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Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration Detail from Chinese *Anti-opium poster, c. 1895. "Quan shi jieshi dayan wen"* [Essay Urging the World to Give Up Opium]

West Lake from Wang Villa (*Wang Zhuang*), *Lois Conner, 2008*

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Professor Geremie Barmé.

Geremie has been editor of *East Asian History* since it began under this title in 1991, and was editor of its predecessor *Papers on Far Eastern History* from 1989. In this period, he has sustained and promoted the importance of the journal as a forum for rigorous and original historical scholarship on China, Korea and Japan. Encouraging and exacting in equal measures, he has been generous to scholars taking their first steps in learned publication. During Geremie's tenure, *East Asian History* has become a major journal in the field, noted for its consistently high standards of scholarship and the care taken in its production. His editorship stands as an example and a challenge to the new editorial team.

或操觚以率爾或含毫而邈然

陸機文賦

Sometimes words flow easily
As soon as he grasps the brush;
Sometimes he sits vacantly,
Nibbling at it.

Lu Ji, from *Literature: A Rhapsody*

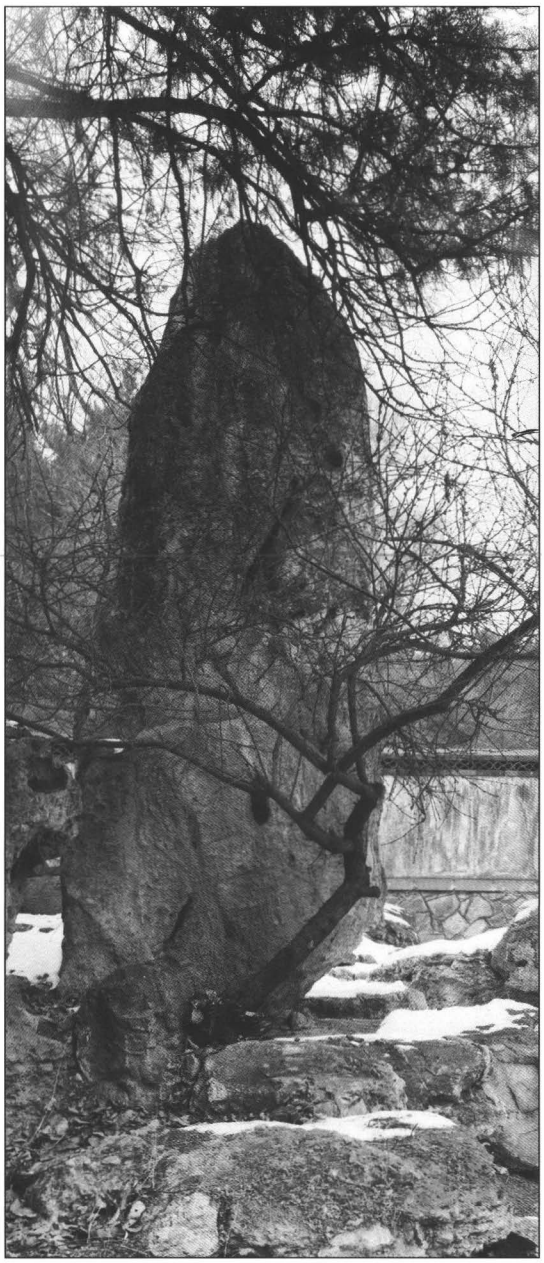
Translated by Achilles Fang, "Rhymeprose on Literature: The Wen-Fu of Lu Chi (A.D. 261–303)", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 14, 3/4 (Dec., 1951): 527–66, p.534

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Marion Weeks.

Marion joined what was then the Department of Far Eastern History in 1977. From that time, she was involved in various capacities with, first, *Papers on Far Eastern History*, and then *East Asian History*, for which she served as business manager from its inception. By the time of her retirement from the Division of Pacific and Asian History in November 2007, Marion had become the heart and soul of the journal.

Over the years she worked with many editors—Andrew Fraser, John Fincher, Sydney Crawcour, Ian McComas Taylor, Jennifer Holmgren, Geremie Barmé, Benjamin Penny—as well as numerous associate editors, copy editors, printers and, of course, countless authors and manuscript readers. All owe her an immense debt of gratitude.

East Asian History would certainly not have been the same without Marion—at times, without her, *East Asian History* may not have been at all.



Imperial Summer Retreat, Chengde, *Lois Conner, 2000*

MAIZE, ECOSYSTEM TRANSITION AND ETHNICITY IN ENSHI, CENTRAL CHINA

Xu Wu 吴旭

China's population is officially classified into 56 ethnic groups. Scholars have used these ethnic groups (*minzu* 民族) as analytic units in their sociocultural studies.[1] The field of ethnicity in China has also identified a dichotomy between the state-imposed ethnoscape based on the 56-ethnic-group system and that of local identities.[2] Connecting the two ethnoscapes are the élites, who might be professional scholars or governmental officials.[3] The work of these élites on converting the local ethnoscape into the official one has resulted in phenomena that have attracted the attention of anthropologists. For example, in some areas many locals are ignorant of, indifferent to, or confused about, the ethnic titles officially assigned to them.[4]

Enshi autonomous prefecture 恩施自治州, in western Hubei 湖北, has eight counties (Enshi, Jianshi 建始, Xuanen 宣恩, Lichuan 利川, Laifeng 来凤, Hefeng 鹤峰, Badong 巴东 and Xianfeng 咸丰) and over three million people, who are officially classified into over ten ethnic groups, including the four largest ones: Han 汉, Tujia 土家, Miao 苗 and Dong 侗.[5] In Enshi

The Fund for Support of International Development Activities at the University of Alberta (FSIDA 00–14) and the Chinese Graduate Association of Alberta Graduate Scholarship funded a period of intensive ethnographic research in Enshi Prefecture from October 2000 to March 2001. I am grateful to Professor Jean DeBernardi for her help in this study. I also thank the reviewers and the editors for their useful comments.

[1] See Yang Changxin, *Tujia fengsu zhi* [Tujia Customs] (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu xueyuan chubanshe, 1989), and Ralph A. Litzinger, *Other Chinas: the Yao and the Politics of National Belonging* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[2] See Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Susan Blum, *Portraits /of "Primitives": Ordering Human Kinds in the Chinese Nation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Norma Diamond, "Defining the Miao: Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp.92–116.

[3] See Litzinger, *Other Chinas*; Fei Xiaotong, *Towards a People's Anthropology* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981); Melissa J. Brown, "Local Government Agency: Manipulating Tujia Identity," *Modern China* 28 (2002): 362–95.

[4] Shih Chih-yu, "Ethnicity as Policy Expedience: Clan Confucianism in Ethnic Tujia-Miao Yongshun," *Asian Ethnicity* 2 (2001): 73–88; Brown, "Local Government Agency: Manipulating Tujia Identity"; M.J. Brown, "Ethnic Classification and Culture: The Case of the Tujia in Hubei, China," *Asian Ethnicity* 2 (2001): 55–72; Kathrine Kaup, "Regionalism Versus Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic of China," *The China Quarterly* 172 (2002): 863–84.

[5] Enshizhou minwei [Ethnic Affairs Committee of Enshi Prefecture], *Exi zizhizhou minzu zhi* [Exi Autonomous Prefecture Ethnic Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1993).

prefecture, scholars and local officials have also attempted to delineate general cultural and environmental features for each ethnic group in the prefecture.[6] However, these same figures admit to encountering contradictions and obstacles when seeking to identify local customs with specific groups or to develop ethnic generalisations. As one local scholar in Enshi confirmed, "There is not a single 'Tujia' custom maintained by all Tujia people throughout the prefecture".[7]

Based upon my own field research in Enshi prefecture in 2000–01 I contend that it is impossible to conduct cultural or ecological studies with ethnic groups as analytic units. This is because identity in Enshi prefecture has two aspects: regional identity and lineage identity. At the local level, an inclusive regional identity often contains several exclusive lineage identities. Customs related to lineage identity are resistant to change and are not commonly shared even by neighboring lineages that officially belong to the same ethnic group.[8] Conversely, commonly shared customs related to regional identity cannot be divided according to any specific ethnic group.[9] I argue that it was a transition in the local ecosystem that dates from the introduction of New World crops such as maize in the eighteenth century that proved to be the great unifier of the region, and not ethnic identity as officials and scholars have tended to believe.[10] A food study of the prefecture shows that there is no material basis for any ethnic boundary as officially identified. On the contrary, there is a highly unified food (and agricultural) system that is heavily based on maize farming.[11]

In Enshi prefecture, in every so-called "ethnic" village there are lineages or families belonging to several other different "ethnic groups". This situation challenges the "ecological niche" theory which suggests a relationship between ethnic groups and their ecological niches.[12] As I discuss below, the theory of "ecosystem reproduction" is more useful to studies of the relationships between ethnic identity and ecosystem reproduction among migrating populations.[13] The reproduction or transition of the ecosystem in Enshi did not impose a boundary between the migrants and the indigenous inhabitants but rather brought a similar subsistence pattern to both. All of the people in Enshi, regardless of their origins or ethnic affiliation (if any), have actually developed a unified and similar agro-ecosystem as well as a highly unified regional identity.

Generally speaking, maize, potatoes, and sweet potatoes do not feature in the so-called higher-level Chinese cuisines (*caixi* 菜系). These three New World crops have long been viewed by urban Chinese as low-grade foods. So why do these three New World crops, and in particular maize, occur in the set meals of restaurants selling local foods (*hezha* 合渣

[6] Lichuan xian, *Lichuan minzu zhi* [Lichuan County Ethnic Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1991).

[7] Brown, "Local Government Agency," p.381. In Enshi certain people eat the festive New Year meal in advance, a custom known as "eating an early New Year's Eve dinner" (*guo gannian* 过赶年). This special custom is considered by scholars in China to be a typical identity marker of the Tujia. However, other studies provide evidence that people who are not officially Tujia in Enshi also eat this dinner in advance. Members of some lineages that are officialy Tujia in fact told researchers simply that, "This *gannian* is not known to us; it was probably made up by some literati [or cultural workers (*wenhuaren*, 文化人)]". See Long Zijian, Tian Wanzhen, Zhang Xiangen, Zhang Boxiang, Wang Ping and Wu Xuemei, *Hubei Miaozu* [The Miao people of Hubei] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1999), p.363; Huang Baiquan, "Tujia zu zuyuan yanjiu zonglun" [A Summary of Studies on the Tujia's Ancestral Origins], in *Tujiazu lishi wenhua lunji* [Collection of Tujia History and Culture], ed. Huang Baiquan and Tian Wanzhen (Enshi: Hubei minzu xueyuan, 1999), pp.25–42, p.40.

[8] The official classification of ethnic affiliation is based on lineage identity.

[9] Xu Wu, "The New Year's Eve Dinner and Wormwood Meal: Festival Foodways as Ethnic Markers in Enshi, China," *Modern China*, 31.3 (2005): 353–80.

[10] Xu Wu, "Food, Ethnoecology and Identity," (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2003).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Fredrik Barth, "Ecological Relationships of Ethnic Groups in Swat, North Pakistan," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 1079–89.

[13] Alfred W. Crosby, *Germs, Seeds, and Animals: Studies in Ecological History* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994) and A.W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

restaurants) in Enshi?[14] I contend that this is because maize has been the decisive factor in the development of intensive farming in Enshi prefecture, and was crucial in supporting the food needs of a rapidly growing population. The radical changes that have taken place in Enshi society in the last three hundred years or so cannot be separated from the development of maize farming.

Maize is native to the Americas and most researchers agree that modern maize originated in the highlands of central Mexico.[15] By 1590, Portuguese Jesuits had introduced it into China, where it was known as *fan mai* 番麦 (foreign wheat).[16] Throughout history maize has been important for several reasons. It is high yielding; it is adaptable to mountainous conditions; it supports population growth. It has brought radical change to every culture that has adopted it. For example, when maize was introduced in their society, the Anasazi (regarded as the ancestors of today's Hopi and other native American peoples) underwent a radical transition from subsistence hunting-gathering to intensive farming and became a highly complex, even urban society.[17]

Maize and the Ecosystem Transition in Enshi

Anthropologists have explored issues related to food and identity through ecological studies. Classic ethnographies include Fredrik Barth's studies of ethnic groups in North Pakistan and Alfred Crosby's studies of European immigrants in America and Oceania.[18] The idea of the ecological niche and that of ecosystem reproduction are the two main concepts on which these studies are based.

An ecological niche, according to Fredrik Barth, is "the place of a group in the total environment and its relations to resources and competitors".[19] Barth concludes in his research that each of the three ethnic groups he considered has exploited only one part of the total environment and left the rest for other groups.[20] He also notes that ecological factors have had an effect on the distribution of ethnic groups: "The distribution of ethnic groups is controlled not by objective and fixed 'natural areas' but by the distribution of the specific ecological niches which the group, with its particular economic and political organisation, is able to exploit". If different groups can use different niches, they can set up co-existence relationships or symbiotic economic relations.[21] Enshi prefecture is officially home to several ethnic groups, the main four being Han, Tujia, Miao, and Dong (as noted above). According to official accounts, each of these groups has distinctive characteristics, including their sub-

[14] *Hezha* is a local dish made of soybeans and vegetables. See Xu Wu, "'Ethnic Foods' and Regional Identity: the *Hezha* Restaurants in Enshi," *Food and Foodways* 12 (2004): 225–46.

[15] Richard M. Klein, *The Green World: An Introduction to Plants and People*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p.153. Klein notes that "modern maize, virtually indistinguishable from that grown today, has been dated with certainty to 4000 BP".

[16] Ibid., p.158.

[17] Michael J. Balick and Paul A. Cox, *Plants, People and Culture* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1996), p.75.

[18] Barth, "Ecological Relationships of Ethnic Groups"; Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism.*

[19] Barth, "Ecological Relationships of Ethnic Groups," p.1079.

[20] Namely Pathans (sedentary agriculturalists), Kohistanis (agricultural and transhumant herding people) and Gujars (nomadic herders).

[21] Ibid., p.1088.

sistence patterns and economic activities. These characteristics influenced migrants to choose specific ecological niches in the diverse and sparsely populated landscape of Enshi prefecture in the mid-Qing 清 dynasty.[22] In contemporary Enshi, however, this is not the case at all. In all of the so-called Tujia, Han, Miao and Dong villages there are invariably families that belong to other groups. For this reason I have chosen not to apply the "ecological-niche" approach in this study, finding the "ecosystem approach" more appropriate.

An ecosystem is defined as "the assemblage of living and nonliving components in an environment together with their interrelations".[23] Alfred Crosby notes that an ecosystem is

> an active collection of interdependent organisms. They depend on one another for food and shelter and much more. Ultimately, all organisms within a given system are in symbiotic relationship.[24]

An ecosystem "as a unit of study" may be defined broadly or narrowly, according to how the research problem is defined by the investigator.[25] Thus farming can be studied with the systems approach,[26] as can food.[27] Emilio Moran has also pointed out that in studying a population's adaptation to an environment, the researcher should begin by identifying the constraints of the environment to which the population's subsistence strategy responds.[28] Enshi prefecture is a mountainous area with a diverse topography, which is not good for agriculture. Cultivable land covers only about ten to twelve per cent of its total territory.[29] The important role of maize in the life and identity of the people is related to this constraint.

The ecosystem-reproduction approach has been applied to studies of identity-ecosystem relationships in migrant societies. Generally speaking, when migrating groups enter a new environment, they are disadvantaged compared with the indigenous populations. As Moran puts it,

> a population that has existed longer in a particular environment is more likely than a recently settled one to have developed physiological and even genetic characteristics aimed at coping with environmental constraints.[30]

Moran's conclusion only holds, however, when no fundamental changes have occurred in the environment itself. If they have, there is no guarantee that the indigenous population will possess an advantage in adaptation. Alfred Crosby's studies have dramatically demonstrated how European immigrants to America and Oceania turned disadvantage to advantage by changing the environment through the introduction of European animals, plants and germs, which eventually made the environment exotic to native populations.[31]

[22] See *Lichuan minzu zhi*, p.109 and Long et al., *Hubei Miaozu*, p.370.

[23] Emilio F. Moran, *Human Adaptability: An Introduction to Ecological Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p.243.

[24] Crosby, *Germs, Seeds, and Animals*, p. 186.

[25] Moran, *Human Adaptability*, p.343.

[26] Stephen Brush, "Farming Systems Research," *Human Organization* 45 (1986): 22–8.

[27] Milton Freeman, "Why Mattak and Other Kalaalimerngit [local foods] Matter," *Cultural and Social Research in Greenland* 95/96 (1996): 45–53, at pp.46, 50.

[28] Moran, *Human Adaptability*, p.5.

[29] *Xuanen xianzhi* [Xuanen County Gazetteer] (Wuhan: Wuhan gongye daxue chubanshe, 1995), p.44.

[30] Moran, *Human Adaptability*, p.9.

[31] See Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* and *Germs, Seeds, and Animals*. For example, one Maori in New Zealand concluded: "As the clover killed off the fern, and the European dog the Maori dog—as the Maori rat was destroyed by the Pakeha rat—so our people, also, will be gradually supplanted and exterminated by the European". Ibid., p.41.

Invariably, bringing crops to a new place has been part of ecosystem reproduction. Introducing wheat farming to America, as Crosby has argued, brought European migrants a feeling of being at home. At the same time, certain New World crops, such as maize and potato, which were introduced to Europe, Africa and Asia, radically changed or destroyed the old ecosystems and enhanced the development and expansion of European industrialism.[32]

The Enshi ecosystem transition was significantly influenced by the expansion of New World crops. The 1735 political centralisation not only promoted the movement of migrants into this prefecture but also the expansion of these novel crops, which adapted very well to Enshi's mountainous conditions.[33] They provided much higher yields of grain than any of the native dry-land crops, producing sufficient food for a growing population. Although immigrants of Han, Dong and Miao origin (according to official classification) did not originally identify with the New World crops (both Han and Miao are mainly rice eaters, while the Dong eat sticky rice), they are regarded as the groups that introduced New World crops to Enshi. These crops functioned in Enshi in the same way as European animals and crops did in America and Oceania. In the early period of the ecosystem transition, it was the intensive farming of maize that first changed the Enshi ecosystem and made it possible for the immigrants to settle down and live sedentarily. In the course of the reproduction of the immigrants' ecosystem in Enshi both the immigrants and the natives (the Tujia) became fond of and adopted the introduced crop—maize.[34]

In Enshi, therefore, the final outcome of ecosystem transition could be said to be a compromise between the immigrants and the natives: everyone finally came to depend on a similar subsistence pattern that included agriculture (maize, potato and rice, as well as side crops and vegetables), animal raising (pigs, chickens, ducks and cattle), wild plant gathering and, more rarely, hunting and fishing. The native population seemed to adopt the New World dry-land crops and largely exchanged their own old crops for these introduced ones. Meanwhile, the limited rice that was produced there provided both immigrants and natives with a chance to taste "higher-level" food.

The contemporary food system in Enshi continues the transition of the ecosystem that started with the 1735 political reforms. Enshi people generally classify food crops as main crops and side crops. The former include maize, rice, soybeans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, wheat and rapeseed, while the latter comprise buckwheat, millet, mung beans and so on. One source notes that people in low-lying flat areas use rice as a staple accompanied by other crops;[35] in mid-range areas, people take rice and

[32] See Balick and Cox, *Plants, People and Culture*; Klein, *The Green World*. William McNeill has argued that the potato changed world history since it provided a huge amount of energy for growing industrial populations around the world. See William H. McNeill, "How the Potato Changed the World's History," *Social Research* 66 (1999): 67–83. Sugarcane became an important economic crop and destroyed the old ecosystems in the Caribbean area, and also provided the industrial west with cheap energy; see Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985). From being a magical herb used by American natives, tobacco has come to occupy large areas of farmland and has become a daily necessity for several billion people and a favourite tax-earner for governments around the world. See Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History* (London: Routledge, 1993). As Thomas Jefferson concluded: "The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture". See Klein, *The Green World*, p.167.

[33] *Gaitu guiliu* 改土归流 was a set of political reforms carried out in the reign of the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor (1723–36) of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Local chiefs were deposed from many chiefdoms and the emperor began to directly appoint new governors for these areas.

[34] In Chinese, Tujia literally means "local lineages".

[35] *Laifeng xianzhi* [Laifeng County Gazetteer] (1867 ed.), Section 29.

maize as staples, supplementing them with sweet potato and potato; and in the high mountains, people take maize, potato and sweet potato as staples.[36] This gradual transition in ecosystems contributes to a unitary local regional identity in Enshi.

Pre-1735 Subsistence

Pre-1735 subsistence patterns in Enshi were characterised by two main features. First, they combined hunting, fishing and gathering with shifting cultivation of certain dry-land crops. Second, they were long-standing and powerfully resistant to the influences of Han intensive farming.[37]

Shifting cultivation of certain dry-land crops such as millet had lasted over a very long time in Enshi prefecture.[38] One Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644) source recorded: "Shi prefecture [施州, today's Enshi] is in a remote corner with deep mountains. The inhabitants cut down and burn trees to plant cereals".[39] Even after the 1735 reforms, shifting cultivation still co-existed with intensive farming in some areas. For example, the *Laifeng County Gazetteer* (Laifeng xianzhi 来凤县志) (published in 1867) recorded: "In spring, people look for places in the mountains which could be cultivated, and cut down trees and burn them to plant coarse grains".[40]

Felling generally took place in early spring or late winter, so the trees and grass had plenty of time to wither. The time to set fire to the dried trees and grass was a matter that needed careful planning, since it should be done just before a fall of rain. The people of the ancient kingdom of Ba 巴 (located in today's Enshi prefecture and Chongqing 重慶 municipality before the 4th century BCE) determined the best time to burn by practicing divination, drilling holes in tortoise shells.[42]

Seeding was another carefully timed action. The best time for planting seeds was when the fire had just gone out but was still smoking. The extinguished fire would not harm the seeds, while the smoke would protect them from animals such as birds and mice. The people of Ba reportedly called this seeding practice "sowing seeds in the warm ash".[43] Seeding completed the farming process. What the Ba people needed to do then was just to wait for harvest time. An observer of this situation wrote, "Finishing their burning and dibbling [seeding], the Ba people sang songs with their hands folded. They paid no attention to ploughing and hoeing".[44]

The most noteworthy feature of this slash-and-burn farming was "having no fixed farmland". This probably accounts for why the magistrates in Enshi prefecture before the eighteenth century would "urge local

[36] See also *Jianshi xianzhi* [Jianshi County Gazetteer] (Wuhan: Hubei cishu chubanshe, 1994), p.288; *Enshi shizhi* [Enshi county gazetteer] (Wuhan: Wuhan gongye daxue chubanshe, 1996), p.193; *Xuanen Xianzhi*, p.76.

[37] Deng Hui, *Tujiazu quyude kaogu wenhua* [Archaeological Culture in the Tujia Area] (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 1999), p.309; see also Gu Cai, *Rongmei jiyou* [Travels in Rongmei], annotated by Gao Runsheng (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1991 [orig. 1704]); Xu Wu, "Lun Qingdai Exi Tujia shiwu huoqu fangshi de bianqian" [On Changes in the Exi Tujia's Food-Getting Pattern in the Qing Dynasty], *Hubei minzu xueyuan xuebao* [Journal of the Hubei Nationalities Institute], 2 (1997): 33–5.

[38] Chang Ju, *Huayang guozhi* [Southwest China Gazetteer] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p.2; Kou Zhun, "Chunchu yeshu" [Writing On an Early Spring Night], in *Zhongmin ji* [Collected Works of Kou Zhun] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), Vol.2; Wu Yongzhang, *Zhongguo nanfang minzu wenhua yuanliu shi* [The Origin and Historical Development of Ethnic Cultures in South China] (Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), pp.2–3.

[39] Deng Hui, *Tujia zu quyu de kaogu wenhua*, p.309.

[40] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 28.

[41] See Mao Junde's decrees on "Urging people to save fertiliser", "Urging people to reclaim farmland" and "Urging people to store grains", as well as the "Items for urging" which include information about a pre-1735 absence of irrigation, fertilising, hoeing, reclaiming, growing of economic plants and so on. Enshizhou minwei [Ethnic Affairs Committee of Enshi Prefecture], *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu* [Collection of Historical Materials on Minorities in Western Hubei] (Enshi: Enshizhou minwei, 1986), pp. 263–65.

[42] Wu Yongzhang, *Zhongguo nanfang minzu wenhua yuanliu shi*, pp.2–3.

people to reclaim farmlands" (*quan nong* 劝农).[45] As for the crops in the pre-1735 era, the traveller Gu Cai 顾彩, in his account of 1704, mentions barley, buckwheat, soybean, rice, sorghum, kidney beans and billion-dollar grass (*Eleusine coracana*).[46] The Xiang family genealogy, thought to date from the late eighteenth century, lists millet, autumn-millet, and billion-dollar grass.[47] The Tang-dynasty writer Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 mentions millet and rice,[48] while the Song-dynasty 宋 poet Fan Chengda 范成大 notes, "planted wheat and soybean in spring so the summer months could be tided over by eating wheat-soybean cakes".[49]

Rice had been planted in the Enshi area since at least the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907). Liu Yuxi mentions that in the Three Gorges area there was a large expanse of rice fields.[50] During the Song dynasty a royal ban prevented ploughing cattle from entering this area. After the end of this prohibition, Li Zhou 李周, a new magistrate sent to the Enshi area, found that the local people were not used to ploughing with cattle. He therefore selected soldiers from the garrison troops who knew how to plough, and asked them to buy cattle and plough the fields.[51] The Ming dynasty set up garrison stations in Shi prefecture and made the soldiers open up wasteland for the cultivation of grain. This practice had a major impact in promoting rice farming in some of Enshi's flat areas. For example, in the Qingjiang 清江 river valley near the prefecture's capital, there was intensive farming of rice.[52] The main crops in the period of shifting cultivation were those dry-land crops that were drought-tolerant, highly competitive with weeds, and long-lasting in storage.

Rivers and streams in this mountain area have an abundance of fish. According to ichthyologists, there are 147 species of fish in Enshi prefecture belonging to twenty families and nine orders, 85 of which are carp.[53] Even after the political reform of 1735 which centralised government rule and changed the rural economy, some households were still called "fishing households" (*yuhu* 渔户). For example, the *Laifeng County Gazetteer* records that "Tian Jinglu 田荆录, 97 years old, made a living by fishing all his life".[54]

The subtropical climate and mountainous environment make this area a good habitat for wild animals. Zoologists have identified over 100 species of birds belonging to 37 families and 15 orders, 60 species of mammals belonging to 20 families and 8 orders, 25 species of reptiles belonging to over 7 families, and 20 species of amphibian belonging to 5 families in Enshi.[55] Hunting played a historically important role. Archaeological excavations in the Qingjiang river valley indicate that in the Shang 商 dynasty (sixteenth--eleventh century BC) people consumed cattle, goats, water-deer, deer, pigs, boar, bear, leopard, wolf, dog, badger, rat, porcupine and macaque, as well as many birds, on the basis of the animal bones that were burnt there.[56] Up to the early Qing dynasty, hunting was still important.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Enshizhou minwei, *Exi zizhizhou minzu zhi*, p.260.

[46] Gu Cai, *Rongmei jiyou*, pp.31, 90.

[47] "Xiangshi zupu" [Genealogy of the Xiang Lineage], in *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.93.

[48] In Wu Yongzhang, *Zhongguo nanfang minzu wenhua yuanliu shi*, pp.2–3.

[49] Ibid., p.2.

[50] Liu Yuxi, "Zhuzhi ci", *Liu Bingke wenji* [Collected Works of Liu Yuxi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p.222.

[51] Tuo Tuo, *Song shi* [History of the Song Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p.10934.

[52] Huang Fu, "Quan nong tai" [The Pavilion Where People Were Urged to Farm], in *Enshi xianzhi* (1982), pp.463–64.

[53] Enshizhou nongwei [Agricultural Committee of Enshi Prefecture], *Exi zizhizhou zonghe nongye quhua* [The Agricultural Regionalisation of Exi Autonomous Prefecture] (Wuhan: Hubei kexue jishu chubanshe, 1989), p.39.

[54] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 30.

[55] Enshizhou nongwei, *Exizizhizhou zonghe nongye quhua*, p.39.

[56] Deng Hui, *Tujia zu quyu de kaogu wenhua*, p.94.

The last report of villagers seeing tigers in Enshi was in the 1950s. Before the twentieth century, however, the tiger thrived in this mountain area, an observation on which certain Chinese scholars have based their arguments about the local tiger totem.[57]

Enshi prefecture's flora comprises about 3,000 wild plants, including more than 100 kinds of oil-bearing plants, 2,000 kinds of medicinal plants, 100 kinds of starch plants and over 50 kinds of wild fruit.[58] A long time before the 1735 centralisation of government rule, gathering wild plants for food was very important to the people in the area. The genealogy of the local Xiang lineage recorded: "Gathering tea in spring ... picking up beeswax and honeycomb in the fall; often getting food by gathering fiddlehead and uprooting the kudzu rhizome".[59] A record from the Ming dynasty reads: "Felling and burning for planting grains, hunting and fishing for supplying the kitchen".[60] This summarises the food system of the inhabitants of Enshi in the long period before the 1735 reform.

Post-1735 Subsistence

In 1644, the Qing dynasty was established. However, in the following 90 years, many mountainous areas in southwest China still maintained the traditional *tusi* 土司 system: self-rule by local chieftains which had operated since the Yuan 元 dynasty. In 1726, the fourth year of the Yongzheng 雍正 reign (1722–35), the then governor of the provinces of southwest China proposed a political reform project known as "changing rule by local chieftains into direct rule by the imperial court, with shifting officials" (*gaitu guiliu*).[61] The movement to depose chieftains began in the Enshi area in 1732 and was completed in 1735. All 23 chieftains in Enshi were removed and all except one were exiled to prefectures in eastern Hubei or other provinces.[62] The Qing in fact founded Enshi prefecture, which at that time consisted of six counties.

The population in the time of the chieftains had been very small. For example, Rongmei 容美, the largest chieftainship in the prefecture, had only 3,000 households, while the smallest chieftainship, Zhongxiao 忠孝, had a population of just 1,000 households. Consequently, the Qing government promoted immigration into this area for reclamation. According to the *Enshi County Gazetteer* (Enshi xianzhi 恩施县志) from the Daoguang 道光 period (1821–51), during the 90 years from 1736 to 1832 the number of households in the prefecture increased 6.2-fold and the population 7.6-fold, with an average growth of 1,588 households each year.[63] The 1735 reform has been regarded as the cause of immigration movements, the clearing of forests for farmland, the advent of intensive

[57] The fact that the white tiger is worshiped only in certain areas in Enshi has been taken to support the ethnic separateness of the Tujia (see Xu Wu, p.335).

[58] Enshizhou nongwei, *Exizizhizhou zonghe nongye quhua*, p.39.

[59] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.91.

[60] Deng Hui, *Tujia zu quyu de kaogu wenhua*, p.309.

[61] Wu Yongzhang, "Zhongnan minzu guangxi shi" [History of Ethnic Relationships in South China] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1992), p.392.

[62] Hu Rao and Liu Donghai, *Exi Tusi shehui gailüe* [An Outline of Chieftain Society in Western Hubei] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1993), p.111.

[63] Ibid., p.127.

farming, a growth in population, and the introduction of higher-grade foods (rice, maize, potato and sweet potato) that accelerated the social development of the Enshi area.[64] However, in terms of cause and effect, maize farming was a decisive factor.

Soon after the reforms, along with increased immigration, intensive farming activities appeared in Enshi area. These included the establishment of farms on a large scale and the building of irrigation systems, the introduction of farm tools and new cultivation methods, the use of fertilisers, attention to the farming seasons, and field management after sowing. During the Qianlong 乾隆 period (1736–96) rice fields were established over most of Hefeng county, as recorded in 1823:

> When Hefeng came under the direct rule of central government, quite a few people came in from Changde 常德, Lizhou 澧州 and other prefectures in Hunan 湖南 province to reclaim and plant maize. First the virgin forest was cleared. This area proved to be good land for planting rice.[65]

The acreage of farmland increased quickly. In Laifeng county, for example, 486 *mu* were reclaimed from 1838 to 1743, 2679.5 *mu* from 1743 to 1751, and 7090 *mu* from 1751 to 1778.[66] Farm building on a large scale presented a remarkable contrast to the "farming without fixed places" previously practised by the natives of Enshi.

Many farming tools were also introduced after the Yongzheng-period reform, as the *Enshi County Gazetteer* of 1868 notes: "There was every kind of farming tool. Fields on both high and low levels were now ploughed with cattle".[67] Many small reservoirs and irrigation ditches were built. One famous example was the irrigation ditch built in Laifeng county, to which one magistrate of the county contributed his own salary. Since many irrigation ponds were built in that period, many places in Enshi were named *tang* 塘 or *yan* 堰 (both meaning pond or reservoir).[68] Irrigation devices, such as the waterwheel (*shuiche* 水车) and the thick-tube wheel (*tongche* 筒车), were built in this area.[69] The *Laifeng County Gazetteer* recorded: "Sitting on the stand, people rotated the [water] wheel with their feet and could draw water very quickly".[70]

People who make a living by intensive farming take the seasons very seriously. Historical sources record that the people of Enshi in the years following 1735, including the native people of the area, "transplanted rice seedlings despite the wind and rain, because they feared missing the season".[71] They also knew how to ascertain the season by combining observations of local natural phenomena and the 24 divisions of the solar year in the traditional Chinese calendar. There are many farming proverbs in these Enshi villages. For example, "If the Qingming Festival

64 Ibid.

65 *Hefeng xianzhi* [Hefeng County Gazetteer] (n.p., 1823), Section 13. Also, when I worked in Hua Village, local agricultural cadres told me that in 1976 archaeologists discovered that near Duting town in Lichuan county many rice fields had been built from the original swamps by the "floating mud with logs" method.

66 Hu Rao and Li Donghai, *Exi Tusi shehui gailüe*, p.128.

67 *Enshi xianzhi* [Enshi County Gazetteer] (1982), Section 7.

68 In the chapter about the Qing-dynasty administrative zone recorded in the *Enshi xianzhi*, there were place names such as Wanjiatang (Wan Family Pond), Dayantang (Large Pond), and Mantang (Brimming-Over Pond). Lichuan county has such place names as Changyantang (Long Pond), and Datang (Large Pond). Enshi county has Xintang (New Pond) and Huangnitang (Yellow Mud Pond) and so on.

69 "The thick-tube wheel could allow farmers to get double the result with half the effort. A wooden rack was erected, on the top of which was set a huge wheel made of bamboo tied with many thick bamboo tubes with all the openings facing upwards. When the rig was placed in the river, water dashed against the wheel to rotate it and the tubes, which went upwards containing water, then poured the water into the wooden or bamboo conduits, which led to the rice fields. Approximately, one thick-tube wheel could service several dozen *mu* of rice fields", *Enshi xianzhi*, Section 7.

70 Recorded in *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 13.

71 Ibid.

清明节 occurs in the third lunar month, sow seeds later. If it occurs in the second lunar month, hurry to put the seeds in the fields"; or "The poor are not fooled by the rich; only when the *tung* (桐) trees bloom can you sow"; or "When the cuckoos begin to sing, be quick to steep the rice seeds".

In post-1735 years, the people of Enshi further developed their cultivation methods. For example, the method called *qutianfa* 区田法 saw people increase yields by dividing their fields into small plots.[72] In the intensive farming era, fertilisation also became an important issue in local magistrates' decrees. For example, Mao Junde 毛峻德, the first magistrate of Hefeng county, found that the local people did not have the custom of building cesspits, so he issued a decree that each family must build one in order to store up dung for farm use.[73] Apart from these pits, Enshi people had other ways of fertilising their fields, for example by "pressing green leaves" (*yaqing* 压青). As the local chronicle reported in 1867, "Farmers soak the leaves of trees in the rice fields in winter. When spring comes, the leaves have rotted; when mixed with mud they can replace faeces".[74] There was also a way of making "fire fertiliser" (*huofen* 火粪) which had been one of the most important elements in the ancient practice of shifting cultivation. In fall or winter, farmers cut down brambles and grass and dried them, stacked the withered brambles and grass, covered the stack with a layer of mud, set fire to it and let the black smoke belch forth, but without allowing an open fire.[75] Also, presenting a striking contrast to the ancient Ba custom of "paying no attention to ploughing and hoeing", people in Enshi in the mid-Qing dynasty took the management of the fields after sowing very seriously, especially when the maize became ripe. From these phenomena, it is clear that the local people of Enshi had already made the transition from shifting cultivation to intensive farming by that time. They worked conscientiously through the year and exerted much effort in their fields.

After the 1735 political reforms, there were two significant features in relation to the principal crops. First, many varieties of traditional crops such as wheat and rice had been introduced or developed, and adapted to the diversified climates and geographic environment. Second, maize, potato and sweet potato were introduced, which brought a fundamental change in the diets of both native people and immigrants. This has continued up to the present time. As the *Enshi Gazetteer County* reports:

> After the 1735 reforms, immigrants from outside crowded in and the population doubled. Accompanied by Han culture and agricultural techniques, new crops including maize, potato and sweet potato were introduced. The application of cattle-ploughing and iron farm tools was also promoted. Therefore, from the Qianlong period to the Jiaqing 嘉庆 period [1796–1820], farming in Enshi became prosperous. Crops in the Qing dynasty included maize, millet, soybeans, buckwheat, large peas, small peas, mung beans, sorghum, sweet potatoes, potatoes, non-sticky rice and sticky rice.[76]

[72] Ibid., Section 31.

[73] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, pp.263–64. He added: "I will check up at any time; if anyone has not built a cesspool within two months, he is stubborn and lazy and will be severely punished without leniency," *Hefengxianzhi* (1886 ed.), Section 13.

[74] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 28.

[75] The ash produced in this way was said to be rich in phosphate and potassium.

[76] *Enshi xianzhi*, p.193.

Among the traditional crops, there was a great increase in the varieties of rice sown. In the Tongzhi 同治 period (1862–74), Laifeng county had over twenty kinds of round-grained, non-glutinous rice and thirteen kinds of glutinous rice.[77] The *Enshi County Gazetteer* records that there were at least 28 "folk varieties" of rice planted in Enshi at that time.[78] In the pre-1735 period of rule by chieftains, the traveller Gu Cai reported that the local people had barley but no wheat.[79] In the Tongzhi period, however,

> farmers had both barley and wheat; today's "old wheat" was barley, and the one which was ground for cakes was only wheat. There was also one strain of *heshang* wheat 和尚麦 and one strain of *chijiang* wheat 迟酱麦, neither of which had awns. One strain of *hongjiang* wheat 红酱麦 had awns. Although oats had small stems and small grains, farmers took it as superior.[80]

The *Enshi County Gazetteer* lists three local varieties of wheat that were still planted in the early 1950s.[81] The Enshi chronicle records that there were 30 landraces of soybeans, one of the traditional local crops, planted in Enshi up to 1950.[82]

There were two varieties of sorghum, one red and the other black, both sticky. There were two varieties of millet as well, one sticky and the other non-sticky, and the same was the case with buckwheat. There were five varieties of broomcorn millet.[83] But dry-land grains such as millet, buckwheat, beans and sorghum became less popular in the post-1735 era. After 1735, few farmers planted them. Millet was produced, but its yield was less than that of maize, so fewer and fewer farmers planted it. Beans were planted at the borders of the fields and in the narrow empty spaces under the maize plants, however, the production of beans was very small. Peas could grow everywhere but fewer and fewer farmers planted them.[84] If farmers planted those crops they often chose those fields with poor soil: "On the tops of mountains", reported the *Enshi County Gazetteer* of 1868, "farmers planted beans, buckwheat and millet, which were regarded as coarse grains".[85]

After the 1735 reforms many new food plants, especially New World crops, were introduced to the area. By the middle of the eighteenth century, maize was popular in the mountain areas in southwest China such as Hunan, Hubei, Sichuan 四川, Guizhou 贵州 and Yunnan 云南 provinces.[86] Maize was introduced into the western Hubei area in the Qianlong period, and it was locally called "wrapped-grain" (*baogu* 包谷).[87] Mao Junde, the first magistrate of Hefeng, who was there for six years (1735 to 1741), noted that "the mountain fields were rocky and barren; only maize could adapt to it".[88] In the light of this record, maize appears to have been grown in Enshi prefecture for 250 years. The spread of the cultivation of maize was quick in this mountain area.

[77] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 29.

[78] *Enshi xianzhi*, p.210.

[79] Gu Cai, *Rongmei jiyou*, pp.89–90.

[80] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 29.

[81] *Enshi xianzhi*, p.213.

[82] Ibid., p.215.

[83] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 29.

[84] *Xianfeng xianzhi* [Xianfeng County Gazetteer] (1913), Section 4.

[85] *Enshi xianzhi*, Section 7.

[86] Tang Qiyu, *Zhongguo nongzuowu zaipei shi* [A History of Crops in China] (Beijing: Zhonguo nongye chubanshe, 1986).

[87] According to local record, "In the Qianlong period [1736–96], people began to cultivate maize", *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.92.

[88] *Hefeng xianzhi*, Section 13.

A source from 1823 records that "maize accounted for 80 per cent of the food products in Hefeng county".[89] In 1866, "Xianfeng county had all sorts of grains, but only maize could adapt to fields on both the high and lower levels".[90] In 1867, according to the *Laifeng County Gazetteer*, "in most of Laifeng county's mountain fields maize was planted".[91] Four factors may explain the quick spread of maize: first, could adapt to both mountain and dry-land fields; second, its high yields and stability of output; third, its high nutritional value and its versatility in cuisine; and fourth, the fact that its grain, stem and leaves are all good forage for livestock.

Following maize, sweet potato[92] and potato also came to Enshi.[93] Like maize, both sweet potato and potato were originally domesticated in America, and have the ability to adapt to mountain fields and produce high yields. Potatoes are also nutritious, delicious, can be steamed, boiled or fried, and can be made into starch or liquor.

New crops gave rise to new ways of storing foods. In Enshi, potatoes were stored in the house, while sweet potatoes were stored in special underground cellars, and maize was suspended from ceilings and beams. Grain storage would seem to have been an important marker of the transition to intensive farming, as reflected in Mao Junde's decree entitled "Urging people to save grains".[94]

In the post-1735 period, the role of animal husbandry increased in importance while that of hunting and fishing fell. In Gu Cai's travel notes of 1704, we can find fragmentary historical materials about native husbandry before 1735. Gu recorded, for example, that people in Hefeng (Rongmei) raised horses, mules, goats and geese. But animal husbandry at that time was less important than hunting and fishing, which was the main source of meat. Throughout his book, Gu mentions neither pork nor pigs (and the genealogy of the Xiang lineage specifically mentions that they did not raise pigs),[95] while he was full of praise for the cured meat of wild animals and dried fish. After the 1735 reforms, local historical documents recorded new customs of livestock husbandry: poultry raising and aquaculture. For example, the *Changle County Gazetteer* (Changle xianzhi 长乐县志 written in the Xianfeng period (1850–61) of the Qing) reported: "In recent years, tigers and leopards often broke into villages and injured pigs, dogs, goats and cattle, so villagers would often beat gongs and blow reed stems to ward them off at dusk".[96]

This historical record also noted the local folk custom of "gathering pig-weed" (*da zhucao* 打猪草): "The impoverished families gathered wild weeds near the houses or at the edges of farmland for pigfeed". Li Chunhuan 李春焕, the magistrate of Changle county at the time, wrote: "The villagers' baskets were full of green weeds for pigfeed. When the pigs lay sleeping with faces downward they looked like full moons".[97] Shang Pan 商盘, another Qing official, said: "At the sides of a stretch of thatched huts

[89] Ibid., Section 7.

[90] *Xianfeng xianzhi*, Section 9.

[91] *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 29.

[92] The *Enshi County Gazetteer* in the Tongzhi period recorded that "poor people took sweet potato planting as their proper duty", *Laifeng xianzhi* (1867: Section 29), also written in the Tongzhi period, likewise recorded: "sweet potato, which was introduced from overseas, was commonly called 'overseas yam' (*fanyu*); and as it was red in colour it was also called 'red yam' (*hong-shao*)", *Enshixianzhi* (1982 edition), Section 7.

[93] According to the gazetteers of Changle 长乐 (today's Wufeng county, Hubei) and Enshi counties, it would seem to have been in the Jiaqing period that the potato was introduced into the Enshi area. See *Changle xianzhi* [Changle County Gazetteer] (Changle, 1852), Section 7 and *Enshixianzhi* (1982 ed.), Section 7.

[94] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.265.

[95] Ibid., p.91.

[96] *Changle xianzhi*, Section 12.

[97] Ibid.

surrounded with cogon grass fences, there are more pigsties than cattle byres".[98] Picking pig-weed was an important part of local environmental knowledge, and this is preserved in proverbs. For example, villagers of Liang village told me that "in early spring every tender green herb can be picked for feeding pigs, but people must distinguish among various herbs once the oriole calls". In order to make the collecting of pig-weed easier, many farmers even planted certain wild herbs along the edges of their fields as pig feed. Nowadays, pig feed mainly consists of potato stems and leaves, sweet potato vines and radishes as well as maize, sweet potatoes and potatoes.

With the advent of intensive farming, fish farming was also practised in some areas. Reservoirs and ponds simultaneously provided farming irrigation and a place for raising fish. For example, the *Hefeng County Gazetteer* recorded: "Grass carp were raised in the ponds. In the rivers and streams there were no such fish. Silver carp were raised in ponds too".[99]

Alongside the advent of intensive farming, the significance of animal husbandry was that it provided farmers with cattle for ploughing, as the local proverb advises: "Raise horses and cattle for farming". It also provided a source of manure another proverb says: "We cannot find fertiliser anywhere without raising pigs, chickens and ducks"—and a steady and reliable source of meat—"Raise a fat pig for celebrating the New Year". Usually when the end of the year comes, each household will slaughter a pig, which they have fattened for a year. This practice is called "slaughtering the yearly pig" (*sha nian zhu* 杀年猪), a matter of great importance in the lives of the people, during which the owner of the pig would feast his relatives and neighbours. As cured meat, pork can be preserved for a year or longer. In comparison with the hunting-gathering times, however, the proportion of meat in the Enshi diet actually decreased in the intensive farming era.

In contrast with the growth of animal husbandry, hunting and fishing in post-1735 Enshi were on the wane. There are many factors that could account for this, but population growth and the reclamation of forests was the main one, as it led to the destruction of the habitat of wild animals and hence of the animals themselves. The *Hefeng County Gazetteer* (Hefeng xianzhi 鹤峰县志) reported that, "Special hunting families became fewer owing to the decrease in forests".[100] The *Changle County Gazetteer* also recorded that:

> When this county was first founded, the mountains were deep and the woods dense, and there were lots of wild animals such as roe deer, hare, and deer; and every *bao* 保 [a Qing-dynasty administrative subdivision of a county] had hunters (*liehu* 猎户). Now that many mountains have been reclaimed, birds and beasts have fled or gone into hiding. If pheasants, hares, foxes and badgers are caught, it is during the farmers' leisure time. People who raise hawks and hunting dogs are rarely seen.[101]

[98] Shang Pan, "Xiache jianxun jijing chengyun yidang caifeng" [A Poem Inspired by the Local Scenery upon Taking Up Office]" and "Cai jue" [Picking Fiddlehead Fern], *Enshixianzhi* (1982), p.470.

[99] *Hefeng xianzhi* (1886 ed.), Section 7.

[100] Ibid., Section 6.

[101] *Changle xianzhi*, Section 12.

The genealogy of the Xiang 向 family in Hefeng county noted the change also:

> During the Qianlong period, birds and beasts fled or went into hidiing, while fish and turtle became extinct. The former days of hunting in the mountains and fishing in the rivers could not be recovered. The mountain summits and riversides, which were the lairs and nests of beasts and birds, all became fertilised farmlands.[102]

Thus, hunting after 1735 was only a leisure-time pursuit for farmers (in winter in particular) and became a form of recreation. Moreover, it served farming. For example, as the maize matured, monkeys liked to steal and eat it, so farmers attempted to guard against them or recruited hunters to get rid of them.

Living in Xiao 晓 village in 2001, I found that almost every family had dogs.[103] People explained that they needed them for hunting as well as for guarding the household. Hunting, some people said, was for recreation rather than subsistence. However, until the late 1970s fishing was still a useful source of protein for farmers during the summer months. When I lived in Hu 胡 village in Enshi as a child in the 1970s,[104] villagers used many methods to catch fish. For example, besides fishing nets (a small net fixed on a bamboo circle on the top of a long wooden handle that was especially effective in flooded rivers), angling was also common. In reaches with shoals and rapids where fishing nets did not work, people in Enshi fished by rod angling in the daytime and string-hook angling at night. People living along the Lou river 溇水 in Hefeng county usually used cormorants and fishing lights for fishing in the mating areas in the spring and fall.[105]

Reasons for the Ecosystem Change in Enshi

Most existing studies claim that Tujia–Han cultural exchange before 1735 in western Hubei prepared the basis for the 1735 political reforms and the establishment of intensive farming in Enshi. It is my contention here, however, that rather than such a cultural exchange, it was actually the introduction of maize farming that destroyed the old ecosystem and gave rise to radical social change in Enshi, including a highly unified regional identity.

Some scholars believe that there was a long history of cultural exchange between the natives of Enshi and Han people before the 1735 reforms, and it has been suggested that the already existing native tradition of absorbing and using Han culture helped the people of Enshi to assimilate into Confucian education more quickly than other southern minorities.[106] The *Enshi County Gazetteer* of the Tongzhi period reported: "Enshi has

[102] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.92.

[103] Xiao is a pseudonym.

[104] Hu is a pseudonym.

[105] Xiang Guoping, "Zhao yehuo: Loushui yusu" [Lighting the Night-Fire: Fishing Customs on the Lou River], in *Exi fengqing* [Folk Customs in West Hubei], ed. Tian He (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1991), pp.235–39.

[106] See Wu Yongzhang, *Zhongguo nanfang minzu wenhua yuanliu shi*, p.3.

had schools for a thousand years, since the Tang dynasty. Many clever people with splendid literary talents could inherit and pass on learning".[107] Also, some local chieftains held Confucian education in high esteem. For example, each of the eight generations of Rongmei chieftains had its own poetry collection written in classical Chinese. Xiang Tongting 向同廷, the chief in Maodong 卯洞 area in the Chongzhen 崇祯 period (1628–44) in the Ming dynasty, "built school buildings over a wide area for the purpose of improving customs and developing education".[108] Some native people had also passed the imperial examinations.[109] By contrast, the chieftains in the western Guangxi 广西 region preferred to keep their people away from Confucian education:

> Although the aboriginal people were allowed to go school, no one was permitted to take the imperial examinations for fear of local people escaping once they had become successful candidates.[110]

Given that the Enshi area lies just between the Sichuan Basin and the Middle Reach Plain of the Yangtze River (two typical Han areas with highly developed intensive farming systems), it might be assumed that this area would have been deeply influenced by Han subsistence patterns. Indeed, there was also some development of farmland there in the Tang and Song dynasties due to Han immigration. Du Fu 杜甫, the famous Tang poet, wrote that "customs in Shi prefecture are simple, but people take farmland development seriously".[111] The Ming emperors built many garrison stations in this area in order to protect against attacks by minorities and had garrison troops clear forests for the growing of crops.[112] Garrison soldiers who came from mainstream Chinese areas practised intensive farming in the fields surrounding the fortresses. It is thought that these fortress areas might have been the centres for the diffusion of Han agricultural culture. The peasant army in the last phase of the Ming dynasty and remnants of the army (*Kuidong shisanjia* 夔东十三家, that is troops settled in the Yangtze Gorges) lived in this area for about 30 years. These peasant troops were active in anti-Qing campaigns while opening up fields for farming.

By the late Ming dynasty, limited intensive farming had appeared in some flatlands in the vicinity of the capital of Shi prefecture, where garrison troops settled. To the Ming poet Huang Pu 黄溥, the rural scenery of these garrison areas was roughly that of the Chinese plains.[113] At the end of the Ming dynasty, observers recorded the practice of intensive farming in parts of Enshi. For example, in the Wanli 万历 period (1573–1620) of the Ming dynasty, the Datian 大田 chieftain's area (in today's Xianfeng county) had a reputation for "esteeming plowing and sowing".[114] In the early Qing, some local chieftains still had to urge people to turn to intensive farming practices. In the Zhengtong 正统 period (1436–50), for example, Xiang Nawu 向那吾, the chief of

[107] *Enshi xianzhi*, Section 8.

[108] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.299.

[109] For example, "Tan Zongyi, a successful candidate in the highest imperial examination in the Hongzhi period [1488–1506, in the Ming dynasty], was appointed magistrate of Yongxin county, Huguang province; Tan Zhen was a successful candidate in the imperial examination at provincial level", *Jianshi xianzhi* (1874 ed.), section on election.

[110] Wu Yongzhang, *Zhongguo nanfang minzu shizhi yaoji tijie* [Explanatory Notes on the Historical Records and Classics of China's Southern Minorities] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1991), p.198.

[111] *Enshi xianzhi*, Section 27.

[112] There are many places in Enshi named after the garrison buildings or fortresses (*bao* 堡), for example Tunbao, Yuanbao, Tuanbao, and Weiganbao.

[113] Huang Pu noted: "The barley was yellow while the wheat was still green; the second rice had come into bloom while first rice was ripening". See *Shinan fuzhi* [Shi Prefecture Gazetteer] (1982 ed.), Section 27.

[114] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.260.

the Maodong area (today's Baifusi 百福司 township in Laifeng county), promulgated a decree on "Reclaiming land for farming", which stated:

> Now I especially instruct: all families with property and tools must look for some lands with water resources and open them up for farming (without exception). Even if it is dry land, you must diligently plow and sow it all.[115]

In the early Qing dynasty, chieftains in Rongmei bought much farmland in mainstream Chinese areas (including Wuhan 武汉, Zhijiang 枝江, Yidu 宜都, Changde 常德 and Lizhou districts in Hubei and Hunan provinces), which suggests that intensive farming had a place for the local chieftains.

However, intensive farming activities in the area did not radically change the foraging subsistence patterns of the native people. Intensive farming took place within the garrison areas and among the local chieftain class. It was not therefore strange that the government policy of "advising people to practise intensive farming" had already been in existence for a very long time. For example, as early as the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279), Kou Zhun 寇准, the magistrate of Badong 巴东 county, had advised the local people to farm. The relics of a pavilion built in honour of his arguments for intensive farming still exist, and so do the stories about his farming advice and teachings.[116] As noted above, the Song official Li Zhou 李周 selected soldiers who came from intensive farming areas to demonstrate ploughing with cattle so as to promote intensive farming in Enshi. Tang Langran 谭朗然, a Ming official in Jianshi county, was regarded as a model official for urging the local people to take up intensive farming and to produce mulberries and silk as the mainstream Chinese did.[117] The magistrate Mao Junde, as noted, promoted intensive farming by mandating that people build cesspools, reclaim wastelands, and store up grain for times of shortage.[118]

The 1735 reforms were the turning point for the introduction of maize farming. In pre-1735 times, though the emperors had allowed the chieftains to follow a self-rule system, this did not mean that the court really liked it. Compared to the imperial army, the power of local chieftains was weak. It was fairly easy for the royal army to occupy the area, but every time the emperor tried to set up direct rule, some high-ranking officials would oppose it and it would soon come to an end.[119] The fact was that provisioning the royal troops and an unwieldy administration made it easier to conquer an area than to manage it.[120] The traditional crops in China (such as millet, rice and wheat) were either poorly adapted to the mountain conditions or had low yields and could not sustain a large population of soldiers and officials.[121] For this reason the chieftain system lasted for many years. In fact the Qing emperor selected the best time to implement political reform, because the New World crops, which proved

115 Zhang Tingyu, ed., *Ming shi* [History of the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), Section 310.

116 See Deng Hui, *Tujia zu quyu de kaogu wenhua*, p.309.

117 *Shinan fuzhi* (1909), section on officials.

118 *Hefeng xianzhi* (1886), Section 13.

119 Wu Yongzhang, *Zhongguo tusi zhidu yuanyuan yu fazhan shi* [The Origins and History of China's Chieftain System] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1988), p.207.

120 Ibid.

121 Fredrik Barth has also argued for the relationship between ecological constraints and an ethnic group's economic and political organization. Barth, "Ecological Relationships of Ethnic Groups".

to have both good adaptability to mountains and high yields, had just been introduced into China. Maize farmers, in particular, were waiting for the "mountain doors" to open.

The Qing emperors who instituted the reforms also prompted the immigration of Han Chinese to this mountain area. These immigrants, who came for the express purpose of planting maize, subsequently changed the native ecosystem and provided a provisional basis for direct imperial rule. As this area had formerly been sparsely populated, it was very easy for both natives and immigrants to reclaim land for planting maize. Han immigrants therefore continued to arrive. The *Xianfeng County Gazetteer* (Xianfeng xianzhi 咸丰县志) recorded that there were 63 large lineages in Xianfeng county shortly after the 1735 reform, but only four of these lineages were native.[122] Thirty-eight lineages came from intensive farming areas such as Jiangxi 江西 and Hunan provinces and the plains of Hubei.[123] The newly appointed Han officials in the area did their best to encourage immigration and reclamation for farmlands, as the historical data show:

> If one succeeds in soliciting farmers for reclamation, then one's deeds will be memorialised by the emperor and one will be given an appropriate promotion in official rank.[124]

The population explosion and environmental change forced the native people to turn to intensive farming. The 1735 reforms and the introduction of maize farming made the immigration project successful. As a local historical record noted:

> There are many people entering this mountain area for reclamation. They come from outside places such as Shangde and Lizhou ... . Since the 1735 reform, immigrants have crowded in and almost every place has been reclaimed---even the barren rocks and the remote valleys, without exception.[125]

In the words of another gazetteer "The maize-planters arrived in quick succession."[126] The *Enshi County Gazetteer* of the Jiaqing period reports:

> The population of this county is now ten times greater than before, and more and more land has been reclaimed. People are even living in the remote valleys. Even the summits of the high mountains have been planted. It looks as if "there is no rest for the land as there is no rest for human labor".[127]

The population doubled and redoubled within a short space of time. During the Yuanfeng 元丰 period (1078–86) of the Song dynasty, Shi prefecture had a population of "9,323 native people and 9,781 immigrants".[128] According to demographic data in the Qing dynasty, Jianshi county had a population of 70,000 in 1735 and 193,000 in 1823.[129] Xianfeng county had a population of 400 households at the end of the Ming

[122] *Xianfeng xianzhi* (1886 ed.), Section 8. The four lineages were Qin, Ran, Xiang and Tian, all of which were of Tujia nationality in the 1950–80s' ethnic (*minzu*) classification.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., Section 5.

[125] *Jianshi xianzhi*, section on foods.

[126] *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.92.

[127] *Enshi xianzhi*, Section 7.

[128] Wang Cun, *Yuanfeng jiuyu zhi* [Chronicle of Yuanfeng] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p.386.

[129] *Jianshi xianzhi*, section on population.

dynasty and its population rose to 101,000 in 1827.[130] In 1736, Laifeng county had 11,000 aboriginal people while the migrant population was 42,000, and in 1833 the whole population of the county amounted to 76,000.[131] It has been calculated that Shinan 施南 prefecture, which consisted of six counties at the time (Enshi, Laifeng, Jianshi, Xianfeng, Lichuan and Xuanen), had a population of 910,000 in 1849, which had increased to 1,020,000 by 1871. The net increase of population in those 21 years was 110,000.[132]

The reclamation of farmland from forest and population growth led to violent environmental change. Most of the primeval forests were destroyed. The Xiang family genealogy noted that although the place they lived (in Hefeng county) had been a remote one in the Qianlong period, "many people crowded in and many green hills were wiped out by the immigrants' axes".[133] As already noted, due to the large-scale reclamation, "the mountain summits and riversides which were formerly the lairs and nests of beasts and birds all became fertilised farmlands", and "birds and beasts fled or went into hiding, while fish and turtle became extinct".[134] The ecological preconditions for subsistence patterns based on hunting, gathering and shifting farming had not existed since the eighteenth century; for the native population, there was no alternative but to adopt intensive farming practices.

Maize as a Social Unifier

In the early years of the immigration wave and the growing of maize, there was an obvious gap between the native and immigrant populations, and there were also gaps between different groups of immigrants. Historical sources claim that "all over the county, most residents are immigrants" and that all groups lived according to their original customs.[135] But maize was to change this. Apart from the mutual exchange of knowledge and technology among farmers, maize farming requires rapid planting, rapid hoeing, and rapid harvesting, and this gave rise to a new practice in Enshi, namely labour exchange among neighbouring households. When various households worked together, there arose customs such as the hoeing opera,[136] folk songs and story-telling, and other activities to accompany work. The "maize-shucking night" was another time for collective action. The cobs had to be shucked on the night of the harvest, and everyone took part in this, telling stories, singing songs and guessing riddles. It was noisy and looked like a festival, and in local gazetteers the maize-related hoeing opera, harvesting and shucking are all recorded as special local customs.

The role of maize in the development of a unified local identity is represented by the Enshi concept of "we maize-eaters in the mountains"

130 *Xianfeng xianzhi*, Section 8.

131 *Laifeng xianzhi*, Section 13.

132 Enshizhou minwei, *Exi minzu yanjiu* [Western Hubei Ethnic Research], Vol.2 (1989), p.128.

133 *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.92.

134 Ibid.

135 Hu Rao and Liu Donghai, *Exi Tusi shehui gailüe*, p.127.

136 This custom is also called "hoeing songs" (*haocao ge*) or "hoeing drum" (*haocao luogu*), and has been attributed to Tujia in Enshi (see *Exi zizhizhou minzu zhi*, p.71). However, as long ago as 1313, farmers in Sichuan province also had this custom. See Wang Zhen, *Nong shu* [Book on Farming], annotated by Wang Yuhu (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1981), p.235.

versus "those rice-eaters on the plains". Local people and scholars in Enshi would both claim, without hesitation, that maize has been the food of people in Enshi since time began (*zi gu jiu you* 自古就有); few know that maize is native to the Americas and was introduced into Enshi only about 250 years ago.[137] The importance of maize is also enshrined in local sayings. During the years I worked for the ethnic affairs committee, for example, I was often sent to the countryside for rural work, during which time I met a number of local drivers who scorned the use of cars (which are poorly equipped to travel over the bumpy roads in remote mountain villages) in favour of jeeps. "Jeeps are maize-eaters (*chi baogufan di* 吃包谷饭的)", they would say, "and they never have problems in the mountains". Cars, on the other hand, "can't really deal with rough mountain roads"; this is not strange, as "cars are rice-eaters (*chi mifan di* 吃米饭的) after all". These "maize metaphors" are similar to the Hopi's "conceptual metaphors" (such as "People are corn" or "Maidens are corn"), which demonstrate the population's identification with their superfood.[138]

Examining the transition of the ecosystem, one feature of the traditional food system—"farming dry-land crops plus foraging"—still remains to a certain degree, even though most of the old dry-land crops have given way to the New World crops. The practice of foraging is especially prevalent when famines occur, although it constitutes only a tiny portion of the whole food system today. During the Mao era (1949–76), demand for rice and meat reached a peak. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, when rice and pork become easily available, a fondness for dry-land crops and wild plants (such as maize-powder dishes) reemerged,[139] with people expressing the opinion that they needed these "coarse foods" to change or refresh their tastes.

This continuity of dry-land crops and wild plants in the food-system transition is also reflected in folk literature. As Eugene Anderson has suggested,

> We may expect to find that traditional subsistence-oriented cultures will encode a tremendous amount of intensely emotional and personal material about animals and plants, and this material is highly structured and organized into a simple, memorable world-view that is dramatically highlighted in myth and ritual.[140]

Historically, the Enshi tradition of prizing dry-land crops and wild plant foods is reflected in local folklore. By analysing certain folk tales, we can see how local people cognitively fill the positions of old favourite foods with the later, introduced ones.

We should note, for example, how important the fern was in the native Enshi food system. Historically, the fern was a dependable "crop"—as recorded in Gu Cai's travel notes—and its importance is reflected in a Tujia-language folk story told to me in 1996 by a Mr Tian who lives in a

[137] For example, the local folklorist Cao Yi, local archaeologist Deng Hui and local historians Hu Rao and Liu Donghai all mention the growing of maize in pre-1735 times. See Cao Yi, "Tusi shiqi de Tujia wenxue" [Tujia Literature in the *Tusi* Period], *Minzu luntan* [Ethnicity Forum] 3 (1996): 55–60, at p.56; Deng Hui, *Tujia zu quyu de kaogu wenhua*, p.355; Hu Rao and Liu Donghai, *Exi Tusi shehui gailüe*, p.72.

[138] Jean DeBernardi, "Social Aspects of Language Use," in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Tim Ingold (London: Routledge, 1994): 861–90, at p.865.

[139] Xu Wu, "'Ethnic Foods' and Regional Identity," pp.225–46.

[140] Eugene N. Anderson, *Ecologies of the Heart* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

town close to the capital of Laifeng county.[141] The hero of the story, a local chieftain, is very proud of his mountains which are full of "treasures". These treasures are nothing more than fern and kudzu.

In post-1735 times, intensive farming was accompanied by the use of fern starch, as various county chronicles relate:

> In high mountain lands, buckwheat, soybeans, millet and other dry-land crops were planted. There were few paddy fields, although so-called "dry-land rice" was planted. Ferns were everywhere in the mountains, and people dug out their rhizomes and produced starch to cope with crop failure. ... ferns are everywhere in the mountains. People dig out their roots and make starch to prepare against famine.[142]

> Whenever people met with crop failure, they would go to dig up fern roots for starch, as well as picking edible wild herbs to add to their meals.[143]

> Ferns dominated the mountains. By digging up their roots and making starch from them, the farmers could prepare against famines.[144]

In the 1980s, two Enshi people (an 84-year-old woman in Hefeng county in 1987, and a 48-year-old man in 1983 in Enshi county) both related a similar folk tale about ferns to some folklorists working on *A Collection of Folk Tales of Western Hubei* (Exi minjian gushi ji 鄂西民间故事集).

The old lady said:

> Long ago, fern starch was very easy to get, because it grew on the fern leaves. So if people wanted to eat it, they just put a big winnowing fan under the fern plants and waved the leaves, and the fern starch would soon fall into the fan. But when things become easy to get, they become worthless. That's why people didn't value fern starch. The worst thing was that a woman even used fern starch to cover up her baby's excrement. Unfortunately the Jade Emperor, who was on a tour of inspection, saw this. The Jade Emperor was angry and ordered "Fern Starch, go into the fern roots; and Fern Roots, go down three *chi* 尺 deep into the earth.[145] Those mortal people treat you so disrespectfully that I am going to give them the trouble of digging, cleaning and beating the roots when they want to eat fern starch". From that time on, people found how hard the job became: first they had to dig up the roots, then clean them with water, smash them, wash them again and then let the starch settle".[146]

Here is the man's version:

> Whenever there was a crop failure, people would dig up fern roots to make fern starch for food. Fern starch tastes good, and it's good for you. But it was hard work digging up those roots, which are deep in the earth. They say that fern starch grew on fern leaves long ago, and people only

[141] "Mr Tian" is a pseudonym.

[142] *Enshi xianzhi*, Section 7; see also *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.273.

[143] *Hefeng xianzhi* (1886 ed.), Section 7; see also *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.272.

[144] *Xianfeng xianzhi*, Section 8; see also *Exi shaoshu minzu shiliao jilu*, p.271.

[145] One *chi* is equivalent to 0.33 metres.

[146] Enshizhou wenhuaju [Cultural Bureau of Enshi Prefecture], *Exi minjian gushi ji* [A Collection of Folk Tales of Western Hubei] (Beijing: Minjian wenxue chubanshe, 1989), p.263.

needed to sweep it up whenever they wanted it. When people swept the starch away, the fern leaves would grow new starch again. You couldn't use it all up. Then in one famine year, a woman tore a bunch of fern leaves to make a a cushion to sit on for a while. Unfortunately a fairy maiden, who was sent to the earth by the Jade Emperor to collect fern starch, spotted it. The fairy maiden scolded her for sitting on the fern leaves. But the woman argued with her: "There's fern starch everywhere in the mountains. Who cares?" When the fairy maiden reported this to the Jade Emperor, the Jade Emperor announced angrily: "The common people have insulted fern starch, so let it go down into the earth three *chi* deep". After that, fern starch grew deep in the earth.[147]

Enshi people have stories about maize that follow similar logic:

Once upon a time, maize plants could bear a cob on each leaf. But why do maize plants today bear so few cobs, with three at the very most? That's the fault of a few lazy girls. People say that the Jade Emperor sent the Jade Boy to the earth one day to see if there was anything unjust. When the Jade Boy came down, he met several girls carrying corn cobs, bent over and sighing in despair. The Jade Boy asked them: "You've got a good harvest and your corn cobs look so good and big; what are you sighing for?" The girls complained, "The stupid corn bears too many cobs; we've been carrying them day in and day out, and we still haven't finished. Are we supposed to die of exhaustion?" The Jade Boy reported this situation to the Jade Emperor. Sighing and shaking his head, the Jade Emperor said, "I see. Order maize to bear fewer cobs in future. One plant will bear three cobs at the most".[148]

In these folk tales about ferns and maize, dry-land crops are pictured as having been extremely high-yielding, but that human failings made the Jade Emperor change this. They also reflect the fact that dry-land crops, the superfoods of folk cuisine, occupied a similar position in Enshi food ideologies. Furthermore, as the following story demonstrates, maize has been incorporated into the legendary ancestry of local groups in some parts of Enshi:

Long, long ago, two tribes fought fiercely. One tribe was killed, and nobody was left except a young eighteen-year-old woman named She Xiangxiang. She escaped and hid in a large cave. But soon she found she couldn't set out, as the enemy besieged her. When she cried in despair, an eagle flew in and saved her by carrying her to a safe place called Luopoping. The eagle gave her a bag containing maize seeds and maize cakes. She survived by eating the maize cakes, and began to plant maize there. One night she dreamed two small eagles entered her bosom. Before long she found she was pregnant and ten months later she gave birth to a daughter and a son. These two children were the remote ancestors of today's Tan families who live in the eight flat lands in Enshi.[149]

[147] Ibid., p.235.
[148] Ibid., p.230.
[149] Ibid.

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney has suggested that a population's superfood is usually related to their deities.[150] Even though maize was introduced relatively recently to Enshi prefecture, it has been incorporated into folk stories involving folk deities and even ancestral origins. These stories demonstrate the importance of maize in Enshi's ecosystem transition and in the social life and identity expression of its people.

Local élites in Enshi have attempted to identity the ethnic affiliations of aspects of local food culture, including maize;[151] but in the end they have given up.[152] This study helps to demonstrate that maize, like other special local foods, reflects the unified nature of local regional identity, which cannot be simply classified into—or analysed in terms of—officially imposed ethnic categories.[153]

[150] Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.53.

[151] Enshizhou minwei, *Exi Tujiazu Miaozu Zizhizhou Gaikuang* [Basic Facts of Exi Tujia Miao Autonmous Prefecture] (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1990), p.25.

[152] Ibid., p.91.

[153] Xu Wu, "'Ethnic Foods' and Regional Identity."

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