

CHAPTER III

BAI CULTURE, AND TOURISM IMPACTS ON DALI

3.1 BAI CULTURE

As the only Bai autonomous prefecture in China, Dali is where most of the Bai people live. Therefore, the unique Bai culture becomes one important attraction here. “Bai” means white in Chinese, as Bai people admire white color and enjoy being clean. The dress and architecture are also based on white color. Colorful vests, waistbands, headgear are supplements for the dress.

➤ Dress

Young Bai women in Dali Old Town area wear Baotou (headgear). The dress has a white base with red flowers, white long sleeve shirt, white long pants with red flowers on the edges, a red cover vest and then a black or red apron. Men wear white shirt, white long pants, with a black or dark blue vest. Girls will dress differently after marriage. Dresses differ slightly between different regions.



3.1. Bai girls

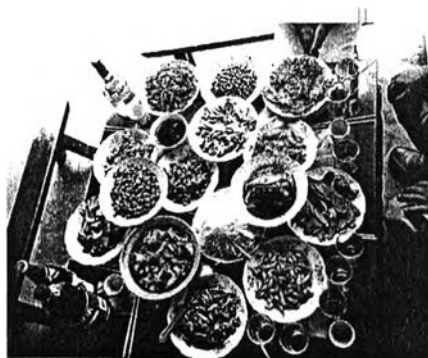
Photo Source: Dali Travel Group

➤ Food

Due to the stable climate, vegetables are available in all seasons, so Bai people like having fresh vegetables for every meal. Their staple food is rice. Bai people are famous for their pickled vegetables. Their main meat dish is pork, and they often use pork to make sausages, hams, salted pork and dried pig livers. The Bai have the custom of eating slightly roasted, raw pig skin and almost fresh pork that has become a famous dish in Dali now. Those

who live close to lakes are good at making fish dishes. The Bai enjoy drinking alcohol and they drink different types of Chinese white alcohol, while some alcohol is from medicine plants (Qian 2004). They prefer spicy, salty and sour taste, and eat sweet snacks as well.

Bai people enjoy drinking tea and tealeaves are baked in small pots. Breakfast tea and the noon tea break are important. Normally, Three-Course Tea is served after dinner, they drink three cups at a time: plain tea first, tea with nuts, brown sugar and fruits as the second cup, and tea with pepper and honey for the last cup. The Three-Course Tea is usually provided to guests especially important ones (Zhan and Zhang, 1990). This specialty is now becoming a main way to attract the interest of tourists, as a way to display Bai culture.



土八碗是大理人招待客人的菜谱。

3.2, Bai food

Photo Source: Dali Xidian Haixing

➤ Residential Houses

The traditional Bai houses are usually built facing the east with a white wall covering the house front. The most popular style is three houses connected by a wall with a center courtyard, in a well balanced overall layout. All outside walls are painted white and the edges are colored. Wealthier families have carved beams and painted rafters. There usually are four Chinese characters in calligraphy on the white wall outside of the house. The theme colors for the design on walls of houses are dark blue and gray. The Bai like putting red calligraphy with couplet on gate sides for the Chinese New Year, weddings and white ones at funerals. Bai people enjoy having plants and flowers in the houses.



3.3, A Bai house wall

Photo Source: Author

➤ Language

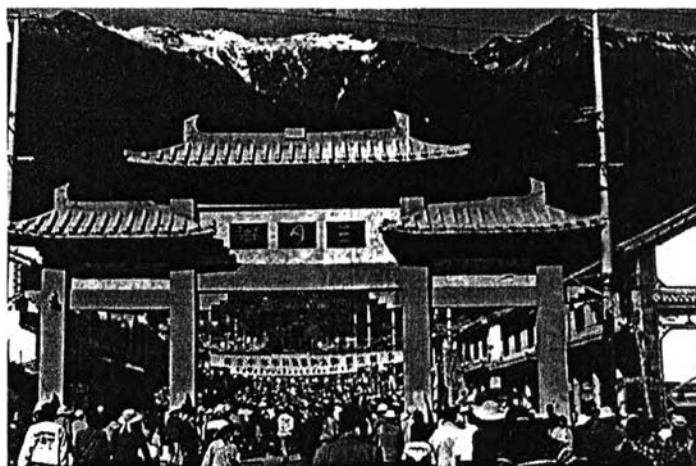
The Bai people speak a distinctive Bai language but do not have their own characters so they use Chinese characters to record the language. Bai accepted Chinese words into their language long time ago and during the Tang Dynasty there were plenty in the Bai language according to historic records (Zhan and Zhang, 1990). The Bai in Dali Old Town normally speak a local Han dialect as well, since this is widely used in the town. In Bai villages around the ancient city, daily conversation is in Bai. All schools use Mandarin for teaching. Bilingual schools are very few.

➤ Festivals

The Bai have a number of unique festivals, and also celebrate the important traditional Chinese festivals. The March-street Festival and the Torch Festival are the typical ones that the whole prefecture celebrates. There are some other Bai festivals in different regions within the prefecture and everyone is welcome to participate.

a) The March-street Festival (March Market Festival)

This is one of the most important festivals in Dali, a combination of religion, culture and trade. From March 15 of the Chinese Lunar Calendar, Bai people gather together at the foot of Cangshan Mountain to celebrate. It emerged during the Tang Dynasty as a worship of Kwan-yin. During the Ming Dynasty, a market fair was added. Nowadays people are doing Kwan-yin worship, horse racing, performances and trade, lasting for five to seven days (Li, 1991). In 1991, it was listed as the only official Minority Festival of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (Dali Travel Group, 2005).

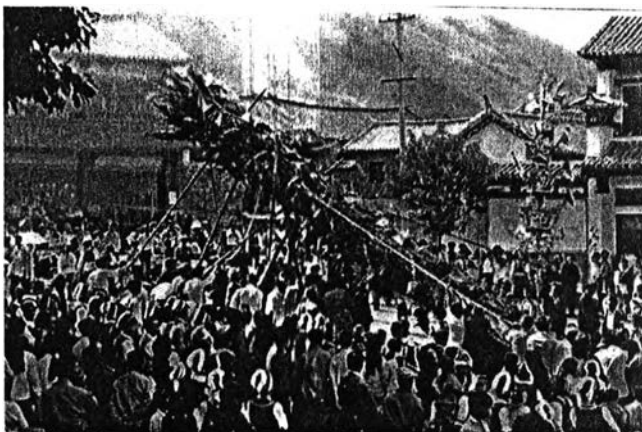


3.4, The March-street gate

Photo Source: Dali Xidian Haixing Luxingshe

b) The Torch Festival

This festival also has a long history and is conducted from June 24 to 26 of the Chinese Lunar Calendar. It originated from the worship of fire by the Bai ancestors. A torch symbolizes brightness and hope. Every village burns a huge torch on the first day, and people walk around with their own small torches at night, greeting each other with good wishes.



3.5, A huge torch in one Torch Festival
Photo Source: Dali Xidian Haixing Luxingshe

➤ Other Customs

The Bai people sing Baizu Diao (Bai tune), a type of Bai poem style with eight sentences each (Li, 1991). Question and answer songs – a way to sing songs with questions by one side, which are answered by the other side singing, normally men in one group and women in one group. They like wearing straw hats (Zhan and Zhang, 1990). Bai women dance with a Bawang Bian – a one-meter bamboo stick with holes for putting bunched-coins in, which gives a nice sound when dancing (Yang and Li, 2001), and with handkerchiefs or with a straw hat. The men dance with a drum. Bai people like dragon play, especially for festivals.



3.6, Bai girls dancing
Photo Source: Gaungxi Xinwen Wang

The general custom is for the husband to move to stay with his wife's family after marriage, but there are exceptions. The wedding ceremony is unique with many rules and customs.

As a unique ethnic group, the Bai people have their own culture, and their customs, knowledge, art, habits, beliefs, and many other aspects of a life style different from people in other areas. This has contributed to the tourism development in Dali. On the other hand, tourism has also had its own impacts on Bai culture.

3.2 TOURISM IMPACTS IN DALI

a. Positive Impacts

According to Zheng (2003), as the support economy, the newly emerging industry and the industry enriching the province and the people in Dali, tourism has encouraged the adjustment of the economic structure, stimulated consumption, increased employment opportunities, increased the income of farmers and improved ethnic minority identity awareness. Tourism has helped establish the image of Dali and Bai culture, which attracts more people nationally and internationally to come, to understand Dali, and also to invest here.

Impacts on Bai Culture

➤ Cultural revival and promotion

The Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture has greatly promoted the cultural revival of Dali. It has undertaken a number of specific measures such as requesting all staff to wear Bai dress in all shops in Dali Old Town (Dali Travel Group, 2005); reconstructing Dali Old Town, exposing existing



3.7, The main street with a stream
Photo Source: Author

streams and adding new streams including the Hong Long Jing Water Garden, and even adding more butterflies to the Butterfly Spring area. Several years ago, visitors might have been able to see some modern houses or very Han style architecture in Dali Old Town, similar to many other cities in China, but now most of the buildings on the sides of the main street and Foreigners' Street have been changed to unique Bai style, and the two streets been reconstructed with dark blue flagstones and streams. Two gates were built up at the east side and west side of the ancient city in a typical Bai style. All new houses were built in Bai style including a new hotel at the east gate.

As “culture is the soul of tourism, tourism is the carrier of culture”³ (Bai Enpei, the CCP Yunnan Provincial Committee Secretary. Quoted by Zheng, 2003: 85), the government wants to attract tourists to stay longer, through these efforts to provide more cultural attractions, which can encourage tourists to further explore the locality. This is a well-known approach since “One way of increasing receipts from tourism is to persuade people to stay longer, rather than attract more visitors.” (Harrison, 1992:12)



3.8, Reconstruction
Photo Source: Author

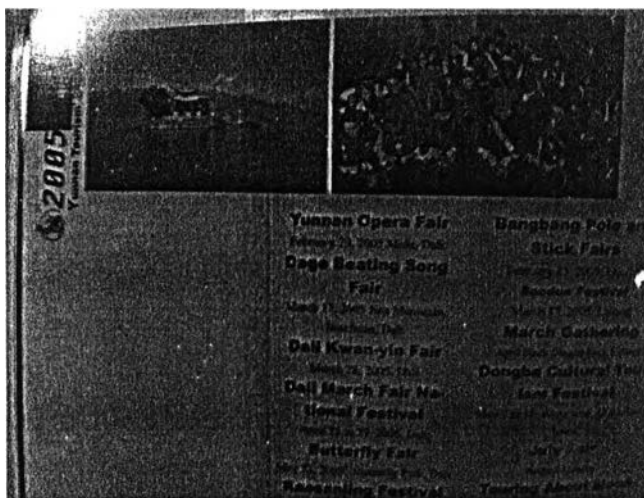
➤ Sense Of Ethnic Minority Identity

People have started to realize the Bai identity can bring them much more than it could before the tourism industry flourished. Visitors come to see Bai people and their culture and admire them, which makes Bai people proud of themselves and realize the value of their identity. Bai people started coming out to show their culture to share with the world and to be aware that it is worth informing the world of their culture.

³ Translated by the author



Dali participated in the competition for the Most Attractive Cities in China in 2004, and was honored as one of the top ten cities. Bai people have a better confidence in themselves. This prize further encourages them to promote their culture, to do research on history and retrieve old traditions, and to preserve the culture. Tourists come to see the real Bai culture, which makes it is necessary to sustain Bai culture. On the other hand, the protection and promotion of Bai culture attracts more tourists.



3.9, Information on Dali in a provincial magazine
Photo Source: Author

➤ Ethnic Minority Cultural Products

The rising tourism in Dali has become a platform to develop Bai cultural products with a rapid increase in processing, production and sales. The production and trade of marble craftwork, Sandao Cha (Three-Course Tea), Zharan (tie-dye handmade cloth with natural plant color), embroidery, Diaomei (marinated carved-plum), dairy products, Xiaguan Tuocha (Xiaguan lump green tea), woodcarving, grass knotting, Yunmu (Yunnan log) furniture and souvenirs are increasingly thriving (Dali Luyou Xinxi Wang).



3.10, Sale of Zharan and marble craftwork
Photo Source: Author

➤ Learning Approach

To some degree, tourism can be seen as a special school, in which local leaders and ordinary people get trained and refresh their perceptions on the development of the Bai ethnic

minority region. The ability of people has been encouraged and strengthened. The new and advanced information brought by tourism has had a great influence on local people. This may positively push the development of Dali tourism even further (Zheng, 2003). In addition, the government promotion of tourism training provided more chances for local individuals to learn skills.

Impacts on the Economy

➤ The Economic Growth

In 2003, the whole income of Dali tourism industry was 2.827 billion Yuan (16.1 % of local GDP) plus U.S. \$28,997,500 in foreign currency (Zheng, 2003). From January to May 2004, 2,718,800 tourists came to Dali, 54,200 of whom were foreigners. The total income of tourism industry for this period was 1.214 billion Yuan, plus U.S. \$11,923,400 in foreign currency (Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, 2004). It has become one of the most important industries for economic growth in Dali contributing to further development in all aspects.



3.11, A Bai tour guide
Photo Source: Author

➤ Employment

In 2000, the whole Dali city had 130,000 people directly and indirectly working for the tourism industry (Zheng, 2003). In 2003, the whole prefecture had 35,000 people directly working in tourism industry, with 165,000 indirectly employed in it. The first half-year of 2004, there were 12 tourism training programs conducted with 1,010 trainees. Among them, 320 participated in hotel staff training, 200 received foreign language for hotels training, 410 took the program for tour-guide certificate and 80 received travel agency management training (Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, 2004).

Table 3.1 Output of the Dali tourism industry 2002 and 2003

Sources: Yunnan Luyou Ninajian, 2004; Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, June 22 2004 and Dali Luyou Xinxi Wang 2003 June 14

Year	National currency income (Billion Yuan)	Tourism employment (Persons)	Foreign currency earned (USD)
2003	2.827	200,000	28,997,500
2002	2.850	120,000	28,000,000

➤ Infrastructure

The tourism industry in Dali has changed from being a 'reception project' to a 'support economy'. A support system has been established including hotels, travel agencies, transportation, restaurants, entertainment, attractions and souvenir shops. This infrastructure of tourism for catering, accommodating, transporting, visiting, shopping and entertaining has been greatly changed and improved. As of 2003 in Dali city, there were 46 specific restaurants for tourists, 25,694 beds, 1 four-star hotel, 7 three-star hotels, 16 ordinary hotels, 156 private guesthouses, and 39 rest houses; a domestic airport; a railway station; piers; 2 national highways; the Chuxiong-Dali-Lijiang tour highway, and some other high quality roads around the city and Erhai Lake (Zheng, 2003). There were over 400 tour buses, 800 taxies, and 4 high-end tour steamships (with a total of 2,120 seats) and 24 travel agencies, 4 of which were international (Dali Luyou Xinxi Wang).

According to the *First Semi-year Report and the Second Semi-year Working Plan 2004*, the Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture planned to invest considerable funds to improve the basic infrastructure of transportation, communication, electricity, and the city image in order to improve tourism industry development. Cooperation with several companies has started concerning investment on tour infrastructure construction. Expanding the Dali domestic airport into an international one has been considered in the plan. Improving public toilets is also planned and the Dali Travel Group says public parking areas have been improved and enlarged such as the one in the Three Pagoda Park.

b. Negative Impacts

There are also negative impacts from the tourism industry development. However, specific information is not easy to find as most material and information comes from the government, which is more positive. According to a few researchers and field observations, there are some critical impacts, mainly some of the effects on the culture.

Impacts on the Culture

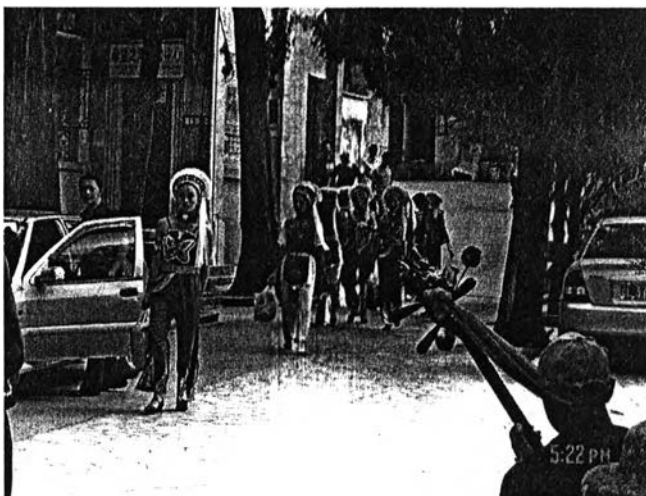
As observed, tourism development in Dali may have modified local culture while encouraging it. Residents of Dali seldom wear traditional Bai dress in daily life. Young generations prefer to wear fashionable dresses, sing pop songs, listen to western, Hong Kong and Taiwanese music, and dance to disco music. More people are celebrating more western festivities especially the young generation. The young generation has started to dislike the Bai language and the number of people who speak Mandarin and the local Han dialect has increased. Schools encourage the use of Mandarin, and all TV programs are in Mandarin. In order to meet tourists' requirements, restaurants modify the Bai food style and taste to cater to the tourists. The traditional Bai dress has been changed to a more modern style for some performances and to fit the modern taste.



3.12, Western food menu
Photo Source: Author

Culture is seen as a way to attract tourists, so even non-Bai people perform Bai dance or wear Bai dress so it can be observed that some of the authenticity of culture is lost. Tourists cannot tell who is the real Bai in the shops as all the staff wear traditional Bai dress. It is the

same when watching a performance, in which tourists may never be able to see the differences between a Han girl and a Bai girl when they are dancing a Bai dance with traditional Bai dress. Bai (2001) found the authenticity of the antiques was affected due to tourism, including that some new souvenirs were made to look old.



3.13, girls with modernized 'Bai dress' for a performance

Photo Source: Author

Impacts on the Economy

Doorne, Ateljevic and Bai (2003) describe that people in Dali are living in a process of capitalization and commoditisation caused by tourism and that the culture of consumption is encouraged. This may lead local people to tougher economic competition and change people's attitude to life. Bai (2001) summarizes, tourism has changed and shaped the lives of local people.

These impacts have been claimed, seen and argued by government, academics and outsiders. Compared to the positive impacts, however, the negative ones are much less obvious and talked about locally. What about the local individuals' own understanding? The next chapter will explore the local perceptions on the tourism impacts.