

# Dali

A History of 4000 Years

Translated by **Bu Shaoxian**

Yunnan University Press

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# Dali A history of 4000 Years

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# 前 言

大理闻名遐迩，得益于它秀丽的风光和悠久的历史文化。著名民族学家马曜教授在《大理丛书序》中指出：“以洱海为中心的大理地区是云南古代文明的发祥地。剑川海门口青铜文化向东发展，形成以石寨山为代表的光辉灿烂的滇文化；中原文化向西传播，形成以大小爨碑为标志的西爨文化。西来的土著文化与东来的中原文化相互撞击的结果，产生了大放异彩的南诏大理国文化。以上各种文化之间不仅有纵向传承与横向传承的关系，而且始终构成云南三千年文化的主流。”考古发现证明，早在四千年前，大理地区就有人类生活。汉代曾在此设置郡县。从唐代开始至南宋末年，云南曾存在过南诏和大理国两个共历经五百多年的地方政权。新中国成立后，大理是国务院首批公布的历史文化名城之一。电影《五朵金花》的播映，又使大理进一步名扬世界。大理风光和大理文化也成为人们耳熟能详的词语，不断吸引着海内外游客慕名而来。

人们到了大理，看到的山水风光依然美丽动人，而历史文化，有的由于岁月的沧桑演变而难觅真迹，有的属于非物质形态不能具体展示。何为大理文化？它有哪些内涵？其意义和价值为何？它的渊源和发展脉络怎样？有不少专家学者对此进行了不断的探索和研究，取得了很多重要的成果。但还没有从古到今全景式描述和展示大理历史文化的作品。



《大理上下四千年》由大理学院民族文化研究所有关研究人员共同撰写，是一部从古到今全景式描述和展示大理历史文化的作品。该书以史牵事，以人系事，集锦串珠，接力递进，知古鉴今，面向未来；努力追求历史的沧桑感、文化的厚重感、见解的新颖感和诗意的优美感。叙述方式上，以历史人物小传的方式纵向贯通史迹，以专题串讲的方式横向充实内涵，形成了二十章的构架。此书集历史性、文学性与通俗性于一体，图文并茂，雅俗共赏。通过阅读，可以总览大理历史文化的精神，了解风花雪月背后的生动故事，探知山水风光所蕴涵的文化底蕴。

此书侧重于对历史文化的客观展示，而不作更多的主观解读。大音希声，大象无形，历史会给我们更多无言的启示，广大读者还可以从中读出更多的东西。这正是大理文化的丰富多彩和无穷魅力所在。

## Foreword

Dali is world famous, thanks to its beautiful landscape and long history and culture. Professor Ma Yao, a noted ethnologist, observes in *Preface to Dali Series*: “The region of Dali, with the Erhai Lake as the centre, is the cradle of Yunnan’s ancient civilization. The Haimenkou bronze culture of Jianchuan moved eastwards and resulted in the gorgeous Dian culture typified by that of Shizhai Mountain. The culture of the Central Plain transmitted westwards and ushered in the Western Cuan culture exemplified by the small and big Cuan Steles. The indigenous culture from the west encountered the culture of the Central Plain from the east and culminated in the radiant cultures of

Nanzhao and Dali Kingdom. Not only were these cultures interrelated vertically and horizontally in their evolutions, they also constituted the mainstream cultures of Yunnan in a span of 3,000 years." Archaeological findings have shown that as early as 4,000 years ago there were already human activities in what is now the region of Dali, where, later in the Han Dynasty, the royal court installed shires or counties. Beginning from the Tang Dynasty to the end of the Southern Song Dynasty, two local regimes, Nanzhao and Dali Kingdom, existed one after another in Yunnan for over 500 years. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Dali has been rated one of the historically and culturally famous cities on the first listing promulgated by the State Council, and the movie *Five Golden Flowers* has earned Dali still wider fame. Today, "Dali landscape" and "Dali culture" have become popular terms, attracting tremendous numbers of visitors from home and abroad.

In visitors' eyes, the mountains and rivers or the landscapes are as beautiful and engaging, but of the history and culture, some have sunk into oblivion in rolling tides of times and some, being in immaterial form, are impossible to reveal in a concrete fashion. What is Dali culture? What does it contain? In what way is it significant and valuable? And what is its origin and course of evolution? Quite a few experts and scholars have made incessant explorations with significant achievements. However, from ancient times up to now, there



has been no effort to present a panoramic description and display of Dali's history and culture.

*Dali--A History of 4000 Years*, written by researchers of the Institute of Minority-Ethnic Culture of Dali College, is just such an effort in this perspective. It sketches out the history by unveiling events and persons of thematic importance in a chronological order and, on the other hand, seeks to represent the bleak vista of vicissitudes, evoke a sense of cultural profundity and offer brand new insights in a lyrical vein. While taking on an approach of mini biographies of the historical figures that run vertically throughout history, the narrative moves from one special topic to another in a space of twenty chapters. The book is a trinity of history, literature and popularity, illustrated with nice pictures and suitable for both refined and popular tastes. Thumbing through the book, readers will grasp the spirit underlying Dali's history and culture, apprehend the vivid stories behind *the wind*, *the flowers*, *the snow* and *the Moon*, and perceive the cultural implications imbued in the scenery and landscape.

The book is more of an objective presentation than a subjective interpretation of history and culture. The loudest being the silent and the biggest the formless, history would give us more wordless revelations and readers would also learn more from reading the history. This is what the richness and charm of Dali culture really lie in.

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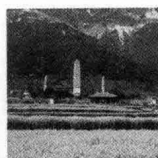
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# Chapter One

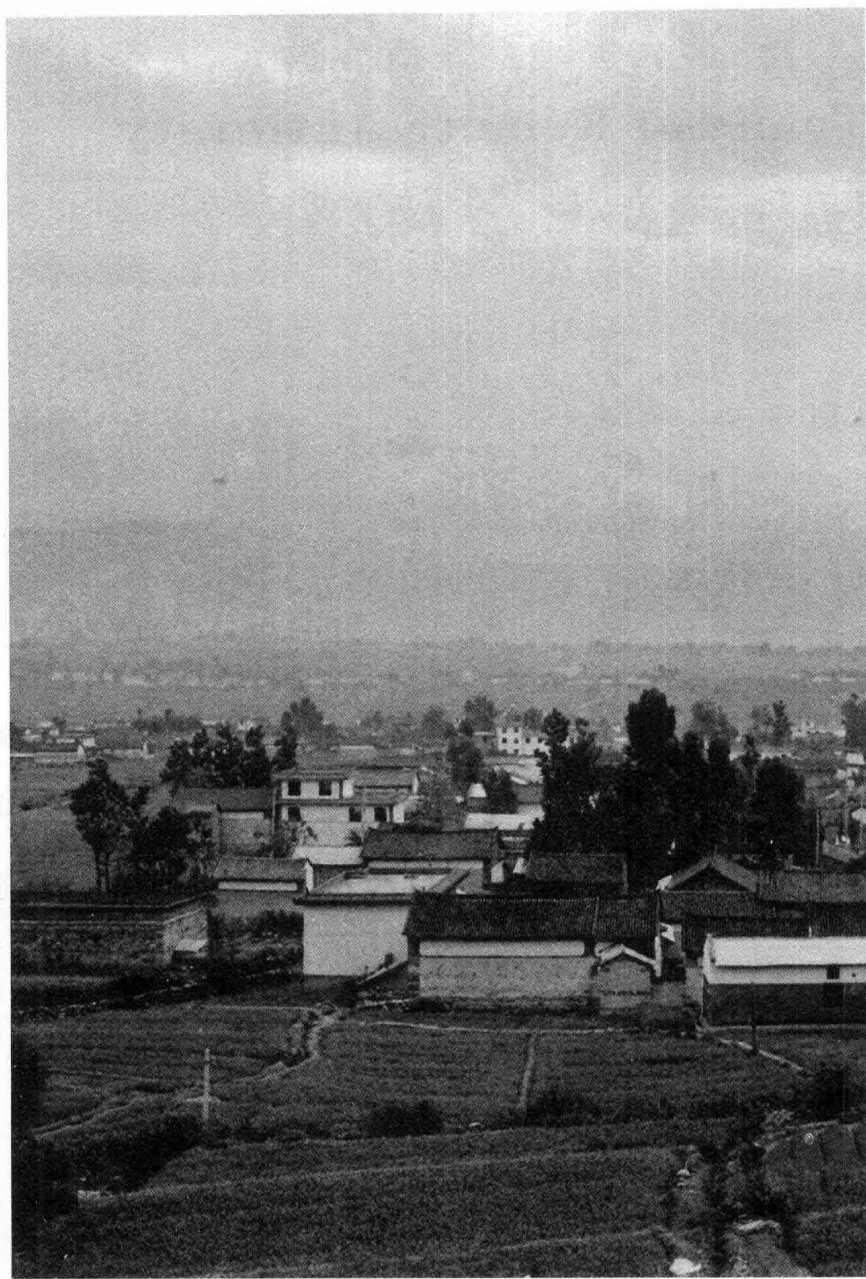
## Trails of Remote Antiquity

This is a picturesque place, as enticing as Switzerland, as Mr. Lao She said.

This is a land of purity and simplicity. A movie called *Five Golden Flowers* has fascinated so many people.

What's more, it is a mystic region of multi-cultural interfusion. Countless ancient and present-day celebrities have been here lingering and wandering about, enjoying themselves.

It's nowhere but Dali, a modern Arcadian land. At the sight of its seductive landscape of *A glittering lake expands a sky mirror vast / A screen of mountains encircles in jade green cast*, the Ming scholar Wang Shixing couldn't help but chant: "Either a merry land to nestle in, or nice hills and waters to stroll around, is nowhere to be found, but Dali that has come with both around" — It's indeed an emotional sigh from the depths of a heart, a sigh that has epitomized the praises chanted of Dali by the noted figures of all dynasties in history.



The Basin of Dali

The ancient people regarded Dali as a most liveable nest and a most visit-worthy haunt, where “Weather stays as if in May / Sweet flowers scent all-year spring” — That’s a sure verdict and admiration of Dali’s ideal living environment. However, what we are wondering about is: who on earth first discovered this unique land and when did they begin to settle down here?

Dali, as a story goes, used to be an enormous expanse of waters in ancient times when all of the folks lived in mountains. Many years later, the waters ebbed away and there gradually emerged what has been the basin of Dali today. Yet forests had sprawled so wide and dense in the way that the folks could hardly edge their way to the basin to settle down. Before long, they saw two red-crowned cranes in the distance that flew back and forth every day across the river bank area. Following the direction of the flying birds, they blazed a trail through the brambles and finally arrived at the beautiful and richly endowed basin of Dali.

So cute and fantastic is this legendary story, but it’s a story after all. Then what on earth is the true story in history? For this, we’ll have to trace back to the end of 1930s.

In the winter of 1938, the elderly Bai villagers, who had long been in the habit of enjoying a leisurely daily walk outdoors and basking in the sunshine either at the village entrance or at the end of a lane, would see from time to time a young man walking over here inquiring about Dali’s historic



A Fishing Village on the Erhai Lake

sites with a strong Shandong accent. The young man, once assured of certain information he needed, would pick up his shovel and tramp away out of sight all alone, either down a brook or in deep woods. By and by, curiosity about this strange young man arose in these old folks, who had seen much of the world, though.

Not until the beginning of the next year when the young man, accompanied by two ladies (newcomers), was recruiting village hands for clearing up a relic site did the young man's identity and intention begin to dawn on them. As it was, he was called Wu Jinding, an archaeological expert from the former Central Academy of China, who had not only participated in

Yinxu excavation of Anyang, but also had been the discoverer of the Longshan black-pottery culture in Shandong. This time, he came to Dali together with two ladies, Zeng Zhaoyu and Wang Jiechen; they were the "Investigation Team of Cang'er Relics" on a mission to make a scientific survey and excavation of Dali's existing historic sites and ruins.

From November 1938 to June 1940, the "Investigation Team of Cang'er Relics" worked in Dali for one year and eight months, surveying and discovering a total of 38 relic sites, nine of which were excavated, with the Malong Site as the largest in size.

Malong Site is located at the foot of Malong Peak of Cangshan Mountains. It is 200 m. long and 100 m. wide, with about 1200 m<sup>2</sup>. formally excavated. There is half a toft unveiled, together with a cooking range, a cellar, and an ashpit; a great deal of stoneware and crockery are also unearthed. The stoneware is mainly of abraded type, including axes, falchion, spade, chisel, grinding stone, and slub, while the crockery appears more of sandy and orange-coloured kind, produced by winding sticks of clay, such as the earlier-stage objects. Later-stage objects are made by using wheels, such as jars, flasks, bowls, plates, and also spin wheels and net weights.

As archaeological excavations at that time were proceeding so overwhelmingly in North China rather than in South China, the team hardly had any access, in Yunnan or nearby regions, to some materials and data that could be used



for a comparative or contrastive analysis. Therefore, Wu Jinding and his associates discreetly believed that the earlier stage of the Malong Site was "still in or not far from the Stone Age", without defining a definite span of time.

This notwithstanding, their conclusion might well prove the presence of human's activities in Neolithic Dali and therefore is of vital significance in understanding the prehistoric civilization of the Erhai region. Then, does this conclusion made more than 60 years ago stand really convincing?

In order to get more evidence, archaeologists have made much rewarding effort since the founding of the People's Republic of China. So far, as many as 100 Neolithic relic sites have been discovered, of which Baiyang Village site in Binchuan and Xinguang site in Yongping are the most typical.

Judging from unearthed utensils and their types, the two sites share cultural homogeneity with the Malong Site, corroborating, one another, the Neolithic culture of the Erhai region. More importantly, the two sites, by  $C_{14}$  dating, are far off from today by 4,000 years. This finding provides objective evidence for defining the upper time limit of Dali's Neolithic culture.

An analysis of these sites and thousands of unearthed utensils has given us a rough picture of the prehistoric human life: They planted rice, raised livestock, spun and wove, went in for fishing and hunting, and inhabited semi-cave or fence-like shelters; and lived a relatively settled life. What

deserves a special remark is, Dali remains one of the earliest regions of Yunnan that initiated rice planting, which, as a technique mastered 4,000 years ago, is no doubt a phenomenal achievement.

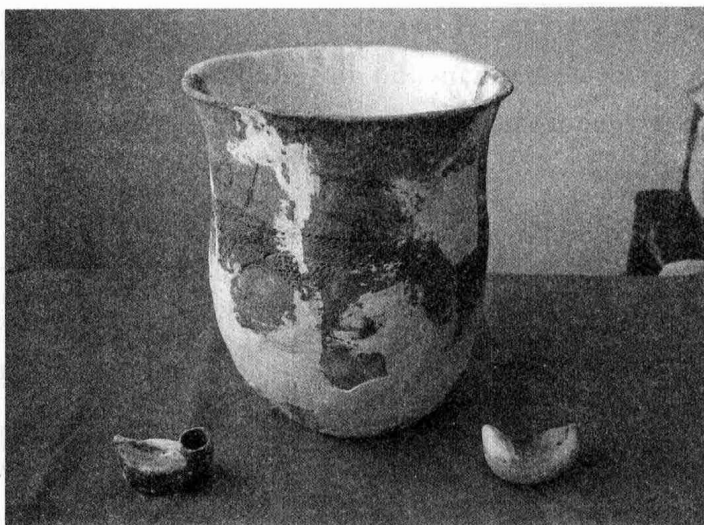
Approximately 3,000 years ago, Dali entered the Bronze Age after the long years of the Neolithic Age. Bronze is the symbol of Chinese civilization, but for most people today, the Bronze Age is extremely distant and remote. Interestingly enough, the true face of Dali in the Bronze Age, like many other significant discoveries in archaeology, came to light in quite a fortuitous fashion.

In mountain-interlaced Jianchuan, which is the hometown of Apeng, hero of the movie *Five Golden Flowers*, there is a fresh-water lake called Jianhu. Early in 1957, some local



Wu Jinding





Potteries Unearthed from Xinguang Relic Site



New Lithic Tools