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UN ESTUDI DE LA POLÍTICA DE PROMOCIÓ DE
LLENGÜES MINORITÀRIES A LA XINA/ A STUDY OF THE
POLICY OF PROMOTION OF MINORITY LANGUAGES IN
CHINA

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A study of the policy of promotion of minority languages in China

(Un estudi de la política de promoció de llengües minoritàries a la Xina)

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PREFACE

The dominant and consistent aim of Chinese Language policy among the minority nationalities is to enable them to become fluent in spoken and written standard Mandarin Han in order that they can fully participate in the overwhelmingly Han-dominated Chinese nation state. A secondary aim, which has been applied only in a limited number of minority areas, and in most cases has not been applied consistently over time, is to promote literacy in non-Han languages in order both to bring their speakers the general benefits of literacy in their own languages and in order to help them to learn Han with the help of minority language scripts.

Despite a seemingly unified linguistic policy throughout the whole of China, the results of the promotion of minority language scripts differ widely in different parts of the country. This is also true within predominantly monolingual non-Han-speaking rural areas of south-western China, where unlike in Tibet and Xinjiang, there are no secessionist movements.

In the Yi Autonomous Prefecture of Liangshan (in the Province of Sichuan) the relatively high rural literacy rate using the standard Nuosu (Liangshan Yi) script attained as a result of the application of the policy is widely hailed as a success, whereas there is an unofficial consensus that literacy in the romanised Zhuang language script promoted according to the same basic policy in Zhuang-speaking areas of Guangxi (Zhuang being the non-Han language in China with the greatest number of speakers) has been a complete failure.

This thesis set out to explore these different outcomes and to fathom the extent to which the use and acquisition of these minority scripts and languages is really promoted and supported in the face of competition from Han.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

This thesis sets out to analyse the policy of the promotion (or absence thereof) of standardised minority languages and their scripts, alongside the universal promotion of the standard Mandarin Han language and script, among minority language speakers of south-western China lacking a previous tradition of widespread popular literacy. To this end two case studies are described, evaluated and contrasted, in which the results of the implementation of the same basic policy have produced significantly different results.

Firstly (under the “Relative Success Question”) the thesis seeks to shed light on why the promotion of the Nuosu script among Nuosu-speakers in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (in Sichuan Province) has been significantly more successful than that of the Zhuang script among Zhuang-speakers in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, based on the perception that in Liangshan the spread of rural adult minority language literacy and bilingual education have been basically achieved and gained popular acceptance, but not in Guangxi. 8 main hypotheses which set out to explain the differences are explored.

Secondly (under the “Implementation Question”) it attempts to explain some of the limitations of the promotion of even the Nuosu script. In other words, it attempts to explain why there is such a gap between the constitutionally guaranteed principle of linguistic equality, according to which a situation of long-term stable bilingualism would be encouraged and supported, and the stark reality of minimal promotion and use of minority language scripts.

These two particular minority language situations were chosen in order to contrast two different outcomes of the same basic linguistic policy. Among people concerned with minority language promotion in south-western China, the promotion of Nuosu is often held up as a success story and that of Zhuang as a failure.

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This research follows the interpretive tradition, based on the ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed and on a subjective epistemology. The research was mainly based on the comparative case study strategy with two embedded cases of official promotions of minority language scripts. The case studies were analysed in the form of articles and reports, chiefly –but not exclusively- written by those involved in the promotion of minority languages. These were combined with opinions expressed through interviews, and in the case of Nuosu, on a language attitudes questionnaire (thus introducing an element of an ethnographic approach), collected during field trips to Zhuang and Nuosu-speaking areas. I also used my personal experience of having lived at Guangxi Nationalities Institute and of having visited minority language areas of Yunnan and Sichuan.

There are tens of millions of speakers of non-Han minority languages in China, many of whom have no or little knowledge of either standard Mandarin or other Han varieties and many of whom live in the poorest areas of China. A basic concern of central policy towards the minorities has been to politically incorporate them in the common project of the Chinese nation state. Literacy is often considered to be a first step to empowerment of disadvantaged communities and Han-only literacy is obviously problematic in communities not familiar with Han, as well as going against the spirit of respecting communities' rights to use and develop minority languages.

Baker (2001) points out, minority language speakers not literate in their languages are more likely not to pass them on to the next generation. I would add that this statement has greater validity when they are already literate in the majority language. In contexts such as Wales and Catalonia, where virtually all Welsh and Catalan speakers have an excellent command of spoken and written English or Spanish, there is a general consensus that minority language literacy will help to preserve the endangered minority language.

In China language preservation does not appear to be a major preoccupation of the authorities and in the case of southern China not even of many minority language speakers. Thus minority language literacy is not a priority for those already literate in Han or even those orally competent in Han. Large numbers of minority language speakers who have mastered Han and acquired literacy in it (but not in their mother tongues) are under greater pressure to undergo language shift to Han than if they are also literate in their first

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language. Likewise, minority language speakers who have acquired an oral knowledge of Han but are illiterate in both languages appear to be under stronger pressure to abandon their mother-tongue than if they were literate in the minority language.

Monolingual minority language speakers denied literacy in their own languages have difficulties in achieving meaningful (or even minimal) literacy in the majority language which they do not master, especially if they live in areas (such as the core Zhuang and Nuosu areas described in this study) where they have few meaningful contacts with the Han language. Such speakers (numerous in many areas of China) are automatically denied the possibility of upward mobility and of generally reaping the benefits of education and self-betterment usually associated with literacy, although, as Street (1996 and 2003) and others remind us, it cannot be assumed that literacy will automatically bring empowerment.

Language policy in China has varied greatly over the last 55 years between positions on a pluralist-assimilationist continuum. At the one end of the scale is the pluralist – and perhaps utopian – ideal, whereby minority nationalities should be allowed to conduct their lives through their own languages and not be forced to learn Han, and at the other extreme is the radical Maoist notion that - given that differences between nationalities (and hence between their languages) will wither away when the final stage of communism is reached – the arrival of communist society can be hastened by assimilating minority language speakers to the natural future language of communism – Han. Since the end of the Maoist era, the policy has been officially pluralist, but the way in which it has been implemented has varied enormously between different time periods and in different linguistic communities and administrative areas.

Zhuang (a Tai language) is the non-Han language with the largest number of speakers in China (not far below 20 million if the linguistically akin Bouyei nationality are included), but they have little sense of ethnic identification with the category Zhuang, which many see as a label imposed on them by the government. Dialectal fragmentation and the degree of linguistic unintelligibility is very marked, particularly between speakers of central and northern Tai varieties (the southern and northern Zhuang “dialects”), but also between sub-varieties of these. They are popularly thought to be virtually hanified in speech and culture (e.g. Ramsey, 1987), but this is really only true of the urbanised minority and

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peasants who live in close proximity with Han. Most Zhuang live in poor rural areas of western Guangxi where they form the overwhelming majority and often have minimal contact with the Han language outside the school context.

Traditionally, the Zhuang have either used the Han script or a complex adaptation of Han characters to different regional variants of Zhuang. In the 1950s a romanised script was created and promoted for several years in certain rural areas, chiefly through literacy campaigns. After a 20 odd year pause (for the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath) the script was reformed and relaunched in 1980 via literacy campaigns and experimental bilingual classes. By the second half of the 1980s the promotion had met with considerable, largely covert, opposition, and initial optimism among the promoters had given way to disillusion and a feeling it was not working. Officially the project of the Zhuang script is still there but in practice it is dead.

The 2 million or so Nuosu speakers (officially classified as part of the Yi nationality) of the mountainous stronghold of Liangshan, which until 1950 was virtually independent of central control, have a strong sense of ethnic awareness and pride. Before the communist period a complex 8,000 character script was used by the bimo (shamans) and some of the nobles. In the 1950s a romanised script was promoted with little success, while at the same time there was a strong bottom-up movement among ordinary people, with no top-down encouragement, to informally learn the traditional script in order to cover their everyday literacy needs. In the light of the failure of the short-lived romanised script and the grassroots pressure to use the Nuosu traditional script, but combined with the feeling that the latter was excessively complex for ordinary peasants to learn in its present form, there was strong pressure to reform and simplify the traditional script.

At the close of the Cultural Revolution period a reformed 819 character syllabary based on the old traditional script was introduced and used in widespread adult literacy campaigns and gradually introduced into many (although far from all!) schools, sometimes with Nuosu just as a subject and sometimes as the sole or joint medium of instruction. In core Nuosu areas (in contrast to core Zhuang areas) the new script and its popular use is very much in evidence and a large part of the rural population is literate in Nuosu. However, the promotion is far from ensuring the long-term use and maintenance of Nuosu and its implementation has met with serious limitations.

My personal ideological position is one in favour of plurilingual societies, where weaker languages are actively protected, respected and encouraged alongside stronger ones.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCHER PRIOR TO THE RESEARCH

Having been brought up in Wales in a South African family of mixed (German-British-Afrikaner) ethnic origins, served to stimulate a long-standing and avid interest in multilingual contexts and minority language situations all over the world. My last two school years at an international college, attended by speakers of many languages, where I met the first Chinese (worker-peasant-soldier) students to come to the United Kingdom after the Cultural Revolution, further stimulated my interest in China and its languages.

After completing my first degree in Chinese at Edinburgh University, I was resident in China, first as a student from September 1979 till February 1980 in Peking and subsequently as a teacher of English in institutes of higher education in Xian (6 months), Guilin (one year) and Nanning (6 months). In Peking and Xian I came into contact with Mongols and speakers of Turkic languages from Xinjiang. During my vacations I passed through Nuosu (Yi) areas and briefly visited Tai (Sipsong Panna) and Sani (Yi) areas, as well as an area inhabited by “Muslims” or Hui speaking an Austronesian language. In my contacts with speakers of the foregoing languages I was conscious of the existence and use of scripts very different to Han characters. In Guilin and Nanning (where I taught at Guangxi Nationalities Institute) I met students, teachers, researchers and cadres of non-Han speaking minorities teachers and students of linguistics many of whom befriended me and with whom I discussed at length the situation of the south-western non-Han ethnic groups. While at Nanning I also visited the experimental Zhuang school of Wuming just as the first bilingual class was about to be initiated and Yunnan Nationalities Institute in Kunming, where I talked at length with researchers of different south-western minority languages.

After returning to the United Kingdom I worked at a community centre in Pontardawe in Wales, where among other things, I endeavoured to promote the use of the Welsh language at the Centre. I also worked as community translator and interpreter within the

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Chinese community in Edinburgh which helped me gain an insight into the problems faced by minority immigrant communities. At the same time I attained an elementary level of Gaelic and became familiar with some of the problems of the Hebridean Gaelic speech communities.

In the summer of 1989 I spent 3 months in Yunnan, during which I visited Bai and Naxi areas, making contact with Naxi researchers and literacy workers. Since 1991 I have lived in a bilingual Catalan-Spanish environment and made an effort to actively use the Valencian variant of Catalan in my daily life and work (I teach partly through the medium of Catalan). Since January 1994 I have taught first English and subsequently German and Chinese at the Polytechnic University of Valencia.

1.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA FOR THE RESEARCH

The idea for the research originated when I lived in China from 1979 to 1982 and witnessed the beginning of the recuperation of the second pluralist phase. I read documents outlining proposals for the recuperation, or creation, of languages with no or minimal traditions of popular, widespread literacy, such as Zhuang, Mian (Yao) and Bai and during both my 6 months as a teacher at Guangxi Nationalities College (from September 1981 till February 1982) and a visit to the Yunnan Nationalities College in February 1982, I talked at length with many linguists, teachers, students and cadres involved in the promotion of non-Han scripts (especially that of Zhuang), who expressed their hopes or scepticism about the promotion. In general there was a moderate degree of optimism. I also visited areas, such as Liangshan and Sipsong Panna, where minority languages were spoken and was impressed by evidence of the promotion of non-Han scripts there. In 1989, during a 3-month stay in Yunnan, I was again in contact with people involved in the promotions and visited Naxi, Bai and Sani Yi areas of the Province.

When I began the research in 1993, it was difficult to ascertain to what extent the idealistic declarations and ambitious plans for the promotion of non-Han languages, chiefly in the form of adult literacy campaigns and bilingual education, were being translated into reality. When I visited Guangxi in winter 1993/1994 (for some 17 days), I was surprised to

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learn that the de facto – although not nominal - abandonment of the promotion of Zhuang was well underway. However, linguists and cadres in Guangxi pointed to the promotion of Liangshan Yi (Nuosu) as a positive example of promoting a minority language script. Accordingly, I made two short field trips to Liangshan in the summers of 1994 and 1995 (each of approximately 3 weeks), where I was impressed with the enthusiasm with which the Nuosu script had been promoted in contrast to the widespread indifference encountered in Guangxi. On the second of these trips I carried out a linguistic attitudes questionnaire. It appeared logical and interesting to compare these two situations in order to analyse factors which had given rise to such different results.

At the same time, it was clear that the promotion in Liangshan was far from complete and fell short of implementation of the constitutional right of minority nationality communities to lead and develop their lives entirely and fully through the medium of their own languages. This led me to question the real commitment to the Marxist ideals of the 1950s in the latter part of the second pluralistic phase, and my doubts were confirmed by a brief week-long visit to Meigu County (Liangshan) in August 2005.

1. 4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC

Internationally there is heightened awareness of the decrease in global linguistic diversity (e.g. Dorian 1981 and 1989, Junyent 1998, Crystal 2000) and a growing consensus, reflected in international forums such as UNESCO and the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages that speakers of minor or endangered languages have the right to use and develop these as vehicles of literacy and education in order to achieve empowerment, although –as Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) caution, literacy per se does not automatically empower people: their literacy must enable them to achieve certain socioeconomic, political and cultural ends before empowerment can said to have occurred.

Approximately 60% of the land area of China is inhabited at least partly by non-Han peoples, a large proportion of whom speak non-Han languages. These are areas of strategic economic importance to China, a state dominated by speakers of Han or Sinitic languages who form over 90% of the population. In order to ensure complete political control over these areas, China has sought to convince non-Han peoples that they are

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equal partners in the common project of a multinational China, suppressing by force those who have refused to take part in this project, as events in Tibet and Xinjiang have shown. This is in contrast to the pre-1949 communist promises of self-determination made to nationalities who wished it.

Given the linguistic, cultural and economic isolation of many minority language speakers, the question of how best to integrate them into the Chinese State and help them to identify with its aims and aspirations without alienating them and provoking a negative reaction has assumed great importance. Through media propaganda extolling ethnic unity and minority policies, such as regional national autonomy and the freedom to use non-Han languages and scripts, China has tried to integrate minorities into this common project. The promotion of minority languages and scripts is particularly important among ethnic groups, such as the Tibetans and Nuosu, where a high proportion of the population is illiterate and does not speak Han and most linguists would agree that it is inefficient, ineffective –or downright counterproductive- to educate people directly in Han.

Despite this, China has not followed a consistent, sensitive language policy capable of convincing speakers of other languages that their identities are compatible with that of the modern Chinese nation state, with perhaps (apart from the Cultural Revolution) the exception of the Korean-speaking minority. Ethnic tensions among traditional minorities with separatist tendencies and localised tensions among smaller groups, caused in part by Han-centred insensitivity and chauvinism, are still rife. The Chinese Constitution emphasises the right of minorities to use and develop their own languages and scripts. Whether this right is in fact allowed them will affect the quality of their integration and participation within the state and the extent to which they identify with the common project of China.

This study is significant in that it sheds light on two concrete cases where large predominantly monolingual non-Han linguistic communities have attempted, with help from the State, to exercise their right to the equality of their languages and scripts in the face of considerable Han chauvinism. The factors determining the relative success or failure of the promotion of minority languages and scripts are significant not just to the languages themselves, but to the socio-economic, political and cultural aspirations of their speakers. The thesis sets out to provide an insight into, and an overview of, how and why

the promotion of Zhuang and Nuosu differed and ends by discussing the future facing these speech communities.

1.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

I began my doctorate courses at Valencia University in 1991, the most useful of which were the courses of Professor Alfredo Torero from Chile on Andean linguistics, which I felt offered many parallels with south-western China. In 1993 I presented the *treball d'investigació* or research project, which I did on *Language Planning in Minority Areas of China* based on Cooper (1989)'s scheme for language planning. Shortly after my field trips to China, I was obliged to concentrate on professional duties and preparing for the *oposició* or exam to obtain security of tenure in my post, for which I was required to write an extensive dissertation. After obtaining the security of tenure in 1999, the death of my father and other personal circumstances delayed my fully resuming my research until 2002, since when I have also had to cope with a second son. The lack of continuity of my research has thus borne some resemblance to that of Chinese minority linguistic policy. Due to family, work and financial constraints, apart from the field trips to Zhuang and Nuosu-speaking areas, the research was carried out in Valencia and Wales.

1.6 SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE RESEARCH

In the early stages of the research little information about the Zhuang and Nuosu situations was available in the West and I had to rely heavily on Chinese material (both published and unpublished) and informants, a situation that changed dramatically in the later stages. In Chapter 2 the different information sources used in the compiling of this thesis are detailed.

1.7 RESEARCH AIMS

In addition to gaining a general insight into the policy of promotion of minority language scripts (alongside the promotion of standard Mandarin Han) among Zhuang-speakers, in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Nuosu-speakers in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, the aim of this research was to address two

research questions. The first was why the promotion of Nuosu in Liangshan seemed more successful than the promotion of Zhuang in Guangxi in spite of limitations of the former and can be referred to as the “Relative Success Question”. The second research question was what kinds of resistance to implementing minority linguistic policy have been met in both Zhuang and Nuosu areas and can be referred to as the “Implementation Question”.

1.7.1 THE RELATIVE SUCCESS QUESTION (TO EXPLAIN THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF THE PROMOTION OF NUOSU IN LIANGSHAN AND THE FAILURE OF THE PROMOTION OF ZHUANG IN GUANGXI, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EXAMINING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE FORMER)

In order to achieve this, the following 8 hypotheses will be explored:

1.7.1.1 THE IDENTITY HYPOTHESIS

The more self-confident minority language speakers are of their ethnolinguistic identity, the more likely they are to view the promotion of their language and script positively. As Nuosu speakers have a stronger ethnic consciousness than the Zhuang and feel themselves to be more different from the Han, they will be more loyal to their language and script and hence will give greater support to the promotion of their language and script.

1.7.1.2 THE MINORITY ELITE HYPOTHESIS

If the elite, who serve as role models for a large part of the minority language speech community, are supportive of the promoted language and script and use it actively and pass it (rather than Han) on to their children then the promotion’s chances of success are greatly increased. The greater tendency among the Nuosu elite to support their language and script and pass them on to their children than among the Zhuang elite has resulted in greater acceptance of the promotion in Liangshan than in Guangxi.

1.7.1.3 THE GRASS-ROOTS HYPOTHESIS

Minority language script promotion involving a strong grass-roots bottom-up element (in addition to the top-down element) is much more likely to succeed than if it is perceived as being imposed from above. The fact that the promotion of the

Zhuang script was widely seen as being imposed by the authorities on an unenthusiastic public and that standardised Nuosu was promoted in response to strong popular grass-roots demand and support explains the much warmer reception by, and more active participation of, Nuosu speakers in the promotion than of their Zhuang counterparts.

1.7.1.4 THE IMPLEMENTATION HYPOTHESIS

Effective official promotion of minority languages and scripts requires maximal compatibility of measures with consistent and continuing use of the minority language in institutional and interactional settings. The promotion of the Nuosu language and script was carried out much more conscientiously by cadres and local authorities in Liangshan than that of the Zhuang language and script in Guangxi. This was a determining factor in the greater success of the promotion of Nuosu.

1.7.1.5 THE LITERACY-MEDIUM HYPOTHESIS

The greater the extent to which members of the speech community believe in the positive effects of bilingual and minority-medium education and to which they perceive the minority language and script being promoted as an aid to learning Han, the better the chances of the promotion succeeding. The fact that Nuosu parents were more convinced of the positive effects of bilingual education and its role in helping children to learn Han, than Zhuang parents, played an important part in the greater success of Nuosu-medium education.

1.7.1.6 THE SCRIPT-TYPE HYPOTHESIS

A positive identification by minority language speakers with the script being promoted, independently of its complexity, and the perception that it forms a part of the ethnic group's history and culture increases the chances of its successful promotion. The fact that the Nuosu speech community strongly identified with the standardised syllabary as being traditional Nuosu, whereas most Zhuang saw the standardised romanisation as something alien and imposed has played a major part in the greater acceptance of the Nuosu script.

1.7.1.7 THE SPOKEN STANDARD HYPOTHESIS

The more minority language speakers identify with the oral variety chosen as the standard to be promoted, the more successful the promotion of the minority

language and script will be. The fact that Nuosu see their oral standard as a positive, unifying element whereas large numbers of Zhuang-speakers see the Wuming-based standard as being an alien language different to theirs, helps explain why Nuosu have much more enthusiastically embraced their script than the Zhuang.

1.7.1.8 THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

The more the minority language and script being promoted are perceived by the speech community as a possible vehicle of economic development and socioeconomic progress, the more enthusiastically they will embrace mother-tongue literacy. . The Nuosu have in part been more motivated than the Zhuang to embrace their script, because they see it as a practical instrument to better themselves. In contrast most Zhuang see the only escape from poverty through Han.

1.7.2 THE IMPLEMENTATION QUESTION. (TO BROADLY EVALUATE THE EFFECT OF MINORITY LINGUISTIC POLICY IN ZHUANG AND NUOSU AREAS AND WAYS IN WHICH ITS IMPLEMENTATION WAS RESISTED)

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the context and the aims of the research. In Chapter 2, I review the literature which has most influenced the development of my ideas relating to the research aims and summarise the theoretical approach I have taken and in Chapter 3, go on to outline the conceptual foundations of the research. In Chapter 4 theoretical frameworks from several disciplines are outlined which have influenced my ideas and certain key concepts defined which could cause confusion. Chapter 5 begins with an overview of Chinese minority language policy in general and continues with background information to events of the two case studies under examination, the promotion of Zhuang in Guangxi and Nuosu in Liangshan. The inclusion of this lengthy background information is justified by the inaccessibility and unfamiliarity of this information to most people. Chapter 6 analyses the data to order to test the aims outlined in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7 presents the conclusions. Extra non-linguistic background to the Nuosu of Liangshan is included in Annex 1 and in Annex 2 relevant maps are included.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 LITERATURE ON GENERAL ASPECTS

My chief theoretical reference for language planning became Cooper (1989), later supplemented by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), due to its clarity and the user-friendliness of his typological checklists. In the field of education I found the writings of Baker and Cummins particularly stimulating and in that of adult literacy Street (1995 and 2003) and in that of linguistic vitality Giles (e.g. Giles, H., Bourhis, R.Y. and Taylor, D.M., 1977 or Giles et al., 2000).

When embarking on the research there were few sources analysing the linguistic vitality of non-Han speech communities. Therefore I relied heavily on literature on minority languages in other countries. Fishman's *Reversing Language Shift* (1991) and publications such as IJSL and Multilingual Matters journals and books had a particularly strong influence on me, although I perceived the former principally as an action blueprint for communities wishing to secure the futures of their endangered languages (something extremely underdeveloped in south-western China) rather than as tool for an outsider to analyse language planning methods. It also assumed that a central goal was to save the minority languages concerned from extinction and breathe new life into them by extending their domains etc., which seemed to contrast with the official evolutionary Marxist Chinese belief in the ultimate long-term blending together of all languages (alongside with nationalities and social classes) and the attitude that while minorities were free to preserve their languages, they were also free to adopt other languages, for example Han.

Examining diverse minority language and language-planning situations in many parts of the world provided useful ideas for approaching the Chinese situation. Parallels between south-western China and language policy in Central and South America, described by authors such as Hornberger, were particularly useful.

2.2 CHINESE LITERATURE ON CHINESE MINORITY LANGUAGES

In 1981 and 1982, while living at Guangxi Nationalities' Institute, I appealed in vain to the highest authorities to visit out of the way Zhuang and Mien (Yao) areas of Guangxi, a reflection of how hard it was for non-Chinese to visit most minority areas at first hand. Largely due to the inaccessibility of China to the outside world during the long years of political upheavals between 1958 and 1978, most sensitive minority areas were out of bounds to foreigners even well into the 1990s and the main sources were articles published in Chinese journals. Some of these were available on subscription such as 民族语文 (Nationalities' Languages and Scripts), some published by institutions of higher learning such as 广西民族学院学报 (Guangxi Nationalities Institute Journal) and 云南民族学院报 (Yunnan Nationalities Institute Journal) and some were internal memoranda or reports approved for release.

My initial sources on Chinese minority language policy were thus overwhelmingly in Chinese and appeared in both published sources (books and journals) and internal (内部) journals, not on sale to the public. Unfortunately, there was little systematic literature (with exceptions such as Cui Jiyuan (1991) who described language use among the Koreans of Yanbian) detailing the sociolinguistic situation. Most articles were descriptions of individual languages, were related to language typology or were written from the perspective of language planners faced with the task of standardising and promoting non-Han languages. It was obviously the latter category which most interested me.

Typically such articles outlined the problems facing the planners, what had already been achieved (if anything) and detailed what needed to be done or improved upon. They were often statements of intent and blueprints of what was to be done, rather than clear, faithful descriptions of either the real situation or the policies actually implemented. It is in this section where one can start to get an idea of the obstacles faced in the implementation of the policy. With their heavily politicised jargon, they often read rather like religious texts, for example reminding readers of China's policy of equality for all nationalities and their

languages and quoting statements by CCP leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin or historical Marxists such as Engel and Stalin.

Many articles directly criticise “comrades” who have not properly grasped the Party’s nationality and minority language policies and refuse to implement them properly and indeed a prime objective is to convince reticent cadres of the value of the promotion. In other comments the obvious is stated (or what should be obvious if official policy were being followed properly), because obviously important sections of cadres do not accept these “obvious” points. One reads ad nauseam the argument that monolingual minority language speakers can learn Han better if they first become literate in the minority language: for this point to be stressed so insistently obviously there exist important sections of cadres (at least in part the target readership of such articles) and the public (whom the articles hope to influence by way of supportive grass-roots cadres) who believe this not to be true and think that every minute invested in learning a useless “backward” language is a minute lost learning Han.

To give an example, writers on Zhuang continually stress the fact that Zhuang literacy promotion activities have succeeded in areas where the southern dialect is spoken. If one accepts the creation of a single Zhuang standard form, then this should be no big deal, but in fact it is a highly controversial subject. Criticism is always from within the framework of the Party line. To do otherwise would leave the author open to all kinds of attacks. Given the political atmosphere of China, I have sometimes been surprised at the directness and frankness of criticisms. There is a lot of “hedging” within this criticism, authors expressing themselves as if they were also criticising themselves. Criticisms are generally followed by a list of proposals or measures for overcoming problems and often an affirmation that these fulfil the Party’s nationality policy and the cause of socialist modernisation and construction.

The cadres they are indirectly criticising do not write frontal rebuttals. The preferred strategy of opponents of the promotion of non-Han languages is firstly to keep quiet (at least on paper) and hope that the obvious superiority of a Han-only policy will be apparent to all, secondly to emphasise the importance of concentrating all one’s energies in learning Han and thirdly to generally nullify (usually by ignoring) the directives to carry out the promotion.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

The main information that I extrapolated from such articles was about the broad linguistic situation (statistics being unreliable and also often given in terms of “members of nationalities” rather than “speakers of languages”: see 4.2.2) and the socioeconomic problems caused by lack of minority language provision. There were also useful descriptions of corpus planning (e.g. script creation or reform, standard forms and whether to coin native or Han loanwords), legislation on language use, and acquisition planning measures. On the whole little indication of the viability or realism of implementing the proposed legislation was given. As is made clear in the course of this thesis, one thing are policy goals, and quite another, their implementation.

In a large proportion of cases the implementation measures being described were just experimental, affecting only a small minority of schools or literacy classes, something it was easy to lose sight of. In 1989 I had read extensively about experimental Naxi and Bai literacy classes and when I visited Naxi and Bai areas was stunned to discover that none of the people I talked to (in the case of the Naxi, deep in remote non-Han speaking areas) had ever heard of the existence of such a script and it was nowhere to be seen.

Descriptions of achievements of the mostly experimental classes were usually followed by discussions of their implementation and suggestions for improvement, implying that the planners were having a tough time. And indeed they were. The main impression given was that minority script promotion in south-western China was generally confined to isolated remote mountain or rural areas, that it affected only a small proportion of monolingual non-Han speakers and was meeting stiff resistance from Han and minority cadres alike (and indeed from large parts of the public) and that many bilingual education and other promotional activities were unable to get beyond an “experimental” phase.

These sources, being largely written by organisations responsible for –or with an interest in showing the success of– minority script promotion, have a strong bias, which has to be taken into account when interpreting the data. Despite this they yield valuable information, sometimes directly and other times via indirect insinuations, assumptions and criticisms.

Up until a few years ago sociolinguistic studies were very uncommon in China. The few studies that existed tended to draw too many conclusions from small unrepresentative samples. (e.g. Zhang Yanchang, Wang Yu and Xu Xiangwu, 1991). Having made this

criticism, they still gave useful impressions of the sociolinguistic situation in minority areas of China. More recently, particularly as Chinese students who have studied linguistics abroad have returned to China, either to work or to carry out research, there has been a growth in this area.

2.3 PRE-1995 LITERATURE IN THE WEST ON CHINESE MINORITY LANGUAGES

In the early 1990s, when I began my research, apart from typological studies of particular languages such as Ramsey (1987), Coyaud (1987 and 1992) and Bradley (1979), there was little literature in the West about the situation of minority language communities in China and what there was, mostly described the language systems themselves rather than their sociolinguistic contexts. In Western sources there was even a dearth of studies about non-Han peoples, in other fields such as anthropology and history and religion. Most of the literature prior to this time was of a general and political nature such as June Teufel Dreyer's *China's Forty Millions* (1977) and Moseley (1966), neither of which cast much light on how linguistic policy was being implemented. Regarding language policy, perhaps the most useful work at this time was Glyn Lewis (1972)'s work on the language policy of the Soviet Union, which described situations with some parallels –and perhaps most importantly- with a political system which had much in common with China's and whose nationality policy had influenced it (especially in the 1950s) greatly.

In 1992 a series of articles by well known Chinese linguists involved in language planning appeared in English in the *International Journal of Sociology of Language* which suddenly brought issues of Chinese minority language policy to the notice of Western scholars, although such articles were still very much written in Chinese terms of reference. For example Sun Hongkai described problems of defining languages and nationalities, while Zhou Yaowen wrote of how to categorise types of bilingual education in different parts of China. The latter article was somewhat misleading, because it did not stress how incomplete the application of bilingual education had been, making it sound, for example, as if the Zhuang in general received bilingual schooling, when it had only affected a miniscule minority, thus presenting the world with an unjustifiably optimistic picture of the use of Zhuang in education.

2.4 POST-1995 LITERATURE IN THE WEST ON CHINESE MINORITY LANGUAGES

From the mid-1990s Western literature and overseas Chinese literature on minority nationalities, including their languages and linguistic situation, increased (and has continued increasing) dramatically. Some of those writing were mainland Chinese studying abroad (including Hong Kong), who now researched and wrote from a non-Communist perspective, coherent with the Western academic tradition. Among these were some minority nationality students such as Wuda (2002) and Bamo Ayi (2001), both Nuosu. At last some Chinese scholars were becoming (as Russian and other ex-Soviet linguists had some years earlier) integrated in the global sociolinguistics discourse –which was itself becoming more self-critical and aware of power relationships under the influence of writers like Glyn Williams- and had left their Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist ghetto behind. In the field of education, western researchers such as Postiglione (1999) and Upton (1999) were writing about education policy affecting linguistic minorities.

Whereas before the mid-1990s mainly general overviews of Chinese language policy as a appeared (e.g. Svantesson, 1991), since the late 1990s the breadth and depth of subjects treated has grown exponentially. Stites (1999:121) was one of the first that came to my attention which compared promotion in different areas (although not in depth), including Liangshan and Guangxi. This article, which I saw in 2002, was the first written source in which I had seen others directly comparing these 2 situations.

Bradley 2001 and Harrell 2001c described the language situation in parts of Liangshan and even attitudes towards language planning. Of great value to me was Hansen (1999a and b) who contrasts the relationship between identity and education (language and script choice playing an important role in her analysis) in the Naxi and the Tai, whose differences have some parallels with those found between the Zhuang and Nuosu. Harrell (2001a and b) particularly valuable as he summarised and analysed a wide range of aspects of the Nuosu and other ethnic groups living in Liangshan. Meanwhile, Kaup (2000) published a book on the post-1952 construction of a Zhuang nationality identity, which she also relates to the promotion of the Zhuang script. An interesting development were reports detailing the involvement of international organisations (e.g. UNESCO) in rural development

projects in non-Han speaking areas, where adult literacy and basic education were key elements. In some of these reports there is, frustratingly either no reference to the proposed language medium or it is implied that Han is used.

2.5 INTERNET AS A FORUM FOR BOTH WESTERN AND CHINESE SCHOLARS

The Web opened a whole new window not only to articles written by western scholars, but also by Chinese authors. The number of relevant articles grows exponentially and I only wish I had had this facility when I embarked on my research, it having arrived frustratingly late. In the last several years a spate of useful articles treating minorities as speech communities with socio-economic aspirations have appeared on the Web such as Dory Poa & Randy J. LaPolla (2003?), Bulag (2003), a variety of articles in the China Education Forum published by the Wah Ching Centre of Research on Education in China, Minglang Zhou (2000 and 2001), Dwyer (2005). In the closing phase of the research my problem was how to reflect, at least the more important parts of this latest academic input in my research, much of which addressed similar concerns to my own.

It is only in the last five years that much serious interest has been taken in the West about minority language policy in China, either from the point of view of the rights of language groups or of non-Han literacy as a vehicle of empowerment. Under the influence of the great number of case studies from other countries of attempts to slow, stop or reverse language shift in the last several years some studies (many initiated from Hong Kong or foreign universities) are emerging which look at the linguistic ecosystems of minority communities. However, very little (examples are Dwyer on Xinjiang and Bass on Tibet) has appeared which examine the efforts of minority speech communities in China to conserve and develop their languages and scripts in the way being done in many other countries.

In recent years articles by Chinese authors have gradually been influenced by western scholarly traditions and the political content of articles has significantly decreased.

2.6 TREATMENT OF ASPECTS RELATED TO THIS THESIS

A number of descriptions of language distribution and division into dialects is to be found in Chinese sources (e.g. the series of general introductory descriptions to the Chinese minority languages), although information is often given in a rather piecemeal fashion. The most frustrating aspect is being given figures for nationalities rather than for speakers of a particular language. In China there are no census figures for how many people speak different languages.

Aspects such as attitudes towards different Han and minority languages (and their speakers) and towards bilingual education were not always easy to extrapolate from the language planners' and educationalists' reports, being often written in a pamphleteering style. The issue of the benefits of bilingual education was particularly delicate and many of the claims in the literature for good results have come under attack. I am still not 100% certain how to evaluate many of these reports. Elites benefiting or suffering from language policy were mentioned in the literature, but often anecdotally rather than systematically, the beneficiaries of minority language promotion named being chiefly peasants and grass-roots cadres. The top-up bottom-down aspect and the connection between literacy and empowerment via the diffusion of technical knowledge were mentioned most succinctly by Maheimuxia and Yao Changdao (1994), but also were apparent from many earlier reports (from both Liangshan and Guangxi) which described pressure from peasants in favour of minority language literacy or their response to the promotions.

I treat many reports of the "great enthusiasm of the broad masses", especially from Zhuang areas, with scepticism in the light of other sources. Such exaggerations make it difficult to know the true extent of support for the promotions.

Regarding the question of whether minority language literacy was to be permanent or just a transitional "crutch" to learning Han, readers were assured that it was not just a transitional phase. However, little attention was paid in the literature to the need for minority language speakers already competent in Han to learn the minority language script, except in the case of cadres who were going to work in monolingual minority

areas. The problem of a standard oral form, which particularly affected the Zhuang situation, was widely referred to.

Of interest was the increasing intensity of the tone of criticism towards non-cooperative cadres used from the late 1980s onwards. I frequently had the impression of promoters of minority scripts being lone prophets in the wilderness fighting for their cause against an uncaring bureaucracy. Certainly in the case of Guangxi, this was largely the case. Just as linguistic policy is often deemed to be a “soft” policy, not to be taken too seriously (Heberer, 2001), so too it was not such a serious crime to criticise implementation of linguistic policy, as long as it did not question the leadership of the CCP, the unity of China and the spread of standard Mandarin and provided that it was not linked to controversial issues like human rights.

Until I was in the closing phase of the thesis, there was a dearth of information on language shift and intergenerational transmission. Recently sources such as the aforementioned China Education Forum have started to treat such issues and just as I am putting the closing touches to the thesis an issue of the IJSL (No.173, 2005) edited by David Bradley has come to my notice treating the subject of *language endangerment* and language policy (in other words the ecology of minority languages and their speech communities. While these articles provide valuable insight into aspects such as the transmission processes of 5 non-Han languages, the emphasis is not so much on concrete measures to reverse or stem the pace of language-shift, as on describing the process of language shift. Sun Hongkai (2005), commenting on the disappearance of Anong, a Tibeto-Burman language of north-western Yunnan, laments:

Today, China is implementing policies of reform, and opening up her doors to the outside world in the development of a socialist market economy. This is an age when communications are increasingly frequent and important, and where the public media, including radio and television broadcasts and the telephone, are highly developed. Language is a tool for human interaction, exchange of ideas, and communication of information. Many “weak” languages, which cannot adequately fulfil these functions and which have gradually lost their usage domains, are being replaced by “dominant” languages. This is an objective reality, which cannot be changed by mere subjective desires. Therefore, we need to implement good language policies and adopt definitive measures in order to decrease the speed with which languages are disappearing, even if we cannot completely reverse this process.

After continuing that the linguistic resources of the national minorities are an important part of China’s national culture, and that “the disappearance of these languages will

mean the loss of hundreds and thousands of years of different cultural distinctions” he proposes as a solution “using every means available to record and preserve data from languages in imminent danger of extinction” such as recording oral literature and thoroughly describing them. At no point does he suggest a programme of language reversal.

Juha Janhunen (2005)’s article on endangered Tungusic languages is novel in China for suggesting possible language revitalisation methods such as “language nests” for those such as Ewenke and Sibe Manchu which still have any chance of being revived. Xu’s article on Bisu speakers also touches on the possibility of revitalisation when he describes how heartened isolated Bisu speakers from Yunnan felt when they heard about Bisu communities in Thailand taking initiatives to create and spread literacy.

When I first embarked on this research, I felt I was sailing alone in an unchartered ocean with no-one else interested in the ecology of Chinese minority speech communities and their attempts to spread literacy. Now as it draws to a close, I feel I am in a narrow straight surrounded by many other ships.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to briefly present the philosophical assumptions underlying this research, to introduce the research strategy and the way in which the data was selected and analysed. It will also define the limitations and scope of the research design and situate this study within existing research traditions.

For the research, I conducted three short field trips between December 1993 and September 1995, each of 2 to 3 weeks, to Zhuang and Nuosu (=Yi)-speaking areas of south-western China, where I interviewed people involved in the promotion of the Zhuang and Nuosu languages and scripts, plus a further one week visit to Liangshan in August 2005 to attend a conference, during which I reviewed the progress of the promotion of Nuosu. These were based on prior knowledge of the situation of minority languages in the area gained from living in Guangxi from 1980 till 1982 and a 3 month visit to Yunnan in 1989.

Subsequently, I analysed literature, almost exclusively Chinese, on the promotion which I had mainly collected on these visits, but also found on the Internet. My work was interrupted from late 1995 till 2000 due to work and personal reasons. Since renewing the research, I have benefited from the sudden exponential growth in literature (both on paper and on the Web) related to China's national minorities and to their languages and educational problems.

To arrive at my conclusions I have qualitatively and interpretively analysed the interviews conducted in China and literature available to me in the light of the vast body of literature on minority languages worldwide. My aim is to analyse the situation and predicament of the Zhuang and Nuosu speech communities in the light of the promotions of their scripts, in the (perhaps overoptimistic) hope that ways can subsequently be found to spare their speakers the trauma of language shift and culture and identity loss. My personal ideological standpoint is near to the sentiment expressed in the Chinese constitution, namely that each ethnic group has the right to use and develop its own language and script and to create a script if it has none. I do not share the prevailing Chinese attitude that

measures to promote and preserve marginalised non-Han languages are not necessary if their speakers already have a good grasp of Han or if they are apparently willing to give up their languages in favour of Han. I believe that the use and development of minority language scripts and languages are important for healthy socio-economic development of both the minority and majority language communities involved and are essential in a tolerant democratic world. It is increasingly important and urgent for such speakers to be competent in the official state languages for their own political and socio-economic defence, but this can and should be done without destroying the minority language, culture and identity.

3.2 THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This research is essentially based on an interpretive (as opposed to a positivist or critical) approach and rests on the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed and on subjective epistemological assumptions according to which knowledge is experiential, personal, subjective and also socially constructed. Obviously, being an individual with a given ideological stance (that of favouring linguistic diversity and the right of speakers of minority or politically weak languages to use, maintain and develop their languages and cultures alongside dominant and majority languages), I feel under pressure at times to take a more critical approach.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) deal with a major confusion about research which follows an interpretive approach and explain the centrality of the concern with “trustworthiness”. Beginning with a detailed critique of four criteria that emerged from positivist philosophies - internal validity, generalisability, reliability, and objectivity, they then turn their attention to criteria appropriate to interpretive research, and propose credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These are parallels to the positivist criteria and later authors argued that these still follow the agenda set by positivist approaches, a critique accepted by Lincoln (1995), who offered revised criteria in place of the earlier ones, namely authenticity, fittingness, auditability and finally application and action.

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In interpretive research, credibility or authenticity is checked by going back to research sites and comparing researcher “constructions” of use of languages with those of speakers of the languages concerned. One feature which is common to interpretivist and to positivist approaches is reliance on multiple sources of information. Then processes and steps taken in conducting research are described in a way that can make as transparent as possible the linkages between researcher decisions, evidence generated, and inferences drawn. Another feature common to both kinds of approach is resistance to any temptation to look solely for confirmatory evidence of hypotheses. Ambiguities and inconsistencies in sources are considered carefully to rule out spurious relations and check out rival explanations. So although the central concern in interpretive research may not be “validity” as traditionally understood, developing an understanding of language situations and locating them in their social and historical context is to be judged in terms of “trustworthiness”.

A source of potential confusion in understanding the linguistic situation in China are the different assumptions underlying some of the basic terms and concepts used in China and in the West. By way of illustration, the word “propaganda” usually has a negative connotation in the West, whereas it is often seen as a laudable awareness-raising activity in a Chinese context, as indeed it was during the Second Republic in Spain. Many of the concepts treated in this research are based on particular ideological or historical viewpoints. Some of these, along with other basic concepts requiring clarification, are discussed in 4.2.

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGIES.

Strategies available for studying the use of languages are case studies, field studies, action research, surveys and laboratory experiments. The strategy chosen determines what kind of data and results can be obtained. For this thesis the case study strategy has been chosen. Yin (1989: 23) offers the following definition of a case study:

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

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The same author claims that “*the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events*”. (Ibid: 14)

This is in accordance with aim of my research project, which is to generate knowledge about behavioural and attitudinal factors influencing the outcome of the promotion of minority languages and scripts.

Of the three types of case studies distinguished by Yin (1993, cited in Tellis, 1997), namely descriptive, exploratory and causal case studies, the last best fits the needs of this study, as the intention is to explain the causes of certain outcomes. Given the interpretivist rejection of the possibility of ahistorical, acultural laws, it may be surprising to declare an interest in “causality”. However, it is consistent with interpretive presuppositions to reorient causality from general laws to specific cases, the intention being to tell specific “causal stories” about policies, their implementation and how speakers of languages experience and modify their behaviour as result of intergroup contact. The conceptualisation of causality is broadened beyond the variables-based, explanation-prediction, general law model. The issue is not whether enough variables have been included to allow generalisation, but one of the researcher’s responsibility, which is to provide sufficient contextual description and discussion so that others can assess how plausible it is to transfer findings from the cases described to other settings. The intention is to convey an understanding of, and emphasis on, context—and of the ways in which context and causality are intertwined—that will enable others to build on the research findings which they find trustworthy.

This research sets out to explain some of the factors responsible for different outcomes in different situations and thus necessarily entails a comparative or multiple case study strategy (as opposed to a single one). Although case studies are not always representative, may contain varied and complex data and are frequently open to varied interpretations and to the researcher’s bias, multiple case studies do help the researcher to make generalisations from particular sets of results.

In this study, official policy towards, and use of, minority languages is looked at holistically to begin with. But then two minority languages are considered with institutional support for their use, use in writing, use in teaching and inter-generational

use, as “subunits”. In the terminology of Yin (1994, cited in Tellis, 1997) case studies with subunits are “embedded” case studies. The use of embedded multiple case studies to analyse language planning situations is not new. Some examples are Ager (2001), Fishman (1991) and Kaplan and Baldauf (1997). Linguists and others involved in language planning, including those concerned with the maintenance of minority or “threatened” languages, are continually comparing language situations in different countries to try to see if they can draw useful lessons from other contexts.

Thus, there is a generalised consensus that, so long as the different contexts are taken adequately into account, certain principles of language planning are transferable from one language situation to another. For example, in October 2004 I attended the Endangered Languages Conference in Barcelona where the main theme was to what extent planning should be top-down or bottom-up and participants continually drew parallels between different language situations in different parts of the world.

The basic unit of analysis in this case study will be the overall situation of the promotion of the minority language, focusing on the specific measures taken and the response of the people involved directly or indirectly to the promotion.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is defined by Yin (1989: 28) as:

... an action plan for getting from here to there, where “here” may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and “there” is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions.

3.4.1 SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDIES

The selection of the first case, that of Zhuang in Guangxi, was done on grounds of convenience and special interest. I had lived in Guangxi (1980-82) and taken a great interest in the preparations for re-launching the promotion of the Zhuang script and for promoting other newly-created romanised scripts such as Mien (Yao) and Kam (Dong). Moreover, I had important contacts at my former workplace, Guangxi Nationalities Institute, who were able to arrange suitable visits and meetings with key people involved in the promotion of Zhuang.

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The choice of the second case study was based on the judgement that it would be a “critical case” for checking the hypotheses described in Chapter 1, especially in cross-case comparison of institutional support for its use, its use in writing, use in teaching and inter-generational use with the situation of Zhuang. On discovering that the promotion of Zhuang had effectively come to an end (only being maintained symbolically in the form of a few “experimental” bilingual classes and publications etc.), I was eager to analyse a context in south-western China where the promotion of a minority language script and standardised language had been more successful, both to satisfy my personal curiosity as to whether the basic policy could lead to the successful promotion of a non-Han standardised language and script and also to serve as a contrast to the Zhuang situation. It was suggested to me by various people in Guangxi involved with the promotion of Zhuang that I examine the promotion of Liangshan Yi or Nuosu in southern Sichuan. I was able to make contact with the prefectural Nationalities Language and Scripts Committee in Xichang via a contact in the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Sichuanese Provincial Government and via the former was able to visit the Nationalities Language and Scripts Committee of the County of Zhaojue.

In order to have a point of reference with other minority languages and scripts being promoted in China, concrete examples of the promotion of different categories of minority languages in China in general were examined. This was done in the hope of gaining at least a superficial insight into whether the cause and effect relations detected in the Zhuang and Nuosu situations might possibly be applicable to further situations.

In spite of many different circumstances, the two situations chosen do have a number of points in common. In both cases the promotions took place in autonomous areas where the language communities in question had nominal autonomy, namely the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (equivalent in importance and size to a province) and the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (a sub-division of Sichuan Province). Both language communities have large rural areas where few people are fully competent in Han and in which there are administrative centres with Han and /or hanised cadres and other residents which serve as foci of hanisation. They also have adjacent strongly Han agricultural and urban areas. Both areas promoted the scripts intensely at the end of the Maoist period and both have produced a body of literature documenting the promotions and of cadres (teaching and administrative staff) involved in the promotion work.

3.4.2 TIME FRAME

The time frame covered by the study is essentially from 1950 until the mid-1990s, the period from the end of the Maoist era until the mid 1990s being the most central. Wherever possible, developments during the last 10 years (1995-2005) have also been taken into account, in order to give a picture, not only under the first 30 years of centrally planned communist rule (two thirds of which was dominated by radical Maoist Han-centric policies, but also of how post-Maoist economic reforms have affected the situation of the promotion of the Zhuang and Nuosu scripts.

3.4.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A case study can involve the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Conclusions from this study are based on qualitative methods. A language attitude questionnaire was tried out on speakers of Nuosu (in 1995 in Zhaojue –see 3.4.6.2), but there was no opportunity to use the same questionnaire with speakers of Zhuang.

3.4.4 SOURCES OF DATA

Data for this study was collected through both primary and secondary sources.

3.4.4.1 SECONDARY SOURCES OF DATA

These included articles and reports, chiefly –but not exclusively- written by administrators, linguists and educationalists involved in the promotion of minority languages. Some were published in academic journals or books and others in “internal” journals and memos. The latter were provided to me by members of official organisms involved in the promotion and on the whole were not politically sensitive. I am sure anything of that nature would have been kept from me. Letting a foreigner find out about the highs and lows of minority linguistic policy (even where this involved being faced with assimilationist opinions or trends) did not seem to be viewed as a problem by the authorities at any level. For example the police in Liangshan was worried in 1995 that I might report on the problems of heroin addiction and AIDS rampant in Zhaojue County and were relieved when they were reassured that I only wanted to study the linguistic policy. Particularly since 2003, many articles on language policy and planning have appeared on Chinese websites in the internet, confirming that it is not considered a particularly sensitive issue.

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Articles tend to comment on what has already been achieved, the problems that have been encountered and to put forward recommendations for successfully carrying out the tasks ahead. It is in the latter section where most of the criticisms (veiled or direct) are made of cadres, teachers and members of the public who are either not cooperating with the promotion or not carrying it out as the authors would wish. Many of these authors have a very strong bias in favour of the official philosophy of the promotion with a tendency to emphasise both the right of minority nationalities to use and develop their own languages and scripts and the necessity of all minority language speakers to learn Putonghua and the Han script. Very often the opinion of the opponents and sceptics of the promotion can be inferred from their criticisms and urging. I was unable to find published literature from the second pluralistic phase (see Chapter 4) which openly opposed the promotion, something which Kaup (2000) has also commented upon.

Different authors do however stress different aspects which often give a clue as to where they are placed on an ideological “plurilingual - Han-only” scale. For example some authors go out of their way to carefully stress that all nationalities have the right (some even implying that it is their duty) to fully use and develop their languages and scripts in different domains, while others remain strangely silent on this aspect or lay far more emphasis on the necessity of mastering Han if minority speakers want to look further than the neighbouring village. Some authors give mixed messages making it hard to know which aspects they really value and which they may be repeating out of political correctness. Many such articles paraphrase, or even directly repeat, the content of official documents (another source of secondary data) issued by official organisms as policy guidelines or to outline language work legislation. Official documents tend to concentrate on idealised goals to be achieved.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, when I initially began work on this research very little had been written by western authors on the promotion of Chinese minority language scripts. Since the late 1990s, and especially since 2000, there has been a large increase in publications, both by westerners and Chinese studying (or who have received training) at western institutions, which treat in some way the promotion of minority languages, although this subject is often not the main focus of many such studies, which may be more concerned with issues such as ethnic identity or school attendance. These authors tend to be much more direct when describing sensitive areas or in expressing criticism

than the “home-grown” Chinese authors, who use a certain amount of hedging and political slogans to protect themselves from potential political critics.

Another source which has appeared in the last few years are internet chat forums where participants expressed opinions about the promotion of the Zhuang script. These are sometimes specific forums connected with particular ethnic groups or were found through search machines using key words likely to elicit a response such as “推广壮文” (“promotion of the Zhuang script”) and “彝文 + 扫盲” (“Zhuang script + literacy campaign”). This is an aspect which I would have exploited more if it had been more widespread earlier in the research period.

3.4.4.2 PRIMARY SOURCES OF DATA

These consisted of interviews conducted mainly with people involved in the promotion of Zhuang and Nuosu, as well as with those involved in the promotion of other minority languages such as Qiang, Mien (Yao) and Naxi. The interviews were not recorded, something I latter regretted (as this would have greatly increased reliability), but were recorded using notes, typically in the form of mind-maps (Buzan, 1991). Most interviewees were found for me by the organisations which I was working with, namely the Language and Scripts Committees of Liangshan and Zhaojue, Guangxi Nationalities Institute and Debao County Government. Although the choice of interviewees was biased in that they were mostly supportive to the idea of the promotion (they would hardly be likely to seek out opponents of the promotion), it was still possible to see where disagreements, doubts, problems and setbacks had occurred. The aforementioned organisations were not trying to present a completely rosy picture of the situation and on the whole chose a range of interviewees whom I considered suitable and covering policy makers, policy implementers and “consumers” of the promotion.

Although interviewees were obviously biased (just as were the secondary sources of data) and typically carefully edited what they said, I do feel that they felt freer to express their true feelings than in a formal article, as well as often betraying attitudes through their gestures and expressions. Also it was possible to interview people who would never have thought of writing an article about their views, such as Nuosu bimo (shamans), peasants who had learnt the scripts, editors or reporters of minority language

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publications and members of staff of schools (not necessarily always in favour of the promotion). For example a Han English teacher in Zhaojue expressed freely that he thought the promotion of Nuosu was not working and was pointless, something he would never have published anywhere.

This was even more the case with people I interviewed by chance, such as Han owners of restaurants in Zhaojue County town who quite openly expressed their disdain and dislike for the Nuosu language and way of life. Of course the latter were not conducted in the form of interviews but were rather spontaneous conversations, in which people are less inhibited to express their opinions. The analysis and understanding of attitudes and opinions expressed in the interviews was complemented by personal observation during my field trips and from my previous residence in Guangxi Nationalities Institute and visits to Yunnan, where I had had numerous conversations with minority language speakers and Han about the promotion and long term vitality of minority languages and scripts.

A further source of primary data is a language attitude survey carried out among various students, cadres and peasants attending literacy classes in Zhaojue County in Liangshan in summer 1995. The percentages of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with attitude statements were of interest (see 3.4.6.2). These are discussed when considering the use of Nuosu in bilingual education (see 6.2.5.4). The subjects for this survey were selected by the Minority Language and Script Committee of Zhaojue in coordination with schools, an adult literacy class and local cadres.

A primary data source which I hope to exploit in future research but have not used in this research due to lack of early awareness of this possibility, is that of participating in internet forums to solicit a variety of reactions. Of course it is difficult to know who the respondents are (or even if the same person is answering more than once under various guises, but as an extra source of data to be qualitatively analysed it could be a useful tool, particularly when controversial points are raised.

3.4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

This research sets out to generate insights into the factors which have caused different results in the promotion of Zhuang in Guangxi and of Nuosu in Liangshan. While it is hoped that the conclusions will help to predict results of similar promotions in other language communities, it must be bourn in mind that some of the cause-effect relations analysed here might have only local rather than universal applicability and some of the cause-effect relations of other situations may be determined by different contexts and circumstances.

The first step in data analysis was to examine data in each sub-unit of each case study to identify issues relevant to the questions (the aims of the thesis) raised in Chapter 1. In a much more superficial way data for the promotion of minority languages as a whole in China was examined with the main trends for different categories of languages (with concrete examples) particular attention being paid to those with well established traditions of literacy such as Tibetan, Uyghur and Korean. The following step is to conduct cross-case analysis in order to identify patterns and to what extent findings differ.

As regards the quality of this research, that will be judged by how convincing the causal relationships are between the data and the conclusions reached concerning the questions asked (internal validity), the extent to which the findings can be generalised to similar contexts (external validity) and whether someone else examining the same two linguistic communities would come to the same conclusions (reliability). Although this basic procedure was developed (Yin, 1989) with positivist assumptions in mind, I see no reason why it cannot be adapted as a kind of check list in interpretive research, providing that the constructed realities of those who contributed to the data (the interviewees and authors of articles) are taken into account and sufficient data relating to the cause and effect relationships.

3.4.6 DATA COLLECTION

3.4.6.1 COLLECTION OF DATA FROM SECONDARY SOURCES

Over two main periods prior to 1996 and after 2002, there was intensive consultation of secondary sources. Some of the reading was extensive in which I selected and

summarised relevant points after reading or skimming through articles looking for points which I could relate to the research. Like minority language policy in China, my secondary data collection took a zigzag route, largely occasioned by the many interruptions. However, as the research progressed I became more selective in my reading and applied more efficient skimming and summary techniques, thus eliminating unnecessary reading of irrelevant information. I found a particularly helpful technique was the use of mind-maps, which saved wordy note-taking.

3.4.6.2 COLLECTION OF DATA FROM PRIMARY SOURCES

Interviews

As previously mentioned, I took notes from the interviews (usually in the form of mind-maps) and in a mixture of Chinese (both pinyin and characters according to speed) and European languages. Many of the interviews were in Mandarin, which of course meant that I had a rather biased sample. However, a number were conducted via an interpreter, such as the head of the Zhaojue Minority Languages and Scripts Committee, Hainailama. The atmosphere was without exception cordial and usually relaxed. In most cases the subjects appeared to enjoy being questioned as “expert informants”.

Language Attitude Questionnaire

The questionnaire was inspired by an assignment for a doctoral course that I carried out at Valencia University with José R. Gómez Molina. It was elaborated after my visit to Guangxi and so was only carried out in Liangshan. This is a great pity as it would have been of great value to be able to directly compare the results from the two situations. The questions were elaborated and continually revised in the six months prior to my second visit to Liangshan and translated into Chinese. The Chinese version was checked and corrected by a Chinese student living in Valencia. On arrival in Zhaojue the questionnaire was discussed with members of the county Minority Languages and Scripts Committee and very slightly modified, mostly due to their pointing out probable reactions to the wording which I had not anticipated. The questions were then translated into Nuosu and photocopies of both the Nuosu and Han versions made.

The survey took place in a Nuosu medium secondary school, a Han medium secondary school with Han and Nuosu students, at a cadre school with Han and Nuosu cadres, at a meeting of rural Nuosu cadres and at a rural adult literacy class. Over 300 subjects took

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part, although not all subjects answered all questions. Thus the total number of respondents varied for each question. All respondents were given the choice of answering in Nuosu or Han. Several of the questions turned out to be inappropriate. For example, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “If a [Nuosu-speaking] Nuosu marries a person [i.e. not necessarily a Nuosu] who can speak Nuosu, they should only teach their children Han.” In rural Liangshan marriages between Nuosu and non-Nuosu (and even between different Nuosu castes) are virtually impossible.

Of the items that were found to be appropriate, attitudes expressed to ten items concerning bilingual education are discussed in 6.3.5.4. The level of agreement and disagreement with such attitude statements corroborated interpretations of interview evidence concerning the use of the minority language in teaching.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BASIC CONCEPTS

This chapter examines some of the theoretical frameworks relevant to the issues in the thesis, before going on to explore basic concepts essential to the understanding of the issues in the research context, especially those which could lead to potential confusion.

4.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis necessarily cuts across different disciplines (between which there is considerable overlap) and the official promotion of the Zhuang and Nuosu scripts is looked at partly from a language planning perspective, partly from a literacy perspective partly from a bilingual education point of view and also as an endangered minority language in which ethnolinguistic vitality is a vital consideration. Below I discuss some of the chief theoretical issues underpinning this thesis.

4.1.1 THE LANGUAGE-PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

4.1.1.1 LANGUAGE PLANNING SEEN WITHIN A COMPLEX ECOSYSTEM

This research is inspired by, and draws heavily upon, the theoretical approach outlined in Cooper (1991), which was refined and expanded by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997). This is a holistic, flexible approach which takes into account the factors relevant and important to my research. It sees language not as an isolated object, but rather as a tool of real living communities with political, socio-economic and cultural aspirations which forms part of a complex eco-system. Thus language-planning measures will not only effect the particular language, domains and speakers etc. at which they are aimed, but potentially all those in the eco-system. This approach is useful in that it looks at planning from a number of levels and perspectives. Its starting point is to use Cooper's accounting scheme to pose the question "Who does what to whom for what purposes, under what conditions, by what means with what outcome?"

In addition it takes into account many important aspects such as the behaviour of the different groups involved in reaction to the language planning measures or how they affect what measures are actually taken. For example, it predicts manipulation of

language planning policy by elites in order to maintain their power, which is relevant to this situation.

Cooper (1989) proposes an accounting scheme for languages, which I have used as a check-list in this research. In the overview of linguistic policy in China as a whole in Chapter 5a, I have followed his scheme through systematically., whereas in the introductions to the Zhuang and Nuosu situations (Chapters 5b and 5c) the events are arranged chronologically and in Chapters 6 and 7 the analysis is arranged thematically according to the research questions and hypotheses that this thesis sets on to answer/test.

Of special interest to me is also the linguistic eco-system proposed by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) and which in figures 4.1-4.3 below I apply to the Chinese situation. However, the influence of this model goes way beyond my crude over-generalised diagrams and the idea permeates the research that there are a series of inter-related elements in the system and changing one of them can have a knock on effect on the others.

China can be envisaged as one big macro-eco-system increasingly dominated by standard Mandarin, but where non-standard forms of Mandarin, and some non-Mandarin “dialects” (themselves under fire from Mandarin) are also very strong. In a few corners of the country there are strong pockets of Uyghur, Tibetan, Korean, Mongolian and Kazakh with long-standing “confident” cultural and literary traditions of being completely distinct from the Han. Fragmented over the western and northern border areas is a mosaic of infinite smaller fragmented languages, some of which (e.g. Nuosu and Sipsong Panna Tai,) have literary and literacy traditions and most of which have either very limited or no tradition of literacy.

I have represented these along the lines of Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: 311 pp)’s eco-system model (see figure 4.1), where different circles represent different languages. Circles within circles represent varieties of those languages. This is a gross oversimplification of the situation and is certainly not drawn to scale in proportion either to their importance or population. If this were the case, the circles for Mandarin and some of the other Han varieties would be far larger and one would hardly see those

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for many of the minority languages. Neither does it show how languages interact between one another – it merely places them within the same linguistic eco-system.

Kaplan and Baldauf stress that no eco-system is isolated from other ecosystems. Thus the macro-eco-system for China is influenced by those of neighbouring countries and international trade, tourism and foreign relations. Thus the eco-system of Mongolia exerts an influence on that of China (on the Mongolian speaking areas), those of the Central Asian republics on Xinjiang, that of Thailand on the Tai-speaking areas of Yunnan, etc. Eco-systems of foreign countries exert an influence via foreign trade in the form of English and to a lesser extent Japanese, German, Russian, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, etc.

Trying to represent a linguistic eco-system for the whole of China is an over-ambitious, simplification. Therefore I have adapted their model to the sub-eco-system for Liangshan from the point of view of the influences on the Nuosu-speaking community and promotion of Nuosu / Han (figure 4.2) and to that of Guangxi, from the perspective of the influences on the Nuosu-speaking community and promotion of Nuosu / Han (figure 4.3). Even at these levels, these representations are gross over-simplifications, but do, I feel, provide useful insights into the processes and participants involved in the promotion of non-Han minority languages and scripts. Although it is the promotion of these latter which is the focus of this research, the overt and covert promotion of Mandarin Han –which often is promoted at the cost of , rather than complementary to (as should be the case according to the principles of the promotion), has also been included.

TOP-DOWN INITIATIVES

Bodies/ organisations (at different levels) exerting influence on the linguistic eco-system: e.g. CCP, Government, Education Authorities (bilingual education /Han-only education), Language and script committees, several NGOs and foreign/international organisations

Concrete overt planning measures in favour of standard Mandarin Han: e.g. adult literacy campaigns, Han only and Type 2 schools, L2 instruction in Type 1 schools public use, media use, use in commerce, Han publishing. Inter-ethnic lingua franca.

Covert measures in favour of standard Mandarin Han, Guiliu Mandarin or other Han “dialects” (e.g. Cantonese or Minnanhua): e.g. encouraging Han-speaking Zhuang elite, encouraging, not obliging Han to learn Zhuang.

Concrete overt planning measures in favour of non-Han languages: e.g. adult literacy campaigns, Type 1 and 2 schools, public use, media use, use in commerce, Nuosu publishing etc.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES especially ENGLISH

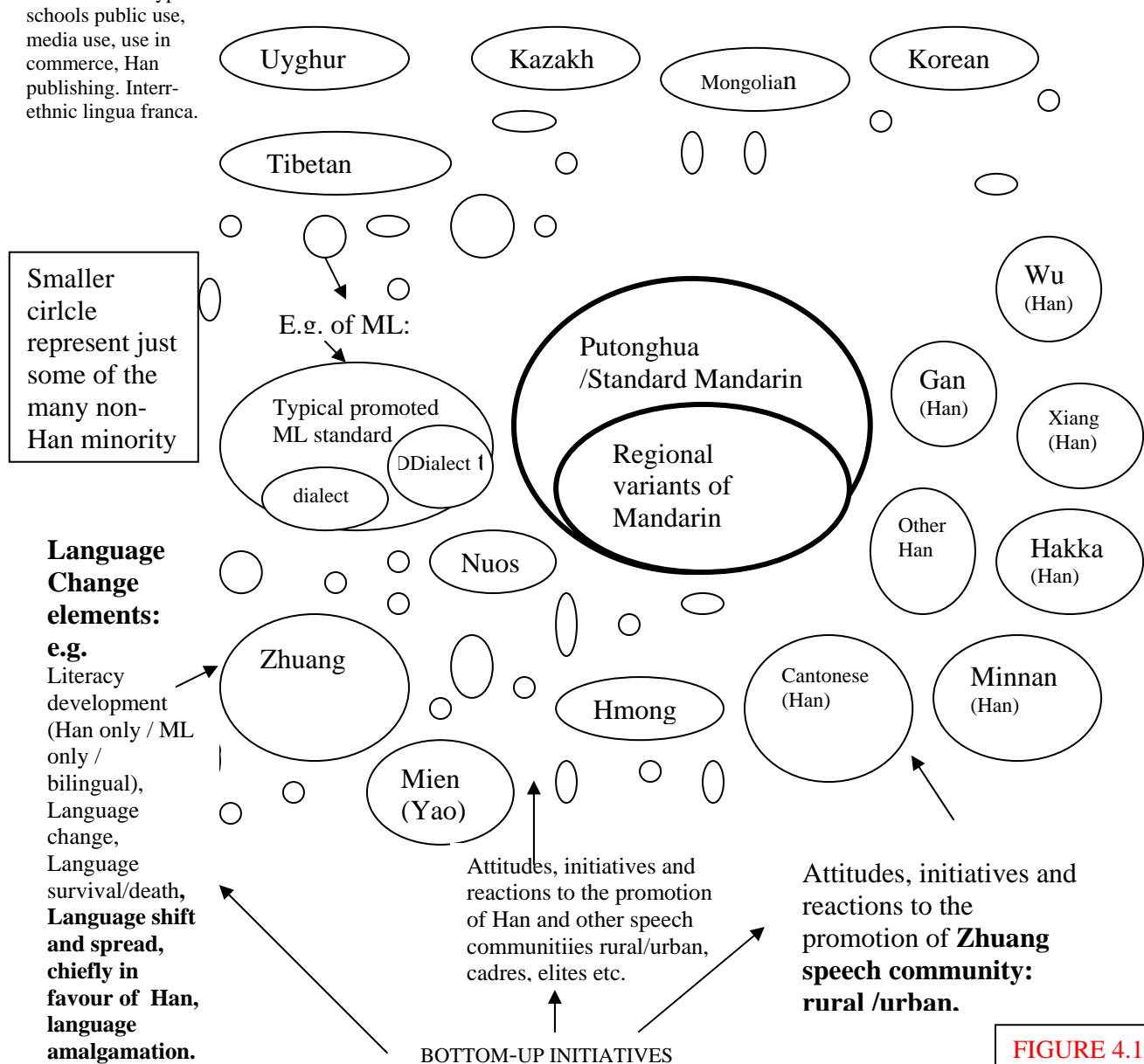


FIGURE 4.1
Linguistic Eco-system of China from the perspective of minority language communities.

TOP-DOWN INITIATIVES

Bodies/ organisations (at different levels) **exerting influence on the linguistic eco-system:** e.g. CCP, Government, Education Authorities (bilingual education /Han-only education), Language and script committees,

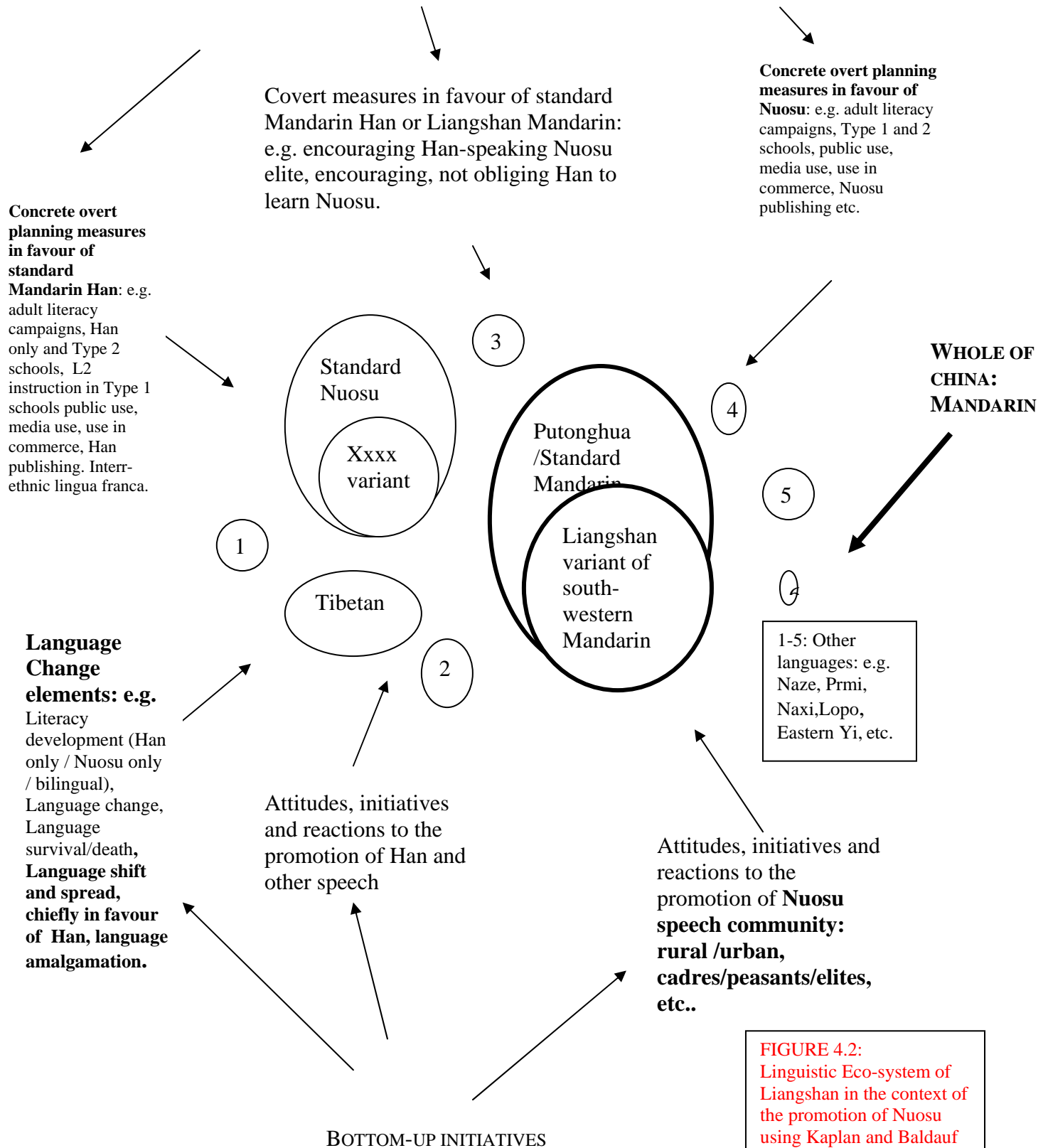


FIGURE 4.2: Linguistic Eco-system of Liangshan in the context of the promotion of Nuosu using Kaplan and Baldauf 1997's approach.

TOP-DOWN INITIATIVES

Bodies/ organisations (at different levels) **exerting influence on the linguistic eco-system:** e.g. CCP, Government, Education Authorities (bilingual education /Han-only education), Language and script committees, several NGOs and foreign/international organisations

Covert measures in favour of standard Mandarin Han, Guiliu Mandarin or Cantonese: e.g. encouraging Han-speaking Zhuang elite, encouraging, not obliging Han to learn Zhuang.

Concrete overt planning measures in favour of Zhuang: e.g. adult literacy campaigns, Type 1 and 2 schools, public use, media use, use in commerce, Nuosu publishing etc.

Concrete overt planning measures in favour of standard Mandarin Han: e.g. adult literacy campaigns, Han only and Type 2 schools, L2 instruction in Type 1 schools public use, media use, use in commerce, Han publishing. Interr-ethnic lingua franca.

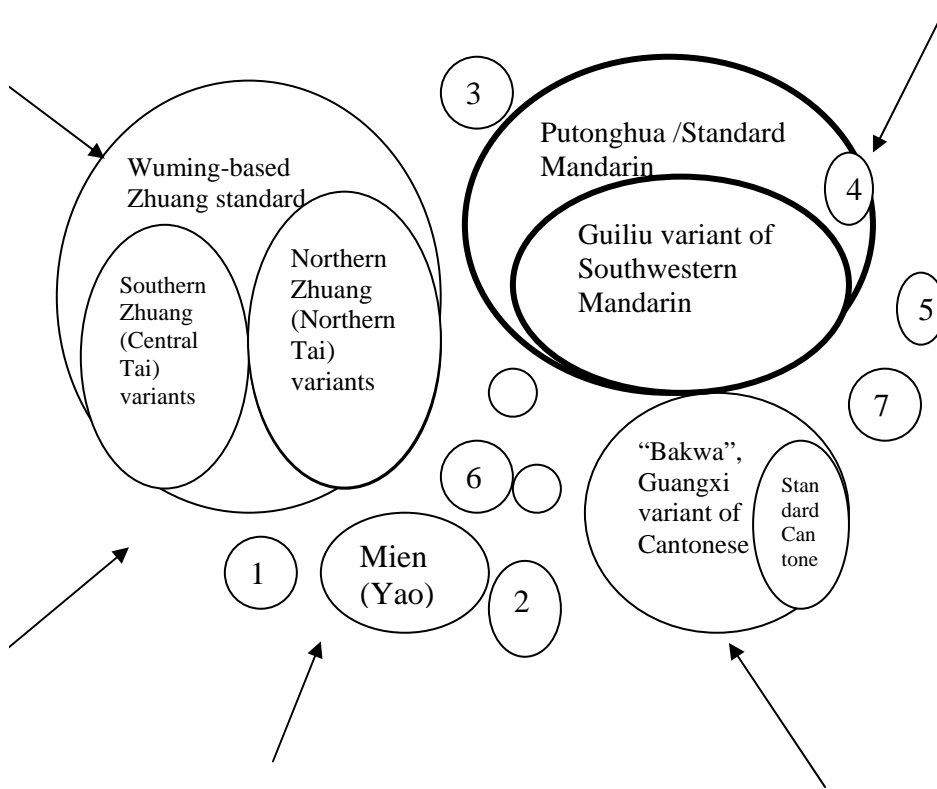
WHOLE OF CHINA: MANDARIN

Language Change elements:
e.g. Literacy development (Han only / Zhuang only / bilingual), Language change, Language survival/death, **Language shift and spread, chiefly in favour of Han, language amalgamation.**

Attitudes, initiatives and reactions to the promotion by Han and other speech

Attitudes, initiatives and reactions to the promotion by **Zhuang speech community:** rural /urban.

BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES



1-7: Other languages: e.g., Kam, Lagga, Hmong, Sui, Vietnamese,

FIGURE 4.3
Linguistic Eco-system of Guangxi in the context of the promotion of Zhuang using Kaplan and Baldauf 1997's approach

4.1.1.2 MAIN ISSUES IN LANGUAGE PLANNING IN CHINA

Language planning can consist of many kinds of different measures to achieve a variety of different aims associated with language use. In its widest sense the term is often used to encompass “everything from government macro-level national planning to group or individual micro-level planning” (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997, 27). “In its simplest sense, language planning is an attempt by someone to modify the linguistic behaviour of some community for some reason” (ibid, 3-4). Others such as Jernudd (1993, quoted in Kaplan and Baldauf, ibid) see it as being restricted to top-down measures taken by those in power and prefer to use the term “language management“ for bottom-up grass-roots initiatives aimed at influencing language use.

Kaplan and Baldauf prefer the wider definition as can be seen from the following quotation:

...language planning involves deliberate, although not always overt, future oriented change in systems of language code and/or speaking in a societal context (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971b). The language planning that one hears most about is that undertaken by government and it is intended to solve complex social problems, but there is a great deal of language planning that occurs in other societal contexts at more modest levels for other purposes. (ibid, 3)

This research analyses the overt top-down planning measures taken by the Chinese authorities to encourage the use of minority languages and scripts and the way in which cadres and the public react to them (the bottom-up reaction) and mentions bottom-up initiatives taken by Zhuang and Nuosu speakers, while also discussing covert measures taken by influential participants, which affect the success of the overt ones as well as overt policies to promote Mandarin in so far as they conflict with the promotion of minority languages.

China in the mid-20th Century had many aspects of linguistic behaviour which its rulers, first the Guomindang –who were unable to, as they were on a continual war footing– and later the Communists, wished to modify. The vast majority of the population was illiterate and “dialectal” differences between different varieties of Han made communication between different parts of China difficult. Planning has largely (but not consistently throughout the communist period) concentrated on spreading basic literacy, universalising basic education and spreading standardised Mandarin. Large numbers of people of non-Han nationalities could not speak Han and had totally different cultures,

religious beliefs and social and value systems, which the largely Han cadres did not understand. In order to integrate them into the Chinese motherland the language barriers needed to be bridged, preferably without alienating the minorities, many of whom were not very convinced by the new project of a united communist China.

Language planning involving the reform and standardisation of Han

Most literature on language policy and planning in China describes attempts to reform and standardise the Han language and script, create a romanised phonetic script for it and to establish and promote Putonghua, the Peking-based variant of northern Mandarin, among speakers of other Han varieties. The question of whether to reform the Han script (and to what extent), whether to convert it into a phonetic syllabary (along the lines of Nuosu) with one character for each possible syllable in each tonal variation, or whether to replace it entirely with a romanisation or other phonetic script has in itself generated a lot of emotions and debate.

The first step, which established a modern standardised language based on the colloquial speech of northern Mandarin to replace the outdated classical language, laid the foundation for the spread of universal literacy among a population not familiar with classical Han Chinese.

Many linguists (e.g. Riedlinger 1989, Belde 1982 and Hannas 1996) have argued forcefully that the complex system of Han Chinese characters places an unnecessary burden on speakers of Han Chinese. Common sense and the experience of many people –myself included- tell us that it is not the same learning several thousand complex ideographic symbols as it learning 26 or so phonetic symbols. A large proportion of early schooling in China is taken up just with acquiring basic literacy. Despite strong arguments for replacing Han characters with a phonetic script, thus greatly facilitating the acquisition of universal literacy –especially in rural areas- and releasing more time for pupils to concentrate on learning the content of other subject areas rather than the basic building blocks of language, this debate for the foreseeable future a closed chapter. Having simplified standardised an important number of characters and successfully propagated these throughout the population, no more simplifications will be carried out. The pinyin romanisation is fine as an aid to learning the standard language and the pronunciation of characters, but is not meant as a replacement for

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characters. I must here declare that I am in favour of replacing Han characters with a phonetic script and feel that the Communist Party missed a great opportunity in the 1950s and 1960s when they still had the means to mobilise the masses and impose such a reform.

One important reason for conserving the script was not to break with China's cultural past. I find this a weak argument as important works could be translated into pinyin (nowadays there are special computer programmes which do this) and in any case pupils who wished, could be taught characters just as many western students learn Latin and Greek. In any case most modern Chinese have great difficulties in reading classical texts written before the 20th Century as the characters are used with a very different syntax and meaning from modern characters.

Another reason for not changing to pinyin was the fact that speakers of non-Mandarin Han "dialects" who now read off characters with the pronunciation of their "dialect" would be forced to read and write a variety which is totally alien to many of them. Proposals for the creation of creating a series of "dialect"-based standard phonetic scripts along the lines advocated by the CCP shortly before coming to power (and earlier put into practice by some missionaries for evangelising purposes) were rejected by the CCP after assuming power (Chen Ping 1999: 121) on the grounds that they would undermine the unity of the Han language and hence nationality. In the absence of dialect-based phonetic scripts, the sole promotion of a standard Mandarin phonetic script would have denied the possibility to speakers of southern and central Han languages not competent in Mandarin to use (or rather "adapt") the Han script for their dialects. This could conceivably have led to them feeling alienated from the standard Mandarin Han script and the project of a unified Han language and nationality. Although a sole standardised Mandarin pinyin would have provided the perfect opportunity for imposing Putonghua on speakers of other Han varieties, the logistical difficulties of doing so in the early years of the Communist period, when a very large proportion of the Han population in Central and Southern Han dialect areas spoke no Mandarin, was considered too overpowering.

There has been a certain diglossic flowering of the writing of the more prestigious non-Mandarin Han variants, especially of Cantonese (mainly in Hong Kong) and Southern

Min (chiefly in Taiwan), in recent years, even though generally restricted to informal domains. The idea of promoting a Peking-based standard Mandarin (Putonghua) is widely accepted, even though many speakers of other “dialects” find it bothersome that their “dialect” is undervalued. The spreading of Putonghua has been very successful and it is now possible to be understood by a big proportion of the population all over China. Now, more than at any other time before, it would thus be feasible to consider promoting standard Mandarin pinyin as the sole script. However, given that most of the population now has at least a minimal grasp of characters, it is probably the most difficult moment in history to gain support for abolishing characters. Near universal literacy seems to have strengthened even humble peasants respect for characters and among many non-Han peoples characters have become a symbol of Han superiority and advancement.

Mandarin is widely perceived to be in direct competition with the promotion of minority nationality (i.e. non-Han) languages and scripts (and the creation and reform of these), even if its promotion is often argued to be complementary to the latter.

Language planning involving the reform, standardisation and promotion of non-Han languages and scripts

Literacy is seen as the key to a nationality’s development and in the Chinese context is associated with being “cultured” and “advanced”. Language planning among non-Han languages has mainly manifested itself in the creation (and / or reform of written scripts), and the promotion of literacy either via adult literacy campaigns or state schools, which either teach the scripts as a subject or use them as a teaching medium. In some, but not all, domains, public –and even commercial- use of these scripts has been promoted. Planning involving encouraging oral use is somewhat thinner on the ground, as is status planning and encouraging the formation of elites bilingual in Han and minority languages. I think this is mainly due to the existence of elites of Han or hanised minority nationality cadres in many minority areas (especially in south-western areas) who are scared of losing their privileges, which rest, in part at least, on their dominance of the Han language and script. Thus as with autonomy laws (Heberer 2001), language laws and directives are “soft” laws that many reticent cadres and members of the public feel they can (and very often do) simply ignore.

While the Chinese constitution guarantees the freedom to use and develop non-Han languages, the implementation of the promotion (or not) of non-Han languages is usually devolved to lower levels (e.g. autonomous regions, provinces, counties) meaning that there is considerable local variation in the promotion (or lack thereof) in different areas. That local cadres and elites often make the decisions regarding the degree to which non-Han languages are promoted and used does not necessarily benefit these languages. As mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, many of the local elites in areas where there are excellent sociolinguistic and educational arguments for a full-blown promotion will oppose this. The problem is that if the decisions were taken by higher, much more Han-dominated levels of government who do not understand the problems of non-Han speaking areas this may not help things either. With administrative elites (often, in south-western China at least) dominated by Han or Hanised non-Han, very often the real intended beneficiaries of the policy, the “broad masses” of minority language speakers, and minority cadres at grass-root level, are not given much say in determining which policy is implemented and are not adequately informed of the full implications of the language planning options open to them.

All minority languages being officially promoted use phonetic systems (alphabets and syllabaries) which are much easier and quicker to learn than the Han ideographic script. There are systems just as complex in popular, but not official, use, (e.g. the traditional Yi script with over 8,000 characters) and ones even more complex, such as the Zhuang *fangkuaizi*, an adaptation of Han characters along the lines of the former Vietnamese *chu nom* script. In many parts of China, especially in the south-western provinces such as Guangxi, Guizhou and Yunnan, there is a generalized feeling that phonetic scripts are inferior to Han characters. In the past culture, education and therefore progress was, in many areas, directly linked to the acquisition of Han characters and people today know that they or their children will still have to acquire them, whether or not they become literate in their nationality’s language. Therefore many non-Han language speakers see the learning of a relatively simple non-Han phonetic script as being the burden rather than the laborious memorizing of several thousand Han characters.

As pointed out elsewhere, the main targets of the promotion are not Han or even members of the nationality in question who are fluent in Han, but minority language speakers with no, or only a poor, knowledge of Han. This contrasts with Catalonia,

where all residents (whether their roots are in Girona, Cordoba, Wenzhou or Senegal) are targets of the policy to promote Catalan. In fact, if the same policy were applied to Catalonia as in south-western China, there would be no top-down promotion of Catalan, as all Catalans, virtually without exception, are fluent in Castilian Spanish and could function with only Spanish literacy (as indeed many Catalan speakers do, especially in Valencia and eastern Aragon). Some Han do indeed choose to learn minority languages and scripts and others do so naturally. In some areas and periods it has also been required of some Han cadres, especially in rural areas, that they learn the local languages, just as it is not totally unknown for children of hanised minority nationalities to relearn their “native” languages.

What is clear is that it is no good just promoting a language through acquisition planning, even when the corpus planning has been well-prepared, if its speakers (or potential speakers) see this as a waste of time and energy, which brings no economic, professional or educational advantages. Status planning is very much the weak link in language planning involving non-Han languages. I sincerely believe that without a few well placed “carrots” (e.g. prizes for literacy and fluency in the language such as better jobs) and perhaps even “sticks” (e.g. the impossibility of finding work as a cadre in areas where the language is spoken) the policy is doomed to failure.

Covert and Overt Language Planning Measures

Language planning measures can be either overt or covert. In order to understand events in language planning in Communist China it is important to be aware of the latter as well as the declared explicit official aims. As Dwyer (2005: 6) puts it:

Every country has language policies, be they overt, covert, or both. **Overt policies** are disseminated through legal documents, legislation, and official administrative bodies. **Covert policies**, which may promote or undermine languages, are unwritten and often not even discussed. They reflect policymakers’ assumptions about the nature and comparative worth of ethnolinguistic groups and their speakers, and mesh so seamlessly with elite and popular ideologies that their existence is presumed a given.

Being customary and “traditional,” covert policies are implicit and must be inferred from praxis: from the implementation of overt policies, from media statements, and from popular language attitudes. Covert policies differ from mere opinions or attitudes in that they are systematically implemented in one or more domains (e.g. education and the media) over a period of time. The United States is an example of a nation without an overt policy specifically for language; China has both overt and covert policies.

While at a localised level covert support on behalf of minority languages has certainly occurred on isolated occasions, covert policies have been behaviour or assumptions, direct or indirect, which have favoured Han at the expense of the non-Han languages. In 6.3 I examine how covert, implicit policies have limited the effective application of the minority linguistic policy not only in Guangxi, but also in Liangshan.

4.1.2 THE LITERACY PERSPECTIVE

The promotion of the Zhuang and Nuosu scripts chiefly involves making previously illiterate speakers of these languages (who were previously either totally illiterate or maybe had some degree of literacy in Han characters,) literate in the standardised form of their mother tongue. The promotion is carried out because it is assumed that mother tongue literacy will enable poor rural Zhuang or Nuosu speakers to improve their lives. The perceived relative usefulness of target minority-language and Han literacies to Zhuang and Nuosu speakers is central to understanding the different results of both promotions, as well as the limitations of the more successful promotion of Nuosu. The debate on the nature and implications of literacy is complex and controversial. The potential uses of the written word in peoples' lives are many and varied. It enables them to record things (rather than commit them to memory), to communicate with others who are not present at the same time, to receive knowledge from a wide variety of sources such as signs, labels, newspapers, manuals, textbooks, encyclopaedias, governments, religious and political groups, to read for pleasure, to have access to literary heritages, to follow academic courses and to sit written examinations and thus obtain qualifications.

What do we actually mean by literacy? Different people mean different things, from reading one's name and simple words to writing complex prose. At the simplest level it is often understood as having mastered the set of basic symbols. Of course such mastery could be active or passive and it would be necessary to specify to what degree different aspects such as spelling conventions have been mastered. This is somewhat easier to achieve in the case of alphabetic and syllabic scripts than in the case of Han characters. Often people who have attended schools or literacy classes for a certain period of time are assumed to be literate, but this is not a reliable guide to acquisition of literacy as many people undergoing literacy education fail to become wholly – or even

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partially – literate and many others subsequently forget all or some of what they have learnt (often described as “relapsing” into illiteracy or semi-literacy). Baker (2001: 322) quotes from Huddleson (1994: 130) whereby reading (and by implication writing) are language processes in which individuals construct meaning through transactions with written texts (constructed with symbols which represent language). In such transactions ideological aspects such as the individuals’ past experiences, language backgrounds, cultural frameworks and purposes in reading or writing are involved.

Literacy is popularly seen as a way of empowering – or at least helping to empower – disadvantaged illiterate people. A major argument in favour of both universal primary (and secondary) education and literacy education for adults is that it will provide access to modern scientific knowledge and technology, thus increasing a person’s employability and enabling them to find better and more rewarding jobs. It is argued that literate people will have a better understanding of their situation and be in a better position to better themselves and fight for their rights. Functional definitions of literacy which include empowerment as a built-in element are common among many promoters of literacy campaigns such as UNESCO, such as the following (quoted by the website Literacy.org, jointly sponsored by the International Literacy Institute and the National Center on Adult Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, 200?):

A person is functionally literate if s/he can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his/her group and community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his own and the community's development. (<http://www.literacyonline.org/explorer/defliteracy.html>)

It would be naïve, however, to imagine that literacy necessarily entails empowerment and it is clear from countless examples that many literacy campaigns set out not to empower, but rather control and manipulate, hitherto illiterate people. An example is the spreading of literacy for evangelical purposes by many missionary groups throughout the world and the religious schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish Highlands, which set out to both evangelise and anglicise the Gaelic-speaking population (see Whithers 1984).

Brian Street (2003) divides people’s approaches to literacy acquisition into 2 main kinds.

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The first approach embodies the “Great Divide Theory” (espoused by writers such as Ong 1982, Levi-Strauss, 1962, Goody and Watt, 1963 and others cited in Street, 1995 and Morgan and Ramanthan, 2005) which viewed the transition of individuals and societies from illiteracy to literacy as a momentous all embracing event, implying a transition from primitive, simple societies to civilised advanced ones, from pre-logical, concrete modes of thought to analytic, abstract ones and from utterance-based and context-dependent ways of using language to text-based and abstract ways (Morgan and Ramanthan, 2005). Street (2003: 77-78) puts it thus:

The standard view in many fields, from schooling to development programs, works from the assumption that literacy in itself--autonomously--will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. Introducing literacy to poor, "illiterate" people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their "illiteracy" in the first place. I refer to this as an "autonomous" model of literacy. The model, I suggest, disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will have these benign effects. Research in NLS [=New Literacy Studies] challenges this view and suggests that in practice literacy varies from one context to another and from one culture to another and so, therefore, do the effects of the different literacies in different conditions. The autonomous approach is simply imposing western conceptions of literacy on to other cultures or within a country those of one class or cultural group onto others.

Over the last two decades much linguistic and educational research has challenged the claims of this approach and some researchers (e.g. Graff, 1979 and 1987, cited in Morgan and Ramanthan, 2005) suggested that rising literacy levels in different countries were sometimes as much the result of, as the cause of, economic growth. In my opinion, this does not diminish the common sense principal that the disadvantaged have a potentially useful weapon in literacy, but it does show that literacy in itself does not automatically bring wonders.

In China, the Great Divide approach is echoed by many writers in the Guangxi and Liangshan contexts. For example Xu Jing and Luobianmuguo (2004: 279) stress:

文字的创造, 使用标志着—个民族进入了文明时代。所以, 文字是衡量—个民族野蛮与文明的分界线。文字解决了语言的两大缺陷, 即完善了语言的空间局限和时间局限。用文字记载下来, 可以传送到世界任何地方进行交流; 用文字来使语言能跨越千万年的时间, 使古人与今人及未来人之间可以进行交流, 以无限增大语言的功能。The creation of writing systems using symbols brings a people into the civilised age. Therefore, a script is a measure of whether a people are uncivilised or civilised. Written scripts resolve two flaws of language, namely overcoming language's temporal

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and spatial limits. Recording things by way of a script, exchanges can be initiated anywhere in the world; The use of writing allows one to leap across many millions of years, enabling past, present and future generations to be in contact, as well as extending the functions of language.

In the same vein I would also like to quote from a lesson witnessed by Hansen (1999b: 135) in an ethnically-mixed class in Sipsong Panna, illustrating the importance of script in the Chinese Marxist scheme of social development and its subtle use to imply that the Han –having the oldest, most complete script- are superior to other nationalities such as the Tai with less widespread scripts, who are in turn superior to nationalities such as the Jinuo who have no script:

TEACHER: What is the characteristic of a “primitive society”?

CLASS (in unison): It has no script.

TEACHER: Right. Therefore mankind in primitive society had not yet entered the era of civilization. At the time of slave society, mankind entered the era of civilization. Before the time of slave society, people had no culture [*wenhua*], no science [*kexue*]. The most important characteristic of the era of civilization is the existence of script. In primitive society, people used knots, carvings on wood, and so forth to remember things. Genuine script developed from pictographic script. Therefore we have the following stages: from no script, to knots and carvings, to pictographic script, and finally to genuine script. Then, why was there no division between physical labor [*tili laodong*] and mental labor [*naoli laodong*] in primitive society?

CLASS: Because there was no script.

This approach –despite my conscious rejection of it- also to some extent permeates my thinking. For example, when I questioned rural illiterate Nuosu about the potential benefits of learning to read and write, I was amazed when some respondents told me that they never needed to write notes to their friends or relatives, because there was always somebody with whom they could leave the message and so did not feel they were missing out. To me, not being able to leave a note would be a severe handicap. I must confess to being relieved when other literate bystanders affirmed that they did make use of written notes. I feel that in criticising the ideological implications of this approach, we should not be tempted to deny the fact that the introduction of literacy practices can make a great difference to people’s lives.

Street (2003: 77-78) describes the alternative approach as follows:

The alternative, ideological model of literacy, offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another. This model starts from different premises than the autonomous model--it posits instead that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context and the effects of learning that

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particular literacy will be dependent on those particular contexts. Literacy, in this sense, is always contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always "ideological", they are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others (Gee, 1991; Besnier & Street, 1994). The argument about social literacies (Street, 1995) suggests that engaging with literacy is always a social act even from the outset. The ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants, especially the new learners and their position in relations of power. It is not valid to suggest that "literacy" can be "given" neutrally and then its "social" effects only experienced afterwards.

This approach is the model implicit in this study. Researchers following an "ideological" model of literacy avoid using the term "literacy" (with its many ideological and policy presuppositions) as their unit or object of study and Street (2003: 78) has developed a distinction between "literacy events" and "literacy practices", the former having been defined by Heath (1982: 93, cited in Street, 2003: 78), as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes". "Literacy practices" was used by Street to focus upon "social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" (Street, 1984: 1, cited in Street, 2003: 78) and later elaborated to take into account both "events" in Heath's sense and of the social models and concepts of literacy that participants bring to bear upon those events and give meaning to them (Street, 1988, cited in Street, 2003: 78-79). Street (1995) also warns that the significance of the distinction between literacy and orality is a complex and dangerous one, open to uninformed and gratuitous speculation.

Literacy means different things to different people and to the same people within different contexts. For Street (1995: 135) "multiple literacies" can exist side by side and overlapping in a community and he develops the notion of "dominant literacies, in opposition to 'marginalized' literacies". This terminology underlines the ideological nature of literacy. In the case of minority languages such as Zhuang and Nuosu, where there is a power struggle between a dominant language and literacy (/ies) and marginalised languages and literacies, we could add that there are dominant-language literacies and marginalised- or minority-language literacies, between which there is a constant struggle. If the state or other holders of power promote a form of literacy in a minority or marginalised language, we could call the form of literacy promoted dominant minority-language literacy as opposed to more spontaneous localised forms of minority language literacies. However, in the eyes of those in power (and many

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upwardly-mobile speakers of marginalised languages) a dominant minority- (or marginalised-) language literacy plays second violin to a dominant dominant-language literacy.

When those in power seek to promote a dominant literacy (whether in the majority or minority language), they do so with the aim of pushing particular ideological agendas. As Street (1995: Chapter 2) points out, recipients of such literacy do not necessarily view or use their newly-learned reading and/or writing skills in the same way as those in power envisaged, adapting them to local conditions. When studying literacy behaviour in local contexts Street (2003: 80) stresses the importance of taking both local and “distant” literacies and their ideological underpinnings into account. Although also often disseminated via adult literacy classes, dominant literacy is generally most efficiently introduced via schools (Seeberg 1990, 341). As Street (1995: 127) points out

Within school, the association of literacy acquisition with the child’s development of specific social identities and positions; the privileging of written over oral language; the interpretation of ‘metalinguistic’ awareness in terms of specific literacy practices and grammatical terminology ; and the neutralizing and objectification of language that disguises its social and ideological character – all must be understood as essentially *social* processes: they contribute to the construction of a particular kind of citizen.

According to Street (1995: 128) attitudes about literacy from the community feed back into school literacy (typically legitimising it as authoritative, but also often influencing it). At the same time

The kinds of literacy children might be acquiring from peer groups and the community are marginalized against the standard of schooled literacy.

It is important to avoid a total “dominant-marginalised” dichotomy, as there is often overlap between different literary practices and some, such as for example local commercial literacy practices, while not being “dominant” can hardly be described as “marginalised”

In China literacy has a long tradition of being the key to advancement and “being literate” is expressed as or “有文化” which can be also translated as “having culture” or “being educated”. Chinese minorities who do not possess a script of their own are considered inferior (see the earlier quote from. Hansen, 1999b). Moreover –especially

in south-western China- many that are literate in their own non-Han scripts are not considered properly literate, because they have not mastered the superior Han script.

In the following section I discuss a particular type of literacy - school education. As mentioned earlier Seeberg (1990: 341), who analysed the efficiency of both adult literacy and school literacy programmes in Communist China up to the early 1980s, concluded that the latter is far more effective.

4.1.3 THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

This thesis accepts the ideas of Jim Cummins regarding the relation between conversational (BICS) and academic language (CALP) distinction, which are based on observation of numerous case studies and widely supported by educationalists in many countries. According to Cummins (2000) children have usually attained conversational proficiency around the age of 6, but still need a number of years to attain proficiency in academic language even if this is taught in the children's first language. If cognitive academic proficiency is first acquired by minority language speaking pupils in their L1, as would be the case in many of the experimental Zhuang-Han bilingual programmes and the Type 1 Nuosu-Han bilingual schools discussed in later chapters, then these underlying skills can be transferred to the majority language. However, if minority language speaking pupils who are not fully competent in the majority language receive academic instruction exclusively through the medium of this language, as is the case of almost all Zhuang-speaking children and a large number of Nuosu-speaking children, then they will have serious problems in coping with this input and developing an academic or literate register, even if their conversational proficiency in the majority language is high, which is typically not the case among predominantly monolingual minority language speakers, such as the two groups analysed in this thesis. Not having received academic input in their mother tongue, they have no underlying cognitive academic language proficiency which they can transfer to the majority language and this explains the high rate of failure among minority language children who receive all their schooling in the majority language.

If on the other hand, cognitive academic language proficiency is first acquired in the minority language by majority language speakers (typically from privileged homes

where they receive much literacy-orientated stimulation) participating in an early immersion-type second-(perhaps minority-) language dominant bilingual education programme, then they have been shown to acquire academic proficiency in the second language, but with a delay and transfer it easily to their high status L1. This is certainly not the case in the contexts under examination, extremely few Han participating in non-Han medium schooling.

Cummins (2000) has been criticised for taking an “autonomous” approach to literacy, consistent with the “Great Divide” theory, but has successfully demonstrated –in my view- that his approach is totally consistent with the “ideological approach” of Street mentioned in the previous section, arguing that the kind of language needed for academic proficiency is different from that of conversation in terms of the degree of how cognitively challenging or contextually embedded it is, while at the same time emphasising that these parameters cannot be correlated with a simplistic oral-written dichotomy.

In the case of largely monolingual minority language communities (such as those of the core Zhuang and Nuosu counties) the medium of instruction can be exclusively in the prestigious majority language (in this case standard Mandarin), both the majority and the pupils’ minority language or only in the pupils’ minority language (classifications summarised by Baker 2001: 194).

Education in the minority language only is generally classified as being separatist (ibid), unless organised by the authorities with the aim of limiting access to the majority language, in which case it is segregationist. The latter case may have occurred in some areas –such as rural Tibet- where teachers were not competent in Mandarin, but not with the aim of being segregationist. Minority language-only education would also have been coherent in the early 1950s with encouraging while not forcing minorities to learn Mandarin, but again would not have been segregationist. Minority language-only education not organised by the authorities occurs in China mainly among non-official religiously based schools (e.g. Koranic schools, Buddhist temple schools in Sipsong Panna and monastery schools in Tibet) and even in these there is sometimes an attempt to include Han language in the curriculum (see for example, Hansen 1999b: 113-115).

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Such schools, generally only for boys, have enjoyed a revival since the end of the Maoist era.

As mentioned above, education in the majority language only, which encourages majority language monolingualism among minority language children, at best produces a subtractive kind of bilingualism, whereby children have no chance to develop their cognitive and academic language proficiency in their first language, but do not generally receive sufficient input in the majority language to cope with the complex, abstract, decontextualised concepts (Cummins 2000). Cummins (1984, cited in Cummins 2000) argues in favour of bilingual schools where they can develop their minority L1 and at the same time become competent in the wider majority language, seeing this as a necessary precondition for empowerment via education. He has no illusions about the socio-political resistance of those in power to such changes, something bourn out by experience in countless minority language situations.

Minority students are disabled or empowered in schools in very much the same way that their communities are disempowered in interactions with societal institutions. ... This analysis implies that minority students will succeed educationally to the extent that the patterns of interaction in school reverse those that prevail in the society at large. (p. 24) Given the societal commitment to maintaining the dominant/dominated power relationships, we can predict that educational changes threatening this structure will be fiercely resisted. (p. 34)

This thesis accepts the idea that additive bilingual education among speakers of marginalised and minority languages, which has as its objective maintenance of the minority language with proficiency in the majority language (i.e. bilingualism and biliteracy) is positive for children's cognitive development, as expressed by writers such as Cummins (2000), Skuttnabb-Kangas (1981) and Baker (2001). Such education should be aimed at empowering disadvantaged minority language communities to compete successfully in the majority language dominated globalised world, while at the same time helping them to conserve, develop and adapt their native language and culture to new times and to feel comfortable with them.

“Bilingual education” is a vague term. In the writings of Chinese educationalists and linguists involved in minority language planning, this can mean anything from totally minority language-medium instruction with an occasional class of Han to totally Han-medium teaching with some teaching of minority language literacy, as well as all

possible permutations in between. It is worth noting that Type 2 bilingual schools described in Liangshan in this thesis, first teach Han, subsequently introducing minimal (in terms of the time dedicated to it) Nuosu literacy, but the bulk of the cognitive academic input is the majority language.

In the foregoing paragraphs the rationale of including the children's minority language in the education system was to help them to cope with the necessary academic language and to empower themselves. However, there is a general consensus among many linguists today -which I share- that minority language communities have the right to use and develop their own languages and scripts and that this includes the right to receive at least some of their education through the medium of their mother tongue. This principal is stressed in many articles by Chinese linguists, but seldom put into practice.

Bilingual education in the specific Nuosu and Zhuang contexts will be analysed in 6.1.5 and again in 6.2.5.

4.1.4 THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENDANGERED MINORITY LANGUAGES

As pointed out in Chapter 1, in recent years there has been an increased awareness of the speed at which a large number of the world's languages have died and are in danger of "dying". This does not necessarily entail the death of the speakers, although this has all too often been the case (e.g. the southern African Khoisan or the Australian aborigines). During my own lifetime, and in front of my own eyes, I have watched as viable, living communities of Welsh, Gaelic and Breton speakers have dwindled, "died" or been converted into minority "networks", while the majority British and French populations have accepted this as being inevitable and perhaps desirable. For the past 15 years I have lived in an area of Valencia where the local variant of Catalan is slowly dying among a significant section of the population, showing classical symptoms of a "language without a future".

From decade to decade largely monolingual minority language communities become largely bilingual ones. In a very short time the predominant language of bilingual communities can switch from being the minority to the majority language and the number of people only mastering the majority language grows. From there it is a short step to the

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complete demise of the minority language or to its “preservation” by a small dedicated band of intellectuals. In the 1960s, for example, Welsh was so dominant in parts of rural Southwest Wales that newcomers were under great pressure to learn Welsh. By the 1980s this pressure was largely gone and now in 2006 it is sometimes hard to hear Welsh spoken at all due to the avalanche of English immigration and the pressure of language shift.

Given present trends, large numbers of minority languages the world over are on their last legs. Everywhere, there are signs of unceasing language shift and this applies as much to Zhuang and Nuosu areas as to any other. A large body of international linguists and representatives of communities of threatened languages throughout the world have become concerned with ways of halting or reversing this seemingly inevitable language shift. Perhaps the best known theoretical attempt to tackle this problem was formulated by Joshua Fishman in his 1991 work “Reversing Language Shift”, where he provides a blueprint for those wishing to halt and reverse language shift.

Glyn Williams (1992), an avid critic of the conservative, unquestioning nature of traditional sociolinguistics, and others have criticised Fishman for not taking into consideration the unequal power relationships involved: in this case between the Chinese State which mainly represents the interests of the over 90% Han-speaking majority and the politically weak and divided tiny (compared to Han speakers) Zhuang and Nuosu speech communities. Baker (2001: 82-83) summing up these arguments (to which Fishman, 2000 himself –acknowledging the power relationship- contributed) writes:

For parents to raise their children in the minority languages, for schools to have a strong reason for content teaching through the minority language, economic and employment incentives are crucial to language revival, but not sufficient in themselves. Economic prescriptions are needed to provide a strong rationale for intergenerational transmission. Integrative motives and cultural sentiment may not be enough to persuade parents, educators and students to use the minority language. The economic base of the language community can be a vital safeguard to the maintenance of a threatened language. The state, and not just the local language community is thus important (e.g. in economic regeneration of a language minority area. Material dimensions of success (individual and societal) and economic advancement have grown in importance in a consumerist society. Because these areas are often controlled by majority language groups, a power struggle becomes vital.

Why do people who have spoken a language for countless generations suddenly apparently give up the ghost and ditch their language, denying not only the language,

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but also a host of intimately related cultural and social elements, to their children and grandchildren? Influenced by the global economic and political situation mentioned above, speakers of minority languages themselves reach a point where they see no point in continuing to transmit a language which no longer furthers the interests of the members of its speech community. Baker (2001, 81), commenting on Fishman (1991)'s discussion of language shift says:

... a language is ultimately lost and won inside the minds and hearts of individuals. While such individuals will doubtless be affected by economic, political and media factors, there is a personal cost-benefit analysis that ultimately determines whether one language is passed on the next generation or not.

Griffiths (2000: 113), the writer of a Welsh-language cultural guide to Brittany, musing on the causes of the massive and rapid language shift in Brittany during the 20th Century, comes to essentially the same conclusion as Baker:

Pam fod ieithoedd yn marw? Difaterwch sy'n gyfrifol, meddai Gunnarsson, gan awgrymu mai siaradwyr yr iaith sydd ar fai. Yn achos Llydaw buaswn yn dadlau nad dyna'r gwir. Difrodir iaith gan bobl a sefydliadau. Yn gyffredinol mae iaith yn marw pan roddir y gymuned sy'n ei siarad yn y fath sefyllfa lle na werthfawrogir ei hadnoddau diwylliannol. Pan na chewch swydd am eich bod yn siarad iaith arbennig a'ch gwybodaeth o iaith y mwyafrif yn annigonol fe gewch eich gwthio i gylch economaidd sy'n cyfyngu ar eich cyfle. A phan ddywed y fam, 'Mae medru'r iaith yn llesteirio dyfodol fy mhleintyn felly dydw i ddim yn mynd i'w throsglwyddo iddo` - mae dydd ei thranc yn nesu.

(Why do languages die? Indifference is responsible said Gunnarsson, suggesting that speakers of the language are to blame. In the case of Brittany I would argue that this is not true. A language is destroyed by people and institutions. In general a language dies when the community in which it is spoken is put into a situation where its cultural resources are not appreciated. When you don't get a job, because you speak a particular language and your knowledge of the majority language is insufficient, you are pushed into an economic circuit which restricts your opportunities. And when the mother says, 'Knowing this language is hindering my child's future, so I'm not going to pass it on to him` - the day of its death draws nigh.)

Minority language speakers also have naïve unrealistic expectations of how a minority language can survive. I once overheard a Welsh-speaking mother explaining (in Welsh) that she was first teaching English to her child, but that she would later teach it Welsh. Others believe that they do not need to transmit it to their children, if they learn it at school.

Many speakers of majority languages regard minority languages with distrust. Are minority language speakers really loyal citizens or do they form a fifth column of some imagined enemy? Why do they insist on speaking some senseless, inferior, secret

unintelligible code if it is not to confound and thwart the innocent victims who are the majority language speakers? So many English people have said to me on hearing I come from Wales, something to the effect of: “When I went on my holiday to North Wales, everyone was speaking in English until we came into the shop / pub, when they all started speaking in Welsh.” Personally I have only witnessed the inverse situation, where Welsh-speakers meekly change to English to not “offend” strangers. I have heard similar complaints about Breton-speakers from monolingual French.

When bilingual (not Welsh-only!) signs and bilingual education were first mooted in Wales in the 1960s they were decried in the Media as an attack on the liberties of the non-Welsh-speaking majority. It is now accepted even in anglicised areas of Wales that Welsh comes first on bilingual signs. However, worldwide prejudice against minority languages, disbelief that they should go on existing and a feeling that their speakers are politically disloyal is still omnipresent among majority language speakers, in China as in most places. This discussion is continued under 6.3.

4.1.4.1 LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

The relation between nationality (民族 *minzu*) on the one hand and language (语言) and dialect (方言) on the other is discussed in the following section. Here I would like to briefly discuss the bearing that ethnic identity might have on language maintenance. The relation is a complex one and a high degree of ethnic consciousness does not automatically go hand in hand with a high degree of maintenance of the ethnic language, at least beyond a symbolic level. One only has to examine the mostly symbolic use of Irish in Ireland, and the advanced state of language shift among Rom communities all over Europe. The following quotation is from the Indian and Northern Affairs (updated 2004), Canada’s *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*:

Most people find it impossible to separate language and identity. Language is perceived as the quintessence of a culture. It expresses a unique way of apprehending reality, capturing a world view specific to the culture to which it is linked. But language is connected to identity in another important way: its presence and use in a community are symbolic of identity, emblems of group existence. Using a language is the ultimate symbol of belonging.

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Language is usually seen as an essential component of ethnic identity, and it is commonly understood that the loss of a minority language automatically entails assimilation with the dominant group. But the preservation of a distinctive language may not always be essential to preservation of a distinct identity. In other words, language shift does not automatically imply ethnic assimilation. There are clear examples in Canada of Aboriginal groups who have lost their language but retain a sense of group identity and of belonging to the Aboriginal world. While language is an important cultural and ethnic marker, its loss does not automatically signal a redefinition of group allegiance.

According to Fishman (1980 and 1985, cited in Teachout, 2005) minority language maintenance are dependent on reward systems which require the use, in combination with a majority language or alone, of the minority language. If the minority language is to be maintained, it must be central to religious, political and social rewards which enforce and recognise family, community and social membership. Using Fishman's reasoning, by the 18th and 19th Centuries strongly nationalistic Irish wishing to affirm their identity and carry out the anti-English struggle felt it was more rewarding and profitable to do so through the medium of English, despite the rich historical, literary and cultural heritage of Irish. In the same period in extended areas great numbers of the less anti-English and more politically subservient Welsh (for whom the Welsh language was central to their religious life) felt it necessary to conserve their language, perhaps partially to maintain boundaries between themselves and mainstream English society.

What is clear is that language is that even linguistic groups with a strong degree of ethnic consciousness and pride are willing to "abandon" and stop transmitting the language associated with their group, if they feel that it is not a rewarding, worthwhile investment.

4.1.4.2 ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY

Although it is both well-established and logical that there is a reciprocal relation between ethnic identity and language use and attitudes, it is not always a clear one. Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 308) saw ethnolinguistic vitality as a construct helping to explain the behaviour of members of a speech community in their interaction with those of other speech communities defining it as "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations". While some members of speech communities play down or even deny their minority identity and identify with the interlocutor of the (superior) majority ethnolinguistic group, others emphasise their minority identity in such exchanges, perhaps even trying to insist

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that the member of the minority group speak the majority language. Thus in Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (ibid)'s view, the greater a group's ethnolinguistic vitality, the greater its probability of survival as a speech community in a multilingual setting.

A useful concept for looking at the state of "health" of threatened languages –only treated superficially here for lack of space- is that of objective ethnolinguistic vitality, introduced by the aforementioned source and

which articulated some of the main sociostructural features defining a group, such as its sociohistorical status, numbers of its members, institutional support provided it, and so forth. In this regard, dominant ethnic groups usually have higher vitality across a range of vitality constituents than subordinate ethnic groups. (Giles et al, 2000)

Such an assessment of both the Zhuang and Nuosu ethnolinguistic groups has been essentially covered in this thesis. What is interesting about Giles et al's approach is the way of grouping the factors of status, demography and institutional support and assigning values which give a general idea of these languages's state of health within their communities. Below is a table, based mostly on Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 309), with additional information from Baldaquí (2000), which can be used as a checklist to obtain this "bill of health" and in 6.3.1.3 I reproduce the same table with brief comments on the specific Zhuang and Nuosu ethnolinguistic situations. I hope this will allow a look at the findings presented from a slightly different angle.

Objective Ethnolinguistic Vitality (the higher the 3 main factors, the higher the ethnolinguistic vitality)		
5-point scale: high, medium-high, medium, medium-low, low.		
STATUS Hard to measure and dependent on demographic situation and on the degree of institutional support (Baldaquí 2000: 330).	DEMOGRAPHY -where demographic tendencies are instable (as in China) this has important implications as different ethnolinguistic groups compete for political and social influence. It is to be expected that favourable demographic tendencies will favour a higher degree of vitality.	INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT This takes into account both top-down and bottom up support and thus not only refer to official institutions.
Economic status - degree of control that the ethnolinguistic group has over the economic life of the nation, region or community.	Group distribution factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National territory • Concentration of group • Proportion of total population 	Formal (top-down) support (institutional control – Baldaquí 2000: 329) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mass media • education • government services Reflects speech ethnolinguistic community’s socio-political influence and power. Necessity of aware elites, activists and capable leaders who support culture and language and also that members of the ethnolinguistic group use their language in different institutions and domains (Baldaquí 2000: 329).
Social status - degree of self-confidence of the community.	Group number factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absolute numbers • birth-rate • mixed marriages • immigration • emigration 	Informal (bottom-up) support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industry • religion • culture Low informal support warns of negative effect when the area of the ethnolinguistic group has a lower rate of development during phase of rapid socioeconomic modernisation (the case of China) Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 316-317)
Sociohistorical status -historical consciousness of the group		
Language status within ethnolinguistic community area. - importance and prestige		
Language status outside ethnolinguistic community area. -importance and prestige		

“Subjective ethnolinguistic vitality” is how members of the ethnolinguistic community in question (or of those which interact and co-exist with them) perceive the situation of their languages and affects the degree to which they use them and pass them on to future generations or to which they replace them by a higher prestige language. Giles et al (2000) and other authors combine this with objective ethnolinguistic vitality to gain a more holistic picture. While this study sheds light on aspects of this important factor and while informed guesses can be deduced from knowledge of the cases being researched, no systematic investigation of members of the Zhuang and Nuosu communities towards the vitality of their languages has been carried out. In any case subjective vitality has its limitations as a predictor of individuals’ linguistic behaviour as Giles et al (2000) point out:

the more vitality individuals consider their social group to possess, the more likely they will invest their energies (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to preserve the ingroup’s identity, activities, and influence (see also Sachdev & Bourhis, 1993). In this respect, studies have shown that individuals who perceive their ethnic group to have high vitality will have stronger motivation to learn, as well as increased proficiency in, their ingroup tongue than those construing their vitality to be lower (see Cenoz & Valencia, 1993; Clachar, 1997; Leets & Giles, 1995). While such relationships have not always emerged (Labrie & Clément, 1986; Hogg & Rigoli, 1996), and low vitality can also trigger ethnic mobilisation (e.g. Giles & Viladot, 1994),

4.2 BASIC CONCEPTS USED IN THIS RESEARCH

Below is a discussion and clarification of some terms and concepts central to the thesis which could cause misunderstandings, particularly where there are differences between how these concepts are understood in China and in the West.

4.2.1 THE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGES

Languages are often studied as if they were static, abstract systems or objects. Under the interpretive approach of this study, they are seen rather as negotiated instrumental tools of living speech communities (in this case the non-Han minority language speakers) having socio-economic, political and cultural aspirations (e.g. a higher standard of living, more political autonomy, access to the Han language and culture while retaining –or not- their own) and who are in contact with another more dominant language community (that of the Han-speaking majority), which has the full power of the nation state (the government and administrative apparatus of the People’s Republic of China) behind it. Although it might appear that this research is concerned with the languages in question *pe se*, this is only a convenient abstraction or working assumption. It is the language’s instrumental function which is the main concern.

4.2.2 NATIONALITY (民族 MINZU), LANGUAGE (语言) & DIALECT (方言)

(See maps 4, 5 and 6 in Annex 2)

An article in the West discussing the linguistic situation of Welsh would be unlikely to take “people of Welsh nationality” (or “ethnicity”) or of “non-Welsh nationality” as the basic units of analysis. Unless the article were specifically contrasting the different attitudes of non-Welsh-speaking Welsh and non-Welsh-speaking non-Welsh towards the Welsh language, the basic units would be “Welsh-speakers” and “non-Welsh speakers”, perhaps with intermediate categories according to linguistic ability. In China this is not so. Most articles discussing non-Han minority language speakers usually talk about “壮族 (Zhuang nationality)” or “彝族 (Yi nationality)” rather than “Zhuang speakers” or “Yi speakers”. However, just as there are many (a majority in fact) of ethnic Welsh who do not speak Welsh, there are also many members of the Zhuang nationality and up to a third of those classified as “Yi” who speak Han instead of these languages.

Following the Soviet model, all Chinese – apart from being citizens of the Peoples’ Republic of China - belong to an official *nationality* (or ethnic group). Mainly in the 1950s, the Chinese authorities undertook a classification of the population into different official nationalities. There existed a plethora of names used by different groups to refer to themselves. The official researchers classified the hundreds of groups into a mere 56 nationalities, according to a mixture of criteria, among which were linguistic criteria and the wishes and history of the groups in question. However this classification is not very useful when it comes to analysing the linguistic situation in China, due to two main complications.

Firstly, there is much ambiguity and a lack of consensus as to what is meant by *language* and by *dialect* in China. Secondly, there is no simple correspondence between nationality and language. Many nationalities in China speak more than one language or / and speak a language (or more than one) associated with another nationality.

Although it is common to hear Europeans excusing themselves for not speaking the language of their ethnic group (for example “I’m a non-Welsh-speaking Welshman” or

“Although I’m a Highlander, I’m afraid I don’t have the Gaelic, because my parents only spoke it when they didn’t want me to understand”), when talking about minority language situations in Europe, people are usually categorised as speakers of different languages rather than members of a particular nationality or ethnic group. In fact one does not officially and formally belong to an ethnic group or nationality in Western Europe; one is merely a citizen of a particular country.

In China (as in the former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and USSR), the starting point for analysing the language situation is one’s official “nationality” status. The constitution and legal documents talk about the right of “nationalities to use and develop their languages and scripts” rather than the right of “speakers of minority languages”. Languages are thus essentially seen as belonging to particular nationalities rather than to particular geographical locations. Although a high proportion of a particular minority nationality in a particular place does usually identify with a particular language (provided the members of that nationality speak the language in question!), if there were to be an influx of people of another nationality, for example Han, speaking their national language, there would no longer be such a complete identification between language and place as the recently arrived language would now be just as much identifiable with the place as the old one.

This is not of course to say that there is no connection between the area that people live in and their ability to speak non-Han languages: I have met Han who gave as excuses for not speaking minority languages, that they grew up in totally Han speaking areas and others, who, having grown up in rural non-Han speaking areas were totally fluent in it. However, I have also met many Han from strongly non-Han speaking areas who told me that they understood none of the local minority language because they were Han and had no interest in learning what they considered an inferior language. In other words having Han nationality seems to serve as a reason for not learning minority languages, even in traditional non-Han speaking areas. The converse is not true and people of minority nationality living in Han-speaking areas would be expected to learn Han.

In Catalonia and north-west Wales, all residents are educated through the medium of Catalan or Welsh, whatever their mother tongue or tongues may be, whilst in minority

areas of China it is rare for people of Han nationality to be educated through the medium of the local promoted minority language or, apart from certain cadres in core minority areas, even to learn it as a second language. In Catalonia it is felt that all residents, whatever their origin, should be fluent in Catalan, whereas in areas such as Liangshan, there is no movement for the Han public at large to acquire competence in Yi or other minority languages.

4.2.3 HAN LANGUAGE AND HAN NATIONALITY (See map 6 in Annex 2).

The ethnic group that we know as *Chinese* is known officially as the Han *nationality* in China to distinguish it from the *minority nationalities* (official non-Han ethnic groups). In the same way, *the* language (or the languages!) which we normally call *Chinese* is officially called *Han* in China, to distinguish it from the languages of minority nationalities. According to the Chinese constitution the languages of all nationalities are equal and all *minority nationalities* (they are seldom referred to as “speakers of minority languages” as in Europe or America) have the right to employ and develop their own languages. In practice a constant element in Chinese linguistic policy has been the promotion, at all costs, in all areas and among people of all nationalities, of Putonghua, the standard Mandarin variety of Han, although the explicit active expectation that all nationalities learn it dates from the second half of the 1950s.

4.2.4 CLASSIFICATION OF HAN LANGUAGES

The two complications referred to above are reflected in the definitions of the majority Han nationality to which more than the 90% of the Chinese population belong and of the Han language. Millions of Han in the south and south-east of China speak varieties of Han which are as different from Mandarin as English is from German or Icelandic. It is as if speakers of Germanic languages were classified as members of a single “Germanic Nationality” or “Germanic-Minzu” whose standard language was “Hochdeutsch”. In this hypothetical analogy not only would speakers of deviant varieties within the official German-speaking countries (from Alpine to low German dialects) have to accept Hochdeutsch as their standard language as is the case today, but speakers of English, Dutch, Icelandic, Swedish etc. would also read, write and use for official and formal purposes “Hochdeutsch” or High German.

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Many linguists, especially in the West, consider these varieties to be languages rather than dialects and that Chinese constitutes a whole language family. So why not treat them as different languages?

Weinreich (1945) is attributed to have said “a shprakh iz a dyalekt mit an arney un flot” (“a language is a dialect with an army and navy”). Most Chinese appear to have an inherent hidden fear that the political unity of China would be challenged if the status of Han “dialects” were raised to that of “languages” with standard written forms which could be taught in schools and promoted in all domains, the fear obviously being that speakers of non-Mandarin Han languages might identify as non-Han and constitute powerful new “national minorities (少数民族).”

The possibility that these “dialects” could even be considered “languages” has not even occurred to many Chinese. This is in part due to the influence of the Han script (which we normally refer to as the Chinese script), which, although based on standard Mandarin, can be read off in the pronunciation of non-Mandarin varieties. However such a reading can appear rather forced and often differs radically from how speakers of these varieties spontaneously express themselves in the spoken language – a bit like reading a German sentence with the English pronunciation of English cognates of the German words (supposing we can find cognates for them!).

If the non-Mandarin dialects had developed independent phonetic alphabets, perhaps they would today be considered separate languages from Mandarin and consequently (if the borders of China had not developed differently as a result) they might today also be classified as *minority languages*. However, China has a long historical tradition of cultural unity between the speakers of all varieties of Han and a keen interest in promoting a unified majority Han nationality which has total hegemony over all other nationalities. Consequently nobody seriously questions Han ethnic and linguistic unity. This is a closed, taboo subject. In 5A.4.1.1 “dialect” writing is briefly considered.

4.2.5 CLASSIFICATION OF NON-HAN NATIONALITIES AND LANGUAGES

(See maps 4 and 5 in Annex 2).

As in the former Soviet Union, classification according to *nationality* is more important than classification according to *language*. The linguistic situation of the Han majority has influenced linguistic policy toward the non-Han minorities and so in the case of some *nationalities* a single standard language has been established for each *nationality* in spite of its members speaking non-mutually intelligible linguistic varieties. As a counterweight to this tendency, in the case of some nationalities the authorities have recognised the necessity of using and promoting more than one standard “dialect” as is the case of Yi.

Most of the over 400 groups that applied for the status of *nationality* in the 1950s, were refused with the argument that they belonged to other nationalities (including that of the Han in some cases). As with the Han nationality, the classification of many non-Han nationalities was not easy and many members of these new official nationalities heard for the first time of their (officially defined) ethnic and linguistic affiliations in the 1950s. Many groups in the south-west such as the Tujia and Bai previously believed (and some still do) that they were Han and their languages Han dialects. Other groups speaking Han as their main native languages were classified as non-Han according to non-linguistic criteria, as was the case of most members of the Hui and Manchu nationalities. Many communities which had already replaced their original ethnic language with a variety of Han were classified as Yi, She, Tujia etc.

Sometimes the authorities gave in to the wishes of these groups. The speakers of the Mien language on Hainan Island, for example, successfully insisted that they were members of the Miao (Hmong) nationality, despite the fact that the majority of Yao people in China speak Mien and of Miao speak Miao. Also on Hainan, the half million speakers of Be (or Lingao), a language related to the Tai languages, succeeded in conserving their status as Han in spite of speaking a clearly non-Han language. The speakers of Naze, a Tibeto-Burman language of the Yi branch who live in Sichuan, managed to have themselves classified as Mongols even though there existed no clear proof that they were related in any other way (there was certainly no identifiable linguistic link) to the Mongols of northern China. In other cases, however, the

authorities totally ignored their wishes. For example, the speakers of Naze who live on the other side of the provincial border in Yunnan are classified as Naxi in spite of their wishes to be known as Mosuo (see Harrell 2001a).

Teufel Dreyer (1997: 361) points out:

Having pledged to help minorities preserve and develop their languages and cultures, the government was generally more comfortable with fewer groups rather than many.

Despite this preference, however, the above examples show that other considerations were often more important.

Sun Hongkai (1992), one of the most influential linguists in China, does not regard mutual intelligibility as an indispensable condition for being dialects of the same language rather than separate languages. All the speakers of Tai languages (of the central and northern branches) living in Guangxi, the east of Yunnan and an area of western Guangdong were classified as Zhuang in spite of the opposition of many of these Tai speakers with smaller, more localised groups. In contrast, the speakers of (northern) Tai languages living in the Province of Guizhou (and whose language is intelligible with the northern Zhuang dialect, spoken by two thirds of this nationality) succeeded in resisting their classification as Zhuang and in securing the creation of a distinct Bouyei nationality.

The Yi of Liangshan (in the south of Sichuan and the north of Yunnan) considered themselves to be Nuosu rather than Yi and the Yi of Shilin (in Yunnan) considered themselves to be Sani. Officially the members of the Yi nationality speak at least 6 mutually unintelligible “dialects” which, although all belonging to the Yi branch of the Tibeto-Birman languages, are not very closely related to one another. The classification of Yi has clearly followed the model of the classification of Han in the insistence on creating a nationality with unintelligible speech varieties. However to be able to carry out literacy campaigns in Yi it was necessary to create more than one official Yi standard variety, something which was not done in the case of Han. In spite of recognising this necessity (something that they have denied to the speakers of non-Mandarin varieties of Han) the authorities speak of *standard dialects* and not of

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standard languages. Also the plurilingual situation of various other nationalities has been recognised.

If there are 2 groups (who speak 2 similar varieties) who have already been classified as different *nationalities*, their languages are considered different. For example, as the Bouyei of Guizhou did not want to be identified as Zhuang for non-linguistic reasons, Bouyei and Zhuang are considered not as dialects but languages. While the differences between the northern and southern varieties of Zhuang (in both Guangxi and Yunnan) are much greater than those between Bouyei and Zhuang, Zhuang is still considered a unified language. As Harrall (1993) affirms,

There are broad categories of people, numbering in the hundreds of thousands or millions, scattered over many provinces and showing much internal cultural and linguistic variation, whose unity seems based more than anything on pre-existing Han folk categories: these include the Hani, the Yi, the Miao and perhaps the Yao.

How many languages do the 55 officially recognised *minority nationalities* speak? Chinese linguist Sun Hongkai (Shearer & Sun, 2002) recognises the existence of at least 125 non-Han languages, but this figure does not include the varieties, which have (as in the case of Yi) or lack (as in the case of Tibetan) the status of standard varieties, belonging to the same linguistic group and spoken by the same nationality. Sometimes it is recognised that members of the same nationality speak different unrelated languages. For example it is accepted that members of the nationality Yao speak at least 3 distinct languages: Mien (Yao), Nu (a variety Miao or Hmong) and Lakkia (a variety of Kam). Likewise, it is recognised that the members of the Hui nationality (Chinese Muslims) of Sanya on the southern tip of the island of Hainan, do not speak Han as do the Hui in most of China, but an Austronesian language similar to Malay.

We have seen that the 56 official nationalities are arbitrary constructs of the 1950s fixed to suit a particular political context at a particular moment. The number of real ethnic entities is in fact far greater, even the Han being a grouping of diverse peoples. Having said that, after 50 years of carrying the official label of one's nationality, many people, especially the upwardly mobile who wish to "play the system" and advance through the education system and find state employment, outwardly exploit the official categories in their public lives even though in their private lives they may use the traditional ones. Thus a Nuosu speaker in Liangshan may be proud of being Yi when

talking to Han and foreigners, but in their own community will remain a Nuosu. (See 6.2.2 for a discussion of how Nuosu and Zhuang speakers have coped with the issue of their contentious official ethnic labels). There are a small number of Nuosu intellectuals who are interested in the idea of unity with other groups speaking Yi languages, in other words with fellow members of the official Yi nationality, but they remain a minority. Likewise although some Tai speakers of Guangxi have accepted and assimilated the official category of Zhuang, there is still widespread grassroots rejection of it.

To sum up, the Chinese government has engaged over the last half-century in a large-scale project of “ethnic engineering” which superficially at least appears to have gained partial acceptance among certain upwardly mobile elites. However, vast numbers of people feel themselves straight-jacketed into alien identities. The official insistence on these categories and on their primacy obscures the linguistic situation and the satisfactory identification of different linguistic communities.

4.2.6 USE OF THE TERMS NUOSU AND YI

I have consciously decided to use the term “Nuosu” in preference to the official Chinese term “Yi”. The main reason is that the Nuosu themselves consider themselves to be Nuosu rather than Yi. Additionally I feel it is important to distinguish between the Nuosu and those speakers (or “ex-speakers”) of other languages of the Yi group of Tibeto-Burmese languages who are also classified as “Yi” by the Chinese authorities. Of course I could have followed the practice of many writers and referred to “Liangshan Yi”, as I did in my communication to at the 4th International Conference on Yi Studies. One reason I did not is that there are also officially designated Yi in Liangshan who are speakers of other Yi languages, but the main reason was that I feel more comfortable using a term which the speakers of the language themselves use, especially as the term “Yi” is felt by many to be a variant of a Han word for “barbarian”. Moreover, by using the term Yi I would be implicitly automatically accepting the official classification.

4.2.7 USE OF THE TERM ZHUANG

To be consistent with my use of the term Nuosu rather than Yi, I should not use the official term Zhuang, substituting it instead either with the names that different sections of this officially-designated nationality use to refer to themselves or by referring to “speakers of Central and Northern Tai languages” (as indeed I do on occasions). Unlike Liangshan where all Nuosu speakers see themselves as such, in Guangxi speakers of different Central and Northern Tai languages have a great number of autonyms and I felt it would be unmanageable to refer to the myriad autonyms and too long-winded and clinical to always refer to the linguistic grouping.

4.2.8 A 56 NATIONALITY MODEL OR A 2 NATIONALITY (HAN NON-HAN) DICHOTOMY?

One could be mistaken in China for thinking that there were two principal ethnic categories, “汉族 hánzú (Han nationality)” and “少数民族 shǎoshǔ mínzú (minority nationality)”. On various occasions in different parts of China I have heard Han referring to widely different ethnic and linguistic groups as “少数民族 (minority nationality)” even though each person was referring to one particular non-Han group (Li, Zhuang, Nuosu, Uyghur, Yao, Naxi, Bai etc.). In many cases there was a complete lack of interest in even bothering to specify which group they were talking about, even by the official nationality.

Some non-Han even accept labelling themselves “少数民族 (minority nationality)” in their discourse with Han. Not only have I heard Han (on various occasions) in areas of specific minorities asking “你是少数民族吗? (Are you of minority nationality?)” instead of the name of the local minority, but on several occasions I have even heard non-Han volunteer “我是少数民族。(I am of minority nationality)”

Most Han seemed to have a preconceived, ready-packaged blueprint in their mind of what “少数民族 (minority nationalities)” did and how they behaved. Basically it was a negative image of being primitive, simple, backward, lazy, fun-loving, wasteful,

hospitable, sensuous and sexually promiscuous, wearing colourful picturesque costumes and loving singing, dancing and drinking, which contrasted to the advanced, modern, serious, hard-working and morally upright Han nationality whose mission was to civilise the “少数民族 (minority nationalities)”.

I see several covert motives for this projection. First, as Gladney (1994), Harrell (2001a) and others have pointed out, lumping together minorities in one backward, exotic category legitimises the role of the Han as the kind superior big brother in a big happy multi-national family. In other words it justifies Han domination of China. Secondly, lumping them all together diminishes the importance or significance of any one ethno-linguistic identity. At the end of the day, whether you are Zhuang, Nuosu, Tibetan or Uyghur is not as relevant as the fact that you are a “少数民族 (minority nationality)”. It is as if a Castilian Spaniard did not distinguish between Galicians, Catalans and Basques, but called them all “minorities”.

This dichotomy is officially projected in a covert way. Although the state has created the 55 labels of the different minority nationalities, it actively promotes the collective label of “少数民族 (minority nationality/-ities)” in multiple situations, especially in the media and the education system. Even in articles discussing the promotion of specific non-Han languages, the term “少数民族 (minority nationality)” is often used instead of the specific nationality (e.g. 壮族 /Zhuang nationality, 彝族/ Yi nationality or 纳西族 /Naxi nationality).

CHAPTER 5 THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE ZHUANG & NUOSU SITUATIONS.

Understanding particular cases of minority language use in Zhuang and Nuosu areas can only be achieved by placing these situations in the wider context of language policy in China as a whole and the development of the language policy in Guangxi and Liangshan. After a brief introduction to the division of Chinese communist language policy into plurilingual and assimilationist phases (5A.1, 5A.2 and 5A.3), the planning measures (5A.4) and *actors* (5A.5) involved in the former phase are analysed according to Cooper (1989) 's framework. This is followed by an outline of events and tendencies in communist Chinese minority language planning (5A.6) in order to be able to place events in Guangxi (5B) and Liangshan (5C) in the context of the country as a whole.

5A LANGUAGE POLICY & USE IN COMMUNIST CHINA: DEALING WITH NON-HAN SPEAKERS

5A.1 INTRODUCTION

In spite of only accounting for 8.41% of the total population (106,430,000 people) according to the 2000 census, members of the non-Han nationalities, a large part of whom speak non-Han languages, occupy more than 60% of the land area of China, mainly in the west, north and south-west. No Chinese administration could conceive of a country without the minority areas (in many of which there is already a Han majority, often an overwhelming one as in the case of Inner Mongolia).

Consequently, a constant aim of the Chinese communist government since 1949 has been the promotion of a **unified** and **multinational** China in which the members of all *nationalities* are loyal and patriotic Chinese subjects. While all nationalities are equal, the majority Han nationality is considered to be the big brother destined to help its less developed fellow nationalities. Where the policy has varied over the years is in the recognition, or not, of the concept of a *plurilingual* China, entailing the promotion or not of non-Han languages and scripts. The active recognition and promotion of the

Mandarin variety of Han Chinese as the only official nationwide language has not changed since 1949, although the intensity of the pressure put on non-Han speakers to acquire and use Mandarin has: the view prior to 1956 was that minority language speakers need not learn Han if they did not wish to. Since then the intense promotion of Mandarin has overshadowed all attempts to promote minority language scripts.

The predominant element in official policy between approximately 1958 and 1978 (reminiscent of the centralist and monolingual policies of centralist France and Franco's Spain) favoured the linguistic assimilation of all linguistic minorities to Han within a united multinational, monolingually Han China. An opposing tendency which espouses not only a united and multinational, but also "plurilingual", country determined official policy between approximately 1949 and 1958 and has predominated in official discourse since 1978. This is reminiscent of post-Franco Spanish linguistic policy and that of the Second Republic. I start by briefly discussing the assimilationist phases (roughly 1958-1978) before going on to the pluralist phases, the main concern of this thesis.

5A.2 ASSIMILATIONIST TENDENCIES IN LANGUAGE POLICY

Before 1958 and after 1978 plurilingual ideas based on Marxist principals of the equality of nationalities and their languages inspired minority language policy. However, for some 20 years (approximately between the Great Leap Forward of 1958 and the consolidation of the power of Deng Xiaoping in 1978) a radically different assimilationist tendency was dominant: with rare exceptions only Han was promoted and the use and promotion of minority languages and scripts condemned and either forbidden or restricted, being considered a threat to the territorial unity and integrity of China as well as to social progress. With the initiation of this radical Maoist era, the majority of linguistic codification and standardisation projects, as well as bilingual education and literacy campaigns, were prematurely interrupted.

This centralist hanising project has much in common with the traditional pre-communist policy, according to which the *Hanisation* of the barbarians was a precondition for civilising them. Chinese linguists since 1980 have harshly criticised

this policy both for its failure to make minority language speakers literate in Han and for not respecting the Marxist principal of equality between languages.

By 1958 the initial policy of accommodation between the communists and the traditional minority elites had come to an end and local nationalism and advocating the use and promotion of non-Han languages became identified with the reactionary oppressive classes. According to Stalinist doctrine ethnic groups will blend into one another as they evolve towards the final stage of communism and in 1959 the vice-chairman of the PRC State Commission on Nationalities Affairs announced that, in view of the success of socialist reforms in many minority areas (e.g. people's communes) which were to serve as a bridge to communism, the integration of nationalities (by which he meant the assimilation of the minorities into the Han) could be accomplished in only 15 or 20 years (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 5). In this atmosphere, the use and promotion of minority languages and scripts were seen as undesirable hindrances to achieving a short-cut to communism.

After a short-lived respite in the early 1960s the identification of non-Han languages and cultures as “counter-revolutionary”, “reactionary”, “revisionist”, “capitalist-roader”, “splittist” etc. was vigorously renewed with the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

5A.3 POLICY IN FAVOUR OF UNITED PLURILINGUAL CHINA

Plurilingual language policy can be divided into 2 main phases:

5A.3.1 FIRST PLURALISTIC PHASE: 1949-1956.

During this phase (which began in 1945 in the case of Korean areas) the emphasis was on incorporating non-Han speaking minorities into the Chinese state via the use and development of their own languages and scripts. The principal of equality was a strong motivating force, largely under the influence of Soviet minority policy. Many adult literacy campaigns were carried out and among nationalities with traditional popularly used scripts such as the Koreans, Uyghurs and Kazakhs schooling (both primary and secondary) was mainly through the medium of their languages. In Tibet until 1959

there was a mixture of traditional Tibetan-medium schools and Tibetan-medium state schools.

It was intended that minorities without scripts be educated in them as soon as they were ready and only to use Han as a temporary measure. In some languages such as Zhuang, adult literacy campaigns were carried out in limited areas using newly-created scripts. Some minorities such as the Nuosu (Yi of Liangshan) ignored the new officially created scripts and informally taught themselves traditional non-officially approved scripts. The official scripts never really had a chance to take off before they were swept away by radical Maoist intolerance. In most areas this phase continues until approximately 1978 coinciding with the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping.

5A.3.2 SECOND PLURALISTIC PHASE: 1978-PRESENT

Judging by the declared intentions of the policy in the early 1980s the second phase was to be a continuation of the first phase. However, there was a major difference, which has become especially clear since the mid-1980s in some areas and mid-1990s in others: now the promoting of Mandarin alongside the promotion of the minority language has assumed enormous importance. In fact in this second phase the main thrust of the policy seems to have been to help people to become literate in their own languages so that they can then learn Han more easily. In contrast, there is much less sincere talk of equality, a change borne out by the gradual abandoning and phasing out of existing non-Han medium education in many areas of the educational system in Tibet and Xinjiang and by the general lack of progress in developing and using non-Han languages. It would be plausible to divide this phase into 2: an initial more idealistic period and a latter less sincere pluralistic period over the last decade or so. As the division between these periods has varied greatly in different areas of China, I shall group both periods under one category, bearing in mind the perceptible shift in policy which occurred from the mid 1980s onwards.

5A.3.3 AIMS OF PLURALISTIC LANGUAGE POLICY

5A.3.4.2 AIM 1 (MARXIST LANGUAGE EQUALITY AND RIGHT TO USE OWN LANGUAGE) & AIM 2 (TEACHING MINORITIES MANDARIN TO CONSOLIDATE NATIONAL UNITY)

I shall deal with these two closely-linked points together. The former upholds the Marxist principle of language equality and the right of each person to use and develop their mother tongue and the latter ensures that non-Han speaking minorities learn standard Mandarin, the inter-ethnic lingua franca and official state language, thus consolidating a united multinational and (at a localised level) plurilingual China. In practice, this translates into helping minority language speakers to learn and use their own scripts and standardised languages.

Cynically, but realistically, they can be translated as “All languages in China are equal, but Han is more equal than the others”. Wang Geliu (1989) sums up the Chinese Marxist (-Leninist Maoist) theory towards the minority languages as follows [translated by self for pre-doctoral research project, 1994]:

Linguistic equality is essential for the development of socialist interethnic relations. Under a system of ethnic oppression, the languages and scripts of oppressed groups are often oppressed and despised, which results in their members being antagonised. With the total elimination of ethnic and class oppression under the socialist system, the interests of all the nationalities are basically the same. As a previous requisite for socialist relations based on the equality of ethnic groups and on mutual help and unity, all the ethnic groups should adhere to the Marxist principals of ethnic and linguistic equality. Language (the medium through which thoughts are expressed) plays an important role in interethnic relations and the principal of equality is indispensable for helping to overcome historic prejudices.

He continues:

Marxism has always insisted that all languages are equal and opposed any attempts to despise or restrict minority languages and special privileges for any language. Lenin supported this view and stated that while he naturally encouraged minority language speakers to learn Russian, he was against any compulsion to learn it. The Marxist theory of language equality is the main principle of China's and the CCP.'s minority language policy.

For this author, language is more than just a code for communicating:

Culture, social intercourse & ethnic distinctness are dependent on language. Development of any nationality is directly related to making use of, and developing, their own language in equality of conditions. The culture, history, knowledge, experience and traditions of an ethnic group are handed down and preserved in their ethnic languages or scripts, the use or learning of which involves the learning, inheritance and exchange of ethnic culture. The attitude of other ethnic groups to an ethnic group's language reflects their attitude to the group itself. (ibid)

A possible motive for officially promoting minority scripts could be to avoid the appearance of nationalist movements demanding the right to use minority languages and cultures and to ensure that speakers of minority languages associate the promotion of their nationality's language (and not just the Han language and culture) with the Chinese authorities. Among nationalities where the initiative to promote the minority scripts has come from the administration (for example the cases of the Zhuang, the Naxi or the Bai) I think this strategy has been at least partly successful.

The Chinese constitution guarantees, and Chinese authors constantly emphasise, the full right of all nationalities to use and develop their minority languages and scripts and to create or reform the scripts according to their particular needs. They also stress the desirability of members of the minority nationalities becoming literate in their own language, in addition to Han-Mandarin

It is often stressed by Chinese linguists and politicians that national minorities not only have the right to employ their own spoken languages, but also the duty to do everything possible for its development and that speakers of the minority languages should not be forced to learn Han. However, they invariably go on to extol the virtues and importance of Han-Mandarin as an interethnic lingua franca and thus an indispensable addition to everyone's linguistic repertoire. Chinese articles on linguistic planning are full of references to the necessity of Han speakers (especially cadres) learning minority languages. Typically the authors go on to add that, given the importance of Han, the natural tendency is that speakers of minority languages will or should learn Han. I have seen little evidence of training in the minority languages for speakers of the Han.

This brings us to one of the greatest differences between the linguistic policy in China and that of places like Catalonia, Québec and the north-west of Wales. In the latter, an integral and key part of the policy is the integration of speakers of the dominant language (Spanish in the first and English in the latter two examples), or at least of their children, into the threatened minority language (Catalan, French and Welsh in the foregoing examples) community. In China it is considered that a language is more closely bound up with a particular nationality than with a particular geographical area. When I have asked Han living in minority areas of many different parts of China why they had not learned the non-Han languages whose speakers they lived among, their

explication was often that they were of Han nationality, as if that were sufficient reason. Even in Tibet and Xinjiang where the Han do not constitute the majority and non-Han speakers take great pride in their language, Han children in general do not learn Tibetan, Uyghur etc., not even in the school.

With respect to the official attitude towards the long-term maintenance of minority languages, I have come across differing viewpoints. According to the plurilingual viewpoint, any type of assimilationist policy is totally unacceptable. However, many Chinese intellectuals believe in the inevitability of a long-term process of linguistic fusion (in other words the adoption of Han-Mandarin by all nationalities in China).

There are many people who see in the promotion of the minority script a more efficient and faster way to "hanise" speakers of non-Han languages, although I have met many dedicated individuals with responsibility for implementing linguistic policy who believe in the long-term survival and future of minority languages.

I have heard of cases of limited literacy campaigns in minority languages in communities where the process of language shift was already underway, for example in some Nuosu communities in Liangshan who were already fully bilingual in Han. However in contrast to Catalonia and Wales, where a key aim of the promotion of the minority languages is to slow down, stop or reverse the language shift in favour of the majority language, in China the main worry of the people responsible for carrying out linguistic policy appears to be the lack of knowledge of the majority Han language among the minority nationalities rather than the possible loss of the minority languages. Thus generally the promotion of a minority language and its script in a community where the population already has a good grasp of the Han is not considered priority, because such a bilingual population can gain literacy in Han and advance socio-economically and culturally by means of this language. Except among the Korean-speaking population of Manchuria and perhaps among the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, protecting the minority language from language shift in favour of Han has never generally been a priority or explicit objective of the promotion of the minority languages (although this may be the personal agenda of some of those involved in implementing the policy).

Some of those responsible for implementing linguistic policy informed me that the decision of whether or not to defend their language from language shift must be taken by the speakers themselves, in other words if there are no popular, bottom-up initiatives, the authorities would not intercede in favour of the threatened language. However, such bottom-up initiatives are far from common.

Although upholding the freedom to use minority languages is an important principle to many involved in the policy, there is no doubt that what is foremost in the minds of many cadres and monoglot speakers of non-Han languages who learn their language's script is being able to use the minority script to learn Han.

5A.3.4.3 AIM 3. FULL INTEGRATION OF MINORITY LANGUAGE SPEAKERS

This is the idea that minority language speakers should participate fully in all aspects of life in the Chinese state, improve their living conditions and promote the socioeconomic development of their (mainly backward) areas. A central concern is that they are made literate in the minority language or Han (the most desirable), or both, in order to have access to the wealth of information about the modern world.

It is widely recognised by Chinese linguists (though not necessarily by all sectors of the public or administration) that the fastest and most efficient way of eliminating the present situation of illiteracy and of promoting Han language proficiency and literacy is through minority-language literacy: not only is it ideologically incorrect to force speakers of minority languages to use exclusively Han to improve their situation, but also counterproductive and inefficient. Studies of the results of Han-only schooling and literacy campaigns among populations with little or no knowledge of Han generally coincide in demonstrating the failure of this approach, at least in the short- or medium-term. In contrast, the many minority language educational and adult literacy pilot projects which have been carried out in minority areas of China, coincide in indicating cognitive advantages and an improvement in the standard of Han and of other subjects.

In Chinese-language literature in the field of minority nationality education this is the most emphasised argument in favour of the promotion of the minority languages. Minority languages and scripts thus serve a double purpose:

- They serve to propagate new basic techniques in the fields of agriculture, economic management, crafts, public health etc., by way of texts written in the minority languages. Of course, the variety of such texts will be relative to the size of the language community and the resources at its disposition. These advantages would be short term and even those who do not go on to learn Han, would reap the benefits.
- They serve as an aid for learning Han, the language of science and technology in China. Through texts written in Han characters they have access to all the new techniques of the modern world, which unavoidably, given the limited resources available, will not be available in minority scripts.

A major frustration of many Chinese linguists who have argued forcefully in favour of mother-tongue and bilingual literacy and education is that their arguments appear to be largely ignored by people in the administrations responsible for taking political decisions. Perhaps this sounds familiar to advocates of plurilingual language policies all over the world. In addition, accusations of falsification and manipulation of the positive results of such studies have cast deep shadows in the minds of many cadres and members of the public about the real value of minority language-medium education. In China there is a tradition of producing statistics which please the higher authorities and prove that objectives set by them have been met or surpassed, even if this means fudging the reality, and the field of bilingual education is no exception. This does not mean that all statistics and results of pilot projects are worthless. Firstly, comparative results from countries basically free from such manipulation tend to show bilingual education (with a large component of minority-language-medium teaching) in a favourable light. Secondly, despite the existence of the “cooking” of results, there are also reliable studies.

5A.3.4.4 AIM 4. EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting the cultural life and development of areas where minority languages are spoken. Some minority scripts have a multitude of uses in daily life, how many they are actually put to in a particular linguistic community depending on its users’ motivation, the resources at their disposition and the promotion’s success. Examples of uses of minority scripts are:

- As a medium for primary, secondary (less often) and adult education. Exceptionally it may also be used in tertiary and further education.
- Reading magazines, journals and books (technical or otherwise).
- Disseminating the ideology and the policy of the State and of the Communist Party.
- Reading and writing reports, posters, decrees, advertisements, etc.
- Reading and writing messages, letters, notes etc.
- Bookkeeping.
- Reading traditional literature and religious texts (not always favoured by the CCP).
- Noting down, composing and revising the words of songs, rhymes, sayings, legends, folk tales and lullabies.
- Creating new literature in minority languages.

The above uses are fundamental everyday applications of literacy. I am amazed how often they are overlooked by opponents of promoting non-Han languages, who argue that promoting anything other than Han is a waste of time, money and resources serving no useful purpose.

5A.3.4 APPLICATION OF PLURILINGUAL POLICIES

In the West, we often think of China as a centralist and authoritarian country where decisions taken at the Centre are carried out in the regions without any discussion according to the principals of “democratic centralism”. The reality is quite different. Manion (1991), in a study of confrontation between decisions taken by the authorities and individual interests in the case of the implementation of the policy of the premature retirement of veteran cadres during the 80, reveals that while the Central Government did indeed attain its objective, it was only after a long process of separate behind-the-scenes negotiations between each veteran cadre and the cadres entrusted with carrying out the central policy. This resulted in the offer of material incentives (such as increments in their pensions, better housing and good jobs for their children) not foreseen according to the original policy.

One of the first things that strikes anyone reading about plans for promoting minority languages and scripts, who then visits the areas where this is supposed to happen, is the

wide gulf between the theory and reality. In many cases (the most glaring one being that of Zhuang) it is clear that an important part of the administrative system has either not cooperated with the implementation of the policy (passive opposition) or has actively opposed it. The former is the preferred strategy during the “plurilingual” phases and I have seen no evidence of articles opposed to the promotion of minority languages and scripts during these periods of accommodation.

From personal experience in minority areas of Guangxi and Yunnan, I know that there is enormous resistance to the linguistic policy on the part of many (perhaps the majority) of cadres. In many areas of China the impact of the policy (at least when I revisited the country in 1989, 1993, 1994 and 1995) has been minimum and often unknown to the majority of the national group whose language is being officially promoted. In 1989 I visited the autonomous Bai area of Dali and autonomous Naxi county of Lijiang after having read articles of experimental literacy classes in Bai and Naxi using new romanised scripts. However, when I talked to Bai people in the old town of Dali and to Naxi in both the town of Lijiang and the fairly remote rural district of Baoshan they professed never to have heard of a Bai or Naxi (except the ancient Dongba one) script.

Among the groups who oppose the policy are cadres of minority nationality who do not actively –or at all- speak their ethnic language or who – if they do speak it- look down on it) in addition to cadres who speak varieties which differ considerably from the new chosen standard minority languages.

Given the massive resistance to this policy and the consequent delay in (and often the total frustrating of) its implementation, the organisations and cadres responsible for their promotion invest a great part of their energies in convincing and winning over reticent cadres.

Many of the articles on the promotion of the minority languages serve precisely this function; for example Jianchuan County Language and Scripts Committee (1989) is an attempt to convince sceptics and opponents of promoting them with arguments, both reasoned and based on the experience of a project pilot for literacy work in Bai. The authors challenge the readers to go and visit the village where the literacy pilot projects are being carried out to see for themselves how successful they are and cite UNESCO

support for mother-tongue literacy, stressing that promoting minority languages is essentially socialist. At the same time, they intend to present a strategy which people working in the promotion can employ to solicit the cooperation of unenthusiastic cadres. They stress the role of "model" cadres who have inspired others when there was a lot of opposition and apathy towards minority scripts and insist on the necessity of unanimous, sincere and consistent support from all sections of the bureaucracy.

The reason for the lack of the compliance with the officially sanctioned policy lies partly in the fact that constitutional rights and laws relating to language (alongside with many of those relating to political and economic rights of autonomous areas) are what Thomas Heberer (2001) terms "soft laws" which cadres in power do not feel duty-bound to carry out. The reluctance of cadres to carry out official pluralistic language policy will be examined in 6.2.4 and 7.3.4.

5A.4 TYPES OF PLURILINGUAL PLANNING MEASURES

Using Cooper (1989)'s framework, this section outlines different types of language planning measures carried out during plurilingual phases.

5A.4.1 CORPUS PLANNING

5A.4.1.1 STANDARDISATION OF HAN AND NON-HAN LANGUAGES

Han

In Chapter 4 it was seen that unlike western linguists who regard Han Chinese as a language family rather than a language, in China Han Chinese is perceived as a single language with incomprehensible dialects. This is not to say that unofficial regional standards do not exist. People regard the speech of Guangzhou as the elegant standard for Cantonese for example. Likewise south-western Mandarin has many regional "standards" which are taken as models at a local level. For example, in northern Guangxi 桂林官话 (Guilin Mandarin) and 柳州话 (Liuzhou speech) are the main local "standards", in Yunnan 昆明话 (Kunming speech) and even Liangshan had its own regional variant of 四川话 (Sichuanese). Many of these serve as the primary model for minority language speakers learning Han.

During the first half of the twentieth century there were various proposals for creating phonetic scripts with standards for each major Han “dialect”, a view even popular among some communist linguists, but they were rejected both because the creation of more than one Han standard language was unacceptable to most Han Chinese and also because the idea questioned the monopolistic and all-embracing inter-dialectal role of the Han character script. The fact that Han characters (written according to the syntactical and lexical norms of the standard Mandarin) can be read off in the pronunciation of other “Han” dialects, creates the false impression that there is one script which is totally suited to all “dialects”. How can they be separate languages if they have the same script? However, as Maxwell (2003: 149) points out Chinese language planners who codified regional “dialects” typically intended their codification as an intermediate step on the path to mass literacy in some Beijing-based standard.

Consequently over 300 million speakers of non-Mandarin Han languages are denied the opportunity of having their languages recognised, even as minority ones. Given the strength of regionalist feelings in China, often linked to different Han dialects, there is an underlying fear among many people that recognition of different standardised Han languages could lead to political fragmentation. The exception is the official status of Cantonese in Hong Kong, where it is the commonly used teaching and broadcasting, which has helped to create and reinforce a standard Cantonese spoken language. Likewise Minnanhua, and to a lesser extent Hakka, are used and promoted in schools and in some limited publications on Taiwan.

Non-Han languages

In most cases a sole standard form of each minority language has been established as in the case of Zhuang. Other languages have more than one standard form, an example being the Tai language with 2 principal spoken and written standards. Sometimes the standards adopted correspond to a particular region, chosen for being considered intermediate between different variants, for having the greatest number of speakers or for being the most prestigious. However some new standards are not based on any single region having been confected to contain common traits of different variants, with for example, a standard pronunciation based on one variant and a grammar or vocabulary on another.

Many minority languages have not even been fully classified and described – far less standardised - and their speakers have no hope at all of becoming literate in their own language.

5A.4.1.2 CREATION AND REFORM OF HAN AND NON-HAN SCRIPTS

Han

The simplification of the Han characters carried out in the first three decades of Communist rule together with the creation of the pinyin romanisation were designed mainly to facilitate literacy among the speakers of Han (both Mandarin and non-Mandarin varieties), but Pinyin also aimed at helping speakers of non-Han minority languages and foreigners to learn Mandarin. The short-term aim for Mandarin promotion was among the speakers of Han “dialects” and the longer-term aim (especially after 1958) among speakers of non-Han languages. For over 20 years promoting Mandarin in non-Han speaking areas has been a priority of language policy.

Despite the widespread prestige of oral Cantonese throughout Guangdong and southern Guangxi and its official status in Hong Kong, the written form of colloquial Cantonese which uses some non-standard Han characters to express words which have no Mandarin cognates is restricted, even in Hong Kong, to comics, advertisements, jokes, traditional opera and folk literature, the occasional newspaper column and the odd exceptional colloquial publication. In folk literature there is limited writing in Shanghaiese, Minnanhua and Hakka, on the mainland restricted mostly to folk literature.

Non-Han languages

From the 1950s an objective of the linguistic policy was the creation of scripts based on the Latin alphabet in order to make it easy for people literate in minority languages to subsequently learn Mandarin using the *pinyin* romanisation, both in the case of languages without scripts and those seen in need of script reform. The phonetic values of the letters were as near as possible to those of *hanyu pinyin*. Scripts were created for some languages previously lacking standardised scripts, such as Zhuang, Kam (Dong) and Mien (Yao).

Some traditional alphabets were replaced by Latin ones, for example in Uyghur and Kazakh the Arabic script was replaced by a romanisation and a romanised form of

Nuosu (the northern variant of Yi) was promoted on a trial basis in place of the traditional 8,000 character script. In the 1980s, due to lack of popular acceptance, the Arabic forms of Uyghur and Kazakh were reinstated and Nuosu was given a reformed (and much simplified) version of the traditional script. In other cases, traditional scripts were reformed (for example in the case of the variants of the Tai language), often creating considerable controversy among their speech communities.

5A.4.1.3 ADOPTING NEW LEXIS FOR NON-HAN LANGUAGES

An aspect of corpus planning which has been very controversial is that of coining new expressions for new or unfamiliar concepts. One point of view advocates the borrowing of Han words and another, the use of native roots to coin new expressions. Others are in favour of a pragmatic mixture. In recent years in Xinjiang, for example, the Chinese media and education system have actively promoted Chinese words to replace words in Uyghur of Latin, Greek or Russian origin, which has not been well received by the Uyghur speech community.

5A.4.2 STATUS PLANNING

According to Cooper (1989), this type of planning refers to "deliberate efforts to influence the allocation of functions among a community's languages" and to "an effort to regulate the **demand** for given verbal resources "whilst "acquisition 'planning' is an effort to regulate the **distribution of** those resources ".

5A.4.2.1 FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE RELEVANT TO STATUS PLANNING

Cooper cites a list of possible functions which can serve as possible status-planning objectives which he has adapted from Stewart (1968, cited in Cooper, 1989) and are analysed below in relation to the languages of China.

- **On a national scale**

Official languages can be *statuary*, *symbolic* or *working languages*.

China is considered a single indivisible state with one nationwide official language, Han Mandarin, which functions as uncontested nationwide *statuary* and *working language*. At a national level there is only a purely symbolic use of Tibetan, Mongol,

Uyghur, Zhuang, Yi and Korean on banknotes, a curiosity mentioned with pride by those eager to show the respect shown to these languages by the Central Government.

- **At lower administrative levels**

Although Mandarin is promoted for this function in all parts of China, the minority language(s) of the *nationality/-ies* corresponding to a particular autonomous area should, in theory at least, function alongside Mandarin as additional official administrative languages. In most cases the use which is made of the “official” minority language is more symbolic than real. To varying degrees, minority languages are used in the judicial system (particularly in the provision of oral interpreters) and promoted in public and commercial life.

There is much more oral than written use of minority languages between cadres in the administration who speak these languages, although they often insist on speaking in Han (Mandarin or other variants) in the context of administrative work. Code switching and wholesale importing of Han administrative and political jargon is common. At an oral level non-Mandarin, or regional Mandarin, Han “dialects” are commonly used by many cadres. Sometimes non-Han cadres will tend to use a non-Mandarin variety of Han in their day to day work, e.g. many Zhuang cadres in southern Guangxi use Cantonese more than Mandarin and throughout south-western China many minority cadres use varieties of south-western Mandarin.

Although many grass root cadres (especially in rural areas) do speak local non-Han languages and so can attend the public in them, there are many cadres (especially in larger administrative centres) who do not, severely hindering communication with the public they are supposed to be serving. Ironically, many cadres belonging to the nationality which holds the power of autonomy do not speak the language, because they belong to the hanised elite. Sometimes they are children of mixed marriages who have opted for non-Han nationality in order to benefit from positive job discrimination in favour of minority nationalities; others are children of parents who have made a conscious decision to bring up their children only in Han and leave behind the obsolete backward language. The whole point of reserving jobs for certain nationalities is surely so that these nationalities have people in power that can relate to them, understand their situation and problems and speak their language. Employing people who are to all

intentions and purposes Han, and who have made an effort to distance themselves from their culture, traditions and language, in positions where they are supposed to “connect” with people of the culture they have left behind, is surely a pointless exercise in self-delusion.

- **Co-official language at level of autonomous region (equivalent to province)**

In the Autonomous Uyghur Region of Xinjiang, the Autonomous Mongol Region of Inner Mongolia, the Autonomous Zhuang Region of Guangxi and the Autonomous Tibetan Region, Uyghur, Mongol, Zhuang and Tibetan respectively are officially, alongside Han, administrative languages and of the educational system and of the mass media. Up to what point they fulfil this function varies a lot between the regions. In Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia, Uyghur, Tibetan and Mongolian are fairly ubiquitous (although very much inferior to Mandarin), but in Guangxi the use of Zhuang dazzles by its total absence, even its symbolic use being limited to the name-signs of a few state organisms and companies and place names on railway station signs.

- **Co-official language at level of autonomous prefecture**

Autonomous prefectures are numerous, for example: the Autonomous Korean Prefecture of Yanbian (in the Province of Jilin), the Autonomous Kazak Prefecture of Ili (in Xinjiang), the Autonomous Bai Prefecture of Dali and the Autonomous Naxi Prefecture of Lijiang (both in the Province of Yunnan) and the Autonomous Tibetan Prefectures of Haibei, Hainan, Xushu, Huangnan and Golog (all in the Province of Qinghai).

In some prefectures the autonomy corresponds to several nationalities, for example: the Autonomous Dong (=Kam) and Miao Prefecture of Qiandongnan (in the Province of Guizhou), the Autonomous Tai and Jingpo Prefecture of Dehong and the Autonomous Zhuang and Miao Prefecture of Wenshan (both in the Province of Yunnan) and the Autonomous Tibetan, Kazak and Mongol Prefecture of Haixi (in the Province of Qinghai). Languages that correspond to the nationalities lending their names to the autonomous area are used in theory (but often not in practice - or only minimally) as languages of administration, education, public notices, mass media etc., jointly with Mandarin.

- **Co-official language at level of autonomous county**

E.g. the Autonomous Tibetan County of Muli (in the Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Liangshan in the Province of Sichuan), the Autonomous Tujia County of Laifeng (in the Province of Hubei) and the Autonomous Multinational County of Longsheng and the Autonomous Yao County of Jinxiu (both in the Autonomous Zhuang Region of Guangxi). In the foregoing examples Tibetan is used in a limited way in Muli –as is Nuosu (Yi)- but any use of Tujia (without a script and in most areas dead or fast dying out) or Yao (whose script has been only minimally promoted) is almost anecdotal.

- **Co-official language at level of autonomous townships**

This is the most localised form of autonomy. As in the county and prefecture levels the choice of language depends on a complex series of factors, among which are which languages the cadres and populations involved actually can speak. Much more use is made of oral than of written minority languages. For example in Bai and Naxi autonomous counties of Yunnan, I saw no public signs written in these languages.

- **Language of wider communication (lingua franca)**

The most common interethnic lingua franca in most minority areas of China is Han (whether varieties of Mandarin or of other Han “dialects” such as Cantonese). However there are also non-Han lingua francas in different parts of the country, e.g. Uyghur in Xinjiang, Tai in some areas of Sipsong Panna, Zhuang in some areas of Guangxi. The policy is to recognise and acknowledge the use of non-Han lingua francas, but to actively encourage and promote the use of Mandarin for this function.

- **International language**

The Chinese Government and most citizens of China have been quick to recognise the importance of English. Han-English medium bilingual schools have been set up, English language television programmes, English newspapers, public signs in English etc. This is not to say however that the government wishes to replace Mandarin with English. The former is the inter-ethnic language of China not the latter. The government appears not to wish for a situation where non-Han and Han use English rather than Mandarin to communicate, as happens increasingly between Flemings and Walloons in Belgium.

Dwyer 2005(42-43) reports that private English instruction was shut down in Xinjiang in the mid-1990s “amid concerns that private schools could be conduits for anti-government political propaganda” and that it is not possible for Uyghur speakers to study English directly through the medium of Uyghur, despite the fact that English is easier for Uyghur speakers than for Han speakers due to Uyghur being stress-based like English and having more phonological similarities to English than Han. In addition there are many words of Romance and Greek origin which have entered Uyghur via Russian which are similar to their English equivalents: e.g. *kompyuter* = computer, *telefon* = telephone. Obliging Uyghur speakers to learn English via Mandarin is, argues Dwyer, is giving out the message that Uyghur is a second-class, “low quality” language compared to Mandarin.

For some time Mandarin has been recognised as the international language which gives speakers of minority languages and of the non-standard dialects of Han a window on the world. Mandarin has long been considered a lingua franca within the Far East, and since the late 1990s –with the economic rise of China- it is suddenly no longer considered to be so outrageously exotic to learn Chinese. Despite the promotion of Mandarin at an international level, China has invested heavily in teaching its population English and many minority language speakers are aware that if they want to speak to a wider audience they need to learn English as a wider language of international communication.

Being the language of Hong Kong, Macao and many overseas Chinese communities who invest heavily in mainland China, Cantonese has enjoyed a much higher status than any other non-Mandarin Han dialects. In 1989 I even saw television programmes in Yunnan (a non-Cantonese speaking province) for learning Cantonese. In the 1990s the popular trend to learn Cantonese caused alarm within the Government and measures were taken to restrict its use and diffusion as a lingua franca at the expense of Mandarin. Spurred on by the return of Hong Kong to China, many Hongkongese have made an effort to learn Mandarin to communicate with non-Cantonese speakers in China. While the spread of Cantonese outside its traditional mainland areas of Guangdong and southern Guangxi might have been contained, it is likely that it will continue to enjoy high prestige among both native speakers and speakers of other languages within these areas. Thus many rural speakers of Zhuang, Yao and other non-Han languages in

southern Guangxi and Guangdong learn Cantonese rather than south-western Mandarin and in most minority communities in these areas where language shift is taking place it is in favour of Cantonese rather than Mandarin.

With the greater permeability of the Sino-Russian border and increased commercial activity between both countries, Russian has regained some of its former importance as a window on the world, which perhaps will encourage the few native Russian speakers left in Xinjiang and Manchuria not to abandon their language.

It could be argued that some minority languages serve as international languages, as they facilitate communication with linguistic groups in neighbouring countries. There are speakers of Korean in Manchuria, of Vietnamese in Guangxi, of Mongolian all over the far north of China which are official languages of neighbouring countries. Speakers of other minority languages can more or less communicate with those of closely related official languages of neighbouring countries. For example: the speakers of Turkic languages of Xinjiang can communicate with speakers of Turkic languages of the new republics of Central Asia and some speakers are aware that their languages are not so different from Turkish. Speakers of Tai in Sipsong Panna (Xishuangbanna) in the extreme south of Yunnan can communicate with speakers of the Laotian and Thai, especially those from the north of these countries. Indeed many Tai in Sipsong Panna seem to be much more orientated towards Bangkok than towards Peking or even Kunming and the learning of the standard Thai language and script has become a priority for many people and is taught in many of the temple schools (Hansen, 1999a and b). In 1980 a Tai family in Sipsong Panna proudly showed me a photograph of their son who lived in Bangkok, just as a Han family might have shown one of a relative in Hong Kong.

The speakers of some minority languages can more or less communicate with speakers of the same or closely related minority languages in neighbouring countries, for example: the speakers of the southern dialect of Zhuang of Guangxi and Yunnan (belonging to the central group of Tai languages) with the speakers of Nong and Tay of Vietnam, there are speakers of Va (= Wa) and Jingpo on both sides of the Sino-Burmese border and speakers of Tibetan can communicate (to an extent) with speakers of Tibetan variants in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The presence of the Tibetan Diaspora

in northern India, concentrated around the Dalai Lama's government in exile also provides a reference point outside the country for Tibetan speakers as does the fact that Tibetan language and culture is taught in many foreign universities and generates great interest among the public in the West, partly thanks to their interest in Tibetan religion and the Dalai Lama's writings.

- **Speech of capitals and localised elites**

Standard Mandarin is largely based on the speech of Beijing. In the case of regional Mandarin varieties and of Han "dialects", provincial capitals often serve as local linguistic models. For example, the speech of Kunming (a variant of south-western Mandarin) serves as a model for the major part of Yunnan and the Cantonese of Guangzhou is considered the purist and most standard.

Since recent Han immigration raised the proportion of Han residents in Lhasa to at least half the population (Tibet Information Network, 30th September, 2003), there are no capitals of provinces or of autonomous regions where the majority speaks a non-Han language. However, Lhasa is still a partly Tibetan-speaking capital and Lhasa Tibetan does have a tradition of being the prestigious variety. In Urumqi (Zingg, Elisabeth, 1998) Uyghur speakers reportedly form only some fifth of the total population due to massive Han immigration and however ethnically proud they may be, are under considerable hanising pressures. Likewise Hehhot is not a Mongol-speaking city. The city of Nanning is surrounded by strongly Zhuang-speaking areas and has many residents who speak different forms (often not easily mutually intelligible) of Zhuang, but is a strongly Han-speaking city in which the central districts are predominantly Cantonese-speaking and the periphery speaks mainly the Pinghua "dialect" (classified by some as a deviant form of Cantonese). Although Kunming has aging, and thus dying, communities of speakers of Central Yi variants who live on its outskirts, this is a historical curiosity involving only a few people and the city is a bastion of south-western Mandarin with its own influential regional standard *Kunmingese* (昆明话). Likewise capitals such as Xining and Guiyang are Han-speaking (north-western and south-western Mandarin respectively) in spite of Qinghai and Guizhou Provinces containing large numbers of non-Han speakers.

Even administrative centres of prefectures and counties in minority areas tend to be centres of hanisation, due both to the large number of Han often living there and to the use of Han as the principal administrative language. Thus Xichang, the capital of the Liangshan Autonomous Yi Prefecture, is Han-speaking (and traditionally so for many generations) and the Nuosu-speaking incomers there tend to become assimilated to Han. Even when only a few Han are resident in say a county administrative centre, as is the case in Zhaojue County town in Liangshan or Debao County town in Guangxi, their presence is very influential and many of the minority speakers in influential positions are partly or extremely hanised, both in speech and in their ways. Even though a language may be spoken by large sections of the population it may (the case of Zhuang in Debao) have no presence as a written or formal language. In areas where a script is promoted and an effort has been made to put up signs and notices in the non-Han language within the town, the minority language is still competing against the full power of Mandarin and usually appears as the junior partner.

- **Language of group solidarity**

In China, as in other countries, it seems that the stronger the identification of nationality with a particular language the stronger its ethnic self-awareness and solidarity the greater the possibility of language maintenance. For example, there are areas of Yunnan where speaking *yi* is essential to be accepted as such, while there are also Yi nationality communities where variants of Han have become the language of group solidarity.

- **Language as teaching medium and as a school subject**

These functions form a key part of the policy and will be discussed in detail in later sections.

- **Literary function of language**

This function has been much emphasised in the promotion campaigns, even in the case of the smaller minority languages without a tradition of literacy. For example, in the promotion of the Zhuang, Yao and Bai languages the advantages of being able to transcribe the large body of oral literature without having to translate it into Han.

- **Religious function of language**

During the leftist period, many saw Han as the only revolutionary language of Marxism and Mao Zedong thought, whilst many languages and minority scripts were associated with particular counterrevolutionary religions and superstitious practices. Thus Tibetan (and to a lesser extent Mongolian) was associated with Lamaism, Tai with Buddhism, various minority languages of Xinjiang with Islam and the scripts of some southwestern minority languages (as is the case of the Miao and Va languages) with Christian evangelism by foreign missionaries. Other scripts were associated with shamanistic religions such as the traditional script of the Nuosu (and also those of some other Yi languages), most of whose users were *bimo* or shamans. With the increase of religious freedom in post-Maoist China, which has caused a certain amount of alarm in official circles, this function has seen a vigorous renaissance in the last several decades.

For many languages, the religious function is of utmost importance in their maintenance under the onslaught from Mandarin and among many minorities religious schools have been set up, either as alternatives or substitutes of the state education system, although typically only for boys. For example in Sipsong Panna many parents send their sons to Buddhist temple schools to become novice monks, either instead of, or in addition to, the state school, because they feel it provides a more relevant education than do state schools (Hansen 1999a and b). Likewise, in Xinjiang there has been a growth in Islamic mosque schools which teach through Turkic languages as well as teaching Arabic.

5A.4.3 ACQUISITION ‘PLANNING’

According to Cooper (1989), this type of language planning refers to organised efforts to promote the learning of a language. In the context of Chinese minority areas, this is of enormous importance. The most obvious manifestations of the promotion are precisely the campaigns of bilingual education and literacy campaigns, the objectives of which are both the acquisition of the minority script and (especially in the case of children) standard variant of the minority language, combined in many cases with the acquisition of Mandarin.

5A.4.3.1 COOPER'S OVERT GOALS OF ACQUISITION PLANNING:

Acquisition of a language as a second or foreign language.

The acquisition of Mandarin by non-Han linguistic minorities is without doubt the greatest priority of current minority language policy. This can be done either by directly teaching Han to minority language speakers (through Han language schooling, adult literacy classes or communicative work situations) or by using minority language literacy to serve as a bridge to learning spoken and written Mandarin. Both supporters and opponents of promoting minority languages and scripts claim that their method will achieve the learning of Han Mandarin quicker and more effectively.

With respect to the acquisition of minority languages as a second language I have only heard of limited initiatives to teach minority languages and scripts to cadres of other languages, working in minority areas. However, some non-natives participate voluntarily in literacy classes and there are children of some smaller minority languages who are educated through the medium of other minority languages of their area.

Throughout China, also in minority areas, English is encouraged as the main foreign language. I have detected a desire among several Tibetan and Uyghur intellectuals (probably not a very representative sample) to use English as their language of wider communication within China rather than Mandarin. However, whereas a Tamil-speaking Indian could realistically rely on English rather than Hindi to communicate with educated Indians from other language groups, this strategy is not feasible in China. Russian is regaining certain popularity thanks to the cross border trade and at a more localised level, there is a boom in learning Vietnamese on the south-western border.

Reacquisition of a language by populations who have already lost their ethnic tongue as a vernacular language

In northern China there is much interest in learning Manchu (on the verge of extinction as a living community language) among some intellectuals of this nationality and some attend Manchu classes. I have also seen manuals of Manchu and even a Manchu language bookshop in Peking.

While in south-western China, I have heard second-hand accounts of hanised minority nationality cadres and others learning their ethnic language, but know little of the

success of such classes. Harrell (1993) comments that due to the high proportion of cadres (and intellectuals) among some minority nationalities (such as the Yi or Zhuang) who already do not speak the languages identified with their nationalities, the implementation of the linguistic policy needs a programme to teach them their ethnic language as a second language. The importance of belonging to a particular nationality in China as opposed to being a speaker of a particular language or languages has meant that the authorities can reserve political posts for particular minority nationalities and fill them with people of that nationality who are largely or totally Han in language and outlook. Even those who are still fluent in their ethnic languages often bring up their children only in Mandarin when it would be perfectly feasible to bring them up as balanced bilinguals.

The fact that ethnic minority cadres in areas where their ethnic languages are being promoted in education, literacy campaigns and public life often either do not speak the language in question or wish to put it behind them as something to be discarded, is extremely bad news for the promotion and use of minority languages in China and might indeed spell their death-knell. I personally do not think that sending a few poorly-motivated Hanised minority nationality cadres to learn or relearn their ethnic language will have much positive effect whilst they continue to measure their success by the extent to which they have Hanised themselves and distanced themselves from their primitive and backward language and script which is linked to backwardness and often to religious superstition. This is a key theme to which I shall return further on.

The maintenance of a language: implies the acquisition of the language by the next generation, that (without the planning) would probably have abandoned it in favour of a more prestigious language

The creation, revision and promotion of minority scripts has been done with two main aims in mind, namely the acquisition of Mandarin by all speakers of these languages (the first point) and exercising their right to develop and use their nationality's language and script under the Marxist principle that all languages are equal. As pointed out elsewhere, nobody (or only very few people) would seriously question the first aim, but I would estimate that only a minority of those in power really take the second aim seriously.

Are measures like adult literacy campaigns and bilingual education aimed at facilitating their transition to Mandarin or at maintaining the minority language alongside Mandarin? They are indispensable measures for achieving either aim, but which aim is achieved depends on how the promotion is carried out, what the long-term aims of the different actors are and how they respond to the promotion measures. Obviously the greater the use of the minority language and script as a teaching medium and as a language of the workplace and of public life, the better the chance that it can hold its own alongside Mandarin.

Even though literacy promotion and education in minority languages is often carried out on a shoestring budget with inadequate resources and manpower and a lack of coordination, experience and know-how, it is still a first prerequisite for language maintenance and arguably better than exclusively using Han. The main condition for the maintenance of a language is the will of its speakers (even when they have acquired Mandarin) to pass it on to future generations and to use it in preference to Mandarin in at least some contexts. In the last analysis I feel that measures in favour of acquisition of minority languages will fail if insufficient attention is paid to status planning and in particular to creating a bilingual, biliterate elite and material tangible incentives (e.g. making knowledge of minority languages and scripts a prerequisite for jobs).

In the Chinese minority nationality context, I would add a fourth category:

Acquisition of (or at least the attempt to acquire) another non-Han language by a population who believes it (often mistakenly) to be their lost ethnic tongue

In the Xinmeng district of Yunnan Province Bai Jie (1989) reports that some 4,000 people classified as “Mongol” speak a Tibeto-Burman language called “Kadio” which is “closely related to Yi”. They are said to be descendents of a Mongol garrison stationed in the area after the Mongol conquest of the kingdom of Dali. Most of the population, excepting some small children can also speak Han and Yi through close contacts with speakers of these languages and some can also write Han. In the 1950s members sent to Inner Mongolia to study Mongolian, abandoned their attempt due to the difficulty of the language and later on teachers sent from Inner Mongolia were also unsuccessful. As the written medium being promoted was totally distinct from the

spoken language, it served no communicative function. The extent of their Mongolian roots is of course extremely questionable.

The eastern group of Naze speakers of Liangshan who speak a Tibeto-Burman language closely related to Naxi also believe themselves to be Mongols and were in fact successfully classified as such. (The western group of Naze speakers split between Yunnan – where they are classified as Naxi- and Sichuan where they are classified as Mongols - were not keen on this idea and considered themselves to be Moso). In fact evidence for Mongolian connections is flimsy. As in the case of the Kadiao, they also tried to learn Mongolian. One Naze informant in Liangshan (personal communication 1994) that indeed the 2 languages were similar, but this flies in the face of all linguistic evidence (see also Harrell, 2001a).

Likewise in the western part of Sichuan there are people classified as Tibetans who speak languages belonging to the Qiangic sub-family of Tibeto-Burman languages, but who nevertheless wish to learn Tibetan. This places a big burden on them as it is almost as big a step as learning Mandarin.

5A.4.3.2 ATTAINING THE OBJECTIVES OF ACQUISITION

According to Cooper 1989, methods to create or improve opportunities to learn the L2 can be subdivided into:

Direct methods (including class instruction, provision of materials for self-learning and use of the mass media to produce texts and programmes in a simplified form of the L2):

- Han as L2

Most minority children (especially in the South-West) who attend school are taught all or most subjects in Han. Children who have acquired some Han before starting school (e.g. through playing with Han children) are obviously at an advantage when it comes to understanding their teachers. However, unlike communicative immersion programmes in Catalonia for non-Catalan speakers or in Wales for non-Welsh speaking children, children from monolingual minority language backgrounds have a problem in becoming fluent in Han when faced with a traditional non-communicative classroom

where rote-learning is the order of the day and children mainly listen to the teachers.

As Cummins (1989, 25) points out:

...the experience of traditional second-language teaching programmes in countries such as Canada, Ireland and Wales demonstrates the disappointing results typically obtained when principals of interactive pedagogy are ignored. Most traditional L2 teaching programmes tend to be teacher-centred and allow for little real interaction or active use of the target language by students in the classroom. They conform to a 'transmission' model of pedagogy rather than to an interactive model.

If the teachers are competent in the minority language then they will often explain things and paraphrase in the mother tongue which obviously can aid enormously acquisition of the new language, but many teachers (usually Han), even in the early years of primary school, do not speak the children's language and often show no interest in doing so. Likewise, adult literacy classes of Han tend to often be rather academically orientated which can make meaningful learning difficult to say the least. Different education departments often dedicate considerable resources to helping minority adults learn Han. Of course the more input learners have through contact with Han speakers and the Han-medium mass media the more motivated to learn they will be and this will vary greatly from place to place. These questions will be considered in detail in Chapter 6.

- *Minority languages as L2*

As pointed out earlier this is a relatively rare occurrence in China.

Indirect methods, including efforts to modify the L1 (non-Han language) of the student, so that it resembles more the L2 (Han).

It is no coincidence that many newly-created minority language scripts are based on the romanised *Pinyin* transcription, which was done with the explicit idea of facilitating the posterior learning of Mandarin. Diverse languages which were romanised before the Cultural Revolution (for example Uyghur and Nuosu) later either returned to their traditional scripts or reformed versions of these. For a long time there was a policy of importing borrowings from Mandarin (various Chinese linguists, personal communication, 1982) in preference to inventing new terms from native roots; for example many languages have adopted political terms such as "*gongchandang*" (Communist Party) and "*zhuxi*" (chairman) from Han, at times with small modifications due to phonetic differences. I have talked to linguists and read articles advocating both

points of view. In the 1980s the insistence on adopting Han borrowings was partially dropped, although in some cases (e.g. that of Uyghur) has been re-imposed.

Creation or improvement of incentives to learn the L2

Incentives to learn Han

Even if no special measures are taken to encourage people to learn Han, minority language speakers usually see it as their passport to success, because it is perceived both as their window to participation in the modern world and as the only way to become a cadre or work in a company. The education system for most minority speakers is either entirely, or mainly, Han-medium, especially above primary school level. As the authorities encourage the use of Han as an ethnic lingua franca, it will probably increasingly displace other regional interethnic languages such as Tai, Uyghur or Zhuang.

Incentives to learn non-Han languages

Although some Han incomers to minority areas have successfully learnt minority languages and integrated into their societies, especially where greatly outnumbered by minority language speakers, most have a reputation for not learning them and insisting on talking Han. I have even met Han who pride themselves on **not** having made an effort to learn the minority language spoken all around them, for example a Han shopkeeper next to a logging camp in rural Lijiang where the overwhelming majority of the population spoke only Naxi. I have seen little evidence of concrete measures or incentives to overcome this reluctance of Han speakers to learn minority languages apart from comments in articles and speeches stressing the importance of Han cadres (and Han people in general) learning minority languages and scripts. However, such comments are not articulated with specific incentives or threats for those that do or do not comply. In the Basque Country, for example, there are lots of Basque courses for monoglot Spanish speakers, whereas in minority areas of China I have never heard of courses of non-Han languages for Han-speakers who are not cadres.

Creation or improvement of the incentives and opportunities for learning

As Cooper stresses, language planning for acquisition can embrace much more than only teaching the languages in question and if pupils lack practical reasons for using the language outside the classroom, it is improbable that they will use it as an everyday

language. The experience of Welsh- and Basque-medium education shows that unless these languages can be encouraged outside the home (especially where the students do not use them at home with their families) in contexts such as discotheques, sporting activities and clubs, their use among pupils will remain entirely academic. In minority language communities where Han is little heard, presumably the use of the minority language in family and community social events and gatherings will be uncontested. Among bilingual communities and in bilingual schools it is of utmost importance to promote social and free time activities linked to the language and script if they are to stand their ground against Han. I have no evidence of how many such activities have been organised.

As for the teaching of Han as a second language to speakers of minority languages, many activities and competitions (e.g. public speaking competitions) are organised both inside and outside schools. Encouraging monolingual Han immigration into minority language areas can be an indirect method of increasing opportunities for minority language speakers to use Han (see 6.3.2.4). There are ever fewer minority areas unaffected by Han immigration.

The main energies of the present promotion of minority language scripts and standardised languages are concentrated in bilingual schools and minority language adult literacy campaigns.

Measures taken to improve the acquisition of literacy in non-Han languages

Bilingual Education

When bilingual education is mentioned in the big cities of China, Han and non-Han bilingualism is usually not envisaged, but rather English-Han or Han together with some other important foreign language. This type of bilingualism is prestigious and popular, despite its expense. Parents are anxious that their children grow up naturally with languages which “give them a good start in life” or “get a good job”. Many English-speaking parents in Wales eagerly send their children to Welsh-medium schools. The last thing most Han parents in minority areas would dream of would be to send their children to bilingual schools where one of the mediums of education was a non-Han language rather than a world language. Why not? Surely it makes sense if they live in an area where it is spoken? If Han parents who live in predominantly Korean,

Mongolian, Uyghur or Kazakh areas (the highest status non-Han languages in China) seldom do so, it is even less likely that those in areas of less prestigious (in the eyes of most Han) languages such as Nuosu, Tibetan or Tai which also have a literary tradition will do so. In the case of those living among languages with no written tradition the chances are very slim indeed. When I have asked Han parents in Nuosu and Zhuang areas why not they looked at me incredulously as if I were mad to even imagine for a minute that they would lower themselves to let their children learn such a useless and backward language and script.

Although the members of the nationalities associated with their nationality's language are the target of non-Han medium education and literacy campaigns (and not also majority group members as in Wales or Catalonia), even many of these are hostile to sending their children to non-Han medium or bilingual schooling. Sometimes this is simply because they believe that anything short of Han-only teaching hinders their learning Han and getting on in the world. Sometimes it is because parents do not identify fully enough with the standard dialect and script being promoted, e.g. in Zhuang areas. In large areas of China (Uyghur, Kazakh, Korean and Mongolian –in rural Inner Mongolia at least- being the exceptions) many or even most children do not attend bilingual /non-Han medium schools, simply because there is not enough provision. When articles claim that the Miao of Guizhou, the Yao of Guangxi or the Bai of Yunnan receive one type or another of bilingual education, it is seldom stressed that the reference is only to a few experimental pilot classes and that the vast majority of pupils of these nationalities are educated totally in Han.

Even in urban areas of Xinjiang, Uyghur parents are being pressured to “choose” a monolingual Han-medium education over a Uyghur-medium or bilingual one (Dwyer 2005: 37-38). Parents are forced to choose between maintaining their native language and culture (and learning Han) and ensuring their children integrate well into wider Chinese society in the hope of gaining better access to jobs, but at the cost of alienating their children from traditional Uyghur society. Dwyer (ibid) reports that half the Uyghur children of the capital Urumchi attend Han-only schools. No balanced bilingual program is offered enabling children to feel comfortable and competent in both the Uyghur and wider Han worlds.

Bilingual education in the context of Chinese minority languages includes any kind of school education where the minority language and script is taught to some extent, however minimally. In the Catalan-Welsh context bilingual education implies that at least part of the teaching (apart from the actual language subject itself) is carried out through the medium of the minority language. An analogy would be to classify a school where all subjects except Welsh were taught in English, and one in which all subjects except English were taught in Welsh, as both being bilingual.

5A.4.3.3 BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN TYPE 1, 2 AND 3 COMMUNITIES

Zhou Minglang (2001: 9) divides minority nationality communities into 3 categories with respect to bilingual education. His typology is partly based on that of Zhou Qingsheng (1991, quoted in Zhou Qingsheng, 1992):

Type 1 communities (Korean, Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur and Kazakh) with traditionally and widely-used functional scripts. Bilingual education among these communities mainly follows the “Maintenance Model (保存性)” whereby the non-Han language is “maintained” throughout schooling as the language of instruction (or in the second category only as a subject). This category includes:

- A non-Han language as the medium of instruction and Mandarin as a subject in both primary and secondary schools. [This corresponds to the Type 1 schools discussed in the section on education in Nuosu areas]
- Mandarin as the medium of instruction and a non-Han language as a subject in both primary and secondary schools. [This corresponds to the Type 2 schools discussed in the section on education in Nuosu areas]
- Both Mandarin and a non-Han language used as the mediums of instruction (typically Mandarin for science subjects and the other language for other subjects) and subjects in both primary and secondary schools.

It is difficult to see how the pupils that receive all their classes in Han *except* the class of the minority language will maintain and develop their knowledge of the minority language to nearly the same degree as those who are taught all or some subjects in the minority language. It must be bourn in mind that Han-only schools (where the non-Han language is not even taught as a second language) are a serious option for many parents.

Type 2 communities (Tai, Jingpo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, Naxi, Va and Yi –including Nuosu) with traditional scripts of limited popular usage:

- Mostly Han-only education in both primary and secondary schools.
- A non-Han language used as medium of instruction and Mandarin as a subject, in some primary schools.
- Mandarin used as the medium of instruction and a non-Han language as a subject, in some secondary schools.

Some of these follow the “Maintenance Model”, but others the “Transition Model (过渡性)”, where children begin their primary education in the minority language – or simultaneously in both – with the proportion of Han-medium instruction increasing until teaching is entirely, or mainly, in Han. This aims at bridging the home-school linguistic gap in order to promote and ease their transition from the minority language to Han, “transition” here not being meant in the sense of a conscientious rejection of the minority language. Very often the motive for abandoning minority medium instruction in higher years is declared to be lack of materials and trained teachers. Zhou Qingsheng (ibid.) divides this model into 4 sub-types:

The 3 Stage Model: Primary education is taught first in the minority language, then in both languages and finally only in Han.

The 2 Stage Model: Primary education is taught first in both languages and finally only in Han.

The Graduated Model: Primary education is taught first in the minority language and then its use as a teaching medium decreases from the 2nd year onwards, while that of Han increases.

The Auxiliary Model: The minority language is used as a teaching aid whilst pupils improve their knowledge of Han (which takes over as soon as possible as the teaching medium). The minority language is taught as a subject for only about 5 months.

Type 3 communities (the remaining 42 nationalities) without traditional scripts.

Type 3 communities without newly-created scripts

- Exclusively Han-only education in both primary and secondary schools.

Type 3 communities with newly-created scripts:

- Mostly Han-only education in both primary and secondary schools.
- Mandarin as the medium of instruction and a non-Han language as a subject in a few experimental primary and secondary schools.

Although there have been isolated examples of experimental (e.g. Zhuang) “maintenance” programmes, those implemented among Type 3 communities were primarily intended either as “transitional” programmes or what Zhou Qingsheng (ibid) terms the “Expedient Model (权宜性)” whereby Han is taught “in the elementary classes to allow pupils to master Han as soon as possible, while the L1 is only taught in the upper classes for some 3 or 4 months.” This seems to be a retrospective mother-tongue literacy course for non-Han speakers who have received a totally Han-medium education. One could ask why the L1 is taught in the upper and not the lower classes, so that Han could be introduced with the help of the L1 and students benefit cognitively from prior L1 literacy.

Zhou Minglang (2001: 10) argues that 2 main factors constrain the choice of educational type within each community type, namely the availability or lack of qualified teachers fluent in the minority language and of minority language teaching materials. As minority language speaking teachers generally have a lower educational standard, a high proportion of them are only qualified to teach in primary schools and it is particularly difficult to recruit secondary teachers fluent in minority languages. I would add that opposition to non-Han medium education at different levels also plays a major role in restricting the scope of non-Han medium teaching.

Comments on the different types of bilingual schools

Generally, the less financing and resources received, and the less convinced communities are as to the desirability of teaching in the minority language, the smaller its scope and impact. Among such groups, especially those whose scripts have only been codified, standardised or reformed during the Communist period, the promotion of bilingual education (and of minority scripts in general) has not advanced much and in many cases, not beyond a few pilot projects. In 1989, when I questioned people in Bai and Naxi autonomous areas of Yunnan, most respondents showed surprise that a

phonetic Bai or Naxi script even existed and had never heard of bilingual programmes. In an understatement Zhou Yaowen (1992) makes it clear that bilingual education has barely begun to be implemented in Yunnan and that much work still needs to be done.

Not only the choice of teaching languages, but also teaching quality, the importance attached to minority language-medium (and –subject) teaching, as well as children's linguistic environment, can play a key role in determining to what extent they maintain their minority L1. Frequent changes in national and local linguistic policy, the many obstacles to effective implementation and the often provisional and experimental nature of bilingual schools all make it hard to fully evaluate these different school types.

The debate about bilingualism and bilingual education is mostly concerned with the great number of speakers of minority languages who speak no Han. Many writers propose a bilingual model where a major part of the teaching is through the medium of the minority language both on cognitive grounds and to guarantee that the speakers learn Han in a way which does not threaten their own ethnic identities and self-confidence. Nobody seriously questions the need to learn Han. Chinese authors repeatedly stress that linguistic minorities (most of whom are poorer than the Han) need access to modern technology and training (most of which is available in the Han language). Moreover, the political necessity of a unifying interethnic lingua franca to forge a common identity among the speakers of all the languages spoken within China is strongly emphasised. Thus the provision of bilingual education is aimed principally at the monolingual minorities among whom intergenerational transmission of the minority language seems assured.

The question of whether such pupils learn sufficient Han is sometimes debatable and there have been criticisms of the low standard of Han in schools as far apart as Nuosu schools in Liangshan and Korean ones in Yanbian, reminiscent of criticisms of insufficient Russian L2 provision in non-Russian medium schools in the USSR (Lewis, 1972). On the other hand, at least some minority language speakers who are taught almost exclusively in minority languages (for example in Xinjiang or the Koreans of Yanbian) speak Han with fluency. This type of teaching, despite having as an objective the maintenance of the L1, does not aim at creating non-Han speaking *ghettos*.

An important ongoing debate in the field of bilingual education in China, which raises passions, is whether teaching materials should reflect the peculiarities of the culture and customs (often linked to religion) of the nationality in question or whether (generally the case) they should be literally translated from standard nationwide Han materials, which extol the virtues of patriotism, atheism and communist morality strongly coloured by traditional Han values. In Fishman (1991)'s terminology, the minority language X is being promoted and used to express the majority culture associated with the majority language Y (Han in this case).

In the above categories, transition and maintenance referred to the distribution and balance of Han and non-Han medium teaching within the school rather than to whether the particular model was intended to maintain the non-Han language or hasten its replacement by Han. At a theoretical level Chinese authors normally stress the importance of maintaining minority languages and of upholding each nationality's right to use and develop its language(s) and script(s) and extol the positive effects of beginning education with the L1 on pupils' cognition, self respect and self-confidence. When describing bilingual speech communities, however, there is a tendency to regard as normal and even desirable that children who already have a good grasp of Han can and should receive Han-only (or at most mainly Han) teaching.

In Europe and North America, the principal focus of *bilingual education* involving minority languages, is on the maintenance of the minority languages in the face of the onslaught from majority languages. The greater part of the speakers (especially the younger generations), typically already dominate the prestigious majority language. In China, many people perceive linguistic shift in favour of a more prestigious language (generally Han of course) as an unstoppable natural evolutionary process. Apart perhaps from the teaching where most subjects are taught in the minority language, there is little evidence of serious efforts to try to prevent linguistic shift in favour of Han, although many Chinese authors, such as those of *Jianchuan* (1989) stress that it is not intended to replace minority languages with Han, but to make them complementary with Han. This section perhaps gives the impression of widespread bilingual teaching throughout minority language areas. As is discussed in 6.3.2.13 and 7.3.1 the real scope of all these impressive-sounding models is extremely small.

Adult literacy campaigns

Many literacy campaigns in minority areas are carried out in Han. Logically, they are more successful when students have prior knowledge of Han. In such cases they are often considered both by the authorities and by potential newly literates to be preferable to minority language literacy campaigns. Frequently there is no minority language literacy provision for a particular language or area, and often the authorities and/or the participants insist it be in Han. Many Chinese educationalists oppose this type of L2 literacy campaign whereby illiterates are taught an unfamiliar language's script, moreover one whose complexity causes hardship even to Han illiterates. What is surprising is the continued insistence on such campaigns despite widespread reports of failure. For example by 1994 (and things have changed little since then) most literacy campaigns among Zhuang speakers in Guangxi (large numbers of them with no or little knowledge of Han) were in Han-only.

Where they do exist, adult literacy campaigns are considered an important part of promoting minority language scripts, especially among rural adults who generally have no knowledge of the Han language and script. Often (for example in the Autonomous Naxi County of Lijiang in Yunnan), the teachers establish a centre in a particular area under the coordination of the Committee of Languages and Minority Scripts (at county prefectural or provincial level) to give short literacy courses before moving on to another area. On successful completion of the courses the adults should be capable of engaging in basic written communication and bookkeeping in the minority language. Grass-root cadres are often the target of literacy campaigns and the degree of their involvement can be taken as an indicator of the seriousness of the campaigns. Among some minorities (e.g. the Christian Miao) spontaneous, bottom-up literacy movements have arisen, often using non-official scripts (as in the foregoing example). Most minority language literacy campaigns in the South-West seem to have only affected a small proportion of the rural population, who have received little post-literacy backup or encouragement.

Administrative, media and public use of the minority languages

Apart from the basic right to use minority languages and scripts guaranteed by the Chinese constitution, many autonomous areas have a series of regulations which stipulate (at least in theory) that the use of one or more minority languages and scripts

is considered necessary in the public, governmental, judicial and work spheres; for example: laws, legal proceedings, public notices and signs, meetings and the use or not of minority languages and scripts in different work contexts. Encouraging the use of written non-Han languages in commerce is yet another litmus test of the sincerity and efficiency of minority language promotion.

Other important aspects of the task of implementing linguistic policy are propaganda (a word with positive connotations in the Chinese context) in favour of promotion campaigns, dubbing films and the copious work of translating, publishing, compiling dictionaries and reference works.

Until the mid-1990s Xinjiang stood out as guaranteeing the use of the minority languages and scripts (see *Yunnan Nationality Languages and Scripts*, 1989, 1: 48-50). In the south-west, the use of minority languages and scripts in these domains has always been highly restricted. Even in hotels in Chengdu (Sichuan) in 1995, I was able to receive a TV channel totally in Uyghur, but not in any Sichuanese minority language. Although some restricted, short non-Han TV broadcasts do exist, in all my visits to minority areas I saw no evidence of them on local television channels (e.g. in autonomous Bai, Naxi and Yi areas). In contrast, there are somewhat more broadcasts in minority languages on the radio.

5A.5 ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE PROMOTION/HINDERING OF MINORITY LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS

The behaviour and attitudes of all involved with the linguistic policy (the *actors* according to Cooper) can determine, either directly or indirectly, the success or failure of the policy.

5A.5.1 ELITES

As Cooper (1989) points out, a linguistic policy which lacks the support of an elite or "*counter-elite*" is doomed to failure. In all the "Republics of the Union" (except the Russian Federation) and in some of the "Autonomous Republics" of the ex-Soviet Union, the *nationality* which gave its name to the republic was numerically dominant.

Therefore, elites belonging to non-Russian *nationalities* existed which could benefit from the promotion of their languages in all domains (see Mansour, 1993 and Lewis, 1972). In some republics (for example Armenia and Georgia) with strong non-Russian elites, the co-official languages prospered.

By contrast, Han speakers constitute the biggest ethnic and linguistic group in all provinces/autonomous regions of China, with the exceptions (for now) of Tibet and Xinjiang (where they are not far from being the biggest). The Uyghurs, Koreans, Tibetans and Mongols have elites who in principal stand to benefit from the promotion of their ethnic languages. However, with the aggressive promotion of Mandarin, such benefits are increasingly perceived as entering into conflict with the necessity of these elites to function in, and advance socio-economically through, the medium of Han. As Harrell (1993) puts it

... the immense head start Han language enjoys as a carrier of all the elite functions of education, literature, and administration, and the structural dominance of Han population 'in' administrative and educational circles .

The omnipresence of Han (either as a first language or a main lingua franca) and of its speakers, makes the training of elites, who will occupy positions of power in the administration and of prestigious professions based on the promotion minority languages a difficult task. The fragmented distribution of the speakers of many minority languages as well as strong dialectal variations (exasperated by the lack of standard forms) reinforces this situation. One would anticipate the emergence of elites who would benefit from the joint promotion of Han-Mandarin and of the minority languages, but while these have arisen among the big languages of the north, it has largely failed to happen in the south-west.

According to my experience in Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi it is usual for upwardly mobile speakers of these languages (especially those living in urban areas) to transmit Han rather than their L1 to their children. Consequently their monolingually Han children and grandchildren, who still retain their official minority nationality status, form an important part of “minority nationality” cadres and intellectuals. Harrell (1993), commenting on the necessity of mastering Han as a previous condition for upward socioeconomic and occupational mobility, continues:

.... and 'in' doing so they naturally leave their minority language behind; at best they become diglossic, using Han for those contexts that involve elite participation and contact with the wider community.

Among some nationalities, especially where there is a long established combined religious and literary tradition, as among the Nuosu, the Tibetans, the Uyghur, the Kazakh and the Tai of Sipsong Panna, there exists an alternative traditional elite, many of whom are priests, shamans (e.g. bimo), monks or imams. These are considered ideologically incompatible with the Communist Party and are not really favoured as cadres (administrative and other state employees such as teachers). However, for pragmatic reasons many are in fact working as cadres. There are continual criticisms in articles of minority nationality cadres who believe in, and promote, religion and superstitious practices (e.g. Bass, 1998). These traditional elites usually enjoy considerable influence and prestige among the public of their nationality and are often regarded as preservers and bearers of the traditional literature, religion, culture and literary language. Sometimes as in Tibet, Sipsong Panna and Xinjiang they provide an alternative traditional, religiously-orientated education through the medium of non-Han languages, although typically for boys only.

Apart from sometimes “infiltrating” members into the ranks of the basically “hanised”, Communist Party approved elites, the traditional elites sometimes have a certain amount of influence on the members of these. In places where the traditional elite’s public influence is strongest, so is its influence on the Communist Party approved elites, because the latter would be unpopular if they did not pay at least some lip-service to the former.

Cooper (1989) distinguishes between *formal elites* which are officially charged with the implementation of the policy, the *influentes* or the formal privileged sectors of society and the *authorities* who decide the policy. Often there is overlap between the 3 and the distinction is ambiguous. In China, this overlapping is extensive because the cadres (still considered the most privileged sector of society) decide and implement the policy and often take advantage of their positions to become entrepreneurs. The recent transition to the free market has produced the growth of ethnic businessmen, some of whom actively use the languages, but increasingly need Han to participate in the wider

economy and has also stimulated increased immigration of Han business people into minority language areas who generally are unwilling to even learn non-Han languages.

5A.5.2 THE OFFICIAL IMPLEMENTERS OF THE POLICY

5A.5.2.1 POLICY FORMULATORS (*authorities* according to Cooper 1989)

The general principals of the policy are formulated by the organs of the central government in Peking (for example the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the Ministry of Education and the National Committee of Languages and Minority Scripts), bearing in mind that there is a constant process of feedback of ideas from the authorities of the minority areas.

5A.5.2.2 LOCAL ELABORATORS OF POLICY, ONCE CENTRALLY FORMULATED

Under the central organs, there are a multitude of intermediary level organs, at national, provincial/regional, prefectural, county or lower levels.

5A.5.2.3 COORDINATORS OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Cadres of government departments and committees (at different administrative levels) charged with the promotion of minority languages and scripts. These include linguists and other professionals.

5A.5.2.4 GRASS-ROOTS POLICY IMPLEMENTERS

All employees of organisms responsible for literacy campaigns, bilingual education and other areas of use, such as teachers and head-teachers of schools and adult literacy centres.

5A.5.3 POSSIBLE BENEFICIARIES OF POLICY'S IMPLEMENTATION

5A.5.3.1 SPEAKERS OF MINORITY LANGUAGES IN GENERAL

These, especially those literate in the language and those not fluent in Han, would benefit in the following ways from a full blown and sincere promotion of their language and script throughout their communities:

- Literacy in their own language, access to better information such as agricultural and accounting techniques (helping socioeconomic development), the possibility of

writing letters and reports (aiding political empowerment) and not feeling “illiterate”. Literacy is an important yardstick of “culture” in China and nationalities without scripts are made to feel inferior and more primitive than those with them, those using Han characters being considered the most advanced!

- Better chances of learning Han (or, though less likely, other minority languages). As discussed elsewhere, this is a benefit which a large number of both ordinary folk and cadres are not convinced of, despite the vain attempts of linguists involved in minority language work.
- As a consequence of the foregoing 2 benefits, speakers of the promoted language would have the possibility of bringing their culture and language into the 21st Century and not feel alienated from them, whilst at the same time having access to dominant mainstream Chinese society and the vast store of information written in Han. That this does not happen too often, is in my opinion due, not to the failure *per se* of promoting and using a language other than Han, but rather to the half-hearted, badly prepared way in which policy is often implemented.
- Depending on the status-planning measures adopted in the area in question, speakers (particularly literate, qualified ones) might benefit from better educational and vocational training (through the medium of the language) opportunities, better job opportunities (jobs where people fluent and literate in the non-Han language are required). People educated in their languages and scripts will not feel alienated from their own communities, will feel appreciated by them and will be able to make an active contribution to their future development.
- Political or sociocultural advantages, derived from the use of their minority languages and scripts.

All these benefits are only to be reaped if speakers have easy access to acquisition planning measures (literacy campaigns, non-Han medium education etc.), identify with the script and standard dialect (i.e. if corpus planning has been effective) and if they are motivated to learn and use it (which for all but the most ethnically aware nationalities requires considerable status planning work). Some minorities, such as the Tai are so motivated that they will educate their sons (not daughters) in alternative non-state schools through the medium of their mother-tongue, many of them completely side-stepping the state Chinese education system.

If, as is often the case, speakers see their linguistic baggage as something to be thrown away in favour of Han as soon as possible and are not open to acquiring and using an ethnic script and standard form, then they will exclude themselves from benefiting. Central and regional governments also would gain a more positive image in the eyes of speakers of minority languages through an enlightened policy towards these languages. In this way, it is possible that the policy will reduce discontent among minorities with developed ethnic self-awareness.

Many speakers fail in a Han-only system and feel alienated from a dominant system and culture they do not understand and feel pressurised into making a stark choice between persisting in speaking backward “dialects” and remaining in poverty or learning Han and “getting ahead in the world.” However, they will only benefit from the promotion of their language if it is sensitively and effectively carried out.

5A.5.3.2 NEW ELITES

Such elites are, competent in, and favourable to, the non-Han language and script and probably also in Han. If minority languages speakers have access to better jobs and privileges because they acquire and use minority scripts alongside Han, they have the potential to convert themselves into new elites. This group potentially includes (although not necessarily) those responsible (see groups a-c above) for the implementation of the policy. In south-western China at least, I have yet to see any evidence of such a counter-elite being set up. It is true that there are a certain number of graduates of bilingual education programmes and cadres working in the field of language promotion who could contribute towards its formation, but up until now such people have tended to be on the fringe of the hanised elites and be outnumbered and overshadowed by them. In fact, even cadres working to promote minority languages often do not bring up their children in the ethnic language. For example, a person in charge of promoting Qiang (personal interview, Wenquan Normal School, Aba Autonomous Tibetan and Qiang Prefecture, Sichuan, August 1995) did not speak his native Qiang to his children.

5A.5.3.3 GRASS-ROOT CADRES AND TEACHERS

Many mainly grass-roots cadres and teachers (mostly non-Han, but also many Han who know well the local conditions and language) etc. who live the frustration of the

lack of educational and economic progress and who have suffered and witnessed monolingual Han education and alphabetisation in non-Han speaking areas. Many cadres (especially at grass roots levels) have not mastered Han or at least not very well, and would themselves personally benefit from using the minority script. Also there are teachers with a limited competence in Han who would –provided they are properly trained – prefer to teach (or at least do so more competently) in the minority language rather than in Han. Such people, if given the proper support and encouragement could become the new elite discussed in the previous point.

5A.5.3.4 LOCAL HAN WITH KNOWLEDGE OF PROMOTED NON-HAN LANGUAGES

These include Han who have learnt it for their work or social life, those working in language planning and those who have married minority language speakers. A small minority of Han (many of whom I met in minority areas and working at Guangxi Nationalities Institute) even actively promote and support the non-Han language they are fluent in, often playing an important role in implementing policy.

5A.5.3.5 “ALTERNATIVE TRADITIONAL ELITES”

These are found in some nationalities (e.g. the Nuosu *bimo*, Tai Buddhist priests, imams of Turkic Muslims or Tibetan and Mongolian lamas) and are generally literate and schooled in the traditional scripts, culture and literature of their languages would benefit from the atmosphere in which the social standing of the minority scripts and languages on which they depend, were improved. It would help to make such traditional intellectuals seem more reconcilable with mainstream, Han-dominated Chinese society. Often such traditional elites use a more antiquated or complex form of the languages and scripts in question (e.g. Tai and Nuosu), but what counts is if the public link the promoted scripts to those used by traditional elites.

5A.5.3.6 CHINESE AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Chinese and regional governments would benefit from the greater integration of non-Han language speakers in the economic, political and social life of mainstream China, bringing incalculable benefits to the Chinese economy. It would also help diminish dissatisfaction among some minorities with regard to being dominated by the Han (or “Han chauvinism / 大汉主义” in the jargon). To use official jargon, it would promote

“the unity of nationalities (民族团结)” and lead to a more relaxed atmosphere in minority areas and reduction of tensions.

The image of these would be improved in the eyes of many minority language speakers and the international community. China would be seen to be implementing the Marxist policy of equality of languages, bringing an element of self-satisfaction to ideologically-motivated cadres.

The central government has much to gain for its image at an international level from an enlightened minority language policy. Heavy-handed policies in Tibet and other areas have done the Chinese Government's image more harm than it seems to realise. The treatment of minorities who make up the majority (or who speak languages related to the majority languages) in neighbouring countries is a sensitive matter; for example the *Koreans* of Manchuria, the *Mongols*, the Tajiks of Xinjiang (although in fact their language differs greatly from the Tajik of Tajikistan and of Afghanistan) and the speakers of Turkic languages in Xinjiang (easily intelligible with Turkic languages in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan). Where Chinese minorities also form minority communities in neighbouring countries (the case of the Evenki on the border between Manchuria and eastern Siberia and of many ethnic groups along the borders with Burma, Laos and Vietnam), it is an opportunity to demonstrate that those in China live better and with greater freedom to use and develop their language than their "relatives" on the other side of the border.

In the case of Xinjiang tensions between Turkic speakers and the Central Government have risen dramatically in recent years and many Turkic speakers in the newly independent Central Asian republics (themselves repressed by dictatorial regimes having good relations with China) have come to see their “oppressed brothers” in “Eastern Turkistan” as victims of assimilationist policies. As Dwyer (2005: 39) points out, the recent promotion of Mandarin at the cost of Uyghur, Kazakh and other languages has done tremendous harm to China's image both in Xinjiang and across the borders, where Uyghur and Kazakh communities enjoy schooling in their own language, without being considered destabilising factors. In the case of the Evenki the Chinese authorities have failed miserably, having virtually destroyed Evenki society in order to

grab the resources of their traditional territory, meaning that even the most enlightened language policy would be rendered useless. A large proportion of Tai in Sipsong Panna are dissatisfied with the scant attention paid to their language and culture in the Chinese educational and administrative system, send their male children to Buddhist temple schools for a traditional Tai education (where they often also learn standard Thai) and look towards Thailand, rather than the developed parts of China, as their role-modal of the modern developed world (Hansen 1999a and b). This will have created an awareness in Thailand that the local Tai are not satisfied with the way the Chinese authorities have “promoted” their language, script and culture.

5A.5.4 POSSIBLE LOSERS OF POLICY’S IMPLEMENTATION

5A.5.4.1 MINORITY LANGUAGE SPEAKERS UNWILLING TO LEARN NON-HAN SCRIPT

These could fear competition from a new elite whose power is based on its knowledge of the minority languages and scripts or from an increase in the influence and social standing of traditional alternative elites who usually employ and defend non-Han languages with a long history of literacy and native culture. Typically, these elites who fear the promotion and prestige planning of non-Han languages have succeeded in mastering the Han language and its characters which has allowed them to advance within the Han world and to this they owe their social position and standing. This explains the utter disdain that many urbanised, hanised speakers of minority languages show for their own languages and scripts.

In most cases no substantial rival elite competent in the minority language script has emerged, in part due to the hanised elite’s opposition. There are individuals (e.g. teachers and promoters of the new scripts) who form a kind of embryonic new elite, but they are typically outnumbered and eclipsed by the hanised elite. As mentioned earlier the ethnic minority elites which have been encouraged by the Chinese authorities are typically hostile to the policy, because they fear it and see themselves as losers.

Ironically those members of the hanised elites who are still fluent in the minority language would have no problem learning the minority language scripts if they were motivated to do so. It typically takes an educated minority language speaker, already

literate in Han Chinese, much less time and effort to master the script of their minority language than an uneducated peasant.

5A.5.4.2 MINORITY ELITES NOT SPEAKING /MASTERING) “THEIR” PROMOTED TONGUE

These are largely the children and grandchildren of the former category, with no, or only a poor grasp of, their nationalities language and account for many of the non-Han cadres who have been assigned administrative posts on the basis of positive discrimination in favour of members of minority nationalities. They feel threatened by the possible ending of the exclusive monopoly of the Han language and will be hard-pushed and poorly motivated to master the script.

5A.5.4.3 OTHER NATIONALITIES (E.G.HAN) UNWILLING TO STUDY PROMOTED

LANGUAGE While I have met a number of Han cadres who have enthusiastically learnt minority languages and (though less commonly) scripts, there are also a very large number who refuse to do so or who protest that it is too difficult.

5A.5.4.4 HIGH LEVEL CADRES WHO FEEL THREATENED BY PROMOTION

Many people fear that the creation of new elites, expressing themselves in languages other than Han, will escape the control of the Party and the administration and even threaten China's unity.

5A.5.5 PEOPLE WHOM THE POLICY IS AIMED AT

In theory, all speakers of the minority language in question are the objects of the policy. Also, there is some reference to members of Han and other nationalities (see for example Wang Geliu, 1989) although, as mentioned elsewhere, in practice members of other nationalities do not often seem motivated to learn the standardised minority languages and scripts being promoted. In a more immediate sense, adults and youths enrolled in literacy campaigns and pupils of bilingual education programmes are the targets of these campaigns. At least in rural areas, there is evidence of coordination between bilingual education and adult literacy programmes with the aim of making the whole community literate.

The situation differs greatly between minorities with a long tradition of political, cultural and literary independence from mainstream Han society (such as Uyghur, Kazak, Mongolian, Tibetan and Korean) and those with no or little tradition of literacy or cultural and political activity (e.g. Bai or Zhuang). Some speakers of the former have the possibility of carrying out the major part of their education in their mother tongue and even of living out most domains of their everyday lives through the medium of the minority languages and scripts, independently (judging from evidence from Yanbian) of their knowledge of Han. A small proportion of speakers of a few other minority languages in China (such as Yi or Miao) have very limited possibilities of schooling in the minority languages and scripts and even more limited possibilities of using them in certain formal domains. Other languages have had minimal or no literacy work or promotion of any kind.

There is no sense of urgency to make minority language speakers who are also fluent in Han literate in the minority script and it is often considered totally unnecessary if they can learn and express themselves in Han characters. This does not auger well for the long term preservation of non-Han languages and cadres commonly cite the apathy or hostility of minority language speakers to promoting their languages and scripts as a justification for inaction. The fact is few speakers have been able to make a properly informed choice about the options open to them.

5A.5.6 INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING/USING OR REJECTING PROMOTED SCRIPT & ORAL STANDARD

Among the incentives given for being literate in minority scripts, Chinese authors cite a multitude of essential everyday functions such as book-keeping, letter-writing, writing notes, articles, public notices, posters, advertisements etc. which facilitate literacy in the minority language and emphasise how this helps the subsequent learning of the spoken and written Han language. These incentives could lead to a socioeconomic improvement in the condition of minority language speakers.

Other possible incentives are being able to communicate in writing with other speakers of their minority language without having to use Han *and* feeling that they have been

loyal to, and helped, their native language and culture while at the same time remaining loyal to a multilingual, multicultural vision of China.

A large number of speakers of minority languages consider minority languages and scripts to be of no or little practical use compared to the Han language and script. Despite the large body of literature (aimed chiefly at cadres) to convince people that the promotion of minority scripts not only does NOT hinder the learning of Han, but actually makes it much easier, there is still an extremely widespread belief that the opposite is true. This problem is analysed in 6.1.5.4 and 6.2.5.5.

Smaller minorities elsewhere in China often look jealously up to the language rights enjoyed by big traditional minorities. However, the position of these languages vis a vis Mandarin Chinese is far from strong. To begin with, via Han immigration to areas where these languages were traditionally spoken, many previously monolingual areas are now bilingual and where Han incomers are numerous this invariably means the non-Han speakers learning Han and not vice-versa. In Inner Mongolia, Mongols account for only approximately 18% of the population and it is only the dominant language in certain rural areas. Even there, many speakers feel threatened by Han. Meanwhile in Tibet and Xinjiang, Tibetans and Uyghurs are fast losing their numerical superiority to Han incomers.

Whereas cadres of these nationalities are expected to speak Han, cadres of Han or other nationalities in Tibetan, Uyghur or Mongol areas are not usually expected to speak these languages, except for grass-roots cadres working directly with non-Han speaking populations. Han incomers in other walks of life are even less likely to make the effort to learn them. Even in Korean or Uyghur areas where pupils can be educated to the end of secondary school in Korean or Uyghur, the local Han do not normally learn Korean or Uyghur. This strongly contrasts with the integrative policy of the Government of Catalonia or local authorities in North-west Wales, where the children not native in the autochthonous minority language are made fluent in it through an immersion policy, the idea being that everyone in the area should be able to speak it and not just people of a particular ethnic group.

5A.6 EVENTS IN CHINESE MINORITY LANGUAGE PLANNING

Parts of the account in this section draw heavily from Zhou Minglang (2001) Dreyer (1997) and Bass (1998).

5A.6.1 PRIOR TO 1949

Under the imperial system the Han language and culture was considered superior and non-Han peoples were encouraged to assimilate both linguistically and socioculturally. Indeed the whole history of the Han language and ethnic group seems to have been of gradual assimilation and displacement of –and possibly sometimes blending with– other linguistic groups as the Han slowly expanded southward and along rivers until they occupied most of what now constitutes the core Han areas of China. It is thought that large areas of southern China were occupied by speakers of Tai, Austronesian and other languages perhaps leaving a substratum in some non-Mandarin Han “dialects”. Non-Han were looked down on as uncouth barbarians who could be potentially civilised by accepting Han Chinese ways, but in line with the more tolerant *laissez-faire* Confucianist ethos were not forcibly assimilated.

Some dynasties (e.g. The Mongol or Yuan dynasty and the Manchu or Qing dynasty) were founded by non-Han. The Mongol dynasty was very tolerant of linguistic diversity and right up till the end of the Qing dynasty Manchu was used as an official court language, even when most Manchu had already abandoned it in favour of Han.

The founder of the Guomindang (Kuomintang) government Dr. Sun Yatsen only recognized 5 ethnic groups in China: the Han, the Turkic Muslims, the Mongols, the Manchus (very few of whom by then could speak Manchu) and the Tibetans, whom he hoped to weld together into a a single cultural and political unit. Other non-Han groups were officially ignored and treated as inferiors. Although a conscious policy of Han assimilation was carried out, given the geographical and social isolation of many minority populations, and their non-integration in the educational system, a large proportion of non-Han language-speakers were not affected by this policy. Large numbers of non-Han (even many who spoke different languages) did not even imagine themselves to be different from the Han. “Hanness” was not yet a hard and fast institutionalized concept. During this period, Outer Mongolia had already been lost to

China and Tibet was de facto independent. Other areas such as the Nuosu (Yi) areas of Liangshan lay outside the Guomindang's control.

The CCP was influenced by Soviet nationality policy and before coming to power even envisaged the possibility that non-Han nationalities would have the right to secede from China if they so wished. From the 1920s onwards they promoted equality of, and (in some areas under their control) autonomy for, minority nationalities, in many cases winning over minority communities. Contrasting the CCP's and Guomindang's policies Wang Geliu (1989: 41-46. Translated by self for pre-doctoral research project, 1994) says

The development of minority language scripts is a cornerstone of the CCP's minority language policy. In contrast to the Guomindang administration, who refused to recognise the minorities and despised their languages, the pre-1949 Communist controlled areas recognised the minorities' freedom to speak their own languages and use their own culture and religion.

In this period the communists had not yet categorized the non-Han groups into 55 official nationalities and had not even drawn a line between who was Han and who was not. The Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia was set up in 1948, before the founding of the PRC.

5A.6.2 FIRST PLURALISTIC STAGE 1949-1957 (& BRIEFLY IN EARLY 1960s)

5A.6.2.1 GENERAL POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The communist government was eager to control the peripheral areas where minority peoples lived, both because they were rich in natural resources and because these underpopulated areas offered room for Han migration from overcrowded eastern areas. This Han immigration served to strengthen the central government's control over these areas, many of which owed doubtful allegiance to China and to hanise them, both linguistically and culturally. The CCP had dropped its willingness for minority areas to secede from China, and from now on all nationalities would supposedly be eager to sacrifice their lives to defend the integrity of the indivisible sacred motherland. China was eager to show the world that the minorities were happy members of a big

multinational socialist family presided over by the older, wiser, more educated and civilised Han.

Bringing minority areas under central control was often done by force or threat of force. In 1950 Tibet was invaded and occupied, although it remained largely self-governing until the unsuccessful anti-Chinese rebellion of 1959. Communist forces defeated Muslim (Hui) warlords and most of the multiethnic coalition of warlords in Xinjiang surrendered.

Under the Common Programme, a kind of provisional constitution passed in September 1949 by the CCP-controlled Chinese People's Consultative Congress, an "accommodationist" policy (Zhou Minglang 2001: 3-4) was initiated under which the CCP was willing to cooperate with members of traditional ruling classes in minority areas. Reforms were often deferred until such time as the masses were ready to request them. For example in Nuosu areas the black-Nuosu caste continued in effective power until at least 1956. Minorities were guaranteed equal rights with Han including those of keeping their languages, religious beliefs and traditions. Relations with some minorities were good, while with others, such as the Nuosu (Liangshan Yi) and the Va (Wa) there was considerable friction.

At provincial level the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region was set up in 1955 followed by the Guangxi Zhuang and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Regions in 1958. The latter were controversial as Han outnumbered Zhuang and Hui in these two regions. In 1959 the Lhasa Uprising put an end to any element of self-rule in Tibet. Throughout China 29 autonomous prefectures, 69 autonomous counties and a few hundred autonomous townships (actually many of them rural rather than urban areas) were set up. These autonomous areas had powers –albeit limited-

...to adapt the laws, regulations and decisions of higher authorities to the requirements of the particular nationality, with the stipulation that central authorities must approve the regulations drawn up local authorities (Dreyer 1997: 364).

Although Beijing forbade the right to break away from China or to go against communist principles and retained control over foreign affairs, this autonomy still looked good on paper. Unfortunately it was often perceived as a mask to justify a

colonial Han-dominated occupation of non-Han areas. As the turbulent history of the first three decades of communist rule shows, the theoretical autonomy could be swept away by the whims of those in power in Beijing at a moment's notice.

The Nationalities Affairs Commission in a critical 1956 report (Dreyer 1997: 366) found that “there had not been enough support for devising and promoting written minority languages” nor had enough been done to train and promote non-Han cadres to positions of responsibility. These criticisms were a swan song just before the intolerant Han chauvinistic Anti-Rightist Campaign (Summer 1957) and Great Leap Forward (Summer 1958).

5A.6.2.2 CORPUS RELATED PLANNING 1949-1957

In the early 1950s various nationality academies and the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing were set up to train both Han and minority cadres to undertake implement the Party's programme in minority areas. A large number were trained under Fei Xiaotong, the best known Chinese anthropologist who had trained under Malinowsky and sent out to minority areas to classify and define minority nationalities. In 1951 a Research and Advisory Committee on Nationality Languages and Scripts was set up within the Ministry of Education to survey and classify languages, determine standard forms and create or reform scripts. On the basis of its findings, in 1954 this committee issued the following guidelines (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 8) or the creation of new minority language scripts for minorities speaking non-Han languages -of course it was taboo to suggest that Han “dialects” were languages. It is interesting to note that the starting point for the classification is the nationality or ethnic group and not the language per se:

- a) Nationalities concentrated in a particular geographical community with a single major dialect should have a script based on the major sub-dialect of the community's political and economic centre. This is not easily definable in the case of languages not spoken in important urban centres.
- b) Nationalities whose population is spread over different communities with various major dialects –perhaps unintelligible- should record these for further research to determine whether one or more scripts should be created.

- c) Different nationalities using a similar language(s) should try to use the same script if they have no objections.
- d) Nationalities using the script of a closely related language should be allowed to continue using it if they wish.
- e) Nationalities that have their own language but have used the language and script of a neighbouring nationality may keep the latter if they do not require a new system.
- f) Nationalities that have their own language but have only a few speakers and is willing to use a non-native language and script should have its will respected.
- g) Members of non-Han nationalities who wish to study and use Han or other languages should be encouraged and protected.

This report was approved by the State Council (Zhou Minglang, *ibid*) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the State Commission on Nationality Affairs asked to implement the proposals experimentally and to extend them if successful. In 1955 over 700 linguists in 7 teams were sent to survey nationality languages “in order to revise ‘imperfect’ writing systems and create new writing.” (*ibid*). Two more principals were applied under Soviet influence. Firstly it was considered that establishing a single “standard writing system for dialects of one language and for closely related languages was considered to help their speakers integrate into a single community more smoothly and sooner under socialism” (*ibid*). Secondly to strengthen cross-border ties within Altaic language communities, “writing systems in the Cyrillic script were created or adopted for Daur, Kazak Kirgiz, Uzbek, Tatar Uygur, Xibe and Mongolian, though only the one for Mongolian was actually used briefly.” (Zhou Minglang, *ibid*)

The earliest efforts to revise existing writing systems were aimed at reducing illiteracy and improving (or indeed initiating for the first time!) education and concentrated on trying “to achieve a closer one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes” (*ibid*: 9). 18 new scripts were created.

From 1956 Zhou Minglang (2001: 10) reports “a change towards an integrationist approach”. The CCP Central Committee took the initiative away from minority communities in determining the timetable for script creation and reform and setting a limit of three years for the reform of existing scripts. Also in 1956 the State Council

took away the authority of autonomous governments in language affairs and transferred responsibility for script recreation and reform to the Minority Language Institute of the Chinese Science Academy, responsibility for approving them to the State Nationalities Affairs Commission, for experimenting with and implementing minority nationality education programmes to the Ministry of Education and for translation and publication to the Ministry of Culture. The Central Institute for Nationalities was to be in charge of training minority linguists and teachers. These measures concentrated the responsibility for very localised projects in the hands of central organisms staffed mainly by Hans unfamiliar with specific local conditions and the non-Han languages being promoted.

At the end of the 1950s the integration of nationalities increasingly came to be seen as a middle- or even short-term goal rather than a long-term one. In 1957 many linguists and teachers were criticised for promoting differences which hindered the integration or “blending” of nationalities and their languages, as were the 1954 proposals of the Research and Advisory Committee on Nationality Languages and Scripts paraphrased above, particularly the proposal to create more than standard script to accommodate major dialects. I suppose many integrationists saw the assimilation of speakers of divergent dialects to the promoted (non-Han) standards as a prior stage to an ultimate voluntary abandoning of these in favour of Mandarin.

Anticipating this final step in linguistic integration, as well as the more short-term goal of learning Mandarin alongside their non-Han home language, the *Draft Plan for the Phonetic Spelling of the Han Language* (Pinyin) began to be envisaged as a model for new writing systems, so that people literate in these would be able to learn Mandarin with greater ease.

5A.6.2.3 OFFICIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL USE OF MINORITY LANGUAGES

The Common Programme of 1949 guaranteed the right of all minority nationalities to use and develop their own languages and scripts (helping those with scripts to reform them and those without scripts to create them) and to obtain government help to do so and in 1954 this was enshrined in the first constitution of the PRC. While members of minorities were not to be forced to learn Han, all ethnic groups had the right to learn Han or any other language of their own free will and would be supported by the Government if they chose to do so.

Han cadres sent to minority areas were usually encouraged (and sometimes obliged) to learn the non-Han languages they would need to be able to speak to carry out their duties. For example, cadres being sent to Tibet were first trained in Tibetan language. In fact Tibetan departments existed in many Chinese universities solely for this purpose (Bass, 1998: 238).

The "*Programme for the Implementation of Autonomy in National Minority Areas of the Peoples Republic of China*", made public in 1952, laid down that the administration of each autonomous area should use a language and script in local use as its main working language in all spheres and, when addressing peoples not familiar with the administrative language, should use the relevant languages and scripts and additionally educate the public to respect each other's languages (Wang Geliu, 1989 and Zhou Minglang, 2001: 7).

The 1954 Constitution guaranteed the right of all nationalities to use their own spoken and written languages in courts and that these would provide interpreters for any party unfamiliar with the spoken or written languages commonly used in that area (Dreyer, 1997: 364-5). Not only were court hearings to be conducted in these languages, but judgements, notices and other court documents were to use them. This sounds very impressive, but as Dreyer (1997: 365) warns:

In actuality, the Chinese Constitution should be understood as a statement of intent rather than a guarantee of specific rights and protections. As we will see, when party leaders revised their opinions on policies toward ethnic minorities, constitutional provisions that ran contrary to these new policies became irrelevant.

5A.6.2.4 ACQUISITION PLANNING 1949-1957

The Preliminary Plan for Training Minority Cadres of 1950 specified that interpreters and translators be hired to assist with teaching in nationality colleges, but that courses should gradually be taught through the medium of minority languages and that minority students should master not only Han but also their own languages (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 7). In 1951 the Ministry of Education (ibid) stipulated that:

- in communities where the Uyghur, Mongolian, Korean, Tibetan and Kazak scripts were in common use, primary and secondary education should be through the medium of those languages.

- in communities lacking written scripts teaching should be through the medium of Han until suitable scripts could be created.
- Han courses be offered to cover minorities' needs.

In 1952 a nationalities education agency was established in the Ministry of Education and nationalities education divisions within provincial education departments with more than 10% of minorities (as well as corresponding sections at prefectural and county levels) to oversee the education of the non-Han population, including aspects such as bilingual education, teacher training and materials production.

Zhou Minglang (ibid: 19) reports that during this first pluralistic phase the concept of bilingual education did not include the oral use of non-Han languages which lacked written scripts. The fact that they had no script was reason enough for their speakers to receive a 100% Han-medium education. Oral use of languages like Shui, Maonan and Li which lacked a script and of others with scripts did often take place in classrooms if the teacher spoke them (the practice for all non-Han and non-standard Mandarin Han languages, but this was not a recognised, formal teaching practice.

Zhou Minglang (2001: 10), summing up education in minority nationality communities between 1949 and 1957, speaks of rapid development with

...substantial reductions in illiteracy and substantial increases in the number of people completing primary and secondary education as well as enrolling in universities. Type 1 minority communities, with the best bilingual education, made the most advances in education, and some type 3 communities also made significant progress, while most type 2 communities and some other type 3 communities lagged behind.

By 1956 all schools had been nationalised and were controlled by provincial education departments or the Ministry of Education, who not only held the purse-strings and controlled teacher-training, curricula, materials etc, but also tightened ideological control over teachers and course content following the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. This control meant that when the Government lost interest in bilingual education, few at the grass-roots level dared to plough on with it.

As late as 1956 (ibid: 11) the CCP Central Committee and the State Council stated that the promotion of Mandarin was to be only carried out within Han communities and in

Han language classes for minority nationality students. Since a large proportion of non-Han speaking students received Han-only teaching, this seems to me a rather utopian directive.

5A.6.3 ASSIMILATIONIST PHASE 1958-1978 (EXCEPT BRIEFLY IN EARLY 1960s)

5A.6.3.1 GENERAL POLITICAL BACKGROUND: 1958-1978

With the onset of the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957 the Hui, Mongols, Uyghurs and Kazakhs were accused of “splittism (分裂主义)” or separatism (and indeed there were separatist movements) and other smaller minorities with no aspirations of independence were accused of “localism (地方主义)” and even (Dreyer 1997: 366) of “wanting to expel all Han from their areas.” Many non-Han in turn (ibid) complained that the Han-dominated authorities were carrying out assimilationist policies and exploiting their areas for Hans’ benefit, that so-called “autonomy” was a sham, that their true representatives were their traditional leaders and not the Government appointed “traitors” and that collectivisation was not compatible with their culture and traditions. The Party responded to these complaints by purging those who made them, but also making some concessions, short-lived ones, because with the onset of the Great Leap Forward in 1958 every measure or policy which acknowledged non-Han language rights, culture, traditions and way of life came under fire or was swept away.

Most minorities were now forced to collectivise, leading generally to economic disaster, many herdsmen and peasants slaughtering their livestock rather than lose it to the collectives. The Great Leap Forward was followed by 3 years of famine and widespread starvation. Many of the minority nationalities’ cultural and religious traditions were attacked. The idea that the final melting together or integration of all nationalities (i.e. their assimilation to the Han language and culture) could be achieved in the short term, led to the ending of the greater part of initiatives and projects to promote and use non-Han languages and scripts. The 1959 Lhasa Uprising resulted in the exile of 60,000 Tibetans together with the Dalai Lama and the exposure to the world of the nature of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Several sporadic armed uprisings occurred in Xinjiang in 1958, 1959 and 1962, the last of these resulting in

over 70,000 Kazakhs and Uyghurs fleeing across the border into the Soviet Union where they were welcomed (Dreyer 1997: 369) by the Soviet authorities. In 1956/7 there was a massive and bloody –although relatively little-known – rebellion among the Nuosu of Liangshan protesting against the social and land reforms (various informants, personal communication and Harrell 2001a).

The CCP realised it had gone too far, and in the early 60s (1962-64?) introduced a slight respite, conveniently blaming all that had gone wrong on low-level cadres who had not kept the authorities properly informed about the real mood of the non-Han nationalities (Dreyer 1997: 369). The rosy picture painted of smiling members of different nationalities in colourful costumes standing around Chairman Mao (reminiscent of pictures of Queen Victoria seated among native rulers from around the British Empire) and the cheerful singers of folksongs praising Chairman Mao and the CCP for liberating them from their nasty feudal/slave-owning oppressors could not paper over the deep resentment which had built up among many non-Han peoples. This was just the beginning.

The Cultural Revolution was traumatic enough in Han areas, but minority nationality areas were particularly hard hit, because the lifestyles, culture and traditions of the non-Han peoples symbolised the “Four Olds” (old thoughts, old customs, old habits and old culture) which Mao had ordered the Red Guards to attack. Many temples, shrines, monasteries, mosques and churches were destroyed and monks, imams, priests, shamans, bimo etc. persecuted and humiliated (Muslims being forced to eat pork for example).

The idea that special policies should be applied in minority nationality areas adapted to their special circumstances was denounced as “revisionist” and Mao’s ruling that “when it comes down to it national struggle is class struggle” assumed paramount importance and provided the perfect excuse for attacking any aspect of non-Han culture and way of life. As a result, some national minority communities in Xinjiang took refuge over the border and small-scale armed resistance broke out in Xinjiang, Liaoning, Ningxia, Tibet and Yunnan. Contrary to the rosy fairytale picture painted in Maoist propaganda of colourful patriotic minorities who would die to protect every blade of grass of the sacred Chinese motherland, the seeds of deep resentment had been sown.

The 1970 draft constitution, while confirming autonomous areas, reduced their rights and dropped the 1954 constitution's anti-discrimination clause and references to preserving customs and traditions (Dreyer, 1997: 372).

Following the downfall of Lin Biao in 1971 policies toward national minorities became less extremely intolerant and assimilationist, despite some minor rebellions (Dreyer, 1997: 374) by Muslim groups in Xinjiang and Yunnan (where Muslims, for example, had been forced by communist cadres to raise pigs). Attacks on people accused of "splittism" and propagating religious superstition decreased and in many minority areas less intolerant cadres were put in charge. In 1972 the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing (closed in the Cultural Revolution) was reopened and there was an intense effort (ibid) to train more non-Han cadres.

Although the final 1975 constitution, like the 1970 draft version, confirmed only watered down autonomy and omitted references to respecting nationalities special peculiarities and forbidding discrimination, there was now at least a kind of "tacit acknowledgment that minorities did have special characteristics" (Dreyer, 1997: 374).

5A.6.3.2 STATUS PLANNING AND LEGAL GUARANTEES

The goal shifted from prior literacy in non-Han languages as a base for learning Mandarin to directly learning Mandarin. In many ways non-Han languages became associated with being reactionary, counterrevolutionary or revisionist and were seen as an obstacle to the final melting together of nationalities, meaning the exclusive use of the Han (Mandarin-based) language and script and the adoption of Han ways.

In the Cultural Revolution non-Han scripts and documents were treated as antirevolutionary and often burnt and broadcasting, publishing and public use of non-Han scripts came to an end in most areas as did their use in literacy campaigns and education. Of course, the assimilationist minority language policy was not uniformly carried out over the whole period of 20 years. The most fanatically assimilationist periods were the Great Leap Forward and its aftermath (1958-60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In the early 1960s, especially between 1962 and 1964, there was a slight relaxation in the severity of the policy's implementation. The 1970 draft

constitution confirmed the right to use non-Han languages, but by then this declaration rang rather hollow.

In Tibet, not only did the schools switch to Han-medium teaching, but Han also expanded as the language of administration and propaganda campaigns such as “Tibetan Written Language is Useless, Only the Han Language is an Advanced Language” were conducted to denigrate Tibetan (Bass, 1998: 230).

In the loosening up that occurred after Lin Biao’s downfall in 1971, non-Han radio broadcasts resumed or were expanded and Han cadres working in ethnic minority areas were once more “enjoined to study the languages of those areas” (Dreyer, 1997: 373).

5A.6.3.3 CORPUS RELATED PLANNING 1958-78

- The effect of the approval of the *Plan for the Phonetic Spelling of Chinese* in 1958

Premier Zhou Enlai suggested (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 12) that the plan for pinyin could also serve as a model for the creation and reform of non-Han scripts. In this way, minority language planning could help to hasten and smooth the final integration or melting of non-Han languages into Han. Accordingly the State Council approved five principals based on this plan for creating and reforming new romanised scripts:

- The Roman alphabet should be the base for the reform and creation of non-Han scripts.
- Sounds in non-Han languages close to sounds in Mandarin should be represented by the same letters as in Pinyin.
- Sounds not existing in Mandarin should be represented by single, or a combination of two, Roman letter(s), a newly created letter or a letter together with a diacritic.
- Tones were to be represented by adding a letter to the syllable or not be represented.
- Scripts of different languages, especially when closely related, should use similar letters and orthographic rules.

15 romanised scripts for 12 nationalities were created between 1955 and 1958. Those created after 1956 followed the above guidelines, while those created in the first year differed somewhat from Pinyin and were to be revised over the next 5 years, as were

previously created romanised scripts and non-romanised scripts (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 12). Romanised Nuosu, Uyghur and Kazakh scripts were created and unpopularly imposed on their speakers.

In the words of Dreyer (1997: 368)

The compilation of dictionaries for local languages and other scholarly research were halted: there was simply no longer any need for such “bourgeois scientific objectivism.”

In Liangshan in the mid-1970s there were strong demands and pressure to reform the Nuosu (Liangshan Yi) traditional script and convert it into a syllabary ready for its large-scale promotion to fight illiteracy. This was done at time when language work in most parts of China was still largely at a stand-still.

5A.6.3.4 ACQUISITION PLANNING 1958-78

In 1958 an influential article by the Minority Culture and Education Department of the State Nationalities Affairs Commission argued that although Type 1 minority scripts (Korean, Mongolian, Uyghur, Tibetan and Kazakh) had a maintenance role in primary and secondary education and possibly beyond, newly created scripts should be limited mainly to a transitional role in primary schools and literacy work. It generally discouraged the creation of further scripts (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 13-14) and advocated that all students be taught Mandarin, even at primary level and this should be the medium of literacy classes for nationalities without scripts and for those with scripts if they so chose. I suspect this element of choice was minimal.

Also in 1958, a campaign for minority nationalities to learn Mandarin was launched and went hand in hand with the scaling down and cancelling of efforts to promote the use of non-Han scripts. As Dreyer (1997: 367-8) put it

Suddenly, again according to the media, everyone wanted to read and write the Han language. They were also eager to welcome young Han immigrants into their areas, the better to learn from them. Inter-marriage, even between Han and Hui, was reportedly becoming fashionable. The levelling process of the Great Leap Forward also extended to entertainment. Minority song and dance troupes began to sing revolutionary songs in the Han language.

In 1962 and 1963 bilingual education was tolerated, more especially in Type 1 communities. From 1964, tolerance of bilingual education diminished and disappeared entirely in most areas after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Organs responsible for bilingual education or language promotion were either disbanded or frozen. In the following pages I have summarised and tabulated the effects on different languages compiled from Zhou Minglang (2001: 14-15) and others (where specified):

	Pre-1958 Situation	Changes after 1958
Type 1 language communities:		1966-1977: bilingual education reduced to minimum. Mandarin medium education became increasingly dominant. The higher the proportion of a community speaking Han, the less literacy levels were affected by the change. Secondary education suffered except among Koreans.
Korean	From 1945 (when CCP controlled Korean areas) Korean used as medium of instruction, Mandarin as a subject (both primary and secondary schools).	1958: The subject Mandarin replaced the subject Korean as the main language course.” Otherwise the mainly Korean medium system continued basically unaffected till 1967 (Zhou Minglang 2000: 133). 1967-1977: Total hours of Korean reduced in all schools in favour of Mandarin. Many Korean-medium schools integrated into Han-medium schools and Korean pupils enrolled in Han-only schools (under pressure to do so + belief that no future in Korean education). E.g. In Dunhua County of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, 45% of Korean schools were integrated into Han ones and 23% dissolved (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 18)
Mongolian	Mandarin courses taught in urban areas	1958: Mandarin (presumably L2 as a single subject) courses extended to rural areas. Zhou does not specify how teaching mediums were affected. 1966-1977: Han became teaching medium in most primary and secondary schools. Many Mongolian-medium schools integrated into Han-medium schools
Tibetan	Pre-1959: mostly monastery education. 13 state primary and 2 secondary schools with some monks as teachers (Bass, 1998: 30-31).	1959: Monasteries closed down. More state schools set up and rural “community schools” established with community teachers (Bass, 1998: 30-31). Mandarin courses offered in primary schools and used more as teaching medium in secondary schools, especially in towns. 1966-1977: In most schools Mandarin used as teaching medium and Tibetan only as subject.
Uyghur + Kazakh	Mandarin courses generally only taught in secondary, but not in primary schools. (Implied by Zhou, ibid)	1958: Mandarin courses expanded from secondary to primary (especially urban) schools. Newly-created romanised scripts experimentally introduced into schools in 1960, but due to popular resistance not really launched till 1965. Zhou Minglang (ibid: 13)’s comment that Replacing the Arabic writing systems with the Roman ones had a disastrous consequence in education in Uygur and Kazak communities in the following years. is evidence that people were not willing to be forced into using a script they did not identify with.

		1966-1977: New scripts introduced to all levels of schools. Mandarin courses expanded to lower primary classes. When I met Uyghur cadres in Xian in 1980 they told me they preferred writing in the Arabic script and ignored the romanised one.
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	Pre-1958 Situation	Changes after 1958
Type 2 language communities:	Mostly Han-only education in both primary and secondary schools. A non-Han language used as the medium of instruction and Mandarin in some primary schools. Mandarin used as the medium of instruction and a non-Han language as a subject in some secondary schools.	In some communities Mandarin completely replaced the non-Han languages, whilst in others the latter was reduced to a minimum. Communities with longer and better established written language-use traditions, such as the Dai [=Tai], had a better chance to keep their native languages in schools. (Zhou Minglang, 2001) Progress in literacy levels slowed down or (among the Yi and Lahu) illiteracy rose. Primary schools biggest losers as secondary schools had always been Han-medium.
Yi, Naxi, Miao	Newly- created/reformed romanised scripts used for past 1-2 years in several experimental classes.	These scripts withdrawn from schools (and hence from the community).
Jingpo, Lisu, Lahu	Newly- revised romanised scripts used alongside Mandarin	1958: Use continued in rural schools, but basically replaced by Mandarin in urban schools. Mid 1960s: Last existing experimental Lisu and Lahu classes disbanded. Jingpo continued in a few remote mountain primary schools due to sympathetic local cadres.
Va	Newly- created romanised script replaced missionary-created script in 1957. Successfully used in teacher-training and literacy classes.	Not promoted in primary schools in 1958 as had been originally envisaged.
Tai	Tai-medium primary schools	Tai maintained as teaching medium in primary schools.

	Pre-1958 Situation	Changes after 1958
Type 3 language communities:	Han-only education in both primary and secondary schools except in a few short-lived experimental schools in some minority communities.	1958: All new attempts at experimenting with non-Han scripts abandoned. Only Han-only education (with rare exceptions among the Zhuang until 1965). In some communities literacy development slowed in early years and in others in later part of period.
Zhuang	Newly- created romanised scripts used since 195? in literacy classes and 195? in a few experimental primary schools.	No expansion of experimental classes after 1958. Mid 1960s: Last existing experimental Zhuang classes disbanded.
Li, Bouyei	Newly- created romanised scripts had	Withdrawn in 1959

	just started being used in literacy classes in a few experimental primary schools.	
Bai, Kam (Dong)	Schools about to start trials of newly-created romanised scripts	Ordered to stop in 1958 before starting the trials.
Other minority nationalities 39	No formal bilingual education.	Any plans to initiate bilingual education were cancelled.

5A.6.4 SECOND PLURALISTIC STAGE 1978-PRESENT

5A.6.4.1 GENERAL POLITICAL BACKGROUND: 1978-PRESENT

Just as Franco's death in 1975 brought fresh life and hope to the oppressed non-Castilian Spanish nationalities and languages of Spain, so Mao's death the following year signalled in many ways a new era for non-Han nationalities and languages. Under Hua Guofeng (from 1976) and Deng Xiaoping (from 1977) minorities were treated with greater tolerance and deference, being given special privileges in some areas such as being subject to laxer birth control restrictions than the Han.

The 1978 constitution specifically guaranteed the equality of all nationalities, urging them to help and learn from one another, and expressly forbade discrimination against, or oppression of, any nationality (Dreyer, 1997: 375) and Han chauvinism (大汉主义) and local nationality chauvinism were condemned. It also reaffirmed the principal of autonomy, although decisions adopted by autonomous authorities were still subject to approval by the central authorities. Affirmative action in many areas (such as easier access to education and certain jobs) was introduced. The 1982 constitution changed little except to forbid "acts that would instigate secession" (ibid: 381).

However, despite good will (or perhaps simply pragmatism!) on the part of the administration to make up for the excesses of the 20 years of chaos (which comprised at least two thirds of the years of communist rule up to 1979!) many principals outlined in the constitution were not fully translated into action on the ground.

Autonomy was further strengthened by a 1984 law which gave hitherto unknown freedoms to the minority nationalities (Hebrerer, 2001: 216-7). The leading cadres were to be from the nationalities receiving the autonomy and they were given freedom of

decision in a wide variety of sectors such as economic and regional planning, foreign trade, education, finance etc. and could opt not to carry out central government decisions on condition that the higher organs agreed. Heberer (ibid) is sceptical about the workability of regional autonomy:

...most of the clauses are so vaguely worded that they would be unimplementable in the absence of accompanying laws. The Autonomy Law is thus a “soft law,” that is, a process of setting goals that should be followed as far as possible by state policies. One misses reference to an effective system for protection of autonomy. In addition, there are no legal measures for implementation of this law. There are correspondingly many complaints that local authorities do not hold to it.

Consequently, Heberer notes, many minority leaders are calling for a far greater degree of autonomy:

...wider-ranging, actual autonomy (up to the maximum degree: Beijing should, following the emperor’s example, manage only the international relations and military interests of large regions like Tibet or Xinjiang and leave local politics to the peoples living there). Particularly among the larger nationalities, disappointment spread widely, and younger forces radicalized because they no longer expected Beijing to solve any of their problems.

Finally Heberer (ibid) explains, diplomatically, that this autonomy is basically an elusive lame duck because of the undemocratic nature of the one-party Han-dominated state:

To a great degree, the existing rights themselves occur only on paper. Because they are not actionable (in the end, there is no law independent of the Party and no constitutional or administrative court), the degree to which rights can be realized depends on the current Party line and is therefore not quite arbitrary. Thus, a basic conflict of Chinese society consists of the contradiction between the pretension to be an ideologically single-ethnic party and the fact of the existence of a polyethnic society. The Party, which corresponding to the majority of the population is dominated by Han Chinese, is the court of last resort. It is dedicated in its organizational structure to the levelling of all ethnic differences and is not subordinated either to the legal system or to autonomy. Therefore all forms of self-rule find their limits here. And this inhibits actual, implementable laws of autonomy.

The Tibetan problem has simmered on for decades, with anti-Chinese feelings and support for the Dalai Lama (even among Tibetan cadres) and for either independence or genuine autonomy for Tibet running very high. Periodically there have been large-scale protests which have been brutally crushed. The problem of the influence of the Dalai Lama’s government in exile causes tensions and the fact (Dreyer, 1997: 389) that many cadres had sent their children to its schools outside China. Many Tibetan cadres

supported Buddhist activities and the influence of monasteries and monks has grown. Large-scale Han immigration to Lhasa and other areas has heightened ethnic tensions.

Suppressing the aspirations of the Tibetan people in such an undiplomatic, heavy handed and blatantly colonialist way the Government has alienated the broad masses of Tibetans, as well as world opinion, for a long time to come.

In Xinjiang, where the Han (unlike in Tibet) are now almost as numerous as the Uyghur due to intense Han immigration since 1950, the independence of the former Soviet Central Asian republics has spurred on aspirations for the establishment of an independent East Turkistan or at least a region with real autonomy. Many non-Han cadres have been accused of supporting separatist ideas and not only of being devout believers, but also of propagating Islam. There have been various armed groups operating in the Region for the last decade or so, causing bombings and violent street-fighting. Some groups have even been linked to Al Queda and have sent guerrillas to Afghanistan and other countries. From talking to people from Xinjiang (both Han and non-Han) and hearing visitors' accounts, my impression is that anti-Han feelings are running high.

Dreyer (1997: 390) points out that in both Tibet and Xinjiang many non-Han cadres have managed to hijack party membership for their own purposes, i.e. furthering the aims of their ethnic groups cultures, and religions.

Among smaller ethnic groups there are no serious aspirations to independence or unification with other countries. However, there are many groups that would dearly love a more meaningful formula of autonomy. The phenomenon of ethnic cadres using party membership and government posts to further the aims of their nationality, even where they conflict with the aims of the Party and the government, is also widespread among other nationalities. At a local level tensions between members of different nationalities, but especially between Han and non-Han, are very common. From talking to local people in many parts of south-western China I realised how widespread ethnic prejudice, mistrust and small-scale conflicts are (more often on the scale of punch-ups than of armed fighting). Mistrust was especially deep-seated in Liangshan between Nuosu and Han, but I heard of extensive problems between Yao and Han in Guangxi,

Tai and Han in Sipsong Panna and of problems on Hainan between Li and Han and between a miniscule group of Muslims (speaking an Austronesian language) and local Han.

The coming of democracy to (Outer) Mongolia has also spurred calls in Inner Mongolia for genuine autonomy, despite the fact that only 4 of its 22 million inhabitants are Mongols. Some of the unrest (Dreyer, 1997: 388) reflects cultural and environmental concerns (the overstocking of the grasslands with cattle and people by the central government).

Minorities were once more given a lot more religious and cultural freedom and there was a prolific growth in religious activity in many areas. International borders were made more permeable and many minorities were able to renew contacts with relatives and trading partners in Burma, Laos, Mongolia and the Soviet Union. This led to some smuggling problems, for example of drugs in the south-west. There has also been a certain amount of population movement in and out of China, e.g. Tai migrating to Bangkok, Tai-speaking Shan from Burma migrating to Sipsong Panna, Koreans from Manchuria seeking a better life in South Korea, desperate North Koreans risking their lives to slip into Manchuria.

The colourful costumes, quaint customs and exotic dances of some of the non-Han nationalities, as well as their social, economic and educational backwardness, gave the majority Han, themselves a mixed bunch whose lifestyles, culture and customs varied greatly from place to place, a good measuring-stick with which they could define themselves. In other words the Han could be defined as what the other nationalities were not. For large numbers of the Han public, non-Han peoples are not Uyghurs, Yi, Zhuang, Tai or Tibetans, but simply “minorities (少数民族)” and I have met many who are not interested in defining which nationality a non-Han person belongs to and make sweeping generalisations about the character and personality of “minorities” as if they all belonged to a single category. The official and media portrayal of non-Han peoples encourages this collective (and total artificial) non-Han identity.

According to this vision an infinite number of extremely different ethnic groups are merged into a blurry folkloric conglomerate of 55 happy patriotic minority nationalities, who being backward and primitive (and lower down the Marxist social evolutionary scale); need the help of their Han big brothers. At the same time they wear beautiful exotic costumes, are fun-loving (always singing and dancing) and sexually promiscuous; everyone knows about those sexy Tai women who wash their beautiful long hair naked in the rivers and the carefree youths of some nationalities who freely court and sleep around with whom they fancy and other groups who can openly have extra-marital relations! In contrast the Han are everything that the “minorities” are not. They have evolved socially and economically further than other nationalities, wear “modern” fashionable clothes, they are serious, educated, non-erotic, do not mess around sexually and are modern and advanced in their way of thinking.

The tendency to attribute all these characteristics to all non-Han nationalities in general has misled many Han into thinking that some Muslim women were sexually promiscuous and of portraying them as such, which has led to massive protests among Muslim communities. I have found it difficult to talk to most Han about a particular non-Han minority nationality without them referring to stereotyped “minorities” in general rather than the particular nationality in question. In addition a whole school of art has sprung up (Dru Gladney, 1994) which portrays minorities in general in this light and which has achieved great popularity in China and abroad.

This exotic view of non-Han nationalities is presently being exploited massively for tourism, both Chinese and foreign. For example a favourite destination is Lugu Lake where the matrilineal Naze speakers (classified as Naxi on the Yunnan side of the border and Mongols on the Sichuanese side) live, because of “exotic”, “primitive” customs such as that of men continuing to live with their mothers (or the matriarch) of their household after marriage, mainly going to visit their wives at night. Another is the Tai areas of Sipsong Panna where many Han men have gone in search of naked Tai women bathing in rivers. This type of sexually-orientated tourism has naturally caused considerable resentment.

Unfortunately minority tourism, in addition to presenting a superficial and rather skewered image of the ethnic groups (rather like what happened with the Scots –both

lowlanders and Gaels- being represented by kilts and bagpipes or the Welsh by women in tall black hats), is largely controlled by Han incomers. Dreyer (1997: 383).

Minority areas –generally much poorer than Han areas- have on the whole not benefited much from the exponential economic growth of the Chinese economy in recent years. The economic gap between the mainly Han areas (especially the coastal and central provinces) and the minority areas has actually widened over recent years.

5A.6.4.2 CORPUS RELATED PLANNING 1978-PRESENT

In a 1991 directive the State Council stipulated (Zhou Minglang, 2001: 17-18) that:

- Commonly used scripts be improved, standardised (if romanised, then as close to the norms of Pinyin as possible) and promoted.
- Scripts created and reformed in 1950s were to be promoted after legal approval, provided they are popular, otherwise they should not be promoted.
- Nationalities lacking a script or without a commonly used one were encouraged to adopt an existing commonly used script.
- Scripts created by local communities since the 1980s were to be “further examined scientifically” and “subject of strict legal procedures for approval”.

The fact that it takes a long time for the Committee on Nationalities Affairs of the Chinese People’s Congress to draft legislation on minority languages leads Zhou Minglang (2001: 18) to suspect that some “integrationists within the CCP still resist a more accommodative approach to minority language rights”.

5A.6.4.3 STATUS PLANNING: 1978-PRESENT

The 1978 constitution guaranteed the freedom of all nationalities to use and develop their own languages and scripts and organs of autonomous areas were to use the languages and scripts commonly used by the nationality/nationalities lending its/their name(s) to the autonomous area in question. These points were affirmed in the 1982 constitution, which reiterated that every nationality has the freedom to use and develop its language and script and that local autonomous governments are to use one or more non-Han language in their official business (Zhou Minglang 2001, 17). The 1984 Autonomy Law gave local autonomous governments the power to decide on the

principal teaching medium in schools and encouraged and rewarded cadres who learned another nationality's language and could use 2 or more languages fluently. Given the enormous opposition to the promotion of non-Han languages by many cadres (both Han and Hanised non-Han) in minority areas, this devolution of responsibility may not always be positive for the promotion and use of the language in question.

While the long-term anticipated fusion of all nationalities still went on forming a pillar of many communist cadres' beliefs about the future relationship between Han and non-Han languages, it was now stressed that the disappearance of linguistic differences was something that would not happen for generations.

The Compulsory Education Law of 1984, required primary and secondary schools to promote Mandarin, but also that they use commonly used minority languages as teaching mediums if most pupils were non-Han (Zhou Minglang 2001: 17). 1988 regulations on eradicating illiteracy allowed the use of Mandarin and /or non-Han languages in literacy work. Most local autonomous governments passed legislation on bilingual education in the course of the 1980s and 1990s.

In a 1991 directive the State Council stressed the importance and equality of non-Han languages in the economic development of the Nation. It stressed not only minority-medium education and literacy work, but also the active use and promotion of non-Han languages in such areas as translation, publishing, newspapers, radio, television, films and traditional literature as well as in academic training and research (Zhou Minglang 2001: 17).

5A.6.4.4 ACQUISITION PLANNING: 1978-PRESENT

By the 1990s according to Zhou Minglang (2001: 19) bilingual education had experienced the following developments with regard to the first pluralistic phase:

In some Type 1 communities:

- A non-Han language used as the medium of instruction and Mandarin as a subject in both primary and secondary schools and in some universities and institutions of higher education.

In some Type 1 and Type 2 communities the following model of school became widespread (called Type 2 schools in the section on Nuosu):

- Mandarin used as the medium of instruction and a non-Han language as a subject in both primary and secondary schools.

In some Type 1 communities:

- Both Mandarin and a non-Han language used as the mediums of instruction (typically Mandarin for science subjects and the other language for other subjects) in both primary and secondary schools.

In some Type 3 communities:

- Mandarin used as the main medium of instruction and a non-Han language with a supplementary role in primary schools.

5A.6.4.5 ACQUISITION PLANNING (AND IN TIBET ALSO STATUS PLANNING) SINCE 1978

The information for this section is set out in tabulated form for clarity

Developments since 1978	
Type 1 language communities: Although it is possible for lots of Koreans (especially in Yanbian), Uyghurs and Kazakhs to be educated and live literate lives in their own languages, if they want access to Higher Education and certain jobs they need to know Han. The fact that people of Han nationality are not seriously expected or pressurised to learn non-Han languages, while non-Han nationalities are under tremendous pressure (their chance of success depends on it) greatly undermines the status of non-Han languages. In Inner Mongolia it is more difficult to escape the imposition of Han and in Tibet anyone who wants to seriously climb the educational (even as far as secondary level) or job ladder needs to know Han.	
Korean: By early 1980 almost all Korean-medium schools had been restored to their previous strength and since then Korean medium education has been further strengthened. Zhou Minglang (2000: 133)	
Mongolian By early 1980 almost all Mongolian-medium schools (approx. 3,000) had been restored, but never won back the proportion of Mongol nationality pupils they had in the first pluralistic phase. Quoting Shamajiajia & Luo (1990), Zhou Minglang (2000: 133) points out that whereas 180,000 primary and secondary students were taught subjects through the medium of Mongolian in 1962, this figure had fallen to 163,286 in 1989, despite the Mongolian ethnic population having more than doubled. This means that a lot of Mongols are receiving Han-only schooling.	
Tibetan in the TAR (Source, unless otherwise stated: Bass, 1998: 229-249)	
Status planning: 1980s onwards: Han cadres no longer given language training in Tibetan before arrival in the TAR. They were encouraged to learn on arrival,	Acquisition planning: 1982: Committee set up to co-ordinate Tibetan-medium teaching materials with other Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

<p>but often did not, or did not get very far.</p> <p>1987: At instigation of 10th Panchen Lama and Ngapo Nawang Jigme TAR People's Congress issued 'Provisions on the Study, Use and Development of Spoken and written Tibetan (for trial implementation)' setting out procedures for implementing Tibetan language policy in education and public life. Tibetan and Han to be used, but Tibetan:</p> <p>...was to be the first language". Henceforth all official meetings to be held in Tibetan and Han, "Official documents were to be written both in Tibetan and Chinese, including court documents, public notices and signs; the media were also to use both Tibetan and Chinese; the procuracy and the courts were to guarantee the right of Tibetans to use spoken and written Tibetan. The examination for government service could henceforth also be taken in Tibetan (ibid: 231).</p> <p>The provisions also</p> <p>...stipulated that all Tibetan cadres under forty-five and Tibetan workers under forty who did not know Tibetan should 'take lessons in Tibetan and strive to be capable of using basic Tibetan language in three years'time.' (ibid: 238)</p> <p>1987:</p> <p>Out of 6,044 Tibetan government officials in one particular prefecture who were educated beyond primary level, 991 could speak Tibetan. This represented 16.5 % of the total number of Tibetan government officials. (ibid: 238)</p> <p>1991: Guiding Committee on Work in Spoken and Written Tibetan set up to oversee implementation of Tibetan language policy. Parallel structures at prefectural, county and municipality level to promote Tibetan and translate documents and texts from Han into Tibetan.</p> <p>However even at the height of the reforms in the 1980s, directives to implement the Tibetan language policy met with apathy or resistance from many officials and leaders (ibid: 232).</p> <p>Early 1990s: TAR Deputy Party Secretary Tenzin stressed development could not take place without Tibetan literacy and mass translation of scientific and technical texts into Tibetan and appealed to those blocking the implementation not to. In 1991 he declared that the policy was not working and in a position of stalemate.</p> <p>Mid-1990s: Change in political climate unfavourable to Tibetan:</p> <p>The notion of cultural distinctiveness which had allowed the Tibetan language policy to be formulated in the 1980a,</p>	<p>1982: Pilot Tibetan-medium project in 3 secondary schools. Tibetan educationalist reports good marks. Another source says closed down due to lack of teachers, materials and poor management.</p> <p>1984: Introduction of Tibetan language education. All primary schools with mainly Tibetan pupils to be Tibetan medium. Secondary schools could be Tibetan (this was not implemented) or Han medium, but Tibetan to be taught as subject. Envisaged that Han children would also have to learn Tibetan.</p> <p>1984: Plans drawn up for Tibetan-medium primary schools</p> <p>1987: 'Provisions on the Study, Use and Development of Spoken and written Tibetan (for trial implementation)': advocated its gradual introduction into secondary schools.</p> <p>1989: Further secondary Tibetan-medium pilot project in 4 schools. Glowing reports of success. Lasted till 1996.</p> <p>1990: In Lhasa, Tibetan language made a requisite for secondary school graduation.</p> <p>1991: In Regional Conference on Tibetan Teaching cadres urged to try harder to implement central and regional policies on Tibetan-medium education.</p> <p>By 1996: 98% of TAR primary schools officially Tibetan medium.</p> <p>1997: Despite glowing reports of success, the 1989 secondary pilot project closed down in 1996, officially due to financial reasons and lack of qualified teachers to teach in Tibetan. Educationalists blame</p> <p>abandonment of Tibetan medium secondary education and the apparent lack of commitment to resolving the problems that partial implementation of Tibetan medium education engenders. By 1997, teaching Chinese to Tibetans from the first grade of primary school was deemed by the TAR government to be more appropriate than extending Tibetan medium teaching into secondary education (ibid: 237).</p> <p>27.11.2001: The Tibet Information Net reported:</p>
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<p>was replaced in the TAR by a Central Committee directive to use 'the guiding spirit of close connection with the Interior'(ibid: 232).</p> <p>2002 Regulations on Study, Use and Development of the Tibetan Language. This law affirms the promotion at all levels and in all spheres of Tibetan alongside Mandarin. Treated by scepticism by the Tibet Information Network news update (30.1.2005) due to past non-implementation of most regulations to promote Tibetan.</p> <p>The non-implementation of policy in favour of the Tibetan language is obviously a successful strategy by an elite of Han and hanised Tibetan cadres hostile to the promotion of Tibetan (largely because they themselves do not speak or master it sufficiently). The failure of the promotion and the lack of prospects for those with a Tibetan-medium education, coupled with the necessity to master Mandarin, have led to many Tibetan parents wishing to send their children to Han-only schools. In other words the social status and prestige of Tibetan has been successfully lowered in the eyes of many Tibetans.</p>	<p>There have been further indications that Chinese is becoming the main medium of instruction in schools in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) with the use of the Chinese language as a teaching medium being increased in primary schools. The main teaching medium in middle schools is already standard Chinese (Mandarin). Reports from Tibet indicate that Chinese is now being used as a teaching medium in a number of primary schools near Lhasa, with plans to increase its use throughout the region.</p>
<p>Conclusion: While there is some piecemeal half-hearted provision for Tibetan and while impressive regulations and policy documents for its use and promotion have been issued, the stark reality is that their implementation has been actively sabotaged by a large body of cadres (mainly Han and hanised Tibetans) who have no interest in seeing them put into practice. Meanwhile the Tibetan population suffers and is further alienated as a result and the China shows the world that it is not capable of properly implementing a tolerant, non-colonial language policy in such a sensitive area, in the process greatly damaging its public image throughout the world. I believe China could bring the anti-Tibetan elite in the TAR to heel if the will existed. Indeed it must if it wants a stable Tibet. The funds for a comprehensive tolerant Tibetan-dominant language policy would be a worthwhile investment and should not be grudged as at present. It is surely much less than military investment and certain to bring better returns for money.</p>	
<p>Examples of Tibetan in other areas of China (Source: Bass, 1998: 229-249)</p>	
<p>Acquistion planning:</p> <p>Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province Early 1990s: 1 pilot Tibetan-medium primary class did better than Han-medium class. 1996: 34% of schools for Tibetans provided education in Tibetan.</p> <p>Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province 1994: 61% of ethnic Tibetan secondary pupils taught in Tibetan. Also upper secondary teacher-training school with 557 students teaching in Tibetan. 1996: 34% of schools for ethnic Tibetans provided education in Tibetan.</p>	
<p>Uyghur + Kazakh</p>	
<p>1982: Roman scripts based on Pinyin were scrapped in favour of reintroduction of former traditional Arabic scripts. Most Uyghur and Kazakh children receive primary and secondary teaching (and limited higher education) in their own languages. 1984: Formal study of Han from 3rd year of primary school instead of first year of secondary school.</p>	

Later this was changed to the 1st year of primary school (Dwyer 2005: 36-37).
 Since 1980s: Most urban parents have choice of a monolingual Han education (pre-school → secondary). Most non-Uyghur chose Han and in Urumchi up to 50% of Uygurs chose Han over Uyghur medium schools (Dwyer 2005: 37-38).
 Since 1984: Uyghur-medium instruction reduced at all levels (ibid: 38-39).
 From mid-1990s: Han changed from being just second language subject in minority language schools, to replacing Uyghur, Kazakh etc. from the 3rd year (and by 2005 from the 1st year) as teaching medium for all subjects, leaving the minority language only taught as a subject. Also reduction in pre-school non-Han medium provision. Uyghur medium classes at Xinjiang University phased out during 1990s (ibid: 39). Since “minority” schools now were becoming more like Han ones the Region’s Education Commission started merging Han and Uyghur/Kazakh schools, to “consolidate” them, what Dwyer 2005 (39) calls “linguisticide”. It is hard to disagree.
 2002: No more Uyghur language courses offered in Xinjiang University in the 1st 2 years. Previously many subjects could be studied in Uyghur. Now even some aspects of Uyghur literature are taught in Han (ibid).

Developments since 1978

Type 2 and 3 language communities:

The focus of minority language work was on the reintroduction of scripts revised or created in the 1950s, but abandoned in the Great Leap Forward/Cultural Revolution period. These non-Han speaking communities suffer the problems usually associated with marginalised minority languages and in general these promotions have not been tremendously successful. The fact that people of Han nationality are not seriously expected or pressurised to learn non-Han languages, while non-Han nationalities are under tremendous pressure (their chance of success depends on it) greatly undermines the status of non-Han languages. The lack of consolidated elites who actively support and promote non-Han languages also poses a constant problem to the success of status and acquisition planning. Indeed, I would argue that effective status planning requires the dismantling of established elites who fear and oppose the effective, sincere, meaningful promotion and use of non-Han languages and scripts and their replacement by new elites (perhaps in part the same “reconverted” individuals) who identify with and have a stake in the successful future of these languages.

Zhou Minglang (2001: 20) raises the question of the ongoing debate in Type 2 and 3 communities (although I think they certainly affect some Type 1 communities, especially Tibetans) over whether to use Han or non-Han languages as the main teaching medium. Some people argue that pupils need a Han-only education to get on in the world and integrate themselves into mainstream society as thoroughly as possible. Others argue that it makes cognitive sense to learn the mother-tongue first and that moreover this will help them to learn Han (indeed that they will not learn Han as well if they do not first consolidate their mother-tongue literacy) and to bridge the culture gap. The first of these views is prevalent among both cadres and the general public, both Han and non-Han.

Zhuang. (Source. My own research) See 5B.

Introduced in some literacy classes and some pilot primary schools in 1980. Despite ambitious plans to unify speakers of all variants under a standard language and bring about a bilingual, biliterate and educated Zhuang population in order to promote economic development, the promotion ran into problems (analysed in a later chapter) and was seriously run down in the late 1980s and effectively definitely abandoned (although not officially!) in the 1990s. The debate about what to do regarding the Zhuang script still smoulders on.

Nuosu (Liangshan Yi / The Northern Yi dialect. (Source. My own research). See 5C.

Revised approved syllabary of 819 characters (based on traditional script) introduced in adult literacy classes all over Liangshan and in a limited number of primary schools and secondary schools from the late 1970s. Used extensively on public and commercial signs and documents and in one daily

<p>newspaper. Despite successes, there is a hanised Nuosu elite which brings up its children in Han thus providing a negative role-model for ordinary Nuosu. This appears to present an insurmountable obstacle to further progress in the promotion of Nuosu.</p>
<p>Sipsong Panna Tai (main source: Hansen, 1999a and b). See also 6.1.5.6 and 6.2.5.6.</p>
<p>Number of Tai-medium primary schools, especially attended by girls. Many boys attend Buddhist temple schools, either instead of, or as well as, state schools. Temple schools teach the traditional unreformed script, as well as standard Thai (and often Mandarin). State schools often seen as irrelevant to the reality of Tai in Sipsong Panna by parents.</p>
<p>Derung, Qiang, Tujia, Tu, Daur, Dongxiang and Yao (Mian):</p>
<p>New scripts (some formulated in 1958 and some in the 1980s) were approved for experimental use in primary schools during the 1980s and 1990s.</p>
<p>Mulam, Maonan, Lakka (Lajia) Yao, Li, Salar, Bonan, Hezhen, Shui, Tadjik and Blang :</p>
<p>In the absence of approved scripts, these languages have been used orally, in an active, planned way for explanations in primary schools and to facilitate the learning of Mandarin.</p>

The following two sections go on to examine in more detail how the minority language policy was carried out in Zhuang areas of Guangxi (5B) and Nuosu areas of Liangshan (5C).

5B THE ZHUANG LANGUAGE AND SCRIPTS: USE AND PROMOTION

It is essential to be clear about which people are considered to be Zhuang, what kind of language they speak, the literacy options open to them and how language policy has evolved during the communist period.

5B.1 WHO ARE THE ZHUANG?

All informed Chinese know that the Zhuang nationality of Guangxi, Yunnan (and a tiny part of Guangdong), with a population of over 16 million members (16,178,811) in 2000, are the largest of the 55 minority nationalities in China. Is it not strange therefore to ask who the Zhuang are? The present concept of “Zhuang” and “Zhuangness” dates from the beginning of the Communist period, when speakers of central and northern Tai languages were classified under the umbrella of “Zhuang” or Bouyei. It is universally acknowledged by Chinese scholars and linguists that the Bouyei nationality of southern Guizhou speaks a language almost identical to the Northern dialect of Zhuang. In 2000 there were almost 3 million (2,971,460) Bouyei, making a combined Zhuang-Bouyei population of approximately 19 million.

Historically a large part of South China was inhabited by peoples speaking Tai languages. Even speakers of Tai languages in Thailand, Burma, Laos and Vietnam generally acknowledge South China as the historical cradle of their cultures. Little by little speakers of Han languages extended southwards assimilating or displacing further southwards speakers of Tai, Austronesian, Tibeto-Burmese, Miao-Yao and other languages, but Tai languages are still spoken in a great part of South-western China. Languages belonging to all 3 main branches of Tai languages are spoken within the borders of the Peoples’ Republic of China.

In South-West Yunnan, South-Western varieties (similar to Thai and Lao) are spoken by Buddhist peoples with Indic writing systems and culturally akin to Tai-speakers in Thailand, Burma and Laos. Their speakers are classified not as Zhuang, but as “Dai” (or “Tai” by western scholars). In the South-West of Guangxi and

South-East of Yunnan, near the Vietnamese border, varieties of Central Tai are widely spoken (as they are in the North of Vietnam). The Northern branch is spoken in the Northern and Central parts of Guangxi, part of Eastern Yunnan, the South of Guizhou and a sizeable, isolated *Sprachinsel* on the border of eastern Guangxi and north-western Guangdong. Speakers of the Central and Northern groups were classified as Zhuang, except in Guizhou where they were classified as “Bouyei”.

Thus before 1950, most “Zhuang” speakers thought of themselves not as speakers of “Zhuang” but of a series of localised “dialects”. If pushed to define what their language was a dialect of, many assumed it to be a dialect of Chinese. In recent history there is no evidence within Zhuang areas, prior to the 1950s, of a pan-Zhuang consciousness, much less of a pan-Tai consciousness encompassing all Tai languages of South-East Asia.

Indeed before 1950 nobody identified with a Zhuang ethnic group except in a few specific areas. Unlike the Buddhist speakers of South-western Tai languages, speakers of Central and Northern Tai languages did not have a heightened awareness of being different from the Han and many of them fervently believed (and still do) that their ancestors came from the North of China. They identified chiefly with local clans. Many Zhuang called local Han “guest people” or incomers in opposition to themselves, “the local people” and there were often ethnic tensions between them, although people did not think in terms of Han and Zhuang. History abounds with ethnic conflicts in the area, between Zhuang and Yao, Zhuang and Han and between different *zhixi* or clans of the Zhuang. As there was no overall pan-Zhuang consciousness, these were not along large-scale Han-Zhuang ethnic lines.

Historically the Han have called the Zhuang a variety of terms over the ages, most having the meaning of barbarian. Many of these were written with the dog radical (the left hand element), including the character Zhuang 獯 itself, which was later changed to 獯 (now with the person radical on the left) and finally simplified to 壮.

5B.1.1 HOW THE ZHUANG REFER TO THEMSELVES

Before 1950 what we now call the Zhuang nationality lacked a sense of ethnic unity and different communities considered themselves separate ethnic groups with separate terms of self-address. The most numerous single group, in many Central, Western and Northern areas of Guangxi did indeed refer to itself as *bouxcuengh* [*x* and *h* are tonal markers] which means *Zhuang people*, *boux* (transcribed as 布 *bù* in Han Chinese) meaning *people* and *cuengh* (壮 *Zhuàng* in Han Chinese) and this term (*bouxcuengh*) came to be applied to the newly recognised Zhuang nationality or 壮族 *Zhuàngzú* in Han Chinese. However, other groups used other terms of self-address, all containing the element *boux* (= *people*). Examples (this is far from being an exhaustive list) of the Mandarin forms of names many groups referred to themselves by are:

- 布衣 *bùyī* (transcribed as *Bouxyaej* in the romanised Zhuang script) in the Northern part of Wenshan Prefecture (Eastern Yunnan) and North-western and Northern Guangxi. This is the same term of self-address used by the Bouyei (also written 布衣 *bùyī* in Han) nationality of Guizhou.
- 布农 *bùnóng* in the Zuo 左 and You 右 river valleys and the Southern part of Wenshan Prefecture (Eastern Yunnan)
- 布太 *bùtài*
- 布土 *bùtǔ* in part of the You 右 river valley and Southern Guangxi
- 布寮 *bùrao* meaning “our people”
- 布班 *bùbān* meaning “village people”.

5B.1.2 LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION OF ZHUANG

Western linguists and Chinese linguists expressing the official viewpoint differ radically in the classification of Zhuang, Bouyei and the other Tai-Kadai (sometimes called Tai-Kam) languages. According to the official Chinese view:

壮语是汉藏语系壮侗语族壮傣语支的一种语言。它跟布依语、傣语等同属于一个语支。Zhuang belongs to the Zhuang-Dai [called Tai outside China] branch of the Zhuang-Dong [the Kam are called Dong in China] group of the Sino-Tibetan

language family. It is in the same sub-group as Bouyei and Dai, etc.. (Wei and Qin, 1980: 71).

A minority of Westerners have accepted the Chinese definition without question such as the missionary society Mekong who state in their web-page devoted to the Zhuang and their prospects for being evangelised) “The Zhuang language belongs to the Sino-Thai language group.” Likewise the web-page of the English-language on-line encyclopaedia Infoplease affirms:

Sino-Tibetan languages ... It is usually said to have three subfamilies: Tibeto-Burman, Chinese, and Tai, or Thai. One school of thought, however, assigns the Tai and Chinese languages to a single subfamily called Sino-Siamese or Sinitic.

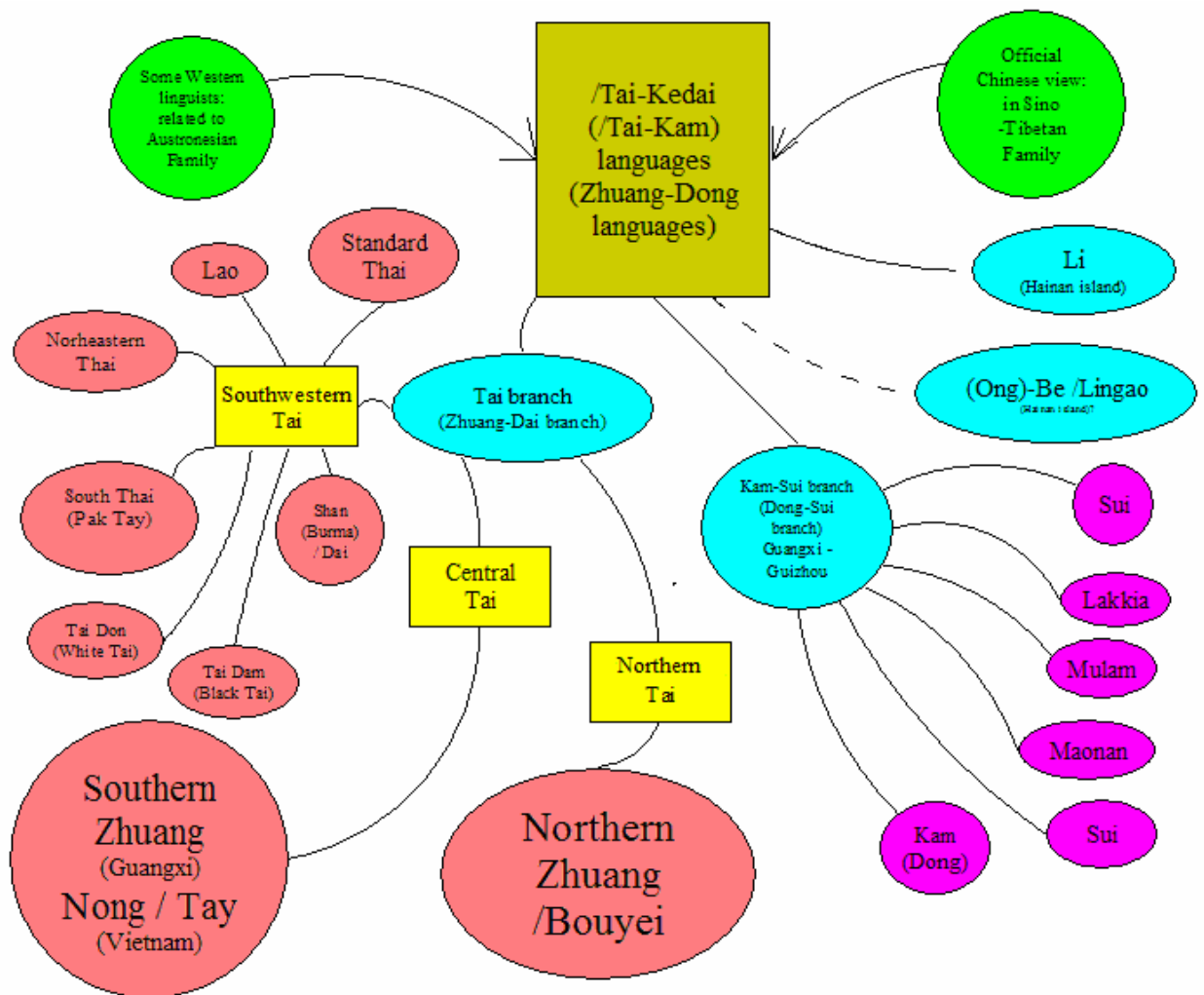
I imagine that it is politically desirable from a Chinese point of view to place this group of languages in a large family which has most of its speakers within the territory of the Peoples Republic of China rather than in Thailand, Burma and Indochina (in spite of consensus regarding a southern Chinese cradle of the Tai languages). However, most Western linguists (and in private some Chinese linguists) are of the opinion that the Tai-Kadai languages do not belong to the Sino-Tibetan language family and regard their many tonal, phonetic and structural similarities with languages of this family as being a result of prolonged mutual contact. The linguist Paul Benedict has even argued that the Tai-Kadai languages are closely related to the Austronesian group of languages and postulates an Austro-Tai superfamily (Tsu-lin and Norman. 1976 and Solnit, 1996).

There is general agreement both on the relation of the Tai languages to the Kam (called Dong in China) -Sui group of languages (Sui, Lakka etc.) spoken in northern Guangxi and southern Guizhou and on the lack of knowledge about the exact relation of the Tai and Kam languages to two languages spoken on Hainan Island: the Ong, Be or Lingao language, spoken by half a million people of Han nationality and the variants of Li spoken by people of Li Nationality. The following map (original source Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998), which I have modified, shows the approximate distribution of the Southwestern, Central and Northern Tai languages and other Tai-related languages over Southwest China and neighbouring countries to the south.

Map 5A.i Distribution of Tai Languages



The tree diagram below, where I have summarised different sources, is a gross oversimplification of an extremely complex situation. What is relevant to this thesis is the close relationship of the Northern and Southern Zhuang dialects to other Tai languages spoken in Yunnan, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam and the fact that the former belongs to the Northern group and the latter to the Central group. This has implications for anyone wishing to create a single standard language for both variants, even taking into account that the Tai languages as a whole are a comparatively unified group.



Tai-Kedai Languages

It is generally agreed that ancestors of the Tai languages were once spoken across large areas of South China, as were Austro-Asian languages (see Tsu-lin Mei and

Norman, 1976) and Miao-Yao languages, and that a long, gradual process of linguistic substitution in favour of variants of Han has taken place over several thousand years. The Tai speaking peoples from outside China often look to South China as the cradle of their language and culture.

Wei and Qin (1980: 21-23) constructed a comparative table of similarities with other Tai-Kadai languages, using very basic everyday universal vocabulary. Below I have adapted a small part of this information, adding the Southern Zhuang equivalents taken from 103-131 of the same reference.

English meaning	sun	wind	rain	water	tree	dog	Pig	bird	Sleep
Zhuang (Northern: Wuming) [Northern ^o Tai]	taŋ ¹ ŋ ^o n ²	ɣ ^o um ²	fu ^o n ¹	ɣ ^o am ⁴	fai ⁴	Masq ^o	Mou ¹	ɣ ^o ok ⁸	nin ²
Zhuang (Southern: Longzhou) [Central Tai]	ha ¹ van ²	lum ²	phə ^o n	nam ⁴	mai ⁴	Ma ¹	mu ¹	nuk ⁸	no: n ²
Xishuangbanna Tai /Dai [Southwestern Tai]	ta ¹ van ²	lum ²	fun ¹	nam ⁴	kɔ ^o mai ⁴	Ma ¹	mu ¹	nok ⁸	nɔ ^o n ²
Lao [Southwestern Tai]	ta ¹ wen ²	lom ²	fon ¹	nam ⁴	mai ⁴	ma ¹	mu ¹	nok ⁸	nɔ ^o : n ²
Thai [Southwestern Tai]	du: aŋ ² ta ^o wan ²	lom ²	fon ¹	nam ⁴	to: n ³ mai ⁴	ma ¹	mu ¹	nok ⁸	nɔ ^o : n ²

The table shows considerable similarities between Zhuang and its sister languages, but relies on lists of very basic words which have tended not to change much. If we take into account the constantly developing lexis, sounds and syntax of these languages the barriers to mutual comprehensibility are much greater. Han influence and borrowings in China, Vietnamese ones in Vietnam and Burmese ones in Burma contrasted with relying on Tai roots in Thailand and Laos, serve to widen the gap further between these sister languages. I have only reproduced the relation with the Tai (also called Dai) of Xishuangbanna, standard Thai and Lao, because there is a language continuum between Zhuang / Bouyei and other Tai languages. Zhuang speakers of the Southern dialect living near the border communicate effortlessly with Nong and Tay speakers on the Vietnamese side and find that they are even able to make themselves understood –with a bit more patience and good will – further afield in Vietnam, Laos and northern Thailand. Several Zhuang linguists I met in Guangxi

were very excited that they could understand a certain amount of Thai and Lao from their mother tongue. I even detected a kind of Pan-Tai cultural (though not political) pride among some of them.

Speakers of Tai (officially “Dai”) in western Yunnan communicate effortlessly with the Shan-speakers of Burma and speakers of Tai languages in Thailand, Laos and north-western Vietnam. In fact there has been a certain drift to Bangkok among some younger Tai to seek their fortunes there rather than in the big Chinese cities (personal communication, Xishuangbanna 1981). In contrast are the Kam-Sui languages and Li, which are distant enough from Zhuang for there to be no hope of mutual intelligibility, although superficially many of the basic Kam and Sui words in the comparative list by Wei and Qin (1980) were remarkably similar to their cognates in Tai languages).

5B.1.3 ORIGIN OF THE ZHUANG

There are various theories about where Tai speaking peoples came from, ranging from the Nanchao kingdom of Yunnan, Thailand, Indonesia, the Altai mountains, the lower Yangtze valley and south-eastern China, and the areas of northern Vietnam and south-western China centred on the present Zhuang, Nong and Tay speaking areas (Suriya Ratanakul, 2005). Most sources favour an origin somewhere within southern China (a vast area), but there is no conclusive evidence. There is, however, general agreement that the Zhuang-Nong-Tay areas have been long inhabited by Tai-speaking peoples.

5B.1.4 PRE-COMMUNIST POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

What are today termed Zhuang areas, were nominally incorporated into the Han dynasty Chinese state in the third century B.C. and central power was only gradually consolidated over many dynasties. Imperial control over Zhuang areas was largely through native Zhuang hereditary rulers or *tusi* who professed loyalty to the Emperor in return for a large degree of autonomy. Han settlers gradually penetrated and

settled Zhuang areas, first (from the Han dynasty onwards) eastern areas (many of which lay to the east of Guangxi and have had no native Zhuang speakers for centuries) and then (from the Ming dynasty onwards) to a more limited extent in some more western areas. Those Zhuang who remained in more eastern areas tended to be pushed onto more marginal land by the Han while in the western areas controlled by *tusi* the Zhuang tended to hold onto the best land and the Han settlers had to do with more marginal lands. In both areas the Yao were forced onto the worst land of all. Thus while Zhuang areas were brought under nominal central control, they remained socially and linguistically isolated both from the rest of China and from each other. History abounds with ethnic conflicts in the area, between Zhuang and Yao, Zhuang and Han and between different *zhixi* or clans of the Zhuang. As there was no overall pan-Zhuang consciousness, these were not perceived as conflicts between the “Zhuang” and “Han” or other official nationalities, but rather as conflicts between particular localised groups.

The Zhuang were not among the four non-Han Chinese nationalities recognised by Sun Yatsen, the south-western minorities in general being regarded as the “south-western tribes”. The Guomindang’s policy of complete assimilation of minority languages and cultures was along the lines of the United States *melting pot* concept. However, while the provincial nationalist government in Guangxi did set up special (assimilationist) education programs, mainly for the Yao and Miao, they hardly mentioned the Zhuang at all, barely noticing them as being different from the Han.

5B.1.5 LACK OF UNIFIED ZHUANG NATIONALITY

In 5B.1.1 it was seen that members of the Zhuang nationality refer to themselves by a wide range of antonyms and prior to the 1950’s did not think of themselves as forming a coherent, unified nationality together with all speakers of central and northern Tai languages in Guangxi and Yunnan. This lack of unity and mutual identification between speakers of the Central and Northern Tai languages in China, upon whom the authorities were to bestow the label *Zhuang*, is due to a number of factors, which also explain why Zhuang areas were traditionally poorly integrated

into the Chinese State. For example (the factors below largely follow Kaup 2000's classification):

- The mountainous nature of Zhuang-speaking areas, a large part of which is covered with Karst or limestone mountains (distinctive steep, pointed peaks rising out of flat fields), made communication between different areas, and thus economic, political and ethnic integration, most difficult.
- In Imperial times the traditional system of indirect rule in Zhuang areas was through native Zhuang chiefs or *tusi* who paid nominal allegiance to the Emperor but in reality enjoyed virtually complete autonomy and, in many cases, complete abuse of power. However, there was no centralised Zhuang administration, thus promoting the fragmentation of different Tai-speaking groups. Many *tusi* discouraged contacts with other areas, further exasperating this tendency.
- There were considerable differences between linguistic varieties of different areas, which as will be seen is of great significance in this thesis.
- Most Zhuang speakers owed loyalty to their local ethnic group or clans and did not identify with other Zhuang-speakers of other local ethnic groups.
- There was no centralised religion. While Tibetans are unified by Lamaism, Uighurs by Islam and the Tai by Hinayana (Small Wheel) Buddhism, Zhuang have no unified religion or religious hierarchy. Their polygamist and shamanistic practices (combined with ancestor worship) vary greatly from area to area, as do the spirits worshiped. Extremely few Zhuang have converted to Christianity, Buddhism or Islam.

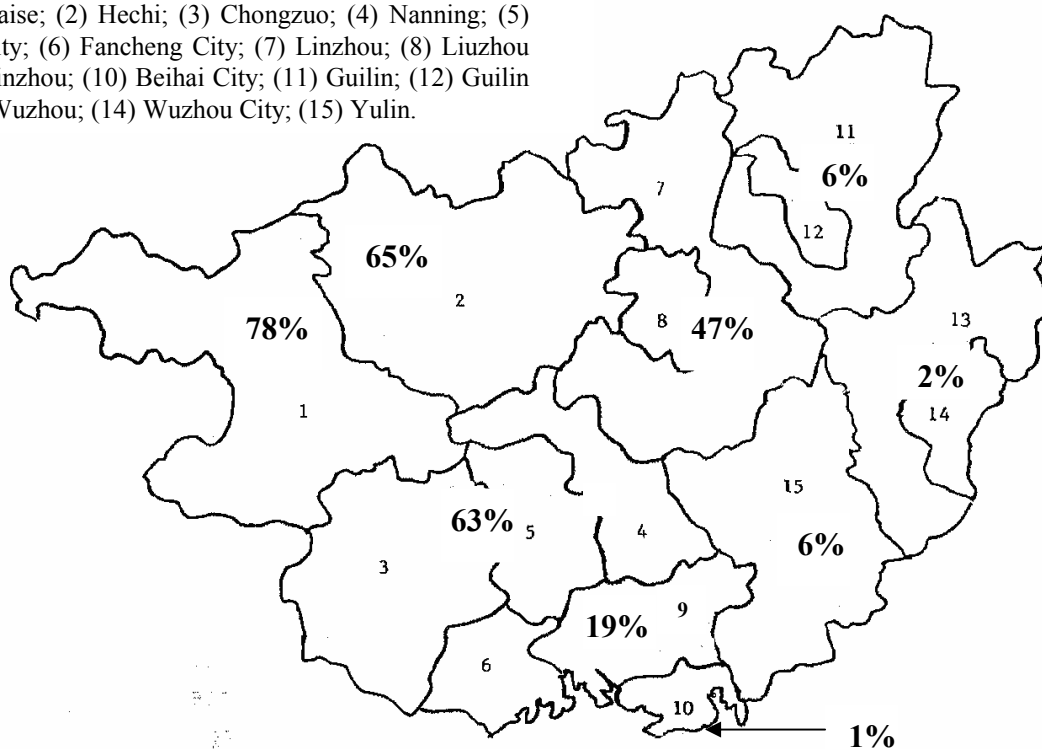
5B.1.6 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ZHUANG LANGUAGE

According to the 1982 Census (Chen Zhulin, 1986: 20-21) over 12 million [over 15 and a half million in the 2000 census] of the more than 13 million Zhuang in China lived in Guangxi. Of the 83 counties and cities in Guangxi, 53 counties had a Zhuang population of over 30,000. As always when dealing with language matters in China, it must be bourn in mind that most census data and statistics concerning minorities in China relate to official nationality classifications and not to specific

languages spoken. Although we can assume that most Zhuang indeed speak Zhuang, not necessarily all people of Zhuang nationality do. This is especially true of those living in urban centres and children of mixed marriages with non-Zhuang.

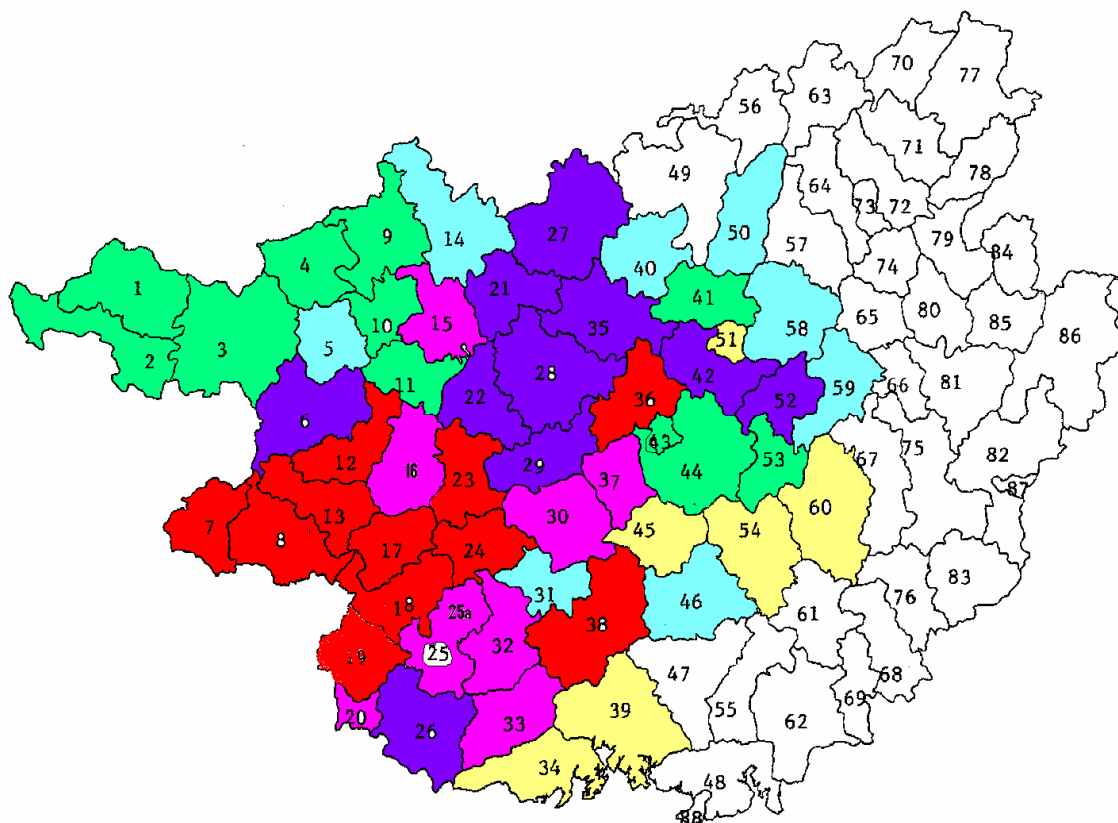
Conversely many people classified as other nationalities, speak Zhuang as their mother-tongue, for example some members of the Bunu Nationality speak Zhuang as their first language (Shearer and Sun, 2001: 65). Prior to the 1950s large numbers of Zhuang-speakers considered themselves members of the Han nationality and it is to be expected that some have succeeded in being classified as such. In addition there are some Han in strongly Zhuang-speaking areas who have been assimilated by, or married into, Zhuang-speaking communities. I heard of other small Han nationality communities speaking non-Han languages as their mother tongue, e.g. a Han nationality student at Guangxi Nationalities Institute in 1981 readily admitted that his native language (and that of most Han from his village) was a variant of the Mien language, normally spoken by the Yao nationality. The following map adapted from Kaup (1999), shows the proportions of Zhuang in different prefectures of Guangxi, the statistics being based on the early 1990s:

Key: (1) Baise; (2) Hechi; (3) Chongzuo; (4) Nanning; (5) Nanning City; (6) Fancheng City; (7) Linzhou; (8) Liuzhou City; (9) Qinzhou; (10) Beihai City; (11) Guilin; (12) Guilin City; (13) Wuzhou; (14) Wuzhou City; (15) Yulin.

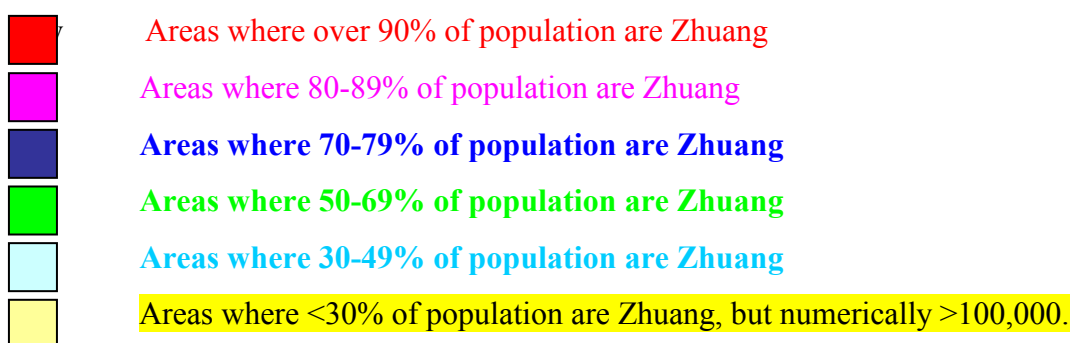


Map 5B.ii Proportion of Zhuang in different prefectures

Seeing the ethnic distribution on a county basis gives us a much clearer picture:



Map 5B.iii. Counties in Guangxi according to percentage of inhabitants of Zhuang nationality. Statistics according to Sha’nanmanlin (200?) based on 2000 census. Map adapted from Kaup 1999.



This map is based on the figures for the proportion of Zhuang compiled by Sha’nanmanlin (200?) from various sources, based mainly on the period around 2000, who divides the counties and cities of Guangxi into the following categories. Below are his figures, the number before county names refers to that on the map:

1) 11 counties (shown in red) where over 90% of the population are Zhuang:

- 8. Jingxi County (3,331 km²) in Baise Prefecture: population approximately 570,000 of whom 568,000 (99.71%) are Zhuang.
- 17. Tiandeng County (2,159 km²) in Chongzuo Prefecture: population approximately 400,000 of whom 395,800 (98.81%) are Zhuang.
- 13. Debao County (2,558 km²) in Baise Prefecture: population approximately 340,000 of whom 330,000 (97.82%) are Zhuang.
- 18. Daxin County (2,756 km²) in Chongzuo Prefecture: population approximately 350,000 of whom 340,000 (97.2%) are Zhuang.
- 24. Longan County (2,264 km²) in Nanning City: population approximately 370,000 of whom 356,000 (96.34%) are Zhuang.
- 19. Longzhou County (2,318 km²): population approximately 270,000 of whom 260,000 (95.8%) are Zhuang.
- 38. Yongning County (4,725 km²) in Nanning City: population approximately 912,000 of whom 836,000 (91.65%) are Zhuang.
- 36. Xincheng County (2,541 km²): population approximately 400,000 of whom 364,000 ((90.92%)) are Zhuang.
- 23. Pingguo County (2,487 km²) in Baise Prefecture: population approximately 450,000 of whom 408,000 ((90.62%)) are Zhuang.
- 7. Napo County (2,230 km²) in Baise Prefecture: population approximately 190,000 of whom 170,000 ((90.59%)) are Zhuang.
- 12. Tianyang County (2,395 km²) in Baise Prefecture: population approximately 330,000 of whom 30,000 ((90.20%)) are Zhuang.

2) 8 counties / cities (shown in violet) where 80-89% of the population are Zhuang:

- 33. Shangsi County (2,816 km²) in Fangchenggang City: population approximately 210,000 of whom 182,000 (86.8%) are Zhuang.
- 30. Wuming County (3,367 km²) in Nanning City: population approximately 646,000 of whom 544,000 (85.83%) are Zhuang.
- 16. Tiandong County (2,816 km²): population approximately 390,000 of whom 330,000 (85.22%) are Zhuang.
- 15. Donglan County (2,435 km²): population approximately 280,000 of whom 230,000 (85.0%) are Zhuang.
- 20. Pingxiang City (650 km²) in Chongzuo Prefecture: population approximately 100,000 of whom 84,000 (83.5%) are Zhuang.
- 37. Shanglin County (1,876 km²) in Nanning City: population approximately 450,000 of whom 370,000 (82.0%) are Zhuang.
- 32. Fusui County (2,876 km²) in Chongzuo Prefecture: population approximately 410,000 of whom 336,000 (82.0%) are Zhuang.
- 25a. Jiangzhou District of Chongzuo City (3,290 km²) in Chongzuo Prefecture: population approximately 330,000 of whom 266,000 (80.7%) are Zhuang.

3) 10 counties / cities (marked in dark blue) where 70-79% of the population is Zhuang:

- 26. Ningming County / 宁明县 (3,709 km²) in Chongzuo Prefecture: population approximately 390,000 of whom 300,000 (77.6%) are Zhuang.
- 29. Mashan County / 马山县 (2,365 km²) in Nanning City: population approximately 490,000 of whom 373,000 (75.8%) are Zhuang.
- 42. Liujiang County / 柳江县 (2,504 km²): population approximately 522,000 of whom 394,000 (75.6%) are Zhuang.
- 27. Huanjiang County / 环江县 4,558 km²): population approximately 350,000 of whom 263,000 (75.0%) are Zhuang.
- 35. Yizhou City / 宜州市 (3,869 km²): population approximately 600,000 of whom 443,000 (74.01%) are Zhuang.
- 22. Dahua County / 大化县 2,754 km²): population approximately 410,000 of whom 300,000 (74%) are Zhuang.
- 6. Youjiang District of Baise City / 百色市右江区 (3,713 km²) in Baise Prefecture: population approximately 320,000 of whom 235,000 (73.55%) are Zhuang.
- 21. Jinchengjiang District of Hechi City / 河池市金城江区 (2,340 km²) in Hechi Prefecture: population approximately 310,000 of whom 226,000 (73 %) are Zhuang.
- 28. Duan County / 都安县 (4,092 km²): population approximately 630,000 of whom 454,000 (72%) are Zhuang.
- 52. Xiangzhou County / 象州县 (1,898 km²): population approximately 350,000 of whom 246,000 (70.4%) are Zhuang.

4) 11 counties /cities (marked in green) where 50-69% of the population is Zhuang:

- 43. Heshan City / 合山市 (350 km²) in Laibin Prefecture: population approximately 140,000 of whom 98,000 (69.55%) are Zhuang.
- 11. Bama County / 巴马县(1,966 km²): population approximately 240,000 of whom 166,000 (69%) are Zhuang.
- 44. Xingbin District of Laibin City / 来宾市兴宾区 (4,404 km²) in Laibin Prefecture: population approximately 960,000 of whom 656,000 (68.27%) are Zhuang.
- 53. Wuxuan County /武宣县 (1,966 km²): population approximately 240,000 of whom 166,000 (69%) are Zhuang.d
- 2. Xilin County / 西林县 (2,955 km²): population approximately 130,000 of whom 166,000 (69%) are Zhuang.
- 3. Tianlin County / 田林县 (5,584 km²): population approximately 230,000 of whom 145,000 (63.06%) are Zhuang.
- 10. Fengshan County / 凤山县 (1,743 km²): population approximately 190,000 of whom 110,000 (58%) are Zhuang.

- 9. Tian'e County / 天峨县 (3,196 km²): population approximately 140,000 of whom 80,000 (56%) are Zhuang.
- 1. Longlin County / 隆林县 (3,542 km²): population approximately 350,000 of whom 190,000 (53.68%) are Zhuang.
- 41. Liucheng County / 柳城县 (2,124 km²): population approximately 406,000 of whom 209,000 (51.58%) are Zhuang.
- 4. Leye County / 乐业县 (2,617 km²): population approximately 150,000 of whom 64,000 (50.09%) are Zhuang.

5) 8 counties/cities (in pale blue) where 30-49% of population speaks Zhuang:

- 58. Luzhai County / 鹿寨县 (3,358 km²): population approximately 470,000 of whom 230,000 (48.99%) are Zhuang.
- 59. Jinxiu County / 金秀县 (2,517 km²): population approximately 150,000 of whom 64,000 (43.97%) are Zhuang.
- 40. Luocheng County / 罗城县 (2,639 km²): population approximately 360,000 of whom 140,000 (43.97%) are Zhuang.
- 46. Heng County / 横县 (3,464 km²): population approximately 1,060,000 of whom 396,000 (37.40%) are Zhuang.
- 50. Rongan County / 融安县 (2,904 km²): population approximately 320,000 of whom 113,000 (35.43%) are Zhuang.
- 31. Area under jurisdiction of Nanning City / 南宁市辖区 (1,834 km²): population approximately 1,356,000 of whom 461,000 (33.96%) are Zhuang.
- 5. Lingyun County / 凌云县 (2,306 km²): population approximately 180,000 of whom 60,000 (33.13%) are Zhuang.
- 14. Nandan County / 南丹县 (3,902 km²): population approximately 280,000 of whom 90,000 (33 %) are Zhuang.

6) 6 counties / cities (marked in yellow) where the Zhuang proportion of the population is less than 30%, but is numerically greater than 100,000:

- 54. Area under jurisdiction of Guigang City / 贵港市辖区 (3,533 km²): population approximately 1,660,000 of whom 470,000 (28.5%) are Zhuang.
- 39. Area under jurisdiction of Qinzhou City / 钦州市辖区 (4,657 km²): population approximately 1,170,000 of whom 310,000 (26.5%) are Zhuang.
- 34. Area under jurisdiction of Fangcheng Port / 防城港市辖区 (2,815 km²): population approximately 450,000 of whom 100,000 (23 %) are Zhuang.
- 45. Binyang County / 宾阳县 (2,639 km²): population approximately 960,000 of whom 170,000 (18%) are Zhuang.
- 51. Area under jurisdiction of Liuzhou City / 柳州市辖区 (650 km²): population approximately 970,000 of whom 163,000 (17.98%) are Zhuang.

- 60. Guiping City /桂平市 (4,074 km²): population approximately 1,630,000 of whom 110,000 (6.5%) are Zhuang.

Information on the distribution of Zhuang speakers in Yunnan, Guangdong and Hunan Provinces or of Bouyei speakers in Guizhou and Yunnan Provinces is not given here, as the focus of this research is on Guangxi.

County statistics are only part of the picture. The distribution of Zhuang-speakers within individual counties has important implications for the vitality of Zhuang and the extent to which Zhuang-speakers are bilingual in Han and to which they might be tempted to attempt language shift to Han. A county with a high proportion of Zhuang-speakers may be situated very close to overwhelmingly Han-speaking centres and be open to hanising influences. For example Wuming is very close to the overwhelmingly Han (Yue and Pinghua)-speaking metropolis of Nanning, whereas Jingxi is a good drive even from the largely hanised regional city of Baise.

There are many further counties with smaller numbers and proportions of Zhuang speakers. These speakers might be concentrated in isolated rural areas where they form the majority and have limited contacts with Han-speakers, might be bilingual in Han or even undergoing language shift. The extent to which rural Zhuang are bilingual is something I shall return to in more detail in 6.1.3, while the urbanised Zhuang and hanised Zhuang elites are discussed under 6.2.2.

5B.1.7 LANGUAGE USE IN ZHUANG AREAS

Some Zhuang who live in areas with lots of Yao, Kam or other speakers have acquired a knowledge of these languages, but – according to the information gleaned from informants in Guangxi (personal communication 1980-82 and 1993) - it seems that Zhuang is the main language of interaction between Zhuang and other minorities in areas where Zhuang form the large majority of the population and that Han is where this is not the case. If there is any chance of communicating in Han, most Han seem reluctant to use Zhuang, but in core Zhuang areas are often fluent in Zhuang.

Mo (1993: 71) offers the following description of language contact in Guangxi:

各民族由于长期杂居共处，互相学习语言的现象十分普遍，很少数民族群众会讲汉语，汉族也有不少人会说壮语或其他少数民族语言。在民族杂居区，有的人能同时讲几种民族语言。但是大体上各民族主要还是以自己的语言作为交际工具。 Because of the fact that these nationalities have lived together and intermingled for a long time, many Han have learnt the languages of the others and numerous speakers of the minority languages can speak the Han language. Also, there are members of the Han nationality who can speak Zhuang or other minority languages and in ethnically mixed areas some people can speak various minority languages. On the whole, however, the members of each nationality use their own language as a medium of communication.

5B.1.8 ZHUANG DIALECTS AND BOUYEI

In 1982 just over 9 million (roughly two thirds) of the estimated 13 million Zhuang speakers spoke the Northern dialect and over 4 million the Southern dialect. These in turn are divided into sub-dialects, there being a greater degree of variation between those of the Southern dialect than those of the Northern dialect. As can be seen from Map 5A.i, the Southern dialect (Central Tai marked in light blue) is spoken in areas of South-western Guangxi and South-eastern Yunnan near and along the Vietnamese border. Indeed, the Nong and Tay languages of the Vietnamese side of the border are universally considered to be the same language as the Southern Zhuang dialect. All other Zhuang-speaking areas belong to the Northern dialect area (Northern Tai marked in orange) as does the Bouyei language which is called a different “language” for solely political reasons, its speakers having successfully resisted classification as Zhuang, unlike many Central and Northern Tai speakers of Guangxi and Yunnan who failed in their attempt to be classified separately.

This section, which outlines the linguistic differences between the two dialects not only serves as an introduction to the Zhuang language, but also as a preamble to the question discussed in 6.2.7 as to whether the decision to create a single standard Zhuang language was a wise one or not. The following summary of the main phonetic differences between both dialects is adapted from Wei and Qin (1980: 79). Naturally these examples are only isolated words. To really see the effect of the

differences it would be necessary to see typical utterances contrasted which is beyond the scope of this study.

a) The aspirated consonants ph, phj, th, kh, khj of most variants of the Southern dialect do not exist in the Northern dialect. As the following examples illustrate the correspondence is largely, but not totally, logical:

English meaning →	to sharpen (a knife)	to walk	with	to kick	tail	leg	egg	amount
Jingxi (Southern)	phan ¹	phja : i ³	tha ¹	thək ⁷	tha: η ¹	kha ¹	khjai ⁵	khja: u ¹
Laibin (Northern):	pan ²	pja: i ³	ta ¹	tik ⁷	γu: η ¹	ka ¹	kjai ⁵	γa: u ¹

b) The opposition between ts and ths (or ɕ) existing in the Southern dialect disappears in the Northern dialect, both Southern phonemes merging into a single Northern phoneme pronounced ʃ ∞ in some Northern areas and ts in others.

English meaning →	kis s	rope,string	Spring
Longzhou (Southern)	tɕup ⁷		ɕin ¹
Fusui (Southern)	tsup ⁷	tsha: k ¹	
Laibin (Northern)	tsup ⁷	tsa: k ⁸	tsan ¹

c) The Northern dialect r (pronounced in many areas as γ and sometimes as z or j) doesn't exist as an independent category in Southern dialects and can correspond to a variety of different allephones can be seen from the table below:

		tail	warm	seek	boat	to leak	water
Northern Dialect	Wuming	γiəη ¹	γau ³	γa	γu ²	γo ⁶	γam ⁴
	Hechi	jien ¹	jau ³	ja ¹	ru ²	ro ⁶	ram ⁴
	Longlin	zɯəη ¹	zau ³	za ¹	zuə ²	zo ⁶	zam ⁴
Southern Dialect	Longzhou	ha: η ¹	hau ³	khja ¹	lu ²	ɬu ⁶	nam ⁴
	Jingxi	tha: η ¹	thau ³	khja ¹	lu ²	ɬu ⁶	nam ⁴
	Yanshan	tha: η ¹	thau ³	tʃha ¹	lu ²	ðu ⁶	nam ⁴

d) There are a number of further correspondences between most Southern and Northern dialects, e.g.:

Northern dialect (most areas)	Southern dialect (most areas)	Individual correspondences	English meaning
fai ⁴	mai ⁴	f → m	tree
pei ²	vi ²	p → v	fan
mɯŋ ²	maɯ ²	ɯŋ → aɯ	you
ɕa: k ⁸	tsɯ: k ⁸	a: k → ɯ: k	string, rope
ɣa: n ²	lɯ: n ²	a: n → ɯ: n	building
hau ⁴	khau ⁴	h → kh	rice field

e) The phonemes 'ʔv and 'ʔj of most Northern variants are absent in the Southern dialects.

f) Phonetic correspondences within the Northern dialect are regular and simple.

Lexical differences between Zhuang dialects were often mentioned to me as problem, even sometimes by enthusiastic supporters of a unified standard language. In 1955 Wei and Wei (1980: 19-20) carried out a study into the amount of lexical similarity within each of the sub-dialects of both the Northern and Southern dialects of Zhuang and between the Southern and Northern sub-dialects, using a sample of 1,592 frequently used lexical items, excluding Han loan words.

The closest sub-dialects within the Northern Zhuang dialect area (those of Wuming 武鸣 and Laibin 来宾) shared 86.3% of lexical items (allowing presumably for phonetic and tonal changes), whereas the most distant (those of Wuming 武鸣 and Tiandong 田东) shared only 73% of items. The closest sub-dialects within the Southern Zhuang dialect area (those of Fusui / 扶绥 and Chongzuo / 崇左) shared

77% of lexical items, whereas the most distant (those of Yinzhou County / 钦州县 and Debao / 德保) shared only 63% of items. The highest percentage of shared lexical items between a Southern and a Northern sub-dialect was 68% (between Wuming / 武鸣 and Chongzuo / 崇左) and the lowest was 60% (between Longzhou / 龙州 and Liujiang / 柳江).

The authors of the study conclude that there is a high degree of common ground within the Zhuang language and that were the large amount of Han loan words in common use in all Zhuang varieties such as 共产党 Gòngchǎndǎng (Communist Party) to be included then the proportion of vocabulary in common would be greatly increased and in this case the lexical overlapping between Northern and Southern Zhuang dialects would be in the order of more than 75 %.

With regard to dialectal differences within Bouyei (itself considered a variant of the Northern dialect of Zhuang by Zhuang linguists) according to Yu Cuirong (1980:66) sums up the situation thus:

布依语各地的词汇和语法结构一致性相当大。语音的对应也叫整齐，语法上虽然有些细微的差异，但没有地域性的规律；各地不同的词也不容易找出明显的地域分界来。因此，布依语内部没有方言的差别。我们主要根据语音的差异和部分词汇的不同，把布依语划分为黔南 (...), 黔中 (...), 黔西 (...), 三个土语。The vocabulary and grammatical structure of Bouyei displays a considerable degree of internal unity. Phonetic correspondences [between variants] are also regular. Although there are a few subtle variations in syntax, there are no [clear] regional patterns. Likewise it is difficult to identify clear geographical boundaries for the distribution of lexis. Because of this within Bouyei there are no dialectal differences. Chiefly on the basis of phonetic variation and differences in vocabulary, we have divided the Bouyei language into Southern, Central and Western variants.

The same author (ibid: 77) cites the results of a comparative lexical study he carried out with a word list of over 3,500 commonly used words. This study showed between 65% and 76% of common lexical items between places where Southern and Central variants are spoken, >63% between areas where the Southern and Western

variants are spoken and between 56% and 66% between areas where the Central and Western variants are spoken. In 6.2.7, I shall return to the effect of dialectal differences on the degree of success of the promotion of the standardised and unified Zhuang script.

5B.1.9 LANGUAGES WITH WHICH ZHUANG IS IN CONTACT

5B.1.9.1 HAN LANGUAGES

1) The south-western variant of Mandarin (with its sub-variants Guilinhua, Liuzhouhua etc.), spoken in the north of Guangxi, the east of Yunnan and the south of Guizhou. This is the variety of Han in Guangxi that is closest to standard Mandarin or *Putonghua* and, given a certain amount of patience and good-will, is mutually intelligible with it. In its most “standard” form it is known as “桂柳官话” or “Guilin-Liuzhou Common Speech / Guilin-Liuzhou Mandarin” and serves as a de facto lingua franca in large areas of northern Guangxi and beyond.

2) Cantonese in Guangdong Province and its dialectal variant 白话 *bak'wa* (or *báihuà* in Mandarin) spoken across the south of Guangxi

3) Pinghua is a Han language spoken on the outskirts and the edge of the city of Nanning (in whose centre Cantonese is the dominant language) and in other zones of Guangxi such as Qinzhou. Its number of speakers has been estimated at approximately 2 million (linguist at Guangxi Nationalities College: personal communication 1981). Some linguists consider it an independent dialect of Han, but others classify it as a divergent variant of Cantonese.

4) Hakka. There are *Sprachinseln* of Hakka all over Guangxi and Southern China.

5) Some isolated Zhuang speakers in north-eastern areas of Guangxi and southern Hunan are in contact with Xiang variants of Han.

6) There are further Han “dialects”, probably related to Cantonese, such as *Dan* on the south coast of Guangxi.

5B.1.9.2 KAM LANGUAGES

This linguistic group is a sub-branch of the larger Thai-Kam family (called the Zhuang-Dong group in China). Thus they are distantly related to Zhuang. Kam is the largest of these groups with almost 3 million speakers (in 2000) in Southern Guizhou and Northern Guangxi, while Shui and Maonan are miniscule language communities (officially recognised as separate nationalities) with over 400,000 and 100,000 speakers respectively in 2000. The Laga language is spoken by a small minority of members of the Yao nationality.

5B.1.9.3 YI LANGUAGES

In north-western Guangxi an eastern Loloish (Tibeto-Burman) or Yi language is spoken by a reduced speech community

5B.1.9.4 HMONG-MIEN LANGUAGES

Hmong (Miao) of the Hmong branch is spoken by most members of the Miao nationality (almost 9 million in 2000) in southern Guizhou, Guangxi and Wenshan. The Bunu language of the Hmong branch is spoken by about 40% of all members of the Yao nationality in China. Mien, of the Mien branch is spoken by more than half of all members of the Yao nationality in China and, curiously, also by the members of the Miao nationality on Hainan Island.

5B.1.10 CREATION OF ZHUANG NATIONALITY AND ZHUANG AUTONOMY The following account is drawn extensively on Kaup (2000: Ch.4).

During the first two years of communist rule the Zhuang were treated very much as what they essentially were, a mosaic of fragmented ethnic groups, with whom it was not easy to communicate, due to linguistic and cultural differences and to not having previously been fully integrated politically in the Chinese state. Both in the first two years of Communist rule and earlier there was almost a complete absence of

references on the part of the CCP to the speakers of Central and Northern Tai speech varieties as belonging to non-Han minorities. In September 1952 the Zhuang were recognised as an official nationality and in December of the same year the Western Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture was set up. The Wenshan Zhuang Miao Autonomous Prefecture was also set up in eastern Yunnan and various autonomous Zhuang and Bouyei prefectures and counties in Guizhou, Yunnan and Guangdong.

Over six million people lived in the newly created Western Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture, over 67% of whom –according to figures of the Guangxi Nationalities Affairs Commission quoted by Kaup (2000: 89) were Zhuang, 11% of other minorities and almost 22% Han. However in the census of the following year many of these Zhuang declared themselves either to be Han or as belonging to other unofficial minority groups (identifying with their clan or *zhixi*).

From 1952 till 1956 work teams of ethnologists (民族学家), linguists, historians and political analysts were sent to Zhuang areas to try to determine, among other tasks, which groups should be classified as Zhuang and which not. A large number of Zhuang called themselves “local people” and wanted to be classified as Han. Many others wished to be known by their *zhixi* or clan names. In theory they took into account both Stalin’s criteria of a common language, territory, economic life and a common psychological make-up manifested in a common culture and the context and wishes of the groups being identified. In practice the classification was a political decision and in the case of the Zhuang the wishes of speakers of Tai variants themselves were not much taken into account. Instead the state apparatus invested a large amount of energy in a public relations campaign aimed at convincing people to accept their new status.

Sometimes different criteria were applied in different areas. For example speakers of Northern Tai variants in Guangxi were labelled Zhuang, even if they wished to be known as Bouyei or other categories, but across the border in southern Guizhou were classified as Bouyei. Thus members of the same families living on different sides of

the border belonged to 2 different nationalities. In eastern Yunnan Tai speakers were classified as either Zhuang or Bouyei.

Some Zhuang have speculated that this was done so that the Zhuang would not become too powerful. Personally I doubt that this was a motive among a “reluctant” and fragmented nationality such as the Zhuang / Bouyei. Large numbers of Tibetans (members of a nationality that present a real threat to the unity of the Chinese state) live outside of Tibet proper. Many Tibetans in western Sichuan speak varieties of Qiangic or Gyariong languages of the Tibetan-Burmese family (having been classified as Tibetans on religious and cultural grounds) and yet there has been no attempt to have them reclassified in order to lessen the power or influence of Tibetans (in Yunnan, however, speakers of the Qiangic Prmi language are officially “Pumi”). If the Chinese state does not worry about troublesome Tibetans spilling over into other provinces, why should it worry about ethnically reluctant Zhuang? To me, the idea of having the same nationality split among different administrative regions (as opposed to being concentrated only in the core area where they enjoy most autonomy) is a way of emphasising that they belong to China in general and not exclusively to some ethnically-based political unit which could potentially aspire to be independent.

Many Zhuang trace their ancestry back to Han migrants from North China and strongly insist on the authenticity of this version. While constant Han immigration over the centuries must have contributed to the Zhuang “gene pool”, these genealogies are considered by many scholars to have little basis. Kaup (2000: 26) offers the following explanation:

Though the Communist regime has tried to decrease discrimination against the minorities, historically many minority peasants were ashamed of their ethnicity and tried to conceal it by claiming Han ancestry. Before the CCP came to power the minorities were often blatantly discriminated against, and many peasant families sought to disguise their ethnic origins by falsifying their family lineages. For many families this process began generations ago, and the current family members reject the notion that that their family lineages are anything but factual. Many trace their family ancestry back to the Shandong region and to the Zhejiang and Fujian areas.

Zhuang with the surname Zhao, for example, claim to descend from the palace retinue of the Song court. Scholars who have researched this question, however, contend that

these peasants more likely descend from members of the common clan surnamed Nong. After a major Zhuang uprising in 1053, all of the Nong clan members who surrendered were bestowed the surname Zhao”.

Although there are clear linguistic criteria to justify the existence of a Zhuang-speaking community and include within it the Bouyei speakers of Guizhou (and even the Nong and Tuy of Vietnam) in Zhuang-speaking areas there was no sense of common Zhuang identity prior to the *creation of* the Zhuang nationality at the beginning of the 1950s. Moreover millions of members of the new nationality had previously considered themselves to be Han. On the Island of Hainan the half million speakers of *Be* or *Lingao*, a Tai language related (though it is not clear how closely) to Zhuang, have rejected being classified as Zhuang or as any non-Han nationality and are classified as Han. (Fang Honggui, Ethnologist at Guangxi Nationalities College, personal communication 1981-82).

As Kaup (2000: 171) puts it, “The creation of the Zhuang nationality as it exists today was a product of the central part and government’s hegemonic policy to integrate the Chinese nation.” Many Zhuang consider themselves Han. Kaup (2000: 3) affirms that “Even segments within the Zhuang population itself assert that the Zhuang are no different from the Han.” I am sure that many Zhuang who, given the nationalities’ policy, are unable to deny being Zhuang would much prefer to be Han if they had the chance. When I asked a Zhuang student at Guangxi Nationalities College from a rural area of Guangxi in 1981 which language he spoke at home, he answered, blushing and looking very uncomfortable in front of his classmates, “the Zhuang dialect”. When I enquired which language Zhuang was a dialect of, he was unable to respond. After some hesitation he said ambiguously and without much conviction that it was a dialect of Chinese (implying of Han). He appeared offended when I informed him that it was far closer to Thai or Laotian than to Han.

This ignorance about the identity of the Zhuang was widespread and even extended abroad:

In the West, Zhuang have been casually dismissed by scholars as “Sinified” and fully integrated into the Han majority. No major study has been conducted on the Zhuang in English in any field. Early Western studies that tangentially referred to

the Zhuang concluded that they were indistinguishable from the majority Han and “as a minority group actually do not pose any minority problem for the Chinese administration.” (Hudson, 1960. “The Nationalities of China”, *St. Anthony's Papers*. London: Chatto and Windus, quoted in Kaup, 2000: 3)

In 1958 the existing Western Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture was replaced by the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region after several years of ideological preparation on the part of the CCP in which the then premier Zhou Enlai personally played an active role to persuade reluctant Zhuang to accept their new identity and play a full part in this new project, which was once again clearly imposed from above. The Autonomous Prefecture was amalgamated with the rest of the Province within which it lay (the predominantly Han areas of eastern Guangxi). Essentially this move combined an area with only a small proportion of Zhuang, under 7% in 1990, with the predominantly Zhuang areas of the West where they made up two thirds of the population. In the resulting new Autonomous Region only a third of the population was Zhuang. Superficially the Zhuang had been granted autonomy of even greater importance, but in reality the degree of autonomy had been greatly diluted. Kaup (2000: 93) quotes government sources that imply that to have divided Guangxi into two on purely ethnic grounds - 60% of the area for the 30% Zhuang population and 30% for the 60% Han population (the 10% of other nationalities distributed across both areas) - would have deprived the Han population of valuable resources in western Guangxi and the Zhuang of the Han's know-how to exploit them.

A question often asked both within and outside China is why the Communist Government should have found it necessary or desirable to “artificially” create a Zhuang nationality and moreover bestow it with the status of Autonomous Region on a par with Tibet, Xinjiang or Inner Mongolia, when nobody (not even its eventual inhabitants) asked for it or particularly wished for its creation. In a discussion forum about the Zhuang script on the Guangxi Police Academy Alumni Association (广西公安学院校友会)'s web-site in December 2002 Canglang (a pseudo name) asserted:

所谓的壮族是中共凭空制造的一个民族,其实就是广西的部分汉族。The so-called Zhuang nationality is a nationality created by the Chinese Communist Party

without any basis. In reality its members form part of the Han nationality of Guangxi.

Canglang was right in claiming that the nationality was invented by the Communist Party, but wrong in saying “groundlessly”. As discussed in Kaup (2000) there are various theories advanced for the creation of the Zhuang nationality and their Autonomous Region. Some scholars believe that the Zhuang were given autonomy on the same basis as the Uighurs, Tibetans or Mongols in order to confuse the issue of autonomy for these latter nationalities, all with strong separatist tendencies, just as in Spain there are many advocates of Galicia, Andalusia and Castile La Mancha being given the same degree of autonomy as the Basque Country and Catalonia in order to dilute separatist tendencies in these last 2 areas. Kaup (200:51) refutes this view:

Minority policy was not formulated in Zhuang areas and used to justify party policy in the north. Rather, policy was developed in reaction to north-western demands and then adjusted to fit, albeit awkwardly, the situation in the south.

Another theory was that the Guangxi Autonomous Region was created to keep the local Han under control: either to politically separate the Cantonese-speaking population of Guangxi from that of Guangdong and to incorporate them in a political unit where another group (the Zhuang) would be given preferential treatment or to punish local Han for their widespread opposition to the Communist Regime. With regard to the former possibility I think it is clear that there is a mild degree of ethnic tension or mutual mistrust between many Mandarin and Cantonese speakers, rather along the line of that existing in Spain between Castilian and Catalan speakers. Kaup (2000: 51-54), while acknowledging an element of truth in the foregoing arguments, criticises the proponents of these viewpoints for having mistakenly assumed that the Zhuang were essentially the same as the Han. Instead Kaup asserts that

Although the Zhuang had no formal ethnic organizations, had little sense of ethnic consciousness, and were therefore unable to make concerted political demand on the central government, special policies were nonetheless needed to integrate them into the greater Chinese state. (ibid: 51)

....

The creation of a greater Zhuang was intended as a means of integrating the southwestern ethnic groups into the unified administration of the Chinese state. The manipulation of the Zhuang ethnicity was not intended purely as a means of assimilating them, or of imposing external controls over them. The CCP's goal was

not, as many theorists have suggested, to effectively eliminate the nationalities or to assimilate them completely into the Han majority, but rather to integrate them into a Greater Chinese State. With the exception of the Cultural Revolution, during which all differences within the population were viewed with suspicion, nationalities that did not threaten secession or openly challenge the party's right to rule were granted a greater degree of cultural autonomy than nonautonomous areas. (ibid: 54)

Kaup (2000: 86) quotes a scholar at the Guangxi Nationalities Research Institute, who summarised the motives for creating the Zhuang and giving them autonomy:

The Zhuang may not have been organized or had a strong sense of ethnic consciousness before the party came to power, but it would be ridiculous to therefore assume that the decision to recognize them was simply created from the top down with no pressures from below. There were a number of grassroots reasons for recognizing the Zhuang and awarding them autonomy. First, Zhuang had their own cultural traditions. If you didn't understand the Zhuang culture and just waltzed in with outside directives, you couldn't hope to get a single thing accomplished. You simply had to have Zhuang leadership, or central policies would never reach the people. Second, linguistic considerations were a key reason for encouraging Zhuang cadres to take rule over their own internal affairs.

It's easy enough to see. The CCP didn't simply decide that the Zhuang should be ruled by their own people: the party had no choice since it didn't have administrators trained in the Zhuang language or familiar with the Zhuang culture. That was a type of grassroots pressure, you could say.

Kaup (2000:73-74) explains this in the context of the CCP's takeover of war-decimated western Guangxi in 1950 whose urban areas had put up fierce resistance to the Communists and where the communist cadres had real problems communicating with the non-Han speaking rural inhabitants:

As the CCP poured into these regions, it was often met with outright resistance and distrust. At best party members were welcomed by a local population that may have heard of their political mission but was unable to work with the new cadres on administrative projects due to language barriers.

The party had little hope of implementing its broad economic and social plans before solidifying administrative control over its territory. Unifying the fragmented province under a single administrative system with "unified leadership and decentralized management"¹ thus became the primary focus of early CCP policy. Incorporating the minority areas, which had historically been only loosely integrated into the political system, proved a particular challenge for the regime. Within the first four years of the CCP's administration, more than four hundred local groups demanded recognition as unique nationalities along with the accompanying rights such recognition accorded. Each of these groups clearly perceived of itself as different from the Han or "official" Chinese. As the party struggled to integrate the minorities and implement its earlier promises of self-government, it was forced to limit the number of ethnic groups that could receive official recognition. Unable to offer autonomous territorial governments to all of the groups clamouring for recognition in western Guangxi, the CCP devised a strategy to convince several local groups that they could achieve self-rule in the

greater Zhuang autonomous region. The first step toward consolidating administrative rule thus became convincing millions of Guangxi residents that they were members of the larger minority the government designated “Zhuang”.

5B.2 LANGUAGE PLANNING IN ZHUANG AREAS

5B.2.1 LINGUISTIC POLICY IN ZHUANG AREAS BEFORE 1950

In imperial times there was no active linguistic policy towards Zhuang, except that of ignoring it completely both in public life and in education. The Guomindang advocated linguistic assimilation, but made few inroads in putting this into practice. The system of Zhuang *fangkuaizi* never achieved any formal or official status. There was no general awareness among Zhuang – or Han - of the possibility of using a phonetic script. In fact, as mentioned elsewhere, many Zhuang considered themselves basically the same as the Han, believing their ancestors had come from the Han heartland such as Shandong. They therefore regarded their local speech as simply a “dialect”, the implication being that it was a dialect of Han Chinese in the same way as Cantonese, Pinghua, Hakka or Minnanhua. Virtually no Zhuang realised that the historical origins of their language were with the Thai of Thailand rather than with the different variants of Han.

In an article of an issue of the Guangxi Minority Nationality Language and Script Committee bulletin, which I have been unable to retrace, reference was made to a Zhuang student in the late 1940s, who on his individual initiative devised a romanised system for writing Zhuang, but was reportedly murdered by the Guomindang authorities. It was not made clear if this was because of his ethnic activism or because he was generally against the Government.

5B.2.2 ZHUANG LITERACY BEFORE 1950

Referring to the use of Zhuang *fangkuaizi*, Mo (1993: 71) points out

据考察, 这种文字至少在唐代 (1300 多年前) 已存在, 流行于宋代 (800 多年前)。近年出版的 <<古壮字字典>> 一书, 收入流行于壮族地区的古壮字有 10700 个字, 其中使用较普遍的又 4918 个字。但是, 由于壮族社会发展的局

限和历代统治阶级实行民族歧视，民族压迫政策，这种古老的壮族文字，一直被排斥和压制，从未得到统一和规范。Investigations show this kind of script already existed in the Tang Dynasty (1300 years ago), or earlier and became popular in the Song Dynasty (about 800 years ago). According to the recent *Dictionary of Zhuang Han Characters*, there were some 10,700 characters in use in Zhuang zones, of which 4,918 were in common use. However, these ancient characters of the Zhuang were continuously rejected and suppressed and never unified or standardised, due to the limits on the social development of the Zhuang and ethnic discrimination and suppression by successive generations of the ruling classes.

Extremely few Zhuang knew how to read and write (of course it must be bourn in mind that even only a small minority of Han were literate before 1950). Those Zhuang who were literate were normally literate in the Han script. However, in the absence of their own alphabet some Zhuang, who were familiar with Han characters and the sounds of at least one variant of Han, used Han characters to represent the sounds of their local speech (not always easy, given the phonetic differences with Han) or alternatively combined Han characters to form even more complex characters to represent their particular variety of Tai. In many cases one character gave clues to the pronunciation while the other hinted at the meaning. In others a new character was invented or an existing Han character adapted to a This system was similar to the *chu-nom* writing system of Vietnamese and other systems used in a variety of non-Han languages (e.g. Mien or Yao) throughout south-west China which were based on Han characters. Apart from being significantly more complex than normal Han characters it was also off bounds to anyone unfamiliar with Han characters and their Han pronunciation and had the drawback of varying from area to area according to local Zhuang dialectal variants and according to which variant of Han (e.g. southwestern Mandarin or Cantonese) served as the phonetic reference point. This system is still often used for transcribing songs and stories in Zhuang.

5B.2.3 INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNIST LINGUISTIC POLICY IN GUANGXI

In the following description of events I have drawn heavily on personal contacts in Guangxi and on Wei and Wei (1980) and Mo (1993). Most Chinese authors divide the history of linguistic (and most other) policies in communist China into 3 broad periods:

1) Before the Cultural Revolution: from 1950 until the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This period includes the disruptive political campaigns and movements of the late 1950s such as the Great Leap Forward and the Anti-Rightist Campaign, but also some relatively stable, though short, periods in the early 1960s. The disruptions of this period are often lumped together with the almost total abandonment of the policies of the 1950s during the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath.

2) The Cultural Revolution and its aftermath (1966-1978).

3) Since the Cultural Revolution: from approximately 1978 till the present.

In addition, I shall also divide the post-Cultural Revolution period into two periods, the first from approximately 1978 until 1990, corresponding to when the promotion of Zhuang was given a lot of official support and there was certain optimism about its future. The second has been since 1990 and represents a dismantling of the promotion and a generalised feeling that the Zhuang script has no chance of successful promotion.

5B.2.4 LANGUAGE PLANNING FROM 1950 TO 1966

5B.2.4.1 CREATION OF STANDARD ZHUANG SCRIPT AND ORAL FORM

In 1952 when the Linguistic Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Guangxi Institute of Minorities began investigating the Zhuang language, two experimental classes were set up in the counties of Laibin and Yizhou (44 and 35 on Map 5B.iii) with Zhuang phonetic symbols being employed. In 1954, soon after the ratification by the State Council of the “Report on the question of work to help nationalities without scripts create scripts” [“关于帮助尚无文字的民族创立文字问题的报告”] work on the creation of the Zhuang script was defined as a priority in the creation of minority scripts in all China.

On two occasions, in 1952 and 1954, the State Council instructed the Linguistic Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to send experts and work groups to Guangxi to cooperate with researchers in Guangxi (at that time the Autonomous Zhuang Region of Guixi and later the Autonomous Zhuang Prefecture of Guixi) in carrying out a general census and comparative study of the Zhuang language in the 46 counties where Zhuang lived in concentrated communities. The conclusion of these investigations was that the Zhuang language consisted of 2 major dialects, a northern dialect (belonging to the Northern Tai languages) and southern dialect (belonging to the Central Tai languages), which had approximately 60% of their lexis in common. Furthermore the northern dialect was basically the same as the Bouyei language of Guizhou, which for purely political reasons could not be classified as “Zhuang”. It was decided to create one written standard to cover both dialects and this same standard was adopted for Bouyei.

It was reported to me by an ethnologist at Guangxi Nationalities College (personal communication 1981-82) that unsuccessful attempts were even made to promote standard Zhuang literacy in areas of northern Hainan where Be (mentioned earlier in this chapter) is spoken, but I have heard no further confirmation of this and other sources consulted imply that Be has a somewhat tenuous and distant relation to the rest of the Tai languages.

The resulting rough draft of the *Project of the Zhuang Script*, which stipulated an orthographic system based on the Latin alphabet and including several Cyrillic letters, was proposed in May 1956 and after “广大壮族干部群众反复讨论修改和桂西壮族自治区人委的决定 (the decision of the Peoples Committee of the Autonomous Zhuang Region of Guixi and of repeated discussions and amendments of the masses and cadres of Zhuang nationality)” (Wei and Wei, 1980: 2), was published in the Guangxi Daily [广西日报 Guangxi Ribao] of 1st December 1956. On the 29th November 1957, the 63rd Plenary Session of the State Council, presided over by President Zhou Enlai, debated and approved the final version of the project and the promotion of the Zhuang script in Zhuang areas. Mo (1993) reports that

Zhou Enlai managed to secure 5 million Yuan a year financing from the Ministry of Economy to promote the Zhuang script. In fact, various people who promoted the Zhuang script mentioned to me that Zhou Enlai was a “friend of the Zhuang script”.

5B.2.4.2 EXPERIMENTAL PROMOTION OF ROMANISED ZHUANG SCRIPT

According to Chen Zhulin (1986: 4), previous to the formal promotion of Zhuang (1956 and 1957) there was an experimental promotion of the script among over 1,000 students in 26 classes in peasant leisure schools in 6 counties of both northern and southern dialectal areas. Mo (1993) reports pilot classes in this orthography produced excellent results, because the script was easy to learn and near to the spoken language, but does not specify if the different dialects were written or if the future standard based on the county of Wuming was employed. In March 1956 the *Zhuang School of West Guangxi* was opened with 1,100 pupils, 100 of whom came from the neighbouring provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou.

Mo (ibid) reports that in July 1954 the Research Committee of the Zhuang Nationality Script Autonomous Zhuang Region of Guangxi was set up which later was transformed into the Working Committee on the Zhuang Script and that in all the different municipalities and counties with large concentrations of Zhuang, it was essential to establish such committees on a local scale.

5B.2.4.3 FORMAL PROMOTION OF ROMANISED ZHUANG SCRIPT

Mo (1993) informs us that in March (April according to Wei and Wei, 1980: 2) 1957 the promotion commenced in Zhuang nationality areas. During the academic year beginning in 1957 350,000 youths and adults participated in Zhuang language literacy classes in their free time. Simultaneously in 1957 classes of standard Zhuang language and script or trial classes in which the Zhuang script was used as a medium of instruction in primary schools began in counties throughout the Zhuang-speaking areas. During 1958 the number of enrolled pupils reached 2,900,000. During 1959 and the first half of 1960, in spite of the economic problems that China was suffering, more than a million people enrolled (Wei and Wei, 1980: 2-3). Apart from the regular promotion, the counties of Ningming, Napo, Nanzhou, Fengshan,

Donglan, Du'an, Wuxuan and Luzhai were chosen as focal points of the continuation of the promotion and in 1962 more than a thousand Zhuang literacy instructors were trained in isolated mountainous areas. Between 1956 and the end of 1960, 700,000 Zhuang youths became literate in Zhuang and 1,200,000 learnt to spell and write simple original sentences (Mo, 1993 and Wei and Wei, 1980: 4).

To sum up, during this first period the promotion of Zhuang was centred on 52 schools in Guangxi, on the training of over 3,000 cadres specialized in the training of basic literacy teachers - 40,000 according to Mo (1993) and over 100,000 according to Wei and Wei (1980) - and on the training of over 16,009 agricultural technicians.

5B.2.4.4 PRE-CULTURAL REVOLUTION ZHUANG PUBLISHING (Sources: Mo, 1993 and Wei and Wei, 1980: 3-4)

In May 1957 the Editorial of Nationalities of Guangxi was set up. During this first phase of the promotion, the Guangxi Nationalities Publishing House (广西民族出版社) until the first half of 1960 published a total of 10,040,000 volumes of more than 350 titles of different books, dictionaries and grammars, as well as books on politics, economics, agriculture, industry, science and technology, art etc. The Central Nationalities Publishing House (中央民族出版社) set up a Zhuang-language section and translated and published more than 80 titles having a total circulation of 1,400,000 (according to Mo and 1,200,000 according to Wei and Wei) copies including 100,000 copies of the works of Mao Zedong, scientific reference books, popular reading matter, comics and various periodicals. Among the latter were *The Peoples' Illustrated* (人民画报), *The Nationalities' Illustrated* (民族画报) and *The Zhuang Language Newspaper* (壮文报), initiated by the Language Committee of the Autonomous Region and which published over 500 issues. Approximately 2,000 of the key cadres involved in the promotion became correspondents of this publication. The internal newsletter *Work on the Zhuang Script* (壮文工作), where experiences on the promotion and teaching of the Zhuang script in all areas were

exchanged, appeared monthly in Han and the agricultural magazines of the Baise and Yishan areas published columns written in Zhuang. In the same period the Peoples' Central Broadcasting Station (中央人民广播电台) and Guangxi Peoples' Broadcasting Station (广西人民广播电台) began broadcasting in Zhuang.

5B.2.4.5 POLITICAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY MAOIST CAMPAIGNS

As Wei and Wei (1980: 5) state:

但是,道路是不平坦的。一九五八年以后由于左倾思潮的干扰,使壮文推行遭到了障碍,壮文也收到某些人的歧视,甚至还有限制使用壮文的现象。在对待壮汉语言互相丰富互相吸收语言成分的问题上,有些同志则片面地把壮语借用汉语来丰富自己的语言看成是壮语发展的"总趋势",因而忽视壮语自身的发展规律,去"引导壮语逐步靠拢汉语"。一九五八年第二次全国民族语言科学讨论会以后开展的对所谓"异,分,纯"和"挖,创,借"的批判,就是左倾思潮的产物。这种思潮的产生是与当时社会上出现的"共产风","浮夸风","民族融合风"有密切关系的。 But it was not all plain sailing. After 1958, due to the ideological interference of the extreme left, the promotion of the Zhuang script met with obstacles and suffered discrimination from some people who went so far as to restrict the use of the Zhuang script. On the question of the abundant mutual assimilation of linguistic elements between the Zhuang and Han languages, there are some comrades who one-sidedly borrow Han loanwords into Zhuang to enrich their language regarding this as the "general trend" of the development of the Zhuang language and consequently overlook the Zhuang language's own rules of development, thus causing Zhuang to "become progressively more similar to Han". The repudiation of the so-called "different, separatist and purist (异,分,纯)" forms and "dug-up, created and borrowed (挖,创,借)" forms carried out after the Second National Symposium on the linguistics of Nationality Languages in 1958 was a product of extreme leftist ideology. The appearance of this ideological trend was closely linked to the simultaneous phenomena of "excessive egalitarianism" of "exaggeration" and the "current in favour of the assimilation of nationalities" [in reality their hanising].

In 6.2.8.11 the dilemma of using Han loanwords is considered.

5B.2.4.6 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE 1960s

Wei and Wei (1980: 7) quote 1963 statistics from a survey of the Guangxi Regional Education Department among minority, school-age children (of all non-Han nationalities) living in Zhuang areas. In most areas Zhuang primary school attendance was between 50% and 60% (and in some between 30% and 40%) and

falling year by year and only 1 Zhuang in 3,100 was attending university compared to 1 Han in 1,100 (in Guangxi). According to the same source the primary school attendance rate among Zhuang children in mountainous areas was only 20% to 30% in the years 1966 till 1976.

Wei and Wei (1980: 7) comment on the low quality of education among the Zhuang in the 1960s and on the fact that many Zhuang older primary pupils and secondary pupils confused Han characters and were incapable of using them to write a composition. This problem is dealt with again in 6.1.5.

5B.2.4.7 CONCLUSIONS OF INITIAL PERIOD (“HIGH TIDE”) OF PROMOTION

The 1950s coincided with a period of agrarian and social reform when the state apparatus exercised a big influence on the population with many possibilities of mobilising their participation in a variety of campaigns. In many zones a large number of people succeeded in learning to read and write. The movement started off gaining impetus, but was first adversely effected by some of the political movements of the late 1950s and finally forced to come to a premature end with the onslaught of the Cultural Revolution.

Wei and Wei (1980: 7) report that, according to statistics from 1956, there were over 3 million Zhuang adult potential targets of literacy campaigns in the original Autonomous Prefecture of Guixi (which then included the predominantly Zhuang areas of the three special areas of Baise, Nanning and Yishan) of whom some 700,000 were made literate during this first promotional phase. Of course if all 3 million had properly assimilated the language and been motivated to enthusiastically use it and spread its use, the seeds for the ultimate success of Zhuang would have been sown, but this did not happen. Out of a total Zhuang population of some 12 million, 700,000 is only a small minority. However, even this achievement has been largely wasted as most people made literate in Zhuang had only limited or no opportunities to use it, except if they were motivated enough to actively use it on their own initiative. Unfortunately, despite the many reports of individual people actively using their written Zhuang learned during this period for the rest of their

lives, most people do not appear to have been so motivated. As Wei and Wei (ibid.) comment

.... 但是距今二十余年不用, 大部分人已不同程度地复了盲. but to date [at the beginning of the 1980s] having not used it for over 20 years, a large part of these have already reverted to various degrees of illiteracy.

Thus, despite all the enthusiastic efforts of many of those involved, after the long gap of the Cultural Revolution it would be necessary to start the promotional work again more or less from scratch as after so many years many people previously made literate in Zhuang had forgotten the script and many had died or retired. Moreover, by about 1980 virtually nobody under the age of 30 would have been literate in Zhuang as a whole generation would have grown up without the opportunity to learn it. Many of those who had invested much energy and enthusiasm in learning the new script must have felt deceived and let down by the authorities after having been left in the lurch for two decades. Nevertheless, these years are widely seen as having been the “high tide” (高潮) of the promotion of Zhuang.

5B.2.5 CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Wei and Wei (1980: 5) sum up the opinion of the Cultural Revolution that most language workers had, while at the same time associating quite widespread Han-centred views with the leftist radicals in order to use politically correct jargon to criticise such points of view.

"文化大革命" 期间, 林彪, 江青两个反革命集团推行反动极左路线, 更给壮文带来大灾难。他们肆意践踏党的民族政策, 否认壮族是少数民族, 咒骂壮文是 "独立王国" 是 "人为地制造分裂", 胡说壮文 "落后", "无用", 诬蔑推行壮文是 "复辟倒退". 他们的罪恶目的, 就是不使壮族人民使用和发展自己的语言文字, 妄图取消党的民族工作, 壮族地区的四化建设需要壮文。During the period of the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” the counterrevolutionary cliques of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing promoted reactionary extreme left policies which spelled disaster for the Zhuang script. They wantonly rode roughshod over the Party’s Nationality Policy, denying that the Zhuang nationality was a minority nationality and cursing the Zhuang script as being an “independent kingdom” and an “artificial separatist creation”. They falsely said that the Zhuang script was “backward”, “useless”, and insulted its promotion as a “step backwards in the restoration of the old [pre-communist] system”. Their evil

intention was to not let the people of Zhuang nationality utilize and develop their own language and script, in a desperate attempt to annul the work that the Party has done with the nationalities. The construction of the Four Modernisations of the zones Zhuang areas needs the 4 Modernizations.

Regarding the effect of this period on illiteracy, Wei and Wei (1980: 7) comment that not only was illiteracy among up and coming generations not stamped out, but there was a big increase in lapsed illiteracy.

5B.2.6 1980s ILLITERACY RATES IN ZHUANG AREAS

It is very hard to define illiteracy rates in China, even in Han areas. Normally, literacy is defined in terms of mastery of Han characters. The problem then arises as to how many characters a person needs to master in order to benefit from being “literate”. There are various definitions of Han-character literacy ranging from about the 4,000 characters needed to read newspapers and a wide range of general reading materials, to the basic 1,500 required for rural literacy campaigns (and 2000 in urban areas) in 1988. In 1978 UNESCO (cited in UNESCO 200?) introduced the concept of “functional literacy” which it defined as “able to participate in any reading-writing-skill-requiring activities organized by one’s social group or by the community”. While this sounds pragmatic and ideologically correct it is no simple matter to quantify the number of characters needed to achieve this participation.

Another complication in defining literacy is the degree of familiarity with different characters. In an alphabetic writing system, it is reasonably easy to remember the 26-odd symbols after a relatively short period of training even if one makes some mistakes in the way they are combined, especially in languages not written in a very phonetic way such as English or Gaelic. However, in the case of Han characters it is easy to forget characters that one does not frequently use and to have only a passive knowledge of the large number of characters that one reads but never writes. Many peasants are known to lapse into a state of semi-literacy or even total illiteracy.

Had the literacy campaigns of the pre-cultural revolution period not produced large numbers of new literates? Although large numbers of Zhuang speakers had been made literate they were only a small proportion of the total population. A large

number of these quickly forgot what they had learnt, slipping into complete or semi-illiteracy, as they had little or no opportunity to use the romanised script. Most people capable of writing Zhuang *fangkuaizi* were also already literate in Han characters, because competence in the former implied knowledge of the latter.

In Guangxi, except among proponents of the promotion of Zhuang, what really counts is literacy in Han characters. Han characters represent standard Mandarin (having also a less exact correspondence to other Han languages). In rural areas of Guangxi many people either cannot speak Han (neither South-western Mandarin nor Cantonese or Pinghua) or only have a limited knowledge. It is not surprising therefore that illiteracy rates are higher than in Han areas. To learn a non-phonetic script which represents a language they are not familiar with is a daunting task. Many Zhuang learn Han characters and read them with their local Zhuang pronunciation. When they write they often write Han characters according to the Zhuang word order in a way in which Han speakers would have difficulty in understanding due to the many syntactical differences between both languages (see 6.2.5).

According to incomplete statistics for 1982 quoted by Chen Zhulin (1986b: 20) 25% of the total population of Guangxi over 12 years of age (of whom approximately one third were Zhuang) were illiterate and the proportion in the 4 prefectures with large concentrations of Zhuang (Nanning, Liuzhou, Baise and Hechi) was even higher. The prefecture of Baise had an illiteracy rate of 40.09%, which was greater than 90% in some out of the way mountainous areas.

In spite of many years of repeated literacy campaigns in the Han language, the results were poor and many people lapsed into illiteracy after the campaigns were over. Moreover the pass-rate in rural primary schools was very low and many graduates remained wholly or partially illiterate (Chen Zhulin, 1986a: 20-21). It is true that many more pupils attended school than in the pre-communist era, that over 80% of children of primary age enrolled in the first year of primary school and that the 60% drop-out rate after the first year is considered by Chen Zhulin (*ibid*) to be quite low

given the circumstances. However, the quality of teaching was low and, aside from the lowland counties, the primary school pass-rate was between 10 and 20%, and in some counties bordering Vietnam was only 1.56%.

A further even lower estimate of the illiteracy rate, at the same time critical of official figures (probably from the 1990 census), is provided by the missionary society Mekong, which I assume refers only to rural areas.

The government reports that only 33 % are illiterate, but another 44 % have only attended part of elementary school. An overall figure of 20 % literacy is probably realistic. The percentage in many villages would be much smaller.
(http://www.infomekong.com/Zhuang_secondary.htm)

5B.2.7 SECOND “HIGH TIDE” OF ZHUANG LANGUAGE PROMOTION: 1981- 1988

This section describes the period between the recuperation of the promotion of the Zhuang script after the Cultural Revolution and its de facto informal scaling down and abandonment beginning in 1988: [Principal sources Mo (1993: 72), Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Yuwei (1987). Chen Zhulin 1986 (1)]

After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Sitting of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the Party restored its previous policy towards the national minorities and their languages throughout China.

In May 1980 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Zhuang Autonomous Region of Guangxi decided to resume promoting the Zhuang script “in an active and decisive way” / “积极稳步” [Source: Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Yuwei (1987)] and proposed “first accomplishing the promotion in the key points and then extending it gradually to other places” / “搞好重点, 逐步铺开” in addition to concentrating the promotion in schools simultaneously teaching the Zhuang script to schoolchildren and to rural adults via Zhuang literacy campaigns. With this objective in mind, the Working Committee on the Minority Nationality

Languages and Scripts of the Autonomous Region (自治区少数民族语言文字工作委员会), which had been disbanded in the Cultural Revolution, was restored.

The first steps at restoring the promotion were taken in the Counties of Wuming (where a variant of the Northern dialect is spoken, on which the standard language is based) and Debao (where a variant of the Southern dialect is spoken) at the end of 1980. In autumn 1981, 169 children of 7 classes in 7 primary schools in these counties started learning through the medium of Zhuang or as Chen Zhulin (1986a: 5) puts it they “started out on a new Long March / 开始了一新的长征”.

In 1981 adult literacy campaigns were resumed, aimed at cadres (especially initially) and peasants.

5B.2.7.1 REVISION OF THE ZHUANG SCRIPT

The Chinese Committee of Nationality Affairs (国家民委) approved the revision of the Proposal for the Zhuang Script (壮文方案). Why should it be revised? Firstly, the version of the script promoted in the 1950s contained some Cyrillic letters due to the influence of Russian linguists. These were now replaced by Latin letters in order to simplify writing with a normal keyboard and also to bring it in line with pinyin.

Wei and Wei (1980: 24-25), reappraising the pros and cons of the normalised script promoted in the 1950s, reaffirm the need for a script based on the northern dialect and do not question, or even justify, the necessity or desirability of having a single unified script for both dialects (discussed in 6.2.7).

世界上任何民族的文字，都要有一定的规范。这个规范应该是有利于文字的推广，方便多数人的学习和使用。怎样才能做到这一点呢？

首先，要用人口众多语言内部比较一致的一个大方言为基础放言。而过去我们选用了壮语北放言为基础方言，这是正确的。因为北部方言的人口比南部方言多两倍以上，方言的语言内部也很一致；南部方言不但人口少，而且语言内部差

异较大。几乎与北部方言的差异程度相等。所以从全民族的利益来看，只能选用北部方言为基础方言，使壮文一开始就具有较大的普遍性，较利于推广应用。

其次，要选用具有较大普遍性的音系作为标准音。对次我们过去采用了加工过的武鸣音系做标准音，也是对的。但是现在如果把这个音系改用马山壮话的调值来读音就更好一些，因为马山壮话六个调的调值与南北各地多数地方相同或相近，... 所以南北各地壮族人比较容易听懂马山话，...马山县城居民也普遍都讲壮话，这就更有利于标准音的推广。

同时在词汇方面，因在普遍性原则上，适当照顾南部方言。过去通过北部的武鸣，来宾，宜山，田阳和南部的龙州，邕宁南等等六个代表点进行词汇比较，取其多数相同作为规范词而收进词典中，今后可在这个基础上增加马山，德保，河池，凌云四个点，凡是有做点相同的词都收入词典作为规范，这样既可充分有用普遍性词汇，又能丰富标准语，也有利于壮文的迅速推广应用。一九五六年区语委曾编印过这样的壮汉词汇油印本，现在可以对进行加工修订，正式出版应用。总之，按照壮语的实际情况和壮文推行的实际需要，壮文规范词汇中多一两个同义词或近义词，绝对没有什么害处。有几年历史的汉语文和国际通用的英语，不是也还有许多同义词和近义词吗？...，难道壮语标准语就不能多用几个同意词和近义词吗？另外壮语法方面，南北各地基本一致 (...), 应以这个语法基本规律来规范壮文的语法，并要重视使用壮语固有的传统语格式。

The written script of any nationality in the world requires certain norms. These norms should help in the promotion of the script, and facilitate its acquisition by the greatest number of people. How can this be achieved?

First of all, a major dialect with a large population, which is linguistically internally consistent, should be used as the underlying [basis] dialect. Previously [in the 1950s] we chose the Northern Zhuang dialect, which was a correct decision, because the population speaking it is over twice as large as that speaking the Southern dialect. Furthermore, the Northern dialect has a high degree of internal consistency, while the Southern dialect has not only a smaller population, but also a degree of internal consistency barely much greater than that between the Northern and Southern dialects. Therefore in the interests of the whole [Zhuang] nationality, there was no alternative to selecting and using the Northern dialect as the underlying dialect, in order to give the Zhuang script a large degree of universality from the start and to aid its promotion.

Secondly, a phonetic system with a high degree of universality should be chosen for the standard pronunciation. In this respect we in the past [in the 1950s] used a modified version of the Wuming sound system as the standard pronunciation, which was the correct thing to do. However, it would be even better if this system now adapted the tone values of Mashan, because the 6 tone values of the Zhuang of Mashan are identical or similar to those of most Southern and Northern varieties... therefore Zhuang from all over the Northern and Southern dialect areas can understand the Mashan dialect with comparative ease. ... [The authors also mention other phonetic features of the Mashan variety which are more typical of Zhuang as a whole than is the case of the Wuming variety.] ... The inhabitants of the county town of Mashan generally speak Zhuang, which is another point in favour of promoting the standard pronunciation of this variety.

At the same time, applying the principal of universality to lexis, the Southern dialect should be adequately taken into account. In the past [the 50s and 60s] comparative lexical work was carried out in 6 delegated areas: in Wuming, Laibin, Yishan and Tianyang in the Northern dialect area and Longzhou, Yongning etc. [I think the "etc." is an error] in the Southern dialect area. Most [shared] identical words were considered standard words and included in the dictionary. In the future this work can be extended to Mashan, Debao, Hechi and Lingyun and basically identical words can all be entered into the dictionary as standard forms. In this way, since a fully universal lexis can be used, the standard language will be enriched yet again and the speedy promotion of the Zhuang script benefited.

Back in 1956 the Guangxi Autonomous Zhuang Nationality Region Language and Script Committee compiled and printed pamphlets with such Zhuang-Han vocabularies. Now this work can be revised and formally published and applied. In short, in line with the reality of the Zhuang language and the practical needs of promoting the Zhuang script, there is no harm whatsoever in including a few extra synonyms or near synonyms. Do not the Han language and script with its thousands of years of history and the internationally used English language also have many synonyms and near-synonyms? ... Can not the standard Zhuang language then use a few more synonyms and near-synonyms? As far as grammar is concerned, that of all parts of the Northern and Southern dialect areas is basically the same ... This basic grammatical pattern should be applied to the grammar of the written Zhuang language and moreover the use of intrinsically traditional Zhuang language patterns should be emphasised.

In March 1982, the People's Government of the Autonomous Region formally proclaimed the restoration of the promotion and in August 1984 convened a Guangxi-wide *Working Conference on the Zhuang script* (全区壮文工作会议) in order to research, summarise and plan the promotion work.

5B.2.7.2 ACHIEVEMENTS IN PROMOTION OF ZHUANG UP TO 1987

By autumn 1984 primary classes from another 21 counties joined the promotion that had started in Wuming and Debao and in autumn 1985 from a further 10 counties. Thus by 1985 17,017 Zhuang children in 648 classes of 455 primary schools were being educated in Zhuang. Writing in 1986 Chen Zhulin (1986a: 6) reports that the initial classes had already completed primary school and that there were Zhuang-medium classes for each of the 5 primary grades, whose experiences varied widely. He reports that where the administration and civil servants at all levels had given strong support to the promotion, where appropriate provision for teachers had been made and where teaching conditions were favourable the results were unexpectedly good, whereas in other classes with unfavourable circumstances results were not particularly good or fell short of the classes' remit (see 6.2.4 and 7.2.4).

From 1981 to 1986 (ibid) over 100,000 young and middle-aged adults in 33 counties were (re-) acquainted with the Zhuang script. Through this active campaign over 170,000 Zhuang peasants, pupils and civil servants were reported capable of actively using Zhuang to fulfil their reading and writing needs leading to the introduction of new ideas and innovations (ibid).

In September of 1986 the Autonomous Region's Nationality Affairs Committee, Working Committee on Minority Nationality Languages and Scripts and Education Department (教育厅) were charged with holding a congress to praise the work of the 88 organisms and 214 progressive personalities involved in the promotion of the Zhuang script throughout Guangxi. This was to prove to be the swan song of the promotion. The authors of a report by Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Language and Script Committee (1987) evaluating the success up till then of the promotion showed great optimism with its authors seeming to believe in the potential success of the promotion. However, this may have been a desperate attempt to stave off the terminating of the promotion which hung like a sword of Damocles over their heads.

...几年来,在各级党委,政府的直接领导下,在各有关部门的密切配合下,壮文推行和使用工作正积极稳步地在壮族地区的学校,农村,机关逐步地开战,整个工作开战是正常地,健康地,形势是好的。In the last few years, under the direct leadership of the Party Committee and of all levels of Government, in close collaboration with all the relevant departments, the work of promotion and use of the Zhuang script has actively and steadily been carried out in schools, in the countryside and in organisations. All the work has been carried out in a regular and healthy manner and the situation looks good. (Ibid: 1)

The report (pages 1-3) bases this optimism on the following points:

1) The setting up of leading organisms and experts to train the personal that carry out the promotion. The report mentions the recuperation, after the parenthesis of the Cultural Revolution of the following organisms: the Minority Nationality Languages and Scripts Committee of the Autonomous Region (自治区少数民族语言文字委员会), the Guangxi Nationalities Press (广西民族出版社), the Nationalities

Newspaper Office of Guangxi (广西民族报社), originally the Zhuang-language Newspaper Office (壮文报社), the Zhuang schools of Guangxi (广西壮文学校), the Guangxi Nationality Language and Script Printing Press (广西民族语文印刷厂).

“Working Offices of National Minority Languages and Scripts (少数民族语言文字工作办公室),” offices in charge of promoting the Zhuang script, were set up in administrations of the cities of Nanning and Liuzhou and the districts/prefectures of Nanning, Liuzhou, Baise, Hechi and Yinzhou and were gradually re-established in the 54 counties and municipalities of Guangxi with Zhuang populations of over 30,000. The recuperation of Zhuang-medium schools was also initiated in these counties. In total the report mentions that initially there were more than 1,300 workers of the Zhuang script and 1,817 Zhuang primary school teachers and that the different Zhuang training classes trained more than 18,000 state employed key promoters of the Zhuang script. Moreover, the Central Department of Translation of Minority Nationality Languages and Scripts (中央民族语文局) set up a Zhuang Script Translation Office (壮文翻译室).

2) The accumulation of experiences and of preliminary successes in the process of regularisation of the use of the Zhuang script in the schools. The authors regard the work in schools as being at the centre of the promotion work in general. In the Autumn of 1987, 385 primary schools in 42 counties and municipalities of Guangxi offered 5 years of Zhuang-language education. This figure means that an average of approximately 9 primary schools in each of these counties had some Zhuang-medium classes. This obviously accounts for only a small proportion of total primary schools in these counties. In these 385 primary schools there were 1,033 experimental Zhuang-medium classes with 27,210 pupils, meaning that each of the 385 schools had an average of only 3 Zhuang-medium classes, again only a small proportion of the total number of classes in these experimental schools.

Seven years after the beginning of the recuperation, only a minority of primary school classes in a minority of the primary schools in 42 of the 54 counties with a Zhuang population of over 30,000 was Zhuang-medium, and even these were considered *experimental* (试点班). These figures are being proudly presented with the intention of impressing the readers of the report, but the fact that only an infinitesimal minority of Zhuang-speaking primary schoolchildren had been made literate in Zhuang should be a cause for concern. The fact is that the great majority of Zhuang primary school pupils, even at the height of the second *high tide* of promotion were receiving their education only through the medium of Han. After the 7 years of promotion only 320 pupils graduated between 1985 and 1987, the first groups of graduates to receive Zhuang-medium primary education. At the end of 1987, 292 pupils had already gone up to Zhuang-medium classes in lower secondary schools.

The authors of the report hoped that this *experimental* phase, carried out in an extremely minority context would be extended and generalised to the whole Zhuang-speaking community and recognise the key role of the promotion of the Zhuang script in schools for the development of the cultural and scientific level of the Zhuang nationality. However they warn that the wide range of Zhuang-medium education provision, implies not just a high degree of political, professional and scientific work, but must proceed in a stable and active manner, “搞好重点,逐步铺开. After obtaining good results in the focal points, gradually spread [the promotion to other places]”.

- 3) Encouraging successes obtained by using the Zhuang script in rural literacy work.
- 4) The publication of all kinds by the *Editorial of the Guangxi Nationalities Press* (广西民族出版社).
- 5) The preliminary use of the Zhuang script in some official organisations.
- 6) The preliminary successes obtained in the research work on the Zhuang script.

Following the habitual pattern of such articles, the list of achievements is followed by a list of suggestions from the authors to increase the scope and intensity of the promotion. Far from heeding this advice, the administration went beyond ignoring it and decided to do the opposite and “run down” what had been achieved so far.

5A.2.8 THE TIDE GOES OUT: POLICY TOWARDS ZHUANG FROM 1988

In 1992 the responsibility for the promotion of the Zhuang script was transferred from the Guangxi National Minority Affairs Committee (广西壮族自治区少数民族委员会 = “广西民委”) to the Guangxi Education Committee (广西壮族自治区教育委员会 = “广西教委”). Wu Chaoqian (*ibid*) relates (confirmed by Guangxi cadres in personal communication) that in 1990, the number of counties with Zhuang language pilot classes was reduced from 47 to 22 and half the functioning Zhuang-medium schools were abolished. In junior middle schools which continued teaching the Zhuang script, only the compulsory subject *Zhuang language* was taught in Zhuang and all other subjects were taught through the medium of Han. Additionally the promotion of the Zhuang script was “temporarily” suspended in upper secondary schools. What almost non-existent public use there might have been, alongside with spontaneous social use, now became an extreme rarity.

5B.2.9 THE ZHUANG SCRIPT IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE ZHUANG SCRIPT

By all indications the promotion has, all in all, failed in its objectives of gradually being extended and actively used throughout the whole of Zhuang-speaking society. Not only did it reach merely a small minority of Zhuang speakers during the 1980s, but its use and promotion became even more restricted and marginalised in the 1990s and 2000s. Is the script definitively dead? Can its death certificate be issued? Continuing the same metaphor, it would seem that news of its death is premature and that it is being kept alive on the resuscitator in a secret back-room of an out-of-the-way rural hospital.

In a news item in February 2002 in the Web page of the Dayang online news service, the 20th birthday of the second phase of the promotion was celebrated. This item failed to mention the virtual paralysis of the promotion and with one exception was fuzzy about distinguishing between events of the 1980s and 1990s/2000s, instead listing with supposedly impressive statistics the usual formulaic achievements of the campaign as a whole, without saying what the present situation was, or what the future held for the script. For example when referring to education, the initial impression is given that things are going well and the promotion is still in full swing:

广西积极推行学校使用壮文教学。目前全自治区有23个县(市、区)的66所小学校、63个教学点和23所民族中学进行壮汉双语文教学实验,总结出“以壮为主、壮汉结合、以壮促汉、壮汉兼通”的教学办法。广西壮文学校从1982年成立至今已培养3170名合格的壮语专业毕业生,各级壮文学校也培养了一大批壮文骨干。20年来,广西还编译、出版了大量的壮文图读物及各种政策法规文件,仅广西民族出版社已出版的图书就有230多种近260万册。壮文的报纸、杂志、电视、电影、广播受到壮族农民的欢迎。Guangxi actively promotes the use of Zhuang-medium teaching in schools. At present there are 66 primary schools, 63 teaching centres and 23 nationality secondary schools carrying out Zhuang-Han bilingual teaching experiments, with a methodology of "prioritising the use of Zhuang, integrating Zhuang and Han, using Zhuang to promote Han, mastering both Zhuang and Han." Since 1982 Zhuang-script schools in Guangxi have trained 3,170 qualified Zhuang language specialists and a large number of key Zhuang-script workers. In these 20 years Guangxi has published a large quantity of reading matter and all kinds of political and legal documents, with Guangxi Nationalities Publishing House alone publishing 250 titles and near to 2,600,000 copies of Zhuang language books. Zhuang-language newspapers, magazines, television items, films and broadcasts have been welcomed by Zhuang peasants.

However, when one considers that the Zhuang-speaking population of Guangxi is over 15 million and that an overwhelming majority of Zhuang schools are totally Han-medium, the statistics given are not so impressive. One wonders who they are trying to impress by boasting about the achievements of “experimental” classes which have been going on for 20 years and have actually shrunk in number during this time. Regarding the publications, when one thinks about it, 250 titles are not a lot for a time-span of 20 years and I wonder how many of these titles are even of interest to the average Zhuang reader or potential reader. With respect to the number of books published, if we took the most optimistic potential readership figure of a

million people, this means that two and a half books (from one of 250 titles) have been published for each potential reader over two decades. Perhaps a readership of half a million or even considerably less, would be more realistic (and this figure is surely dwindling very fast as people forget how to read and write Zhuang through lack of practice) in which case 5 Zhuang books would correspond to each reader. The report actually quotes an estimate of 700,000 people made literate through adult literacy campaigns (i.e. apart from the experimental bilingual education programme).

广西少数民族语言文字工作委员会主任黄海坤说，自广西壮族自治区党委于1980年决定恢复使用壮文并于1981年开始实施以来，广西编印壮文扫盲教材7种约35万册，扫除青壮年文盲70万人。The Head of the Guangxi Minority Nationalities Language and Script Working Committee, Huang Haikun, said that since the Guangxi CPC made the decision in 1980 to restore the promotion of the Zhuang script in 1981, 350,000 copies of 7 kinds of literacy materials have been published which have made 700,000 people literate. [Ibid]

It must be bourn in mind that most of these people in the early and mid-1980s and many of them have since not used their literacy or have slipped back into illiteracy. Again, in of a population of over 15 million this small fraction of literates are unlikely to make much impact, especially as a large proportion hardly make use of their theoretical literacy. The article had one vague reference to recent activity, although with no reference to when it took place or how it might fit into future developments:

据新华社消息，近年来，广西又探索出了民族语文扫盲与脱贫致富相结合的新路子，有计划、有重点地在一些壮族聚居地区开办了10期“农民学壮文科技”培训班。据了解，受训的500多名壮族农民，不仅达到了壮文脱盲的标准，而且掌握了种桑蚕、水稻旱育、抛秧技术、蔬菜高产栽培、家禽饲养、病虫害防治等结合当地自然条件和经济状况的种养技术。According to the Xin Hua News Agency, in the last few years Guangxi has again explored a new approach of integrating illiteracy and poverty eradication through the setting up of 10 planned key training courses in majority Zhuang areas for peasants to study the Zhuang script and science and technology. It is understood that over 500 Zhuang peasants received such training, not only achieving literacy in Zhuang, but also mastering silkworm production, the cultivation of rice and dry crops, planting seedlings, the cultivation of high-yield vegetables, raising domestic fowls, the prevention and cure of plant diseases and insect pests etc. thus combining local natural conditions and economic possibilities with husbandry and cultivation techniques. [Ibid]

This is an implicit recognition of the failure of Han-language initiatives to increase literacy in core Zhuang rural areas, which will be further discussed in 6.1.5.

5B.2.10 CLOSING COMMENTS

The promotion was only carried out among a low proportion of the total population of majority Zhuang areas. However, articles describing the promotion work tend to emphasise the large number of people made literate in Zhuang or who have been educated in Zhuang, thus giving the impression that the promotion has intimately affected the majority of Zhuang-speakers. During my visit in 1993-4 numerous Zhuang speakers told me they had not personally come into contact with the promotion of the Zhuang script, even though they knew of its existence. Several Zhuang even told me they did not know about the existence of the script.

5C THE NUOSU LANGUAGE AND SCRIPTS: USE AND PROMOTION

Further background information to Liangshan and the Nuosu is provided in Annex 1 of this thesis.

5C.1. THE NUOSU /YI, THEIR LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS

5C.1.1 NAMES AND ANTONYMS FOR THE YI /NUOSU [main source Bradley 2001: 201]

The Nuosu are the speakers of the northern branch of the Northern Loloish or Yi languages, living in and around the Liangshan Mountains of southern Sichuan and northern Yunnan.

Members of the Yi nationality are people who have been classified as such by the Chinese authorities. However, many Yi are not very disposed to use the term, the degree of resistance to doing so varying greatly between individuals and groups.

According to Harrell (1989) being Yi means that:

One speaks, or at least one's ancestors spoke, one of the 'Loloish' group of Tibetan-Burmese languages (Bradley 1979); aside from this one is an Yi if one has been classified as such. What it does not mean is that one shares all kinds of common characteristics with the other members of the Yi *minzu*. [民族 *mínzú* = nationality, ethnic group]

As shall be seen later, not speakers of all Loloish languages are classified as Yi. The members of the Yi nationality are distributed around the south of Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou as well as a small number in the north-western corner of Guangxi. According to the 1990 National Census of China, (also quoted in Bradley 2001: 205), 6,572,173 people identified themselves as members of the Yi nationality (compared with just over 5 million in 1982), 4,060,327 (more than 62%) of whom lived in Yunnan, 1.8 million (27%) of whom lived in Sichuan, 707,275 (more than 10%) in Guizhou and 6,074 in Guangxi. There are also small communities in Laos, Burma (personal communication during a visit to Liangshan, August 1994) and Vietnam (roughly 9,700 according to Bradley 2001: 205).

However, of the 6 and a half million members (involuntarily or voluntarily) of the Yi nationality, about a million and a half have no knowledge of any variety of the Yi language or only possess a rudimentary knowledge. These *non-speakers* of Yi speak Han, are concentrated in parts of Yunnan and Guizhou and belong especially to the groups who originally spoke the Yi of the western and eastern branches. There are also members of the Yi nationality who originally spoke Yi of the central, south-eastern and southern branches who no longer speak Yi. The immense majority of the northern Yi or Nuosu do speak Yi, a large proportion of them knowing no other language.

The people classified as Yi, who in reality speak some 6 main linguistic varieties (called *dialects* by Chinese writers), normally call themselves Nuosu, Sani and other traditional ethnic names which are now classified as Yi. When dealing with the non-Yi world, however, many Yi have come to accept and exploit their official categorisation as Yi.

Throughout history the Han have used many names for the nationality that is today officially called the Yi. For example, the term “Man” referred to a variety of non-Han peoples of the south-west of China, including the Yi in the modern official sense, but also many other groups such as the Miao and Yao. The term “Wuman” included both the Yi and also some other peoples of the east of Yunnan. Sometimes names of ancient kingdoms or of local non-Han dynasties such as Dian or Cuan were used. During the Ming dynasty the term Yi (夷) was applied both to partially *Hanised* groups speaking Tai languages such as the Zhuang and Bouyei and to partially Hanised Yi-speaking subgroups. From the 12th Century many groups of Yi came to be known as Luoluo, or Lolo in European languages, written with various different Han characters, but always with the dog radical (犭) to express disdain. Lolo was the term most used in the West prior to the communist period. it was written 猓猓 or 猓猓 in Han characters. Another perjorative variant was 猓猓 Guoluo. Some Yi groups even came to refer to themselves by these names, typically pejorative, bestowed upon them by the Han, but they were the exception.

Already prior to the communist period some educated Yi and some politically conscious Han wanted to avoid the term *Luoluo* or *Lolo* and some had already suggested as an alternative the term Yi. Referring to an incident in the 30s, Goullart (1959: 117-8) cites the reaction of an Yi nzyimo (prince) (the Nuosu Prince Molin mentioned in other quotations from Goullart elsewhere and the Leng Guangdian mentioned by many writers in Liangshan) when Goullart used the term Lolo to him.

I noticed that every time I used the word 'Lolo', a shadow of distaste flitted across his sensitive face; and felt that I was saying something wrong. At last he stopped me and looked straight at me.

'Although the Chinese call my people the Lolos, we dislike it intensely as it is a derogatory appellation and even the Chinese character contains a radical which means "beast"; we may be savages, but nobody likes that to be said to his face,' he said with a wry smile and paused sipping his tea and looking at me with his brilliant eyes. 'The proper name for us which we use is Yi and next time you refer to the Lolos or when you speak to them, you had better call us "Yi-jen" i.e. Loloman...

Under the Peoples' Republic the term Yi was modified and is now written with the Han character 彝 instead of 夷 to refer exclusively to the new Yi nationality (and no longer also to the Zhuang, Bouyei and other groups). Moreover when the term Luoluo is written now, or if the element Luo appears as part of the name of a subgroup, the dog radical has been dropped: 罗罗. In spite of the declaration of Prince Molin, Heberer (2001: 218) informs us that the alternative "Yiren" (人 rén = person) is not so politically correct either.

The Yi in Liangshan call themselves either Nuosu or Nasu, which means nothing but "people." Names that they were earlier known by, such as Lolo or Yiren (the first is derived from a pejorative name, the second means barbarian), were perceived as discriminatory. The current name, Yi, is said to have been the result of a majority opinion in a survey of representatives of this nationality in in 1950s. But Yi informants point out that the only thing actually debated was a new character for Yi. The sound was still a historical product forced on them by earlier emperors.

5C.1.2 LANGUAGES YI NATIONALITY MEMBERS SPEAK

5C.1.2.1 LOLOISH OR YI (TIBETO-BURMESE) LANGUAGES

According to the linguistic classification of Bradley 1979, the Nasu language (usually known as Nuosu, the linguistic variety of the majority of the Yi nationality in Liangshan (Sichuan and of north Yunnan), with approximately 2,500,000 speakers in 1990) belongs to the northern branch of the Loloish languages (sub-family of the

Tibeto-Burmese language family), while other varieties spoken by the Yi nationality belong to the central branch. Some varieties spoken by members of the Yi nationality are more closely related to Loloish languages spoken by members of other nationalities than to varieties spoken by other members of the Yi nationality. For example, according to Bradley (2001: 201-202) the central and western varieties of Yi bear more resemblance to other languages of the same family such as Lisu and Lahu (officially associated with those official nationalities) than to other official varieties of Yi. Bradley (*ibid.*) informs us that the central variant is so similar to the Lisu language, that between the censuses of 1982 and 1990, 50,000 speakers of central Yi (who call themselves Lipo) in the counties of Luquan, Wuding and Yuanmou (all in Yunnan, to the north-west of Kunming) changed their nationality from Yi to Lisu. Thus the inclusion or not of different groups who speak Loloish languages as Yi was somewhat arbitrary.

5C.1.2.2 SOUTH-WESTERN VARIETIES OF HAN-MANDARIN

Especially in Yunnan there are large numbers of people classified as Yi, whose communities once spoke Tibeto-Burmese languages but now speak the south-western variety of Han-Mandarin. There are also many communities classified as Yi who at present are undergoing language shift in favour of Han. This is for example the case among Yi communities which traditionally spoke Central Yi languages (see for example Bradley, 2005).

5C.1.3 LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION OF YI/NUOSU

5C.1.3.1 RELATION TO OTHER TIBETO-BURMESE LANGUAGES

The Sino-Tibetan family is often considered to consist of the Sinitic or Han languages on the one hand and the Tibeto-Burmese on the other, with some considering Bai to be intermediate. Tibeto-Burmese languages are spoken over a wide area of south-western China (Tibet, Yunnan, Sichuan, Qinghai, Guizhou, Guangxi, etc.) and neighbouring countries from India to Vietnam, Burmese, official language of Myanmar being one. Their classification is a matter of great debate and controversy. The main branches (using mainly Ethnologue, 2007's criteria and taking into account those of Promotora Española de Lingüística, 2007): Kuki-Chin-Naga (eg. Naga), Bai, Tangut-Qiang (Qiangic/rGyarong, eg. Qiang, Prmi), Lolo-Burmese, Himalayish (including Tibetan),

North Assam, Nungish, Jingpho-Konyak-Bodo (eg. Jingpo or Kachin), Tujia, West Bodish, Mru, Mikir, Meiti and some unclassified languages.

The Lolo-Burmese languages are divided into Burmish languages of which Burmese is the best known and the Loloish group is divided into Northern and Southern branches. To the Southern Loloish branch belong languages such as Hani, Lahu and Jinuo, whose speakers have been classified into their own official nationalities. There are also various Loloish languages neither in the Southern nor Northern groups, some containing the word “Yi” in their names, spoken in southwest China by people both classed officially as Yi and as other nationalities.

Northern Loloish is divided into Lisu (the Lisu and Lipo languages both being spoken by people of Lisu nationality), Samei (a dying tongue spoken by people of Yi nationality) and the Yi languages, spoken mainly (but not exclusively) by people of Yi nationality. As is discussed in the following sub-section, the Yi languages are in turn divided into Central, Eastern, Southeastern, Southern, Western and Northern Yi languages in addition to others hard to classify.

5C.1.3.2 THE 6 NORTHERN LOLOISH LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY THE YI:

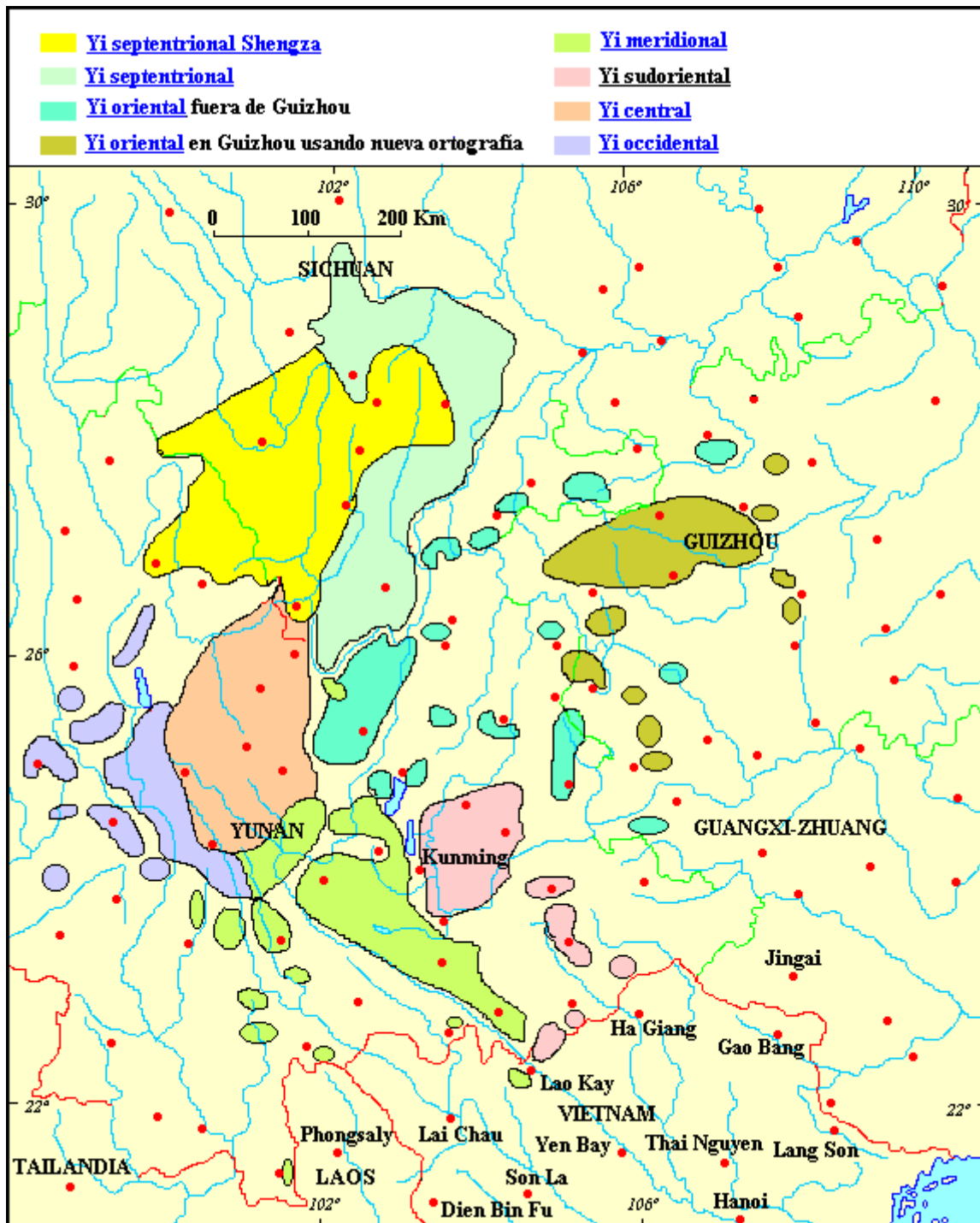
According to the traditional history (Bradley, 2001: 201-2 and Wu Gu, 2001: 29-31,) the Yi people split into six clans somewhere near Kunming, and these migrated in different directions, following the fall of the kingdom of Cuan according to Bradley (2001: 201), and some 4,000 years ago according to Wu Gu (2001: 30). As I point out elsewhere, the latter greatly exaggerates the antiquity of the landmarks of Yi history. This event is known as the *division of the 6 forefathers*. Bradley comments (2001: 201) that

... modern linguists may have used this [the fact that there were six clans] as one of the reasons for including six major *fangyan* [= dialect] groups within Yi.

In fact only four of the six official groups of *fangyan* or dialects are identifiable with these traditional six clans: the Nuosu speakers of the north, the Nisu of the south, the Sani of the south-east and the Nasu of the east.

Two other modern “dialects” classified as Yi, the western and central languages, do not have any tradition of an autochthonous script like the other four and are – as we have already mentioned - more similar to languages not politically classified as Yi such as Lisu and Lahu (which are linguistically classified as belonging to the Yi branch of Tibeto-Burmese languages).

Map 5C.i. Yi Languages. Nuosu shown in Yellow and pale turquoise



(Source: Promotora Española of Linguistic. <http://www.proel.org/mundo/loloish.htm>)

Key: “**Yi septentrional**” and “Yi septentrional Shengza” = Nuosu or northern Yi.
 “Yi oriental (**fuera de Guizhou/ en Guizhou usando nueva ortografía**)” =Nasu
 = eastern Yi (**outside Guizhou / in Guizhou using new spelling system**)
 “Yi meridional” = southern Yi = Nisu. “Yi sudoriental” = south-eastern Yi = Sani.
 “Yi central” = central Yi. “Yi occidental” = western Yi

5C.1.3.3 Degree of mutual intelligibility between Yi languages

The table below shows percentages of lexical items with a common origin (including both items with exactly the same form and cognates) in the vocabulary of the 6 Yi languages according to investigations of Chen Shilin et al. (1985: 178, 183, 192, 198, 206-7, 212), carried out between 1956 and 1958. Percentages in brackets indicate relations between the variants of the same Yi languages.

N = Northern YI S = Southern Yi C = Central Yi
 W = Western Yi E = Eastern Yi SE = South-Eastern Yi

	N (Nuosu) Xide	N (Nuosu) Huili	E Wei- ning	E Lu- dian	E when	L ping	S X S Qiu- bei	SE Yi-liang	SE Wen- shan	SE Milei /Mile	W Wei- shan	C Dayao	C Yaoan
N (Nuosu) Xide		(73%)	42%		39%	36%	20%	39%	33%		31%	35%	
E Weining	42%			(55%)	(57%)	41%		32%		45%		41%	
S Xinping	36%	35%	41%	38%			(very simil -ar)	35%			48%	52%	
SE Yiliang	39%	36%			42%	35%				(57%)	40%		53%
W Weishan	31%	26%	33%			48%		40%					57%
C Dayao	35%	28%			41%	52%		50%			57%		(very similar)

Chen Shilin et al. (1985: 178) conclude, although there is no shortage of cognates (words with a common origin) between the 6 Yi languages, in almost all cases they

account for less than half of the total vocabulary. Only between the central and western Yi languages (57%), the central and southern Yi languages (52%) the central and south-eastern Yi languages (53 %) is there a common vocabulary of more than 50%, although the dialects of the western and southern Yi language have 48% of words of common origin.

The proportions of common vocabulary between dialects of the Northern (Nuosu), southern, central and western Yi languages are the lowest, 20% in the first case, 26-31% in the second and 28%-35% in the last.

We can observe that the northern Yi language or Nuosu, the object of this thesis, has between 20% and 42% of their vocabulary in common with the other Yi languages. I do not know to what extent these figures are reliable and consistent. This weak relation between the Yi languages makes the authorities' efforts to promote the concept of a single Yi nationality much more difficult, especially as their speakers (aside from a tiny elite, which has only existed since the 1950s) do not as it is feel they have much in common with one another,. It would also make much harder (or almost impossible) any future linguistic project to unify the Yi languages, naturally called dialects (方言 fangyan) by official Chinese sources.

The Chinese classification of the 6 types of Yi as “dialects” is modelled after the official classification of Han which considers totally unintelligible Han varieties to be dialects rather than a language family. While Yi languages have a common origin, which they also share with Lisu and Lahu, there is not enough mutual intelligibility to realistically consider them varieties of the same language, at least according to normal European criteria, especially taking into account the general lack of identification with the category Yi among most speakers of Yi varieties.

5C.1.3.3 NUOSU OR NORTHERN YI AND ITS SUB-CLASSIFICATIONS (Principal sources: Bradley, 2001: 202-205, Chen et al., 1985: 172-3 and Coyaud, 1992 - based to a great extent on Chen et al., 1985: 180-185).

Nuosu (the language which relevant to this study) comprises the yellow and light turquoise areas on Map 5C.i. Since the linguistic category of Yi is a fairly vague

concept, which does not coincide with how Yi speakers define themselves, I have decided to follow the example of Harrell (2001a and b) and of some other non-Chinese authors and use the term “Nuosu” to refer to this language, that the majority of the Chinese sources call the northern dialect of the Yi language or “Liangshan Yi”.

In 1990 some 2,500,000 people spoke this variety (in 1982 there were some 1,600,000 speakers), principally in the mountain range of Liangshan: Daliangshan in the Province of Sichuan and Xiaoliangshan in the Province of Yunnan and adjacent areas. Speakers of this language call themselves Nuosu. When many writers refer to the Yi or Lolo they have in mind this group, which they sometimes called independent Lolos.

Chen Shilin et al. (1985)’s sub-classification of Nuosu

Nuosu, a *dialect* (方言 *fangyan*) of the Yi language, is divided into two *sub-dialects* or *次方言* *cifangyan*:

1) Northern sub-dialect, with approximately 1,200,000 speakers according to Chen Shilin et al. (1985), divided into 3 *土语* *tuyu* or patois:

a) Patois of *Shengzha*

Speakers of this variety numbered at least 800,000 speakers, presumably at the beginning of the 1980s. Includes the greater part of Zhaojue County.

b) Patois of *Yinuo* .:

More than 300,000 speakers in the 1980s. Includes Meigu County and some areas of Zhaojue County.

c) Patois of *tianba*.

Over 80,000 speakers in the 1980s.

2) Southern sub-dialect, with approximately 400,000 speakers, according to Chen Shilin et al. (1985), divided into 2 *tuyu* or patois:

a) Patois of *butuo* :

More than 200,000 speakers in the 1980s..

b) Patois of *huili* or *suodi*:

More than 175,000 speakers in the 1980s.

Percentage of lexical items with a common origin (including both items with exactly the same form and cognates) in the vocabulary of the subdialects of both (northern and southern) dialects of the Nuosu language, according to research by Chen Shilin et al. [1985: 177-8]:

- Between Shengzha (Xide) and Yinuo (Mabian) - both dialects of the north: 90%.

- Between Shengzha (Xide) - a dialect of the north - and Suodi (Huili) - a dialect of the south: 73%.
- Between Yinuo - a dialect of the north - and Suodi - a dialect of the south: 71%.

Bradley (2001)'s subclassification of the Nuosu language (ibid: 202-205)

Nuosu, with approximately 2,500,000 speakers (according to the census of 1990), is divided into 3 subgroups:

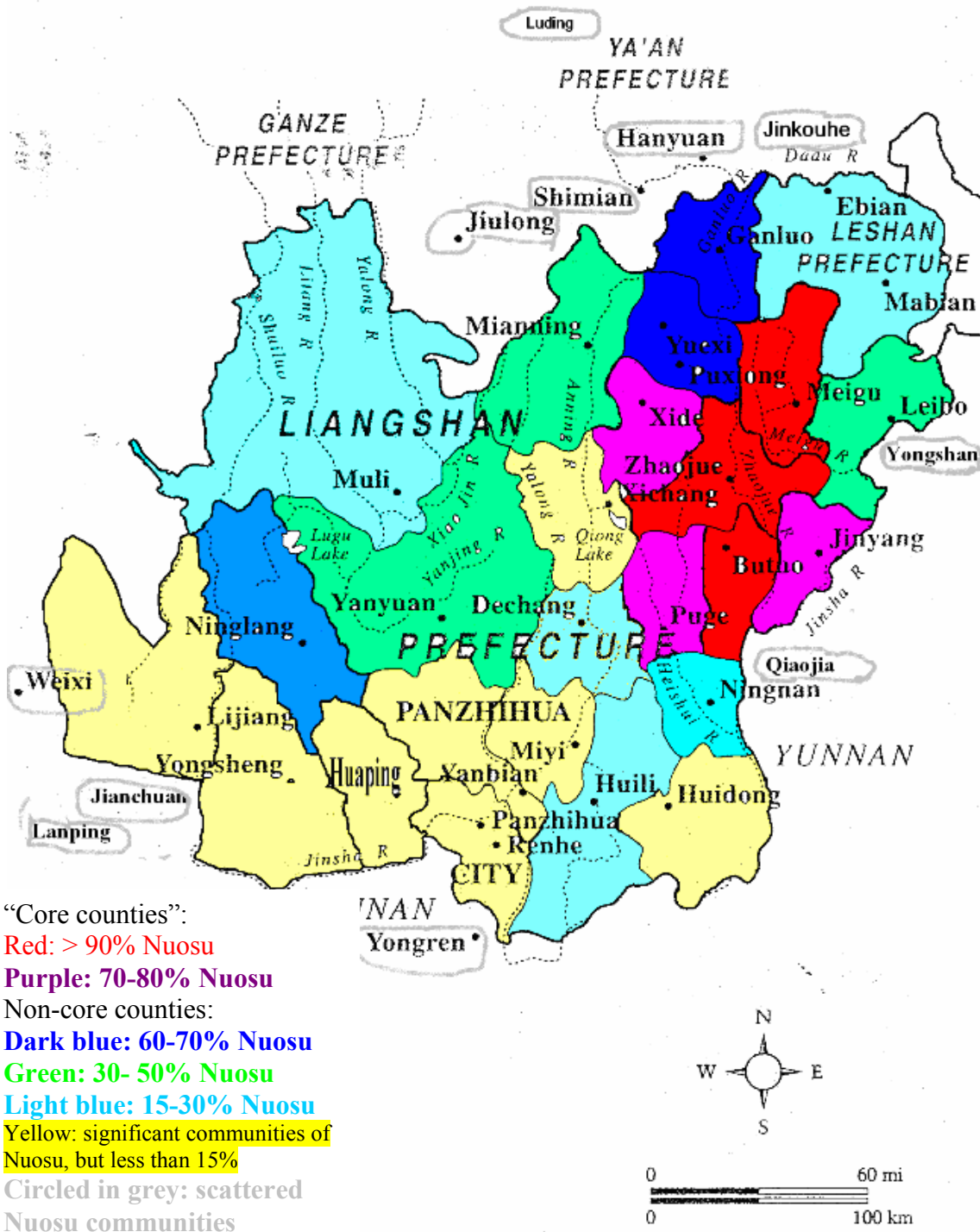
1) The subgroup of the north or *Yynuo* (Yinuo in Han), translatable as *Long trousers*, with some 450,000 speakers according to the census of 1990. There is a very distinctive north-western variety in the area of Lindimu (Tianba in *han*).

2) The central or *Shynra* (*Shengza* in Han) subgroup, translatable as *Medium-length trousers*, which some 1,500,000 people spoke as their native tongue in 1990. This variety serves as a lingua franca for many speakers of other varieties of Nuosu, since apart from being the variety with the greatest number of speakers, Shynra spoken in Xide County was chosen as the standard form of Nuosu. This variety is also the one which the majority of the Nuosu of Yunnan speak (for example in Ninglang).

3) The Suondi (Suodi in Han) subgroup, translatable as *Short trousers*, spoken some 550,000 native speakers in 1990. It is subdivided into *Adur* in the west and eastern *suondi*. There are some speakers of this subgroup in the counties of Yuanmou and Wuding in the Province of Yunnan.

Yynuo and *Shynra* (the first two subgroups) are mutually intelligible without problems. However speakers of the third subgroup, *Suondi*, have to make a great effort to learn *Shynra*. The reference to the trousers has to do with the traditional costume of Nuosu men.

5C.1.3.4 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF NUOSU IN THE LIANGSHAN AREA



Map 5C.ii: adapted from Harrell (2001a) with statistics from various sources

Below are the proportions of Nuosu in different counties

A) In the province of Sichuan:

1) The **Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Liangshan (凉山彝族自治州)**. The proportion of Nuosu (which may include some non-Nuosu Yi) have been calculated from the web page of the Liangshan Government (2002), whose figures are shown in 5C.1.4.9. For the whole prefecture it was 43.5%:

a) The **core counties** where the Nuosu make up the great majority of the population (all in Greater Liangshan):

> 90%: **Zhaojue 96.9%, Meigu 97.6% and Butuo 93.6%**. (These figures approach 100% if we exclude administrative centres)

74-90%: Xide 85.3%. (This figure likewise approaches 100% if we exclude the river valley of the county town), **Puge 74.2%** and **Jinyang 77.2%**.

b) **2 further counties** (also in Greater Liangshan) where the Nuosu make up **more than half of the population**, but where the Han constitute an important proportion:

Yuexi 69.2% and **Ganluo 65%**

c) **3 counties** (both in Lesser and Greater Liangshan) where the Nuosu make up **between 30% and 50%** of the population and the Han form the majority:

- **Mianning 32.2%** (the western part of which belongs to Lesser Liangshan), at the head of the Anning River; the Han form the great majority in the Anning Valley.

- **Yanyuan** (in Lesser Liangshan) **46.6%**

- **Leibo** (in Greater Liangshan) **47.4%** [Figure may include some speakers of Eastern Yi]

d) **4 counties** (2 in the south of Greater Liangshan and one in the north of Lesser Liangshan) where the Nuosu make up **between 16% and 30%** of the population and the Han form the majority: **Muli 27.3%** (in Lesser Liangshan), **Dechang 22.2%**, **Ningnan 21.3%** (in Greater Liangshan) and **Huili 16.1%** (in Greater Liangshan).

e) **3 counties** in the Anning and Yangtze (Jinsha) Valleys where Nuosu account for **less than 16%** of the population, but with significant communities in some areas: **Xichang 15%** (the capital of the Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Liangshan) and **Huidong 6.8%**.

2) Parts of the following Sichuanese counties outside Liangshan Prefecture:

- **2 autonomous Yi counties** of Leshan Prefecture: **Mabian, 37%** (Mabian Yi Autonomous County Information Network, 2006) and **Ebian, 31%** (Tao Shilong, 2006 –on a blog)

<15%: Miyi and **Yanbian** and the **City of Panzhihua** in the Prefecture of Panzhihua City (not far below 15%)

- The following areas: **Circled in grey on map where possible.**

- Hanyuan (in the prefecture of Ya'an)
- Shimian (in the prefecture of Ya'an)
- Jiulong (in the Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture of Ganzi)
- Luding (in the Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture of Ganzi)
- in rural and industrial areas of Jinkouhe (In the Prefecture of Leshan)
- Bing-/Pingshan, Gulin and Xuyong (to NE of map).

B) In the province of Yunnan

1) The **Autonomous Yi County of Ninglang** in the Prefecture of Lijiang where the Nuosu form **60.75%** (Lijiang City Weather Station, 2006)

2) 3 counties in the Prefecture of Lijiang where there are small numbers of Nuosu:

- **Yongsheng, Huaping and Lijiang.**

3) Other counties in Yunnan with very small numbers of Nuosu speakers: **Circled in grey on map where possible.**

- Zhongdian (in the Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture of Diqing),
- Lanping (in the Autonomous Lisu Prefecture of Nujiang),
- Jianchuan (in the Autonomous Bai Prefecture of Dali),
- Qiaojia and Yongshan (in the Prefecture of Zhaotong),
- Yongren, Yuanmou and Luquan (in the Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Chuxiong),

5C.1.3.5 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF OTHER YI TONGUES

The Nisu or southern Yi language (Bradley, 2001: 202-205)

Nisu (green in Map 5C.i) includes a wide range of varieties spoken from central Yunnan fins the extreme north of Vietnam, many of which are mutually very divergent. However there is limited information about this language.

The south-eastern Yi language (Main source Bradley, 2001: 202-205)

Marked pink in Map 5C.i, it is spoken in the area to the south-east of Kunming in Yunnan. It is divided into 4 subgroups and each one is considered as a distinct group. Two of the subgroups, the *Axi and Azha* do not have any tradition of an autochthonous script, while two do: the *Sani* (who call themselves) *Ni*, just like various other subgroups of Yi) *and the Azhe*.

The eastern Yi language or Nasu (sky blue and brownish green areas in Map 5C.i)

According to Ethnologue (200?) the Wuding-Luquan variant, spoken to the south-east of the Nuosu area has a traditional script which is being recuperated in Guizhou. Although many speakers (especially older ones) use the Pollard missionary script.

In Yunnan a hybrid script based on traditional Yi characters serving all 3 of the above groups has been promoted.

Unlike the foregoing Yi languages the following 2 have no traditional writing systems.

The central Yi language (Bradley, 2001: 202-205)

The speakers of this language (salmon-coloured in Map 5C.i) call themselves Lipo in some areas and Luoluopo in others. As mentioned earlier this language is so similar to Lisu that more than 50,000 speakers switched their nationality from Yi to Lisu during the 1980s.

The *Laluo* or western Yi language (Bradley, 2001: 202-205)

Like the central Yi language, this language (blueish purple in Map 5C.i) is more similar to Lisu than to other Yi languages.

5C.1.4 NUOSU / YI SCRIPT AND ITS USE

5C.1.4.1 ORIGINS OF TRADITIONAL NUOSU/YI SCRIPT.

According to Maheimujia (1985: 43) different academics maintain that the Yi script (in general, not just the Nuosu variety) has its origins in the Han dynasty, (206 B.C.-25 A.D.), Sui (581-618 A.D.), Tang (618-907 A.D.), Song (960-1279 A.D.) and Ming (1368-1644 A.D.) whilst according to the traditions of the Yi writing started between

1,500 and 2,000 years ago. In Zhaojue in 1994 discovered a quite widespread belief among Nuosu intellectuals and by way of them among the Nuosu public, that the Yi script was much more ancient than the Han script and probably the most ancient in the world. Some even think that the Han script was influenced by the Yi script and maintain that some symbols on Neolithic ceramics (from the fifth millennium B.C.) found at Banpo, near the modern city of Xian in the Province of Shaanxi, are an ancestral form of Yi script. Harrell (2001a: 181-2) reports claims that scholars of the ancient Han script were unable to understand anything of the Banpo inscriptions, but when a Nuosu *bimo* was called upon he was capable of deciphering the majority of the symbols due to their similarities to modern Nuosu characters. Harrell (*ibid*) sees this as a desire to demonstrate the historic value of the Yi culture and concludes

There is, in fact little concrete, datable evidence of any Yi writing systems before the Yuan and Ming dynasties, at which time inscriptions ancestral to most of the scripts used by Yi peoples today are found on stone stelae, mostly in Guizhou.... [.....]
The story, however, has gone beyond formal or even speculative scholarship.

Ding Chunshou (1993: 34-42) devotes a chapter to a comparison between the inscription of Banpo and Yi characters from Guizhou to lend support to the thesis that the Yi script is at least six thousand years old. During my stay in Zhaojue several Nuosu intellectuals also tried to convince me of this. The commentaries of Harrell (2001a: 182) about the symbols of Banpo is:

.....many of them do in fact, duplicate or very closely resemble some of the syllabic signs in Nuosu writing.. The same claim, however, could be made for the Roman alphabet: one can find the capital letters I, T, Y, X, Z N, K, L, and E, along with an upside-down A.

Some Chinese scholars have similarly tried to find a connection with the first examples of Han characters of two millennia later. Personally they remind me of the ancient Iberian script.

Wu Gu (2001: 29), an expert of Yi nationality on the Yi classics of the Province of Yunnan, affirms in a book edited by the same Harrell (2001b) that the history of the script is even more ancient

About ten thousand years ago, Yi people began to invent a form of writing (the signs, which can be read in Yi, found on pottery from about ten thousand years ago during the process of excavating the remains of “Kunming People” at Jinbao Shan in 1980, are an example).

Further on he concludes

The history of the Yi, which began ten thousand years ago, has been a process of development, maturity and flourishing; and the cultural documents that have come from it also have a history in which they have changed and then finally assumed a fixed form. As a result, Yi historical documents have taken on a living strength that transcends time and place.

I confess to having avoided entering into discussions on this topic with Nuosu scholars. These beliefs seem to form part of their resistance to the official Han-Chinese discourse and I understand them as a symbol of the rejection of Yi history written according to the unifying and official Chinese discourse rather than as a serious scientific proposition.

The most ancient surviving examples of the Yi script according to Maheimujia (1985: 43) are of stone inscriptions (esteles) from the Ming dynasty: one from 1533 in Luquan County in the Province of Yunnan and another from 1546 in Dafang County in the Province of Guizhou. Maheimujia (ibid) affirms that the form and structure of the characters of these inscriptions was essentially the same as that of modern Yi characters and that during the Ming Dynasty there were people who taught the script in the Province of Guizhou and wrote works of a scientific nature.

5C.1.4.2 NUOSU /YI SCRIPT: ADAPTATED FROM HAN SCRIPT OR INDEPENDENT?

Some authors consider that the Yi script *is* an adaptation of the Han script, a point of view not popular among Yi intellectuals. For example Stites (1999: 119) asserts (on what authority I know not):

Like the square Zhuang script, it was developed on the model of Chinese characters, but unlike Zhuang, the Yi script developed out of use of Chinese characters to represent syllables rather than words.

Other authors are of the opinion that the Yi script was modelled along the principals of the Han characters, with some loans from Han. For example Bradley (2001:195) comments:

.....the Chinese language began to influence Yi languages more and more, even to the extent that the Yi developed a cluster of writing systems based on the same principle as Chinese and using some Chinese characters (though mainly different ones).

Personally, my intuitive impression is that the Yi script has developed independently from the Han script, although it might have been partly influenced by it.

5C.1.4.3 REGIONAL VARIETIES OF TRADITIONAL YI SCRIPT

Apart from the Nuosu script of Liangshan, there were three other literary traditions, one among the Sani and Azhe speaking the south-eastern Yi language, that of the eastern Yi language and that of the southern Yi language. The Sani and Azhe scripts of the south-eastern Yi language had the greatest number of divergent characters with respect to the other Yi literary traditions.

In the Nuosu areas of Sichuan, it has been estimated there were between eight and ten thousand characters in the ancient manuscripts (Maheimujia, 1985:43) which, due to lack of political unity in Liangshan was not unified. This lack of a standardised script resulted in many redundant characters (homophones with the same meaning) and much individual variation between writers, but in general, according to Maheimujia (1985:43-44) the basic structure of the Nuosu characters was the same or similar in all the Nuosu areas of Sichuan, which made possible the latter Standardisation Law .

In contrast to the new standardised script (which is written from left to right), the traditional script was written from right to left. Inherently the Nuosu script is a phonetic syllabary with characters which have a form like Han characters, but there are also some symbols which indicate paragraphs and reduplication.

As to the question of whether the Yi script (including the Nuosu script) is an ideographic script (originally hieroglyphic), a phonetic syllabary, or a mixture of these, Ding Chunshou (1993: 51-59) maintains that the traditional Yi script is not phonetic, but a system of monosyllabic ideographic characters which have a mechanism for character creation similar to the *six ways of creating Han characters* (六书).

5C.1.4.4 WESTERNERS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE YI SCRIPT BEFORE 1950

From the 1880s onwards some westerners entered Yi areas to explore or preach Christianity and presented to the outside world the Yi script *and* the sacred Yi scripts, but because of linguistic hurdles and other problems, were unable to continue their

research or to follow it up in more depth. The materials and treatises by westerners of this period are all general introductions (Zhuwenxu, 1993: 221) .

5C.1.4.5 HAN SCHOLARS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE YI SCRIPT BEFORE 1950

According to Zhu Wenxu (1993: 221) in the 1920s and 1930s many Chinese scholars (mainly Han) investigated, the Yi writing system and sacred manuscripts.

5C.1.4.6 TOPICS OF TRADITIONAL YI MANUSCRIPTS

From the earliest records down to recent times there has been a constant depicting of pre-communist Yi society (and above all Nuosu) within the Han world in general (both by the pre-communists and the communists) as barbaric (based on slavery), primitive, unclean and backward. To defend the Nuosu script and culture, and their dignity as an ethnic group against these attacks, many Nuosu and Han intellectuals have made an effort to demonstrate and emphasize that although the communist “liberation” eliminated a basically unjust society, not everything about the old order was despicable and there was much to feel proud of. Many Nuosu intellectuals do not like at all the official portrayal of pre-communist Yi society promoted during the first 30 years (and beyond) of the communist period and since the 1980s have emphasised the great contribution of these traditional Yi texts to civilisation. For example Maheimujia (1985: 43) underlines the great variety of topics dealt with, such as religion, medicine and medicinal plants, astronomy, refrains, proverbs, ethics and literature (epic poems, and tales, some of which are very well known among the Yi population).

Chen Chunming (1995: 41-43), makes use of a Marxist discourse (a common strategy) to defend the Yi culture:

The traditional Yi script is a development and creation of the struggles of production and of class on the part of the great Yi people over a very long period and it is the great intellectual crystallisation of the people of Yi nationality that brought light to the eyes of innumerable “blind people”. In the history of the development of the Yi nationality the Yi script has played an active innovating role. The numerous, scientifically valuable documents written in Yi reflect from different perspectives the work and life of the Yi in different periods and their spirit, appearance and traditions. These documents of great value research the history, the politics, the economy, the culture, the astronomy, etc. of the Yi nationality. The Yi script is based on a unique style and social interaction, on a structure of images with ingenious but simple combinations and on wholesome concise and profound characteristics to register Yi history and peculiarities. All the historic incidents of importance and all the many outstanding works have been registered and conserved making use of the Yi script, which has made a great contribution to the transmission of the Yi culture. We can affirm without doubt that the existence, the

development and the use of the Yi script played a key role in the historic development of the Yi nationality. (ibid: 41-42. Own translation, original unavailable)

5C.1.4.7 TRADITIONAL NUOSU LITERACY AMONG NUOSU POPULATION BEFORE 1950

According to Maheimuya and Yao Changdao (1992) and confirmed by all other sources, there was an extremely high illiteracy rate in the former slave society in Liangshan and they remind us of Lenin's quote that illiteracy is the hallmark of a social system based on slavery. They quote from a study of the 1960s carried out by the original Language Committee (语言委员会 or 语委) which estimated a literacy rate for the traditional Nuosu script of just 2.75% in 1956 (just before the democratic reforms). The same authors implicitly alluded to informal questionnaires with even lower literacy rates and attributed such high illiteracy both to the extreme social and economic backwardness of the Nuosu and to a deliberate policy on the part of the ruling classes to keep common people in a state of ignorance and lead them to believe a knowledge of the script could be harmful. As in Han areas, peasants did not begin studying until after the land reforms. The General Report of Zhaojue County (1995: 28) that quotes an illiteracy rate of 97.25% for 1956 comments that only *bimo*, *tusi* and the black Yi or nobles possessed a knowledge of the Nuosu script. *Tusi* were heads of Nuosu clans -or of other non-Han nationalities – nominated by the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties to administer a territory where often the central government in fact did not have any authority.

Before the reforms of 1956, according to the head of the Languages Committee of Zhaojue County, Hainai Lamo (personal communication 1994) with very few exceptions only the *bimos* (priests or shamans) and the heads of clans made use of the traditional Nuosu script. Normally the *bimos* taught only their own children to write the sacred scripts, but on occasions taught other children, for example those of clan heads.

According to Hainai Lamo (personal communication 1994), approximately 3% of the population belonged to this pre-communist literate class which included very few women or girls. A much lower figure of less than 1% is quoted by Ma Muju (1999:197). Liesuo Ziha (1999: 134) who came from a small village in Zhaojue County, relates that as many as 8 out of 160 inhabitants (a full 5%!) were literate in Yi prior to “liberation”.

According to two members of the traditional literate elite in Zhaojue (personal communication, 1995), however, a significant minority could read and write the Nuosu language before the official promotion. A survey of 1954 or 1955 (quoted in my field notes without a reference) claimed approximately 10% of the population had a knowledge of the Yi script. Apart from the *bimo*, a significant number of people (above all young people) were capable of recording songs, stories, folk tales, etc. It is difficult to know how to treat these varying estimates. It is possible that a certain amount of self-learning took place between 1950 and 1954/5, the period between the arrival of the communists and the social and economic reforms.

Goullart (1959: 123) describes how (around 1938) a Nuosu noble he refers to as *Prince Molin*, wrote him a letter of introduction which served in the Yi areas as a kind of passport or safeguard, addressed to the noble's head servant:

The rest of the afternoon Prince Molin spent in writing a letter to his majordomo at Dienba and a 'passport' for his vassals and friends in the Taliangshan [= Daliangshan or Greater Liangshan]. The Lolo script flowed from under his capable hand. It was nothing like Chinese ideographs, but a succession of circles and half-circles, crescents, swastika-like images and cones.

Later, on arrival at Dienba (ibid: 134), the aforementioned majordomo informed Goullart that "he had a letter from the Prince commanding him to present me on his behalf, with a pony and to render courtesies and assistance."

Alan Winnington, a British communist reporter who worked in China, wrote a series of reports about minority areas of Yunnan, during the writing of which he spent several months of 1957 in Ninglang or Xiaoliangshan (Lesser Liangshan) on the Yunnan side of the border, where a majority of the population are Nuosu and where the Nuosu script was also later promoted. This region is called *Lesser Liangshan* to distinguish it from Daliangshan or *Greater Liangshan* which is my primary focus of attention (see Annex 1). Winnington (1962) provides an interesting report which concentrates on the social and economic reforms and on the abolishment of slavery (see Annex 1) from the viewpoint of a western communist eager to show to the world how the Chinese communists had saved a poor severely downtrodden people. Throughout the whole book there is barely a reference to the Nuosu script, neither of its traditional use, nor of its spontaneous use for socio-economic betterment. Winnington does not even

fleetingly refer to the romanised Nuosu script or to whether it or Han characters were being taught in the local newly set up primary schools. The first reference that he makes to the traditional script and their traditional use is highly negative and, unless the situation in Xiaoliangshan was very different from that in Daliangshan, which I greatly doubt, Winnington seriously underestimates (or chooses to ignore) the extent of their status and influence within Nuosu society:

In Greece and Rome the misery of the slaves at least raised the level of human conditions to that point where a leisured class could think, philosophise and invent, leave their indelible mark on history and provide the basis for a still higher stage of human development beyond the slave system. It cannot be said that Norsu society made any contribution to mankind at large to offset the anguish of its slaves. **I met not one noble who could read. Sorcerers alone are “literate”, that is to say they know by rote how to recognise the mumbo-jumbo of their animistic creed in the ideographs of their dead script, itself a less worthy derivative of the complex Chinese language which they affect to despise.** All the piled-up sufferings of their slaves and commoners ended in drunken feasts, opium orgies or buried silver ingots. This was a rotting backwater of human life, strictly in need of cleansing. (Winnington: 69. The emphasis in bold is my own.)

Winnington shows total ignorance of the history and reality of the Nuosu script (not to mention Nuosu society!) and exaggerated prejudices against the priests or *bimo*, having neither objectively investigated their knowledge and use of the script nor the eagerness of many non-*bimo* to learn it. During my much shorter visit to Zhaojue I talked to several (by then very old) ex-nobles who had learnt the script under the old pre-communist order. I fail to understand how Winnington did not meet similar cases so soon after the communist takeover. He quotes an illiterate noble:

Aristocratic Zeku Alu once said to me: “My only real use was to settle disputes. In the old days people died every day in clan battles. Now most of the feuding has stopped. What use am I? **I cannot even read** and my brain is no good at learning.” (ibid: 148. The emphasis in bold is my own.)

5C.1.4.8 INTERVIEWEES WITH MASTERY OF THE TRADITIONAL NUOSU SCRIPT

Madaren

Madaren (personal communication 1994), a black Nuosu then 90 years of age from the Zhaojue area who also spent a part of his life in the Province of Yunnan, told me – in good Mandarin (in which he was illiterate)- how a *bimo* (a white Nuosu as were the great majority of *bimo*) had commenced teaching him the traditional Nuosu script when he was 7. As Madaren was a black Nuosu, the *bimo* dared not reject him as a pupil together with their own children otherwise he almost certainly would not have taught

him. Once he had acquired a basic grasp of the script he sought another *bimo* to learn more of the traditional script and Nuosu classics.

A *bimo*, I was told by Madaren, studies a minimum of three years. There were two types of texts, called in Han *shangshu* 上书 and *xiashu*. The former were the sacred books (*jingshu* 经书) only to be studied by hereditary *bimo*, because there was a rule that if one's forefathers had not studied them, one should not either. However, some children of *bimo* were not willing to study them and Madaren cited a *bimo* with four children, of whom only one was willing to study the *superior books*. *Xiashu* or *inferior books* in contrast were not forbidden to non-*bimo* and consisted of works of literature, history and politics. The *bimo* apprentices commenced with the *inferior books* before starting the *superior books*.

Madaren remembered everything that he had learnt as a child. He extended his knowledge and studied legal texts. This enabled him to pass sentences in legal cases, acting as a traditional judge. During the course of his life had collected a great quantity of Nuosu books.

During the period of the Guomindang (= Kuomintang or KMT) he studied the traditional Nuosu script for more than 20 years, but there was always something new to learn. He claimed that it is possible to read ordinary books after a year or two of study. Madaren wrote books on traditional Nuosu astronomy, some of which have been translated into Han.

Jingzhushi

Jingzhushi (personal communication, August 1994, Zhaojue) of 62 years was a *bimo*, specialised in the treatment of rheumatism. He claimed that in the old society only the older people, but not the young people, could study the script. The logic was that people with too much knowledge would be frightened of dying and lose their bravery. Fighting was an important occupation for the Nuosu, above all for young people. This does not fit in with the evidence that many children studied from *bimo*. Jingzhushi was 20 years old and already working when in the year 1956, he began studying the traditional Nuosu script. He studied alone and practised writing reports, letters etc. and

collecting materials. He had no knowledge of the Han script (despite speaking good Mandarin to me) and did not learn the normalised script until its promotion beginning in the 1970s.

He studied nine years to become a *bimo* specialized in the treatment of rheumatism, but the Cultural Revolution put an untimely end to his studying. There was a tradition of *bimo* in his family. Four of his elder brother's children and one of his great nephews were *bimo*, just like 27 of the descendents of his paternal grandfather.

5C.1.4.9 ETHNIC MAKE-UP OF LIANGSHAN

Below the ethnic composition of the counties of Liangshan Autonomous Yi Prefecture for 2002 is given, adapted from the webpage of the Liangshan Autonomous Yi Prefecture Government (http://www.lsz.gov.cn/html/lsztemplate_1.asp?catalogid=93). I have calculated the % of Yi living in each county (the colours referring to those used in the key to Map 5C.ii) and arranged the counties according to the % of Yi.

Area (Prefecture /Counties):	Total population at the end of 2002	Population of different nationalities						Pop. per km ²
		Han -mostly speakers of SW Mandarin	Yi (mainly speakers of Nuosu) % Yi	Hui -mostly speakers of SW Mandarin	Tibetans -includes speakers of Prmi.	Mongols -Speakers, or descendents of speakers, of Naze	Other nationalities	
Liangshan Autonomous Yi Prefecture	4,104,413	2,165,942	1,788,130 43.5%	18,915	64,364	26,385	40,677	67.9
Meigu County 美姑县	178642	4215	174382 97.6%	18	5	18	4	69.5
Zhaojue County 昭觉县	209632	6432	203029 96.9%	103	36	8	24	77.7
Butuo County 布拖县	141038	8401	132038 93.6%	34	47	4	514	83.7
Xide County 喜德县	137652	19974	117446 85.3%	44	109	49	30	62.4
Jinyang County 金阳县	140226	31245	108206 77.2%	25	13	3	734	88.3
Puge County 普格县	142409	34469	107099 74.2%	301	18	13	509	74.8

Counties:	Total population at the end of 2002	Population of different nationalities (continued)						Pop. per km ²
		Han -mostly speakers of SW Mandarin	Yi (mainly speakers of Nuosu) % Yi	“Hui” (Muslims) -mostly speakers of SW Mandarin	Tibetans -includes speakers of Prmi.	Mongols -Speakers, or descendents of speakers, of Naze	Other nationalities	
Yuexi County 越西县	249221	73699	172403 69.2%	443	2577	16	83	110.4
Ganluo County 甘洛县	182701	60076	118721 65%	57	3765	18	64	84.7
Leibo County 雷波县	229303	119493	108670 47.4%	160	11	5	964	78.2
Yanyuan County 盐源县	322610	144942	150318 46.6%	529	8640	16656	1525	38.5
Mianning County 冕宁县	323562	212897	104100 32.2%	461	5849	82	173	73.20
Muli County 木里县	124900	27387	34163 27.3%	118	40892	7992	14348	9.4
Dechang County 德昌县	188019	138046	41744 22.2%	702	10	388	7129	82.3
Ningnan County 宁南县	172705	133340	36726 21.3%	83	59	49	2448	103.6
Huili County 会理县	427584	354262	68796 16.1%	179	41	74	4232	94.5
Xichang City 西昌市	568808	462043	85534 15%	15550	2270	995	2416	214.2
Huidong County 会东县	365401	335021	24755 6.8%	108	22	15	5480	113.2

Figures for Yi include some speakers of Central and Eastern Yi languages and hanised Yi. Those for Tibetans include speakers of Prmi and other Tibeto-Burmese languages. Mongols speak Naze, a language not so distantly related to Naxi (see Harrell, 2000a).

5C.2 LANGUAGE PLANNING IN NUOSU AREAS

5C.2.1 HAN LANGUAGE-MEDIUM EDUCATION FOR NUOSU BEFORE THE COMMUNIST PERIOD.

Goullart (1959: 130-3), describing the situation between approximately 1938 and 1940, refers to a school for *Lolo* children, set up by an important Nuosu noble in the village of Dianba (to the south of the city of Fulin - today Hanyuan or Fulinzhen - and in the extreme south of Hanyuan County or in the extreme north of Ganluo County) in a totally Nuosu area cut off from Han areas. This noble lived part of the year in the Han city of Fulin and mastered spoken and written Nuosu, Han and English. Goullart refers to him as *Prince Molin*, a translation of the Nuosu Nzemo *Molin*. He believed in the importance of education for the progress and modernisation of his people and had himself studied in the Central Military Academy of Nanjing. Interestingly, I discovered that the educational efforts of Prince Molin or (Leng Guangdian in Han) are still greatly respected in Liangshan today. He had employed a Han couple as teachers, who lived feeling insecure among *barbarians*. They taught the Han script of course. Goullart does not mention if these teachers had learnt the Nuosu language. With respect to the use of Han as an instrument of education, Goullart (ibid: 131-2) reflects:

At first the idea of educating the Lolos in Chinese appeared rather incongruous to me but, upon reflection, I could hardly see year alternative. Anything modern for which the Lolos craved, came to them from China or through China and, however powerful and brave they were, they could not ignore the fact that their territory was but a piece of mosaic in the colossal territorial pattern of China. Even if they were to attain real nationhood in the future, their State would still be separated by many hundreds of miles from other independent nations of Asia [...]. Therefore, loss of pride or no, they had to extend their connections with China and that could not be done without the knowledge of Chinese; and the value of recent technological developments in warfare, the subject dearest to their hearts, could only be learnt through the medium of Chinese publications.

However, Goullart does hint at the existence of some element of Nuosu-medium education, at least during the lifetime of Prince Molin's father:

....his late father's ardent follower. His father was quite progressive and had embarked on a programme of education of Lolo youths, himself translating some textbooks into the Lolo language.

(See 5C.1.4.7, 5C.1.4.8, 6.1.5.6 and 6.2.5.6 for a discussion of traditional bimo education)

5C.2.2 LINGUISTIC POLICY TOWARDS NUOSU FROM 1950-1958

5C.2.2.1 OFFICIAL USE OF TRADITIONAL NON-STANDARDISED NUOSU SCRIPT

After the setting up of the Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Liangshan in 1952 (Maheimujia and Yao Changdao, 1994, 31), the administration of the Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Liangshan, and of other areas of Sichuan with large concentrations of Nuosu, employed the ancient Nuosu script in many documents, in public notices and official seals, as well as in the more important proclamations, together with Han. In the words of Yao Changdao (1994: 39):

凉山州早在50年代初期,就认真贯彻执行了党和国家尊重少数民族语言文字的政策,政府的名篇,印章和重大政策法规均同时使用彝、汉两种文字,在凉山历史上彝文第一次得到如此尊重的地位,极大地提高了共产党和人民政府的威信,促进了民族团结,推动了早期对民族地区工作的开辟。In the early 1950s Liangshan Prefecture conscientiously implemented the Party and the Nation's policy of respecting minority nationality languages and scripts. Government documents, seals and important political decrees were used both Yi and Han characters. This was the first time in the history of Liangshan that the Yi script has been accorded a position of respect, and greatly raised the prestige of the Communist Party and of the People's Government, promoting unity between the nationalities and acting as an impulse to the early opening up of work in minority nationality areas.

5C.2.2.2 ELABORATION AND INTRODUCTION OF ROMANISED SCRIPT

In 1950 the Working Group for Sichuan and Sikang (a former province in what is now western Sichuan) of the Linguistic Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences sent linguists from the Central School of Nationalities, in Beijing, to carry out general research into the Liangshan Yi (i.e. Nuosu) language and script and also to design a proposal for a romanised phonetic script (Maheimujia 1986: 3). After years of arduous work among the Nuosu and speakers of other Yi languages in the south-western provinces, these linguists compiled the *Project for a phonetic transcription of the Yi language of Liangshan* (凉山彝语拼音方案).

These linguists, who from 1956 made up the *Number 4 Work Team* of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' research project into the languages of the minority nationalities, also according to Luo Kaiwen (1992: 4), constituted a group of cadres specialised in the Nuosu script to lay down the scientific foundations of the use and teaching of the Nuosu script: however Luo Kaiwen does not specify if this last point referred to a possible future use of the traditional script in the education system or if concerned only specialists in the traditional script working exclusively on the creation of the romanised

script. Maheimujia (1990: 3) comments that *Number 4 Work Team* carried out a complete census of Yi areas of China, comparative research and accumulated many useful materials.

The Zhaojue County General Report (1995: 28-29) and various informants (personal communication, Zhaojue, 1994 and 1995) define the period 1951 until 1958 as that of the official promotion of the Yi romanisation and the report mentions also the start of the use of the romanisation in the county's schools, together with the Han language from 1951: this use was very limited. According to the same report (ibid: 28) just 880 members of cooperatives in Zhaojue had learnt the romanisation - to help them in the movement of cooperativisme and agricultural reform - before the Autumn of 1958 when it was abandoned for lack of popular support and because this script "departed from reality".

Teaching trials in the new romanised script were carried out at the School of Nationalities and the School of Cadres. The results of the trials were negative, since - and none of my sources has contested this - the Nuosu people did not have the slightest feeling of identification with this non-traditional script that people from outside had imposed on them. At the same time everyone within the Nuosu-speaking community was very conscious that the Yi (Nuosu) nationality possessed their own ancient script which was of great religious and socio-cultural importance. Thus no further trials to promote the romanised script among the Nuosu people were carried out. A lot of people were even of the opinion that they almost preferred learning the Han language directly to learning a Nuosu script imposed from outside with which they did not identify. This is a commonly used argument among speakers of minority languages opposed to learning their scripts and, as was seen in the section on the Zhuang, one heard a lot among Zhuang speakers.

5C.2.2.3 WINNINGTON'S 1957 ACCOUNT OF XIAOLIANGSHAN

Winnington (1962) in almost 150 pages on the social and economic reforms in Ninglang County in the Yunnanese part of Xiaoliangshan (Lesser Liangshan), that he visited for several months in 1957, only makes one explicit reference to the development of education with a very superficial and short mention of the use of the Nuosu script which contrasts strongly with the importance that Nuosu-medium literacy

has for Maheimuya and Yao Changdao (1992) in the advancement of the Nuosu people of Daliangshan (Greater Liangshan).

In education, so decisive for the future of the Norsu people, no big break has yet been made. While I was having a midday meal at Clear Water River, a child came panting in from Yangping and flung himself at his mother, “Sitting there learning to write is worse than being in Zeku Dhor’s house,” he wailed. Zeku Dhor had been his owner. But his mother gave the boy a beating and sent him back the 15 miles to school without a meal. (Winnington, 1962: 147)

Winnington does not specify which language that the child in question is learning to write, but I deduce from his comments (which I have emphasised in bold in the following quotation) that it was exclusively in Han characters.

Yangping Primary School was the first to be opened in the Norsu areas, in 1951. Now there are sixteen other schools and 3,979 pupils. Most nobles will not allow their children to go to school, having had bad experiences with Han schools under the Kuomintang, who used schools as a means to get hostages for the future penetration of the Cool Mountains [= Liangshan]. To prevent this, the nobles ordered their commoners to send children as part of corvée obligations, but all these schools collapsed.

No fees are charged for the new schools and subsidies are paid. Tuition starts with hygiene and goes on to the 3 R’s. **Teachers use the standard text books until books in the newly devised Norsu written language are ready.**

There is also one middle school near Ninglang, which mainly **trains Norsu people working for the authorities in literacy and accounting.** Sixteen more primary schools were scheduled to be opened by the spring of 1958. (ibid: 148-9)

Winnington implies here that the Han language and script are being used as a means of attaining literacy and education until it is possible to change to new books in the Nuosu script. Neither does he specify which Nuosu script, but I assume he was referring to the romanised script. It seems that for Winnington this topic is of very little importance.

5C.2.3 1958-EARLY 1960s: PROMOTION OF HAN SCRIPT

5C.2.3.1 LIANGSHAN IN GENERAL

From the beginning of 1958 onwards the Great Leap Forward and other extreme leftist campaigns affected language work and assimilationist policies began to be stressed. Since (according to Chinese Marxist dogma) a long-term spontaneous fusion of languages could in any case be expected, which would mean that all the speakers of minority languages in China would in the end inevitably adopt Han, why not accelerate the process and “organise a Great Leap Forward” with respect to the language and

script? Why not mobilise the Nuosu population directly and acceleratedly study the Han language and script? Advocates of the assimilationist policy proposed the exclusive use of Han in schools and in rural literacy campaigns, among a population with no knowledge of this language. Maheimujia (1985: 44) expresses it thus:

At the beginning of 1958 the “leftist” ideology, which increasingly underlined the common aspects [among the nationalities] raised its head in the field of language work among the minorities. With respect to the scripts of the minorities it was thought that a “Great Leap Forward” and a rapid transition to the use of Han characters could be made, ignoring the peculiarities of the history of the Yi areas and the present objective situation where neither the Han language nor script are understood. A “direct transition” to the Han language and script in schools and in the rural literacy campaigns was advocated, which was dressed up with sweet the sweet sounding words “[in this way] we can reduce the trouble [of having more than one language]. (Own translation. Original lost, copying from Macintosh to PC).

The proponents of this ideology (cited by Maheimujia 1985: 44) also affirmed that since the Nuosu have been able to eliminate slavery, they need not be afraid of learning Han. Advocates of the use of the Nuosu script were accused of being “nationalists” and “rightest conservatives” (ibid: 44).

From 1958 only the Han script was taught in the schools and adult literacy classes and personnel previously employed to promote the Nuosu script had to go a rural Nuosu areas to teach the Han script - in Nuosu logically, since pupils understood nothing else. In 1960 the *Project for a phonetic transcription of the Yi language of Liangshan* was formally abolished and the hanising policy applied since 1958 was formalised.

In Zhaojue County

At the end of 1958, the government decided to exclusively promote the Han language. According to Gelushasa and Jishijieer (personal communication 1995) and others, all the Nuosu scripts were officially abandoned. In Zhaojue, according to the *Zhaojue County General Report 1995* (28) official organisms both in the administrative county town (县城) and in the rural areas organised Han literacy classes at the administrative level of *qu* and *xiang*, using the facilities of primary schools. There were classes for adolescents, youths and adults with a total of 2,979 pupils. In 1959 (ibid: 29), the Zhaojue County administration (县人委) created the *Command Headquarters* (县扫盲指挥部) which implied working with 21,416 youths and adults at the administrative

level of *qu* and *xiang*. After training 766 teachers in 8 intensive classes, the teachers were made responsible for imparting evening literacy classes.

In 1960 (ibid: 29) the majority of the classes continued. Of 18,871 pupils, 6,930 managed to learn up to 500 Han characters, 11,941 between 500 and 1,000 characters and 6,435 people studying after work reached the level of lower primary school and 300 people the level of upper primary school. Between 1958 and 1961 literacy classes in Han were organised for cadres, professionals and workers. In 1962, due to the extreme economic crisis, literacy classes in the whole of Zhaojue County were discontinued.

5C.2.4 POPULAR, SPONTANEOUS USE AND LEARNING OF TRADITIONAL NUOSU SCRIPT

Prior to 1958 the official policy was the promotion of the romanised script and thereafter was the education and direct use of Han. Thus as both Maheimuya and Yao Changdao (1994) confirmed, at the official administrative level no active measures were taken to develop education using the traditional Nuosu script nor to extend the range of its use. This policy did not change until 1964 when the authorities of the Autonomous Prefecture initiated a reform of the traditional script that was interrupted in 1966 by the Cultural Revolution.

5C.2.4.1 BEFORE SOCIAL REFORMS OF 1956

According to various Nuosu literate in the traditional script interviewed in Zhaojue in 1994 and 1995, in the 1950s many people had learned the traditional script from the arrival of the communists in 1950. As teachers of the traditional script, the population had at their disposition the *bimo*, who earned money teaching it and clearly had no interest in the promotion of a romanised script.

5C.2.4.2 AFTER SOCIAL REFORMS OF 1956

According to Maheimujia and Yao Changdao (1994) the implementation of the social and economic reforms initiated in 1956 created the necessities and conditions for the mass learning and use of the traditional Nuosu script. Suddenly an urgent need for everyday literacy among many rural Nuosu served as a strong incentive to learn and use

the script. Motivated by their real-life needs, Nuosu peasants studied and used the Nuosu script of their own initiative. Over the ten years from 1956 to 1966 an initial spontaneous popularisation of the Nuosu script took place in the rural areas with the result that at the end of this period in most villages there were various new self-made literates (Maheimujia and Yao Changdao, 1994: 31).

As they knew no Han and were unfamiliar with the Nuosu romanisation (Maheimujia 1985: 45 and 1986: 4), the public and the cadres of the core Nuosu areas who needed to be able to use the script to be able to carry out certain practical functions taught one another the traditional Nuosu script, using it as an instrument to take notes, write letters, keep accounts and record work-points, which greatly increased rural literacy, especially in the core counties and among cadres.

5C.2.5 LINGUISTIC POLICY IN NUOSU AREAS FROM 1958-1966

5C.2.5.1 LIANGSHAN IN GENERAL

It was almost impossible to put up any opposition to the strong current of assimilationist policy. However there was a great degree of discontent among the majority of the Nuosu public and cadres.

In the first half of the 1960s the central authorities corrected errors and modified the policy and in view of the formal abandonment of the promotion of the phonetic script and the popular spontaneous movement to learn the traditional Nuosu script, the prefectural government took measures reflecting the desire of the people and the necessity of eradicating illiteracy amongst the population. It was influenced by the many letters written to the central government in favour of promoting an acceptable Nuosu script and this resulted in the central government entrusting the Sichuanese provincial government with the standardisation of the Nuosu script (Gelushasa and Jishijieer, personal communication 1995).

In 1964 the prefectural government entrusted to the Language Committee the revision and reordering of the more than eight thousand traditional Nuosu characters which resulted in the elaboration of the *List of frequently used Yi characters* (彝文常用字表)

ordered according to the abandoned phonetic script and with more than 800 characters. In 1965 the *Liangshan Daily* (凉山日报), which at that moment only had a Han language edition, started a special column entitled the *Nuosu Script Column* (彝文专栏) with bilingual lists of everyday lexical items and expressions in Nuosu and Han to help both cadres and members of the public to study and use the Nuosu script. While this initiative was obviously aimed at cadres and peasants who already understood the Han script, this influential minority would go on to explain the contents to monolingual Nuosu. Some counties started translating documents and notices into the new simplified syllabary, making the most of the initial spontaneous popular willingness to study the traditional script, a process which little by little put it on a sounder footing, opening the range and the depth of the social function of the Nuosu script (Maheimujia and Yao Changdao, 1994: 31, Maheimujia, 1986:4 and Maheimujia, 1985: 45).

5C.2.5.2 HAN LITERACY WORK IN ZHAOJUE COUNTY

In the Autumn of 1963 according to the *Zhaojue County General Report 1995* (29) a working group of the Prefecture of Liangshan education authority created two after-work Han literacy classes in the *xiang* of Chengbei in the *qu* of Fucheng. These were pilot classes to complement the Rural Socialist Education Movement (农村社会主义教育运动试点试办) and 32 youths and adults enrolled for them, each person managing to acquire an average of 110 characters.

With an improvement in the economic situation in 1963 (ibid: 29) literacy work was gradually resumed and in August of the same year 15 classes had already been set up plus two classes of the first cycle of primary school (初小班) with more than 400 pupils.

In 196? (ibid: 29) 104 *after work schools* were set up as well as after work classes organised by the prefectural and county authorities with 2,200 pupils (approximately 4% of the youths and adults of Zhaojue County), which had increased to 146 classes with 3,983 pupils in 1965, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution.

5C.2.6 GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION (文化大革命)

All sources make use of the strongest language to describe the disastrous effects of this mass-movement orchestrated by the great Helmsman on the linguistic policy in Nuosu areas. Maheimujia (1985: 45) comments on the fate of both his profession's (and surely also his personal) fate and of the work that he did.

With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution the Yi script fell victim to a new catastrophe and was greatly damaged. The comrades dedicated to the work of promoting the Yi script were beaten and persecuted. (Own translation. Original lost when transferring text from Macintosh to PC).

Despite this seemingly senseless organized chaos, many of the *comrades* referred to in the forgoing quote continued working secretly during the whole of the Cultural Revolution period on the reform and standardisation of the traditional Nuosu script whilst (above all in the latter phase of the Cultural Revolution) a lot of Nuosu in Liangshan demanded a solution to the problem of the *Nuosu* script (Hainai Lamo, Personal communication 94). Moreover the spontaneous, unofficial use of traditional Nuosu characters continued during throughout the Cultural Revolution period. The Nuosu public also presented constant petitions to use the Nuosu script throughout this period.

5C.2.7 FINAL PHASE OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION PERIOD

The recuperation of the promotion of the Yi script is the result of popular demand among various sectors of the population of Liangshan during the mid 1970s, a period of intense ultra-leftist radicalism in China.

5C.2.7.1 ROLE OF LANGUAGE WORKERS

As I mentioned earlier (Hainai Lamo, personal communication 94), throughout the period of the Cultural Revolution some experts had secretly worked on the reform and standardisation of the traditional Nuosu script whilst (above all in the latter part of this period) a lot of Nuosu in Liangshan increasingly demanded a solution to the problem of the Nuosu script. The influence of the preliminary list of just over 800 standardised Nuosu characters published in 1965 had been limited due to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, but from 1974 onwards (Hainai Lamo, *ibid*) some influential

linguists working with Nuosu, such as Na Xueliang, Yao Changdao and Den Deba, began advocating a reform and standardisation which was given the green light in 1975 by the Department of Propaganda (in China the word *propaganda* does not have the negative connotations it has in the West).

5C.2.7.2 PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC AND CADRES FOR REFORMED NUOSU SCRIPT (main source Maheimujia 1985 and 1986)

During a great part of the period of the Cultural Revolution, "...the public and Yi cadres wrote incessantly to the central and provincial governments to energetically demand the restoration of the use of the Yi script" according to Maheimujia (1985: 45. Original text lost on transferring text from Macintosh to PC) In May 1974 the Sichuan Nationalities Committee organised *research groups into the script of the Yi nationality* in the five counties of Zhaojue, Meigu, Xide, Yuexi and Butuo with the aim of researching, interviewing and listening to opinions and petitions from all kinds of people.

The research groups published "Research Report into the problem of the Yi nationality script". In July of 1974 the Sichuan Nationalities Committee prepared "Report to request instructions concerning the problem of the Yi nationality script" in which it was suggested that in the Nuosu areas of Sichuan the native script of the Nuosu be adopted and that the overdue ordering, standardisation and improvement of the Nuosu script be carried out while simultaneously continuing the parallel promotion of the Han language and script. In September of 1974, the provincial government of Sichuan emitted a report favourable to these suggestions.

In November 1974 the Sichuan Nationalities Committee invited Yi language researchers of the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing, and of that of the province of Sichuan, to train the Yi language and script working group. This group jointly with the Liangshan Leading Committee of Languages and Scripts revised and standardised the Traditional Nuosu script and elaborated the draft of the *Scheme for the Standardisation of the Yi script*.

After a meeting and consultation in Xichang with staff involved in working on the Nuosu script in May 1975, some modifications were made to the *Scheme for the*

Standardisation of the Yi script. Later the Yi language and script working group organised eight pilot groups (试点组) with literacy classes in the new standardised script. These pilot groups were located in the counties of Xide, Zhaojue, Meigu, Butuo, Xichang, Mianning, Ningnan and Ebian which represent the three main dialects (shynra, yynuo and suondi). After between 60 and 173 hours of study, the students who had previously acquired the rudiments of the Nuosu characters used before the Cultural Revolution learnt approximately 700 characters and those starting the course without any knowledge managed to learn 300 or more. All the students who had learnt approximately 500 characters were capable of reading books and newspapers. These trials satisfied those involved in the promotion that the *Scheme for the Standardisation of the Yi script* worked.

In December 1975 the provincial government approved the experimental implementation of the *Scheme for the Standardisation of the Yi script* and also the recuperation or creation of the whole infrastructure necessary for the work of the promoting the Nuosu script at all levels. By all accounts the Nuosu public received with a lot of satisfaction the experimental implementation, which lasted almost four years from 1976 until 1979, and the prefectural government considered it a success and requested that the experimental phase be concluded and the new script officially promoted. After the approbation of the Sichuanese provincial government, the State Council of the central Government made the *Scheme for the Standardisation of the Yi script* law in December 1980.

5C.2.8 NUOSU SCRIPT LITERACY CAMPAIGNS IN LIANGSHAN

Adult literacy campaigns were launched throughout Nuosu-speaking areas, especially in the core areas. In 1984 (Maheimujia, 1985: 50) all the counties of Liangshan organised more than 500 *after-hour classes of the second cycle of primary school of Nuosu script* (业余彝文高小班) with more than 15,000 pupils. At the same time there were also 400 *schools of technical education for peasants* (农民文化技术学校) with more than 100,000 pupils. These schools combined literacy work with the learning of

technical innovations outside working hours. A lot of people not only learnt to read, but also to write notes, notices, instructions and literary works.

5C.2.8.1 NUOSU AND HAN LITERACY CAMPAIGNS IN ZHAOJUE COUNTY

Between 1972 and 1975 there was a gradual development in Han language literacy activities, with however very minimal results, through the establishment of political night schools (政治夜校). (*Zhaojue County General Report, 1995: 2 pp*).

When in 1975 the Party Committee of the Autonomous Prefecture of Liangshan (中共凉山州委) stipulated the criteria for the eradication of illiteracy and decided to use the Nuosu script in place of Han for literacy work, the Department of Education and Culture (县文教局) of Zhaojue County provided a full-time Nuosu-medium literacy worker (*Zhaojue County General Report, 1995*).

5C.2.8.2 TRAINING OF NUOSU SCRIPT PROMOTERS IN ZHAOJUE COUNTY

In 1975 the Minority Nationalities Languages and Scripts Working Committee was created in Zhaojue (also with an editorial department) and the president was the secretary of the Zhaojue County Party Committee. This Working Committee had the responsibility of training key cadres. In 1976 some 3,980 of such trained cadres went out to different areas where they were responsible for literacy campaigns (*Hainai Lamo Personal communication 94*).

In 1976 Zhaojue County organised a training course for key cadres of the Nuosu script, seconded (脱产) from their regular jobs, which trained 75 cadres who then went to all areas of the county to organise training classes for further key cadres of the Nuosu script. By April 1977 6,093 key commune-, county- and *qu*-level cadres (骨干) had been trained in 99 classes. In each production team there was now an average of 4.5 such key cadres and in this way the Communist Party of the Autonomous Prefecture had fulfilled the request that each production team have at least two workers familiar with *the norms for the Yi language*. At the same time, 620 Nuosu literacy classes were organised using political night schools (政治夜校) as centres in which 17,863 men and

women of all ages participated. 12,011 people were made basically literate through these classes (Zhaojue County General Report, 1995).

Between 1975 and 1979 primary school teachers in the area of Guli were trained during the school holidays [some 40 days in Winter and Summer 1975]. During the day these teachers taught primary school pupils the Han language and in the evenings they taught adults to read and write Nuosu. They also wrote down the words of many traditional Nuosu songs. The result of these classes at Guli was that 560 people (85% of the participants) became literate in Nuosu (Hainai Lamo, personal communication 94).

In 1979, to accelerate the process, the County Revolutionary Committee (xiangweihui) set up the Workers' and Peasants' Education Committee with a structure of centres at the administrative levels of county, *qu* and commune which trained 7,561 teachers of the Nuosu script. In 1979, out of a rural population of 63,000, some 15,000 people had already become literate, a literacy rate of 25% (*Zhaojue County General Report, 1995*).

According to Maheimujia (1985: 54) in total 501 Nuosu literacy classes were organised for 18,751 key cadres throughout Zhaojue County. 8 of these classes, with 896 pupils, (of a month in duration) were organised by the county administration, 268 (also a month in duration), with 12,015 pupils, were organised by the *qu* administration and 125 (of between 15 and 20 days) by the *xiang and she* (commune) administrations with 5,840 participants. In this way each production brigade (生产队) had an average of 4 or 5 key cadres, solving the problem of finding the personal to promote the Nuosu script.

5C.2.8.3 LITERACY CAMPAIGNS AMONG GENERAL PUBLIC

(Source –unless otherwise stated: *Zhaojue County General Report, 1995*)

In 1980 the cadres trained in Guli went to all parts of Zhaojue County to teach the script. (Hainai Lamo, personal communication, 1994). 1980 also saw the appearance of the *Scheme for the Yi language*. By 1982, claimed the Report, 61,043 youths (82.6% of 73,902 in the County) already knew how to read, thus complying with the objective of the Autonomous Prefecture. In October of 1988 the Chinese Ministry of Culture named

Zhaojue County as an “advanced county in literacy work” (全国扫盲先进县) and in November 1989 it received the same prize at the provincial level.

In 1983, 85% of the population was reported already literate, a claim I would personally not take too literally. From 1983 in order to consolidate literacy work *after-hour classes of the second cycle of primary school of Nuosu script* (业余彝文高小班) were set up (see 5C.2.8). The basic unit of literacy work was the study groups of the schools for adults in the villages (村民校学组). In this way a structure of peasant education in all the districts (*qu*) and municipalities (*xiang*) was set up.

In Spring 1984, 36 villages and hamlets in 18 *xiang* had been inspected. Of 1,116 pupils, 918, or 82%, had attained literacy. In 1985 the County Peasants and Workers Education Office (县工农教育办公室) unified the literacy exams in all parts of the county. In Spring 1985 40,999 candidates, comprising 71% of the 56,935 people matriculated in the classes, sat the literacy exam and 77.2% of these – 31,627 candidates - passed. Up until early 1986 there had been 218 Nuosu script classes of *after-hour classes of the second cycle of primary school of Nuosu script* (业余彝文高小班) with 5,163 pupils. Up till the beginning of 1986 there were already 43 types of reading matter in Nuosu and the relevant departments at different administrative levels published 55 runs with more than 6,000 copies.

5C.2.8.4 PHILOSOPHY AND CONTENT OF LITERACY CAMPAIGNS

It was decided from the beginning that the content of the materials used in the literacy campaigns would deal with technical and agricultural topics such as the cultivation of rice and maize and animal husbandry, to motivate people to learn. Starting in 1985 the edition of *the Liangshan Daily* commenced, publishing technical and scientific articles translated from Han (Hainai Lamo, personal communication 94).

According to the Education Report of Zhaojue County (1995: 31) technical training courses were organised by the *qu and xiang* administrations (employing full-time teachers) for newly literate peasants on subjects such as raising pigs, sheep and

freshwater fish, the reparation of watches and the cultivation of maize, Chinese flowering pepper, saplings and bulbs etc. In April 1988 there were 548 technical training classes in Zhaojue County with 38,975 pupils. The Report (ibid: 31) quotes as an example of the direct effect of these classes on agricultural production the spectacular increase to 10,742 *mou* (54 times more than in 1986), of the area of maize cultivated under cover.

Between 1988 and 1990, according to the Education Report of Zhaojue County (1995: 31), the Department of Education and the Language Committee of the Province of Sichuan spent 155,000 Yuan on promoting the development of technical and cultural schools for peasants (*nongmin wenhua jishu xuexiao*). This aspect will be examined in 6.2.8 and 7.2.8. According to the new head of the Zhaojue County Language Committee (personal correspondence 2000) illiteracy was virtually eradicated in the county by the year 1999 (see 6.3.1).

5C.2.9 GENERAL STATE OF EDUCATION IN POST-MAOIST LIANGSHAN

5C.2.9.1 EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES WITHIN LIANGSHAN: 4 COVER UPS

The subject of this section is the educational situation of the Nuosu-speaking pupils in Liangshan. Han-speaking pupils (just over half the total pupils in Liangshan), who generally not only live in more fertile and prosperous areas, but also have better access and a fuller participation in the state education system are actually more numerous than those speaking Nuosu. As was mentioned earlier, the Nuosu-speaking population can be divided into Nuosu communities which live in close contact with speakers of Han and other languages, a significant proportion of them, especially the men, being fluent in Han, and those who live largely isolated from the Han-speaking world. Many of the former group live in or around county towns or in the fertile lower valleys such as the Anning Valley and in counties such as Xichang, Ningnan,, Huili, Huidong, Yuexi etc. The latter are mainly counties like Zhaojue, Meigu, Butuo and large rural parts of counties such as Xide.

The main issue at stake is what proportion of different groups (defined chiefly by nationality, sex and exposure to the Han language and culture) attend and graduate from primary school and are promoted to higher educational levels (lower and upper

secondary schools and further education). In 1992 approximately 73% of all children of primary school age in the Prefecture of Liangshan were enrolled in schools. A figure of almost 30% for school absenteeism sounds alarming to many people, but these figures of course say nothing about how many pupils actually attended regularly or how many dropped out or when. The real global attendance rate for the Prefecture was thus probably somewhat lower than 73%.

An article subtitled *The 4 cover ups* (四个掩盖) Wu Mingxian (1992) points out the danger of being impressed by the comparatively high global school enrolment rate (referring to the figure of 73%!) and thereby underestimating just how utterly abysmal school attendance and attainment in Liangshan was in the more isolated mountainous Nuosu-speaking areas. The inclusion in the global statistics of Han inhabitants and non-Han from better-off areas only serves to hide and obscure the deep gulf between: the educational situation of:

- Han and non-Han inhabitants of Liangshan.
- Non-Han living in accessible areas and in close contact to Han and other nationalities and those living in inaccessible mountain areas.
- High drop-out rate among minority nationality pupils.
- Non-Han boy and girl pupils.

This problem, according to this author, not only had not been resolved from 1987 to the time of writing (1992), but had got worse. He implies that the false impression that the overall situation was not really so bad contributed to the administration not having adequately faced up to the reality of the minority areas and not having reacted quickly enough to take appropriate measures.

Below I paraphrase, elaborate and comment on his conclusions. Unfortunately he does not distinguish between Nuosu and other non-Han nationalities. While he is also referring to the situation of speakers of Tibetan, Prmi, Naze, Naxi and other non-Han languages in Liangshan, it is clear that the majority of those being described are Nuosu-speaking, simply because they make up the majority of non-Han-speaking pupils. The

figures are from 1992 or shortly before. Unless otherwise stated this article is the main source for this section.

5C.2.9.2 SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE: HAN V. MINORITIES

Below are the proportions of minority nationality children (mainly Nuosu) for different educational sectors, illustrating the impressive decrease in enrolment (it can be assumed that actual attendance is even lower) in each successive rung of the educational ladders of non-Han pupils:

42.05% (148,723) of primary school pupils of all nationalities in Liangshan belonged to Nuosu and other non-Han minority nationalities.

According to figures given to Schoenhals (2001: 244) by Liangshan Education Committee in 1994 only 65% of minority nationality children were enrolled. 73.2% (341,760 pupils) of children of primary school age of all nationalities (including both Han and Nuosu) were enrolled in primary school. This means that over a quarter, at least 26.8%, of all children in this age group in Liangshan was not enrolled at school. Bearing in mind that there was a situation of almost universal schooling among children of primary school age in the affluent, partly urbanised and predominantly Han counties of Dechang, Xichang and in 72 *xiang* and *zhen* of other counties in Liangshan, the figures for remote rural minority areas must have been much lower. Some 1,200,000 people (mainly Han), accounting for 33.62% of the total population of Liangshan, lived in these areas of almost universal schooling.

24.19% (16,979) of lower secondary school pupils of all nationalities in Liangshan belonged to Nuosu and other non-Han minority nationalities.

Schoenhals (2001: 244) estimates from available statistics, that about 15% of minority children of the corresponding age-group “attend” lower secondary school.

22.18% (6,887) of the pupils of technical secondary schools (中专) of all nationalities in Liangshan belonged to Nuosu and other non-Han nationalities.

Schoenhals (2001: 244) calculates this figure to be approximately 2% of minority children of the corresponding age-group.

17.94% (2,384) of students matriculated in institutions of higher education

These figures illustrate a catastrophic progressive dropout rate among non-Han pupils, especially over the course of primary education. What they do not show is what proportion of those pupils enrolled actually attended school regularly or for how long before dropping out. Given the stark economic differences between the mountainous Nuosu areas (and those of other minorities) and the fertile and urban predominantly Han areas, I was surprised to learn that as many as almost 18% of minority students had enrolled in higher education (almost a third of the number that would have done so proportionate to their share of the population). However as can be seen in the next point, these figures still include the better off affluent minority nationality communities as well as some minority nationality pupils speaking Han as their first language.

5C.2.9.3 SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE: NON-HAN IN DIFFERENT AREAS

Here the higher rate of school enrolment and attendance of non-Han children in areas where they live in close contact with other nationalities and the Han language compared to the alarmingly low rate in areas where they live in compact communities isolated from the Han-speaking world is discussed.

Zhaojue, Meigu, Butuo, Jinyang are four of the poorest counties in the whole of China, having been singled out to receive priority aid. The first 3 have negligible Han populations, mostly concentrated in the county towns and in Jinyang people of Yi nationality outnumber Han by over 3 to 1. In addition, the Autonomous Tibetan County of Muli (where in 2002 roughly 33% were of Tibetan nationality, some 27% Nuosu Yi, 22% Han and 18% of other groups) is officially listed as having problems to make primary education universal. These 5 counties have an area of 21,719.79 square kilometres which accounts for 36.11% of the land area of the Autonomous Prefecture of Liangshan. The population of minority nationalities in these five counties is 644,835, equivalent to 38.66% of the non-Han population of the whole Autonomous Prefecture.

However only 30.95% (44,488) of all enrolled minority nationality pupils in the Autonomous Prefecture live in these five counties: in the case of the lower secondary schools the proportion falls to 25.20% (4,278 pupils) and in that of upper secondary schools falls to 15.71% (395 pupils). Only 46,490 (50.3%) of the 91,638 children (the vast majority Nuosu and most of the rest Tibetans or other non-Han) aged between 7

and 12 in these 5 counties are enrolled in school, the corresponding school enrolment figure for the whole Autonomous Prefecture being 73.2% of the children aged 7 to 12.

Thus, school attendance is much higher among minorities living in lowland areas near centres of Han population and administrative centres such as Manwanshui (described by Harrell, 2001a). Such areas have a decades-old tradition of sending children to school. Schoenhals (2001: 247) mentions that some lowland Nuosu families even compete to hire Han tutors for their children. In these areas there is a strong perception that to get on in the world and better their lot, Nuosu children should go to school, learn Han fluently and get a good job. This is not seen as threatening their identity as Nuosu, even if they end up expressing themselves mainly (or even exclusively) in Han as most Nuosu, at least in these areas, do not feel that one's membership of the ethnic group depends on ability to speak Nuosu (Wuda, 2002 and Schoenhals, 2001).

In addition Wu Mingxian (1992) hints that for the global enrolment rate to be so low, a very high proportion of non-Han school-age children from the remoter counties do not attend school at all and that those remoter areas of some generally better-off counties also have very low attendance rates, something bourn out by a number of sources (e.g. personal communication with various informants, Liangshan 1994 and 1995, Luobianmuguo 1999 and Luwanfa 1999).

Luobianmuguo (罗边木果, 1999) sums up the situation in core areas of Greater Liangshan thus:

在彝族聚居地区，入学率低，升学率更低，复盲率高。凉山州布拖县、昭觉县、喜德县、美姑县、雷波县、越西县的偏远区高小毕业回家务农三四年后又成为文盲的不少见。 / In core Yi areas, the enrolment rate is low, the proportion being promoted to higher schools was even lower and the illiteracy relapse rate was high. When upper primary school graduates from remote areas of Butuo, Zhaojue, Xide, Meigu and Leibo counties returned home to their farming work after three or four years, it was not rare for them to fall back into illiteracy.

According to Ma Muju (1999:200) only 13,169 out of the 26,624 children of school age in Zhaojue County were actually attending school, a school attendance rate of 49.5%. In the village of Shanyou in the *xiang* of Jiuladipo in Zhaojue County, out of 31 children of school age only 11 (just over 35%) children attended school. Of 12 girls in

the village, only 1 went to school. The same author cites a school attendance rate of 56.9% for children aged 7-12 in Butuo County in 1994, which he suspects has been doctored upwards.

5C.2.9.4 PROGRESSIVELY HIGH DROP-OUT RATE OF NON-HAN PUPILS

The first group of figures correspond to 1992 and the first 6 show the proportions of minority pupils in Liangshan in particular school-years expressed as a percentage of all non-Han students attending primary schools (not as a percentage of the total number of children of all nationalities within each age cohort). Being synchronic they do not follow through the drop-out rate of a particular intake of pupils from year to year, although they still provide a good idea of the way the drop-out rate increases with each succeeding year:

- Non-Han pupils in the first year of primary school accounted for 32.18% (46,255) of the total of 143,723 minority nationality pupils.
- Non-Han pupils in the second year of primary school accounted for 24.09% (34,627) of the total of 143,723 minority nationality pupils.
- Non-Han pupils in the third year of primary school accounted for 16.45% (23,643) of the total of 143,723 minority nationality pupils.
- Non-Han pupils in the fourth year of primary school accounted for 11.62% (16,702) of the total of 143,723 minority nationality pupils.
- Non-Han pupils in the fifth year of primary school accounted for 9.25% (13,297) of the total of 143,723 minority nationality pupils.
- Non-Han pupils in the sixth year of primary school accounted for 6.41% (9,199) of the total of 143,723 minority nationality pupils.
- Minority nationality graduates of lower secondary schools: totalled 3,609 (20.30% of the 17,777 pupils of all nationalities).

- Minority nationality graduates of upper secondary schools totalled 651 (15.22% of 4,276 pupils of all nationalities).

The second group of figures is diachronic:

- Of the 46,998 non-Han pupils in Liangshan who enrolled in 1991 in the first year of primary school, only 34,627 enrolled in the second year in 1992. In other words, there was a drop-out rate of over 26.32% in the course of this year.
- Of the 37,728 non-Han pupils in Liangshan who enrolled in 1985 in the first year of primary school, only 9,199 enrolled in the sixth year of primary school. In other words, there was a school drop-out rate of 75.62% over these six years.
- Of the 40,178 non-Han pupils in Liangshan who enrolled in 1989 in the first year of primary school, only 9,199 began the sixth year of primary school were in 1994, a drop out rate of 72.73% over these six years, an average of 14.5% each year (Wu Mingxian, 1995:177, cited in Ma Muju, 1999: 200).

What these figures do not show is the extent to which children who are enrolled at school actually attend regularly. There is evidence (personal communication, Liangshan 1994 and 1995) of widespread absenteeism and of many pupils dropping out soon after enrolment.

Ma Muju (1999:200) reports that only 220 pupils in Butuo County in 1994 graduated from lower secondary school (of whom 8 went on to upper secondary school and 91 to secondary technical school), 9 from upper secondary school and only one entered an institution of tertiary education.

5C.2.9.5 SCHOOL ENROLMENT & ATTENDANCE: NON-HAN BOYS V. GIRLS

The proportion of girls attending school is much lower than that of boys and the proportion of girls in the classes falls with each succeeding school year and in some classes there are even no girls at all. In primary schools 40,566 or 28.33% of minority nationality pupils are girls and in lower secondary schools 4,367 or 25.72%. Curiously

the percentage of girls in upper secondary school is higher than that for primary schools: in upper secondary schools 839 or 33.35% of the minority nationality pupils are girls. The enrolment rate of girls among the minority nationality girls of Liangshan is 35.5%. Naturally in core Nuosu areas this rate is typically lower still.

Ma Muju (1999:200) reports that although the official school attendance rate for children of school age in Zhaojue County was 49.5%, this fell to 27.3% in the case of girls. In the hamlet of Yangjuan (in the *xiang* of Jinbaiwu in Yanyuan County) the same author informs us (ibid: 199) that whereas 54 (69.2%) of a total of 78 boys attended school, only 10 (16.5%) of a total of 61 girls did so. Schoenhals (2001: 246) informs us that “out of the scores of students at the several countryside primary schools that I visited in Butuo County, for example, only a handful were female”.

5C.2.9.6 EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN CORE NUOSU AREAS: CONCLUSIONS

The general situation painted is deeply depressing. There is an extremely low rate of school attendance –astronomically high among girls- coupled with a high drop out rate at every stage of the educational process and moreover, as Wu Mingxian (1992) points out, illiteracy has not been eradicated. Many sources (eg. Luobianmuguo, 1999) report a constant relapse into illiteracy or semi-illiteracy on the part of drop-outs or school leavers.

5C.2.9.7 POSSIBLE CAUSES OF ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

Poverty

Poverty is often a vicious circle. Although putting their children through the educational system to get a good job would help poor communities and families out of their poverty, they cannot afford to do so, lack a tradition of education and are logically obsessed by short-term economic survival and desperately need their children’s manual labour to survive economically.

Tuition and living fees

Many parents simply cannot afford to pay the school-fees and books to send their children to school. As Schoenhals (2001: 245) reports, many families can only afford to send one child to school and pupils are often under continual pressure to drop out in order not to place a financial burden on their families:

One, for example wrote, “My home is poor. I often can’t afford both food and school and so often go without food. Therefore, I want to quit school.” Another Yi student wrote, “My father is old and my mother is often sick.” This is a typical answer...

When children attend boarding school, something necessary for those whose homes are too far from school (especially in the case of secondary schools) to walk their daily, board and lodging can be astronomically prohibitive. Pupils either board in the school or find local lodging with relatives or friends. Schoenhals (ibid: 244-245) cites the example of Liangshan Nationalities Secondary School in Xichang where tuition and living costs for one pupil is equal to, or greater than, the annual income of many rural Nuosu families. Schoenhals (ibid: 243) found in a survey that 23 out of 47 Yi (some maybe having been non-Nuosu) pupils had considered dropping out of school on financial grounds.

Need for children’s labour at home

Sending their children to school not only costs money in the sense of school-fees and books which many parents simply cannot afford, at least for all their children, but also implies lost earnings through the loss of valuable members of the family work-force, which for many peasants is a life and death matter.

Wu Mingxian (1992) points out that the basic reality (at the time of writing in 1992) of most predominantly non-Han parts of Liangshan is that they are poor areas in high mountains and on steep slopes whose population live in scattered communities and where more than 800,000 people are still not adequately fed or clothed. We can assume, although he does not specify this, that a large proportion of these unfortunate folk are Nuosu and that a sizeable proportion of Nuosu-speakers belong to this category. Where he refers to “minority nationality”, I shall refer to “Nuosu”, although in many cases it is also applicable to other non-Han speakers. School attendance in these areas is accentuated by scattered mountain communities which often live many hours difficult walk from the nearest village school and by the pressure on children to tend the families’ sheep, goats and cattle.

After the Communist Party’s 1978 11th Central Plenary Session established the policy of fixing farm output quotas for each household (包产到户), this pressure was

increased, which, as Ma Muju (1999: 199) pointed out, had the devastatingly negative consequence for rural Nuosu society that someone had to look after the few animals which each household had been allocated):

当家长们的视野被眼前的利益挡住时,管理这几头牛羊的最好人选当然就是自家的孩子了. 因此,实行"包产到户"的头几年,大批的学龄儿童被家长从学校拉回农村,由学童变成了牧童. / When family heads were blinded by the short-term benefits, the best candidates for looking after the cattle and sheep were of course their own children. Therefore, in the first few years of the policy of fixing of farm output quotas for each household large numbers of children of school age were dragged back to the countryside, and from being school children became shepherds.

Ma Muju (*ibid*) goes on to give the example of the village of Yangjuan (羊圈) in the *xiang* of Jinbaiwu (仅白乌) in Yanyuan County, where out of 75 children who had either not started school or who had broken off their studies, 45 (60%) had become shepherds. This same village had become known as a positive example of Nuosu medium education because an unheard of number of its children had made it into tertiary education (see later), but in 1993 (the same year 6 pupils entered institutions of further education) of a total of 139 children between the ages of 7 and 18, there were only 64 who were either at school or had graduated from lower secondary school, while 75 children had not entered school. This means that there is a school attendance rate of only 46.1%. 54 (69.2%) of a total of 78 boys attended school and 10 (16.5%) of a total of 61 girls.

Large distances from pupil's homes to nearest schools

As pointed out elsewhere, pupils often have to walk very long distances along paths which are very often steep and torturous and impassable in heavy rains or snowfalls. This results in pupils often arriving late for school and moreover in a state of exhaustion and negatively effects their capacity to learn properly. Also it means that children attending school will be able to help less at home than if they lived near to school. Thus it is not surprising that many families decide not to put their children through such an ordeal. Schoenhals (2001: 245) reports that

At the very least they delay sending them to school for several years, until they are around ten years old, because parents believe that by this age children can handle the long walk more safely.

Lack of a tradition of formal schooling and recognition of its utility in core Nuosu areas.

While Schoenhals (2001: 247) concedes that families with bimo connections do not send their children to state schools because they perceive them as belonging to a rival system antagonistic to the institution of the bimo and traditional Nuosu society, he does not feel that this is a widespread feeling among Nuosu of the core Nuosu areas and that they do not see going to school “as a betrayal of their own Yi culture and society.”. Rather, he suggests, based on the conclusions of well-placed informants, that whereas Nuosu in counties such as Yuexi, where Han and Nuosu lived side by side and there was a strong (sometimes competitive) tradition of putting children through school, in the core Nuosu counties such a dynamic is lacking. Schoenhals (2001: 255) sums this up as follows

Thus, whereas in most multiethnic settings one group often derives its identity and value through repeated performances of opposition to an Ethnic Other, the Yi show no such dynamic. Consequently, the Yi do not need to do the opposite of a dichotomized Ethnic Other such as the Han in order to define and defend their own identity. They can do well in school, or fail at school, with little effect on their sense of who they are as Yi.

I do not find this explanation entirely satisfactory and suspect that it is perhaps not only bimo families that view the state education system as an alien Han institution.

Language barrier

This point is commented on in 6.1.3, 6.2.5 and 7.1.1.

Reasons for lack of attendance of girls

In Nuosu society there is a widespread view that there is no point in investing scarce resources in educating girls when they will leave their parents and move to their husbands’ families after marriage. Han girls also move to their in-laws after marriage. However, while this trend is also seen among many Han, the attendance of Nuosu girls is much lower. As Schoenhals (2001: 244) puts it

Han peasant females at least start school, and many of them in Liangshan enter secondary school. For the Yi, however, most girls who start school go only for a year or two.

There is also a traditional belief among many Nuosu that educated women make disobedient wives. Attitudes are very different among the Yi regarding male and female

educational roles and Schoenhals (ibid: 254) stresses that Nuosu boys are never teased as being softies or sissies for doing well at school, whereas Nuosu boys at Liangshan Nationalities Secondary School did tease girls (both Nuosu and Han) for doing well, especially in the traditionally male-domain of science.

Low participation in schools.

The low participation and high drop-out rate in rural Nuosu schools has a negative effect on literacy and hence on economic development (discussed in 6.2.8, 7.2.8 and 6.3.1) and has not supported the impressive literacy gains of adult literacy campaigns.

5C.2.10 BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN LIANGSHAN FROM 1978

Before 1978, education in Liangshan for all nationalities was almost exclusively monolingually Han, bar a few experimental classes in the late 1950s that tried out the romanised Nuosu script. Even after this time the introduction of bilingual Han-Nuosu education, especially Type 1 (see 5C.2.10.1), mainly given through the medium of Nuosu, has only reached a small proportion of Nuosu-speaking pupils and many Nuosu speaking children who are not fluent in Han have received no instruction in Nuosu at all. Nuosu-speaking children who have a good knowledge of Han, or live in areas where they are exposed to Han, are considered to not be in need of anything other than a totally monolingual Han education.

In Liangshan, normally only people of Yi nationality are considered candidates for bilingual Nuosu-Han education. With limited individual exceptions (for example some isolated Han living in strongly Nuosu-speaking areas) people who do not have Yi nationality do not (and are not expected to) receive any kind of teaching in Nuosu.

5C.2.10.1 TYPE 1 AND 2 SCHOOLS IN NUOSU AREAS

In Liangshan, as in most areas of China with significant national minority concentrations, there are, in addition to the network of ordinary schools to which the greater part of Yi nationality pupils – even in core Nuosu areas such as Zhaojue - attend, also *nationality schools* (民族学校) both at primary and secondary level. *Nationality* here refers essentially to non-Han nationalities; although some Han do attend them (for

example 16% of pupils in Liangshan Nationalities Secondary School in Xichang are Han). Schoenhals 2001 was unable to establish any meaningful distinction between *nationality* and regular schools in Liangshan, both of which attempted to deal with special remedial needs of Nuosu pupils.

During the nine months I spent living at MZ [凉山民族中学 Liangshan Nationalities Secondary School in Xichang], I also visited other secondary and primary schools throughout Liangshan. I found the nationalities schools' curricula to be identical to those used in regular schools throughout all of China, a situation occasionally making for awkward moments, as when a Han primary school teacher of an all-Yi class, specifically designated as such] within a regular primary school taught a lesson from a national textbook about the ancient accomplishments of "we" the Han people. (Schoenhals 2001: 241).

5C.2.10.2 DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION: 1978-1991 (Main sources: Liangshan Prefectural Education Committee, 1992 and Deng Chenlun, 1992)

In autumn 1978 Nuosu language and script became a main subject on the curriculum of some secondary and primary schools in Liangshan and, according to Wu Mingxian (1999: 189), was highly successful in developing pupils' intellect, arousing their interest, consolidating pupil numbers, achieved clear improvements in the quality of teaching and was generally welcomed. However, as the same author (*ibid*) pointed out, only a single subject in Nuosu was being offered and only to children in some 20% of Nuosu areas, which did not come near to satisfying the needs of the over 90% of Nuosu children in core Nuosu areas who speak no Han. It was subsequently decided to extend Nuosu as a main subject to over 80% of Nuosu secondary and primary pupils within Liangshan. This was to become the Type 2 bilingual system described below.

In 1980 the State Council (国务院) approved the "Scheme for the Standardised Script of Sichuan Province (四川省彝文规范方案) and the "All-China Working Conference on Nationality Education" (全国民族教育工作会议) summed up the lesson to be drawn from post-1950 education of the national minorities saying:

发展民族中小学教育,一定要在教育体制,教学内容和教学方法等方面适合少数民族的特点,最主要的是,凡是有本民族语言文字的民族应使用本民族的语文教学,学好本民族语文,同时兼学汉语汉文." To develop primary and secondary education of [minority] nationalities, the special characteristics of the minority nationalities must be incorporated in the educational system and the teaching content and methodology. Of greatest importance is that all nationalities possessing their own language and script

should use them as teaching mediums, and at the same time as learning their own nationality's language and script should learn the Han language and script. (Quoted in Ma Muju, 1999: 199 and several other sources)

In 1984 a two-tier system was developed as explained below (figures from Liangshan Prefectural Education Committee, 1992: 21):

1) Type 1 (一模 / 一类体制 / 一种体制 / 一类) or bilingual education where all subjects are taught through the medium of Nuosu and where Han language is taught as a single subject.

2) Type 2 (二模 / 二类体制 / 二种体制 / 二类) or bilingual education where all subjects are taught through the medium of Han and Nuosu language is taught as a single subject.

For whom is each type appropriate? In the words of Luobianmuguo (1999):

...根据语言环境、群众意愿和办学条件采取开设彝语课 (二类模式) 和举办彝文中小学 (一类模式) 的两类模式; / ...on the basis of the linguistic environment, the wishes of the people and the administrative state of the schools either Yi language classes are to be set up (Type 2) or Yi-medium primary and secondary schools established;

Many writers, among them Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) stress that different solutions are needed in remote rural areas where Nuosu speakers have minimal contact with the Han language and in areas with better communications with mainstream China where they are in contact with speakers of Han. They propose Type 1 for monolingual Nuosu areas and Type 2 for areas where a large proportion of the Nuosu population have a certain degree of familiarity with the Han language.

Naturally by Catalan or Welsh standards Type 2 bilingual schools would be considered to be Han-medium schools where Nuosu is taught as a subject (albeit through the medium of Nuosu!) and perhaps some other consideration is given to Nuosu in other classes and activities where the teachers are Nuosu speakers. As made clear at several points in this thesis, the idea that areas which are not so monolingually Nuosu should use the majority Han language as the main teaching medium is quite different to the

philosophy of education aimed at the maintenance of minority languages such as Welsh, Catalan or Basque, where minority language medium teaching is often considered a way to help prevent the complete or partial loss of the minority language in question. Although some people are concerned about language shift to Han, the general preoccupation in Liangshan, as it was in Wales, Catalonia and the Basque Country a century ago (and even more recently) is that everyone should learn the majority state language, the passport to socioeconomic advancement, rather than preventing the loss of the minority language.

Yao Changdao (personal communication 1994 and 1995), who strongly champions minority nationalities' rights to use their own languages, rather surprisingly perhaps indirectly implies in the following quote that Nuosu children in areas where Han has been widely disseminated are not in need of bilingual education.

凉山州为了在汉语普及低的彝族聚居区充分发挥"母语优势",在基础教育中逐步推广规范彝语和汉语普通话的双语(文)教学. Liangshan Prefecture has fully elaborated "mother-tongue superiority" for Yi nationality areas where the Han language has not been widely disseminated. In elementary education bilingual standard Yi and Han-Mandarin teaching is being promoted. (Yao Changdao, 1994: 40)

In personal communication he expressed the opinion that it should be left up to the individual Nuosu communities which were bilingual in Han whether they wished for bilingual Nuosu-Han education. While not advocating a situation such as in Catalonia where all children, regardless of ethno-linguistic origin, would have to receive a bilingual education, he certainly was in favour of Nuosu who were fluent in Han, as well as of Han people, learning the Nuosu language and script. Indeed Yao himself is Han, from a non-Nuosu-speaking area and fluent in spoken and written Nuosu.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei 1993: 118) warn of the danger of ignoring or abandoning altogether Han language classes in Type 1 schools (as happened in some schools: see the section below on Zhaojue) insisting that Han is the interethnic lingua franca and official language as well as being the language of commerce, further education and occupational mobility. They recommend gradually increasing Han classes in Type 1 schools with each succeeding school year. At the same time they

warn of the danger of neglecting, or of not taking seriously enough, Nuosu classes within Type 2 schools.

Some of the statistics given below must be treated with utmost caution and used as an approximate guide. Very often they do not add up as they should, which could be due to either incomplete or incorrect information. Many authors have a tendency to express a sample consisting only of several individuals as a percentage of a group, figures with limited statistical significance. Despite this I have given their exact percentages, even where such exactitude might be considered meaningless, because they do serve to give an orientative idea.

Events in the development of Type 1 and Type 2 bilingual schools in Liangshan up to 1991 (figures from Liangshan Prefectural Education Committee, 1992, [1]: 21 and Wu Mingxian, 1999: 189-190)

This two-tier system was proposed at a meeting of the Sichuan provincial education department held in Xichang in June 1984 and in the same year the Liangshan prefectural Government issued and distributed the “Programme for the development of Yi medium education in primary and secondary schools in Liangshan Prefecture (凉山州中小学彝文教学发展规划)”.

Starting in 1984, the Type 1 bilingual system was launched for 2,085 first year pupils in 64 classes in 64 schools in 25 *xiang* of 11 (according to Wu Mingxiang, 1999, but only 10 according to Luobianmuguo, 1999) counties of Liangshan with large concentrations of Nuosu. However, no more than 995 or 47.72%, of these, graduated from the final year of primary school in 1990. In 1985 the Provincial Government and Education Department of Sichuan formally laid down the active progressive setting up of the two-tier system for Sichuan’s Nuosu and Tibetan medium primary and schools, which were subsequently implemented by the prefectural government and education department.

In 1990 this was extended to lower secondary schools and 11 classes with an intake of 755 pupils (77.89% of the 1990 Type 1 primary school graduates) were set up in 9

schools in 9 counties. The setting up of these Nuosu primary and secondary schools (彝文小学 and 彝文中学 – presumably he is referring to Type 1 schools) led to what Ma Muju (1999:199) terms “凉山彝族农民的办学积极性空前高涨. (an unprecedented surge in enthusiasm for schooling among Yi nationality peasants of Liangshan).”

According to Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115), the growth of the percentage of the minority pupils of the Prefecture of Liangshan receiving a bilingual education of some kind (mainly Nuosu, but also Tibetan) between the years 1986 and 1991 was:

1986: 13.85%

1987: 16.12%

1988: 17.61%

1989: 23.12%

1990: 26.08%

1991: 31.27%. (The figure for the proportion of Nuosu pupils receiving a bilingual Nuosu-Han education was of 33.87% in 1991)

As the example from 1991 shows, these figures include a small number receiving a bilingual Han-Tibetan education and so are lower than the proportion of Nuosu pupils receiving a bilingual education. Moreover the figures for the total number of minority pupils include a significant number who are not Nuosu speakers and whose script is not being officially promoted (e.g. Naze or Prmi speaking pupils) in addition to many Hanised minority members. Although the number receiving bilingual teaching included pupils (mainly in Muli County) receiving bilingual Tibetan -Han bilingual education, these only accounted for a tiny fraction of those receiving a Nuosu-Han one.

5C.2.10.3 DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION AFTER 1991

By 1992 almost one third of all bilingual primary schools (and over a fifth of the pupils attending them) were of Type 1. There were 117 primary schools with 6,615 pupils learning under Type 1 and 381 primary schools with 31,122 pupils under Type 2. At lower secondary level were 9 centres (校点) with 775 pupils learning under Type 1 and 54 lower secondary schools with 9,471 pupils under Type 2. There were also 9 upper secondary schools, with 1,110 pupils under Type 2. In the same year bilingual schools

of both types were staffed by 527 primary school teachers and 174 secondary school teachers who taught bilingually (it must be remembered that many teachers in Type 2 schools teach exclusively, or nearly so, in Han).

In 1993 401 (or just under 52%) of the original 775 pupils from the first (1990) intake of Type 1 lower secondary schools graduated. 279 (almost 70%) of these 401 graduates made it to a higher educational institution:

- 178 entered the first Type 1 upper secondary schools (Zhaojue and Xide upper secondary nationality schools) through province-wide exams, of whom 130 pupils (almost 73.6% of the original intake) graduated in 1996.
- 85 entered the provincial Yi Script School (四川省彝文学校), Xichang Teachers' College (西昌师范学院) and the Yi Script Special Class of the Liangshan Nationalities Teachers' School (凉山民师校彝文专业班).
- 16 were promoted to the prefectural schools of Finance and Trade (财贸校), Machinery and Power-generating Equipment (机电校), Agriculture (农校) and Nursing (卫校).

According to Yao Changdao (1994: 40) by 1994, 35% of Yi (including some non-Nuosu Yi) primary school pupils in Liangshan were receiving Nuosu-Han bilingual education of some form (either Type 1 or 2) in 1994. In 1996 130 pupils (over 73%) of the first 1993 upper secondary intake of 178 graduated and the first Nuosu-medium 3 year college class (大专班) was set up. From 1996 to 1998, of a total of 304 upper secondary school pupils graduates (in 3 successive batches), 207 (66.45%) passed the unified further education entry exams: 71 for undergraduate college courses, 48 for professionally orientated college courses and 83 for technical secondary schools (actually these numbers given by Wu Mingxian, 1999: 190, add up to 202 and not 207!).

Wu Mingxian (1999: 193), an ardent champion of bilingual education, finds this figure unsatisfactory, pointing out that of the original first Type 1 intake of 2,085 students

who entered primary school in 1984, only 103 pupils (just over 6%) graduated from upper secondary school 12 years later in 1996. If the 102 pupils who went on to technical secondary schools are taken into account then still only 205 pupils (just over 11%) successfully completed their secondary education. As this author puts it, “这就是说有 88.87% 的一类模试学生中途流失了。 / This is to say that 88.87% of trial Type 1 pupils got lost along the way.”

My first reaction to these statistics was to think they were low because they were the first batch of pupils coming through the Type 1 system and were naturally victims of the hiccups of implementation of the new system. I am still sure that this is basically true, but according to the Wu Mingxian (ibid:) the situation did not improve in subsequent years. The first batch of 130 Type 1 upper secondary school graduates in 1996 mentioned above fell to 115 in 1997, 73 in 1978 and 51 in 1999. As Wu Mingxian (ibid: 193) puts it “..., 与具有 180 万彝族同胞聚居的自治州极不相称。 /..., hardly fitting for an autonomous area of 1.8 million Yi compatriots.”

What has happened to what should have been a progressive increased development of Type 1 education? Wu Mingxian (ibid) lays bear the stark reality:

有的县十几年都只用一个乡一所学校照收一个班应付“试点”,多数县彝文小学越办越少,群众意见大。生源越来越少,给“接轨”造下越来越大的难度。 In over 10 ten years some counties only set up a single class in a single school to deal with the “experiment”. In most counties the number of Yi medium primary schools decreased over time to the great opposition of the public. The intake of students became less and less, thus creating greater and greater hardships for coordinating.

This all sounds terribly familiar from our observation of the situation of Zhuang medium education in Guangxi. What looked on the surface in the early 1990s as if it were destined to become the normal routine system, and was the envy of many Zhuang educators I spoke to in Guangxi, had gone terribly wrong in the second part of the decade. Part of the reason for this false optimism was probably partly the successes which the rural adult literacy campaigns were enjoying in the same areas and the assumption that this enthusiasm would be automatically transferred to school education. By the end of 1998, according to Wu Mingxian (1999: 193), only 74,128 minority nationality pupils throughout Liangshan (the author seems to assume that none of these

would be Han pupils) were receiving some form of bilingual education in 776 primary and secondary schools and that these accounted for 33.21% of the 223,239 non-Han pupils then in Liangshan schools. From further data given by the author it would appear 74,153 pupils were receiving a bilingual Han-Nuosu education, so there appears to be an error in the figures given, as I know that at least a small number of pupils in the north-western part of Liangshan (especially Muli County) were receiving a bilingual Han-Tibetan education. What calls my attention is that two thirds of non-Han pupils in Liangshan schools (i.e. not counting those not attending school at all) are therefore receiving totally Han-medium teaching, without Nuosu (or Tibetan) being taught even as a subject.

8,446 pupils (ibid) were receiving Type 1 Nuosu-Han bilingual education (7,335 primary pupils in 133 schools [130 primary schools in 36 *xiang* of 11 counties according to Luobianlugu 1999], 877 lower secondary pupils in 9 schools and 234 upper secondary pupils in 2 schools), accounting for only 4.14% of all Nuosu primary and secondary pupils in Liangshan (and 3.78% of all non-Han pupils). Thus when we are talking about Type 1 bilingual education we are talking about an extremely minority phenomenon within the education of Nuosu-speaking pupils in Liangshan. If we take into account the low school attendance rate among Nuosu-speaking children of school age (especially among monolingual Nuosu-speakers), only an insignificant proportion of Nuosu benefit from Nuosu-medium education, despite it being the form of teaching recommended by most language experts for core Nuosu areas. The numbers of pupils receiving a Type 2 education was approximately 9 times higher than those receiving Type 1 (65,707 according to my estimates based on the author's data), but still accounted for only a tiny minority of Nuosu pupils receiving a state education.

In contrast to Wu Mingxian, who sees a mostly empty bottle, Luobianyiguo (1999) seems to see a bottle with something in it. He sees the fact that Nuosu pupils can learn all the way through from the first year of primary school until tertiary level in Type schools as a great achievement. He goes on to cite the successes of the Type 1 Korean-medium education system in Yanbian, which is generally recognised as being of a very high level, emphasising that the Type 1 system of Liangshan is designed along similar lines. He points out that among Koreans who have attended such schools the proportion entering University and further education is far higher than even of the local Han. What

he does not say, is that the Koreans of Manchuria are among the socio-economically best-off nationalities of the whole of China (into whose education much has been invested) the opposite of rural Nuosu.

5C.2.10.4 PROBLEMS FACED BY BILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN LIANGSHAN

Although the problems discussed below are also often common to all schools attended by Nuosu pupils (and often to pupils of Han and other nationalities) in Liangshan, they were felt by various people working in the field of Nuosu-medium education to be especially applicable to bilingual – and above all to Type 1 - schools.

Shortage of teachers and problems of teacher quality and job stability.

This problem, according to Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993), was initially created by the rapid development of bilingual education. Within Type 1 some teachers have to simultaneously teach more than one subject and some subjects which should be begun at an early stage are delayed for lack of qualified teachers. Some Type 2 schools are unable to initiate classes of Nuosu due to a lack of teachers and some have resorted to merging classes or accelerating the rhythm of the classes - solutions which have not yielded good results.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993) regret that although a section of the teachers had received adequate training and now formed the backbone of bilingual education, many of them had not received any specialized training and, especially the Nuosu language teachers, were hurriedly catapulted into the classroom underprepared. Furthermore, they complain of a shortage of teachers of all Nuosu-medium subjects in Type 1 upper secondary schools, which they hope to solve transferring and retraining teachers from technical secondary schools. They stress that the problem is not only of changing teaching medium, but also of the low professional standard of teachers and a crisis of instability that the teaching profession is going through, with many teachers leaving the profession. They conclude (119) that more practical help and support should be given to teachers at the chalk-face and that more in-training courses (better planned, coordinated and thought out than at present) are needed to raise the level of Nuosu-medium teachers at different levels. Moreover more recognition and rewards should be given to successful teachers to give them self-confidence and stability.

Shortage of Nuosu medium teaching materials

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 118) praise the efforts of the Sichuan Province Yi Language Educational Material Editorial and Translation Department over the last 10 years, which has worked hard to produce and translate primary and lower secondary (at that time upper secondary Nuosu medium classes had not yet been set up) textbooks in all subjects, reference books for teachers and part of the materials for upper secondary schools, in this way covering the most basic necessities of bilingual medium teaching texts.

However these authors qualify this by admitting that due to lack of time and staff, the quality and quantity of the preparation of materials has been unable to satisfy all the teaching demands, especially of reference works, supplementary reading and exercise books. This has restricted the range of topics that pupils can cover and assimilate in and out of the classroom. The authors express their hope that the setting up of the Sichuan Province Yi Language Primary and Secondary Teaching Materials Revision Committee in 1991 by the Provincial Education Committee will help to overcome problems such as lack of materials and translation problems. This new body has the remit to revise, one by one, all primary and secondary teaching texts in the Nuosu script.

Tendency to translate materials directly from Han into Nuosu

Many authors (e.g. Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei 1993: 118) stress that the quality of teaching materials and their relevance to pupils' minority nationality context can have a key role in pupils development and lament the fact that most Yi language teaching materials are direct translations from the Han and the contents have not been adapted to the particular necessities of the Nuosu. Two conflicting principles are at work here.

A basic tenant of Chinese minority nationality policy is the equality of nationalities and their languages and scripts. According to this logic the Nuosu have the right to develop the content of their education to suit their own necessities. If they are to develop freely as Nuosu, then their educational content should not have to be an exact mirror of mainstream Han education, but should be adapted to take into account the extremely important and deep-seated cultural differences, which make the integration of the Nuosu (at least in the core areas) into mainstream Chinese society so difficult. In other

words, the right of the Nuosu not to become merely Nuosu-speaking replicas of the Han should be recognized and enshrined in the education system. Zhang et al (ibid) argue that this is necessary in order to stimulate minority students' interest and intellectual development.

On the other hand an important aim of minority education is the ideological, cultural, social and economic integration of the Nuosu and other non-Han peoples into a modern, centralized, Han-dominated state controlled by the Communist Party, but operating largely according to the mechanism of the free market. Thus, having the same materials in Nuosu (and Tibetan, Mongol, Uyghur and Tai) as in Han helps to convert Nuosu pupils into well-integrated Chinese who just happen to use Nuosu as their main language as opposed to reaffirming their different Nuosu identity and values in opposition to the officially promoted ones. Imposing Han-centred nationwide teaching materials also fits in with the “civilising project” of the state referred to earlier on. While it is in the State's interest to maintain a few quaint Nuosu folk customs, most deep-seated cultural and social differences are treated with intense mistrust and often disdain and many Han or Hanised cadres would love to leave a large part of the cultural and social baggage of being Nuosu behind.

Naturally, having identical materials also means that pupils from Nuosu medium schools who want to integrate into mainstream Chinese education will at least be familiar with aspects which might not have been covered in a culturally Nuosu-biased syllabus. Mahaihanxiare, (1990: 40) opposes the quite popular idea of simply translating teaching materials literally from Han into Nuosu on the grounds that a language is more than just a neutral code and that it embodies the thoughts and aspirations of its speakers:

套搬汉语文教材是一种弊病,因两种不同性质的文字,不管在教本编排个教学上,都有其本质上的不同,更不用说在教材内容上也不切合实际.研究出一整套语文教学方法,也是我们广大彝语文教师,责无旁贷的,艰巨而光荣的任务。Slavishly following Han language teaching materials is a bad practice whether in the layout or teaching of texts, to say nothing of the teaching materials not being properly geared to the (pupils') reality, because both scripts have essentially different natures. Taking responsibility for achieving a complete teaching methodology for the Yi language and script, without any material gain is our arduous and glorious task as teachers of Yi.

Problems with how Nuosu texts are taught

Mahaihanxiare, (1990: 41) lists some negative ways in which Nuosu texts are sometimes taught in Type 1 schools:

1. No matter what text-type, the main teaching strategy applied is the direct translation of the Nuosu text into Han.
2. After first discussing new vocabulary the text is translated into Han.
3. After dividing the text into short sections, the main idea of each paragraph is discussed and summed up.
4. Only characteristics of the writing and literary style are discussed, no attention being paid to words and phrases.
5. Pupils are just taught to read the text, other aspects not being treated.

As can be seen from the foregoing list of negative ways of teaching Nuosu materials, he comes out strongly against the practice of translating into Han, seeing it as a pointless exercise as pupils are generally native Nuosu speakers and these are original Nuosu medium teaching materials. He concedes that in the case of pupils who speak better Han than Nuosu this might serve some purpose. Such pupils must constitute an extremely small minority. Mahaihanxiare feels that this practice benefits neither the pupils' Nuosu nor Han.

Mahaihanxiare (1990: 41) criticises the tendency of many Nuosu teachers to race through texts too quickly and teach the Nuosu language in an unimaginative, alienating and boring way which does not engage the interest of the pupils or harness or build on their knowledge of the world and Nuosu society. He points out that pupils enter school with a rich knowledge of Nuosu language and culture, which should be harnessed and built upon in a way which stimulates them to learn new things, thus developing their imagination, memory, comprehension, consciousness and analytical capacity. Chinese (and Asian) education in general tends not to be based on participative, communicative methodologies. Asking untrained, inexperienced, and often not well educated, teachers to stimulate their pupils is a tall order. More than anything Mahaihanxiare appears to be asking for a missionary zeal and dedication from teachers to inspire pupils to overcome their natural shyness of an alien education system imposed by an alien culture.

Mahaihanxiare (1990: 40) stresses the importance of the teaching of Nuosu language and script in Type 1 schools not only as a worthwhile end in itself, but also as a teaching medium for imparting the whole range of subjects on the curriculum, calling it a“打开各种知识宝库的钥匙. (key which opens the treasure chest of knowledge).”

The complaint that some Nuosu medium teachers spent a lot of time translating Nuosu texts into Han as a principal activity, could only be made by a true proponent of the equality of languages or someone concerned at the cognitive effect of not stimulating thinking and reasoning in the mother-tongue. The argument is that there are far more didactic activities to do with texts in Nuosu than translating them into Han, for example discussing their content and value in Nuosu. Han schoolchildren would not normally translate a Han text into English unless it were in an English class.

Tendency to not have unified terms for translating new concepts into Nuosu.

Yang Jianhua (1994: 24) laments the tendency among many teachers (e.g. of science subjects) to use different terms which can be very confusing for pupils and all users of the language. Often even the same teaching materials contain different versions for the same term.

Neglect of Han language in Type 1 schools.

There is widespread recognition that the standard of Han generally taught in Type 1 schools is too low and that greater quality input of Han is needed. Some advocate much more contact with Han (e.g. the teachers speaking it more both in and out of class) and many (e.g. Yang Jianhua 1994:24) are in favour of Han being introduced from the very first year with more hours devoted to learning this language. As was noted earlier there were some Type 1 schools in Zhaojue County that for a time did not even teach Han. Given that a major argument of bilingual education is that it helps Nuosu speaking pupils attain a better level of spoken and written Han than an exclusively Han-medium education, even fervent defenders of Nuosu-medium education realise that if Han is not effectively taught that parents and others will lose faith in Type 1 schools if they feel that children are not being properly equipped to deal with the Han-dominated real outside world.

In short nobody would advocate having an education system where Han was not taught. A low standard of Han among Type 1 pupils is something proponents of predominantly Nuosu medium education cannot afford if they wish to convince parents, cadres and society at large of its desirability.

Neglect of the Nuosu language in Type 2 schools.

Calling Type 2 schools “bilingual” sounds impressive and reassuring to those who fear that Nuosu is being neglected in schools. As mentioned earlier however, they are really Han-medium schools in which pupils have the opportunity to learn to read and write in Nuosu, and study its literature, if they choose to. How effectively they achieve this depends to a great extent on how the schools teach this subject. How much use is made of Nuosu outside the Nuosu language class depends on the number of Nuosu-speaking teachers in different schools (often very low) and on their attitude to promoting its use in formal school situations among pupils. By way of comparison in Wales a school system where Welsh is just taught as one subject on the curriculum (whether to native Welsh speakers or not) with the other subjects being taught in English, is not considered to be a bilingual school in the full sense of the word.

Due to the socially inferior status of Nuosu vis a vis Han, unless the staff of Type 2 schools actively promote the formal use of Nuosu, it will invariably tend to become more and more marginalised.

Tendency for Type 1 teachers to teach the syllabus a la carte.

Yang Jianhua (1994: 24-25) mentions that some teachers of Han teach at different rhythms to others and that the final exams often concentrate disproportionately on the content of the later stages thus penalising pupils who have not covered as much.

Terrible conditions of poverty under which many teachers and pupils of Type 1 schools live

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993) lament that many teachers have to wait long periods before receiving their salaries. Speaking of the 2 *xiang* in Leibo County with experimental Type 1 schools, Yang Jianhua (1994:25) points out that most of the teachers belong to the inferior professional categories of “substitutes” (代课) or

“teachers of the people” (民师) and earn a pittance (20-30 yuan in 1994) that even by Liangshan standards is shocking. He mentions Type 1 primary school pupils attending “semi-boarding schools in their own *xiang* who survive, despite negligible economic aid (5 yuan in 1994), thanks to bringing grain and maize etc. from home, but mentions that pupils attending county level secondary schools receive insufficient state aid to buy enough grain, have problems in bringing supplies from home and have to buy their own books. This author mentions that it is common for such pupils to skip meals, sometimes more than one on a run.

Lower attendance rate and higher drop out rate among girl, than boy, pupils

Almost all authors comment on this problem persisting among bilingual schools. Yang Jianhua (1994:25) mentions that if this problem is not solved there will be a permanent acute shortage of women cadres among rural Nuosu. Harrell (2001a) interestingly reports (citing the popularity of a Nuosu medium-class among girls) signs that Nuosu medium education is considered more socially useful for girls, who are not expected to be as upwardly mobile as men and to integrate themselves into mainstream Han-dominated society to the same extent. According to this way of thinking woman would acquire a predominantly Nuosu-medium basic education which would make them literate and teach them basic information needed for a modern rural life.

Bad conditions of classrooms.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993) stress the importance of taking adequate financial and administrative steps to solve the bad state and deterioration of classrooms, school buildings and grounds, classroom and laboratory equipment and school dormitories. They argue that current budgets are simply insufficient to cope with the inferior educational infrastructure in rural Liangshan, especially bearing in mind that bilingual education is a new project and thus is in need of extra spending and staffing in order to overcome such difficulties. The authors make their criticism diplomatically (as the article is essentially a plea for financial and administrative help from the county and prefectural authorities), stressing that the situation in general has improved, but going on to say that in some remote minority areas basic school infrastructures are either lacking or in a very bad state. They report that in many schools there is a shortage of classrooms, tables, chairs, offices and dormitories and

many pupils who wish to board at the school are forced to find lodging far away. Some schools do not start classes until 11 or 12 o'clock, in part because many pupils live various hours walk from school, and have difficulty in offering a regular timetable, thus making the teachers' job of providing an adequate education very difficult.

Thomas Heberer of Duisburg University who sponsored a school in Meigu was shocked to discover in 2005 that many basic installations such as taps and washbasins had been stolen (personal communication, 2005).

Ambiguity about which domains the Nuosu language and script can be used for and allowing Nuosu to open itself to the world. (Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei 1993: 118)

Many authors comment that despite the clear advantages of bilingual education, a significant part of the public are not prepared to send their children to Type 1 schools. Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 118), discovered not one son or daughter of a cadre in any of the Type 1 secondary schools. Many members of the public were also waiting and seeing how these schools fared before committing themselves to sending their children there.

In a questionnaire conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in November 1988 in Xide County Nuosu parents were asked if they would prefer to send their children to a Han or Nuosu-medium school. 80% answered to the Han-medium school. The main reason given by Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 118) was that domains of use of Nuosu had still not been consolidated and that there was no continuity in the Nuosu-medium teaching throughout the primary and secondary sectors and that many members of the public were in doubt about the utility of Nuosu-medium education, arguing that hardly any official organisms or commercial enterprises used the Nuosu script. Thus for example, one cannot be reimbursed for a bill written in Nuosu and a letter addressed in Nuosu will never reach its destination. Parents were also concerned about whether graduates from Nuosu-medium schools would have access to Han universities and whether there was professional future for people with a knowledge of Nuosu.

5C.2.10.5 SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS OF BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

Yang Jianhua (1994: 20), summing up measures adopted to make bilingual schools in Zhaojue work (one of the counties where they have enjoyed most success), attributes this (relative) success mainly to the concern of leaders and key cadres at all administrative levels (provincial, prefectural and county, especially the county Education Bureau 县文教局), who visited and closely monitored, encouraged, stimulated and supported the bilingual classes and their teachers (especially in trying out new methodological ideas) and to their active promotion of the Party's Nationality policy and the importance of bilingual education. This is relevant to the Implementation Hypothesis, discussed in 6.2.4 and 7.2.4. Secondly he stresses the importance of the county education bureau having in addition introduced bilingual education in the county in the following ways:

- Closely cooperating with staff of the teaching and research section (教研室) and with teachers and researchers involved in bilingual education to analyse both problems which cropped up and future perspectives. It was consistently stressed that Type 1 education was the key to the success of bilingual education and the teaching and research section paid special attention to researching Type 1 education, in this way improving its organisation and quality.
- Fostering the training of bilingual teachers, especially those teaching Nuosu language.
- Funding the normal development and research of bilingual education amidst a situation of considerable scarcity of funds. For example 3 key Nuosu-medium classes for boarders (寄宿制重点班) were set up at primary level and 3 at secondary level.
- Carrying out successful public relations work in favour of school bilingual education among cadres and members of the community, leading to their accepting it and being ready to send their children to bilingual schools, in turn increasing the motivation of teachers.
- Improving the administration of Type 1 schools and facilitating the setting up of new schools through committees of cadres, teachers and members of the public at the levels of *xiang* (rural district) and village, which have, among other tasks, supervised teachers' work and the enrolment of new pupils.

Given the largely experimental and partial implementation of bilingual education, even in rural Nuosu areas, articles on Nuosu-Han bilingual education tend (after outlining the achievements and problems met by bilingual classes) to be full of recommendations for how to improve the setting up and running of bilingual education, in particular of Type 1 schools. Below are some of the typical recommendations:

Conscientiously implementing bilingual education.

This may sound like empty communist jargon, but it is meant quite sincerely. Wu Mingxian (1992) considers that since 1979 the swift eradication of illiteracy among the Nuosu has been successfully achieved and that 13 years of experience have shown that bilingual education at a young age develops the intelligence of Nuosu pupils improving their quality of education and of life in Nuosu areas. However, he sees the biggest problem in some areas as being a lack of appropriate knowledge, enthusiasm, sincerity and support of bilingual education which restricts its expansion and development and mentions that some classes presently being taught fear for their future and their usefulness and are on the verge of changing what they are doing or stopping teaching altogether and makes a plea to conscientiously and correctly implement the policy of bilingual education in the Autonomous Region. To sum up, he is making an appeal to passive opponents of the promotion of Nuosu to stop dragging their feet and support the policy wholeheartedly (see 6.7.4 and 7.2.4).

Training of Nuosu (and other non-Han) teachers and improving their quality, stability and number

To escape from this terrible situation Wu Mingxian (1992) stresses the public responsibility of the authorities to implement universal primary education among the minority nationalities. To achieve this, he recommends the speedy training of skilled and motivated minority nationality primary and secondary school teachers dedicated to the task of creating a literate peasantry to overcome the present shortage of non-Han teachers.

Education orientated towards the context of the Nuosu (or other nationality in question)

Wu Mingxian (1992) warns that unless the societies, history, language scripts, psychology and other unique characteristics of the minority nationalities are taken into

account educational efforts will fall on barren ground. In the parlance of the Western world he is saying that multicultural education is needed.

Consolidation of system of Nuosu-medium boarding schools

Wu Mingxian (1992) argues that the three types of boarding schools in Liangshan are among the great successes of recent years. Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993) discovered in the course of their research that cadres, the Nuosu public, teachers and pupils all had a supportative attitude towards the 3 types of boarding schools. In 1991 they report that there were 50 priority boarding schools (17 of them at primary, 25 at lower secondary and 5 at upper secondary level), 232 general or common boarding schools (189 of them at primary, 42 at lower secondary and 1 at upper secondary level) and 444 *xiang* centralised primary boarding schools (443 primary and 1 lower secondary) giving a bilingual education. They see the consolidation and improvement of boarding schools as being important for overcoming both the low enrollment and high drop-out rates and the problem of pupils arriving late and exhausted at school due to living too far from school and having to walk long, often difficult, paths.

Naturally boarding schools may be seen with some hostility and suspicion by members of the rural Nuosu community, because they take children away from their parents and thus reduce the socialisation of children into traditional Nuosu society and culture. On the other hand such schools are an opportunity for the state (even if it is done through the medium of Nuosu) to indoctrinate pupils in the ideas and culture of the centralised Chinese state. Also they reduce the opportunities of children to help their families at home and to learn traditional skills such as farming and herding which are passed on from parents to children and alienate children from the rural mountain environments, perhaps increasing their desire not to return home on graduating. Experience from other contexts such as Native American boarding schools in the US would seem to support this fear of alienation.

5C.2.10.6 CITED ACADEMIC ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUAL PROGRAMMES

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114) cite examples which demonstrate a clear improvement in educational standards, reflected in the marks of

pupils participating in predominantly Nuosu medium bilingual (Type 1) schools throughout the Prefecture of Liangshan between 1987 and 1989:

- In 1987 the pupils of the 3 levels of 74 primary schools obtained an average mark of 56.1% in the subject of Nuosu language, 32.7% in the subject of Han language and 44.9% in mathematics, all significantly higher results than Nuosu-speaking pupils of the same age who studied mainly through Han (I do not know if the author was referring only to schools teaching exclusively through Han or also to predominantly Han medium bilingual schools).
- In 1989 the pupils of the 5 levels of 84 primary schools obtained an average mark of 49.18% for all three subjects: 48.7% in Nuosu language, 38.74% in Han language and 52.35% in mathematics.
- In 1989, the sixth-year Nuosu medium class of Seda primary school in Ganluo County achieved the following average marks in the standardised prefecture-wide exams: 48.3% in Nuosu language and 42.6% in mathematics taught through the medium of Nuosu. The pupils of the Han class of the same school year and in the same school in contrast, only obtained 34.5% in Han language and 32.2% in mathematics taught through the medium of Han.
- In 1991 the average marks in final exams obtained by pupils of 35 graduating classes predominantly Nuosu medium bilingual schools throughout the Prefecture of Liangshan were 53.03% in Nuosu language, 22.53% in Han language and 32.44% in mathematics.

At first sight these results are not exactly impressive; in fact they appear to indicate a total failure. That such depressing results are being proclaimed as a great achievement brings home just how bad things must have been before. Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114) remind us that these results were much better than those obtained prior to the introduction of bilingual education. They quote the example of the 1983 exam results of 109 candidates of the final (Han-only) class of Hepoluo primary school in Xide County: mathematics 26.1% (only 10 people passed), Han language 5.1% (none of the candidates passed). In 1984 the results of 161 candidates of the same school were: mathematics 12.5% (only one person passed), Han language 10.8% (4 candidates passed).

In more than 20 years of Han medium education, the *xiang* of Hepoluo primary school had only produced 8 pupils of secondary professional schools (of which 4 were promoted during the Cultural Revolution for political reasons), 5 lower secondary school and 5 upper secondary school pupils. In 1984 Hepoluo primary school introduced bilingual education and the final exam results (in %) between 1987 and 1989 were:

Year -->	1987			1988			1989		
Subject -->	Han Lang- uage	Yi Lang- uage	Maths.	Han Lang- uage	Yi Lang- uage	Maths.	Han Lang- uage	Yi Lang- uage	Maths.
Bilingual Yi- Han classes	59	75	55	44	77	49	53	67	60,4
Monolingual Han classes	17		14	28		20	32		26

If we accept these statistics as reliable (in the case of Guangxi we saw that the reliability of such results was often put in doubt), these marks are clearly better than those the authors quoted earlier and show more impressive difference between Han and Nuosu medium teaching.

Luobianmuguo (1999), who quotes these same statistics (of Hepoluo) is also of the opinion that they are an advance over Han-only teaching:

四川省彝区一类模式办学时间不长，但已显示出强劲的教育功效。从凉山州1987—1989年连续三年对全州一类模式进行统计的情况看，其学生的学习成绩、学生的升学率和巩固率都比汉语教学班高得多。Although the Type 1 System has not been around for long, it has already revealed powerful educational efficiency. From the statistics for the three successive years from 1987 to 1989 for the Type 1 System in the whole Prefecture of Liangshan, the results of its pupils, the proportion of students being promoted to higher educational levels and those not dropping out of school were much higher than those of the Han-medium classes.

5C.2.10.7 ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENTS IN BILINGUAL PROGRAMMES

Wu Mingxian (1999: 195-196) relates the following positive examples of Type 1 education:

- During the 16 years between the social reforms of 1958 and the introduction of Type 1 education in 1984, not a single pupil in the mountain village of Luoya in the *xiang* of Bi'er in Zhaojue County (with a population of a few hundred) successfully graduated from lower secondary school. In contrast between 1984 and 1999 nine pupils completed lower secondary school, 2 upper secondary school, 8 technical secondary school and 1 higher education.
- In the *xiang* of Jiapoluo in Xide County, where over 4,000 pupils have received Type 1 education, illiteracy among the youth has more or less been eradicated and primary education made universal, leading to a rise in prosperity.

Ma Muju (1999: 199) cites 2 further examples:

- In Yanyuan County Nationalities Secondary School in the late 1980s and early 1990s student numbers reached over 800 with almost 20 entering tertiary education and over 30 technical secondary schools.
- In the village of Yangjuan (羊圈) in the *xiang* of Jinbaiwu (仅白乌) in Yanyuan County (mentioned in 5C.2.9.5 with respect to the high number of children not attending school) school attendance in 1993 was high and 6 graduates of lower secondary school entered Luzhou Medical College, Xichang Teachers' College, Sichuan Yi Script School and Liangshan Agricultural School. In gratitude the parents bought a cow and presented it to the school. This village sent over 30 graduates to tertiary institutions and technical secondary schools over the next few years and became somewhat of a legend throughout Yanyuan County.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) compare the attendance situation in Hepoluo, mentioned in the foregoing section, affirming that before the introduction of bilingual education, the proportion of school age children entering school was 40-50%, of whom roughly 30% continued attending school. For example, of 122 new pupils who entered in 1978, only 9 graduated in 1983 from the final year of primary school: a drop-out rate of 92.6%. From 1958, when Hepolo school was opened, until 1982, according to the lists of pupils admitted, more than 2,500 pupils (80% of the total population [of school age]) should have completed their primary education.

However a 1982 study showed that 72.03% of the total population of the *xiang* aged 12 or over was either illiterate or semiliterate.

With the introduction of bilingual education in Hepoluo in 1984, the first bilingual class of Type One (predominantly Nuosu medium) started off with 30 pupils. In 1990 when the time came for this intake to graduate, these 30 pupils had grown to 42, the other 12 having been transferred from other schools. The total number of primary school pupils in the *xiang* grew from 168 prior to the introduction of bilingual education to 346 in 1990. The number of pupils in the central school of the *xiang* increased from 68 in 1983 to 242 in 1990, the proportion of new entrants of school age increased in the same period from 63.7% to 80.4% and the school drop-out rate of this centre fell from 52.7% to less than 5%.

Thanks to the role of bilingual education in developing pupils' intellect and stimulating their motivation to study, the results and academic standard improved very quickly. Of the 42 pupils who graduated in 1990 from Hepoluo primary school, 40 passed the nationalities secondary school entrance exam and of the 30 who graduated in 1991, 26 passed it.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) cite a further example: Beginning in 1984, Yanyuan County introduced the Type 2 [predominantly Han medium] of bilingual education as its main system. At the time of writing there were 8 *nationality* upper secondary school classes and 31 *nationality* lower secondary school classes with a total of 1,196 secondary school pupils. Moreover there were 251 Type Two (predominantly Han medium) primary school classes, with a total of 16,281 pupils, being taught mathematics bilingually. At the *nationality* secondary school a class with 57 pupils adopted Type 1 (predominantly Nuosu medium bilingual teaching).

Bilingual education accelerated the County's educational development. In 1991 Yanyuan County had 4 upper secondary schools, a secondary professional training school, a school for recycling primary and secondary school teachers, 11 (5 of them *nationality*) lower secondary schools and 296 primary schools (170 of which were in predominantly Nuosu areas). There were a total of 34,666 primary and secondary pupils, of whom 16,281 (47%) were members of non-Han minority nationalities

(obviously the authors include Nuosu and other nationalities, some of them Hanised). Minority nationality pupils had grown between 1978 and 1991 to 19.4% in primary schools, 11.6% in secondary schools, from 20 to 50 pupils in the secondary vocational training school and from 2 to 10 in the higher vocational training school.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) optimistically summing up their experience claim (personal translation, original unavailable):

Bilingual education has seen a constant expansion year after year. It has seen a constant expansion under the supervision of the policy of the Communist Party and with the support of the educational institutions at all levels. The resistance to bilingual education has diminished as heads of family and the public become aware of the benefits and one after another request the setting up of bilingual classes.

5C.2.11 PROMOTION OF NUOSU SCRIPT IN PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL LIFE

5C.2.11.1 INTRODUCTION

The impact of written Nuosu in Zhaojue and Meigu (both in the county towns and in smaller places) is much greater than in Xichang. Naturally it is because the proportion of Nuosu signs in all spheres is higher in the core areas. In Xichang in addition to the compulsory bilingual signs, most signs are monolingual Han, whereas in Zhaojue and Meigu there were some signs of a commercial or informal nature that were written either bilingually or only in Nuosu (especially in small villages).

5C.2.11.2 SIGNS OF OFFICIAL STATE ORGANISMS AND ENTERPRISES

When I was in Zhaojue and Xichang in the summers of 1994 and 1995, I gained the impression that all the signs of names of the state-run work places, (official institutions, offices of the administration, colleges, state factories, hospitals etc. had the names of the stations in Han and Nuosu, something I had observed back in the summer of 1980 when I passed through Nuosu areas of Liangshan by train and bus. The names on lorries, buses and other official vehicles were also bilingual.

Liangshan Prefectural Languages and Scripts Committee (1994: 17) requires that all official and commercial establishments have signs with the name in Nuosu in addition

to Han. Generally all signs of organisms (and not just the names as in Guangxi) had Nuosu versions.

The same Committee lays down that the signs of public utilities (stations and public transport stops, airports, parks, sports centres, hotels, exhibition halls, hospitals, cinemas, theatres and dance halls) be bilingual with priority to be given to hospital and public transport signs, thus implying that the signposting in Nuosu *in* this sector was not yet totally universal in the year 1994.

5C.2.11.3 USE OF NUOSU WITHIN PEOPLE’S CONGRESS (Liangshan Prefecture People's Government, 1994a: 3-4)

Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994a: 3-4) stated that the People's Congress at all administrative levels within Liangshan should go a step further and take seriously the use (oral and written) of both Nuosu and Han in meetings, thus setting an example in the application of the Working Rules. Different demands were to be placed on different administrative levels of the People’s Congress and varying from place to place. Banners and emblems of all people’s Congresses within Liangshan were to be written bilingually in Nuosu and Han.

The Prefectural People’s Congress was to follow its usual practice of publishing and distributing the principal documents in both Nuosu and Han and providing simultaneous interpreting for oral reports and interventions. People’s Congresses in Xicheng City and the counties of Zhaojue, Leibo, Jinyang, Meigu, Butuo, Puge, Ganluo, Yuexi, Xide and Yanyuan “限于目前条件 (owing to the limitation of present conditions)” were to concentrate on translating into Nuosu, printing and distributing Government working reports and reports of the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress and orally interpreting at meetings. People’s Congresses in Ningnan, Mianning, Dechang, Huili and Huidong should carry out oral interpretation for people of Yi and other nationalities unfamiliar with the Han language. In overwhelmingly Nuosu *xiang* and *zhen*, mainly the Nuosu language and script should be used. This source also refers to the need to use other languages and scripts in *xiang* inhabited mainly by other nationalities.

5C.2.11.4 USE OF NUOSU WITHIN PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT (Liangshan Prefecture People's Government, 1994 a: 3-4)

Following the same principles as People's Congresses, important meetings of all levels of the People's Government within Liangshan should have Nuosu –Han translation facilities as necessary. Major public gatherings should be presided over in both Nuosu and Han.

All laws, regulations and important proclamations aimed at the public as well as appointment letters and important certificates the People's Government and their functional departments should “from beginning to end (原原本本)” be passed down to lower levels in the form of bilingual Nuosu-Han documents.

5C.2.11.5 USE OF NUOSU WITHIN JUDICIARY

Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994a: 3-4) recommended judicial bodies at all levels within Liangshan to take measures to guarantee citizens of Yi nationality involved in legal cases their right to use their own language and script, according to constitutional law and the “Working Regulations on the Yi language and script” and saw the priority for the legal use of the Nuosu script in people's courts at all levels as being:

- bilingual Nuosu-Han public announcements;
- the adding of a Nuosu version for Yi nationality citizens not proficient in Han of court verdicts, adjudications, indictment of the people's procuratorate, exemptions from prosecution and other legal documents;
- when the people's procuratorate issues accusations against defendants and checks and verifies people being questioned and the person or persons in question are Yi nationality citizens not proficient in Han then the Nuosu language should directly be used and the original notes should be taken in the Nuosu script. Apart from this, interpreting should be provided for languages of other nationalities.

The public security (police) bureau was also expected to carry out translation and interpreting work according to the same spirit.

5C.2.11.6 COMMERCIAL SECTOR

Outside Han areas such as Xichang and administrative centres with Han communities such as the county town of Zhaojue, a large number of the handwritten signs in private shops, restaurants etc. addressed to a largely monolingual Nuosu public are in Nuosu. In the county town of Zhaojue, thanks to the activity of the Language and Script Committee, many private establishments also had at least a part of the labelling and signposting in Nuosu. There were however some Han-run establishments, for example restaurants where the proprietors had put up no bilingual signs, menus etc. and the staff (Hainai Lamo, 1994 and 1995, personal communication) of the Language and Script Committee had opened a dialogue with the owners who did not comply with the bilingual norms to convince them of the necessity of a bilingual policy. Hainai Lamo, the late head of the Committee, stressed that he wanted to avoid direct conflicts that could be counterproductive. In the Han city of Xichang most establishments also thanks to the Language and Scripts Committee, had bilingual signs (in both 1995 and 2005).

From the beginning of the promotion, Nuosu's use as a medium for book-keeping has been heavily stressed and encouraged.

5C.2.11.6 PUBLIC NOTICES /SLOGANS

Many of these were in Nuosu only or bilingual in small villages in Zhaojue and Meigu Counties.

5C.2.11.7 OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS (Main source: Maheimujia, 1985)

The prefectural and county level Language and Script Committees and the government editorial departments translate and circulate all important documents of the provincial, prefectural and county governments addressed to the public or to grass-roots cadres. According to Maheimujia (1985: 48) in this way the Nuosu public can understand better the CCP's laws and policies. Documents such as the Marriage Law, the Constitution and the Law of Autonomy have been translated.

5C.2.11.8 VEHICLE OF IDEOLOGICAL PROPOGANDA

Maheimujia (ibid) and other authors mention that the newly-literate Nuosu public now has the chance to study Marxist theory in Nuosu. At the other ideological extreme, the

protestant missionary Covell (1990: 305) identifies in the new script a good vehicle for evangelization:

If in the future, the Chinese church is able to translate the Bible and other Christian literature for the *Liang Shan Yi*, there is now the foundation for this to occur. Previous to this time [the reform and normalization of the Nuosu script], it would have been a hopeless mess.

I have no idea to what extent evangelisation work in Nuosu has been carried out, but a bilingual Nuosu-Mandarin version of the New Testament was published in 2005 by Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft.

5C.2.12 PUBLISHING IN NUOSU (Main source: Maheimujia, 1985: 48-49)

Naturally there are books and reference materials such as maps (of Liangshan, China, the World, etc.) in Nuosu which could serve both as school materials and as reference works outside school.

5C.2.12.1 TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

In the section on literacy, I mentioned that a great part of the literacy materials were on scientific, technical and economic topics. Logically an important part of Nuosu-language publications were on modern agricultural and pastoral techniques, scientific innovations, management and economic innovations, health and hygiene, etc. This will be examined in more detail in 6.2.8.

5C.2.12.2 LITERARY WORKS

In 1984, according to Maheimujia (1985: 49) more than 200 novels, stories and comic-format stories had already been published. Popular traditional Nuosu classic literature written in the traditional script was also being translated into the standardised script. 5During fieldwork in Meigu (2005) I discovered that a limited number of novels and other fictional works were circulating among some members of the rural population.

5C.2.12.3 DICTIONARIES

Maheimujia (1985: 50) mentions that the original *Yi language working group* had already organized the compilation of reference tools for coping with the Nuosu script.

For example it published in Nuosu *the method of ordering Nuosu characters*, and had published more than 200,000 copies up to the summer of 1984, when demand exceeded supply and a new edition had to be brought out. The same group also edited a Nuosu-Han and a Han-Nuosu glossary.

After 1984 the following dictionaries were published: a *Small Nuosu-Han Dictionary of Idioms*, a *Dictionary of Nuosu Characters*, a *Han-Nuosu Dictionary* with more than 400,000 entries and a *Nuosu Dictionary*.

5C.2.12.4 LITERACY CLASS DIDACTIC MATERIALS

Many literacy handbooks and technical books were published to serve as literacy texts. Apart from textbooks, there are also maps in Nuosu.

5C.2.12.5 NUOSU BOOKS FOR LEARNING HAN

Nuosu-medium primers for learning Han have been widely distributed

5C.2.12.6 MATERIALS FOR HAN TO LEARN NUOSU

I know of at least one widely distributed work (also available online on the page of Yizuren.com) called 凉山彝语会话六百句 *niep sha nuo hxop ddop ma fut hxa go* (Liangshan Yi Dialogues: 600 Sentences), for Han speakers to learn Nuosu.

5C.2.12.7 BILINGUAL SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

In 1984, according to Maheimujia (1985: 50), the prefectural education bureau had already compiled and translated 10 language and mathematics textbooks with a total of 200,000 copies as well as textbooks on ideology, ethics, environmental studies and history for the teaching of these subjects.

5C.2. 12.8 NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

The Liangshan Daily (Main source: interview with editor of the *Liangshan Daily*, August 1995). The first experimental Nuosu-language edition of the *Liangshan Daily* was published in 1977. From the beginning of 1978 the Nuosu language edition appeared every ten days. Later on it appeared three times a week and from May 1984 every day. By 1984 according to Maheimujia (1985:49) 730 different issues of this

newspaper, with a total accumulated circulation of more than 3,700,000 copies, had appeared.

In summer 1995, the *Liangshan Daily* had a Nuosu edition with a circulation of more than 4,000, of which some 700 were in Zhaojue, but only 6 in Huili, a place where the Nuosu live mixed with other nationalities. The number of readers is in fact much greater, since normally various people read a single copy. There are still distribution problems and a copy is generally sufficient for a village. Its readers are mainly peasants, grass-roots Nuosu cadres, teachers and people working to promote Nuosu. The proportion of higher level Nuosu cadres reading the Nuosu edition was, according to the editor of the Nuosu edition, surprisingly low. The editor claimed that it exerted an important influence on rural life in the core Nuosu areas. In the county town of Meigu in 2005 only the Han edition was pasted up in the main square and when I asked in small villages in the county I was told that people had to go to the *xiang* reading room to read the Nuosu edition, but that many people did.

The content consists of news (including international affairs), as is to be expected of a newspaper, articles of interest, cultural articles and political documents - a function that in Spain is more reminiscent of an official state bulletin, and in the UK of a government white paper, than that of a newspaper, but which in China is perfectly normal. The last point brings us to the important function of the newspaper as a voice for state propaganda and for integrating Nuosu society into mainstream China, albeit through the medium of Nuosu in a way which respects and the active use of the Nuosu language. Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994a: 6) stresses that as it effectively functions as the organ of the Communist Party in rural Nuosu speaking areas, the paper should stress special "nationality" characteristics and adapt itself to the study needs and reading level of its readers. This obviously reflects an awareness that this readership is not being (and cannot be) effectively reached.

According to Maheimujia (1985:49) this newspaper has played a very important role in the promotion and the use of the *Scheme for the Standardisation of the Nuosu Script*. He affirms that this newspaper is the principal learning material in rural areas and that it has already become an important medium for propogating party policy, for learning the theories of Marx, Lenin and Mao and for studying about culture and science.

The Nuosu edition of Art and Literature of Liangshan (in Han: 凉山文学) (Main source: Maheimujia, 1985:49).

From the beginnings of *Art and Literature of Liangshan* in 1980 until the summer of 1984 60 issues with a total runoff of 59,000 copies were published, which contained epic poems, legends, stories and many works reflecting art and contemporary literature. It became very popular among the general public and cadres and the demand always outstripped the supply. Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994a: 6) stressed its key role in developing Nuosu literature.

5C.2.12.9 CONCLUSION ABOUT PUBLISHING IN NUOSU

Back in 1984, Maheimujia (1985: 49) considered that the Nuosu language press had been successful. Under the impetus of these 2 publications, members of the public who collaborated in writing articles or in carrying out creative activities greatly increased. In 1984, the Nuosu press had some 350 journalists who produced an average of more than 500 manuscripts each month. In the case of *Art and Literature of Liangshan*, 40% of the manuscripts were by members of the public (as opposed to journalists), indicating the extent of popular involvement.

5C.2.13 RADIO, TELEVISION AND DOUBLING OF FILMS

5C.2.13.1 RADIO

In August 1994 Radio Sichuan broadcast an hour every day of music, news etc. in Nuosu (Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994a)).

5C.2.13.2 TELEVISION

In August 1994 Liangshan television channel broadcast 15 minutes of news in Nuosu every Sunday and a bilingual Han-Nuosu channel was projected for the end of 1994. The provision of adequate television was also a priority of the prefectural government in 1994 according to Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994 a). However, by 2005 the amount of time devoted to Nuosu language broadcasts had barely increased and I personally failed to find Nuosu programmes on Meigu County Television in the short time I was there, although I saw reports on Nuosu folklore and local news in Han.

5C.2.13.3 DUBBING OF FILMS

According to Maheimujia (1985: 50) the dubbing of films with the Nuosu script has been a success. Up until the summer of 1984 more than 70 films had already been dubbed into Nuosu.

CHAPTER 6. ZHUANG AND NUOSU: CRITICAL CASES FOR EVALUATING HYPOTHESES ON MINORITY LANGUAGE PROMOTION

6.1 INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS

Before discussing the causes for the different outcomes of the promotions of Zhuang and Nuosu, I wish to first discuss 5 points, which will help to clarify points raised in the hypotheses discussed later in this Chapter. The justification for treating them here rather than in Chapter 4 or 5 is firstly that the information they are based on presupposes familiarity with the situations discussed in Chapter 5, secondly that they form part of the process of contrasting the 2 case studies and lastly that they help to clarify events discussed later in this Chapter. The points are:

- 1) The validity of the hypothesis that the promotion of Nuosu really was much more successful than that of Zhuang.
- 2) The kind of literacies being promoted by the authorities and that are wanted or being adopted by the target population of the promotion.
- 3) The hypothesis, that the difference between the two situations is explained by the Zhuang being mainly bilingual Zhuang-Han or totally hanised and the Nuosu being predominantly ignorant of Han.
- 4) Why do language communities undergo language shift?
- 5) The debate about the effectiveness of Han-only versus bilingual Zhuang-/Nuosu-Han education.

6.1.1 WAS NUOSU'S PROMOTION REALLY FAR MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THAT OF ZHUANG?

It is well-accepted by Chinese, but also by Western scholars, e.g. Bradley (2005) that the promotion of Nuosu has been a relative success (albeit with serious limitations) and –perhaps to a lesser extent, especially outside China- that the promotion of Zhuang in Guangxi has failed, a contrast which I hope is clear from information and events described in Chapter 5A and 5B.

6.1.1.1 WAS THE PROMOTION OF ZHUANG A FAILURE?

As detailed in 5B.2.8 and 5B.2.9, between the late 1980s and early 1990s the top-down pressure of the promotion of Zhuang became a trickle and more or less dried up. In the surprisingly critical words of Wu Chaoqian (1992)

A progressive slowing down and abandonment of the promotion work of the Zhuang script was thus imposed. This work has declined to a critical point and has drawn opposition from everywhere where the script was promoted. There is confusion among pupils, parents are afraid and the public feels cheated. Teachers are worried and the state of the whole cause of the Zhuang script is in a worrying state (Translated by self. Original not available) .

Many Zhuang cadres and intellectuals in Debao, Jingxi and other places attributed a great part of the blame for the change to the “higher educational authorities” which must presumably mean Guangxi Department of Education. Although during my visit to Nanning (capital of Guangxi) I only held a very brief interview with the person responsible for the implementation of linguistic policy, through interviews with other persons of the same department and through the Department’s prospectuses, I gained the impression that the promotion of the Zhuang script (let alone scripts of lesser-used languages such as Mien) had come to a standstill) and that only literacy campaigns using Han characters were on the agenda (bar several insignificant symbolic projects).

During my visit in Christmas 1993 / New Year 1994, linguists and cadres involved with the Zhuang language were reluctant to proclaim attempts to normalise it as having failed. Rather there was an attempt to give me the impression that the process had met with difficulties and was undergoing review and consolidation in preparation for a renewed and possibly more effective promotion at some (unspecified) time in the future. When pushed, however, some such people (not those in the higher political echelons) confided that the outlook was bleak and implicitly admitted it had been a failure. Naturally enough, few people dedicated to the future of Zhuang wanted to see things in such stark terms.

Within 6 pages of an explicative article of Guangxi Department of Education on minority nationality education, only one reference to the promotion appears, which I quote below (Mao, He and Huang, not dated, but handed out by the Education Ministry in January 1994. Translated by self in 1994. Original not available):

Chapter 6. 6.1 Introduction to Findings

With regard to the development of the education of the National Minorities, the Autonomous Region has adopted mainly the policies and the following measures:

6. The correct application of the Zhuang script in the educational process, to exploit as soon as possible the cognitive development of the pupils and improve the quality of education. In Guangxi there are 14,150,000 people of Zhuang nationality, a nationality with its own language and script. The Zhuang in areas where they live in concentrations habitually use their language to communicate and think. Thus, Zhuang pupils on the whole can only speak Zhuang before starting school and do not know how to speak Han. Because of linguistic hurdles, Zhuang pupils come up against many difficulties when beginning to study the Han language and script that can negatively influence their cognitive development.

With the object of researching the cognitive development of the pupils and improving the quality of education in the shortest possible space of time, in 1981 the Autonomous Region initiated a pilot educational programme through the medium of the Zhuang language and script in some primary and secondary schools in those areas with major concentrations of Zhuang people. The Committee of the Communist Party and the Peoples' Government of the Autonomous Region stipulated a formula of 'enthusiasm and firmness' in applying this programme.

Because of a lack of knowledge about how to implement education through the medium of a minority script and of insufficient preparation, the efforts to carry out this task have travelled a torturous path. Following a summary of the experience and a correction of ideological knowledge, a readjustment of the work of implementation was carried out to improve its development. In this way, the application of the Zhuang script in education has been successfully tried out, child cognition taken full advantage of, the study of the Han language and script promoted and the quality of education improved. In addition, the principles 'of using mainly Zhuang, of promoting Han through the Zhuang script and of mastering both languages' have been applied that are compatible with the reality of this nationality.

In accordance with the reality of the situation in Guangxi, the Autonomous Region lays down:

- a) that during the present phase, in some primary schools in those areas with large concentrations of Zhuang people, pupils are educated principally through the medium of Zhuang ,
- b) the initiation of Zhuang as a compulsory subject in lower secondary schools and
- c) the non-promotion of Zhuang in the upper secondary schools.

At present in Guangxi, some schools (with a total of 20,900 primary school pupils and 4,600 lower secondary school pupils) in 23 counties continue carrying out these stipulations. It is necessary to wait until accumulating more experience before continuing to promote the script."

What should be an explicative document shedding light on the application of an important policy effecting the education of millions of children, written by the administrative organ responsible for its implementation, is imprecise and confusing. For example, the third paragraph of point "6" refers positively to Zhuang-medium teaching, but further on proclaims a much watered down version of the promotion which in reality amounts to the virtual abandoning of what was implemented in the

early 1980s, due to “a lack of knowledge” and “insufficient preparation”. Although it does not directly admit it, this document amounts to an effective renunciation of the promotion of Zhuang in the schools, while at the same time trying to avoid offending proponents of the promotion by speaking well of the pilot Zhuang classes.

My impression of the overall situation of the promotion and use of the Zhuang script in January 1994 was that it had effectively been permanently abandoned, but that for propaganda purposes the promotion continued, albeit on a very reduced and limited scale (see for example the reference to recent literacy campaigns in 5B.2.9). I think the official promotion of Zhuang will never be formally totally abolished as a policy, because it is needed for symbolic purposes in order to show members of the Zhuang nationality and the whole world that China’s largest minority exercises its right to use and develop its own language.

In April 2005, the official webpage of the Guangxi Languages and Scripts Committee only contained one indirect reference to the existence of non-Han scripts in Guangxi, the caption of a photograph of participants in a conference held in October 2004 on bilingual education. Otherwise all references were to their work of promoting standard Mandarin among speakers both of Han “dialects” (south-western Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Minnanhua, Pinghua etc.) and minority non-Han languages. Its only article devoted to the Zhuang language is one of contrastive analysis to help Zhuang speakers overcome interference from their mother-tongue when acquiring Mandarin. The promotion of Zhuang had effectively disappeared from the agenda.

6.1.1.2 HAS NUOSU REALLY BEEN A SUCCESS?

When I embarked on the idea of comparing the Zhuang and Nuosu situations, I was convinced that the promotion of Nuosu was essentially a success story in the core Nuosu counties of Liangshan. During my 1994 visit to Zhaojue my impression was that Liangshan had succeeded in harnessing the support of a highly motivated rural population and that even most urbanised and educated Nuosu in the core Nuosu areas were solidly behind the initiative. Through the charismatic head of the Minority Languages and Scripts Committee, the late Hainai Lama, who enthusiastically introduced me to the promotion work in Zhaojue County via meetings with cadres of administrative and educational institutions, students, bimo, traditional Nuosu

intellectuals and a wide range of Nuosu people, I was convinced –and remain so- that the promotion of Nuosu was infinitely more popular, spontaneous and thorough than that of Zhuang in Guangxi. A high proportion of both peasants and cadres were literate in Nuosu, whereas, even in core Zhuang counties such as Debao, it was hard to find more than a handful who were literate in Zhuang.

The following year, also in Zhaojue, I had more contact than the previous year with Han and urbanised Nuosu residents of the County capital. I was shocked by the depth of resentment towards the Nuosu, their culture, their society and their language shown by a large part of the Han residents (although no important cadres expressed such views to me) and their unwillingness – in many cases outright opposition – to learn the Nuosu language or script, or even to allow their children to learn it. Instead of seeing knowledge of Nuosu as another string to their bow, they saw it as a despicable, inferior sociolect, not representing their aspirations. If there had been total commitment to the promotion of Nuosu among the Nuosu residents of the seat of the county government, such attitudes among the minority of Han in Zhaojue would not by themselves have cast such deep shadows on the success of the promotion. However, I came to hear of Nuosu cadres who had started speaking Han to their children and in some cases the latter were growing up with no (or limited) competence in Nuosu.

That ethnically Nuosu children, most of whose relatives spoke Nuosu (many of them no Han), and who heard the language spoken all around them on the streets, could grow up monolingually Han in a county where 99% of the population are ethnically Nuosu seemed incredible. I had almost expected that Han children would automatically grow up learning Nuosu from their playmates, in addition to Han at home, but while this is the rule in core Nuosu rural areas, in county towns such as Meigu and Zhaojue, it is becoming increasingly rare. This made me realise that the strong hanising tendencies present among Nuosu residents of the prefectural capital of Xichang and among Zhuang in urban areas of Guangxi, were also present –albeit in a less dramatic form – in the seat of a core Nuosu county.

During my visit to Meigu County in August 2005, it became apparent that hanisation, coupled with a desire by many urban Nuosu to dissociate themselves and their children from the Nuosu language and certain non-superficial aspects of the culture, had been

growing over the last decade. There was still a widespread view that to “get on in the world” it was necessary not just to learn the Han language and script, but to leave the Nuosu ones behind. This is not to say that this was a unanimous view and I heard of numerous exceptions to this trend. However, it is a trend in full swing, which will be difficult to reverse. While Nuosu is still strong outside the county towns of the core Nuosu areas, the county towns –which could have been potential foci for a new bilingual, biliterate Nuosu-speaking elite, proud of having two windows on the world, have become instead foci of hanisation.

6.1.1.3 CLOSING REMARKS

Although many Nuosu seem to have resigned themselves to the unstoppable long-term erosion of their language and culture and are disillusioned with the limitations of the promotion, a large proportion of them are still enthusiastic about creating a bilingual, biliterate community. The popular response to the promotion of Nuosu has been much more enthusiastic than that for Zhuang and widespread use (unlike with the Zhuang) has been made of the promoted script. However, Nuosu is still under threat from similar kinds of factors that stopped the promotion of Zhuang.

6.1.2 LITERACIES PROMOTED BY AUTHORITIES AND WANTED OR ADOPTED BY TARGET POPULATION

In 4.1.2 I briefly discussed Street (1995)’s idea of mutually interacting multiple literacies (or different social contexts within which we use written language), which could be either dominant, emanating from the centre of power with the intention of politically, socially and linguistically influencing people’s behaviour, or localised (and often marginalised) literacies emanating from the communities in question. I would like here to briefly consider the kinds of literacies –both dominant and local, both Han and Zhuang/Nuosu- in use in Zhuang and Nuosu areas. This does not set out to be an ethnological description of literacy use and this discussion is based on interviews, articles and observation.

6.1.2.1 DOMINANT VERSUS NON-DOMINANT LITERACIES

The discourse of dominant literacies is that of official institutions and is taught and propagated via schools, through adult literacy campaigns, publications (e.g. newspapers

and magazines), notices and laws etc. It aims at instilling a sense of patriotism and national pride (“nation” here meaning the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan), belief in the unity of China and its nationalities, acceptance of the leadership of the Communist Party of China and of its values and decisions and also a belief in the economic development of China. While this is done overwhelmingly through the medium of standard Mandarin using Han characters, in some minority areas non-Han scripts play a certain, albeit limited, role. A major aim of dominant literacies is the integration of minorities in the modern Han- and CCP-dominated post-Maoist China and for a large number of people the attraction of school-imparted literacy is the possibility of finding a good job, preferably in the state sector (as a cadre). An essential difference between the content of school-promoted literacy and many adult literacy programmes is that the latter often include aspects of literacy such as keeping accounts and commercially-orientated subject matter. Such commercial literacy is an essential life-skill for most people - although not generally considered a dominant literacy.

6.1.2.2 MANDARIN-MEDIUM LITERACIES

The fact that most written communication in modern society (whether official, technical, commercial, social or for entertainment) is carried out through Han makes it clear that dominant Mandarin literacy will necessarily be infinitely superior to any dominant minority language literacies, especially outside of Xinjiang and Korean speaking-areas. In Zhuang and Nuosu areas, as in the rest of China, the written medium through which the official discourse of the State and the CCP is promoted (generally hand-in-hand with the spoken standard) is that of standard Mandarin, based on Han characters. Even among native Han Chinese speakers, becoming literate is much more complex than among people learning alphabetic scripts. As was seen in Chapters 4 and 5, teaching Han characters to Han speakers (even of Mandarin) is no easy task, due to the high number of characters necessary in order to attain basic literacy and the lack of a logical system for remembering them. After initial progress from 1950-1957, significant improvements in mass literacy among the Han majority only occurred from the end of the 1970s. According to national and international statistics, illiteracy among the younger generations has since come close to being eliminated. Western researchers such as Belde (1982) and Hannas (1996) remain sceptical as to how “functional” or partial the literacy of large numbers of peasants is.

If literacy in Han characters is so difficult to achieve among the Han, it is much more so among speakers of other languages, particularly those with limited exposure to Han (especially the Mandarin variety). In 6.1.5 the unsuitability of schoolchildren with little or no knowledge of Han being educated exclusively through the medium of this language is discussed. Most references to Han-only literacy campaigns among minority-language speakers with little or no knowledge of Han have likewise recognised these as failures, bearing in mind that even among Han speakers adult literacy campaigns were found to be less efficient bearers of literacy than school education (Seeberg, 1990: 341).

Apart from its functions as a dominant literacy, Mandarin-based writing also has other functions. In their dealings with Han-speakers (as well as with other more hanised Zhuang/Nuosu), there are many contexts where the preferred or assumed medium of communication is via writing. Apart from official forms, notifications and correspondence, important examples are commercial notes, signs and correspondence. Potentially Han is seen as being able to cope with most areas of life, so the possibilities for the spread of Han literacy are endless, once communication with the Han-speaking world has been opened up and knowledge of Han has spread among Zhuang and Nuosu speakers. Much more such information is generated in Han than in minority language scripts and it is natural that the demand for Han literacy among minority-language speakers (including those ignorant of Han) is high.

6.1.2.3 ZHUANG AND NUOSU LITERACIES (TRADITIONAL AND NEW)

- Traditional literacies

Chinese minorities without a script of their own are considered inferior and uncultured (see 4.1.2) to those that do and Nuosu are very proud of possessing a traditional script with a long history (see 6.2.2 and 6.2.7). Traditional Nuosu literacy, limited to bimo and selected members of upper castes, used the traditional Nuosu script and had a rich body of religious and secular texts. In the 1950s and 1960s this script was adapted spontaneously by a wider public to fulfil tasks of everyday local literacy. Traditional Zhuang literacy, representing mostly oral literature, was written mainly in dialect-based *fangkuaizi* derived from Han characters. Zhuang have tended to identify with Han characters (regarding *fangkuaizi* as a variant of these).

-The standardised Nuosu syllabary and the standardised Zhuang romanisation

Via bilingual education and literacy campaigns –reinforced by public signs, notices and publications- the authorities promoted a carefully planned and engineered writing system, based on specially standardised phonetic, lexical and syntactical rules, which was also used to propagate loyalty and sympathy for the Chinese nation, the CCP and its policies.

Standardised Nuosu literacy was infinitely more thoroughly and widely promoted and used than standardised Zhuang literacy. Apart from their roles as dominant literacies, expressing the views of the CCP on culturally divergent peoples, there are many instances where Zhuang and Nuosu literacies are used in contexts which Street would term “local literacies”, e.g.:

- notes and letters between members of the family, friends, neighbours, employers, employees etc.
- keeping accounts, writing IOUs and commercial correspondence
- signs of a commercial (e.g. shop signs) or private nature
- labelling objects, goods for sale, making inventories, advertisements and product information
- taking minutes and notes of meetings, writing diaries and reminders
- reading texts about technical and agricultural innovations and methods.

All these functions could potentially be fulfilled by Han instead. The fact that it is a competitor looming in the background, serves to devalue and lower the status of Zhuang- and Nuosu-medium literacies and might even put people, who see Han as superior but never actually get around to learning or mastering it, off learning these scripts. The use of Zhuang literacy in the above contexts was largely restricted to a few localised areas during limited periods and even where individuals thereafter continued using it (often for years or decades thereafter) they constituted an insignificant, anecdotal minority of the total Zhuang-speaking population. On the other hand Nuosu literacy, although not used necessarily by virtually the whole population of the core rural areas as claimed by some, is widespread and it is not hard to come across people who actively use it.

There are also contexts, in which Han characters (barring total language shift) could not be conceived as a serious competitor:

- Bimo religious texts - in the case of Nuosu only. Bimo use the old traditional script. However, many texts have been transliterated into the standardised script. In any case the gulf between traditional and standardised Nuosu scripts is not perceived to be anything near as great as that between the traditional and standardised Zhuang scripts. Zhuang religious texts are often written either using *fangkuaizi* or Chinese characters written according to Zhuang grammar and meaning, but not generally in the romanised script.
- Oral literature and modern composed literature. This is an aspect that was emphasised much in writings in favour of the promotion.

The types of scripts available for Zhuang and Nuosu literacy are discussed in 6.2.6.1.

6.1.3 BILINGUAL/HANISED ZHUANG VERSUS NON-HAN SPEAKING NUOSU. TRUE OR FALSE?

“Minority language speakers who have less contact and familiarity with the Han language are more likely to favour the promotion than those familiar with it. The fact that most Zhuang speak (and often write) Han, whereas most Nuosu do not, goes a long way towards explaining why Nuosu speakers have welcomed the promotion of their script more than Zhuang speakers.” So runs the argument offered to me by a number of casual observers in China to explain the different outcomes in Liangshan and Guangxi. In this section I examine the validity of this assertion, the first step being to examine if speakers who are less familiar with the Han language are less likely to favour promotion of non-Han scripts.

6.1.3.1 ARE NON-HAN WHO KNOW HAN LESS LIKELY TO FAVOUR NON-HAN SCRIPTS?

This statement is borne out by the general lack of interest in, or open hostility toward, the promotion of their scripts by most Zhuang and many Nuosu already proficient and literate in Han, generally the more urbanised, hanised classes and higher-level cadres who use mostly Han in their work. Once they have mastered Han characters they see learning a limited and inferior script as a waste of their time. This generalisation is not

universally valid and there are bilinguals (especially Nuosu) already literate in Han with an interest in their mother tongue script. This is especially the case of rural bilinguals (e.g. cadres) who work closely with monolinguals. In fact, educated Zhuang and Nuosu speakers, already literate in Han, can learn their respective scripts with a minimum of time and effort if motivated to do so. In both places, the most enthusiastic supporters of the promotions have been monolingual peasants and the grass-roots cadres (often themselves with limited competence in Han) who have to work with them.

Knowledge of spoken Han does not necessarily mean opposition to learning the minority language script. Many (especially older) Nuosu who speak Han have succeeded in learning the Nuosu script where they have failed –or not even tried- to learn to learn Han characters (e.g. Madaren and Jinggezhushi quoted in 5C.1.4.8). The reason normally given is that they identified with it more than with Han characters and more importantly that the latter were impossibly complex to learn. I have also heard of examples of Zhuang bilinguals becoming literate in Zhuang but not Han. The essential point is that such bilinguals have a positive attitude to their mother-tongues.

In rural Liangshan, there has been genuine enthusiasm for the Nuosu script among the monolingual population, especially those who feel they shall never have the chance to gain fluency in (or even a rudimentary grasp of) Han. While there are also numerous reports of grateful monolingual Zhuang peasants enthusing about having benefited from Zhuang literacy, the acquisition of Han characters being beyond their possibilities, there are also many accounts of monolingual Zhuang who are anything but tolerant towards romanised Zhuang. Even in rural Liangshan I interviewed several monolingual peasants in favour of promoting only Han. In general though, Nuosu monolinguals are much keener than their Zhuang counterparts on learning it.

Being monolingual is thus no guarantee of being supportive of the mother tongue, although it does mean one's only chance of achieving literacy, in the absence of acquiring Han (no easy short-term task!), is through the mother-tongue. Being illiterate excludes a speaker from domains of language use which give power and access to resources and if China's development continues to promote the integration of minorities into the market, then use of Han will penetrate more and more into precisely those

domains where Nuosu literacy has hitherto been seen to be advantageous. Using Nuosu in such domains would increasingly become a poor second to Han, inducing monolingual Nuosu speakers into behaviour that could ultimately lead to the displacement of their language (e.g. insisting on Han-medium literacy for their children).

Can the greater success of the promotion in Nuosu areas be explained at least partly by people having less contact with the Han language than in Zhuang areas? In answer to this question, a number of Chinese I talked to (Han, urbanised Zhuang and some Liangshan Nuosu), none of whom had a deep knowledge of the linguistic reality of rural Zhuang areas, contrasted the virtually monolingual Nuosu society in Liangshan with the high level of Han among the Zhuang, a great proportion of whom have even abandoned their language. Below I discuss whether this assumption has any basis.

6.1.3.2 HAVE ZHUANG LARGELY LINGUISTICALLY ASSIMILATED TO HAN?

Yao Changdao, a Han linguist enthusiastically involved in the promotion of Nuosu (personal communication August 1994), mentioned the generalised Han-language competence among Zhuang as an important factor to explain the different results of the promotion of Zhuang and Nuosu. Ramsey (1987: 235) also assumes Zhuang are familiar with Han:

...Zhuang, along with Tibetan, Mongolian, Uighur, and Korean, has been given official status as one of China's "major" minority languages. The difference between Zhuang and these other four languages is one of need: unlike the other more distinct nationalities, **the bilingual Zhuang can understand and communicate perfectly in Chinese and are more than happy to do so.** [The emphasis is mine]

Likewise, the webpage of the missionary society Mekong states that:

"Many Zhuang are bi- or trilingual, speaking Zhuang and Mandarin or Cantonese or all three. For most Zhuang there are three languages "My" language, Chinese, and "Foreign Language".
(http://www.infomekong.com/zhuang_secondary.htm)

And the Wikipedia entry for Zhuang states

Zhuang, which belongs to the Tai language group, is an official language in that region. However, use of the language is rapidly declining as the Zhuang assimilate to the Han Chinese.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhuang_language)

Writing as recently as 2005 on language policy in Xinjiang, Dwyer (2005: 87) classes a large proportion of the Zhuang as having, like the Manchu, abandoned their language:

Though other large minority groups in contiguous areas exist in China, these groups are either overwhelmingly semi-speakers of their heritage language (such as a sizeable portion of the approximately 16.2 million Zhuangs [sic] in Guangxi and environs) or heritage language non-speakers (such as the nearly 10.7 million Manchus in Manchuria).

In case we are in doubt as to what Dwyer means by “sizeable portion” she specifies elsewhere (ibid: 90) that “...most but not all Zhuang groups have lost their language, see Kaup 2000...” In fact Kaup (2000) says nothing of the kind. On the contrary she stresses that it is a mistake to categorise the Zhuang as being linguistically assimilated to Han:

Though there are no conclusive statistics on the percentage of Zhuang who could speak Mandarin before 1949, Zhuang scholars agree that likely less than 10 percent were verbally fluent and far fewer were literate in Chinese. The language barrier was a decisive impediment to Zhuang integration into the Chinese state. (Kaup, 2000: 37)

Although she is referring to before the Communist period, we can assume both from the limited educational progress made in the first decades of communist rule and from accounts of other authors that the bulk of the rural Zhuang population who had little contact with Han speakers, had minimal exposure of Han until at least well after the Cultural Revolution.

Other estimates vary greatly. The generally well-informed Ethnologue web-page (http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=CN) estimates that about 50% of the Zhuang population is monolingual. This could be the case if hanisation has accelerated over recent years, but possibly many people with an imperfect knowledge of Han have been counted as bilinguals.

As was seen in 5B.1.6 some counties have an overwhelming majority of Zhuang-speakers, whilst in others they are anything from a small majority to a small minority. Although an over-simplification, this helps us to generalise about the linguistic situations in different areas. With regard to the relative proportions of Zhuang speakers, Guangxi with over 15 million people of Zhuang nationality (spread over approximately 60% its area) can thus be divided into:

Western Guangxi where Zhuang speakers form the majority of the population.

In 2000 13 million or 84.3% (in 1992 this figure was quoted by Chen Zhulin 1986: 20-21 as being 87%) of the Zhuang population of Guangxi was concentrated in these areas. This comprises the District (an administrative unit between county and provincial levels) and City of Nanning (63% Zhuang), the District and City of Liuzhou (47% Zhuang), Baise (63% Zhuang) and Hechi (65% Zhuang). In total 63.25% of the population of these administrative areas was of Zhuang nationality in 1992. Of the 53 counties in Guangxi with a Zhuang population of over 30,000, in 27 the Zhuang nationality made up more than 70% of the total population and in 8 counties over 90%. In Jingxi County, the proportion of Zhuang was as high as 99.2% and in Tiandeng County 98.7%.

In turn, Zhuang inhabitants of these areas can be divided into those living in:

- Remote rural areas with a large proportion of monolingual Zhuang speakers having minimal contact with the Han language
- Rural areas in fairly close proximity to urban centres (e.g. county towns) where Han is spoken and with a certain amount of exposure to Han.
- County towns and other small urban areas where Han is heard and used alongside Zhuang.
- County towns and other small urban areas where Han is the chief language used.
- Big towns and cities (e.g. Liuzhou City and Nanning City) where Zhuang-speakers tend to undergo language shift to varieties of Han (mainly Yue or South-western Mandarin) and where Zhuang tends not to be intergenerationally transmitted.

Parts of eastern Guangxi where Zhuang speakers form a minority of the population.

In 1992, 8.7% of the Zhuang population of Guangxi was concentrated in these areas, comprising parts of the District and City of Guilin (6% Zhuang), the districts of Wuzhou (2% Zhuang), Yulin (6 % Zhuang) and Qinzhou (19% Zhuang). There are no figures for Fancheng City in the extreme Southwest corner of Guangxi, inhabited by significant numbers of Zhuang (which could also affect the total figure for these areas). In total only 6.8% of the population of these administrative districts was of Zhuang

nationality in 1992. Zhuang inhabitants of these areas can be divided into those living in:

- Rural areas, usually where Zhuang speakers come into regular contact with Han speakers.
- County towns and other small urban areas where Han is the chief language used and where there is strong pressure in favour of language shift away from Zhuang.

Large areas of the extreme eastern part of Guangxi where there are no indigenous Zhuang

There is evidence that some such areas were Zhuang-speaking until comparatively recently. In 1981 Liyu, a student at Guangxi Nationalities College (personal communication), carried out field research in a totally hanised area of Pingnan County (平南县), a county with a majority of Cantonese speakers (and a minority of Yao and some thousand speakers of Zhuang in the north-western corner of the county) and discovered that many older people (officially of Han nationality) knew odd Zhuang words and expressions and remembered when the older people had spoken it among themselves. Liyu also found peculiarities caused by the influence of Zhuang on the local dialect of Cantonese. This is an indication of linguistic substitution that occurred at the beginning of the 20th Century in Pingnan and several neighbouring counties and that possibly continues today on the linguistic frontier.

It is thought that Tai speakers once occupied large areas to the east and north of present Zhuang/Bouyei-speaking areas and, alongside with speakers of many other non-Han languages were gradually but systematically assimilated into the Han melting pot. The large Zhuang-speaking *Sprachinsel* to the north-east of Wuzhou, which straddles both sides of the Guangxi-Guangdong border (on the Guangdong side mainly in the Lianshan Zhuang-Yao Autonomous County), implies that it was once joined to Zhuang-speaking areas. further west. There is a widespread popular assumption that this long historical process of assimilation to Han will not cease until all speakers of Tai and other non-Han languages have passed on Han to their children.

Zhuang-speaking areas outside Guangxi

Most other Zhuang live in the Autonomous Zhuang-Miao Prefecture of Wenshan and some other counties in the east of Yunnan, bordering on Guangxi and Vietnam (where many speak only Zhuang). There is even a small Zhuang-speaking population in Tongdao Dong Autonomous County of Hunan Province. (The statistics were compiled by Kaup 2000: 31 from the 1990 Census and *The Guangxi Yearbook*, 1994 b). Speakers of some varieties of Zhuang identify with the Bouyei language of southern Guizhou and parts of Yunnan and with the Tuy and Nung languages of northern Vietnam

The different linguistic contexts outlined above help explain the many conflicting assertions that are made about how *hanised* the Zhuang are. Many people (both Han and Zhuang) from urban areas categorically state that the Zhuang are *hanised*, often speaking no Zhuang and in any case not passing it on to their children. This is true of most Zhuang in big cities and some smaller urban areas, who only represent a small proportion of the total Zhuang population.

Others affirm that although Zhuang people speak their own language among themselves, most are also fluent in Han. This is indeed true of rural areas where Zhuang speakers, through contact with Han and other nationalities have acquired Han (usually Southwest Mandarin or Cantonese or even both). While this is valid for many Zhuang communities that live in contact with -or scattered between- populations of Han-speakers, especially near urban centres and in some easterly and northerly rural parts of the Zhuang-speaking area, it does not describe the situation in the rural areas where most Zhuang live.

In areas where the Zhuang live in compact communities (especially in the west of Guangxi and Wenshan) and form the majority of the population, the Zhuang language is still the principal or only form of oral communication used. There are even county towns, such as Jingxi, Debao and Mashan where Zhuang is still strong (or at least was when I began my research). In the counties of Debao and Jingxi I discovered that only a small minority were competent in Han and even in Wuming County, a mere hour's bus-ride to the north of Nanning (capital of Guangxi), I had the impression that a great proportion of the population was not fluent in Han. Many commentators are simply not aware of the significant proportion of Zhuang monolinguals. Stites (1999: 111) quotes a

Chinese researcher Liang Tingwang, who to the contrary of what many people think, affirms

....significant numbers of people among the 90 percent of the Zhuang population living in the countryside speak only Zhuang. In addition, there are some Zhuang in both cities and in the countryside who are bilingual to varying degrees in both Zhuang and Han. One writer estimated that in 1990 there were no more than 2 to 3 million Zhuang with any grasp of the Han language and that as many as 7 to 8 million (or half the total Zhuang population) were illiterate in any language.

If this estimate reflects the real situation, the commentary often heard that the Zhuang in general have a mastery of Han is not applicable to core Zhuang areas of western Guangxi.

Chen Zhulin, one of the best known Zhuang linguists, (1986b: 27) supports this view.

壮族中的绝大多数人只懂得壮语，不懂汉语或懂得很少，这是壮乡社会的语言现状，在多少代人之内也不可能改变这个语言状况。The great majority of people of Zhuang nationality only understand the Zhuang language and either do not understand no or very little Han. This is the current social situation of Zhuang rural areas and won't be changed in many generations.

Obviously with socioeconomic contacts, educational development, television etc. a number of rural Zhuang are becoming increasingly familiar with Han. Lu Yongbin (2003) of Guangxi Nationalities Institute, while avoiding defining what proportion of the Zhuang population speak Han, emphasises that bilingualism among Zhuang is becoming increasingly commonplace.

由于长期受到汉族文化的影响，壮汉语的交际与融合历史久远，融合程度高。如今，在壮族地区，壮汉语兼通的壮人，已经是一种比较常见的现象。 Since [the Zhuang nationality] has over a long period of time been influenced by the culture of the Han nationality, the history of contact and fusion between the Zhuang and Han languages goes back a long way in history and the degree of assimilation is very high. Nowadays in Zhuang areas, people of Zhuang nationality who master both the Zhuang and Han languages are already a common phenomenon.

6.1.3.3 ARE NUOSU MONOLINGUALLY NUOSU?

Having seen that all Zhuang are not competent in Han, I now turn to examine the popular assumption that most Nuosu have no or little knowledge of Han. To answer this question I analyse the different kinds of Nuosu communities in Liangshan.

Core Nuosu areas are areas where Nuosu form the vast majority of the population and do not have easy access to the world of the Han and their language. These are mainly the more mountainous areas, where Han did not dare to go before the 1950s for fear of being captured as slaves and where there were virtually no schools. Knowledge of Han in remote Nuosu areas is minimal. There are also remote mountainous Zhuang areas of Guangxi, but many elements of Chinese culture and thinking penetrated there, to the extent that many Zhuang thought themselves Han, whereas in the uplands of Liangshan most people were completely cut off from mainstream China. The two counties, Zhaojue and Meigu which I visited to the east of the prefectural capital Xicheng were at the heart of this “core area” and had a reputation as cradles of Nuosu culture.

The core areas essentially comprise:

- a) The following counties outside the county towns: Meigu, Zhaojue, Butuo.
- b) The following counties outside the county towns and hanised lowland areas: Xide, Puge, Jinyang.
- c) Some isolated mountainous areas of the following counties: Yuexi, Ganluo, Mianning, Leibo and Yanyuan.

This is not to say that there are not mainly monolingual Nuosu-speaking communities in other counties (such as E-bian). Also Ninglang County in Yunnan Province is to a large extent monolingually Nuosu.

During my visits (1994 and 1995 - after almost half a century of communist administration) in Zhaojue, an area of Liangshan with a majority of Nuosu, the great majority of the population (above all among women and outside the administrative capital) were still unable to express themselves in Han, although many knew a few phrases. Harrell (2001a: 73), describing the present situation, confirms this impression:

Probably a majority of the population of the core counties of Greater Liangshan is monolingual in Nuosu with only a rudimentary knowledge, if any of the Liangshan dialect of Southwestern Mandarin.

Emphasising the lack of contact with the Han language of many isolated Nuosu, Harrell (2001a: 72) comments

Chapter 6. 6.1 Introduction to Findings

Villagers in the mountains of Mishi see a non-Nuosu only when their child's teacher visits their home, if she does, or perhaps when they travel, once or twice a year, to distant markets at Lianghekou or Xide City.

Regarding the attitude of Nuosu in these areas towards the acquisition of Han, Harrell (2001a: 302) comments that although they only have limited opportunities to practice it

....Nuosu in core areas who know a little Han are usually proud of the fact, even if they are disdainful of the culture that sustains that tongue.

Thus the core rural Nuosu counties, especially the mountainous areas, can be described as predominantly monolingual Nuosu, with a gradual increase in competence in Han via education and contact with Han (e.g. on visits to the county towns).

The linguistic situation among Nuosu in county towns of core Nuosu areas

At a county level most important cadres and educated Nuosu live in the county towns. Despite the promotion of Nuosu, there is an accelerating tendency (although not as pronounced as among the Zhuang), for many Nuosu residents in traditional Han towns to not pass on Nuosu to their children. In the last 15 years this phenomenon has grown among educated Nuosu cadres living in hanised administrative centres (county towns) of core Nuosu areas, such as those of Zhaojue and Meigu, to the extent where some urban Nuosu children are barely able –or unable- to communicate with quite close monolingual rural relatives. This language gap creates a culture gap between the county towns and their surrounding rural areas and often Nuosu urbanites are no longer regarded as true Nuosu by their rural compatriots, at least not in their behaviour and speech (see 6.2.2).

The linguistic situation among Nuosu in major Han cities

Before the communist period, the cities of the Anning Valley such as Xichang, Miandian and Lugu were essentially Han cities, and thus Han-speakers, surrounded by a mixture of Han and Nuosu villages and farms, the proportion of Nuosu villages increasing with the distance from cities and the hanised river valleys and with proximity to the mountains. Goullart (1959: 183) confirms the general absence of Nuosu residents in Xichang (referring to the situation around 1940)

....there were many Lolos in the market-place, selling and buying, but they never stayed overnight, always returning to their mountain fastnesses in the evening.

Covell (1990: 115), an American missionary, refers thus to the walled valley town of Mianning:

Although it was largely a Chinese city with a population of twenty thousand, many Nuosu lived nearby in the plains and mountains.

Modern Nuosu residents of such Han centres have a stronger tendency than those of the county towns to bring up their children in Han. Most – but by no means all - people involved in the promotion of Nuosu language and culture in Xichang did speak Nuosu to their children, but they made it clear to me that they were the exception rather than the rule among educated Nuosu residents.

The linguistic situation among Nuosu in areas with a Nuosu majority, which are near to urban centres or concentrations of Han.

Wuda (2002) reports that an ever-increasing proportion of the majority Nuosu population of an area of Ganluo County was bilingual and already starting to use Han in certain higher domains, even often with other Nuosu, such as officials and policemen and furthermore (see 6.2.2) that some Nuosu cadres are not transmitting the language. It is a situation where Nuosu is still dominant, but Han is becoming generalised. Informants from Xichang, Yuexi, Mianling, counties (personal communication, August, 2005) reported hanisation spreading outwards from county towns and some rural townships with concentrations of Han. Many areas of Ganluo, Xichang, Yuexi, Mianling, Yanyuan and other counties such as Xide, especially in the river valleys, urban centres and near to major roads and railways.

The linguistic situation in Nuosu *Sprachinseln* surrounded by concentrations of Han speakers.

In areas like those near Xichang and along important rivers such as the Anning River, the Nuosu who had many contacts with Han inhabitants, were logically comparatively well acquainted with the Liangshan variety of Sichuanese, a variety of south-western Mandarin. Harrell (2001a: 153-171) analyzes the linguistic and cultural situation of Manshuiwan, a Nuosu village just to the north of the prefectural capital Xichang, which is surrounded by a sea of Han villages and whose inhabitants have adopted many Han customs and habits. They consider themselves to be “Nuosu of the plains” to distinguish themselves from the “Nuosu of the mountains” and from the local Han.

When I saw it from the train, it looked like any other Han village. An informant told Harrell that while the local Nuosu knew Han and Nuosu, the Han locals typically knew no Nuosu, but adds that the Han of Manshuiwan who live in the same Nuosu village do indeed speak both tongues (ibid: 161). Harrell describes the present linguistic situation thus:

Nowadays, children in Manshuiwan may learn either language or both, depending on where in the village they grow up. If they live below the highway, where all but one household is Nuosu, then they may well grow up knowing some Han but not speaking it fluently. In fact, some Nuosu families in this part of the village, if they have Han affines or friends, like to make sure their children get chances to play with their friends' or relatives children so that they will not be at a disadvantage when they start school, which now as in Republican days, is entirely in Han. If they grow up in the Wu lineage cluster way above the railroad, they might speak only Han. But even if they grow up in this upper section, depending on whom they play with, they may learn serviceable Nuosu, and children who grow up near the highway or between the highway and the railroad play with Nuosu and Han indiscriminately and will probably know both languages fluently before they start school.

It has probably been several decades since there were any monolingual adult Nuosu speakers in Manshuiwan; everyone speaks the local dialect of Han, at minimum as a fluent second language, and almost always equally well as they speak Nuosu. (ibid: 166)

This is the opposite of what happens in most non-Han Sprachinseln within Han areas known to Harrell, where

..... once the number of speakers of that surrounded language goes below a few hundred, the language dies out in that community ... (ibid: 167)

Harrell notes that in Manshuiwan, as in other villages of the “Nuosu of the plains”, the Nuosu language does not appear to be in danger of extinction, despite the fact that most villagers interact on a daily basis with Han and only minimally with other Nuosu outsiders and in spite of being almost universally literate in Han but illiterate in Nuosu. An informant of the village suggested to Harrell (ibid.: 167) that the survival of Nuosu was due to Nuosu clans having established themselves in the village before the arrival of Han, having maintained a concentrated micro-environment where Nuosu is dominant (even many nearby Han speaking or understanding it) and to making a conscious effort to preserve their language as a key element of their ethnic identity. I wonder how long lowland Nuosu will continue to consider their language worth passing on to future generations.

The linguistic situation among Nuosu in Xiaoliangshan to the west of the Valley of Anning. (Sources: Harrell 2001a and personal communication with informants in Liangshan in 1994 and 1995)

Xiaoliangshan (the Lesser Cool Mountains) to the west of the Anning Valley has an important minority of Nuosu (varying between 15% and 50% according to the area), except in the county of Ninglang in the Province of Yunnan where they make up the majority. Most Nuosu migrated there from Daliangshan (the Greater Cool Mountains) from the second half of the 18th Century onwards. In many areas of Xiaoliangshan the Nuosu live in close proximity mainly to Han and to an ethnic group who are classified on the Sichuanese side of the provincial boundary as Tibetans and on the Yunnanese side as Pumis. This group speaks Prmi (a Tibeto-Burman language of the Qiang sub-family). In some southern areas Nuosu are also in contact with Naze speakers, an ethnic group who are classified on the Sichuanese side of the provincial boundary as Mongols and on the Yunnanese side as Naxis, although those in Yunnan (and probably a small number in Sichuan close to the border) wish to be known as Mosu). Naze is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Loloid sub-family similar to Naxi). A small number of Naxi speakers also live in close proximity to the Nuosu. (Harrell 2001a). Concerning the extent to which the Nuosu of Xiaoliangshan are familiar with Han, Harrell (2001a; 73) comments

For most members of minority groups in the Lesser Liangshan area, however, bilingualism is a fact of life. One has to know Chinese to deal in the market, to get an education, even to talk to some of one's neighbors.

There is a much higher incidence of bilingualism or multilingualism than in core areas of Daliangshan, although there are also concentrations of monolingual Nuosu in the more mountainous areas and over the Yunnan border in Ninglang. Harrell (2001a:138-9) describes the situation of Baiwu, an administrative town together with various satellite villages which altogether account for some 10 thousand inhabitants, where

...there is no single predominant language. Nuosu and Han vie for supremacy in different contexts, with Prmi relegated to a distant third Both Nuosu and Han are languages of everyday conversation and of official discourse. (ibid: 138)

In the administrative town of Baiwu the Nuosu population accounts for a little over half the total: the other ethnic groups are Han, Prmi, Naze and Naxi. Some of the satellite villages are entirely Nuosu, a couple are part Nuosu part Prmi and one of them has all

the ethnic groups except the Nuosu. Almost the whole population of less than 50 years (and many among the older people) is bilingual Nuosu-Han. Harrell mentions that some Han only speak Nuosu with Nuosu people who have not mastered Han, despite their competence in Nuosu. In one mixed Nuosu-Prmi village the children were bilingual in Nuosu and Prmi with some knowledge of Han. In some Nuosu villages further from the administrative town, older people and small children knew little Han. At an official level, officials and cadres (for example in public meetings) spoke in public in both languages, with frequent code switching. In contrast to the Nuosu Sprachinseln of the Anning Valley, those of Prmi and Naze speakers tend to lose their languages very easily. When Nuosu and Prmi speakers converse together, generally they do so in Nuosu or Han according to the context and their mastery of these languages.

6.1.3.4 CLOSING REMARKS

The generalised belief both within and outside China that a large part of the Zhuang nationality speaks no Zhuang has little basis and reflects only the reality of urbanised Zhuang and some rural Zhuang in close contact with Han speakers. The fact that the minority of urbanised Zhuang are the politically most influential members of their nationality and that they are the Zhuang with whom most educated Han come into contact, means that they create the false impression outside rural Zhuang-speaking areas that they typify most members of the Zhuang nationality. The linguistic situation in mainly monolingual core Zhuang areas of western Guangxi is largely unknown to city-dwellers, who are ignorant of the problems caused by the huge language gap.

In contrast, it is common knowledge outside Nuosu-speaking areas that a large part of core Nuosu areas are predominantly monolingually Nuosu and that a number of articulate, educated Nuosu defend and extol the virtues of the Nuosu language and script. Among traditional rural society the language script and the bimo religion which is based on it enjoy great respect and popularity, creating a very different environment to that in Zhuang areas of Guangxi. As Harrell (2001a)'s observations show, even many Nuosu communities fluent in Han and other languages are (for the moment) resisting language shift where other ethnic groups succumb. However, such popular support by itself may not be enough to ensure the long-term success of the promotion, and ultimate survival of Nuosu.

Although to a markedly lesser extent than their Zhuang counterparts, an important part of the urbanised Nuosu elite has for some years made a deliberate point of not transmitting the Nuosu language to their children, leading to Han becoming the “default” language among many urban Nuosu. There appears to be a greater tendency towards language shift in favour of Han in more easterly rural Zhuang-speaking areas (where Zhuang-speakers are in close contact with important concentrations of Han-speakers) than in similar rural Nuosu-speaking areas, given the latter’s stronger ethnic consciousness and identification with a unified prestigious language.

6.1.4 LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES AND LANGUAGE SHIFT

In Chapter 4, I considered some of the reasons for language shift among minority language speakers. Here I wish to briefly responses to this threat. As I hope has been made clear in the course of this thesis, preserving the linguistic vitality and viability of non-Han languages is not a major concern of official Chinese language policy as a whole. While the right of minorities to use and develop their languages has been stressed during more pluralistic phases, it is generally considered only worthwhile preserving weaker languages if their speakers are sufficiently motivated to request it and insist upon it.

Among highly motivated groups such as the Uyghurs, Koreans, Mongols and Tibetans, generally both intellectuals and the public strongly support the survival of their languages. During the last decade in Xinjiang and Tibet, where minority language speakers not only strongly support furthering their languages, but also have latent or open separatist leanings – or are simply unenthusiastic about the common Chinese project – this has put the official pluralist discourse to test. As mentioned in 5A, the Chinese authorities have taken measures aimed at encouraging assimilation to Han among these elites.

In southern China, with the exception of several ethnically aware groups (the Tai speakers in Sipsong Panna for example), vocal organised support from within the minorities in favour of taking measures to ensure that their languages are handed on to future generations is seldom strong, or at least clearly articulated. Indeed where minority language scripts are officially promoted, the ultimate concern is not so much

the survival of these languages, as the incorporation of minority speakers into mainstream Chinese society and their eventual acquisition of the Han language. Despite this, many individual minority language intellectuals and ordinary speakers are concerned about their native language and culture disappearing.

While a large proportion of Zhuang and Nuosu speakers have no or little knowledge of Han, in this age of globalisation, economic development and technological advance, time is on the side of Mandarin (just as it is on the side of English, Spanish and other high prestige majority languages). Heberer (2001: 231) bluntly interprets the implications of hanisation among the Nuosu elite (see 6.2.2), which increasingly rejects the Nuosu language,

But Chinese is not only, as is often maintained, a lingua franca. It is a means of transport for Han Chinese value concepts and norms of behaviour, a not unimportant contributor to a process of cultural assimilation.

Children of minority elites need to master this way of thinking and these behavioural norms to be successful in a Han-dominated world. Too often, instead of choosing the bilingual and bicultural option, upwardly mobile minority language speakers prefer to reject their non-Han identity in order to adapt to the new Han world. Heberer (ibid), referring to the situation of the Nuosu, has no doubts about the implications for the long-term survival of the Nuosu language.

Where smaller speech communities count as “backward”, where such an image is adopted by the elite of an ethnic group, where language is thus understood as a symbol for being dominated, the first step toward the extinction of the language has already been taken.

This analysis is relevant to the effect of a capitalist, globalised, Han-controlled economy on Zhuang and Nuosu areas. In 6.2.3, I argue that top-down measures with no bottom-up support are doomed to failure. What the above quote implies in the cases of Guangxi and Liangshan is that, while these **are** indeed essential, if the economic and political control is not in the long-term interests of the Zhuang or Nuosu speech community (see 6.2.8), then the prospects for the long-term survival of Zhuang and Nuosu –even if they have bottom-up support- will be extremely difficult. This thesis does not venture into the field of economics, but most sources (see for example Kaup 2001 and Heberer 2001) indicate that the economies of these areas are very firmly

controlled mainly by Han interests. Hence the empowering function of literacy discussed in 6.2.8 is of particular importance.

In 4.1.4 the question of the connection between language shift the degree of ethnic pride of the speakers of a language was raised and in 6.2.1 it is argued that ethnic pride can play an important part in preventing language shift, but that it cannot be counted upon to do so is reached. How can Nuosu (and even some Tibetan and Uyghur) intellectuals, who are extremely proud of their culture and language (often regarding them as superior to the Han culture and language), not pass on their languages to their children, even when they still live in or near areas where they are spoken? In other words, is language switch essentially a question of ethnic loyalty or is it something beyond the control of all but the most dedicated die-hard activists (often referred to as “fanatics” and “extremists” by mainstream society for daring to challenge this apparently inevitable process)?

Countless examples of language shift among minorities with a high degree of ethnic consciousness show that very often they use the majority language (which they might admire or even hate) to fight for their rights and their future. This is already being done by many urbanised Zhuang and Nuosu. That it is not happening (on a large scale at least) in rural areas is largely because large parts of the rural population are not sufficiently (often not at all) competent in Han to choose this option. It is to be anticipated that as they acquire competence in Han, they might well choose it as the mother-tongue of their children to give them what they see as a “better start in life”. Language shift decisions are based on the idea that stable bilingualism is not sufficient – knowing the minority language is a millstone round its speaker’s neck holding them back from getting on in the world. Only when they only speak Mandarin, and it alone (perhaps together with some English), will this be possible. Under 6.2.1, I consider how the differing degrees of ethnic consciousness among Zhuang and Nuosu communities contributed to the different outcomes of the promotion.

6.1.5 DEBATE ON EFFECTIVENESS OF HAN-ONLY VERSUS BILINGUAL EDUCATION

In 4.1.3 some general theoretical considerations of bilingual education were introduced and in 6.2.5 parents’ attitudes towards education using different teaching mediums are

examined. Here some of the educational arguments about the effectiveness of teaching in different languages are considered. After looking at the evidence for the effectiveness of Han and bilingual schools, I examine the possible role of mother-tongue literacy in learning Han and finally the phenomenon of bimo education in Liangshan, a traditional, totally Nuosu-medium –although restricted- type of education for Nuosu males.

6.1.5.1 DOES HAN-ONLY EDUCATION WORK?

Monolingual rural parents who reject Zhuang- or Nuosu-medium in favour of Han-only education must be convinced that their children will be more likely to succeed in the latter. Is this blind faith hoping that just because their children are taught in the same language as the successful Han they see, they too will succeed or is it based on real tangible results?

Persistence of language barrier to advancement solely through the medium of Han and to effectiveness of Han-language competence as result of Han-language schooling

An essential question when considering monolingual Han-teaching in rural Zhuang or Nuosu areas where few people are fluent in standard Han, is whether such teaching enables ordinary monolingual Zhuang or Nuosu children to become fully bilingual in Han, along the lines of French immersion schools in Canada. Available literature from Guangxi and Liangshan shows this is not the case. Neither would we expect it at a theoretical level. Unlike immersion education, which is a “strong” form of additive education and respects and encourages pupils’ mother tongue alongside the target L2, Han submersion education is a “weak” form of education for dealing with bilingual situations (Baker, 2001), which in general implicitly aims solely at assimilation to Han (i.e. effective eradication of the minority L1) and which does not respect pupils’ native language and culture, thus creating a situation of subtractive bilingualism. Baker (2001: 114-115) defines additive bilingualism as referring “to positive outcomes from being bilingual” and subtractive bilingualism “to the negative affective and cognitive effects of bilingualism (e.g. where both languages are underdeveloped)”.

Where monolingual Han-speaking teachers are employed in rural Zhuang or Nuosu areas, they generally ignore the knowledge of the Zhuang or Nuosu mother-tongue

which pupils bring to school with them and teach them exclusively through a medium that they do not understand. Given the formal setting of the traditional Chinese classroom with children sitting in their rows of desks and not encouraged to talk out of place, the chances of monolingual Han teachers making these students fluent in Han are generally slim in contexts where children receive little or no Han-language input from the community at large or from peers. Chinese education – especially in provincial rural backwaters - is very traditional and puts great value on rote-learning. It is difficult to envisage Han-language classes aimed at making Zhuang or Nuosu pupils communicatively competent in Han. In the 18th Century Scottish Highlands, generations of monolingual Gaels attended English-only schools without having assimilated or understood what they had been “taught” (Whithers 1984: 124), echoing reports from Guangxi and Liangshan.

Teachers who are fluent in the local variant of Zhuang or in Nuosu, can (and generally do according to most sources) explain, paraphrase and gloss wherever possible or necessary in Zhuang or Nuosu. Depending on how this is done, the teacher might or might not succeed in imparting Han to the children as was the case with many 18th Century English-medium teachers in the Highlands who paraphrased into Gaelic (Whithers, 1984). If the teacher repeatedly uses the Han expressions they have introduced through the medium of Zhuang or Nuosu in communicative contexts (reminding pupils of the Zhuang or Nuosu meaning where necessary) then logically pupils will be successful in acquiring a certain amount of Han. If on the other hand teachers keep on translating into Zhuang or Nuosu with minimal or no meaningful highly contextualised input in Han then it is hard to see how pupils will acquire fluency in the new language. They will merely have learned about the Han language and characters in Zhuang or Nuosu. At the same time they will not have become literate in Zhuang or Nuosu. It is unlikely that even with the help of the oral L1, which to use Cummins’ term has not been developed to the standard of CALP, a knowledge of Han will be attained which will enable children to fully function academically, using complex abstract concepts, through the medium of Han, especially given the complexity and non-phonetic nature of the Han script.

If Han is truly acquired, whether or not L1 paraphrasing takes place, the form of bilingualism produced will be highly subtractive and if only a negligible amount of Han

is acquired then pupils will be basically in a situation of Zhuang/Nuosu monolingualism and illiteracy where the inferiority and inadequacy of their underdeveloped language will have been made clear to them.

Han-only teaching in Zhuang areas of Guangxi

Socioeconomic costs of a monolingual Han policy and the inadequacy of Han as a sole teaching medium.

Chen Zhulin (1986a: 3) points out that the use of Han-medium teaching and materials in schools in those Zhuang areas where the population comes into contact with, and is generally familiar with, spoken and written Han, has achieved satisfactory results. However those in such areas account for only a small proportion of the total Zhuang population, while accounting for the majority of Zhuang successfully educated in schools. In rural areas, where most Zhuang live, the language barrier stifles education:

..... 人们的交往主要是靠壮语；由成人到儿童，都靠壮语进行思维。建国以后，壮族地区学校都沿用汉语文教材进行教学，由于学生不懂汉语，教师只好在教学时，把教材上的汉文逐字逐句翻译成壮语，从小学到初中，都用这种方式进行教学，离开了教师的翻译，学生是没有办法阅读任何读物，也没有办法通过书写来表达自己的思想，学到的数以千计的汉文单字，往往成为壮语中表述某些概念的符号，很难用这些单字按汉语的语法习惯组词造句。

处于这些没有汉语社会环境的小学校，不论地处山区或平原，往往读满了小学阶段，仍然无法使用汉语汉文进行起码的思维，要通过汉文去学习各门学科的文化科学基础知识就更加困难了。人们都知道，壮族地区城镇意外的初中或高中的壮族学生基础知识很低，甚至小学生应具备的基础知识，读到高中的人也没有弄清楚。这都是从小学带给中学的后遗症，如果绝对按教育部制定的中学教学大纲的要求来招考中学生，就会有很高比数的农村壮族学生被拒之中学大门之外。..... Interpersonal contacts depend on Zhuang. Adults and children alike all think in Zhuang. Since 1949 schools in Zhuang areas have continued to use Han-medium teaching and materials. As the pupils don't understand Han, teachers have to translate the Han materials word for word and sentence for sentence into Zhuang. All teaching in primary and junior middle schools is done like this. Without the teachers' translations pupils have no way of understanding any of the reading matter or of expressing their thoughts in writing. Even after studying thousands of Han characters, these are often used as a way of representing Zhuang and pupils have great difficulty in using individual characters according to the norms of Han grammar and syntax.

Graduates from such primary schools with no Han-language environment, whether on the plains or in mountainous areas, often are still incapable of expressing their most rudimentary thoughts in the Han language or characters. If they are to study the basic cultural and scientific knowledge of all their subjects through the Han script things will be even harder for them. As everyone knows, outside of the cities and towns of the Zhuang areas, the rudimentary knowledge of Zhuang junior or senior middle school pupils is very low, to the point that they often do not even grasp the basic knowledge that a primary school pupil should possess. These are the damaging effects that have been transferred from the primary to the secondary school. If the Education Ministry's criteria were strictly applied in the secondary school entrance exams, then a very high proportion of rural Zhuang pupils would not be admitted to secondary school.

Thus pupils' knowledge of Han is so limited that even supposedly Han-medium education has to be taught in (or paraphrased into) Zhuang. However, even with this paraphrasing, Zhuang pupils as a group are not successful learners.

The web-page of the missionary society Mekong reaffirms the language barrier to education:

Although education in school is supposed to be done in Mandarin the teachers in the Zhuang areas explain things in Zhuang, and since most Zhuang leave school during grade school, they forget the Mandarin they have if they don't have frequent contact with those outside of their village.

(http://www.infomekong.com/Zhuang_secondary.htm)

Chen's implication is obvious: pupils would learn better if taught in Zhuang, the language they understand. Although Chen was writing at the height of the second phase of the promotion before its scaling down, the vast majority of Zhuang children were still being educated through the medium of Han and he is making a plea for the expansion of Zhuang-medium education which we know with hindsight fell on deaf ears.

Lu Ruichang (1992: 74) cites, as a negative example of the consequences of Han-only education among a monolingual Zhuang population, the results of a survey carried out (sometime between 1990 and 1992) in Yongchang village in Napo Township of Tianyang County into the relation between competence in Han and the educational standard attained among a sample of 48 Zhuang peasants aged between 15 and 48. His findings showed a relation between length of schooling and ability in Mandarin and composition writing. It seems logical that the pupils who are not learning anything or getting anywhere will drop out long before they get to upper secondary level. The small numbers of upper secondary school graduates are thus only a tiny "surviving" proportion of their age-group that began school with them.

Regarding Han language (Mandarin) competence, none of the 25 primary school graduates from Lu's sample could speak fluent Mandarin, although some of them could understand a bit. 4 out of the 16 lower secondary school and 5 out of 7 upper secondary school graduates could express themselves in Mandarin although not very fluently. Whereas only 10 out of 25 primary school graduates and 8 out of 16 lower secondary

school graduates were capable of writing short practical notes correctly, 6 out of 7 upper secondary school graduates were able to successfully complete practical writing tasks. These results, despite not being statistically significant, corroborate most descriptions of Han competence in majority Zhuang areas and illustrate two things. Firstly that it takes a long time for pupils in these areas to gain even a rudimentary knowledge of Han and secondly that not many of them reach the grades where the majority of pupils has attained a basic competence in Han – in other words there is an astronomically high drop-out rate. If the 5 upper secondary school graduates who could express themselves in Mandarin could only do so shakily, it is questionable how many employment opportunities all those years invested in Han-only education will in fact be open to them.

Lu Ruichang (ibid: 69) also gives an example of a supposedly “key” Han-medium school, where pupils have totally failed to learn Mandarin and at most have managed to learn some Han characters with which they mould to the grammar and pronunciation of Zhuang:

如田林县八桂中心小学壮族学生,读到三年级,还不能用普通话来回答老师提问。每次作文前,先用壮话一句一句讲,然后用汉语一个一个译,实际上是汉语写壮话,句子颠三倒四。象这种情况,在壮族聚居地区不是个别的现象。 This is the case of Zhuang pupils at Bagui "Key" Primary School in Tianlin County who had completed 3 years and still were incapable of answering their teachers' questions in Mandarin. Every time they wrote a composition in Han-Chinese, they first composed it orally in Zhuang sentence by sentence and then translated the Zhuang into Han. In fact they were using Han [characters] to write Zhuang and their sentences were incoherent [read in Han]. This kind of phenomenon is not exceptional in majority Zhuang areas.

This author reminds us that Zhuang (and other minority) pupils learning Han bear a double burden: not only must they grapple with learning a new language, but also memorise the pronunciation, form and meaning of every Han character whose pronunciation, form and meanings have little logical connection with spoken Han. This increases negative psychological pressure on already disadvantaged children. That these pupils should be expected to attain the same levels as Han-speaking pupils is neither realistic nor possible in Lu's opinion.

In the foregoing quotation Lu draws our attention to an extremely widespread strategy used by monolingual Zhuang who have no access to their own script, but have been

taught Han characters, reading Han characters with a Zhuang pronunciation and writing oral Zhuang with Han characters, but Zhuang word/order and grammar. I return to this in 6.2.6.

Drop out rates in Guangxi from Han-only education

The virtual abandoning of any serious promotion of Zhuang-medium education on a large scale could lead one to assume that the basic situation in rural Zhuang areas had changed significantly and that now Han-only education was working and most rural Zhuang children were acquiring a knowledge of Han. While there is no doubt that Zhuang is gradually losing out to Han over time as part of a long-term process, a large degree of Zhuang monolingualism still persists in areas where Han speakers are few, proving that the overwhelmingly Han-medium education system and literacy campaigns have not succeeded in teaching people the majority language. At the end of the second high-tide of Zhuang promotion, which only involved a small minority of the Zhuang population, Lu Ruichang (1992: 67) paints a picture of a situation where large areas of Baise at the beginning of the 1990s were virtually monolingually Zhuang, the Zhuang making up almost 81% of the population and the Han only about 13%. Commenting on school attendance in Baise he affirms:

然每年有八九万适龄儿童入学,但真正读满五年或六年的却很少。如1990年统计,1983年秋季小学一年级新生为123850人,按时读满五年的只有54027人,占43.6%,有个山区,1983年秋季14380人,能读满五年的只有2507人占17.4%。我们到田阳县那坡永常村调查也发现,该完小1985年-1990年中,一、二年级小学生每年留级流动的高达50%以上,有的年份高达56%。留级,辍学的可怕的浪潮,每一年都冲击着壮族山村。Although each year between 80,000 and 90,000 of the appropriate age start school, those completing 5 or 6 years of study are however very few. For example according to 1990 statistics, of the 123,850 new pupils who entered the first year [of Baise prefecture] primary schools in the Autumn term of 1983, only 54,027 or 43.6% completed 5 years of primary study. In one mountainous district, of the 14,380 pupils who entered in 1983, only 2,507, or 17.4%, completed their 5 years [of primary education]. When we went to Yongchang village in Napo township of Tianyang county to investigate we discovered that, that between 1985 and 1990 the repetition rate each year in the first and second primary years was over 50% and in some years as high as 56%: a terrible major trend to drop out of school was affecting this Zhuang mountain village.

Likewise the problem of the education of girl pupils had not improved by this time. Lu Ruichang (1992:67-68), commenting on the same mountainous area says:

在这弃学可怕的浪潮中,牺牲品首当其冲的多是女孩子,1990年3月统计,全地区中小学学生流失校外的有10247人,其中女童便有6192人, ... The main

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victims of this terrible trend to give up school are girls. According to data from March 1990, 10,247 pupils in the whole area (among them 6,192 girls) dropped out of primary and secondary schools...

The same author (1992:68), from the education bureau of an extensive prefecture with a large monolingual Zhuang population, comes to a stark conclusion that should leave anyone who thought the Zhuang were basically assimilated in the last decade of the 20th Century with food for thought:

按照目前小学生只有50%左右读到毕业,那么照这样下去,小学教育永远也普及不了。If the present situation where only about 50% of present primary school pupils complete their primary education continues then the universalisation of primary education will never be achieved.

Academic results of those pupils who do not drop out in rural Guangxi

According to Lu Ruichang (1992: 68) half of the small proportion of rural Zhuang pupils in Baise Prefecture who actually managed to complete their primary education obtained abysmal academic results. He reports that in 1986, 42% of the 48,388 primary school graduates in the whole Prefecture passed the subject Han language, while this figure fell to 30% in the case of 5 counties. In the 1987 entrance exam for lower secondary school, in 8 out of the 12 rural and urban districts of one county, primary school graduates had a pass rate of fewer than 10%. Despite reporting (in 1992) a turn for the better in “recent years”, he laments the enormity of the urban-rural gap, quoting some more recent examples:

1990年百色市统计,秋季小学升初中考试,城内小学生792人,农村小学生3029人,城内小学语文及格率91.2%,而农村小学及格率43.2%,语文科城内学生比农村学生均分高出19.1分,及格率高出48%,优秀率比农村高出29%,数学科城内学生人均比农村学生高18.2分,及格率高出29.3%;优秀率高出42.5%。城镇与乡村小学质量悬殊很。百色市农村小学及格率只在25%以下的阳圩,汪甸,龙川,泮水4个乡。其中阳圩乡的及格率只有18.7%。这些都是壮族聚居或者是壮,瑶杂居的山乡,与城镇的差距越拉越大。因此,广大壮族聚居的农村小学,读了五年或六年,不少学生还是文盲半文盲状态,有些读七八年小学还没有毕业。所以每年一些县的初中招生任务无法完成。有的勉强完成招生任务,但也没有什么选择的余地。壮族聚居地区的教育又陷入这样一个怪圈,造成恶性循环。 According to 1990 statistics from Baise City, 792 primary school graduates from within the city and 3,029 from rural areas [near to Baise City] took the lower secondary school entrance exam. While the pupils from the city had a pass rate of 91.2%, among those from the countryside it was only 43.2%. In the subject [Han] language and literature the pupils from the city had 19.1 more points than the rural pupils, a 48% higher pass rate and 29% more top grades. In the subject of Mathematics the urban pupils had 18.2 points more than their rural counterparts, their pass rate being 29.3% higher and obtaining 29.3% more top grades. In the rural primary schools of the 4 rural districts of Yangwei (or -xu??), Wangdian, Longchuan and Panshui belonging to Baise City, the pass rate was under 25%. Among these it fell to 18.7% in the case of Yangwei (or -xu?). These are all either

majority Zhuang or mixed Zhuang and Yao mountainous, rural areas where the differences with urban areas are widening. Because of this many primary pupils in rural, majority Zhuang areas are still illiterate or semi-illiterate after 5 or 6 years of study. Some have not completed their primary education after 7 or 8 years. Therefore each year some counties are unable to fulfil their task of recruiting lower secondary school students. However, there is no other choice. Education in majority Zhuang areas gets bogged down in this kind of vicious circle.

He then goes on to put the blame for this state of affairs squarely on the Han-only education system, the only choice for almost all pupils in Baise prefecture, one of the most heavily-Zhuang-speaking areas in Guangxi, there only being several “experimental” Zhuang-medium classes in the prefecture. This is a powerful cry for help to change an extremely dismal situation in the backward rural areas of Baise. Given the generally growing urban-rural economic disparities in China as a whole, it is one that has fallen on deaf ear judging by the attitude of the Guangxi educational authorities towards bilingual education since he wrote (1992) up till the present (2006).

Han-only teaching in Nuosu areas of Liangshan

Most of my informants in Liangshan (results of attitude survey, Zhaojue 1995 and personal communication 1994, 1995 and 2005) were unanimous in affirming that teaching monolingual or near monolingual Nuosu children in Han was highly damaging to their self-esteem and cognitive development. Han-only schools in totally Nuosu-speaking areas where there was negligible contact with Han outside school, put monolingual Nuosu children in an immersion situation, but given the formal and typically non-communicative classroom situation it was hardly an environment for progressively acquiring the new language, but rather an alienating unsympathetic and uncompromising environment which led to pupils abandoning their studies without having learnt much of value about the majority Han language and culture and absolutely nothing about their own. With Han teachers who had no knowledge of Nuosu, there was often no way of “smoothing” the language barrier by paraphrasing and explaining in Nuosu, although this did typically occur where teachers spoke Nuosu.

Regarding the cause of this state of affairs, Luobianmuguo (1999) relates that after careful research and enquiry the authorities from province downwards:

...，最终找到导致四川彝区教育效率低下的一个重要原因，即教学用语障碍。彝族学生学龄教育脱离母语，直接用汉语教学，这就造成语言障碍，使教学质量低下。要改变四川彝族教育落后的面貌，就必须用与学生思维和概

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念相联系的母语进行文化知识教学。 / ...finally found an important reason for the low educational efficiency in the Yi areas of Sichuan, namely the teaching medium barrier. School -age Yi nationality pupils became estranged from their mother tongue, being educated directly in Han, thus creating a language barrier and poor quality teaching. If the backwardness of Yi nationality education in Sichuan is to be changed, then pupils' mother tongue, in which they formulate their thoughts and concepts, must be used for teaching literacy and knowledge.

In Nuosu areas where pupils have exposure to Han usually they are not considered to need any kind of Nuosu medium education and often not even basic literacy in Nuosu. Echoing my remark in the section on Han-only teaching in Zhuang areas, Schoenhals (2001: 249) reports that

Surprisingly even students who had been living in Han areas as students and attended years of school claimed that the Han language was a major barrier preventing them from doing well in school.

Proponents of the equality of nationalities and languages see the solution to the language barrier to be provision of Nuosu medium education, the problem being the lack of such provision. In contrast, those who advocate switching to Han medium education as soon as possible see the problem as not knowing Han and the solution as being acquiring Han as quickly as possible to be able to benefit from a Han-medium education and “get on in the world”. Both these motives (which often blur together) are behind demands for Nuosu-medium education.

Han-only adult literacy campaigns

Maheimujia (1986: 4) comments that teaching the Han script directly to Nuosu who understand no Han is doomed to failure. From 1958 to 1960 the Leading Committee of Work on Minority Languages and Scripts of Sichuan (四川少数民族鱼盐文字工作指导委员会) and the Prefecture of Liangshan jointly organised a pilot literacy class in Han in a rural area of Xide county. The majority of the pupils had forgotten the Han characters that they had learnt, either through lack of practice or due to not understanding the semantic and phonetic units they symbolise, a constant problem in monolingual Nuosu areas.

In Guangxi in the field of adult literacy, the view has persisted among many of those responsible for minority nationality education that peasants (who often have no knowledge of Han) should not waste time with Zhuang but learn the Han script directly.

In January 1993 I paged through journals devoted to the eradication of literacy in Guangxi, which contained many articles about illiteracy eradication in Zhuang areas, vainly trying to find explicit references to the use of the Zhuang script. Rather more surprising, some illiteracy eradication campaigns with funding from International institutions (e.g. International Fund For Agricultural Development Executive Board, 2000) and Western NGOs talk about campaigns initiated in Zhuang and other minority areas of South-West China without even mentioning, much less discussing, in which language(s) and script(s) the literacy campaigns should be, or were actually, conducted.

Closing thoughts on Han-only teaching

Despite a generalised belief that Han-only education will improve the employment prospects of rural monolingual minority children, this is not bourn out by most reports and statistics regarding the drop-out rates among such children. They are unable to attain Han-medium CALP in the absence of meaningful input of Han outside the classroom and a lack of communicative input within it, or to develop sufficient intellectual capacity in Zhuang or Nuosu, which would imply prior literacy in those languages. In areas where children have significant extra-curricular exposure to Han, it is reported (e.g. Lu Ruichang, 1992: 74) that they progress much better, although experience from other countries shows that their CALP would be better developed if they had access to mother tongue teaching and literacy, something supported by many educationalists in both Liangshan and Guangxi and by Schoenhals's quotation above.

6.1.5.2 COMPLETION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL BY HAN PUPILS –A CONTRAST

Up till now the discussion has been on teaching through a medium alien to the pupils. It is interesting to note that in China as whole (the majority of children speaking variants of Mandarin and a significant minority speaking non-Mandarin Han languages) the percentage of pupils completing 6 (from 1957-1965) or 5 (from 1966-1980) years of primary school for selected years was far from universal. The figures below, which I have set in their political context, are from official 1984 Ministry of Education statistics (quoted in Seeberg, 1990: 214). :

1957 (pre-Great Leap Forward – the last graduates under a moderate policy): 45.8%

1959 (pupils who received two-thirds of their education under a moderate, and the rest under a radical, policy): 66.8% *

1963 (pupils who were educated almost wholly under a radical, policy): 38.2%

1965 (pupils who received two-thirds of their education under a radical, and the rest under a moderate, policy): 32.6%
1967 (pupils who received roughly half of their education under a radical, and half under a moderate, policy): 53.02%*
1970 (pupils who received most of their education under the most turbulent part of the Cultural Revolution period): 50.1%*
1975 (pupils who received all of their education under the Cultural Revolution period): 70.6%*
1977 (pupils who received all of their education under the Cultural Revolution period): 70.6%
1980 (pupils who received two-thirds of their education under a radical, and the rest under a moderate, policy): 61.3%

Note: * According to Seeberg (1990: 214) figures for 1958-62 and 1967-1975, i.e. the most radical years, were highly unreliable]

Completion of primary education does not necessarily mean functional literacy. As Seeberg (1990: 216) notes

...the disruption curtailing the school term during the GLF-Hard Times (59/60/621/62 – 3 years) and the CR (66/67/68/69/70, 74/75 – 6yrs), lasting a total of 9 years, reduced graduation to a meaningless event.

According to the same source (quoted in Seeberg, 1990: 186) the proportion of primary school age children **attending** (but not necessarily completing) was 50,3% in 1953, 61.7% in 1957 (at the close of the first moderate period), 57% in 1963, 84.7% in 1965 (on the eve of the Cultural Revolution), 95% in 1975 (towards the end of the extreme radical phase) and in 1979 was 93%. This would indicate that almost half of new entrants were not completing primary school.

Thus until 1980 a high proportion of even Han children were not completing their primary education, or were only doing so in a superficial way. With the economic reforms (see 6.2.8) and rural decollectivisation, school attendance –especially among girls- fell even further. Peterson (1997: 157), quotes Pepper (1990)`s figures which show that numbers of children enrolled in primary school actually fell from 150 million in 1976 to 136 million in 1983 and 128 million in 1987, while the number of dropouts increased. In 1986 the compulsory education law was introduced, but was not begun to be strictly applied until 1990, but widespread child labour still continued. By the late 1980s it was claimed that the primary school enrolment rate was 97%.

6.1.5.3 HOW EFFECTIVE ARE BILINGUAL ZHUANG/NUOSU-HAN SCHOOLS?

Do Zhuang–Han bilingual schools work?

Virtually all reports and articles written about Zhuang-medium education trumpeted it as a success. Many of the arguments used (as in many articles in favour of Nuosu-Han bilingual schools) were those put forward in the western literature such as lower drop-out rates, increased self-esteem, less problems of cultural identity, better development of cognitive skills (leading to better academic results across the curriculum), quicker and more effective acquisition of the L2 (Han), etc. The fact that so many articles repeatedly, and over a long period, justified so defensively the basic arguments in favour of bilingual mother tongue - majority language education serves to show the tremendous popular opposition which the promotion had encountered. One naturally wonders that if the results were as wonderful as painted in these articles, why anyone should be sceptical of the policy. Kaup (2000: 145) reports:

Of all the published reports on bilingual education, none suggest that the Zhuang language should *not* be used, though many make just this suggestion in interviews and conversations. The articles, instead, rave about the success of all the experimental Zhuang language classes in which students study Zhuang in first and second grade before gradually phasing Chinese into their curriculum. According to published sources, the students in all of these classes score better on national Chinese and math tests. In interviews at three experimental schools, however, none of the teachers, administrators, or students viewed Zhuang as a tool for excelling in other subjects, and several teachers acknowledged that the students in Zhuang classes performed slightly below the Chinese language students. One interviewee became quite concerned that he would suffer political ramifications for telling me that students in the Chinese language classes outperformed those in the Zhuang classes. Whenever higher-level officials tour the schools, he said, the school administration presents only glowing reports of the experimental classes' success.

People who were not particularly supportive of Zhuang-medium education, often questioned the whole concept of bilingual education, but in my interviews at Wuming and Debao experimental Zhuang schools no one confided to me that Han-only teaching was superior or as good. Of course they might have told me what they thought I wished to hear. What they did admit was that Zhuang-medium education was not implemented effectively or professionally enough. Wuming County Education Office (1992: 33-34) poses questions which reveal a frank recognition of large-scale opposition:

...如为什么社会上人们对壮文进校工作并不热情,甚至施加压力?为什么有些学生家长要自己子女从试点校转走?等等。such as why there is no popular social support for the promotion [work] of the Zhuang script to the extent that people exert pressure against it? Why do some heads of family wish to have their sons and daughters taken out of the pilot schools? etc.

The authors, in the light of extensive interviews carried out with cadres and teachers, analysed popular resistance to the promotion of Zhuang in Wuming schools (after 1990 only 4 experimental Zhuang primary streams and one secondary stream - usually praised as model schools) in an unusually open way and could not be more scathing about the state of Zhuang language teaching.

壮文教学试点工作在我县开展不够正常的原因是各校都持观望态度,只是象征性开设几节壮文课,而且各校步调不一致。The reason for the insufficiently regular development of Zhuang medium teaching in our county [Wuming] is that each school has a "wait and see" approach, only symbolically offering some classes in Zhuang writing and each school has a different pace. [Ibid: 34]

The authors offer the following explanations for this state of affairs:

- A lack of explicit objectives for introducing Zhuang-medium teaching.
- No clear approach as to how to introduce Zhuang-medium teaching and to handle the relation between Zhuang- and Han-medium teaching.
- A generalised lack of Zhuang-medium teachers which is unable to meet the demand.

These factors have thus resulted in the following chaotic situation:

由于种种原因的困扰,各壮文校的教学基本上处于"盲目打仗"的状态,严重影响了学校教学质量的提高.因而,来自社会上的压力不小,领导,教师人士不统一,为了应付考试,顺应人心,不得不把绝大部分精力放在汉文教学上,壮文教学几乎被丢到一边。Due to all kinds of worries, teachers in each Zhuang-medium school basically find themselves fighting blind battles which prevent improving the quality of teaching in the schools. Consequently, considerable social pressure is exerted and leaders and teachers are divided. To cope with exams and comply with popular feeling, it is inevitable that most effort goes into Han-medium teaching and Zhuang-medium teaching is pushed to the side. (Ibid: 34)

The authors (Ibid: 34-37, 42) go on to advocate solutions which were initiated in the Wuming situation, such as the formulation of clear guidelines for Zhuang-medium teaching, holding seminars to thrash out teaching problems, improving teacher-training and increasing the number of teachers able to teach through both Zhuang and Han, thereby overcoming both the shortage of Zhuang-medium teachers and the problem of lack of communication between teachers giving lessons in both languages. They also propose improving supervision and support to teaching staff. The authors claim that through such measures they improved the quality of teaching and sense of purpose and direction in the trial schools and that pupils' oral and written self-expression made great

strides. The drift away from Zhuang-medium teaching was stopped and reversed, with formerly sceptical family heads becoming positive about bilingual Zhuang-Han education and many pupils formerly withdrawn from Zhuang to Han streams returning to the Zhuang streams.

If all this is true then it is good news for bilingual teaching, but only a drop in the ocean. Perhaps the other counties where Zhuang is taught have not made such an effort to improve the situation – after all Wuming is the showcase of Zhuang education. It must also be bourn in mind that even in Wuming only a tiny minority of pupils have received even a partly Zhuang-medium education and that the improvements described will not benefit many Zhuang-speaking pupils. Finally it is alarming that such a small-scale Zhuang-medium sector should have been allowed to become so chaotically disorientated, unmotivated and deprived of basic resources and support. Is/was Zhuang-medium teaching really in such a bad state? How could they be worse than in rural Han-only schools?

Whilst it is highly credible that there was a lot of falsifying of results, I cannot believe everything was a big lie. Apart from successful use of the mother tongue as a teaching medium being predicted from international research, there were a lot of motivated and dedicated people taking part and I am convinced that some at least of the reported successes are based on reality. I find Wuming County Education Office (1992)'s report (quoted above) frank and convincing, although maybe its happy ending was too rosy.

Do Nuosu bilingual schools work?

In 5C.2.10 the conclusion of the educationalist Wu Mingxian (1995) was examined, which attacked the inadequate implementation of Type 1 (predominantly Nuosu-medium) bilingual education programmes (with a high drop-out rate), where in 1998 only one third of Nuosu pupils in Liangshan (concentrated in the core Nuosu counties) were receiving any kind of instruction in Nuosu at all (both Type 1 and Type 2, but mostly the latter), a situation which according to statistics had not improved since 1994. While expressing disappointment at the relatively high drop-out rate of Type 1 schools, he was unwavering in his support for them.

Pupils at the end of the first year of primary school attained basic literacy, according to Wu Mingxian (1999: 190), while second and third year pupils were able to write an essay of hundreds of words. Fourth and fifth year pupils were capable of reading traditional Nuosu classics translated into standardised syllabic characters and popular science manuals.

Perhaps this is an idealisation. If so many pupils drop out along the way, how much are they learning and thereby contributing to their communities before swelling the ranks of non-attenders? If the basic objectives outlined above are being generally achieved (and Wu Mingxian is an educator with many years experience as a teacher, educational researcher and designer of bilingual education programmes) then at least pupils leaving after the end of the first year of primary school will have acquired basic literacy skills and those who stay on for the second or third year will have consolidated these. If they only complete primary school they may lag far behind properly educated children, but they will be infinitely better equipped to deal with modern life than someone who has not attended school at all or that has dropped out of a Han-medium school without even knowing what the teachers were saying to them, unless the latter paraphrased in Nuosu (not the case of many Han teachers, who typically see no reason to learn what they consider a backward language).

Type 1 bilingual education may not have fared very satisfactorily by normal Han Chinese (or international) standards, but in the context of monolingual Nuosu areas of Liangshan it appears to be the best thing that has been on offer so far. The drop-out rate in these areas is inherently high for socioeconomic reasons and before Type 1 Teaching can be written off as a failure it is important to compare it with results from the other educational options on official offer, Han-only teaching (in the majority of cases) or Type 2 Teaching. As pointed out in 5C.2.10, at least an important part of Type 2 schools only commence the teaching of Nuosu language and literacy in the second or third year of primary school, thus defying the logic of the interdependence hypothesis that prior literacy and basic academic knowledge taught in Nuosu would aid subsequent acquisition of the initially unknown L2 (Han). If the first year or two are essentially the same as in immersion Han-only schools, Nuosu is only being introduced after a lot of cognitive and psychological harm has already been done. This is not to say that its introduction at a later stage will not help pupils compared to those receiving no Nuosu

instruction at all, but seems to be a highly ineffective way of introducing Nuosu as well as an inefficient use of precious economic and human resources.

Thus despite all the problems which he quotes, Wu Mingxian (1999: 195) still strongly affirms:

彝语文和汉语文同时使用的双语教学,也被无数事实证明是民族教育一项最成功的改革。其中,以彝语文为主要教学语文,同时开设汉语文,英语文的一类模式(或一类体制)双语教学是这项改革最核心最引人注目的部分。 Countless facts have proved that simultaneous Yi-Han bilingual teaching is the most successful innovation in nationality education. Of these [two types of bilingual education available], the Type 1 modal (or system) whereby the main medium of instruction is the Yi language and script and at the same time Han and English are taught is the most spectacular and central part of this innovation.

Effective teaching of English in rural minority areas is still largely wishful thinking.

Wu Mingxian (1999: 196) points out that although Type 1 school pupils only account for 5% of Yi nationality primary and secondary pupils in Liangshan, they have produced over 20% of Yi nationality higher primary school (高小) graduates (more than 10,000), more than a thousand pupils graduated from lower secondary schools, 304 from upper secondary school, 74 from technical secondary schools, 48 from technical colleges and 71 from university. Unfortunately he does not give similar figures for graduates from Han-only and Type 2 bilingual schools.

Should we expect Zhuang/Nuosu-Han bilingual schools to work?

In the West there is now abundant information by such authors as Cummins, Skuttnabb-Kangas (1981), Baker (2001) and Hornberger (1997) about the beneficial effects of bilingual education on children's development, whether it is for disadvantaged speakers of stigmatised minority languages or for speakers of the dominant high-status language. References to these sources have begun to creep into the Chinese literature in recent years, but from a long way back there has been an awareness of the cognitive and developmental advantages of a bilingual education and especially the advantages of monolingual minority children being educated in their mother-tongue, which was even recognised in the report, quoted in 6.1.1.1, by Guangxi Department of Education on minority nationality education, (Mao, He and Huang, not

dated, but handed out by the Education Ministry in January 1994) after it had effectively abandoned the promotion of Zhuang and bilingual education.

Many sources from both Guangxi and Liangshan quoted positive results from bilingual education. Below is an example from Liangshan:

According to Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 113), who argue in the same vein as other authors, more than 10 years of Nuosu-Han bilingual education in the Prefecture of Liangshan have shown that it improves the quality of the education, because it makes use of a script which represents the language in which the pupils think, helping them remember things and to work faster and more actively. At the same time bilingual education helps them to utilise their literacy in Nuosu to learn Han. They conclude therefore:

Bilingual education promotes intellect and culture among the minority nationalities and not only develops their level of education, but also accelerates professional training and economic development. (Own translation. Original unavailable).

As indicators of the success of bilingual education Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) and others point to a clear improvement in the marks of pupils participating in the bilingual programmes between 1987 and 1989 in a range of subjects as well as to a rise in pupil enrolment rate and a fall in pupil drop-out rate and to a general rise in educational standards.

6.1.5.4 THE ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE LITERACY IN THE ACQUISITION OF HAN

Nobody disputes the necessity and desirability of learning Han in today's China, just as nobody questions the necessity for minority language speakers the world over to learn dominant state languages. As Lu Yongbin (2003) puts it:

汉族是我国人口最多的一个民族。长期以来，它在人口、地域、政治、经济和文化上一直处于领先地位。除了这些客观因素之外，在长期的封建社会里，封建统治者又一直执行民族歧视政策，千方百计地压制少数民族语文的使用和发展。所以，汉语在使用上的优势是国内任何其他民族语文所无法比拟的。这一因素是造就壮汉双语性质特点的主要条件。The Han nationality is the most numerous nationality in China. From early times they have been in a superior position as far as population, land, political and economic strength and culture are concerned. Apart from these objective factors, over the long period of feudal society, the feudal rulers also implemented a continuous discriminatory policy towards the minorities, using all possible means to stifle the use and development of minority language and scripts. Therefore, in terms of superiority of use no other language of any other nationality in China can compare with

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the Han language. This was the main conditioning factor for the characteristic traits of Zhuang-Han bilingualism.

However concerned people are about the maintenance of linguistic diversity and the preservation of their languages, the most powerful concern in China is that everyone ultimately becomes competent in standard Mandarin.

Universal “common sense” logic on which most people appear to operate tells us that if a minority speaker receives their education through the medium of the majority language they will both learn the majority language and succeed in the subjects taught through it, thus achieving empowerment. It is commonly assumed that what the child learns in minority language medium education will be useless in advancing in the majority language and thus in “getting on in the world” – what Cummins (1980) calls the “Separate Underlying Proficiency Model of Bilingualism”. This is the assumption upon which many administrations the world over base their policies, upon which many bureaucrats base their attitudes to implementing language policy (whether assimilationist or pluralist) and upon which parents base their reactions to the different forms of bilingual or monolingual education open to them.

Cummins Developmental Interdependence hypothesis based on his model of Common Underlying Proficiency flies in the face of such “common sense”, suggesting that a child’s L2 competence is at least in part dependent upon the level of competence they have already achieved in their L1. Cummins further developed a distinction between less cognitively demanding, more context-based “basic interpersonal L2 communicative skills “(BICS), needed for surface conversational fluency and cognitively demanding, context-reduced and more abstract language needed to achieve academic success (“cognitive/academic language proficiency” or CALP) and found that whereas the former could be achieved in several years, the latter took at least twice as long. If minority language children first develop CALP in the language in which they already have BICS (in our case Zhuang or Nuosu) then they will be able to transfer CALP to their L2 (Han) as they progress in it, because once achieved in one language CALP – being based on a “common underlying proficiency” - can be applied and transferred to any further language the child is learning. An essential prerequisite for CALP in today’s complex world is literacy. If we accept this line of argumentation then

it is important that minority language L1 literacy be developed prior to (or at least no later than) L2 majority language literacy. Given the complex nature of the Han script, this is perhaps even more relevant in the Chinese context.

According to this hypothesis, teaching context-reduced, cognitively-challenging concepts to monolingual Zhuang and Nuosu-speaking children, who have not yet attained CALP in their mother-tongues, exclusively through the medium of Han (in an atmosphere of subtractive bilingualism) is not only unrealistic but damaging. Indeed the consensus of most researchers is that the “subtractive” nature of majority language submersion classes not only stops the development of the mother-tongue, but that it greatly hinders the adequate and efficient acquisition of the majority language, because the child is still struggling with the basics of the L2, while not having developed L1 CALP to be able to use it for transferring concepts to the L2.

Thus the development of the L2, in our case Han, will be easier and more effective, the more the L1 is already evolved. In recent years countless studies –ignored to a surprising extent by policy makers the world over - have shown that indeed majority language L2 acquisition is significantly boosted by the correct kind of prior minority language L1 education. Many studies have shown that prior instruction can greatly improve performance in L2 and in subjects taught through the medium of L2. For example Huguet, Vila and Llurda (2000) showed that Catalan-speaking children in eastern Aragon between the ages of 4 to 12 (where, unlike in Catalonia, Catalan does not have a high-status) who were given up to 3 hours a week optional instruction in Catalan at school were not only more proficient in Catalan (although not as proficient as children in Catalonia) than those who had received no such instruction, but also more proficient in Spanish. This example refers to minority language speakers who have had much more natural exposure to the majority language (Spanish), and thus relatively well advanced L2 BICS skills, than is the case of children in monolingual Nuosu and Zhuang areas and provides evidence that Nuosu and Zhuang-speaking children exposed to Han would also benefit from bilingual education. Moreover, in this case the majority language benefited after only minimal L1 instruction of the kind provided by Type 2 bilingual schools in Liangshan, with the difference that unlike Type 2 schools the L1 instruction was introduced from the beginning.

The following is an example of pupils of primary school pupils who used their Zhuang literacy to learn Han. According to Wei and Wei (1980)

实现再次证明,推行壮文将使壮族人民特别是在校壮族学生更快更好地学习汉语文,提高汉语水平。一九五九年,田东县祥周大队祥周小学作过教学对比试验。他们在一年级的一个班中设壮语文课学生学习三个月的壮文以后,能用壮文拼写童谣,民歌,能写近二百个音节的短篇文章,并能用壮文注音释义来学习汉语文课。结果,这个班学生的汉语文水平,比直接学习汉文的其他班级的学生更高得多。由于壮文易学易记,便于直接拼写自己的话,并能用来注音释义帮助学习汉文,所以很受壮族人民的欢迎。他们认真学习,学了就用,使壮文在他们当中扎下了根。

What has been achieved also demonstrates once more that the promotion of the Zhuang script will allow Zhuang pupils to learn the Han language and script better and faster thus improving their standard of this language. In 1959, in Yangzhou Primary School in the brigade of Yangzhou in the County of Tiandong a comparative didactic experiment was carried out between a group which was taught how to write in Zhuang in their first year [and pupils who did not study Zhuang]. After 3 months of learning the script, the pupils of this experimental group were capable of writing children's' songs, folk songs and essays of about 200 syllables in Zhuang as well as using the Zhuang script to make phonetic transcriptions and paraphrasing when learning the Han language and script. The result was that the oral and written level of this class was much higher than that of pupils of the other classes who had directly learnt Han.

Because of the ease of studying the Zhuang script and the convenience of spelling directly in their own language, together with transcribing phonetically and paraphrasing in the Han being learnt, the Zhuang people welcomed the script. Studying it conscientiously, they were capable of using it, thus ensuring that the Zhuang script took root among them.

Independently of the desirability, and right, of children who are bilingual in their minority language and Han to receive an education at least partly through the medium of their mother-tongue, the evidence shows that non-communicative Han-only schooling for monolingual (or almost monolingual) minority language speakers ensures that only a tiny minority of pupils will successfully learn Han and have a chance of advancing through education. This has been proved in Guangxi, Liangshan and in many other minority areas of China, and indeed the world over. Many years experience have shown that initial minority language literacy can help minority language speakers to learn Han much faster and more effectively.

Advocates of linguistic diversity recognise that speakers of a marginalised language with limited access to input in the official dominant language can learn the official language more quickly and efficiently if they are first made literate in their own mother-tongue before learning the official language with the help of materials written in the mother-tongue. The fact that learning through the medium of the mother-tongue

helps the acquisition of the official language is used the world over in publicity in favour of bilingual education programmes to calm universal fears that teaching through the medium of the minority marginalised language will prevent the acquisition of the official and foreign languages.

6.1.5.5 POTENTIAL USE OF ZHUANG-/NUOSU LITERACY AS A VEHICLE OF HANISATION

Many administrations and organisations in many lands and eras that have not been in the least enthusiastic about promoting minority languages have been conscious of the efficiency of teaching the majority language and script using previously acquired mother-tongue literacy. Such administrations and organisations have promoted transitional bilingual education, a type of bilingual education which recognises the utility of learning the majority or dominant language by means of the minority script, but once the minority script has served its purpose as an aid to learning the dominant high-status language, then it at best takes a secondary role and at worst is discarded, having outlived its purpose. For example, there have been transitional programmes among non-English-speaking immigrants in the United States, aiding their assimilation into mainstream Anglophone society. What is perhaps surprising is that administrations (e.g. most states in the USA) in favour of assimilating minorities should not take more advantage of this fact and instead oppose a measure (transitional bilingualism, with emphasis on prior L1 literacy) which in the long-term would have hastened language shift.

From the 17th to the 19th Centuries many attempts were made in the largely monolingually Gaelic Scottish Highlands by predominantly church-backed educational societies (keen not only on anglicising Gaeldom, but also eliminating the widespread vestiges of Catholicism from the Highlands), both to teach directly through the medium of English and to promote Gaelic literacy, usually as a transitional tool to acquiring English (and thereafter be used only for religious purposes). For example the *Society in Scotland for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge or SSPCK*, with predominantly assimilationist aims, initially tried to teach monolingual Gaelic-speakers directly through the medium of English despite the warnings in 1707 of one of its founders (James Kirkwood, quoted in Withers 1984:121) that:

As to ye teaching them the English language it seems somewhat forraign to our first and maine designe viz. ye propagating of ye Knowledge of God amongst them which must

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either be done in the language they understand, or else it will be lost labour with respect to the farr greater part of that people, few of whom (in comparison) either young or old understand English.

Withers (1984:123) points out that even though many Gaelic pupils were only rote-learning English texts without understanding their meaning, the SSPCK insisted on “teaching the principles of our Holy Religion in the English language and by time wearing out the Irish [=Gaelic]”. Withers (1984:116-160) relates that the SSPCK was gradually forced to adopt a policy of translating into Gaelic, in order that pupils could have a hope of understanding what they were being taught, but that even so many completed their schooling with little effective knowledge of English.

In the early 19th Century the Gaelic Society introduced schools teaching Gaelic reading (but not writing!) into many Highland areas. It believed (Withers 1984: 146)

that the reading of the Gaelic will implant the desire of knowledge, as well as improve the understanding; and thus you insure both the extension and use of the English language.

The success of this tactic was confirmed by reports from the Society’s schools such as the following from Kilmuir in Skye (Whithers 1984: 147):

‘The people here ... though they have not had the benefit of Gaelic Schools long, are becoming anxious for English Teachers, which had some time ago been very much disputed: *“that to cultivate the Gaelic language it is a certain though indirect road to promote the study of the English”*.’

The SSPCK by now had also realised that first learning to read and write Gaelic and subsequently learn English with the help of passive Gaelic literacy was a much more efficient way in making Gaelic speakers competent in English and first taught pupils to read Gaelic in order to help them learn English, as did other providers of Highland education. The result was that in the course of the 19th Century vast numbers of monolingual Gaelic speakers learnt English via prior Gaelic schooling and literacy. Once English was acquired, it was made clear to them that it was the logical medium for continuing their studies and self-betterment.

The purpose of the foregoing Gaelic example is firstly to show that even many enemies of linguistic diversity recognise the advantages of bilingualism and biliteracy (albeit not active literacy in the case of Gaelic) for teaching official high-status languages to

speakers of low-status, minority languages and secondly to illustrate a case in which prior L1 transitional literacy made a large contribution in favour of language shift to the majority language. With this example in mind it is surprising to me that this possible transitional function of mother-tongue literacy has not been more seized upon by proponents of hanisation in Guangxi and Liangshan, especially in the former, where for the last 13+ years a de facto assimilationist language policy has been pursued. Even if the Zhuang script had no other function than to help Zhuang monolinguals to learn Han, it would surely serve a useful purpose for the assimilationists. In Liangshan, the fact that so many hanised Nuosu do not learn the Nuosu script and it is not widely offered to them, but that it is tolerated in rural areas, leads me to deduce that many urban cadres (both Nuosu and Han) who are not particularly in favour of spreading any language other than Han, tolerate and even support the teaching of Nuosu in monolingual rural areas precisely because they DO recognise that Nuosu literacy will probably smooth and hasten the road to ultimate language shift.

6.1.5.6 REVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL BIMO EDUCATION IN LIANGSHAN

One form of education – without a parallel in Guangxi - which has enjoyed a revival in the post-Mao and post-Deng eras with the resurgence of clans and revival of traditional Nuosu religious activities is the apprenticing of school-age boys to bimo. This is a sign that there is some demand for totally Nuosu-medium education and concern for educating their children in traditional Nuosu values, albeit of a very different, more radical kind. Both bimo and sunyi had been classified as “superstitious”, prohibited from carrying out religious activities from the time of the Democratic Reforms in the 1950s and were punished for practicing through the Cultural Revolution and until 1984 when the State Council decided they were to be treated as intellectuals (Heberer 2001: 227). This coincided with a powerful popular demand for the services of bimo.

Schoenhals (2001: 247) reports that members of hereditary bimo clans regarded official “Han” education as being a threat to, and in conflict with, bimo education and resent being looked down upon as superstitious frauds by the mainstream education system. Thus they were reluctant to send their children to schools run by a rival educational system. Curiously, Schoenhals (*ibid*) affirms that the Nuosu in general do not perceive mainstream education as a threat to their culture and society. Either they send their children to school, seeing it as a way of furthering themselves, or they do not, perhaps

because they do not perceive it as useful or advantageous or because it is too expensive or inconvenient.

According to Bamo Ayi (2001: 128-130) there is traditionally no formal institution for bimo education, and it is usually done within a master-apprentice relation in a very practice-oriented way which places emphasis on the participation of the student. A *bimop* [the –p marks a low tone] or master bimo teaches one or more *bisse* or students. Often *bisse* seek out particular *bimop* and hereditary *bisse* are sometimes taught by their fathers or grandfathers.

Bisse accompany their *bimop* when then they are summoned to conduct rituals and ceremonies and learn by observing, questioning and actively participating in the proceedings. Teaching normally focuses on individual *bisse* needs and there is no formalised pedagogy, the teacher deciding on the how, what and when he teaches. Both teacher and apprentice are highly motivated to teach /learn as their future reputations depend upon the quality of the training.

Studying bimo texts written in complex Nuosu characters are an important part of the training and a prerequisite for carrying out rituals and understanding traditional bimo wisdom and knowledge. This involves learning much classical language and antiquated expressions by way of reading, reciting and copying of texts. Pupils often recite after the teacher. The texts they copy are those they will use in future rituals. Bamo Ayi (2001: 129) stresses the importance of the teachers' explaining thoroughly the contents and socio-historical contexts of the texts if students are to understand the significance of the texts properly and comments that some contemporary teachers have failed in this. There are also special pedagogically-orientated textbooks, written in a more oral style on white cloth, to help guide pupils. Lu Wanfa (1999) mentions storytelling as an important teaching medium.

The main subjects covered in bimo education (Bamo Ayi 2001: 124) are knowledge about ancestors, gods, spirits and ghosts, ceremonial texts, genealogies, history, geography, calendars and astrology, medicine and disease (caused by disease ghosts), arts and crafts (drawing, straw weaving, sculpture, carving and paper cutting), ritual

procedures and folklore. Lu Wanfa (1999) reports that ethics and knowledge of traditional social relations is greatly stressed.

Lu Wanfa (1999) stresses the closeness of the bimo to the clan heads and to their role in upholding the clan and slave system as well as the inferior position of women and essentially criticises them as having an extremely negative effect on Nuosu society and especially on the universalisation of education.

In core Nuosu areas there are reports of a surge in the number of bimo apprentices over the last 15 or so years. Bamo Ayi (2001) and Schoenhals (2001) cite statistics by Gaha (1996) on the bimo of the core Nuosu county of Meigu revealing that some 2,800 men and boys, approximately 8% of the County's male population, were either bimo or training to become bimo. Harrell 2000a, referring to 1998, revises this figure upwards to 15%. Lu Wanfa 1999 (who gives a figure of 13.7%) bemoans that more money and energy is being invested by the population of Meigu County in bimo-related activities than in conventional modern education.

据《美姑彝族毕摩调查研究》的不完全统计，目前，西南彝族地区有近10万专门从事毕摩活动的人员，其中，四川省美姑县就有6850名毕摩，约占全县总人口的4%和成年男子的13.7%，是全县教师队伍总数的7倍和在校学生的五分之三。美姑县有230多种10余万卷毕摩经书，这些经书的种类和数量比美姑县办学40多年来所采用的教材之和还要多。在美姑村村有毕摩，寨寨有毕惹（毕摩学徒），一年四季，招魂驱鬼送灵的法铃声和诵经声不绝于耳，所谓被毕摩弄死了的各种“妖魔鬼怪”（泥塑或草木扎成的怪物）随处可见，人们几乎每时每刻都在谈论鬼神，都在与鬼神打交道。相反，40多年来美姑县还有43个村，约占总人口35%的地区从未举办过学校教育。美姑县每年花在毕摩活动方面的钱“至少也有1500万元人民币，相当于1996年全县财政收入的2倍和教育总投入的2.5倍”。 According to incomplete statistics from the "Research Survey into the Yi Nationality Bimo of Meigu" in the southwestern Yi nationality areas there are at present 100,000 people engaged in bimo activities of whom 6,850 (4% of the County's total population and 13.7% of the male population) are bimo. That is 7 times more than the total number of teachers in the County and three fifths of the number of children attending school there. Meigu County has over 230 types of 100,000 odd bimo ritual scrolls. The variety and quantity of such texts is far greater than all the teaching materials used in Meigu County in the last 40 years. In each village there are bimo and in each hamlet there are bimo pupils. The whole year around they call back and exorcise spirits, send off souls, the sound of their tinkling bells and reciting lingering in ones ears. Everywhere one can see so-called evil spirits of all kinds (monsters made of clay or plants) being put to death by bimo and people continually and constantly discuss, and make contact with, supernatural beings. In contrast, after 40 years there are still 43 villages in Meigu County where about 35% of the population lives that have never experienced conventional school education. The money spent every year in Meigu County on bimo-related activities is at least 15,000,000 Yuan renmenbi, equivalent to twice the finances for the whole county for 1996 or two and a half times the total investment for education.

He goes on (ibid) to lament the terrible damage this trend has wrought on education in Meigu County and on the promotion of socialist and atheist ideology among the school-age population:

由于毕摩活动盛行，这些地方基础教育的入学率、巩固率以及教育教学质量都遭到了严重的冲击。一方面，很多原本就很贫穷或不太富裕的家庭把大量钱财花在毕摩活动上，而不愿或无力给孩子缴纳为数不多的书费和学费，致使适龄儿童入学率始终难以提高。另一方面，在父母的默许和毕摩的怂恿下，很多中小學生还没有修完义务教育所规定的学习年限就成了毕摩学徒或小毕摩，因此，辍学率也相当高。在一些彝族聚居的边远山区，跟着毕摩通宵达旦地搞宗教活动成了有些青少年课外活动和有些教师八小时以外活动内容之一，不少师生都是毕摩的“得力助手”。因而严重影响了教育教学质量和广大青少年的身心健康，也使学校的无神论教育难以理直气壮、旗帜鲜明地深入开展下去。很多家长相信毕摩胜过相信教师，因而在一些地方，教师爬山涉水动员学生入学，却遭到“放狗咬他”或“背毕摩回家休息”的对待。毕摩活动也严重阻碍彝族地区两个文明建设和教育事业的发展。 Because of bimo-related activities being in vogue, the elementary education attendance rate, drop out rate and quality of education have all been severely effected. On the one hand many originally poor or not well-off households spend vast quantities on bimo activities, but are unwilling or unable to pay for the low book and tuition fees [for regular state schools], making it in any case difficult to raise the attendance rate of school-age children. On the other hand, with the tacit consent of parents and on the initiative of the bimo, many primary and secondary pupils have become bimo apprentices or little bimo when they still have not completed the stipulated period of compulsory schooling. Therefore the school drop-out rate is also correspondingly high. In some remote mountainous core Nuosu areas, night-long religious activities carried out by bimo have become the principal extra-curricular and after-work activity for some youths and teachers. Many teachers and pupils are the bimo's right-hand men. Consequently the quality of education and the mental and physical health of the youth have been seriously affected and it makes it difficult for schools to continue authoritatively teaching atheism in a meaningful thoroughgoing way. Many parents believe in bimo more than in teachers, causing teachers in some places to climb mountains and ford streams to get pupils to start school, only to have dogs set on them or be expected to carry the bimo back home to rest. The activities of bimo also seriously hinder "the construction of the material and spiritual civilizations of socialism" and the cause of educational development.

As a solution Lu Wanfa (1999) advocates taking legal and administrative measures to combat bimo activities, pointing out that according to the Law on Compulsory Education, the development of an atheistic education system is an important responsibility of moral education work. He advocates more research into bimo, criticising the bimo research centre in Meigu for having inadequate resources to carry out satisfactory research. He calls for progressively minded and more knowledgeable bimo to be incorporated into the body of cadres and help in the development of education and of the economy, naming the potential role as bilingual teachers as being especially useful.

From the point of view of the Nuosu language and script, this trend, which will surely not be quite as great in other core Nuosu counties (given Meigu's reputation as the centre of bimo activity), is a clear rejection of the state-imposed system which is aimed directly or indirectly at making children competent in spoken and written Han (whether or not accompanied by a grounding in written Nuosu) in favour of a system where pupils not merely learn the Nuosu script, but (especially if taught by a competent bimo) acquire the traditional 8,000 character script and the important storehouse of Nuosu knowledge contained in it. It is to be assumed that these bimo will go on to teach further students and that, if allowed to by the Chinese state (something writers such as Lu Wanfa are campaigning against), this system might well expand and become more centrally organised and coordinated.

The situation has parallels with that of Sipsong Panna (for which my main source of information is Hansen, 1999) in Yunnan, where for centuries most Tai boys (but not girls) have traditionally enrolled in village Theravada Buddhist temple schools, which traditional Tai perceive as relevant to their context and culture. Here monks teach the traditional Tai language (very close to standard Thai, which is often also taught) and script and religious scriptures. In contrast official Chinese education is regarded as teaching an irrelevant alien culture and system of values, albeit in an instrumentally useful language.

In the 1950s, many girls, and a smaller number of boys enrolled in state schools (most boys attending en masse during the radical phases when temple schools were closed), where they were taught Han literacy and –if they were lucky- the simplified Tai script. Since 1982 a large proportion of parents have sent their sons to become novices in temples and although officially most Tai boys enrol in state schools, these figures are misleadingly high due to the high male drop-out rate, especially among novices (Hansen, *ibid.*). State schools suffer a severe shortage of Tai-speaking teachers and Tai is normally taught as an extra voluntary subject several hours a week. Hansen (1999: 256 and 279) was only able to locate one school with a single class where all subjects were taught in Tai, as in Guangxi and Liangshan “on an experimental basis”.

Unlike bimo education (unique to the Nuosu), Tai Buddhist education belongs to an internationally respected “world religion” and has close links with Thailand (where

many of the teaching monks come from), which parents (where many have relatives or friends) admire as a modern highly developed Buddhist country, speaking a similar language to theirs. Being a bimo, like a Tai Buddhist monk, is an exclusively male profession, but unlike in Sipsong Panna where all boys ideally become novices, only a small proportion of Nuosu boys train to become bimo. Moreover knowledge imparted in a bimo education is often viewed as secret and not to be divulged to non-bimo. I am unaware of any movement to open bimo education to all boys (along the lines of Sipsong Panna), far less to open it up to girls. It will be interesting to see if some kind of informal education for non-bimo, taught by bimo emerges.

Despite the lack of international dimension of bimo practices, the efforts of Nuosu writers such as Bamo Ayi (2001) have brought bimo culture to the attention of the outside world helped by some academics outside China, in particular Professor Stevan Harrell of Seattle University. The holding of the 8th International Conference on Yi Studies in Meigu in August 2005, which was sponsored by the Meigu County Government, the Institute of Ethnic Literature and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (and supported by the Foreign Bureaus of the Provincial and Prefectural Governments) had as its special theme “Bimo Practice, Traditional Knowledge and Ecosystem Sustainability in the 21st Century” and has likewise done much to call international attention, and bring academic respectability, to bimo skills and culture, paralleled by the local authorities attempts to convert the occasion into a colourful and exotic tourist attraction. Not only academics, but also many bimo participated and were seen by many as learned guardians of an ancient cultural and scientific tradition rather than as dirty superstitious wizards. I suspect the bimo’s ability to attract tourists will be what will most protect them from ideological attacks.

Bimo appear to be less popular among urbanised Nuosu, whom according to Heberer (2001: 230) have more respect for modern science and medicine than for the skills of the bimo and

...with the increasing level of education and the popularization of modern medical and scientific knowledge, shamanism (including animism and animatism) is doomed to disappear from Yi society.

Chapter 6. 6.1 Introduction to Findings

Bimo education and bimo-stimulated demand for Nuosu literacy is a force not to be underestimated.

6.2 & 6.3 FINDINGS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the discussion of the findings which seek to address the research questions and hypotheses posed in Chapter 1, there is often a degree of overlapping in the discussions of the below points, due to the different factors being inherently interlinked. I have tried to avoid excessive repetition through cross-referencing whenever possible.

6.2 FINDINGS RELATED TO THE RELATIVE SUCCESS QUESTION (TO EXPLAIN THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF THE PROMOTION OF NUOSU IN LIANGSHAN AND THE FAILURE OF THE PROMOTION OF ZHUANG IN GUANGXI, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EXAMINING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE FORMER)

Having argued in the previous section that the promotion of non-Han scripts had radically different outcomes in both contexts, the 8 hypotheses outlined in Chapter 1 will be explored in order to explain the relative success of the promotion of Nuosu in Liangshan and the failure of the promotion of Zhuang in Guangxi as well as the limitations of the former.

6.2.1 THE IDENTITY HYPOTHESIS

The more self-confident minority language speakers are of their ethnolinguistic identity, the more likely they are to view the promotion of their language and script positively. As Nuosu speakers have a stronger ethnic consciousness than the Zhuang and feel themselves to be more different from the Han, they will be more loyal to their language and script and hence will give greater support to the promotion of their language and script.

6.2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

As was mentioned earlier, the relation between language and ethnic awareness in politically downtrodden peoples under pressure to assimilate to a dominant “superior” language is complex. In the case of Iceland and the Faeroe Islands, for example, Icelandic and Faeroese prevailed over the politically dominant state language Danish, partly through the former being a rallying point for the Icelandic and Faeroese cultures, although geographical isolation also naturally played an important part. In the case of Ireland, in contrast, at least from the 18th Century onwards, Irish nationalism (whatever

purely symbolic value Irish might have had) embraced English as its weapon with which to fight British colonial power. The result is that ethnic consciousness is extremely high among the Irish, even though Irish has virtually ceased to be a medium of everyday communication.

6.2.1.2 DO NUOSU HAVE A GREATER SENSE OF ETHNIC AWARENESS THAN ZHUANG?

As discussed in 5B.1.5, 5B.1.8 and 5B.2.4.1, there is an acute lack of ethnic consciousness among most Zhuang speakers and lack of identification with a unified Zhuang nationality and, consequently, with a unified Zhuang language. A large proportion of Zhuang speakers consider themselves to be a kind of Han just as say the Hakka or Cantonese are. This is partly the result of several millennia of incorporation into the cultural sphere of the Middle Kingdom.

Many identify with the *zhixi* (=“branches”) categories used before the creation of the Zhuang nationality, which are still very strong in Zhuang areas of Yunnan and still have a certain, although lesser, influence in Guangxi, where there have been active campaigns against *zhixi* (see Kaup 2000: 37-44). In Guangxi many people identify only with the Zhuang of their county or locality and not with the Zhuang nationality created and promoted by the Government. A further psychological division is between the Zhuang of Yunnan and Guangxi, caused by living under 2 different administrations. The categorization of Zhuang-speakers in Guizhou as *Bouyei* and those in Vietnam as Nong and Tay also diminishes the perceived unity of speakers of central and northern Tai varieties.

Why should they then make the effort to learn a standard language and script which represents an ethnic classification which they only minimally agree with, and in many cases openly oppose?

Nuosu, in contrast, have never had doubts over whether they are Han or Nuosu and for centuries the core upland areas of Liangshan have been socially and politically isolated from the mandate of Heaven. Nuosu have always been highly conscious of the difference and “*hxiemga*” (= Han) is one of the worst insults among Nuosu, probably partly because prior to 1950 many Nuosu captured Han as slaves. Apart from some members of the upwardly mobile urbanised elite, they do not suffer from the inferiority

complex of not being Han (even though they may greatly envy their economic superiority) which exists amongst the Zhuang. The fact that they are officially categorised as “Yi” (as opposed to “Nuosu”) does not appear to present too much of a problem as most Nuosu live in areas where they are the only kind of Yi and where the word “Yi” is thus often treated as the Han translation of “Nuosu” (the term “Yi” never being used in Nuosu). However Nuosu do not take kindly to being classified together with non-Nuosu Yi and there is no mutual identification between Nuosu and speakers of Eastern or Central Yi languages in areas where they live together.

Thus even to the casual observer of Zhuang and Nuosu areas it will quickly be clear that the Nuosu are much more ethnically aware and self-confident than their Zhuang counterparts. To see if the difference in ethnic awareness also affects attitudes towards promoting their ethnic scripts, I start by examining how essential both groups consider a knowledge of the ethnic language to be in order to be thought of as “true Zhuang” or “true Nuosu”.

6.2.1.3 MUST ONE SPEAK NUOSU TO BE NUOSU AND ZHUANG TO BE ZHUANG?

There is no doubt that Han in Guangxi hold ethnic Zhuang (even those who speak no Han) in far less contempt than Han in Liangshan hold ethnic Nuosu, due to the much wider gulf which Han in Liangshan perceive between themselves and the Nuosu culture and way of life. If all Nuosu and Zhuang were to speak Han as their mother-tongue, I am sure that the Han would still regard the Nuosu as being alien (and vice-versa), but the Zhuang as being much the same as Han with a few odd local religious and cultural customs.

Being Nuosu is important for a Nuosu. Even if one cannot speak Nuosu any more and lives a Han lifestyle, one is expected to pay attention to a series of traditional cultural norms like marrying the appropriate person from within one’s caste (or facing ostracism). Similar to many Jews in western societies, the pull of their ethnicity is very strong. Of course it remains to be seen if this state of affairs can be maintained over many generations of totally hanised Nuosu, or if they would eventually demand reclassification as Han. Urban Zhuang who do not speak Zhuang and have lost the contact with their rural roots, on the other hand, often see themselves as no different from Han. I have met Zhuang who wish they could just be officially recognised as Han.

Although at a localised level rural Zhuang speakers might feel estranged from Zhuang who no longer speak their variety of Zhuang, there appears not to be the same degree of resentment as in Liangshan that their hanised compatriots have somehow betrayed their nationality as the price for bettering themselves.

Until recently it was naturally assumed that being Nuosu involved speaking Nuosu. It is only in the last several decades, with the growth of an urbanised Nuosu class, that the possible compatibility of being Nuosu (translated into Chinese as Yi) and speaking only Han has been debated. While many hanised Zhuang feel themselves to be no different to Han, non-Nuosu-speaking urbanised Nuosu typically still have a strong “Yi” identity, although they realise that they have lost (or are loosing) a great part of the Nuosu culture of their rural places of origin, principally the language. As is discussed in 6.2.2, upwardly mobile predominantly urbanised Nuosu and Zhuang speakers, especially cadres in Han-speaking milieus, are most likely to seek ways to make compatible their ethnicity with the new Han language.

Among ordinary rural Nuosu, their language is a very strong indicator of ethnic loyalty. They are aware of their kinship networks, which often stretch across the length and breadth of Liangshan and proud of their history (see Annex 1), religion and bimo tradition with its extensive ancient literature (see 6.2.7). Most Nuosu generally feel superior to the Han, quite undeterred by the disdain that most Han show towards them. Even in the largely hanised lowland Nuosu community of Manshuiman (see 6.1.3) described by Harrell (2001a: Ch.8) the Nuosu language is fiercely passed on as a marker of ethnic identity. No-one is in doubt that they speak the Nuosu language (or the Yi language if they are addressing themselves to officialdom or the outside world) and most are fiercely proud of this language.

The linguistic attitudes survey I undertook in Zhaojue in 1995 showed strong support among Nuosu respondents for their language and its intergenerational transmission and results pertaining to this aspect are shown below. The sample of over 300 respondents included a minority of Han and a large proportion of educated Nuosu (schoolchildren, cadres and literate peasants):

- 80.4% of respondents agreed with the statement “True Nuosu should all be able to speak the Nuosu language.”
- 78.8% of respondents agreed with the statement “If a [Nuosu-speaking] Nuosu marries a [Nuosu] person who can only speak Han [mixed marriages are not traditionally permitted], they should at least teach their children Nuosu [i.e. whether or not they teach them Han as well].”
- 72.5% of respondents disagreed with the statement “Yi people who can speak Han should only speak Han.”
- 91.4% of respondents disagreed with the statement “The Nuosu language has no future. The sooner Nuosu people only speak Han, the better.”
- 86.2% of respondents disagreed with the statement “Yi people who can speak Han should only speak Han to their children.”
- 65.5% of respondents disagreed with the statement “In 30 years time I hope all Nuosu children only speak Han to each other.”
- 64.3% of respondents disagreed with the statement “The Han language should be the main language of Zhaojue county town.”

These results generally show strong support for the vitality and transmission of Nuosu, although it is perhaps worrying that sometimes the percentages in support drop to less than three-quarters of the respondents.

Most people I interviewed in 2 villages in rural Meigu in August 2005 were of the opinion that mastery of the Nuosu language was an essential part of being Nuosu. Several respondents who maintained that it was irrelevant were heckled by disagreeing bystanders. When pushed as to whether children of Nuosu speakers brought up only in Han were still Nuosu or not, most maintained that such people were still Nuosu but at the same time made clear their disapproval, not only of hanised Nuosu not speaking Nuosu, but also of their pride in having adopted Han ways and their eagerness to dissociate themselves from the authentic Nuosu culture and way of life. Several urban Nuosu in Meigu County town reported their rural relatives criticising their hanised Nuosu and strongly disapproved of urbanised Nuosu not transmitting Nuosu and using it at every opportunity.

Wu Da (2002) interviewed peasants in a rural area of Ganluo County where many younger people had a knowledge of Han and found a great range of opinions. Generally his respondents felt the language to be a very important part of Nuosu identity and assumed that rural Nuosu would naturally speak it, but were willing to forgive Nuosu who had grown up in the Han areas for not speaking Nuosu and to still accept them as Nuosu. His general conclusion was that most bilingual Nuosu would prefer to remain bilingual, but if they ever had to choose between their children being educated and competent in Han or Nuosu they would choose the former without hesitation, without feeling that they were thereby losing their Nuosu identity.

It is thus logical that while recognising the economic and instrumental value of Han (discussed in 6.2.5 and 6.2.8), rural Nuosu should be more open to the idea of Nuosu-language literacy, than rural Zhuang to Zhuang-language literacy, even though the non-Han-speaking proportion of the population in both areas is similar. Most Nuosu appear to strongly support both rural literacy and bilingual education, **provided** it does not interfere with the possible acquisition of Han. Many of the rural Nuosu I met were in no doubt that it was natural and logical for them to be learning to read and write their ethnic language. The bottom-up nature of the mass learning of the traditional script from the 1950s until the 1970s bears this out, as does the presence of a sizeable number (their total proportion was impossible to ascertain) of literate peasants whom I interviewed in 1995 in Zhaojue and in 2005 in Meigu, many of whom possessed and exchanged books and went to the local *xiang* offices to read magazines and the Nuosu edition of the *Liangshan Daily*.

In Zhuang rural areas the language is a marker of local identity and few people have a feeling of belonging to a greater Zhuang speaking network (and only a small handful of intellectuals are aware of belonging to a greater Tai-speaking network which extends over the border through Vietnam and Laos to Thailand and Burma). Many Zhuang think they are different from the standard Mandarin-speaking Han in the same way that a Cantonese or Hakka-speaking Han is and will vaguely declare that they speak “*方言 fāngyán* (dialect)” if asked for their mother tongue. Unlike their Nuosu equivalents, a large proportion of Zhuang do not see the necessity of learning to read a write a mere “dialect”. This is not to say that most Zhuang speakers are indifferent to language loss

amongst their speech communities, but at a localised level, such as not being able to communicate with their urbanised cousins or grandchildren. Although they feel estrangement from those who no longer speak Zhuang, they do not generally feel more estranged from them than they do from Zhuang who speak other varieties of Zhuang.

To what extent rural Zhuang peasants and grass-roots cadres supported the promotion is difficult to fathom. Grass-roots cadres I talked to at Guangxi Nationalities College tended to be very supportive, whereas higher up cadres much less so. My contacts with the “broad masses” of Zhuang peasants were limited to a few casual conversations and interviews with beneficiaries of the promotion hand-picked by the Debao County educational authorities – hardly an unbiased sample. Likewise peasants’ accounts of the promotion printed in articles were always supportive.

As discussed in other sections, a strong traditional Nuosu cultural elite centred around the bimo existed and is still very influential in rural society, helping to raise the prestige of traditional values, culture and the Nuosu spoken and written language, this latter (in its traditional pre-standardised form) being the literacy form through which this elite expresses itself. In Zhuang areas, on the other hand, there is no such literate, influential elite and as I point out in 6.2.5, such indigenous “intellectuals” as existed, wrote either in Han or in their local dialect, using Han characters or *fangkuaizi*. Among some urbanised Nuosu-speaking parents in Liangshan who had brought up their children in Han, I detected clear guilt feelings and some of them openly regretted what they had done, admitting it went against the interests of their ethnic language and group. In Guangxi, I only heard one or two urbanised Zhuang regretting not having brought up their children in Zhuang. In general they felt they were just leaving behind an undesirable inferior sociolect rather than a valuable cultural heritage.

A strong selling point of the promotion of literacy in Zhuang and Nuosu was that it could be used to record oral literature (folk-songs, legends, poems etc.) and other aspects of their traditional culture and this is often quoted as a chief aim of promoting non-Han minority languages. In traditional Nuosu society this had been recorded in the traditional script. While some people, notably bimo, might feel the traditional script to be superior to the standardised syllabary, it is universally accepted as a realistic continuation of the traditional script and way of popularising an existing age-old

tradition. Many works have been translated from the traditional script into the syllabary and it is acceptable to use it for recording oral literature and indeed all other subjects except ritual texts.

Zhuang oral literature was traditionally written in *fangkuaizi*, translated into Han or even just written in Han characters according to Zhuang rules. There are many accounts of peasants using the romanised script to collect and write down folk literature, among the Zhuang. The following is a statement by Wei and Wei (1980: 4) involved in the planning of Zhuang:

实现还证明，壮文便于直接拼写壮话，能准确记载内容丰富的壮族民歌、童谣、谚语、民间传说、故事等等，有助于挖掘抢救壮族传统文化，发展繁荣壮族民间文学艺术，推动生产建设。在创制和推行壮文中，我们用它准确地记载了大量民间文学，出版了《广西革命故事》，《壮族民间故事》，《壮族民间诗集》等册子，使濒临失传的壮族民间文学得到发掘抢救，优美的壮族传统文艺形式也焕发了新的光辉。 What has been put into practice shows that the Zhuang script is convenient for spelling the Zhuang language, and for faithfully recording the rich content of folksongs, lullabies, sayings, popular traditions, tales etc. and that it is an aid for rescuing and saving traditional Zhuang culture, developing the flourishing popular literature and art and promoting production and construction. In the course of the creation and promotion of the Zhuang script, we have used it to accurately record a great quantity of folk literature and have published: “Revolutionary Tales of Guangxi”, “Folk Tales of the Zhuang Nationality”, “Popular Poems of the Zhuang Nationality”, etc., in this way making possible the discovery and rescuing just in time the folk literature of the Zhuang nationality that was on the verge of being lost for ever.

I have heard of many Zhuang who appreciated being able to transcribe and read oral literature in the new script. However, it never gained universal acceptance as a medium for folk literature in the same way as the standardised Nuosu script and many Zhuang continue regarding *fangkuaizi* as the proper way of recording oral tradition.

6.2.1.4 CLOSING REMARKS

The Nuosu possess a much stronger sense of ethnic unity, loyalty and consciousness than the Zhuang and regard a knowledge of Nuosu as an essential ingredient of Nuosu identity. In contrast, Zhuang speakers identify with their localised clans and dialects rather than a Zhuang nationality and language (clans are of great importance for the Nuosu, but do not diminish their ethnic identity as “Nuosu”), do not perceive themselves as being so different from Han (many in fact regarding themselves as Han) and do not attach so much importance to language loss.

6.2.2 THE MINORITY ELITE HYPOTHESIS

If the elite, who serve as role models for a large part of the minority language speech community, are supportive of the promoted language and script and use it actively and pass it (rather than Han) on to their children then the promotion's chances of success are greatly increased. The greater tendency among the Nuosu elite to support their language and script and pass them on to their children than among the Zhuang elite has resulted in greater acceptance of the promotion in Liangshan than in Guangxi.

This section sets out to examine the possibility that the Zhuang-speaking urbanised and educated elite has ignored and covertly opposed (even “sabotaged”) the promotion of Zhuang, while their Nuosu-speaking counterparts –despite also being under pressure to hanise- have been significantly more supportive to the promotion of Nuosu, and if so to see whether this could help explain differences between both situations.

6.2.2.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL GAP BETWEEN URBANISED AND RURAL ZHUANG

As examined in 6.1, there exists a widespread belief among most Han as well as among many urbanised and hanised Zhuang who are not familiar with the reality of the rural Zhuang, that a large proportion of Zhuang either have no knowledge of Zhuang or are in the process of substituting it with Han. A hanised participant, of Zhuang nationality, of a discussion forum about the Zhuang script on the web-page of the Guangxi Police Academy Alumni Association in December 2002 (a certain Dada 2092) considered it normal that a Zhuang should speak no Zhuang declaring

...本人也是壮族，我爸还会说壮话。....I'm also Zhuang and my father still knows how to speak Zhuang.

In Guangxi I talked to many urbanised Zhuang, some of whom spoke only Han and others who thought of the Zhuang language as something to be left behind and at best only having an informal, domestic role, much like that of Cantonese or other non-Mandarin Han varieties. Kaup (2000: 170) sums up the attitude of this group:

Urban Zhuang who are not cadres in departments directly dealing with nationality issues tend to know very little about the situation of the rural Zhuang. Urban Zhuang often assert “there is no difference” between Han and Zhuang. The majority of urban Zhuang workers assert that Zhuang all speak Mandarin, wear Han clothing, and have educational levels comparable to the Han. This lack of information about their rural compatriots

extends to cadres in departments not directly researching nationality issues, or so contend a large percentage of NAC members and Zhuang scholars.

Zhuang living in majority-Han areas such as the cities of Nanning, Liuzhou and Guilin are under great pressure to reject Zhuang in favour of Han to integrate themselves in Han society. However, they represent only a tiny minority of the total Zhuang population. What casts shadows over the future of the Zhuang language is not so much the number of Zhuang speakers who have abandoned their language, but rather their disproportionate social and political influence and the role model which they serve to current users of the Zhuang language. The reluctance of influential Zhuang, including many important cadres, to send their own children to bilingual classes, thus creating an aversion among ordinary Zhuang to sending their children to anything other than all-Han classes, has been a major problem for the promotion of Zhuang from the outset.

When living in Nanning (September 1981 - February 1982), with few exceptions the urbanised Zhuang I came into contact with, many of whom were employees of Guangxi Nationalities Institute, spoke no Zhuang to their children, even when both parents spoke Zhuang (often between themselves). In this connection Kaup (2000: 171) confirms “I met very few second-generation urban Zhuang who could speak the Zhuang language”. It was a phenomenon that I also observed among intellectuals of many other minorities.

This strong tendency for Zhuang living in urban, mainly-Han, areas to undergo complete language shift to Han occurs not only when both partners speak different Zhuang varieties. Even when both partners are speakers of the same variety of Zhuang, they typically transmit only Han to their children (and often speak Han among themselves). I assume that only in very rare cases will urban children of mixed Zhuang-Han marriages speak Zhuang as well as Han. One reason for urbanised Zhuang speakers not passing on their mother tongue is their perception that it is a limited local *patois* (rather than a variety of a high-status Zhuang language) which represents the backwardness of the rural milieu from which they come. Another important reason is that the Zhuang they often meet in their new urban environment speak varieties which they either have difficulties understanding or do not wish to make the effort to understand. In contrast urbanised Nuosu are much more likely to find themselves in proximity to other Nuosu speaking a totally intelligible variety: even speakers of the divergent Suondi dialect and other dialects speakers are more likely than in the Zhuang

situation to make the effort to understand one another, because they clearly recognise they are both Nuosu.

Having already unrepentantly committed linguistic suicide, these parents are not keen on their children being educated in the Zhuang script, which serves as an uncomfortable reminder of the language which they have just abandoned. Zhuang literacy classes would be useless for such children unless coupled with basic Zhuang L2 instruction, which even if it existed and even if it were communicatively orientated, would probably be totally ineffective in face of the low social prestige of Zhuang. Even parents who do pass on their local variety of Zhuang to their children often do not wish them to waste time becoming literate in Zhuang. While such educated, influential, upwardly-mobile, urbanised Zhuang are precisely the people who the Zhuang-speaking community needs to defend its interests, it is clear that most of this group does not identify with the interests and needs of their rural cousins, having fully thrown their lot in with mainstream Han aspirations. Kaup (2000: 176-7) concludes that “Zhuang within the cities, then, appear poor sources of support for the Zhuang cadres pressing for nationality rights”. Sites (1999: 113), when speaking of the implementation of bilingual education, confirms

There are a number of obstacles standing in the way of the implementation of a complete Zhuang language-based school system. One of the chief obstacles seems to be a lack of support for mother tongue literacy among the urban Zhuang intelligentsia. The high degree of acculturation of this group and their shift to the Han language and literacy makes it unlikely that they will choose to render themselves “illiterate” by promoting the general use of the Zhuang language and script. According to one observer, because Zhuang cadres and intellectuals are accomplished in Han language and literacy, - as are their children - they have no use for Zhuang literacy and think that the masses have no use for it either.

In any case most such parents have never had any choice about whether their children receive instruction in Zhuang or not, given the limited number of Zhuang-medium experimental classes on offer, even at the height of the promotion.

6.2.2.2 URBANISED NUOSU

During the communist period the number of Nuosu families, especially those of cadres, in the urban centres of Liangshan that were traditionally exclusively Han has grown exponentially. Many educated Nuosu have found employment there as a result of the policy of autonomy. In the prefectural capital of Xichang there is a marked tendency to

lose Nuosu as their language of intergenerational transmission. An important minority of families have managed to pass on the language thanks to close contacts with relatives in rural areas or to a conscientiousness (perhaps influenced by the linguistic policy) of the importance of the Nuosu language as a marker of ethnic identity and as a passport to finding a good job within a plurilingual prefecture. However, for many hanised Nuosu the mere fact of being classified as Yi is sufficient in itself (without needing to master the Nuosu language) to benefit from positive job and educational discrimination in favour of minority nationalities.

The last 50 years have also seen the growth of hanised, or partially hanised, urban nuclei such as the administrative centres of the counties of Zhaojue and Meigu which in the pre-communist period were places inhabited, with rare exceptions, by Nuosu-speakers. This development has produced a certain hanisation amongst some Nuosu residents, above all among the new cadre class, but to a lesser extent than in the traditionally Han urban nuclei. In these smaller centres hanisation has not been so thorough because a high proportion of the Han residents (not so numerous in core area county towns) are provisional residents and moreover the Nuosu residents in general have intense enough contacts with the monolingual Nuosu society all around them to be able to maintain their language and culture if they are motivated to do so.

In the mid-1990s in the administrative centre of Zhaojue, I met and heard of families who did educate their children to be Nuosu-Han bilinguals and many of whose children did learn the Nuosu script at school, but also other Nuosu families who had brought up their children as Han monolinguals, without doing anything to ensure that they spoke or wrote Nuosu. The very existence of educated Nuosu passing on Nuosu to their children stood in stark contrast to the Zhuang situation. In 2005 in Meigu county town, the pace of hanisation among the Nuosu elite appeared to be proceeding quickly. According to most respondents (mostly Nuosu residents of the town) the majority of Nuosu speaking parents were already bringing up their children in Han only. It was hard to ascertain what percentage of parents still passed on the language to their offspring, but some respondents ventured a rough estimate of a third, certainly lower than I had expected.. Whether Nuosu children in the town who spoke Han at home acquired Nuosu at all depended largely on their contact and exposure to monolingual relatives from the countryside and Nuosu-speaking playmates, because only with rare exceptions did they

learn any Nuosu at school. In Meigu County town in 2005 few cadres' children were receiving any kind of Nuosu-medium education.

In view of this tendency of urbanised Nuosu, just like their Zhuang counterparts, to stop transmitting Nuosu to their children and the resistance of a large part of Nuosu cadres to sending their own children to Nuosu-medium or even minimally bilingual schools, I became quite cynical about the validity of the Minority Elite Hypothesis. However, whereas it is extremely difficult to find urbanised, educated Zhuang consciously resisting language shift and transmitting Zhuang intergenerationally, I met many educated Nuosu who were very vocal in their support for the maintenance of their language and critical of those who abandoned it and discovered that they are less likely to totally abandon their mother tongue than their Zhuang equivalents. When I have confronted Nuosu who have brought up their children in Han they have normally displayed guilt feelings about what they have done, something generally absent among Zhuang who have done the same. It is less easy for urban Nuosu to make a clean break with their rural background than their Zhuang counterparts as clan membership is important even in urban centres and they are under great pressure to conform to many social norms, such as whom they marry. Of course the geographically further they are from Nuosu core areas the lesser these pressures will be. But if they ignore them they risk losing their position in Nuosu society.

As among Zhuang speakers, higher-level Nuosu cadres appear less likely to pass their language on to their children than grass-roots cadres, as well as to using it in their everyday work and life, both because the hanising influences increase with social status and because the higher level cadres tend to live in more populous (and consequently more hanised) centres. According to Gelushasa and Jishijieer (Personal communication August 1994) of the Liangshan Nationalities Research Institute (who brought up their own children in Nuosu in the prefectural capital of Xichang) many higher level cadres have the tendency, due to lack of practice and use, to forget the Nuosu script totally or partially, in contrast to grass-roots cadres who tend to frequently use, maintain, and even improve, their written knowledge of Nuosu,.

Although language shift is taking place among the Nuosu elite, they are more likely to assure that their children speak Han without losing their ethnic language than are

urbanised Zhuang. As discussed in 6.2.1, Nuosu who speak no Nuosu are looked down upon more by Nuosu society in Liangshan than Zhuang who speak no Zhuang in Guangxi. Stites (1999:121) contrasting the extent of assimilation among Zhuang and Nuosu intellectuals, affirms “The Yi as a whole and the Yi literati in particular are much less integrated into Han society.” Naturally the existence of the bimo religious and cultural tradition, very much dependent on the Nuosu language has also created an intellectual precedent for a Nuosu speaking intelligentsia.

6.2.2.3 TRADITIONAL ELITES

Pre-communist Nuosu society was a highly stratified caste system with a traditional elite formed by a partly literate warrior caste of *black Yi* and a fully literate bimo class (see 6.1.5.6), with a very rich literary and cultural tradition independent from that of the Han. The popular renaissance of this established and influential rural elite (helped by scholarly and tourist interest) limits the social influence of the up-and-coming hanised elite, who as mentioned above, are more prisoners of their ethnicity than their Zhuang counterparts. Members of this rural-based traditional elite are highly unlikely to encourage their children to only speak Han.

In Zhuang areas religious practice varies greatly from place to place and there is no equivalent of the Nuosu bimo class, although there are priests and shamans who command respect locally (and even use Zhuang *fangkuaizi* or Han characters adapted to the local Zhuang dialect). Local intellectuals sometimes wrote down their dialects in *fangkuaizi*, but traditionally people who aspired to upward mobility in Zhuang society became literate in Han and hanised in other ways. This lack of a strong, confident traditional elite based on non-Han values and aspirations has certainly set a precedent, and made it easier, for the new Zhuang elite to escape the influence of their traditional culture and language than for their Nuosu counterparts.

6.2.2.4 COMPETENCE IN NON-HAN SCRIPT AS REQUIRED QUALIFICATION FOR CADRES

When discussing the problem of the newly emerging urbanised hanised elites in Liangshan (but also in Guangxi and other parts of China), the usual response of people supportive of the promotion was that no bilingual elite would emerge unless written and spoken Nuosu or Zhuang were required as compulsory (or at least highly evaluated)

qualification for school-leavers, university entrance exams and for people wishing to become cadres.

Cadres, particularly prior to the beginnings of the formation of an entrepreneurial class from the 1980s onwards made up a significant proportion of urban elites. Despite the emergence in Guangxi of a body of cadres involved in language promotion work, and in spite of many cadres in certain areas and periods being encouraged to learn the script, knowledge of the Zhuang script was not generally a required qualification for Zhuang or Han cadres in Zhuang areas.

In some parts of the core Nuosu areas an active knowledge of the Nuosu script was required for many cadres. This represents an important step towards encouraging a middle class literate and competent in Nuosu. According to Maheimujia (1985: 54), exams were introduced to measure competence of cadres, workers and professionals throughout Zhaojue County in the Nuosu script and also for purposes of employing new cadres and workers and for transferring cadres to Zhaojue. He attributes a great deal of the success in carrying out Nuosu literacy work to these measures.

Liangshan Prefecture People's Government set out in the "Working Relations on the Yi Script" a series of concrete status and acquisition planning measures with the aim of ensuring that cadres would actively learn, use and promote the standard Nuosu script (Liangshan Prefecture People's Government 1994a: 5-8). This would help promote a literate, even if localised elite. The same source, when discussing the language training of ordinary Yi nationality cadres, points out that in addition to being trained in the Han language and script they should also, in order to raise their cultural level, at the same time carry on and develop their "knowledge of the Yi nationality's outstanding traditional culture (彝族优秀传统文化的认识)" and "on their own initiative (自觉地)" take on the obligation of accepting special instruction in the Nuosu script.

Nobody I have been in contact with, even fervent supporters of minority languages and scripts, puts in question either the desirability or necessity of learning the majority language Han-Mandarin, but it is constantly thought necessary to justify investing time and energy learning and using a non-Han script. Even in ethnically conscious

Liangshan Prefecture, Liangshan Prefecture People's Government (1994 a: 5-8) had no necessity to tell cadres they should try to learn Han if possible, but it was felt necessary to remind them that they should attach the same importance to learning and using the Nuosu script. The aims of this document were ambitious, that

州府用五至七年时间,使行政机关45岁以内的彝族干部都具备使用彝文执行公务的能力。The prefectural government will ensure that in the space of 5 to 7 years, Yi nationality cadres under 45 years old, working in administrative bodies, will be capable of carrying out their public functions using the Yi script. (People's Government of Liangshan Prefecture, 1994 a: 5)

In order to achieve this, Nuosu cadres were expected to master the standardised Nuosu script either on their own initiative through self-study in their spare time or through various kinds of collective study activities. Such mastery was to imply not only being able to read the script, but also being capable of publicising and explaining [宣讲] Nuosu documents, periodicals and other publications to the public. As a prize, cadres achieving this level were to receive a certificate of proficiency in the Yi script (彝文达标合格证书).

Training for cadres was jointly organised by county (/city) level Language and Nationality Committees and by adult education departments, using tutored self-study or by way of short courses or night classes. Departments were also expected to include training in the Nuosu script as a subject in the normal educational training of Yi cadres. The document also exhorted the Nationality Cadre School to continue training a part of the Nuosu language trainers through short training courses. Such measures led to widespread use of the Nuosu script at a grass-roots level.

Wu Da (2002: 3) casts a shadow over the use made of the Nuosu script in county town administrations, quoting a teacher of Nuosu language in a rural school who was transferred to an administrative post in a county town (probably that of Ganluo, which is admittedly more hanised than core counties):

“县城里没有地方用彝文的，很久没有看彝文书报了，...” / “There’s no place for using the Yi script in the County town. It’s a long time since I’ve seen an Yi language book or newspaper...”

What is perhaps more alarming is the same author's account (ibid: 4) of a graduate of Nuosu language working as a *xiang*-level cadre (presumably also in Ganluo County) who starkly declares “我现在很少用彝文。(I now only seldom use the Yi script).” In Zhaojue I talked to *xiang*-level cadres who stated that they did often use it in their work. It is hard to know exactly to what extent it is actually used in local rural government, probably varying greatly from area to area.

Regarding oral use of Nuosu by cadres in parts of rural Ganluo County (where many more peasants can speak Han than in the core counties), Wu Da (2002: 4) reports the development of diglossia and code switching in interactions between Nuosu-Han bilinguals, especially in formal and administrative domains. For example, when bilingual Nuosu cadres go to bilingual rural areas to seek something from the peasants such as taxes, or their cooperation, they tend to use Nuosu. When this is not the case, such as police going to arrest or fine someone (punishment) or the doctor visiting patients (service provision) they tend to use Han. When bilingual peasants go to urban or administrative centres they tend to use Han at the Post Office, Bank etc.

So far, only Nuosu cadres have been mentioned. What did the “Working Relations on the Yi Script” have to say about Han cadres in Nuosu areas? Their linguistic behaviour will necessarily influence the process of hanisation among Nuosu cadres. It (ibid.: 6) states that all levels of government should pay special attention to educating grass-root Han cadres working in core Nuosu areas in the Nuosu language and script and encouraging them to learn them (see 6.3.2.1).

Although these measures sound very impressive, and were to a large degree carried out in core rural areas, in Meigu in 2005 people were still complaining that qualifications proving competence and literacy in Nuosu were not given sufficient importance to act as an effective incentive for people to learn the script or choose bilingual education. I was assured by cadres from the prefectural Language Committee that there were plans afoot to give more credit to Nuosu-language qualifications.

6.2.2.5 NATIONALITY POLICY INFLUENCE ON ZHUANG/NUOSU ELITES' ETHNIC IDENTITY

In Chapters 4 and 5, I mentioned that the concepts of the Zhuang and Yi nationalities were imposed on speakers of Central and Northern Tai languages and of Nuosu, but that these categories even half a century later have not gained the wholehearted widespread support of most ordinary Zhuang or Nuosu. One way in which the modern elites of these groups differ from the mass of the ordinary people is in the way they have reached a certain accommodation with the official “nationality” labels, accepting them (at least vis a vis the Han and the outside world) and using them for their own ends. This can influence how they react to the promotion of their ethnic languages and scripts. In the case of Zhuang, support for the standardised promoted script and language is likely to imply support for the category of Zhuang, whereas in Liangshan support for standardised Nuosu is more likely to come from those giving more importance to a Nuosu, as opposed to an Yi, identity.

Growth of a Zhuang ethnolinguistic consciousness and identification with the category of Zhuang among some sectors of the Zhuang public and intellectuals

The promotion of both scripts produced a number of language workers and people dedicated to the Zhuang script. As Wei and Wei (1980: 4) attest:

一批壮文知识分子也开始形成并逐渐成长起来,他们用壮文写了九十多万篇科学知识,忆苦思甜和学习体会的文章,四百八十多万首歌颂党,歌唱社会主义新生活的民歌和大量的其他艺术作品, ... An intellectual class literate in the Zhuang script gradually emerged [during the promotions] and grew which wrote more than 900,000 texts disseminating scientific knowledge, which contrasted the sufferings of the past with the happiness of the present, more than 4,800,000 folksongs praising the Communist Party and the new socialist life and other works of art.

I find it surprising that this new “elite” with a vested interest in the success of the Zhuang script did not fight more for the success of the project. I hope that their energies were not really wasted on “folksongs” praising the CCP, which would not seem an effective way to endear people to the new script. The failure of a Zhuang-speaking elite to establish itself is surely due to its potential base being made up predominantly of grass-roots cadres and intellectuals with very limited political clout, whereas the Hanised elite with a vested interest in not promoting Zhuang were far more powerful.

Since the end of official support for the promotion of Zhuang, there appears to have been a miniscule but interesting growth in bottom-up activity advocating action to promote the script. Or maybe it is just that in the absence of the top-down activity, only the bottom-up initiatives –previously already there- are observable. Apart from those advocating the use of the official romanised standard, there are also many intellectuals who advocate the use of *fangkuaizi* or Chinese characters adapted to Zhuang. In the Internet a few dedicated intellectuals, writing some of the time in Zhuang (in the romanised script) have for example set up the interesting and informative webpage www.pouchong.com which disseminates information, mainly in Han, but also in Zhuang and English, about the Zhuang language and culture. Kaup (2001) argues that such intellectuals are direct products of the CCP's nationality policy and would never have acquired such a consciousness without it. The importance of this group should not be exaggerated and most members of the Zhuang elite feel that Han is the most adequate medium of expression for their nationality, even if they have found it convenient (e.g. for benefiting from positive job discrimination or lower requirements for university entrance) to nominally embrace Zhuang identity.

Identification with the category of Yi among educated Nuosu

As Harrell (2001a: 171-189) points out, the members of the different ethnic groups officially classified as Yi, in general do not identify with the Yi nationality in their local discourse, in other words within their local context and traditions, above all when they express themselves in their native tongue. Harrell (2001a: 189) concludes

For now, the Yi are not a nation, and the ethnic identity of the Nuosu - stable discrete and kin-based - works differently from that of other groups in Liangshan.

However, Harrell sees signs that many Yi are taking advantage of their membership of the nationality that has been assigned them by the state. Many urbanised Yi (and “urbanised” here includes rural Yi who live and work in an essentially Han milieu) have, at least partially, assimilated the official Chinese discourse of the 56 nationalities, one of which is the Yi nationality. If they wish to advance within predominantly Han society they have to accept and exploit the official discourse.

....most urban Nuosu in Xichang feel their ethnicity at least as strongly as do their village relatives. But because they are educated, and because most of what most of them do all day is done in the context of contemporary China, their ethnicity is not just Nuosu, but consciously Yi. The *minzu* categorization may originally have been quite artificial. The

ethnic identification project may have imposed an umbrella category on a large conglomeration of groups who were only distantly related and at that time had little consciousness of commonality. But for urbanites in 1980s and 1990s this commonality is important, for two reasons. First, they believe most of what they learn at school; they certainly believe that China has fifty-six *minzu* and they believe this whether or not they also think that one of these, the Yi, or perhaps fifty-five of these, the minority *minzu*, have gotten a raw deal for the last forty years. So whether they think in terms of opposition or cooperation, it is in terms of their identity as members of Yi *minzu*. (Harrell 2001a: 188-9)

Harrell (ibid.: 189) foresees the growth of the Yi ethnicity among the rural Nuosu population, which now regards itself as only Nuosu.

For villagers, the process has not gone so far in most places, though it has certainly gone much further, for example with college-educated officials and teachers than it has for illiterate farmers But with the gradual increases in education, media penetration and geographic mobility, and bilingualism that seem to be irresistible trends even in the heart of Liangshan, village Nuosu too will learn about the history and traditions of the Yi, about Yi in other places, even about the principles of *minzu* classification.

Harrell anticipates two possible reactions on the part of the Nuosu (and of other Yi) to this tendency. One is that the Nuosu and other types of Yi regard themselves as Yi, but as different kinds of Yi, as is the case at present among the Tai of Sipsong Panna and Dehong who live in the provincial capital of Kunming and who call themselves *Eastern* and *Western* Tai when they speak Han. The alternative reaction would be that

...perhaps, Yi - including all the multiple “branches” from Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi - will become the relevant ethnic category for ordinary people, as it is now for governmental and scholarly elites. (ibid.: 189)

When I was in Zhaojue in 1995, a member of the Language Committee of the county (县语委) informed me of a plan to unify the traditional scripts of all the Yi languages. Among scholars of the traditional Yi script (*both* Nuosu and other types) there is a conscientiousness of the similarities between the different traditional Yi scripts. Also there is conscientiousness among Yi linguists (an insignificant, but potentially influential minority) of the similarities between not only the different Yi languages, but also with some other Sino-Tibetan languages of the Loloïd branch such as the Naxi, Lisu, Lahu and Hani languages, whose speakers officially belong to other nationalities. Pan-Yi consciousness has been boosted by academic interactions such as the International Conference of Yi Studies. Personally I believe that the obvious linguistic barriers between the different kinds of Yi will limit the growth of this “Pan-Yi-ism” among the Nuosu public in general.

I have observed that urbanised Nuosu undergoing hanisation prefer to shift the emphasis of their identity from Nuosu to Yi, because – Yi being a Han-imposed construct - they feel it easier to reconcile the abandonment of their Nuosu speech and script than if they identify with Nuosu, which has a clear cultural tradition, intimately bound up with the use of the Nuosu language and script.

6.2.2.6 CLOSING REMARKS

While it is not a simple clear-cut matter of the Nuosu urbanised elite supporting, and the Zhuang elite sabotaging, the promotion, influential urbanised Zhuang have in general abandoned their own language and culture much more readily than their Nuosu equivalents. Hanisation of the elite is a long established tradition among the Zhuang and is seen as a natural, non-traumatic way of advancement. Aided and abetted by the widespread popular rejection of the Zhuang ethnic category and of a unified standardised Zhuang language, the elite not only have had no interest in promoting the Zhuang script, but have also had a keen vested interest in not promoting (especially in a standardised and written form) a language which they have already abandoned and ceased transmitting to their children. Without the help of this important social group the movement in favour of the promotion of Zhuang will have a nigh impossible task.

As in Guangxi there are powerful hanising tendencies among urbanised Nuosu, which hinder the establishment of a strong influential “modern” elite maintaining contact with its roots and actively using and supporting Nuosu alongside Han, which is essential if the Nuosu language and script are to have the necessary prestige for their promotion to succeed. The ultimate survival and development of the Nuosu written and spoken language depends upon the formation of such a class to serve as a model for the rural masses striving to better themselves. Given the greater sense of ethnic consciousness, lesser degree of dialectal fragmentation and greater sense of identity of a unified speech community among the Nuosu, renunciation of their language is not as pronounced as among the Zhuang, many quite hanised Nuosu being proud and supportive of their language and culture. The significant minority of the Nuosu elite who is conserving and transmitting the language is enough to produce significantly different results than in the promotion of Zhuang, although not enough, it seems, to prevent long-term language shift in urban centres adjoining core Nuosu areas. The existence in Liangshan of a

traditional literate bimo-based elite which is still very influential in rural society, has also helped to maintain the social status of Nuosu even among many of the elite.

The effect of the Chinese categories of Zhuang and Yi on the elites' perception of their languages is complex and does not seem to help explain the greater success of the promotion of Nuosu. The support of a tiny minority of educated Zhuang for a unified, standardised Zhuang language and script is heavily influenced by acceptance of the category Zhuang, but this group lacks political clout and is eclipsed by those accepting the informal myth that Zhuang do, or should, all speak Han. Although the category of Yi is irrelevant within Nuosu society, it provides a convenient alternative identity for totally Hanised second and third generation urbanites, more compatible with Han monolingualism than that of Nuosu.

6.2.3 THE GRASS-ROOTS HYPOTHESIS

Minority language script promotion involving a strong grass-roots bottom-up element (in addition to the top-down element) is much more likely to succeed than if it is perceived as being imposed from above. The fact that the promotion of the Zhuang script was widely seen as being imposed by the authorities on an unenthusiastic public and that standardised Nuosu was promoted in response to strong popular grass-roots demand and support explains the much warmer reception by, and more active participation of, Nuosu speakers in the promotion than of their Zhuang counterparts.

6.2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section examines if the promotion of Nuosu has involved a greater bottom-up element than that of Zhuang and if so whether this has contributed to the differing results. The current worldwide concern about the survival of endangered languages, many with small and fragmented speech communities, has generated discussion about the importance of the bottom-up (community-based) aspect of language-planning. For example a major theme of the Eighth Foundation for Endangered Languages Conference (Barcelona, 2004) was "Grass-roots Efforts and Top-down Institutions", accounting for over half the papers presented. Hornberger (1997: 357), when summing up various bottom-up initiatives to promote literacy in indigenous Amerindian languages (from Alaska to Peru) comments

.... for indigenous language communities as large as Quechua with over 10 million speakers or as small as Hualapai with just 1,500, we have seen that it has been the involvement and initiative of the indigenous communities themselves that have provided the impetus and sustenance for these language planning efforts. While non-indigenous governmental and non-governmental organizations have played significant, and at times positive, roles in many cases, it is fair to say that the efforts which have had the greatest impact and duration are those initiated and carried out by the indigenous community.

6.2.3.2 TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP ELEMENTS IN THE ZHUANG SITUATION

Although all early (and many later) articles about minority language policy were couched in political jargon and slogans, to a great extent to protect their authors from being accused of “splitism” and undermining the unity of the Motherland, Mo (1993:72) was not exaggerating when referring to state concern for promoting Zhuang:

解放后, 壮族人民和各族人民一样, 结束了被压迫被奴役的历史, 翻身作了主人, 成为广西壮族自治区的自治民族。壮族的语言文字也得到党中央, 国务院的重视和关怀。After liberation, the Zhuang nationality –just like all other nationalities – ended their history of oppression and enslavement, became their own masters and received autonomy in the form of the *Autonomous Zhuang Region of Guangxi*. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Counsel showed loving care for the Zhuang nationality’s language and script.

According to Kaup (2000: 141) the promotion of the Zhuang script until at least the end of the 1980s was totally top-down:

As with so many of the nationality policies promoted in Guangxi in the 1950s, language promotion was instigated and implemented by the central government in order to integrate the Guangxi minorities. The Zhuang themselves were not particularly interested and certainly were not demanding promotion of the Zhuang script. [Kaup 2000: 139]

.....the descriptions of Zhuang language promotion and collected in interviews clearly indicate that the impetus for language reform came from the central government rather than from the Zhuang themselves. Certainly there were some Zhuang who joined the government in advocating the script, and the few Zhuang already possessing a strong sense of their Zhuang identity, such as scholar and teacher Huang Xianfan, leaped at the chance to promote a written script for the Zhuang. These cadres were the exception, however; the broad majority of Zhuang were indifferent, or even resistant, to the script when it was first proposed.

Some people involved in the promotion of Zhuang were extremely touchy about the assertion that there was no widespread grass-roots support, steadfastly asserting that the demand for the creation of the script came principally from Zhuang-speakers.

创作壮文是壮族同志自己提出来的。1951年, 来京参加政协和语文座谈会的壮族代表就提出了创立壮文的要求。The creation of the Zhuang script emanated from Zhuang comrades themselves. In 1951 Zhuang delegates to the Chinese People’s

Political Consultative Conference in Beijing put forward a request for the creation of a Zhuang script. [Wang Jun, 1986: 7]

Wei and Wei (1980: 2) even went so far as to claim

无不欢欣鼓舞, 热烈欢呼, 奔走相告。The whole Zhuang people was exultant and acclaimed [the Project], running hither and thither to spread the news.

What was the truth? Despite the existence of a very small number of educated Zhuang in favour of a Zhuang script, I would not dispute that it was overwhelmingly top-down. Regarding the reaction of peasants, I have heard from informants stories of significant grass-roots involvement and enthusiasm in certain limited areas in the literacy campaigns of the 1950s, so I think it is unfair to totally ignore and write off the existence of a bottom-up response to the promotion, even if it did fall far short of that in Liangshan. Some Zhuang peasants I was introduced to told me that they felt genuinely “liberated” by Zhuang-medium literacy. A major problem was that most Zhuang speakers neither believed in being speakers of a unified Zhuang language nor were properly informed of the potential of Zhuang literacy. Many promoters were left with the frustrated sensation that most Zhuang speakers would have demanded and supported it if only they had fully realised how Zhuang literacy could have changed their lives.

From the end of the 1980s onwards there was a gradual change in the Government’s orientation of the policy of promotion.

As the government realized its integrationist goals toward the end of the 1980s, it gradually became less interested in Zhuang language development and began phasing out many of the programs it had initiated. [Kaup 2000: 139]

As the top-down pressure that had existed in a minority of Zhuang areas in favour of the script disappeared, the burden of keeping support going for the promotion fell upon grass-roots cadres and non-hanised Zhuang intellectuals, the very sectors who had previously been most supportive of the promotion.

Demands for language reform were then taken over by the corps of Zhuang scholars and officials who had been indoctrinated by party propaganda stressing the importance of the Zhuang language and fostering a sense of Zhuang ethnic pride. [Kaup 2000: 139]

But this does not mean that the promotion of Zhuang from this moment onwards received strong, widespread bottom-up support, because this tiny minority of supporters and new guardians of the Zhuang script possessed neither the influence nor the power of the Government and higher echelon cadres (typically against the promotion) and received little support from other sectors of Zhuang society:

As the loci of Zhuang interest promotion shifts from the center to the middle-level cadres, many of the autonomous rights guaranteed by the constitution or granted by party proclamations cannot be effectively implemented because the new advocates do not have the requisite political and economic resources. (Kaup, 2000: 139)

Although ironically these advocates of the script were people in close contact with the reality of the rural areas (as many grass-roots Zhuang cadres undertaking training courses at Guangxi Nationalities Institute informed me), where they could easily observe the social and economic necessity for Zhuang-speaking peasants to have the possibility of writing their own language (and even the enthusiasm of some of them), they received no large-scale organised support from the rural Zhuang population. According my informants (personal communication, Guangxi 1993-4) and reaffirmed by Kaup (2000:144), the peasants were a lot less enthusiastic about learning the Zhuang script in the 1980s than they had been in the 1950s. Many of them had seen how the promotion of the 1950s had been swept away by the leftist political campaigns after all the effort they had invested in learning the script, so they felt understandably (and with hindsight justifiably) sceptical about how lasting the 1980s promotion would be. At present one can observe the surfacing of spontaneous and non-official pressure groups such as *pouchoong.com* which appear to include more pro-Zhuang language intellectuals than peasants.

The fact is that although the script was welcomed by some Zhuang peasants, it had not on the whole been demanded by them.

6.2.3.3 TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP ELEMENTS IN THE NUOSU SITUATION

In total contrast to the situation in Zhuang areas, Maheimuya and Yao Changdao (1993: 40) stress the totally bottom-up character of the movement to learn the traditional Nuosu script in the 1950s:

从1956年开始,凉山州在完成民主改革的基础上,掀起了以农业合作化运动为标志的社会主义建设高潮,农民组织了合作社,因为经济上的需要,迫切地要求学文化。合作社的农副业生产经营管理工作,都需要用文字记载,于是,在广大彝族农村才出现一个完全自发的学习彝文的热潮,**没有任何机构或者个人去发动,去组织,去领导的自然形成的学习热潮。**农民群众,特别是基层干部,他们从实际需要出发,首先学认学写本社本队的人名,地名粮食名,牲畜名和农活名等最需用的语词,大约300字左右;从未跨过学门的青壮年农民,在评工记分的过程中逐渐学会了认读用阿拉伯数字书写的千位以内的数字。 Beginning in 1956, in order to consolidate the democratic reforms, the Prefecture of Liangshan, ensured a new expansion in socialist construction using the agricultural cooperative movement as a symbol. Peasants organised cooperatives and out of economic necessity urgently requested to study [the Nuosu script]. It was necessary for all the administration and management of the agricultural production and of the secondary occupations within the cooperatives to be recorded using a written script. As a result a surge of totally spontaneous enthusiasm for studying the Yi script in the Yi rural areas sprang up. **The peasants were not mobilised, directed or organised by any particular organisations or people to learn the Yi script.** The rural population, especially grass-roots cadres, in response to their basic needs, first learnt to recognise and write the names of workers, places, plants, animals and principal agricultural activities of the cooperatives and work teams, some 300 characters. Youths and adults who had never crossed the threshold of a primary school, learnt, little by little, by means of the process of assigning work points, to read and use Arabic numerals up to the thousands. [The emphasis is my own]

According to the same authors, this movement increased the literacy rates from not more than 3% before 1956 to 15% (they do not detail which years these statistics apply to, but I assume they mean the end of the Cultural Revolution) in the Nuosu areas as a whole and to over 26% in the core counties of Xide, Zhaojue, Meigu and Ebian, where more than half of rural grass-roots cadres assimilated the rudiments of the Nuosu script essential for carrying out their work. They even report a top-down response to this bottom-up movement, namely that some counties began using documents translated into traditional Nuosu characters, in this way gradually formalising the already existing popular and spontaneous study and use of the Yi script and deepening and extending its social functions.

This bottom-up spread of the use of traditional Nuosu characters continued throughout the Cultural Revolution period, although people had to be careful not to use it too openly in front of people in favour of the assimilationist current. In the core Nuosu areas according to Maheimujia (1985: 45), with the exception of some counties and villages, at the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s approximately 20% of the men in the communes (in other words of male peasants) and 60% of grass-root

commune cadres made use of the Nuosu script to write letters and record work points and keep books etc.

It is due to bottom-up pressure that the work for the standardisation and promotion of Nuosu began in the mid-1970s, some years earlier than that of Zhuang and still a period of ultra-leftist anti-pluralistic ascendancy. Even during the latter years of the Cultural Revolution (especially in the early 1970s), many petitions were sent to the authorities by grass-root cadres and ordinary people demanding the official restoration of the Nuosu script (Maheimujia, 1986: 45). In these consultations the public and the cadres unanimously manifested that the policy of directly teaching the Han language and script to Nuosu speakers, was inappropriate and had failed. Accountants, those responsible for recording the work points, store keepers and others had in practice –and unaided by officialdom- used the traditional Nuosu script to carry out their work. The research groups discovered that the Nuosu people had very positive feelings towards its own script and moreover considered it easy to learn, despite the huge number of symbols it contained – 815 in the standardised script and over 8,000 in the traditional script!. Public demand was in favour of an official recuperation of the use of the Nuosu script.

Maheimuya and Yao Changdao (1993: 40) also remind us that the success of this spontaneous mass movement inspired the way in which the official promotion of the standardised Nuosu script was conducted from the late 1970s onwards:

80年代初,凉山大力推行规范彝文首先开展农村扫盲工作时,正值我国进入社会主义现代化建设的新时期。遵照中央关于"把工作的着重点转移到现代化建设上来"的要求,民族语文和教育部门注意到凉山50年代自发学习彝文的动力问题,认为"农民学文化必须同技术结合起来",... At the beginning of the 1980s, when the standardised Yi script was promoted energetically in literacy campaigns in the rural areas of Liangshan, our country had just entered the new phase of socialist construction: modernisation. In accord with the central government petition to change the emphasis of work in modernising construction, the departments responsible for the promotion of minority languages and scripts and for education paid attention to what had been the propelling force of spontaneous learning of the 1950s in Liangshan and came to the conclusion that "the peasants had to study the script closely linked to technology"...

The linking of these campaigns to technological progress will be looked at in 6.2.8. What is important here is that top-down planning was both in response to a very real bottom-up demand and that it anticipated further bottom-up reactions to the top-down measures.

6.2.3.4 INTERACTION BETWEEN TOP-DOWN STATUS PLANNING AND BOTTOM-UP REACTIONS

With respect to status planning and the difficult struggle against the monopoly of Spanish as the most widespread language of communication and language of social mobility, the cases of Latin America, according to Hornberger (ibid.: 357-358)

...demonstrate that attitudes can change where there is a political will, driven forward by the pressure of the indigenous organizations. For example ... it was the pressure brought to bear by indigenous organisations that led to the creation of the National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education ... in Ecuador.

The kind of highly-politicised indigenous organisations that Hornberger is referring to, do not exist in the Nuosu and Zhuang situations. Bottom-up pressure is brought rather to bear via grass-roots cadres and traditional social networks. Hornberger (ibid.: 358) also emphasises the importance of the role that teachers and others involved in the promotion of indigenous languages can play in the creation of new academic contexts for new scripts and their promotion within their speech communities. In both Nuosu and Zhuang situations many dedicated teachers have taken initiatives to do so. Given the more active bottom-up response of the public and the longer, more stable timeframe over which there has been top-down Nuosu literacy provision (compared to that of Zhuang) such active individuals have been able to achieve more in the Nuosu context.

In Zhuang-speaking areas it has not been easy to change attitudes of suspicion or even of downright hostility towards the promotion of the Zhuang script, in spite of years of propaganda in favour of the campaigns. This was particularly so in the second period of promotion when many older adults had already seen the 1950s campaign come to an untimely end. In Nuosu areas however, a large part of the peasants were enthusiastic about the promotion of the standardised Nuosu script without the need for top-down propaganda. Even where Nuosu peasants have become cynical about the instrumental advantages of Nuosu (vis a vis Han) literacy for “getting on in the world”, they are generally strongly supportive of promoting Nuosu literacy alongside that of Han, as was made clear to me as recently as 2005 in interviews with villagers in Meigu County.

6.2.3.5 DIVISION BETWEEN TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PLANNING

With respect to corpus planning, while recognising the importance of a standardised form of minority languages and scripts, Hornberger (1997: 359) considers even more

important the large-scale implementation of reading and writing activities at all levels and in all aspects of social life for their speakers. Bernard (1997: 145-146), referring to the promotion of written Quechua in Peru, believes that it is of greater priority to develop a literary corpus in languages without a literary tradition than to expend energy on elaborating perfect orthographic systems and that (as was the case of written English) orthographic norms establish themselves through everyday use.

In Debao, where the southern variant of Zhuang is spoken, one of the complaints I heard about the standardised form of Zhuang was that it was based on the northern Zhuang dialect and that many standardised words were different from the forms used in Debao. Instead of tamely accepting this situation, which increases the sense of disillusionment of many people towards standardised Zhuang even further, some people advocate that it would be more productive and useful to write the southern (and non-standard northern) Zhuang dialectal forms even if not officially approved. In this way speakers of the southern Zhuang and non-standard northern dialects would take part more actively in the creation of Zhuang literacy and through 'de facto' use such forms could become standardised alternative forms. Forms which use different cognates should in my opinion be included as legitimate synonyms, which in addition to enriching the language would also strengthen its acceptance among speakers of non-standard variants. (See 6.2.7 for a discussion about attitudes to the unified oral standard).

The type of planning for acquisition, based on the bottom-up principal which Hornberger (1997: 358-359) advocates, is also relevant to the Nuosu and Zhuang situations. In general, the more actively the community as a whole is involved in bilingual education and adult literacy campaigns, the more successful these activities are, and this undoubtedly helps to explain the widely differing results in Nuosu and Zhuang areas. However, there is an important aspect of this category of planning which is sometimes controversial in the Chinese context; that of the production of materials and programmes initiated and designed from within the community. In China, in spite of various articles advocating more materials and programmes adapted to the cultural world of the linguistic minorities, they are highly centralised. A lot still needs to be done to involve minority language communities, which I am sure holds the key to successful bilingual education and to educational success in general. There are

currently demands for a much greater inclusion of ethnically-relevant Nuosu-medium materials and content (e.g. Wei Anduo, 2004 and 2005). In Nuosu areas several NGO-funded schools are experimenting with more “relevant” materials, although with minimal use of Nuosu. For example the project in a Xiaoliangshan Nuosu school described by Blumenfield (2005) involved mostly the use of Han.

The influence of the community, within which a large number of traditional ideas and beliefs enjoy widespread popularity (e.g. the culture and beliefs of the *bimo*) could come into direct conflict with the pan-Chinese and Han-centred philosophy of centralist nationalism, which is at the centre of teaching in all schools throughout China. Hansen (1999a and b) describes how, many Tai in Sipsong Panna are suspicious of the teaching content of official bilingual schools and the State in turn mistrusts the religious and Tai-/Thai-orientated content of the temple schools. I believe that it is most improbable that the rural Nuosu community will be granted unlimited freedom to determine the cultural content of the Nuosu-medium teaching materials of the bilingual schools. There have indeed been calls for teaching of many Nuosu classics (transcribed into the standardised script) which until now have been thought of as the preserve of the *bimo* (e.g. Wei Anduo, 2004). As the Zhuang, in contrast to the Nuosu, do not feel culturally distant from the Han and lack an organised religion, Zhuang community-based cultural materials –where they may arise- would not pose the same threat to the foundations of the People’s Republic of China.

6.2.3.6 TOP-DOWN FUNDING AS DECISIVE ELEMENT

There is no doubt that the level of financing has a huge influence on the success of the promotion of minority scripts. This is especially so in the case of the provision of bilingual education, where the cost of teacher training and the production of teaching materials would be higher for these languages than for Han. A major reason for the abandoning of the top-down promotion in Guangxi was the withdrawal of central Government funding in the early 1990s and a lack of financing from any level of the administration.

According to Yao Changdao (personal communication August 1994) the implementation of the linguistic policy in Guangxi received enormous quantities of Central Government funding until the winding down of the promotion, in contrast to

Liangshan which received only local funding. When looking at the comparative success of the promotion of Nuosu, often carried out with a bare minimum of funding and resources in one of the poorest areas of China, the argument that the withdrawal of central Government funding dealt a death knell to the promotion of Zhuang only tells part of the story. If the promotion of Nuosu has been carried out from the beginning without central funding (indeed the spontaneous learning of the complex traditional script prior to the Cultural Revolution took place in the absence of any official funding), the fact that Zhuang can not be promoted with as low a level of funding must serve as an indicator of the lack of bottom-up support.

As the Nuosu experience, and many community literacy initiatives from around the world show, while it is true that wisely spent money can greatly improve the quality and status of bilingual teaching and materials, speech communities that are really determined to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” (and succeed) are capable of setting up literacy campaigns on a shoestring and even implementing bilingual education in adverse conditions. I believe that the withdrawal of funding, while a big setback, would not spell death for the Zhuang script if its speakers and their community leaders really cared about it. In other words, a bottom-up initiative has greater strength to keep going on a low budget than a top-down one.

Although the promotion of Nuosu has managed to keep going despite poor funding, the limited success of bilingual policy in Liangshan can be attributed to an acute shortage of funding. After many years of low-budget bottom-up initiatives both leading, and in response, to limited top-down measures, a certain cynical “activism fatigue” appears to have set in as a result of the lack of consistent, continued and wholehearted government commitment to full bilingual education, Nuosu rural literacy, promotion of the language in public life and to making Nuosu a requirement for university entrance and state employment.

6.2.3.7 PUBLIC AND SOCIAL USE OF ZHUANG AND NUOSU

Certain public use of minority languages is clearly top-down, such as the publication of official documents and decrees, official signposts (street names, the obligation for bus-stops and vehicles to be bilingual etc.). However, the degree to which this is implemented has a lot to do with the bottom-up reaction. In Guangxi, knowing that

most of the public does not care less how many Zhuang signs go up, a minimalist job has been done, only a few symbolic names of places and official bodies being bilingual. The use of Zhuang for decrees and official documents has at best been symbolic tokenism. Unlike in Guangxi, in Liangshan a wealth of official documents, notices, signs, forms etc. are bilingual and the language is in far more evidence on the streets. This is because a large number of Nuosu rely on this information and expect and demand it in the Nuosu script, having gone to the trouble of learning it.

6.2.3.8 INDICATIONS OF GRASS-ROOTS SUPPORT FOR NUOSU AND ZHUANG SCRIPTS

In summer 1980 in the course of a train journey between Chengdu and Kunming, I asked various passengers of Yi nationality (Nuosu) who had got on in stations in Liangshan (in the counties of Ganluo, Yuexi and Xide) about the Nuosu language and script. Almost all those with whom I spoke (logically I was restricted to talking to people with at least some knowledge of Han) *were* capable of writing down lexical items and phrases in the standardised Nuosu script for me in my notebook and gave me the impression that its use was fairly extended among the Nuosu. At that time I knew next to nothing about the Nuosu or their script. Even at that early date on a single occasion, I spontaneously met more ordinary people literate in Nuosu than I met adults (non-schoolchildren) literate in Zhuang during my entire 17-day field trip to Guangxi.

In interviews with Nuosu peasants in Zhaojue County in 1994 and 1995 and Meigu County in 2005, I met a large number of people who regularly and actively used the Nuosu script in their daily lives. Despite official claims of near eradication of illiteracy in the core Nuosu counties being clearly highly exaggerated and untrue, there was (especially considering the limited amount of top-down financing) an impressive number of users of the standardised script.

If the number of people gaining literacy in Zhuang (both via adult literacy classes and Zhuang-medium was restricted in its heyday, following the cut-backs in the promotion it dried to a tiny trickle. It is only logical that the tiny minority of poor, Zhuang-literate peasants did not militantly agitate for a consistent and widespread public use of the language. I have seen and heard many anecdotal accounts, both in literature on the promotion and via personal communication, of how people in this period have used the Zhuang script in their everyday lives (writing letters, notes and notices, keeping

accounts, etc.) and efforts of some peasants and cadres to make it their everyday medium of communication are very moving. However, these are isolated examples.

6.2.3.9 CLOSING REMARKS

In Nuosu and Zhuang areas both the public and the organisms and cadres responsible for implementing linguistic policy have reacted in different ways. In Guangxi implementation of the policy has received much less popular grass-roots support than in Liangshan and has been perceived by many people to be an imposed policy which virtually nobody asked for. In Liangshan there has been much stronger and more active demand from Nuosu cadres, and the public in general, in favour of promoting the minority script than in Guangxi, whereas their Zhuang-speaking equivalents were much more sceptical, or even downright hostile, to the Zhuang script. In Liangshan there was strong bottom-up demand for the traditional script from the late 1950s which was maintained for almost 2 decades, during which there was virtually no top-down promotion of Nuosu. This bottom-up demand has continued since the Cultural Revolution, from the mid-1970s onwards being supported by top-down provision of Nuosu-medium education, literacy and media. Naturally this generalisation is relative: in Liangshan there is some grass-roots opposition to the promotion of Nuosu while in Guangxi and in other Zhuang areas there are also many members of the public and grass-roots cadres in favour of promoting the Zhuang script.

6.2.4 THE IMPLEMENTATION HYPOTHESIS

Effective official promotion of minority languages and scripts requires maximal compatibility of measures with consistent and continuing use of the minority language in institutional and interactional settings. The promotion of the Nuosu language and script was carried out much more conscientiously by cadres and local authorities in Liangshan than that of the Zhuang language and script in Guangxi. This was a determining factor in the greater success of the promotion of Nuosu.

6.2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

This might seem a rather obvious point (although one hard to measure), which is applicable to any policy, or indeed activity. However, it is worth pursuing, because in minority language planning there are many examples of empty high-sounding policy declarations which are never translated into action. It is doubtful whether certain official policies are even ever sincerely intended to be implemented from the very beginning. For example, the declaration of Quechua and Aymara as regional official languages of Peru in 1994 made almost no difference to their promotion and use. In 1995 the main result (and obviously the covert intention) of declaring 11 official South African languages instead of only Afrikaans and English, was not to raise the status, use and spread of the 9 new official languages, which has been extremely limited, but to demote the position of Afrikaans. In effect English has become the sole first-class official language.

Many other minority policies are sincerely formulated by the planners or politicians, but never get properly carried out or are not implemented at all. For example, in 2004, the Valencian Government declared that all civil servants should be able to attend the public in Catalan. In practice this remains a largely hollow declaration, due largely to the resistance of a significant proportion of Valencian government employees who do not feel confident using Catalan as a working language or who are totally unable to do so. It is highly possible that Government leaders foresaw this resistance and never intended the policy to be properly implemented, but just to be used as political propaganda.

Anyone reading the Chinese constitution could suppose that as minority nationalities have the right to use and develop their languages and scripts in their daily lives that they all actually do. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no doubt that the authorities often do not really intend policy in favour of minority languages to be fully and literally applied from the outset, while other policies are sabotaged in a way which might or might not have been anticipated by the policy makers. Covert opposition to minority language promotion by people in positions of power and influence is discussed in 6.3. To use Heberer (2001)'s term, language law is a "soft" law, which administrations and individual cadres do not worry too much about applying conscientiously.

6.2.4.2 HOW CADRES HAVE APPLIED LINGUISTIC POLICY AND THEIR ATTITUDE.

The official literature on the promotion of Chinese minority scripts is basically unanimous in its support of the promotion. Outside the periods of centralist political ideology (such as the Cultural Revolution) it is hard to find frontal criticisms of the promotion. However, many articles can be found which treat general questions like the spread of rural literacy, schooling and development of rural minority areas which do not even mention the existence of minority languages and the special problems of its speakers. I interpret this painful and obvious omission of references to the diversity (or potential diversity) of scripts in these areas, as an indirect criticism of the policy of promotion. For example when paging through articles about literacy campaigns in rural Guangxi in a reading room attached to Guangxi Education Bureau in January 1994, I found many reports about campaigns in Zhuang and other minority areas, but not one that mentioned the use of the Zhuang (or any other non-Han) script. Likewise, the website of the Guangxi Language and Scripts Committee in May 2005 contained no reference to the Zhuang script and appeared to be solely dedicated to promoting standard Mandarin, mentioning Zhuang and other languages only in the context of the special problems their speakers faced in learning Mandarin.

Within the literature in favour of the promotion there are many criticisms of cadres who deliberately do not implement or who put obstacles in the way of the policy. This is proof of the existence of considerable opposition to the policy, because if there were barely any opposition it would not be necessary to defend the policy so energetically. Sometimes in the West it is easy to get the impression that national and Party policy is carried out unanimously, but nothing could be further from the truth. There is continuous struggle and tension between those who favour tolerating linguistic diversity (enshrined in the official policy) and those favouring the complete assimilation of linguistic minorities into the Han world. In my conversations with Chinese officials and intellectuals I often heard the Marxist idea of a long-term fusion of all languages and cultures. For many cadres (especially those more in favour of the assimilationist thesis) this conveniently means hanisation and here and now, not in some far-off future. If it is historically inevitable, why waste one's time with a language and script doomed to extinction? Even supporters of minority languages and scripts often believe in this ultimate inevitable fusion in the distant future: could it be they are just recognising cold hard fact?

Naturally it is not a case of simplistic bipolarisation and there are many cadres and influential people who are in favour only of some aspects of the policy or even display contradictory opinions and attitudes. While most urbanised Zhuang cadres have an active interest in not promoting the Zhuang script because they feel threatened by it, there are exceptions and cases of hanised Zhuang who support the right of Zhuang-speakers to have a script. Influential hanised Zhuang, instead of openly criticising the policy, often indirectly sabotaged it by simply ignoring it. In the articles on the promotion there are many criticisms of this kind of reticent cadre (many of whom I met in Guangxi), which shows that they represent the point of view of a significant part of the population.

In both situations there are cadres at different administrative levels who represent both main tendencies, but there is no doubt that is in Guangxi where the resistance to, and non-cooperation with, the official policy has been infinitely stronger. In Liangshan, the relevant cadres have to a great extent (and at times enthusiastically) implemented the principals of the promotion. There has been much more active cooperation between the Committee of Minority Languages and Scripts and other branches of the administration in Liangshan than in Guangxi. Naturally there are cases in both situations that contradict this generalisation, but the generalisation is justified.

The commentaries of Mahaeimuxia and Yao Changdao (1993: 41) quoted below might resemble propagandist political slogans, but in the context of the stiff resistance (passive and active) to the policy on the part of many cadres, the authors are basically saying that in Liangshan the difficult task of implementing the spirit of the national linguistic policy has met with success.

全面贯彻国家语文政策,才能促进彝语文工作及异族自身的发展。(…)

凉山州在开战民族语文工作中,认真贯彻国家的语文政策,大力发展了彝,汉双语制。由于凉山的双语制是在拨乱反正,亦既纠正忽视使用少数民族语文的情况下发展起来的, 所以, 在规划之初, 把保证少数民族语文的使用放在首位。实际上, 彝语文的使用和发展,一开始就是在发展双语制的过程中实现的。凉山州采取的保障措施是:

在社会用字(用语)方面,自治机关带头纠正了在极"左"时期基本上只用汉语文执行公务的作法,召开"两会"(人代会和政协)和向彝区公开发布重要文告都加用了彝语文; 大众传媒和普及读物, 尽可能增加了彝语文; 在学校教学方面,

彝族聚居区的中、小学改变过去只用汉语为教学用语的作法, 开创和逐步扩大了彝、汉双语(文)教学体制。

National linguistic policy in all its aspects must be applied as a precondition for the promotion of the Yi language and script and for the development of the Yi nationality. (...)

..... when implementing the work of developing minority languages and scripts, the Autonomous Yi Prefecture of Liangshan has emphasised the thorough implementation of the national linguistic policy and has energetically developed Yi-Han bilingualism. Given that this bilingual policy in Liangshan has developed in a situation of eliminating chaos and restoring order, that is to say of correcting the previous situation where the use of minority languages and scripts was ignored, at the beginning of the implementation the use of minority languages and scripts was guaranteed as a priority. In reality from the start, the use and development of the Yi language and script has adhered to the system of bilingualism. Measures that the Prefecture of Liangshan has taken to guarantee the use of minority languages are:

- With respect to the use of the Yi script and of language, the autonomous organisms [of the Prefecture] were pioneers in putting right the situation left by the era of leftist extremism where essentially only the Han language and script were used for public purposes and convened two organisms, the People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which added the Yi language and script to all important proclamations destined for Yi areas. In the mass media and when disseminating and popularising reading materials, everything possible was done to add the Yi version.

- With respect to school education, in areas with an Yi majority the primary schools changed over from only teaching in Han and gradually built up a bilingual Yi-Han education system.

What is being said here is that a real effort has been made to implement the national linguistic policy towards minority languages in its true spirit in Liangshan. In Guangxi much is also heard about the importance of correctly implementing the policy and there is a lot of propaganda in favour of it, but the results of the promotion (which in any case affected a smaller proportion of the target speech community than in Liangshan) clearly show that an important part of the cadres have made no serious effort to do so.

6.2.4.3 GUANGXI CADRES' RELUCTANCE/REFUSAL TO IMPLEMENT ZHUANG PROMOTION

Wu Chaoqian (1992) attributes the promotion's failure to:

1) Lack of knowledge about national linguistic policy

According to Wu Chaoqian (1992), since the promotion and the use of the Zhuang script form an integral part of the national linguistic policy and since they reflect the most urgent desires of the Zhuang nationality, there is no reason to cast doubts on the promotion.

However, since the moment of the recuperation of the Zhuang script up till the present, there has been a war of words over the usefulness or not of the promotion. Above all, some high-ranking state-employees of Zhuang nationality permit impressions, instead of linguistic policy, determine their behaviour: they believe that the Zhuang nationality has been assimilated and that the promotion of the Zhuang script makes no sense. They even claim that it is “a step backwards”, “a return to the past”, “a waste of materials and human resources” and “unnecessary”. These cadres are not numerous, but have a lot of influence and are capable of creating enormous obstacles to the promotion.”

.....

Throughout history, if leaders have really wanted to implement a particular policy, they have done so efficiently, without obstacles and certainly not in a passive way, so that it maybe does not even get implemented. (The emphasis is mine. Own translation. Original unavailable.)

Here he is agreeing with Heberer (2001) that minority linguistic policy is a “soft” policy that many cadres feel they do not really have to carry out and continues by quoting from different parts of “Law of the Autonomous Nationality Areas” which lend support to the linguistic policy. He goes on to express the hope that

... all cadres of Zhuang nationality in positions of responsibility diligently study the linguistic policy of the Party and succeed in carrying it out. Only in this way will it be possible to respect the autonomy of the (minority) nationalities and the desires of the people of Zhuang nationality. These cadres should worry about the culture and the education of their nationality and go straight to the point and solve specific problems instead of having a fatalist attitude that things will run their natural course. (Own translation. Original unavailable.)

2) Ineffective measures

Wu Chaoqian (ibid.) recommends beginning to analyse the reality of the minority areas and then taking efficient measures which make efficient use of human, material and financial resources, to aid and accelerate the development of the education and of the cultures of these areas.

3) The fact the promotion work is still recent.

Wu does not elaborate more upon this reason. However, it seems to me that 10 years is time enough to make headway in implementing a policy if the necessary will exists. I think that Wu cites this reason only as a strategy to soften the intensity of his criticisms against the cadres who are contrary to the promotion and offer them a face-saving opportunity to change their behaviour without feeling cornered. Perhaps what Wu is really criticising is that the promotion has never advanced beyond the provisional phase.

6.2.4.4 IS THE LEARNING OF THE SCRIPT, AND ITS ADMINISTRATIVE AND PUBLIC USE, ACTIVELY PROMOTED, THUS MOTIVATING SPEAKERS TO LEARN AND USE IT?

During my visit to Guangxi in 1993/1994, I noted a lack of commitment to the promotion and use of the Zhuang script, even among some cadres who supposedly supported the policy. In the urban centres and villages of Debao, Jingxi and Wuming counties (the first and third having been “key centres in the promotion of the Zhuang script”), where well over 90% of the population is Zhuang-speaking, although I interviewed people who had taken part in literacy and bilingual education programmes, I saw no public or outward signs of the existence of the script excepting some signs at the entrances of state buildings. I saw no commercial publicity, no notes hung on the doors of private houses or shops, no shop-signs, no posters advertising meetings or concerts and not one single Zhuang-language graffiti. Even a good proportion of the important cadres in the administration of Debao County who received me were ignorant of the Zhuang script and within their offices and public buildings I almost never saw any signs (save the names of official organisms), posters, publications, books or reports etc. written in *Zhuang*. And these were all Zhuang-speakers who always spoke in Zhuang when I did not directly participate in the conversations and even on occasions when I did. In Chongzhou, a county in the southern dialect area where the promotion of the Zhuang script had been abandoned many years previously, of the 2 heads (both fluent Zhuang speakers) of the local county Minority Nationalities Committee, one had never learnt it and the other had forgotten it years ago from lack of practice.

There are cases of literate cadres, intellectuals, peasants and workers who write in Zhuang, who read the (limited) press in Zhuang and who use the script to keep accounts and note things down, but these are a minority of scattered individuals. What are missing are monolingual Zhuang-speaking (or Zhuang-dominant, bilingual) communities within which, the Zhuang script fulfils the kinds of basic functions mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Acquisition planning in Guangxi was limited to making about 700,000 adults – at least temporarily - literate (a very low proportion of the total Zhuang population) and a tiny number of schoolchildren in experimental Zhuang-medium or bilingual schools. The newly literate had extremely limited reading matter, despite a few useful works and several excellent magazines which provided an excellent technical and social advisory

service to readers. Since the effective ending of the policy, the Guangxi provincial government's publications and web-sites have hardly mentioned the existence of a language policy and, with rare fleeting exceptions (like discussing how to teach Mandarin to native Zhuang speakers), have treated the situation in Guangxi as if there was no language barrier and no pending issue of language rights: a conspiracy of silence it seems on the part of cadres who wish the Zhuang language no longer to be seen as an issue.

In Nuosu areas, in spite of the omnipresence of Han on most public signs, extensive use is also made of the Nuosu syllabary. Public notices, shop signs and some handwritten commercial signs also use Nuosu. In several small villages in Zhaojue and Meigu Counties I even saw signs only in Nuosu. Even in the prefectural capital of Xichang, with its overwhelming Han majority, most public (official and shop-signs, bus-stop signs etc.) are also in Nuosu. This public omnipresence of the Nuosu script is thanks to local legislation (and fines imposed for non-compliance after first trying to persuade the offenders amicably) and the efforts of the Committee of Minority Languages and Scripts. As discussed under the Minority Elite Hypothesis (1.7.1.2), an infinitely larger proportion of Nuosu cadres have attained literacy in their own language than in the case of Zhuang cadres. Despite the difficulty of persuading peasants to attend literacy campaigns under the new individualised agricultural system, rural Nuosu literacy is widespread in these areas, although the exact percentage is very hard to ascertain: during interviews in 2 villages in Meigu County in 2005 residents' estimates varied from 20%-80%. A large proportion of rural Nuosu children in core areas attending school have received at least some of their education through the medium of Nuosu.

6.2.4.5 IMPLEMENTING BILINGUAL VERSUS MONOLINGUAL HAN-MEDIUM EDUCATION

Here the problem is looked at more from the point of view of how educational policy is implemented, while the Literacy-Medium Hypothesis (6.2.5) is more concerned with how parents and the community in general view bilingual education.

Implementation problems of Zhuang-medium education

In Zhuang areas, despite some described glowing successes (upon which frequent and persistent dispersions have been cast) bilingual education did not take off. The initial limited experimental mainly Zhuang-medium classes were drastically reduced and the

few still existing are anecdotal curiosities. Were these claims of success true or false? Judging from the results of similar educational experiments in other countries - when carried out professionally, carefully, thoughtfully and patiently, Zhuang-medium classes would be expected to benefit Zhuang-speaking students. However, from persistent comments (especially “off the record ones”) noted by myself and others (e.g. Kaup 2000), about how the positive results of the experimental Zhuang classes have been inflated and even falsified, and given a tradition in China of manipulating figures to keep higher authorities happy, it seems likely that a certain degree of falsification and exaggeration did take place. At the same time there is a great deal of prejudice from many sectors of society against Zhuang-medium teaching, even when only some teaching is in Zhuang and where its usefulness in learning Han is stressed (see 6.2.5). This has led to uninformed, unfair criticism of bilingual education, especially considering the many adverse conditions which the pilot projects have operated under (e.g. lack of experience, of training, of funds and –in many instances- of both public and administrative support).

Implementation problems of Nuosu-medium education

Despite the relative successes of the implementation of bilingual education and the presence of many dedicated professionals in Nuosu areas, the promotion of Nuosu in schools has been far from ideal. I am not here trying to undermine my own assertion here that the policy has been infinitely more conscientiously carried out in Liangshan than in Guangxi, but it would be dishonest and misleading to minimise the extent to which the implementation of bilingual education has fallen short of the theoretical ideals. Below I discuss accusations by an educationalist who has dedicated many years to promoting bilingual education in Liangshan that some of the authorities have withheld information about the true extent of the calamitous educational situation in core Nuosu areas.

Ma Muju (1999: 200) exposes how the reality of low attendance and high drop out rates (with all their consequences for the socioeconomic development of Liangshan) has been fudged and smoothed over by the local authorities preferring to present a rosy optimistic picture and sweep the dirt under the carpet rather than take the bull by the horns (to use some very European metaphors) and try to actually solve the problem. If

the Nuosu are to get themselves out of their poverty stricken rut and prosper in the globalised information society then those involved in minority work need to:

...彻底改掉过去那种只善于站在麦克风前高谈民族教育和民族经济实现了如何飞跃的工作作风,少坐点办公室,少开点表彰会,多去调查调查民族地区儿童入学的真实情况,了解了解贫困山区农民的新生。 ...completely give up the work style of the past where they stand in front of a microphone boasting about how the [minority] nationality education and economy have progressed in leaps and bounds. They should spend less time sitting in offices and less time in congratulatory meetings and more time in investigating the true situation of school attendance among children in Nuosu areas and understanding poor mountain peasants' new life.

To politically justify his attacks as being from within communist doctrine he adds:

多为党和国家制定切实可行的民族教育政策,为民族经济建设方针政策出点谋,献点计的话,民族地区的教育,经济何愁不能走上一个新台阶! If they spent more time formulating feasible [minority] nationality educational policies for the Party and nation and contributing general and specific policies to promote nationality economic construction, then surely education and the economy in the minority nationality areas would advance!

Ma Mujia (ibid) then goes on to cite an anonymous example of the widespread practice at the county level of covering up deficiencies by falsifying fieldwork data. He tells of how a friend of his who taught at a secondary school in a county town in Liangshan, was sent to the countryside to carry out a general survey of rural areas and discovered many of the workers falsifying the results in order to paint a rosy picture of the situation. When he complained, the other workers laughed at him. Moreover all cadres from the county level downwards knew about this and justified it on the grounds that if they told the truth they would not be given money by higher authorities. In any case, they argued, since everybody else did the same thing they would be silly if they did not follow suite. Thus, when Wu Mingxian (1992: 173) claims,

州委,州政府的主要领导认为:民族教育问题关系着一个民族的生死存亡,必须刻不容缓地提到全州各级党政的重要仪式日程上来认真讨论,切实加以解决。 The leaders of the Government and of the Party of the Autonomous Prefecture are of the opinion that the problem of the education of the minority nationalities is in a life and death struggle for the minority nationalities and a serious discussion is urgently needed together with practical solutions when the time comes to deal with important public affairs at all the levels of the government and of the party within the Autonomous Prefecture.

it is obviously an appeal to more sympathetic sectors of the administration to modify a situation in which those with political influence do not take the problem seriously.

6.2.4.6 FINAL REMARKS

The promotion of Zhuang in the early and mid 1980s was effectively sabotaged by cadres (especially higher and middle level ones) and other members of the Hanised elite who had no interest in seeing Zhuang promoted. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the promotion virtually existed only on paper, a high-up informal decision obviously having been taken to discontinue it. Where measures had been implemented, their effectiveness was greatly diminished by many (often key) cadres dragging their feet and being uncooperative. There are also cadres opposed to the promotion of Nuosu, but the proportion and influence of such cadres is far greater in Guangxi than Liangshan, where, especially in key stages of the promotion of the late 1970s and 1980s, the administration was largely supportive of the implementation of the policy.

As pointed out above, results in both situations were often made to look better than they really were or even completely falsified. This may have made the policy seem successful to outsiders, ignorant of the situation, but badly set back its real implementation. In numerous articles, supporters of the policy exhorted cadres hostile to the promotion to cooperate – I often wonder whether these articles actually ever succeeded in winning over sceptics. That such exhortations fell largely on deaf ears in Guangxi is testified by the demise of the promotion there and that they were not always heeded in Liangshan is clear from the limitations of the implementation there. Under The Implementation Question some ways are discussed, in which cadres and administrations in general have often covertly promoted policies antagonistic to the maintenance of minority languages.

6.2.5 THE LITERACY-MEDIUM HYPOTHESIS

The greater the extent to which members of the speech community believe in the positive effects of bilingual and minority-medium education and to which they perceive the minority language and script being promoted as an aid to learning Han, the better the chances of the promotion succeeding. The fact that Nuosu parents were more convinced of the positive effects of bilingual education and its role in helping children to learn Han, than Zhuang parents played an important part in the greater success of Nuosu-medium education.

In 6.1 the effectiveness of Han- and bilingual medium schooling was considered and under the Implementation Hypothesis (1.7.1.4) how bilingual education was implemented. Here the focus is on the attitudes and reactions of parents to these alternatives.

6.2.5.1 INTRODUCTION

Before considering parents' attitudes towards bilingual education, it is worth mentioning that many children in monolingual core Nuosu and Zhuang areas do not even attend school of any kind. This is especially so in core Nuosu areas, where as well as problems associated with geographical access to schools, poverty and parents' need for their children's labour, there is often a deep mistrust of the Han world and a belief in alternative deeply-rooted Nuosu values. In the absence of surveys, it is hard to know what percentage of parents cannot economically afford under any circumstances to spare their children's labour, what proportion feel that rural state education (whatever the language medium) is simply irrelevant to their lives and a bad investment and what percentage specifically object to it being in one language or another. Some dislike the fact that it is all in Han (in the case of Han-only schools) or overwhelmingly so (in the case of Type 2 schools) and conveys Han values, while others feel (in the case of Type 1 schools) that too much is taught in Nuosu and children aren't being taught to get on in the mainstream Han world.

As was mentioned in Chapter 5, school absenteeism affects girls much more than boys. This happens not only in Nuosu and Zhuang areas, but throughout China. In many rural Han areas school attendance has also been low, especially in the 1980's after the decollectivisation of agriculture and before compulsory education was more strictly enforced. When looking at absenteeism it must be bourn in mind that in Zhuang areas all but a handful of schools were Han-only and in Liangshan many areas likewise receive no Nuosu-medium education - and of those that do, most are Type 2 (predominantly Han) bilingual schools. Thus in most cases, parents who withhold their children, do so mostly from schools with a minimum of mother-tongue teaching. In cases where they do not let them attend Type 1 (predominantly Nuosu -or Zhuang) bilingual schools, it is hard to tell if the cause is purely economic or that they would prefer a Han-medium education.

Parents remaining sceptical or antagonistic towards bilingual education has been the downfall of many minority language-medium education initiatives throughout the world. Parents of even ethnically conscious minorities are generally also aware of the importance of their children mastering the majority languages and, while they usually wish their children to be competent in the native language, do not want this to be at the cost of the majority language. In Guangxi this will often be translated into outright rejection of Zhuang-medium education, given the factors of low ethnic consciousness, scant identification with the script and standard oral form being promoted and a feeling that it is a useless waste of time which could better be spent learning Han. While this tendency also exists in Liangshan, parents are on the whole much more positive towards bilingual or Nuosu-medium education, given their greater degree of ethnic consciousness, pride in their script, and greater acceptance of the oral standard coupled with a wider recognition that bilingual education can work and open up paths which Han-only education cannot in monolingual Nuosu speech communities.

6.2.5.2 PARENTAL COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN CORE NUOSU AREAS

While the decollectivisation of agriculture has (as in Han areas) negatively influenced school attendance in Nuosu and Zhuang areas, a significant part of the low attendance and high drop-out rates is commonly attributed to basic rural poverty. In 5C.2.9 and 6.1.5, it was shown that school enrolment and attendance in core Nuosu areas of Liangshan are abysmally low, especially in the more out-of-the-way mountainous areas and especially among girls. Some of this low attendance can certainly be attributed to the language barrier, but given the isolation and backwardness of upland Liangshan other causes have played an important part such as: extreme poverty, high tuition fees (especially for boarding schools), the need for children's labour at home, the large distances and difficult (often impassable) paths children have to walk to school, the lack of a tradition of formal schooling, the lack of recognition of the usefulness of schooling and, in the case of girls, the beliefs that education is a wasted investment if daughters are destined to leave home and that anyway educated women make disobedient wives.

Schoenhals (2001: 243) referring to enrolment in the Liangshan Nationalities Secondary School in Xichang bears out these causes when he affirms:

The school is mandated by its charter to recruit students from all over Liangshan and to affirmatively recruit students from peasant families. Slightly lower admissions standards for students from especially poor regions of Liangshan help MZ [Liangshan Nationalities Secondary School] realize its mandate, although the principal admits the school has difficulty achieving full geographic diversity since Yi families from counties with a very high percentage of Yi traditionally do not encourage their children to go to school, so the school has relatively few students from such counties as Zhaojue, Meigu, and Butuo, but many from Yuexi, Xichang, Huili, Ningnan and so on.

Some of these problems are universal to all poor mountainous areas up to a point, including Zhuang areas, but rarely to the extent of upland Liangshan (in lowland Liangshan the situation is distinct). In addition to being physically more isolated from Han-dominated society than their Zhuang counterparts, upland Nuosu have only been fully integrated politically and economically into mainstream Chinese society since the mid-1950s and therefore are far less receptive – and sometimes openly hostile - to Han ideas than the Zhuang, who have always perceived themselves as belonging to the Middle Kingdom. There is thus far less inherent opposition to education in general from Zhuang than from Nuosu parents.

6.2.5.3 PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF HAN-ONLY AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION?

In 6.1.5, I concluded that available research, both in south-western China and abroad, shows that properly implemented bilingual education helps minority language children adapt to the mainstream majority language world, without alienating them from their native language communities.

One of the main arguments against bilingual education, used not only in Guangxi, but also by large numbers of Nuosu parents who are otherwise supportive of Zhuang/Nuosu values and culture and often have no great love of Han culture, is that it does not prepare their children to find good jobs. This is typically understood as becoming cadres or finding steady government jobs which help children escape from traditional – and backward- Zhuang and Nuosu society. Proponents of this argument seem to ignore two main tenants of bilingual education (and thus expose a failure on the part of the proponents of bilingual education to properly get their argument over to the public at large). Firstly they overlook that bilingual education can provide better access to the Han world than Han-only teaching for children with no or scant knowledge of Han and secondly that many graduates who have received no Zhuang/Nuosu language education have trouble fitting back into traditional rural Zhuang/Nuosu society. Secondly they

ignore the facts that many Zhuang/Nuosu pupils have trouble absorbing and coping with an exclusively Han education and that only a miniscule minority of graduates can realistically hope to become cadres or get good jobs in urban areas. The vast majority (as emphasised earlier) do not succeed in Han schools and instead of getting good jobs, stay in the rural areas (or drift to the towns under conditions which are far from ideal!). Luobianmuguo (1999) argues this with clarity:

一类模式的教育功效还在于，未能升入高一级学校的中小學生，回彝区后可用所学知识于家乡建设，母语和家乡的生活联系紧密，用汉语学知识，脱离彝区生活用语而不能在群众中运用。从长远观点来看，未能过高考“独木桥”的人将是绝大多数，是我们学校素质教育的主体对象，教改趋势将职业技术教育引入中小学教育之中，各阶段学生都有相应的职业技术来适应社会需求。所以，一类模式教育可培养适应彝区农村和企业的学生。The educational effect of the Type 1 System lies in those primary and secondary pupils who return home to the Yi areas after failing to reach a higher rung of the educational ladder. They are then able to use the knowledge they have acquired in the building up of their home area, [what they have learnt in] their mother tongue being intimately bound up with the life of the area, [whereas] using Han to acquire knowledge is more alienated from the life and linguistic reality of Yi areas. From a long-term point of view, the absolute majority of people unable to walk the torturous path of taking university entrance exams are the main objects of schools' quality education. The trend of educational reform will lead to vocational and technical education within primary and secondary education and pupils of each level will all have corresponding vocations and skills adapted to the needs of society. Thus Type 1 Education is able to train pupils adapted to the [reality of] the rural Yi areas and their enterprises.

Despite this many members of the public seem to see a stark uncompromising choice between two extremes: either a useless non-Han-medium education which does not lead anywhere or a Han-medium one which will enable children to get on in the modern globalised world.

This is not to say that the employability of graduates of bilingual tertiary education institutions is not important. Even though these affect only a minority of pupils, they are of great symbolic importance for parents (who often imagine the maximum which their children could attain). Ma Muju (1999: 201) reports that due to saturation of the job market for Nuosu graduates of the Yi departments of the South-Western Nationalities' College and Xichang Teachers' College the incentive for pupils from bilingual schools to enter these departments has plummeted drastically, while at the same time they typically do not reach the required academic standards to study other subjects (although it seems they do achieve better results than those from Han-only

schools). This has increased demoralisation among Nuosu pupils and their families and shaken their confidence in the Nuosu script as a stepping stone to academic success. He advocates studying the examples of Xinjiang and Tibet. In the light of developments over the last 10 years, (see 5A), it is doubtful whether these situations provide much comfort.

In Zhuang areas, with all the other factors analysed in this thesis going against the acceptance of the normalised language and script, parental opposition was intense, something I was aware of through Zhuang informants in Guangxi Nationalities College and was later reaffirmed in the literature, e.g. Wuming County Education Office (1992: 33-34)'s findings quoted in the Introduction to Chapter 6 that parents had opposed the promotion of Zhuang and withdrawn their children from the school. The school had been undergoing a crisis, but I imagine that, given the low social status of Zhuang literacy, a bilingual school would have to do much better than an ordinary school to attract the confidence of the parents. In the case cited, the authorities managed to put right the deficiencies and attract the parents back. As the school was in Wuming, the objection of the parents could not have been that the standard language was alien (although there are several differences between the standard oral form and everyday speech in Wuming).

According to Wu Mingxian (1999: 192. Written “吴明先 Wú Míngxiān” and nothing to do with “武鸣县 Wǔmíng xiàn” = Wuming County):

...事与愿违,恰恰在凉山最急需彝语文大显身手的社会主义建设时期,人民竟然围绕"彝文的前途和用途问题",喋喋不惜地争论了四十多年.更令人痛心的这种无谓的争论至今仍在延续,以致成为双语教学一道又一道新的障碍。

Contrary to what one would wish, just at the time when Liangshan urgently needs socialist construction which makes full use of the Yi language and script, people unexpectedly focus the discussion on whether the Yi script has a future or whether it is any use and have not hesitated to carry on the dispute for over 40 years. Even more distressing is that this kind of pointless dispute is still going on today, putting obstacle after obstacle in the way of bilingual education.

The whole world over, there is no shortage of examples of minority or stigmatised languages whose promotion, normalisation and use is set back, and even totally destroyed by arguments over which standard form (as we saw in the case of Zhuang) or which kind of script or spelling system should be used. Another example is the futile

questioning of the form of standard Valencian (and its being a variant of Catalan), which has delayed for over 30 years its effective promotion and measures to prevent language shift in favour of Spanish.

What is surprising about the above quote and other signs of frontal opposition to the promotion and use of Nuosu, is that this is happening in an area where conditions are so much more favourable to the promotion of a non-Han script than in Guangxi. When lamenting the limitations of the promotion of Nuosu it is perhaps pertinent to recognise that what has been done has often been achieved despite strong opposition.

According to Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) the argument that the Nuosu script is no use and has no future is widespread among some cadres and part of the Nuosu public especially among a section of parents who lack knowledge about the importance of bilingual education. This is something I perceived among many urban and some rural Nuosu on my visits to Zhaojue (1994 and 1995) and Meigu (2005) Counties. According to this argument (the prevalence of which is confirmed by various sources) the study of the minority language and script does not solve problems such as finding work (for example as a worker or cadre), gaining access to further education or bettering oneself professionally. Parents believing in this argument reason that there is only a future if their children study Han and they are not prepared to consider sending their children to what they see as inferior bilingual classes which detract from the purpose of getting on in the mainstream Han world. Of course children of Nuosu cadres will probably stand a better chance than children of peasants and herdsmen of surviving Han-only teaching, but at the cost of alienating themselves, to some extent at least, from their native language, culture and society.

There is an obsession with one's children becoming cadres (via a Han-only education) in order to have a life-long "iron rice bowl". Judging from their behaviour, there seems little concern on the part of such parents that their children should be able to reintegrate themselves in, and contribute constructively to, the impoverished monolingual Nuosu communities from whence they came, applying their newly acquired knowledge to raise the general standard of living and acting as bridge between the wider Han-speaking world and the local Nuosu-speaking community, without looking down on the latter. As Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) point out, such

people only consider their own short-term individual material benefits and not the long-term all-round development of the Nuosu communities. However, I have talked to a number of Nuosu parents who expressed both guilt and regret at not having brought up their children in Nuosu.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) leave some hope that such parents might abandon their scepticism and warm up to bilingual education if things go well. They attribute such attitudes to a lack of knowledge and understanding of function and utility of the Nuosu language and script in the socioeconomic development of the Nuosu (although they are also referring to the situation in Tibetan areas of Liangshan) and accuse people with this attitude of exaggerating or inappropriately stressing the role of Han to progress and develop. Evidently, the arguments in favour of bilingual education as the only way of raising the educational quality and standard of monolingual Nuosu areas has not got through to a good part of the Nuosu public.

Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115) criticise people who advocate Han-only teaching for rural Nuosu areas, and who see the teaching of non-Han languages as superfluous and an unnecessary burden, for not caring about the interests of the immense majority of Nuosu in Liangshan. Such people sweep under the carpet the reality that after decades of monolingual Han teaching, non-Han speaking areas have developed so little and have not stopped to consider the main reason for the educational failure in Nuosu areas and why people of talent in these areas do not advance, namely that the language barrier makes it impossible for pupils to progress within a Han-only system. They cite the case of a pupil from Xiluo in Puge County who repeated the first year of primary school seven times without passing, because he was unable to understand anything of what was being taught.

Interestingly they make a plea not only to sceptical Nuosu cadres (the target readership of the article) but also to those of Han nationality, to actively support bilingual education for the sake of the prosperity of the Yi nationality and to safeguard one of the main symbols of its identity. In 2005 in Meigu County town, I talked to several Nuosu-speaking parents (who spoke much better Nuosu than Han) who were proud of their children not learning Nuosu at school and of bringing them up in Han and had the impression that without a lot of propaganda work attitudes were unlikely to change.

6.2.5.4 SUPPORT FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION AMONG NUOSU COMMUNITY

In Guangxi, while there is frustration at the language barrier their children face, there is almost no bilingual provision and hence no widespread debate about the convenience or not of bilingual education. As the promotion has effectively been laid to rest, any debate is now restricted to the very few areas where Zhuang-Han experimental schools are still running. In Liangshan, the opposition detailed above is relative and far from paints the whole picture of the situation. There is considerable support among many Nuosu parents for some form of bilingual education. Many parents in core Nuosu areas withhold their children from school (admittedly also under pressures of poverty) partly because they feel that conventional Han-medium teaching is irrelevant. Various informants I interviewed in rural areas of Zhaojue and Meigu Counties (some through interpreters) indicated that they strongly supported Nuosu-medium education, because they felt it was more relevant to their rural lifestyle and accessible unlike Han-only education. Heberer (2004, personal communication) reports that some successful Nuosu businessmen who have funded schools in Meigu county have insisted that they be bilingual as a precondition for funding them. As is discussed below, the support for the traditional bimo religion and culture also helps to buoy up support for Nuosu-medium teaching.

In August 1995 I carried out a language attitude survey amongst cadres and secondary school pupils in Zhaojue, most (but not all) of them Nuosu and all of them either parents or potential parents. Their answers to questions relating to bilingual education are given below. I give the percentages of the respondents for each question who expressed support for bilingual education (each question was answered by 320 to 330 respondents):

- 94.4% of respondents **disagreed** with the statement “**Yi children learn the Yi language at home. There’s no need for them to study the Yi script at school**”.
- 93.9% of respondents agreed with the statement “**Yi children in Zhaojue County town should attend bilingual Yi-Han schools.**”
- 88.7% of respondents **disagreed** with the statement “**The academic results of bilingual schools are not as good as those of monolingual schools.**”

- 84.7% of respondents agreed with the statement **“The bilingual Yi-Han policy could help people who understand both the Yi and Han scripts to find work.”**
- 76.9% of respondents agreed with the statement **“Receiving a bilingual education can help children to later learn a foreign language (e.g. English).**
- 59.1 % of respondents agreed with the statement **“Yi children will progress more slowly if they study only the Han language and script.”** What surprised me here was that as many as 40% obviously thought that Nuosu children could progress at least as fast in Han-only schools as in bilingual schools.
- I was baffled by the fact that only 56.8% of respondents agreed with the statement **“Children who only understand Yi should first study the Yi script and then study the Han script.”** The low result could be due to those people who disagree believing that they should learn BOTH scripts simultaneously and not merely the Han script.
- To my surprise over half the respondents expressed a preference for Type 1 (predominantly Nuosu-medium) over Type 2 (predominantly Han-medium) schools, 58.6% of respondents agreeing with the statement **“Schools where all subjects are taught through the medium of Yi, and Han language is just a subject, produce better results than those where all subjects are taught through the medium of Han and Yi language is just a subject”**.

These results, with all their imperfections, show that even in a sample which contained some Han and Nuosu who were highly fluent in Han, the level of support for Nuosu-medium education of some kind (Type 1 or 2) was very high and even almost 60% supported Type 1 over Type 2 schools. There was even general support for Han pupils in both the administrative centre and rural areas of Zhaojue County to attend bilingual schooling (which they generally do not attend):

- 86.2% of respondents agreed with the statement **“Han nationality children in the County Town of Zhaojue should all receive bilingual Yi-Han education.”**

- 89% of respondents agreed with the statement **“Han children in rural areas of Zhaojue County should attend bilingual Yi-Han schools.”**

As mentioned earlier, Nuosu parents I interviewed in 2 villages in Meigu County in 2005 were strongly in favour of Nuosu education, with the only thing holding them back being the fear that it might negatively affect their progress in Han. Evidently it would be advantageous to repeat the survey, comparing results obtained over time and between different places. It is possible that the same or similar respondents might today not be so supportive of Nuosu-medium education if it is the case that a certain amount of disillusionment over the effectiveness of such schools has set in. Wu Da (2002), commenting on the situation in a largely bilingual part of rural Ganluo County notes that parents are strongly in favour of Han-medium education, tending to see Nuosu-medium teaching as offering extremely limited possibilities to get on in life; while liking the idea of their children learning Nuosu script at school, they were concerned that this could hinder their progress in Han.

6.2.5.5 PARENTS’ PERCEPTION OF PROMOTED LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT AS POSSIBLE AID TO LEARNING HAN AND HENCE TO “GETTING ON IN THE WORLD”?

The purpose of examining this question is not so much to compare the Nuosu and Zhuang situations, as to draw attention to the fact that many people, both in Guangxi and Liangshan, are not convinced that bilingual (that is to say where Nuosu /Zhuang are taught in some form alongside Han) education is positive. This is of course a world-wide phenomenon (which I have also come across in places like South Africa, Wales, Valencia, Germany and Brittany) and parents the world over cast doubts over the capacity of children to be successfully educated in 2 languages, especially if one of these is perceived as of limited value (the case of most minority languages). Perhaps it is a basic primordial belief that the human brain is only capable of coping with one language as a medium of instruction. Given that parents of minority language-speaking children are generally eager for children to be educated –either wholly or partly- via high-prestige L2s, it seems that an additional language of instruction is seen as an investment which is only worthwhile if it is not perceived to threaten, or distract from, the acquisition of the high-prestige majority language.

The use of initial minority language literacy to learn the majority or high-status language does not only occur within a transitional bilingual programmes, but can equally take place within strong forms of bilingual education aimed at stable, long-term bilingualism and biculturalism. In the propaganda in favour of the promotion of both the Nuosu and the Zhuang scripts, it has been strongly emphasised that prior literacy in the mother tongue is the most efficient way of learning Han. It seems that this message has got through better to the Nuosu-speaking public than to the Zhuang (as the quote at the close of the previous section illustrates), among whom there are many that consider it a complete waste of time to learn the useless Zhuang script when they could learn Han characters directly.

In the Language Attitude Survey I carried out in Zhaojue, 63.4% of respondents agreed with the statement **“The standard of Han language attained by Nuosu students attending Nuosu-Han bilingual schools is higher than that attained by those attending Han-only schools.”** This shows almost two thirds of respondents (who were admittedly mostly educated and socially aware) believing that learning Han with the help of Nuosu is beneficial. I have no similar statistics for Zhuang areas, but from my experience of the sociolinguistic situation there, I would be most surprised if there were anywhere near as many Zhuang people who believed this.

6.2.5.6 BIMO EDUCATION

Earlier bimo education was contrasted with Buddhist temple education among Tai boys in Sipsong Panna. Regarding the rejection by Tai parents of the state system because of the way it largely ignores the Tai language, Hansen (1999a: 257) warns

A small but increasing number of Tai teachers, cadres and students have started to raise the question of introducing the Tai language into secondary schools, expanding the use of it in elementary schools and making the study of Tai history and culture part of the common school curriculum and examination. They criticize the fact that parents are forced to send their boys to the temples if they want them to learn Tai, and some believe that schools would be much more attractive to the common people if they were based on the Tai language and included Tai history and literature as part of the curriculum. Others have a more practical point of view, and argue that schools will only become relevant among the Tai peasants when they teach useful knowledge of agriculture in the Tai language. Some of the more pragmatic Han cadres feel that teaching the Tai language in schools should be extended mainly to convince people that they do not need to send their boys to the temples.

Are Nuosu parents concerned in the same way with the lack of Nuosu language and culture taught in schools? On the one hand Schoenhals (2001) notes that in rural core areas, bimo activity is a factor influencing low school attendance, especially among clans involved in such activity, who view official “Han education” with great suspicion and dislike. On the other hand a significant part of the population, especially in parts of Liangshan with greater contact with Han-speakers, such as Ganluo (Wu Da 2002) and Nuosu students of the South-western Nationalities Institute, Personal Communication (2005) recognises that it is important to learn Han and are far more concerned with this than in gaining or improving literacy in Nuosu.

Rural Nuosu parents are often ignorant of the implications of bilingual education and would welcome a strong dose of Nuosu-medium teaching with traditional Nuosu cultural content as long as it did not interfere with their children effectively acquiring Han. As mentioned in 6.2.3, some academics such as Wei Anduo (2004 and 2005) advocate including bimo classics and traditional Nuosu writings in the mainstream primary and secondary school curricula. What is important about bimo education is that it represents a respectable, high-prestige, intellectual, literate, educational tradition, carried out wholly through the medium of Nuosu. I am surprised that it has not led to Nuosu parents taking a more militant stance in favour of Nuosu-medium teaching in public schools.

6.2.5.7 FINAL THOUGHTS ON PARENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Perhaps in this discussion the events, problems and attitudes described in Guangxi and Liangshan have often appeared to be too similar for parents’ differing attitudes to have played a significant role in the differing outcomes. As has emerged from the discussion, there are indeed a lot of similarities, but I am seeking to explain differences, not between an utter failure and a total success, but rather between a complete failure in Guangxi and a “partial success” (which could more pessimistically be described as a “partial failure”) in Liangshan. Parents in Nuosu areas, at the same time as harbouring fears that their children might not master Han properly in Nuosu-medium schools, have a much greater awareness than their Zhuang counterparts that acquiring L1 literacy might actually aid, instead of hindering, successful acquisition of Han. In addition the very concept of “Nuosu literacy” is better established in the minds of Nuosu parents than that of “Zhuang literacy” in the minds of Zhuang parents and the former are more

open to their language being used as a medium for imparting general knowledge than the latter. This contributes to the better acceptance and success of bilingual education in Liangshan. In addition, in remote rural Nuosu areas there is a greater inherent suspicion of official Han-dominated education (and a perception that it is irrelevant to their lives) than in corresponding Zhuang areas, which sometimes results in greater readiness to accept either official bilingual education or traditional bimo apprenticeship.

Bilingual education in both situations has faced innumerable problems such as underfunding, neglect, opposition from Hanised bureaucrats (see the minority Elite Hypothesis) and (above all) general ignorance and disbelief about the advantages of bilingual education and how it can help not only intellectual and academic development in the L1, but also more effective acquisition of the L2 (Han). Having said this, bilingual education has been implemented much more widely, less tentatively, more enthusiastically and more thoroughly in Liangshan than in it was in Guangxi and this could not have happened with the opposition of parents. Although many Nuosu speakers (especially in urban areas) oppose education other than Han-only, most Nuosu's awareness of (and pride in) a native Nuosu literacy tradition (commented on in 6.2.1) means that active supporters of bilingual teaching are omnipresent in rural Liangshan. In addition the existence of bimo education in Liangshan – even if it does only affect a small minority of male-only children – is proof that there is a deep-seated commitment to Nuosu-medium education and culture among at least some parents.

6.2.6 THE SCRIPT-TYPE HYPOTHESIS

A positive identification by minority language speakers with the script being promoted, independently of its complexity, and the perception that it forms a part of the ethnic group's history and culture increases the chances of its successful promotion. The fact that the Nuosu speech community strongly identified with the standardised syllabary as being traditional Nuosu, whereas most Zhuang saw the standardised romanisation as something alien and imposed has played a major part in the greater acceptance of the Nuosu script.

Before examining the relation between the nature of scripts and their degree of success in being implemented, I would like to briefly summarise the choices of script open to both speech communities.

6.2.6.1 CHOICE OF SCRIPTS OPEN TO NUOSU AND ZHUANG SPEECH COMMUNITIES

Both the Nuosu and Zhuang languages have three main possible scripts which have been put forward, at one time or another, as rival candidates as mediums of literacy.

Nuosu has:

- 1) the traditional, largely ideographic script of over 8,000 characters used mainly by the bimo,
- 2) the standardised syllabic script of 819 characters, derived from the traditional script, and officially promoted in Nuosu-speaking areas since the mid-1970s.
- 3) the romanised script which was briefly, but not very thoroughly, promoted in the late 1950s.

Zhuang has:

- 1) the traditional Zhuang *fangkuaizi*, which adapted and combined Chinese ideographs to create a script similar to the Vietnamese *chu-nam* script and of greater complexity than the Han script and which varied greatly from area to area. A possible and much less complex variant would be a *fangkuaizi*-based syllabary.
- 2) the romanised script, officially promoted on a limited scale in Zhuang (and Bouyei) speaking areas for limited periods before and after the Cultural Revolution,
- 3) the simplified Zhuang script (简化壮文) which Margaret Milliken (1999), an American linguist with many years experience living in Wuming (just to the north of Nanning and on whose speech the standard oral form was based), comments on this way of representing Zhuang, which she calls “Simplified

Zhuang script” (简化壮文) as being a serious alternative both to the unwieldy Zhuang *fangkaizi* and to the unaccepted romanisation. Milliken (1999) defines it as follows:

简化壮文是当今壮族按照自己的言语习惯和交际需要使用的简化汉字。没学过拼音壮文或者学过但已经忘了怎么写的壮族人经常使用汉字来朗读和书写自己的语言。虽然字面是汉文，但它体现的是壮语的语音、语法、语义等语言特征，又因它有别于复杂、难认的古代壮文，所以我们称之为简化壮文。目前这种文字尚未形成体系，但使用范围比较广泛。鉴于壮族对使用汉字具有全民性的亲和力，可以此为基础将简化壮文系统化，使之成为壮族的一种规范文字。The simplified Zhuang script is a way in which the present-day Zhuang use simplified Han characters according to their own speech habits and communicative needs. Zhuang who either have never learnt the phonetic script or that have forgotten how to write it often use Han characters to read aloud and write things down. Although the typeface is Han writing, it represents the phonetic, grammatical and semantic, etc., features of the Zhuang language and because it differs in complexity from the ancient Zhuang script [*fangkaizi*], it is referred to as the simplified Zhuang script. So far this writing system has still not taken on systematic form, but it is quite widely used. In view of the entire Zhuang nationality's affinity for using Han characters, the simplified Zhuang script could be systematised, thus becoming a standard script for the Zhuang nationality.

Given attitudes in Guangxi, I feel considerable sympathy for Milliken's view. On the one hand children are failing in the Han-only system, on the other hand it seems improbable that Zhuang parents will ever accept (in the short-term at least) any other script than the Han script. Perhaps mastering this script would be a starting point for going on to learn Han, while focusing on the differences in phonology, syntax and lexis. I feel intensely uncomfortable about suggesting promoting a non-phonetic script, but perhaps it is the only politically and socially workable method which could pull Zhuang children out of the vicious circle of school failure.

As a variation on this, many people read (and sometimes write) Han characters according to Mandarin grammar, but with the pronunciation of the Zhuang translation, analogous to how Cantonese speakers read standard Chinese characters in their own pronunciation.

In the case of Nuosu, the traditional partly ideographic script was, until the 1950s, the only accepted script, although used only by a small elite (mainly bimo) until the 1950s

when a wider public informally learnt it prior to the introduction of the standardised script. Since its introduction in the 1970s, the standardised syllabic script of 819 characters has been successfully established as the vehicle of widespread rural literacy and Nuosu-medium education, while the traditional script retains its high-status position as the script of religious and historical texts used by bimo and some intellectuals. A high proportion of Nuosu are literate in the former. There are advocates of replacing the standardised script with the old traditional script, but due to the sheer complexity of such an operation and also to the relative success of the standardised script, I think this would be a highly unlikely scenario and one which in my opinion would be highly damaging to Nuosu-medium literacy. It would create a situation where people literate in the standardised script would be unable to understand texts written in the traditional script and would need to invest (this time a lot more time and energy) in becoming literate again. This might well have the effect of people preferring to directly and exclusively invest in learning Han characters. A revival of bimo apprenticeships is currently making sure that a parallel use of the traditional script is continuing.

Having deemed the traditional Nuosu script to be less viable than the reformed one on pragmatic grounds, it must be recognised that with the revival of bimo education in recent years, the traditional script is being learnt as a ritual and literary medium by large numbers of apprentice bimo (all boys). However, even in Meigu County where the bimo have the strongest influence (see 6.1.5.6), the proportion of apprentices accounts for a small minority of the male population and the traditional script, while enjoying great prestige, is unlikely to become a mass vehicle of everyday literacy to rival the syllabary. This situation has parallels with Sipsong Panna (see Hansen, 1999a and b), where male novice monks in the Buddhist schools learn the old traditional Tai script, whereas pupils (predominantly girls) of official schools with Tai-medium teaching learn the simplified, standardised script, creating two-tier Tai-language literacy. The former can read simplified texts, but the latter cannot read traditional texts fully.

The romanised Nuosu script serves a limited function helping non-Nuosu speakers to learn and read the Nuosu pronunciation and script and for ordering Nuosu dictionaries (Maheimuya and Yao Changdao 1994), but attempts to use it as a fully-blown script have been definitively abandoned, because it was not felt to be properly “Nuosu”.

Interestingly, in 2005 I found a video CD of the singer Uop Jiep At Gi (200?) which had the Nuosu transcriptions of the songs in the romanised –and not the standardised syllabic- script.

In contrast to the Nuosu situation, in the case of Zhuang the supremacy of the officially promoted script is contested. Only a very small proportion of Zhuang speakers are familiar with the official romanised script and many are not even fully aware of its existence. As discussed below, many people advocate replacing the romanised script with either *fangkuaizi* or *simplified Zhuang script*. The idea of a syllabary based on *fangkuaizi* has even been suggested (Stewart Milliken, Personal Communication 1994). It seems, however that the majority view by far (or at least that of those with political influence), is that people should forget about any kind of Zhuang script and learn Han directly.

6.2.6.2 WHETHER PROMOTED SCRIPT IS TRADITIONAL OR PERCEIVED AS SUCH

In the 50s the Nuosu romanised script was introduced in an extremely instable period, when momentous social reforms (among others the abolition of slavery and agrarian reform) were taking place, when an armed rebellion had been launched and in the midst of a series of destabilising political campaigns. It was therefore not promoted under ideal conditions and only a tiny fraction of the population was reached. However, all sources I have consulted (both written and through personal communication) were adamant that it was rejected to a large extent because the Nuosu-speaking public did not identify with it, regarding it as a poor rival to the traditional script with its long literary and liturgical traditions. This rejection can be compared to the general frontal opposition of most speakers of Han (regardless of the variant spoken) to the replacement of Han characters by pinyin. This project, toyed with by the Chinese Communist Party before coming to power, but rapidly jettisoned in the 1950s, was widely regarded as tantamount to the destruction of the core of Han Chinese culture.

In contrast, most Nuosu regarded the new standardised syllabary (devised in the 1960s and promoted from the mid-1970s onwards) as both belonging to them and as being very ancient, and considered it worth investing time and energy in learning a script that represented their traditional culture. They were not just learning to read and write for fun, but principally to be able to carry out basic communicative and administrative

functions which relied on written rather than oral communication and had to be recorded on paper. However, it mattered to them whether they did this through the medium of a script they identified with or not.

That ordinary people were prepared to learn the traditional complex script is quite clear from the period of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when many people learnt it in the absence of a simpler “traditional” script. It is certainly no more complex than the Han script which many Nuosu speakers go on to learn or even learn as a first or only script. Some people in Liangshan expressed the opinion that it would be preferable to adopt lock, stock and barrel a form of the traditional script of 8,000 characters, but it seems that the Nuosu-speaking public has accepted very well the standardised, simplified script as their own, despite occasional nostalgic comments in favour of the 8,000 character system.

The fact that the Zhuang script was of new creation and had no tradition within the Zhuang language and culture, was quoted by Yao Changdao (姚昌道, personal communication August 1994) as an important reason for the lack of success of the promotion of Zhuang. When I was in Guangxi, I often heard affirmations of the type “If our new script is not traditional, we’d prefer to learn Han characters directly.” Bodomo and Tai Chung-Pui (2003) remark:

Quite a number of our informants were of the view that romanized Zhuang has remained as a kind of political propaganda for the purpose of promoting ethnic autonomy.

In other words these Zhuang informants saw the script as imposed from above.

6.2.6.3 EXISTENCE OF LITERARY TRADITION USING, OR ASSOCIATED WITH, PROMOTED SCRIPT.

Ordinary Nuosu in Liangshan are very aware, and proud, of the existence of the varied ancient literary tradition of the bimo, many people even believing the origins of the script go further back than Han characters. Although the original 8,000 plus character script was radically pruned down to a mere 819 standardised symbols, in the mind of most Nuosu these was still a direct continuation and descendent of the old historical script. Many works of literature have even been translated into the reformed script,

further reinforcing the impression of continuity between them. In contrast there has been a lack of a unified, high-status literacy tradition in Zhuang and what body of highly dialectal literature there was, was not written in the promoted romanised script.

In the absence of a proper unified and workable script before the 1950s, first classical and later modern written Han-Chinese was used (by those who knew it) for the purposes of serious writing in place of Zhuang. When Zhuang was recorded, it was (and indeed still is) often for religious and folk literature and was highly dialect dependent, varying enormously from area to area as were the *fangkuaizi* used to record it. Zhuang was thus traditionally regarded as totally unsuitable for higher literary functions. Surprisingly (considering the time and energy invested in the two periods of Zhuang-script promotion), large numbers of Zhuang people talk as if the promotion had never happened and even express surprise when informed that it did.

Lu Yongbin (卢勇斌) of Guangxi Nationalities College, writing in July 2003 on a website dedicated to the Tai-Kam language family, does not consider the promotion of the script to have resulted in its penetrating literate domains and writes as if it had never taken place:

语言功能大小，一是看它的表达力，再是看它的使用人口和使用范围。当然二者是不能分开的，表达能力强往往使用人口多，使用范围广。壮语单一的语体限制了自身的使用范围，在社会生活领域里，壮语只在日常生活中的口头使用。在需要用书面语交际的场合，壮语没有相应的文字，书面语则要使用汉语书面语。地域上，壮语没有书面语标准语的纽带作用，超时空交际是困难的，... The scope of a language's functions depends on both its power of expressivity and on the number of its users and its range of use. Of course the two cannot be separated: when the power of expressivity is strong, the number of uses is often large and its range of use wide. The Zhuang language's exclusively spoken style restricted its own range of use and in the social sphere it is only used orally in everyday life. When there is a need to communicate in writing, Zhuang has no corresponding written form and Han is used for writing. Nowhere is Zhuang associated with the function of a literary language and transcending communication in time and space is difficult ...

Lu is referring to the use of different regional oral variants, and ignores the existence of a standardised oral language. The acceptance of a supra-regional standard Zhuang is made difficult by the fact that no variety of Zhuang is thought of as suitable for higher functions and thus it is rejected by Zhuang elites in favour of Han (see the discussion of elites in 6.2.2):

读过一些书的壮族人，虽然讲汉语夹壮语多，然而，同乡人谈话或聊天，即使出于对本土语的亲切感情往往开头是家乡壮话，但谈话继续不久不知不觉又以汉语代替了。如果谈话的内容上升到更高的文化层次，那么壮语严重的缺陷更显露出来。

旧时代，壮族读书人读的是汉语书，也唯有通汉语，才能有劳心之日，而称之为土语的壮语则被认为是不登大雅之堂的“南蛮铁舌”。这样又导致了壮汉语使用上抑壮扬汉的语言崇尚心理现象。在民族观念中，不少人认为壮语是低层次的语言，并认为优势语言—汉语在许多地方已经“战胜”了壮语，如广西东南地区，北部地区，原来多属壮族，现在几乎“汉化”了，讲壮语的人寥寥无几。Although educated Zhuang speak Han interspersed with Zhuang, yet when chatting with fellow villagers, even if out of warm feelings towards it they start off in their home variety of Zhuang, after a while they will unconsciously switch to Han. If the content of the conversation rises to higher cultural levels, then Zhuang's serious shortcomings are revealed even more. In the past, Zhuang scholars read Han-language books and were obliged to use Han for mental work and what is more considered their Zhuang "patois", as they called it, to be the unpresentable "iron tongue of the Southern barbarians". With regard to the use of Zhuang and Han, this again led to the psychological phenomenon of relegating Zhuang and promoting Han. Within the concept of nationality, many people think that Zhuang is a second-class language and that the linguistic superiority of Han has already prevailed over Zhuang in many places, as in the South-Eastern and Northern areas of Guangxi. These areas were originally more Zhuang, but by now are almost "hanised" and Zhuang speakers are far and few between. This kind of notion has been around for a long time and has also been very detrimental to the use and development of the Zhuang language.

These quotes should cause concern among proponents of the promotion of the Zhuang language and scripts. The classic negative diglossic situation mentioned (presumably affecting only educated and more hanised Zhuang) does not appear to have been dented after years of promotion.

6.2.6.4 EFFECT OF SCRIPT'S COMPLEXITY ON PEOPLE'S MOTIVATION TO LEARN IT

It is common sense that the more complex a script, the more time and energy (all other things equal) must be invested in order to acquire competence in it. Does the complexity of a script play a major role in determining how ready people are to learn it? The complexity of the Nuosu syllabary does not seem to have played a big role in people's perception of its usefulness. The romanised script, by far the simplest, was dismissed by most people out of hand. Many ordinary people were motivated to learn the traditional script of over 8,000 characters and mass literacy was achieved via the 819 character Nuosu syllabary. Many Nuosu literates additionally aspire to be literate in the complex Han script.

In the case of Zhuang, Latin letters likewise have a low status compared to Han-Chinese characters despite objectively being much easier and quicker to learn. Many Chinese linguists and newly-literate Zhuang peasants have affirmed the advantages of the romanised script, but such viewpoints do not appear to be influential. Most Zhuang-speakers seem to regard Han characters just as much part of their culture and heritage as Han speakers do. Even *fangkuaizi* enjoy a higher prestige than the romanised script, despite being one of the most complex and unwieldy scripts ever invented.

Both Nuosu and Zhuang speakers, although especially the latter, are highly motivated to learn to read and write Han characters, despite this being a script which is so complex that a disproportionate amount of time must be dedicated to its acquisition, and many authors (e.g. Riedlinger 1989, Belde 1982, and Hannas 1996) have put in doubt whether it is an effective medium for achieving universal rural literacy among Han speakers of Mandarin. Whether or not Han characters are an ideal form of spreading literacy (and in my view they are not), they are a hard reality which are likely to remain the most called for and prestigious form of writing in Zhuang and Nuosu areas for the foreseeable future. Of course being motivated to learn Han characters does not guarantee success in doing so, even among those proficient in spoken Han. For example, Madaren (personal communication 1994), a 90 year-old black Nuosu, told me that he had never managed to learn the Han script, despite having studied it for a year and speaking excellent Mandarin, because it had too many characters and he found the learning process too slow. He had succeeded in mastering the equally complex traditional Nuosu script though!

A big disadvantage of the system of Zhuang *fangkuaizi* system, in addition to its mind-blowing complexity, is the fact that it presupposes a good knowledge of the Han language and script. The main function of a Zhuang script should be to make the population literate, the majority of which is ignorant of Han. A peasant (Lei Fengming, 1992: 66) who was literate in romanised Zhuang but knew nothing of the Han language, neither spoken nor written, tells us that she wanted to translate some songs and stories written in Zhuang *fangkuaizi* into the romanisation. She tried learning the *fangkuaizi*, but the task proved impossible, because she needed a prior knowledge of Han to understand them. Finally she asked a woman who was familiar with *fangkuaizi* to read the texts aloud so that she could write them down in the romanised script.

The informal writing system mentioned earlier which Margaret Milliken (1999) refers to as the *simplified Zhuang script* (简化壮文) involves texts composed according to Zhuang syntax and grammar, though many people read off texts written according to Mandarin-Han syntactical and grammatical rules in stilted artificial Zhuang (unless the reader paraphrases in more natural oral Zhuang). When reading texts written according to the conventions of standard Mandarin, a Zhuang speaker would read off texts word for word translated into Zhuang akin to the way a Cantonese speaker would read the same text with a Cantonese pronunciation but following the order and conventions of the Mandarin-based standard written language. Of course Cantonese grammar and syntax is far closer to that of standard written Mandarin than is that of Zhuang, which unlike Cantonese belongs to a different family, there being major differences in word order and syntax between Zhuang and Han (e.g. adjectives follow nouns in Zhuang).

A Cantonese speaker would read off the Han characters using the Cantonese cognates of the Mandarin-based words, even where these are not necessarily the normal way of expressing the idea in Cantonese. Except in the case of borrowings from Han, a Zhuang speaker would not be reading cognates but instead reading the Zhuang translations of Han characters, just as the Japanese read off Kanji with native Japanese pronunciations and just as we could also conceivably read Han characters off in German, Welsh, Catalan or English. Given the highly divergent dialects, different speakers in different areas might choose totally unrelated Zhuang variants to translate the same Han word into their local Zhuang dialect.

When Zhuang speakers write a text in this system they would presumably normally write it according the rules of Zhuang grammar and syntax as several educationalist writing about Zhuang speakers' use of written Han have testified. Likewise they would also read texts of this type written by other Zhuang speakers or by themselves. This would presumably be not unlike the tradition of writing colloquial Cantonese which is used in comics, song-lyrics and some popular literature. However Cantonese invents new characters for Cantonese words which have no Mandarin cognates. Presumably this would not be necessary in Zhuang as they would just write the Han character representing the Han translation of the Zhuang word, which would be used to pronounce this character. Problems could arise when several synonyms exist in both

languages over which Han character to represent which Zhuang word and attempts at standardisation would be undermined by the great dialectical differences.

Most Cantonese speakers write according to standard Mandarin syntax and grammar and using vocabulary cognate to the generally used Mandarin words, even where this diverges from spontaneous spoken Cantonese, rather than writing colloquial Cantonese as described in the previous paragraph. Zhuang speakers would surely similarly come under pressure to write as close to normal Han style and syntax as possible.

As the following opinion expressed on a page of the website Zhuang Nationality Online 壮族在线 (Pouchoong.com, 15th of March 2003) illustrates, there is far from unanimity amongst those Zhuang speakers who want a Zhuang script as to which form it should take.

在壮语文的出路上，有支持坚持和完善拼音壮文的贝侬，也有希望恢复并规范古壮文的贝侬，还有呼吁规范民间汉字壮读方案的贝侬，... In the search for a solution to the problem of the Zhuang script there are Zhuang who insist on sticking to and perfecting the phonetic Zhuang script, **there are others who hope to recuperate and standardise the ancient square Zhuang script (*fangkuaizi*)**, and there are Zhuang who demand the standardisation of the popular practice of reading Han characters with a Zhuang pronunciation, (壮族在线 /the Zhuang nationality online: 15 of March 2003) [The emphasis is mine]

Whether the standardisation of the *fangkuaizi* referred to here in fact implies the creation of a syllabary or the just the standardisation of a full-blown *chu-nom* type script is unclear.

It is true - as Belde (1982) and Riedlinger (1989) argue - that the use of a highly complex script such as Han characters can hinder and lengthen the learning of the script, especially in rural areas among people with no tradition of literacy. The result, as has happened among many Han peasants, can sometimes be a relapse into the previous state of illiteracy or at best of semi-literacy. Seeberg (1990) reports minimal progress in rural illiteracy eradication between 1950 and 1980. Riedlinger, on a different tack, cites the example of the Dungan in Soviet Central Asia, Muslim speakers of Gansu and Shaanxi varieties of Mandarin who in a very short time (much shorter than it would have been possible to have learnt Han characters) were successfully made literate, first in a romanised script, and subsequently, at the whim of Stalin, in the Cyrillic alphabet.

He also quotes the successful Soviet literacy campaign carried out in Vladivostok in the 1930s among illiterate Han Chinese *Gastarbeiter* using a romanised script. It must be stressed that the Dungan had no loyalty to the Han script and if anything would probably have opted for an Arabic script, which was in fact briefly used by some speakers prior to the Soviet initiatives. These examples, coupled with the many Chinese Christians who learnt to read the Bible in phonetic transcriptions, show that Han literacy is perfectly feasible and quickly learnt via a phonetic script. However, if one is sufficiently motivated to overcome the difficulty of learning a more complex script, as is the case of the hundreds of millions of people literate in Han and Kanji, the complexity does not play such a key role as could be expected.

The Nuosu syllabary, in spite of being more complex than the Zhuang romanised alphabet (but also much simpler than Han characters) has had much greater success. At the same time it must be recognised that a Nuosu ideographic script of 8 thousand symbols would surely not have been as efficient and successful as the present standardised syllabic script of eight hundred characters as a tool of mass literacy. I believe the correct choice of standard Nuosu script has been made in Liangshan. Obviously one perceived as traditional was needed, but it was also essential not to choose one so unwieldy and complex as to put it beyond the reach of poor peasants.

The use of the traditional characters implied the management of a great number of characters from a potential repertoire of some eight thousand, which for many centuries had not been subject to any kind of standardisation process. In fact the opposite of standardisation had occurred; regional and individual differences had increased. As mentioned in 5C.1.4, the traditional Nuosu script has a strong ideographic aspect (up to what point is something the experts still do not agree on) and due to geographical isolation many words can be represented by more than one character. According to Yao Changdao (1994: 39) this lack of standardisation supposed a serious limit to attempts to increase the social functions of the Nuosu script. Surprisingly, a bimo, Jingezhushi (personal communication, August 1994, Zhaojue), informed me that whilst the traditional script was very difficult to learn and the normalised script easy and convenient to learn, he considered that there were not enough symbols in the normalised script and that some three thousand symbols would be ideal.

6.2.6.5 VIABILITY OF DIFFERENT POSSIBLE SCRIPTS FOR ZHUANG

I sometimes wonder if some opponents of the promotion of the romanised Zhuang script identify with the complex form of the *fangkuaizi*, with the hidden agenda of sabotaging a challenge to the exclusive hegemony of the Han script. This tactic has been successfully used by *blauvers* in Valencia, people who maintain they support a true, pure Valencian which is completely unrelated to Catalan, but in reality favour the exclusive hegemony of Castilian. As a result an important section of the public argues about the nature of Valencian rather than getting on with using and promoting it. Likewise in Alsace and northern Lorraine there are people, opposed to any challenge to the hegemony of French, who claim Alsatian is an independent language and not a dialect of German in order to frustrate any attempts to promote German in traditionally German-speaking areas of France. In the popular debate about Zhuang, the romanisation has lost credibility, dispersions having been successfully cast over its usefulness and legitimacy, but no serious attempt has been made to implement an alternative.

I believe that a solution based on a standardised version of the complex *fangkuaizi* would attract a lot of people because of its long tradition, but would not be viable due both to its presupposing a knowledge of spoken and written Han, which Zhuang monolinguals do not have and to its being even more complex than the Han script. It must be borne in mind that people are willing to learn the complex Han script, because of the exceedingly high status and communicative functions enjoyed by the Han language. Given prevailing sociolinguistic attitudes among Zhuang-speakers, it is highly doubtful that many people would be prepared to learn something so complex to become literate in a “second-rate” language. Even if they were prepared to, it is doubtful that busy peasants would have time to master thousands complex symbols.

Such a script would vary greatly from area to area due to the great dialectal variation displayed by *fangkuaizi*, as most *fangkuaizi* are a combination of one Han character to represent the meaning and another to represent an approximation to the local Zhuang pronunciation according to either the norms of south-western Mandarin or Guangxi Cantonese. Logically the phonetic components would be interpreted differently in the light of different local Zhuang and Han variants, making it virtually impossible to promote a standard Zhuang pronunciation (e.g. Wuming, or as suggested elsewhere in

this thesis, Mashan). Despite its superficial attractions, I see this system as a non-starter.

If a standardised *fangkuaizi*-based syllabary (just one character representing each syllable along the lines of the Nuosu syllabary) were adopted it would mean that the number of symbols needed would be drastically reduced. Stewart Milliken (personal communication 1994), an American linguist working on a Zhuang-Han-English dictionary, first informed me of this option, which he regarded as a realistic possibility. Given the desirability of a syllabary that could be read off in all dialects, it would be preferable to eliminate phonetic elements altogether and to choose the simplest characters possible to represent each phoneme.

In the case of the simplified Zhuang script, speakers of each dialect would read the Han characters off in their own pronunciation and presumably some Han characters could be read off in a particular Zhuang dialect using several different synonyms. In this way dialectal fragmentation would be accentuated and a standardised Zhuang pronunciation unnecessary. The rendering of a character in one Zhuang dialect would not necessarily have to be a cognate of the rendering in another. In some cases (within some or all dialects) the same Zhuang rendering might be used for different Han characters which are synonyms.

The experience of teaching only Han characters to monolingual, or near monolingual, speakers of minority languages has shown that, in spite of their often being highly motivated, the failure rate is high with a high risk of relapsing into total or partial illiteracy. If they studied the *simplified Zhuang script* they would be learning the same Han characters (which would also serve to help decipher Han texts), but in a much more digestible way. Moreover learning to read, understand and write standard Han would then not be such an impossible task if they already knew the characters from their Zhuang literacy.

6.2.6.6 CLOSING REMARKS

Both Nuosu and Zhuang speakers failed to identify (or only minimally so) with romanised writing systems created by the Chinese state and neither of these have met with success. While it can be argued that many other factors were at play in their

failure, a major reason given in both (very different) contexts by people involved in the promotion (as providers or recipients) was that they were rejected as being alien to the culture and customs of the Zhuang and Nuosu nationalities.

In contrast, ordinary Nuosu people were keen to learn both the traditional complex Nuosu script (before and during the Cultural Revolution) and the standardised Nuosu syllabary (after the Cultural Revolution), despite even the latter being much more complex than the Latin-based alphabet. In the same vein, the Zhuang *fangkuaizi*, which must come close to being one of the most complex writing systems ever used, was popular in Zhuang areas (among a small minority literate in Han) for transcribing different Zhuang dialects and some opponents of the romanisation have even called for *fangkuaizi* to be used on the grounds that it is a traditional system with a long history of use. Likewise the high prestige of ordinary Han characters among the Zhuang have led to calls for a syllabary based on these. Contrary to what one might expect, complexity of the script and hence the degree of ease or hardship in acquiring it, appear to play a negligible role in people's preference for it over another.

6.2.7 THE SPOKEN STANDARD HYPOTHESIS

The more minority language speakers identify with the oral variety chosen as the standard to be promoted, the more successful the promotion of the minority language and script will be. The fact that Nuosu see their oral standard as a positive, unifying element whereas large numbers of Zhuang-speakers see the Wuming-based standard as being an alien language different to theirs, helps explain why Nuosu have much more enthusiastically embraced their script than the Zhuang.

What is being examined here is whether the fact that the Nuosu identify with the standard form of their language being promoted, and the Zhuang do not, has played a significant role in the different outcomes of the promotion. As the acceptance of the Nuosu standard has been virtually unanimous, this section concentrates on discussing the problems of a standard form of Zhuang.

6.2.7.1 IS A UNIFIED STANDARD ZHUANG LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT VIABLE?

In 5B.1.8 I referred to lexical and phonetic differences between the northern and southern dialects and to the relation of Zhuang to other Tai languages. Would it not have been better to have created two different scripts, one for a Southern Zhuang standard of the Central Tai linguistic variants and one for a Northern Zhuang / Bouyei standard of the Northern Tai linguistic variants? Zhuang linguist Chu Zhulin (1986b: 24) sums up the two opposing points of view:

五十年代中国科学院第一语言工作队的同志和地方主要领导同志对创造壮文的必要性以及壮文字母拉丁化都是肯定无疑的,并取得了一致的意见。只是在对待壮语的两个方言问题上,因为壮语的南北两种方言之间不能直接交谈,当时曾经有过两种不同的设想:一种设想是根据方言不同创制两种文字。即方言文字;另一种设想是创制一套统一的文字。两种设想各有利弊,创制一套统一的文字有利于南北方言交流,对发展文化教育事业好处多,有利于民族内部的团结。但南北方言语音差别较大,30%左右的基本词汇不相同,非基础方言的人学习起来比较困难。尤其是壮语没有一个讲壮话的城市为点上的依靠,选择标准音点比较困难,勉强定一城市以外的地方为标准音点的话,难于对各方言起到推动作用。勉强定一城市以外的地方为标准音点的话,难于对各方言起到推动作用。 In the 1950s comrades from the First Work Team of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and local leading comrades unanimously approved beyond all doubt the necessity of creating a Zhuang script and of its using a romanised script. Only on the question of the two dialects of Zhuang, due to the impossibility of direct mutual intelligibility between the Northern and Southern dialects, did two different ways of thinking ever arise. One way of thinking was in favour of creating 2 different scripts, one for each dialect, in other words dialectal scripts. The other way of thinking was the creation of a unified script. Both concepts had their pros and cons: the creation of a unified script is beneficial for communication between speakers of Northern and Southern dialects and has many advantages for developing the cause of culture and education. As about 30% of the basic vocabulary is different, speakers of the non-standard dialects will find hardships in starting to study it. In particular Zhuang has no Zhuang-speaking city to act as a focus of support and to choose a standard pronunciation from a non-urban area is quite hard for each dialect to assume a promoting function.

Most Zhuang linguists (including Chu Zhulin, *ibid*) were quite adamant that Zhuang should be treated as a single unified standard language and argued against any fragmentation of Zhuang into more than one standard language and script. Likewise Zhuang students and cadres I met at Guangxi Nationalities College who had a knowledge of the Zhuang script, or who had been sensitised to its promotion, tended to minimise the dialectal differences, maintaining that these could be easily overcome.

..... 文字要统一,也能统一,规范要一致,也能一致., the script should and can be both unified and standardised. (Wei and Wei, 1980: 26)

Some Zhuang cadres and students did however confess to me that having separate northern and southern standards would be highly desirable and help in the promotion of Zhuang literacy. Ramsey (1987: 236) comments

What is called “Zhuang” should probably be thought of as two closely related languages. Chinese dialectologists, who have surveyed the speech of some seventy Zhuang-speaking localities, report that the dialects fall into two relatively distinct groups, which they term the “northern dialects” and the “southern dialects.” The speech of these two dialect areas is divergent enough to be considered two separate languages, even by the relaxed criteria of mutual intelligibility used in China.

According to the testimony of many Zhuang from many different areas consulted by myself and other sources, a major stumbling block for the success of the promotion of the Zhuang script has been not only the division into the northern and southern variants of Zhuang, but into numerous sub-dialects within the two main dialect areas. Many Zhuang I spoke to considered that they spoke a (Zhuang) dialect, largely unintelligible with other variants of Zhuang, rather than a variety of an all-encompassing Zhuang language.

One of my students of English at Guangxi Nationalities College, on being asked what language he spoke, was visibly embarrassed at having to say (in front of some Han classmates moreover) that he spoke what he obviously considered an inferior patois. His face bright red, he answered “Zhuang dialect”. Interested in seeing how he understood the word “dialect”, I feigned ignorance asking “A dialect of which language?” He was unsure how to answer and seemed to ambiguously insinuate that it was somehow a dialect of Han Chinese in a similar way to Hakka or Cantonese. He was adverse to openly proclaiming that he spoke the Zhuang language. This is not to say that all Zhuang students refused to identify with Zhuang and there were students who had no problem with identifying their mother tongue as the “Zhuang language” and several who were very proud of this.

6.2.7.2 HOW DIFFERENT ARE ZHUANG VARIANTS?

Kaup (2000) comments on the lack of a sense of linguistic unity among the Zhuang (gained after speaking to many Zhuang state employees and members of the public):

Although published sources contend that speakers of the various Zhuang dialects can understand at least 50% of what is said by Zhuang using other dialects, in practice the language barriers have often proved quite difficult to overcome. Though the speakers of

various dialects may have noticed some commonalities if they came into contact with outsiders, the languages were different enough that the peasants did not believe they were speaking different dialects, but that they were using different languages. In the countryside today many peasants still contend that their particular local language is not the same as “Zhuang language”. These vast differences in Zhuang dialects and the lack of a unified written script have clearly limited integration among the Zhuang.

Lu Yonggan (July 2003) supports this view:

... 壮语粗看起来分布不小，可是语言本身和地理环境的因素使它出现许多“语言割据”。人们一旦跨越本土语区，就失去了本土语的使用功能，须寻求为双方共同认可的交际桥梁。天等人去南宁，离县境不久路过隆安的白潮乡，交际就得换用广东话或普通话；武鸣话过不了高峰拗。我们应该承认，壮语真正的使用范围并不很广。狭小的使用范围，影响了壮语的表达能力。 Although at a rough glance Zhuang appears to be widely distributed, due to the linguistic and geographical environment, many separated linguistic communities have emerged. People can cross dialectal boundaries in a very short time, thus being deprived of the functional use of their local speech and must seek to bridge the communication gap in a way that both sides approve of. When people from Tiandeng go to Nanning, soon after crossing the county boundary they pass through Baihu village in Long'an where they have to communicate in Cantonese or Mandarin. The speech of Wuming is unable to go beyond the high peaks. We should recognise that Zhuang's real range of use is not wide. A narrow and small range of use influences the Zhuang language's expressive capacity.

Wei and Wei (1980: 20), linguists involved in describing Zhuang and creating and promoting its script, paint a far more positive picture of the similarities between dialects and how they can be overcome. For example with regard to tonal differences they maintain that:

... 南北各地语音系统大致相同. 南北各地都有整齐对应的八个调类, 并且第七, 八两个调类的调值各地也都相同。其他各个调类, 在各土地和邻近几个土语调值相同或基本相同的也很多. 调类相同这一点对各地学习统一的一套壮文是很有好处的。南部方言虽然有一些地方多分化出一两个调类, 但是都有明显的条件, 那就是同声母和介词有关系。而且分化出来的调类包括的词数很少。 The phonetic system of the Northern and Southern dialects is on the whole the same. There is a neat correspondence between the 8 tonal categories of both main varieties and moreover the tone pitch of the seventh and eighth tonal categories is identical. Many of the remaining tonal categories of the speech variants of many areas and neighbourhoods are identical or almost identical. Such tonal uniformity is advantageous for people of all dialects when studying the unified Zhuang script. Although there is tonal divergence between several tonal categories within the Southern dialectal area, that is due to identical initial consonants and prepositions and in any case the number of words included in these differentiated tonal categories are very few.

By way of analogy it should be borne in mind that even the tones of different dialects of Mandarin (for example between Beijing and Tianjin) vary a lot, without totally hindering communication.

When linguists involved in Zhuang language planning talk of the percentage of shared lexical items between Zhuang dialects, although in many cases they are referring to items which are identical in all respects, in many cases they are referring to related cognates with different tones and /or pronunciation. Considering cognates as shared items, we could consider the English “two” or Dutch and Low German “twee” as shared lexical items of the High German “zwei”. However, ordinary people, not motivated to seek out etymological similarities with variants they may regard with hostility, may not perceive historically related, but phonetically different, cognates as “shared items”. To expect ordinary laymen, moreover unmotivated ones, to accept their explanations and overcome these sound shifts is highly unrealistic.

6.2.7.3 CHOICE OF UNIFIED STANDARD

Just before Zhuang was again promoted in the 1980s, Wei and Wei (1980: 24-25)’s advice (quoted in 5B.2.7) to adapt a standard pronunciation based on that of Mashan rather than that of Wuming was not heeded, unwisely I think, as the former has more features common to a greater variety of other dialects (both northern and southern). Although the standard variety of Zhuang was theoretically based on the phonetic variety of Wuming, even speakers there could not identify fully with it.

There are a number of differences between the sounds that are actually spoken in Wuming, say, and those that are supposed to be standard. Wuming for example, has a few contrasts between the sounds *qy-* and *y-*, but in the standard language these distinctions are ignored. ... In Wuming the phonemes *b* and *d* are pronounced [qb] and [qd]; in some other localities the glottalization also appears before *m* and *n* in initial position. (Ramsey, 1987: 236)

Wei and Wei (1980: 26) state that the kind of Zhuang to serve as a model for the top-down promotion should be the standard variety in all dialect areas:

在恢复推行壮文中，所有壮文课本报刊，词 [should be 辞] 书和全区行的来往公文等，一律使用统一规范的标准语：壮文专业干部、教师、壮语广播播音员、壮剧演员也严格要求使用标准语，..... When reinitiating the promotion of the Zhuang script, all text books, magazines, dictionaries and official documents throughout the whole Autonomous Region should as a rule be in the unified standard language: Zhuang cadres specialised in the Zhuang script, teachers, Zhuang language radio announcers and actors of Zhuang theatre/opera should be strictly requested to use the standard language,...

6.2.7.4 DEGREE OF PERMISSIVENESS TOWARDS DIALECTAL FORMS

Although various sources complain that the promotion insensitively imposed the Wuming standard, Wei and Wei (ibid) continue (from the end of the previous quote) that:

.....群众,干部和学生可做一般要求.各地壮族群众脱离了壮文文盲以后,应允许带有些本地特点的壮文在小范围内使用。规范的标准语要因势利导,稳步前进。有了几千年修久历史的汉文尚且如此,何况刚创立不久的壮文,更不宜要求太严。

... However, only modest demands should be made on the general public, cadres and students. After Zhuang people in each area have been made literate, they should - within a limited scope - be allowed to use a form of the Zhuang script with some local features, and the standard language should be progressively employed according to circumstances. If this is the case of the Han script which has a history of thousands of years, it will be all the more that of the recently created Zhuang script, and so demands should not be too strict.

Here are prominent authors involved in Zhuang language planning emphasising that newly literates should not feel alienated by having to learn a variety (that of Wuming) too unlike their own. Instead they emphasise that newly literates should be able to identify with the new script and use it too express their own idiom, envisaging a gradual dissemination of the standard language and script from above. Thus in top-down activities the standard is to be popularised as much as possible, but in bottom-up (more grass-roots) literacy activities there is ample room for using local non-standard dialectal pronunciations and lexical forms in order that the general newly literate public identify with the script and don't regard it as something totally alien. The bottom-up use of dialectal synonyms was discussed in 6.2.3.

In Wales a limited output of pure dialect writing exists alongside the majority of writing based on a more neutral standardised Welsh (which can also be regionally "flavoured" without anyone questioning the unity of the language), but the standardised language is not based on any particular area as in the case of Zhuang. Often southern and northern Welsh variants are treated as synonyms in standard Welsh, even if one is more associated with the standard language. In Valencia we have a situation where Valencian, a standardised form of western Catalan, is based on clearly Valencian norms without straying too far from the standard eastern Catalan norms which are promoted in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. A large number of people, especially intellectuals, accept this and display a high degree of tolerance towards regional forms of other areas. Perhaps more in keeping with the negative reaction of speakers of some Zhuang

dialects to the promotion of what they perceive as an “alien language” is the rejection by some users of Valencian (influenced by the “blaver” movement) of vocabulary which they perceive as being too “Catalan”.

Wei and Wei (1980: 26) asserted in 1980, when the relaunching of Zhuang was imminent:

在壮族地区推行壮文,可从本地语音特别是从本地调值入手,对标准语的学习不应要求太急太严。 When promoting the Zhuang script in Zhuang areas, one could start with the local tonal characteristics and not be too strict or demanding when it comes to learning the standard variant.

and go on to say that those involved in the promotion of standard Zhuang should hereafter “...多做各地语音和词汇的对比研究工作。 / ... carry out more comparative research work into the pronunciation and lexis of each different district” (ibid) with the aim of helping dialect speakers to master the standard. They lament that during the first phase such work was only done in 5 areas and advocate that future work should be in more depth and be strongly orientated towards teaching standard Zhuang in areas of different speech varieties.

This demonstrates a pragmatic awareness that trying to insist too suddenly on a unified standard, when most Zhuang speakers identify much more strongly with their local dialectal variants, could lead to speakers of non-standard forms ignoring or opposing the promotion. These same authors also argued in favour of extending the use of forms from different dialects as synonyms in the standardised language and (ibid) maintain:

但在各地教学和使用中,也要有一定的灵活性,是壮文得到健康地发展。 However, in each area where it is taught and used, there should also be a certain amount of flexibility in order for the Zhuang script to have a healthy development.

With regard to the standard language of Bouyei, it was decided to adopt the same script as Zhuang, taking into account regional differences.

6.2.7.5 CREATING A (LOW STATUS) STANDARD FROM DIVERGENT LOW-PRESTIGE DIALECTS

Chen Zhulin (1986b: 27) rather optimistically reported, after some 5 years of the second phase of the promotion, that the dialect rift was gradually being bridged.

尤其是1980年恢复推行以来,南北放言区采用了统一的壮文教材,通过学习,南北放言区的人不仅可以用书面语进行交际,还可以直接对话。这就是共同书面语使口语走向一致的良好开端。Especially after the resumption of the promotion in 1980, both southern and northern dialectal areas have employed unified Zhuang-language teaching materials. After a period of study, speakers of both southern and northern dialects are not only able to communicate by way of the written language but also orally [via the standardised language]. This is the beginning of the beneficial unifying effect of the written standard on the spoken language.

During the whole course of the promotion it has been necessary to continually justify the promotion in areas outside Wuming by stressing that all Zhuang speakers, of both southern and northern variants, could cope with the unified standard. For example Wei and Wei (1980: 3-4) mention as an achievement that in the 1980s in a commune of Heng County (where the southern dialect is spoken) some primary schools employed Zhuang directly to read “Revolutionary Tales of Guangxi” and other supplementary reading materials and that in the brigade of Dongmen (东门) in Fuhuan County (扶绥县) where the southern dialect is spoken, Zhuang literacy classes were organised for 3,241 people and excellent results obtained after a month.

The linguistic distance between northern and southern Zhuang dialects (and even between some sub-dialects) is not unlike that between dialects of High and Low German between which there are a regular series of sound shifts and other correspondences as well as less logical and explainable differences. Whereas a speaker of a Low German dialect or even Dutch is often motivated enough to work out the correspondences and to understand and even speak High German (long the prestigious official standard and lingua franca), on the whole speakers of the latter tend to be less motivated to decipher linguistic systems that they consider to be inferior. However, in situations where Low German variants are prestigious this can be reversed: many High German speakers who settled in South Africa were motivated to integrate quickly and effectively into the Afrikaans-speaking community.

Successfully creating a unified standard language for a continuum of dialects requires a large degree of political and ethnic coherence, consciousness and unity. Such conditions enabled the successful creation and diffusion of standard German (Hochdeutsch). The Zhuang do not fulfil these conditions. In contrast the dialectal differences in the Nuosu speech area are not so great and the chief barriers that exist between the *suondi* and other dialects have been largely overcome, because of the high degree of common ethnic consciousness.

Just as Plattdeutsch speakers and speakers of Schwyzerdeutsch can communicate after familiarising themselves with standard German, if all Zhuang speakers were to conscientiously study standard written Zhuang and its corresponding spoken form, I am sure that mutual intelligibility would make great strides in a short time. The problem is that standard Zhuang does not have the motivating and unifying effect of standard German and most Zhuang speakers –unlike Nuosu speakers- look towards standard Han Chinese for this unifying function.

As Zhuang speakers are not so motivated, I think the adoption of a single standard helped to spell the death of the promotion of a standardised oral and written form and with it to create Zhuang literacy (at least for the time being!). Even had two standard forms been created (the northern standard being close to that of Bouyei), strong differences between southern, and to a lesser extent northern, sub-dialects would surely have still caused considerable controversy, since many Zhuang consider these sub-dialects to be totally different languages.

6.2.7.6 GROWTH OF HAN AS INTER-DIALECTAL LINGUA FRANCA IN CORE ZHUANG AREAS

It is easy to assume that Zhuang speakers who live far from concentrations of Han speakers will have little or no contact with the spoken Han language (apart from television and the wireless) because they are surrounded by other almost exclusively Zhuang-speaking counties. However, many Zhuang speakers regard neighbouring counties (or even some areas within their own counties) as speaking mutually unintelligible languages from their own. Given the lack of ethnic coherence and consciousness amongst most Zhuang and a much stronger identification with their locality and its linguistic variety than with the Zhuang nationality and language as a

whole, many Zhuang are not motivated to make the effort to bridge dialectal gaps. Speakers who have no knowledge of Han will logically be better motivated to use their native language to talk to speakers of other varieties when the need arises. A lot of Zhuang speakers competent in Han, however, have the tendency to speak to speakers of other Zhuang varieties in Han, claiming that they cannot understand them or at least that they have great problems in understanding them. This was the case of some of my Zhuang students at Guangxi Nationalities Institute and Guangxi Teachers' College. Kaup (2000:176) likewise observes:

The Zhuang students I met in Nanning at the Guangxi Nationalities Institute, and in Beijing at the Central Nationalities Institute, said they were not willing to speak the Zhuang language with other Zhuang who were not from their own locality. The students in Nanning would not speak Zhuang with classmates from neighboring counties, but usually only with those from within their particular county. "It just feels weird," one student explained. "It's just easier to speak Han to them than to awkwardly try to use Zhuang." These same students instantly switched to their local Zhuang dialect, however, when they met someone from their own county. The use of the local dialect was clearly viewed as a type of bonding experience that separated the two speakers from surrounding listeners. Whenever I was with Zhuang in the city who ran into other Zhuang from their locality, they would beam and explain that they were *laoxiang*, which can be loosely translated as "village brothers" There was no similar response when Zhuang speakers from other areas were heard conversing.

Up until now widespread ignorance of Han language has limited this trend, but as the Han language spreads slowly but unstoppably into the furthest corners of the South-west its use as a lingua franca among speakers of different Zhuang variants will grow. In contrast Nuosu speakers from different areas are much more ready to communicate in Nuosu (even if they know Han) than their Zhuang counterparts are in Zhuang. I must point out though, that a minority of my Zhuang students who had positive feelings towards their ethnic identity and towards the Zhuang script and its promotion were willing to go against the current and speak with students from neighbouring counties, and further afield, in Zhuang.

6.2.7.6 CLOSING REMARKS

Although the Nuosu public generally does not identify with speakers of other varieties of Yi, this does not effect the acceptance of the linguistic policy, because the language promoted is Nuosu (normally referred to as "Liangshan Yi"): it is neither some other kind of Yi, nor an attempt to create a hybrid of Nuosu and other Yi languages. Among the Nuosu dialects, only just over half a million speakers of *suondi* have to make a

serious effort to understand the standard promoted variety, but according to informants, they have made the effort to do so and as a result of the promotion the knowledge of standard Nuosu among *suondi*-speakers has increased dramatically. All speakers of Nuosu varieties consider themselves to be Nuosu and have a high degree of ethnic consciousness, but do not feel a special sense of ethnic affinity with speakers of other Yi languages. In contrast, extremely few Zhuang speakers outside of Wuming County identify with the variety of standardised Zhuang being promoted.

Firstly, as was seen in 6.2.1, a large proportion of central and northern Tai speakers do not even identify with the concept of Zhuang nationality. Secondly, there are large differences (real and perceived) between northern and southern dialects, and even often between their sub-dialects, and the officially promoted variety is based on the northern dialect. If pan-Zhuang ethnic consciousness were sufficiently strong between the speakers of the 2 dialects and their sub-dialects, the 14-40% of (see Kaup: 36-37) vocabulary which the southern dialects do not share with the promoted form of the northern dialect and the phonetic differences, while still posing a challenge, would probably not be an insurmountable obstacle. However, many speakers of the southern dialect reason “Why should I go to so much trouble to learn a language with which I don’t identify, when I could just learn Han Mandarin, the key to success”?

6.2.8 THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

The more the minority language and script being promoted are perceived by the speech community as a possible vehicle of economic development and socioeconomic progress, the more enthusiastically they will embrace mother-tongue literacy. . The Nuosu have in part been more motivated than the Zhuang to embrace their script, because they see it as a practical instrument to better themselves. In contrast most Zhuang see the only escape from poverty through Han.

Here the question is explored if rural Nuosu who are illiterate in Han have (or think they might have) benefited from materials in the promoted script informing them about technical innovations, public health, accountancy and other matters of interest—unlike their Zhuang counterparts. Also of relevance is whether parents feel that a bilingual education equips their children better technically and socioeconomically for life in

modern free-market China than a Han-only one and whether abstract, modern, technical and scientific ideas and concepts can be adequately transmitted through Zhuang or Nuosu.

6.2.8.1 LITERACY AND EMPOWERMENT

The ideological (as opposed to the “autonomous”) model of literacy supported by Street (1995 and 2003), and discussed in 4.1.2 and 6.1.2, implies that literacy can be used for different ideological ends. There is nothing intrinsically “liberating” about literacy *per se*, which can be used by those in power either to oppress and keep happy the disadvantaged or to empower and encourage them to further their own political, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic ends.

The traditional Nuosu script was used to pass on the secrets of the bimo from one generation to the next. Traditional Han literacy was used to propagate and inculcate Confucianist, Taoist, Buddhist, and in the 20th Century, Marxist-Maoist ideals. It is undisputed that modern state Chinese education aims to ideologically mould children into loyal and obedient citizens of a CCP-dominated state. In the context of minority groups such as the Nuosu and Zhuang, it also aims to integrate them fully into Han-dominated modern China.

In contrast, there are examples of literacy movements, principally bottom-up, which aim at empowering disadvantaged communities. Among minority language speakers these initiatives have often aimed at creating functions for community literacy in the minority language and access to literacy in the majority language in ways which seek to enable minority language speakers to take control over their lives without denigrating their language and culture. Hornberger (1997: 360-362) affirms that case studies of diverse bottom-up literacy campaigns among speakers of Amerindian languages show that the newly literate population of these marginalised linguistic minorities perceives such empowering promotions as an opportunity for, and a passport to, socioeconomic and political advancement. Hornberger (*ibid*: 362) quotes examples of such “empowerment”:

Children are empowered - they are more communicative and secure and less inhibited when their education is bilingual and intercultural, in great contrast to the repression of the past.... Teachers are empowered - to become cultural brokers, reflective educators,

and community leaders.... Authors are empowered - “the creativity Guarani writers showed when preparing literacy materials in their own language.... is a proof of how an indigenous language can become both a pedagogical and a personal and social mobilizing resource.” [Quote from López 1997: 341-342]... Communities are empowered - “members of each ethnic group investigate their own cultures, not simply for the benefit of the social sciences, but also to contribute to the preservation of their cultures and to help their communities understand themselves” [Quote from Salines 1997:182] ... Peoples are empowered - literacy for the Mayan peoples is no longer the route to obliteration (*alfabetizarse para desaparecer*) or to integration (*alfabetizarse para integrarse*), but rather to self-realization (*alfabetizarse para ser nosotros mismos*) [a reference to Richards and Richards 1997]... . Importantly, the empowerment envisaged is one that confirms indigenous identity, language, and culture, while simultaneously promoting development and modernization for the indigenous peoples.

Hornberger (ibid: 362), referring to Godenzzi (1997), warns that

.... the model of development intended here is not the traditional top-down western assimilationist one, but rather a model of openness, mutual negotiation, and consensus among diverse sociocultural groups in a society - a consensus “in which the word of the oppressed has audience and consequence” (Godenzzi). This model of development is consistent with, for example, the insistence of the Guarani People’s Assembly that the introduction of bilingual education in the schools be closely linked in theory and in practice to the general Guarani development plan [a reference to López (1997)] .. .

6.2.8.2 CONNECTION BETWEEN LITERACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Throughout the literature on literacy efforts in China, the connection between socioeconomic development on the one hand and literacy and education on the other has been stressed. Most reports see effective, properly orientated literacy as helping illiterate peasants, a majority of whom are women, better themselves. Zhang Zhaowen (1997) –of the Department of Adult Education of the State Education Commission- reports that

Before the implementation of the household responsibility system in the rural areas of China, the content of literacy education consisted of political education, general education and technical education, with priority placed on general education. Afterwards, the content of literacy education has gradually changed with the changes occurring in the economic and social spheres. In many localities the authorities in charge of literacy work have readjusted its content in the light of the needs of production and daily life of the learners. Thus, it not only includes knowledge and skills related to character-recognition, reading, writing, keeping accounts, focusing on literacy and numeracy, but also includes knowledge related to civics, production skills, common knowledge related to daily life, personal hygiene and health care. With the introduction of the responsibility system and a shift to a market economy, the weight of knowledge and skills related to production has become much greater in the curricula in many localities.

Thus, with the realisation that a poverty-stricken population can hardly make a useful contribution to their development and that literacy and higher educational standards promote a better educated and skilled work-force (in turn contributing to economic development) the empowering discourse in literacy work has grown. Since the 1980s

China has collaborated actively with UNESCO –a body which has itself in recent years increasingly advocated types of literacy aiming at empowerment of the poor and disadvantaged, especially those in rural areas, concentrating particularly on the problems of women and ethnic minorities. A UNESCO report from around 2000 (“Innovative Approaches to Functional Education for Poverty Alleviation in China”) stated

It is widely recognized that poverty and illiteracy are intrinsically interrelated, and that education is one of the most efficient ways to empower the poor. In the past decades, China has made great efforts to reduce poverty through education. But as a country with the largest population in the world and limited educational expenditures, China still lags behind in the pursuit of universal literacy.

In a report (“Multi-Channel Literacy for Women Farmers,” UNESCO, 1985) on a UNESCO-led functional literacy programme in Yunnan, Xinjiang and Guizhou, socioeconomic empowerment of poor peasant women was explicitly stated as being the main aim.

The model works on the assumption that literacy materials alone do not guarantee an improvement in women’s productivity, but that education for development must reinforce women’s self esteem at the same time. These programmes promote the role of women as good wives and mothers, productive workers and active members of society. “The idea” says Aksornkool, “is that literacy boosts these women’s confidence in themselves and in their abilities. At the same time, the courses build their capacity to take advantage of opportunities that can lead to financial and psychological independence.”

In an investigation of literacy between 1949 and 1980 for China as a whole, Seeberg (1990: Chapter 5 and 277-280) found that Social Demand for education (an aggregation of individual decisions about participating in education, based on private needs and aspirations, but affected by institutional and structural constraints –e.g. availability of schooling and labour market conditions- and informational flows about them) is determined by socio-economic incentives and cultural context. She concludes (ibid: 278) that even in a “centrally-planned totalitarian state” such as China

...despite the omnipresence of the mechanisms of social control, private decisions to participate or not in an educational activity were not only made but also had a macro-effect that counteracted the force of state control.

If this was the case up till 1980, under a collective system where peasants were largely denied the power to make economic decisions, then it has become much more so since the decollectivisation of agriculture and stimulation of rural commodity production

from 1983-4 with its responsibility system whereby households have to take their own economic decisions. This latter system had a deep effect on the way in which peasant households valued literacy education. Peterson, also referring to China as a whole, (1997: 153) puts it thus

Under the collective system, with its emphasis upon food-grain production, local self-sufficiency, and the near absence of commercially based exchange, peasants were required to master a series of relatively uniform and interchangeable basic literacy skills – what I earlier termed ‘workpoint literacy’ – in order to carry out their responsibilities as team members. And since both geographical and social mobility were tightly constricted under the collective system, there were few opportunities and outlets for literate expression available beyond the boundaries of the collective. But with decollectivisation, literacy had become a potential ingredient in mobility strategies and a significant factor in determining the economic choices available to peasants and their families. And with peasants increasingly able to travel and even relocate, the scope for additional forms of literate expression, economic and otherwise, was substantially greater than before. Operating in the future as ‘comparatively independent commodity producer[s]’, peasant households would be more ‘free to choose what they want to produce *in the light of their own special skills and abilities*’ (Guangming Ribao, 5th Jan. 1983).

It was envisaged that a growth of rural entrepreneurs would lead to a demand for literate rural workers with specialised business, managerial and technical skills. Peterson (1997: Ch.10) distinguishes between short and long-term effects of literacy, the former being fairly uniform throughout China and the latter varying greatly according to ever-widening regional distribution of economic resources and opportunities (the effects thus being different in a backward mountainous area like Liangshan or western Guangxi and in a developed area like the Sichuan basin or the Pearl River Delta).

After an initial revival in literacy programmes from 1977 to 1981, China-wide enrolments fell and dropout rates rose in adult literacy classes and rural schools from 1982 (especially among females), leading to a significant slowdown in literacy acquisition. Peterson (1997: 157-158) reports that whereas over 26 million people were made literate in the 4 years of the former period, only 19 million became literate in the 7 years from 1982 to 1990 and that the quality and length of schooling in many poor rural areas was very limited. The “responsibility system” was extended to education and adult literacy and central government financing reduced (despite increasing central control over content and standards), with greater burdens being placed on lower levels of government and the families themselves.

Families now began to view the economic benefits of schooling and literacy in a different light.

Literacy was now, in theory, a potential ingredient in family-based mobility strategies. In cases where households pursued economic strategies involving regular commercial activity or the acquisition of technical skills associated with these undertakings. Local governments attempted to meet such demand by vastly increasing the number and range of short-term specialized training classes for adults. Equally important, however, was the fact that the responsibility system often had the opposite effect on popular demand for literacy. The system also encouraged families to rely upon the intensification of field labour to increase household income. In such cases, household income rose by devoting less, not more, time to educational pursuits. In such cases rural income rose by devoting less, not more, time to educational pursuits. Believing that 'study is useless' (*dushu meiyou yong*) many parents in the reform era withdrew their children from school for the opportunity to earn quick money. Likewise rural industrialization and the sudden lure of factory labour drew many children out of school. (Peterson, 1997: 159)

Peterson (1997:169) reports that even in affluent cities of the Pearl Delta, dropout rates were high, especially among girls, because of child labour and that after 1991 (when the compulsory education law was enforced fairly strictly) school attendance improved, but certainly did not become universal. If literacy figures for 2002 are to be believed, then 95.1% of Chinese males (99.2% of those aged 15-24) and 86.5% of Chinese females (98.5% of those aged 15-24) are literate. I remain sceptical that social demand has been so efficiently controlled by enforcement of school attendance and suspect, as do authors such as Belde (1992), Riedlinger (1989) and Seeberg (1990), that rural literacy in Han areas is often an extremely limited literacy and is far from universal.

6.2.8.3 ACCESS TO LITERACY AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

In the literature advocating the promotion of Zhuang and Nuosu literacy, development of pride in the minority community, culture and language is often cited in combination with grass-roots economic development of a kind whose momentum comes from within the community and which benefits the disadvantaged rural masses. The spreading of mother tongue literacy is generally seen as a necessary prerequisite for economic development which benefits the minority language community without alienating them. This is not to say that such a scenario is necessarily favoured by the majority of cadres or demanded by most speakers of these languages, but it is a constant leitmotiv mentioned by those involved in the promotions.

An alternative and infinitely more influential discourse is that Han is the only language that really matters economically and should either be learnt directly as soon as possible (minority language scripts are superfluous) or via mother-tongue literacy (minority language scripts to be used as an aid to learning Han and discarded).

Zhuang (to a limited extent) and Nuosu literacy have thus been presented as facilitating immediate, but second-best access to modern technical skills and knowledge. At the same time their promotion has taken into account local literacies, resulting from communities adapting literacy to their own benefits according to their own cultural and social needs.

Yao Changdao (personal communication 1994 and 1995), for many years head of the Liangshan Committee for Minority Languages and Scripts, was of the opinion that (together with the correct and consequent implementation of the Party's linguistic policy and the use of the standardised script Nuosu) "economic construction is the main propelling force of the spreading of the Yi script." In the discussion on literacy campaigns in Liangshan in 6.2.3, I referred to the arguments of Maheimujia and Yao Changdao about how the literacy campaigns in the Nuosu script were closely linked to socioeconomic development:

我们从建国40年来的彝文普及速度最快的两个时期的共同特点中看到:经济建设是促进彝文普及的主要推动力。In the 40 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, there have been two periods when the diffusion of the Yi script has taken place quickly. These 2 periods have in common that economic construction has been the main propelling force of the spreading of the Yi script. (Maheimujia and Yao Changdao, 1994 : 40)

6.2.8.4 PROBLEMS OF HAN-MEDIUM LITERACY PROGRAMMES

For proponents of the principal of equality of languages, all speakers of non-Han languages (even those fully bilingual in Han) ought to have access to technical knowledge in their own language. It would seem logical (although apparently not to the authorities in Guangxi and many parts of south-western China) that even those who do not believe in this principal should, for pragmatic reasons alone, realise that in largely monolingual non-Han communities, Han-based literacy initiatives will not have much of an empowering effect and instead support minority language literacy initiatives.

For example, Madaren (personal communication 1994), the 90 year old Black Nuosu from Zhaojue mentioned elsewhere, who had studied traditional Nuosu texts from childhood, gave the example of a Nuosu village where a Han language literacy campaign was initiated in 1958. He claimed that the vast majority of the participants, aged under 40, were unable to understand a single Han character on completion of the course, making it highly unlikely they would ever read anything written in Han. Even the tiny minority, who had succeeded in learning some Han characters, had already forgotten them after a few years. In 1987, in contrast, the Nuosu script was promoted and seven years later, about a hundred people (in this tiny village of unknown population) were already capable of reading the Nuosu edition of the *Liangshan Daily*, which carries lots of information on subjects such as agriculture, herding, public health and accountancy..

6.2.8.5 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, LITERACY AND THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

The abysmally low school attendance among Nuosu students, especially girls, which was described in 5C.2.9 and 5C.2.10 and the likewise low attendance rates among Zhuang pupils described in 5B.2.4.6 and 5B.2.6, are recognised by most supporters of the promotion as having a very negative economic effect on the economy. Not only are drop-outs and non-attenders extremely likely to end up illiterate (unless they attend an adult literacy centre, which many Nuosu at least do), they are more likely to remain in poverty as a consequence.

In 6.1, I quoted extensively from Lu Ruichang (1992: 68-69) commenting on the low school attendance and astronomically high drop out rates in Baise Prefecture, in the heartland of the core monolingual Zhuang-speaking area. He (ibid) sums up the terrible consequences of monolingual Han-medium education on the economy thus:

虽然多年来，我们耗费了巨大的人力，物力，财力，但教育的社会效益很低，严重地阻碍了壮族聚居地区的经济发展，阻碍了社会的进步和人民群众文化素质的提高。究竟原因在哪里？Despite having expended vast resources in manpower, materials and financing, the effect of education on society has been minimal, seriously hindering both the economic development of the majority Zhuang areas, social progress and an improvement in the quality of the education of the masses. What's the reason for this state of affairs?

This representative of one of the main education authorities of a Zhuang-speaking area could not be blunter. He then goes on to answer his own question (ibid: 69):

根本的原因是经济落后, 制约着教育的更快发展, 直接的原因是语言的障碍, 使壮族聚居地区的教育与经济陷入可怕的穷愚轮回,这在少数民族地区是不容忽视的问题。The underlying reason is economic backwardness which restricts the faster development of education and the immediate reason is the language barrier which has caused the education and economy of majority Zhuang areas to sink into terrible interacting poverty and ignorance. This is a problem which cannot be ignored in minority areas.

The following comments of Ma Muju (1999: 200) on the extremely low participation of Nuosu from core Nuosu areas in the educational system is a shattering condemnation of how education has been carried out in Liangshan. Rarely does one see such sharp criticism in linguistic articles of people and politicians still in power and I can only conclude that he must have had influential friends within the administration. He translates the low attendance statistics (presented in 5B) into stark terms:

以上这些数据并非只是一些单纯的数字显示,它意味着一个民族的前途和命运,意味着我们的民族到了下个世纪依然只能是锄头加犁头,扁担粪桶,负出艰辛的劳动代价后才勉强维持温饱! 其实,这种急患用不着预测学方法来论证和判断。The foregoing data are not just merely figures, they hint at a whole nationality's future and fate and imply that our nationality at the threshold of the next century is still just capable of hoeing, ploughing, shouldering manure buckets on poles and bearing the arduous cost of hard labour in order to barely keep themselves clothed and fed! In fact there is no need for academic forecasting to expound, prove and judge this kind of urgent calamity.

Continuing as to the possibility of Liangshan establishing and developing successful enterprises Ma (ibid) is extremely pessimistic:

凉山彝区曾经林立的乡镇企业不到几年时间如今已所剩无几,究其原因,不能仅仅归咎于市场的疲软,而应该同时看看这批企业工人队伍中的文盲人数.企业要想靠靠文盲半文盲充斥的工人队伍在竞争中站稳脚跟,当然是难上加难了。After just a few years, few of the once numerous village and township enterprises of Yi areas of Liangshan remain today. When investigating the reason for this, one cannot simply lay the blame on a sluggish market, but should at the same time take a look at the extent of illiteracy among the workforce. If enterprises want to rely on a workforce full of illiterates and semi-literates it will of course be extremely hard to gain a foothold in the competitive world.”

Regarding social effects of a high drop-out rate (which he reports increasing between 1996 and 1999) on rural Nuosu society, Ma Muju (1999: 201) mentions (commenting

on the situation in the late 1990s) that many of the school drop-outs are not willing to go back to the countryside, instead drifting to hang around small and big urban centres where in the course of time they often easily turn to bad ways, especially drugs and crime. A senior Nuosu police detective in Kunming informed me in 2005 that Nuosu migrants were among the most hardened criminals and I have heard similar reports about Chengdu and also how Nuosu are discriminated against in the latter (Heberer, personal communication, 2004). Ma (ibid) reports an increase in drop-out rates over the years 1996 to 1999.

6.2.8.6 LACK OF TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED ZHUANG AND NUOSU GRADUATES

Technically qualified graduates at secondary or tertiary level could contribute considerably to the economy of the monolingual rural areas, provided of course, that they return there and do not seek work in urbanised Han areas, a tendency likely to be greater the more highly qualified they are.

In further education, there was a lack of Zhuang with technical and scientific training. For example between 1982 and 1984 the average number of inhabitants of all nationalities (approximately a third of whom were Zhuang) in Guangxi in universities and equivalent institutions fell from 6.7 to 6.0 per 10,000 inhabitants, the lowest figure of all 5 of the autonomous regions of China according to Chen Zhulin 1986b: 21). If Han and other nationalities are excluded from this figure, then only 3 in every 10,000 is in Higher Education. Chen Zhulin (ibid) laments that such a backward education system inevitably affects socioeconomic construction, which, in spite of generous economic help from the central government, is doomed to failure and concludes that the cause of backwardness in Zhuang areas is having ignored the Zhuang script.

In Nuosu areas the situation was no better. In 1992 there were fewer than 2,400 minority nationality students in Liangshan matriculated in institutions of higher education and just under 7,000 in technical secondary schools. These figures include also other non-Han speakers in Liangshan (such as speakers of Tibetan, Prmi, Naze and non-Nuosu Yi languages), typically some Hui and hanised nationalities from other parts of China, as well as Yi nationality students who are totally Han in speech and culture. Thus the number of genuine Nuosu-speakers who make it past the secondary stage is very low. The feeling of many educationalists and linguists is that, if bilingual

education had been fully and wholeheartedly put into practice, more Nuosu would have made it into higher and further education.

6.2.8.7 FINAL THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE CHOICE AND GRASS-ROOTS DEVELOPMENT

There is thus a consensus among linguists and many others involved in minority work that only through the extensive use of their mother-tongue can rural minority language speakers gain effective access to basic knowledge which can enable them to improve their economic situation. Stites (1999: 124) succinctly sums up this view

Without mother tongue instruction, China cannot possibly enrol and keep monolingual linguistic minority children in school. Without providing minority children with instruction in *Putonghua*, the Chinese party/state cannot socialize these children into the political cultural and economic mainstream of Chinese society, nor can it provide them with the skills and knowledge needed to support the development goals of the Four Modernisations.

6.2.8.8 LITERACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN LIANGSHAN

Referring to the spontaneous popular learning of the Nuosu script from about 1956 onwards, Maheimujia and Yao Changdao (1994) comment that without the needs of the new situation of economic development, this wave of popular enthusiasm for learning and using the Yi script would never have sprung up. After the Cultural Revolution this first phase of spontaneous literacy acquisition impressed the people responsible for literacy campaigns, because the literacy campaigns of the 1980s were considered as an integral part of the *4 modernisations* (the programme of economic and technical development launched after the prolonged disruption of the Cultural Revolution). Thus the organisms in Liangshan with responsibility for the promotion and teaching of the Nuosu script concluded that Nuosu language literacy campaigns should be used to propagate the scientific and technical knowledge which the Nuosu -speaking inhabitants of Liangshan needed to be able to better their economic lot.

这样做, 因为把对农民的识字, 文化教育同他们的经济利益紧密连在一起, 使他们学到使用知识,提高了他们的学习热情,从而推动了扫盲,也成为巩固扫盲成果的最有效的方法; This method of closely linking the learning of reading and cultural education of the peasants with their economic interests makes them use their knowledge, increases their enthusiasm to learn and thus promotes the literacy campaigns. It is the most efficient method of consolidating the results of the literacy campaigns. (Maheimujia and Yao Changdao, 1994: 41)

And indeed in an article aimed at motivating cadres to enforce the “Working Regulations on the Yi Script in 1994”, Liangshan Prefecture People's Government

(1994 a: 5): stated the necessity of consolidating the literacy work of the 12 counties and municipal areas where Nuosu illiteracy has been basically eradicated in a way which would directly benefit the newly literate Nuosu peasants:

成教部门今后应特别注意同有关部门紧密合作。把学习文化同学习农业科学技术有机地接合起来进行, 促进农村经济更快地发展。 Departments responsible for adult education should from now on pay special attention to closely cooperating with the relevant departments to organically link literacy work with agricultural science and technology, thus promoting the faster development of the rural economy.

The same source was not only concerned with peasants and grass-roots cadres becoming literate in Nuosu to be able to read the new technical material, but also with training Nuosu cadres in departments working with agriculture to become completely fluent in the Nuosu script in order to be able to work with technical and scientific Nuosu language reading materials, if the work of spreading the education of agricultural technology in core Nuosu areas where Han is little understood was to be actively developed. After these agricultural experts had become responsible for producing reading materials about agricultural technology, peasants would have Nuosu translations by agricultural experts. This government document goes on to affirm that such work could have no chance of success if carried out in Han:

当前, 彝语文是在彝族农村进行农业科技教育的不可替代的交际工具。 At present, the Yi language and script are an irreplaceable tool for carrying out technical agricultural education. [People's Government of Liangshan Prefecture (1994 a: 6)]

Maheimujia and Yao Changdao (1994: 40-41) describe the way in which the technical knowledge and the literacy classes were combined:

凉山把“双普”工作, 既普及彝文的学习和使用, 普及科技知识并实际运用的工作结合起来进行的基本作法是:

第一, 首先在扫盲课本及扫盲后继续教育各种课本中编入一定分量的科技常识, 并举办农民技术夜校专门学习农技知识。迄今为止, 教育部门共已发行扫盲课本近200万册。

第二, 州编译局主要针对扫盲后的需要, 与有关部门合作, 系统地编译针对凉山实际的农牧科技读物, ...

The work in Liangshan of “double-propagation” of the learning and use of the Yi script on the one hand and of technical and scientific knowledge applied simultaneously to the reality of the work situation on the other hand, was carried out in two basic ways:

First of all a certain amount of elementary technical and scientific facts were inserted into all kinds of literacy texts and post-literacy reading matter (to consolidate and develop the knowledge of the newly literate) and technology night classes were organised for peasants to learn about agricultural techniques. Up till now (1993) the Department of Education has already distributed a total of nearly two million copies of literacy textbooks.

The office of editing and translation of the prefecture, in collaboration with the departments concerned, determined the needs of the post-literacy situation and systematically compiled, translated and promoted reading materials relevant to the agricultural and pastoral reality of Liangshan.

According to Hainailama (personal communication 1994) at the beginning of the courses not so many pupils turned up, but when they realised that literacy could also have economic advantages, many (approximately 45 in each class) went there. In general the economic results could be seen after only three months. Even the literacy exams were orientated principally towards the technical content.

According to the political committee (政委) of Zhaojue in 1993 approximately 90% of the population knew how to read and between 60 and 70% how to write (though Harrell 2001a's literacy survey seems to cast shadows over the reliability of these figures), a great motivating force having been the desire to read articles and manuals on agricultural topics. This is not to deny in any way the omnipresent economic pressure to learn Han. Wu Da (2002) points out that in the last analysis the economic importance and attraction of Han is and will remain greater than that of Nuosu.

During my visits to Zhaojue I was taken by the Language and Scripts Committee to interview various peasants who had bettered themselves economically through reading Nuosu-language post literacy materials about agricultural and horticultural techniques, accountancy etc. Some had raised pigs, goats and sheep more efficiently others planted orchards and improved their yields of buckwheat and maize. One individual I was introduced to had even gone on to become a millionaire after starting up various agricultural enterprises and had gone on to found a huge construction company. He told me he would still be living in poverty if he had not become literate in Nuosu.

Apart from the publication of many technically orientated manuals, the Nuosu edition of the *Liangshan Daily* also contains a lot of useful technical advice and hints, as well as answering readers' letters on such matters.

6.2.8.9 LITERACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN GUANGXI

If we accept that literacy is essential for prosperity and bettering oneself in the globalised modern world, then the infinitely fewer opportunities for monolingual rural Zhuang to learn their script than their Nuosu counterparts, must greatly restrict their access to modern agricultural and other techniques, independently of the fact that more such materials are available in Nuosu. This aspect is beyond the scope of this research. Wei and Wei (1980: 7), writers of Zhuang nationality, referring to the “Four Modernisations” affirm:

扫盲是科学文化的基本建设,是第一步的很重要的工作。一个普遍文盲的民族是不可能建设四个现代化的。 Illiteracy campaigns are the prerequisite for a scientific culture, an important first step. A predominantly illiterate nationality has no possibility of constructing the “4 Modernisations”

Likewise, Wei and Wei (1980: 3), conclude:

实现证明,与本民族语言相一致的拼音壮文是完全符合科学原则的,是容易学容易记的。在壮族地区推行壮文是加快扫盲步伐,普及提高壮族人民科学文化水平的正确途径。 What has been put into practice shows that the phonetic Zhuang script which corresponds to the language spoken by the Zhuang nationality conforms to scientific principals, is easy to write down and is a means for speeding literacy acquisition in Zhuang areas and is the adequate vehicle for generalising and improving the cultural and scientific level of the Zhuang people.

In Zhuang areas of Guangxi, the promoters of the Zhuang script also stressed its economic importance among a population with little knowledge of Han. Just as in Liangshan, literacy and reading materials were published about how to improve agricultural and herding techniques and on the subject of economic management etc. In Debao County I was taken to meet several peasants who had improved themselves through Zhuang technical texts and in the literature there are many accounts of Zhuang peasants who have been able to improve their economic conditions thanks to books or articles they had read about new techniques or because they had been able to write letters to Zhuang-language publications to ask the advice of experts. Wei and Wei (1980: 3), for example, proudly cites the following cases of people who benefited from the use of the Zhuang script:

- A Party secretary of a brigade in Debao county (where the southern dialect is spoken) who was illiterate in Han, but who used the Zhuang script to write down the contents of reports, meetings, summaries and communications.
- A young worker in an engineering factory in Liuzhou Prefecture (where the northern dialect is spoken) who had managed to teach himself to master the Zhuang script, used it for keeping a diary for noting down what he had learnt. In the second half of 1974 he wrote in Zhuang to the “Guangxi Newspaper”.
- -A Party secretary of a brigade in Fusui County (where the southern dialect is spoken) was also illiterate in Han and wrote summaries, reports and short texts in Zhuang after three months of studying the script. Moreover he used it for glossing the Han version of the Works of Mao Zedong. In 1977, he used the script to take notes when he took part in a training course for cadres at Guangxi Institute of Nationalities.
- In the commune of Daxing (大兴) in the Autonomous Yao County of Du’an (都安瑶族自治县) during 1958 over 95% of the 14,281 learners matriculated in Zhuang literacy night classes were capable after a month of instruction to use the Zhuang script to write reports, letters and texts in addition to noting down work points. (If only all communes had had such numbers of people learning Zhuang, it might have been more successful).
- -Many peasants wrote to “San Yue” and other magazines and obtained answers to specific agricultural and health problems.

In general, however, the Zhuang public does not look upon the acquisition of the Zhuang script as a useful economic tool. Kaup (2000: 146) supports the view that instead of regarding the Zhuang script as a complement to the acquisition of other branches of knowledge, most people see it as having no connection to the modern world:

As long as the Zhuang language is perceived merely as a symbol of Zhuang ethnic nationalism and has little practical use for the average peasant, it will remain difficult to promote. As educational opportunities increase in the Zhuang countryside, Zhuang students have a growing incentive to learn the Han language and not “waste their time” learning a “backward language,” as so many of the peasants I interviewed pointed out. The economic reforms over the past decade have also decreased Zhuang initiative to learn a Zhuang written script. Students are now interested in learning English or Han, so that they can participate in the opening market.

The question of whether the acquisition of the Zhuang script facilitates or hinders (which its detractors seem to believe) the learning of Han, and even of English, is discussed under 6.2.5.

Related to the question of economic prosperity is also the claim made by some people that the relatively developed economy of Zhuang areas compared to that of the more backward Nuosu areas of Liangshan explains the difference. According to Yao Changdao (personal communication August 1994), the more developed economy of the Zhuang-speaking areas has been a negative factor with respect to the promotion of the Zhuang script, the opposite of the case of Nuosu. According to this argument the more prosperous monolingual Zhuang-speaking areas have no desperate need for materials in their own script in order to improve their economic situation, because they already have attained a reasonable standard of living, while the isolated Nuosu areas of Liangshan have such low living standards that - in the absence of a knowledge of Han and with a minimum of contacts with Han people - the Nuosu-medium literacy campaigns and schooling with their materials orientated towards raising their standard of living is a very tempting option to a people who often feel so alienated from Han culture, that they do not know how to begin familiarising themselves with it.

Although many people in Liangshan explained to me that the Zhuang-speaking areas were more prosperous than Nuosu areas, during my visit to Debao I was continually reminded by county government cadres and others that it was one of the poorest and most backward of all the counties in all China, as indeed were many other of the core Zhuang-speaking counties. It may indeed be that as a consequence of its fuller historical integration into the Han cultural sphere, that more advanced techniques filtered into Zhuang areas from outside than was the case in Nuosu areas, but it is beyond the scope of this research to evaluate this claim.

6.2.8.10 DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTATED SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NUOSU AREAS

It is not only in literacy classes where an attempt has been made to orientate literacy work economically. Wu Mingxian (1992: 174) argues that it is essential to promote education in the context of socio-economic development, taking special measures (“the tasks of the century”) to raise the quality of life of the minority nationalities, eliminate real inequalities between nationalities and permit minority nationalities to catch up with more advanced nationalities

应该统筹制订经济、科技与教育发展规划,形成以中、小学为基础,以中等职业技术学校为骨干,以乡(镇)农技校为主要阵地,以高校为后盾的民族地区人才培养和使用技术推广网络,逐步建立起教育与经济、科技相互促进,相互配合,协调发展的运行机制。凉山部分地区现行的面对少数人过“独木桥”式的升学教育必须转变为面向全体学生,全面贯彻党的教育方针,培养全面发展人才的素质教育,为当地的两个文明建设服务。要进一步认真贯彻<<义务教育法>>,切实加强基础教育,有步骤地推行九年制义务教育。 A development plan should be elaborated to coordinate with vision education, technology and economy and lay the foundations for primary and secondary schools making use of technical secondary schools as the backbone, rural technical schools in the *xiang* and *zhen* as “battlefront” and the higher schools as support for training personnel of the areas of the minority nationalities.

Technology must be used to promote the recruitment and the progressive establishment of a mechanism to develop the promotion, cooperation and mutual collaboration between education, the economy and technology. the present situation in some areas of Liangshan, where a minority of people face an educational type which makes it difficult to advance to a school of the following level [e.g., pass from primary to secondary school] must be transformed into a situation where the educational policy of the Party is applied to all pupils and where complete, quality education which develops people who are at the service of the “material and spiritual civilizations of socialist construction”. The “Compulsory Education Law” must be better applied, basic education strengthened and nine years compulsory education be promoted step by step.

This goal is very laudable and necessary if parents are to be convinced of the instrumental utility of bilingual or minority language medium education. As discussed in 6.2.5, although many more Nuosu-speaking parents (especially in core rural areas) are convinced of bilingual education than their Zhuang equivalents, a lot of work still needs to be done by schools to show them that their children’s bilingual, rather than Han-only, education is a worthwhile economic investment. Poor areas of Nuosu are plagued (as are other poor areas of China) with low quality education and Sha Zhengrong (2004: 290) warns that such work must be carried out with care:

处理好教育与经济, 数量与质量, 普及与提高的关系, 不单纯追求数量与速度, 在提高质量, 培养合格的毕业生上狠下工夫。 Dealing properly with the relationship

between education and economics, quantity and quality and between popularisation and improvement, not naively seeking quantity and speed, but going all out to raise quality and train qualified graduates.

The same author also stresses (ibid: 291) the importance of Nuosu–Han bilingual education in this process

开展 "双语" 教学是贯彻落实党的民族政策, 发展民族传统文化, 促进文化交流, 推动民族地区经济和社会发展的基础性工作。The carrying out of the Party's Nationality Policy, the developing of [minority] nationality traditions and culture, the speeding up of cultural exchange, the promotion of the economy and social development of [minority] nationality areas depend upon the development of "bilingual education".

6.2.8.11 EXPRESSING MODERN SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND SOCIAL PHENOMENA

A problem faced by all minority languages (e.g. Welsh) is to what point they can be used to describe modern scientific and technological subject matter. In the Chinese context the vast number of characters (several thousand) which a peasant needs to passively gain access to the great store of modern scientific, technical and economic knowledge written in Han, introduces a strong argument in favour of the minority language script assuming this function. If even many L1 Han-speaking peasants do not succeed in gaining a level of literacy in Han to achieve this level, the bulk of non-Han-speaking peasants in core Nuosu and Zhuang areas, have a prohibitively difficult – virtually impossible- task. But if the Nuosu or Zhuang scripts are to be more than just a transitional aid to learning Han, then they must be able to fulfil the function of adequately expressing modern social, cultural, technical and scientific ideas.

Although this function of both minority scripts has been promoted and enhanced via literacy campaigns with their emphasis on socio-cultural and technical innovations, this had an infinitely greater and more significant impact among Nuosu than among Zhuang speakers. If Type 1 schools in Liangshan are to have any chance of success, Nuosu must be successfully promoted as a vehicle of modernity. For large numbers of Nuosu peasants (compared to an anecdotally miniscule minority of Zhuang peasants) the standardised Nuosu script has fulfilled this role. Despite this, objections (from all sectors of society, but especially those already familiar with Han) that the Nuosu language is not capable of coping with such concepts, have not been in short supply. As can be imagined, such attacks against Zhuang are even more vociferous (see Wei and Wei's comments in 5B.2.4.5).

Stites (1999: 124) sums up the perceived limitations of minority language scripts

What the Chinese party/state wants and needs is a bilingual educational system capable of producing people who are both “ethnic and expert.” But there are tensions inherent in this dual objective just [as] there were in the old pairing of “red and expert.” To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan the medium of instruction is the message. Minority languages are not entirely autonomous systems that can be easily engineered to promote the central government’s goals for social, political and economic development. Even in the case of the new scripts, such as that being promoted for the Zhuang language, the available literature may remain so marginal as to be useless or it may serve ends in direct conflict with those envisioned by central planners.

Here Stites is to a large extent expressing the de facto situation, especially in the case of Zhuang. Maybe minority languages cannot be “easily” engineered, but they definitely are capable of being engineered. Luobianmuguo (1999) for example defends the ability of Nuosu to express modern concepts:

怀疑和否定一类模式是多角度的，也有多种理由，其中有一种观点是：彝语文的知识容量不如汉语文，有些东西彝语无法表达，生硬翻译过来又使老百姓听不懂，不能适应现代科学技术的发展。所以，彝语文在学科领域使用，以研究发展彝族历史的文化就行了，不宜进入理科领域。这样的看法是欠妥的。 Putting in doubt and denying Type 1 [schools] is done from different sides and on many different grounds. One such point of view is that the Yi language and script's capacity for expressing knowledge is not like that of Han, that there are some things that Yi is incapable of expressing, that rigidly translating from Han will still be incomprehensible to ordinary people and that Yi cannot be adapted to the development of modern science and technology. Therefore while it is alright to use Yi in academic disciplines to research the historical development of the Yi nationality, it is not suitable in scientific domains. This kind of opinion is unsatisfactory.

The same author (ibid) then goes on to argue that Nuosu is as capable as any other language of expressing modern concepts:

至于有些翻译过来的词语彝族老百姓不懂是正常的。因此许多的科学知识是彝族老百姓所不具备的，像“核原子”、“蛋白质”等词语，没有学过这些知识的老百姓理应不懂，没有进过学校的汉族老百姓也不懂，每个民族都一样，一些知识的懂或不懂是与学历层次有关的。就拿文艺作品来说，反映城市生活的作品，边远农村老百姓不一定看得懂。因此，我们不能以彝族老百姓不懂一些新词语来评价彝语的表达力和知识容量。总之，彝语文和其他任何自然语言一样具有极强的再生能力和灵活的表达方式，它完全能够表达包括自然知识和社会人文知识在内的任何文化知识，因而完全能够适应当今和未来现代化社会发展需求，...As for those words and expressions which have been translated into Yi and are not understood by ordinary Yi as normal. Therefore many scientific concepts are not understood by ordinary Yi people, e.g. atom, protein etc. It is logical that ordinary people who have not studied such things do not understand, just as ordinary Han people who have not studied

them at school do not understand them either. All nationalities are the same, whether or not they understand certain concepts depends on whether or not on their level of schooling. Taking the example of works of literature reflecting urban life, ordinary people in remote rural areas won't necessarily understand them. Therefore we cannot conclude that because ordinary Yi people do not understand certain neologisms that the Yi language is incapable of expressivity and capacity to record knowledge. To sum up, Yi or any other language possesses a strong regenerative capacity and a flexible system of representation and is totally capable of expressing any cultural knowledge including that about the natural world and society. Consequently it is perfectly able to adapt to the needs of modernised social development...

Finally, Luobianmuguo (1999) warns of the consequences for the development of Nuosu as a whole if the idea of Type 1 schools where modern concepts are taught through Nuosu is rejected in favour of doing this exclusively through Han. He feels that the whole cause of promoting the constitutionally guaranteed right of the Yi nationality to use and develop their own language and script is at stake, a sentiment echoed in Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 114-115). I quote from Luobianmuguo (1999) at length, because I feel he articulates this argument clearly, poignantly and from his heart:

只是为了满足民族感情的话，二类模式就足够了，这就可以表明我们拥有并且使用着自己优秀的语言文字了。开办一类模式（包括二类）教育，也不仅仅是把彝语文作为学习汉语文的桥梁，最根本的目的是发展彝语文事业，发扬彝族传统文化知识，发展彝族科学文化知识。过去有一种观点是只把彝语文视为学习汉语的工具，学习彝语文的目的是为了学习汉语文，而不重视彝语文的教学，这是一种错误的认识。如果真的只把彝文作为工具，那么，彝语文教学只在小学阶段开设就够了，不用费如此大的人力和资金办初中、高中、中专、中师、大学等多层次的彝语文教育，也无需搞一类模式。

目前，各种彝语言教育形式中，只有一类模式是把彝语言投入自然科学教学之中。即一类模式的诞生标志是彝语文进入理科领域。以前，彝语只在文科，主要是语文知识领域运作，是一种残缺不全的“只用一条腿走路”的语文。一类模式之后，彝语言才进一步成了健全的语文。

彝语不进入理科，那么，彝语文在文科领域也难以发展，因为文科，特别是语文知识是涉及包括理科在内的各种知识的。如果有关自然科学方面的小说和报告文学，涉及到理科知识的，没理科术语的彝语，就难翻译成彝语文，更不能直接用彝文写出来了。因为每一学科的术语是具有系统性和严密体系的。理科的术语只有文科领域里就词译词的话，就会出现相互矛盾或错译现象。

众所周知，社会发展必然的趋势是知识交叉，文理科相互渗透、边沿学科不断产生。彝语文只限制在文科领域，到头来使用范围越来越小而最终消失。所以，否定一类模式的实质是否定二类模式，否定彝语文的使用。我们应为彝语文进入自

然科学领域，为一类模式的诞生和发展欢呼！一类模式的产生使我们对彝语文事业的真正繁荣发展有了希望。

However, the Type 2 System is not enough to satisfy the nationality's self-esteem. This makes known that we possess, and moreover make use of, our own outstanding language and written script. Setting up Type 1 (or Type 2) education is not merely to make the Yi language and script serve as a bridge to learn the Han language and script, the most fundamental aim is to further the cause of the Yi language and script and develop knowledge of the traditional Yi culture and develop scientific knowledge among the Yi nationality. In the past there was a point of view that only regarded the Yi language and script as a tool for learning Han and the objective of learning the Yi script was to learn the Han language and script. This viewpoint did not attach any importance to Yi medium teaching, which was a very mistaken conception. If the Yi script was really just to be a tool (for learning Han) then Yi medium education would only be necessary in the primary phase and it would not be necessary to spend so much energy and money in setting up the many different levels of Yi medium education: upper and lower secondary schools, secondary technical schools, teacher training schools, tertiary courses etc. and neither would it be necessary to set up the Type 1 System.

At present of all forms of Yi language education, only Type 1 uses the Yi language to teach natural sciences. That is to say the hallmark of the Type 1 system has been to take the Yi language and script into the domain of science. Formerly Yi language belonged exclusively to the liberal arts, operating mainly in the area of linguistic knowledge and was an incomplete and fragmentary language and script which "only walked on one leg". Only since the setting up of the Type 1 system has Yi been strengthened.

If Yi does not enter into the sciences, then it will also be hard for it to develop in the arts, especially because linguistic knowledge includes all kinds of scientific knowledge. If there is a novel or investigative report touching on aspects of the natural sciences, without the specialised Yi language of the scientific subjects, it would be hard to translate into Yi, and even harder to compose it in Yi, because each branch of learning has a systematic composition. If specialised scientific language only uses words translated literally from the domain of liberal arts (non-scientific language) then many contradictions and mistranslations may arise.

As everyone knows, an unavoidable trend of social development is the overlapping of areas of knowledge there is a process of mutual penetration at work between arts and science disciplines, with the constant creation of fringe disciplines. If Yi is restricted to non-scientific domains, in the long run its scope of use will become progressively more restricted and it will finally die out. Therefore, to deny the essence of the Type 1 system is to deny the Type 2 system and the true use of the Yi language and script. For the sake of the Yi language and script we should enter the domain of the natural sciences and acclaim the birth and development of the Type 1 system. The creation of the Type 1 system gives us hope that the cause of the Yi language and script will truly prosper and develop.-

Planners in Liangshan and other minority areas could do a lot more to stimulate the production of technically orientated literature so that monolingual minority language speakers (and if one believes in the right to use one's own language, also those who are bilingual in Han) have access to basic aspects of modern life in their mother tongue. Most authors writing on the subject stress that although mother tongue instruction is necessary, it is essential to give minority language speakers (especially via a bilingual education system) access to the large body of technical information in Han.

6.2.8.12 CLOSING COMMENTS

Rural Nuosu and Zhuang core areas are among the poorest areas in China and ones traditionally associated with high illiteracy rates. In general the gap between these areas and prosperous parts of the country (and indeed of Sichuan/Guangxi) is widening. Literacy is universally held to be a key pre-requisite for socioeconomic development, but Han-only education and adult literacy initiatives among populations with no or little competence in Han do not have a record of success and are often regarded by monolingual Nuosu and Zhuang speakers as beyond their scope. Mother-tongue-medium adult literacy instruction and general education which emphasise subject matter relevant to socioeconomic development have been emphasised by proponents of both the Zhuang and Nuosu scripts. However, the acceptance that such literacy can be a vehicle of socioeconomic advancement, capable of conveying modern ideas and technical concepts is infinitely more widespread in Liangshan than in Guangxi and without doubt helps explain the differing results.

6.3 FINDINGS RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION QUESTION

(TO BROADLY EVALUATE THE EFFECT OF MINORITY LINGUISTIC POLICY IN ZHUANG AND NUOSU AREAS AND WAYS IN WHICH ITS IMPLEMENTATION WAS RESISTED)

This part of the discussion of the findings aims to look at how linguistic policy is affecting the vitality of Zhuang and Nuosu (6.3.1) and to try to analyse the ways in which those opposed to the officially declared pluralist policy subtly behaved in order to ensure it was not put into practice (6.3.2).

6.3.1 EFFECT OF LINGUISTIC POLICY IN ZHUANG AND NUOSU AREAS

6.3.1.1 EFFECT OF THE PROMOTION IN ZHUANG AREAS

As already pointed out, the campaigns to promote the Zhuang script affected only a small proportion of the total Zhuang-speaking population (moreover the figures for attainment of Zhuang literacy could have been inflated) and only for a limited time, there typically being no or insufficient follow-up activities. The failure of the policy has made many people sceptical and cynical about possible future Zhuang medium literacy attempts and confirmed their belief that the only way forward is via the Han language and script. Those few who attained and made an effort to use Zhuang literacy or who were convinced by the promotion of its necessity, must feel let down by the collapse of the promotion. Recent official sources mention the promotions as a fact where convenient, but generally remain silent about any need for a Zhuang script. Where Zhuang is referred to, it is in the context of interference in the learning of Mandarin (e.g. in having problems in distinguishing between the Mandarin sounds k and g or placing adjectives and measure words after nouns).

What the promotion did achieve, was to make people aware of the concept of a Zhuang language and even of a Zhuang script (whether or not they agreed and identified with it) for something which was previously only considered a series of vulgar patois spoken by different clans. This awareness was not sufficient to gain powerful mass support and any concrete action to relaunch it seems to have been taken off the agendas of most people with political influence. Many people -generally not those in positions of power and influence- still perceive the need for Zhuang literacy, but are divided on, and vague about, what kind of script should be used and on how to go about promoting it.

6.3.1.2 EFFECT OF THE PROMOTION IN NUOSU AREAS**Official Statistics**

Maheimujia (1985: 49) cites statistics from the end of 1983 showing that Xide and Zhaojue had already been proclaimed basically illiteracy-free counties. In the predominantly Nuosu areas of the 4 counties of Jinyang, Butuo, Yuexi and Xichang, youths were basically made literate and throughout Liangshan the illiteracy rate among the Nuosu population had dropped from more than 90% in 1956 to 47% in 1983.

In Zhaojue County in 1990 a countywide survey “household by household and person by person” was carried out among the newly literate and potential subjects of further literacy campaigns. Those surveyed received a rural population training registration card from Zhaojue County. The figures I copied by hand from the report (*Zhaojue County General Report, 1995*) whilst on a field trip in Zhaojue obviously contain errors, but reported that approximately two thirds of the respondents were literate, overwhelmingly in Nuosu (over 5 times more than in Han). The report did not say how many of those literate in Han were also literate in Nuosu; neither did it enter into the question of what literacy in Han means. According to the figures from my field notes, of 59,119 people surveyed throughout the county, 39,486 declared themselves literate in the Nuosu script and 7,588 people in the Han script. Of this last group, 3,387 people had attained a primary school level of the Han script, 945 that of lower secondary school and 42 of upper secondary school. Moreover 19,650 (4,952 men and 14,677 women -33.2% of those surveyed) had been made partially literate. The report does not specify in which language, but the great majority would logically be in Nuosu.

According to the statistics cited by Maheimuya and Yao, by 1994, 66.8% of adult Nuosu peasants in Liangshan had become literate and eight counties with populous, predominately Nuosu, areas were not far off their objective of eradicating illiteracy. 34.64% of primary and secondary pupils (throughout Liangshan Prefecture) were already receiving bilingual education of either Type 2 (mostly) or 1. In total, near to a third of the Nuosu population of Liangshan, more than 500,000 people, were capable of writing their script in 1993.

This rosy image presented by many articles and by cadres I interviewed in Liangshan is contradicted by information from other interviewees and some articles giving

significantly lower literacy rates. For example, the analysis of Harrell of literacy rates in rural Xide County, discussed in the following section.

The results of Harrell (2001a)'s questionnaire on the degree of literacy in a core Nuosu area (carried out in approximately 1994)

I treat Harrell (2001a: 116-121)'s literacy questionnaire at length, because it is one of the few such detailed statistical surveys which provides feedback about literacy measures, and because it was carried out by a reliable researcher who although an outsider, knows Liangshan, its people and its language well. The area of Mbi Shy (Mishi in Han) in rural Xide County was chosen, where Nuosu is the automatic medium of oral communication, except for a small minority of Han traders and teachers, and encompassed 2 very different villages. Jiemo is a village, with reasonable links to the outside world. Educational standards, along with literacy rates and knowledge of Han, are much higher than the average for core Nuosu areas of Liangshan.

Of the 147 people questioned in the moderately isolated and self-sufficient village of Matalo ("with almost no modern amenities or access to avenues of outward or upward mobility" Harrell, 2001a: 111), of which 44% (71% of the men and 13% of the women) had a knowledge of spoken Han (Harrell does not say to what standard), only 30% were literate in Nuosu (55% of the men and 7% of the women).

31%, of those questioned (47% of the men and 14% of the women) were literate in Han, a very high rate if we bear in mind that 56% of the respondents (29% of the men and 87% of the women) had no knowledge of *spoken* Han. Harrell does not say how the category "literate in Han" was defined: I suspect it was knowledge of a rather restricted number of Han characters.

It is also important to point out that 20% of the respondents are literate in both Nuosu and Han: in other words half of the people who were literate at all were literate in both languages. Two thirds of the people literate in Nuosu were also literate in Han and vice versa. The proportion of totally illiterate respondents was 58% (32% of the men and 83% of the women). There is no mention of how knowledge of one script might have affected the learning of the other.

In the less isolated, and thus more homogenised Jiemo, a village of former slaves near the administrative centre of Mbi Shy, Harrell (2001a: *ibid.*) questioned 149 people of whom 74% (89% of the men and 56% of the women) had some knowledge of spoken Han and only 40% were literate in Nuosu (53% of the men and 26% of the women).

In contrast a significantly higher proportion, 51%, of the respondents (72% of the men and 26% of the women) declared themselves literate in Han - and this in a sample where 26% of the respondents (11% of the men and 44% of the women) had no knowledge of spoken Han.

In this case 30% of the respondents were literate in Nuosu and Han. As in Matalo, this accounted for half of the people who were literate in any of the two languages. Three quarters of those literate in Nuosu were also literate in Han (more than in Matalo), but only three fifths of those literate in Han were also literate in Nuosu (less than in Matalo). The proportion of totally illiterate respondents was 38% (17% of the men and 63% of the women).

Interpretation of the results of Harrell's questionnaire

In both villages the low proportion of people literate in Nuosu is discouraging for proponents of universal mother-tongue literacy. In Jiemo, where people have a better knowledge of Han, the proportions of women literate in Nuosu and Han are the same and the proportion of men literate in Han is significantly higher than in Nuosu. In Matalo, the total proportions of Nuosu and Han literates are almost the same (the proportion in Nuosu is in fact slightly higher!) and, surprisingly, there are more women literate in Han than in Nuosu and more men literate in Nuosu than in Han. Regarding Nuosu literacy rates, Harrell (2001a:120) comments:

...literacy in Nuosu is either passing away or is acquired at later ages (or our figures may underestimate this slightly with the younger population, since we tended to concentrate on their school achievement).

This quote refers to the fact that in Matalo, whereas 69% of men between 21 and 40 and 63% of the men older than 40 declared themselves to be literate in Nuosu, only 29% of the boys (the few girls literate in Nuosu also followed this pattern) aged between 8 and 20 did so. Obviously the schools are not succeeding in promoting

mother tongue literacy. In Jiemo in contrast the literacy rate in Nuosu fell with increasing age among both sexes (the proportion of literate males was 66% in the 8 to 20 age group, 45% in the 20 to 40 age range and 44% of those aged over 40). Harrell (2001a:120) explains the difference between the villages in the following way:

Literacy in Nuosu *bburma* (Nuosu writing) is only slightly higher in Jiemo than in Matalo; in the younger age groups, a few more people in Jiemo are probably literate in Nuosu, because more of them go to school, and they learn Nuosu writing in school. But in the adult age groups, literacy in Nuosu is not very different - around 50% of the men, and only a fraction of the women (15% or less) can read and write their language. This despite the fact that, as the villagers of Jiemo proudly told us, they had spontaneously been conducting their own adult literacy classes in the Nuosu language, and many women had attended them.

The literacy rate in Han among women and girls is very low because of the extremely low school attendance rate among Nuosu girls. Among men and boys the rate has risen during the communist period due to schooling. In all age groups of both sexes the Han literacy rate was higher in Jiemo (the village better communicated with the outside world and better integrated with the rest of China) than in Matalo (the village where the traditional Nuosu form of life has continued with fewer interruptions). Harrell attributes this difference to the better access which residents of Jiemo have to schooling.

As far as sex goes, the proportion of literate (in either language) men and / or those with a knowledge of Han is higher in all age groups than that for women.

Spoken competence in Han, superior to the Han literacy rates in both villages, shows that oral competence is not determined principally by Han literacy. According to Harrell, spoken competence depends above all on the degree of mobility, which depends on access to urban centres, on the level of schooling and on the number of workers employed by Han-speakers and especially by the state. Jiemo has direct access to urban centres by a bus which stops 20 minutes walk from the village and is more *hanised* than Matalo an hour's walk from the bus stop. Naturally oral competence in Han depends not only on the actual mobility that people have, but also on the degree of mobility they aspire to in the future. The results also show that many Nuosu speakers

when they have a knowledge of Han and acquire literacy in it, feel themselves adequately “literate” and do not feel the need to learn the Nuosu script. This could be interpreted as a symptom of a speech community in the early stages of language shift from Nuosu to Han.

This survey shows that a speech community in a county which was supposed to have attained near universal literacy in reality fell far short of this aim and calls into question the official literacy figures quoted earlier. Can official literacy figures be trusted? It is possible that the area surveyed by Harrell has exceptionally low Nuosu literacy rates for a core area or that many of those counted by Harrell as illiterate in Nuosu had relapsed into illiteracy or semi-illiteracy since the literacy campaigns of the late 1970s and early 1980s, whereas official figures included all those that had attended earlier literacy courses. If the latter is true, it is clear that not everyone who enrolls in a literacy course and even successfully completes it, can necessarily be counted as a permanent literate, and also that since the abolition of collective agriculture it has been much more difficult to ensure mass participation in literacy activities.

In Jiemo, we clearly have the first stage of a rural bilingual community in the making, in what was largely considered a core Nuosu area and we might anticipate that in a generation or so hanisation will have proceeded to the degree found today in Manshuiman (see 6.1). More inaccessible surrounding areas will take longer to be hanised, but an unstoppable process has already been set in motion. Outside the core areas there are already large rural areas where many people know Han. Wuda (2002) describes the situation in rural Ganluo County (where many more people are bilingual in Han than in core counties such as Zhaojue and Meigu) and many Nuosu are beginning to use Han with one another in determined situations. With regard to the use of the script in such areas, Wuda (ibid: 4) quotes a *xiang* level cadre:

乡下的农民识字的不多，文件传达多数靠口头翻译。不管是彝文文件还是汉文文件，我们都用彝语翻译给村民们听，政府文件多数是用汉文写的。Not many peasants in the countryside are literate and depend upon oral translations of documents. Whether the documents are written in Yi or in Han, we interpret them in oral Yi. Most government documents are written in Han.

This does not support the achievement of universal literacy in rural Ganluo and also calls into doubt the extent to which official documents are translated into Nuosu.

Judging from informal discussions with Nuosu scholars and educationalists and claims (e.g. Ma Muju, 1999: 200 –see 1.7.1.5) of some falsification of official figures, I think official figures should be treated with healthy scepticism, although I think it unlikely that they did not at least reflect a general trend. I imagine that Harrell’s results probably reflect the reality of a large part of Nuosu core rural areas, although it is important to remember that Xide does have larger concentrations of Han in its county town (and along the railway line) as well as better access to the outside world than Meigu and Zhaojue. It is possible that there are areas with significantly higher Nuosu literacy rates, which I would expect to vary from area to area according to how literacy work had been implemented locally. When I tried to take a spontaneous “straw poll” of literacy rates in two rural villages in Meigu in August 2005, residents’ estimates varied from 90% to 20% of the male population and a minority of women. I think the disparities were partly caused by respondents not knowing how to classify passive and lapsed literates.

Harrell (2001a: 73) commenting on the fact that most people in the core Nuosu areas are monolingual, paints a cheerier picture of Nuosu literacy than the results of his literacy survey,

There is very little occasion for anyone to use any language other than Nuosu, especially with the increasing availability of books, newspapers, and government notices written in that language.

Bradley (2001) shares this optimism, concluding that

The Shynra syllabic script is very widely seen and used throughout the Liangshan Prefecture and to a lesser extent in Ninglang County in north-western Yunnan. (ibid: 212)

The commitment to Yi and other minority languages in China is much more than superficial. It has become an important part of developing the Yi identity.In general, the Sichuan syllabic script is a great success ... (ibid: 213)

I would say that Bradley and Harrell are viewing the half-full bottle of events. After all, there could have been no popular response to the Nuosu script and the situation could have turned out as in Guangxi. Universal literacy could be interpreted as having reached as many peasants as possible given the limited resources and funding at their disposition and taking into account that many people who have attended courses do not become fully and permanently literate.

The literature on adult literacy campaigns in Liangshan states that universal literacy has essentially been achieved in core Nuosu areas thanks to Nuosu literacy campaigns, but when reading about the educational problems of Liangshan (lack of school attendance, the high drop-out rate etc.) it becomes clear that this is not the whole picture.

When referring to adult literacy campaigns, Liangshan Autonomous Yi Prefectural Nationalities Research Institute (various authors) (1992), and many other sources, consider that these have achieved swift eradication of illiteracy among the Nuosu. However, when referring to education of children of school age, they point out that illiteracy has not been eradicated and that new pupils constantly relapse into illiteracy. They quote statistics of the fourth National Census (published in the *Liangshan Daily* of 7th of December 1990), according to which 1,329,944 people aged over 15, in other words 36.37% of the total population of Liangshan (of all nationalities including the Han) were either illiterate or only knew a few characters (presumably of any script). This is an illiteracy rate 1.78% higher than that of the first National Census of the 1 of July of 1982 which was 34.59%. It is hard to know with certainty if the illiteracy rate really did rise (for example due to decollectivisation) or if the censuses were inaccurate. What is clear is that the situation had not improved as it should have taking into account the literacy campaigns of the 1980s. As Han populations tend to have lower illiteracy rates than Nuosu ones, the probability is that a large proportion of those >36% illiterates were Nuosu, although it is hard to know if Nuosu literacy had been properly included or what the distribution of illiteracy was between Nuosu of core and non-core counties.

To recapitulate, core Nuosu areas of Liangshan are still predominantly monolingual, but knowledge of Han is spreading steadily. Nuosu in county towns are undergoing a large degree of language shift to Han and in many rural areas bilingualism with a large degree of diglossia is increasing. It is hard to know the reliable extent of Nuosu literacy.

6.3.1.3 ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY IN ZHUANG AND NUOSU AREAS

In Chapter 4, I briefly mentioned Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 309)'s criteria for measuring ethnolinguistic vitality. Most of their factors for objective identity and aspects of subjective vitality have been treated in detail in this and other chapters, although not organised under the same framework. Here, I would like to very briefly

show how I have tried (superficially) to apply their vitality framework to the Zhuang and Nuosu. I would like to stress that the vitality scores I have assigned are based on my subjective perception of the the Nuosu and Zhuang situations.

Table 1: The situation of Zhuang in Guangxi.

Vitality: LOW		
These values –shown in capitals- are based on my subjective knowledge of the situation of Zhuang (according to a 5-point scale: high, medium-high, medium, medium-low, low).		
STATUS	DEMOGRAPHY	INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT
- LOW	- MEDIUM / MEDIUM HIGH	- LOW
<p>Economic status - Active rural speakers have a low degree of control over the economic life of western Guangxi, the economy being very much in the hands of Han and hanised Zhuang.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">- LOW</p>	<p>Group distribution factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional territory (rural western areas of Guangxi and eastern Yunnan) <p>Constitutes small proportion of total land area of China, but half of Guangxi. Significant hanised urban centres within this area. – MEDIUM HIGH / HIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentration HIGH • Proportion High proportion of speakers in above areas. – HIGH 	<p>Formal (top-down) support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mass media Anecdotal - LOW • education Anecdotal - LOW • government services Anecdotal - LOW <p>The Zhuang ethnolinguistic community’s socio-political influence and power is extremely weak with a lack of “aware elites, activists and capable leaders who support culture and language” .High-and middle-level hanised Zhuang cadres tend to have little sympathy for the language. Zhuang speakers tend to use Han in different institutions and domains as soon as they are able to. – LOW</p>
<p>Social status</p> <p>- Most speakers of Zhuang have a very low degree of social self-confidence and tend to strongly link progress and modernity to a knowledge of Han.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">- LOW</p>	<p>Group number factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absolute numbers -Biggest non-Han linguistic group in China. - HIGH • birth-rate MEDIUM LOW • mixed marriages ?MEDIUM LOW • Immigration of Han – ?MEDIUM HIGH? • Emigration of Zhuang – ?MEDIUM HIGH? 	<p>Informal (bottom-up) support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industry Non-existent or anecdotal. • religion Some use of <i>fangkuaizi</i> and Chinese characters adapted to Zhuang dialects. • culture Limited, small-scale, isolated use. – LOW in all above cases <p>Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 316-317) warn of negative effect when area of ethnolinguistic group has lower rate of development during phase of rapid socioeconomic modernisation –this is the case of rural Zhuang areas.</p>
<p>Sociohistorical status</p> <p>-Most Zhuang speakers</p>		

<p>have little or no historical consciousness of the “Zhuang” as a group, identifying either with local, non-official ethnic groups or with the Han language and culture. Many Zhuang believe they are descended from Han ancestors who came from northern China.</p> <p>- LOW</p>		
<p>Language status within predominantly Zhuang-speaking areas of western Guangxi</p> <p>- Almost no official or public use of the language: virtually anecdotal.</p> <p>- LOW</p>		
<p>Language status without</p> <p>- Anecdotal and superficial fact that Zhuang is official and has been promoted and has been used on banknotes and signposts has been widely trumpeted. Otherwise Zhuang is hidden from view.</p> <p>- LOW</p>		

Conclusion: only for the demographic factors would Zhuang appear to have favourable factors. But these are of little use if not accompanied by high levels of status and institutional support. While Zhuang is still the only language of millions of people, the low degree of ethnolinguistic vitality does not augur well for the future.

Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 309)’s criteria for measuring ethnolinguistic vitality applied superficially to the situation of Nuosu in Liangshan.

Objective Ethnolinguistic Vitality MEDIUM		
I have given values –shown in red- based on my subjective knowledge of the situation of Nuosu (according to a 5-point scale: high, medium-high, medium, medium-low, low).		
STATUS	DEMOGRAPHY	INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT
- MEDIUM / MEDIUM HIGH Vitality is much higher in	- MEDIUM HIGH	- MEDIUM (although in comparison with many other ethnolinguistic groups in China, it may be perceived as “high”).

<p>rural than in urban areas, where the educated elite often bring up their children to become Han-speaking Yi rather than Nuosu-speaking Nuosu.</p>		
<p>Economic status - Active loyal rural speakers appear to have a low degree of control over the economic life of Liangshan, the economy being very much in the hands of Han. Having said this, there have been many Nuosu entrepreneurs. - LOW</p>	<p>Group distribution factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional core Nuosu areas (rural mountainous areas of Liangshan) Constitutes small proportion of total land area of China, but a large part of Liangshan Autonomous Prefecture and several neighbouring counties. –HIGH • Concentration - HIGH • Proportion - HIGH 	<p>Formal (top-down) support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mass media Daily newspaper- MEDIUM • education widespread -MEDIUM • government services - MEDIUM <p>The Nuosu ethnolinguistic community’s socio-political influence and power is strong compared to most south-western minorities, but weak in absolute terms. There is a traditional, bimo-orientated elite and many “aware articulate educated activists and capable leaders who support culture and language. Many Nuosu use their language in different institutions and domains. However, the growth of urban-based Hanised elites, many of whose members reject their ethnolinguistic identity has dampened the support of such activists. - MEDIUM TO MEDIUM LOW</p>
<p>Social status</p> <p>- a) Most rural speakers of Nuosu have a high degree of social self-confidence. However, like the Zhuang they tend to strongly link progress and modernity to a knowledge of Han. - HIGH</p> <p>b) However, among many members of the urban hanised elite there is an inferiority complex vis a vis Han language and culture, while at the same time being proud of their Nuosu origins. - LOW</p>	<p>Group number factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absolute numbers <2 million (<50% of Liangshan population) - - MEDIUM HIGH • birth-rate - MEDIUM HIGH • in-group marriages -marriages with outsiders or even between castes virtually non-existent HIGH • Significant immigration of Han, especially to urban centres (county towns etc.) - MEDIUM LOW effect on ethnolinguistic vitality. • Steady emigration of Nuosu to urban centres, both inside and beyond Liangshan. - MEDIUM LOW effect on ethnolinguistic vitality 	<p>Informal (bottom-up) support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industry and commerce Limited use in local businesses and shops. - MEDIUM LOW • Religion Traditional bimo religion only uses Nuosu. -HIGH • Culture There is though a tendency to foster in urban areas a Han-speaking “Yi” culture. - Generally HIGH <p>Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 316-317) warn of negative effect when area of ethnolinguistic group has lower rate of development during phase of rapid socioeconomic modernisation –this is the case of rural Nuosu areas in an exaggerated way. - Generally HIGH</p>
<p>Sociohistorical status</p>		

<p>-Most Nuosu speakers, even hanised ones, have a high level of historical consciousness of the “Nuosu” as a group.</p> <p>- HIGH</p>		
<p>Language status within predominantly Nuosu-speaking areas of Liangshan</p> <p>- In core areas very much in evidence.</p> <p>- MEDIUM HIGH</p>		
<p>Language status without</p> <p>- Symbolic</p> <p>- LOW</p>		

The vitality for all 3 factors was significantly higher than for the Zhuang, reflecting the general conclusions of this thesis. However, if firm supportive measures are not taken, ultimate long-term language shift may still take place.

6.3.2 COVERT HAN-CENTRISM IN PLURALISTIC LINGUISTIC POLICY

Part of the gap between idealistic pluralistic principles and the reality of how Chinese minority languages and scripts have been, and are being, promoted can be explained by prevalent chauvinistic Han centrism among a large part of the Han and hanised minority speakers, which essentially carries on the traditional long-term project of the Middle Kingdom in which the concepts Han and Chinese are synonymous. As commented on in Chapter 4, such chauvinism seems to be inherent among speakers of dominant majority languages. Bearing this in mind, perhaps the strength of monopolist Han-centeredness, in spite of running counter to the multicultural façade and rhetoric of Chinese Marxist theory, is more understandable. In this vein Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: 201) explain that:

There is a perceived tension between language as a vehicle for national unity and any multilingual cultural and personal needs of groups and individuals, which are viewed as divisive and therefore needing to be controlled. In multicultural societies, the ‘person in the street’s view often is that the dominant language is under threat, despite the fact that census and other data shows that it is the minority languages that are finding it difficult to hold their own. La Ponce (1987, 1993) has argued that languages, like animals, need and defend their territories. It is in this context that the nation-state model of language policy

and planning development has led in almost all cases, to either the overt or covert suppression of minority (i.e. not in the numerical sense, but non-national, non-official) languages, **even where there are multilingual policies in place.** [Emphasis my own]

This should ring a bell with observers of the Welsh, Catalan and Basque scenes, where majority language speakers often allege that they are being oppressed by speakers of the minority languages. Spaniards from outside Catalonia often assert that Spanish is in serious danger of dying out in parts of Catalonia and that many Catalan children can no longer speak it, an assertion which can at most only be true of some pre-school children in remote rural areas. Despite the majority language and culture not being in the slightest danger from the weaker peripheral ones, many speakers of majority languages appear to have a built-in need to affirm the adequacy and superiority of their language and culture through denigrating minority ones and denying them any space, to the point of often seeming almost insulted by their very existence (e.g. In Wales I have often heard comments like “Why do they insist on speaking Welsh [among themselves] when they know English perfectly well?”). In contrast to the monopolistic phase, Han-centrism in the second pluralistic phase is characterised mainly by covert language planning measures motivated by hidden agendas of those in positions of influence and power.

In 6.2.4, I concluded that both the more efficient implementation of the policy in Nuosu than in Zhuang areas and the limited implementation of the policy in the Nuosu areas were to a large extent due to top-down measures in favour of minority language and script promotion not being implemented at all or only being partially or half-heartedly applied. As was mentioned in 4.1.1, language planning measures can be either overt or covert. In order to understand events in language planning in Communist China it is important to be aware of the latter as well as the declared explicit official aims. This has had particular importance in the second pluralistic phase (since the beginning of the post-Maoist era), in the course of which the principle (so emphasised in the first pluralistic phase prior to the Anti-Rightist Movement and Great Leap Forward) that nationalities should be able to use their languages and scripts in the maximum number of domains and contexts has been largely discarded and quietly laid to rest. Thus, covert measures have been used as a vehicle for implementing a Han-centric agenda in language policy, at worst totally paralysing and at best rendering less effective, the

overt official policies aimed at promoting and developing the non-Han minority language.

At a local level, covert support on behalf of minority languages is certainly not totally unknown, but covert measures have on the whole been behaviour or assumptions, direct or indirect, which have favoured Han at the expense of the non-Han languages.

By covert “Han-centric” measures I do not necessarily mean coordinated, centrally-planned or even well-formulated actions. In fact, as the measures are “covert” or “hidden” and never generally discussed, they are often not easily identifiable. Such measures refer to actions detrimental to the promotion of minority languages and their scripts which are taken by people who are in a position to influence in some way the implementation of minority nationality language planning. Equally they could refer to the absence of actions supportive of the promotion of minority languages. Where such behaviour is widespread and occurs at the highest levels, it comes close to being “covert unrecognised official policy”. I believe the policy of the Guangxi administration towards Zhuang from the late 1980s onwards (and possibly earlier) falls into this category.

Frequently, action is taken on a sporadic, individualised or localised basis, meaning the policy is implemented differently in different areas. Thus in one area the policy (for example the setting up of bilingual schools or literacy classes) might be conscientiously carried out, in another area only partially and in yet another may not be implemented at all (a rather common occurrence). It is not unusual for different levels of the administration to display very different attitudes towards the policy and for the same individuals within it to display different attitudes to different aspects of policy. For example some cadres I met in Guangxi and Liangshan were in favour of adult literacy campaigns but not of bilingual education. Also different individuals sometimes have different hidden agendas based on different interests and thus will react in different ways. All in all, the situation can be very complex.

Given that the initial official language policy was highly egalitarian, the failure of its implementation in Zhuang areas, and its limited success in Liangshan, can be largely attributed to covert measures and actions (often consisting in simply ignoring the

promotion of Zhuang or Nuosu) motivated by hidden agendas of cadres (both Han and non-Han at different levels). Below I have listed some of the covert measures or actions which have hindered the implementation of a pluralistic language policy. There is much overlap between the different categories and some of the arguments have already been discussed under the Relative Success Question are aired here, although from a different angle.

Central to the understanding of the “covert measures” or “hidden agendas” described below is the linguistic behaviour of Han residents (whether long-established or recent incomers) of minority areas and neighbouring Han areas, upon whom there is no official pressure to learn Nuosu or Zhuang except in the case of some rural cadres. The first covert policy I would like to consider is this lack of compulsion for Han residents of Liangshan and Guangxi to learn Nuosu or Zhuang. I start by discussing to what extent this group has (or has not) learnt Nuosu or Zhuang (emphasising more the situation in Liangshan).

6.3.2.1 HAN IN MINORITY AREAS NEED NOT LEARN NON-HAN LANGUAGES

The extent to which Han speakers learn Zhuang or Nuosu

Given the large and ever increasing numbers (due to migration from Han areas) of Han speakers in Zhuang and Nuosu-speaking areas, it is important to examine how local Han react to the presence of the Zhuang and Nuosu languages, in order to see how this might affect language shift (see the previous section). The readiness of Han to learn and use minority tongues contributes to the linguistic vitality of these languages and to how necessary it is for minority language-speakers to learn and use Han to communicate with Han-speakers. In the west of Wales and in Catalonia, the desirability of integrating incomers in the minority language speech communities has been the subject of much debate over the last several decades. Yao Changdao (1994: 40) reports that some 23% of Han nationality cadres and 5% of Han peasants in Liangshan use the Nuosu language (he makes no explicit mention of the script) to varying degrees in the course of their work, proportions which are presumably significantly higher in rural monolingual areas, as the global figures also include lowland Han-dominated areas. In rural core Nuosu areas Han cadres would simply be unable to carry out their work if they did not understand and speak Nuosu. Below I consider how the degree of isolation of Han can affect their knowledge of the minority languages.

The foregoing figures contrast with 93% of Nuosu cadres using the Han language and script in their work and 29% of non-Han peasants in Liangshan bilingual in Han (also cited by Yao Changdao, 1994: 40). The tendency to include all non-Han minorities in one category is widespread, even in Yao's article which is specifically about the promotion of the Nuosu language and script. This can be disconcerting, as different nationalities have different linguistic repertoires (which as I mentioned in an earlier section also vary considerably according to the geographic location). As Nuosu speakers make up the majority of people of non-Han nationality, we can take it for granted that this figure is not so wide of the mark and that the figure for Nuosu-speakers bilingual in Han is a bit lower than that of minorities as a whole, there being some non-Nuosu speaking minority nationalities well on their way to being hanised (e.g. eastern Naze speakers). At the same time, a large proportion of Nuosu in Lesser Liangshan, the river valleys with large concentrations of Han and those resident in the county towns of even core Nuosu areas such as Zhaojue are bilingual in Han.

The linguistic situation among members of the Han nationality who live in areas isolated from concentrations of Han.

Although I have heard of many cases of isolated Han individuals living in remote south-western minority areas being completely assimilated into minority language speech communities (e.g. in the case of intermarriage), it is not common in contemporary times, given the high prestige of the Han language. In Nuosu areas the strong Nuosu ethnic conscientiousness and prohibition on marrying outside their ethnic group or caste, help to inhibit social integration more than in Zhuang areas. Until the 1950s, the capture of Han peasants (and of other non-Nuosu ethnic groups) as slaves was common among the Nuosu. These slaves were totally assimilated into the Nuosu culture and language community within a generation. Slaves were forbidden to go on speaking their non-Nuosu languages. At present the descendents of captured Han slaves do not want to know about their possible Han origins.

In isolated rural areas with a monolingual Nuosu majority and miniscule Han minority, it is generally impossible for Han to avoid acquiring Nuosu, as long as the isolated Han have an interest in communicating with the monolingual Nuosu or have no choice but to do so. In Zhaojue County I heard of Han cadres in remote areas who spoke and even wrote Nuosu fluently and whose children often spoke it among themselves (to the point

that their parents feared that they would not learn Han properly). I have been told of similar cases in core rural Zhuang areas, where Han cadres and others are more likely to intermarry and socially integrate into the Zhuang speech community than their Nuosu counterparts.

However, there is a attitude of superiority among many remote bilingual or trilingual Han because they know that when it comes down to it their language is the important state language and

...it is much more likely that minority people will find Han language useful than the other way around. After all, higher education and most governmental functions are carried out either exclusively in Han or in Han plus some other language; rarely is a minority tongue without translation used. Harrell (2001a: 304)

This causes a situation where many remote Han are only prepared to speak in Nuosu if their Nuosu interlocutors do not master Han.

Other Han, however, seem set on not learning minority languages despite being very isolated from other Han-speakers (their contacts in Han being often limited to just a few individuals) and where the mastery of the minority language spoken all around them would in my opinion simplify their lives greatly. I met a Han shopkeeper in a tiny logging camp some hours drive northwards from Lijiang, where virtually all the local population, apart from Han loggers and lorry drivers, were Naxi-speakers with either no or a poor knowledge of Han. She saw no point in learning even a couple of words of Naxi and seemed quite offended by the very suggestion that she do so. Obviously she felt that only the relation with the lorry drivers and loggers counted and as far as she was concerned if any Naxi wanted to speak to her they should do so through the medium of Han. Harrell (*ibid.*: 304) cites an example of a Han who previously had good instrumental motives for acquiring Nuosu (having been forced to communicate with monolingual non-Han speakers) and upon being no longer obliged to use it as a medium of communication (although still with plenty of opportunities to do so in his everyday live) either genuinely regressed in Nuosu or on psycholinguistic grounds decided he could not function in it.

...old man from Muli, [who] was originally from a Han family who were tenants of a landowner. One year his family owed the landlord three silver ingots but could produce only two, so the landlord captured him and he

worked for nine years in the lord's house as a slave. But now, forty years later, living in Baiwu, a community with a majority Nuosu population, he remembers only a few words of the language.

It seems that in the present linguistic climate where Han is seen as progress and non-Han languages as symbols of backwardness, that Han-Nuosu and Han-Zhuang interethnic communication will increasingly be through the medium of Han, even though some isolated Han (who need to break their isolation by using non-Han languages) do learn and use them. My impression is that recent arrivals from predominantly Han areas are unlikely candidates for learning minority languages, unless they see communication with non-Han monolinguals as essential for their survival. Whether children of Han growing up in miniscule Han-speaking communities acquire non-Han languages depends largely on the extent of social contact with non-Han-speaking communities.

Importantly, unlike majority language speakers in Catalonia or parts of western Wales, most people of Han nationality in minority areas are not actively encouraged to learn and use minority languages and scripts. The fact that the language is seen and promoted as only something for people of the associated nationality, whereas Han is a language for people of all nationalities, greatly restricts peoples' expectations of the range of use of minority languages.

The linguistic situation among members of the Han nationality who live in rural Han-speaking communities in close proximity to minority language speakers

As mentioned in the case of Manshuiwan (see 6.1.3.3), some rural Han who have lived in close proximity to Nuosu for generations have gained competence in Nuosu, even though their Nuosu interlocutors are fluent in Han. Goullart (1959)'s guide to parts of Liangshan was a Han from a rural area near the Dadu River who spoke Nuosu, because his family had a lot of dealings with Nuosu.

The linguistic situation among members of the Han nationality who live in administrative centres of core non-Han areas

In general Han who have no need to learn minority languages avoid doing so. In county towns such as Zhaojue the pressure to learn Nuosu is not as great as in more isolated areas due to a high proportion of Han-speaking inhabitants, but is still necessary if they

wish to function properly and have meaningful contact with the local population, especially if they relate to people from the outskirts of the county town or the surrounding countryside. Many Han I met in the administrative centre of Zhaojue seemed offended when I asked them if they spoke Nuosu, even though there were monolingual Nuosu all around them. Harrell (2001a) confirms my impression, gained among the Han of Nuosu and Zhuang areas, as well as among those who live in areas of other minorities, that the Han do everything possible to avoid using minority languages:

Most Han in the Anning Valley and in other areas of concentrated Han settlement are also strictly monolingual: I once astonished an old Han lady, a lifelong resident of Yanyuan, when she overheard me speaking Nuosu on the street, since she did not understand a word and considered the Nuosu language to be impossibly difficult, even though it was all around her (ibid: 73).

..... The Han-area Han can live their lives in almost total ignorance of minority society and culture - it is almost unheard of, for example, for Han people from the areas in and around Yanyuan City to know anything at all of the Nuosu language (ibid: 301).

On my 2005 visit to Meigu County town most Han shopkeepers I asked were not openly hostile towards the Nuosu language but said that being recent arrivals from Han areas they did not speak Nuosu. They claimed that most Han who had lived there for over 10 years were competent in Nuosu, a claim I had insufficient time to test.

The linguistic situation among Han in traditional Han towns

The Han inhabitants of cities surrounded by Nuosu areas felt very insecure prior to the communist “pacification” of Liangshan:

Typical of ancient Chinese cities, it [Mianning] was surrounded by a huge wall, penetrated only by four large gates which were always closed promptly as the sun sank beneath the surrounding mountains. Above each gate and at intervals along the wall were guard houses. Such precaution reflected the ongoing Chinese fear of the Nuosu.

Well might they fear. Nuosu crowded the streets, buying and selling their wares. Outside the city, they were armed to the hilt, often with rifle, pistol and a full cartridge belt. All of their firearms were checked at the gates when they entered the city, but the Chinese could never be sure what other weapons might be hidden under their loose, sweeping clothes. Covell (1990: 116-117)

As far as I have been able to ascertain, most Han of these cities traditionally had no knowledge of Nuosu except if they had intense contacts with members of this ethnic group, above all with those who knew no Han.

Also it is true that many Urban Han have no significant contact with Nuosu. As Harrell (2001a: 72) comments

....for Han workers or bureaucrats on the streets of Panzhihua or Xichang, minorities are nothing but folks in colorful costumes whom they see but do not talk to.

Closing remarks

When Lu Yongbin (2003) of Guangxi Nationalities Institute, writes

可以说，壮族是我国一个双语大户，语言使用上壮汉语化现象在日益增多。One could say that the Zhuang nationality is one of China's big bilingual families and day by day ever more people speak both Zhuang and Han.

he does not say that the Han of Guangxi are part of this “bilingual family” as this bilingualism is overwhelmingly one-way. Han are generally reluctant to learn minority languages unless they have no choice to do so and it is widely considered that Mandarin should be the default lingua franca. Except in the case of Han cadres in monolingual areas, there is little genuine official encouragement for Han to learn minority languages, but enormous pressure for minority speakers to learn Han. This alone is a tremendous handicap for the promotion of non-Han languages.

6.3.2.2 NON-HAN SCRIPTS ONLY USEFUL AS TRANSITIONAL CRUTCHES FOR LEARNING HAN

In 6.1.5 I discussed the evidence for learning Han more efficiently with the help of prior literacy in Zhuang or Nuosu and in 6.2.5 came to the conclusion that this function had been better (although far from perfectly) grasped by the Nuosu than the Zhuang public. This metaphor of the crutch is employed by many Chinese linguistics involved in promoting minority language scripts to repudiate the idea that, once Han has been learnt, there is no need to promote or use the minority language in any way. Such linguists stress that they are not in favour of assimilationist policies and that the purpose of implementing bilingual education is not solely the teaching of Han but also the right of the minority language speakers to preserve their language and identity.

In its second pluralistic phase (and to an extent in its first) the plurilingual policy has, in spite of supposedly being faithful to the Leninist principal of the equality of different languages, stressed the desirability of a situation where all the minorities should be at least bilingual, including Han as one of their languages. Unlike in the first phase (where

it was stressed that minorities should not be pressurised to learn Mandarin –although the practice was frequently very different!), great stress is laid on acquiring Mandarin, usually considerably more than on learning the minority language. In areas where minority language speaking pupils are exposed to, or familiar with, Han, it is frequently considered not necessary to teach the standard minority language and script – indeed this is also the case of a large proportion of those without prior exposure to Han.

A large part of the promotion of minority scripts is linked to the posterior promotion of the Han script. Wherever possible, the use of the Latin alphabet is selected to represent the minority script in order to facilitate the learning of Pinyin, the romanisation of used to teach Mandarin. In spite of frequent references to the convenience of Han (especially cadres) in minority areas also learning local minority languages, there is in practice no, or at best minimal, insistence on this point. There is certainly more insistence on minority cadres being competent in Han. Even Uyghur, Kazakh and Korean speakers, who have had the attainable potential to carry out all the normal domains of their lives in their languages have been pressurised to learn Mandarin if they want to be modern and take part in the 21st Century. Given the geopolitical reality of China, few advocates of linguistic diversity would question the necessity (or at least desirability) of learning Han any more than they would that of linguistic minorities in Europe learning the state language of their country of residence, but the arguments in favour of learning Mandarin, the state language and desired inter-ethnic lingua franca, are often advanced much more strongly than those aimed at safeguarding the minority language, especially since the 1980s.

There are no bilingual schools for the minority elites and once people have a knowledge of Mandarin, it is generally assumed (with the exception of some ethnically self-conscious parents of nationalities with a tradition of literacy) that they do not need non-Han language education and literacy. The only bilingual schools that elites will seriously consider are Han-English ones and these are not normally available in non-Han areas.

Therefore, although in theory all China's languages are equal, given the political, economic and sociolinguistic reality, the Han language "is infinitely more equal than the others" and the only one that is really necessary even in minority areas. Before

being too judgemental of this linguistic inequality, it is convenient to remember that in Wales, English is “more equal” than Welsh and in Spain Castilian is also “more equal” than Catalan, Galician and Basque – not to mention Aranese, Aragonese or Asturian!

The Zhuang context

What was the intention of the promoters of the Zhuang script and the Zhuang-speaking public among whom it was promoted? To provide a proper working unified Zhuang language for all time or just to use as a stepping-stone to Han language literacy? There is no doubt that many people only or chiefly thought of the latter option, but it is hard to know what proportion of its proponents (themselves a tiny minority) were as much or more interested in genuinely communicating in written Zhuang on a long-term basis in a bilingual society. The dedicated linguists involved in the promotion went to pains to point out that they did not intend the Zhuang script to merely be a way of accelerating linguistic shift, but rather a way of becoming bilingual in Han and Zhuang. For example Wang Jun, in the context of Zhuang, writes (1986: 6):

关于少数民族的语文教学可否让我给你两补充?第一,掌握民族文字确实可以帮助学习汉语文,而不会妨碍学汉文,所以谈不上什么“走弯路”.但是决不能,也不应该把民族文字看做学汉文的“拐棍”, 因为拐棍是准备丢的。 根据民族平等,语言平等的政策,民族文字是该民族的第一文字。教育部制订的<<教学大纲>>明确指出:“民族中小学的汉语文教学,对少数民族学生来说,是第二语言的教学。”第二,少数民族要不要创制民族文字,完全由本民族自愿自择,自己决定。少数民族根据自己的实际情况,有的要使用自己的民族文字,有的愿意选用他们认为合用的文字如汉字等,有的经过实践,又有新的考虑,都是可以的。要相信少数民族无不关心本民族的进步和发展,重视人才的培养和智力的开发。

As far as the teaching of minority nationality languages and scripts is concerned, will you allow me to add 2 extra points? Firstly, mastering a minority nationality script can help to learn the Han language and script and does not hinder the learning of the Han script, meaning that it will not lead to travelling a “long and torturous road”. But one cannot, and moreover should not, look upon nationality scripts as being “crutches” for learning the Han script, because crutches are meant to be thrown away when no longer needed. According to the policies of the Equality of nationalities and their languages, nationality scripts are nationalities’ primary scripts. The syllabus formulated by the Ministry of Education clearly specifies that “Han language teaching to minority nationality pupils in nationality secondary and primary schools is second language teaching.” Secondly, whether minority nationalities want to create a script for their nationality or not is completely up to them to choose. On the basis of each minority nationality’s individual circumstances, some use their own nationality’s script and others are willing to adapt other scripts they deem suitable such as Han characters etc., others again change their mind after trying out one of these options; all these options are valid. One must believe in minority nationalities’ invariably

being concerned in their own nationalities' progress and development and taking seriously the training of talent and the development of intellect.

The Nuosu context

Although the main theme of this thesis is to explain why the promotion of the Liangshan Nuosu script has met with a much greater degree of success and acceptance than the promotion of the Zhuang script in Guangxi, this by no means implies that the future of Nuosu as a standardised modern language has been assured for future generations.

A main concern of linguistic policy in Liangshan is with the learning of the Han language and script. Although there is a lot of talk of the right of all minority nationalities to use and develop their own languages, and despite a lot having been said about the advantages of learning the Nuosu script, when it comes down to it, for many cadres and members of the public, the main motivation of Nuosu literacy campaigns (see 6.2.4) is to learn the Han language and script more efficiently (see 6.2.5). I have not seen any institutional preoccupation with preventing the ongoing linguistic hanisation of many young Nuosu in urban areas, nor heard of any medium or long-term strategies to prevent irreversible language shift, when, in a possibly not too-distant future, the great majority of young Nuosu will basically master (to a large extent probably thanks to the bilingual policy) the Han language and characters. The socioeconomic and political power implied by a knowledge of the Han language, together with a high degree of Nuosu monolingualism in a large part of Liangshan, have ensured that the conservation of the Nuosu language has not been priority up till now, a situation which could change in the future if people react to protect it alongside Mandarin.

Up till now the policy in areas where the majority of young Nuosu have a fair amount of exposure to Han, has been to introduce mainly Han-medium teaching, while at the same time teaching the Nuosu script (Type 2 bilingual schools) and often (for example in Nuosu-speaking *Sprachinseln* in the river valleys) only Han-only education is on offer, with no Nuosu literacy component at all. For many people, when the “problem” of non-Han monolingualism disappears, young bilingual Nuosu can and should be educated exclusively in Han with maybe the option of additional Nuosu literacy.

According to this point of view, there is no language problem. Although this lack of Nuosu language provision for bilingual pupils also competent in Han could naturally be partially due to scarcity of funds, teachers and materials for mainly Nuosu-medium education, it does not show a strong commitment to the principal of linguistic equality. The question for me hinges on whether or not more proponents of linguistic policies aimed at preventing a complete language shift in favour of Han will appear. Will measures aimed at the creation of stable bilingualism and at protecting Nuosu from extinction, follow the example of Catalonia, for example?

Heberer (2001: 231) refers thus to the limitations of the socio-political limitations of the Nuosu language:

The language and writing are widely restricted to primary schools, at best; Chinese becomes the primary language beginning in middle school. Because of this, the level of Yi language remains restricted, and the language and writing remain insufficiently developed. Increasingly, Yi language is being degraded to a language of the rural population.

The many urban Nuosu parents (some themselves not very fluent in Han) who have stopped transmitting the Nuosu language to their children, in areas, such as Zhaojue County town (where an overwhelming majority still spoke mainly Nuosu in 1994) does not auger well for the future of the language. Even though informants in Liangshan quoted me plentiful examples of urbanised Nuosu bringing up their children in Nuosu, these by no means account for the majority of people in this situation.

I am amazed by how many people (admittedly a minority) I met in Liangshan that did not seem to be worried by the possibility of language shift to Han. Sometimes this is expressed as outright declarations of the uselessness and limitations of Nuosu, but there are also supposed supporters of Nuosu language and culture who do not back up their words with deeds. There are, for example, even cases of Nuosu researchers of traditional Nuosu culture who have brought up their children only in Han.

The Marxist argument of the inevitable (almost fatalistic), natural long-term fusion of languages and nationalities, which in the Chinese context means the assimilation of non-Han languages and of non-Mandarin Chinese “dialects” by standard Mandarin, enjoys widespread support in China and I was quoted this by many people as a rationale

for meekly accepting, and even encouraging, language shift. Zhang Yurong, Yu Huibang and Ma Jinwei (1993: 116-7), while, like all Marxist writers accepting (at least nominally) this thesis, stress that it is an extremely long-term process which has to follow its natural course, during which minority languages and scripts should be developed side by side with Han on a basis of equality, each playing its indispensable part within distinct contexts. They criticise the viewpoint that minority languages and scripts will disappear soon as being unscientific, emphasising that the first phase of socialism is for developing, not extinguishing, minority languages.

They see the implementation of bilingual education as guaranteeing such development and at the same time fully harnessing the minority language to help minority nationality students to learn Han better and faster. This improves and transforms the quality and standard of education, culture and economic conditions of the minorities. Furthermore they stress that the study and acquisition of the minority language and script is not merely a transitory staging post for the acquisition of Han, but rather an end in itself on a par with acquiring Han.

The authors lament the lack of understanding on this point among both the public and cadres and stress the need for propaganda in favour of the importance, benefits and objectives of bilingual education as being essential for the success of the policy.

Although insistence on the use and recognition of minority languages alongside Mandarin has varied, learning Mandarin has remained a priority. As in Guangxi and other minority areas, the language barrier is seen to be a major barrier to political integration into the modern Chinese state.

在各民族中逐步普及汉语文的学习与使用的基础上,凉山州贯彻50年代提出的"大力提倡,重点推广,逐步普及"的方针,逐步把"推普"工作提上日程,局为主,语委协办,主要在教师中举行一次普通话演讲比赛,... In the 1950s, on the basis of the progressive popularisation of the study and use of Han-Mandarin among all minority nationalities, Liangshan Prefecture carried out a policy of "vigorously encouraging the gradual dissemination through focal promotion points" putting the step by step promotion of Mandarin on the daily agenda. In the last few years, most counties, under the Education Bureau in collaboration with the Language Committee, hold a yearly Mandarin speaking competition mainly among teachers ... (Yao Changdao, 1994: 40)

The example of the speaking competition is a bit bizarre, but shows that even among educated people like teachers, fluency in Mandarin is far from assured. Yao does not mention to what extent the Mandarin variety promoted is that of Liangshan (South-western Mandarin) or that of Beijing. Realistically it would be something between the two. An aim of the Liangshan Government according to Yao Changdao (1994: 40) is also to follow up Nuosu literacy classes with Han language and literacy classes for those Nuosu peasants.

可以说, 在凉山已存在局部的初级双语制. It can be said that a partial situation of incipient bilingualism exists in Liangshan.

However as mentioned in the previous section, this bilingualism is understood to be a phenomenon principally for Nuosu, rather than for Han, speakers.

Closing remarks

Although many promoters of minority scripts desperately believe in long-term bilingualism and the right to use them in a large variety of domains, the actual implementation puts much more emphasis on their function as crutches for the learning of Han.

6.3.2.3 ENSURING HAN BECOMES UNIVERSAL LINGUA FRANCA, REPLACING REGIONAL ONES

I mentioned in 5A.4.2.1 the traditional role of some non-Han languages as lingua francas such as Zhuang in parts of Guangxi, Nuosu in parts of Liangshan, Uyghur and Kazak in Xinjiang and Tai in parts of Yunnan is being discouraged in favour of Mandarin (or other Han variants). Where major “dialectal” differences exist within an ethnic group (especially between local variants and the officially promoted standard language) such differences are emphasised and played upon by those opposed to the normalisation of non-Han standard languages, as was illustrated in the Zhuang example and Han variants covertly promoted as the intra-ethnic lingua franca.

6.3.2.4 ENCOURAGING HAN IMMIGRATION TO ALTER THE LINGUISTIC EQUILIBRIUM

Han immigration is a constant ongoing process affecting minority areas. Depending on the degree of contact between locals and incomers, it forces previously monolingual speakers to add Han to their linguistic repertoire and those with a little knowledge to

improve it. In bilingual communities already competent in Han, it can tip the balance in favour of linguistic shift to Han. I remarked earlier that Han usually was automatically assumed to be the *default* language of communication between Han and Non-Han. Logically, the greater the proportion of Han immigrants in a given area, the greater their hanising effect on the local population will be and the less the chances of their being motivated to learn a local non-Han language. In areas such as the county towns of core Nuosu or Zhuang areas, even a small proportion of influential Han incomers can have a disproportionate accelerator effect on the process of hanisation, especially among non-Han elites.

6.3.2.5 ASSUMPTION THAT HAN SOCIETY, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ARE SUPERIOR TO, AND MORE MODERN /ADVANCED THAN, BACKWARD MINORITIES AND THEIR LANGUAGES

Official Chinese discourse has established a simplistic stereotyped dichotomy between the Han nationality (majority, modern, advanced, international etc.) and the minority nationalities (exotic, folkloric, culturally and socio-economically more backward than the Han) and often refers to the minority nationalities in general, thus lumping together many extremely diverse peoples. In the same way the official discourse has indirectly created a stereotyped dichotomy between the Han language (efficiently equipped for all of life's functions) and the minority languages in general (with very limited functions and status). Many minorities are often said not to have culture, (没有文化) which is closely bound up with not having their own script. However, possessing or creating one does not necessarily give them much more status (in the eyes of Han and non-Han alike), as it is still often perceived as inferior (functionally if not intrinsically) to the Han one.

In addition, on the Marxist scale of social evolution almost all the minority nationalities are a long way behind the Han. This can be seen in the fact that they are poorer and need help to catch up with the Han. Being backward they need to raise their “素质 (suzhi)” or “quality” through education. Dwyer (2005: 7) puts it thus:

This contradiction between rational egalitarianism and visceral anti-minority sentiment served and still serves to undermine proactive language-maintenance policies in China's Western Regions. Raising minority “quality” may be a laudable (if chauvinistic) sociological goal, yet at the same time, the connotations of *suzhi* were deeply insulting.

6.3.2.6 ASSUMPTION THAT INFERIOR, MINORITY LANGUAGES ARE INADEQUATE FOR “HIGHER” DOMAINS AND FUNCTIONS AND MINIMISING OF DOMAINS OPEN TO THEM

According to Harrell (1993):

This old project of the civilizing center has been officially superseded by the new project of creating a unified multinational state. But in fact the old project remains; the Han still feel themselves superior and the elite still uses the Han language exclusively in administration, education, and other areas.

The interaction between these two “projects” impregnates – or maybe “sabotages” would be more appropriate - the whole of the linguistic policy (as well as the whole relation between the minorities and the Han) and its implementation, and not only many Han, but also many cadres and speakers of minority languages reject or are unenthusiastic about the promotion of their languages and scripts, deep down knowing that they are inferior. An important limitation on the use of minority languages in all domains is the fact that Han and other nationalities are not generally expected to learn them, even in areas like Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Korean-speaking areas, thus effectively denigrating them to the status of intra-ethnic languages.

If it were possible to use Chinese minority languages for elitist functions of education, literature, administration and modern life in general (minority areas are mostly rural and far from urban, industrial centres), we could approach a situation where they are equipped for use in most domains. However, there are various factors that make improbable, not only in the south-west of China but also in Tibetan, Mongolian and Turkic regions (where it seemed until the early 1990s that it might just be approached on an intra-ethnic basis), a normalisation of the type carried out in Catalonia. For speakers of most non-Han languages, knowledge of Han is the only realistic way of gaining access to modern economy and to up-to-date technology and science (discussed in 6.2.8). This leads to the next point.

6.3.2.7 ENCOURAGEMENT OF HAN LOANS IN PREFERENCE TO COINING NATIVE WORDS

In 6.2.8, I discussed the issue of minority languages being equipped to deal with technical domains. Naturally all languages can be equipped to deal with all possible domains and situations, but if well-established ones like Uyghur and Tibetan are heavily discouraged from using their own resources or non-Han borrowings to deal with modernity, then languages with new literacy traditions, like Bai or Zhuang, are

unlikely to be allowed to develop adequate terminologies. This is a manifestation of a covert policy to minimise the domains in which non-Han languages may be used and the tendency to impose Han loan words for modern concepts is also a covert strategy to associate them (and everything modern and advanced) with the Han nationality.

Han words have been massively introduced into all non-Han languages to describe objects and concepts which could have been described by coining native words, as in fact many linguists involved in planning these languages advocated, sometimes successfully. While such wholesale borrowing from Han went against Marxist equalitarian principals, it did fit in with the widespread Marxist belief that in the long-run all languages would merge into one. In China, cadres and others I discussed this with, were clear in their minds that this meant other languages “merging” into Mandarin Han and saw the large-scale importation of Han lexical and structural elements as a logical and helpful hastening of this inevitable process. An extension of this assumption is the following point.

6.3.2.8 IMPLICATION THAT MINORITY LANGUAGES ALSO SPOKEN OUTSIDE CHINA SHOULD LOOK TO HAN, NOT TO RELATED LANGUAGES IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, TO MODERNISE AND EQUIP THEM FOR HIGHER DOMAINS

This aspect, which generally further implies a minimisation of the use and intermediary role of minority languages in contacts with other countries in favour of Han, is not really relevant to the Zhuang and Nuosu contexts. In the former case only Zhuang living on the Vietnamese border are aware that people (perhaps blood relatives) across the border speak the same as, or similar to, themselves and only a tiny handful of Zhuang scholars hanker after increased cultural ties with Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Nuosu has no natural speech communities outside China. This aspect does, however, affect many non-Han minorities. In theory the Koreans of Yanbian could make use of the resources and materials from South Korea (given the choice, who would want those of the North?!) which would give them access to the modern world in their own language. Some resources and materials from independent “Outer” Mongolia could be put at the disposition of the Mongols *of* China. Also many would argue in favour of the widely-spoken Turkic language Uyghur (which moreover is very similar to the Turkic languages of the new Central Asian ex-Soviet republics and not so distant from the Turkish of Turkey), taking on the function of a language of development and progress.

Moreover, there are Uyghur medium schools in several Central Asian republics with banks of materials and Kazakh is the official language of Kazakhstan. However, political considerations such as national unity and Han hegemony, rather than linguistic proximity and convenience, decide this question. Unlike the Zhuang and Bouyei, southwestern Tai speakers in Sipsong Panna regard the Thai language of Thailand as their window to the world and modernity, a tendency which makes the Han Chinese feel uncomfortable.

Official attempts (Dwyar, 2005) to cleanse Uyghur of established western borrowings (via Russian and French) are probably aimed in part at the degree of ease of communication with speakers in neighbouring countries. Not only do powerful elements within the Chinese state wish to increase the lexical and structural dependence of minority languages on Han and accentuate differences with cross-border cousins, but also to generally minimise the role of minority languages in dealing directly with the outside world. When I was much younger I naïvely assumed that national minorities speaking languages intelligible with those of other countries would be seen as an asset in international contacts and relations. Thus it came as a shock to me that the French government, instead of encouraging naturally existing French-Flemish bilingualism in the Dunkirk / Hazebrouck area or French-German bilingualism in Alsace and northern Lorraine and harnessing it as an economic and political bridge to Dutch- and German-speaking countries, pursued an active policy of what many would term “linguisticide”.

China is clearly worried that speakers of languages also spoken as majority languages in neighbouring countries, especially speakers of Turkic languages and Mongolian, may aspire to join with their politically independent brethren outside China. Is it a coincidence that the miniscule Vietnamese-speaking population of Guangxi on the coastal border with Vietnam is classified as “Jing” rather than Vietnamese and uses no written language? I have heard from various sources that the Government is uncomfortable about the contacts between the Tai speakers of Yunnan and Thailand (and also to Laos and Shan-speaking areas of Burma). It is true that some Zhuang linguists and cadres have sometimes stressed the advantages for contacts with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam of a strong standardised Zhuang, but these exhortations fell on deaf ears and were in no way perceived as a political threat. The fact that the Korean

minority have proved politically loyal to China explains in part their large degree of linguistic autonomy, since they were not perceived as a threat.

6.3.2.9 DISCOURAGING LEARNING FOREIGN TONGUES THROUGH MEDIUM OF MINORITY LANGUAGES

Even on the level of tourist contacts, I have heard (source mislaid) that the Chinese authorities were not too happy about direct air links between Sipsong Panna and Thailand because of the ease of communication between Thais and Tais. I heard an anecdote (thus not totally reliable) that a Chinese-English interpreter taking English-speaking Turkish tourists around Xinjiang grew very angry when the Turks started trying to communicate with the local Uyghurs (or Kazakhs) in Turkish. In any case Dwyar (2005) reports how the authorities have discouraged and put obstacles in the way of English language teaching materials using Uyghur as the interface language, insisting that Han be used as a “go-between”. This is despite the fact that Uyghur speakers face different learning problems to Han-speakers and that Uyghur shares much vocabulary of Latin, Greek and French origin (imported via Russian) with English, such as “transport” and “telefon”. As mentioned in the previous point there is an attempt underway to replace many such terms with Han borrowings. This pressure to learn English through the medium of Han implies that Uyghur is not up to being a language of international “interface”. At present (2005) English classes at Liangshan University in Xichang have been introduced where not only Han, but also Nuosu was used as the language of explanations and vocabulary etc. According to the Head of the Nuosu Department, He Gang (personal communication August 2005), this had not only greatly helped Nuosu speakers to learn English, but also raised the status of Nuosu in their eyes, as they realised that English could also be learned directly from Nuosu, without necessarily passing through Han.

6.3.2.10 DISCOURAGING FORMATION OF ELITES WHO ACTIVELY USE /SUPPORT PROMOTED NON-HAN LANGUAGE

This point is the all pervading leitmotif of this study and has been discussed in depth throughout this Chapter (especially in 6.2.2). Without encouraging the creation of an elite (at least at a local level) with an invested interest in the promoted minority language and script, the latter will inevitably be seen as backward and not really worthy of investing in. In the south-west of China minority languages have quite low social

prestige and traditionally the only effective form of upward social mobility has been by way of partial or total hanisation. While working at the *Institute of Nationalities of Guangxi*, I met various native speakers of minority languages such as Zhuang, Kam and Mien (Yao) who had a very high standard of education (exclusively in Han of course) and who did not have the slightest interest in learning to read and write their native language (which they often disparagingly termed "dialect"). Especially in the south-west most educated speakers of minority languages have mastered Han, live in urban or administrative centres and typically do not transmit their minority language to their children. Moreover, even when they have the option of a bilingual education for their children, they generally have no interest in their children learning to read and write the minority language.

This tendency exists not only among speakers of low prestige languages, but there are also cases of educated speakers of high-prestige minority languages like Uyghur, Mongol, Tibetan and Korean who speak Han, or chiefly Han, to their children. Likewise (as this thesis has endeavoured to show) many educated speakers of languages such as Nuosu with a high degree of ethnic pride and awareness have promoted the *hanisation* of their own children.

In order to correct such a situation, it is necessary to promote via status planning measures the formation of an elite supportive of maintaining and developing the non-Han language. This is not being done. On the contrary, throughout China hanised elites which bring up their children in Mandarin are being actively encouraged as is made clear in the following point.

6.3.2.11 ENCOURAGING EXISTING ELITES WHO ACTIVELY USE /SUPPORT THEIR NON-HAN LANGUAGE TO INSTEAD USE /SUPPORT MANDARIN

The dismantling of the promotion and use of non-Han languages in areas like Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang and measures to encourage the intellectuals and elites to switch more to Han is evidence of this unwritten and unsaid policy. Any up-and-coming alternative minority language speaking elite in south-western China (for example Nuosu or Zhuang) would feel extremely uncomfortable in the face of these developments, which have often been held up as shining models of bilingual tolerance and equality in the literatures of the promotion of Zhuang and Nuosu. It is certainly an

incentive for such people to choose to integrate themselves into the hanised elite if they suspect that any bilingual elite might subsequently be dismantled.

6.3.2.12 INSUFFICIENT FINANCING AND RESOURCES FOR NON-HAN LANGUAGE PROMOTION

People involved with the promotion of non-Han languages constantly cite lack of financing and resources as a major stumbling block, especially in the area of setting up and maintaining schools, training teachers to teach in the particular languages (especially at secondary level), the provision of non-Han language teaching materials and the development of minority language media and publishing. Social costs of not investing in bilingual policies do not seem to be taken into account. For example, provision of Han-only education is not free and has high social costs, such as dropping out of school.

6.3.2.13 SUCCESSFUL BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROJECTS REMAINING “PROVISIONAL” AND LOCAL

Many cadres (often forming the majority in an administration) who do not support the normalisation of minority languages and scripts, pay lip-service to pilot projects with the intention, or in the hope, that they never get beyond the experimental stage. Such permanently “provisional” projects have great symbolic and propagandistic value, showing as they do that things are being done to implement pluralist language policy. At the same time they do not threaten the hanised classes in power, and others opposed to the promotion, because they only effect a few individuals in a few remote areas, in this way rendering meaningless (or at very best less meaningful) the promotion. The fact that pilot projects are praised and talked about for long periods without any action being taken to extend the promotion, means that hope is still being kept alive among proponents of the promotion, while nothing is really being done. This was the case of Zhuang areas from the late 1980s onwards. The administration is seen to be carrying out a pluralist policy, when in real terms only Mandarin is being furthered and the policy of hanisation proceeds apace.

6.3.2.14 CLOSING REMARKS

Despite an official language policy which on paper is the envy of minority language activists in many countries, the reality is that little is being done to promote the use and development of minority languages and their scripts in south-western China. A major reason is the strength of Han-centred thinking which permeates the Chinese state and hence the implementation of minority language policy in the form of “hidden agendas” and “covert measures” such as those outlined above.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Here the conclusions on the findings (Chapter 6) and background events (Chapter 5) are presented. In Chapter 1 two objectives were stated, the first of which was made up of 8 hypotheses to explain the different outcomes of the promotion of Zhuang and Nuosu. The second was to reflect on the general trend of minority linguistic policy in China and how this might affect linguistic vitality of Zhuang and Nuosu.

Before considering individually the 8 hypotheses which help to explain the differences between both situations (The Relative Success Question), I wish to return to two misconceptions (discussed in 6.1.3 and 6.1.5) which are prevalent among a large section of the population and result in the general public (of all nationalities) seeing things in a totally different light to linguists, language planners and educationalists in favour of a plurilingual policy.

7.1.1 WIDESPREAD MISCONCEPTION THAT MOST ZHUANG SPEAK HAN

A recurring explanation for the failure of the promotion of Zhuang constantly proffered in China and even beyond, is that the Zhuang all know Han and many of them cannot even speak Zhuang. In putting forward the argument that Zhang speakers are basically bilingual in Han, its proponents are surely thinking rather of the lesser degree of ethnic consciousness existing among the Zhuang (discussed in 6.2.1), than of their linguistic competence and of the longer tradition of adapting Han characters to the Zhuang language (see 6.2.6). However, these factors have not yet converted the bulk of the rural Zhuang population into fluent Han-speakers and especially in the west of Guangxi there are extensive almost monolingual Zhuang areas, where the possibility for contacts with the spoken Han language are minimal.

What is undoubtedly true is that a significant Han-speaking and Han-literate Zhuang urban class, indistinguishable from Han, has arisen which has given urban Han the impression that most Zhuang have adopted Han as their first language. This illustrates how easy it is to spread false ethnic stereotypes with them hardly being questioned. One wonders to what extent this misconception might have been deliberately encouraged by

enemies of promoting the Zhuang script and identity. A further point brought up was that even monolingual Zhuang identify with many aspects of Chinese culture (e.g. Han characters) far more than their Nuosu counterparts, which in no way implies they necessarily speak Han.

Despite the popular stereotype of the ethnically proud Nuosu who speak no Han, there are rural areas in close proximity to Han speakers with a large degree of bilingualism and urbanised centres where many upwardly-mobile Nuosu-speakers are “jettisoning” their language in favour of Han, although (unlike their Zhuang counterparts) the latter do not ethnically identify with the Han. Factors such as the Zhuangs’ greater tradition of integration into the Middle Kingdom tend to obscure sociolinguistic similarities between both situations.

Thus, the assertion which some people use to explain the different results, that Nuosu are mainly monolingual in Nuosu and that Zhuang are bilingual or even monolingual in Han, is inaccurate and misleading and does not satisfactorily explain the difference between the results of the promotion in the two areas under study, which must rather be sought in the 8 hypotheses treated under The Relative Success Question. If the authorities in Guangxi do not face up to the linguistic reality of core Zhuang areas, the chances of any effective language planning initiatives being taken to alleviate the socioeconomic problems of these areas are very slim.

7.1.2 WIDESPREAD MISCONCEPTION THAT HAN-ONLY EDUCATION IS MORE BENEFICIAL FOR MONOLINGUAL MINORITY AREAS THAN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Educational results from core Zhuang and Nuosu rural areas (outside the County towns or hanised areas), where children have no significant exposure to Han outside the classroom, bear out the claim that Han-only submersion education does not permit monolingual non-Han speaking children to gain competence in the Han language and script and the subjects which are taught through them. If teachers speak only Han without providing meaningful, contextualised input, teaching is often ineffective, maintaining children in a state of monolingual illiteracy. If acquisition in Han actually takes place, a highly subtractive form of bilingualism generally arises and literacy is

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only achieved in the acquired (less familiar) language and in most cases probably only to a limited extent.

In the absence of mother-tongue literacy, children appear to stand a better chance of acquiring Han if their teachers are able to introduce Han to them through the medium of Zhuang/Nuosu, just as many Gaelic speakers in 18th Century Scotland gradually (although hardly efficiently) learnt English, largely through oral explanations of English texts in Gaelic (Withers, 1984: 125). However, even if basic competence (BICS) in Han is achieved, in the absence of CALP acquired through mother-tongue literacy and with further development of the mother-tongue (especially complex, modern, abstract concepts) being severely stunted, there is a danger of a situation of subtractive bilingualism arising. Achieving CALPS through Han is a truly Herculean task and if even Han BICS acquisition has been unsatisfactory, as is probable in poor rural monolingual areas, sacrificing mother-tongue development will not have been compensated by acquiring enough Han to help them to significantly “get on in the world” (a key aim for parents). Having been denied the basic tools of coping with the kind of abstract and context-remote concepts typically taught in schools, such children have a slim chance of ever succeeding in the academic world.

Even allowing for some exaggerated claims from Guangxi and Liangshan, bilingual education (if properly carried out, supported and financed) provides monolingual Zhuang and Nuosu children with a realistic, non-traumatic way of learning Han and a better cognitive development and understanding of the subjects they study. At the same time it not only avoids the loss of competence in the mother tongue but positively raises pupils’ command of it. Where experimental Zhuang classes were shown to be successful in Guangxi, they were never extended to the population as a whole (or even a significant proportion of it) and either remained “experimental” or were discontinued. This resulted in Zhuang medium education not even being an option for most monolingual Zhuang parents, large numbers of whom were not even aware of its existence. In contrast classes with at least some Nuosu teaching were widely (although not universally) implemented throughout core Nuosu areas. However, most “bilingual” classes were of Type 2, where the input of Nuosu is widely considered insufficient to provide adequate Nuosu-medium CALPS.

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In my opinion, despite the obvious failure of Han-only education, bilingual teaching has not been given a proper chance to get off the ground and has been severely handicapped by lack of investment in resources and teachers. It is a rather like clipping the wings of bird, throwing it into the air and saying “Do you see? It can’t fly!” It is not surprising under such circumstances that some bilingual teaching has been inadequate. Strangely, its critics do not seem to notice whether the Han-only alternative is adequate.

It might well be (as some criticisms have implied) that sometimes Han has not been taught well in bilingual schools, but bad, uncommunicative teaching methods produce bad results whatever language they are taught in and neither has Han usually been taught efficiently in Han-only schools. Further, it is a fact that minority language medium teachers tend to be less qualified and more poorly trained and paid than mainstream teachers. These are problems that with careful, long-sighted language planning ought to be overcome.

My overriding impression is that the role of Nuosu as an aid to learning Han was better exploited in Liangshan than that of Zhuang in Guangxi. Certainly Han primers written in Nuosu are far more omnipresent in Liangshan than ones written in Zhuang were in Guangxi. Accepting fully that they belong to a different ethnic group than the Han, which is not always the case among the Zhuang, Nuosu speakers are more likely to accept the use of their written script (which they likewise better accept as their own) to learn Han, a totally alien language for them. Many Zhuang speakers, not being so convinced they are really different from the Han (see 6.2.1 and 7.2.1), will be reluctant to use a script that they do not identify with to learn Han characters which they do not perceive alien.

The modest spread of Nuosu literacy in predominantly monolingual core areas of Liangshan seems to be having at least one of two possible effects on people learning Han. One is that they will learn it faster and more efficiently with the help of Han primers written in the Nuosu language and the other is that people newly literate in Nuosu decide they can “get by” with Nuosu literacy (albeit offering fewer material advantages than Han literacy) and have no need to acquire Han characters.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO THE RELATIVE SUCCESS QUESTION

TO EXPLAIN THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF THE PROMOTION OF NUOSU IN LIANGSHAN AND THE FAILURE OF THE PROMOTION OF ZHUANG IN GUANGXI, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EXAMINING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE FORMER

Here I individually treat the hypotheses posed in 1.7.1 and examined in Chapter 6 to explain the different outcomes of the promotion of Zhuang in Guangxi and of Nuosu in Liangshan.

7.2.1 THE IDENTITY HYPOTHESIS

The more self-confident minority language speakers are of their ethnolinguistic identity, the more likely they are to view the promotion of their language and script positively. As Nuosu speakers have a stronger ethnic consciousness than the Zhuang and feel themselves to be more different from the Han, they will be more loyal to their language and script and hence will give greater support to the promotion of their language and script.

The greater ethnic consciousness and sense of unity of the Nuosu has played an important role in their receptiveness (compared to that of the Zhuang) to the promoted standard language and script. A large proportion of Zhuang are not even convinced that they really exist as an ethnic group and perceive that they speak different languages from other types of Zhuang. It is conceivable that if various standard Zhuang languages (more in line with people's ethnic self-perceptions) had been promoted, that speakers might have identified more with standards nearer to their own speech varieties, although this is by no means certain given the extreme ethnic fragmentation, such that many Zhuang do not even identify with Zhuang who live in close proximity and speak clearly mutually intelligible dialects. For several thousand years, Central and Northern Tai speakers of south-western China (in contrast to South-western Tai speakers of Sipsong Panna) have identified literacy and culture (as did their Vietnamese neighbours) exclusively with Chinese characters, either in pure form or adapted to local speech variants. Although Central and Northern Tai dialects were represented by either Zhuang *fangkuaizi* or by pure Chinese characters, true literacy was considered to be

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literacy in Han. Thus a large proportion of Zhuang feel that they do not need a script since their traditional script and target standard language are obviously those of the Han. Where Zhuang peasants and grass roots cadres have benefited from mother tongue literacy, they lack political influence and are unable to convince the sceptical majority to adopt a script that they do not identify with.

In sharp contrast to the Zhuang, the Nuosu have a strong sense of (and pride in) their otherness from the Han and feel a strong sense of unity with other Nuosu speakers. Almost all Nuosu (even if they do not master it) identify the standardised Nuosu script as their own and are very proud of it. Many even believe it to be more ancient than the Han script. Although most see it as functionally less useful than Han in the wider world, they are likely to show strong support for it as long as they do not perceive their (or their children's) chances of learning Han as being threatened.

Had the Chinese authorities tried to promote one type of language and script for all Yi not based on Nuosu, the success of the promotion would have been very different, as the category of "Yi" has only been properly accepted by the more hanised urban Nuosu. Although officially Nuosu speakers share a nationality with other Yi, the fact that they are treated differently linguistically and form a geographically compact group, leads to their effectively being treated as the "Nuosu nationality." One development of interest will be whether the hanised mainly urban Nuosu, as they undergo language and culture loss, will increasingly see themselves as "Yi", not only in opposition to the Han and other nationalities, but also to their rural "Nuosu" cousins.

This hypothesis has proved to be valid in the Zhuang and Nuosu contexts. However, as will be seen in the following hypothesis, the political influence of ethnic consciousness is strongly conditioned by the attitudes and behaviour of the non-Han elites.

7.2.2 THE MINORITY ELITE HYPOTHESIS

If the elite, who serve as role models for a large part of the minority language speech community, are supportive of the promoted language and script and use it actively and pass it (rather than Han) on to their children then the promotion's chances of success are greatly increased. The greater tendency among the Nuosu elite

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to support their language and script and pass them on to their children than among the Zhuang elite has resulted in greater acceptance of the promotion in Liangshan than in Guangxi.

Linguistic shift among upwardly mobile urbanised speakers of minority language in favour of majority languages is a worldwide phenomenon, but its extent often differs between minority communities. For example propertied classes in Catalonia show greater loyalty to Catalan than has been the case in Valencia, resulting in a much greater degree of language shift in favour of Spanish in Valencia than in Catalonia.

Hanisation of urban members of minority speech communities is a worrying trend for advocates of promoting standardised minority languages and scripts in China. It deprives the minority speech communities of an educated, influential, upwardly-mobile and prestigious elite which could support and benefit from the promoted minority script and standard language and sends out a clear message that to get on in their world members of the minority-speaking public should give up their native language.

In both Guangxi and Liangshan hanised, urbanised Zhuang and Nuosu privileged classes have grown up, which on the one hand benefit from positive discrimination favouring national minorities, but at the same time despise their rural non-hanised compatriots and have scant interest in their general economic and social development and advancement. A large proportion of this class has made a deliberate point of not transmitting their language to their children and ensuring that they do not acquire its script, using the rationale that they will thus learn Han more effectively and get on better in the world. They thus gradually dissociate themselves from their rural cultural and family roots.

The consequence of this is that a large proportion of Zhuang and many Nuosu cadres, even at county level, do not represent the interests of their own nationalities, resulting in a widening gap between rural and urban interests. Such cadres at best drag their feet over the implementation of minority language promotion and at worst totally refuse to implement it. It would appear that they either do not appreciate the potential usefulness of these promotions for the economic and social development of rural areas or that they do not care about such development. Their hanising behaviour inevitably serves as a

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role model for the mass of the population. Already there are non-core Zhuang and Nuosu (Wu Da, 2002) previously monolingual rural areas where knowledge of Han is widespread and being incorporated diglossically into bilingual speakers' everyday linguistic repertoire. This creates the situation where the next child-bearing generation could decide to bring up their children in Han only.

If this hanising tendency is such a powerful force among both Zhuang and Nuosu, how can it help to explain the differing outcomes? The fact that an important minority (a much larger proportion than in Guangxi) of urbanised influential Nuosu actively support their language and script, combined with the continued widespread influence of a traditional respected Nuosu literate elite, goes a long way to explaining the greater success of the promotion in Liangshan, thus validating this hypothesis. However, unless bilingualism and biliteracy is seriously promoted among the hanised urban Nuosu elites, the future of Nuosu will be in serious danger.

If the official language policy of encouraging non-Han languages and scripts is to be more than empty rhetoric, then the creation and consolidation of bilingual, biliterate local elites should be a strong and urgent priority. This would be much easier to achieve in Liangshan than in Guangxi.

After half a century of being labelled against their will (in the case of the majority) by the Chinese state as Zhuang and Yi, many upwardly mobile Zhuang and Nuosu now (at least in the Han world) accept these labels. While this has helped a miniscule number of Zhuang identify with the imposed standard language, most urbanised Zhuang have no problem with abandoning Zhuang and being illiterate in it. If urbanised Nuosu identify more with the category Yi than that of Nuosu, then I imagine this is likely to speed up their hanisation.

7.2.3 THE GRASS-ROOTS HYPOTHESIS

Minority language script promotion involving a strong grass-roots bottom-up element (in addition to the top-down element) is much more likely to succeed than if it is perceived as being imposed from above. The fact that the promotion of the Zhuang script was widely seen as being imposed by the authorities on an unenthusiastic

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public and that standardised Nuosu was promoted in response to strong popular grass-roots demand and support explains the much warmer reception by, and more active participation of, Nuosu speakers in the promotion than of their Zhuang counterparts.

In keeping with evidence from many other studies (e.g. Hornberger 1997 and Hansen 1999a and b) the Zhuang and Nuosu situations clearly show that without sufficient bottom-up support, the promotion of a language and its script is doomed to failure. Given the prior existence of bottom-up support, top-down measures can make a big difference in the provision of organisational and financial support. In the absence of sufficient prior bottom-up support, top-down measures must be aimed at awakening a bottom-up reaction if they are to have any chance of being effective. Once top-down measures have been implemented, active grass-roots community involvement in all spheres, but especially in the conflictive area of education, is essential to prevent a feeling that the policy is something useless or imposed from outside the community. Such increased community involvement should in turn generate further supportive top-down action, so that planning of the linguistic “eco-system” becomes an interactive cyclical process.

While such an idealised planning framework remains a pipedream in both situations, it has been more closely approximated in Liangshan than in Guangxi, where the bottom-up element was overwhelmingly absent and a healthy feedback between top-down planning and bottom-up reactions totally lacking. This goes a long way towards explaining the differing results of the two promotions.

In my judgement, even in Liangshan there needs to be far more community involvement, in which language planning (planning for long-term stable bilingualism) is integrated with planning a long-term stable, biliterate and bicultural society where the globalised world of the 21st Century and traditional Nuosu society can come to terms with each other in the least traumatic and conflictive way possible and be able to face up to the enormous social and political challenges facing it such as AIDS, drug addiction, rife diseases (e.g. hepatitis), alcoholism, cultural dislocation and (despite all the goodwill of the central government) tremendous discrimination and mistrust from the Han majority. Such an integrated approach is now gaining supporters in Liangshan. For example, a number of papers at the 4th International Conference on Yi Studies

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focused on sustainable development where the traditional Nuosu culture and traditions were fully respected: Thomas Heberer (2005) treated the relationship between ethnic identity and entrepreneurship in Liangshan, Qubi Ago (2005) spoke of how to balance traditional Nuosu culture and modernisation, Baqie Rihuo (2005) of the contribution that the traditional bimo religion can make to ecologically friendly development and Ma Erzi (2005) of how promoting traditional Nuosu beliefs can help environmental protection and biodiversity. Bai Shige (2005) pointed out how grass root action by Nuosu clans can play an important role in preservation of natural resources and economic development, while Mi Wuzuo (2005) and Yang Lingqiong (2005) considered how bimo culture can make a positive contribution to a healthy kind of tourism, respectful of Nuosu traditions.

For this to become reality, it is necessary that new community projects, whether promoted by NGOs or the administration, arise in minority areas of China, which will combine (via schools and adult education) promotion of non-Han and Han literacy, traditional ethnic culture, values and traditions and relevant information necessary for successfully surviving in the new globalised market of mainstream Han-dominated China. Of course a necessary condition for bottom-up pressure in favour of balanced bilingualism is for the public to be adequately informed about linguistic matters. As I pointed out in 7.1.2, people are generally ill-informed of the possibilities of multi- and plurilingualism.

With regard to the necessity of school teaching materials (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6), sensitive to the sociocultural context of the Zhuang and Nuosu, I would argue that it is important to adapt the China-wide materials to pupil's cultural values and local contexts, especially if these are then contrasted with more socially dominant Han or globalised values, in a way which introduces pupils to mainstream values that is compatible with, and respects, their ethnic and linguistic identity and values. Thereby they will have more chance of surviving the early years of schooling and reaching a stage where they have the possibility of entering mainstream Han-medium further education, to which they will have an increased chance of being able to adapt.

7.2.4 THE IMPLEMENTATION HYPOTHESIS

Effective official promotion of minority languages and scripts requires maximal compatibility of measures with consistent and continuing use of the minority language in institutional and interactional settings. The promotion of the Nuosu language and script was carried out much more conscientiously by cadres and local authorities in Liangshan than that of the Zhuang language and script in Guangxi. This was a determining factor in the greater success of the promotion of Nuosu.

In China minority language policy is not taken very seriously by those who oppose it, being regarded as what Heberer (2001) terms a “soft-policy”. Given that many cadres are opposed to, or sceptical about, pluralistic language policies, it is to be expected that their implementation is in for a rough ride. During pluralistic phases, cadres who are against the policy do not usually openly and frontally voice their public opposition. Instead, they do so by non-cooperation with (see the covert measures described 6.3 and 7.3), or non-implementation of, the policy. Sometimes opposition to the policy is tacitly agreed upon by the greater part of the administration. For example, now that the abandoning of the promotion of Zhuang is a tacitly accepted fact (and a taboo subject), there appears to be a conspiracy of collective amnesia on part of the Guangxi administration to forget that the script ever existed apart from occasional ambiguous references to it, where it is advantageous to create the superficial impression that the government has generously applied an enlightened pluralistic language policy.

A speaker of Nuosu in rural Liangshan receives constant reminders of the usefulness of knowing how to read and write Nuosu (although they might receive even more reminders of the usefulness of knowing Han), while the average Zhuang-speaker in Guangxi would be justified in asking if the famous script only exists on the banknotes of *renminbi* and name-signs of public buildings. Once, on asking certain cadres in Guangxi about the Zhuang script, they proudly answered that it was on Chinese banknotes, without being able to say much more about it.

Despite much foot-dragging and non-implementation of important aspects of the promotion of standardised Nuosu, a high (even if not “universal” as often claimed) proportion of rural, as well as a significant minority of urban, Nuosu have had access to acquiring literacy in, and using, this script, either through bilingual education or rural

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literacy programmes. In contrast, in Zhuang areas the campaigns only touched a small proportion of the population and what gains in literacy were made were mostly later lost. This is in no small part due to the more effective and wholehearted implementation of the policy on the part of cadres in Nuosu areas than was the case in Zhuang areas. The Implementation Hypothesis is thus valid in that the top-down measures of the promotion of Nuosu were carried out much more sincerely and thoroughly by cadres at different administrative levels than was that of Zhuang. Notwithstanding these comparative successes, the promotion of Nuosu is in grave danger due to some cadres' lack of cooperation in implementing it, especially as the new urbanised Nuosu higher level cadres become further and further estranged from their rural roots and relatives.

Zhuang- (and not infrequently Nuosu-) medium education and literacy campaigns are often popularly seen to have been a failure. However, neither has Han-medium education been much of a success in areas where pupils are not exposed to the Han language outside of the classroom (see 6.2.5 and 7.2.5). If mainly Zhuang- (/Nuosu-) medium teaching is properly implemented in all Zhuang (/Nuosu) areas, with proper resources, staffing, funding, training and inspection, and made a requirement for access to employment and higher education, then pupils will have the opportunity to advance socioeconomically within both their own ethnic and Han-speaking worlds as well as properly exercising their equal rights as a non-Han group. If in contrast the language barrier to advancement is ignored as at present, then we shall see a very long term, slow, drawn out process of gradual linguistic shift in favour of Han with negative psychological and socioeconomic scars on generations of Zhuang (/Nuosu).

Quite aside from questions of linguistic rights, something is seriously wrong with decision-making in Guangxi and Liangshan if a large proportion of monolingual Zhuang and Nuosu children are –and have been for generations- failing on a large scale due to lack of access to a bilingual education (an almost total lack in the case of the Zhuang). Educational decision-makers have no excuse for having so brazenly ignored the large body of accessible literature written by educationalists and linguists in Guangxi and Liangshan.

7.2.5 THE LITERACY-MEDIUM HYPOTHESIS

The greater the extent to which members of the speech community believe in the positive effects of bilingual and minority-medium education and to which they perceive the minority language and script being promoted as an aid to learning Han, the better the chances of the promotion succeeding. The fact that Nuosu parents were more convinced of the positive effects of bilingual education and its role in helping children to learn Han than Zhuang parents played an important part in the greater success of Nuosu-medium education.

My observations in Guangxi and extensive conversations with Zhuang students and cadres from different Zhuang-speaking areas – largely backed by the literature on the promotion in Guangxi, if one ignores triumphant exaggerated claims - have persuaded me that the overwhelming majority of Zhuang-speaking parents were not convinced of the desirability of bilingual education programmes, not even recognising its possible role in teaching Han. Literacy for most parents is seen exclusively as literacy in Han and many feel threatened by an alternative literacy which they do not value, identify with or recognise as a valid form of literacy.

My impression from interviews with rural Nuosu in the counties of Meigu and Zhaojue (including the language attitude survey) is that most rural Nuosu warmly welcome bilingual Nuosu-Han education and Nuosu literacy, provided that it does not endanger their children properly acquiring Han. While realising that their children must be competent in Han to survive in modern China, they are not keen for them to become estranged from their culture, language and script of which they are intensely proud. In many cases their desire for their children to learn Han (a language that many monolingual Nuosu do not like and which represents a culture and way of life that in many ways threatens Nuosu identity) is purely utilitarian. What often holds large numbers of Nuosu parents back from wholeheartedly supporting measures to promote Nuosu is that they suspect this could prevent them from acquiring Han properly. The proponents of bilingual education have largely failed to adequately reassure rural Nuosu parents on this point, while those interested in preventing the promotion have successfully spread rumours of its negative effects (see 6.2.4, 6.3.2 and 7.1.2).

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Intense suspicion among many rural Nuosu parents towards Han values and their misgivings regarding the usefulness of Han schools and the alienating effect they have on their children, accentuates the tendency (also strong in most poverty-stricken remote minority areas with language barriers, such as western Guangxi) to withhold children from school and means that they are more open than their Zhuang counterparts to alternative L1 medium instruction, and even (among certain clans in certain areas) to bimo apprenticeship, a type of what Baker (2001: 200-201) terms “separatist” education and which is totally alienated from mainstream Chinese values.

The more positive attitude of parents towards bilingual education in Liangshan helps to explain the much greater acceptance of bilingual education, including mainly non-Han-medium variants, in Liangshan than was the case in Guangxi.

In my opinion the best-articulated practical argument in favour of bilingual Nuosu- or Zhuang-medium education is that it is the most appropriate (and perhaps only) possibility of reconciling to some extent the radically opposed worlds of mainstream Chinese majority Han society and traditional rural Nuosu or Zhuang society. As has been pointed out in different sections, this gulf is much wider in the case of the Nuosu than of the Zhuang. The opposing pressures of the two irreconcilable worlds of the Nuosu and mainstream Han-dominated Chinese society accentuate social dislocation and often frustrate attempts to integrate smoothly into either.

It is essential that education for Nuosu children should not alienate them from the rural Nuosu society from which they come and should provide them with the knowledge to contribute actively to developing modern Nuosu-speaking communities, where traditional cultural values are still respected, although not necessarily unquestioned. At the same time it should also enable pupils to cope with the wider Han-speaking world through their acquired knowledge of Han. This is far preferable to a situation where returned graduates feel alienated from their own ‘inferior’ culture, but still are unable to fit into the majority Han culture and no gradual modernising reform of Nuosu society seems possible. Graduates who return to their villages do not necessarily look down on their culture, but often their education is not relevant to rural life. In northern Meigu County I met a computer science graduate (literate in both Han and Nuosu) of a

technical college who had returned to his native village, which had no electricity, much less a computer.

In both Guangxi and Liangshan (except perhaps in certain core Nuosu areas) language planners have failed to inform both the public and many cadres adequately about the potential benefits of a balanced bilingual education and its function in learning Han more efficiently. Hence a large proportion of the population feels that bilingual education is detrimental to the effective acquisition of Han and to socioeconomic success. If minority scripts and standardised oral forms are to be successfully promoted and gain universal acceptance, the general public must be quite clear about the true educational and socioeconomic implications of both Han-only and bilingual education (whether minority language- or Han-dominant). This would entail intense grass-roots community action, something not so easy since the dismantling of collectivisation.

7.2.6 THE SCRIPT-TYPE HYPOTHESIS

A positive identification by minority language speakers with the script being promoted, independently of its complexity, and the perception that it forms a part of the ethnic group's history and culture increases the chances of its successful promotion. The fact that the Nuosu speech community strongly identified with the standardised syllabary as being traditional Nuosu, whereas most Zhuang saw the standardised romanisation as something alien and imposed, has played a major part in the greater acceptance of the Nuosu script.

The widespread perception that, whereas the standardised Nuosu script being promoted is traditional, the romanised Zhuang alphabet is a superfluous and unnecessary invention of the Government, is a key factor which helps to explain the high degree of acceptance with which the promotion of Nuosu has met, in contrast to the indifference and even generalised rejection towards written Zhuang. Even though the traditional Nuosu script is enjoying a revival as a ritual bimo script and as the language of classical writings, the standardised script has been firmly accepted as a “traditional” vehicle of Nuosu literacy and has to defend itself not from rival Nuosu writing systems, but from the onslaught of (the more complex) Han characters. Standardised Zhuang has to contend with not only the fact that educated Zhuang see Han (or Han-based) characters

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as their traditional writing system and reject the alphabetic system, but also with many people's refusal to recognise Zhuang as a *bona fide* language. It is hard to gauge how much support there is for the romanisation among illiterate Zhuang. While many Zhuang speakers are influenced by societal pressures opposed to it, I am convinced that a large number would accept it gladly, if only its utility could only be proved to them – something unlikely to happen.

While a script's complexity does objectively affect the length of time needed to acquire it, as shown in cases such as the Han-speaking Dungan, it plays a surprisingly small role in the success of its promotion, borne out by the fact that the Han script is the most popular and that both the traditional Nuosu ideographic script and the Zhuang *fangkuaizi* have enjoyed infinitely greater popularity than either of the “simple” romanised scripts. Far more important is the utility assigned to a script by its potential users and thus people feel they have to learn Han characters however long it takes them. As their ultimate aim is to learn to read and write Han, most Zhuang-speakers (just like speakers of most Chinese minority languages) prefer to directly learn and use Han ideographic characters, infinitely more complex than a romanised alphabet. Unless at some future time Han characters are abolished this preference for them will persist.

If a non-romanised Zhuang script were actively promoted, the thousands of people already made literate through the romanisation would feel cheated. On the other hand, given the minute proportion of Zhuang speakers familiar with it and its extremely limited use (especially among young people), I think there would be little problem in the general population accepting a script change if it were better promoted and received than the romanisation was.

Due to their presupposing a prior and advanced knowledge of written and spoken Han, compounded by their being even more complex than normal Han characters, *Fangkuaizi* are not a viable option. The adoption of a standardised *fangkuaizi*-based Zhuang syllabary, with its characters (perhaps simpler ones) being carefully chosen so that they could be pronounced according to different local dialects, has been suggested by some as a realistic option in the hope that Zhuang speakers might identify with, and thence accept, it better than the romanisation. Of course in the case of the many *fangkuaizi* composed of 2 Han characters, one for the meaning and one representing the

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Zhuang sound, the semantic component would lose its *raison d'être* if all homophones were to be written with the same character. However this is something that need not worry ordinary people.

The *simplified Zhuang script* would have the advantage over a *fangkuaizi*-based syllabary of using the exactly the same characters as Han, meaning people newly literate in Zhuang not having to learn new characters again from scratch in order to read and write Han texts. Characters would of course need to be combined differently according to the rules of Zhuang or Han syntax and grammar than when writing normal standard Han. Presumably it would generally be written according to Zhuang syntax. When reading texts written in Han or writing texts intended to be read by Han speakers then monolingual Zhuang speakers would have to read them off with a Zhuang pronunciation, but in the Mandarin word-order, similar to how Cantonese speakers read standard written texts.

The *simplified Zhuang script's* chances of becoming a standardised officially promoted script, depends, I think, largely on the final fate of the romanisation and whether anything comes of the proposal to create a *fangkuaizi*-based syllabary. In many ways it is the most viable option, because it has already been adopted by large numbers of Zhuang-speakers in many different situations and might stand a chance of being generally accepted by the Zhuang-speaking public. If adopted, it would have to be carefully standardised and rules formulated. Its main advantage would be that it could be read off in different dialects and its main limitation that it would not lead to a unified oral standard. Maybe if an accepted written standard without an oral one were created this in itself would be an enormous advance.

Personally I think that either the creation of an effective script to represent Zhuang and serve as a medium for mass literacy or a revival of the standardised romanisation are so low on the political agenda that they are unlikely to get beyond the drawing-board stage. The longer the debate over what kind of script is suitable continues, the more acceptable and justified a policy (with all its socioeconomic consequences) of totally ignoring the Zhuang language is seen to be. Whatever problems the promotion of Nuosu might run into, they will have nothing to do with the nature of its universally accepted standardised script.

7.2.7 THE SPOKEN STANDARD HYPOTHESIS

The more minority language speakers identify with the oral variety chosen as the standard to be promoted, the more successful the promotion of the minority language and script will be. The fact that Nuosu see their oral standard as a positive, unifying element whereas large numbers of Zhuang-speakers see the Wuming-based standard as being an alien language different to theirs, helps explain why Nuosu have much more enthusiastically embraced their script than the Zhuang.

Distances between the Nuosu dialects are much less than between varieties of Zhuang, to the extent that whereas no Nuosu question the existence of a unified Nuosu language, a large proportion of Zhuang speakers (lacking a sense of common identity) perceive Zhuang to be not one, but several, or even many, distinct languages. Even where substantial dialectal differences exist in Nuosu, for example between the *suondi* and other dialects, the strong sense of ethnic conscientiousness and cohesion motivates speakers to overcome these differences. The standardised form of Nuosu has thus been accepted in all dialect areas. The fact that Nuosu speakers unquestioningly accept the standard form of oral Nuosu being promoted and that most Zhuang speakers strongly reject the standard oral Zhuang is an important factor in explaining the different outcomes in Liangshan and Guangxi.

It is fortunate that Nuosu rather than the wider category of Yi was taken as the basis for the standardised language in Liangshan, given the extremely low degree of identification among Nuosu with speakers of other varieties of Yi languages. Had there been an attempt to promote a standard common to all the Yi languages, radically different from oral Nuosu, as was proposed by some “pan-Yi” scholars (Hainailama, personal communication 1994), I am sure it would have been a total failure. That the promotion in Liangshan has been as successful as it has, undoubtedly owes a lot to having selected a standard form that most speakers can understand without difficulty and all are willing to accept.

Speakers of different Zhuang dialects lack motivation to overcome dialectal differences, not only where differences are considerable (as between the northern and southern dialects or between some southern dialects), but also in many cases where they are less accentuated (for example between neighbouring northern variants).

Speakers of southern dialects (such as Debao) literate in the romanised Zhuang script told me that even the northern-southern divide can be largely overcome if southern speakers are sufficiently motivated to learn the standard Zhuang language, especially if concessions are made to southern features, within what is seen as a somewhat off-putting, deviant standard language. Much as a tiny group of Zhuang intellectuals emphasise similarities to Thai and Laotian (as well as other Tai languages throughout neighbouring countries) the fact remains that even uniting the Tai variants within Guangxi and eastern Yunnan remains an unaccomplished task.

It is generally accepted that the attempt to create a Zhuang standard has failed. This subject is now only discussed (mostly in Han) in private forums such as web-pages for Zhuang intellectuals and even there is controversial. In the present climate where the Guangxi administration is unlikely to encourage literacy in Zhuang and the use of a standardised Zhuang language (in part due to the lack of enthusiasm among Zhuang speakers) it is improbable that a unified Zhuang standard will be given a second chance. I envisage that the most that Zhuang can hope for is the creation of dialectal scripts, probably based on Han characters (see 6.2.6 and 7.2.6), which will help in the learning of Han and in the recording of dialect literature as well as limited personal dialect-based personal communication, such as writing notes, which will probably ultimately be totally replaced by Han.

7.2.8 THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

The more the minority language and script being promoted are perceived by the speech community as a possible vehicle of economic development and socioeconomic progress, the more enthusiastically they will embrace mother-tongue literacy. . The Nusu have in part been more motivated than the Zhuang to embrace their script, because they see it as a practical instrument to better themselves. In contrast most Zhuang see the only escape from poverty through Han.

For limited periods in the 1950s and 1980s a small proportion of the population in core Zhuang rural areas became literate in the Zhuang romanised script and had access to a limited number of publications which gave them access to technical, social and economic innovations. Information that was not contained in the limited amount of

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manuals and other publications made available could be sought by writing to experts via Zhuang language magazines and obtaining detailed answers in Zhuang. Although there are many impressive examples of individuals, families and small communities having their lives revolutionised by access to such information, it affected too few people for too short a time (at least in an intensive manner) to make any serious impact on the socioeconomic development of Zhuang areas. The result is that Zhuang literacy is not generally or widely seen by Zhuang-speakers to be a serious means for socio-economic advancement, especially since the effective abandonment of the second phase of the promotion.

In Liangshan widespread literacy campaigns emphasising technical knowledge have reached a large proportion of the population over a much longer time-scale and been backed up by post-literacy technical courses. A significant proportion of rural Nuosu speakers in core areas have used their new-found Nuosu literacy to study agricultural, technical and economic skills and to keep accounts and do business etc., thereby bettering themselves economically. Some have used their Nuosu literacy to go on to acquire Han literacy in order to have a much larger body of information at their service, but for many (especially those who have acquired Nuosu literacy as adults and those who have no knowledge of Han) this is not a viable prospect (bearing in mind that even for Han peasants becoming literate in Han characters is a daunting task).

For such people, information written in Nuosu in manuals and publications such as *The Liangshan Daily* is their only direct access to such information, apart from what they hear from word of mouth. There is also an additional knock-on effect with many illiterate peasants benefiting from the knowledge acquired by literate family members or friends. Unlike in Guangxi, the impact of non-Han literacy on economic activity has been considerable in rural Liangshan, although perhaps not as great as might have been hoped by its proponents. Successful peasants and businesspeople I interviewed in Zhaojue County were emphatic about the key role their technically-oriented literacy training had played in their economic success.

Nuosu literacy is thus much more greatly perceived as a vehicle of socioeconomic advancement than that of Zhuang, as demonstrated from the late 1950s onwards by a widespread spontaneous grassroots popular movement to learn and use, first the

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traditional –and later the standardised- Nuosu script for utilitarian purposes. In comparison, while some Zhuang peasants may have enthusiastically accepted it, there was no mass demand for Zhuang literacy to help socioeconomic advancement. The perception of Nuosu literacy as a passport to a better life is also partly due to the different factors analysed under the previous hypotheses and to the fact that infinitely more Nuosu than Zhuang speakers were exposed to the real-life opportunity of becoming acquainted with, and of using, their script for such purposes. Perhaps if more Zhuang (even if unwillingly at first) had been exposed to this use of Zhuang literacy, a lot more awareness of its usefulness might have been generated.

While this hypothesis is valid, for minority languages such as Nuosu to effectively fulfil the role of purveyors of modernity, a much larger body of basic technical literature in these languages needs to be generated. As things stand, minority scripts can (especially if exploited more efficiently) fulfil this role to an extent which could greatly transform the economy of poor rural areas. More employment incentives and recognition should be given to those competent in technical Nuosu etc. and to raising the status of these languages in technical and scientific domains. There is a widespread feeling that ultimately Nuosu and other minority language speakers need additional access to Han and its vast “modernising” technical literature, especially at more advanced levels. If people were made aware that prior empowerment in the minority language can be complementary to learning technical Han (rather than in opposition to it), then there would be less offhand rejection of non-Han literacies.

The most widespread kind of bilingual education in Liangshan, the Han-dominant Type 2 is felt by many educationalists to teach a form of Nuosu literacy which is used in restricted, mainly non-technical, domains and to provide insufficient opportunities for monolingual Nuosu speakers to advance socioeconomically. This view supports full use of Nuosu-medium teaching in all –including technical- domains (via for example Type 1 schools) which is geared towards developing the local Nuosu economy, while at the same time coping with the wider globalised, Han-dominated economy.

As discussed in 6.2.5 and 7.2.5, many parents in core rural Nuosu areas (and a fair number in Zhuang areas) do not even see the point of sending their children (especially girls) to school, feeling it to be inaccessible and irrelevant to their traditional way of life

and economic needs and that it is unlikely that their children will ever succeed and thus benefit from the system. According to experience from situations in many countries, an empowering bottom-up bilingual education system with strong community and parental involvement might well change the attitude of such parents. However, a lot of preparatory groundwork will be necessary to make disadvantaged illiterate peasants aware enough of the empowering implications of literacy and bilingual education to commit themselves to it.

The economic gap between poor, disadvantaged upland areas, such as the core Nuosu and Zhuang counties of Liangshan and Guangxi, and prosperous coastal and urban areas of China is ever widening. Basic effective access to information which can lead to socioeconomic self-empowerment remains tenuous in these areas, seriously endangering their full participation in the new prosperous China. In my view unless the authorities in Guangxi stop ignoring the necessity for bilingual self-empowering education in Zhuang areas, and unless their counterparts in Liangshan give greater importance to it in Nuosu areas this gap will simply continue to grow, exasperating social and - especially in the case of Liangshan- ethnic tensions.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION QUESTION

(TO BROADLY EVALUATE THE EFFECT OF MINORITY LINGUISTIC POLICY IN ZHUANG AND NUOSU AREAS AND WAYS IN WHICH ITS IMPLEMENTATION WAS RESISTED)

In my treatment of the Implementation Question in 6.3, after a brief discussion of the effect of the promotion of the Zhuang and Nuosu scripts on their speech communities, I went on to analyse the “hidden agendas” of cadres and administrations that used “covert measures” in order to thwart the aims of the official pluralistic language policy. In the section that follows, I consider the gap between the theory and practice of Chinese minority language practice, caused by covert measures taken to pursue hidden agendas, followed by thoughts on the present state of Zhuang and Nuosu and the outlook for these languages and their scripts. Finally, I suggest some possible future policy measures and future academic research.

7.3.1 HIDDEN HAN-CENTRED AGENDAS: CONSTITUTIONALLY-GUARANTEED LINGUISTIC EQUALITY VERSUS PRACTICE

If the almost utopian Marxist Soviet-influenced principles of language and ethnic equality espoused in the 1950s had been continuously, consistently, fully and sincerely implemented over the past half century, China would undoubtedly be the envy of linguistic minorities the world over. This was not to be. Although the theory of language and ethnic equality gained much admiration in the West, in part because some naïve intellectuals believed –or wanted to believe- in a Chinese success story in a sphere where many Western countries (e.g. France and the U.S.A.) had shown linguistic intolerance, China gained a very bad press abroad as a result of its repressive policies (including linguistic ones) in Tibet and, since the mid-1990s in Xinjiang, due to the efficient sources of information (e.g. the Tibet Information Service) from these conflictive areas.

Despite a nominally pluralist language policy since the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping, the tangible results are not consistent with the policy's theoretical aims. The true extent of the implementation, or rather non-implementation, of minority language promotion is extremely difficult for a casual observer in the West – or even in China outside the minority areas – to fathom. It is well-publicised in general introductory publications and web-sites about the national minorities and in minority areas, that scripts have been created for languages such as Zhuang, Mien (Yao), Naxi and Bai and that they have been promoted.

However, little or no attempt is usually made to explain that they have only been promoted in a few limited experimental situations and that the majority of speakers of these languages not only are illiterate in these scripts and have no opportunity to learn them, but that moreover many are even ignorant of their existence. A good example of this is the article by Zhou Qingsheng (1991) in which he analyses types of bilingual education among different national minorities (see also 5A.4.3.3 and 6.3.2.13), creating the false impression that this is the system for the vast majority of the non-Han speech communities. Even Bradley (2001) when analysing the situation of script promotion among different branches of the Yi language family does not give much indication of the extent to which it has been applied.

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This state of affairs brings to mind Scots who know nothing of the Gaelic language or of the threatened and precarious situation of the last remaining Gaelic-speaking areas, but proudly proclaim that the Western Isles are Gaelic-speaking, with Gaelic being the language of instruction and public life or of Irish who point to the official status of Irish to prove that the language is alive and well. In Valencia, the Autonomous Government makes many declarations in favour of promoting and using Catalan as if this makes up for the complete lack of real sincere measures to do so. In China, an important sector of those in power wish to be seen to be promoting these languages and their scripts, while at the same time to save the trouble of actually doing so in any meaningful way, often because the personal interests of those in power (including many minority cadres) are contrary to their promotion.

Due to the enormous variety of sociolinguistic situations in such a big country, generalisations are difficult. In the 55 years since the communists came to power there have been many ups and downs in minority language and script promotion, which has been neither continuous nor consistent. A brief period of idealistic and relatively sincere activity in favour of the equality of languages and empowerment through them in the early and mid 1950s (even if permeated with an unavoidable Han-centred patronising attitude and by Han-centred interests) was followed by 20 years of assimilationist policies during which advocates of promoting non-Han languages were suddenly deemed to be counterrevolutionary, unpatriotic and backward.

By the time the post-Mao era arrived, the emphasis was not so much on the right of minority nationalities to use and develop their languages and scripts (despite lip-service to this effect), as on their right (and even duty) to learn Mandarin, either directly or with the help of the minority script. The present plurilingual policy, which replaced the assimilationist Han-only phase, has been limited and piecemeal in scope and half-heartedly applied and even since 1978 policies in many places have travelled a zigzag path.

In general, promotion of minority languages has not been fully carried out and in most areas the promotion has simply not been given a fair chance to prove itself and solve its teething problems. It is clear that the second pluralistic phase is not as idealistic and ideologically sincere as the first and has a greater element of Han-centeredness: apart

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from perhaps a brief surge of idealism in the early 1980s the main tone of the promotion since then has not been on promoting non-Han languages and scripts for their own sake, but on learning Han. The promotion and use of Uyghur and Kazakh (formerly considered a model of linguistic equality by smaller minorities) is being drastically cut back in favour of Mandarin in an attempt to hanise the elites of these nationalities. In fact “promotion” can hardly be applied to Uyghur and Kazakh any more –“pruning” being perhaps a more appropriate word.

In Tibet, where China could have scored a big propaganda victory at home and abroad by a generous, tolerant language (not to mention human-rights) policy, plans have been launched in the post-Maoist period to create a complete Tibetan-language education system and abandoned again. In the cases of Xinjiang and Tibet it seems that the government does not like the existence of non-hanised elites and is trying to neutralise them through hanisation. If supportive influential elites were ever to emerge among smaller minorities of the south-west, perhaps they would also be discouraged.

The official position is that if minorities themselves do not support the use and development of their own languages and scripts they should not be forced to develop them being free to choose to do so or not. In areas with no (or weak) elites supportive of minority languages and scripts, no meaningful encouragement has been given to the formation or strengthening of such elites. On the contrary non-Han elites are generally encouraged to learn and use Mandarin as their main language, thus encouraging the natural hanising tendencies of these elites. Even in areas where few people speak Han, many members of minority nationality elites, who serve as role models for the “broad masses”, aspire to integrate themselves into the Han-speaking world and even bring up their children in Han only to “give them the right start in life.” In the absence of an influential elite supporting the non-Han language this sets in motion a gradual but steady long-term process of irreversible language shift which may last various generations. At the same time Han is also progressively and unceasingly displacing other languages which serve as lingua franca at a more local level. These tendencies support the official point of view that Han is necessary as an interethnic lingua franca and key to socioeconomic progress.

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As discussed under the Implementation Question in Chapter 6, the implementation of promotion measures have in many cases been opposed tooth and nail, not only by some Han cadres and members of the public, but also by hanised minority elites who rely on their knowledge of Han for their political and socio-economic power. Cadres in charge of policy implementation often prefer to implement their own “hidden agendas” which are incompatible with the official policy and largely in favour of maintaining complete Han-language hegemony. In many cases this has meant that important implementation directives have been ignored or only half-heartedly or symbolically carried out. Frequently they have been implemented in some areas but not in others, depending on the attitude of local cadres. In many cases what were intended as universal measures affecting the whole population of the nationality, have remained as isolated long-term “pilot projects”.

The promotion of Chinese minority languages has seldom been carried out in a way which sincerely aims at creating a speech community in which the minority language has the same rights and uses as Han. The situation where this came closest to being applied was that of the Korean-speaking minority in Manchuria, followed by that of the Uyghur- and (to a lesser extent Kazakh-) speaking communities. Even in Korean areas, non-Koreans (chiefly ethnic Han) were generally not expected to learn Korean, thus ensuring Korean did not occupy a linguistic monopoly. In Xinjiang there were periods in the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1980s where policy was carried out reasonably sincerely, although again most Han (the second biggest linguistic group in Xinjiang) were not expected to learn Uyghur or Kazakh. Even when policy measures supporting linguistic empowerment and equality appear to have been genuinely applied, under examination they sometimes turn out to be handicapped or sabotaged by a series of accompanying or inherent covert countermeasures (see 6.3).

The Chinese declarations of linguistic equality must be seen within their political and socio-economic context. The linguistic policy in China is the result of the interaction between various, sometimes contradictory, factors: on the one hand the Marxist ideals of equality and the recognition that denying the minorities the active use of their language puts obstacles in the way of social and economic development and on the other hand the desire among those in power (in their majority Han or hanised members of minority nationalities) to maintain their hegemony over the minority areas and to

impose the Han language and culture in all corners of the country. The socioeconomic, political and demographic forces working against minority languages have allowed China to have nominally pluralist policies in south-western China without any realistic fears of the hegemony of Han being seriously challenged (i.e. that the generously pluralistic policies will actually be fully implemented). Many people seem to be more impressed by the government's propagandistic declarations of intent than by what they actually do in reality.

Sometimes we linguists from the Western democracies have the tendency to criticise the plurilingual Chinese policy for not putting into practice its almost utopian Marxist ideals. Given the political unity of China under the hegemony of the Han nationality, should we be surprised at the role planned for Mandarin Han? With rare exceptions such as Switzerland and Belgium, what multinational states, including those with a policy of using and promoting minority languages, do not promote the use of a national language which serves some functions considered beyond the scope of lesser languages? Even in Catalonia, where there is a policy of promotion of minority languages which is the envy of minority languages throughout the world, Catalan has not yet succeeded in occupying all possible linguistic domains (such as the judiciary) and there is a bilingual policy where Castilian Spanish is the indispensable language. In the United States, "the land of the free," there is no active initiative on the part of the government to preserve even indigenous languages and outright hostility towards encouraging the persistence of immigrant languages. If we look at the official assimilationist policy of intolerance towards linguistic diversity (and indeed one could say "linguistic genocide") in France, it becomes difficult to establish a clear relation between democracy and tolerance of linguistic diversity and minority language rights. To what extent can we give lessons to the Chinese in the promotion of cultural diversity beyond explaining to them experiences in other countries?

7.3.2 WHITHER ZHUANG AND NUOSU?

7.3.2.1 WHITHER ZHUANG?

Although speaking related Central and Northern Tai languages was the common identifying feature of the Zhuang, and although overcoming the language barrier was a major impetus for the creation of the Zhuang nationality and its autonomy, it is doubtful

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if there was ever a wish on the part of the CCP to have a mainly Zhuang administrative area where the bulk of the administration and written communication would be carried out in Zhuang. It is true that they wished for rural Zhuang-speaking cadres who would be in touch with the Zhuang masses and gradually ease them into mainstream Han-dominated Chinese society. However, a situation where Zhuang might be the principal, or at least equal, language of administration and public life seems not to have been seriously contemplated by those holding the reins of power. One telling indication is (as in most minority areas in China) the lack of pressure on local Han (except for certain rural cadres) to learn either oral or written Zhuang.

If the intention had been to create large administrative units where Zhuang would be the main or at least equal working language, then the Western Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture could have been expanded to include predominantly Zhuang areas elsewhere in Guangxi and in Wenshan (Yunnan Province), as well as mainly Bouyei areas of Guizhou and Yunnan. Instead, the original predominantly Zhuang autonomous unit was diluted within extensive and populous Han areas when the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region was created. Even in counties such as Debao with virtually no Han residents, the administrative use of Zhuang is confined to the oral sphere. In a bigger unit where two thirds of the inhabitants know no Zhuang and where the Bouyei and Zhuang outside Guangxi were excluded, how could one even seriously expect the language to be given prominence and status in the running of the region?

Another matter is many of the linguists, educationalists and other cadres involved in planning the promotions of Zhuang in the 1950s, and again in the early 1980s. I have no doubt that many of these envisaged long-term state-encouraged bilingualism along the lines of the tolerant Han-Uyghur bilingualism which emerged in Xinjiang during the same periods, but that they failed to sufficiently anticipate the depth of problems such as dialectal diversity, lack of ethnic solidarity and the lack support from Zhuang elites, the lack of a supportive Zhuang-speaking elite and the outright opposition and non-cooperation of large sections of influential cadres. They naïvely saw through rose-coloured spectacles the promotion of Zhuang as an opportunity to make monolingual peasants, whom the Chinese Communist Party felt cut off from, and unable to communicate with, literate in order to integrate them into mainstream communist Chinese society, both by teaching them the ideals and morals of communist China in

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Zhuang and using Zhuang literacy as a vehicle for learning Han. To what extent such people envisaged this as a first transitional step to Hanisation is an open question. From talking to many different people, I think a wide range of views on this question existed. Articles written in 1992 (e.g. Wuming County Education Office, 1992, Wu Chaoqian, 1992 and Lu Ruichang, 1992), just before the final burial of the promotion, when responsibility for it was transferred from the Minority Language and Scripts Committee to Guangxi Education Bureau, show that those in charge of the promotion still defended it tooth and nail to the end, hoping (against all odds as it happened) that the promotion would be implemented more seriously and on a greater scale. That these “experts” were simply ignored and sidelined shows the strength of opposition in the administration to the Zhuang script.

At best, the bulk of politically influential cadres only wished to pay lip service to the promotion in order to be able to say to the world, “Look, we promote Zhuang in education and public life and even on the Renminbi banknotes,” without mentioning that this affects only a minute proportion of the Zhuang-speaking population. This is somewhat reminiscent of Irish people trumpeting the official status of their national language, which is now moribund even in the *Gaeltacht* areas. However, many more influential cadres simply opposed the promotion of Zhuang outright.

The result of 2 failed promotions has been to make people wary of embarking on further adventures in Zhuang literacy and has given the anti-pluralist lobby ammunition in favour of not repeating the experience. They can now say with a clean conscience “we tried hard to promote Zhuang, but the people just didn’t want it and it just didn’t work”. After all, a pillar of Chinese language policy is that minority language speakers should not be forced to promote and use the script against their will. Unfortunately, taking Zhuang literacy off the political agenda will not help the large numbers of rural Zhuang not fluent in Han and living in poverty.

Linguistic substitution in favour of Han and in detriment of Zhuang is a long ongoing process, which was completed long ago in parts of eastern Guangxi and further east and is now taking place in more western areas, radiating from urban centres and areas of Han population. Even though there are still large rural areas where hardly anyone

speaks fluent Han, it is evident that gradually increasing bilingualism followed by eventual loss of Zhuang is the most likely foreseeable long-term scenario.

My overall impression is that few people, even a large part of its speakers, care much about the long-term survival of Zhuang. The urbanised Zhuang abandon their language at the first chance and there has been a remarkable lack of interest in the officially-sanctioned promotion of a written and oral standard language which had the potential to unite a language community of almost 20 million speakers. While many people have a blind faith that Zhuang will survive in rural areas for ever just as it has up till the present, I think it inevitable that rural Zhuang speech communities will ultimately succumb to linguistic substitution in favour of Han over the next few generations. Obviously the sheer fact of widespread Zhuang monolingualism and the consequent serious communication gap between Zhuang and Han speakers will delay language shift in favour of Han for some time. However, in the absence of an effective and written and oral standard capable of uniting the different dialects, of gaining acceptance and of being used in everyday life, I see little hope of its speakers remaining faithful to Zhuang once they have gained fluency in Han.

7.3.2.2 WHITHER NUOSU?

As in the case of Guangxi, different parts of the administration have had different ideas of what the promotion should mean. As pointed out throughout this thesis, an important part of urbanised, hanised cadres have never wanted a meaningful state-promoted long-term stable bilingualism, but rather a gradual transition towards Han. On pragmatic grounds they accept transitional Nuosu literacy and bilingual education for core rural areas, but not for those who do not need it. On the other hand there are many cadres (with more influence than their Zhuang counterparts) who probably also envisaged a kind of “Xinjiang scenario” of comparative linguistic equality and tolerance. Indeed if all cadres and members of the public carried out the language planning measures to their logical consequences and if local Han took the trouble to (or were obliged to) learn Nuosu, then Nuosu would have an equal place in public, political, social, educational and commercial and other spheres such as the mass media.

Some Nuosu are aware of the danger of possible language shift and show signs of an awakening consciousness that the acquisition of the Han language need not necessarily

entail the long-term rejection and extinction of the Nuosu language. Whether these Nuosu who are aware of the dangers facing their language and culture will organise and articulate themselves strongly enough on a political and social level to be able to influence the attitudes of bilingual Nuosu of child-raising age in favour of stable, long-term Nuosu-Han bilingualism is not easy to foretell. I believe that, given the strength of Nuosu ethnic consciousness and the deep-seated popular mistrust of Han culture, this is attainable, at least in core Nuosu areas with a low proportion of Han, but will require a high degree of awareness-creating among the Nuosu speech communities and their active participation in the language planning process. The crucial test for the future vitality of Nuosu will be to what extent it can continue developing and evolving in a future bilingual society and in how far bilingual, biliterate Nuosu will be conscious of the importance of intergenerational transmission of Nuosu. Can the Nuosu script survive alongside Han characters? Will a consciousness of the importance of preventing language shift extend among the Nuosu elite? The lessons of other minority languages elsewhere do not auger well.

7.3.3 SOME THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE SHIFT

Since 1978 there have been momentous economic and political reforms, which among other things have led to a loosening of the authorities' grip over the population: not only is it now much more difficult to mobilise the public to participate in mass literacy campaigns and other activities, but also to control their movements as tightly as in Maoist times. The last several decades have seen large-scale immigration of Han-speakers into minority areas, as well as a drift of minority language speakers to urban Han-speaking cities such as Kunming, Chengdu and Beijing. It is thus increasingly difficult for minority language speakers to exclude from their socioeconomic networks interactions where a knowledge of Han is necessary (or at least advantageous) and a rapid increase in bilingualism with minority language-Han diglossia, and (in many previously monolingual non-Han areas) language shift in favour of Han, is taking place.

Chinese policy is still largely geared towards creating bilingual Han-minority language speech communities out of monolingual minority language ones and has not adequately prepared a coherent policy to deal with preventing bilingual speech communities shifting to Han only. Given that many people perceive only non-Han monolingualism,

but not language shift in favour of Han, to be a problem, and given the powerful Han-centric hidden agendas outlined in the section on covert measures as well as recent language policy in Xinjiang and Tibet, I am highly sceptical as to the commitment of the Chinese establishment (including an important part of the minority elites) to work in favour of the maintenance of stable long-term bilingualism.

As the sociolinguistic history of speech communities such as Lower Brittany and the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland (the *Gaidhealtachd*) illustrates, the transition from societies where almost nobody speaks the official state language to ones where nobody speaks the autochthonous language can happen extremely quickly, even in the space of 3 generations. Two centuries ago in the Scottish Highlands, and a mere century ago in Lower Brittany, Gaelic or Breton monolingualism were perceived by many to be the main problem and not the imminent and irrecoverable loss of these languages. By today, despite a revival in both areas which has come too late, the intergenerational transmission of these languages is almost a subject for comment (especially in the Breton case). Unfortunately, attitudes take time to adjust to new situations and realities. In the 1970s, when the intergenerational transmission of Gaelic had already ceased among many families on the Isle of Skye, some older people told me that it was a pity to see Gaelic dying out, but that the children needed English to get on in the world, as if the acquisition of Gaelic would have hindered the acquisition and simultaneous mastery of English. Such stubborn attitudes in a society obsessed with the consequences of not mastering the majority language have surely inhibited the growth of a bilingual society and accelerated language shift in favour of the majority language.

The persistence of such widespread misconceptions regarding bilingualism and language maintenance among the general public of many cultures and countries shows that conclusions of linguists and educationalists based on generations of research and observation are totally ignored and have not been even minimally popularised.

7.3.4 IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE TO PROMOTING MINORITY NATIONALITY SCRIPTS?

The scenario of ignoring Han and only promoting the minority language is not a political option. The most obvious alternative strategy to the policy of promoting

minority nationality languages and scripts would be to ignore their existence (or at least minimize their importance), actively promote Han in all possible ways and wait until the population is fully hanised over the course of time. This would in the long-run solve the problem of ignorance of the Han language, but, in my personal opinion, at a terrible social and economic cost to the Zhuang and Nuosu communities. It is extremely difficult, in both the case of Zhuang and Nuosu, to predict how long such a language shift in monolingual, impoverished rural backwaters would take. In the age of globalisation new factors difficult to foresee could come into play. At present (and for well over a decade) this scenario has effectively been the preferred option in Zhuang areas of Guangxi. Even in the mid-1980s only a tiny fraction of the Zhuang-speaking population was being made literate in Zhuang. Even in Liangshan there are many who favour such a policy.

7.4 CLOSING COMMENTS

I would like to end by quoting again my comment from Chapter 2, which is totally true in the case of Zhuang. The fact that Nuosu has managed to get beyond this stage is a measure of its comparative success within the context of south-western Chinese non-Han languages:

The main impression given was that minority script promotion in south-western China was generally confined to isolated remote mountain or rural areas, that it affected only a small proportion of monolingual non-Han speakers, was meeting a lot of resistance from both Han and minority cadres (and indeed from large parts of the public) and that many bilingual education and other promotional activities were unable to get beyond an “experimental” phase.

If languages and scripts such as Nuosu and Zhuang are to have a more meaningful future, then their speech communities must be properly informed, motivated and in control of initiatives to promote them. The Chinese government must also promote adequate top-down measures to support and harness bottom-up activity as well as providing at a macro level the political and economic context in which such measures can flourish. There are limited possibilities of more efficient bottom-up mobilisation materialising in the case of Nuosu, but this is extremely unlikely in the case of Zhuang. Regarding the provision of top-down language planning measures and the creation of a political and socioeconomic order which favours these languages to flourish within their linguistic eco-systems, events in Xinjiang, where policies tolerant to Uyghur and

Kazakh have been dramatically scaled down, and Tibet, where complete Tibet-medium promotion was never given a proper chance, leave little room for optimism. Admittedly south-western ethnic groups (especially the Zhuang) do not pose the same threat to Chinese unity as those of Xinjiang and Tibet, but I think there is deep-seated mistrust of letting non-Han languages become too powerful and influential, even if they are only used in restricted marginal contexts.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Below I suggest some topics for future research which would shed light on the dynamics of language behaviour and policy in non-Han speech communities.

- 1) Language loyalty and intergenerational language transmission among members of minority language communities –in particular among their upwardly mobile, educated and urbanised elites- and what determines their decisions to transmit their native language or not to their children.
- 2) The question as to why a generalised attitude persists among many parents, cadres, administrations and the public at large that minority language education and literacy is a waste of time and incompatible with learning Han.
- 3) Determining attitudes of local Han to non-Han languages and under what circumstances they learn (or might be prepared to learn) minority languages and scripts.
- 4) Carrying out sociolinguistic attitude surveys in minority language areas.
- 5) Compiling accurate language atlases and carrying out detailed studies of language use and trends in minority areas.
- 6) The potential for cooperation with foreign or Chinese NGOs or with foreign Governmental bodies such as the Department of Linguistic Normalisation of the Catalan Government.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

Abbreviations

BICS = Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP = Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CCP = Chinese Communist Party
PRC = People's Republic of China
L1 = first language
L2 = second language

Chinese terms for subdivisions of counties

qu 区 = district

xiang 乡 = rural township

zhen 镇 = urban township

ANNEX 1 NON-LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND TO LIANGSHAN

GEOGRAPHY

Liangshan – meaning the *Cool Mountains* - is the name given by the Han to the mountain range within the northern side of the loop formed by the upper Yangtze in the south of Sichuan and northwest of Yunnan, just to the southeast of the Tibetan plateau, to the north of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau (and separated from it by the Yangtze or Jinsha River) and to the southwest of the Sichuan Basin. The inaccessible parts of this mountain range, a large part of which is over 3,000 meters high, were known to Westerners as *Independent Lololand* until in 1950s and to the Nuosu inhabitants as Nuosu *Muddi* or *Nimu* or *Land of the Nuosu* (Harrell, Bamo and Ma, 2000: 3). In contrast the lower-lying valleys, such as that of the Anning river, with their Han majorities were administered by the Chinese, although its inhabitants lived in constant fear of being attacked and kidnapped by Nuosu from Independent Lololand.

Liangshan is divided by the valley of the River Anning which flows southwards into the Yangtze. The part to the east of the Valley of Anning (and to the east until reaching the eastern side of the loop of the Jinsha or Yangtze) is called the *Greater Liangshan* or *Daliangshan* (大凉山) - the *Greater Cool Mountains* - and is the Nuosu traditional nucleus and the great majority of the population is still ethnically and linguistically Nuosu. The part to the west of the Anning Valley (and to the west until reaching the western side of the loop of the Jinsha or Yangtze) is known as *Lesser Liangshan* or *Xiaoliangshan* (小凉山) - the *Lesser Cool Mountains* - and is an area which was settled by the Nuosu between the 19th and 20th centuries. It is also inhabited by many Han and speakers of Qiang languages (generally classified as Tibetans because of their religious affiliation) and Naze (a Tibeto-Burman language of the Loloid or Yi branch, officially considered in Yunnan to be the Muosu dialect of Naxi and unofficially –and mistakenly- considered by some on the Sichuanese side to be a dialect of Mongolian). The Anning Valley and some other areas, such as the towns of Yanyuan, Yanbian, Mianning and the surrounding valleys have had a Han majority, interspersed with a Nuosu minority, for many centuries.

Traditionally Nimu –the Land of the Nuosu- was divided between the Chinese provinces of Sikang (Daliangshan and a part of Xiaoliangshan) and Yunnan (a part of Xiaoliangshan), but in 1955 the province of Sikang was incorporated into Sichuan. According to the present geo-political divisions *Nimu* corresponds to the main Nuosu-speaking areas of Greater and Lesser Liangshan.

INDEPENDENT LOLOLAND

Before the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (from 1279 till 1368), when Liangshan became part of the Chinese Empire, a great part of the *nzyimo* (or nobles) were probably subject to the kingdom of Nanzhao, centred in Yunnan and independent of China. In the southwest of China the Yuan, Ming and Qing (1644-1912) authorities normally governed the minority areas indirectly by way of a *Tusi* or native ruler system (土司). During the Yuan dynasty and the first part of the Ming dynasty (1279-1368) first the Mongol and later the Chinese central authorities governed the majority of the Nuosu areas by way of Nuosu *nzyimo* upon whom they bestowed the title *Tusi*. According to Harrell (2000: 7-8)

But *nzyimo* hegemony was never universal in Nimu [= the Nuosu areas of Liangshan], and toward the end of the Ming period aristocratic *nuoho* clans in many areas revolted and drove the often highly Hanified *nzyimo* away from the Nuosu core areas toward the peripheries of the territory. Thus, in the twentieth century, Liangshan consisted of a patchwork of *nzyimo*-ruled areas, areas dominated by aristocratic *nuoho*, and a few places where neither of these upper strata was present and the commoner *qunuo* were the de facto local lords.

Regardless of which of these three systems predominated in the different areas, the result was that the Chinese central governments effectively were not in control of these areas, even where *Nzyimo* ruled as *Tusi*. Due to the fact that "... until 1956 the Nuosu heartland was never effectively ruled by any outside power, imperial or modern" (Harrell, 2000: 5) Westerners referred to it as *independent Lololand*. Goullart (1959, pag. 119-121) describes at the end of the 30s a Nuosu *Nzyimo*, *the Prince Molin*, (Lin Guangdian in Han) who governed a territory around Tianba in the mountains of the north of what is today Ganluo County. Tianba is just to the south of the River Dadu which was the traditional northern border of the Nuosu and just to the south of the Han city of Fulin (today Hanyuan), where the aforementioned *Nzyimo* had a residence in territory under control of the Chinese central government.

Annex 1 Non-linguistic background to Liangshan

The princes, whose domains directly adjoined Chinese-controlled territories usually had their titles confirmed by the Chinese Government as 'tousze', which means ruling prince or paramount chief, and they were supplied with appropriate seals of office. It was an eminently save-facing device to the Chinese who thus maintained the fiction that somehow they were in control of large parts of the Lolo territory, although the fact that they could not enter, except by very special permission from the *nzemo*, was sedulously concealed, especially from foreigners. Prince Molin was in the category of a prince, and he was frankly pleased with the arrangements. No Chinese could enter his vast territory without an explicit invitation, a Lolo passport which carried the prince's guarantee for the person's safety. On the other hand, Prince Molin could travel all over China as he wished, perhaps without much pomp but, at least, with marked deference from the Chinese authorities.....The usual Chinese requirement for such Lolo princes was to maintain a separate *yamen* [= *residência*] on Chinese soil and reside there from time to time, the idea being of course that the prince could be seized in times of trouble.

.....
There had always been bad blood between the Lolos and the Chinese, the latter evidently not being able to forgive them for occupying so large a territory. In 1868 the famous Chinese warrior, General Chao, led a great expedition against the Lolos. The Chinese were utterly defeated in battle and had to abandon to the Lolos considerable portions of what was considered Chinese soil. They nevertheless made several more unsuccessful attempts to subjugate the Lolos and their last effort in 1905 ended in disaster for the Chinese expeditionary force.

In the 19th and 20th centuries there was a lot of demographic pressure from Han living on the edges of Liangshan (Harrell, 2000: 8), for example in the Anning and Dadu Valleys which provoked an increase of Nuosu resistance and incursions to Han farming villages in these areas to capture slaves. At the same time, however, the Nuosu expanded westwards to Xiaoliangshan or Lesser Liangshan which they settled until they ended up forming a significant part of the population. Here they came into contact with speakers of *Qiang* languages (the Majority of whom today are officially classified as Tibetans), with *Naze* or *Naxi* and also with Han locals.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NUOSU

The origin of the Nuosu, and that of the other Yi is a mystery concerning which there are many different hypotheses, for example that they come from the north (from Gansu or Qinghai), from the west (from the area between Tibet, Burma and Yunnan). For example Goullart (1959: 118-9) cites the same *Prince Molin*, who informs him

..... that, according to some genealogical records in the possession of old noble families, the Lolos' original home was in what are now the Chinese provinces of Kweichow [= Guizhou] and Yunnan, but the Chinese military expeditions against them, in the eighteenth century utterly destroyed their old habitat, forcing those who had survived to flee to the inaccessible and at that time, uninhabited mountain fastnesses of the west.

Harrell (2000: 7) in contrast, believes that the Nuosu have been in Liangshan for at least a 1,000 years.

TRADITIONAL SOCIETY UP TO THE REFORMS OF 1956

The social system is not the topic of this thesis. Among others, Winnington (1962) and various works written or edited by Harrell have described this subject. In recent years (especially since the 1980s) controversy has arisen over the true nature of the traditional system of slavery among the Nuosu of Liangshan, practised until the 1956 reforms.

A basic tenant of Chinese Marxism (taught in China as an objective fact and up till now only minimally questioned) is that of the five stages of history which go back to the ideas of the American Lewis Henry Morgan and refined by Engel. According to this dogma, the historical development of society passes necessarily through 6 stages of economic systems:

- 1) Initially, before the beginning of a class-based society, there is a primitive communist society which initially is matrilineal and later patrilineal.
- 2) A slave society.
- 3) Feudalism.
- 4) Capitalism.
- 5) Socialism.
- 6) Pure communism.

Some societies, because of their special contexts, are able to skip one or more of these phases (for example many Yi passed directly from a slave society to socialism after the social reforms of 1956. This theory has had a big influence on the classification of the Yi nationality as a unified category and also on the description of the social situation which existed in Liangshan prior to the social reforms of in 1950x.

According to Chinese communist authors, the Nuosu *of* Liangshan had an extremely cruel slave society, similar to that of Rome or ancient Greece, corresponding to the second of these historical stages. For example, all the Marxist analyses of the Nuosu have defined their society according to this dogmatic discourse and have postulated that other branches of the Yi nationality have already entered different sub-phases of the feudal phase. The descriptions of Winnington (1962) of interviews with former slaves in Ninglang County in Lesser Liangshan paint a picture of cruel society where the majority of the population was submitted to extreme and prolonged suffering.

Annex 1 Non-linguistic background to Liangshan

When I asked in Liangshan (in 1994 and 1995) about the system of slaves, which had been officially abolished almost 40 years previously, the usual answer was that although it was a very hard system, it was not as terrible as the official descriptions painted it. According to the Nuosu whom I asked (admittedly many of whom had belonged to higher castes), many slave-owners treated their slaves with respect and affectionately. They also emphasised that the members of the high castes were sometimes materially no or little better off than their serfs and slaves due to the extreme economic deprivation of the mountain area. In the last few years, a growing number of Nuosu and non-Nuosu intellectuals have questioned the Marxist scheme (which presents the Nuosu as if they were a primitive prehistoric fossil).

Goullart (1959: 119-121) cites a description, at the close of in 1930s, of the social system from the point of view of the *nzymo* Prince Molin:

The real Lolos, Prince Molin enlightened me, were the Noble Lolos or as they styled themselves, the Black Bone aristocracy, analogous to the Blue Blood of English aristocracy. The set-up in Lololand was feudal. At the top of the social pyramid were the *nzemos* who were like princes. They controlled several clans and were rich and active; below them were the nobles equivalent to dukes, who controlled only one or two clans. There were also independent but powerful families with extensive land holdings and local influence who might be termed marquises and barons.

[.....]

The Noble Lolos were born warriors and essentially a pastoral people, given to breeding all kinds of domestic animals. But agricultural labour and all kinds of menial tasks were not considered a fit occupation for the aristocracy, and so they had serfs and slaves to perform these duties for them. These subject classes had their own strata and collectively were known as White Lolos.

In no case were they related to the Black Bone Lolos, who always remained a race apart, like the Brahmin caste of India, intermarrying only within their own circle. The White Lolos had always been recruited from among the surrounding Chinese and Chiang tribes by the simple expedient of conquest and kidnapping. As they were strictly forbidden to talk their own dialect while in Lolo captivity, in a generation or two they became true Lolos in everything but blood. The hard-working and loyal slaves were elevated to serfs after several generations and many were given complete freedom, while enjoying their lord's protection and assistance. As the nobles despised trade, they were invaluable intermediaries between the Noble Lolos and the Chinese in obtaining supplies of necessities, having unrestricted entrée to both to Chinese territory and to their former master's castle. Lolos who were defeated in battles with other clans sometimes migrated to faraway mountain ranges and sometimes the serfs, freed altogether, by the extinction of their lord's family also moved to new territories to lead a separate existence.

Harrell (2000: 5-6) sums up as follows pre-communist Nuosu society:

The Nuosu lived a tribal existence - without permanent rulers, without courts or formal governmental institution, without clearly marked territories. Their society was ordered by a complex network of patrilineal clans, each commanding the absolute loyalty of its members, ready to fight to defend themselves against territorial or personal insults from others, but also ready to marry and ally with neighbour clans. Clans are tied to one

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another by marriage. In the old days a young woman and man were matched, often as children..... Today when Nuosu strangers meet, the first thing they will inquire about is clan affiliation. Those in the same clan will recite their paternal genealogies for as long as it takes to find the nearest common ancestor. [.....] Clans were ranked into castes.

The highest cast were the *nzymos* who, as we have already seen, had lost influence and power in many areas (especially far away from Han areas) to the next cast down on the scale, the *nuoho*, aristocrats who governed the plebeian *qunuo*, except in some areas where there were no *nuohu* clans and where the *qunuo* governed. Both *nuoho* and *qunuo* owned *mgajie* or serfs, who worked the land, and *gaxy* or slaves who used as personal domestic servants. Many *gaxy* had inherited their status as slaves, but some were members of Han or other nationalities that had been captured in raids and others again were higher caste Nuosu who had fallen on hard times (ibid and other sources).

Where *nuohu* lords and *qunuo* retainers lived together, the retainers owed their overlords labor services; gifts at marriages, funerals, and holidays; and loyalty in war. When the lords moved, as they frequently did in this very mobile society, the retainers often moved with them. The serfs, whether servants of commoners or aristocrats, were bound to the land but carried out their own independent household economies. The slaves labored at the behest of their masters and had no independent economic existence. When slaves were allowed by their masters to marry, they could then set up independent households and in effect could rise to the slightly less debased position of serfs.

Castes preserved their unity and purity by strict prohibitions against marriage between castes. This meant that serfs could almost never rise to the status of commoners and commoners never crossed the line into the aristocracy. A clan that allowed one of its members to marry someone from a lower cast would be ostracized by its caste peers.... [...] Although they did not intermarry, members of different castes interacted casually in everyday life. Only on certain occasions would it be possible to tell which people in a community held which rank. [Ibid:6]

While the Chinese communists have surely exaggerated the degree of cruelty of the caste system, it was by no stretch of the imagination any Shangri-La, neither for the lower castes – nor for that matter for higher castes.

LIVING CONDITIONS

The geography of Liangshan does not permit an economically ideal lifestyle. Harrell (2000:3-4) describes thus the living conditions of the Nuosu:

The land of the Nuosu is as rugged as the people.[...] Swift rivers, good for occasional fishing but not much else, run between a few narrow plains and the steep slopes that stretch toward the sky. Only a lucky few can live and farm on flat land. Most people live in isolated houses or small village clusters clinging to the mountainsides, building their dwellings out of whatever materials are available locally -- wooden boards or planks, piled stones, or packed mud for walls; and straw thatch, wood shingles held down by rocks, or sometimes overlapping stone slabs for roofs. Floors are nothing but packed dirt, and furniture is simple, with home life centering around the floor hearth.

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Around their simple dwellings Nuosu have traditionally lived by a mixture of farming and herding. Their land for the most part has always been too high above sea level, and thus too cold, to grow the wet rice that is the staple of lowland peoples, but they gladly eat rice when and where they can get it. Most of the time, however, they have had to rely on coarser grains -- corn and wheat in the middle elevations, oats on the highest slopes, and potatoes and buckwheat just about everywhere. A day's fare often consists only of potatoes, roasted in the hearth fire and peeled by hand, accompanied by pickled vegetable soup and perhaps dipped in hot peppers. Nuosu agriculture has never been very productive, and for that reason the population is scattered much more sparsely on the land than are the Han Chinese in the lowlands.

But land unsuitable for farming means plenty of pasture. Nuosu have always kept horses for transport and as work animals, or for the sheer pleasure of displaying and racing them; cattle for work and also to eat; and sheep, goats, chickens and pigs for wool, meat, and eggs. Meat, however, is usually restricted to special occasions -- weddings, funerals, holidays, or anytime unexpected guests came from far away.

I was witness to this last point, when some Nuosu families whom I visited in 1994 and 1995 slaughtered animals in my honour, which (knowing that they were not well off) caused me to feel very guilty. Also I witnessed a *bimo*'s ceremony at the house of a sick toddler, where a sheep, a goat, a pig and hens were sacrificed for the occasion. Nuosu food is very different to that of the Han Chinese. Typically it is boiled rather than fried -- as in Han cooking - and meat is cut into large pieces. People eat with their hands or with a wooden spoon from out of a communal bowl and traditionally without chopsticks. Sometimes individual wooden bowls are used.

The Nuosu culture is not the topic of this thesis and therefore I shall not deal here with fascinating aspects such as traditional costumes (still very much in evidence in many rural areas such as Zhaojue), the architecture, crafts, music, festivals, ceremonies, religious beliefs and the anthropological situation.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications were very difficult and travellers like Goullart (1959), Winnington (1962) and Covell (1990) were witnesses to the lack of means of transport and passable roads within the Nuosu areas, because of the steep-sided mountainous terrain, a great part of which was covered by dense jungle (but which unfortunately has largely disappeared during the last 50 years). They travelled on foot or, if they were lucky, on horseback or with the help of servants to carry their luggage. When I visited Zhaojue it was necessary on several occasions to walk a good half hour before reaching a house or hamlet, but even these were considered easily reached, well-communicated places near to main roads. Many rural Nuosu live many hours walk from the nearest road (not to

mention other public services or utilities). A problem cited in many works on education is that children in isolated houses or hamlets have to walk very long distances (often taking several hours) to reach school. It is one of the main arguments used in favour of boarding schools.

RELIGION

The Nuosu believe in good and evil spirits (both of their forefathers and of others) and in demons with great supernatural powers. These control all of life's happenings (both positive and negative). At same time the Nuosu believe in a supreme invisible creator spirit, a god of the heavens. According to Covell (1990: 95) this god of the heavens has a son who busies himself with human affairs. Also there is a belief in a demonic controller spirit. Their religion also contains important elements of shamanism, Taoism and fetishism.

The bimo

The bimo or priests are relevant to this thesis, because they were the principal guardians of the transmission of the literary tradition. Who was eligible to be a bimo? According to Harrell (2000: 6) bimo "...were males from specific clans with priestly traditions, interestingly, almost all of the bimo clans were commoners." There are both hereditary bimo (from stipulated clans with a tradition of producing bimo) and bimo who had acquired their knowledge through a period of apprenticeship.

What did bimo do? According to Ma Erzi (2000: 51), a Nuosu author,

Bimo recite all kinds of texts and perform all kinds of ceremonies: for the living they divine auspicious days and times, exorcise ghosts and expel evils, replace misfortune with good fortune, and regulate ethical behaviour; and for the dead they provide offerings, lead the way to the world of the ancestors, and ensure peaceful rest in the next world.

When I visited Zhaojue in 1994 and 1995 the *bimo* were much sought after and respected according to the traditional proverb "'When the *nzy mo* ... comes, the *bimo* does not have to stand up out of respect' (Nzy la bi a de)." (Harrell, 2000: 6). Harrell (2000: 9) confirms the present high status of *bimo* with a little preoccupation,

"... almost as many boys in Meigu County are studying to become bimo as are in regular schools, whatever the result may be for economic development."

As I have previously mentioned, I was witness to a ceremony to cure a sick little girl. As well as sacrificing various farm animals (a sheep, a pig, some hens and a goat), two *bimo* chanted sacred scripts from rolls of parchment in order to expulse the demons which had caused the sickness.

One important reason for the revived popularity of *bimo*, was that the rural Nuosu still believe strongly in their healing powers, trusting them more than western doctors. Various informants in Zhaojue expressed this opinion to me in 1994 and 1995 and in summer 1995 I witnessed a ceremony conducted by two youngish *bimo* in a village on the Meigu River (just inside Meigu County) to cure the 2 year old niece of my host, the head of the Language and Script Committee of Zhaojue County. For several hours the *bimo* chanted from traditional scriptures and then sacrificed various animals, which were then cooked and eaten. The sick girl later made a complete recovery. This high esteem for the medical abilities of *bimo* among the Nuosu public is borne out by Heberer (2001:228). No doubt the positive psychosomatic effect plays a key role, although how much this can be the case with a 2 year old is open to question.

Coupled with this belief in the *bimo*'s medical expertise is the collapse of the public health care system since the introduction of the socialist market economy in the 1980s, following the removal of subsidies, free medical care and the subsequent closure or downgrading of many clinics and preventive programmes (Heberer 2001: 224). There have been renewed outbreaks of infectious diseases and I members of a visiting UNESCO delegation in Zhaojue 1995 painted me a depressing picture of the dismal service of state health provision. Thus even if people prefer modern medicine (which in rural areas at least they tend not to), they do not have access to an adequate standard of care, cannot afford it and often have to work for hours along difficult paths to reach clinics.

Another important reason for the popularity of *bimo* is their function as intellectuals and guardians of traditional Nuosu knowledge transmitted through manuscripts. Heberer 2001 (228) points out that in a time of such threatening social change, many Nuosu cultivate traditional Nuosu religion and beliefs representing nostalgia for the past in order to protect their own identity.

Boys belonging to a hereditary bimo clan can become bimo by inheritance (it is felt that if there is a bimo in the father's generation, at least one of the son's generation should be one) or, usually by paying a high fee, through apprenticeship to a hereditary bimo, although such non-hereditary bimo can only perform certain limited rituals, cannot pass their skills and secrets on to their children (who would have to be apprenticed to a hereditary bimo), receive lower fees for their services than hereditary bimo and are not held in such high esteem. Sometimes it is determined by divination at a boy's birth that he should become a bimo and sometimes the parents decide, either of their own free will or in response to a sickness or disaster (Bamo Ayi 2001, 122).

Sunyi

Other religious specialists were the *sunyi* who could be from any social cast; they could even be - unlike the *bimo* - serfs or slaves. They were a kind of shaman and their authority derives from inspiration rather than knowledge of written scripts. As a consequence they are not as relevant to the script as are the *bimo*.

LIANGSHAN SINCE 1950:

Political History

The Peoples' Liberation Army entered the mountainous stronghold of Liangshan in 1950 and set up a new administrative framework in an area which the central Government had never before directly administered. Perhaps because they were aware of the precariousness of the power they held in this new area, at the beginning the communists made no radical changes to the social structure as they did in the greater part of China. This meant that all the social casts continued as before. The communists divided the previously Independent Lololand into counties (县 *xiàn*) and also initiated the construction of roads, public buildings, schools and other infrastructures. The communists officially defined the Nuosu as Yi, together with the majority of the other groups of the south-west of China who (just like the Nuosu) previously were known as *Luoluo* or *Lolo*.

In 1956 the communists initiated *democratic reforms* and the situation in Ninglang in Lesser Liangshan is described in some detail in Winnington (1962). Slavery was abolished as were the obligations of serfs to their masters and mistresses. According to

the descriptions of Winnington (confirmed by Harrell, 2000:8, in reference to Greater Liangshan) the implementation of the reforms was generally carried out diplomatically and peacefully without alienating, and with the cooperation of, the greater part of the higher casts. Then reforms were also carried out.

Starting in 1957, a series of radical, extreme, and very often violent, campaigns were launched: first the Anti-Rightist Campaign, followed in 1958 by the Great Leap Forward and the movement of the Peoples' Communes etc. Class struggle now replaced the former mild policies. This provoked an armed uprising, led by some discontent aristocrats, which lasted for a few years, until the guerrillas were put down by the army. [casualties → Heberer?]] Between 1959 and 1961 there was a terrible famine throughout the whole of China which also affected Liangshan.

Just when more moderate policy had returned and when people were starting to recover from the all the calamities they had been through, in 1966 the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and effectively lasted until 1976 or later. Harrell (2000:9) describes the effect of this event on Liangshan thus:

More than any other event in history, the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 threatened the survival of Nuosu culture. Schools no longer taught the Nuosu language in any form, but adopted the policy of "direct transition" to Chinese-language education. *Bimo*, the repositories of so much traditional ritual and naturalistic knowledge, were labelled "feudal superstitious practitioners" and forbidden to perform rituals, read and copy texts, or teach their sons and nephews as disciples. any activities by clans acting in concert were immediately put down as "counterrevolutionary" and government cadres became the only legitimate authorities. Nuosu culture was far from being totally obliterated during this time: of course it was impractical to force everyone to speak Chinese, which most Nuosu did not know at all; and some *bimo* even managed to conduct the most important rituals secretly in attenuated form. But the Cultural Revolution set up an adversarial relationship between local practice and modern development.

From the end of the 1970s Chinese policy changed radically under the objectives of modernisation and economic development. The Nuosu were now free to practice their religion and traditions once more and a cultural renaissance has taken place among the Nuosu, mixed with influences that are more characteristic of universal international globalization.

With respect to the possibility of attaining political independence, the Nuosu realise that such an idea is geopolitically impossible and as far as I am aware no one sees this as an option. Instead ethnically conscious Nuosu try to reap the maximum possible

benefit from the system of autonomy. I talked with an aging intellectual in 1995 who expressed envy of the Tibetans who at least could dream about the possibility of claiming their independence (even though it was a hopeless struggle), thanks to the sympathy of the whole world, an international border and the presence of the Dalai Lama in India. He added “We lack a Dalai Lama and the worldwide attention that Tibet benefits from.”

Socio-economic and socio-cultural changes in Liangshan during the communist period and drug, alcohol, and mental health problems among the Yi of Liangshan

To sum up some of the tensions which have given rise to the social changes which the Yi people have gone through in the county town of Zhaojue, I quote from the English abstract of the masters dissertation of a postgraduate psychiatric student of Han nationality at the Medical University of South China (*Huaxi yike daxue*):

In this quasi-experimental designed cross-sectional study, 3 questionnaires were employed, using structural interview techniques, to collect the information of socio-cultural background, life stress and health of 240 adults of Yi nationality in Zhaojue County, Liangshan District, Sichuan Province. In the past 36 years, the rapid socio-cultural change in this area has resulted in the great rural / town differences in the socioeconomic status, life styles, values and adaptational problems. People in the town (mainly cadres) encountered more stress and reported more psychological and somatic symptoms than the peasants. These results show that the upward mobility of socioeconomic status is also stressful. Stress came from 4 sources:

- a) demands of the culture from outside;
- b) the interactions (co-ordinations and conflicts) between the traditional and modern culture;
- c) the traditional culture itself; and
- d) natural events.

The most important events or hassles in the town included:
difficulties in work and learning,

- conflicts between nuclear families and clans (Jiazhi),
- excessive drinking,
- arranged marriages,
- serious disease or death of family members.

For the peasants, poverty was the most serious problem. The score of the symptom questionnaire and the items reported by the two groups reflected the influences of the differences mentioned above to some extent. Correlation between stress and health was supported, and their levels were found to be higher in male employees and female peasants than in the male peasants. Stepwise regression and path analysis points out that background variables have various effects on the stress, symptoms and the stress symptom link. (Zhao Xudong 1988)

Here we have an account of an up-and-coming urban class of Yi nationality in the administrative centre of Zhaojue. Essentially this class has problems of adaptation to the modern world which has been introduced into Zhaojue by cadres and professionals

of Han nationality and at the same time continue being good traditional members of the Yi nationality, maintaining intact their links to their more traditional, and general rural relatives and fellow Nuosu.

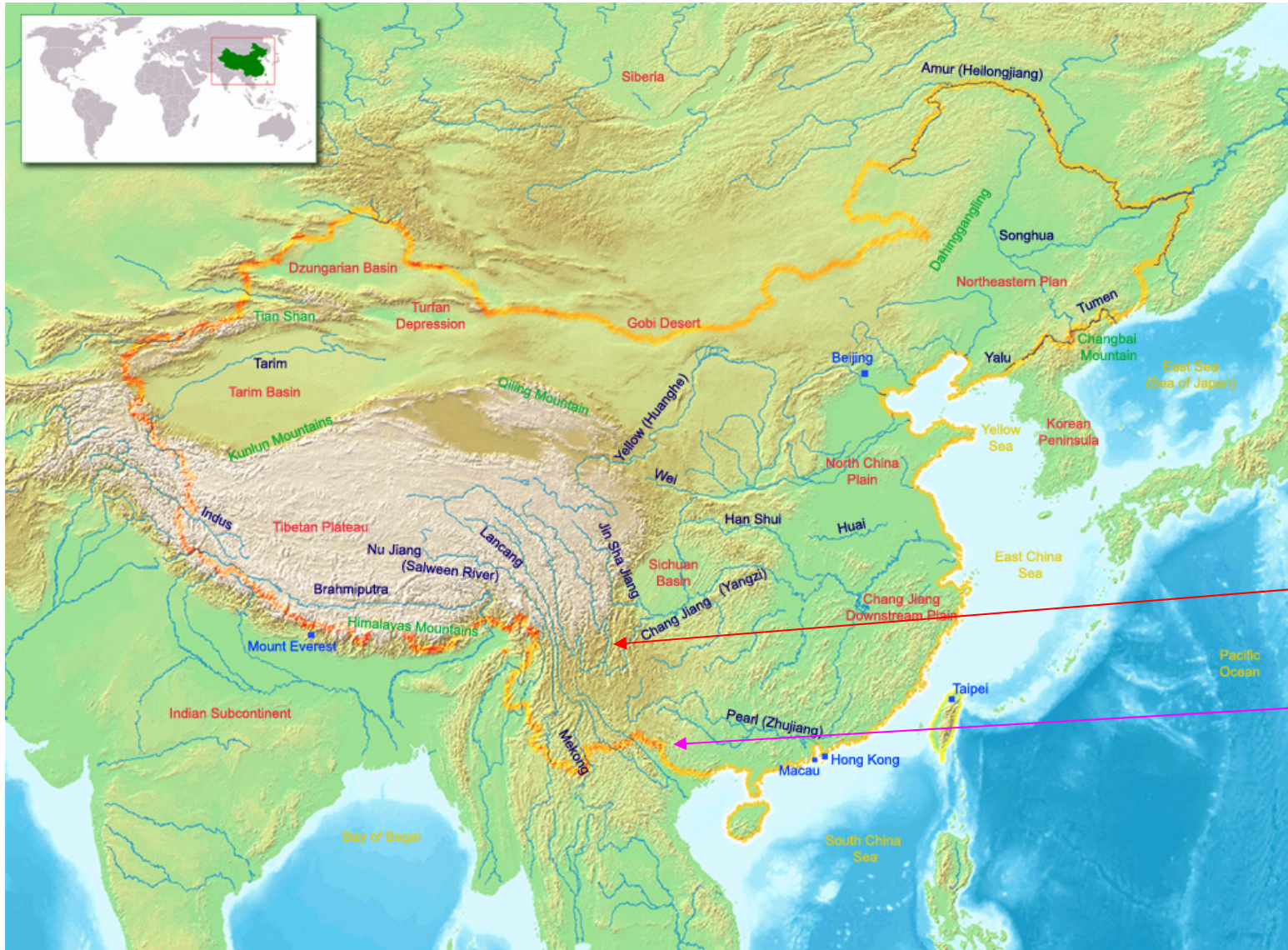
These urbanised Nuosu live in close contact with a strong concentration of Han cadres and professionals, who, even though very small in number, make up a highly influential nucleus. Different members of this new Nuosu social class have been hanised to varying degrees, according to their degree of loyalty to the traditional Nuosu culture and their motivation to adapt themselves to the dominant culture. As I point out further on, this process of cultural assimilation implies familiarising oneself with the Han language and script and in some cases can imply not learning the Yi script or even the loss of a degree of oral competence of the Nuosu and not passing Nuosu on to ones children (discussed in 6.2.2).

In rural areas the changes of the last years also have been revolutionary and surely these changes will have produced many tensions and social problems. However, the outside Han influence is not as strong as in the administrative centres.

ECOLOGICAL DETERIORATION OF LIANGSHAN

Prior to “Liberation” the upland areas were a mixture of thick virgin forest and grasslands teeming with wildlife. The forest has largely been cut down since the 1950s, taking its toll on the bio-diversity of the region and some sources have spoken of an ecological disaster. The Nuosu are very aware of this and many people deeply resent the Han who came in the radical periods to cut down their woodlands and destroy the teeming wildlife. In recent years there has been much concern, both among locals and outside NGOs (some foreign) to set up projects promoting sustainable development and environmental management which will favour the livelihood of the rural Nuosu population.

Annex 2 Maps



Annex 2, Map 1
Relief map of China and surrounding area. Drawn for Wikipedia by map was drawn by [Alan Mak](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/ChinaGeography.png). (<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/ChinaGeography.png>)

Liangshan

Guangxi

Annex 2 Maps



Annex 2, Map 2
 Relief map and political map of China and surrounding area.
<http://www.johomaps.com/as/china/chinamap2.html>

People's Republic of China (PRC):
Administrative Divisions & Territorial Disputes



Annex 2, Map 3
Map of Chinese Provinces. From the web-page http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/c/c9/China_administrative.png

Annex 2 Maps



Annex 2, Map 4

CIA-produced ethnolinguistic map of mainland China.

(http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_ethnolinguistic_1967.jpg)

Key:

Light green: Han languages

Dark green: Korean

Light brown: Turkic languages

Beige: Mongolian

Dark purple: Tungusic languages

Light purple: Tibeto-Burman languages

Dark brown: Tadjik (Indo-European)

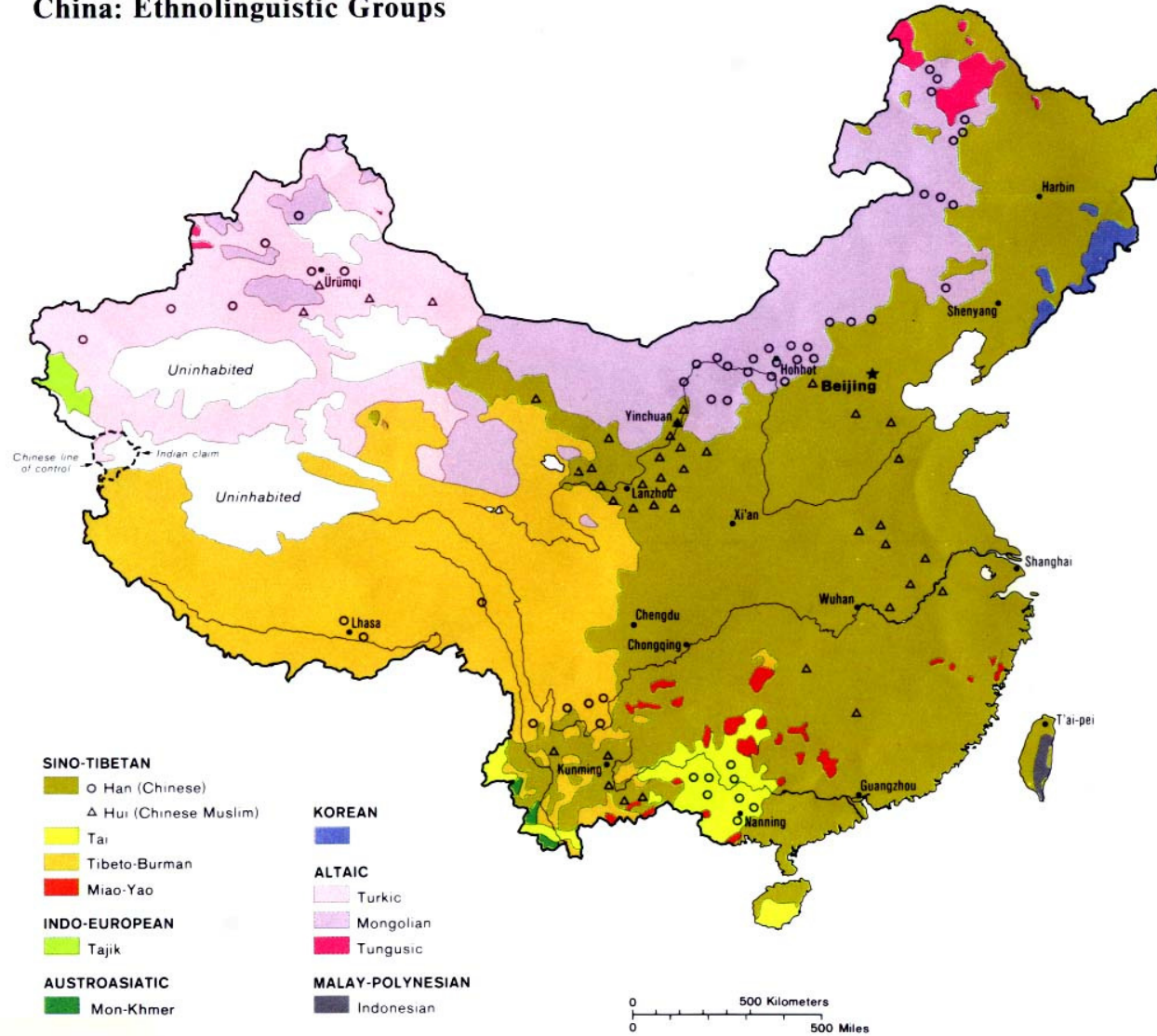
Pink: Austro-asiatic (Mon-Khmer) languages

Yellow: Tai languages

Pink-orange: Hmong-Mien languages

Triangles: Han-speaking muslims

China: Ethnolinguistic Groups



Annex 2, Map 5
 Map of main language families in China. From the web-page http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_ethnolinguistic_83.jpg

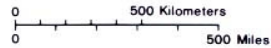
The Sinitic Languages



Annex 2, Map 6
 Map of Sinitic languages, commonly called « Chinese dialects ». On the web-page of Glossika. Most linguists consider Jin (the dark blue area to the west of Beijing and North of Xian) to be a dialect of Mandarin. From this map it can be seen that south-western Mandarin is spoken by Han in Liangshan (the white island there represents the high-density of monolingual Nuosu speakers) and in the northern parts of Zhuang areas. In southern Guangxi Cantonese and Pinghua are spoken alongside Zhuang and in some areas of Guangxi, Hakka.
<http://www.glossika.com/en/dict/dialectmap.php>

AUSTROASIATIC
 Mon-Khmer

MALAY-POLYNESIAN
 Indonesian



ANNEX 3: ILLUSTRATIONS



Cinz Hanvwnz

1

Fwn doeksasa, rumz boqfafa.

Gou simvueng lo. Mbouj daiq liengj, baenzlawz baema ne? Haetneix mbwn baenzhaenx gvengq, byawz rox daengz yaek cuengqhag seiz cix doek fwnraq, caemhcaiq yied doek yied hung, yied raq yied haenq.....

Giz gyae cienzdaeuj singgo gou gig sug haenx:

*Song raeuz doengzcaez gang
mbaw liengj*

Yienznaeuz fwn doek naek

Cij aeu mwngz bang gou

Gou caemh bang mwngz

.....

Neix cingq dwg souj go MBAW LIENGJ IQ NDEU, gou ceiq maj ciengq haenx. Mwhneix, gou caen muengh miz byawz soengq liengj hawj gou roxnaeuz hawj gou caez gang mbaw liengj he ha.

Sawqmwh, gwngz gyaeuj gou caen

ywz daeuj mbaw liengj vahoengz he! Gou ngiengx gyaeuj baez yawj, dwg mwngz! Mwngz cingq riunyumnyum caencingz yawj gou, lumj naeuz: Baema ba.

Gou gamjdoengh dwk ngaekngaek gyaeuj, caeuq mwngz caez byaij haeuj ndaw fwnraq bae.....

2

Mwngz miz aen coh gig ndei dingq he heuh "Ginh". Hoeng, gij cingzciq mwngz mbouj rox vih maz cungj caeuq aen mingzcoh ndei mwngz mbouj doxhab, hix daihgaig vih neix ba, yienznaeuz gou caeuq mwngz doengz daiz naengh, hoeng vah gangj ndaej gig noix.

"Ginh, haemhneix baet ranz le, raeuz coihcoih aen daengq ga vaih neix, ndei lwi?" Ngoenz he, gou baez daih'it unqsing doiq mwngz naeuz.

"Ndei ha! Ndei ha!" Mwngz han ndaej vaiqvued dangqmaz.

Baet ranz sat le, mwngz dawz ok.

GVANGJSIH MINZCUZ BAU

广西民族报

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liggaeuq gveiqyocux nienz ndwenit cocib 广告许可证: 南工商广字45-01114

Ningzmingz Coih Suijli Gaij Naz Yaez Caez Guh
注重基础设施建设 加强农业后劲
宁明县冬修水利农建改低齐头并进

Ningzmingz Yenveij, Yen Cwngfuj cizgiz cuj-ciz daengx yienh gunbu ginzcung guh raemx, namh, bwnh, roen cangh-hoz ceihleix, ca ndei gauh byauhcuinj gaijcau namh naz yaez, mieng-raemx boiqdaug caeuq buek suiqli guzgan gungh-cwngz gensez ndeu, aeu ndaej cingzcik ndei. Daengz ll nyied daej, daengx yienh gaenq

员各乡镇兴修水利, 大搞农田基本建设。到11月底止, 全县动工的山塘、陂头、防渗硬化渠等工程共计120宗, 投入资金80多万元; 已修好涵闸15座、桥梁21座、三面光硬渠115条共90公里, 机耕路7条共74公里, 完成土石方9万立方。至此, 新增加灌溉面积875亩, 恢复改善面积1662亩, 改造低产田1045亩。经过多年的努力, 宁明县水稻产量逐年提高, 今年产量达1.2亿公斤。但是, 至今仍有相当部分的易旱田、低洼积水田、沙质浅瘦田和亩年产在600公斤以下的低产田急需改造, 产量进一步提

领导具体抓。二是早计划、早动工。不少乡镇上半年刚过就开始进行农建规划, 9月就发动群众, 抓层层落实任务。三是深入办点, 以点带面。县农业局、水电局、农建办紧密配合, 县、乡镇两级的水利、农业专职人员通力合作, 深入工地办点。四是组织群众投工投劳, 15个乡镇农村劳力每人投入义务工10天以上。五是多方筹集资金, 坚持县、乡镇、管理区、农户各出一点, 向上申请拿一点和“谁受益, 谁负担; 多受益, 多负担”的原则解决资金问题。

(钟腾飞)

Ci b Sam Boux Famh Buenq
Gai Duzbinj Deng Banh
十三名毒品罪犯被枪决

12 nyied ll hauh, Nanzningz Si, Liujeonh Si, yuzcounh Si, Yilinzi Digih caeuq Bwzswz Digih haj aen cunghgiz yinzminz fazyen doengz-seiz ciuhai senhban daih-hoih, ciuq fap banh le Senh Cujlingz daengj 13 boux yenzcung duzbinj famhcoih fwnswj.

本报讯 (记者罗瑞繁) 12月11日上午, 南宁市、柳州市、梧州市, 玉林地区和百色地区五个中级人民法院同时召开宣判大会, 依法处决了禿祖玲、杨文兴、杨廷炎等12名严重毒品犯罪分子。

这13名毒品犯走私、贩卖、运输的毒品数量大, 犯罪情节特别严重, 有些是犯罪团伙的主犯, 有些是一犯再犯的累犯, 实属罪大恶极, 国法不容。对他们处以极刑是大快人心之举。



全州县绍水镇大渭洞村青年农民谷汉洪, 从1985年以来办起家庭林场, 到1993年的九年间, 共投资15万多元, 造林4300亩, 产值逾千万元, 成为广西造林大户。最近, 谷汉洪被选为县政协委员。图为谷汉洪与爱人上山造林。(赵景樟、邓建华 摄)

Illustration 2. Title of 4-page bilingual Zhuang-Han edition of "Guangxi Nationalities' Newspaper, December 1993

ngveih iq, aen iq louz
ngveih, vaiq daeuj cawx

Tiāncái Yǔ Qínfèn

天才与勤奋

Tiāncái chūyú qínfèn.

天才出于勤奋

——高尔基

Tiāncái jiù shì zhēnyǎng,
zhōngshēn nǜlì, biān chéng
tiāncái.

天才就是这样，终身努力，
便成天才。

——门捷列夫

Tiāncái, wúfēi shì cháng
cháng de rénnǎi, nǜlì baj

天才，无非是长长的忍耐，
努力吧！

——福楼拜

Gōngfū, nǎi shì yìshùjiā
zuì wúfǎ hénglǒng de cǎichūn.

功夫，乃是艺术家最无法衡
量的财产。

——纪德

了解语法差异，

广西民院

四、句式的差异

壮语和汉语的句子特点和表
示法也有不少差异，这种差异也
往往容易引起翻译时出现一些病
句。所以，去掌握它们的相异规
律，也是很重要的。它们的差异
大致有几种：

1. 汉语靠介词“对”、
“把”的帮助，可以将宾语提前
到动词前边来；壮语则没有这种
表示法。比如：

(1) 他对别人特别关心。

(2) 大家对这个问题进行
了认真的研究。

(3) 我们把敌人打败了。
象这些例句，翻译成壮文时，就
要将“把”字去掉，将宾语放到
动词的后边。变成：

Goj Mauz Cwzdungh

Laemxsim Guh
Gunghcoz

Mboujguenj youq
seiz lawz, Mauz Cwz-
dungh cungj dwg laemx-
sim guh gunghcoz. Youq
Yenzanh sij LUN CIZ-
GIJCAN seiz, de laeb-
daeb geij ngoenz mbouj
ninz, cungj dwg boemz
youq gwnz daiz sij ha
sij ha, daiq baeg lo, de
cij laep da yaep he, miz
cingsaenz le youh laeb-
daeb sij. Cig daengx
ngoenz daihcaet, sij
baenz saw le, cij hwnq
congz ninz.

Mbaet Gwn
Mbaet Yungh

Mauz Cwzdungh
gig mbaet, caeuq vunz-
lai doengz van caez
haemz. 1961 nienz, guek
raeuz ginghci gunnanz,
daengxguek yinzminz
swnghoz gig hoj. Mauz
Cwzdungh gveidingh gij
gwn cihgeij: Dan gwn
haeux, byaekheu, mbouj
gwn noh. Gingjveiyenz
yawj de gwn ndaej
yienghneix ca, gunghcoz
youh yienghneix muengz,

毛泽东的故事

gig sim'in, gienq de
naeuz: "Yienghneix
roengzbae ndangdaej
mwngz vaih bae hw.
Dangj caeuq lwgminz
sihyau mwngz, daengx
guek lwgminz moix
ngoenz mbaet gaemz
ngaiz ndeu, hix nyienh
hawj mwngz gwn ndei
di." Mauz cujsiz dauq
naeuz: "Daengx guek
lauxbeksingq cungj dwg
yienghneix, gou boux
ndeu gwn ndei mbouj
simsoung ha!"

眼睛的光线的多少。中午，
阳光很足，猫的瞳孔就变成
了一条窄缝，保护眼睛不受
阳光刺激。晚上，光线很
弱，猫的瞳孔又变得溜圆，
尽量吸收周围的光线到眼睛
里去。这样，猫在晚上也能
看清东西了。照相机上也有
一个类似猫眼的装置——光
圈。光圈能调节进入相机的
光，使相机无论在强光下还
是在黑暗中都能正常使用。”



Gojwngyez Duzmanaez Yakdoeg

Duz manaez ndeu daeuj daengz henz
rij, raen duz yiengzlwng ndeu cingq youq gizhaenx
gwn raemx.

Manaez gig siengj gwn duz yiengzlwng neix,
cough daekdaengq ra saeh gangj: "Mwngz dawz
raemx gou loengh uq lo! Mwngz yaek guh lawz?"

Yiengzlwng doeksaet yat, unqswnh naeuz: "Gou
baenzlawz dawz raemx mwngz loengh uq ne?
Mwngz youq baihgwnz, raemx dwg daj giz mwngz
lae daengz giz gou, mbouj dwg daj giz gou lae
daengz giz mwngz."

Manaez youh heiqfodfod naeuz: "Gou dingq
vunz naeuz, bi'gvaq mwngz youq laeng luenh
gangj gou!"

Duz yiengzlwng hojlienz neix hemq naeuz: "Ha,
manaez daxgoeng, haengjdingh mbouj miz saeh
neix, bi' gvaq gou lij caengz seng nel!"

Manaez mbouj caiq gangj gijmaz, aj bak rig
heuj, yiengq yiengzlwng byaij gvaqdaej daihsing
ndaq naeuz: "Mwngz lwg yak neix, gangj gou vah-
rwx mbouj dwg mwngz cough dwg daxboh mwngz,
fanjingq cungj ityiengh." Gangj sat cough coemj
gwnz ndang yiengzlwng bae. (桂林民师 苏晓)

保证译文质量

韦达

De daegbied gvnsim
bouxwnq.

Caezgya nyinhcaen
yenzgiu aen. vwndiz neix
lo.

Raeuz: hoenx bouxdig
baih lo.

2. 在包含主语、谓语、宾
语、定语的句子中：

(1) 当主语部分含有名
词、代词、动词、形容词作定语
时，壮语的句式是这样的：

主一定一谓
例：A. Go faex hag-
裸 树 学

dangz hwnj lo.
校 起 了

B. Mbanj raeuz
村 我们



ndei hw.
好 黑。

汉语的句式却是：
定—主—谓

上两例译成：
学校的树木长了。
我们的村庄好呀。

(2) 当谓语部分带有名
词、代词、动词、形容词作定语
时，壮、汉语的句式也不一样。

壮语是：主—(判断动词)
谓(名词)—定 (待续)

Illustration 3. Extract from "Guangxi Nationalities" Newspaper, December 1993

dauqsiengj	196	dawz	dawz	197	dawzmaeg
dauqdoet ①相反[方向相反] ②逆 raemx ~ 水流	或脚掌上因摩擦而生成厚皮]	daw 肫; 胗子[禽类、鸟类的胃]	dawz (见giet) 结(瓜、果) Go makbug ~ mak lo. 柚子树结果子了。	dawz (见cae) 犁(田、地)	dawzfoengfoeng [方] 火焰很大
dauqsiengj [方] ngeix-daengz; hoizsiengj; nih-daengz 回想; 回忆	daw (见swnx) 芋头或红薯煮熟后, 肉质不松	daw (见nwnj) 被虫咬或被鞭打后, 皮肤所起的红疙瘩或血痕	dawz (见daenj) 戴(耳环、手镯)	dawzbanj (见habbak) 可口; 合口味	dawzgaenj [方] 抓紧
dauqsingj (见dauqndiu) 苏醒	daw (见cid) 结实	dawz ①等; 守候; 等候 ②守; 看守	dawzbanj [方] haenjgeq 合拍 符合节奏 协调一致	dawzbaux [方] sauc; dieb; fuh; cuij 交配; 交尾[指禽类]	dawzgeng 巡夜; 巡更[旧时兼打更鼓]
dauh 道; 道场; 道公所做的迷信活动 guh ~ 做道场	dawz [方] cawq; duij 带(小孩)	dawz [方] remj; dwz 着(火) Feiz ~ lo. 火着了。	dawzcai [方] gaemcaiq; giemqciengq; gonh; neij-cienz 负债; 欠债	dawzbaek (见dauzbaek) 可口; 合口味	dawzgeng (见dauzgeuq) 放哨或守关卡[在山上]
dauh [方] 留下一点[倒东西时没有倒完, 留下一点在容器里] Bat raemx neix gaej raix liux bae, ~ di youq ndaw de. 这盆水不要倒光, 留一点在里面。	dawz (见deq) 等; 等候; 等待	dawz (见hen) 守; 看守; 防守	dawzdaez 切题	dawzgeuq [方] dawzgeng; dawzngauh; saeujgeng 放哨或守关卡[在山上]	dawzgyaq (见gaisiengq) ①摆臭架子 ②招摇过市
dauhdoengj(见doengjfouz) 用藤或竹篾编成的圆圈, 挑水时放在桶口, 防水荡出桶外	dawz (见nangq) (蚂蟥)咬	dawz (见deng) ①对 ②中路; 门路 ②事情; 工作	dawzdengq (见dauzneuz) 放哨; 了望	dawzgyuk 稻谷物出花的时候	dawzhaeujrwz [方] dawzhaeujsim; giphwujrwz; giphaeujrwz 重视; 注意; 入耳 Vunz gangj mwngz cungj mbouj ~. 别人讲你都不注意。
dauhgoenj(见ndaemgyoiq) 倒栽葱	dawz (见danh) 泡(饭)	dawz (见laj) 下(面)	dawzdingh 公证(人)	dawzhaeujrwz (见dauzhaeujsim) 重视; 注意; 入耳	dawzhauq 戴孝
dauhleix 道理; 理由			dawzfaek [方] haeujiemz; roengzfaek 结荚[豆类开始结实]	dawzhoz 气味相投	dawzhuhuh [方] 火焰很大
dauhloh 道路				dawzmaeg (见dinghmeg)	
dauhloh (见dauzloh) ①头					
daw 肉茧; 茧子; 胼子[手掌					

Illustration 4. Pages from a Zhuang-Han dictionary

r	426	r
跌歪靠。 Duz roeg douh gwnz faex. 鸟儿栖息在树 上。	长过鞋子。	
鞞 (鞞) 〈方〉 roeg [yok ^a] 茂 密的草丛。	坤 (踏、魂) roen [yon ¹] 路; 作抽 跟条~ ₁ 。 Doxcaemh byaij diuz roen ndeu. 同走一条路。	
融 〈方〉 roek [yok ⁷] 纺 纱用的梭子。	筭 roengh [yok ⁸] 筭; 撮 筒合~。 Gach gaeq haenj roengh. 把鸡 进筭。	
抗 (笑) 〈方〉 roek [yok ⁷] 播 (种); ~稼。 roek gyaj. 播秧。	桀 (洩、杰、陇、笊、 陵、还、赶、籊、 隆)	
撩 roemj [yom ³] 动词之 后附加成分: 打 鬲 康~ ~。 Riuj noh ma- roemjroemj. 提着肉慢慢地 走回来。	roengz [yok ²] ① 下(动 词): ~岫。 roengz bya. 下山。 ② (动物) 生产: 猪她 ~幼。 Moumeh roengz lwg. 母猪产小猪。 ③ 签(名): ~獠。 roengzcoh. 签名。	
恣 roemx [yom ⁴] 置放 物体超出预定范围: 腩 跖 ~卦 鞞。 Angjdin roemx gvaq haiz. 脚板	④ 努(力): ~衝。 roengzrengz. 努力; 用 力; 卖力。	

r	427	r
洛 (淪、閻、潤) roenx [yon ⁴] 溢; 盈 余: 滄~垠~埒。 Raemx roenx haenz roenx hamq. 水漫过堤 岸。	糶 (糶、糶) roi [yo:i ¹] 梳子; 梳〔动 词〕: 歐~靠~尅。 Aeu roifaex roi gyaeuj. 拿木 梳子来梳头。	
戾 (戾) roet [yot ⁷] 屁: 聽戾 挡唔豕。 Ok roet deng bak ma. 放屁中狗嘴吧 〔喻碰巧〕。	塚 〈方〉 roih [yo:i ⁸] 丘; 块〔指较大的田 块〕: 三~畲。 sam roih naz. 三块田。	
閼 (閼) rog [yok ⁸] 外; 外边: ~阡。 rog dou. 门 外。	黽 (黽、黽、黽、荷、 噉、潏、噉) roh [yo ⁸] ① 漏: 露禁空 只~。 Fwn doek ranz cix roh. 一下雨屋子就漏 水。 ② 泄露。	
	孺 〈方〉 roiz [yo:i ²] ()个(人)〔指男 性〕。	
	躡 〈方〉 roiz [yo:i ²] 踪 迹: ~摸~摸。 Roiz moz roiz max. 牛马 的脚印。	
	糶 (糶)	

Illustration 5. Pages from a dictionary of Zhuang fangkuaizi, 1989



6. Blackboard newspaper, Wuming Zhuang-medium school, February 1982



Illustration 7. Blackboard newspaper, Wuming Zhuang-medium school, February 1982

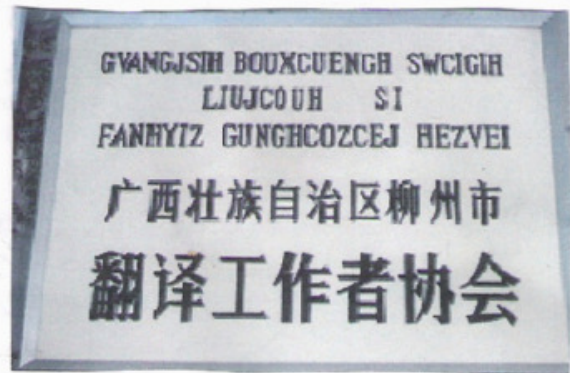


Illustration 8. Bilingual Zhuang-Han name-sign of an organisation (Liuzhou City Association of Translators)

POU CHOONG.com
Bouxcuengh Youqsieng

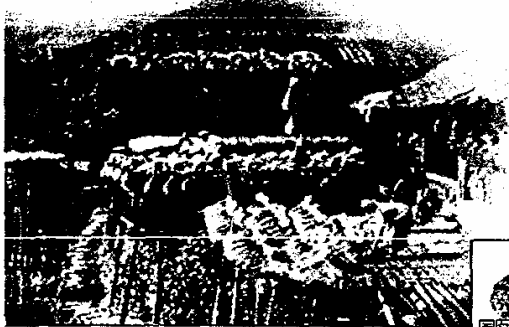
Mbanj Raeuz daj neix haeuj

Mingz Bouxyungh : _____
Hauhmax laeglemx: _____
Haeujbae

Bouxliuh cingjhaeuj Bouxvoih cuez





Banj Gangj Wnq

■ Coenz Cawjmuengx Banj gonq [Bouxcuengh Youqsieng Muengx Bouxraeuz]dwg[Ranz Bouxdoj/Bouxcuengh Youqsieng], 2001.11.16 haidoeng, 2002.01.29 gaenq cingjgouz mingzdieg guekcaeh cingqhanoq lu, daeuj ndaej laep lai lo.Guh aen minzcuz soqnoix yinzgouz ceiq lai youq gyang Cungguek ndeu, ranzmbanj gwnz muengx Bouxraeux(Bouxcuengh 180ofanh, Bouxyaej 280fanh) cungj hai ceiz gvaq haujlai minzcuz soqnoix wnq. Guh boux lwgmbauq Bouxcuengh he, hoiq singggaenj caeuq mbouj naihhoz raixcaix. Sim cwzyin hawj hoiq doi mbouj ndaej bae guh boux daiqdaez ndeu, ylenzxaeuz suijsingz lij daemq, hoeng danghxaeuz heuh ndaej singj beixnuengx Raeuz, hix dwg hoiq miznaj lo. Angqraeb daihgya ciengzseiz ma Ranzmbanj Bouxcuengh/Bouxyaej guh hek caeuq louz gij yigen baujgvei cawj roengzdaeuj.Gyo' mbaic!




Faenzcieng gagmiz Bouxcuengh Youqsieng

Gaigvang	Vwnzyoz	Hag Raeuz	Lijyouz
Cisunh	Gunghcoz	Ciengauj	Yingjyaem

★Faenzcieng moq Mbanj Raeuz



—Yinhyoz Bouxraeuz—

- 小康水平? 1500万 ... [rang] (2003/04/03 11:34pm)
- 给MM装机的惨痛经 ... [luomaren] (2003/04/03 09:34pm)
- 笑掉大牙的足球解 ... [luomaren] (2003/04/03 09:27pm)
- 在佛祖面前求了 ... [luomaren] (2003/04/03 08:58pm)
- 能泛突厥主义化地 ... [南粤孤客] (2003/04/03 02:16pm)
- [关注个人健康]: ... [双城故事] (2003/04/03 01:02pm)
- 布依族的“浪稍”文明 [luomaren] (2003/04/03 10:14am)
- [转帖]民族政策之 ... [zzhc] (2003/04/03 08:52am)
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- [转帖]民族政策之 ... [zzhc] (2003/04/03 08:52am)

>>>>Faenzcieng lai dem>>>>

Gvendaengz Raeuz | Lienzhaeh Raeuz | Gunghcoz Anhbaiz | Hag Raeuz | Cisunh | Veh caeuq Yingjyaem

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Miz saenq cingj geiq: pourao@hotmail.com & pouchoong@hotmail.com

Cawj Muengx:Faexreux (Mayreu) Siepgeiq Mbawnduj: 季人 (Seasoner) Gisuz Cihciz: Bill

Illustration 9. Zhuang language part of the Web site “壮人在线” (Zhuang people online), now at www.rauz.net.



Illustration 10. The researcher visiting a Zhuang-medium school, Debao County, Guangxi. New Year 1994.



Illustration 11.
A monolingual Zhuang
peasant, literate in the Zhuang
script. Debao County,
Guangxi, New Year 1994

Annex 3: Illustrations



Illustrations 18-21. Bimo reading traditional Nuosu scripture in ceremony to cure sick child. Zhaojue County, September 1995.



Illustration 22. Bilingual Nuosu-Han shop-signs, Meigu County Town, August 2005



Illustrations 23-25 - Bilingual Nuosu-Han and Nuosu-only shop signs in Nuosu rural Zhaojue County, August 1994





Illustration 26. Bilingual Nuosu-Han signs and banners on the building of the local health authority (left) and local Communist Party (right), Meigu County town, August 2005.



Illustration 32. Nuosu grave. Zhaojue County



Illustration 33. Meeting with 2 elderly Nuosu intellectuals. Zhaojue, August 1994



Illustration 34. Using a Nuosu typewriter. Zhaojue Language and Script Committee, August 1995



Illustration 35. Meeting with rural Nuosu cadres, who are here filling out the language attitude questionnaire

Annex 3: Illustrations



Illustration 36. Nuosu script on wall in a village in Meigu County, August 2005



Illustration 37. Students of Nuosu literacy class after completing the language attitude questionnaire, Zhaojue County, August 1995



Illustration 38. Bilingual secondary class completing the language attitude questionnaire, Zhaojue County town, August 1995



Illustration 39. Nuosu-medium technical secondary school completing the language attitude questionnaire, Zhaojue County town, August 1995

Annex 3: Illustrations



Illustration 40. Nuosu-medium class in Zhaojue primary school, August 1994



Illustration 41. Rural primary school, Zhaojue County, 1995

Illustration 42. Bilingual secondary class completing the language attitude questionnaire, Zhaojue County town, August 1995

