

- 4. For example, Lucian Pye, *China: An Introduction* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).
- 5. On this point, see William Safran, 'Language, Ideology, and State-Building: A Comparison of Policies in France, Israel, and the Soviet Union', *International Political Science Review* Vol.13, No.4 (October 1992), pp.397-414.
- 6. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 70-71.

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## State Discourses, Minority Policies, and the Politics of Identity in the Lijiang Naxi People's Autonomous County

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Invoking a panethnicity theory approach to understanding identity formation processes among PRC minorities, this article examines how individual members of the Naxi 'minority nationality' of the Lijiang basin in southwest China's Yunnan Province construct their identities in the context of the contemporary post-Mao era. In particular, the article traces out the variable ways in which Lijiang-basin Naxi of a variety of statuses position themselves - within their own society, with respect to the several other 'nationalities' (*minzu*) with whom they co-reside, and with respect to Han Chinese culture in both the Yunnan context and in the context of the larger PRC society.

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The Naxi 'minority nationality' of the Lijiang basin in southwest China's Yunnan Province has long been influenced by the policies of the Chinese state. It is particularly the policies of the post-1949 Chinese socialist state - including minority policies - that have arguably had the most dramatic impact in reshaping Naxi identities. Recent discussions in panethnicity theory in the United States have drawn attention to the significance of state policies in shaping and even creating 'minority' identities. The usefulness of panethnicity theory, however, lies not only in its attention to the potent role of the state in shaping ethnic identities, but also in its attention to the agency of the citizens who are the objects of the policies and their own appropriations of state categories in defining and redefining their identities. In keeping with panethnicity theory's dialectical approach, this article examines how minority and other policies of the Chinese socialist state have been played out in the village and town contexts of the Lijiang basin by specifically focusing on how individual Naxi construct their identities in the contemporary post-Mao era. In particular, the article traces out the variable ways in which Lijiang-basin Naxi of a variety of statuses position themselves - within their own society, with respect to the several other 'nationalities' (*minzu*) with whom they co-reside, and with respect to Han Chinese culture' in both the Yunnan context and in the context of the larger PRC society.

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State minority policies and the discursive practices which they have generated have played a powerful role in shaping Lijiang-basin Naxi identities, and consequently my analysis here entails an examination of how these particular policies have been played out in both village and town contexts of the basin through processes of accommodation, appropriation, and contestation. While I focus on minority policies, I also examine their integral relationship to other dimensions of state policies which have had an impact on all citizens of the PRC.

I begin my discussion with some historical and cultural background on the Naxi, and then suggest that the oscillating official policies concerning minorities in post-1949 China can be characterized as embodying two distinctive discourses. The prevailing discourse is one premised on hierarchical distinctions, encompassing narratives of socialist modernity, unilinear social evolutionism, and the Chinese 'civilizing project'. In contrast, however, there is also a discourse premised on notions of authenticity, in which certain 'traditional' cultural practices (both minority and Han) are valorized by the state and written into official policies. I then turn to an examination of how these dual state discourses are reflected both in the various non-minority-related statuses which are significant to Lijiang-basin Naxi, and in the contextually variable discourses which basin Naxi draw upon in talking about minority nationality aspects of their identities. I argue that the tension reflected in the dual discourses embedded in state minority policies is integrally connected to the distinctive post-Mao era relationship between 'modernity' on the one hand and 'tradition' on the other which exists throughout the PRC. I conclude with some specific reflections on how panethnicity theory can provide insights into Naxi experiences in particular and the position of PRC minorities in general.

### Naxi and the Chinese State in Historical Perspective

While the Naxi are officially classified as a minority, they are unquestionably in the majority within the Lijiang area, constituting approximately 250,000 of the 300,000 total population of Lijiang County. Most Naxi live within the bounds of what is now the Lijiang Naxi People's Autonomous County, in the northwestern corner of Yunnan Province. The county seat is Dayanzhen, usually referred to by outsiders as Lijiang, which has a population of approximately 60,000. Dayanzhen occupies the centre of the 7400-foot Lijiang basin, above which towers the more than 18,000-foot Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (Yulong Xueshan).

The Lijiang basin represents the historical and political heartland of Naxi culture, as well as a part of Naxi society which has been considerably exposed to and influenced by Chinese culture over the past millennium.<sup>2</sup>

Even after centuries of Chinese influence, 'Naxi-hua' (the Naxi language, which is a Tibeto-Burman language) still serves as the lingua franca among Naxi and the several other nationalities who live in Naxi-predominant areas; it also serves as a primary marker of 'insider' versus 'outsider' identity.<sup>3</sup> Historically, most Han who have come to reside in the Lijiang area have quickly learned that it was to their advantage to learn to speak Naxi-hua, and to learn Naxi 'folk customs' (*fengsu xiguan*) as well.

Naxi, like Tibetans, are believed to originally have been a 'Qiang' people from the Qinghai Plateau.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary Han and Naxi historians estimate that the ancestors of contemporary Naxi migrated to the Lijiang area approximately 1,400 years ago, during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD). Geographically, the Naxi were sandwiched between the powerful non-Chinese Nanzhao state in the Dali basin to the south, the periodically powerful Tibetans in the mountains to the northwest, and the raid-prone Yi (as they are now referred to) peoples in the mountains to the northeast. While renowned as fearless fighters, the Naxi were nevertheless quite conscious (at least as depicted in contemporary ethnohistoric accounts) of their relatively small population and consequent vulnerability.

Beginning in the Yuan Dynasty (1206–1368 AD), the Naxi 'kingdom' entered into a tribute relationship with the Chinese state, under the *tusi* system;<sup>5</sup> for the Naxi, this entailed the formation of a two-tiered structure of élites and commoners. Exposure to the influence of Chinese culture was facilitated by the in-migration of Chinese soldiers during both the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. These soldiers were stationed in the Lijiang area and frequently intermarried with Naxi women. Naxi were formally incorporated into the Chinese empire in 1723, during the Qing Dynasty, under the system of 'regular government' (*gaituguliu*).<sup>6</sup> It has been suggested by some scholars that this historical shift had tremendous ramifications in re-shaping Naxi social organization, particularly Naxi gender practices, along then-prevailing neo-Confucian norms.<sup>7</sup> In addition to Confucian practices, basin Naxi culture has historically been influenced by Buddhism in both Chinese and Tibetan (Nyingmapa sect) forms, by Daoism, by Tibetan Bon practices, and by Chinese popular cultural practices.

Contemporary Naxi society in the basin manifests the unmistakable legacy of neo-Confucian practices, despite widespread stereotypes in both Chinese popular culture and among visiting foreigners that Lijiang Naxi are 'matriarchal'.<sup>8</sup> Patrilineal descent, ancestor veneration, and clan exogamy, along with patrilocal residence, are the kinship and marriage norms which continue to shape Lijiang-basin Naxi social structure. Arranged marriages were common before 1949, as were non-patrilineally related cousin marriages (both of which were also common among Han in Kunming).

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Many Confucian rites and rituals persist in the contemporary Lijiang basin as well. In fact, it is difficult to determine what distinguishes many aspects of basin Naxi social structure from, for example, the social structure of Han Chinese cultures in surrounding Yunnan or neighbouring Sichuan (at least in terms of rural Han practices). With respect to gender, Naxi women consequently have borne the same official structural liminality as Han women given Confucian norms. Although their status has been mitigated by post-1949 changes, Naxi women still consider their lot to be a hard one.

Economically, as is still the case throughout most of China, the rural/urban distinction is significant in the context of the Lijiang basin. In Dayanzhen, there is a long-standing practice of family-based small-scale entrepreneurialism among both men and women, since Dayanzhen has for centuries been an important stop on the trade route between Tibet and Kunming. Private entrepreneurial activity has re-emerged in the post-Mao era, but the majority of town residents are employees in either state or collective work units. In the villages of the basin, the post-Mao era decollectivization of the communes and implementation of the household responsibility system has ensured a return to the patrilineal extended or stem family as the basic economic as well as social unit.<sup>9</sup>

Politically, Naxi of the Lijiang basin have tended to appropriate the politics of the socialist Chinese state in playing out power struggles within their own society. Perhaps their long-standing historical experience of being geographically enmeshed between powerful empires has contributed to this ethos. From the perspective of the central government, Naxi are perceived of as being both 'relatively advanced' (*bijiao fada*) and 'obedient' (*tinghua*) as a minority in the PRC; from the perspective of both Naxi and non-Naxi residents of the Lijiang basin, Naxi are renowned for their zealotry in demonstrating their adherence to the Communist Party *status quo*. There is a tongue-in-cheek expression in Dayanzhen: 'Even before Beijing has made a move (in implementing a new political campaign), Lijiang has already started' (*Beijing hai mei dong, Lijiang yijing kaishi le*). A large percentage of Naxi (some local estimates run as high as 90 per cent) became participants in the underground Communist Party in the period just before Liberation in 1949, an implicitly acknowledged strategic move to jump on the bandwagon of the obviously soon-to-be-victorious Communists. The Lijiang basin is, to my knowledge, one of the few areas of the PRC where land reform and class labelling were carried out not once, but twice – the reason stated by basin Naxi being that these early 1950s political movements had not been carried out with sufficient vigilance (*bu gou lihai*) the first time around. Han from Kunming who were 'sent down to the countryside' (*xia xiang*) to Lijiang during the Cultural Revolution testify to the political excesses (even by Cultural Revolution standards) of the basin area.

The intention of this somewhat draconian depiction of politics and power in the Lijiang basin is to convey the direct and potent impact which PRC state policies have had there, and to trace out some of the historical factors which have shaped the distinctive relationship between basin Naxi and the Chinese state.

### State Discourses and Basin Naxi Subjectivities

Minority policies reflect discursive themes which inform all state policies in the PRC. These discursive themes are the legacies of the Imperial (221 BC–1911 AD), Republican (1912–49), and Socialist states (1949–present).<sup>10</sup> They are particularly highlighted in contemporary minority policy, but are also strongly reflected in other areas of state policy, such as medical, education, birth planning, women's association, economic, and of course political policies. With respect to the socialist Chinese state, such policies are inspired from within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), forwarded to the State Council (i.e., the government), and passed down through the various concerned bureaus through central government, provincial, city or prefectural, county, and ultimately 'grassroots' levels. At each of these levels, policies are conveyed to the 'masses' through a variety of mechanisms: through political study meetings in individual work units, through schools at all levels, through the posting of policies in public spaces (such as town squares), and through all sorts of other forms of media: daily loudspeaker broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, books, television, and movies.<sup>11</sup>

One way in which to examine the discursive themes which inform so many policies of the state is to distinguish, for analytical purposes, state discourses premised on notions of 'hierarchy' from state discourses premised on notions of 'authenticity'. Discourses of hierarchy are fundamentally concerned with 'modernity' and 'progress', whereas discourses of authenticity accord a legitimacy to 'tradition' or to difference beyond the evaluations of discourses of hierarchy.<sup>12</sup>

Discourses of hierarchy, and their concern with modernity and progress, reflect three major epistemological lineages. The first is the vision of socialist modernity,<sup>13</sup> which is a direct legacy of the former Soviet Union and Mao's interpretation of Marxism-Leninism. Modernity is equated with economic progress and achievement, and is to be achieved through the power of science and technology. The striving to achieve the 'Four Modernizations', which has been the persistent motto of the post-Mao era under Deng Xiaoping, reflects a continuation of Mao's emphasis on science and technology.

The second lineage, which is also a legacy of the former Soviet Union, is the ideology of unilinear social evolution which has its origins in

Frederich Engels'<sup>14</sup> elaboration of Lewis Henry Morgan's model.<sup>15</sup> As this scheme is interpreted in the PRC, minority nationalities are classified as to their 'stage' of 'social evolution', which inevitably translates to the degree of their relative 'backwardness' (*luohou*) in contrast to Han 'progress' (*fazhan*); their 'feudal' (*fengjian*) – or even more 'backward' – pasts are to be overcome through acquisition of the 'technological' and sociocultural features appropriate to the social evolutionary stage of socialism.<sup>16</sup> In this scheme, while Han Chinese society is not considered entirely exempt from its need to overcome its own 'feudal' past, Han culture is always cast as more 'advanced' than minority cultures.

The third lineage is a legacy of the longstanding worldview of the Confucian state, according to which Han culture is regarded as 'civilized' (*you wenming*) in contrast to that of non-Han peoples who were defined historically as 'barbarian' (*yeman*). Again, however, to be Han is not automatically to be civilized: one must also be 'cultured' (*you wenhua*), or educated.<sup>17</sup>

These three strands intermesh to shape discourses which implicitly advocate assimilation as a solution to the 'nationality problem' (*minzu wenti*), or the problem of any form of diversity or difference. These discourses are not only used throughout the contemporary PRC to draw distinctions between Han and minorities, but also to draw distinctions between urban and rural residents, between intellectuals and workers, and, to some degree, between males and females.

The actual everyday terms which are used throughout the PRC in discourses of hierarchy refer to: progress/modernization versus backwardness; being cultured/educated/civilized versus being uncultured/uneducated/uncivilized; scientific (*kexue*) forms of knowledge and practice versus those forms of knowledge and practice which are viewed as unscientific/feudal superstition (*bu kexue/fengjian mixin*); hygienic (*weisheng*) practices versus non-hygienic (*bu weisheng*) practices; and 'open minded' (*kaifang de sixiang*) tendencies versus conservative/secretive (*baoshou/baomi*) tendencies.

Discourses of authenticity, on the other hand, provide a discursive space to acknowledge difference outside of the polarizing paradigm of hierarchy and progress. With respect to PRC minorities, the legitimization of 'minority nationality' identity has its roots in first Lenin's and then Stalin's nationalism policies. Although Stalin's intention was probably to foster eventual assimilation,<sup>18</sup> the authenticity of minority identity is reified, at least in terms of sanctioning or valorizing linguistic and certain other cultural practices. This strand of the discourse reinforces an image of the 'many-nationality country' which is a centrepiece of the post-Mao socialist Chinese state. The other strand of this discourse, which is clearly

reflected in other arenas of policy as well, also creates a space for 'tradition' with respect to certain Han and even minority cultural practices. Such practices as fall in this category are placed beyond the hierarchical evaluation of whether they are 'modern' or 'backward'. They are simply included in the package of Chinese modernity.<sup>19</sup> While they are not entirely equalitarian *per se*, discourses of authenticity imply a tolerance for cultural diversity and difference in general.

Everyday terms used throughout the PRC which reflect this more neutrally-evaluated status include the notion of (Han) 'traditional culture' (*chuantong wenhua*) as occupying a space outside the progress-versus-backwardness continuum; 'authentic' (*zhenshi de*) cultural practices, among both minorities and Han, are another example of practices outside this space. Religion (*zongjiao*), in contrast to feudal superstition, is not viewed as backward although it is not necessarily part of the discourse of progress. *Hum. Tru strong. It is backward.* The same special status applies to 'folk customs', and to the revered quality of 'ancient' (*gula*) things and practices, which are juxtaposed against the stigmatized quality of things and practices which are 'old' (*jiu* – and thus considered feudal and backward), or which are 'primitive' (*yuanshi*). *but not so much as to have to be*

Clearly these discourses, of hierarchy and authenticity respectively, are not completely disconnected from each other, and in fact can be seen as oppositions along a single continuum of state hegemonic discourse. Indeed, in many cases authenticating discourses have been appropriated into hierarchizing schemes, and hierarchizing discourses have been appropriated into authenticating schemes. However, the delineation of these two discourses is more than just an intellectual exercise. Understanding the location of the 'traditional' in the 'modern', essentially distinguishing 'good tradition' (as *chuantong*) from 'bad tradition' (as feudal superstition), is vital to understanding the PRC's distinctive vision of socialist modernity. *It's not at all clear.*

Discourses of hierarchy and of authenticity have alternately come to the forefront of policies at different political junctures during all three of the historical periods mentioned above.<sup>20</sup> Both discourses, especially discourses of hierarchy, are clearly reflected in state policies, and minority policies are no exception. The inspiration for tracing out these multiple discourses lies (as mentioned above) in the potent way in which state discourses inform everyday discourses and practices in the Lijiang basin. What I will be turning to shortly is how differently situated Naxi use these state formulated categories and discourses in negotiating their own identities.

### Statues of Distinction

Before embarking on how 'discourses of hierarchy' and 'discourses of authenticity' are played out *vis-à-vis* basin Naxi negotiations of minority

identity, it is important to also understand how these discursive practices, especially discourses of hierarchy, interface with other statuses in everyday basin Naxi life. Temporarily excluding minority identity, the statuses which inform Naxi identities are, for the most part, the same statuses which inform Han identities. These include urban (i.e., town) versus rural (i.e., village) residence, educational background, occupation, and party membership. Gender and generation represent additional statuses which crosscut all of these distinctions.

The dichotomy between rural and urban sectors of post-1949 Chinese society reflects a 'caste-like system of social stratification'.<sup>21</sup> While the line between 'rural personnel' (or 'peasants') and 'urban personnel' is beginning to be obscured in the contemporary PRC, it is still a powerful distinction – both conceptually and as lived experience. This is no less the case in the Lijiang basin than anywhere else in the PRC. Residence status in Dayanzhen or in the villages is ascribed by birth,<sup>22</sup> and youth who are residents of Dayanzhen are assured of eventually gaining a position in a state or collective work unit (although this is beginning to change in Dayanzhen as in other parts of the country). Opportunities for rural youth are much more restricted. The quality of the educational system in the villages, while much better than in more remote areas, is not comparable to that of Dayanzhen. The army, once the great hope for social mobility and an eventual work unit job among rural youth (albeit primarily males) during the Maoist period, takes only senior high school graduates now; there are many more of these from Dayanzhen than from the villages. Young men from the villages also lack the same opportunities to obtain employment in state or collective work units and 'eat the state's rice' (*chi guojia de fan*) as their fathers and grandfathers did, the latter having served as a great reserve labour and administrative force for the government during the 1950s and 1960s in many remote work units where urban Han were unwilling to go. For a variety of reasons, young Naxi women from the villages are even more unlikely than young men to leave their peasant status.

Clearly, the rural/urban dichotomy serves as a marker of distinction in the discourse of hierarchy in the Lijiang basin. Peasants and the village lifestyle in general are considered by most Dayanzhen (town) residents as 'relatively backward' and village living conditions as 'non-hygienic'. Additionally, peasants are conceptualized by Dayanzhen residents as having a lower degree of 'culture' and as being more 'conservative' – both in the sense of hanging on to old cultural practices and in the sense of resistance to new ideas. Just as the Naxi characterize themselves as an 'honest' (*laoshi*) and 'hospitable' (*haoke*) people – terms which urban Han often use to typify both minorities and Han peasants – Naxi peasants are also characterized as relatively 'honest' and 'hospitable' by Naxi residents of Dayanzhen.<sup>23</sup>

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Between and within the different villages of the Lijiang basin, principles such as relative degree of 'backwardness', 'cleanliness', and 'poverty' (*qiong*) are used as comparative evaluative criteria, especially by young women considering marrying into the villages. More prosperous villages, especially those which have burgeoning entrepreneurial activities, and which often, coincidentally, have better quality soil to begin with, view poorer villages contemptuously as 'believing in Chairman Mao' (*xin Mao Zhuxi de*), seeing residents of such villages as lazy, holding back the Four Modernizations, and as generally backward.

Education is also an important criterion in the discourse of hierarchy among Naxi of the Lijiang basin. Dayanzhen is the locus of one of the three original schools established in Yunnan Province under the Nationalist Government, now the Lijiang Prefecture Number One Middle School. Dayanzhen continues to produce a large percentage of students with scores which not only get them into the Yunnan Province Nationalities Institute in Kunming and the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing, but also into Yunnan University, Beijing University, and other key universities throughout the country. Scholastic achievement is a marker of status for both young men and young women in the Dayanzhen context, though considered more critical for the former than the latter. Whether one is able to graduate only from junior high school rather than from a senior high school, or able to test only into a technical college rather than a university, affects one's future job assignment and the prestige upon which classmate and agemate relationships will continue to be based. For example, classmates who test into university-level schools tend to look down upon (*kanbuqi*) those who do not.

Education is thus inextricably connected to state or collective work unit jobs (although many higher level schools are no longer arranging job assignments, abdicating the job-seeking role to the graduating students themselves). A position in a state work unit is greatly preferred over assignment to a collective work unit, since salaries are usually higher, work is usually lighter, and benefits are much better. Gender also plays a role in the hierarchization of work units. My Dayanzhen interviews indicate that women are much more likely to work in collective work units and men to work in state work units.<sup>24</sup>

Party membership remains another key variable in evaluating one's relative power and consequent prestige in Dayanzhen. In the rural context of the Lijiang basin, prior to the post-Mao period, Party membership was an extremely important criterion for asserting one's position of power, although this seems to be increasingly less the case now. Thus, in addition to the rural-urban distinction, education, occupation, and Party membership are key distinctions which factor into discourses of hierarchy in the basin.

Any attempt to formulate a concept of 'class' in the Lijiang basin would need to take all of these distinctions into consideration.<sup>25</sup> Education levels in particular are associated with being more 'advanced', more 'modern', more 'cultured', and, implicitly, more Han.

In contrast to these statuses which I have suggested reflect larger societal discourses of distinction, regional identity in the contemporary PRC can arguably be seen as invoking discourses of authenticity (though it can also serve as a powerful basis for asserting essentialisms which can ultimately also be used for purposes of making hierarchical distinctions). However, minority identity is a status which informs Naxi identity in ways that are significantly different from Han distinctions of regional identity, and state minority policy discourses have clearly played a central role in this. Teasing out these discourses is ultimately also revealing of where Naxi individuals place themselves *vis-à-vis* notions of 'modernity', 'tradition' and/or 'backwardness' with respect to the state.

### Negotiations of Naxi Minority Identity

In terms of their everyday lives, in some ways minority identity in and of itself is not much more of an issue for the Naxi of the Lijiang basin than regional identity is for Han residents of other parts of Chinese society. Naxi are the predominant group in their local society, they speak Naxi-hua much as other Chinese citizens speak their respective regional dialects,<sup>26</sup> and they eat distinctive Naxi foods much as other Chinese citizens eat their regional cuisines. However, for Lijiang-basin Naxi, as a group of people who have been greatly influenced by Han Chinese culture, minority identity is distinguished from regional identity as a status by virtue of the fact that 'minority nationality' status is the creation of specific policies of the Chinese socialist state, and is inextricably linked to both discourses of hierarchy and of authenticity.

Questions which I addressed to Lijiang-basin Naxi of diverse backgrounds about what it means to be Naxi elicited a variety of often ambivalent responses. These responses reflect the contradictions intrinsic to state minority policies. They also reflect Naxi appropriations of the discourses which these policies have engendered, which Naxi use in situationally variable negotiations of their own identities.

A number of informant responses reflected what I have earlier referred to as discourses of authenticity, whereby informants would cite a litany of practices which Chinese ethnologists and 'common people' (*laobaixing*) alike refer to as 'folk practices'. These are the types of practices invoked throughout the PRC to talk about differences between minorities and Han, between Han of different regions, and between Han and foreigners. For

Naxi informants, the list of practices usually includes Naxi language, Naxi diet (in which Han are depicted as 'eaters of dog meat', and Naxi are depicted as drinkers of *suyou cha* – yak-butter tea – and eaters of *baba* – a fried bread), holidays (the Naxi as celebrating the Sanduo Festival and the Torch Festival),<sup>27</sup> 'religion' (Naxi as having '*dongba* culture'),<sup>28</sup> medicine (Naxi as having *Naxi caoyao* – implying a distinctive herbal medicine practice),<sup>29</sup> music (Naxi as having 'ancient Naxi Daoist music'),<sup>30</sup> clothing styles (with specific reference to Naxi women's *yangpi*),<sup>31</sup> and – unanimously – gender (specifically Naxi women's 'bitter lot' and 'capableness').

Beyond these sorts of categories which acknowledge, and to a certain degree validate and even celebrate, cultural difference (albeit in a state legitimated discourse), there were also contextually variable discourses which implicitly involved an evaluation of the position of Naxi in the larger hierarchical Chinese scheme of things. One position among informants was that the Naxi are 'about the same as the Han' (*gen Hanzu cha bu duo yiyang*). This was a particularly frequent refrain in Dayanzhen, where many a resident would recount how his or her family was in fact really Han, tracing family lineage to an apical Han patrilineal ancestor who had migrated to the Lijiang area from Nanjing (or Jiangsu in general) during the Ming or Qing dynasties (i.e., the aforementioned soldiers). Other criteria for this position (of Naxi being about the same as Han) was that Dayanzhen is a relatively 'civilized' and 'cultured' place, and that Naxi-hua (as spoken in Dayanzhen and throughout the basin) is becoming inundated with loan words from Chinese. I would argue that these various positionings on the parts of both Dayanzhen and other basin Naxi reflect their belief that basin society sufficiently mirrors Han society in the ways which they feel most significantly denote 'advancement'. I was often advised that if I wanted to seek 'real' Naxi people who spoke 'real' Naxi-hua and had 'real' Naxi culture, I should go to the more remote, mountainous areas to the north and northwest of the Lijiang basin.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer from these latter discursive representations either that basin (including Dayanzhen) Naxi deny their intrinsic 'Naxiness', or that basin Naxi equate the concepts they are referring to as 'Han culture' (*Han wenhua*) with the self-identified Han who reside in the basin. It is clear from the everyday cultural politics of life in the basin that there is a definite 'insider' (i.e., basin Naxi) versus 'outsider' (anyone, Han or otherwise, who does not acknowledge the Naxi status quo) ethos operating in the basin. An equally frequent refrain from those Dayanzhen families who trace their patrilineal ancestry to Han from Nanjing or Jiangsu is the expression 'once we were Han' (*benlai women shi Hanzu*), with the clear implication that they had undergone a

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metamorphosis to becoming Naxi at some point in the intervening generations. This expression is the same expression used by Han who have moved to the basin and integrated themselves into basin Naxi society – whether through marriage or other circumstances. This does not apply to the increasing numbers of Han technocrats (military, Party, and government-related) who live in the ‘new town’ (*xincheng*) as opposed to ‘old town’ (*gucheng*) parts of Dayanzhen, nor does it apply to a culturally segregated village of *Shandong ren* (i.e., Han from Shandong) in the basin who have kept to themselves since they migrated to the basin during the Cultural Revolution; nonetheless, members of these latter groups are clearly regarded as outsiders in basin Naxi society. The appropriation of state discourses, I suggest, is precisely that – i.e., the use by basin Naxi of omnipresent, if historically variable, discourses premised on shifting state policies to assert their superior position with respect to other minorities in the basin and beyond, with respect to Han individuals who reside in the basin, and, I would argue, even with respect to idealized notions of (‘high’) Han culture. ‘Han culture’ is used as an abstract gauge against which to measure the ‘advancement’ of Naxi Dayanzhen culture; while the hierarchical nature of the discourses on culture and civilization have clearly been internalized by basin Naxi (in both town and village contexts), it is more in a sense of an appropriation to assert basin Naxi, especially Dayanzhen Naxi, status as being certainly as good as idealized notions of Han culture, rather than in a sense of ‘internalized oppression’.

There were always some Naxi men who were particularly strong subscribers to the ‘men of fame’ (among whom they included themselves) view of the world. These individuals would proclaim that the Naxi were ‘greater than the Koreans [referring to the aforementioned evaluation of Naxi as having a per capita ratio of individuals who had received higher education second only to the Korean minority in the PRC], even greater than the Han’. Proponents of the Naxi greatness model would cite the phenomenon of foreign and Chinese scholars coming to Lijiang to study the Naxi (starting with Joseph Rock)<sup>32</sup> as further evidence, invoking a notion of foreigners flocking to Lijiang to pay tribute to the Naxi, an image which is reminiscent of Chinese notions of visits to Beijing to pay tribute to the emperor. Among Naxi scholars, papers are written to ‘prove’ that the Naxi were the originators of certain concepts or practices. One article by a fairly prominent Naxi scholar, for example, proclaims the Naxi to be the originators of the concept of ecological balance and environmental conservation based on his analysis of Naxi dongba texts.

Even the virtually universal basin Naxi appropriation of state discourses on both social evolutionism and civilization/ancientness were used to assert the intrinsic superiority of Naxi culture. The basic line was that, while the

Naxi are ‘relatively backward’ in comparison to the Han (this part would always be stated in a quick, non-emphatic, and almost dismissive way), they are ‘relatively advanced’ in the larger scheme of PRC minorities (this was always strongly emphasized). Their written (dongba) script, ‘dongba culture’, ‘ancient history’, and general degree of ‘culture’ would be cited as testimony to this status. The ways in which Naxi talk about cultural identity – their own, that of the Han, and that of other minority groups – epitomize the hierarchical scheme according to which discourses of progress versus backwardness, and of the civilized/cultured/educated versus the uncivilized/uncultured/uneducated merge with other state discourses, such as those on hygiene versus lack of hygiene, and science versus superstition.

The stereotypes which basin Naxi hold of other nationalities living in and around the Lijiang basin reflect a general *kanbuqi* (‘to look down upon’) tendency. They stereotype the Bai as poor, hardworking but willing to do anything for money, stingy, dishonest, dirty, uneducated, and, overall, as backward.<sup>33</sup> The Yi they characterize as poor, eating only potatoes and corn (as opposed to rice and wheat like basin Naxi), dirty, and backward.<sup>34</sup> The Tibetans they typify as wild (literally, barbarian, or *yeman*), and usually as backward and dirty.<sup>35</sup> The Mosuo, the matrilineal ‘cousins’ of the Naxi who are also officially classified as Naxi, are characterized as being not only backward but downright *luan* (chaotic, disordered) given their perceived ‘matriarchal’ practices (see endnote 8). The ‘new town’ Han technocrats are generally ignored, and the ‘*Shandong ren*’ Han village and other pockets of Han-identified villagers in the basin (who usually live in areas with relatively poor soil) are looked down upon as poor, dirty, and backward.

If a ‘basin Naxi-centric’ geographical/spatial model<sup>36</sup> is invoked to illustrate the nature of these hierarchical dichotomies, Dayanzhen, located at the centre of the basin, is associated with progress, culture, cleanliness, and a high degree of (equivalent to ideal Han) ‘cultural’ influence. Naxi villages of the basin, extending out from Dayanzhen in different directions, are associated with relative backwardness, relative uncleanness, and relative lack of culture (though Dayanzhen residents make more of the relative degrees of these categories than do basin village residents). Bai villages in the basin are a bit lower on the scale of all these counts than Naxi villages, as is the *Shandong ren* (Han) village. Finally, located in the really remote, mountainous, poverty-stricken reaches beyond the basin (especially to the north and the west) are the most backward, dirtiest, least ‘cultured’ domains inhabited by Yi and Tibetans.

Ironically, these remote, mountainous domains are also the domains of the ‘authentic’ Naxi, the speakers of ‘real’ Naxi language which is unadulterated by Han loan-words, and the bearers of ‘real’ Naxi culture: however, these Naxi are exempt from the negative categories which their

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geographical/spatial domain would otherwise dictate. That basin Naxi invoke this discourse of authenticity to exempt fellow Naxi from the negative evaluations of hierarchizing discourses on other minorities not only reflects the contradictions embedded in PRC discourses on minorities, but also the degree to which Naxi have selectively appropriated these discourses. Additionally, it reflects the post-Mao era relation between 'tradition' and 'modernity', whereby 'traditional culture' (invoking the authenticity discourse of 'folk practices' and things 'ancient') is distinguished from 'feudal superstition' (invoking the hierarchical discourse of backwardness and anti-science/progress/modernity/hygiene).

Minority identity clearly plays a role in Lijiang-basin Naxi society as a discourse of distinction, albeit in a somewhat less overt manner than the other distinctions and statuses outlined earlier. The situationally variable basin Naxi discussions on minority identity reflect the same lineages as other discourses of distinction in the basin. Those concerned with the hierarchical placement of Naxi most clearly dovetail with (or at least parallel) hierarchizing distinctions along lines of urban versus rural residence, education, occupation, and Party membership. Those concerned with authenticity valorize certain cultural practices.

It is clear that the dual discourses of hierarchy and authenticity which are embedded in minority and other state policies both inform and reflect a narrative of modernity which is distinctive to the socialist Chinese state, and which is clearly a legacy of the Maoist era. In this narrative, the valorized aspects of minority (and Han) 'tradition' occupy a special position alongside the progress- and civilizing-focused notions of 'modernity' in state policies; it is aspects of minority (and Han) cultures which are labelled as 'backward' that are juxtaposed against 'modernity' and officially criticized. PRC minority policies and the discursive practices which they generate play an integral role in the contemporary post-Mao narrative of modernity. An understanding of the particular contours of nationalism in the PRC, specifically in terms of China's official self-representation as a 'many-nationality country', must take into consideration how both discourses of hierarchy and authenticity are played out with respect to notions of a distinctive socialist Chinese modernity.

### Panethnicity Theory and Basin Naxi Identities

Yen Le Espiritu's recent work on Asian American panethnicity engages in a number of critical observations about the important contributions which panethnicity theory makes to previous theories of ethnicity and national identities. In contrast to earlier debates between primordialist versus instrumentalist theories of ethnicity, panethnicity theory emphasizes the

ways in which ethnicity is coercively imposed by the state, the ways in which multiple layers of ethnicity can operate for individuals and groups affected by panethnic categories and identities, and the continual way in which ethnic identities are created and re-created.<sup>37</sup> In his work on Muslim Chinese, Dru Gladney also advocates a 'dialogical interpretation' *vis-à-vis* 'cultural-primordial' and 'circumstantialist-instrumentalist' perspectives on ethnicity; for Gladney this is especially critical in the context of the contemporary PRC given the powerful and privileged role which state polices play in the fundamental creation and shaping of minority nationality identities.<sup>38</sup>

Espiritu emphasizes that panethnicity theory's focus on the importance of the political role of the state in shaping ethnic identity does not ignore either the economic or the cultural dimensions of panethnicity.<sup>39</sup> Thus, for basin Naxi, it is critical to understand their advantageous economic position given their status as basin-dwellers (both town and village residents), as having access to a relatively good educational system, and as serving as cadre/administrator representatives of the Chinese state in other minority areas especially; nonetheless, it is also critical to understand that this does not exempt them from the minority policy and popular discourses of the Chinese state.

Espiritu also points out that, while panethnicity might originally be imposed by the external influence of the state, it is ultimately not only an imposed identity and can indeed represent a political resource for insiders. For Espiritu, 'panethnic boundaries are shaped and reshaped in the continuing interaction between both external and internal factors.'<sup>40</sup> Stevan Harrell addresses this external/internal dynamic of panethnicity from the perspective of the centre/periphery interactions which characterize the various 'civilizing projects' of the Chinese state. While depicting civilizing projects (such as the Communist project in the PRC) as 'asymmetrical dialogues between centre and periphery', Harrell nevertheless moves us towards a more Gramscian notion of hegemony in which he points to the complicity (albeit to varying degrees) of 'peripheral peoples' in civilizing projects. Examining the linkages between the 'ideological discourse of the centre' and 'the ethnic discourse of the periphery' is critical in understanding the development of ethnic identity consciousness.<sup>41</sup> In his analysis of pan-Indian identity in the US, Stephen Cornell has pointed out how 'the language of the dominant group categorization and control has become the language of the subordinate group's self-concept and resistance.'<sup>42</sup> While basin Naxi are engaged in accommodating and internalizing the discourses engendered by the minority policies of the state, they are simultaneously engaged in appropriating and reshaping them into alternative narratives of identity.

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Panethnicity theory's focus on 'multiple levels of ethnicity' is key to understanding the relationship between external and internal discourses in determining how ethnic groups are designated.<sup>43</sup> In the context of the PRC, minority nationality identities reflect the shifting, situationally variable significance of sub-nationality, nationality, and supra-nationality boundaries of ethnicity. Panethnicity theory allows for an understanding of ethnic organization as 'multitiered, situational, and partly ascribed.'<sup>44</sup> As Gladney has pointed out, in addition to potentially unifying them under the category of 'minority nationalities', the labelling process also can juxtapose minorities against one another.<sup>45</sup> Thus, while basin Naxi recognize the need to accept the categories and labels of the state, they also use those categories to distinguish themselves from other minorities. Espiritu defines the panethnic phenomenon of 'ethnic switching' as 'the relabeling of individuals' ethnic affiliation to meet situational needs';<sup>46</sup> I believe this concept is particularly useful in understanding the multiple and sometimes contradictory ways in which basin Naxi talk about their identities.

To conclude, panethnicity theory offers to the terrain of theories of ethnicity and nationalism a way of understanding the emergent, multi-layered, and situational sensibilities which are reflected in the distinctive narratives of minority identity which basin Naxi have created in response to the hegemonic discourses of the Chinese state.

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#### NOTES

1. It is not my intention to depict 'Han Chinese culture' as a monolithic entity, nor to essentialize the tremendous regional and other dimensions of cultural variation which characterize Chinese societies. Nevertheless, for the analytic purposes of this paper, the trope of 'Han Chinese culture' is used as Lijiang basin Naxi themselves use it: to refer to the influences which both

the Chinese state and Chinese popular culture have had on their local culture.

2. This discussion is specifically concerned with Naxi of the town and village contexts of the Lijiang basin (*Lijiang hazi*), and not with Naxi of the much more remote areas to the north and northwest of the basin. With the important exception of Naxi who live in such relatively low-lying (elevation approximately 4000 feet) fertile areas along the Jinsha River (*jianghian*) as Shigu and Judian (who have been considerably influenced by Han culture), Naxi who reside in the mountainous areas (*shanqu*) to the north and northwest of the basin have been much less influenced by Han Chinese culture than have Lijiang-basin Naxi. For recent ethnographically based work on Naxi of these more remote areas, see Charles F. McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones: Kinship and Cosmology in Naxi Religion, Volume One* (PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1992) and Emily Chao, *Depictions of Difference: History, Gender, Ritual, and State Discourse Among the Naxi of Southwest China* (PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1995).
3. There is an awareness among both town and village basin Naxi residents that an increase in the number of loan-words (*jienci*) from *Han-hua* (Chinese) has occurred over the last few decades. While the ability to speak Han-hua is a marker of education, and while the ability to speak Kunming-hua (the Kunming dialect of Mandarin) had a spate of fashionability among 'hip' Dayanzhen youth in the early 1990s, Naxi-hua is still unquestionably the prevailing language of the basin.
4. For a more historically contextualized analysis of both the referential term 'Naxi' and the dynamics of the shaping and reshaping of 'Naxi culture', refer to Joseph Francis Rock, *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947); Peter Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom* (London: John Murray, 1955); Anthony Jackson, *Na-Khi Religion: An Analytical Appraisal of the Na-Khi Ritual Texts* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979); Li Lin-Ts'an, *Moso yanjiu lunwen ji [Collected Research Essays on the Moso]* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1984); Harald Bockmann, 'Naxi Studies in China: A Research Report', unpublished manuscript (1987); McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*; and Chao, *Depictions of Difference*.
5. Herold J. Wiens, *China's March Toward the Tropics* (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, 1954).
6. There are a variety of interpretations of how the term *gaituguliu* should be translated. I am using Dreyer's translation and definition here (June T. Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp.11, 284): 'to change from native to regular administration'. It should be noted that the implementation of this system involved economic as well as governmental transformations, since ownership and sales of land were involved, especially to incoming Han.
7. Rock; Jackson; Emily Chao, 'Suicide, Ritual and Gender Transformation Among the Naxi', *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology*, Vol.9.
8. This stereotype of 'the Naxi' as 'matriarchal' has its origins in the fact that the Mosuo people of Lugu Lake, to the northwest of the Lijiang basin, are also formally labeled as 'Naxi' by the Chinese state. The Mosuo are classified by Chinese ethnologists, most of whom adhere to the nineteenth-century Morganian/Engelsian social evolutionary scheme, as still being in the 'matriarchal social evolutionary stage' (see later discussions of state discourses). Most Lijiang-basin Naxi are emphatic about distinguishing themselves from the Mosuo, who practice matrilineal descent and 'walking marriage' (*zouhun*) - see Chuan-kang Shih, *The Yongning Moso: Sexual Union, Household Organization, Gender and Ethnicity in a Matrilineal Duolocal Society in Southwest China* (PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University, 1993). In Chinese popular media, however, this association of images of 'matriarchy' is made with the Naxi in general, and has been avidly adopted by foreign travellers in the area through their misinformed English-language (and undoubtedly other Western-language) travel guide books.
9. See Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter, *China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
10. See Wiens; George V.H. Mosely III, *The Party and the National Question in China*

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- (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966); idem, *The Consolidation of the South China Frontier* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973); Dreyer; Wolfram Eberhard, *China's Minorities: Yesterday and Today* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982); A.T. Grunfeld, 'In Search of Equality: Relations Between China's Ethnic Minorities and the Majority Han', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* Vol.17, No.1 (1985), pp.54-67; Thomas Heberer, *China and Its National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation?* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989); Frank Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); and Colin Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994).
11. Foucault's (European-experience-informed) vision of modernity – that is, the view of the modern state as consisting of institutions which generate discourses which in turn are deployed through biopower-type technologies – Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) – certainly has resonances for understanding how the Chinese state operates. See M.M.-H. Yang, 'The Modernity of Power in the Chinese Socialist Order', *Cultural Anthropology* Vol.3, No.4 (1988), pp.408-27, and Lisa Rofel, 'Rethinking Modernity: Space and Factory Discipline in China', *Cultural Anthropology* Vol.7, No.1 (1992), pp.93-114.
  12. There are interesting parallels between the polemic reflected in government policies between discourses of 'hierarchy' and 'authenticity', and the polemic reflected in Han kinship discourses and practices traced by Potter and Potter (p.58) between an ethic of competition leading to socioeconomic differentiation and an ethic of 'equalitarian fraternalism' within the lineage. It is important, however, not to imbue discourses of authenticity with an entirely equalitarian message. While difference is valorized in discourses of authenticity, as will be seen later in basin Naxi examples, this valorization can also be used for hierarchizing agendas.
  13. See Yang; Rofel; and Sydney D. White, *Medical Discourses, Naxi Identities, and the State: Transformations in Socialist China* (PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley, 1993).
  14. Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972, originally published 1884).
  15. Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985, originally published 1878).
  16. See also Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.71-74; Stevan Harrell, 'Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them', in Stevan Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp.3-36, and Charles F. McKhann, 'The Naxi and the Nationalities Question', in Harrell, pp.41-42.
  17. See also Dikotter; Harrell; and McKhann, 'The Naxi and the Nationalities Question', p.42.
  18. Heberer.
  19. White.
  20. See Grunfeld; Heberer.
  21. S.H. Potter, 'The Position of Peasants in Modern China's Social Order', *Modern China* Vol.9, No.4 (1983), pp.465-99.
  22. Potter and Potter.
  23. See also Harrell, p.26.
  24. During the 'ethnographic present' of this paper (i.e., 1989-90), few Naxi were engaged in private enterprises (i.e., as *getihu*) in the basin. By 1994, however, during my most recent research visit to the basin, it was clear that numerous Naxi had set up private enterprises in Dayanzhen.
  25. See also James L. Watson, 'Introduction: Class and Class Formation in Chinese Society', in James L. Watson (ed.), *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and Larry M. Wortzel, *Class in China: Stratification in a Classless Society* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).
  26. This is not to imply that Naxi-hua, as a non-Chinese, Tibeto-Burman language, is not qualitatively different than a Chinese dialect. Certainly there is a profound relationship between language and culture. But in terms of how basin Naxi themselves regard their use

- of Naxi-hua – i.e., as a basis for insider-outsider distinctions – there are parallels with the way in which regional dialects operate in Han areas of the PRC.
27. These two 'Naxi festivals' have been officially resurrected by the state in recent years. The Sanduo Festival (*Sanduojie*) is a tribute to the heroic Naxi military leader Sanduo, an apparently historical personage who acquired a legendary and deified status. The Torch Festival (*huobajie*) is a festival which the state also officially recognizes as a Bai festival and a Yi festival. *And the Han also celebrate.*
  28. 'Dongba culture' is actually a recent construction of the post-Mao Chinese state (see Chao, *Depictions of Difference*). Naxi dongbas are (male) religious practitioners who, prior to 1949, conducted a variety of life cycle, annual cycle, and other ritual ceremonies. Naxi dongba practices have their roots in both Tibetan Bon and Tibetan Buddhist practices. For discussions of dongba practices, see Rock; Goullart; Jackson; Li; Bockmann; McKhann, *Fleshing Out the Bones*; White; and Chao, *Depictions of Difference*.
  29. *Naxi caoyao*, or Naxi herbal medicine, is officially classified as a form of 'folk herbal medicine' (*minjian caoyao*) in PRC discourse, as opposed to the more classic and codified repertoire of 'Chinese herbal medicine' (*zhongcaoyao*). 'Naxi herbal medicine' incorporates many of the medicinal plants that are distinctive to the Lijiang area, but, according to Naxi practitioners' evaluations, does not reflect a distinctive theory of practice (*mei you lilun*). See White.
  30. For a historically and culturally situated discussion of this Naxi cultural practice from an ethnomusicology perspective, see Helen Rees, *A Musical Chameleon: A Chinese Repertoire in Naxi Territory* (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1994).
  31. The yangpi is the sheepskin 'cape' which Naxi women tend to wear as padding for the loads which they carry in baskets on their backs.
  32. Joseph Rock was an Austrian-born American who resided in a village in the Lijiang basin for approximately 20 years prior to the 1949 revolution and wrote extensively on Naxi history and Naxi dongba practice.
  33. Most Bai in the Lijiang basin tend to trace their 'ancestral homes' to the Jianchuan area rather than the Dali area, and basin Naxi as well as Dali Bai living in the Lijiang basin tend to look down on these Bai who migrated from the Jianchuan area.
  34. Lijiang-basin Yi distinguish themselves, and are distinguished by basin Naxi, as being *Xiaoliangshan Yizu* ('Small Cold Mountain Yi') as opposed to *Daliangshan Yizu* ('Great Cold Mountain Yi'). Basin Naxi tend to see the Daliangshan Yi as worthy of more respect than the (local) Xiaoliangshan Yi. *substantiating difference between you*
  35. The 'Tibetans' which Naxi are referring to are culturally 'Khamba' Tibetans, most of whom are identified with Zhongdian area culture in northwestern Yunnan. *define 1-2-3-4*
  36. See Gladney, p.95.
  37. Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), p.5.
  38. Gladney, pp.36-38.
  39. Espiritu, p.11.
  40. *Ibid.*, p.7.
  41. Harrell, pp.6-7.
  42. Stephen Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.146. Cited in Espiritu, p.7.
  43. Espiritu, p.7.
  44. *Ibid.*, p.8.
  45. Gladney, p.78.
  46. Espiritu, p.15.