



Cultural Preservation in Dimen, China



Dimen

- Dong minority
- Location: Liping county, Guizhou province, China
- Unesco designated the Dong Grand song as an intangible cultural heritage in 2009.





- "living fossils of Chinese civilization,"
- oblivious to modernization.



- The old generation lives much like their ancestors



- Progress, globalization and tourism threaten this seclusion
 - obliteration of their indigenous cultural heritage
- many villagers leave their homeland to work in faraway factories
- Due to the depletion of the population and lack of interest, the elderly masters who carry much of the knowledge and history of the people have not passed their skills down to subsequent generations.







Problems Dimen faces

- People cannot sustain themselves and leave the village for cities
- Harsh living conditions
- Oral tradition
- Age of elders who know the traditions
- Loss of interest in own heritage
- Overzealous modernization
- Pollution





Dimen Dong Eco-Museum

- This is a live museum which comprises an area of 15 Dong villages.
- The main asset of the museum is not artifacts but the people living in their traditional style.
- The museum works with the people to preserve their heritage.
- Western-style facilities
- All permits, safe food/water



My work in Dimen

- two-year documentary project I coordinated at the City University of Hong Kong.
- Sent nine different groups of students and teaching staff to document the cultural heritage of the Dong.
- I personally accompanied three of these trips.
- The project resulted in several exhibitions in China and in Hong Kong and a multidimensional documentary archive, which included film, photographs and audio recordings.



Experiential learning

- Work/collaborate in groups
- Learn about documentary processes
- Practice people skills
- Experience a different culture



Reaching the Pacific community

- I spent four weeks last summer working with several Dimen elderly artisans on preservation of their unique knowledge.
- Accompanied by my colleague Jennifer Little and student Anastasya Uskova
- Writing a book “Dawn of Butterflies” about the last women artisans in Dimen





Opportunities

Cross-cultural collaboration

Sustainability

- Cultural Preservation
 - Documentary work: songs, folklore, crafts...
 - Boost Dong self-esteem
 - Improve living conditions in the village
 - Education
 - Ways to moderate tourism
- Environmental
 - Waste management
 - Raise awareness of harmful substances
 - Organic food x profit

