

**The Southern Zhuang Languages
of Yunnan Province's Wenshan Prefecture
from a Sociolinguistic Perspective**

从社会语言学方面看

云南省文山州的壮语南部方言

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Abstract

Although the majority of China's 16 million Zhuang nationality people live in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, over one million Zhuang also live in Yunnan Province, mostly in the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in the extreme southeast of the province. More than half of these Zhuang speak Central Taic languages collectively known to linguists as "Southern Zhuang," but referred to by their speakers as "Nong," "Dai," and "Min." The goal of this paper is to introduce the sociolinguistic situation of the Yunnan Southern Zhuang languages, especially focusing on the current language use situation in rural Southern Zhuang villages, the present vitality of these languages and their prospects for future preservation and development.

1 Introduction

The Zhuang people are the largest minority nationality within the People's Republic of China, numbered at 16 million during the 2000 national census (National Bureau of Statistics 2003). Of these, approximately one third speak "Southern Zhuang," that is, Central Taic varieties, whereas two thirds speak "Northern Zhuang," or Northern Taic varieties. Over 1.1 million Zhuang nationality people live in Yunnan Province, and more than half of these are speakers of Central Taic language varieties.

Though the Tai family as a whole has been the subject of a significant amount of research in Thailand, China, and elsewhere during the past century, much remains to be done. Before his death in 1987, the great Chinese-American linguist Li Fang-kuei wrote of the pressing need for more descriptions of Taic languages in China. Li would be glad to see how much new research (and older, previously unpublished research) on the Chinese Taic languages has been published in the past two decades. There remains a need, however, to supplement our knowledge of the Tai family with additional data from less studied languages. The Central Taic languages of Yunnan remain some of the least researched languages of the Tai family, and thus the current work endeavors to bring forth some preliminary data on these languages.

1.1 The Taic Languages

The Tai¹ group of languages stretches from northeast India in the west, down into Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and up through the provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Guangdong in China, with a few villages on Hainan Island. There are over 80 million speakers of Taic languages (Li and Solnit 2002), the language with the largesse population of speakers being that of the Thai language of Thailand. Within China most members of the Zhuang, Dai and Bouyei nationality groups speak Taic languages.

¹ Because the aspirated form, "Thai," is generally understood as a name for the languages or people of the nation of Thailand, the unaspirated form, "Tai," is generally preferred for the language group. This can result in confusion, however, with those Southwestern Taic languages and people officially designated as the Dai nationality within China, as the "d" in Chinese Pinyin Romanization represents an unaspirated, unvoiced alveolar plosive. For the purposes of this work, "Tai" represents the group or family of languages as a whole, whereas "Dai" represents the official nationality in China, and "Dai Zhuang" represents the Central Taic language spoken in western Wenshan Prefecture, known to Chinese linguists as "Wen-Ma Southern Zhuang."

The Tai family has been grouped into Central, Southwestern, and Northern branches (Li 1977). Within China, speakers of almost all Central Taic languages have been grouped into the official Zhuang nationality since the late 1950s, together with those Northern Taic speakers residing in Yunnan, Guangxi, Guangdong and Hainan provinces. The Northern Taic speakers in Guizhou were assigned to a separate Bouyei nationality, while Southwestern Taic speakers form the Dai nationality. In Chinese works, the Central Taic languages are known as “the Southern dialect of Zhuang”² whereas those Northern Taic languages whose speakers are classified as Zhuang are known as “the Northern dialect of Zhuang.”

There are several salient phonetic differences between “Southern Zhuang,” that is, Central Taic languages and those now called “Northern Zhuang” and “Bouyei” (Northern Taic). Southern Zhuang varieties have retained a contrast between aspirated and unaspirated stops, whereas Northern Zhuang and Bouyei have merged these.³ Southern Zhuang has also retained a variety of oral or nasal stop plus liquid consonant clusters, whereas Northern Zhuang and Bouyei have lost these pre-liquid stops (thus these Proto-Taic clusters are usually pronounced as an “r-like” sound such as [ɣ] in Northern Taic languages). Edmondson identifies several historical patterns of phonological change that seem to have moved across both Southern and Northern Zhuang dialects, leading him to conclude that “a north-south division is a too simplified picture of Zhuang linguistic history” (Edmondson 1994:164).

Zhang et al. (1999:9) also state that Southern Zhuang vocabulary is more similar to that of Thai, Lao and Dai than is that of the Northern Zhuang and Bouyei languages, presumably because of less lexical borrowing from Chinese languages. However, Southern Zhuang languages as well as Northern Zhuang languages have long been influenced by dialects of Chinese. Zhang et al. (1999) state that, when speaking about matters of daily life, the average speaker of Zhuang uses 30-40% Chinese loanwords; when speaking about issues of government or economics, the percentage of loanwords rises to 80%. But Edmondson states that “Northern Zhuang shows a much greater degree of contact with the Han language than does Southern Zhuang. In most cases, Han loans [in Southern Zhuang] have been nativized into the tonal system long ago” (1996:178).

1.2 The Central Taic Languages

In this paper, we will focus primarily on the Yunnan Central Taic languages whose speakers have been classified within the Zhuang nationality. We identify two main Central Taic languages spoken by Yunnan Zhuang: Nong Zhuang and Dai Zhuang; in addition, we introduce a much smaller newly discovered language: Min Zhuang, which also appears to be Central Taic. In addition to these three distinct languages, there also appears to be at least one Taic language spoken by people classified within the Dai nationality, further to the West in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture. Also there are small pockets of speakers of other Central Taic languages in Funing County to the far east of the province; these languages may more closely resemble the Central Taic Yang Zhuang, Zuojiang Zhuang and/or Yongnan Zhuang of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (hereafter “Guangxi”) than the other Yunnan Central Taic languages.

Chinese linguists, such as Wei and Qin (1980) and Zhang et al. (1999), have previously identified the two main central Taic languages spoken in Yunnan as “subdialects”⁴ of Southern Zhuang and have assigned them names based on the counties in which they are spoken: Yan-Guang (砚广), spoken in southern Guangnan County, Yanshan County, Maguan County, northern Wenshan County), Xichou and Malipo; and Wen-Ma (文麻, or 文马), spoken in southern Wenshan County, southern Malipo County, eastern Maguan County, and Zhongheying Township (Kaiyuan County).

² In Chinese these are called “*Zhuang yu nanbu fangyan* (壮语南部方言)” and “*Zhuang yu beibu fangyan* (壮语北部方言),” respectively.

³ Though Proto-Taic unaspirated oral plosives have merged with the aspirated oral plosives in Southern Zhuang when preceding a liquid.

⁴ Wei & Qin (1980) uses the word *tuyu*, which can be translated as “subdialect” or “vernacular.”

We refer to these varieties by the names used by the speakers themselves: Nong, Dai, and Min; usually we add the name of their official nationality classification, “Zhuang,” to avoid confusion with other languages. Nong, Dai and Min have recently been registered with the International Standards Organization’s system for standard naming of languages (ISO 639-3) under the following names and codes: Zhuang, Nong [zhn], Zhuang, Dai [zhd] and Zhuang, Minz [zgm].⁵

In addition to these two dialects spoken in Yunnan, Zhang et al. (1999) list three other Southern Zhuang dialects spoken in Guangxi: Yongnan (estimated population 1,800,000 in 2000), Zuojiang (estimated population 1,500,000 in 2000), and Dejing (estimated population 870,000 in 2000, also called Yang Zhuang). According to Zhang et al. (1999:47), Nong Zhuang is phonologically close to Yang Zhuang (Dejing) and Zuojiang Zhuang. Our own phonological analysis confirms that Nong Zhuang is the same language as the “Western Nung” described by William Gedney. (Gedney 1999)

Dai Zhuang, on the other hand, is reportedly the most unique among the Southern Zhuang dialects. This dialect has retained voiced initial consonants and vowel raising and rounding, whereas final stops have disappeared. The Wenshan dialect of Dai Zhuang as spoken in Heimo village may have the most restrictive syllable structure of all Zhuang dialects, with only 36 possible syllable rhymes, whereas other dialects usually have 80 to 100.

1.3 Geography and Population

Of the almost 1.2 million Zhuang people residing in China’s Yunnan Province, over one million live in the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture (Yunnan Province 2004). Wenshan Prefecture has an area of 31,456 square kilometers and lies on the borders between China’s Yunnan and Guangxi provinces and between China and Vietnam in the extreme southeast of Yunnan Province. Wenshan is a subtropical mountainous region with elevation ranging from 1,380 to 1,600 meters. Being both high in elevation and on the edge of the tropics, Wenshan enjoys mild weather in both winter and summer with plentiful rainfall in the summer. Most areas are too mountainous for large-scale commercial farming; however, many areas are well suited to terraced rice-paddy farming, tea plantations, fruit orchards, tobacco, rapeseed and maize fields and an abundant variety of vegetables and medical herbs. In addition to this agriculture, small-scale livestock husbandry (hogs, ducks, chicken, etc.) is practiced by most villagers. There is also small-scale coal, mineral, and metal mining in some areas, and controlled forestry.

The Prefecture administers eight counties: Wenshan (文山), Yanshan (砚山), Qiubei (丘北), Guangnan (广南), Xichou (西畴), Maguan (马关), Malipo (麻栗坡), and Funing (富宁). Maguan, Malipo, and Funing counties share a common border with Vietnam; Wenshan has 438 kilometers of international border, and an official port of entry at Tianbao Township in Malipo County. Eleven official nationalities live within the Prefecture, including the Han, Zhuang, Miao, Yi, Yao, Hui, Dai, Bai, Bouyei, Mongolian and Gelao.

In Wenshan, as in other neighboring regions, ethnic groups are often intermixed geographically, without clearly definable geographical boundaries, at least if one only considers the lay of the land from a two dimensional perspective. Altitude, roads, markets, and water sources are important factors in the relative distribution of the various ethnic groups. An introduction to Wenshan Prefecture, *Wenshan Zhuangzu Miaozu Zizhizhou Gaikuang* (1986), records a local saying: “Han and Hui live by the market, Zhuang and Dai live by the water, Miao and Yi live on the mountains, Yao lies among the bamboo.”⁶ (汉族、回族住街头，壮族、傣族住水头，苗族、彝族住山头，瑶族住箐头). Although today members of all ethnic groups can be found in the market towns, and Han can be found in almost every district, one still finds most Zhuang and Dai rural villages located near rivers and streams at

⁵ The ISO 639-3 language name and code tables are available online at: <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/codes.asp>.

⁶ Throughout this paper, English translations of quotations from Chinese or French language sources are those of the author.

the lower altitudes, with Yi and Miao often living higher up on the hills and mountains, and the Yao often living in the most remote, forested areas, especially in Funing County.

Outside of this prefecture, Zhuang are also found in Yunnan's Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture and Qujing Municipality, as well as smaller numbers in three counties in the far north of the province. Outside of Yunnan Province, there are over four million Central Taic speakers in China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, divided among several different Southern Zhuang languages, as well as the E language, spoken in the Rongshui Miao Autonomous County of Guangxi. In northern Vietnam, along the border with Yunnan and Guangxi, there are around two million speakers of four central Taic language groups whose levels of intercomprehension with Southern Zhuang varieties may be quite high. The total number of speakers of Central Taic languages, in China's Guangxi and Yunnan provinces and Northern Vietnam, is in excess of seven million. (See Appendix A for a county by county breakdown of the Yunnan Province Zhuang population.)

1.4 Ethnic History and Identity

For as long as we have recorded history for this region, the Taic peoples have been present. While there are various theories about the pre-history of the Taic speaking peoples of southern China and Southeast Asia, it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the archaeological and other evidence. We do know that in ancient times the Taic people began establishing their villages on river banks and shore sides, and developed a sophisticated system of rice paddy farming. The importance of rice paddy farming to the Taic peoples can be seen in the frequency with which the Taic word for rice paddy or field, *na*, is used in geographical names: within Yunnan Province alone there are approximately one thousand village names that include the Taic word *na*, over half of which are in Wenshan Prefecture (Huang and Wang 2000).

In ancient Chinese records, the ancestors of the modern Taic peoples are known during the Warring States (476 BC – 221 BC) and Qin dynasty (221 BC – 206 BC) periods of Chinese history as “Baiyue” (百越) or “Baipu” (百濮) (Mengzi Xian Zhi 1995:131). As Chinese understanding of the ethnic groups to the south increased, the Baiyue were divided in Chinese records into more specific groupings. Already in the Qin period, the term “Luoyue” (骆越) was being used to refer to the Nong Zhuang (Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005: 317). Zhang et al. (1999:12) state that the term “Xi'ou” (西瓯) was used to refer to the ancestors of today's speakers of the Northern Taic languages, that is, who are now classified within the Zhuang and Bouyei nationalities in China. On the other hand, “Luoyue” referred to the ancestors of those who now speak Central and Southwestern Taic languages, now classified within China's Zhuang and Dai nationalities. In Chinese historical records of the two Han dynasties (206 BC – 220 AD) and continuing throughout the Tang (618 – 907 AD) and Song (960 – 1279) dynasties,⁷ we also see use of the term “Liao” (獠 or 僚), which Dodd (1923) claims to be an ancient ethnonym of the Taic peoples (Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005: 317, Mengzi Xian Zhi 1995:132⁸). During the Han dynasties, the region now included in Guangnan county formed a kingdom named “Gouding (句町),” and the term “Phu” (濮) was also used of the Taic peoples of this kingdom, possibly related to the Taic word *pu/phu/bu* still used to this day by most Zhuang groups, meaning “tribe, people, person, ethnic group.”⁹

Chinese records from the Yuan (1271 – 1368 AD), Ming (1368 – 1644 AD) and Qing (1644 – 1911 AD) dynasty periods start to recognize the presence of a number of more specific ethnic groups in Wenshan Prefecture. The

⁷ During the Tang and Song dynasties, parts of Yunnan were governed by the Nanzhao (748 – 902 AD) and Dali (937 – 1253) kingdoms, centered around Erhai lake, northwest of Kunming.

⁸ Mengzi Xian Zhi cites the Chinese historical record entitled *Huayang Guo Zhi, Nan Zhong Zhi, 13*, 《华阳国志·南中志·十三》.

⁹ Some use a form of the word *kwn/kon* instead, which is another word for “person/people,” used as a measure word in Nong Zhuang in a way similar to *ge* (个) in Chinese.

Kaihua Fuzhi (Kaihua Prefecture Gazetteer, 1828) of the late Qing period includes an appendix of “races” (种人) which lists a number of ethnic groupings in the Wenshan area, among them the Nong, Sha and Tuliao (Tang et al. 2004; Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005: 329ff.).¹⁰

The increasing specification with which Chinese archives record the various ethnic groups in the area now incorporated into Yunnan Province reflects the increased control China exerted over the area. As Giersch (2006) has pointed out, Yunnan as a Chinese government entity is a relatively recent creation, dating to the establishment of the “Yunnan Branch Central Secretariat” by the Mongolian Yuan dynasty in 1274, following their defeat of the Dali kingdom. However, Chinese involvement in the region goes back to the 4th century BC when the conflict between the Chu and Qin kingdoms overflowed into the Yunnan area. Subsequent Chinese dynasties occasionally attempted to assert their sovereignty over the various indigenous kingdoms of Yunnan, but it wasn’t until the Ming period that significant cultural integration of Yunnan into China occurred because of the permanent stationing of Chinese troops in frontier areas and market towns, and large numbers of Han settlers (Giersch 2006: 34). Giersch credits the Ming dynasty with formalizing the “native official system”, through which predominately non-Han areas like Wenshan would be governed by indigenous officials, known as *tusi* (土司) and *tuguan* (土官). Though many of the indigenous officials remained in their offices until the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911 or beyond, there was a parallel Han government in most areas, responsible for governing the Han soldiers, settlers, and merchants, and gradually Taic political power in the region diminished.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the government began a process of officially recognizing China’s ethnic minority groups. The term “Zhuang” (pronounced [tsu:ŋ⁴] or [ɕuəŋ⁴]) is a Taic autonym widely used in central and northern Guangxi by Northern Taic-speaking peoples there, and has been used in written Chinese records there for centuries, originally written as 獯. The character used to represent the Zhuang nationality was changed to 壮 (meaning ‘strong, healthy; magnificent’) in 1964, reportedly at the suggestions of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai himself (CASS 1994:838).

Although now officially classified within the Zhuang nationality, most of the Central and Northern Taic speakers of Wenshan Prefecture still consider themselves, and are considered by surrounding ethnic groups, to belong to one of three main ethnic groups: the pu Nong [p^hu nŋ], the pu/bu Dai [ʔbu ʔdai] and the bu Yei [pu ʔjai] / [pu juei] / [pu ji].¹¹ In the Chinese language, these three groups are known as “Nongzu” or “Nongren,” “Tuzu” or “Tuliao,” and “Shazu” or “Sharen,” respectively.¹² (As the prefixes pu and bu mean “people” or “ethnic group” in Zhuang, and “zu” and “ren” mean the same in Chinese, we will refer to these groups only by the ethnonyms themselves.) Although all Nong, Yei and Dai speakers are now officially part of the Zhuang nationality, these three groups remain distinct groups linguistically and culturally at a local level.

The three ethnic groupings correlate with spoken languages: the Nong Zhuang and Dai Zhuang speak different Central Taic (Southern Zhuang) language varieties, whereas the Yei speak several Northern Taic varieties, which have been assigned the names “Guibian Northern Zhuang”¹³ and “Qiubei Northern Zhuang.” Zhang et al. (1999)

¹⁰ The original *Kaihua Fuzhi* made use of Chinese characters containing the “dog” radical (犛) for a number of ethnic groups, including the Nong and the Dai Zhuang. The Nong are referred to as “獯人, *Nongren*” and the Dai Zhuang as “土獯, *Tuliao*.” (獯 has no meaning in modern Chinese, to our knowledge, 獯 can mean ‘fierce.’) During the 1950s a systematic attempt was made to end the use of derogatory names and characters, so now characters with a “person radical” (亻) are used for these two groups: Nong 侗, Tuliao 土僚.

¹¹ Tones vary widely by dialect.

¹² In some Dai Zhuang villages it is common (when speaking in Chinese) to refer to the Nong (the largest of the three groups) as “Zhuang” in contrast to themselves (whom they call “Tuzu” in Chinese, identical to the official name of an unrelated Mongolic ethnic group in the northwest of China).

¹³ *Guibian* (桂边) means “on the edge of Guangxi.”

consider the Northern Taic language of Qiubei County to be significantly different from the Northern Zhuang variety spoken in northern Guangnan and Funing counties.

The 2004 total population of Wenshan Prefecture is listed at 3,349,665 (Wen Nong Nian 1 Biao 2005). Of this number 29.9% (1,002,641) were of Zhuang nationality. As official censuses in China typically only distinguish among ethnic groups according to the officially recognized categories, there are not exact figures as to relative populations of the Nong, Yei and Dai Zhuang. However, Wenshan Prefecture sources provide the following percentages for the three sub-branches of Zhuang in Wenshan Prefecture: 53% Nong, 36% Yei, and 11% Dai. (See Appendix B for county-level breakdowns of the Wenshan Prefecture Zhuang ethnic groups.)

In addition to these three main groupings, the *Wenshan Prefecture Ethnic Gazetteer* (Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005) also identifies Zhuang subgroups called “Buxiong” and “Long’an,” and the *Funing County Ethnic Gazetteer* (Lu and Nong 1998), also identifies Zhuang sub-groups with the Chinese names of Butu (布土), Tianbao (天保), Bu’ao (布傲), Jiazhou (甲州), Longjiang (龙降), Mayang (麻央), Yangwu (洋乌), Buli (布俚), Buyei (布越),¹⁴ Long’an (隆安) and Buyang (布央), some of which the prefecture gazetteer has included under the Nong or Yei Zhuang categories. To our knowledge all of these subgroups with the exception of the Buyang¹⁵ are speaking varieties of Northern and Central Taic languages, but we do not yet know to what degree these different autonyms of the small Zhuang subgroups correspond to distinctive languages. In addition, members of the small Zhuang group calling themselves Kwn Min do not identify themselves as belonging to any of the above groupings, and speak what appears to be a distinct Zhuang language from the other known languages. Many of these Zhuang sub-groups in Funing County result from more recent migrations into Yunnan from various locations in Guangxi, according to Lu and Nong (1998).

1.4.1 The Dai Zhuang

The Dai Zhuang, population around 120,000, are found primarily in the west of the prefecture, in central and northern Wenshan County (especially in Kaihua, Panzihua, Matang, Laohuilong, and Dehou districts and townships), western Yanshan (especially Pingyuan Township), Maguan County (especially Nanlao district) and western Malipo County, as well as a handful of villages in southwestern Guangnan in Zhulin Township. There are also Dai Zhuang in Zhongheying Township of Kaiyuan County, Mengzi County and probably Gejiu County, all three in neighboring Honghe Prefecture, as well as around 200 speakers in Muang Khuong Township, across the international border in Lao Cai province, Vietnam, according to Edmondson, Gregerson and Nguyen (2000).

It is common locally to distinguish between at least four types of Dai Zhuang, based on the design of the headdress of the women’s traditional costume: Piled Headdress Tu (*Da Tou Tu*, 搭头土), Flat Headdress Tu (Ping Tou Tu, 平头土), Pointed Headdress Tu (Jian Tou Tu, 尖头土), Slanted Headdress Tu (Pian Tou Tu, 偏头土). These names based on the women’s headdresses are not pejorative. Our research, conducted in villages of each of these four groups, indicates that the various Dai Zhuang communities all descend from common ancestors relatively recently (i.e., within the last century or two), and have ongoing contact with each other. The different headdresses seem to be more a result of local styles rather than ancient cultural or linguistic divisions. (The Nong Zhuang also have quite different headdresses in different areas.) Therefore, when necessary to acknowledge differences among the Dai Zhuang, we will refer to them primarily according to the relative location of the dialects:

¹⁴ Although the standard Pinyin for these characters (布越) is actually “buyue,” when Dai and He (2006) use the same Chinese characters for the Yei Zhuang ethnic group, they provide the phonetic transcription [pu²²jai¹³]. There are no Chinese characters pronounced as “yei” or “yai” (nor are these possible syllable forms in Pinyin Romanization), so researchers writing in Chinese were forced to select a similar sounding character.

¹⁵ Buyang Zhuang speak one of three mutually unintelligible languages which Li Jinfang (1997) has classified into the Ge-yang branch of Kadai (or Kam-Tai).

- Northern Dai Zhuang: also known as Piled Headdress Tu (*Da Tou Tu*, 搭头土, *Daigelai*, *Black Tulao*), Dai Zhuang as spoken in Northern Wenshan and Western Yanshan counties. This is the largest subgroup of Dai Zhuang in terms of population.
- Central Dai Zhuang: also known as Flat Headdress Tu (*Ping Tou Tu*, 平头土, *River Bank Tulao*), Dai Zhuang as spoken in Central Wenshan County's Panzhuhua Township, around the city of Wenshan.
- Southern Dai Zhuang: also known as Pointed Headdress Tu (*Jian Tou Tu*, 尖头土), Dai Zhuang as spoken in Malipo and Maguan counties.
- Northeastern Dai Zhuang: also known as Slanted Headdress Tu (*Pian Tou Tu*, 偏头土), Dai Zhuang as spoken in Guangnan and eastern Yanshan counties.

It is important to note that though the term “Tu” in the western part of the prefecture almost always refers to speakers of Dai Zhuang, in Funing County the term “bu Tu” is often applied to Northern Taic speakers. (Likewise, the Nùng languages of Vietnam, while closely related, are probably not all mutually intelligible with the Nong Zhuang language of Wenshan Prefecture.¹⁶)

Although Zhuang are usually considered to be the original inhabitants of Wenshan Prefecture, it is likely that the several Taic language groups in Wenshan have different histories. It is possible that the Dai Zhuang have lived in the Wenshan Prefecture area the longest, hence their exonym “Tuzu,” which can mean “indigenous people.”¹⁷ According to He (1998), of all the Zhuang groups currently living in Yunnan, it is the Dai Zhuang who descend directly from the ancient Yunnan tribe known to the Chinese as “phu Lao (濮僚).”

1.4.2 The Nong Zhuang

The Nong Zhuang are the largest Zhuang ethnic grouping in Yunnan Province, numbering around 550,000, and are found in largest concentrations in central and southern Guangnan County (especially in Zhetu, Nalun, Liancheng, Jiumo, Nasa, Zhulin, Zhujie, Wuzhu and southern Ake districts and townships), Yanshan County (especially in Zhela, Bang'e, Ganhe, Ameng, Jiangna, and Panlong districts and townships) and Wenshan County (especially in Binglie, Matang and Laohuilong districts and townships) counties. Smaller concentrations live in the remaining five counties: Maguan, Xichou, Malipo, Funing and Qiubei.

There is quite a bit of variety of costume and dialect among the Nong Zhuang of Wenshan Prefecture. He (1998:40-44) identifies five different subgroups of Nong, largely based on costume and geography. Dai and He (2006:117) mention four of these, including their own Nong Zhuang pronunciation of these ethnonyms:

- The Nong Dau¹⁸ (nɔŋ⁴⁴ta:u⁵⁵), or Dao Nong (道依), live in Guangnan County and are the most numerous subgroup of Nong.

¹⁶ There are some small Zhuang groups in southwestern Guangxi, e.g., in Jingxi county, who also call themselves Nong; we are not yet able to confirm whether these are far eastern pockets of the same Nong Zhuang language described here or whether they speak a different language variety.

¹⁷ The “Lao” syllable may derive from an ancient Taic autonym used by various Taic groups, e.g., the majority ethnic group of Laos. Dodd (1923) claims that the Lao/Lau autonym is a more ancient autonym than the widely used Tai/Dai/Thai autonym, and the originators of “Zhuang online” (www.rauz.com) have proposed the term {rauz} [l/ra:u^{A2}] as a cover term for the cultures included in the Bouyei and Zhuang nationalities in China, as well as some Taic groups in Vietnam.

¹⁸ Zhuang modifiers follow nouns, whereas Chinese modifiers precede nouns. Therefore the noun “Nong [nɔŋ⁴⁴]” begins the Zhuang forms of names, but ends the Chinese form of the names.

- The Nong Nyeng (nɔŋ⁴⁴ɲɛŋ²²), or Niang Nong (仰依), live along the Chouyang River (畴阳河) in Xichou and Malipo Counties, and are also called “Blue-green Nong (青依)” for the color of their clothes.
- The Nong Du (nɔŋ⁴⁴tu³¹), or Du Nong (赌依), live along the Duzhou River (赌咒河) in Maguan County.
- The Ting Nong (厅依), live along the Puting River (普厅河) in central Funing County (Xinhua, Banlan and Guichao Townships).¹⁹
- The Nong Jing ([nɔŋ⁴⁴tɕiŋ²⁴]), or Jin Nong (锦依), in northeastern Wenshan County and Yanshan County, also called “Upper Nong” (上方依), “because they lived in the northern part of Wenshan County.”

These names seem to correspond to the more noticeable differences in costume among the Nong Zhuang, especially concerning the women's headdress. However, use of these names does not seem to be widespread among the Nong villagers. Instead, Nong we interviewed simply refer to themselves as “Nong from [a given county, township, district or village].” Within the largest of these groups, the Nong Dau of Guangnan County, there seems to be noticeable variety among dialects and costumes.

The Nong Zhuang, in contrast to the Dai Zhuang, may have migrated to the Wenshan region from western Guangxi at some later period, as their language is more similar to some of Guangxi's Zhuang languages. Chinese records from at least Tang dynasty times report the presence of an important clan of apparently Taic “barbarians” named Nong (儂) in what is now southwestern Guangxi and northeastern Vietnam. The French scholar Savina claims that the “Nùng” were already a major Taic clan in the area that is now southeast China and northern Vietnam, and that the Nong, along with the other major Taic “tribes of Gui (桂) Zhou, (周) and Huang (黄), ceaselessly revolted against the Chinese mandarins of Guangdong, Guangxi, Tonkin [Northern Vietnam] and Guizhou throughout the first ten centuries of our era”²⁰ (Savina 1924: III). Savina cites the French commander and historian Lunet de Lajonnière²¹ as saying that by the ninth century AD the Nong and Huang families were the most powerful of the Taic groups, and occupied 18 Chinese prefectures south of the “Five Mountains.” Likewise Barlow (1987:254), citing Chinese historical records, explains that while the Huang clan of apparently Taic peoples revolted against the Tang dynasty administration in what is now Guangxi in 756 AD, by the second half of the 9th century, the Nong clan had risen in power and apparently allied itself with the powerful Nan Zhao kingdom of Yunnan. Later, in the Song dynasty (960 – 1126 AD), a farmer called Nong Zhigao led a rebellion against the dynasty, briefly founding an independent kingdom and even laying siege to Guangzhou. His forces were eventually crushed, and his ultimate fate remains a legend.

Many Nong Zhuang speakers in Wenshan today still have the surname Nong (spelled either 农 or 依, in the modern simplified forms of 農 and 儂 used today in P. R. China). In his picture book on the Yunnan Zhuang, He (1998) claims that the “Dao Nong,” that is the Nong Zhuang of Guangnan County (known in the Song period as the Temo Dao, or Temo Highway, 特磨道), are the descendants of the remnant of Nong Zhigao's army. The traditional ruling family of the Guangnan area, named Nong (依), who governed the area through the hereditary *tusi* and *tuguan* (ethnic deputy ruler) positions throughout the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties and even into the Republican Period, are believed to be direct descendants of Nong Zhigao (He 1998: 40), and Nong Zhigao is revered as a powerful deity by some Zhuang to this day.

¹⁹ The Ting Nong are not mentioned in Dai & He 2006.

²⁰ “...durant les dix premiers siècles de notre ère, les tribus thai dont les principales étaient celles des Quei (桂), des Tchéou (周), des Hông (黄), et des Nùng (儂[农]) ne cessèrent de se révolter contre les mandarins chinois du Kouang-Tong, du Kouang-Si, du Tonkin et du Kouï-Tchéou.”

²¹ Lunet de Lajonnière, *Ethnographie des Territoires Militaires*, Hanoi, 1904.

Within Wenshan Prefecture itself there are around 15,000 people classified in the Dai nationality (Yunnan Province 2003), almost all living in Maguan, Wenshan and Malipo counties. At least some of these people were the “Baiyi” (摆衣) ethnic group, who were originally classified as Zhuang during the national classification of ethnic groups in the 1950s but then were reassigned to the Dai nationality in May 1980, according to the *Wenshan Prefecture Ethnic Gazetteer* (Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005:20). However, this same document later lists the name “Baiyi” (摆衣) as another name for the “Bu Dai” or Dai Zhuang (Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005:355). Two distinct languages are spoken among Wenshan Prefecture’s Dai nationality people: Zhuang and Han Dai (Wenshan Min-Zong Wei 2005:160). From the data provided in that work, it appears that the Zhuang spoken by the Dai is Nong Zhuang. The Han Dai is probably the same as the Maguan Dai dialect described in Zhou and Luo (1999). This is clearly a Southwestern Taic language and therefore not as closely related to the Central Taic languages as they are to each other, although perhaps it is becoming more similar in form due to contact influence from the surrounding Nong and Dai Zhuang languages.

1.4.3 The Min Zhuang

The Min Zhuang are quite small in number, probably only around 2,600, inhabiting only eleven villages in the extreme southeast corner of Yunnan Province near the borders of Guangxi province and Vietnam. All eleven villages²² are located in the Langheng area of Tianbeng Township and are in contact with each other. The Min Zhuang are surrounded by speakers of other Zhuang languages, and are reportedly all bidialectal in Guibian (Yei) Northern Zhuang.

2 Language Use

In this section, we discuss how the rural Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang and Min Zhuang peoples of Wenshan use their languages in their daily lives, summarizing language use research conducted in a number of Yunnan Southern Zhuang areas during the years 2005 to 2007. We focus especially on patterns of multilingualism, with an eye toward understanding the future of these languages in their rapidly changing environments. We will begin by describing the linguistic milieu in which these languages find themselves, and then explain our own language use research methodology. Following this, we present findings of the current research, with some notes on language attitudes observed among the Zhuang. Finally, we will close this section with a discussion of three factors that seem to be most significantly affecting Chinese bilingualism patterns among the Southern Zhuang speakers of Yunnan.

2.1 The Linguistic Milieu

Zhuang languages, like all minority languages in China today, are influenced heavily by Chinese. Han Chinese people make up more than 91% of the population of China, and there are many urban and some rural ethnic minorities who also speak some dialect of Chinese as their first language. Even in an ethnic minority autonomous area, such as Wenshan Prefecture, where Han are a numerical minority, Chinese is still the most common language used these days, because the two thirds of the population which are ethnic minorities are divided among dozens of mutually unintelligible languages from four different language families.²³ Chinese is the only language used in most formal domains: government, formal medicine, education, etc. It is also the most common trade language used

²² The eleven Min Zhuang speaking villages are: Guixun-Anhe (安哈-贵训), Sankeshu (三颗数), Xionggou (雄估), Shangmabu (上麻布), Tianfang (田房), Getao (戈桃), Gezao (戈造), Gecai (戈才), Bagan (叭干), Na'en (那恩), Longnong (龙弄). All of these were believed to be near 100% Min Zhuang, with the exception of Shangmabu which is mixed with Nong Zhuang speakers. The population figure of 2,600 is based on the 1982 populations of the 10 purely Min Zhuang villages as recorded in Funing Xian Di Ming Zhi (1986), projected forward to 2000 based on the 2000 population figures for Zhuang nationality.

²³ The four families are: Tibeto-Burman, Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien and Mon-Khmer. The first three are grouped by many Chinese linguists into a larger “Sino-Tibetan” grouping. There is only one known Mon-Khmer language in Wenshan Prefecture, the Bagan language, spoken by a few hundred people in southern Guangnan county and northern Xichou counties (Li 1996c, Wu 2004).

among different ethnic groups who do not share a common mutually intelligible language. Usually Zhuang use the local dialect of Chinese to communicate with Han, Miao, Yi or other people, and in town markets in most areas of Wenshan local Chinese is the most common language heard. There are exceptions; for example, in the heavily Zhuang areas of northern Guangnan and Funing it is not unusual to meet Yi, Miao, Yao or even Han who can understand and sometimes even speak the local Zhuang dialect, although this is probably less often the case now than it was a century ago.

Though the Putonghua dialect of Chinese (also known as Mandarin, or *Guanhua*, or *Guoyu*) is the official language of China,²⁴ and is almost exclusively used in national and provincial level broadcast media, local dialects of Chinese are much more common than standard Putonghua in daily life in Wenshan for both Han and ethnic minority people. In all Wenshan Prefecture locations, except for Bo'ai Township of Funing County, the local Chinese dialects are varieties of Southwestern Mandarin (*Xinan Guanhua*), though there are variations in the phonology and lexicon from county to county and even within counties. With the exception of Bo'ai, the local Chinese dialects spoken within the prefecture do not differ from each other sufficiently so as to cause communication difficulties, assuming the speakers adequately command Wenshan Chinese. The Wenshan Chinese dialects are significantly different, however, from other Southwest Mandarin dialects, such as those of Kunming, Sichuan, and the Guiliuhua dialects spoken in Guangxi. Throughout this article when the terms "local Chinese dialect" or "Wenshan Chinese" are employed, we are referring to the variety of Southwestern Mandarin Chinese as spoken in that county. When the terms "Putonghua" or "Standard Chinese" are used, we are referring to the official standard dialect of Chinese as used in national broadcast media and taught in elementary textbooks through the Pinyin Romanization.

There is some local limited broadcasting in minority languages: the prefecture radio station broadcasts several times daily in Nong Zhuang, as well as in Miao, Yi and Yao languages, and Funing County television broadcasts daily in Guibian (Yei) Northern Zhuang. However, use of minority languages in formal domains has been hampered by the lack of a single language understood by the majority of the population in any of Wenshan's eight counties, with the exception of Funing (where probably at least half of the population can understand Guibian Yei Zhuang). In addition, all of Wenshan's minority languages lack widely used writing systems. In fact, national and provincial government language commissions have developed Romanized orthographies for Zhuang, Yao and Miao, and there is an official ideographic script intended for use by Yunnan's many different Yi nationality language groups.²⁵ However, in none of these ethnic groups has there been a widespread, successful literacy campaign in a minority script (within Wenshan Prefecture, that is) and most minority language speakers in Wenshan are not aware of the existence of these scripts.²⁶

2.2 Language Use Research Methodology

Language use and bilingualism are characteristics of the population of speakers rather than of the language itself. Therefore, without careful sampling it is not possible to statistically generalize the results. The ideal sampling situation for assessing features of the population of speakers is pure random sampling, which requires an exhaustive sampling frame—that is, a complete list of the names (and locations) of every member of the population in question. In our case this would be every speaker of Yunnan Southern Zhuang languages: a population of more than three quarters of a million people. Due to this large population and the fact that Chinese census records classify speakers

²⁴ The word *Putonghua* (普通话) literally means "common speech." Chinese living outside mainland China often prefer the term *Guoyu* (国语), meaning "national language."

²⁵ This Yi ideographic script is not a traditional script itself, but a combination of characters from several independent traditional orthographies.

²⁶ Numerous times Zhuang speakers told the researchers, "our language has no writing system," and were surprised to be shown the Zhuang Roman script on the Chinese currency they handle every day! The Zhuang spelling on every unit of the Chinese currency is based on Yongbei Northern Zhuang pronunciation, not their Southern Zhuang, and on the one, two or five *jiao* bills (1/10, 2/10 or 5/10 of a *yuan*), the orthography appears to be the older, 1950s version of the national Zhuang orthography. But nonetheless, it is a writing system that can basically be used to write other Zhuang languages as well, with some adaptation and different spelling conventions.

of various Zhuang languages (and also those people who have at least one Zhuang parent) in the same general category of “Zhuang nationality,” we deemed it not viable to construct such a sampling frame. At the beginning of our survey, we did not even have a complete list of southern Zhuang villages, though during the course of the survey we were able to construct such a list, thanks in large part to the detailed records published in the Chinese Place Name Gazetteer series (中国地名志), published county by county in the 1980s.

So, instead of pure random sampling of speakers or villages, we decided to focus our research on geographical dialect differences and intelligibility, and along the way try to observe the extremes of the Yunnan Southern Zhuang speakers’ language use continuum in a variety of villages. We were curious to try to answer the following types of questions: Are there any Yunnan Southern Zhuang villages that have completely switched to Chinese and lost the ability to speak Southern Zhuang? Are there any villages left where a significant percentage of the population speaks no Chinese, but is basically monolingual in Southern Zhuang? We decided to spend the limited time we had in each village observing and dialoguing with village residents about their language use situation, and trying to understand more of the complete sociolinguistic setting, rather than just collecting isolated responses to binary questions.

Therefore, in the course of the Yunnan Southern Zhuang fieldwork we interviewed local Zhuang leaders and residents in a number of villages about the language use situation in their villages; we also made note of the languages we heard used around us²⁷. We made use of a Zhuang Local Leader Language Use Questionnaire (Appendix C) and an observation schedule (Appendix D). The leader questionnaire involves the use of detailed maps of the area surrounding the villages,²⁸ the goal being to understand the surrounding multilingual environment (or monolingual in some areas) in which the local residents do marketing, schooling, government activities, etc. We found local Zhuang leaders both very knowledgeable about the villages and languages used in their areas and also very friendly and helpful.

We interviewed leaders in thirteen Southern Zhuang-speaking villages in total, of which four are Dai Zhuang, eight are Nong Zhuang, and one is Min Zhuang:

<i>Language group</i>	<i>Village name</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>District or Township</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Date visited</i>
Nong Zhuang	Xiaoguangnan (小广南村)	Xiaoguangnan (小广南村委会)	Liancheng Township (莲城镇)	Guangnan (广南县)	July 2006
Nong Zhuang	Xinzhai (新寨村)	A’e (阿峨村委会)	Renhe Township (仁和镇)	Maguan (马关县)	Feb. 2006
Nong Zhuang	Jiangdong (江东)	Jiangdong (江东村委会)	Babu District (八布乡)	Malipo (麻栗坡县)	Mar. 2006
Nong Zhuang	Geji (革机村)	Longping (龙坪村委会)	Xingjie Township (兴街镇)	Xichou (西畴县)	Oct. 2005
Nong Zhuang	Kuaxi (垮溪村)	Kuaxi (垮溪村委会)	Zhela District (者腊乡)	Yanshan (砚山县)	Oct. 2005
Nong Zhuang	Xiao Milewan (小迷勒湾村)	Milewan (迷勒湾村委会)	Binglie District (秉烈乡)	Wenshan (文山县)	Aug. 2005

²⁷ We recognize, of course, our very limited exposure and also the observer’s paradox, here manifesting itself in the courteous habit of often switching to Chinese when an outsider is present.

²⁸ For this we photocopied detailed sections of the Wenshan Prefecture map produced by the Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Cartography (Yunnan Province 1986), and then were able to circle and label specific villages to indicate various nationalities and ethnic groupings.

Nong Zhuang	Xia Douyue (下斗月村)	Douyue (斗月村委会)	Zhetu District (者兔乡)	Guangnan (广南县)	Jan. 2006
Dai Zhuang	Xiao Minghu (小明湖村)	Minghu (明湖村委会)	Dehou Township (德后镇)	Wenshan (文山县)	Nov. 2005
Dai Zhuang	Laochangpo (老厂坡村)	Tangfang (塘房村委会)	Nanlao Township (南捞镇)	Maguan (马关县)	Jan. 2006
Dai Zhuang	Shuichezhai (水车寨) and Niutouzhai (牛头寨)	Hongqi (红旗村委会) and Libujia(里布戛村委会)	Kaihua Township (开化镇)	Wenshan (文山县)	Nov. 2005
Dai Zhuang	Songshupo (松树破村)	Bainitang (白泥塘委员会)	Zhulin Township (珠琳镇)	Guangnan (广南县)	Sept. 2006
Min Zhuang	Guixun-Anhe (贵训小组- 安哈村)	Balong (Langheng Production committee) (朗恒办公所, 叭咙村委会)	Tianpeng Township (田蓬镇)	Funing (富宁县)	March 2007

Our method of selecting villages was initially based on known concentrations of Southern Zhuang speakers. For instance, we knew there were many Dai Zhuang villages (so-called “Pointed Headdress Tu”) in eastern Maguan and western Malipo County, where Laochang village is located, also around Wenshan city (“Flat Headdress Tu”), where Niutouzhai is located, in northern Wenshan and western Yanshan (“Piled-up Headdress Tu”), where Xiao Minghu is located, and also some scattered villages in southwest Guangnan County (“Slanted Headdress Tu”), where Songshupo is located.

For the Nong, who have a far greater number of villages, selecting a limited number of datapoints was more difficult, so we settled on only choosing datapoints in districts or townships in which Southern Zhuang speakers are a numerical majority of the total population (i.e., more than 50%). However, as there is no single district of Xichou County in which Zhuang form a numerical majority, we added a data point down in the river valley in the heart of Xichou County where most of that county’s Zhuang villages are located. Also, though Nanlao Township in eastern Maguan County is 54% Zhuang (in the 1990 census), this figure combines both the Dai and Nong Zhuang speakers. There are quite a few Nong villages also in the west of Maguan County, so while our Maguan Dai Zhuang datapoint is in Nanlao Township, we chose a Nong Zhuang village in Renhe Township for the Nong Zhuang datapoint. In the very heavily Nong district of Zhetu in Guangnan County (93% Zhuang), we chose the village of Xia Douyue on the northern edge of the district. We did this because we were curious about the exact location of the boundary between the Nong Zhuang and Guibian (Yei) Northern Zhuang speaking areas. Specifically we wanted to determine whether there was a clearly defined distinction at the northern edge of the Yunnan Southern Zhuang speaking area between Southern and Northern Zhuang dialects, or if in the speakers’ impression the two languages just blended together in a dialect continuum.²⁹

The Funing County datapoint of Balong was originally expected to be another Nong Zhuang location; it was only upon arrival that we learned this area speaks another Southern Zhuang variety called “Min” ([ka:ŋ²²min²⁴], ka:ŋ²² means ‘language’).³⁰

²⁹ As it turns out, Nong Zhuang speakers in Douyue were clearly aware of the contrast between their own speech and that of “Sha” people (who call themselves Yei, but are known in Chinese as *Sha* people: 沙人 or 沙族), though many are partially bidialectal. Speakers of Yei Zhuang in Ake district (now being renamed Bamei Township), just north of the Nong Zhuang area in Guangnan county were clearly also aware of the contrast between their own speech and that of the “Nong” people, though again, many of the Ake Yei were able to understand Nong.

³⁰ We did manage to collect a very short wordlist from some Funing Nong Zhuang speakers from Xiamugui in Muyang district and do enough intelligibility testing to confirm that they understood Nong from other areas, but we did not have enough time to do a full interview in Xiamugui.

After choosing a district or township location, we would typically visit the local government³¹ offices before deciding on a specific visit. We would ask local leaders to help us select a village whose population was close to 100% Zhuang and a bit removed from the main road (almost all of our datapoints were away from paved intra-county level roads).³² Our methods of accessing these villages varied with every data point, from government vehicles, to a rental van, to horse carts, to motorcycles, to hiking. We usually stayed in the villages several nights, and lodged with local families (the Zhuang pride themselves on their hospitality to guests), though if there was a government office nearby with beds, sometimes we stayed there instead. Most village leaders are farmers as well as fulfilling their governmental and party responsibilities, so we worked around their schedules, often interviewing them in the evening after the sun had set—so we found lodging in the villages to be the most useful way to get the research done. We feel we came to understand the situation a bit better, in spite of our limited time, having been in the villages at each moment of the day, rather than just during the daytime hours.³³

In the following sections we will present profiles of several of the villages visited, based on the interviews and observations in each village. While we cannot claim that the thirteen locations researched are completely representative of the Yunnan Southern Zhuang language use and attitudes situation, we do feel that each village's situation provides another facet of the rich and complicated sociolinguistic milieu in which Yunnan's Southern Zhuang speakers live. We hope these profiles will help the reader see the human side of these beautiful and fascinating languages.

2.3 Nong Zhuang Language Use Datapoints

2.3.1 Geji Village in Xichou County

Xichou is the smallest of Wenshan Prefecture's eight counties in area, population and also in percentage of Zhuang population, at only 10% of the county population (Yunnan Province 2004). The 25,000 Zhuang of Xichou County live in over 200 villages, but only about forty of these are not shared with members of other ethnic groups³⁴ according to *Xichou Di Ming Zhi* (1988). The Zhuang in Xichou County live in several pockets, one in the far north in Jijie district near Guangnan County, a string of villages at the bottom of a steep river valley that runs from the county seat of Xisa south through Xingjie Township and then southwest into Malipo County, and then a half dozen Dai Zhuang villages on the southern border of the county, near Maguan County's Tangfang area (where the Laochang Dai Zhuang datapoint is located.)

The village we visited, Geji, is in the center of the central river valley string of Nong Zhuang villages. It is at the floor of the valley by the river, below its community government seat of Longping, which is up at the level of the road higher in elevation. Geji is about 30 km from the township seat of Xingjie. It is accessed by car from Xingjie

³¹ Depending on the situation and our partner, Mr. Wang Mingfu's previous contacts in the area, "visiting the local government" could involve any combination of the various levels of rural government: county, township, district, production committee, community, village.

³² It was both necessary to have local leaders' approval of our choice of village and support to do the research, and also practical as, with hundreds of Zhuang villages to choose from, we wouldn't have known where to start! However, we did not get usually get the impression that local leaders had any agenda in guiding us to (or away from) any particular village. Within a given area, the villages seem to be approximately equal in development, similar in attitudes, etc., so there wasn't any particular motivation for them to want us to go to one village over another, except to try to make sure that we stayed safe and not get stuck in the mud during the rainy months.

³³ And of course, Mr. Wang Mingfu himself, being Nong Zhuang and having spent his life both living in this area and researching the minority cultures of Wenshan, saw things not as an outsider but as an insider. We, of course, are outsiders, but have lived in the prefecture several years.

³⁴ The *Xichou Di Ming Zhi* lists 18 villages which are 100% Zhuang, but Zhuang survey participants in Geji and in Laochang, Maguan (which is near the border with Xichou county) knew of a number more which were completely or almost completely Zhuang.

via a gravel road at the bottom of the valley, or one can reach the road above the village via a 30-minute hike on a steep mountain path, and then flag down one of the many passing minivans to reach Xinjie or Xisa, which is 50 km north. With a population of 238 in 68 households, Geji is one of the larger Zhuang villages in Xichou, though average in size compared to Nong villages elsewhere. Geji is almost 100% Nong, but in the community of Longping there are 18 Han villages, with only 6 other (smaller) Nong villages. Han are the majority of the community's 7000 people (969 households).

Everyone in Geji can speak Nong, including several Han wives who have married in. However, even in the village, the Chinese language seems to be making inroads on the intimate domains—some parents felt their children spoke Chinese better than Nong; we were told that although all children could understand Nong, some could say only simple things in Nong. We were told that the children usually speak Nong with grandparents and older relatives but local Chinese amongst themselves. We ourselves observed both grandparents and parents speaking Wenshan Chinese to children and children speaking Wenshan Chinese in return. We noticed a significant dearth of younger adults in the village. During several days residence in Geji, we only encountered four people between the ages of 15 and 30. We were told that 70% of the young adults under the age of 35 have left the village to work. Some told us that when the children finish however much schooling they are able to pursue and/or when they finish their years of working outside the village, they then settle back into a farming life in the village, and that is when their Nong becomes fluent.

Geji residents do their marketing at four different locations: Longping, their community government seat; Xingjie, their township seat; Banggu, the neighboring district; and Xisa, the Xichou county seat. At all of these markets they speak Nong with other Nong, but the majority of the people they encounter are not Nong, and with them they must use Wenshan Chinese. Likewise, although there is an elementary school in Geji village, after sixth grade the students who continue study with classmates who do not speak Nong (mostly Han students) at the middle school in Xingjie and then at the high school in Nasa, if they go that far.³⁵ As both Xingjie and Nasa are too far to walk daily, Geji students live in dormitories at these schools, and as the majority of their dorm-mates are not Nong, they use relatively little Nong during their middle and high school years. At the elementary school in Geji, all but one teacher are Han and do not speak Nong.

Of all the Nong villages we visited, the Nong language seemed the most endangered at Geji, with apparently many of the children growing up only partially fluent, although all can still understand and speak to some degree. This is likely due both to the small population of Nong Zhuang in Xichou County and to the broad scattering of their villages, thus making it impossible for them to maintain a significant social network via the Nong language. The large percentage of parental aged adults absent from the village probably also contributes to a breakdown in transmission of Nong to this new generation—the children are largely being raised by grandparents and teachers, the latter of which at the Geji school generally only speak Chinese.

2.3.2 Jiangdong Village in Malipo County

Malipo County is a narrow, mountainous county along the southern border of Wenshan Prefecture. It contains Wenshan Prefecture's main border crossing into Vietnam at Tianbao Township, south of the county seat of Mali. In terms of Zhuang population, Malipo has fewer Zhuang people than any other Wenshan County except for Xichou County, 32,900 Zhuang in 2003, or 15% of the county population (Yunnan Province 2004), and there are no districts or townships in Malipo where the Zhuang form a majority. Though there are no majority Zhuang districts in Malipo County, we did manage to visit a majority Nong community within the district of district of Babu (八布乡), on the Vietnamese border northeast of the county seat.

³⁵ At the time of our visit, no student from Geji was attending high school. 70% of the Geji children attend elementary school, and at least 30 were attending middle school.

Jiangnan village is within a community of the same name, consisting of 18 villages, of which 13 are Nong Zhuang, three are Miao, and two are ethnically Han. The community is 54 km from the county seat and about 5 km outside the Babu district market town. Jiangnan village is the site of the community government office and elementary school.³⁶ Jiangnan village has 28 households, of which all but three are Nong Zhuang. Those three are classified as ethnically Han, but also speak Nong Zhuang, and the Han women wear the same Nong costume as the ethnically Nong women. There are a lot of marriages with Han people who are the largest ethnic group in the area (except for in Jiangnan Community itself), but if the couple settles in a Nong village, the Han spouse learns to speak Nong.

As Jiangnan is quite far from the county seat and other towns, the only market practical for most residents is the Babu district market, which takes place every six days, and is attended by Han, Miao, Yao and “Tai Lao”³⁷ people of Vietnam. Though it is often necessary to use Wenshan Chinese with people there who do not understand Nong, among the older people who don’t speak Chinese well, Nong is the main language they use at the market.

The community government meetings generally take place in Wenshan Chinese as their community includes five non-Nong villages, but traditionally if it has to do with a village matter then the meeting will be conducted in Nong. Everyone in the village speaks some degree of local Chinese, however, and until recently everyone could speak Nong. However, the people we interviewed in Jiangnan reported a recent shift taking place toward Chinese. According to them, although all the adults still speak both languages, now there are many people who feel that they speak Wenshan Chinese better than Nong. Many of the pre-school children seem to be able to speak in Wenshan Chinese only and even have trouble understanding Nong Zhuang. The cause for this recent shift, in the opinion of the participants, was an intentional focus on increasing the children’s fluency in Chinese so that they would excel in school and have better job prospects. Apparently many parents in the village feel that they should only speak to their children in Chinese, as speaking to them in Nong could cause them to be behind their Chinese-speaking classmates in elementary school. As access to higher education beyond primary school can be quite competitive in rural China, they then might not have good enough test scores to continue.

2.3.3 Xia Douyue Village in Guangnan County

Zhetu Township in western Guangnan County is probably the single township with the largest percentage of Nong Zhuang speakers. According to local government records, 93% of that district is ethnically Zhuang, most of these speakers of Nong Zhuang. As Zhetu is such a strongly Zhuang district, the researchers made a number of visits there during the course of the research period (2005 to 2007), and visited a number of different villages. In this section we will discuss some of the language use characteristics of this district as a whole, and then focus on the specifics of Xia Douyue where we conducted a formal interview. Much of what is true of Zhetu district also can be said of the neighboring districts of Nalun (那伦) and Jiumo (旧莫), which are also heavily Zhuang (88% and 67%, respectively), predominately Nong Zhuang-speaking areas.³⁸

³⁶ The elementary school is offers first through sixth grades, though first grade is not offered every year, depending on the number of students and teacher and classroom availability.

³⁷ We are not able to identify this people group from Vietnam. Both of the names “Tai/Tay” and “Lau/Lao” are ancient Taic autonyms used in various forms by many language groups. The Dai Zhuang on both sides of the border are commonly referred to as Tu Lao (Tho Lao), so these Vietnamese visiting the Babu market could be a far eastern group of Dai Zhuang, though Edmondson et al 2000 encountered the Vietnamese Dai/Tho Lao farther west at Muong Khuong in Lao Cai province (opposite Wenshan’s Maguan county), where as the area directly across the border from Babu is east of Thanh Thuy in Ha Giang province.

³⁸ In addition to the Guangnan county districts and townships of Liancheng, Zhetu, Nalun, and Jiumo, where Nong Zhuang form a majority of the total population, there are six more districts/townships with the majority being of Zhuang nationality. However, to our knowledge in these six, Yei Zhuang (speaking either Guibian or Qiubei Northern Zhuang) predominate. These districts/townships are: Babao (八宝, 53% Zhuang), Zhetai (者太, 55% Zhuang), Banbang (板蚌, 65% Zhuang), Ake (阿科, 74% Zhuang), Bada (八达, 84% Zhuang), Dixu (底圩, 84% Zhuang). (Zhang 2000)

The administrative and market town of Zhetu district is located 43 km to the west of the county seat on a dirt road and about the same distance north of the larger market town of Zhulin, government seat for Zhulin Township. Though the district town is not large, about 4000 population with two paved streets, it is the cross-roads for the districts to the west and north, namely, Zhetu, Dixu and Bada. Historically, the road that runs through Zhulin and Zhetu was the main access road to the county seat of Liancheng. Almost two thirds of the land (70%) is classified as mountainous: lower, flatter areas near water supplies³⁹ are farmed as rice paddies and wheat and corn fields, higher hillsides are cultivated as Pu'erh tea plantations, and 52% of the land area is still forested.

The district consists of eight administrative communities, a total of 116 villages. Of these, 106 are ethnically Zhuang, seven are Yao, one is Yi, and two are Han. One of the communities, Zhemo (者莫), is predominately "Sha" Yei Zhuang, that is speaking the Guibian Northern Zhuang language, although these Yei Zhuang can also understand and speak Nong to some degree. In 2005 there were a total of 33,460 Zhuang in the district, of which about 5000 are "Sha", Guibian Zhuang speakers, and the remainder, that is around 28,000, are Nong speakers (Zhetu district government figures). There were 599 Han, 1171 Yao, and 776 Yi for a total district population of 36,711.

Zhetu district seat has a market every six days, at which Nong is the primarily language used. Though Yao, Yei Zhuang and Yi also participate in the market, most of these other language groups speak enough Nong to buy and sell in Nong. Only the Han usually cannot speak Nong, though there are some Han who can speak Nong also. We were told that it is not possible to distinguish the Yei from the Nong based on costume. Though in most Zhuang areas the men (other than the *mugong* religious leaders) no longer wear a traditional costume, in Zhetu it is not uncommon to see men on market days or festival days wearing the traditional black or dark blue shirts. Most of the women wear their Nong costumes every day, a casual costume for ordinary days and often a more elaborate, more colorful costume on festival days, often with silver plate jewelry. The girls and young women often wear the costume as well, although those who are still going to school usually wear non-traditional Western-style clothing.

The Zhemo Yei, as well as the Yei of the neighboring districts of Zhetai and Dixu, dress identically to the Zhetu Nong women.⁴⁰ The Zhetu Nong call themselves [p^hu²²noŋ⁴⁴], also pronounced [pu²²noŋ⁴⁴], and call the Yei Zhuang [pu²²joɪ⁴⁴] in Nong, or Shazu (沙族) in Chinese. A Yei official present informed us that the Zhetu Yei Zhuang call themselves [pu²²jei⁴⁴].

The district manages 64 elementary schools, some offering six years of education, some four, and many just providing the first and second grades. The district seat has a middle school with dormitories, and those who graduate from the middle school with sufficiently high test scores can continue on to high school at one of the county's half dozen high schools, the nearest of which are the No. 2 High School in Zhulin or the Nos. 1 or 5 High Schools in Liancheng, if they can afford the high school tuition and fees. There have also been some adult literacy classes in the Zhetu district seat. The vast majority of Zhetu teachers are Zhuang, and they teach the children through Zhuang in grades 1 through 3, as most rural children do not speak much or any Chinese when starting school. By grades 4 through 6 the classes are supposed to be conducted entirely in Chinese.

In the district seat itself, most people, even older people and pre-school children, can speak some Wenshan Chinese. However, in the rural villages, we were told most of the pre-school children and older people do not speak local Chinese. Though meetings held in the district seat are conducted usually in Wenshan Chinese, in the villages they are almost always conducted in Zhuang, either Nong or Yei Zhuang, according to the make-up of the village. The idea that any Zhuang person in Zhetu might not be able to speak a Zhuang language was considered laughable: "after all, even some of the Han have learned to speak Zhuang!"

³⁹ The area is fairly well watered, there are 145 identified rivers and streams in the district!

⁴⁰ However, the Yei women of Bada and Ake apparently have a somewhat different costume.

In general, we were told, there is less out-marriage in Nong villages in Zhetu than in some other Nong areas, probably largely because there are not that many non-Zhuang people around. When such a couple does settle in a Nong village in Zhetu, the non-Nong spouse (usually Han, Yei Zhuang, or Yao) generally learns to speak Nong within a year or two.

The village of Xia Douyue (下斗月) is located almost 60 km from the Guangnan county seat, about 16 km northwest of Zhetu district town, on a narrow, mountainous road subject to mudslides.⁴¹ Xia Douyue is the administrative village for the Douyue Community, which consists of three other villages, a total population of 3723 people in 735 households. Xia Douyue itself has 297 of those households, 1631 population, so it is a sizable village in its own right. The community's population is 100% Zhuang, of which almost all are Nong; the only non-Nong resident of Douyue Community is a Yei Zhuang teacher at their school.

Considering its remote location in northwest Guangnan County, not really on the way to anywhere except rural Zhetai, and also its homogenous Nong population, Xia Douyue seemed to us one of the most traditional villages we visited. Not only were all the women wearing the local Nong costume, but all the teenagers and young girls as well. The village relies exclusively on subsistence agriculture, and innovations like electricity are still relatively new.⁴² According to the community government, 20% of the adult population is illiterate or "semi-literate" (*wenmang / banwenmang*: 文盲半文盲). There is a gold mine in the area which is still producing, but it is primarily run by people from Shanghai, Changcun (capital of Jilin province in northwest China) and Inner Mongolia, according to the community officials, not by local Zhuang.

The most frequently visited market is that in Zhetu, though it is quite far away so not everyone goes every time it occurs (every six days, on the Dog and Dragon days, according to the traditional calendar). Some also go to the Zhetai market which is even further: 23 km from Douyue. At the Zhetu market, the residents of Douyue speak Nong with everyone and have no difficulties in communication. At the Zhetai market, where the majority language group is Yei Zhuang, the Douyue folks speak Nong and are basically understood by the Yei Zhuang there, and the Douyue people can understand the Zhetai Yei when they respond in their Northern Zhuang language.⁴³ Though they don't have many dealings with Miao and Yao people, if they do need to talk to these ethnic groups, they speak Nong or Wenshan Chinese if both sides are able to speak Chinese.

Every village in the Douyue Community has its own elementary school, and all teachers are Zhuang (one Yei, the rest are Nong). The students are first taught in Nong and speak Nong with the other students. Those who continue to middle school live with mostly Nong students and teachers at the middle school dormitory in Zhetu district seat. Quite few are able to continue to high school, and the people we talked with could only think of two people from Douyue who had gone beyond high school. (Both had gone to the Kunming Metallurgy College, 昆明金工学院, in the Kunming.)

We were told that 80% of the older people could speak no Chinese whatsoever. Most of the young people can speak some Chinese now, due to the relatively recent phenomenon of working temporarily in factories elsewhere in China. The number of young people who have been busing out of the area to do manual labor in factory towns in the east is unprecedented; a local government official has been keeping records of the number of workers leaving the village,

⁴¹ Actually, there's a foot-trail through the mountains that connects Douyue to the Zhetu county seat in only about 9 or 10 km. As there are usually only a couple vehicles that pass on the Zhetu-Douyue-Zhetai road, we ended up walking this trail back to Zhetu town to catch a bus to the county seat.

⁴² A fixed-line telephone first came in 1997 and electricity in 1999, but the village is still not within range of any mobile phone towers, even on the hill tops.

⁴³ As we have not yet conducted linguistic research into the Northern Taic languages of Wenshan, we cannot say for certain which of the two Yunnan Northern Zhuang languages identified by Chinese linguists (Wei and Qin 1980, Wang 1984, Zhang et al 1999), Qiubei or Guibian, is spoken by these Yei Zhuang.

and, at the time of our visit in August 2006, already 875 people from the Douyue Community had gone outside the village to look for work. (One fifth of the total community population of 3723 people was living outside the area for work.) These people, mostly young adults, go to Kunming, Guangdong and Changchun. We were told that no pre-school children in Douyue could speak any Chinese at all. They start elementary school with no fluency in Chinese whatsoever. When we asked whether anyone in Douyue could not speak Nong, we were told that only the deaf people could not.

2.3.4 Summary of Nong Zhuang Language Use Situation

To summarize the results of interviews in these three, and also the other five Nong villages researched, we see that although many Nong speak at least Wenshan Chinese fluently, and many speak standard Putonghua (Mandarin) as well, Nong remains the primary language used in intimate domains (home life, among friends, etc.) for most rural Nong Zhuang people in Wenshan Prefecture. In areas where the Nong are not a numerical majority, they must use Chinese more frequently to communicate with Han people and other minority ethnic groups, but in areas where they are in the majority, especially the several districts and townships in Guangnan County where they account for over three quarters of the population, we see members of the other surrounding ethnic groups actually becoming somewhat fluent in Nong in order to participate in the local markets and other social functions.

2.4 Dai Zhuang Language Use Datapoints

2.4.1 Xiao Minghu Village, Wenshan County (Northern Dai Zhuang)

Xiao Minghu village is located on the northern border of Wenshan County, right in the middle of the northern Dai Zhuang area. The people are known locally as *Da Tou Tu*, Chinese for “piled headdress Tu”, but call themselves [ʔbu²²da:i¹¹], or “the Dai people”. The northern Dai Zhuang area begins in Matang Township and extends north into Pingyuan Township and Ashe District of western Yanshan County and Zhongheying Township of eastern Kaiyuan County (Honghe Prefecture). Northern Dai Zhuang villages are also found in Laohuilong and Xigu districts in western Wenshan County. Xiao Minghu is one of the villages of the Minghu Community, governed by the Dehou Township government. The Dai Zhuang villages in the Minghu area, as in other Dai Zhuang areas, are scattered among other language groups: Chinese-speaking Han and Hui, Hmong-speaking Miao, Azha and Niesu-speaking Yi, and Nong-speaking Zhuang. Zhuang people make up about one third of the Dehou population⁴⁴ but have a slightly larger population than do Han in the area. (The township also has Miao, Dai, Yi, Hui and Yao.) Most of Dehou's Zhuang speak Dai Zhuang, though there are a few Nong Zhuang villages as well, and at least one (Xiao Long) which is mixed Nong and Dai Zhuang. Most Dai Zhuang in Dehou are living in ethnically mixed villages; the village of our research, Xiao Minghu, is one of only four purely Dai Zhuang villages in Dehou Township, according to residents.⁴⁵

Minghu Community is 53 kilometers from the Wenshan county seat, and about 2 km on a dirt road from the paved two lane highway that connects Wenshan county seat to Pingyuan Township. There is a defunct manganese mine within the confines of the community. The community consists of six villages (497 households, 2252 people) of which three are primarily Han, one is Miao, and two are Dai Zhuang (the other is called Xin Haiwei). Xiao Minghu has 99 households (492 people), all of whom are Dai Zhuang, except for two Han and two Nong Zhuang spouses married to Dai Zhuang people, and also two other Han individuals who recently came to the village from Pingyuan Township in Yanshan County. The spouses married to Dai Zhuang all can speak the Dai Zhuang language, the other two Han people can speak a little Dai Zhuang, but most people speak to them in Chinese. In Xinhaiwei and the Han villages nearby there are another 187 Dai Zhuang households.

⁴⁴ Dehou Township had 10,581 Zhuang out of a total population of 27,846 according to the 1982 Census, the most recent census for which we have district and township level populations. (Zhang 2000)

⁴⁵ There are also two purely Dai Zhuang villages in the Community of Yunfeng, which was part of Dehou Township until July, 1987, when it was annexed in to Yanshan county. (*Wenshan Xian Di Ming Zhi* 1988:377)

Residents of Xiao Minghu attend the Dehou Township market which takes place on Wednesdays, as well as the Lelong market (a Han and Miao community, also under the Dehou Township) which is on Tuesdays. At these markets there are Miao, Han, Nong Zhuang and Yi people (Azha/Phula and Niesu). The Dai Zhuang generally speak the local Chinese dialect at these markets, and none of these other ethnic groups understands Dai Zhuang.

The community of Minghu has two elementary schools, both of which have Miao and Han students as well as Zhuang. Xiao Minghu had its own first and second grade school attended only by Zhuang students until 2003, when it was closed. Xiao Minghu students now attend the primary school in Minghu about a kilometer away. Students who continue on to middle school go to Dehou and to high school in Wenshan county seat. About 30 children from the village were currently in elementary school, ten in middle school, four or five in high school, and three in university or technical college. Students of all levels study with non-Zhuang students, and Chinese is the language of instruction and communication between students at all these schools.

There is no one in the village who is unable to speak the Dai Zhuang language. Likewise, we were told that there is no one in the village who cannot speak Wenshan Chinese, even old people and 3-year-olds can all speak local Chinese. However, not everyone can understand Standard Chinese (Putonghua); for example, some people cannot follow national television shows in Mandarin. When important announcements are made in the village they are usually made in Dai Zhuang, and meetings are also convened in Dai Zhuang.

Like elsewhere, many young people go away to work; Xiao Minghu youth go to places such as Zhejiang, Guangdong and Fujian provinces, Shanghai, Kunming, neighboring Mengzi County and Kaihua City, the Wenshan county seat. But most come back at least once a year and when they return and settle down they can all still speak Dai Zhuang. The older people we interviewed felt that the young people's Dai Zhuang is as standard as the adults; in fact, it is exactly the same as that of the older people. All the women in the village still have the traditional clothing and hats, even the young women, but the young women only wear them for festivals and weddings, and often with jeans or slacks instead of with skirts.

The Xiao Minghu residents we interviewed felt strongly that Zhuang people should speak Zhuang. The party secretary spontaneously brought up the issue of having a writing system without our mentioning it. He feels the Dai Zhuang language should be continued but that it cannot continue without a writing system. He had never heard of a writing system for Zhuang. He hopes there will be literacy classes in Zhuang orthography and feels that being able to write the language would be very useful for keeping the language alive and recording their culture, such as songs. (Some residents of Xiao Minghu, such as our host, Mr. Wang Zhineng, have already produced videos themselves of their traditional singing, with subtitles explaining the meaning of the songs in Chinese.)

2.4.2 Niutouzhai and Shuichezhai villages, Wenshan County (Central Dai Zhuang)

There are about three dozen Central Dai Zhuang villages, all within the boundaries of the Kaihua Municipality where the Wenshan Prefecture government is based, specifically in the communities of Libujia (里布戛村委会), Gaomo (高末村委会), Hongqi (红旗村委会), Gaodeng (高登村委会), Panzhuhua (攀枝花村委会) and Wenxinjie (文新街村委会). These Dai Zhuang call themselves [ʔbu²²da²¹/11]. Though visitors to Wenshan usually encounter these so-called "Ping Tou Tu" (Flat Headdress Tu) first before visiting other Zhuang areas,⁴⁶ the sociolinguistic situation of these Dai Zhuang villages is quite different from the majority of Dai Zhuang villages, due to their proximity to the urban center of Wenshan with all the economic, educational and societal influence that comes with it. Though all the Dai Zhuang we met elsewhere were fully bilingual in Wenshan Chinese, they all consistently indicated that Dai Zhuang was the primary language used in intimate domains such as home life, friendship and

⁴⁶ For example, the Zhuang volume (Gao 2001) of a 2001 book series covering Yunnan's 26 official nationalities entitled "Yunnan Ethnic Village Research" 《云南民族村寨调查》 bases its research almost entirely on the Dai Zhuang village of Jiupingba, on the outskirts of Wenshan city.

village functions, and that all children in the other Dai Zhuang villages are growing up fully fluent in Dai Zhuang. The situation of the Central Dai Zhuang in their three dozen villages surrounding the prefecture and county government seat of Kaihua is quite different, here we were told that no more than one in ten ethnically Dai Zhuang children can speak the Dai Zhuang language.

We conducted our interviews initially with residents of the village Shuichezhai (水车寨) which is on the southern side of Kaihua City. At the time of the interviews in late 2005, this village still maintained rice paddies and fields surrounding the houses on the edge of the city; however, residents told us most residents had already sold their fields and some had sold their homes to developers. By summer of 2007, the original houses of village were already surrounded by the high rise buildings in various stages of completion, and very soon the village will be effectively a neighborhood of Kaihua City. Shuichezhai then had around 150 households, between 600 and 700 population, but there were many Han residents in addition to the Dai Zhuang.

When we discovered that virtually none of the children in Shuichezhai could speak Dai Zhuang any longer, we asked about Central Dai Zhuang villages where children could still speak Dai Zhuang, and were told that there were only a few such villages left, one of which was Niutouzhai (牛头寨), a bit further south in Libujia Community. Indeed, the ethnic composition of Niutouzhai was close to 100% Dai Zhuang, yet even there we discovered that very few of the children can speak Dai Zhuang, even though some understand it.

Niutouzhai is a kilometer or so further south, and west of the small river that meanders through Kaihua City. It is set back further from the highway that leaves the city to the south on its way to Maguan, Xichou and Malipo counties and the Vietnamese border beyond, so its existence as an independent village may last a bit longer, though it seems likely also to be swallowed up by the rapidly growing city. (The village is directly behind a huge Sanqi Herbal Medicine Trade Center completed in 2005.)

Niutouzhai has 127 households with a population of 760, all of which are Dai Zhuang. The only non-Dai Zhuang in the village are six or seven Han wives married to Dai Zhuang men. Niutouzhai is one of eight Dai Zhuang villages in the Libujia Community, though of these only four are predominately Dai Zhuang anymore (other ethnic groups in Libujia Community are Han, Miao, Dai and Niesu/Lolo Yi.) Although almost everyone in the village is Dai Zhuang and all old people can speak Dai Zhuang, Niutouzhai residents felt that only 5 to 10% of their pre-school aged children can speak Dai Zhuang. The language most commonly used in the village is Wenshan Chinese "because we live next to Kaihua City," according to residents. Some meetings are convened in Dai Zhuang, however, as all the older people speak it. All their marketing they do in Kaihua City (which has a several daily wet markets and numerous stores), and it is not uncommon for outside vendors to visit their village. Although a few people go to eastern provinces to do manual labor, most are able to get jobs in Kaihua City and not leave the village.

Reportedly 100% of the children attend elementary school as the grade school at Libujia (first through sixth grade) is less than a kilometer away. Even the disabled students can go to Kaihua City's school for the disabled nearby. Most of the students continue studying at one of the several middle schools within walking distance of the village. About 40% of those who complete middle school are able to continue on to high school.

In both Shuichezhai and Niutouzhai, the economic and educational levels are obviously above those of the more remote villages. Though many people in both villages do various types of farming (especially growing vegetables and raising hogs and poultry), and are able to sell their products directly to the markets of Wenshan city, many residents also have other part- or full-time employment in the city and there are some motorized vehicles and modernized homes in the two villages. The Central Dai Zhuang are clearly being economically and linguistically assimilated into the urban Chinese-speaking population of Wenshan city.

In assessing language use, vitality and bilingualism through this type of survey, one is always quite limited by relatively little time we have to observe the sociolinguistic situation. Though we try to understand ongoing trends

and the directionality of the changing situation, we must largely depend upon the reminiscences of older residents. In the case of the Central Dai Zhuang, however, we actually have a small bit of historical data in the brief observations by an amateur foreign ethnographer who visited the Central Dai area almost a century ago, in May 1910. William Clifton Dodd, an American missionary, traveled on foot through various Daic areas of Yunnan, Guangdong and Guangxi, including Wenshan. He noted that the Central Dai Zhuang had already adopted the Chinese religion and culture (Dodd 1923:91). So already in 1910, it seems the Central Dai Zhuang near Kaihua city were being heavily influenced by the urban Chinese culture and language. Thus almost a century later, it is not surprising to find so few children in the Central Dai Zhuang area able to speak Zhuang. Perhaps we should be surprised that the adults have held on to the language this long. But then we do not have good records on how many people of Dai Zhuang ancestry in this area have already so assimilated into Chinese culture and language such that they are no longer identified as Central Dai Zhuang.

2.4.3 Dai Zhuang Language Use Conclusions

In all the locations we visited, we found that virtually all Dai Zhuang speakers are fluent in Wenshan Chinese and usually must use Chinese on a daily basis, as the Dai Zhuang seldom live in ethnically homogenous communities or townships. In the Central Dai Zhuang area around Kaihua City in Wenshan County, the Dai Zhuang language is endangered with few children learning to speak it. However, in the other villages we visited there seems to be a stable bilingualism, with Dai Zhuang remaining the language of preference when no outsiders are present. And with a population of over 100,000 speakers remaining, it is too soon to predict the disappearance of this language. The population of speakers is still large enough to maintain a viable bilingual speech community if the speakers choose to consciously continue to pass on the language on to their children, and if the speakers are able to access language development resources to strengthen the language use in certain domains, e. g., traditional song and poetry, oral history, family life, etc.

2.5 The Min Zhuang village of Guixun-Anhe

We had heard there were also Nong Zhuang speakers in the far southeast of Wenshan Prefecture, in Funing County's Langheng work committee.⁴⁷ However, upon arriving there, we discovered there were three Zhuang languages spoken in Langheng, none of them Nong or Dai Zhuang. One of them, called by its speakers [pu²²min²⁴] and [kən³³min²⁴],⁴⁸ appeared to be a Central Tai variety (as evidenced by its aspirated plosives, etc.), so we decided to stay and research this group for several days.

The Min Zhuang of Guixun-Anhe call their language [kaŋ²²min²⁴] or [min²⁴səŋ⁵³]. They are a linguistic minority within the Langheng district,⁴⁹ though Langheng is 87% Zhuang (Zhang 2000). The most numerous language group in the area is the Yei Zhuang speakers, who in this area call themselves [kəŋ⁵⁵jui²⁴] or [kəŋ⁵⁵jei²⁴], whose dialect is known to Chinese linguists as the Guibian sub-dialect of Northern Zhuang.

The village of Guixun-Anhe (called "Aiha" by its residents) belongs to the Balong Community, and is the site of the community government and school. Guixun-Anhe had been chosen as a poverty alleviation site by the government,

⁴⁷ Langheng was formerly a district, under the Funing county government, but was recently combined into Tianbeng township, so the Langheng government is now classed as a "work committee" under the township government, governing several village communities (*cunweihui*).

⁴⁸ [kən³³] can mean "person" in Zhuang, or be the measure word for persons, and some Zhuang groups use the word also to mean "people, ethnic group", cf. Zhang et al. 1999.

⁴⁹ Technically Langheng is no longer a district (*xiang*, 乡) but rather a work committee under the township of Tianbeng. But as it was previously a district level entity (under the county government) it is still referred to as a district locally, and the attractive mountain town of Langheng is a significant sized market town.

and at the time of our research trip, a new community government office building and elementary school had already been completed. Forty-nine new brick houses were under construction, funded by the national government and built by the villagers. The Balong Community consists of 470 households with a population of 2269, of which a majority are Zhuang, and a minority Han, Miao and Yao. The community is divided into 23 “small groups” (*xiaozu*, 小组), of which 13 are entirely Zhuang. Among Balong’s Zhuang, the majority speak Min, and smaller groups speak Guibian (Yei) and Ngau, a different, apparently Northern Taic, variety. Guixun-Anhe itself is entirely Min with the exception of a few spouses from other Zhuang language groups.

The residents do most of their marketing at the Langheng market, where the main language used is Guibian Northern Zhuang (Yei), which most of the Min Zhuang can understand and speak to varying degrees. Some also go to the township market at Tianbeng, though this is farther, and there speak Guibian (Yei) as well. When dealing with non-Zhuang, those who are able to speak some Chinese use local Chinese.⁵⁰ However, many Min Zhuang do not speak Chinese, and many of the surrounding Han, Miao and Yao can understand Guibian (Yei) Zhuang. The Funing County television station has a half hour nightly news broadcast in Guibian Yei Zhuang. Not many from Balong go to the market in the county seat of Xinhua as it is 70 km away without regular bus service.

In addition to the newly constructed elementary school at Anhe itself (kindergarten through 4th grade), the community has two other elementary schools, offering the first two years of school to those young children in the surrounding mountain villages who cannot walk all the way to the Anhe school. Those who are able to continue to 5th grade must live in the dormitory of the Langheng elementary school and can return home on the weekends (a two-hour walk). Langheng also has a middle school with a dormitory, but for high school students must live in the county seat of Xinhua. The people we interviewed could only think of nine people in the entire community who had studied beyond middle school.

We observed parents speaking to children in both Min Zhuang and local Chinese, but only observed children responding in Min. Grandparents seemed to speak in Min exclusively, and the children spoke Min among themselves. The kindergarten teacher, who is Min herself, told us that about half of her students can speak some Chinese upon beginning kindergarten, and she teaches them primarily through Min. From first grade on, the teachers (most of whom are Min, though not all) only speak to the students in Chinese during class hours. The students are allowed to respond to the teachers in either Min or Chinese in the early years, according to their Chinese ability.

There is a Han government official assigned to Balong Community, and some Han construction workers are temporarily living in Anhe, managing the poverty alleviation project. Their impression was that most Anhe residents could speak Chinese; however, when we got out of the government office and visited people in their homes, we were told that many middle-aged women could not understand any Chinese. Public announcements and local government meetings are currently conducted in Chinese, however, for the benefit of the Han present.

2.6 Language Attitudes among Yunnan Southern Zhuang Speakers

Although our research did not focus primarily on language attitudes, almost without exception the attitudes that Zhuang people we met expressed toward their language and culture were positive. In terms of the vitality of the Zhuang language, it is not threatened by poor cultural self-esteem, nor by pejorative attitudes by neighboring ethnic groups toward their language. The vast majority of Zhuang are proud to be Zhuang. While they might demote their language to the category of a “dialect” (*fangyan*, 方言) due to its lack of widely-used, standardized orthography, no one felt the need to hide the fact that they were fluent in Zhuang, as linguists have observed among some language groups in other areas of the world.

⁵⁰ The Funing County dialect of Chinese has some significant differences from that of the western side of the prefecture, though to our knowledge, except for in Bo'ai township in northeast Funing, the Funing dialect is still a variety of Southwest Mandarin (*Xinan Guanhua*).

2.7 Factors Affecting Bilingualism Patterns among Yunnan Southern Zhuang Speakers

The most significant factor likely to affect the Zhuang language ecology situation is the increasing level of Chinese bilingualism, due to their increasing integration into the national culture and economy. We see three main factors leading to increased bilingualism in Chinese: greater contact with other ethnic groups locally, formal elementary and secondary education, and young people moving outside the area temporarily or permanently for wage labor.

2.7.1 Local Contact with Other Ethnolinguistic Groups

In many areas, the Zhuang villages have been interspersed with villages of other ethnic groups for many centuries. Though the Zhuang are considered to be the original inhabitants of the Wenshan Prefecture area, Han and Yi presence goes back at least a millennium. Though there may have been some assimilation between the Yi and the Zhuang, and with the Miao and Yao who arrived later (mostly in the Qing dynasty), these ethnic groups seem to have maintained their differences historically.

However, the last two centuries have seen a much greater influx of settlers to Wenshan from other parts of China, most notably Han people, especially since 1950. In 1951 Zhuang made up four-fifths of all people in Funing County (Lu and Nong 1998), whereas by 1957 only 58% of that county's population was Zhuang.⁵¹ Since then the Zhuang population has remained at slightly over half that county's total population (56.19% in 2003; Yunnan Province 2004). In the other counties the percentage of Zhuang relative to the total population is even less. This situation, combined with an increasingly networked market economy, causes us to see relatively few areas where a Zhuang speaker can go an entire week without coming into contact with other languages besides her own.

2.7.2 Formal Education

In describing the various villages we visited in the course of this research, we were struck by the number of students who are not able to study at middle or high school, either due to geographical distance from the available secondary schools or to economic difficulties in paying the school fees. However, the vast majority of Zhuang in Wenshan do now have basic elementary education (at least the first two years, and often up to sixth grade), both within walking distance of their village and either free or relatively inexpensive.⁵² The year 2000 national census found that only 6% of Zhuang above the age of six have never attended any form of schooling, which is actually over a percentage point lower than the national average, and also the figure for the Han nationality. Looking only at those Zhuang 20 years or older, almost 8% have received no schooling, and of those Zhuang 60 and over (that is born before 1941, who lived through World War II and the Chinese Civil War), a full one third have not received any schooling (of those still living in 2000). However, when we look only at those Zhuang aged six to nineteen in year 2000, we find that less than 2% have had no schooling. So in the past half century, and especially since China's opening and reform movement in the 1980s, there has been a remarkable increase in the percentage of Zhuang with access to at least some basic education (almost always via the Chinese written language). This undoubtedly has an effect on Zhuang bilingualism as well.

Though we did not focus extensively on gender differences in bilingualism during our field research, occasionally it was mentioned to us that a higher percentage of Zhuang men are fluent in Chinese than women. Among those

⁵¹ During the tumultuous years of 1957-63 the number of Zhuang people in Funing did not increase, according to Nong and Lu 1998. In fact, during the years 1958 to 1960 the Zhuang population of Funing decreased by over 7000 people.

⁵² From local teachers and students we learned that both elementary and middle school students in some areas of the prefecture were still being required to pay various fees to attend school as late as Spring 2007, even though all rural schools in Yunnan province ought now to be offering free education for first through ninth grades, according to national government statements. (Students from poor families also are to receive free textbooks and subsidized room and board: *People's Daily Online*, 23 December 2006: http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200603/05/eng20060305_248042.html)

Zhuang who are functionally monolingual in Zhuang, our impression (based on several years' residence in the area) is that there is a significantly higher number of monolingual women than men. However, we have encountered both older and younger men who seem to be functionally monolingual in Zhuang, either because they cannot speak Chinese, or they are not confident in their Chinese ability. Given that there are currently no special taboos prohibiting Zhuang women from having market and other contacts with members of other language groups or from traveling elsewhere to earn wages, this difference is most likely due primarily to historical disparities in education between girls and boys (something which is not unique to the Zhuang, of course). While only 2.6% of Zhuang men and boys aged six and over report having had no education, nearly 10% of women and girls over six have had no education. Among those over the age of sixty, the difference is more striking: over half those women reporting no education but only 15% of older Zhuang men. However, among the current generation of students aged six to nineteen in 2000, the disparity has been reduced to tenths of a percentage point: 1.81% Zhuang boys reported never having gone to school and 2.12% of Zhuang girls.⁵³ As Zhuang in this age category account for nearly a third of all Zhuang age six and above, bilingualism disparity between Zhuang women and men may be decreasing. However, at the middle school and high school levels, the disparity between boys and girls is greater, especially in rural areas. These census figures, from the National Bureau of Statistics (2003), include both urban and rural Zhuang, for whom the educational situations are often vastly different.

2.7.3 Wage Labor Internal Migration

Finally, the third factor that may be increasing the level of Chinese bilingualism among Wenshan Zhuang (as well as among other minority language groups in China) is the relatively recent phenomenon of mass seasonal migration of laborers from the countryside to the urban factory areas of China's east and south. Due to various factors, probably including the low prices of non-specialized agriculture goods, such as rice, wheat, corn and soy on the world market (prior to the record high prices of 2007), increased population density in a mountainous area due to domestic migrations, increased need for personal capital in China's new market economy and increased material expectations, many Zhuang now feel that it is impossible to support their families through agriculture alone with the amount of land available to them. Therefore almost every rural Zhuang family has at least one member going off to *da gong* (打工), that is, to perform wage labor somewhere outside the area each year.

While some of these workers find jobs in the prefecture city of Kaihua (Wenshan) or in the provincial capital of Kunming, most make three- or four-day arduous bus and train rides to factories in eastern provinces such as Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, or Shanghai. Though some are able to find jobs that pay 1000 yuan (Renminbi) or more a month (about \$140 USD), live cheaply with numerous roommates, and bring home large sums which it might take a Wenshan farmer five or ten years to earn, too many others have difficulty finding work, end up with exploitive bosses or dangerous working conditions, and arrive home poorer than when they left, after paying the various bus tickets and hostel charges on the return journey. Most do return home eventually, though, either by Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) the following year or several years later, as the living costs in the boomtowns of the east are much higher than those in rural Wenshan. Though we have no statistical data by which to gauge the effect of this seasonal migration to the areas where the Zhuang languages are of very little use, almost certainly those young people who go off to *dagong* for a year or more return more fluent in Chinese than when they left.

2.7.4 Summary of the Yunnan Southern Zhuang Bilingualism Situation

Whether Zhuang young people are able to stay in school through high school or beyond, turn to farming like their parents, buying and selling their products to neighboring Han, Miao, Yi, and Yao peoples, or head to the east to try their fortunes in the sweat shops and computer chip factories, very few Zhuang young people today are able to pass a week without needing to speak some dialect of Chinese in addition to their own Zhuang mother tongue. Most Zhuang feel that in 21st century China the ability to speak Chinese is essential. Not only is Chinese the official

⁵³ The national percentages of unschooled for boys and girls also show three-tenths of a percent disparity as well: 1.89% boys versus 2.29% girls.

language of the country in which they live, it is also a world language, officially used by the United Nations and other international bodies, and a language through which its speakers can access information on almost any subject on earth.

As Bradley and Bradley point out (2002:16), “bi- and multilingualism and the biculturalism that often goes with it, give speakers intellectual, emotional and social advantages over monolinguals, in addition to situational and sometimes economic advantages resulting from a knowledge of several languages.” If the Zhuang speakers can become bilingual in Chinese, while retaining their heritage languages, the benefits will be great for both their personal and cultural development. However, in the eyes of some Zhuang, monolingualism in the national language is viewed as the desirable norm, based on the misconception that retention of the minority language necessarily hinders complete acquisition of the national language. The heritage languages can be viewed as liabilities to their children’s chances of economic success and career development. In light of these factors, we are forced to ask the question of whether the Zhuang languages are likely to survive the next century as more than just nostalgic memories in the minds of the oldest members of the community.

3 How Threatened or Endangered are the Central Taic Languages of Wenshan Prefecture?

It is easy to find urban Sinocized Zhuang or Han Chinese who predict a rapid demise for the Zhuang languages within a single generation, or, on the other extreme, to find traditional elders in villages who predict that “the Zhuang will always speak Zhuang.” A goal of the present research is to get beyond such anecdotal reactions and examine the language use evidence in light of the findings of other linguists elsewhere. In this section we will attempt to assess the linguistic vitality of these languages.

While the subfield of language vitality and maintenance issues is a relatively young one, it is becoming the focus of quite a bit of attention as the world becomes aware of the rapid reduction of linguistic diversity taking place due to globalization and other factors. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Project website, over half of the world’s languages are in danger of disappearing, with a current rate of one language disappearing from use every two weeks.⁵⁴ There is now an increasing collection of academic writing on this issue (such as Fishman 1991, Wurm 1991, Mufwane 2002, Matisoff 1991, Sun 2001, Shaeffer 2003). In the present work, we have limited ourselves to a brief rapid analysis of the Wenshan Zhuang language situation, guided by the language use criteria that have been proposed by several recent works.

3.1 Fishman’s “Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale”

Joshua Fishman’s book *Reversing Language Shift* was first published in 1991, and remains a foundational work in the field of language revitalization. In it Fishman presents an eight-level “Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale” (GIDS) to assess the degree to which the natural transmission of a language from one generation to another has been disrupted. On the GIDS scale, the highest grade indicates the greatest degree of disruption of intergenerational transmission. The higher the grade on the scale, the more likely it is that the language is immediately in danger of extinction. While a high grade does not rule out the advisability of intervention, the language maintenance goals need to be more modest for a language with a higher GIDS grade.

Speakers of Zhuang languages living in some large areas such as Kunming, Kaihua City and the Dai Zhuang villages immediately surrounding Kaihua appear to already be in Stage 7: “Most users are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age” (Fishman 1991). The older adults, who have already raised their own children, still speak the language fluently and are active in their ethnic community, but

⁵⁴ UNSECO ICH website: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00136>.

younger adults and children are growing up speaking Chinese and with a limited knowledge of the traditional culture.

In other Wenshan Zhuang areas, however, we would describe the situation as Stage 6: the language is being maintained orally across all generations, the speaker population remains concentrated demographically, and some grassroots institutions operate primarily in Zhuang. A well planned and implemented Zhuang language literacy program (GIDS level 5) and use as a medium of elementary education (GIDS level 4) in the Zhuang-speaking areas of Yunnan would definitely strengthen the language's position in society, and increase the likelihood of its continued vitality in the future. Even should these dreams become reality, the family-based oral language transmission that currently is the norm in most Zhuang villages will remain essential for the future of these languages. If the language ceases to be the primary informal language in home domains, Fishman's research indicates that formal school-based programs will likely fail to keep the language alive.

3.2 Landweer's "Eight Indicators of Linguistic Vitality"

Landweer (2005), through her extensive research into many languages of Papua New Guinea, has identified eight "indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality" relevant to language endangerment issues:

1. Relative position on the urban-rural continuum.
2. Domains in which the language is used.
3. Frequency and type of code switching.
4. Population and group dynamics.
5. Distribution of speakers within their own social networks.
6. Social outlook regarding and within the speech community.
7. Language prestige.
8. Access to a stable and acceptable economic base.

Though there are significant differences in bilingualism patterns between the Nong Zhuang and the Dai Zhuang language communities, in many other details their sociolinguistic situations are similar. Therefore, in the interest of brevity, we will treat the Southern Zhuang languages of Yunnan as a whole in the analysis which follows, keeping in mind the lower percentage of bilinguals among Nong Zhuang speakers than among Dai Zhuang speakers.

Among the one million Yunnan Zhuang all positions on the rural-urban continuum are represented, though the majority of Zhuang speakers fall in the middle of the spectrum, with marginal or fairly easy access to urban centers. Although most Nong Zhuang still live in rural villages, the majority can access urban centers such as market towns, county seats and the prefecture capital; within a day's bus travel and at a cost of less than Y15 (\$2 USD), a village resident can reach one of these towns or cities.

As for "domains in which the language is used," most rural Zhuang use their Zhuang language at least in the home, and for cultural and social events, and often there is some informal use of Zhuang in other domains such as offices, schools, markets, etc., when all parties present are able to understand Zhuang.

"Frequency and type of code switching," is more difficult to evaluate by means of village research trips of short duration or via questionnaires. In evaluating the Yunnan Zhuang for this criterion we must rely more on our overall experience of three years' residence among the Zhuang, but with a caveat that we have not done a systematic study of code switching. There are relatively few Zhuang who are entirely monolingual, though there are many rural Zhuang whose only use of Chinese is to employ rephonicized Chinese loanwords for items for which no appropriate Zhuang words exist. While there may be movement toward a situation of stable diglossia, at present the

degree of Chinese bilingualism and the relative degree of usage among Zhuang speakers is too varied to fit the classic definition of diglossia. Among Zhuang who are comfortably bilingual, we have mostly observed lexical code switching, often apparently triggered by topics for which either adequate vocabulary is lacking in Zhuang or those that refer to a domain in which Chinese is the language normally used. In this criterion also, our feeling is that the Yunnan Zhuang fall to the middle of the continuum.

The fourth criterion, “population and group dynamics,” concerns the “critical mass” needed for a language community to continue to employ its language in a living network of social or economically useful relationships. An absolute figure for speaker population is not adequate as quite small populations in remote locations have been shown to be able to maintain their languages, whereas large speaker populations can switch languages *en masse* should circumstances demand such a change. Landweer focuses on the immigrants to the language area as a gauge of the degree to which outside immigration may be overwhelming the language group. In the Yunnan Zhuang homeland, other ethnic groups have resided intermingled with the Zhuang for centuries. Almost all originated from other locations within China, so these are no longer considered as outsiders by the Zhuang. The largest ethnic group in the prefecture is the Chinese-speaking Han, who are considered the prototypical Chinese and hold virtually all the political and economic power within the country. The Zhuang do not usually view the Chinese as immigrants to their area who need to learn their language, but rather they view themselves as a minority that has to assimilate to the national language and culture. However, given that the Zhuang do appear to be the indigenous peoples of this area of southern China (including western Guangxi Region), if we consider the other ethnic groups, including the Han Chinese, as the “immigrants” of Landweer’s criteria, the situation best fits Landweer’s classification in which “immigrants maintain their own language and insist that others learn to speak it...”

However, we have encountered Han families living in otherwise purely Zhuang villages who have become either actively or passively bilingual in Zhuang. Some of the other ethnic groups in heavily Zhuang areas, especially the Yao, have become actively or passively bilingual in Zhuang, but most interact with the Zhuang through local Chinese. Though the Zhuang are numerous in population relative to the Wenshan Prefecture population, they are not quite as numerous as the Han Chinese within the prefecture, and on a national scale their total population is only about 1% of the national population.

The fifth indicator, “distribution of speakers within their own social network,” examines how tightly the members of the language community are bound to each other in mutually dependent relationships to fulfill their various tangible and intangible needs. Except for the most remote of Yunnan’s Zhuang, speakers are in some sort of cross-culturally dependent networks. Even village Zhuang in heavily Zhuang areas must interact on a frequent basis with some non-Zhuang (or members of other Zhuang language groups) who do not speak their language. At government offices, schools, markets, buses, etc., one is almost certain to encounter at least one Han Chinese or member of another ethnic group. The Zhuang now live in a complicated market economy, and while most remain involved in agricultural work, almost all rely upon selling their produce and purchasing items that they cannot produce for themselves. And for a half century the government has actively worked to incorporate the Zhuang into the national political and cultural sphere.

The sixth indicator concerns the “social outlook within and regarding the speech community.” This concerns the degree to which the group maintains a positive self-identity as a group, and how the group is viewed by surrounding members of other ethnolinguistic groups. In evaluating the Yunnan Zhuang according to Landweer’s criteria, one wishes one had more of an historical perspective on the Yunnan Zhuang. Present attitudes toward the Zhuang by outsiders are neutral to positive, possibly partially due to government education intended to strengthen national identity over ethnic or regional identities, while at the same time emphasizing the right of ethnic minorities to maintain some level of cultural distinctness. Certainly this was not always the case—ethnic minorities in China were frequently depicted in a negative way in the past, as in most other nations. But at the present, at least within ethnically diverse Yunnan, there appears to be relatively little negative stigma from the outside associated with being ethnically Zhuang or speaking Zhuang, either on the part of the Han majority or other surrounding ethnic groups.

In terms of internal identity, though, the Zhuang certainly once did have a strong identity, for example, during Nong Zhigao's uprising in the 11th century. Today that identity appears to be weakening due to increased identity as "Chinese" and also modernization. Most village women still wear a distinctive costume, and almost all Zhuang women own a formal Zhuang costume for festival days and weddings, but few men own a traditional costume. Traditional style wooden homes are still being constructed in some areas where the felling of trees is still allowed, but most Zhuang houses now are identical to the brick houses of surrounding ethnic groups. According to Landweer's categories, the Wenshan Zhuang situation is best summarized as "weak internal identity, neutral status conferred by outsiders, with some cultural markers present."

The seventh indicator concerns the prestige the language enjoys relative to other languages available in the area, for example, neighboring languages, related or unrelated, trade languages, national languages, etc. While Wenshan is a Zhuang (and Miao) Autonomous Prefecture, and the Zhuang language has some degree of official status within the prefecture (as in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), the nationally recognized standard Zhuang variety is a Northern Taic language spoken in Wuming County, Guangxi. However, the Nong Zhuang language is a *de facto* standard for Yunnan's Zhuang people, being used for broadcasting by the prefecture radio station and as the standard for bilingual education pilot testing. The Dai Zhuang and Min Zhuang are not recognized in any way, though they are not prohibited by the local government. In terms of the attitudes of the speakers, though, the Zhuang languages are not disparaged by speakers themselves or others. For virtually all Zhuang we have met, Chinese is considered much more prestigious than Zhuang, not only the standard Putonghua (Mandarin) dialect, but also the local variety. Other minority languages in the area are not considered more prestigious than Zhuang. It is possible that some Zhuang speakers other than Nong Zhuang consider Nong more prestigious than their own language due to the larger size of its speaker community, but this was not a sentiment we heard expressed. Very few Yunnan Zhuang other than a few intellectuals and government officials have come into contact with the government-designated standard Zhuang language of Wuming, so this is not considered to be more prestigious than their own language. However, if speakers were aware of the extensive published material in that language (newspapers, textbooks, dictionaries, etc.), it might cause them to view that language as more prestigious than their own.

Landweer's final indicator is "access to a stable and acceptable economic base." Phrased in a single word, "money," this is the indicator that speakers themselves cited most often as most crucial to linguistic and cultural survival. In China today massive economic changes are taking place and the presence or absence of wealth is causing huge people movements. There is no question in the minds of the Zhuang that mastery of the Chinese language (and maybe some English as well) is vital to their children's financial success. As most Zhuang have no retirement provision other than their children's earnings, the language ability of the children is an issue that lies at the heart of everyone's personal interests. The Zhuang frequently expressed the point that while they love their culture and language, ultimately the need to make a living must come first—and for those who felt that maintenance of Zhuang equated to poor Chinese language ability and thus less economic security, they were clear that the language would have to go. For the Zhuang language to continue to be strong, the Zhuang, like other societies, must come to see the language as not interfering with their children's ability to fully participate in the national economy.

According to Landweer's criteria for her economic indicator, the Yunnan Zhuang are mixed between "marginal subsistence economy" and "dependence on an economic system requiring non-vernacular language." Some rural farmers are still able to use their Zhuang language in daily work, only needing to use Chinese occasionally on market days or when non-Zhuang buyers visit the village. Many Zhuang who live in mixed areas, near towns or in cities are fully integrated into a Chinese-based multiethnic economic system for their daily needs.

In summary, while the Yunnan Zhuang situation is not the least hopeful for language maintenance, on no indicator does the Zhuang situation possess the factors most likely to result in maintained vitality of the language. More than half a million people speak the Nong Zhuang language alone. Though this population seems huge compared to the languages Landweer researches in Papua New Guinea, the Zhuang languages should not be therefore assumed to be impervious to rapid language shift. Within the national context of a population of 1.4 billion, 91% of whom are ethnically Han Chinese, the Zhuang still represent a very small percentage of the national population.

3.3 UNESCO's Language Vitality Assessment Factors

Another helpful tool for assessing language vitality has been developed recently by the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Expert Languages of the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO 2003). Six of these factors are considered "major evaluative factors" and assess specifically the language's "vitality and state of endangerment" (UNESCO 2003:7), two additional factors focus on language attitudes, and a final factor concerns documentation of the language for posterity.

The first factor is "intergenerational language transmission." Using the scale provided by this tool, the Zhuang situation in most areas could be described as "threatened," bordering on "unsafe." In a few areas, such as the Dai Zhuang around Kaihua City and the urban Zhuang in Kunming, the situation is "severely endangered." We have focused almost exclusively on the rural, agrarian, "heartland" population. Based on that population, we concluded that Zhuang children in almost all locations still speak the Zhuang languages fluently. Had we interviewed well educated, urban Zhuang living in Kunming or Wenshan cities, our results would likely have been quite different: probably we would have found few Zhuang children able to speak the Zhuang language and a number of young adults also possessing only partial ability in Zhuang. We conclude that in terms of intergenerational language transmission, the language is being successfully transmitted to most children as their first language (even though some may use Chinese more extensively later in their lives). While threatened, we would not conclude that the language is technically "endangered", based on these descriptions.

The second UNESCO factor concerns the total number of remaining speakers. The Nong Zhuang is considered a "large" language group (between 100,000 and one million speakers), whereas Dai Zhuang is a "medium" group for the area (between 10,000 and 100,000 speakers), and Min Zhuang is a "small" language group (fewer than 10,000 speakers), by UNESCO's criteria. Relative to other languages in the area, the Nong and Dai Zhuang languages are not immediately at risk due an inadequate population of speakers, though this is more of a concern for Min Zhuang.

To complement the second factor, the third factor concerns the proportion of speakers within the total population of the ethnic group. The Zhuang situation appears to be moving from an "unsafe" situation to that of "definitely endangered," as the number of Zhuang in Wenshan who cannot speak any Zhuang language is still quite small percentagewise, but undoubtedly much greater than it was fifty years ago, when official nationality designations were assigned.⁵⁵

The fourth factor touches on the important sociolinguistic concept of language domains: "where and with whom a language is used and the range of topics speakers can address by using the language" (UNESCO 2003:9). In most Zhuang villages, the situation is still best described as one of multilingual parity, in which Chinese is used in most official domains, but Zhuang is still integral to a number of public domains. The multilingual parity found in most villages may be maintained as stable diglossia. The fact that most of the surrounding Han Chinese people also do not use standard Putonghua Chinese for intimate domains may encourage the continued use of Zhuang in formal domains. As the UNESCO document states: "multilingualism is a fact of life in most areas of the world. Speakers do *not* have to be monolingual for their language to be vital. It is crucial that the indigenous language serve a meaningful function in culturally important domains" (2003:10).

The fifth factor is "response to new domains and media." The Zhuang are probably more exposed to new media than are indigenous language groups in some smaller, less developed nations. Since the 1950s, the government has utilized various forms of media to communicate with all its citizens, including rural, previously isolated minority groups. Today rapid economic development is allowing even the relatively poor access to television, mobile phones,

⁵⁵ Of course, we have no means of knowing how many Sinocized Zhuang were assigned Han nationality in the 1950s and *vice versa* how many people assigned Zhuang nationality descended from Han Chinese who had assimilated into the surrounding Zhuang. Since the Song dynasty, Han soldiers and bureaucrats have lived in Zhuang areas and intermarried with the Zhuang.

and some computers in China. For the future of the Zhuang language, this is a critical issue. The UNESCO article warns that new media expands the power of dominant languages at the expense of other languages, making the traditional language increasingly irrelevant and stigmatized (2003:11). The traditional language must be adapted for usage in these new domains in order to remain vital.

In the case of the Zhuang, there are some hopeful signs. A number of Zhuang have independently started videotaping their traditional epic singing and dancing, and producing low cost videos (VCD format) which sell at some local markets. The prefecture radio station broadcasts four times per day in Nong Zhuang, and the Funing County television station broadcasts nightly in Yei Zhuang. However, Chinese and English remain the primary languages used for most broadcast media, computers, text messaging, education, etc. Two major factors that inhibit greater use of Zhuang in these media are the lack of a widely known orthography to use the language in email, text messages, web sites, and educational curriculum, and also a traditional expectation (since the 1950s, that is) that broadcasting, education, and language development are purely the responsibility (and privilege) of the government. Private individuals have not been encouraged to try their hand at home-grown journalism, orthography creation, etc. But the availability of inexpensive video cameras and the increasing accessibility of the internet may change this perception. For the time being, we must conclude that the languages are “coping” with newer media, but with encouragement and a usable orthography, the Zhuang languages could become “receptive” to new domains, using UNESCO’s terminology.

The last language vitality factor in UNESCO’s list deals with materials available for language education and literacy. While not undervaluing the ability of primarily oral societies to preserve their languages, written materials can be a powerful tool in the continued use and development of the language. At the moment, most Zhuang we interviewed had never heard there was an orthography for their languages other than the modified Chinese square characters (*Fangkuai Zi*), which very few Zhuang can read at all and traditionally were only used in the religious domain. The nationally approved Zhuang orthography is unknown to most of the Nong and Dai Zhuang speakers we interviewed and cannot be used to write these languages without spelling modifications. The Yunnan Provincial Language and Orthographies Commission has recently done some work on modifying this orthography to make it usable by Yunnan’s Zhuang, but very little literacy work has taken place to date, to our knowledge. The only Zhuang able to write in Zhuang that we met are professional linguists, anthropologists, or radio journalists. Therefore we conclude the Zhuang languages of Yunnan are not yet at the “beginning” level of UNESCO’s scale for this factor.

In addition to these six language vitality factors, there are two UNESCO factors concerning language attitudes. First we look at how government and institutions view and treat the language. In China different languages are treated differently. At one extreme, Putonghua has been designated as the sole official language of the country, and extensively promoted and developed. At the other extreme, many mutually unintelligible languages are still not even considered by government linguists worthy of the name “dialect” (*fangyan*, 方言), let alone “language” (*yuyan*, 语言). The constitutional right of all minorities to use their own languages does not guarantee that all minority languages receive equal support or that the same language receives equal support in different provinces or regions.

Though Wuming County Yongbei Zhuang, a Northern Taic language, is officially recognized by the national government, its status is not equal to that of Putonghua, which is the uncontested national language, as well as the prestige language and the national *lingua franca*. The Central Taic languages of Yunnan are not officially recognized as being distinctive languages by the provincial or prefecture governments at this point, but both the province and prefecture have been willing to invest a limited amount of resources in the development of Nong Zhuang. While the minority languages are not prohibited, they are not encouraged in schools, government offices, and other institutions where non-Zhuang may be present.⁵⁶ For the most part, the attitude of the government toward the Zhuang languages of Yunnan is one of passive assimilation.

⁵⁶ Officially the policy in almost all Wenshan elementary and middle schools is “Speak Putonghua at school.” This policy, usually posted in large characters at entrance gates of schools, is not intended primarily to be against the use of minority ethnic languages but against the use of “non-standard” local Chinese “dialects.” This policy does not seem to be strictly enforced in

As far as the community members' attitudes towards their own language are concerned, it is difficult to summarize the opinions of the many Zhuang we have known and interviewed in anything more than an anecdotal way. As we did not conduct a statistically valid sample of the entire Zhuang population, we cannot say for sure what percentage have an interest in maintaining their language, but we would conclude that at present levels of awareness of the issue there is only "mixed" or "minimal" support for language maintenance, by UNESCO's definition. Many Zhuang are indifferent to the issue because they do not see an irreversible loss of the language and culture as an immediate threat. Others feel that the culture is little more than some costumes, dancing and colorful embroidery, and can be preserved equally well via Chinese. As noted before, there are those that feel that losing the language may be a necessary evil for the greater good of their children's economic futures.

The final factor concerns documentation of the language and is especially crucial for those languages critically close to extinction. Though the Zhuang languages of Yunnan are not so endangered that they can be preserved only in the form of archived documents and recordings, nonetheless, the languages and their unique art forms are changing as the lives of the speakers change, and thus are worth documenting as they are remembered at the present. At present the documentation situation for the Zhuang languages is "inadequate" by UNESCO's definition, though more has been done in the last decade than ever before. Should research into these languages continue, hopefully the next decade will bring the status at least to a classification of "fragmentary," and hopefully to "good." There is currently no dictionary, or grammar for any of these languages. There are some recordings, both audio and video, of stories and songs, but most are not of professional quality, and many of the audio recordings are on aging magnetic cassette tapes. The present research project has produced annotated digital recorded wordlists and a limited number of short first person narratives, copies of which have been given to both the local speakers who spoke on the recordings and the prefecture Zhuang Studies Association. Much work remains to be done in recording, as well as in archiving, language data in formats that are accessible both to the speakers today and to future members of the language community, as well as to the linguistic community (cf. Bird and Simons 2003).

Looking at both the eight indicators Landweer proposes and the UNESCO committee's nine factors, we see good reason to be concerned about the future of the Zhuang languages of Yunnan. But, on the other hand, at the moment all of these languages are vital to the degree that their future existence is taken for granted by most speakers. Though there are some factors that do not bode well for the continued use of these languages, in most regards the Zhuang situation is at some point between "full health" and "endangerment."

4 Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Zhuang languages of Yunnan are threatened by the Chinese language in its various forms. As we look at the complex language use situations described above, however, and compare that with the criteria identified as being significant to the continued vitality of minority languages, we conclude in general that the Southern Zhuang languages of Wenshan Prefecture are not immediately endangered. In terms of the future survival of the Zhuang languages in Yunnan, we see that both Nong Zhuang and Dai Zhuang have some hopeful characteristics: relatively large populations, good intergenerational language transmission in most areas, positive language attitudes, and continuing use in various traditional and some newer language domains.

However, without focused language development and maintenance efforts, supported by the speakers themselves, it is likely that a century from now these languages may no longer be natural, living parts of the life of this community, but may be only curious relics of a time few remember. One of the most important tools the languages currently lack is a practical orthography—a writing system that is not just presented in linguists' papers, but one that is understood and "owned" by the speakers themselves. Not only would such an orthography increase the prestige of the languages in the eyes of the speakers, but it would also allow the languages to develop into new domains and keep up with the changes taking place in Zhuang society. Specifically, the Zhuang languages need to be used more

many schools, and Zhuang teachers do seem to be free to use the Zhuang languages orally in the early years of elementary school.

widely in video and computer media, as these media have replaced books, newspapers and radio as the primary sources of new information in many Zhuang areas, even in some remote villages. Materials for education and literacy must be produced and effectively taught to both children and adults.

In Joshua Fishman's fascinating article "What Do You Lose When You Lose Your Language?" he describes how he and his wife are passing on their heritage language, Yiddish, to their grandchildren in the midst of multilingual America, dominated by the prestige language of English:

In conclusion I want to tell you something about my grandchildren. My wife engages in laptop publishing. She publishes in the Yiddish language for our grandchildren. But let me tell you, the true lap top here is my lap and her lap and the laps of the children's mother and father. That is a bond with the language that will stay with them after we are long gone. That is the lap top of language. And if you want that language revived, you have to use your lap also with your children or your grandchildren or somebody else's children or grandchildren. (Fishman 1996:80)

Like Fishman's grandchildren, the majority of rural Zhuang children are still learning Zhuang languages on their grandparent's "lap tops." Ultimately the future of these languages will be up to those children. Whether they choose to allow their languages to lose traditional linguistic domains to Chinese, as has happened to some other ethnic groups in China such as the Manzu, or whether they will continue to use the Zhuang languages in village and intimate domains and teach in-married non-Zhuang spouses the language and culture, is up to the Zhuang young people themselves. For the Zhuang languages, and with them the Zhuang cultures, to continue to live as healthy, useful, dynamic organisms depends on which language these toddlers use when they are adults and their own children sit on their laps and say "tell me a story."

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7 Appendix A: Yunnan Province Zhuang Populations

The following table includes all Yunnan Province county level units whose population is at least 1% Zhuang nationality. (Sources: Yunnan Province 2004, Mengzi Xian Zhi 1995, Pingbian Miaozu Zhizi Xian Zhi 1990, He 1998. Abbreviations: Auto. = Autonomous, Cty. = County, Mun. = Municipality, Pref. = Prefecture)

<i>administrative unit</i>	<i>total population</i>	<i>total Zhuang</i>	<i>% Zhuang</i>	<i>language(s)</i>	<i>location of concentrations</i>
Yunnan Province	43,756,000	1,155,427	2.6%		More than 90% of Yunnan's Zhuang live in the southeast corner of the province, specifically in Wenshan Pref.
Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Auto. Pref. (文山壮族苗族自治州)	3,322,392	1,001,194	30%	Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang, Guibian Yei Zhuang, Qiubei Yei Zhuang, etc.	Numerous in all eight counties; most numerous in Guangnan and Funing counties and least numerous in Xichou and Malipo counties.
Wenshan Cty. (文山县)	428,912	92,699	21%	Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang	Nong primarily in Binglie (秉烈) District and Matong (马塘) Township, Dai Zhuang in Kaihua (开花), Panzhuhua (攀枝花), Matong and Dehou (德厚) townships.
Yanshan Cty. (研山县)	442,380	137,022	30%	Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang	Dai Zhuang primarily in western Yanshan, especially Pingyuan (平远) Township, Nong primarily in eastern Yanshan, especially in Zhela (者腊), and Bang'e (蚌峨) districts.
Xichou Cty. (西畴县)	250,198	24,881	10%	Nong Zhuang	A handful of villages primarily along the Chouyang river, from Jijie (鸡街) District in the north of the Cty., and then along the river south of the Cty. seat down towards Malipo Cty..
Malipo Cty. (麻栗坡县)	270,851	32,900	12%	Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang	Nong in Babu (八布), Yangwan (新寨), and Nanwanhe (南温河) districts and Mali (麻栗) Township, Dai Zhuang in the northwest corner of the Cty. in Daping (大坪) District.
Maguan Cty. (马关县)	352,410	54,643	16%	Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang	Nong Zhuang scattered throughout the Cty., especially in Nanlao Township (南捞) and along the southern border.
Qiubei Cty. (丘北县)	446,240	122,654	28%	Qiubei Yei Zhuang ("Sha"), Nong Zhuang	Predominately Qiubei Yei Zhuang found throughout the Cty. in all districts and townships.
Guangnan Cty. (广南县)	744,319	318,889	43%	Nong Zhuang, Guibian Yei Zhuang ("Sha"), Dai Zhuang, Buyang	Nong in center and south of the Cty., especially Liancheng (连城), Jiumo (旧莫), Zhetu (者兔), Zhujie (珠街), Nalun (那伦), Nasa (那洒), Zhulin (珠琳), Wuzhu (五珠) and southern Ake (阿科) districts and townships, Yei Zhuang in the northern and eastern of the Cty., especially Zhetai (者太), Diyu (底圩), Bada (八达), Tangshang (堂上), northern Ake, Babao (八宝), Yangliujing (杨柳井), Banbang (板蚌), Dai Zhuang in Zhulin Township.
Funing Cty. (富宁县)	387,082	217,506	55%	Guibian Yei Zhuang, Nong Zhuang, Tianbao, Min Zhuang, Buyang, Long'an, Jiazhou, Buli, ⁵⁷ etc.	Zhuang are a majority in most districts and townships, and over 90% in Bo'ai (剥隘), Naneng (那能), Zhesan (者桑) and Gula (谷拉) districts/townships. Yei Zhuang are the most numerous throughout the Cty., with many other Zhuang groups in scattered among the Yei Zhuang.

⁵⁷ According to Dai and He (2006:122), Buli (布俚) is a subgroup of the Sha/Yei Zhuang living along the Jinsha River, but as Lu and Nong's (1998) Buli wordlist appears significantly different than their Buyei wordlist (布越), and several sources list the Buli (布俚) separately from the Buyei for the time being we are listing Buli as a distinct language group until we are able to confirm that they speak Guibian Yei also. Dai and He also seem to be distinguishing between 布越 and 布瑞 (2006:120-122), though in He's 1998 work he translated 布瑞 into English as "Buyei" (1998:53) and Dai and He transcribe 布越 as [pu²²jai¹³] (2006:114). As no IPA or English phoneticization is provided for "布瑞" in Dai and He 2006, for the moment we are unable to determine if these are simply two different Chinese phoneticizations of the autonym of the same Zhuang ethnic group, or represent two different Zhuang ethnic groups.

<i>administrative unit</i>	<i>total population</i>	<i>total Zhuang</i>	<i>% Zhuang</i>	<i>language(s)</i>	<i>location of concentrations</i>
Honghe Hani and Yi Auto. Pref. (红河哈尼族彝族自治州)	4,130,463	99,132	0.02%	Nong Zhuang, Dai Zhuang, Qiubei Yei Zhuang	Primarily in Mengzi and Hekou counties, but smaller populations in Kaiyuan, Gejiu, Pingbian, Mile, Luxi, Yuangyang and Jinping.
Gejiu Mun. (个旧市)	453,311	14,751	3%	probably Dai Zhuang	Manhao Township (蔓耗镇).
Kaiyuan Mun. (开远市)	292,039	13,629	5%	Dai Zhuang	Zhongheying Township (中和营镇).
Mengzi Cty. (蒙自县)	340,051	37,938	11%	Dai Zhuang, Nong Zhuang	Dai Zhuang in Shuiba district (水坝地区); Nong in Duofale Zhuang Township (多法勒壮族自治县) and Zhicun Township's Shimajiao Village (芷村镇石马脚).
Pingbian Miao Auto. Cty. (屏边苗族自治县)	149,088	3,722	2%	Nong Zhuang (85%), Yei ("Sha") Zhuang (15%)	Nong in Dahebian (大河边) Village in Heping District (和平乡), Baihe District Seat (白河乡), Xialati Village (下腊梯) in Dishuiceng District (滴水层乡), Tazhanni (它占泥), Sanjia (三家), Luonishang (侏尼上), Shangzhai (下寨), & Banpo (半坡) villages in Xinhua District (新华乡); Yei in Dashiugou (大水沟) & Liamatan (溜马滩) villages in Baihe District.
Mile Cty. (弥勒市)	495,642	5,889	1%	Qiubei Yei Zhuang	
Luxi Cty. (泸西县)	365,585	2,505	1%	Qiubei Yei Zhuang	
Yuangyang Cty. (元阳县)	362,950	3,353	1%		
Jinping Miao, Yao and Dai Auto. Cty. (金平苗族瑶族傣族自治县)	316,171	5,764	2%	probably Nong Zhuang	
Hekou Yao Auto. Cty. (河口瑶族自治县)	95,451	10,285	11%	probably Nong Zhuang	Qiaotou Miao Zhuang Township (桥头苗族壮族自治县)
Lijiang Mun. (丽江市)	1,126,646	3,916	<1%	Yei Zhuang ("Sha")	A few villages in Huaping, Ninglang, Lijiang and Yongsheng counties.
Huaping Cty. (华坪县)	154,968	1,339	1%	Yei Zhuang ("Sha")	Several small villages on the Jingsha River (金沙江).
Ninglang Yi Auto. Cty. (宁蒗彝族自治县)	229,204	1,165	1%	Yei Zhuang ("Sha")	Several small villages on the Jingsha River (金沙江).
Kunming Mun. (昆明市)	5,781,294	16,382	<1%		Mainly in Luquan Cty., also a few in Lunan (路南) Cty. and various Zhuang civil servants, business people, students and laborers in Kunming city proper.
Luquan Yi and Miao Auto. Cty. (禄劝彝族苗族自治县)	429,355	2,416	1%	Yei Zhuang and Buli Zhuang	Several small villages on the Jingsha River (金沙江).
Qujing Mun. (曲靖市)	5,466,089	28,589	1%	Guibian Yei Zhuang, Buli Zhuang	Primarily in Shizong (师宗) Cty., but also smaller populations in Luoping (罗平), Xuanwei (宣威), Huize (会泽) and Fuyuan (富源) counties.
Shizong Cty. (师宗县)	349,770	22,290	6%	Guibian Yei Zhuang ("Zhongjia," "Sha"), Buli Zhuang	Primarily in Wulong Zhuang District (五龙壮族乡), Gaoliang Zhuang and Miao District (高良壮族苗族乡) and Longqing Yi and Zhuang District (龙庆彝族壮族乡).

Smaller Zhuang populations also exist in Dali Prefecture's Heqing County (Duomei District) and Xishuangbanna Prefecture's Mengla County (Yao District) according to He (1998).

8 Appendix B: Major Zhuang Ethnic Subgroups in Wenshan Prefecture

Wenshan Prefecture Zhuang Ethnic Subgroups
(Source: Wenshan Zhou Zhuang Zu Chuantong Wenhua Diaocha 2004)

<i>Ethnic group Autonym</i>	<i>Autonym in IPA</i>	<i>Name of ethnic group used in this work</i>	<i>Name of language as used in this work</i>	<i>Exonym in Chinese</i>	<i>Other exonyms and autonyms used in some areas</i>	<i>Location</i>
pu Nong (濮依)	[p ^h u ³¹ nɔŋ ³³], [p ^h u ²² nɔŋ ⁴⁴]	Nong Zhuang	Nong Zhuang	Nong (依)	Nongzu (侬族), Nongren (侬人), Long (龙), bu Tei, Bendi (本地: 'indigenous')	Yanshan, Guangnan, Wenshan, Maguan, Funing, Xichou, Malipo (also in Honghe Prefecture Vietnam)
pu Dai (濮岱)	[p ^h u ⁵⁵ dai ³¹], [p ^h u ²² tai ¹¹]	Dai Zhuang	Dai Zhuang	Tu (土)	Tulao (土僚、土老), Tuzu (土族), Pulao (濮僚; ancient ethnonym)	Yanshan, Wenshan, Maguan, Malipo, Guangnan counties (also in Honghe Prefecture and Vietnam)
bu Yai (布雅衣), bu Yei (布依, 布瑞, 布越)	[pu ³⁵ jai ³⁴], [pu ³³ juei ³⁴], [pu ²² jai ¹³]	Yei Zhuang	Guibian Zhuang	Sha (沙)	Shazu (沙族), Sharen (沙人), Baisha (白沙), Nongqianbeng (依迁绷), Zhongjia (仲家)	Funing, Guangnan counties (also in Guangxi to the east and north)
	[bu ji] (Qiubei)		Qiubei Zhuang			Qiubei (probably also in Qujing Municipality to the north)

Wenshan Prefecture Zhuang Ethnic Subgroups Populations by County
(Source: Wen Nong Nian Fu 1 Biao 2005)

<i>County</i>	<i>Zhuang Population</i>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>% Nong Zhuang</i>	<i>% Dai Zhuang</i>	<i>% Yei Zhuang</i>
Wenshan	91,550	50%	50%	0%
Malipo	32,812	90%	10%	0%
Guangnan	320,940	60%	05%	35%
Qiubei	125,116	15%	05%	80%
Maguan	54,922	60%	10%	30%
Yanshan	134,824	75%	20%	05%
Funing	218,380	40%	10%	50%
Xichou	24,097	96%	02%	02%
Wenshan Prefecture Totals:	1,002,641	53%	11%	36%

9 Appendix C: Zhuang Local Leader Language Use Questionnaire

This is a sample of the questionnaire used in Nong villages; for Dai Zhuang and Min Zhuang villages, we substituted “Dai” and “Min” for “Nong.”

壮族本地领导语言使用调查问卷
ZHUANG LOCAL LEADER LANGUAGE USE QUESTIONNAIRE

A) 人口统计
Population Statistics

乡/镇名 _____ 村委会 _____ 村名 (自然村) _____
District/Township name Village Committee (community) Village Name (natural village)

村离县城有几公里 _____ ? How many kilometers from the county seat to the village?

你们村委会有几户? How many households are in your village committee?
村委会总共多少人? The village committee has how many people?
你们村有几户? How many households in your village?
村总共多少人? How many people in the village?

村里的人都是侬支系人 (壮族) 吗? Are all the people in the village Nong (Zhuang)?
有什么其它的民族? 有几户? Which other nationalities are there? How many house holds?

	有 / 没有 Yes/No	几户 No. of households
i. 汉族 Han nationality		
ii. 彝族 : 什么支系? Yi: which ethnic group?		
iii. 苗族 Miao nationality		
iv. 回族 Hui nationality		
v. 土支系 (壮族) Tu ethnic group (Zhuang nat.)		
vi. 沙支系 (壮族) Sha ethnic group (Zhuang nat.)		
vi. 其它民族 : 什么民族? Other nationality: Which?		

B) 周围地区民族分布 (用地图)
Distribution of Nationalities in Surrounding Areas (using maps)

X村子是侬支系的吗? Is X village a Nong village?
村民全部都是侬支系人吗? Are all the villagers there Nong people?
有什么其他的民族? What other ethnic groups are there?
跟这里讲的话一模一样吗? Is their speech exactly the same as here?

他们讲侬话的时候，你完全听得懂吗？ When they speak Nong, can you completely understand them?

C) 村民交往(市场) Communication Among Villagers (Markets)

你们去哪里赶街？ Where do you go for market days?

X地方多久赶一次街？ How frequently does the market at X take place?

哪些村子的人也去X赶街？ Which other villages also frequent the X market day?

赶街地点 market day location	多久赶一次 frequency of market day	赶街人的地理范围 geographical range of market participants
i.		
ii.		
iii.		

你们在X市场的时候最常说哪种话？ At the market day at X which language do you use most frequently?

赶街地名 name of market	最常用的语言 Most frequently used language
i.	
ii.	
iii.	

D) 村民交往(学校) Communication Among Villagers (Schools)

本村的小孩子在哪里上 i. / ii. / iii. / iv. 学校？ Where do the children of this village go to (i. / ii. / iii. / iv) school?

i. / ii. / iii. / iv. 学校有宿舍吗？ Does the (i. / ii. / iii. / iv) school have a student dormitory?

上 i. / ii. / iii. / iv. 学校的学生从哪些地方来？ Students at the (i. / ii. / iii. / iv) school come from which other places?

学校种类 type of school	地点 location	寄宿？ Dorm?	学生求学地理情况 (村名) geographical range of students (village names)
i. 小学 (到__年级) elementary school (up to __ grade)			
ii. 小学 (到六年级) elementary school (up to 6 th grade)			
iii. 初中 middle school (jr. high)			
iv. 高中 high school			

村民有多少人现在正在读： How many residents of this village are currently studying at:

大学 / 大专：_____ 高中 / 中专：_____ 初中：_____ 小学：_____

university / trade school High school / technical high school middle school elementary school

E) 语言活力、汉语取代壮话的程度

Language Vitality, Degree of Language Shift From Zhuang to Chinese

你们村有没有不会讲依话的依支系人? Are there Nong people in your village who cannot speak Nong?
 有没有 i. / ii. / iii. 不会讲依话? Are there (i. / ii. / iii.) who cannot speak the Nong language?
 [如果“是”:] 是少数还是很多? [if “yes”:] Only a few or many?

	有 / 没有 some / none	少数 / 很多 a few / many
i. 老年人 old people		
ii. 五岁以上的小孩子 children over 5		
iii. 还没上学的小孩子 pre-school aged children		

你们村有没有不会讲汉语的人? Are there people in your village who cannot speak Chinese?
 有没有 i. / ii. / iii. / iv. / v. 不会讲汉语? Are there (i. / ii. / iii. / iv. / v.) who cannot speak Chinese?
 [如果“是”:] 是少数还是很多? [if “yes”] Only a few or many?

	有 / 没有 some / none	少数 / 很多 a few / many
i. 老年人 old people		
ii. 五岁以上的小孩子 children over 5		
iii. 还没上学的小孩子 pre-school aged children		
iv. 青年女人 young women		
v. 青年男人 young men		

你们村有没有依支系男人和其他的民族通婚?
 Does your village have Nong men who have married other ethnic groups?
 和什么民族? 有少数还是很多? With which other ethnic groups? Are there only a few or many?
 他们的老婆在家里现在说依话还是汉语? Do their wives usually now speak Nong or Chinese at home?
 他们的孩子说哪种话? Which language(s) do their children speak?

村里有没有人去了外地住下来, 又回到本村来? 有少数还是很多?
 Are there people of this village who settled elsewhere and then moved back to the village? Few or many?
 去了什么地方住下来? Where did they go to live?
 回来了, 他们的依话现在讲得怎么样? When they returned, how did they speak Nong?

有没有外地人来你们村住下来? Are there outsiders who have come to settle in your village?
 有几个还是有很多? Few or many?
 从哪里来? From where did they come?
 他们说哪种话? What language/dialect(s) do they speak?
 你们用什么话跟他们沟通? Which language do they use to communicate with you?

他们其中有没有学会侬话的？ Are there any among them that have learned to speak Nong?
少数还是很多？ Few or many?

你们村子用广播向村民通知一件重要的事的时候，用的是什么语言？

When your village uses the loudspeaker system to notify villagers of an important announcement, which language(s) do you use?

i. 侬话 Nong ii. 普通话 Putonghua/Mandarin Chinese iii. 汉语方言 / 地方话 Local Chinese dialect

你们给村民开会的时候，用的是什么语言？

When you hold a meeting for the villages, which language (s) do you use?

i. 侬话 Nong ii. 普通话 Putonghua/Mandarin Chinese iii. 汉语方言 / 地方话 Local Chinese dialect

10 Appendix D: Observation Schedule

This observation schedule was designed by Ms. Cathryn Yang. “Zhuang” represents the Zhuang language spoken in the village observed, “WSH” represents Wenshanhua, the local oral Chinese dialect.

Village and Town Observation Schedule

Village Level Language Use Matrix

Language:

Population:

Investigator/s:

Village:

Nationalities present:

Date:

for reported language use, write "R" , for observed language use, write "O"

Participants	Domain	Zhuang	WSH	Other
older adult women	home			
older adult men	home			
adult men	home			
adult women	home			
children	home			
parent>child	home			
child>parent	home			
children	playing			
grandparents → children				
children → grandparents				
teacher>students	school			
children	school			
adults	work			
local official (lives in village)	office / official business			
young people>young people	community			
adults	community			
Zhuang>outsider	community			
outsider>Zhuang	community			
<i>Township level</i>				
Zhuang>outsider	market			
outsider>Zhuang	market			

Village Level Infrastructure and Literacy

Category		Observation (circle if observed)	Details (number, language, location, condition)
Location	Accessibility	distance from township (km and time), condition of road (gravel, cement)	
		distance from main road (include altitude gain)	
		number of trucks/vans in half hour	
		scheduled bus service (bus stop?)	
Education	Primary schools	number; condition; how many children live at school	
	Truancy	children playing during school hours	
Homes	Amenities	TVs, radios, tape players, VCD	
	Electricity	power lines, how many hours per day?	
	Communication	telephone lines, cell phones, coverage	
	Construction	on stilts, mud walls, cement foundation, internal walls	
Literacy	Homes with books	all, most, some, few, none	

	Types of books	magazines, newspaper, posters, signs, letters, childrens' textbooks, comic books	
	People reading	age; sex; type of material (school, home, store)	
	People writing	age; sex; type of material (school, home, store)	

Township Level Infrastructure and Literacy

Language:

Population:

Investigator/s:

Village:

Nationalities present:

Date:

Location	Accessibility	distance from county seat (km and time), condition of road (gravel, cement)	
		distance from main road (include altitude gain)	
		number of trucks/vans in half hour	
		scheduled bus service (bus station?)	
Education	Secondary schools	number; condition	
	Truancy	children playing during school hours	
	Supplies	paper, pens, pencils, chalk	
Homes	Amenities	TVs, radios, tape players, VCD	
	Electricity	power lines	
	Communication	telephone lines	
	Construction	on stilts, mud walls, cement foundation, internal walls	
Literacy	Homes with books	all, most, some, few, none	
	Types of books	magazines, newspaper, posters, signs, letters	
	People reading	age; sex; type of material school, home, store	
	People writing	age; sex; type of material school, home, store	
	Leadership	age; nationality; degree of wealth	

For Extended Observation (village or township)

Category		Observation (circle if observed)	Details (number, language, location, condition)
Social Interaction	Women's activities	washing clothes, dishes, farming, carrying goods	
	Men's activities	splitting wood, farming, hunting, fishing, smoking	
	Male/female interaction	public vs. private; separate vs. together; relating to guests	
	Children's activities	games, swimming, sports, toy construction	
	Recreation and hobbies	games, reading, karaoke, story telling; riddles	
	Leadership	age; nationality; degree of wealth	