

TRAINING MONKS OR MEN:
THERAVADA MONASTIC EDUCATION, SUBNATIONALISM
AND THE NATIONAL SANGHA OF CHINA¹

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It would seem self-evident that the purpose of monastic education is to produce monks, or at the very least to produce good Buddhists. Boys and men, girls and women study usually with monks and nuns as teachers, learning *dhamma*. By watching and studying, they learn what it means to be a monk or nun, what someone who has left home must know. Even if the monastic path is ultimately not for them, what they learn is of use to them as Buddhists, ritually and ethically. And to the degree to which monasteries in general and monastic schools, of whatever form, remain separated from the rest of society, this might conceivably be the case. However, I take it as axiomatic that monasteries, monastic schools and systems of monastic education are not and cannot be separate from society, and the larger concerns of the communities that build these institutions. In addition, I would suggest that in many, if not all, formal monastic schools, ordained students learn far more than simply how to chant or meditate, study Buddhist history or philosophy. If this is the case, then perhaps the agenda of monastic education is not necessarily as self-evident as it would appear, and that we need to inquire more directly into the purpose(s) of monastic education. What are monastic institutions training their students to be?

¹ This paper is based on fieldwork conducted between March 2001 and June 2002, principally in the Dai People's Autonomous Region of Sipsongpanna in Yunnan Province in the PRC. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies Conference in Bangkok, December 2002 and at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Antonio, November 2004. I would like to thank Justin McDaniel, Jeff Samuels, Anne Blackburn and Tracy Johnson for their comments on earlier versions of this paper, and of course the monks and novices of Sipsongpanna who graciously allowed me to ask them many nosy questions for fifteen months.

I would like to bring this question to a consideration of monastic education in post-Mao China. In the late twentieth century, Buddhism more broadly, but monastic education in particular has seen a real efflorescence throughout mainland China, including the minority regions of China where Tibetan Buddhism² and Theravāda Buddhism are practiced. While the first post-Cultural Revolution “Buddhist Institute” (*foxueyuan*) was opened at Fayuan Si³, outside of Beijing in 1980, since then *foxueyuan* have opened up throughout the country, though particularly on the East Coast of China (Chen and Deng 2000; Zhu 2003).

Raoul Birnbaum has discussed these schools in terms of the pedagogical ambitions of Taixu, the early twentieth century reformer of Chinese Buddhism. According to Birnbaum, Taixu sought to found a system of modern Buddhist Institutes that would train Chinese men to be both monks and modern men. Although Taixu’s envisioned system would maintain the traditional practice of “life-long texts study by participation in extended lecture series presented by famous masters,” (Birnbaum 2003: 133; Welch 1968: 110-114), the contemporary *foxueyuan* of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are more akin to the public colleges and universities of the rest of country. Their three or four year courses require those hoping to matriculate to take an entrance exam. Moreover, for many of these schools, the student-nuns, -monks or -novices are required to have completed their high school education⁴. Indeed, while most of the study at these *foxueyuan* is focused on Buddhist matters,

² Regardless of the legitimacy of Chinese rule in Tibet, the fact remains that Tibet is under the political control of the Chinese government. Moreover, the Chinese government sees it as a minority region, and has constituted the parts of Tibet formerly under the control of the Dalai Lama’s government as an “autonomous region.” Thus, the Sangha is subject to the force of the Chinese government. While this may be a deplorable situation in many ways, it strikes me that the principled decision to not discuss Tibetan Buddhism as part of the religions in China today, as was done in a recent volume on religions in China by *China Quarterly* (Overmeyer 2003), to be highly problematic.

³ The Buddhist Institute at Fayuan Si was actually reopened in 1980. It was first established in 1956 and closed down in the mid-1960s, after approximately 100 students had finished the undergraduate program there, and another handful had completed postgraduate degrees. See Long 2002: 190.

⁴ While graduation from high school is required for matriculation at the more competitive of these Buddhist Institutes, many of these schools have less stringent requirements. Long 2002: 194-5.

roughly a third of the pedagogical efforts are spent on non-Buddhist subjects (Long 2002; Borchert 2003a).

Despite the fact that two-thirds of the pedagogical time at these *foxueyuan* is spent on acquiring Buddhist knowledge and skills, we might imagine that other agendas also drive the pedagogical actions of the schools. Darui Long in his study of several different schools in Sichuan has noted that according to their charters the aim of these schools is to “train Buddhist nuns who love the country, and support the Party leadership and socialist cause” (Long 2002: 192). Another school’s charter was slightly more expansive, saying that its purpose was “to train Buddhists who are patriots and faithful to Buddhism so that they become knowledgeable and able persons for the development of Buddhism.” However, it goes on to say that:

Students should support the leadership of the Communist Party of China. They should be patriotic and faithful, with good virtues and abilities. They should observe state laws. They are trained to be managers of the monasteries and researchers for Buddhism. (Long 2002: 1999)

Lest we think that this type of statement is limited to China’s interior, a set of regulations from a *foxueyuan* of Shanghai has a similar pointed focus. In the first rule out of more than one hundred and thirty, the document states that students should “Fervently love the socialist motherland, support the leadership of the Communist Party, defend the unity of the Nationalities, and support the unification of the motherland.”⁵

We can read these statements in the broader context of religion in China. In the early 1980s, the Party’s official post-Mao statement on religion was set forth in a still relevant document entitled, “The Basic Viewpoint and Policies on Religious Issues During Our Country’s Socialist Period.” This document repudiates the active effort on the part of CCP officials to eliminate religion from the People’s Republic of China, especially as practiced during the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. Instead, it argues that religion will disappear eventually and naturally

⁵ *Reai shehui zhuyi zuguo, yonghu zhongguo gongchangdang lingdao, wei hu minzu tuan jie, yonghu zuguo tongyi.* I received this set of regulations at Wat Pājie, in Sipsongpanna, shortly before a group of graduates from Wat Pājie traveled to Shanghai in order to study for a year at one of the Buddhist Institutes there. I was told that it was sent from Shanghai in order to inform the students what was expected of them.

with the proper development of socialism and communism⁶. There is also a grudging recognition that the morality and works of “normal religion” (such as the preservation of historic temples and relics, reforestation and the academic study of religion) are beneficial to society (Document 19: 16). Most interesting in this context, however, are the statements about education and the need to train new religious leaders. Given the possible benefits normal religions offer to society, Document 19 suggests that the government should pay attention to religious actors, particularly the leaders, and to “unrelentingly yet patiently forward their education in patriotism, upholding the law, supporting socialism, and upholding national and ethnic unity” (Document 19: 16). It later notes the importance of training “patriotic religious personnel,” and that the government should help set up seminaries to train them. Document 19 goes on to say that the “task of these seminaries is to create a contingent of young religious personnel who, in terms of politics, fervently love their homeland and support the Party’s leadership and the socialist system and who possess sufficient religious knowledge”(Document 19: 20).

The order of these two goals is not accidental. While the Chinese government (in this document) recognizes as legitimate the interests of (what it views as “normal”⁷) religious communities in having adequately trained religious leaders, it is most interested in directing the actions and beliefs of these leaders in specific directions. Pitman Potter, in a recent article on politics and religion in China has suggested that the Chinese Communist Party’s official policy on religion in China needs to be understood in light of an agenda in which political loyalty to the Party-State is given in exchange for a greater degree of autonomy in certain social spheres.

⁶ “Document 19: The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country’s Socialist Period.” Translated by Janice Wickeri and printed in MacInnis (1989), 10. Citations will be made in the text to “Document 19.”

⁷ In general, this means those religions that have a relatively long-standing history on the Chinese mainland. Thus, the government recognizes Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism as the legitimate religions of China. Legitimate religions, in the eyes of the Party-State, have five characteristics: a long history, a mass base, national and international aspects and complexity (Document 19: 5). Although there have been some important shifts in the category of religions and its others (“superstition” and “evil cults”) since Document 19 was first published in 1982 (notably in the late 1990s as a response to the challenge raised by the Falun Gong), Document 19 still retains relevance for understanding the “religion problem” in China in the early twenty-first century. See Borchert 2004.

There is a tension within the sphere of religious practice, however, due to the potential threat posed by religious beliefs. There is a fear, Potter argues, that loyalty to the religion will supercede loyalty to the state, and so, there remains a strong “discourse of control” regarding religion in contemporary China, despite recent suggestions about liberalization (Potter 2003: 18). Fenggang Yang and Dedong Wei have also recently suggested that since the mid-1990s, there has been a hardening of the official position, such that religious actors have much less leeway to act outside the official Party position (Yang and Wei 2005).

These statements change the possible range of interpretations that we might attribute to the stated purposes of the Buddhist Institutes. The stated educational aims of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Institutes of China are clearly political in that they seek to create monks and nuns who are patriotic and law-abiding citizens. These monks and nuns will in turn become the abbots of local temples and the leaders of local Sanghas. Nevertheless, the way the language of the charters echoes the official language of Document 19 is interesting. Most of the charter documents that I have seen are unsigned, or are attributed to a committee with input at least from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the local Buddhist Association (BA). In other words, they are documents produced by government agencies. To the degree that they are written by monks, we must ask if the political allegiance that is expressed is anything more than a politically savvy throat clearing. That is to say, if these temples do not state that they support the leadership of the CCP in this manner, they will get in trouble. Put differently, Buddhists (and other religious actors) know that paying appropriate respect to the leadership of the Party is an important way to avoid being hassled by the Chinese state.

Yet just because a Sangha’s stated goals may reflect those of the state for political expediency, this does not mean that we should assume that these statements are *only* political expediency, or that there might not be other political agendas which fit with the religious agendas. Monks might very well, and legitimately, believe in the importance of educating monks who are also patriotic. Alternatively they may want to produce students who have other agendas and wish to hide it from the state under the guise of patriotism. In other words, we should not presume that these charters allow us to know what a certain monk or nun believes regarding the rela-

tionship between religion and politics, or the role that a Sangha should play in the constructing the Chinese nation. Monks can be nationalist, and this can spill into their Buddhism, or not. However, I would suggest that reading the charters cited above from the Mahāyāna Buddhist Institutes alongside Document 19 alerts us to the fact that these *foxueyuan* are constructed within an environment that is rife with political concerns. In other words, while these charters direct us to look beyond the simply religious to discern the agendas of monastic communities, they do not reveal whether or not there are other agendas behind a project of monastic education.

This is equally the case with the monastic education of minority communities in China. The schools discussed above are affiliated with Mahāyāna Sanghas of the Han majority of China, but China also has Tibetan and Theravāda Sanghas, and for these other Sanghas, the development, or redevelopment, of monastic education after the Maoist period has been even more complicated. The degree to which these minority communities see themselves as belonging to China, and the degree to which the Chinese state and the Chinese people see the minority Sanghas as Chinese raises an entirely different set of concerns. This is most well-known in the case of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, where many (but not all) Tibetans view the Chinese as being illegitimate invaders. The Chinese state is equally suspicious of the Tibetan Sangha, particularly in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (Schwartz 1994). This has meant that towing the party line in such a way that it is recognized by the Chinese state is often difficult and efforts to reestablish monastic education have met with considerable difficulties⁸. Although there are some reports of success in opening institutions for monastic education outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (in so-called “ethnic Tibet”), such as in the Labrang monastery in Gansu and at Sarthar in Sichuan (Germano 1998; Eckholm 1999), the crackdown on the latter in 2001 (Faison 2001) shows the situation is still quite volatile.

⁸ Melvyn Goldstein details some of the efforts to reestablish the traditional monastic education at Drepung Monastery outside of Lhasa in “The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery,” in Goldstein and Kapstein, eds., *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

When we look at the Theravāda Buddhist monks of Sipsongpanna in Yunnan Province, we see something akin to what we saw among the Mahāyāna schools of the rest of China. Each village temple in Sipsongpanna has a poster of regulations provided to it by the local Buddhist Association. This poster, usually hung in a semi-public place, states in the first rule that:

Monks and novices must adhere to the precepts and ideals of the Buddhist virtues, carry forward and develop Buddhist Dhamma, perpetuate a life with Buddhist wisdom; respect the discipline, *defend the law, love the country and love the religion* (italics added).

Noting that the Buddhist Association of Sipsongpanna (the authors of the rules, even if by committee) is staffed completely by Dai-lue monks, this would seem to indicate that they are largely in sympathy with the charters noted above. Is this the case? Do these minority monks in fact view their goal and purpose to encourage their fellow monks and novices to love China even as they are living a Buddhist life?

In the last decade, the Theravāda monks of Sipsongpanna, have opened up their own *foxueyuan*, with the blessing of and a modicum of funding from the local government. In this paper, I want to examine this particular *foxueyuan*, this “Buddhist Institute,” and its educational agendas in relation to its position as a minority — both ethnic and religious — within the Chinese political landscape. I would suggest that the point of the charters and Document 19 within the Mahāyāna *foxueyuan* discussed above has been to focus the political aspects of religious training in a particular direction, to produce religious specialists who are lovers of the nation. Do these same processes work within the monastic schools of a minority community? Moreover, this allows us to begin to ask how we can tell when training monks and novices is not actually about — or principally about — making proper Buddhist leaders? To what degree is monastic education about making monks? And, in the end result, what is it that novices are being trained to be?

Theravāda Buddhism in China

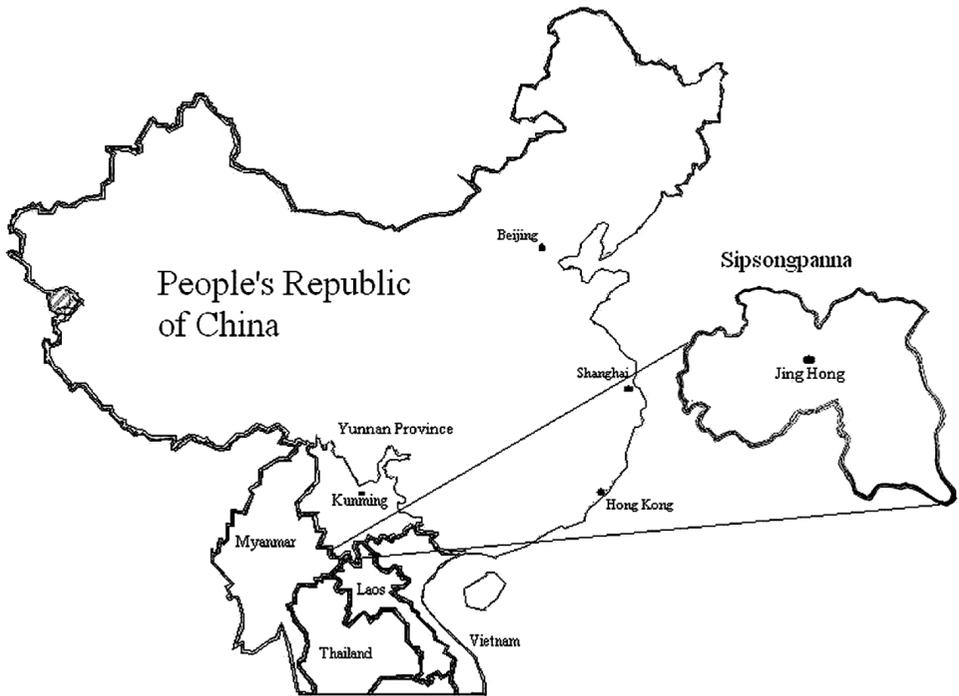
Although historically China is closely associated with East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism, at least since the founding of the People’s Repub-

lic in 1949, both Tibetan Buddhist and Theravāda Sanghas have come under the purview of the Chinese state. In contrast to the situation of Tibetan Buddhism in China, the situation of the Theravāda Sanghas is not well-known. There are in fact two Theravāda Sanghas in China, both located in border regions of the southwestern province of Yunnan. Both of these Sanghas are populated by Tai minorities of China: the Dai-neua of the Dehong *Daizu-Jingpo* Autonomous Prefecture (*Dehong Daizu-Jingpo Zizhizhou*)⁹ and the Dai-lue of Sipsongpanna (*Xishuangbanna Daizu Zizhizhou*)⁹. Viewed by Chinese governments as being part of a single ethnic group, the *Daizu*, in point of fact, the Dai-lue and Dai-neua had minimal contact with one another prior to the middle of the twentieth century (Giersch 1998; Hsieh 1995). Indeed, it is only in the last twenty years or so that by processes of what Dru Gladney has called “ethnogenesis” the Dai-lue and the Dai-neua have come to see themselves as belonging to a single ethnic group (Gladney 1991; Hsieh 1995)¹⁰. Nevertheless, outside academics have generally viewed these groups as linked. Chinese ethnographies about the Dai people dutifully contain a section on the “Xi-Dai” and the “De-Dai,” and while Thai discussions of the Tais of China are far more likely to discuss Sipsongpanna (which is often seen as some sort of older sibling of the Thais), there are some which talk about the Dai of Dehong as well¹¹.

⁹ A brief comment about names and languages is in order. The people that I am discussing here are referred to by the Chinese state as the *Dai-zu*, the Dai people. Most of the time, these people refer to themselves as “Dai” or occasionally “Lue.” “Dai” in this contexts links these people to other Tai groups of Southeast Asia, as well as to other Tai groups in China; “Lue” distinguishes them as a particular subset of the Tai. I refer to them here as “Dai-lue” because it helps keep in focus the fact that these people have important relationships with both China and other Tai groups of Southeast Asia. I refer to their home by the Dai-lue name, Sipsongpanna, and not the Chinese name, Xishuangbanna.

¹⁰ Tan Leshan, a Chinese anthropologist, has told me that it was only in the late 1990s that his Dai-lue informants in Sipsongpanna began to ask him about Dehong and the Dai people who live there. Personal communication, Kunming, China, August 2001.

¹¹ For Chinese examples, see Zhao and Wu 1997 or Wang 2001. Note that Thai texts are more likely to discuss Dali, a city to the West of Kunming in Yunnan Province, because it was the capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom. It was common at least into the mid-1990s for Thai scholars to refer to the Nanzhao Kingdom as a possible birthplace of the Thai peoples, although the historical evidence seems to be against this view. See Princess Galyani 1986 or Sarisakon and Sucit 1991. For a discussion of Chinese and Thai academic representations of the Dai-lue and Sipsongpanna more broadly, see Borchert 2003b.



While I will only discuss the monastic educational practices of Sipsongpanna in this paper, it is important to understand that for many centuries both of these regions have been in extensive contact with Han Chinese settlers and governments (whether imperial, republican or communist), other ethnic groups of the regions, as well as other Tai communities of Southeast Asia (even if not with one another). Natchā Laohasrinadh has commented that Sipsongpanna was referred to as a *rāt song fay-fā*, a “state under two skies.” Similarly, several Dai-lue informants noted to me that historically, *haw bin paw, mon bin mae*: “China is the father and Burma is the mother” of Sipsongpanna. I take from this that although we might tell a story of the twentieth century as one in which the borders of this region become clearer and harder as the “geo-body” is formed (Thongchai 1994) nonetheless, even now they remain quite

porous. In other words, a reasonable discussion into the background of the Dai-lue and Sipsongpanna in the twentieth century must necessarily be a back and forth between contact with China and with the Tai communities of Southeast Asia.

Although Sipsongpanna is part of China, and has been since the 1896 Anglo-French treaty that divided the middle Mekong region between France, Britain, Thailand and China, it is on China's southern edge. Situated in Yunnan Province's deep south, it borders the modern nation-states of Myanmar and Laos. The Mekong River, which provides the border between Laos and Myanmar, flows through Sipsongpanna into Southeast Asia. Prior to the 1953 occupation of Sipsongpanna by the People's Liberation Army, it was a semi-independent kingdom, sandwiched between the Chinese and Burmese empires. Occasionally overrun by armies from the south and the north, it was able to maintain a high degree of independence through its remoteness and savvy politicking with its more powerful neighbors. The region was an important stop on trade routes between China and Southeast Asia (Natchā 1998: 21; Hill 1998), but the paths passing through the mountainous region of Southwest China precluded speed or large numbers of troops. Even in the 1950s, Chinese ethnologists engaged in the ethnic classification project of the Chinese state (*minzu shibie*) required more than a month to get from Yunnan's capital, Kunming, to Sipsongpanna's capital, Jing Hong. This distance, little over 400 km, is now handled in about forty-fifty minutes by fifteen to twenty daily flights between Jing Hong and Kunming.

The dominant people of Sipsongpanna, the Dai-lue, were (and are) Theravāda Buddhist and the kingdom was similar to other minor states of the middle Mekong region, such as Chiang Mai, Luang Prabang and Chiang Tung of the Shan States. The social system and political structures were highly stratified, with a traditional king, the Lord of the Earth (*cao phaendin*), and a state council composed of related "aristocrats" (Tan 1995). Although the *cao phaendin*, whose palace was constructed on a mountain outside of modern day, Jing Hong, is said to have been the sole possessor of all the land in Sipsongpanna (Natchā 1998), the region would be more properly understood as something of a federation. The *cao* of the various *meuang* of Sipsongpanna were largely independent figures who,

while they owed fealty to the *cao phaendin*, also had their own agendas and bases of power. This meant that the Dai-lue and the *cao phaendin* did not always present a unified face in their dealings with the Chinese (Giersch 1998). At the same time, while Theravāda Buddhism was certainly important within the social system, it would be a mistake to think of it as having quite the same importance in terms of the rule of the region as it is said to have had farther south. Most Dai-lue men of Sipsongpanna ordained for at least a period (it is said to have been necessary in order to get married), but Theravāda Buddhism seems not to have played the same role in the control of the *cao phaendin*'s state as it did in Ayuthaya for example (Natchā 1998). Indeed, Ann Maxwell Hill suggests that Sipsongpanna was not only smaller than the galactic polities to the south, but also that the local territorial spirit cults were of far greater importance in the control of the local polity than the Buddhist-Brahmanical ideological ritual complex that undergirds the "galactic polities" of Burma and Thailand (Tambiah 1976; Hill 1998: 147). Another way to say this might be to suggest that while Theravāda Buddhism was central to Dai-lue society, it was not in any way an established religion.

This social structure dynamic began to change in the mid-1950s, when the consequences of China's 1953 invasion of Sipsongpanna began to be felt (McCarthy 2001; Hsieh 1989). Most dramatically, over the course of the first fifteen years of the PRC's colonization of Sipsongpanna, the Dai-lue social hierarchy was legally abolished. A number of Dai-lue aristocrats were co-opted into the Communist Party and the local government, which significantly eased the transition into the Chinese national body. The region underwent a variety of different periods of land reform (McCarthy 2001), and starting in the mid-1960s, the monasteries were closed and Buddhism was abolished. Monks were either forced to disrobe or fled to Southeast Asia. While Dai-lue were permitted to practice Buddhism again starting in the late 1970s (a practice which became widespread several years later), a generation of monks was lost, and the cost to local knowledge and knowledge practices (non-Buddhist as well as Buddhist) is literally unknowable.

Less dramatic in the short term than these changes to the social structure, but equally important was the inclusion of the Dai-lue into the Chinese national imagination as members of the *Daizu*. This process began

in the late 1950s, when Han Chinese ethnologists came to Jing Hong from Kunming to categorize the groups of people in Sipsongpanna. This grand ethnic classification project recognized fifty-four *shaoshu minzu*, ethnic minorities, as part of the Chinese nation¹². Yunnan was and is a province rich in ethnicities, having twenty-four; Sipsongpanna is itself the home to fourteen different nationalities. The Chinese ethnologists were to classify different groups onto an evolutionary scale ultimately deriving from the work of Henry Louis Morgan and using Stalinist criteria to distinguish groups of people¹³. Despite efforts towards scientific rigor, the classification of ethnic groups often relied just as much on folk classifications and the remnants of Imperial Chinese classifications. According to these criterion, the Dai-lue of Sipsongpanna were categorized as “feudal-manorialist” (*fengjian nongnu zhidu*) and lumped together with several other Tai groups of Yunnan (notably the Dai-neua of Dehong discussed above), despite having little knowledge of or interaction with these other groups.

Like the other *shaoshu minzu* of China, the Dai-lue have been subject to the developmentalist projects of the Communist Chinese state ever since¹⁴. Like religion, this ethnic identity in China is something that is supposed to wither away with the increased modernity of a given group of

¹² China is actually now a “multi-ethnic state” with 56 different nationalities: a 55th minority group was recognized in the late 1970s. There are a number of other groups who have applied for recognition as *shaoshu minzu*, in part because it makes them eligible for certain privileges (such as having a second child). While at least some of these applications are still in process, I have been told by academics in China that it is unlikely that other groups will achieve the status of independent ethnic minority (as opposed to being recognized as a branch of an already existing minority group). The western academic literature on China’s minorities is vast and growing. For useful introductions, see Blum 2002 and Harrell 1995a. Schein 2000 and Gladney 1991 have extensive discussions of the CCP’s ethnic classification (*minzu shibie*) project.

¹³ These criteria were: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life and a common psychological make-up manifested in common specific features of national culture (Gladney 1991: 66). Harrell (1995b: 98, 103) helpfully points out that these criterion were presumed to be objective and comparable. That is to say that what makes a *minzu* in one place is the same as what makes a *minzu* in another place. This is important because it enables the “objective” ranking of *minzu* on evolutionary scales, and establishes criterion for paternalistic policies.

¹⁴ Or in Stevan Harrell’s felicitous phrase, the “civilizing projects” of the Chinese state (Harrell 1995a).

people. Thus although Chinese policies have fluctuated over the last fifty years, they have generally been directed towards modernizing minority groups such as the Dai-lue, bringing them closer to the developed standards of Han/Chinese modernity. As James Ferguson (1990) has argued with regard to states and development in Southern Africa, these developmentalist policies have generally resulted in greater bureaucratic intrusion into the lives of local peoples and cultures. Educational projects, and in particular the effort to produce minority citizens who speak Mandarin Chinese, have a central role in these civilizing projects, as is evident from the citations above from Document 19 (see also Hansen 1999). These projects have at best been benignly paternalistic, though many have also been accompanied by the often-violent voluntarism of the Communist Period's "high red" periods (such as the Cultural Revolution). This is not to say that all of these projects have been resisted by all *shaoshu minzu*. To the contrary, while the civilizing projects of the Chinese state (educational and otherwise) should be understood in terms of "symbolic violence" discussed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1978), the responses to them have been diverse and have often changed across time and space. Not surprisingly, questions of the breakdown of traditional culture and assimilation pervade western scholarship on China's minorities in particular. However, I would suggest that more productive ways of articulating the relationship of China's minorities to its majority can be found in a dialogical/cultural studies model, articulated well by Dru Gladney:

Ethnic identity in China...is not merely the result of state definition, and...it cannot be reduced to circumstantial maneuvering for utilitarian goals by certain groups. Rather, I propose that it is best understood as a dialogical interaction of shared traditions of descent with sociopolitical contexts, constantly negotiated in each political-economic setting (Gladney 1998: 109).

Among the Dai-lue of Sipsongpanna, this dialogue and negotiation has played out in important ways in the realm of education. Prior to 1953, the education of most boys took place in village temples, in what we might think of as an "apprentice" mode of pedagogy (Blackburn 2001: 45). Here Dai-lue boys, all ordained novices, generally gained knowledge and skills necessary to be considered full Dai-lue adults. In addition to the all-important Dai-lue script, and the basics of Buddhism (both in terms of

knowledge and ritual matters)¹⁵, some of them also achieved knowledge which was less strictly Buddhist (medicine and astrology, e.g.)¹⁶. Indeed, while it was not necessary for all men to learn these things, it was necessary for all boys to become “cooked” in the temple for some time. That this is the case has long been a thorn in the side of the PRC’s government in Sipsongpanna. While under the ideology of “autonomy” for *shaoshu minzu* the government has acknowledged the legitimacy of traditional knowledge, local Board of Education officials in particular have often complained that the traditional education in temples has obstructed Dai-lue boys’ efforts in the Chinese public schools. This in turn has meant that these boys have remained (at least in the eyes of the cadres) unable to fully participate in Chinese modernity (Hansen 1999).

Not surprisingly, from the perspective of many Dai-lue people, the situation with regard to Chinese public education is not quite so straightforward in at least two different ways. First, public education is supposed to be mandatory through junior middle school (grade 9). There are significant barriers to many of the Dai-lue students fulfilling this responsibility, however. While many boys do finish elementary school, they must pass entrance exams to enter middle school (both junior and senior middle school). For many of the students these tests are prohibitively difficult, not least because of the inadequate level of the elementary education. In addition to this, while it is public and compulsory through grade nine, Chinese education is not free. Students must pay tuition and a variety of other fees. Thus, even for those who do manage to pass the exams, middle school can be prohibitively expensive. The second complication is the attitude of parents towards these schools. Mette Hansen reports that a number of the parents she interviewed in the mid-1990s about public education were quite ambivalent about its utility. The majority of Dai-lue families are still peasants, and most boys (even now) will be peasants

¹⁵ What they learned was probably largely similar to what Tambiah describes in North-east Thailand (Tambiah 1970: 121).

¹⁶ This does not mean that all knowledge passed through the *wat* (temple). Women were (and for the most part still are) excluded from the literate text and temple based knowledge practices, but they possess(ed) their own knowledge practices, among which were both medical and religious knowledge. The religious life of women in Sipsongpanna remains a woefully unexamined topic.

when they become adults. For these parents, the value of a traditional education in village temples was clearer than the public school alternative (Hansen 1999: 112-113). Both of these factors, I would suggest have conspired to make monastic education remain relevant in Sipsongpanna.

Thus for reasons of the persistence of tradition — the Dai-lue are after all by the definitions of the Chinese state believers in Theravāda Buddhism — and the dynamics of the Chinese-Dai-lue relationship, monastic education in village temples has persisted. A glance at the demographics of the Sangha over the last fifty years makes it clear that ordination (and thus monastic education) remains an important aspect of Dai-lue society, even if it is not quite as important as it was prior to the Cultural Revolution. In the 1950s, the Sangha had a population of roughly 6500 (900+ monks and 5500+ novices), out of a population of perhaps 105,000. These numbers were basically zero in 1965. Starting with the “religion fever” in the early 1980s (Hansen 1995: 109), the Sangha population had essentially recovered by the early 1990s when there were about 550 monks (one per temple) and 4500 novices. These numbers have slowly crept up over the last ten years. The most recent numbers that were reported to me (Spring 2002) were that there were about 650 monks and over 6500 novices. At the same time, however, the overall Dai-lue population is currently reported at about 300,000.¹⁷

This rebirth of the Sangha though has had some unforeseen consequences for the continuity of monastic education. The novices of the post-Mao generation are principally trained by the abbots of their temples, as has always been the case (though often these abbots are scarcely older than the novices they train). Yet abbots are not the only teachers in *wats*: his-

¹⁷ For population figures, see Tan 1995: 193 and McCarthy 2001: 172-3. Both of these scholars supply official Chinese statistics. I would raise the possibility, however, that in the 1950s, the time of the first Chinese census in the region, Chinese penetration into the region was not sufficient to get an adequate count of either the monastic population or the larger Dai-lue population. This does not mean that the general trend is wrong, just that it is necessary to take the severity of this shift with a grain of salt. There are also no numbers kept as to what percentage of the Dai-lue male population ordains for some period during their lives. These remain problems to be studied. Also, we need to be cognizant of the fact that the monastic population constantly fluctuates, due to the practice of temporary ordination. This does not mean that there is no stability to the numbers that I reported, but this is why I have given round figures. By the time the Sipsongpanna BA reports the number of novices for a given year, the figure is already inaccurate.

torically novices have also been trained by other monks (or, more commonly, older novices) and especially the *khanan*, former monks who are among the most important men in the village (religiously at least). Yet as mentioned above the Sangha has lost the generation of older monks and *khanan* who were the principle carriers of knowledge and important trainers of the younger generation. In the beginning of this crisis during the 1980s and early 1990s, many temples were staffed by monks invited up from Southeast Asia. These were mainly from Lue areas of either the Shan States or of Thailand), and a large number of novices and monks have traveled particularly to Northern Thailand for further education. Nonetheless, these could only be stopgap measures for two reasons. The first is that while the Chinese state has generally been supportive of monks traveling from Southeast Asia to act in this capacity, they are highly suspicious of foreign influence within religion (Document 19: 16). Thus the official position is that these visiting monks must register with the Public Security Bureau and Religious Affairs Bureau, and that they may only stay for a relatively short period of time. Generally, this has meant between one and four years. Occasionally, the local government has caused foreign monks to return to Southeast Asia. As for traveling to Southeast Asia for an education, the opportunities are limited by both the resources of the local Sanghas and the willingness of the Southeast Asian states (and in particular Thailand) to support these novices. Thus, the senior monks and laity of the Sangha of Sipsongpanna decided that they needed their own *foxueyuan*.

This Buddhist Institute was opened in 1994 at Wat Pājīe, a temple destroyed just prior to the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in 1990, initially with money from the Chinese government. Wat Pājīe is in many ways the ideal place to open a *foxueyuan* in Sipsongpanna. Although surrounded by villages, unlike the other more than five hundred temples in Sipsongpanna, Wat Pājīe is not connected to any single village. It is instead the central temple of the region, from the perspective the Dai-lue people, but also from the perspective of the Chinese government. The local offices of the Buddhist Association are at Wat Pājīe, and the abbot of the temple has two different titles: he is both the head of the Sangha, the *sangha-nayok*, and the head of the Buddhist Association (*fojiao xiehui zhang*). This temple, which was reestablished at the request of local vil-

lagers and monks (Davis 2003; cf. Thepprawin 1998), had been a royal temple, though not the home temple of the *cao phaendin* himself. However, since its reestablishment and the opening of the school in 1994, it has become a center of gravity for Buddhism in Sipsongpanna. Wat Pājie has not only attracted a large collection of monks¹⁸, many of whom have received advanced Buddhist training in Thailand or the Shan states, it has also attracted the support of foreign Sanghas and Buddhist foundations. Patronage from the royal family and *Sangharāja* of Thailand enabled the construction of a Thai style ordination hall (1998); Japanese and Singapore foundations provided money for the temple to buy land and both local Han businessmen and wealthy Mahāyāna Sanghas on China's east coast enabled the construction of a massive new *kuti* (residence hall) for the abbot (2001).

Monastic Education at Wat Pājie

As should be clear, Buddhism in Sipsongpanna, and in particular monastic education must be understood in light of dialogical relationships with both the Chinese state and the Sanghas of Southeast Asia. This is indexed by the fact that the sign in front of the school at Wat Pājie is written in three languages, Chinese, the traditional Dai-lue script and Thai. While most of the financial resources that have gone into reconstructing Wat Pājie have come from Buddhists, the Chinese state is a key actor here, because the monks and lay leaders affiliated with Wat Pājie needed official permission simply to open the school. The senior members of the Sangha wanted to open a full school that would be different from the training which takes place in village temples. However, as should be clear from Document 19, the Chinese government is not really interested in producing rivals to its authority, so it took over four years of applications and assurances before these Dai-lue were able to open a *foxueyuan* at Wat Pājie. Significantly, permission was contingent upon the school teaching Chinese to their students at the *foxueyuan* (Hansen 1999: 115).

¹⁸ During the course of my fieldwork, there were usually between ten and fifteen monks in residence.

Despite these concerns with the Chinese government, it is probably more accurate to think of this *foxueyuan* as a *hong heyn pa pariyatti tham*, a dhamma school, using the monastic schools of Thailand as a model. It is more limited than the Thai schools, both shorter in duration, but also in the scope of its program. Instead of six years, it is only three, and it only trains students in *dhamma-seuksā* (the Buddhism course) and in a handful of secular subjects (discussed below). There is, for example no Pāli instruction, though there have been recent efforts to add it to the school's curriculum. Nonetheless, the *nak-tham* curriculum (i.e., the Buddhist subjects) largely hails from Thailand and uses textbooks that have been translated either from Thai or imported from the Shan States. Moreover there are a series of exams at the end of each fall, based on exams from the monastic secondary schools of Northern Thailand, which test the student-novices in the Buddhist curriculum. While the school teaches non-Buddhist classes, in the eyes of the Chinese state, it is the *nak-tham* curriculum that is primary. Thus it is that the governmental office which oversees the school at Wat Pājie is not the Board of Education, but the Minority Religions Office.

Up until this point, the school has generally been successful, although it has also struggled financially. Each cohort of novices has consisted of one class of students. This class has consisted of some 30-50 students at the beginning of the first year, and over the course of the three years, the number shrinks to 20-30 students. The attrition is mainly due to failure in the dhamma exams, though a handful of students in each class decide that they are simply not interested in studying at Wat Pājie. The number of cohorts present has varied. While the school is equipped to handle up to three classes, when I conducted fieldwork in 2001-2002, there was only one class. I was told that the monks had limited the size of the school not for lack of interest, but for lack of resources to pay for all of the students. As of this writing perhaps seven cohorts have finished the program at Wat Pājie. One of the reasons for the temple's financial struggles is that the fees for receiving an education at Wat Pājie's Buddhist Institute is quite low. A novice's family pays the temple 600 *yuan* for the three-year course (by comparison, public junior high schools might cost 600 a semester. This fee only covers tuition, and does not include the various extra fees that rural Chinese schools are forced to charge in order

to remain open). This fee is largely a nominal one, since it barely pays for educational supplies over the course of three years. For this fee, the students received two meals a day¹⁹, books, and instruction, as well as occasional cash to catch a bus home. Not too surprisingly, the salaries of the teachers (only some of whom were monks) were minimal²⁰.

During my fieldwork, the class studying at Wat Pājie was *nak tham tī*, first year dhamma students. These student-novices ranged in age from thirteen to twenty-two, though the majority of them were between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. The educational background of the student-novices in this class divided relatively evenly into thirds: about a third had finished lower middle school, a third had graduated from elementary school and a third had only finished third or fourth grade. Their reasons for leaving the Chinese schools were various, ranging from financial to religious; a handful left because they had conflicts with their Han teachers. All of the student-novices were fluent in spoken Chinese, even if not fully literate, and when I taught them English, Chinese was the medium of instruction. Most were from peasant families, all but two were still novices and all but four were Dai-lue.

This raises an interesting point about the relationship of Buddhism and Dai-lue identity. In the history of the school at Wat Pājie, there have been a handful of non-Dai-lue students. Some are *Bulangzu*, another Theravāda minority group of Sipsongpanna historically viewed as servants (*kha*) by the Dai-lue. In the group that I taught and researched, there were no Bulang students, but there were four novices from Dehong. They were thus Tai, and *Daizu*, but Dai-neua instead of Dai-lue. While we might read these “others within” as disrupting the relationships between Dai-lue identity and Buddhism, stressing its universality, I would suggest instead that these boys are for the most part not treated differently than the oth-

¹⁹ An evening meal was also provided, but it was generally not referred to as such. This meal was usually a snack of noodles and was not treated by either the monks or novices as a real meal (monks generally did not partake of this snack). When the dinner bell rang around six p.m., I would ask the novices if they were going to eat dinner, and they would respond, “No, we’re just going to have noodles.”

²⁰ During the course of my research, I taught English to the student novices on a regular basis. In exchange for this, the monks taught me Dai-lue and it also gave me a legitimate reason (in the eyes of the local Public Security Bureau) to be at the temple on a daily basis.

ers, that in fact their difference is erased in needing to speak Dai-lue just as much as it is in the uniform of the shaved heads and saffron robes. Nonetheless, the presence of these non-Dai-lue student-novices points to a still deeply understudied aspect of the contemporary Sangha in mainland Southeast Asia: the dynamics of ethnicity and religion with regard to those who are already in the robes. There is an ideology of equality or universal respect towards those in robes, but it remains to be seen if this is actually the case²¹.

Curricula and Educational Projects at Wat Pājie

In order to understand more clearly the educational projects at Wat Pājie, I want to examine what it is that the students actually study over the course of their time at the school. The student-novices at Wat Pājie have two or three two-hour class periods a day for most of the year. The pedagogical methodologies of the classroom are straightforward and of the “read-lecture-regurgitate” variety. The curriculum of the school can be divided into three components which are generally studied simultaneously: Buddhist studies, Chinese or perhaps secular subjects, and Dai-lue cultural studies, each of which I will discuss below. Although I will concentrate on the formal curriculum of the school, I will also briefly discuss the informal training that takes place outside of the classroom (what Jeff Samuels (2004) has helpfully called “action-oriented pedagogy”).

²¹ In the 1970s and 1980s, work was published on the use of the Sangha in matters of “national integration” in Thailand, particularly among the “hill tribes” (see, e.g., Keyes 1971; Tambiah 1976; Somboon 1993). This work however addresses this question solely from the perspective of the state, and does not interrogate how non-Thais understand these efforts or their experience as minority members of the Sangha. While teaching English at a monastic school in Chiang Mai in 1994, I met a young Burmese man who had recently disrobed. He told me that he had come to Chiang Mai for an education. Once he had disrobed, he said, he had been persecuted because he was not Thai, and that while no one had actively been disrespectful to him when he was a monk, they had also not treated him as an insider either. Obviously, this one man’s experience should not be generalized without reason. Nevertheless, it does suggest the possibility that social hierarchies and cleavages from the outside world continue to be present within the Sangha, and that further inquiry into the relationship of nationality and ethnicity for those in robes is needed. For an inquiry into the persistence of caste-based relations in the Sri Lankan Sangha, see Samuels 2006.

Buddhist Training

Buddhist training at Wat Pājie consists of three classes studied over six months for three years. In these classes the student-novices study *Dhamma*, *Vinaya* and the life of the Buddha. The information that the temple wants the novices to learn is straightforward and fairly basic. From the exams that these students took during my fieldwork, we get a pretty good sample of what is deemed important. In the life of the Buddha, the students were asked questions on the names of the Buddha's grandparents, the names of the Buddha's first disciples and the person who donated the *wihān* (worship hall) at Veluvana. Questions on the *Vinaya* exam asked students about the requirements to prepare for ordination, or the categories of particular types of offenses. For the *Dhamma* exam, they were asked about the marks of a good and bad person, some of the characteristics of a Buddha's psychology, and how many types of anger there are. The textbooks used are in the traditional script of the Dai-lue language and either come from Takhilek in the Shan States or have been translated from textbooks used in the monastic high schools of Thailand. In either case, these texts provide a distillation of materials; the students do not read texts in the original Pāli for study. Rather, the point of this training is for them to acquire general Buddhist knowledge; it is not to train the students to be ritual specialists.

The students take a fourth exam, which they call *supphāsīt*. *Supphāsīt* are various aphorisms, usually said to be the words of the Buddha, and the exam itself is an exegesis of some of these. The student-novices generally do not practice this exegesis in a formal classroom setting. Instead several Sunday evenings a month, after the evening service, they practice giving short sermons based on these aphorisms in the *wihān* (during my fieldwork, this was usually done under the guidance of one of the younger monks who had a good reputation for speaking). Occasionally, I observed the monk-teacher taking time in a *Dhamma* class to practice the exegesis of *supphāsīt*. This was done in the form of writing essays, however, not sermons, and these essays were graded for grammar as well as content.

There is also a less formal (though no less important) pedagogy at Wat Pājie that should be discussed alongside the more formal Buddhist cur-

riculum. It takes place outside of the classroom, generally in the *wihān* or in doing the labor of the temple. In the *wihān*, the students come twice a day (at 6 AM and 6 PM) and pay their respect to the Buddha, chant an evening service and sit in meditation for ten to twenty minutes. In the evening, they are often lectured to by one of the senior monks on the way they are acting, behavior they need to correct, or matters they need to think about. These are not *dhamma* talks per se, because the monks are not actually discussing the *dhamma* directly, just how the student-novices should act. In addition to this twice-daily worship of the Buddha, the novices provide most of the unskilled labor for the temple: cutting the grass, cleaning the buildings, building and taking down stages for festivals and of course the all important sweeping. This labor takes place daily, but it is also effectively used as a punishment (for example, when students miss the morning worship on account of oversleeping). Both the students and the head teacher told me that there was no direct pedagogical meaning to the labor the novices did. Nevertheless, the novices learn a great deal in doing this labor: not only do they gain an understanding of how an appropriate temple looks, but they also learn what kind of responsibilities a monk or novice is required to undertake.

Two notable absences to the training of the student-novices at Wat Pājie during my research were Pāli and significant training in meditation.

Chinese/Secular Training

The second major curriculum of the students is a series of classes in secular subjects. First and foremost, the students study Chinese. As I noted above, teaching Chinese was a condition for permission to open the Buddhist Institute in the first place, but none of the teachers or students that I worked with viewed this as an impediment to other studies. To the contrary, most of the student-novices were pleased to have the opportunity. Unlike the Buddhism classes, the student-novices study Mandarin Chinese year-round and there is no formal exam required for promotion to the next grade, though of course they took unit tests. The textbook used during my fieldwork was one produced by the Yunnan Provincial Board of Education for adult learners of Chinese as a second language, and it was not particularly well-liked by the monks. However, the texts

had been donated, and so the school used them. In addition to Chinese, the students study Thai (though for only a few months), and a year of math as well²². They study English whenever there is a researcher (such as myself) or a tourist present and willing to teach, though this is not something for which they actively plan. Finally, they also learn word-processing in Chinese, Thai and Dai-lue, on the temple's I-Macs and old Macintosh computers²³. All the training in this curriculum was in the classroom, and the monks were quite explicit that the point was to give the novices the skills they would need to be competitive within China. Or perhaps to give them the skills that the Sangha would need to survive within China.

Dai-lue Cultural Studies

What I am calling the Dai-lue cultural studies component of the curriculum of Wat Pājie is actually quite diffuse. With one minor exception²⁴, there are no classes specifically directed towards Dai-lue culture, but rather all of the classes (with the exception of my ESL class) are suffused with aspects of Dai-lue culture. It begins with the Buddhist curricula. At the beginning of the first year, the students spend several weeks

²² Hansen (1999: 115) reports that there were plans to teach the students geography as well. However, to the best of my knowledge, this has not been taught at Wat Pājie. Moreover, the students' geographical knowledge is quite poor; or perhaps more accurately, their geographical knowledge is gauged to their needs and not modern/map oriented geography. Once in English class, I was teaching and had a map of Yunnan on the board. The students could not tell me (in English or Chinese) where Thailand was in relation to Yunnan. Nonetheless, some of them could tell me how to get to Thailand.

²³ These computers were donated from Thailand, as there are very few Macintosh computers in China. The temple uses them because a font of the traditional Dai-lue script was developed for Macs; the only font available on Windows-based machines is a simplified version developed at the Yunnan Nationalities Institute. However because it is the simplified and not traditional script, the monks have no interest in using it. For some of the politics of the use of scripts in Sipsongpanna, see Hansen 1995.

²⁴ The exception is Dai-lue history. Hansen (1999: 114) reports that the school planned to teach history, but in point of fact that has not happened. This is not because of a lack of interest. Both the students and the monks would like for the novices to study Dai-lue history. Indeed at a follow up visit in December 2002, I saw that the class schedules had been revised to allow for the possibility of Dai-lue history. However, the novices told me that they had yet to begin to study it. The monks have told me that the real problem is that they lack a usable textbook.

studying a Dai-lue alphabet book, *Baep Heyn Akkhara*, published by the temple from the template of a similar book from Meng Yong in the Shan States²⁵. The students of course are all novices and on average have been so for at least four or five years before they arrive at Wat Pājie. All of them have already mastered the Dai-lue alphabet. However, the Buddhism class teachers use this little book to standardize the pronunciation of the students. At Wat Pājie, the monks told me they do not use the book for its content, they just chant it. However, it is worth our paying attention to the contents of this book²⁶. Very briefly, many of the lessons in this book clearly state one of six points: 1) Studying and acquiring knowledge is good; 2) It is good for moral development; 3) More importantly, it is good for the Dai-lue people; 4) The survival of the Dai-lue people and culture is at risk; 5) To defend them, it is necessary to defend the language and the religion (i.e., Buddhism); and finally 6) Buddhism is necessary for the survival of the Dai-lue people. In other words, this little alphabet book is very much a pro-Dai nationalist book, and even if this is not spelled out to the students, they understand much of what it says. It is not irrelevant that this is what starts their education at Wat Pājie.

There are some other ways that “Dai-lue cultural studies” infuses the pedagogy of the school. The Buddhism class is almost always referred to as *daiyu ke* or *gam dai* — Dai-language class, not Buddhism class. The Dai-lue teacher of the Chinese class would regularly insert tidbits of Dai-lue culture into his Chinese class. He told me he did this because he knew the students were interested and they were not getting the information in other ways. Ironically, much of his information came from a Chinese language textbook he had studied in college²⁷. A third infusion of dai-lue cul-

²⁵ The title of this book means “the book to study letters.” This is the same book I used to learn Dai-lue.

²⁶ There are two comments to be made regarding this text. First, it is used in many places beyond Wat Pājie. While not all village temples use it, I encountered it in temples throughout the autonomous region being used to instruct novices in the Dai-lue script. Much of the time this alphabet book is used solely as a copy manual. However, and this is the second point, the language used in the book is for the most part straightforward, everyday language (there are some words in Pāli, as well as more obscure words). Thus, even if monks do not directly teach the meaning of the text, many students are able to understand it anyway.

²⁷ In one class, he provided the Chinese names of the 44 generations of the *cao phaendin*. In another class, he gave a short lecture on the history of the Dai-lue new year, *Song kǎn pī mai* (Ch. *poshui jie*, or “water splashing festival”).

ture has come in the form of physical education. The abbot of the temple feels strongly that it is important for the novices to get exercise, and so he has had them build a small basketball court and a soccer field. In addition to this, the monks came up with the idea to institute a Dai-lue martial arts class, so that every afternoon, while half the novices perform labor in the temple, and the other half study traditional Dai-lue martial arts. The monk told me they did this so that some younger people would learn the martial arts forms. Finally, the entire point of the word processing part of the secular curriculum is to enable the students to help in the text and knowledge preservation project that is the other major effort of the temple.

Conclusion: Daizu and Dai-lue: Creating Dai-lue men and/or monks in China.

Before discussing what this tri-partite curriculum tells us about the pedagogical agendas of this Buddhist Institute, I want to briefly return to the set of regulations posted on the walls of all village temples that I mentioned at the beginning of the paper. These regulations were written and distributed by the Buddhist Association of Sipsongpanna, the office of which is staffed by the monks of Wat Pājie. That is to say, the monks who devised the curricula described above and who are concerned with the problem of producing monks are the same ones who sent out this set of rules. I mentioned above the first regulation which states that:

Monks and novices must adhere to the precepts and ideals of the Buddhist virtues, carry forward and develop Buddhist Dhamma, perpetuate a life with Buddhist wisdom; respect the discipline, defend the law, love the country and love the religion.

I also mentioned that this poster is written in both Chinese and Dai-lue. While the basic gist of the Chinese and Dai-lue versions are the same, it is worth looking at the Dai-lue version as well. It states:

Monks and novices must act in accordance with the Dhamma and the Vinaya. The noble Dhamma enjoins [them] to teach the matters of the Lord Buddha, to propagate the teachings of the Buddha, to make Buddhism flourish, civilized and thriving, for another 2000 years in the future. [The monks and novices] should act according to the regulations, to love the land (*prades-bān-meng*), love the people (*cheua*), love the nation (*chāt*), to love the teachings of the Buddha (*pha-puttha sāsanā*).

There are two comments I would like to make about this. The first is that unlike the Chinese government, the Sangha of Sipsongpanna is not looking for the gradual disappearance of the religion. To the contrary, it enjoins the monks to act so that they might preserve the Buddha's teachings, the *sāsanā*. The second is to think about the meanings in the differences of the Chinese and the Dai-lue version of these rules. The Chinese version says that these monks should love the country, *guojia*, and love the religion, *zongjiao*. The Dai-lue version says that the monks should love the land (*prades-bān-meng*) and the religion (*pha puttha sasanā*), but it adds that monks should love (and thus care for) their lineage or people (*cheua*) and their ethnic group or nation (*cheau-chāt*). Note, though, that this *chāt* is not a nation that includes a state; there is no call for a separate state. Significantly, the Chinese version does not have an analogous call to love the *minzu*, the Chinese word for nationality or ethnic group. Similarly, while there is some ambiguity in the term *prades bān meuang*, in that it could refer to the country, most of the time when people refer to nation in Dai-lue, they say *guo*, using a Chinese loan word. In other words, I am suggesting that *prades bān meuang* in this context refers to Sipsongpanna, in contrast to the Chinese version, which refers to China. What is going on here, and how does it relate to the education of Dai-lue monks?

I would suggest that the regulation poster and monastic education at Wat Pājje have a similar hidden agenda. Both want to foster a greater love for the ethnic group in monks and novices who are already within the system. In both cases, this agenda is hidden in a script that is inaccessible to the vast majority of people. The number of Han Chinese people who can read Dai-lue is miniscule, and the number of Dai-lue men who can read it is also limited, especially in comparison with the numbers that can read Chinese. When a boy ordains, he can not read Dai-lue. Thus to the extent that anyone reads this regulation poster they can only read the Dai-lue portion of it after they have been novices for several years, and decided that the life suits them. Similarly, while much of the Dai-lue portion of the curriculum, might be viewed by an outsider as being nothing more than the maintenance of cultural forms, that part which is most explicitly pro-Dai, the *Baep Heyn Akkhara*, is, again, only accessible to people who have already decided to participate in the sys-

tem. Members of the government literally do not know how to read this text. They have no idea about its nationalist sentiment.

Even if they could read these texts, however, this “hidden transcript” would not necessarily bother them because both of these texts, the regulations of the temple and *Baep Heyn Akkhara*, direct our attention to what we might think of subnationalist, not nationalist sentiment. That is to say, there is no independence movement in Sipsongpanna, Buddhist-based or otherwise. The monks’ statements in regulations and alphabet study-guides are not nationalist in terms of advocating for an independent Dai state, but rather in terms of the need to protect the coherence of the Dai-lue community within China. There is no call in these texts for the return of Sipsongpanna even to the semi-independent status it enjoyed prior to the twentieth century. This has consequences for the way that we understand not just the makeup of monastic education — to which I will return in a moment — but also the way we understand the fundamental nature of Buddhism in Sipsongpanna. It is tempting to argue that the Buddhism of Sipsongpanna is fundamentally other to China. After all, Dai-lue monks are Theravāda monks, the senior monks of the Sangha were all educated in Southeast Asia, and the majority of their practices, relationships and allegiances are all directed towards the Sanghas of Southeast Asia. In other words, this argument goes, the degree to which Dai-lue monks are Chinese must be considered an imposition and not an essential part of their makeup. Yet to make this in many ways reasonable argument would be to fundamentally miss the way that the Chinese state has successfully colonized Sipsongpanna. That is to say, we should not think of Dai-lue identity, Theravāda Buddhism and China in terms of either/or, but in terms of both/and.

An anecdote from my experience teaching the *nak tham tī* class at Wat Pājie English might help clarify what I mean. Early in my fieldwork (and thus in my teaching of the students), I was teaching them to answer yes and no to simple questions: are you a monk? “Yes, I am” or “No, I am not. I’m a novice.” Sometime during this set of lessons, we talked about nationality. I asked them if they were American, and of course they responded that they were not. Are you Thai? No, we are not. Are you Dai? I asked, and they responded that they were. All was well and good. I then asked them if they were Chinese, and though I fully expected a negative

response, they answered just as loudly and clearly as when I asked if they were Dai, “Yes, we are.” My surprise at this moment is clearly based on the fact that I was conceptualizing Chinese identity in simplistic terms, conflating being Chinese with being a member of the majority Han. In fact, these boys are citizens of the People’s Republic, and while they are often viewed as inferior in some fundamental ways (Hansen 1999) and do not always view their citizenship as valuable, we should not underestimate its consequences.

Perhaps it might be better to think about this in terms of *habitus*. The home that the Dai-lue inhabit, politically, is dominated by the Chinese state. The political forms and many of the social forms are similarly designed by the Chinese state, and since these people, monks or otherwise, live inside China’s borders, they are subject to their strictures, their laws, their public educational projects and also their benefits. In addition, no matter how this situation began, most Dai-lue people, monks included, see their relationship with the Chinese state in complicated ways. They are not simply a colonized minority; rather they are Chinese citizens, which has both costs and benefits (particularly when they compare their situations with their friends and relatives in the Shan States and Laos). But this also means that the agendas of these monks, and thus the programs of the schools they build, must be similarly complicated.

Thus we return to this initial question: What is it that the novices of Sipsongpanna are being trained to be, and to what degree is monastic education about making monks? I asked many of these monks the question in a somewhat different way: Is the point of Wat Pājīe to train monks and novices to be Dai-lue men, or is the point to train Dai-lue men and boys to be monks? Most of the time, the monks avoided the stark contrast of my question, telling me instead that the preservation of Dai-lue culture was the main reason for the existence of the school. This would seem to imply that the real work of the school is to train monks to be Dai-lue men. However, I think their answers actually avoid the stark contrast of my question and caution against assertions that the *true* work of this Buddhist Institute is either religious or ethnic; both agendas are present in the school in fact. Let me put it another way: The abbot of Wat Pājīe regularly said that the survival of the Dai-lue people depended on the survival of the Dai-lue language (a la the alphabet book), and that with-

out the Dai-lue people, Buddhism itself would not survive in Sipsongpanna. In other words, it is not that the monks believe that Buddhism is unimportant, but rather that it is only by preserving the frame — Dai-lue identity — the *sāsanā* can survive. However, if the frame disappears, then Buddhism will as well²⁸.

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²⁸ Another way that we could approach answering this question is to consider the possible career paths for the students of the Buddhist Institute. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address this question fully, but it is worth briefly discussing what students who graduate from Wat Pājie can do. In general, their options as monks are fairly limited. The principal job of monks in Sipsongpanna is to train novices and young monks, and most temples only have one monk to do this job. Many of the student-novices who come to Wat Pājie will disrobe within a year or two of graduation. Some will remain in robes and travel either to Southeast Asia or to the Mahāyāna Buddhist Institutes in the rest of China to receive further education. Very few will take the higher ordination, and even fewer will become the abbot of a village temple. While the fact that many of these students ultimately disrobe is of some concern to the senior monks of the Sangha, at this point in time at least, it is problem that they do not have the resources to solve.

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