

The Formation and Development of Zhuang Environmentalism as Seen in Their Traditional Rice Paddy Cultivation Practices, Known as *Na* culture

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The first ancestors of the Zhuang people had a culture formed around the wetlands rice farming upon which they depended for survival. Through a long history of paddy farming, the ancestors of the Zhuang created a rich and colorful “*Na* culture.” (“*Na*” is the Zhuang word for ‘rice paddy’.) *Na* culture, the Zhuang people’s paddy-farming culture, consisted of wetlands rice cultivation, which, of course, required above all the natural resource of water. The fact that the Zhuang ancestors were able to perpetuate a tradition of several millennia of *Na* culture is due to the fact that the Zhuang ancestors developed a set of principles for the protection of their water resources. In researching the Zhuang people’s *Na* culture, the author has discovered that the Zhuang ancestors, through a long history of wetlands rice cultivation, constructed a philosophy of sustained development allowing for conditions of harmony between people and nature. Their philosophy of conservation can be summarized as: “forest—springs—paddies—people—forest.” Forests provide sources of water; sources of water allow for the cultivation of rice paddies; plentiful harvests allow for mankind’s survival and multiplication; mankind has the responsibility of protecting the forest. From ancient times until the present, Zhuang people adhere to certain ecological principles. Throughout their historical development, due to integration with different ethnic groups, intermixing and societal change, some Zhuang areas have transgressed the ecological principles and have learned the consequences as the encountered disasters and were forced to leave their original villages. In order to realize sustainable development that maintains a harmonious relationship between people and nature, we must continue to promote the Zhuang people’s traditional virtues of loving the mountains, offering sacrifices to the mountains, protecting the mountains.

1. *Na* culture’s origins and essence.

Na culture was born of the passion of a paddy-farming ethnic group for the rice paddies they had brought under cultivation. The essence of *Na* culture is the conservation principle of “forest—springs—paddies—people—forest”. This is the philosophy underlying the harmony between people and nature in traditional Zhuang culture.

1.1. The Zhuang people are one of the world’s earliest civilizations to discover the technology of the cultivation of manmade rice paddies.

The Zhuang are an indigenous people group of southern China. Ancient human fossils from the late Paleolithic Period (Old Stone Age) have been found in more than ten places in what is now the Zhuang area. These have been classified as Liujiang Man, Qilin (Kylín) Mountain Man, Lingshan (Spirit Mountain) Man, Xichou Man, etc. Approximately 10,000 years ago, the original peoples living in the area where the Zhuang now live were entering the Neolithic Period (New Stone Age). Over one hundred Neolithic ruins and scattered remains of stone instruments have been found in the Zhuang area. Archeologists have excavated Neolithic rice paddy instruments such as stone axes, shovels, hoes, ploughs, and other cultural relics. As the ancestors of the Zhuang entered the late Neolithic Period, their agricultural development was advancing by leaps and bounds. As the former Assistant Chancellor of the Central Nationalities University (*Zhongyang Minzu Daxue*), Professor Liang Tingwang (梁庭望) points out in his *An Investigation into the Rice Paddy Culture and Society of the Zhuang*: “The Zhuang are one of the earliest ethnic groups in China and in the world to discover the technology of manmade rice paddies. Their history of cultivation may go back as far as 12,000 to 20,000 years.”

1.2. Historically, the Zhuang as a people have survived and multiplied thanks to rice paddies.

In the place where the fossilized tooth of “Xichou Man” was excavated in Yunnan Province’s Xichou County and in the surrounding Chouyang river valley, archeologists have excavated various cultural artifacts of the late Neolithic Homo sapiens “Xichou man.” In comparing these with Zhuang traditional culture, it has been discovered that the forms of early Zhuang society can be classified into three stages of development: *Mihong* production (Matrilineal production: Paleolithic Period, Stone Age), *Buhong* production (Patrilineal production: end of the Neolithic Period, early Bronze Age) and *Buban* production (Chieftain society, under the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties: Iron Age). The ancestors of the Zhuang were polytheists who believed that all things had spirits. During the *Mihong* production period in which the society had matriarchal rulers the *Miman* who carried on the Zhuang primitive religion came to be. (The *Miman* were women whose part-time occupation was officiating religious activities; some scholars have called these sorceresses or witches.) The Zhuang people continue to believe in this traditional religion and continue to invite *Miman* to officiate at traditional religious sacrifices and other activities. Every time Zhuang people conduct a wedding, celebrate a birth, call on ghosts, celebrate an older person’s birthday, send souls to their ancestors, or commemorate other important occasions, the *Miman* combines the soul of the paddy rice with human souls, believing that human souls are also paddy souls and paddy rice can also grow human souls. From this we can infer that the Zhuang as a people have survived and multiplied thanks to rice paddies.

1.3. The ancestors of the Zhuang created the rich and colorful *Na* culture

From ancient times up to the present, the Zhuang passionately love the paddy fields that they themselves have put into cultivation, calling them *Na* in their Zhuang language. Often they name their own villages after the shape, location, qualities, and landmarks of their rice paddies. From the 1920s to the early 1940s, ethnic historian Xu Songshi (徐松石) many times traveled deep into China’s southwest border region to conduct social science research among the area’s minority ethnic groups, and in the process came across many locations in Yunnan, Guangxi, Guangdong and Thailand whose names contained the word *Na*. He demonstrated that places with

the name *Na* “In most cases are where Tai, Zhuang, Libo (黎僂) and other languages are spoken, all these can be called in the broad sense Zhuang-Thai people.” Within the boundaries of Yunnan Province’s Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, there are 518 villages with the name *Na* according to the villagers’ nomenclature. In 1997 this author for the first time introduced the concept of *Na* culture in an article entitled “Na Culture” published in the *Yunnan Ethnic News (Yunnan Minzu Bao)* and the *Yunnan Daily (Yunnan Ribao)*. In 1999, Guangxi Ethnic Research Center’s Director Tan Naichang (覃乃昌) presented a lengthy paper entitled “Essay on the ‘Na’ Cultural Group” at the Initial International Zhuang Studies Conference. In this paper he discusses the phenomenon of “Na” place names, the ethnic groups belonging to the “Na” cultural group, the cultural distinctives of the “Na” culture, the independent origins of the ethnic groups of the “Na” cultural group, the relationship between the “Na” cultural group, Han culture and Indian culture, etc. Tan Naichang points out that “The ‘Na’ cultural group, that is the rice paddy producing cultural group, is one of the origins of rice paddy agriculture, which is a significant culture contribution of the southern ethnic groups to the agriculture of the Chinese nation, and it should attract our careful attention.” The same year, the former assistant chairman of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and also chief editor of *The Handbook of Zhuang Studies (《壮学手册》)*, Zhang Shengzhen (张声震) in his *Handbook* wrote: “From southern China to southeast Asia place names containing ‘Na’ are spread over a large territory, this forms the ‘Na’ cultural group, this has deep cultural connotations. The ancestors of the Zhuang peoples, through a long period of historical development, formed a ‘Na’ cultural system that does everything according to ‘Na’: chooses a place to settle according to ‘Na’, depends on ‘Na’ for food, relies on ‘Na’ for clothing, thanks to ‘Na’ is happy, and has made ‘Na’ their basic pattern of production and livelihood.”

1.4. The essence of Zhuang peoples’ *Na* culture is a philosophy of harmonious relations between people and nature.

In the system of *Na* culture, Zhuang people enjoy celebrating together joyous festivals related to *Na*, for example: every year upon the coming of spring, the entire nationality makes sacrifices to the spirit of the forest, the spirit of the water, the spirit of the first ancestor, the spirit of the earth and the spirit of the sun. At the autumn harvest time, they make sacrifices to the spirit of the rice and their ancestors. Upon the beginning of winter, they make sacrifices to the cow spirit, and they use rice to help call back human spirits, bring longer life, etc. The main content of festival activities is traditional religious ceremonies, and the guiding principle of the ceremonies is making offerings to heaven and earth, to forest and water, to water and rice paddies, to pray for harmonious relations between the paddies and humans, between people and the forest.

The basis of the Zhuang ancestors’ philosophy of harmonious relations between forest and water, water and rice paddies, paddies and people, people and forest, comes from the Zhuang ancestor’s traditional religious beliefs.

The traditional religion of the Zhuang ancestors was born in the Stone Age. Approximately 10,000 years ago, according to the records of ancient Zhuang religious documents, was an age when: “Tigers and people sat together, people swam like fish, fish walked like people, heaven and earth were not divided.” At that time the ancestors and the animals and plants around them lived together. At night under the hazy moonlight all was mysterious and natural; during the day

the wind and clouds produced a constantly changing world; people experienced the deepest sensations of cold and heat, wind and rain, claps of thunder and bolts of lightning, and they say that rain and water were one, cloud and fog were one, water and heaven were one, all was still in a state of primal chaos. In eleven cliff painting locations in Yunnan Province's Wenshan Prefecture's Zhuang area, archeologists have discovered many prehistoric cave paintings and cliff paintings in which the ancestors painted the elements of the early world of nature that they knew: clouds (fog), water (waves), sun, moon, and early plants. This is the earliest record of the knowledge of the ancestors, and it is also a record of the things possessing supernatural power. At this point in history, what was the collective worldview of these ancestors? It is the early stirrings of the traditional religious beliefs that we recognize today.

Archeologists believe that ancient relics found at the ruins of Guilin's Nanjiao Zengpiyan date from "more than 12,000 years ago, belonging to China's relatively early Neolithic period." "The human bones excavated at Zengpiyan include some pelvis bones, and some red iron dust on a millstone. The red represents life, and it means the revival of life." From this we can see that as early as 10,000 years ago, more or less, the ancestors already believed in the netherworld and this world, and at that time the concept that all things possess a spirit came to be. For the Zhuang ancestors living in the Stone Age, the boundless universe perplexed everyone; the thinking of the ancestors was rich in fantasy, for every part of the world, they fabricated explanations. People of that time affirmed that the things not possessing a visible form, such as thunder, lightning, wind, the sun that controlled light and dark, the moon and other objects were "people" or "objects" that had a hidden form and possessed emotions, and had supernatural powers, and advanced the sacrifice worship of other deities. Archeologists have discovered that in the Zhuang area, "every cave ruin is the residential settlement of a population." "Long-term residence together required the development of a philosophy of contact, the tool of contact is language, the expression of which is the appearance of religious rites." Developing until the later period, people gathered around the "gods" possessing supernatural powers and began offering sacrifices; this is the inheritance of the traditional religion.

The Zhuang ancestors were able to survive and multiply thanks to their planting of the rice paddies, but rice paddies cannot be lacking in water sources. Where did the water come from? People began to search for the "god" who supplied the water, to offer sacrifices to him, to pray for "the common joy of people and gods," and harmonious relations. According to archeologists' discoveries, a large number of bones of cloud leopards, tigers, pandas, wild boars, deer, foxes, and other animals have been excavated in the Stone Age ruins in the Zhuang area, which shows that the earliest Zhuang both hunted and cultivated rice paddies for their food. The funeral scriptures of the Zhuang record hunting songs of the ancient Zhuang: "Yo...yo...tiger leopard road, thatch road, cliff road, red road! Purple road! Yo...Yo..." The "Red road! Purple road!" in this song describes a road burned by fire. This ancient song reflects the use of fire to burn mountains and chase out animals. The ancient Zhuang through a long period of relying on hunting for sustenance discovered that mountains burned by fire were lacking in water. Only in there is forest are there springs of water; under the ancient and large trees there is water. So these people who depended on rice paddies for their survival and multiplication began to worship and offer sacrifices to the ancient trees and forests that blessed them with water. In order to worship the ancient trees and forests, the Zhuang ancestors sealed the formless wind, thunder, frost and dew, the original ancestor Bulokdwo, and the deities with form such as the sun in forest

which surrounded the village and rice paddies, and generation after generation continued to offer sacrifices, hoping that these could obtain “the common joy of people and gods,” praying for harmonious relations. This is how the Zhuang people’s ecological philosophy of forest and water, water and rice paddy, paddy and people, people and forest came to be. This continues to develop into the 21st century—every one of the hundreds of Zhuang villages in Wenshan Prefecture still has its sacred mountain, sacred trees, sacred forests, that the people worship and to which they offer sacrifices at every festival.

2. Examples of and warnings against transgressing the harmony between people and nature.

The Zhuang population of Yunnan Province is 1.2 million, of which 1 million are spread throughout the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture. The secret knowledge of Wenshan Prefecture’s Zhuang traditional culture is very rich. In the course of conducting research into the *Na* culture of Wenshan’s Zhuang, the author discovered that there are areas that have violated the principles of harmonious co-existence between forest and water, water and rice paddy, paddy and people, and people and nature. This has resulted in people no longer being able to make a living from the production of their rice paddies, and in the serious cases, this has resulted in the population having to abandon villages and previously prosperous towns.

2.1 The difference between the ecological mentalities of the Zhuang and Han has led to the destruction of the environment and the forced abandonment of ancient towns.

The county seat of Yunnan Province’s Xichou County, Xisa, was originally called “Dongbuna” (Ancient Zhuang, named thus for the wide and famous rice paddies on the high mountains). This is the place where the fossilized tooth of the Paleolithic “Xichou man” was excavated. Dongbuna has an elevation of 1500 meters. The underwater springs are plentiful; some flow toward the southwest to become one of the tributaries of the Chouyang river, and to the northwest these also form one of the tributaries that feed the Jijie river. Along the two banks of Chouyang river are scattered many Zhuang villages, and along the two banks of the Jijie river, there are twelve Zhuang villages with the word “Na” in their names. Xichou County’s Dongma District is also the market town for all the settlements within a 10 km circumference. Two km to the east of the small town there are the remains of another small town, which was abandoned one hundred years ago: Dongma Laojie. The Zhuang residents of this Dongma Laojie were forced to abandon it because of the destruction of the environment caused by the difference in ecological philosophies of Zhuang and Han cultures.

The name “Dongma” is from Ancient Zhuang: *dong* means ‘a high plateau in the high mountains’, *ma* means ‘horse’ because of the numerous caravans of horses coming through. Dongma is 25 km straight distance from the Sino-Vietnamese border, and from this point on the border to the capital city of Vietnam’s Ha Giang province it is about 60 more km. According to the testimony of the village elders Zhang Meibin (张美斌), Lei Shuchuan (雷书传) and Luo Siying (骆思应) and multiple investigations by this author, the original inhabitants of the Dongma area were Zhuang, and the ruins of the four original Zhuang villages can still be identified. This is very near Vietnam, and two hundred years ago a large number of Han from the interior of China moved to Dongma Laojie to do commerce. Every day the Dongma road

was filled with horse and ox caravans, hundreds of beasts of burden. Merchants from the five provinces of Hunan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangdong, and Guangxi built a “Five Province Society Inn,” which the local people called the “Five Province Temple”. In front of the Five Province Society Inn ran a river, and in a one mile circumference on both sides of the river there grew up a agglomeration of city buildings. This became one of the main trading posts for Chinese and Vietnamese trade during the Qing Dynasty. About one hundred years ago, the population of Han people skyrocketed, and they cut down most of the trees on the “sacred mountains” and in the “sacred forests” of the Zhuang for building material and firewood. The springs every year produced less water, and the Zhuang who before had depended on the rice paddy farming could no longer survive on the produce of the rice paddy. They were forced to abandon their village and move south toward Gabang (嘎邦), Liuhe (六河), Badou (坝斗) and other places. After the river in front of the Five Province Society Inn dried up, the entire settlement had to abandon the town, and today there only remains an ancient “tree eyed” stone arch bridge crossing the dried-up stream bed. On the west end of the bridge are the ruins of the Five Province Society Inn and the market town—a case of environmental destruction brought about by the differences between Zhuang and Han ecological philosophies.

2.2 Societal transformations have brought about environmental destruction and led to villager migrations.

In Yunnan’s Wenshan area, the ancient forests that the early Zhuang ancestors protected have three times suffered catastrophes, caused by societal transformations. The first took place in the 1950s during the “Great Smelting of Steel and Iron” movement. The members of various organizations in every place were forced to cut down ancient forests and use the wood to smelt iron and steel. The second catastrophe was in the 1980s when the land and mountain forests were returned to ownership by the peasant families, who in turn began to fell large numbers of trees. The third catastrophe was in the 1990s when the market economy invaded China and another significant portion of the ancient forest was felled for sale as lumber. These three significant societal transformations were accompanied by the “Destroy the Four Olds” (“破四旧”), “Destroy Superstitions” (“破迷信”), and “Sweep Away Spiritual Pollution” (“扫黄”) political campaigns that forbade the Zhuang people from worshipping “sacred mountains” or “sacred forests.” The result was that the traditional Zhuang philosophy of ecological harmony between people and nature of forest and water, water and rice paddy, paddy and people, people and forest was weakened. Because of the catastrophes befalling the forests, the water sources each year were reduced, and the Zhuang people’s rice paddies became arid “thunder clap fields.” There were some villages that had to relocate due to a shortage of water. This author did research on the mountain behind the village of Shuitouzhai (whose name means “village at the water”) in Guangnan County’s Zhetu District. This mountain, of an elevation of 1823 meters was previously covered with virgin forest and many streams, but today the water has dried up because the forest is gone. On April 8, 2006, the author learned that the Zhuang villagers living in Nanai village under this mountain were forced to relocate to the little river of Fazao because the forest was gone and there was no longer adequate water, this due to these three societal transformations.

2.3. The differences between the ecological mentalities of the Zhuang and the Han have lead to cultural inequalities concerning nature.

Wenshan Prefecture has a population of 3,349,665 people (2004 statistics) divided among eleven different nationalities: Han, Zhuang, Miao, Yi, Yao, Hui, Dai, Bai, Bouyei, Mongolian and Gelao. The Zhuang nationality people in Wenshan have three main groups: Nong, Sha, and Tuliao people, who call themselves Phu Nong, Bu Yei, and Bu Dai, respectively. They are one of the original ethnic groups of Wenshan Prefecture, and have a population of 1,002,641 in Wenshan Prefecture. The Miao are a group who migrated to Wenshan in ancient times; in the first year of the Ming dynasty more than 2000 Miao families from Guizhou settled in Wenshan's Qiubei County, and Wenshan prefecture has a Miao population of 425,448 people. The Yi nationality is one of southwest China's indigenous people groups; according to the history books, the ancestors of today's Wenshan Yi entered the area as early as 1200 years ago in the Tang dynasty and today have a population of 326,007 people within the prefecture. The Yao migrated to Wenshan in successive migrations starting after the Yuan dynasty, and Wenshan Prefecture has a Yao population of 83,051 people. During the Qing dynasty's bureaucratization of native officers ("改土归流"), Han, Mongolian, Hui, Bai, Bouyei and other ethnic groups migrated to Wenshan in large quantities.

According to the Qing dynasty book *Kaihua Government Gazetteer* (《开化府志》), of 1828, at that time more than a century ago, there were only 1184 Zhuang, Miao, Yi, Han and other villages in the area now covered by the counties Wenshan, Maguan, Xichou, Malipo, Yanshan and a bit of Honghe Prefecture. Of these only eighteen were composed entirely of Han people, that is, 1.5% of all the villages. At the end of the Qing dynasty, large numbers of Han began to settle in Wenshan Prefecture, continuing up to the present such that the 2004 Han population of Wenshan is 1,452,463 people. In a not very spacious area of mountains and forests, in only one hundred years of development, the Han population and number of villages now make up more than 40% of the prefecture's total population and villages. The mixing of Han and minority peoples, each having different cultures, psychologies, and ideologies, and not in agreement on the principles of environmental protection, has led to cultural inequalities as concerning nature. In earlier times Xichou County's Xingjie Township only had one settled village, a Zhuang village called Zhebao (者保村). Toward the end of the Qing dynasty, large numbers of Han settled in the area to the point that today this area has ten times as many Han as Zhuang. The Zhuang of Zhebao continue to this day to follow the traditional principles of protecting the sacred mountains, sacred trees and sacred forests, and behind the village of Zhebao, the ancient trees still reach toward the sky, and the virgin forest is still thick. But the mountain that is behind the Han village facing Zhebao, which originally also was covered with virgin forest made up of great ancient trees, is now completely bald, having been clear cut.

3. The Zhuang have established a tradition of harmonious relations between people and nature.

As a result of several millennia of historical development, the Zhuang today continue to pass on their principles for harmonious relations between people and nature. They continue to worship their villages' sacred trees, sacred mountains, and sacred forests. In spite of the societal transformations mentioned above and the invasion of cultural differences from now living mixed with Han people, nonetheless it is still possible to see the ancient forests and the pristine natural lifestyle of Zhuang villages.

3.1. Against the background of Zhuang and Han cultural differences, Zhuang continue to protect the ancient trees.

Within the boundaries of Wenshan Prefecture, most Zhuang villages recognize a great, ancient tree as their village's sacred tree, and use traditional religious ceremonies and worship to protect it. The ancient trees and forests surrounding the villages are designated as sacred trees, sacred mountains and sacred forests, and every year on the sacrifice festivals, the entire village contributes money to buy pigs, chickens and other offerings, and conduct the traditional sacrificial rites. Even in the context of the cultural differences between the Zhuang and the Han, many Zhuang villages are still protecting these ancient trees.

On June 5, 2006, the author and the former prefect Wang Yongkui (王永奎) arrived in the Zhuang village of Mosu (摩索) in Xichou County's Jijie district, to measure this village's "lintel" ("楣者"). According to our measurements, this sacred tree's circumference was 6.88 meters, and the canopy of the tree covered five Chinese acres (*mu*). According to Yunnan Television producer Tan Leshui (谭乐水), "having traveled all over Yunnan filming documentaries, the sacred tree in Xichou's Mosuo village is the largest I've seen in Yunnan." The Zhuang inhabitants of Mosuo village consider this giant tree to be their sacred tree, and they use traditional religious ceremonies and worship to protect it. This tree and the people exist together in harmony; the people of this village maintain an ecological lifestyle and as a result enjoy the unsurpassable beauty of their landscape.

3.2 The sacred forest has been voluntarily protected through the societal transformations of recent history.

The village of A'e New Village (阿峨新寨) in Maguan County's Renhe Township has 102 households, 472 people, of which 94 households are Zhuang, 7 are Gelao and one is Yi. The Zhuang are the original inhabitants of the village. In 1958, when the "Great Smelting of Iron and Steel" campaign began, the local government organized the villagers of several villages in the area to go up into the mountains to cut firewood for smelting iron and steel. Three years of deforestation, from 1958 to 1960, seriously damaged this village's natural lifestyle. When the "Great Smelting of Iron and Steel" campaign was over, the Zhuang villagers continued to seal off the remaining forested mountains near their village as the Great Ancestor Bulokdwo's sacred mountain, the sun's sacred mountain, "Duchu's" sacred forest. Every February, the entire village contributes money to buy pigs and chickens to sacrifice to "Duchu's" sacred forest and the sun's sacred mountain, and every May they make sacrifices to Bulokdwo's sacred mountain. In order to protect their environmental lifestyle and strengthen the powers of the deities, the Zhuang villagers propagate their belief in the existence of their deities. The residents of A'e New Village strictly forbid the indiscriminate chopping of wood, littering, urinating, excreting or spitting in the forest areas where they make their sacrifices and where they believe the deities to be, upon pain of penalty according to traditional ethnic punishments. Today, thanks to the conservation efforts of the villagers, there remain 620 Chinese acres of green mountain forest surrounding the village and the water sources remain adequate and clean, with sufficient water to keep 320 Chinese acres of rice paddy productive.

3.3. In order to achieve harmonious co-existence we must continue to protect the sacred mountains.

The Zhuang ancestors very early understood the delicate balance of “mountain forest—spring water—paddy rice—humanity—mountain forest.” As early as the Western Han dynasty period, the ancestors of the Zhuang formed the border kingdom of Gouding (句町国, within today’s Guangnan County), surrounding Nine Dragon Mountain (九龙山), and using the streams from that mountain they built rice paddies and began the lifestyle we call “Na.”

The elevation of Nine Dragon Mountain is 1,933 meters, and according to legend, it takes its name from nine streams that flowed from it; but Han historians from the Qing dynasty claim the name comes from nine peaks. The Zhuang, the original inhabitants who have lived on the sides of this mountain for many generations, do not call the mountain “Nine Dragon Mountain” for its number of springs, but rather, because the mountain is inhabited by deities, call it “Bojijin, Aojihong,” (Zhuang language) which means “mountain of seven emperors, peak of seven piles of gold.” The Zhuang name can be abbreviated to “Bohong,” “Emperor Mountain.” On April 5, 2006, the author participated in an event when 360 Zhuang village households from eleven villages around this mountain gathered together at the great mountain next to Nabei village to offer sacrifices to “Bohong.” At noon, every male from every household who was capable of climbing the mountain, from three years old to those in their eighties and nineties, climbed to a sacrifice altar on a ridge at an elevation of around 1,800 meters to perform the sacrificial rites. According to the record of mountain sacrifices they maintain, in 1998, 905 people from 303 households contributed money for the mountain sacrifice; in 2006, 1061 people from 360 households donated money. The “Bohong” deity not only protects the lives of the villagers in the eleven villages on Nine Dragon Mountain, he also protects the people of the many other Zhuang villages that depend on the streams from this mountain, such as Nalao, Nading, Naliu, Naha, Nazhou, Nagu, Naxue, Nada. Nine Dragon Mountain is the sacred mountain worshiped by Guangnan County’s more than 300,000 Zhuang people, and on every festival day the entire group of Zhuang uses various methods to make offerings to the mountain. With the population increase, the more and more people are cutting lumber for construction and firewood, and the forest area on Nine Dragon Mountain is decreasing. In order to protect this mountain “Bohong,” sacred to Zhuang people, the Zhuang residents of the eleven villages on the mountains have themselves formed a voluntary team for protecting the forest. They commit themselves, either for a specified term or permanently, to patrol the mountain and protect its natural resources. In 1994, hunters from outside the province came to the mountain and poached twelve monkeys. After the villagers discovered this, they chased away the hunters and day and night protected the mountain. The ethic of loving the mountain, sacrificing to the mountain, and protecting the mountain, which has been passed on from generation to generation among the Zhuang people, has resulted in a Nine Dragon Mountain still covered with lush forest, in which ancient trees still touch the sky.

4. Strategies for sustained development while maintaining peaceful co-existence between people and nature.

Making a comprehensive survey of the patterns and development of the principles of peaceful co-existence between people and nature found in the *Na* culture of the Zhuang is an essential part

of the work of constructing a harmonious socialist society, and it also enlightens us as to how we can development strategies for sustainable development while maintaining peaceful co-existence between people and nature.

4.1.

From ancient times, Zhuang and their ancestors have depended upon nature for survival. In the childhood of humanity, the ancestors created a philosophy of peaceful co-existence between people and nature, and made use of the traditional religion to cause Zhuang people to pass on the traditional ethic of love of the mountains, sacrifices to the mountains, and protection of mountains, which the Zhuang traditional religious activities affirm.

4.2.

The mentality of lifestyle of some of the Han merchants and their descendants who flooded Wenshan during the Qing dynasty of only caring about financial profit and wantonly exploiting natural resources was quite different from that of the minority peoples. That mentality continues to this day and deserves careful attention.

4.3.

Entering the 21st century, as the cultures of the various ethnic groups melt together, and the global market economy invades, the disappearance of the Zhuang traditional culture is accelerating. The peaceful co-existence of people and nature produced by the traditional religious activities does not suit modern development. The local party committees and government have the responsibility to help the Zhuang people extract from the environmentally friendly lifestyle of the traditional religion policies and guidelines for how to live an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

4.4.

As for those villages that still preserve intact the traditional Zhuang culture of harmony with nature, the government should invest funds to appropriate develop cultural products and tourism, the profits of which should be invested in projects to promote lifestyles that protect nature.