

A Comparative Study of Buddhism and Islam in Yunnan Province

Dai and Paxidai

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I, a Nichiren Buddhist, and Dr. Tehranian, a Sufi Muslim, have chosen the road of dialogue. We have chosen to use dialogue to recognize, learn from, and value our differences in beliefs and backgrounds, and we have chosen to see whatever differences may exist not as walls but as varying planes and angles on the scintillating diamond of global culture.¹

Introduction

This article describes the Dai people,² and the *Paxidai*, 帕西傣. They live in Southwest China, Yunnan.

China, Yunnan. Among the nationality-minorities (*minzu*), the Muslim Paxidai are classified as Hui but they speak Dai as well as Putonghua. This article discusses also Sinicization and the prospect of religious harmony based on extensive fieldwork in the region.

For the founder of the department of anthropology of Xiamen University, Chen Guoqiang, cultural anthropology is integrated, comprehensive and theoretical.³ But for Lin Huixiang, in the same department, anthropology focuses on primitive conditions of human society; sociology discusses contemporary society. The current study is socio-anthropological. It starts at the village, in line with the slogan of Fei Xiatong, the leading Chinese anthropologist of the 20th century: "We are first rural" (*women nongcun zhong*).⁴

Works about Yunnan ethnology and minority nationalities in Chinese or English are for example *Yunnan Shaoshu Minzu (The Minorities of Yunnan)* (1980) and the Tai studies of Raendchen and Zheng.⁵ The discourse of race is situated at the periphery of the Chinese symbolic universe and does not concern the two groups of Dai (pron. Tai) studied in this article who are of the same anthropic origin, speak the same mother tongue (Dai Lue), but follow two different religions.

This article defines the Buddhist Dai and Muslim Paxidai, and seeks to show the importance of harmony and trade in a case study about the Menghai area of Yunnan. It

emphasizes the harmony between different religious cultures.⁶ It also looks at religious practice and beliefs, and describes religious believers from the vantage point of anthropology to provide a secular worldview.⁷

For Biletski, religion is after all a way of living. “The current state of religious freedom in China (PRC) can be compared to the proverbial half glass of water; while some people see the glass as half full, others view it as half empty.”⁸ Most would likely agree that given the almost complete absence of religious freedom twenty years ago in China, to have the glass half full today demonstrates remarkable progress. Perhaps more importantly, the water continues to rise. Throughout its long history, China has had an interesting and sometimes tumultuous relationship with organized religions, both domestic and foreign. Because this conflict has appeared throughout Chinese history and across many different governments, it may appear to some to be an inherent feature of Chinese culture. Indeed, unlike most Western societies, China was primarily and officially dominated for more than two thousand years by the semi-religious influence of Confucian philosophy. Since immemorial time, ancestor worship is the basic Chinese religion. How one views religions in China largely depends on the position and political orientation of the viewer.

Buddhism has a two thousand year history in China, and Islam entered in the Chinese world for the first time in 751 at the battle of Talas. Contacts with Arabs, however, could have been earlier in eastern Uzbekistan, in Ferghana (Ta Yuan).

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976, roughly) most religious activities were banned in China. Only one mosque was officially open during that period, but China is sheer and despite the severe conditions imposed to all religions it is possible that in remote places Muslims could have sometimes attended underground ritual *Salat* prayers.

The Chinese government first announced the new Religious Affairs Provisions on 30 November 2004, and they were published in early 2005 by the New China News Agency. On 1 March 2005, the State Council’s Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA) entered into force.

China currently has approximately sixteen thousand Buddhist temples and about 320,000 Buddhist monks and nuns, and more than 40,000 mosques. China has ten Muslim national minorities with a total official population of twenty million adherents to Islam. In fact, the number is probably closer to fifty million. There are more than one hundred and ten million Buddhists in China.

The citizens of China are currently free to express their religious beliefs and may officially choose a religious affiliation within the five major religions. The Document 19 of March 1982 and the Constitution of China recognize only Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam and Protestantism. However, not all Buddhist cults are allowed in China.

An abstract of the full text of the Chinese legislative resolution banning cults, 30 October 1999, follows:

1. Heretic cult organizations shall be resolutely banned according to law.
2. The principle of combining education with punishment should be followed in order to instruct the majority.

3. Long-term, comprehensive instruction on the Constitution should be carried out among citizens.
4. All corners of society shall be mobilized in preventing and fighting against cult activities.

This is an important text aiming to ensure social stability. Buddhist Dai Lue minority in Xishuang Banna (in Dai *Sipsong Panna*) and the neighboring Muslim community called *Paxidai* speaks Dai Lue, Putonghua (Mandarin), and Yunnanese. The Dai of Xishuang Banna belong to the larger group called Tai speakers, as do the Lao. We will try to prove that popular religion exists in China and confirm the thesis of Mayfair Yang that religious revival is in progress.⁹ But “modernity” in Xishuang Banna cannot be compared to that of Wenzhou District in Zhejiang Province, which has links all over the world and in particular with Europe. Culture is unbounded, non-unitary, reified, changing, and also depends on history.¹⁰

History

Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (around 100 BC) mentions the ethnological but not geographical meaning of Dian. So, “Dian” could mean “Tai”. Zheng Xiaoyun puts the origin of the Tai or their place of birth in Yunnan around the Dianchi Lake and Chuxiong, but forgets to mention the kingdom of Nanzhao, a key toponym concerning the root of the Tai people.¹¹ Elsewhere, Shen is right when he says that *Zhao* or “Chao” is not an ethnic identity criterion but became a place name or a “geographical name” meaning “country”.¹² It seems also difficult to deny that Tai and Cantonese are related languages sharing a common linguistic root. Frontier peoples always find a common language to communicate with the others.

Yunnan has many Tai speaking people, mainly the Dai and the Zhuang. This study is centered on the Dai speaking minority, in which Buddhists are largely dominant.¹³ Yunnan, and in particular Menghai District, close to the Burmese border, were “safe havens” on the South Silk Road, the caravan track where Muslims always played a central role. Yunnan, at the end of all the dynasties as well as in the 1950s and during the Cultural Revolution before Deng’s reforms, has played this role of haven. After the death of the Muslim leader Du Wenxiu (d. 1873) who became independent of the Qing dynasty during many years, Yunnan during many decades was not safe for the Muslims — except for the collaborators of the Qing Government. The enraged Qing Dynasty ordered the massacre of hundreds of Muslim villagers near the city of Simao after the fall of the Du’s Sultanate in Dali. There is a stele in Chinese in the sacred tomb (*Gongbei*) of Simao (now called Puer) recording this massacre.

But some rare Muslims who were not pro-Qing survived in Menghai, where the ancestors of Muslim Dai are said to be partly from Dali. Unfortunately no historical legend is kept in the two Muslim villages studied here. Male Muslims from the outside came from around Dali or other part of Yunnan during the past century, and married Dai women who were converted to Islam. Some came more recently during or after the Cultural Revolution. Their arrival is the basis for one of the hypotheses for the foundation

of two Paxidai villages in Menghai. Among these incomers, a Hui from Gansu married at the end of the 1990s a Paxidai woman. The parent of this Hui from Gansu came later by train from very far away. These paternal grandparents now stay in their son's house to take care of their two male grandchildren born from this Hui/Paxidai union. The children's parents both work in the city of Menghai six kilometers away and only come back to the village in the late afternoon. Other Muslims, originally Yunnanese, came back recently from Burma to live again in their country of origin in a Paxidai village.

Dai and Muslim Identity in Yunnan

There are very few comparative studies of close Buddhist and Muslim communities such as in India,¹⁴ and there is even less research in China on this topic.

There are 55 non-Han minority nationalities in China. Among them, ten of these nationalities are Muslims; this study only looks at the Paxidai who are officially designated and called "Hui".

The current study concerns two Yunnanese villages located near the city of Menghai. These Muslims are not exactly Hui but rather Dai. Their classification as a minority is not well defined. However, the socio-political designation of *minzu* allows in principle the Hui to negotiate their classification, which sometimes does not fit the integration to Chinese rule.¹⁵ A question of classification remains for the Paxidai, are they part of the Dai *minzu* (minority nationality) or simply Hui? Technically the Paxidai could claim to be Tai, but this does not appear on their identity card which only mentions "Hui" (Hui means "Muslim"). The name of a person's religion does not appear on official Chinese documents.

We have already mentioned the legal point of view, but there are other aspects. Unity (*tuanjie*) is fundamental for all countries. We have to ask also what is the influence of this type of polity and identity on the two religions studied here?¹⁶

Buddhism

The principal teachings of Gautama Buddha can be summarized in what the Buddhists call the "Noble Truths": There is suffering and misery in life; the cause of this suffering and misery is desire; suffering and misery can be removed by removing desire; desire can be removed by following the Eight-Fold Path. There is an absence of the central concept of God creator in Buddhism.

Buddhism is not the original religion of the Tai people but it "fits so well in the Tai traditional way of life and also in their old indigenous religion that one could think, if it is not the Tai who have invented Buddhism, it was at least determined for them to follow".¹⁷ Generally speaking, the majority of the Dai in Yunnan, and the other Tai people of Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand have a common religion, Theravada Buddhism. The Dai Lue of Xishuang Banna studied here also follow Theravada Buddhism.

Spirits and Dai Buddhism

Despite religious differences between Dai and Paxidai, there are similarities and accommodation is always present in China. Even if the Dai Lue of Xishuang Banna

enjoyed considerable autonomy during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), they did not ignore Chinese religion such as the “Grand Sacrifice” (*dasi*) including sacrifices to Heaven (*Tian*), Earth (*Di*), to ancestors, and other sacrifices to the Sun, the Moon and the God of Agriculture. The Dai Lue worship the *phi muang*, the spirit of the home, the village and the state in a hierarchical structure.¹⁸ This cult is also linked to an ancient agricultural ritual, but territoriality is the central concept. In Menghai, a small bull is sacrificed each year to the *phi muang*. The meat of the bull is divided among all the villagers to perpetuate social cohesion and the spirit of cooperation in the same generation (*pinawngkan*). At the lowest level, the objects of worship among others are the Dragon God. Chinese worship of the Dragon is very similar to the snake cult of the Dai *Naga*.¹⁹ For the Tai villager, Buddhist and non-Buddhist rites (such as the worship of trees, in particular the banyan tree) are part of a single system.²⁰

Both Buddhist Dai and Paxidai of Menghai had former links in particular before 1949 with Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand. The Dai Lue Buddhist population of Menghai district like to go on pilgrimage to Kengtung (formerly Xieng Tong, Jingdong in Chinese). Between 1950 and 1985, however, none of the Dai had the official opportunity to cross the border into Burma. Once in the 1990s, a group of Dai Lue villagers went to Myanmar and they remember the splendor of the Tai Khuen *Wat*.

In Yunnan, despite numerous minorities, the socio-economic domination of the Han Chinese is evident. In Xishuang Banna, in contrast to the pre-1949 period, the current relationship between Yunnan and Burma is less business-oriented than Dehong. However, in the Paxidai village Manzhaihui a cattle market that buys oxen in Myanmar and sells them in Thailand with good profits, is taking advantage of the Yunnanese modern highways.

There is a primary focus on individual and group identity, religious and linguistic. Language is part of culture. The importance of Tai languages (Tai-Kadai family: Dai, Lao, Shan and Thai) along those borders is crucial. These languages are convincing and reliable tools of communication which could create an immediate and true kinship relationship between locutors. Han often use Dai friends more fluent in languages when their border trade is potentially risky. This cultural importance of Tai languages contributes positively to a better relationship among peoples along these borders, even if Chinese and Burmese languages also play an evident powerful politico-linguistic role.

Rituals, myths and Buddhist education

The binomial concept myth and ritual, which can be separated as well as connected, was analyzed at length by Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss. One myth tells about a Tai ruler Phadeang and her courted lover Nang Ai.²¹ The myth includes a fireworks competition to conquer the lover’s heart which is similar to the current rocket festival called *Bunbongfai* still practiced in Xishuang Banna and Dehong districts. Links exist between Buddhism and village guardian spirits. However, the monks try not to mix Buddhist ritual and spirit cults; but it is difficult to deny a link. The key Buddhist ceremony is the joyous

procession of the Dai in the village's alleys, and the monks follow. The rockets circumambulate with the ecstatic cortege, they are later stored a while in the *wat* and at night the *bongfai* will be fired to ask for auspicious rain to the guardian spirits. A banquet is often served to all the villagers.

The Dai Buddhist education exists in the nearby Dai village that I studied since 1986. I returned to this village in March 2009 to update my knowledge. The public teaching of Dai, Putonghua and simplified Chinese characters is compulsory in primary and early secondary education and it ignores the "tai" cultural system which includes Dai rites of passages and a basic knowledge of Hinayana Buddhism. The main Dai festival for the Tai New Year (*phi mai*), the Water Festival with boat races on the Mekong, attracts each year many Han Chinese and tourists. The Dai villagers go, in a sort of pilgrimage, to the main city Jinghong each year for this central festival. Harsh economic conditions could compel them to stay in their village. In addition, Dai or Bulang Buddhist monks come to officiate in the small Buddhist pagoda (*wat*) constructed in the village in the late 1980s (Bulang are another minority of Yunnan). The relationship of the *wat* to the village is fundamental. All the villagers participate when there is a ceremony. So the reconstruction of the village's *wat* is a crucial event. During the earthquake on 30 November 1989; nobody in the village was harmed; the author was present in the village at that time. The village's headman, who established this pagoda, passed away in 2008. His nephew who studied in Jinghong Dai Buddhism and the two alphabets (Buddhist Lue and the new Dai script) is currently the monk in charge of this *wat*.

Islam

The existence of Dai-speaking Paxis in Menghai (in the two villages called Manzhaihui and Manluanhui) is linked to the ancient caravans that plied between Yunnan and Burma. The link between Menghai and Kengtung, Burma, was closed between 1950 and 1988. The networks of Islamic merchants were frequently developed in cities through a framework of Yunnanese mosques in Kunming, Mojiang, Simao and Jinghong. In Mojiang, a Sufi's sandalwood plantation supplied valuable trading load of wood for cremation. These Muslims traveled with their mules in daily stages of around thirty kilometers and carried loads of 70–100 kilograms.²² Temporary Muslim migration occurred back and forth from Yunnan to Burma and Thailand for many centuries.

Kengtung in Myanmar has two mosques but no Muslims from Menghai have gone there in recent times. Jinghong organized an exchange with the Islamic Association in Kengtung but it seems that Menghai Muslims were not invited. In Yunnan, the business-oriented Burmese Muslim community prefers contacts with bigger centres in Yunnan such as Jinghong and even more Ruili in the Dehong District.²³ It is crucial to look at the link Mojiang-Simao-Menghai; caravans disappeared, but links among Muslims are maintained along this road by mosques and ancient markets. Harmony of relations between dominant Buddhists and the Muslims are consequently aiming toward peaceful border relations between China and Myanmar and between China and Thailand. Hui have from the beginning been known for their commercial skills.

Hui or Paxidai Muslims and other minorities in China have to adapt their principles to the Chinese law. Marriage traditions and rules explain how the law works. According to the Qur'an (4-3), a Muslim may marry one, two, three or four wives. But in China it is possible to marry only one wife at a time. Divorce is possible with Chinese and Shari'ah laws. Since humility (*tawadu* Arabic) is a basic Muslim virtue. Humility takes seriously the fact that we live in a world and under a state i.e. China for the Paxidai.

Concerning the identity of these Dai Muslims, they are simply classified *Hui* or *Huimin*. For this study in Yunnan, among the ten Muslims minorities in the country, Hui is the only ethnonym which is used to designate their official Muslim identity. Their double identity as Hui and Dai is totally ignored. Unlike the Buyi, Dai, Dong and Zhuang people who are recognized Tai-speaking minorities, the Paxidai are simply designated Hui. This differentiates them from Buddhism, the main religious identity of many Dai (Lue of Menghai, and Neua in Jinggu and Dehong). On the other hand, most of the Hui in Yunnan have also a strong Islamic identity through their Arabic names Sha, Sa from Shah, Na . . . but this fact does lead to a special classification either. They are simply classified as Hui.

Muslim Beliefs

Muslims believe in Hell. "Fear the fire whose fire is men and stones" (*Qur'an* 2-24). The garden is the most frequent Koranic symbol of paradise. So paradise is called al-Jannah (garden in Arabic). The Muslim rites of passage are not in fact so linked with a *leitmotiv* such as the central question of merit in Buddhism — linked to the concept of karma — which is always present in the minds and in the ritualistic daily life of Buddhists. The Muslim approach is maybe more indirect. However, monks and Imams are key officiants for village's rites. The insistent issue of merit (*bun*) is maybe relatively comparable to the mandatory character of Muslim prayers. The prayer at the mosque is more meritorious than private prayers. In China the obligation that there always be an Imam on duty in city mosques during day in order to remain in contact with the Islamic Association is less strict in rural areas. Since agriculture is very demanding during planting and harvest, Yunnanese Muslim villagers do not perhaps always attend the five prayers as compared to the more faithful attendance in city mosques.

Rituals

Manzhaihui is a Muslim village we studied, which has 79 households. There, on 28 February 2009, a Fatihah ceremony was held, in a house behind a grocery shop, for the soul of a departed elder who died one year before. In all Southeast Asia, as in other parts of the Muslim world, it is common to recite the first Surah of the Qur'an and the Surah is also repeated over sick persons. Women, men and children of twenty households were present at this ceremony. The young Imam and the former Imam, now a business man, officiated.

The ritual lasted around one hour. The elders, the headman and the former headman, were seated in armchairs. All the participants except the two imams were seated on carpets on the ground as is common in China when numerous persons are attending a funeral or a memorial service.

After the ceremony, all the participants were invited to a banquet: a ragout of stewed beef, sliced dry beef, white rice, pumpkin soup and other vegetables, and tangerines and bananas.

Shown as in this example, the Paxidai follow the same life cycles and Islamic festivals as the other Hui. However, very few of them are rich enough to go on pilgrimage to Mecca to become *Haji* or *Hajjab*.

Minority and Sinicization

It is useful to understand better the relationship between the Han Chinese and the minority peoples of China. Yunnan is a province of many minorities, 24 in total. This number of nationality minorities is one of the highest of any Chinese province.

Society and harmony in Menghai

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), harmony was rarely present anywhere in China and in Xishuang Banna. Tensions exist in all society one time or another. Continuities and transformations in the society are essential to progress such as in the 1980s with the reforms of Deng Xiaoping. This transformation of Chinese society, including the minorities studied here, paved the way for China to be the second power in the world after the United States, despite the current economic crisis. Economy and society are interdependent, so it is impossible in 2009 to forget the social and economic influences on the Buddhists and Muslims of Menghai. Their modernization, which has consequences for their religion, depends on sinicization. *Tuanjie*, the unity of the minorities, is a consequence of the necessary sinicization.

What are the consequences of modernization on religion? Modernization is implacable. Buddhist Dai as well as Muslims use mobile phones and like Chinese television, even if religions are not discussed on TV. A certain assimilation and harmony are necessary to harmonize this huge country. For China, modernity means rationalization, growing urbanization, secularization of religions, mass social movement, refined technologies, and discourse about the new epoch.²⁴

For Tibi the Muslim education system imbues its offspring with a feeling of superiority and does not alleviate the crisis-ridden situation.²⁵ In fact, the present case study shows that the Muslim community of Menghai is immersed in the Chinese educational system, which produces itself a feeling of superiority more than a feeling of inferiority. It is difficult to make comments.

The Imam in the mosque is the main officiant for life-crisis rituals: birth, circumcision, marriage and death. In return, households give the Imam gifts in kind or cash. There are collective rituals for the Eid festivals where the entire village participates, with prayers and banquets at the mosque.

The Buddhist Dai and the Muslims of China are communities controlled by ritual. For Fei Xiaotong, the elders are also key persons in the society. The kinship system and kinship connections are certainly important. Education and prosperity are important in the Buddhist and Muslim communities as well. Certainly the *Qur'an*, the basic book of all Muslim, and its last Surah which concerns *jinn* ("spirit" in Arabic) cannot be forgotten by any Muslim, even in Menghai.

One of the most important Dai spirits is the Naga, the water serpent, which is present everywhere in Xishuang Banna. On each side of Dai pagodas climbs a long Naga, symbol of sexuality. When a human being enters the status of ascetic monk, he renounces virility and leaves behind family life.²⁶ The forest of Xishuang Banna is one of the most luxuriant of all China. In this surrounding nature the Buddhist Dai of Menghai do consider seriously the spirits *phi* of the tropical forest and their power. Even the most orthodox Dai monk has this ambivalent type of faith.

The Buddhist Dai Lue also have their own rituals which can be totally different from the rituals of their blood- and language-related Paxidai cousins in Menghai, but ritual remains fundamental. The importance of ethical relationship is also central in China. One of the ten relationships in the *Book of Rites (Liji)* is ghost-spirit. The spirits of ancestors were believed to live on and had power to bless or curse their descendants, depending on whether they were appropriately worshiped. The belief in the active engagement of ancestors in worldly events connected the living and dead in a single stream.²⁷ The decline of belief is not evident because Chinese continue to link business and ancestor worship.

For the Muslims, including those of Menghai, the *jinn* are omnipresent as the *phi* of the Dai. *Jinn* are the inhabitants of the subtle world, made of "smokeless fire". Satan is also considered a *jinn*. There is no direct comparison between *jinn* and *phi*, but the *phi* are always present in the Tai anthropological literature.

Purity and Beliefs

Purity is a very important concept for the Muslims as well as the Buddhists. Ducor's translation has demonstrated Buddhism has a crucial concept of the nature of things (or of the Law, Skr. *dharmā*) which makes the living enter into an ultimate purity.²⁸ Similarly, Islam in China is known as "the Pure and True Teaching" (*Qing zhen jiao*).²⁹ In general and for food in particular, *balal* (Arabic for "purity") is equally a central concept in Islam. *Uzu*, ceremonial and ritualistic washing, is compulsory before the prayer. The right hand is purer in both religions than the left one. So, the right hand is the purest for eating. Death rites are central in both religions, Buddhism and Islam.

The Buddhist Dai and the Muslim Paxidai are modernizing themselves and are exposed to globalization. So Sinicization or Han-Chinese influence is essential to understand modernization in China and the harmonious development of the society and the economy, and the preservation of an essential multi-culture. Chinese scholars sometimes ignore the role of sinicization and instead insist on state's political integration

and local social conditions. They may simply deny the social and cultural role of that assertive acculturation and integration.³⁰

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to compare contemporary Buddhism and Islam in Yunnan. The thesis of Israeli concerning Sunni Islam in China mentioned that, structurally, Islam is an institutional religion which constituted an effective block against any interaction with the Chinese religion.³¹ However, in fact, the Muslims are among the most assimilated people in China, and their modernization is linked to the majority's sinicization.³² This concept and the consequent orientation toward unity are positive because they unite all the peoples of China. This could be discussed. For these Paxidai, as for the other Muslims of China, it seems that Gladney is right to stress that they are being secularized and continue to negotiate "their accommodation to Chinese rule".³³ However we cannot generalize and group together all the Muslims of Yunnan (Hui and a small Uyghur community which confirms my "safe heaven" thesis about Yunnan being a peaceful province) concerning the process of secularization.

The acceptance of other groups is easier in particular when two different groups speak the same language as in the case study of Menghai. This paper tries to demonstrate a situation contrary to that of Israeli's thesis — a certain harmony between Paxidai and Buddhist Dai. This harmony is also confirmed in Ruili, Dehong, where Muslims and Buddhist Dai Neua live currently in harmony despite past events such as Du Wenxiu's uprising in the 19th century. This is a case of interesting facts linked to historical religion which are useful in understanding contemporary religion.³⁴ Chinese rulers prefer harmony between the different nationalities of the country, and emperors such as Qian Long (1736–1796) reprimanded Chinese officials who confiscated Muslim books in Chinese and Arabic.³⁵

Between 1980 and 1989, a certain promotion of religion largely contributed to the re-building of the identities of ethnic minorities. This is especially true for the Buddhist Dai and Muslim Paxidai. Harmony fits these minorities and their emerging cultures, but does not avoid a tight control of religions affairs in Yunnan. The Buddhist Dai have a constant preference for symbols like the Naga in art, mythology, and in village ritual. The Muslim Paxidai of Menghai keep the Naga symbol in their architecture on the roofs of their modern houses.

The relation between the rocket festival addressed to the guardian spirit and the harvest festival may well be the model of a general process, mutual accommodation between Buddhism and the spirit cults. However, more relevant is the Paxidai's cultural accommodation of Islam and Buddhism, Han culture and Dai language, *jinn* and *pbi*, and the everyday sinicization and *tuanjie*. The two unique Paxidai villages in Yunnan try to live in harmony with their nearest neighbours, Buddhist Dai and Han. Without such a basic principle of adaptation, religion in general would not have the importance it does

have in people's lives, in China and everywhere. In conclusion, despite a chaotic past history such as the Cultural Revolution, it seems at present that Buddhism and Islam have a promising future in China.

Endnotes

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