Aspects of Bai Culture
Change and Continuity
in a Yunnan Nationality

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The Bai are a minority nationality centered in the Dali Bai Nationality Autonomous Prefecture (DAP). This administrative unit was set up on November 22, 1956, with its capital in Xiaguan (Shi et al., 1984: 401) at the southern tip of Lake Erhai in western Yunnan Province in China. The 1982 census gave the total Bai population at 1,131,124, making them the fourteenth most populous of China’s 55 minority nationalities (Guojia tongji ju, 1984: 91). About 80% of the Bai dwell within the DAP and the others are scattered over various other parts of Yunnan, with a few communities in Sichuan and Guizhou provinces (Shi et al., 1984: 133).1

The Bai are a Tibeto-Burman people. Their ancestors, the “White” (Bai) Man peoples, were a major ethnic grouping and cultural elite in the Nanzhao kingdom, which from the seventh century until 902 dominated the region to China’s southwest—focused on what is today western Yunnan (Backus, 1981: 50-59). C. P. FitzGerald (1941), who carried out a full-scale study of the Bai people in the late 1930s, uses the term Minjia or “common people,” the Han designation at that time. The Bai refer to themselves as “white people” (Ma Yin et al., 1981: 319) and the term Bai, meaning “white,” became their official name in 1956 (Shen et al., 1985: 41). In the west Yunnan region, it is quite common among the minority nationalities for people to call themselves “white” or “black” and has been so since before the Nanzhao era.

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The main aim of this article is to explore the extent of change and continuity in Bai culture made under the People’s Republic of China (PRC). By the term *culture*, I understand the broad anthropological sense that includes not only the arts but most aspects of society as well. Consequently, I have narrowed down this study to three specific areas of Bai culture: religion, marriage, and the performing arts. As the article will make clear, the three are quite closely interrelated; marriage involves religious aspects, and the performing arts function as part of religious ceremony as well as of courtship and marriage. Although it would obviously have been possible to select other facets of culture, the linkages among these three make them an appropriate set for a study such as this.

A secondary aim, related to the first, is to analyze the degree to which the Bai have become “acculturated” or otherwise fused with the Han under the PRC. According to the important definition proposed by Robert Redfield and others in 1935, acculturation “comprehends those phenomena that result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Spicer, 1968: 22). The term is appropriate to designate a long-term process but does not necessarily imply a value judgment. Chinese ethnologists use two terms, both stronger but also suitable for long-term processes. *Tonghua*, or assimilation, occurs when a nationality “loses the national features and particularities it previously possessed, and changes into a component part within another nationality” (Shi Zhengyi et al., 1984: 82). This is a forced process due to exploitation and thus implies a strongly negative value judgment. On the other hand, *ronghe*, or amalgamation, suggests that a plurality of nationalities “naturally become a newly formed nationality” after a “process of historical development” during which they live together, and over a long period “influence and learn from each other” (Shi et al., 1984: 82). This is historically both necessary and desirable. There is no implied compulsion nor any question of the strong simply stamping out the weak.

The significance of this topic lies in its being a case study of a
people who were already well acculturated with the Han before 1949 and in that respect sharply different from many of China's nationalities, especially the Tibetans and Uygurs, but also the Dai of Yunnan and others. The highly developed civilization of Nanzhao and its successor Dali kingdom, consolidated in 937, was subject to great influence from China, though without imitating it slavishly (Chapin, 1944-1945: 181). Moreover, the Bai probably had a "longer and closer relationship" with the Chinese and were "more strongly influenced by contacts with China" than the other main groups of the Nanzhao kingdom (Backus, 1981: 49). The Dali area has been part of China consistently since the conquest of the Dali kingdom by the Mongols in 1253. The early Qing edition of the official Dali gazetteer cites one observer to the effect that Bai customs "were based on those of the Han people" (Li et al., 1694: 12:2a), suggesting substantial similarities at that time.

Even more striking is the account of Francis Hsu, carried out during the Republican period. The West Town, which he made famous in his study Under the Ancestor's Shadow, was in fact a Bai community, but one so amalgamated with the Han that the people "would be seriously offended" if their Chinese origin were denied (1943: 3). Although they spoke Bai language as their mother tongue, they were more like Han Chinese than Bai, even to the extent of binding their women's feet, a practice that has always been quite foreign to the Bai.

At about the same time, FitzGerald (1941: 14-15) found no "strong national feeling" among the Bai, as a result of which many travelers regarded them "as an absorbed people hardly to be distinguished" from the Han Chinese. FitzGerald rejects the suggestion, largely on the grounds of their spoken language. "More than half the vocabulary and the grammar" of Bai are "wholly unlike the Chinese language." While he thus sees the Bai as a people distinct from the Han, he cites numerous examples showing their culture as very similar and subject over the centuries to very great Han influence.2

Clearly, FitzGerald's work has been invaluable as an aid to the study of change and continuity among the Bai because, along

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with Chinese sources, it provides a yardstick from the pre-1949 years against which to make judgments. In this respect, it is greatly preferable to Hsu's, who studied communities actually much more representative of Han than of Bai people. However, for the PRC period, my sources have been overwhelmingly written in Chinese. Historically, the Bai wrote their own language with Chinese characters because they lacked their own orthography. A Bai writing system based on Latin letters was devised in the late 1950s, but even now virtually all Bai writers use Chinese.3

Ethnologists carried out some very useful fieldwork among the minority nationalities in the 1950s, early 1960s, and 1980s, the interruption being due to the Cultural Revolution. In the 1980s there has been an explosion of publication of their findings. Again because of the Cultural Revolution, much of the material collected in the late 1950s, early 1960s, and even later has had to wait until the 1980s to be published. This means that a few of the sources used actually refer to the 1950s and later, although not published until the 1980s, but care has been taken to ensure that the date of reference is clear in all cases. I have supplemented these sources with material derived from a very brief but completely self-managed and unsupervised visit to the DAP in November 1985 and conversations with two Bai cadres at the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing in March 1986.

RELIGION

The Bai people place no emphasis on categorizing religions by name. They are quite happy to accept deities from the local pantheon, or from the Buddhist or Daoist. Shamanistic rites coexist with Buddhist. However, although religious beliefs are vague, their traditional strength is considerable. A Bai veterinary surgeon with whom I chanced to spend several hours in Dali assured me that still today all Bai people “believe in religion” (xinjiao). He was equally insistent that the figure included the members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), despite his very obvious enthusiasm for the current socialist order. The Bai
cadres at the Nationalities Institute in Beijing agreed that religious influence was still very strong, especially among rural women, the middle-aged, and the old, but considered it on the wane in the younger generation.

An important form of religion among the Bai is known in Chinese as chongbai benzhu, “worship of the local tutelary spirits.” It is “based on the ancient Bai traditional nature and ancestor worship” but has absorbed “some elements of Daoist and Buddhist content” (Song, 1985a: 63). Among all China’s minority nationalities, the Bai rank first or nearly so for the prevalence of Mahayana Buddhism (Ma et al., 1984: 430). Daoism and shamanism have exercised an influence.

FitzGerald claims (1941: 146-147) that the Christian missions enjoyed but scant success: “The idea of an exclusive creed, the one true way distinct from all others that are false, is so unfamiliar to their mental habits as to be barely comprehensible.” Although the missionaries did establish a few churches, almost all were destroyed or taken over for other purposes after their departure, and there are hardly any Bai Christians today.4

The main religions that derive from the Bai themselves, rather than being introductions from other nationalities, are the folk cults of the “local tutelary spirits.” There is an enormous variety of these deities, and although most are specific to a single village, some are found more widely (Zhang and Zhang, 1985: 73). In the villages of Dali County, which lies some 15 kilometers north of Xiaguan, there are 60 local tutelary spirits—39 male and 21 female (Du et al., 1983: 67). An important example is the Chinese General Li Mi, who led an unsuccessful Tang invasion of Nanzhao in 754 (Backus, 1981: 75-76) and was killed near Xiaguan. At that time the capital lay between the present-day Xiaguan and Dali. The local people elevated their defeated enemy to the status of a tutelary spirit “to console his departed spirit” (Song, 1985a: 63), and his image may be found in some village temples even now.

These local tutelary spirits fall into five main categories. There are spirits who created the world, those associated with nature worship, such as earth, sun, moon, river, or mountain spirits
(Song, 1985c: 296); national heroes or good and notable people, "some of them heroic persons who eliminated evils for the people" (Ma, 1986: 38); "personalities of the ruling classes" like princes of the Nanzhao and Dali periods; and deities introduced from Buddhism. Ancestors may be distributed across most of these various categories. There is a legend associated with almost all local tutelary spirits. They are highly anthropomorphic and sometimes a love relationship exists between male and female local gods. Many have spouses and children, friends, or siblings (Zhang and Zhang, 1985: 73).

Fish and conches are prominent among the local tutelary spirits associated with nature worship. Temples dedicated to fish or conch spirits are common and the manifestations of worship accorded them are numerous in Bai society. Even in the 1980s, many Bai villages on the banks of the Erhai Lake bury live fish and conches in earthenware jars together with their dead. A contemporary Bai scholar suggests that this practice springs from the hope and belief that the water spirits can protect and grant peace to the dead relation (Zhang, 1981: 77).

The image of the local tutelary spirit resides in the temple. As everywhere in China, most temples were either totally demolished or partly damaged, or their images destroyed, during the Cultural Revolution, but most have now been restored and new ones built, in some cases at considerable government expense. The Bai cadres of the Nationalities Institute told me that there were actually more temples now than before the Cultural Revolution. In Dali County, I was assured by several local people that every village now had its own temple and in a few cases was able to check that this was true. In Zhoucheng, several kilometers north of the county town, there is a small temple at the top of the village, which is itself situated on the side of a hill. The main hall contains several images and I was informed by a group of villagers that it was still functioning for religious purposes. However, the large courtyard in front of the main hall was being used to sunbake rice. In another nearby village the temple was in use, with some old women worshipping, but the temple was not in good repair, and there was no sign of an active religious life. On a high hill
prominently overlooking Xiaguan is a large temple formerly dedicated to Li Mi, but as of November 1985, most of it had fallen into disrepair and been taken over as citizens' houses, while the main halls, standing proudly right on top of the hill, had become the local CCP headquarters.

Once or several times a year there is, in every village, a ceremony of sacrifice to the local god at the temple. The time is the feast day of the god, which varies according to the individual. According to data collected about 1960, the people kill a pig, chicken, or goat for sacrifice and process to the temple; after the ceremony there are celebrations and rejoicing, which may go on for three days (Wang et al., 1983: 207). These functions are called "temple gatherings" (miaohui).

The sacrifices involved in the temple gatherings can be very expensive. In 1949, one village of 15 families in Eryuan County, central DAP, spent over one-fifth of its total income on sacrifices (Wang et al., 1983: 210). Since 1949, the CCP has applied pressure to reduce the amount of the sacrifices and in the Cultural Revolution tried to prevent them altogether. While they have resumed in the 1980s, the cost of the sacrifices is generally very small by comparison with the pre-1949 period.

A group of specialists runs the affairs of the Bai religions of the local tutelary spirits. They may be male or female, but the latter are the great majority. They are semiprofessionals only, retaining their normal jobs as peasants or housewives. Their training includes dancing and singing (Yang Kai, 1985: 83).

The reason for this is that one of the main functions of these specialists is to perform dances during religious processions and temple gatherings. The females may lead off the procession waving a handkerchief in a dancing motion or "interchange dancing and singing with the masses worshipping the local tutelary spirit" (Song, 1985c: 296). In the past, the specialists also functioned as doctors—for instance, by advising a sick person wherein he or she had offended the local tutelary spirit and how amends could be made to win a cure. At least in Heqing County, the fee was a bowl of rice, an egg, and some money (Yang Kai, 1985: 84). Another possibility was "to dance out the ghost," that
is, to exorcise, through a religious dance, a malevolent spirit that was causing illness (FitzGerald, 1941: 128-129).

The number and power of these specialists have declined greatly since 1949. The weakening of religious activity and the incomparably greater prevalence of modern medicine have reduced the social need for them. Dong Shaoyu (1985: 97) claims to have found none at all from explorations on religion in Bai communities in two communes near Kunming. On the other hand, Yang Kai (1985: 86) concluded from his work in Heqing County that they still had a social base and could survive for some time yet.

Buddhism appears to have begun “displacing the earlier native religious orientation” of the Nanzhao kingdom in the first half of the ninth century (Backus, 1981: 129). The famous Qianxun Pagoda, the tallest of a trio of splendid pagodas that were once part of the Buddhist Chongsheng Temple, dates from 836 A.D. or about then (Qiu, 1985: 128-129). These three are among several ancient Buddhist pagodas that still dot the foot of Mt. Cangshan from Dali to Xiaguan.

Buddhism is often known among the Bai as the Doctrine of the Acārya (Achili) (Zhang, 1985: 59). The term acārya means “master” or “guide,” and the function is still today a determining feature of Bai Buddhism. These masters are mostly ordinary peasants who take on religious work on a semiprofessional basis. They may marry and their position often becomes hereditary. Zhang Xu (1985: 59) records the case of a Dong family in Dali County, members of which had been masters for 43 generations—since the time of the Dali kingdom.

From the time of the Kangxi emperor (1662-1723), these masters were compelled to take on a religious name and secure formal recognition. However, the great majority retained their influence not through government sponsorship but through popular custom. On their situation under the PRC, Zhang Xu writes (1985: 61):

Nowadays there are no longer many achili with legal status. As for the informal achili, they can be found everywhere in the villages,
but the trend is for them to decline. Of course their religious organizations will not last long. But nobody should underestimate the poison of their ideas. A great deal of cultural education work over a long period will be necessary before the backward peasants can be liberated from the influence of the Achili Doctrine.

It comes as no surprise that the value judgment should be so negative. But Zhang’s prediction is uncompromising and suggests that the Bai people still take a great deal of notice of the informal Buddhist masters.

One of the tasks of the acarya is to manage pious women who form societies “which take a vow of partial or total abstinence from meat and wine” (FitzGerald, 1941: 114). The women also chant scriptures or repeat the names of Amida or Guanyin before the altars in the temples. Zhang Xu (1985: 60) recalls that his grandmother, who died in 1922, was a “scriptures mother” (jingmu) in one of these societies and that she or his grandfather would offer incense twice a day at the family altar. “If I was beside her, my grandmother would get me to kneel down with her and say ‘Amida.’” Perhaps more interesting, he relates that in 1976, during a recuperative visit to his old home, he saw his eldest brother’s wife get her five-year-old grandson to perform the same ritual. Considering that the post-Cultural Revolution religious revival did not begin until several years later, the story suggests considerable tenacity in the domestic Buddhist practices of the Bai.

On the other hand, public and formal Buddhism as practiced by monks and others in temples has weakened greatly under the PRC. The number of monks and nuns is far smaller now than it was before 1949. FitzGerald writes (1941: 112-113) that the Guanyin tang just south of the Dali county town was “the principal Buddhist temple in the district” in the late 1930s. Under the CCP, it became a hospital and then a home for the aged. I was able to visit this temple in November 1985 and found that the beautiful architecture and other art were in excellent repair. I was assured by several people I met there that the temple was still functioning as such. However, there was no sign of any monks.
The main hall was open and a few people came to worship. Inside the hall, several old Bai women were having a very plain vegetarian dinner. While such behavior would never have been considered irreverent among the Bai, I suspect strongly that the compound's function as a home for the aged far outweighs that as a temple in importance.

The Guanyin Festival, also called March Market (Sanyue jie) Festival, has for centuries been the Bai people's main festival. Its origin is Buddhist and the legend is that, on the fifteenth of the third month of a year in the mid-seventh century, Guanyin visited the foot of Mt. Cangshan west of where Dali town now stands and there conquered an evil spirit (Ma et al., 1984: 460-461; Shao, 1986: 388). The festival commemorates the event; its main site is still just west of Dali town and the day is the fifteenth of the third lunar month, though nowadays it extends for a week or 10 days to the twenty-fifth (Shen et al., 1985: 340).

Traditionally, people, especially women, burn incense and perform other religious duties as part of the festival, but it has always been also an occasion for commerce and merriment. The sixteenth-century Bai writer Li Yuanyang wrote that the day was marked by "the trading of commodities from every province," adding that "these markets had not changed" since the mid-seventh century (Shen et al., 1985: 340; Ma et al., 1984: 461). The range of goods traded was wide and included mules, medicines, tea, cotton, silk and woolen fabrics, and porcelain, copper, and tin objects (Shao, 1986: 389). Still today, commercial representatives come from Sichuan, Henan, Hebei, Shanxi, and Guizhou and trading is brisker than ever. In addition, the March Market Festival features artistic and sporting programs, such as Bai drama, song and dance, and horse racing (Shen et al., 1985: 341-342). It is an opportunity for courting. "Quite a few young men and women also agree to meet here to talk of love, and frequently become a family" (Ma et al., 1984: 464).

Under the PRC, the religious activities associated with the March Market Festival have weakened, while commerce and merriment have strengthened. The lengthening of the festival period suggests that the scale has grown considerably. But the
main activities, the atmosphere prevailing in the festival, do not appear to have changed essentially from the old days.

The last religion to discuss is Daoism. According to Song Enchang (1985c: 298-299), the main impact of Daoism on Bai religion has been the adoption of Daoist deities as "local tutelary spirits" and the absorption of Daoist elements into Bai folk beliefs. There were formerly temples to Wenchang or other Daoist gods in almost all Bai villages. Although in smaller numbers, these still function today.

One phenomenon associated specifically with Bai Daoism is associations dedicated to the dissemination of the Daoist classics. Probably introduced from Han areas such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang during the Ming dynasty, these associations were at one time "mostly used and controlled by feudal landlords and bureaucrats" (Song, 1985b: 120). Their members worshipped Daoist deities such as Wenchang and the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang) and also helped organize sacrifices to the Bai local tutelary spirits (Song, 1985c: 299). In 1983, Song Enchang carried out fieldwork in parts of Dali county to find out the general state of Daoism there and found that, despite the disappearance of the feudal classes, the Daoist associations were still quite widespread in the villages, with formal administrative structures and regular religious activities (1985b: 119-121).

**MARRIAGE, WOMEN**

Among China's minority nationalities religion has always assumed a very high priority and is consequently a major criterion by which to test social continuity and change. Another one, no less significant, is marriage.

Among the Bai an important prelude to marriage is courtship. One recent and major study of the marriage practices of Yunnan's minority nationalities states that "the love life of Bai nationality young people is comparatively free. They ordinarily use the opportunities that labour, village fairs, festival day activities, and temple gatherings afford to talk of love" (Yang et al., 1983: 32).
As with other Yunnan nationalities, a main traditional method of courting is through rural folk songs termed *mountain songs* (*shan'ge*) (see Mackerras, 1984: 195, 198). Among the Bai, mountain songs are not allowed at home, but the sound of a sung courting dialogue between a man and woman is a common one in the fields or mountains (Yang et al., 1983: 32). Temple gatherings are still frequent among the Bai, especially from the first lunar month to the busy season of the spring plowing. The occasions are not only religious but social, with families eating together in tents outside the temple, and otherwise amusing themselves. Young people “look for counterparts,” that is, members of the opposite sex, “and sing mountain songs in dialogue” (Yang et al., 1983: 33).

Opportunities for courtship are thus quite frequent among the Bai. Not only are there many special occasions, like festivals and temple gatherings, but even ordinary working days may bring the chance to meet in the fields or elsewhere. Nevertheless, forced arranged marriages were still the nearly universal practice in the past, a result of Han Confucian influence. FitzGerald writes that almost no Bai marriage “is arranged by the free choice of the bride and groom . . . and consequently affection and companionship, though these may happily come after marriage, are not pre-determining reasons for a marriage” (1941: 150-151). People were young when engaged, sometimes being betrothed when still in the womb and normally between the ages of four and fifteen. Matchmakers took a leading role in formulating engagements; one source claims, quite credibly, that the parents were “often taken in by the honeyed words of the matchmakers” and that the young people themselves hated them (Yang et al., 1983: 35-36). The boy’s family sent regular presents to the girl’s until the marriage. For the flow to cease or the gifts to be refused meant breakoff of the engagement (Du et al., 1983: 63).

Are marriages still arranged among the Bai? The official account is that “after liberation the feudal clan system was eliminated and freedom of marriage implemented” (Ma et al., 1981: 324). However, a thorough survey of Bai culture and society carried out from 1959 to 1962 found that marriages were still “mainly arranged by parents” and that young people “who flout
their parents’ wishes will be considered unfilial and suffer punishment from the clan” (Wang et al., 1983: 193). People were engaged when still young—very many at 7 or 8, and in a few cases, even as newborns. Admittedly, the years 1959 to 1962 were bad ones that witnessed traditional revivals everywhere in China, but were also after the establishment of the DAP. A more recent but less thoroughly researched account says “many marriages are arranged by parents through the aid of matchmakers in all [Bai] areas” (Du et al., 1983: 63).

The Bai cadres at the Nationalities Institute in Beijing told me of four categories of marriage in the 1980s. The most frequent is marriages in which the parents choose the spouse and arrange for a matchmaker to introduce the couple unless they are already friends, but if either partner shows reluctance at any stage, the match is automatically called off. Another system, gaining popularity in the towns but still rare in the countryside, is for the couple to agree on marriage themselves and then seek the approval of their parents, who enjoy the right of veto. The third and fourth categories are forced arranged marriages carried out against the wishes of either spouse, and unions that take place in the teeth of opposition from either partner's parents. Both types, the Bai cadres claimed, were very rare nowadays. They also said child betrothals were all but extinct and those of infants totally so.

The above accounts suggest that, despite the continuing dominant role of parents in deciding the marriage partner of their children, the latter enjoy more freedom of choice, and especially of veto, now than was the case in the past. The four categories of marriage are reasonable ones, but the dividing lines between them may not always be clear. Thus marriages that take place despite opposition either from parents or one of the partners may in fact result from a process of persuasion among the various concerned parties, and the parents are likely to be in a stronger position to get their way than their children. This is why the first of the four categories may not be as dominant over the third as it appears. One irony is that the opportunities for free courtship that have always been part of Bai culture have contributed so little to the free choice of marriage partners. This comment holds true both
for the past before liberation and for the years since the Cultural Revolution, during the 10 years of which the social customs favoring free courtship were suppressed. Despite the revival of free courtship and the advances of recent years, it will clearly be a very long time before the ideal is reached by which only marriage partners themselves decide on their spouse.

The days of the weddings themselves were formerly chosen by horoscope. FitzGerald writes (1941: 160) that the calendar marked days appropriate to weddings, as a result of which several weddings quite often happened in the same village or neighborhood on the same day. The Bai cadres of the Nationalities Institute told me that the horoscope is still the normal way to decide the wedding day in the villages, though this is losing ground in the towns. They added that the winter months of the old lunar calendar are those most favored for weddings. While in the DAP, I briefly attended two weddings and saw four bridal processions on the same day in villages just north of Dali county town, but saw no sign of weddings on any other day. The concentration on a single day is readily explainable by the continued use of the horoscope, and my visit happened to fall in a winter month.

The traditional practice is for the bridegroom to collect the bride, whose family should ritually show her their love by reluctance to open the door to him. Led by a player of the double-reeded suona,\(^7\) he takes her by sedan chair to his family, where a bridal chamber and feast have been prepared. According to FitzGerald (1941: 162), richer families maintained the festivities for three days, beginning a day before the marriage and continuing to the end of the day after the reception of the bride. Nowadays, weddings last no more than a single day.

At those weddings I saw, the bride wore a blouse, red trousers, and dark glasses, somewhat different from the ordinary female Bai garb and a little more elaborate, while the groom was indistinguishable from the male guests except for a floral ring around his neck. Wedding dress today is very much simpler than in the past. A suona player led off the procession with the bridal sedan chair not far behind, followed by a box containing the
worldly possessions of the bride. In one instance the chair-bearers were resting by the road chatting with the couple, the suona player, and others. This contrasts with past customs when, according to FitzGerald (1941: 160), the sedan chair was closed to prevent the bearers from seeing the face of another man’s bride, but in fact it is still taboo for the bride to show her eyes, which is why she wears dark glasses. During the feast, a fine spread with plenty of food, tea, and cigarettes, the couple sat in their bridal chamber and opened a wooden window to receive the good wishes of the guests, but otherwise remained invisible. Weddings nowadays appear to bear the strong imprint of Bai tradition, itself much influenced by the Han, but to lack the ornateness and formalism of at least those of the rich of the past.8

Usually, it is the woman who marries into her husband’s family. However, if a couple has an only daughter, it may invite a prospective son-in-law to join the family, in which case he adopts his wife’s surname permanently and can obtain inheritance rights over his new family’s property (Wang et al., 1983: 193; Ma, 1986: 38). If a woman is the eldest child and has brothers but no sister, she can return to her own family, with her new husband, a week after the wedding and stay there until her brothers have married and her responsibility toward her old parents is complete, after which the couple return to the husband’s family. These three traditional patterns, writes a recent study, “have persisted right till the present” (Yang et al., 1983: 37).

If the one-child-per-couple policy becomes universal among the Bai, the third pattern will decline sharply, while competition among families over whether to follow the first or second will become intense. At present, autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties may decide on their own population policies. In the 1980s, it is policy in the DAP that, in the towns, everybody, whether Han or minority nationality, is restricted to one child only; Bai peasants may have two children but for a third must pay a fine, varying from place to place, but about ¥120. Signs and posters in Dali and Xiaguan towns advocating family planning and single children are numerous. On the other hand, in those several villages I visited near Dali county town, the number of
children under five was noticeably larger than in other Han rural areas in Yunnan and Sichuan that I saw at about the same time. Clearly, many peasants are both able and willing to pay the fine for the third child and in some cases it may not even be enforced. Eventually the CCP may start pressing seriously for the rural Bai people to introduce the one-child-per-couple policy, but a long time will elapse before it is successful or effective enough to influence marriage practices.

Among the Bai, the dominant marriage system has always been one man, one wife. In the past, rich men occasionally took a concubine, almost never more than one, and only under very special circumstances. The main one was the wife's failure to bear a child (FitzGerald, 1941: 164) or, among a very few communities, her producing only daughters but no son. Material collected in the early 1960s shows that concubinage still survived at that time (Wang et al., 1983: 191), but the disappearance of the rich classes in the 1950s has probably led to its virtual extinction by the 1980s.

Although women traditionally occupied a lower social status than men, it was better than that of their Han sisters. FitzGerald says (1941: 157) of the peasant girls that they showed "a self confidence and assurance rarely found in the women of Eastern countries." A Chinese source claims that "in some middle and poor peasant families women occupied an important position in economic life and consequently their power in the family was quite great. In a few families where the men were incapable, women were the heads" (Wang et al., 1983: 192). The material on concubinage suggests less indignity for women and a slighter obsession with sons, as against daughters, than among the Han.

In some respects, Han women have overtaken those of the Bai since the 1950s, despite advance among both nationalities. One example is entry into public administration. In the entire country, which was 93.3% Han according to the 1982 census, women made up 26% of cadres in 1983 (China Daily, March 7, 1983: 1). In 1981, there was a total of 20,950 cadres of the Bai nationality, of whom 3,483 were women (Du et al., 1983: 73), which is only 16.6%. On the other hand, accounts of female infanticide and ill-treatment of women who fail to bear sons have been found recently among the Han, but not the Bai.
One area of great relevance to the status of the female sex, especially for the future, is education. In the period before 1949, primary schooling was widespread though nowhere near universal for boys, but for girls mainly restricted to daughters in families without any sons. An official statistic claims that in 1981 some 90% of children of the relevant age group in the DAP attended primary school (Du et al., 1983: 77). The Bai cadres at the Nationalities Institute in Beijing told me that education is more or less universal up to the end of fourth grade of primary school, and in the towns for fifth and sixth grades and into high school as well. However, in the villages they acknowledged that many girls leave school at the end of fourth grade of primary to work in the fields or elsewhere, and the balance between boys and girls becomes more and more unequal in the rest of primary and in high school. Thus boys are continuing to grow up better or even much better educated than their sisters.

A fair conclusion would probably be that, while Bai women, like their menfolk, have benefited greatly from the very substantial rise in recent years in the standard of living as well as in educational and health levels, their social status in relation to men has changed much less dramatically. Though women may be less subordinate to men than before 1949, nothing approaching equality of the sexes is on the horizon.

**THE PERFORMING ARTS**

Like China’s other nationalities, Bai society has always been rather closely integrated. So it is natural to find a tight relationship between marriage, religion, and the performing arts. Illustrative examples have already been mentioned: the inclusion of song and dance at temple gatherings as part of religious celebrations, and the suona player’s leading the bridal procession.

There are four main traditional forms of performing arts among the Bai. These are folk songs, song and dance, storytelling, and drama.

The main genre of folk song among the Bai is termed in Chinese Baiqu or Baizu diao, which means “Bai tunes.” It is exclusive to
the Bai nationality and is sung in the Bai language. Its poetical structure in the Dali region is stanzas of eight lines, the first with three syllables, followed by seven, seven, five, seven, seven, seven, and five (Zhang et al., 1983: 238-239). Although this pattern is also the most common in Bai areas as a whole, counties other than Dali display more structural variety (Yin, 1981: 56). A recently published Chinese-language history of Bai literature divides the content of “Bai tunes” folk songs into several categories, including complaints against social injustice and the Chinese-imposed political system, “protests against the feudal marriage system and morality,” love, and labor (Zhang et al., 1983: 239-253). Like all Bai culture, they are much influenced by the Han, and many Bai people who know no Chinese language can sing Han folk songs, but a contemporary Bai writer insists that “Bai tunes” songs are quite distinctive in their words, music, and general style (Yin, 1981: 54).

Other genres of folk song include “dialogue mountain songs” (duikou shan’ge), which have already been mentioned as courtship songs. They were originally Han imports and are usually in Chinese. The structure is not firm, but most poetic lines contain seven characters (Zhang et al., 1983: 265-274). The “little tunes” (xiaodiao), which in China as a whole are the most numerous folk songs (Mackerras, 1984: 195), are found in areas where Bai and Han people live together. Their existence in Bai areas is the direct result of Han influence. They are still more popular among the Han than the Bai, and use Chinese (Zhang et al., 1983: 275). In the Dali and Dengchuan areas, the fan’ge (or fandiao) are folk songs of social protest, a normal structure being a stanza of four lines, each with seven characters (Yang, 1980: 68).

The main song-and-dance genre of the Bai is Raosanling. There are many legends explaining the genre’s origin and the question remains obscure. One recent and plausible suggestion is that its “earliest origin lies in the she primitive clan society” (Li, 1981: 40), the she being defined as “places where the clan members often held various different kinds of meetings” (Li, 1981: 39). In this interpretation the origins of Raosanling go back far earlier than the Nanzhao period (Li, 1981: 38). In more recent times, this
song-and-dance genre was performed at festive entertainment gatherings that took place just before the busy season of the spring plowing began and functioned as a petition to the gods for good rains and harvests and a prosperous year (Yunnan, 1985: 209). Both men and women, old and young were active in what were, in effect, mass dances “in which there were no boundaries between performers and onlookers” (Zhang et al., 1983: 336) and as many as several thousand people took part. The songs were usually the Baiqu, the instruments dizi (side-blown flute) or suona. The main dance action consisted in the performers’ forming themselves into small groups with two people holding flower-bedecked tree branches with which they beat the ground (Qu, 1964: 47-48).

The storytelling genre prevalent among the Bai is called Daben qu, which means “long tunes.” Its origin is obscure but is certainly ancient. The main poetic structure is of stanzas of four lines, three-sevens, one-five, that is with seven, seven, seven, and five syllables, rather like the Baiqu folk songs. Literary folk songs survive from as early as the tenth century with the same structure (see Xu, 1978: 388). Performance is by one singer, and one player of the plucked three-stringed sanxian. Bai folk songs, especially Baiqu, are the main musical source. Apart from song, there is also speech, which can be in dialogue. The language is solidly Bai in the spoken sections, but Chinese or a mixture of both languages is sung. The traditional repertoire included “36 major and 72 minor items” (Qu, 1964: 55), but most were drawn from Han folk legends or historical stories, only the minority from the Bai tradition (Yunnan, 1985: 148). Buddhist themes are common, and the influence of Buddhist tunes evident in the music (Li, 1982: 6). The main occasions for Daben qu items were festival days or temple gatherings and there was a group of highly skilled professionals or semi-professionals who acted as performers. However, pure amateurs also sometimes entertained their friends or families during rest periods in the fields or elsewhere (Zhang et al., 1983: 315).

Possibly the most advanced form of the performing arts is drama. Among the Bai the traditional drama is called Chuichui
qiang (literally “blow tunes”). Chuichui qiang belongs to the system of Han regional theater called Yiyang qiang, and is thus part of the large array of local styles of Chinese dramas. Its date of origin is unclear. The contemporary Han scholar Qu Liuyi states (1964: 50) that when the Ming troops entered Dali in 1382, they brought with them their own entertainment that “fused with the Bai nationality and folk arts” to form Chuichui qiang. However, there is no firm evidence that any Yiyang qiang styles were heard in Yunnan so early; and so, although the Bai may well have had a form of drama by the early Ming, it is unlikely to have been Chuichui qiang. Yang Ming, a Bai who has made an immense contribution to scholarship on, and the theory and practice of, Bai drama, has retreated from an earlier position that the history of Chuichui qiang may go back 500 years (cited in Zhang et al., 1983: 326). His contribution on Baiju in the comprehensive Chinese theater encyclopedia (Yang, 1983: 5) claims only that Chuichui qiang “has an origin relationship with Ming dynasty Yiyang qiang.” Surviving handwritten scripts, makeup collections, and other materials prove that Chuichui qiang had become popular among the Bai by the Qianlong era (1736-1795) and “its most thriving years were the Guangxu period,” which ran from 1875 to 1908.

In many ways, Chuichui qiang was traditionally very similar to a Han drama style. The character-types were divided into sheng (male), dan (female), jing (painted face), and chou (clown). The costumes, properties, and makeup were similar to Han Chinese drama forms, including colored makeup worn by jing and other performers (Yunnan, 1985: 130). The song sections were accompanied only by percussion instruments, just as in Yiyang qiang drama. Many of the actors’ movements were highly stylized. The Chinese language was used in many items.

There were, however, strong Bai characteristics in Chuichui qiang. Most dramas were performed in the Bai language. The main metrical structure of the stanzas was the familiar three-sevens, one-five over four lines (Wang, 1985: 47). There was a stronger emphasis on dance than in Han drama styles and one source (Wang et al., 1983: 217) claims that Chuichui qiang was
“based on the folk song and dance of the Bai nationality.” The 36 main tunes were divided in two main ways. One was according to the role-category that sings the particular melody, the other according to the emotion or atmosphere it intended to convey: heroism, sadness, and so on (Zhang et al., 1983: 328-331). The main nonpercussion accompanying instrument was the suona, used in the instrumental passages that were played either as a prelude to a song or as an interlude between songs (Trapido et al., 1985: 55, 361); while the suona is a Han instrument, it does not dominate the orchestras of Han-style music.

In the Han Chinese regional theater, most items perform stories that are more or less nationwide, with only a few being based on local stories. The same was so of Chuichui qiang. In other words, the majority followed Han legends, love stories, or excerpts from history, but there were also some that were based on Bai stories. As of 1985, “five or six old artists could remember some 300 items, of which 80 had already been written down” (Yunnan, 1985: 128).

Another style of drama found in the DAP is Yunnan opera (Dianju), the largest in scale of the styles of Yunnan province. It dates from about the seventeenth century (Trapido et al., 1985: 230) but was not introduced to Dali until later and did not become widely popular there until the end of the Qing period. It exercised considerable influence over the Chuichui qiang, especially in stage arts such as costuming, movement, and properties (Zhang et al., 1983: 339) and this accounts, at least in part, for the similarities between the Han and Bai drama traditions.

Chuichui qiang, and later Yunnan drama, were closely related to society. At least in Heqing County, the architecture of the temples to the local tutelary spirits included a stage (Zhang et al., 1985: 80). FitzGerald writes (1941: 113) that just outside the gate of the great Buddhist temple, the Guanyin tang, was “a large stage with dressing rooms for the performance of theatricals.” The performances were free and the crowd watched from the market square. The drama was one of the reasons why so many people attended the Festival of Guanyin. He adds that “almost every temple of any size has such a stage with an open air auditorium.”
No matter whether the religion of the local tutelary spirits, Buddhism, or Daoism, drama was often a key part of temple festivities, celebrations, or gatherings.

Virtually all these forms and the practices associated with them still survive in the DAP under the PRC. In Zhoucheng, not far north of Dali county town, I saw at the bottom of the village, and in front of its main square, a large and quite high stage in good repair. At the time there were numerous vendors in the square, but it could easily hold 2,000 people for a theater performance, although two large and magnificent trees would impede the view of some of them as well as providing shade or shelter for many more. The local vendors and some purchasers were unanimous that performances were still given on the stage several times a year on festival days and were popular with the people. They said there was an amateur folk drama company in the village and others periodically came into the village to perform on this stage for the masses. One source (Yang et al., 1983: 33) claims that still at temple gatherings young people court during amateur drama performances. A Bai writer reports that in a village he explored on the banks of the Erhai Lake near Dali town, the villagers once a year spend all night performing Raosanling together as part of their sacrifices to the conch spirit; their belief is that the spirit can provide good luck, a prosperous harvest, and speedy recovery to the sick (Zhang, 1981: 76).

Despite the continuities that such practices imply, there have also been deep changes in the Bai performing arts since 1949. Some of them relate to form and content, others to social context.

Several new Han forms have been introduced among the Bai, in particular the spoken drama (huaju) and song-drama (geju). Initially all items of these two forms were Han compositions, such as the song-drama The White-haired Girl (Baimao nu). Although Bai people did later write some works in the two forms about their own contemporary society and even have them performed in both the towns and villages of the DAP, neither the spoken drama nor the song-drama has been particularly successful or has caught the imagination of the Bai.
The traditional forms have also undergone change. Raosanling and Daben qu items are performed not only in their old context but also on the stage of a theater. Folk songs and dances are given by professionals wearing elaborate costumes on a theater stage that includes scenery at the back and a curtain at the front. Daben qu has tended to become like small-scale drama. The music has been changed and developed through reform of the tunes and addition of both wind and string instruments (Qu, 1964: 57). There are more performers in individual items and dance postures have become more numerous.

Chuichui qiang was similarly developed and reformed. In 1958, the professional DAP Cultural Work Team (Wengong tuan) was set up, and arranged small-scale items of a form it termed Baiju, or Bai Drama, which combined the music of the Daben qu and Chuichui qiang and is in some ways a reformed and updated version of Chuichui qiang. Some newly arranged Chuichui qiang or Daben qu items were simply retermed Bai dramas (Zhang et al., 1983: 547). The new form uses Bai language much less than the old and "adopts a 'Bai-read' (Baidu) Chinese as the basic stage language" (Wang, 1985: 47). The dance element of Chuichui qiang was considerably strengthened, and the role-categories, sheng, dan, and so on, abolished. The reformers also changed the music by adding new instruments, some of them Western, to the accompanying orchestra and writing new tunes in the old style.

In the content, reform has taken two directions. The first is the addition of socialist propaganda to all forms of the performing arts. So the staged folk songs and Raosanling items frequently extol the new order of the CCP and its policies at any particular time. During the Cultural Revolution, the praise of Chairman Mao and his current line provided themes to the virtual exclusion of any other. However, in the 1980s direct propaganda in praise of the CCP and contemporary life has tended to shrink sharply in importance and was not particularly evident in a performance of folk songs, dances, and a drama scene I saw in Xiaguan in November 1985. The same trend is evident everywhere in the PRC.
The other direction of content, except during the Cultural Revolution, is a stronger emphasis on themes specific to the Bai nationality in the Daben qu and Bai drama forms. Whereas most items before 1949 concerned Han stories, there has been a concerted attempt to write new works about life among the Bai, the particular problems of the Bai and the nationality's history. Xue Ziyan, a Han cadre in the DAP Bureau of Culture, told me that about six Bai dramas are written every year, most of them about the Bai. One such, called *Treaty Meeting on the Cangshan* (Cangshan huimeng), he had just recently written himself in conjunction with two other authors, one Bai, one Naxi. The drama is set in the eighth century in the capital of the Nanzhao kingdom (Xue et al., 1985: 28). The basic events dramatized were historical and saw the Nanzhao kingdom realign itself away from Tibet and toward loyalty to the Tang (Backus, 1981: 94-98). The major positive characters are a Nanzhao princess and an ambassador of the Tang dynasty who is trying to arrange a peace treaty with the Nanzhao kingdom. Despite false accusations against him of murder, the drama ends with the successful conclusion of the treaty and a mass song and dance of rejoicing (Xue et al., 1985: 42). The particular historical setting makes this a highly political drama with a strong advocacy of “unity of the nationalities” or, more specifically, the loyalty of each of the minorities to the Han.

The best known of the recent Bai dramas is *The Husband-Gazing Cloud* (*Wangfu yun*), arranged by Yang Ming and others and first performed in 1980. It won a national prize for minority nationality literature in 1981 and for drama in 1982 (Li, 1983: 412). It is based on an ancient Bai legend and concerns the Nanzhao princess Afeng who marries, against her father’s wishes, a hunter from Mt. Cangshan overlooking Dali. The king has him changed into a stone conch and exiled into the Erhai Lake, while she dies in anger and becomes a cloud on top of Mt. Cangshan. Their tragic fate makes for good propaganda on behalf of free marriage without parental interference. The scene where the couple decide to marry, which I saw in Xiaguan, is entitled “Engagement” (*Dingqing*) and features a Raosanling song and dance with a dialogue courting folk song of the traditional kind
but reformed for the stage. There was little in either the stage arts or music to remind one of a traditional Han drama, but many resonances of the professionalized song-and-dance performances of the minority nationalities familiar in many parts of the PRC.

The DAP Bai Troupe (*Baiju tuan*) that performed this item was formally set up in 1961 from the earlier DAP Cultural Work Team and is the only state-run company to specialize in Bai drama. Xue Ziyun informed me that, of its 64 members, 41 (or nearly two-thirds) are Bai, two are Hui, the others Han. All the cadres, including the leader and deputy leaders, are Bai. There are 13 other professional companies in the DAP, state-run song-and-dance and Yunnan drama troupes, 10 “cultural work” companies, some of which perform drama, and all song and dance, music, and balladry, and a “collectively owned” (*jiti souyouzhi*) acrobatics troupe.

Training in the Bai Drama Troupe comes mostly from old artists recruited originally from the Chuichui qiang companies of the old days. There are an arts institute and drama school in Kunming that help train dancers, musicians, actors, and actresses for the DAP, but neither yet has a section for Bai drama. The troupes themselves choose their own recruits through an examination of those who answer advertisements. The overwhelmingly important criterion is artistic skill, with little emphasis on politics. Some recruits for all professional companies come from the ranks of the amateurs.

Xue Ziyun told me that there were about 100 amateur troupes in the DAP, some with about 10 members, most with about 30 to 40. The members are peasants and receive no remuneration for their work. Entry to their performances is free. Some specialize in drama, but most give their main or entire attention to simpler art-forms such as songs, dances, or Daben qu balladry. While some are entirely traditional in their performances, the majority adhere more closely to the reformed style and form of the professionals and include both traditional and contemporary content in their repertoires.

The overall conclusion to follow from this material on Bai performing arts is the central importance of a professionalization
induced by Han socialism. The trend is very similar among the Bai and China’s minority nationalities as a whole. The arts of the past survive and the Bai traditional style and themes have in some ways been strengthened. But folk arts are almost by definition nonprofessional, and so professionalization has greatly changed their nature among the Bai.

CONCLUSION

Already in 1949, the Bai had been subject to centuries of Han influence and acculturation, and in some critically important ways the processes have strengthened under the CCP. A major illustrative example is education, which has increased enormously since 1949. However, in 1981 only 43.2% of the DAP’s primary and secondary school teachers belonged to a minority nationality, the great majority Bai, and the remaining 56.8% were Han (Du et al., 1983: 77), whereas Han people make up 41.3% of the prefecture’s total population (see the figures in Note 1). In Dali, the language of spoken instruction in the first and second grades of primary school is Bai, but standard Chinese comes more and more into use in third and fourth and becomes exclusive by the fifth. Usage varies according to region in the DAP, but in general Bai is the main language in primary and Chinese the only one in high school spoken instruction. At all levels, all writing is through Chinese characters. Students learn about the history and culture both of their own nationality and of China as a whole.

Many Bai were bilingual in the past but more and more are becoming so now. Almost all Bai males, other than small children, can now speak standard Chinese; and females are learning it in increasing numbers, especially in the towns. Although Bai remains the language of daily use in the villages, there is a growing number of urban Bai children who cannot speak the tongue of their nationality.

The prevalence of an education system largely controlled and more than half implemented by the Han and the related strengthening of the Chinese language means that Han ideas and accom-
panying practices are spreading even more fully from the Han to the Bai than before 1949. The influence of the mainly Han CCP will increase among the Bai, and may eventually exceed those of Mahayana Buddhism, Daoism, or ancestor worship in the past, though the specific ideas involved in socialism may change, just as have those of the three religious forms named. Marriage customs very similar to those of the Han before 1949 are changing very slowly away from the old Han ways and toward new ones, also Han. The professionalization of the performing arts is a major trend among both the minority nationalities and the Han and cannot help but impose a certain uniformity among China’s songs, dances, and theatricals. All this would suggest that the historically necessary and desirable “amalgamation” implied in the Chinese term ronghe has accelerated under the PRC.

On the other hand, there are also some countersigns. Bai communities such as those explored by Francis Hsu are now officially encouraged to take pride in the Bai nationality, not to see themselves as assimilated with the Han. Since marriage customs are probably changing more slowly among the Bai than the Han, it follows that the degree of acculturation in this particular aspect is actually slighter now than before the revolution. The same may be so of some aspects of the performing arts. Thus the greater emphasis on Bai content in the Daben qu and Bai dramas since 1949 suggests a weaker acculturation, not a stronger. A Bai drama resembles a Han regional one less than a Chuichui qiang does in the abandonment of the role-types sheng, dan, and so on, and in its more pronounced inclusion of the song and dance of the Bai nationality.

On the whole, the factors tending toward acculturation are more important and stronger than those against. This does not mean that Bai culture is on the point of extinction or anywhere near it. The fact that the CCP has set up an “autonomous prefecture” for the Bai, while the Guomindang did not, shows that the authorities are keener to retain a distinctive culture for the Bai, and indeed other minority nationalities, than they were before 1949. The traditional Bai “worship of the local tutelary spirits” and Bai aspects of Buddhism and Daoism may be much
weaker than they were but show no signs of dying out. The Bai spoken language will remain in use for a very long time.

FitzGerald's comment that the Bai in the late 1930s lacked a "strong national feeling" (1941: 14) is still valid today. It seems that the Bai are quite happy with the strengthened acculturation of the 1980s. One reason for this is the immeasurably greater economic development and higher standard of living that have accompanied it. In addition, their history, and, in particular, long experience of dealing with the Han, have given them great skills in coping with the process of acculturation. The Han have rarely either needed or wanted to practice against the Bai that kind of forced assimilation implied in the Chinese term tonghua. In current official thinking, the Cultural Revolution years saw policies of assimilation adopted against the minority nationalities, but those experienced in Bai areas were relatively mild. This is strongly suggested by the way Bai people speak of the years 1966 to 1976, in comparison with the Tibetans, Uygurs, Kazakhs, or Dai, to name but a few examples.

Many of the issues involved in the discussion of the extent of the acculturation process under the PRC are relevant also to the question of continuity and change in Bai culture. The three most important changes are probably the elimination of the class of rich landowners, the introduction of socialism, and an incipient modernization that, while it has not yet gone far by comparison with an advanced country, is still more profound than anything the pre-1949 years could offer in the way of industry or technology. In the particular areas of culture discussed in this article, factors to follow from these changes include the disappearance of concubinage, the weakening of religious institutions of all kinds, and the professionalization of the performing arts.

At the same time a great deal of the old society remains: the belief in religions and the practices associated with them, the persistence of arranged marriages, even though with much more consultation with the relevant partner than in the past, the mass festivals and the open-air village drama performances. Collectively these are by no means a trivial part of the social fabric.
Tradition is proving somewhat more tenacious than the CCP initially hoped or even expected.

A potential motor for change would be a determined attempt to reduce the population growth rate through introducing the one-child-per-couple policy. Over time this would affect the structure of the family, and the resultant loss of its cohesion would weaken the social power of the family as an institution. Since Bai society is tightly integrated, other aspects of society would certainly change as well. A lower population growth rate would mean higher individual consumption, better health and education levels, and an acceleration of economic development, which would inevitably influence the people's social values and beliefs.

Some of the changes introduced so far can be described as additions to society. Thus the CCP has added socialism rather than destroying the old patterns of thought. The professionalized performing arts have not so much attacked the traditional as tended to replace them and thus begun to render them redundant. Other changes involve a direct undermining of traditional society, such as land reform and measures to cut the population growth rate.

One could call the "additions" overlays upon a more basic continuity. However, if what is under consideration is the long-range effect rather than the current reality, then it might be more reasonable to see the changes as a whole as fundamental, the continuities merely as strong survivals from the past. The impact of the new education, and economic development are still in their early stages and are likely to gather momentum in the coming decades, especially if the population policy currently practiced among the Han is applied also among the Bai. This process will imply acceleration in the decline of religion, of the practice of arranged marriages, of the authentic traditional nonprofessional folk arts, and so on.

The main features of social change are in the direction of acculturation and conformity with the Han. It follows that as the changes gather momentum, so also will the process of acculturation. Although the Bai are unlikely ever to abandon some
of their customs or art-styles, their culture could eventually become similar enough in its essentials to the Han to call them "amalgamated." If and when that happens, it will more likely result from economic and social modernization than from compulsion, which means that it is a long way in the future. Nevertheless, since the Bai were, of China's more populous minority nationalities, among the most acculturated with the Han already in 1949, the likelihood is that, if they do indeed suffer amalgamation, they will be among the first of the larger minorities to do so.

NOTES

1. Two Bai cadres at the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing gave me a statistical breakdown of the main nationalities for the DAP at the end of 1984. The total population was 2,781,427, of whom 1,148,632 were Han, 885,089 Bai, 323,580 Yi, 52,940 Hui, 23,590 Lisu, and 347,596 others.

2. Peter Goullart, who lived in Lijiang, western Yunnan, for almost nine years leading up to liberation, writes that the Bai, whom he calls the Minkia, are of "all the tribes of Yunnan...the closest to the Chinese having adopted the Celestial Civilization almost in its entirety" (1957: 153).

3. The Bai cadres informed me that their new script did not even come into use at all, let alone widespread, until 1983. It is based on the pronunciation used in Jianchuan, the only reasonably large urban area with an overwhelmingly Bai population. FitzGerald (1941: 241-276) has a romanized vocabulary list, but many of the words used in this article do not appear there and, since my sources almost all use the Chinese language, and none the Bai, it appears reasonable to use the pinyin romanization throughout.

4. Wang et al. (1983: 211-212) list 13 Catholic and 23 Protestant churches in Bai regions, together with approximate numbers of adherents, as of "the eve of liberation." There were about 2,000 Catholics, of whom about half were specified as of the Yi nationality, and 1,700 Protestants.

5. Li Yuanyang (1493-1580) was among the best known figures in Bai literary history. He was a poet and essayist; in addition, he was one of two compilers of the Jiajing edition of the Dali gazetteer, and contributed greatly to the Wanli edition of the Yunnan general gazetteer Yunnan tongzhi. The quoted extract comes from the latter work. For Li's biography see Zhang et al. (1983: 374-378).

6. Goullart (1957: 151-152) says of the Bai that they sang "from early morning till late at night, whether working or not...and indulged in flirtations at all times."

7. On the Bai people's suona, which is very similar to that of the Han, see Yuan et al. (1986: 145).

8. Wedding customs among the Bai differ in nonessentials from place to place. For more detailed accounts of wedding celebrations, see Yang et al. (1983: 38-40) and Wang et al. (1983: 193-196).
9. The Bai cadres at the Central Nationalities Institute informed me that the population growth rate in the DAP in 1984 was 9 per 1,000. This figure is very low and less than the Chinese national average for 1984, which the State Statistical Bureau, (1985: VIII) put at 10.81 per 1,000. I believe the DAP figure is suspect.

10. FitzGerald (1941: 165) writes of the late 1930s that in western Yunnan, modern medical science was still almost entirely unknown, and "the ravages of epidemic diseases" proceeded virtually unchecked. By 1957, however, such diseases as cholera, plague, and smallpox had been brought under control and the incidence of illness reduced. In 1981, there were 445 hospitals or clinics with 5,437 beds, and 6,974 medical personnel in the DAP (Du et al., 1983: 79).

11. The sanxian used among the Bai, in particular to accompany the Daben qu, is called longtou (dragon head) sanxian, because it carries the image of a dragon's head on its stem (see Yuan et al., 1986: 220).

12. For a brief note on Yiyang qiang, including bibliography, see Trapido et al. (1985: 971).

13. For brief explanations of these role-types, see Trapido et al. (1985: 777, 216, 422-423, 157).

14. For a list of 136 Chuichui qiang items performed in Yunlong and 83 in Heqing, both Bai counties, see Zhang et al. (1983: 331-334).

15. For extensive commentary on this legend, see Zhang et al. (1983: 88-98), who suggests that the story was already popular before the Mongol conquest of 1253. The many forms in which it has been used in the PRC are discussed on pp. 97-98 of the same work.


17. In a discussion of "West Town" and its satellite villages, among which the inhabitants of all but one village were actually Bai but almost entirely amalgamated with the Han, Francis Hsu notes that the mother tongue of the people was Bai. He adds that "most men and a few women, however, speak Chinese (with a strong local accent) as well" (1943: 3).

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