unpredictability. Hence, it is also at this point that societies can be

expected to construct what defines their apparent cultural uniqueness, such as a Naxi pictographic script, a Naxi love suicide custom, and even perhaps, a Mosuo matrilineal system. This study therefore brought personal responsibility and psychology to bear upon history and society – in this case, and largely because of the paucity of the historical record, the personal and philosophical dispositions of the chief Mu Gong and the Confucian scholar Yang Shen.

Nevertheless, just as Sahlins sees it, history is here ‘anthropomorphic’ by reason of the disproportionate prestige that attaches to the chief or the king in the tribal system. Now, according to Friedman, prestige is accumulated by appropriating descendants, land, slaves, which in turn provides the structural dynamic for social transformation.² But I argued that the chief’s appropriation of the material means of production and reproduction is only secondary to his appropriation of cosmic capital, proximity to the gods and spirits of the land.

To be great, a chief must display not only superior might but also superior magical capacities. Thus, the chief Ah Cong who first unified the ancestors of the Naxi spoke the language of the birds and invented the local books, and Mu Tai who subdued the people of Baidi understood the books his illustrious ancestor and former incarnation had invented. But it is the cosmic capital invested in the things which the chief appropriates, rather than the things themselves, that legitimizes the monopolization of real power. For example, the chief accumulates cosmic capital as he obtains wives through war (diplomacy or conquest) because he does not take just any woman. He marries instead the daughter or even the wife of the defeated chief, in other words, a woman whose prestige is already established at the apex of her tribe’s genealogy, at ‘the highest level of the community’s genealogical structure’ – because only women of this class may confer unto him *new ancestral ties* (new gods) and with those the rights of territorial occupancy. And of course, the chief secures cosmic capital through ritual, because ritual confers social consensus. Therefore, all Naxi sacrifice to the *Ka* (the feudal lord) upon the return of the seasons when they sacrifice to Heaven and Earth, to the mountain gods and the gods of the soil, so as to obtain fertility, good health and prosperity.

Feudal rule owes a great deal to symbolic institutions. For it is in the adaptation of existing myth and ritual that the people of Lijiang and Yǒngning eventually subsumed their social and biological reproductions and with this, their territorial rights, into the reproductions of their feudal lords. And symbolic institutions are essential and indivisible productions of the social order because Order makes sense to a humanity that is only too aware that there exists above its own condition a set of greater contingencies upon which *all life* depends. These contingencies are affirmed in Time: in the regularities of heavenly movements which in real life bring the seasons, rain, sunshine, the growth of crops, etc. and their opposites, the irregularities of heaven, which make trees blossom in winter, droughts burn the crops, and floods rot them. They are also affirmed in Space because territory cannot just be occupied, it has to be negotiated and the original spirits of the land must be appropriately dealt with. But if Humanity is to flourish, human agency *must* mediate cosmic and chthonic domains. Hence, the organization of domestic space reproduces the cosmos, the Naxi house is supported by the *Mee-dv* (the heavenly pillar), the Mosuo house by the *Domi* and *Jimi* (male and female pillars), women and men sit on one side of the hearth or the other and the gods and ancestors keep each to their place.³ The space outside also keeps to the proper order of things, for all Naxi villages have their *Meebiu Da*: the place dedicated to the Sacrifice to Heaven, on the northern side, the high point: that of the gods and the ancestors. The political realm likewise mediates between heaven and earth. The tribal chief becomes a 'divine king' after he has succeeded in containing within his person, his ancestors and his descendants, the sole principle of mediation for all the tribes who live within his jurisdiction.

The Lijiang chief requests from the Chinese emperor to be granted the name Mu according to the ancient Tibetan royal ritual, because the Mu signifies the rope connecting heaven and earth, and the Mu chief considers himself a celestial king. Like the Tibetan kings of old, and not unlike the Chinese emperor himself, he negotiates between cosmic and chthonic forces and powers, and not least, between civilization and wilderness, between the places occupied by those who are already

his subjects and the wild places where recalcitrant hill tribes dwell. To quote from Marcel Granet, the king conquers territory because territorial unification 'humanises the land'.⁴ His domain is shaped as a cosmic ecology which he mediates at the centre, while ritual and myth create and recreate the world as it should be. The political order is here entirely absorbed into religion. But this symbolic hegemony does much more than mystify power relations. Over time, the symbolic realm altogether forgets its human origins. And so much so, that in the 21st century, when the Mu descendants have long been reduced to the stature of men, political relations have become custom; cosmic destiny has become history; the Sacrifice to Heaven has become a cult of nature; and the local people, a Naxi nationality, a *minzu*.

Which brings us to the second object of this study: the historical and ethnic connection between the Naxi and the Mosuo and the classification of Mosuo as a branch of Naxi.

We saw in Chapter I, that Chinese policy and social science theory do not always concur on what actually defines the *minzu* (nationality). As I mentioned then, however, Western anthropology has hardly arrived at a unifying theory on what Van den Berghe calls 'the ethnic phenomenon'. Following classic studies by Clifford Geertz (1963)⁵ and Frederick Barth (1969)⁶ the debates were for some time, and with the wisdom of hind-sight, somewhat unjustifiably polarized between those who stressed that ethnicity was a matter of 'primordial sentiment' and those who argued that ethnicity was a matter of contingency, whilst the object of study should lie with identifying the processes that made ethnicity instrumental to other types of political, economic and social mobilizations. Geertz defined the ethnic bond as a primordial tie deeply rooted in language, kinship, religion, custom and a sense of a 'natural – some would say spiritual – affinity.'⁷ Thus, Geertz stressed the difficulties facing new nation states in their attempts to found civil societies beyond and above ethnic identities.⁸ By contrast, Barth and later Patterson (1977)⁹ argued that ethnic groups are persistent because ethnic consciousness is culturally relative, strategic and adaptive, able to respond to

economic, environmental and political circumstances. So that Barth stressed the ethnic group's capacity to make selective use of culture in order to maintain historically persistent collective boundaries across which individual persons can for their part move in and out. Keyes (1977)¹⁰ and from quite a different approach, Van den Berghe (1981)¹¹ synthesized the debate by arguing that ethnicity was dependent upon both primordial and instrumental modes. According to Van den Berghe also, a broader evolutionary interest in the problem of ethnicity should take some account of the part played by the socio-biological origin of ethnic consciousness in the kin group. Meanwhile, in the same decade, Benedict Anderson proposed in *Imagined Communities* that the persistence of kinship metaphors in nationalist rhetoric was a matter of enduring poetics. And a few years later, in the wake of the Yugoslav wars, William Connor admonished that 'in ignoring the sense of kinship that infuses the nation, scholars have been blind to that which has been thoroughly apparent to nationalist leaders.'¹²

The most cursory review of anthropological titles will show that in the past two decades or so, post-modern concerns with the ideological foundation of political power have shifted the question of what ethnicity is or isn't, and what it does or doesn't do, to the problematics of constructed identities, colonizing projects and resistance, issues of representation, the self and the Other, and so forth. Such a shift of enquiry is certainly welcome but this approach should not neglect other categories of analysis. By focusing on 'what is really happening' in order to demystify what cultural and social fictions construct of collective reality, and by treating individual dissent, incident and exception as 'as real as' or indeed 'more real than' normative categories, anthropologists risk becoming blind to the implications which ideal systems hold for collective consensus and individual political and moral positioning. They also risk a perverse boomerang effect. Scholars who underestimate the ideal system of structural-functional norms in Mosuo society and focus instead on everyday practices may well conclude that Mosuo kinship simply fits in with the wider Tibetan cultural sphere, but in doing so, they not only miss out on identifying a substantial structural boundary, they

effectively succeed in reducing Mosuo matrilineality to a production of Communist ideological constraints, or the wishful thinking of Western mass media.

Speaking of ethnicity as ‘consciousness of being ethnic’, Stevan Harrell proposes that an ethnic group is ‘a group that has two characteristics to its consciousness. First, it sees itself as solidary by virtue of sharing at least common descent and some kind of custom or habit that can serve as an ethnic marker. Second, an ethnic group sees itself in opposition to other such groups, groups whose ancestors were different and whose customs and habits are foreign, strange, sometimes even noxious to the members of the subject group.’¹³ I would like to add that an ethnic group is also a group that *works* at its consciousness of being ethnic by working at its biological, social and spatial reproduction. For as Harrell’s recent study of ethnic boundaries in northern Yunnan and southern Sichuan shows, there are several ‘ways of being ethnic’ and culture (customs and habits) can play a variety of roles in establishing and maintaining the ethnic bond through time, from generation to generation.

Now, when one speaks of the reproduction of social groups in time, of course, whatever actual kinship reality may be, one is always within the domain of the imagination, i.e. the symbolic realm – rules of filiation and marriage, birth-rights, totemic membership, myths of origins, national histories, and at the utmost extreme, racial theories. But here, I do not truly speak of ‘imagined communities’ in the vein taken by Anderson, because all that makes sense of human existence, and all that actualizes the social process, rests with our capacity to imagine, in other words, with our capacity for culture. Anthropology, unlike political philosophy, needs not deconstruct culture to prove that culture is not really true because the relativity of cultural truth is a starting point in anthropological theory. But anthropology does need to understand how culture constructs *contextual* truths and what these truths may or may not do for our practices in ‘human being-ness’.

That the ethnic or national kindred is perpetuated by specific cultural constructs, relations of power, and/or historical accidents, and therefore imaginary,

circumstantial, economic and mythological truths, does not take away that the means which the ethnic or national group utilizes to shape cultural fiction into social action, and not least to shape political relations into kinship representations are meant to be taken seriously. Indeed, at times they are meant to be taken with the seriousness of biological survival – because when ethnic rhetoric insists upon the kindred nature of the ethnic or national bond, it effectively transforms culture into nature.

This study, as I wrote in Chapter I, drew from many schools of thought. Not so surprisingly perhaps, my conclusions on the making of Naxi and Mosuo ethnicity synthesize Keyes, Barth and Geertz's work, for I have stressed that where the Naxi and Mosuo are concerned, the ethnic bond has manufactured itself through conscious selection and the production of kinship ties which for their part are necessarily primordial ties.

In the context of northern Yunnan/southern Sichuan, Stevan Harrell notes several dynamics pertaining to ethnicity: an ethnicity that stresses kinship and endogamy (i.e. Nuosu), another that stresses culture (Han), and then a third which is contingent on history and local context and which shifts in its choices of ethnic markers between stressing at times culture, at other times language, and yet at other times kinship and affinal relations (Nari/Mosuo and Pumi). Whereas Nuosu ethnic boundaries are clearly marked by self-reference and strict endogamy, ethnic boundaries between Pumi and Nari appear blurred. Pumi and Nari frequently intermarry and dress similarly but they speak different although closely related languages. Pumi and Nari are Buddhist but they have maintained distinct yet similar folk traditions, and so forth. When explaining themselves to outsiders, Nari and Pumi may invoke culture, language and intermarriage to either blur ethnic boundaries (meaning: 'We are basically the same people') or to establish them (meaning: 'We are Pumi, not Nari' and/or vice versa). Significantly, none of these criteria, with perhaps the exception of language, is ever sufficient to either completely confuse or clearly distinguish Pumi and Nari. Meanwhile, outsiders regularly confuse the two people. From a Nuosu perspective, for example, Pumi,

Mosuo, Nari and Tibetans are all *Ossu* speakers and basically the same people. The Han too have often confused Mosuo, Pumi and Tibetans whom they have all called Xifan at some time or other. In the recent past, the fluidity of Nari and Pumi ethnic boundaries has been further evidenced by the fact that Nari and Pumi have been successively identified as Naxi, Tibetan, Mosuo and Mongols. Harrell concludes: 'In short, we cannot reconstruct Prmi [Pumi] or Naze [Nari/Mosuo] ethnic identity at any time in the past; we can only surmise that each local community presented a different picture.'¹⁴

In contrast to Pumi and Nari boundaries, contemporary Mosuo and Naxi ethnicities appear not so much fluid and blurred as somewhat slippery. Thus, Naxi and Mosuo languages are so closely related that they appear like dialect variations of one another, and yet they are not mutually intelligible. Naxi and Mosuo religious traditions are based on similar concepts of the afterlife and ancestor worship, and yet, they have different founders. But Naxi and Mosuo ethnic boundaries are slippery because they are the product of centuries of territorial management that has done its best to erase original cultural markers, some of those were once upon a time found on both sides of the Jinshajiang. In fact, linguistic, religious, and cultural boundaries between Mosuo and Naxi become entirely clear when they are viewed from the perspective of territorial boundaries – because *all* the differences between the two groups, be those subtle or obvious, correspond to well-defined territorial demarcations. Hence, Naxi and Mosuo ethnicities are probably best understood in the light of such boundaries as exist today between Italians and French, or Briards and Champenois, or Castillanos and Catalans, and which are likewise the product of layered ethnic and territorial integration, and a former process of feudalization.

The reconstruction of Naxi and Mosuo political and social histories certainly confirms Leach's argument that the transition from a tribal organization defined by *clan* to a feudal organization defined by *place* and the encompassing genealogy of the feudal lord, is not an easy one to make, but ethnohistory also confirms Anderson's thesis that the transition from a feudal or dynastic conscience

collective to ethnic or national consciousness holds comparatively few difficulties. In northern Yunnan, the distance between the dynastic condition founded in feudalism, and the ethnic state of consciousness which the removal of the overlords effected is relatively short because the latter builds upon the continuities established by the former, notably the belief in a common genealogy and what this proffers of rights of territorial occupancy and biological and cultural reproduction.¹⁵

Granted that the process of ethnic formation is a mythological process, that it is malleable, dependent upon interaction as well as traditions of self-perpetuation, and that neither culture nor society are ever static, granted also that the formation of Mosuo and Naxi ethnicities has been, to echo Chinese historian Bai Shouyi's own words on ethnic formation, the result of a 'process of association, separation and fusion, and emigration and immigration between different groups,'¹⁶ the question arises as to whether the Mosuo could not be Naxi. In 1956, a culturally sensitive policy might well have shaped a meaningful and workable Naxi nationality (*minzu*) inclusive of both the people of Lijiang and Yongning. After all, Naxi ethnic consciousness, defined in the present period as the consciousness of belonging to the Naxi nationality, is still in process in many parts of Lijiang (distinguishing 'people who are now Naxi' from the 'real Naxi'). But if such a suggestion is not in the realm of the far-fetched, the divisions and boundaries between Naxi and Mosuo should not be misconstrued or underestimated.

At the onset of their respective Liberation, the Naxi and the Mosuo opted for nationality status on very different terms. The Naxi, at least the revolutionaries amongst them, became members of the Naxi nationality willingly. The Mosuo, if they did not all resist, played a small part in the reforms effected on their behalf by the People's Liberation Army in 1956. And as I described in Chapter I, the post-Liberation experience soon convinced the Mosuo that their collective interests and, not least, their collective dignity did not rest with their membership in the Naxi nationality. But if ethnic consciousness was undoubtedly strengthened by the vicissitudes of the last decades, Mosuo collective identity and boundaries were

already well established by 1956, focused on the quasi-deified person of the Yongning chief, a common language, a common cuisine and etiquette, a style of dress, mythic ancestors, a national goddess, none of which the Mosuo shared with the Naxi or for that matter any of their neighbors unless those, as for example the Pumi, happened to live *inside* the feudal domain.

Thus, feudalism established between Mosuo and Naxi distinct and enduring habits of collectivity, customs and values legitimated by myths of earth, sky and blood. The passage of time conferred upon these myths and habits an eternal and natural truth that exceeded the human condition and reclaimed history, transcending the social and cultural order that had invented them. And it is this truth which, in turn, challenged the entirely new Communist order when it attempted to re-invent Mosuo authenticity.

¹M. Sahlins, "Other Times, Other Customs: The Anthropology of History", p. 518.

²M. Friedman, "The Asiatic Mode of Production".

³For a structuralist analysis of Naxi architecture reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the Kabyle house, see C.F. McKhann, "Fleshing Out the Bones: The Cosmic and Social Dimension of Space in Naxi Architecture", in Chien Chiao and Nicholas Tapp (eds.), *Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups in China*, Hong Kong, New Asia College, 1989, pp. 157-177.

⁴M. Granet, *La féodalité chinoise*, p. 63 [my translation from French].

⁵C. Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution", in C. Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963,

⁶F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston, Little Brown, 1969.

⁷C. Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution", pp. 108 -111.

⁸Ibid.

⁹O. Patterson, *Ethnic Chauvinism*, New York, Stein and Day, 1977.

¹⁰C.F. Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*, London Macmillan 1977.

¹¹P.L. Van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, New York, Elsevier, 1981.

¹²W. Connor, "Beyond Reason: the Nature of the Ethnonational Bond", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (16:3) 1993, pp. 372-389.

¹³S. Harrell, "Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them", in S. Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, pp. 27, 28.

¹⁴S. Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, pp. 193-194.

¹⁵In a broader theoretical perspective, so may be the distance between dynastic realms and the civil societies which emerge in the nation-state. See Hobsbawn on 'proto-nationalism'. E.J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹⁶Bai Shouyi, *An Outline History of China*, p. 16.

Appendix

Zi Tu Co Tu - The Descent of Humanity

The Mosuo Creation Story

Lamu Gatusa collected this myth in Labei in 1989, from Daba Adudashishuabbu who was then 68 years old. The original text is chanted in five syllable verses. The creation myth is chanted on numerous occasions, including weddings and the "Ceremony of skirts and trousers", the Ligshaibv.

A long, long time ago,
When the sky and the earth had just formed,
The sun and the moon had not yet appeared.
The sky was dusky and there was no light,
The earth was black and there was not light.
In the sky, there were no stars, there were no clouds,
On the earth, there were no people and there were no animals
Later the sun appeared in the sky
There were nine suns hanging in the sky.
A hot, poisonous vapor appeared,
All the things of creation were burned.
On the earth there were now only deep ruts and ridges.
The trees had burnt.

The only tree not to be destroyed by the heat was Pula'apu.¹

The rocks had melted.

The only rock that was not destroyed was Hayumi.²

Eight suns burned themselves out,

Only one sun was left in the sky.

It rose in the morning and set at night.

Later the moon appeared in the sky.

There were nine moons hanging in the sky.

A cold *Qi* emanated from the rays of the moon,

The trees froze and shrunk

Only Pula'apu did not freeze.

The rocks cracked from the cold.

Only Hayumi did not break apart.

Then eight moons melted.

There was only one moon left in the sky.

It rose in the evening and set in the morning.

When there was only one sun in the sky

When there was only one moon in the sky,

Humanity was born unto the earth.

First Abaddu came to the world³

Then the sky woman Gugumi descended onto the world.

They married and had descendants.

In the sky there was a race of gods.

On the earth there lived the sons and daughters of the gods.

Gugumi gave birth to three sons,

Our ancestors were born.

They lived by the side of a large lake

The lake was called Anianawa.

The earth was fertile and good to till.

From morning till night, the three sons labored.

Spring came, then winter, ah, many, many years.

They cultivated and harvested crops.

They were the sons of one mother,

They were like the five fingers are attached to the palm of the hand,⁴

As entangled as the roots of the tree.

Days passed in harmony.

One morning, they woke and went to the top of the field.

There they beheld a strange sight.

The earth they had so carefully plowed the day before had been turned over

[to its original shape

Green grass was already growing dense and thick.

There was no trace of the plow

The three brothers stood there, at the top of the field,

Their eyelids twitching,

Their heads, and heart nervous, their thoughts in disarray.

They thought hard but could not think.

They would come back at night to stand guard [at the field].

When night came,

Their crossbows were ready.

The moon appeared,

There was no wind and not even the sound of a bird could be heard.

The three brothers had come into the forest,

They glared at the field, watchful.

Then, a big green frog arrived.

It hopped into the middle of the field and turned over the earth.

It gathered the soil that had been plowed

And hopped to the top of the field where he called three times.

Then, it hopped to the bottom of the field and called three times.

It gathered the soil up little by little

Until the furrow were no longer visible.

The earth that had been plowed was now back to its original state.
The older brother was impatient, and ran to the field.
He got hold of the frog and hit it.
The second brother was furious, and he too came running.
He pointed at the frog and cursed it.
The third brother was kind-hearted. He walked across.
He advised his brothers not to be angry,
And he pleaded with the frog.
Perhaps the frog was divine,
They could ask it to explain his behavior.
The frog immediately answered:
“I am a frog sent by a kind god
Who wishes to help humanity escape the coming catastrophe.
For humanity is now faced with extinction.
The god of the sky and the god of the earth are fighting for supremacy,
They have been at war for three years and three months.
It is impossible to decide who is above and who is below.
The sky god wants to punish the earth god.
In three days, a great flood
Will submerge the earth and extinguish humanity.
You have no need to plow the fields,
You do not need to work so hard anymore,
you have to think of a way to escape.”
The three brothers’ faces were yellow as clay.
They stood still like grass blown by the wind,⁵
They did not know how they could escape.
The clever brothers asked the frog:
“Messenger of the King God, thank you.
Please now tell us how we could escape.
If we can survive in this world,

We will certainly worship you, light incense and prostrate ourselves.”

The frog [turned] to the three brothers

And explained in detail how to escape:

“Quickly flay the hide of an ox,

From the hide make a leather bag,

First and Second Brother, ah,

You must sew the bag with a thick needle and a thin thread.

First Brother, you must sit at the foot of the tree,

Second Brother, you must sit half way up the tree.

Third brother, you must sit at the top of the tree.”

The frog finished giving instructions on how to escape

And the two older brothers began to argue about who should kill the ox.

The frog then turned to the youngest brother and told him what he should do

[about the flood

“Kind hearted Codeiliusso, ah!

You may survive the disaster.

You must sew the bag with a thin needle and a thick thread.

Sew up the leather bag and sew it firmly.

Then, take the bag and place within it a cat, a dog,

A chicken and a fire chain.⁶

When you have climbed to the top of the tree,

Fasten the bag.

When the waters reach the top of the tree

The bag will float to the bank of the river

The floodwaters will not submerge the top of the tree.

Then you can use four things to measure the depth of the water..

Codeiliusso, ah!

You will survive the flood.”

The frog disappeared,

Changed into a puff of smoke.

Codeiliusso and his brothers arrived at the Pula'apu tree.
 The oldest sat at the foot of the tree,
 The middle brother sat halfway up,
 The third climbed all the way to the top
 And entered the leather bag.
 Three days and three nights passed.
 Black clouds rolled and thunder shook the earth.
 The sky grew dark and oppressive⁷
 The floodwaters churned earth and sky,
 The sun and the moon no longer rose,
 The stars no longer shone.
 Second Brother called First Brother,
 But first Brother did not answer.
 Only the sound of the water could be heard.
 When the floodwaters reached halfway up the tree,
 Codeiliusso was hiding inside the bag.
 He could not see the sky, he could not see the earth, and he was anxious.
 He called out but his brothers did not answer him.
 He waited and waited at the top of the tree.
 The nights were long and slow. How he suffered!
 There was only the sound of water.
 There were no sounds of people or birds.
 In his heart, oh,
 It was as though a wild fire was burning his body.
 He wanted to try out the depth of the waters.
 First he dropped the fire chain,
 There was a *gudong* noise.
 He understood that the waters had not receded.
 He stayed there at the top of the tree, waiting.
 Then, he took out the black cat.

But the cat did not call out.
 So he assumed that it had drowned in the water.
 Night passed and daytime came.
 He took out the little dog.
 The dog did not bark,
 So he assumed that it too had drowned.
 Then, day became night
 And he waited for the night to end.
 He took out the rooster and dropped it.
 The rooster called,
 Codeiliusso ah,
 Knew that the floodwaters had receded.
 He cut a hole in the bag and squeezed himself out.
 The sky and the earth were dusky,
 At the four directions, the ridges of the mountains were indistinguishable.
 The great lake had disappeared.
 The houses had been washed away.
 He walked upon a wasteland.
 Poor lonely man, all on his own!
 He did not know in which direction he should walk.
 The sorrowful cuckoo was his sole companion.⁸
 He sang the courtship tune, and walked into the mountain
 Looking for a mate.

Codeiliusso did not have a mate.
 He was all alone in the world. So lonely,
 He sang but there was no one to accompany him.
 He blew the leaf but no one answered him.
 He called the mountain god.
 The god Diyili heard his call

And an auspicious omen came from the mountain.

“Codeiliusso, ah!

I shall help you create a person to be your mate.

Walk for three days

To where the sun rises in the east,

Cut down the white azalea.

Then walk for three days

To where the sun sets in the west.

Cut down the red azalea.

I shall make people with the azalea.

After seven years, one will become your mate.”

Codeiliusso, ah!

Was happy but anxious.

“Kind-hearted mountain god ah!

I, on this earth, shall not live very long.

Seven years are so hard.

My head will be covered in white hair.

My hands and feet will be knotted like an old tree.

Please just let me wait seven months.”

The mountain god agreed.

[Codeiliusso] walked to the east.

He cut the white azalea.

He walked to the west

And he cut the red azalea.

The mountain god made a woman with the wood.

He sculpted figurines and buried them in the ground.

Codeiliusso grew impatient.

The wooden figures had been in the earth for three months.

He went to take a look.

The white azalea women could move their lips

But they could not speak.

When they opened their mouths, their speech was garbled, it was not human speech.

The red azalea people could stretch their hands,

But their small fingers could not move independently.

The feet and hands of the azalea people were not shaped like human feet and hands.

Codeiliusso, ah!

Threw the white azalea people to the east

He threw the red azalea people to the west.

He sat down and cried three times.

But no one came to comfort him.

He stood on a riverbank, calling three times.

But no one came to comfort him.

He turned to the sky and sang.

The sky god did not answer.

He poured his tears to the earth god.

The earth god ignored him.

He turned to the cave in the mountain and pleaded three times.

The mountain god answered him.

The mountain god asked him to solve the conflict of the animals,

He asked him to separate good and evil,

He asked him to walk to the Black mountain

To resolve the conflict that was taking place there,

To calm the chaos.

The chaos created by evil ghosts had to be suppressed

To allow the forest to be at peace again,

To allow one hundred birds to be at peace.

The wise Codeiliusso, ah!

Took hold of his bow and arrows and came to the foot of the mountain

There he saw two yaks fighting
Entangled like whirlwinds.
The white one looked like a cloud,
The black one looked like smoke.
The noise they made shook the forest,
The dust they lifted obscured the sky.
He drew the string of his bow and prepared the arrow.
He shot the arrow
And hit the black yak.
A wail came up from the valley,
A cry of joy came up from the hillside.
In the blue sky, sprang the calls of a hundred birds.
From the mountain peak, came the sound of a hundred animals dancing.
The black yak was an evil ghost.
The white yak was a kind god.
The evil ghost was suppressed, the evil Qi was also suppressed.
A happy song sprang up on the earth.
Once again the earth was at peace.
The white yak thanked Codeiliusso.
He told him:
“Kind-hearted human,
You have helped vanquish a demon king.
I shall tell you where you may find a mate.
On the night of New Year’s Eve,
Three heavenly women will descend on the human world to bathe.
Take a present to court them,
And wait on the banks of the lake.”
Codeiliusso came to the lake.
He waited until nighttime.
Three cold breezes blew on the lake.

Above the lake, one could hear the call of wild ducks.
 Three more breezes blew across the lake.
 The fish then called for help.
 In the sky, clouds passed one after the other.
 Then, between the moving clouds,
 The faces of three heavenly women appeared.
 Then, their laughter.
 The three sisters, holding hands,
 Descended upon the small island.
 Pearls and gold shone in their hair
 As did the bracelets on their arms.
 Their skirts billowed like pink clouds.
 They undressed and entered the waters of the lake.
 The moon rose in the east,
 And the heavenly women bathed in the moonlight.
 Codeiliusso, ah!
 All on his own, crawled on his belly, closer to the lake.
 He looked at the contours of the women's face and his heart beat fast.
 He reflected on his lot
 And his heart welled in his chest. Ah!
 A song came up on his lips.
 "Oh, Goddess from heaven
 You have come like the wind comes to the earth in spring,
 To blow on my frozen heart and melt my sorrow.
 I am a sole survivor upon the earth.
 Like a wild beast wounded by the cross-bow⁹
 A lonely man, living alone on the earth,
 I have walked and walked in search of a mate.
 But there is no woman on earth who could be my mate.
 I have walked across mountains in search of relatives,

But aside from the mountain god, I have found no one.
 I see the wild geese in the sky hover in pairs
 I see how, upon the earth, flowers
 And bees sing their soft mating songs.
 I see the red deer in the mountain
 Male and female galloping together.
 But in this world, I am alone
 For no one here can be my mate.
 Is there no kind god, ah,
 Who may help humanity escape from this sorrow?
 Is there no kind-hearted woman, ah,
 Who will marry me and help bring forth humanity?
 His song made the stars cry.
 His song moved the night.
 The three heavenly women stood still, at the heart of the lake,
 Quietly listening to his song.
 They forgot that time had come for them to return,
 That the moon was slowly descending.
 The three heavenly women had different temperaments.
 The three sisters also looked different.
 The older sister Mumigugumi
 Had a narrow face and her eyes were vertical.
 The second sister, Muminiassemi
 Had a wide face and her eyes were oblique.
 The third sister, Muminiajjami had a round face and her eyes were horizontal.¹⁰
 Codeiliusso, ah.
 Looked on.
 He chose the oldest of the three sisters.
 When the hundred birds began to call,
 The heavenly women had to return to the palace.

Codeiliusso grabbed the oldest sister by the sleeve.

Mumigugumi freed herself from his hand,

But she gave him the ring she had on her finger.¹¹

“Codeiliusso, ah,

In Heaven, I do not have a mate.

I also would like to [see] a powerful humanity.

But we must take care that the Heavenly Mother does not punish you,

You must ask Diggala¹² to help you.

Take this ring and come to me.”

She finished speaking, got up on a cloud and left.

Codeiliusso looked on at the heavenly women,

And stood, alone and sad, on the banks of the lake.

Codeiliusso went to see the earth god.

And the Earth god gave him a pair of wings to fly to the sky.

He placed the ring the heavenly woman had given him upon his breast,

Closed his eye and hung on to a cloud.

He flew for a day and a night.

Then, he heard the soft blowing of the wind.

He heard a burst of happy laughter.

He saw that a servant of the heavenly woman was washing herself.

He heard the rumbling of voices, people joking.

The laughter was coming from this place.

Codeiliusso sat at the foot of a tree, thinking.

He placed the ring quietly in the bucket.

The servant girl picked up her bucket and left.

The servant girl poured the water from the bucket into a pan,

And she heard a *sangju* noise from the bottom of the bucket.

Then, she saw a golden ring at the bottom of the bucket.

It was so bright that it hurt her eyes.

Mumigugumi saw the ring and she was delighted.

She knew Codeiliusso had come to Heaven.
She quickly took him into her house,
And there they loved each other for several nights.

But the Heavenly Mother smelt the scent of humanity.
In the stables, the oxen and the horses were nervous.
In the yard, the pigs and sheep walked nervously.
In the chicken coop, the roosters flapped their wings and crowed.
The Heavenly Mother dreamed that she saw humanity.

This was a bad omen.

She asked her daughters:

“There is a polluting stench in my house.
Something unclean has come into my house.

The stench of humanity is everywhere.

Have you killed something?”

Mumigugumi tried to answer:

“There is no human scent in our house,
This is the smell of sweat from a horse carrying loads,
The smell of sweat from the ox plowing the fields,
The stench of pigs and dogs fighting.

Mother, do not worry. Do not be frightened.”

“Heaven does not have any roads,
Where would there be a horse-carrying load?

Heaven does not have any fields,

Where would there be an ox?

You have brought a human being to the sky!

Now, quickly tell the truth!”

Mumigugumi had to tell the truth.

She had to go and get him.

When the Heavenly Mother saw Codeiliusso, ah,

She fell back in shock.

His tall handsome body,

His piercing eyes,

Caught the intelligent Heavenly Mother off guard.

The Heavenly Mother spoke carefully:

“Codeiliusso, ah,

Yours is an earthly race.

We are a race of gods.

How can sky and earth be united?

How can fire and water bind together?

How can the ox and the horse be put in the same stables?

You have come to heaven to find relatives.

What precious gifts do you bear?

What beautiful things have you brought with you?”

Codeiliusso, facing the Heavenly Mother said:

“I have as many sheep and cattle as there are stars,

But there are no roads in the sky.

So I could not bring my sheep and cattle to Heaven.

I have as much gold and silver as there are stones,

But gold and silver are heavy.

So I could not bring those things to Heaven.

I have as many fine horses as there are leaves on the trees,

But I could not bring them on such a long journey.

So, I have brought wisdom and intelligence.

Please, make peace with me.”

The Heavenly Mother said.

“You don’t have wings, so how did you come to the sky?

If you don’t have what it takes to sing with the birds,

If you don’t have ability¹³, then how can you marry my Heavenly daughter?

You can marry my daughter, if you have ability.

I shall ask you to perform a number of tasks.”

Codeiliusso was cut in his heart.

Codeiliusso bitterly agreed.

Then, the Heavenly Mother bid Codeiliusso to open a road through the mountain
And to cut down nine forests.

Codeiliusso spent one day cutting down one tree.

From the first light at day break

Until the moon lit the darkness of night,

He sweated and his hands bled.

But he did not cut down nine forests.

Codeiliusso thought carefully.

“Even in one year, I could not cut down nine forests.

I could not cut down nine forests

In a lifetime.

Then, I shall have neither sons nor daughters.

I may as well return to the earth as soon as possible

And let my songs be my companions.”

Codeiliusso gave up

And made his way to the heavenly woman

To tell her that he was returning to the human world.

But the heavenly princess could not bear to see him leave.

She gave him nine axes,

And taught him the magic formula to cut down the forests.

“Codeiliusso, ah,

Don’t give up when you meet with difficulties,

Strength, no matter how great, cannot match skill.

You take the nine axes to the top of the nine mountains

And once you get to the top, call out:

“One divine ax cuts down one forest,

Nine divine axes cut down nine forests.

All axes move at once,
Nine forests fall at once!”
Codeiliusso listened to her words carefully,
And he left to cut down the nine forests from nine mountains.
And he cut down the nine forests in the nine mountains.
When the Heavenly Mother saw that he had cut down the forests,
She hid her surprise in her breast,
But she spoke to make things more difficult.
“Codeiliusso, ah,
Cutting down forests in nine mountains cannot count as a great task.
You have to burn the timber from these nine forests
Then, I will agree to your request.”
Codeiliusso went to burn the nine mountains.
He burned all day long but did not even finish one hillside.
He began to feel anxious again
And went off to take his leave of the heavenly woman.
But the heavenly woman once more enlightened him.
“Codeiliusso, ah,
To do anything, one must have patience.
Even for those who can fly to the sky,
Things happen gradually.
Take a torch and place it at the foot of the mountain.
Then go to the mountain peak and call out:
‘God of Fire, come toward the mountain top!
God of the Wind, blow toward the mountain top!
Burn the trees, burn the forest, burn the mountain,
Nine forests from nine mountains burn at once!’ “
Codeiliusso did as he was told.
The wind blew in the mountains
Whistling and urging the Fire god.

Fire set the timber ablaze

And the nine forests were burned to ashes.

Codeiliusso went to see the Heavenly Mother.

“You asked me to cut down the trees, I cut them down.

You asked me to burn the mountains, I burned them.

Now you must give me your daughter in marriage.

I want to take her to the human world.”

The Heavenly Mother frowned and said:

“Cutting down the forests was an ordinary thing,

Cutting down a forest cannot count as something important.

Burning the timber was a soft task.

Burning timber cannot count as anything significant.

Do you have the ability to support my daughter?

I want to see that you are able to grow crops.

Take three measures of buckwheat seeds,

And see if you can grow 33 measures of buckwheat ears.”

Codeiliusso was suffering, but he went to see the heavenly woman

To discuss how he could grow the crops.

They invited one hundred beasts to come and turn over the earth

And invited one hundred birds to come and spray the seeds.

The seeds were all sown.

Everyday, Codeiliusso kept watch at the fields.

When the buckwheat was ripe, he went to harvest it.

But he was three seeds short.

Codeiliusso was furious and helpless.

The heavenly woman once more came to talk with him.

The turtledove had swallowed the grains.

She told him to make a crossbow.

Codeiliusso cut down bamboo and made a bow.

Then he cut down bamboo to make his arrows.

He used hemp to make the bowstring.
 Then, he followed the heavenly woman to find the turtledove.
 On the first tree, there was a peacock.¹⁴
 On the second tree, there was a parrot.
 The turtledove was perched on the Perguda tree.
 He readied his bow and arrow and he aimed. And he aimed.
 Codeiliusso did not dare to shoot his arrow.
 He was worried to miss the dove.
 He was scared to lose the three grains of buckwheat.
 The heavenly woman saw him hesitate,
 She pushed him with her elbow.
 The arrow hit the turtledove.
 The dove cried and dropped.
 The three grains of buckwheat were in its gible.
 He took the grains and went to see the Heavenly Mother.
 "Oh, Heavenly Mother, ah,
 You wanted me to open the land and I did.
 You wanted me to grow buckwheat and I did.
 Even the three grains missing I brought you.
 Now, in return, you must agree to give me your daughter."
 The Heavenly Mother continued with her lies:
 "Codeiliusso, ah,
 Opening land and growing crops are ordinary things
 Which cannot count as difficult things.
 I have seen columns cast of gold and silver,
 I have seen columns made out of jade
 I have seen a central column made out of turquoise,
 But I have never seen a column made out of water.
 If you have power,
 Please make a column out of water."

Once again, Codeiliusso went to the heavenly woman's room.
They thought for three days and three nights.
They went to fetch some ox and sheep wool to make a cord.
They put the cord in a water channel.
Then, the water froze and formed a column of ice.
It took one night to fashion a column out of ice.
Before the sky had lighted, they woke the Heavenly Mother
And brought her to the ditch to see the water column.
The Heavenly Mother hid her surprise.
Then she spoke, hypocritically,
"Codeiliusso, ah,
Your ability really is astounding.
It seems that you are truly a capable man.
But you have not done the very last task yet.
Please go fetch three drops of milk from a Mother Tiger
To cure my head-ache."
Codeiliusso thought and thought:
"I did all the hard work
I accomplished all that was skillful,
But this thing is more than impossible.
I shall have to trick the Heavenly Mother."
He went to hung into the mountains
And came across a yellow weasel.
He killed it and took three drops of milk from it
And went back to see the Heavenly Mother.
The Heavenly Mother wanted to test the milk.
She took it to the horse stables.
The horses did not react and went on eating their fodder.
Then she took the milk to the sheep pens.
The sheep did not react and kept on bleating.

Then she took the milk to the chicken coop.

The chickens flew out in a panic.

The Heavenly Mother was angry. She said:

“Codeiliusso does not tell the truth,

He tried to trick me with weasel milk.”

Codeiliusso then took his crossbow and went back into the mountains.

There he saw a hungry wolf.

He drew his bow and shot the wolf with his arrow.

He drew three drops of milk and went back.

The Heavenly Mother put the milk in the horse’s stables.

The horses did not move.

Then she took the milk to the roosters’ coops.

The roosters did not fly away. They did not call out.

Then she put the milk in the sheep yard.

The sheep all hugged together.

The Heavenly Mother then said:

“Poor Codeiliusso, ah,

He could not milk the tiger, so he milked a wolf

And brought back wolf milk to trick the old woman.”

Codeiliusso, ah,

Dropped his head in dejection.

The more he thought about it all, the worst he felt.

The heavenly woman arrived.

“Codeiliusso, ah,

If you do not see rain, how could there be traces of rain?

If winter has not yet arrived, how can there be frost?

If you want to milk a tiger, you have to grasp at opportunity.

In the very high Naargaggu mountain,

It has been snowing for seven days and seven nights.

The mother tiger has come down from the mountain

She has come down to seek some food.
 The wind has pushed the snow and her way back is blocked.
 You have to look for the tiger's nest.
 Kill the babies and flay their skin.
 Disguise yourself as a baby tiger and milk [the mother].”

Codeiliusso went up the mountain.
 He found 77 caves,
 But did not find the tiger's tracks,
 He searched through 99 dense forests,
 And found the tiger's lair.
 He killed the baby tiger and flayed their skin.
 The mother tiger came back from her hunt.
 He imitated the baby tiger's leaps.
 The mother came to feed him.
 He took three drops of tiger milk.
 He carried the milk out of the tiger's lair.
 He went to the Heavenly Mother's house.
 The horses in the pen galloped and jumped.
 The ox and sheep wailed and ran in panic.
 The Heavenly Mother knew that he had really brought back the tiger's milk.
 In her heart, she began to respect him.
 But in her heart, she still wanted to give him trouble.
 “Codeiliusso, ah,
 You have suffered the sorrows of this world,
 You have survived disasters.
 Go and wait at the spring waters in the mountain.
 I shall bring my three daughters
 And you may choose whichever one you like.”
 Codeiliusso went to the mountain spring,

He waited and waited but did not see the heavenly woman.

A gust of hot wind blew.

Sweat began to pour from his cheeks.

A gust of cold wind blew.

His teeth shattered.

A black cloud and a black fog descended.

Stones and sand eventually settled.

Wild beast then appeared.

The mother tiger walked ahead,

Nodding her head, wagging her tail, she came walking.

He did not dare touch her.

Then the ferocious leopard walked toward the centre.

She opened her mouth and bared her teeth.

He did not dare to look at her.

Finally, a long snake appeared,

Nodding its head and flinching its tail.

Codeiliusso was terrified.

He could not recognize Mumigugumi.

He hesitated and hesitated and he could not decide.

Then, he looked at the snake

And grabbed the snake's tail.¹⁵

The snake turned into Muminiajjiami.

Codeiliusso had made the wrong choice.

He was sorry and sorrowful.

The horizontal eyed Muminiajjiami,

Was very happy and said:

"Codeiliusso, ah,

When you grabbed my tail, you chose me.

You will take me to the human world,

And I will be your wife.

This is how the Heavenly Mother has organized things
And this was also your choice.”

Codeiliusso could do nothing else but take her to make one family.
And he prepared to take her to the world.

Clever Mumigugumi, ah,
She had worked so hard to help humanity.
She had loved the earth man.
How could such a love not succeed?
A dark cloud welled up in her heart. She was jealous.
She wanted to punish this couple.
She wanted to make them sick.
She hid the seeds from the five cereals
In a place no one would ever find.
But Muminiajjiami had guessed her sisters' thoughts.
She sewed the rice in the collar of her shirt.
She hid the rape turnip in the belt of her skirt.¹⁶
He hid the corn in her shoes.¹⁷
Then, as husband and wife, they descended into the world.

Codeiliusso, ah,
With his two capable hands,
Was busy from morning till dawn.
Muminiajjiami, ah,
With her own heavenly wisdom,
Was busy building a house.
In the place washed by the floods,
Codeiliusso sewed the rape turnip.
In the fields submerged by water,
He planted the rice.

In the remote corners of the earth,
 He planted corn.
 Muminiajjami, ah,
 Went into the mountain to harvest the wild hemp.
 With this, she wove beautiful clothes.
 They fished downstream,
 And had wonderful food.¹⁸
 Both husband and wife worked hard to grow the crops.
 And days went by in conjugal happiness.

But the heavenly Mumigugumi
 Saw the green crops on the earth,
 And she knew that they had stolen the seeds.
 When the heavenly woman prayed,
 She put her hands together and whispered incantations.
 She cursed:
 "That the rice grown upon the earth
 Only grow near irrigation channels.
 That it would not grow without water.
 That the corn grown on the earth,
 Shriveled on the ears,
 That its tuberous roots become fibrous.
 That the rape turnip grown on the earth,
 Be heavy as rocks to carry,
 And turn into water when it is eaten."
 Her curse came true
 And the five cereals were thus changed.
 The husband and wife who lived on the earth suffered.
 The sky woman, Mumigugumi,
 Saw that the husband and the wife were not destroyed

And that the days were passing in happiness.
She waited until the night was dark and came down to the earth.
With a horse whip, she beat the crops.
She whipped with great strength.
She broke down the wheat.
She whipped it so furiously
That her hands were bleeding.
Her blood colored the stalks.
Mumigugumi, ah,
Became more and more angry.
She wanted to take revenge upon the husband and wife.
She changed herself into a wild ox.
She trampled the crops.
Muminiajjami saw the wild ox eating the crops,
She tried to drive it away.
She called out to Codeiliusso to come with his arrows.
Codeiliusso in a dream saw Mumigugumi,
But he could not refuse Muminiajjami.
He had to take his bow and arrow and go over to the fields.
He put poison on his arrow
But he shot at random.
He hit the wild ox in the leg, and the ox ran away.
Codeiliusso, ah,
In his heart had doubts.
He followed the wild beast.
Codeiliusso ran quickly.
He followed it across 12 river beds but could not catch up.
He followed it across 9 mountains but could not catch up.
Then he arrived at a small stream.
Codeiliusso was hungry and thirsty.

He sat near the stream to rest.

Of a sudden, the wild ox turned into a heavenly woman.

Turned into a laughing Mumigugumi.

She said to Codeiliusso:

“Codeiliusso, ah,

We cannot be together,

But today, due to the organization of Heaven,

I want to serve you well.”

Before Codeiliusso,

She placed thirst-quenching fruits

And fragrant vegetables and rice.

Codeiliusso took the fruit and ate.

Codeiliusso helped himself to the various dishes.

The sweet fruit dissolved his fatigue.

The fragrant vegetables filled his stomach.

Codeiliusso felt dizzy and fell asleep.

During the time which it takes a sapling to grow into a forest,

Codeiliusso was not to wake up.

The grass on the earth grew and died.

The grass on the earth died and grew again.

Still he did not wake up.

At home, Muminiajjami, ah,

Waited until the sun set,

Waited until the moon rose.

And still did not see her husband.

The leaves of the trees fell, and they sprouted.

The leaves of the trees sprouted and they fell.

Spring came, then winter arrived.

Still she did not see her husband.

She pleaded with the birds in the sky,

But they did not answer.

She asked the ants on the earth,

But the ants did not answer.

She asked the bees that can fly.

The bees crossed the river and over the mountains.

They found Codeiliusso,

But when they called him, he would not wake up.

The bees took a drop of his sweat to bring back to the heavenly woman.

Muminiajjiami then went on the road herself.

The heavenly woman Mumigugumi, ah,

After she had given Codeiliusso the enchanted drink,

Had turned herself into a big hairy ape.

She waited at the mountain pass.

Muminiajjiami, ah,

Arrived at the mountain pass.

The monkey, feigning concern, asked:

The birds in the sky are not as nervous as you are.

The beasts in the earth do not run as fast as you do.

What drives you thus?"

Muminiajjiami explained everything.

The monkey spoke sweetly to comfort her:

"It is not easy for a woman, ah,

To go into the mountains.

The snow and the wind penetrate the body like knives.

It is not easy to cross the rivers.

For when the rivers are angry they make great waves.

I can help you find him.

Please give me your shoes."

Muminiajjiami, anxious to see her husband,

Her heart burning,

Feeling weak,
Took off her shoes and gave them to the monkey.
She thanked the ape for searching for her husband.
Muminiajjiami was grateful,
She turned around and went home.

The monkey arrived at the mountain gorge.
He took off the shoes and rubbed them down against the rocks.
The mountain rocks wore them down.
The monkey waited until the sky had grown dark
And he returned to Muminiajjiami.
“Muminiajjiami, ah,
Your husband cannot be found.
I searched the bamboo mountain and saw no trace of him.
I smelt the earth but could not pick up a scent.
I walked alongside the mountain springs,
But saw no footprints.
Look at my shoes!
Tomorrow, I shall look for him again.
Please get me some shoes made of iron.”
Muminiajjiami, ah,
Went to get some iron shoes.
The next day when the sky lighted,
The monkey went to look for the man.
He hid in a deep valley,
Took off his shoes and rubbed them on a rock.
He rubbed until sparks flew.
He rubbed until night fell,
Until the sole of the iron shoes were worn down.
The monkey went back to the house.

“Muminiajjiami, ah,

I walked along the horizon and did not see him.

I inquired from the benevolent animals in the mountain.

They all said that they had not seen him.

I asked all the benevolent beasts that fly.

They all said that they had not seen him.

Look at how worn the iron shoes are.

You must give up.

I see that you are miserable

And that you would be better off living with me.

You would not need to grow crops, for I can give you food.

You would not have to weave cloth, for I can give you clothes.”

Muminiajjiami listened to him.

She wanted nothing else than to fulfill the original promise: to give birth to
[descendants.

She became the monkey’s wife.

The monkey went into the forest

And collected wild fruit for her to eat.

He peeled the bark of the trees and gave her clothes to wear.

Muminiajjiami, ah,

Could not suffer to live with the monkey.

Muminiajjiami, ah,

Missed her home.

They came back to the old house.

There she gave birth to a boy and a girl/

The children she had brought forth, ah,

Were half-human and half-monkey.

Muminiajjiami, ah,

Saw that her plan was now fulfilled.

She recovered her heavenly and womanly shape.

She made hailstorms, wind and snow.

She made rain and thunder.

Codeiliusso, ah,

Was woken by the thunder.

Codeiliusso, ah,

Was woken by the rain.

He woke up and walked to the banks of a great river.

There he saw that his hair had grown from black to white.

He saw that his face had changed.

Angry he walked back to his home.

When he saw his wife,

He was shocked and happy. He was sorrowful and could not speak.

Then he saw the two children.

Their bodies were entirely covered in hair.

Only their faces were human.

The children were weird and ugly

But he did not have the heart to kill them.

Besides, he could no longer father his own children.

He took a pot of water and secretly brought it to the boil.

Then, when the children were not looking,

He poured the boiling water over them.

The two children were frightened of the water.

They put their hands over their heads to protect themselves.

Their body hair was boiled away.

Only the hair on their head was left.

The boy and the girl married.

The boy and the girl became husband and wife.

Humanity descended, one generation after another,

One generation after another.

¹Divine tree of no specific species.

²Divine rock.

³Abaddu is the great Mosuo sky god.

⁴In other words, they were inseparable.

⁵In Mosuo perspective, the grass that is blown by the wind is soft and this how the brothers' bodies feel: without energy, and therefore standing still, incapable of moving.

⁶A chain struck against a stone to produce sparks and make fire.

⁷The Mosuo text gives 'moved down' [towards the earth] where I use oppressive.

⁸Mosuo folklore relates that the cuckoo cries because it lost its mother a long time ago and is still calling for her.

⁹Note that in the Dongba manuscripts, the Naxi do not have cross-bows but long bows.

¹⁰Mumi means 'heavenly girl/woman', the second part of each name means 'vertical eyes', 'horizontal eye', etc. The suffix 'mi' indicates the feminine.

¹¹The ring is not a token of love but her seal.

¹²The Earth god (*di* = earth, *ggala* = god). Note that this is a gender-less deity.

¹³By ability and intelligence is meant shamanic or magical ability. This is already made explicit in the fact that the Heavenly woman wonders about Codeiliusso's ability to fly and to sing with the birds. In the Naxi version of this myth, Cosseilee'ee climbs the sword ladder without cutting his hands and feet. We shall see below that Codeiliusso's 'bride service' is, as for Cosseilee'ee's, about proving that he has magical powers.

¹⁴The Mosuo word for peacock is *kosomi*. Lamu Gatusa points out that no peacocks are found in Mosuo country today.

¹⁵Codeiliusso chooses the snake because it is the least frightening of the three animals. However, one should note that Co is at a mountain spring, in other words in the domain of the snake. Thus by choosing the snake, Co claims kin and the right of occupancy in the wild, for this is a story of the ancestor hero who marries a Naxi princess. This part of the story is really fascinating because, as I wrote in Chapter IX, tigers and leopards are for their part associated with aristocracy and royalty. Hence, Codeiliusso takes for kin the sky woman who is the most closely associated with the earth and common people.

¹⁶Hence the rice is offered to the gods but not the rape turnip which was polluted. The rape turnip is associated with fertility, whilst the belt is a sexual symbol. We see here that even the Mosuo harbor some notions of pollution regarding women and human procreation but we also find in this passage another clear distinction between what is divine and heavenly and what is human and earthly.

¹⁷Corn can be offered to gods, but it is also thrown at the ghosts during exorcism.

¹⁸This is an interesting detail because many Mosuo, and especially the people at Lake Lugu do not eat fish. See Chapter IX.

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