

**“Humanity, Development and Cultural Diversity”
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Form 1: Application Form

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Type of session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Academic Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent Academic Session Under _____ Organizational Academic Session (Regional, National, or IUAES) <input type="checkbox"/> Roundtable Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Key Note Lecture Series		Language: English, Chinese, Italian, French, Spanish
Type of Panel Session <input type="checkbox"/> Annual session of IUAES commissions <input type="checkbox"/> Regional international anthropological and ethnological session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National international anthropological and ethnological session <input type="checkbox"/> Others		
Your Panel/ Session Theme: New Horizon for Naxi Studies Pictograph writing into Dongba manuscript tradition as Hypo-articulated communication system		
Summary (500 words) : Considering Dongba manuscript pictographic tradition as one of the historical stage of pictography in Lijiang region, thus manuscript production should be related just to Dongba priest hand for writing and eyes for reading, as a sectorial handmade tool destined to be used ad comprehended at all only by Dongbas. In such point of view, abbreviations, iati and mnemonic-key use of pictographs should be seen as a willful technique and meta-style of hypo-articulated written communication (inside manuscript production) able to grant total comprehension and usefulness of manuscripts only by Dongbas.		
Your Resume: Both audio-verbal and written communication occur by production and perception of blocks of significant that vary in nature, size and appearance. (Albano, Maturi, 1995:16) Such blocks are, taken as a whole, the real carriers of information.		

Studying these blocks signifies examining the vehicles of transmission and expression of information, a study consisting of the identification and description of

- their characteristics,
- internal structure,
- constitutive elements,
- the context which they appear within,
- modality of emission and transmission,
- reception of the meanings

In audio-verbal communication, such blocks of significant may be regarded as phonic blocks corresponding to


- phrases,
- groups of words,
- single words
- and single letters


the whole formed by a certain intonation, with variations in the rapidity of speech, presence and positioning of various accents, and sometimes marked by pauses.


Speakers like ourselves and many other communities employing an alphabetical, technology-based writing system, believe that the spoken and written coincide. They assume that the spoken and written represent similar values as they appear at the same time: a succession of different units of meaning - phones or letters - each with a distinct boundary like those of single letters or words in written form and having equivalent value.

Phonetic research, however, shows that each block of spoken communication is a continuum, a process in which it is at times not only extremely difficult to identify boundaries between single phones and single words but in which may be seen the variability of phones, their unpredictability, and their capacity to influence each other.

Such characteristics seem clearly visible in the composite and blended pictographs of the traditional Dongba manuscripts, whose writing technique consists in melding together two or more simple or complex graphic units by fusion or by extending their boundaries and contours to form a unique, complex and graphically significant unit in which the graphic limits and order of composition of the single pictograph are modified, partially omitted, or totally lost.

For example, in the case of the complex fusion pictograph [] ²lv ³sa ¹za -

[the] **suicide demon** ²lv **descending** consists of a central anthropomorphic graphic unit ³sa that represents a **shepherd** or a **young man**, the triple pictogram  ³lv **rock** above his head indicating the plural **rocks** (as in Egyptian hieroglyphs: Gardiner, 1969) used as a symbolic key and alluding to **ritual suicide committed by placing heavy rocks in the pockets of clothing and drowning oneself in water**, a particular context that modifies the meaning expressed, and therefore referring not to a human being but to the damned soul of a suicide transformed into a ²lv **demon**. (Zamblera 2008c)

Moreover, the particularity of the extended leg  ²khva - **foot**, represented as a macroscopic detail, usually a mute determinative of an act of movement (again as in Egyptian: Gardiner, 1969) but now instead pronounced ¹za **descending**, as alluded to by the oblique descending baseline path of the ²lv **demon**. (Zamblera, 2008c)

According to the Dongba religious tradition, ³lv **demons** were generated by the act of suicide: a violent death that occurred without performance of the rituals necessary for successful passage of the soul of the deceased to the beyond to rejoin those of his or her ancestors there.

It was believed that if the correct rituals were not performed the souls of those who died by violence or by suicide would be seized by the demons of the winds and condemned to wander eternally, propagating disease and causing calamity.

In the Dongba tradition, ²lv **demons** were considered to be among the main causes of illness and economic problems in the family, such troubles being seen as a manifestation of curses and maledictions uttered by demons originating from the non-propitiated souls of relatives who died by suicide.

This concept of natural phenomena being manifestations of the influence of demons and devils is an aspect of the traditional Naxi holistic view of the universe and natural world in which within every living being (and also within elements now regarded as inanimate that the Naxi tradition endows with life) lurked a spirit or demon. Such supernatural forces occurred in natural phenomena throughout the universe and interacted in perfect harmony.

Religious rituals specialist in such society had the difficult task of maintaining the equilibrium by identifying those demons that required either propitiation or banishment and performing the appropriate ceremonies in each case.

It is thus reasonable to assume that in Naxi society Dongba priests, sorcerers and experts in divination exerted considerable influence on everyday affairs, especially during the particular historical period when the suicide phenomenon was widespread and represented an ultimate attempt to escape burdensome Han and Confucian societal obligations, as recorded by Goullart and Rock.

Dongba pictographs, a hypo-articulated communication system

The sounds we produce in the act of speaking, as heard by the interlocutor, as signs recorded in the act of writing, and as perceived by readers, may be produced and received under conditions that vary enormously. (Albano, Maturi, 1995: 16).

In audio-verbal communication, a professional speaker (an actor or announcer), isolated in a sound-recording booth is recorded while articulating sounds, syllables, words and phrases, which he reads or that he is required to pronounce; an artificial condition involving the reproduction of the communicative act, an operation intended not for an interlocutor but rather for a professional phonetician, a modality of the act of speaking that may be termed hyper-articulated laboratory speech.

Conversely, an alternative to hyper-articulated speech is hypo-articulated spontaneous speech, as when an excited person turns to a friend and speaks rapidly, gabbling the words or barely alluding to them, the type of conversation that occurs in a natural setting and may be disrupted by other voices or noises, a situation common to the majority of communicative acts. (Albano, Maturi, 1995; 17)

The pronunciation, and the physical and perceptive qualities of the linguistic sounds produced, and therefore of the meanings transmitted, vary greatly according to the situation. Using hyper-articulated speech, the formal act of communication may be clearer and more accurate, while the hypo-articulated, informal act of communication appears to be careless and incomplete. The hyper-articulated act of communication requires various blocks of significants and considerable work, concentration, and control by the communicator (the speaker or writer) but is easily understood by the

addressee (the reader or listener), whereas communication consisting of hypo-articulated messages that apparently require a less complex and careful signal transmission from the originator (the speaker or writer) cause more problems for and require more interpretative efforts on the part of the receiver (the listener or reader). (Albano, Maturi, 1995; Zamblera S., 2009a)

One of the most interesting and engaging characteristics of the study of such communication mechanisms is that the speaker or writer chooses the level of message articulation more or less consciously and spontaneously, estimates the level most suited to the communicative situation, decides to extend or restrict the possibility of reception of the message to certain targets, and to permit or hinder the perception of the complete meaning of the message by a particular subset of listeners or readers.

In both cases the emitting subject consciously transmits blocks of significant, choosing different levels of articulation, facilitating and/or obstructing, allowing and/or restricting access to the true meanings carried by the message. If the source of the act of communication - the speaker and/or the writer - believes that those who are destined to receive the information - listeners or readers - have or need prior knowledge of what is to be communicated, he would then choose a naturally hypo-articulated form of communication, basing the efficacy of the communicative act on the fact that the "correct" addressee could even successfully interpret a message with poor linguistic symbols by relying on his knowledge and the context, it being thereby possible to restore the omitted parts of the speech or writing and decode the communicated message, correctly interpreting and understanding it.

Conversely, if the transmitter/subject prefers not to rely on such skills in the receiver or wishes the communicated message to be understood even by those not possessing a specialized prior knowledge facilitating reception and interpretation of the significant transmitted, he will then attempt to favor the reception and understanding of the act of communication by producing a message richer in information and significant.

The context of the Dongba pictographic manuscript tradition, within which the act of communication occurs is a sector-based and niche context (Mathieu, 2003) restricted to a narrow community of priests specializing in the performance of complex religious ceremonies necessary for the maintenance and restoration of equilibrium in the everyday life of local communities. (McKhann, 1992; 2003; Zamblera, 2009)

The Dongba priests in the local social-religious context therefore constitute an elite class that retains the religious leadership of the community (Rock, 1952; Mathieu, 2003). They maintain and emphasize their primacy among the other religious figures specializing in oracular and divination activities and shamanic practices (McKhann, 1992; Mathieu, 2003), by denying them and the common people knowledge and thereby precluding the possibility of their performing rituals themselves. The

ceremonial corpus is recorded in and handed down through a voluminous series of manuscripts realized on local papyrus and written using Dongba pictographs and the Geba syllabic writing system, both detained exclusively by Dongba priests.

An important phenomenon in the history of manuscripts in the pictographic tradition that may be directly linked to the hypo-articulated style in writing, is the well-known practice of an author, a Dongba priest, reproducing by hand numerous copies of the same manuscript. Such texts were destined not for ceremonies but to be sold to people as amulets or magic charms, a custom also common to the Tibetan tradition.

In this context it may be hypothesized that a Dongba priest, frequently both the author of the manuscript and its intended recipient, chose a hypo-articulated style of writing to preclude non-Dongba readers from understanding it. Should this be so, one could consider the paucity of significant in the traditional Dongba manuscript to be due to a wilful act of hypo-articulated communication.

Examining the ²lv ²bar ²lv ¹za ³sa ³ma ³čung manuscript, whose translation could be “**the second or the final volume (³ma ³čung) [of the ceremony for] inviting (³sa) the spirits of the souls of suicides (²lv ²bar) to descend (²lv ¹za)**” (Rock, 1932; Zamblera, 2008) belonging to the major ceremony ²har ²la ¹lun ³kho - “**perform [the ceremony for] the wind wandering**” (books corpus, the 1st pictograph).



Folio II recto of ²lv ²bar ²lv ¹za ³sa ³ma ³čung - Naxi Manuscripts corpus, Library of Congress.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.asian/asnaxi.nza079> → 10/10/2008



¹la [la] – **tiger**, is a simple or elementary pictograph, polysemantic

(Zamblera, 2008) with the following main meanings: (FANG Guoyu et HE Zhiwu,

1995; HE Pinzheng 和品正, XUAN Qin 宣勤, 2004; Rock, 1963, 1972)

- **tiger**
- **launch an attack, to attack**
- **execute and oracle, to predict, to give a prophecy**
- **seniority, old aged**
- **invertebrate**
- **to be a goner, terminal**

In the manuscript this pictograph is used as a key or abbreviation for the formula: ¹*a* ¹*la* ²*mua* ³*šar* ²*be* ²*thu* ¹*dzhi* translating as “**at the beginning of time**” a Dongba religious and traditional formulaic expression used incipiently in many manuscripts, intended to indicate a very ancient time, before the separation of the sky from the earth, symbolizing distinct and opposite yet complementary principles that according to Dongba tradition corresponded to the creation of the universe. (Rock, 1932; Zamblera, 2008)



¹*la*, assuming the possible meaning **old-aged, seniority**, is not just to be

considered as an abbreviation or phonetic key to the whole formulaic expression, but also a semantic key permitting the Dongba priest's comprehension and reconstruction and recitation of the complete message correctly, although written in hypo-articulated form.

This example is a tangible instance of Dongba pictographic writing as a hypo-articulated communication system whose communicative capacity is based on the reader's knowledge, and in which the act of reading cannot be reduced simply to the perusing of a succession of significant. (Rock, 1940; Mathieu, 2003; Zamblera, 2008)

Please draft the List of participants in your panel if possible (Including Name, Gender, Nationality, Institution, Title/Position, Presentation topic, etc.) :

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