

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCURSIVE PRACTICES ON AGROFORESTRY CULTIVATION**

What is a tree? People based upon different social, political, and cultural context interpret tree from different ways and meanings. Some may interpret tree from the botanical characteristics of tree as very tall, and having large or small leaves. Others may define tree as timber, fruit, and firewood. There are various discursive practices about tree cultivation that are manipulated by individuals' interests and self-consciousness. Language often provides insight into ways of thinking and worldviews. The farmers' language of tree cultivation expresses his or her feelings and perceptions about the environment. This chapter examines the farmers' interpretations on agroforestry cultivation. The purpose is to understand farmers' perspectives of tree planting under the market economy, and to identify the meanings that farmers give to their actions of tree cultivation. Also, it identifies the different meanings of agroforestry cultivation, because this can explain why different groups have changed their actions and behaviors. In addition, this chapter discusses about Miao farmers' different attitudes, needs, and expectations towards agroforestry cultivation. The attitudes of the young generation are examined.

#### **5.1 Agroforestry Development Narrative Within the Miao Community**

##### **5.1.1 Official Discourse on Agroforestry Development**

Miao was a Han Chinese term used in earlier times to define people distance from Chinese culture. The Miao were those who practiced forestry, who settled in the remote mountains, and are not adhered to Confucian morality (Oakes,1997). Historically, Han and other ethnic groups viewed the Miao as an integral part of the forests—the former called the Miao 'the hill people', whereas the latter considered the Miao to be primitive people who made homes in their forest habitat. As for most traditionally rural dwellers, forest use and management have always been integral parts of Miao identity and way of daily life.

In practice, the official discourse has always interpreted Miao communities as underdeveloped as the Miao live in mountainous areas. They are considered to lie in "the heritage of the old society", and to possess "backward traditions, customs, and habits." Since the beginning of the 1980s, a rural reform policy has been initiated in China, Miao areas became a target of development. The village's cadres of Tageba presenting it as a Miao

community, never stopped telling the government authorities and outside visitors about their backwardness and difficulties, and never ceased asking for help. Consequently, an official 'help' and development discourse formulated in the local government has expanded economic development and poverty alleviation projects going into the Miao communities. In fact, in the commune period, the state agricultural policy was self-reliance, which means each community, produced food for self-reliance, and exchange of goods were restricted. At that time, Tageba community still maintained many traditional practices. But, after 1979, Tageba were became a major target of rural development in Taijiang. Miao farmers in this community have been ushered to adapt modern or industrial agricultural lifestyles. For instance, in Taijiang County, development was interpreted as the following.

Taijiang is a center of the Miao people residing in Guizhou. We still have 40 thousand of Miao people living in uncomfortable conditions, and they do not have enough food for eat or money to spend. We should 'help them get rich quickly'. To develop ethnic minority areas, the main issue is economic development. Economic development depends on technology. So we should reform their uncultured cultivation and improve their technique (Governmental Report of Taijiang County, 1991).

The economic structure of Taijiang is extremely simple. Through it's long history we just been based upon timber products to earn income. Forest management in rural areas still employs a timber-based system. The products that farmers are able to gain from their efforts are only enough to fulfill their own needs. It is still far from the reach to getting their rich. So the government's responsibility is to help farmers to improve their structure of forest production, by helping them establish some new ways to make money (Governmental Report of Taijiang County, 1999).

Under this official development discourse, the County government has perceived the Miao region's development as an issue of poverty alleviation. They considered the Miao as having a low standard of living, a lack of education, poor health and a lack of civilization, due to the remoteness of their homes from the central government. In practice, since 1985, the county government has adjusted forest policies in order to promote rural economic growth. The economists in Taijiang have argued for a new policy encouraging regional specialization of forest industry. The main purpose is to adjust the structure of forest management through the addition of other cash crops, such as chestnuts, pears, peaches and oranges. To implement this policy, officers, agronomists, and planners have proposed fruit tree industrial projects to the local areas. The fruit tree industry has been strongly encouraged during the 1980s. Many individual and community fruit farms have been established.

The market economy is a new institution and agency, but it has created new chances for economic development. We should catch up this chance and try to find

some effective ways to improve people's incomes as well as their life standards in Taijiang County. Development is an unalterable reality (*fazhan caisiying daoli*). All governmental agencies or officers need to optimally adapt market mechanisms in order to carry out the policy of rural development more effectively. The government has encouraged communities to adopt different forms and activities to develop their economy. The purpose of this policy is to accelerate economic development, for example, through planting pears, growing tea, raise cattle, allow someone gets rich quickly (Governmental Report of Taijiang County, 1995).

The Five-Year Plan (1990-1995) of Taijiang County government also added to the interpretation of development: "Pure economic aid should be limited to helping development in poor areas. Capability in self-development is more important. Thus, the commodity economy and market need to develop soon." In practice, the County government established some state enterprises and local markets were established.

Within an open market, economic development in Taijiang must look for ways to improve productivity and competitiveness. Information and technology is an essential competitive factor in economic development. With developing market economy as a basis, this will provide a real opportunity for Taijiang. It will also cause some social problems (Governmental Report in Taijiang County, 1994).

Since 1990, the County government has performed well its task of identifying "the main problems connected with the fruit tree industry" and recommended "ways to improve the economic conditions of the local population". The professed aim of the county's development plans is to improve the livelihood of peasants by raising output and diversifying and intensifying production. So government has adopted the fruit tree industry since the 1980s.

The agroforestry development project has not only greened the landscape, but also increased farmers' incomes. It has reduced poverty and decreased farmers' deforestation. The government encouraged the local people to plant trees on their own farms. It was hoped that the Taijiang's economy would be developed and forests would be better restored and conserved (a government worker in Taijiang County, 2002).

From the Township government's point of view, the concept of agroforestry is the advantage 'thing' that increase forest productivity and improve farmers' incomes. They thought the agroforestry development was "an important strategy that increased farmers' income, adjusted rural production structures, and developed the rural economy. Developing agroforestry was a significant measure that made farmers 'get rich quickly' and increased tax revenues. It was not only necessary for the industrial development of mountain regions, but was also needed for social development. Agroforestry development has also been regarded as an employment creator for local people.

Agroforestry provides jobs for women and the young, who, in peripheral regions, tend to be in the worst position in the local labor market. However, agroforestry has a drawback—it tends to keep the level of local skills at a lower order. This is not to say that planting trees, as a source of livelihood, is less important point than the currently popular ‘high technology.’ The important point is that regional development policies should at least also try to enhance the abilities of local people. Growing fruit trees increases local incomes and seasonal employment. As a spatially extensive form of development, agroforestry inevitably increases the utilization of local natural resources (from the Report of the Taijiang Frest Bureau, 1998).

Under the development narrative promoting the agroforestry industry as well as getting rich quickly, many cash crops have been introduced widely in local communities. Tageba has been involved in this campaign of tree cultivation since 1984, because according to the government’s concepts, Tageba was a poor community.

### **5.1.2 Local Discourse on Agroforestry Development**

Farmers growing trees also have their own needs and expectations. While we were reviewing villagers in Tageba, more than 90 per cent of the farmers told us that their purposes in growing trees was to earn money. But under careful investigation, it became obvious that old men, the younger generation, and women have different interpretations regarding fruit tree cultivation. The younger generations mostly think that growing trees is for the purpose of making money immediately. As a young farmer in Shangten village described: “I do not know many growing techniques or much market information about pear cultivation, but I have 2 mu of pear trees because growing them can earn much more money than growing rice, vegetable, or firs. My friends got rich faster because he planted fruit trees ten years ago, so I just followed him.” Yet, when we asked, “did you know the price of fruit? If someday pears could not be sold out or could only be sold at a very low price, what would you do?” He said, “I don’t know. Maybe it’s impossible for pears to not be sold out, because people need it [to eat pears everyday]. If pears really cannot be sold out, I can change to other trees. For me, the main problem is lack of finance and land.”

However, the older generations have interpreted fruit tree growing in another way. As an old man in Dade village explained: “Fruit tree development contributed many opportunities and made more money for us. I work on the farm everyday. I have fruits for eating. Also I use fruits for my grandson to play with while he cries. But growing fruit trees has also destroyed many things. For example, now when you go to the mountains to find traditional herbal medicine, it is very difficult to find. Fruit trees plantation has cleared many species of herb

away. Ten years ago around our village, there were many special varieties of waxberries [sweet and red], but now they can only be found on remote mountains, because everywhere else is fruit trees." Women also regarded fruit tree cultivation differently. While some were similar to men in thinking about making a lot of money; some thought of it as "a waste of time and labor." Several women in Dade village thought "growing fruit trees actually cannot make money. Growing fruit trees needs massive inputs like more fertilizers and pesticides; we should work hard on the farm instead of growing fruit trees. In the harvesting season I sell fruits everyday. Managing the fruit trees and selling fruit waste my time. Growing vegetables or raising pigs can make more money than trees cultivation. Tree growing creates too much work for us." Consequently, farmers have abandoned their traditional fir cultivation, and diversified their crop selection. The Miao farmers now seem not very interested in fir cultivation. There are many drives and desires involved in tree cultivation.

Fifteen to twenty years ago, you would not see anybody who no one would harvest 50 kg of pears and oranges on their own. But now we produce these crops everywhere. You can see for yourself that the variety of crops and trees we grow in our gardens. They include fir, pine, pears, plums, chilies, cabbages and others. Fir we also grow, but no like before. We just grow a few firs on barren mountains. Now when building houses, [instead of using fir wood that we grow ourselves] we can use pine or other materials. And you can buy the pillars [for building houses, which are fir wood too] from other villages. The problem is that you must have enough money (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

If you ask me why we invest in fruit trees, well, it is not easy to give an answer... the one who wants to be successful must behave commercially. In former times we were satisfied when we had enough to eat. We were happy when life was stable and peaceful but today we need more. Now we know the necessity of developing economy. We know better what we really need and how we can get it but to reach it, so we are harder workings than before. The tree growing is just a way of make money (a farmer in Pingqiao village).

Farmers interpret fruit tree cultivation as meeting economic needs. The tree growing, for all practical purposes, has replaced households as the principal source of cash for subsistence and other forms of consumption. As a woman told us: "This [indicating her dress]; this [her shoes]; this [her earrings]; this [miming the food she put into her mouth]; and this [clutching her breast to indicate the food she fed her children]— all come from tree cultivation! That's why I work here everyday!" Indeed, villagers explained to us that when the production cost for rice per mu was about 80 yuan under the collective, now it had dropped to about 50 yuan, because every household tried to make input savings and required the maximal output. In addition, villagers also pointed out the reason why they changed from ground crop use to have

more interest in growing fruit-trees.

Growing pears has more benefits than firs. Even in this year when the price of pears has reduced to 3-5 yuan per kg, but it is still better than growing corn and other cash crops. Pears are easy sell to the drivers and businessmen around the No. 210 national highway. Yes, I know storing pears is not easy. I don't know the future of pear development. Maybe someday its price will become even cheaper, but now it makes so much money, and I like it (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

Growing pears cannot make much money, the weather's no good; you can't plant corn under the trees. Sometime after you've planted, the snow destroys the seedlings. Also, storing pears is not easy. You must sell them [not more than] one week after harvest. Also, to sell pears is difficult for me because there are no roads in our village. I'd more like to work wet rice fields and make enough to eat, or plant firs (a farmer in Shangten village, 2002).

For many years I trusted the government and worked to grow firs and chestnuts. I planted fir and chestnut in over 16 mu in which my wife planned to plant to chili and tobacco. That was five years ago, when the price of chestnut as 8 yuan per kg. I put in much labor to look after the trees. But after my trees were harvested, it was impossible to sell chestnuts. I took chestnuts to Taijiang and other villages, but nobody wants to buy them. Some middlemen buy, but at very low prices and also you have to wait a long time before they pay up, sometimes one year. Now I think it is better to grow pears, but my land is no good because it is full of chestnut trees. So I have to cut the chestnut trees in order to expand into pear farming (a farmer in Shipanqiao village, 2002).

Miao farmers have responded to development policies and market according to their own understandings and perceptions. Their main purpose in tree growing is to make money. They changed their practices when they feel that pear growing is much better for getting benefits than other trees. Unfortunately, agroforestry development in the Miao community has meant not only economic progress, but also the creation of new problems which have changed forest management.

## **5.2 Local Meanings of Subsistence and Market Economy**

The local meanings of a cultural form, or a cultural product, are like the consequences of social actions. Local meanings express and represent local thinking, perception, attitude and viewpoints about their actions. (Tapp, 2001). Local meanings may differ significantly from the views of 'experts'. Based on different political, economic, and cultural context, farmers have interpreted different meanings about market and subsistence. In the local context, local meanings are actually more important than outside meaning system (Fortmann, 1990).

As I described in Chapter IV, in Tageba community, farmers' subsistence system was based on rice, timber, and vegetable cultivation as well as animal raising. However, with the

introduction of market incentives, farmers in Tageba have moved away from thinking subsistence crops are the most important. This is a radical meaning change. Since 1985 the rural market has opened, and the state monopoly system has been canceled. Miao farmers in Tageba are now free to trade any surplus output as they wish. This policy has significantly stimulated Miao farmers in Tageba to increase rice production, especially in Dade village.

Before 1985, rice growing was one of the main activities of production, because filling your mouth (having enough food to eat) was more important than anything else. You should work hard on your paddy fields and produce rice for your family. At that time, even if you had money, you would have to consume your quota of government supplied rice before you could go and buy grain from the grain depot. Buying rice was very difficult and expensive. Buying rice in the market was impossible because rice trade was controlled by state. Borrowing rice from relatives was also difficult (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

However, when the rice market opened and rice was overproduced after 1985, the price of rice dropped from 1 yuan to 0.6 yuan per kg, the attitude of farmers toward rice production has changed.

In the past [before 1979], the everyday hard work on the fields seemed to be intensified, especially the shortage of rice for consumption. People were always worried about food security. If people did not have enough to eat they would borrow rice from their neighbors or relatives. Now I do not worry about rice. But I worry about whether I will have pork to eat every week, and whether I will have wine for drinking everyday (a farmer in Shibangqiao village, 2002).

Since the reforms of 1985 the rice market has become free. You can sell and buy rice everywhere. I was no longer worried about food security for my family. However, I worry about money, because I must pay a lot every month, such as, tuition for my son, new clothing, purchase 5 jins of pork at the each five-day market, 8 jins of rice liquors for myself, presents for relatives, also fertilizers, pesticides, plastic sheeting, and so on. Nowadays, you need to pay for many things not like in the commune period. In paddy field after finishing the compulsory quotas to state, we can grow anything on the fields depending on what species we think can earn more (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002).

Today, rice has remained the agricultural focal point, but not the main part of production. Some parts of rice fields have been changed to other uses, such as, growing vegetables, and seed plots. Farmers have changed land use depending on what they need and want. The timber, fruit, vegetable, and pig industries have now also become part of the village economy.

Ten years ago, I worked on the paddy fields everyday and make enough to eat. Today, I don't like to work wet-rice fields much because rice doesn't get good prices. I am interested in growing fir because there's nothing to do after planting. But, I couldn't take my timber to be sold because there isn't any road in my village. Recently, I have wanted to grow fruit trees because I have a large area of barren mountain. But I don't

how to do it. So the whole time I have had to continue to manage my fir forestry. (a farmer in Shangten village, 2002).

Timber is the main good used daily by farmers in Tageba. Traditionally, Miao farmers lived in post-pile houses. We used fir wood to build houses, make tools, cover houses, and construct animal sheds. If you have no fir, where will you live? Fir timber is better than that of other trees such as pine and maple. If you use pine to build houses, people will deride you. So I should grow and protect fir in my allocated mountains. I can use it in the future or for my son to build new house (a farmer in Shangten village, 2002).

Fir is useful. We use it everywhere, such as, building new houses, making furniture, repairing bridges, constructing temples, and making coffin. Also, after growing it for several years, we can sell it to state companies or businessmen. If my family is short money at some times, such as at a relatives marriage or children's studies, we can cut a few firs to make money (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002).

However, with the market intervention as well as social change, farmers' attitudes toward fir cultivation in Tageba have changed. From the farmer's perspective, the relative economic benefits of tree planting have shifted decisively in favor of orchard. As a leader in Xiaten village said, "Nowadays people are not much interested in fir planting. Growing fir is long-term. You must wait for 15 or 20 years before first returns. With the agroforestry development after 1984, young people in Tageba think of growing firs as a waste of time." As a young farmer in Dade village described: "I don't like to grow firs. This activity belongs to old people because they have time. For me, I just want make money quickly. Growing fir takes 18 years. I will be an old man by that time. Actually, now when building a house, you can use bricks or other materials. Brick houses are better than fir houses. They are cool and good for preventing fires." Yet, we asked him "if someday, fir could be sold at 500 yuan per cubic meter, would you grow fir?" He said, "Yes, if fir price high, I will grow it. But now the price is low." Miao farmers have changed their attitude to traditional fir forests management. Before, trees were seen for their utility value and for their status value. But now, the meanings of trees have become more economically based. Trees are now perceived almost entirely in terms of their role as an economic commodity. Household survey in Tageba shows most people's motivation in farming activities was to earn cash income. Farmers' values have become economically based decisions. Their rationale in tree cultivation is that "time is money, we need to work hard. Planting firs or pines is a waste of time and money. I should earn money quickly." Other farmers who had planted pears in Shangten village said "I think to grow fruit trees is much better than timber trees even if the fruit price very low." Consequently, Miao farmers gradually lost their interest in traditional fir cultivation and



began to adopt fruit tree planting. They started to see new opportunities for developing and fulfilling their subsistent needs immediately. In some cases farmers resisted timber tree planting on the farm, because it reduced their future land-use options.

Additionally, when the market mechanisms were established in the mid 1980s, farmers had different views about the market economy in Tageba. Some people could not adopt the market economy in the most optimal way because many less competitive economic activities have been inherited from the collective period. Others, based on their personal skills and social relationships became rich faster.

I don't know what the market economy is, but I do know that if you want have good living condition, you should find some ways to earn money. Actually, during these recent years I have been working hard to make money, but it is still not enough for my family, I don't know why. This is an era of 'spending money like water' (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002).

Today, the money has become a more important element in our life. Everyday markets open in different places. I think markets are good. You can go to the market to sell your products and buy your necessities. Now we take our fruits or surplus vegetables to market and with the cash obtained we buy such basic necessities as rice or salt. For rich people such food items as pork and beef previously eaten only at times of festival are now purchased in the market in small quantities at fairly regular intervals (a farmer in Pingqiao village, 2002).

Fifteen year ago, there were only four bicycles and ten sartorial [treadle sewing] machines in our village. The bicycle was a symbol of the rich. Now a few people use bicycles, and several households have tractors. The youth go to the market by bus. Today, local clothing styles are not popular anymore. So almost nobody uses sartorial machines to make clothing. We just buy clothes in market where there are many more choices and beautiful modern clothes. When we go to the market many things need to be paid for. Money can do anything (a farmer in Pingqiao village, 2002).

Before, we made few trips to market. We went to neighboring villages to exchange goods with relatives. Now, instead, we exchange everything in the market. Also, some businessmen have come to the village buy produces. The youth often go to the market where they can meet their friends and buying new clothing. They spend money even faster than their parents do (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002).

When farmers think about life at present, a common view is that "now you pay money everywhere, everyday you must spend money in everything. You should be self regulated." The market has forced farmers to reconsider their cash income options. There are several reasons for this: (1) higher school fees and higher health care expenditures than before (2) incentive effects which make people buy more consumer goods (for example sale prices on clothing, goods and furniture); (3) the legalization of many business enterprises whose

operation requires a regular infusion of cash; and (4) higher prices of agricultural inputs due to state reduction of agricultural subsidies. For all interviewees in Tageba there was a strong consensus that the market had led them to spend a lot of money and spend faster than before. Many farmers mentioned that they work harder than in the collective period. As one farmer in Shangten village described: "Well, nowadays I am working for myself, I know how hard I should work. When you see other people get rich, you ask yourself, 'Why can't I work harder?' You really feel motivated to work hard when you want to see the results [for yourself]." One farmer argued, "Under the market economy everything is self-regulated and self-managed." Other farmers gave examples of this:

Before [in the collective period] when I spread fertilizers in the fields, I didn't pay much attention to the instructions on the package. I just spread, as much fertilizers as I thought was right. I always thought I could get more fertilizers when it was used up. Since I have stopped using the collective's fertilizers on my own fields, I've noticed that whenever I use fertilizers or insecticides on my own land, I tried to save whatever I can. I always think that fertilizer is expensive and use it carefully (a farmer in Shibangqiao village, 2002).

When I asked a woman why she was selling pear in a market, she replied, "I am selling it for money." When asked why she wanted money, she pointed to the shops and replied that they were full of things she needed. The people did not resent the intrusion of imported goods into their lives. On the contrary, they resented only that they were not able to obtain a greater quantity and variety of these goods. Everyday wanted more money. Another farmer had a more negative viewpoint. He felt that this "self regulation" was more like "every man for himself."

It's not like before, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In the collective period, not much money passed through our hands. I just worked in the communal farm. Now, I manage the budget by myself. So I must know what I need buy and where I can make money (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

We can see that farmers believed that market reform has created social inequality in the community. Most of the old generation remembered the collective period. One old man described: "Under the collective system, even the poorest households were entitled to an equal allocation of rice. Now I am worried about food and anxious about money. If you have no money, nobody helps or commiserates with you, even your relatives or brother."

During the collective period all people were the same, so, you don't hear the words 'rich' or 'poor' much, but now you hear them everywhere, and it is especially the young generations that makes this comparison. Now, some households have lots of

money, and some may not have enough food to eat. Some maybe never eat even one kg of pork. The cause [for inequality] is that the rich man in general had acumen or had good techniques or social relations (a farmer in Shangten village, 2002).

Many farmers were confused why money was spent faster today and why despite their diligence there was still not enough money for expenditure. Some even said that previously self-confident, resolute, and energetic locals became restless, hesitant, and helpless peasants. Many people became embittered and apathetic. New rich-poor social classes were arising in Tageba, such as large landowners vs. small landowners, and large producers vs. small producers.

Now, society is very different from the collective era. You should manage your forest and budgets by yourself. You should make money for your families. The most important thing is that we have to learn good working skills and knowledge. This will increase the basic strength of the economy. This constant personal improvement has become our basic way of life because the actual society has changed fundamentally as economic matters become the center. There is no way for us [to continue in our previous path and survive]. This is the reason why we change tree cultivation: to make money faster than the thing that we normally do (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

One elder in Pingqiao village noted, "In the collective period, people shared products within the commune. So people were very united. You would not see people fight over land use and water distribution. But now many conflicts have happened in the village. Also, you could get free medicine from the collective when you were ill. People helped each other. Now, you must pay for everything. What is so good about the market reform? The richer are getting rich, while the poorer are left without being properly taken care of." He was like about 40 per cent of the villagers in Pingqiao village, who argued that the market reform was a process creating social inequality in their village.

I was allocated just one mu of paddy field from my mother's family. This limited land is supposed to be enough for my son, my wife, and me. Despite this I have endeavored to do cultivation; the grains produced was still not enough for the three of us. But in the other households one person has more than 4 mu of paddy fields while their daughters married or elders died. So, I have to become a builder and carpenter in Taijing. My wife doesn't have so much land to cultivate at home. But she has raised ten pigs and opened a small shop in the village (a farmer in Shibianqiao village, 2002).

I have been working so hard for my family that I have no time for drinking and gambling and no time to join the traditional Miao dragon performance. I cannot afford to do all those things as I did in the past. In fact, I cannot even understand why I used to behave as I did (a farmer in Xiaten Village, 2002).

Despite all this unrest, most villagers of Tageba did not reject the commercialization of

agriculture nor the industrialization of the forest. This is evident in their active participation in the expanding market economy. As a youth in Dade village said: "Without trees we cannot get money, without money we cannot get wives!" For instance, when asking about farmers' opinions regarding industrial and agricultural development, many informants contended that promoting the growth of the commercial and industrial sector was important. They have embraced the market economy, engaging in both on-farm and off-farm occupations. Since the late 1980s, most villagers of Tageba have actively engaged in cash crops production.

Many older villagers have reflected that social organization and relation is the area of life in Tageba showing the most crucial changes. In the past, village cooperation to guarantee survival was an essential component of life. Today, some villagers argued that the communal spirit of help decreased, because all people were busy earning money, and some of them have had to migrate to work outside their village. The commercialization of agriculture and the spirit of the market have undermined local community cooperation. For instance, the penetration of the market into rural society has replaced traditional labor exchange with wage labor employment and replaced the traditional flexible bartering system with the market economy. Money has become the most important means for exchange goods and products in Tageba. Most villagers had less time to engage in community work, as they were busy striving to earn cash income for their families and to pay off debts. There was a tension between development for public goods and individual interest. Talks with farmers supported these ideas as well.

People now are very busy to make money. Last year I built a new house. While constructed it, I spent more than two thousand yuan on hired labor because my relatives were very busy. Nowadays, the relations between people have changed. If you have no money to pay, nobody work for or help you. The customary forms of labor exchange and helping with relatives is giving way to hired labor (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

As we can see from all of these interpretations of the market in Tageba are very diverse. But some ideas are common to all the different interpretations made by the common people. They believe that a market economy is an economic system controlled, regulated, and directed by the market alone. They believe that under the market economy money becomes the most important means for exchange of goods and products in contemporary Miao society. From their point of view, production and distribution of goods is entrusted to this self-regulating mechanism.

### 5.3 Local Needs and Aspiration

The concept of needs is useful to the extent that it helps us explain variations in human activities and outcomes. As already reviewed in Chapter II, 'needs' is a hypothetical process. Most trees are included in the farming system based on the assumption that they will create benefits or fulfill needs. Household and private companies that invest in fruit cultivation have their own needs and interests. In theory, produces grown within the garden have served a dual purpose of meeting daily needs and creating cash income. Hence, in certain circumstances, tree growing can be particularly important in income generation which is the primary production objective for farmers.

In Tageba, the market has created motivation and requirements for farmers. They are encouraged to expect more from life, such as, a nice fir house, more lavish marriage practices, as well as aspire to modern clothing, big televisions, mobile telephones, and trucks. In my interviews with farmers, they often stressed that newly created needs had increased pressure on family finance and driven individual household members, particularly the young generation, to intensify income-generation activity in order to satisfy personal requirements. Indeed, the "get rich quickly" policy has gradually increased farmers' expectations that these needs can be managed and met through careful and diligent economic planning. Under market intervention, farmers have redefined their needs: they described them using nouns which establish a fundamental dependence on the market. The needs that they see can be summarized as education, skills, and resources. On the practical, level this includes common ideas that control real actions taken by farmers in the creation of their own lives: secure land use rights, education, social relation, and the government service.

#### 5.3.1 Property Right Security

The property rights involved in agroforestry are often more complex than those in annual crop agriculture. One can have secure land tenure without secure tree tenure and, in some situations, secure tree tenure without secure land tenure. It is therefore necessary to determine exactly who holds what property rights over trees and land. The main issue is property right insecurity in Tageba. More than 40 percent of the households said that:

We must clarify both of land and trees rights in agroforestry cultivation. State forest law is very unclear; it stipulates that trees must follow the land, whoever owns the land owns the trees growing on it. We think this is not enough for agroforestry cultivation. We also need clarification on various rights in fruit tree cultivation, such as,

the right to plant trees, the right to use trees and tree products, and the right to dispose of trees, such as, lending, mortgaging, and selling (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002)

In practice, in agroforestry in Tageba land and tree use rights were not clear. Different people might hold different rights to land and trees at different times. In some cases, many households might co-own a single tree. In fact, the conflict has occurred on fruit tree renting farms as well.

I don't know how to solve this conflict. Five years ago I rented 10 mu of land to Mr Zhang's company to grow fruit trees. Every year he shared 30 per cent of the harvests of fruit with me. This has been good for me. But, our conflict occurred during the recent years. Regenerative Chinese firs started to grow on the farm. Zhang thought these firs belonged to his company; as he has been renting and managing my land for 30 years. I think the fir belongs to me, because according to state forest laws, "whoever owns the land owns the trees growing on it." Even if I rented the land to him, he did not plant these trees. According to state documents, the trees belong to the land. So the new forest must belong to me (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002).

A farmer's willingness to interplant or preserve trees within their fields depended on the security or insecurity of land and tree rights that he/she faced. People plant trees only when they had secure land tenure. The point is valid in some situations, but it can mislead in others because it overlooks the relationship between trees and land. Not only does secure land tenure lead to trees being planted, but trees being planted can lead to secure land tenure. For example, in some places the person who planted the trees secured *de facto* rights to the land on which they were planted. Secure tenure to trees does not necessarily require secure tenure to land. In many cases, a tree planter owned the trees even if he/she planted them on someone else's land. If tree owners experienced loss of trees or their produce due to disputes or negligent practices by landowners, they were eligible for compensation from the landowners.

### 5.3.2 Land Redistribution

One of the major aspirations of farmers is land redistribution. While we surveyed the five villages of Tageba, more than half of interviewers had indicated the issue of unequal land distribution.

In the collective period, everyone ate from the same plot, farmers were just laborers. But, after rural reform, farmland was been evenly distributed to households, and forestlands were distributed in 1984. Now, twenty years have past since land distribution, and land occupation differs for each household. In some households, two persons occupy four or five people's land; in other households three people are only allocated one person's land. Depending upon different access to land, some

households have become rich first while other households have become poorer. All of this is an outcome from unfair land allocation (an elder in Shangeten village, 2002).

The state had a policy that depending on the farmers' needs, the village committee or local government could readjust land holding within the village. Generally the period between adjustments is ten years. But in Tageba, this policy has not been adopted. After land distribution in the 1980s, the local leaders have never adjusted land distribution. The cause is that "most of the leaders didn't want to organize this complicated matter, and some of them also have given large land holdings for their clan families."

We consulted the leader of community many times, but there was no response. Some of them said 'this is a difficult job. Some require readjustment, and others require maintenance. If I carried out land adjustment, even though it may disadvantage those who are calling for adjustment, I would have to follow the advice of the majority in my readjustment of land holdings. Actually I need to earn money for my family. If I organized this, who will pay money to my family?' (a farmer in Dade village, 2002).

In practice, land is the main resource of farmers. It has a directly impact on agricultural production and lifestyle. With population change and expansion of conflicts, land reallocation has become a vital expectation for farmers, especially those of the younger generation.

Farmers' roots are in the land [allocated to each household in 1983]...nowadays, things have become more uneven. Someone gets large lands; someone receive lesser lands. It is as if... [we have] gone back to the 'old society,' in fact, the 'landowners' have come back again. ...even though we have consulted many times with leaders [on redistribution or re-adjustment of land], there has been no response. We hope that someday the government can solve this issue (a farmer in Shibanjiao village, 2002).

Clearly, agroforestry practice relates closely to land. When farmers were asked why they have changed their natural forestland to fruit farms. Most of them gave the same answer: land limitation. Small land holding households were turning to off-farm activities. A land small farmer in Dade village described: "I wish to maintain and develop both agricultural and off-farm activities: giving up agriculture altogether is often perceived to be a risky strategy, and has to be avoided wherever, and whenever possible. However, under economic structural transformation, land was allocated unfairly. I received too little. Some of us [small land owners] have been forced to give up agriculture altogether and seek other earning opportunities." The earning limitations caused by the increasing unevenness of land distribution after 1984, especially reduction of the land holdings of some people has caused an increase in off-farm activities. Put it another way, adoption of the new productive environment has been caused by distribution of property rights. This is true of both traditional

land tenure and tree tenure. Farmers' views of and abilities to adopt agroforestry have been affected by the present land and tree distribution situation. Unequal access to land has also led farmers to more rationalized decision-making. The combination of rationalized decision making and the opening up of a new productive environment to farmers has made production more dynamic. But re-distributions of land and the bestowal of distinct tenures to trees are still vital desires for farmers.

### 5.3.3 Education and Social Capital Support

One of the aspects of market reforms that have favored the process of rural commercialization was households' increasing need for larger amounts and more regular supplies of cash. Indeed, this process led to farming households restructuring their capital. This includes rebuilding social relationships, getting advanced education, learning technology about planting trees, and so on. Education has become a practical necessity and, as a result, supporting children to study has become a popular activity in Tageba recently.

I was born in the difficult era [1958-1962], so I only studied in primary school for two years, because I am the eldest in my family... [his four younger brothers could study]... depending on this situation [limited education]... everything was difficult for me, like when selling myself as a laborer in Guangdong, nobody wanted to hire me.... I should support my son to study in university. Even now things are difficult, I try my best to earn money to support his study (a women in Pingqiao village, 2002).

The market economy has led farmers to agree that education was useful for income generation. Or, Farmers agreed that in the market economy education was useful for income generation. As a farmer said: "today you depend on your skills for survival. It isn't like the collective period when everyone ate from the same pot." I interviewed several people from all the five villages of Tageba about the issue of education. A third hoped their children would receive secondary school education while the remaining two-thirds hoped for university education for their children especially in those from rich households. When asked about the exact relationship between income and education, most of them thought that those with the best education usually earned more. 70 per cent of the respondents thought that it was uncertain if newly rich households would have become rich if they were not educated.

The agroforestry project disunites, as some receive privileges while others don't. Project farmers get a good price even for poor quality goods, while those who are not associated with the project might have a good quality product, but can't get a good price for their crops. This is not our way of handling things, but we can't complain as we depend on them. They have good relationships with buyers or have good knowledge about negotiating prices. For me, it is difficult because I cannot recognize



any words. I studied in primary school only one year. So, I don't know how to graft a pear tree. I have to depend on my relatives to help or ask my son to teach me after he has read it from a book (a farmer in Dade village).

In Tageba, more than 90 per cent of the farmers said they think that funds and technology are important for tree cultivation. But, when I probed further, at first they could not answer the question. But finally, they said actually they needed more supports such as market information, planting skills, and knowledge of raising animals. But compared with these factors, good social relationships and government support were more important. Although farmers thought development would be blocked due to the lack of funds, technology and information, in Dade village about half the farmers thought social relations were more important regarding the future development; 30 per cent were not sure and 10 per cent thought that money was more significant.

Interestingly, about two-thirds of the farmers surveyed in Tageba said they wanted to upgrade their social relations. In fact, in Tageba, the highest income earners were cadres, ex-cadres, disabled soldiers, veterans or educated students, that is, precisely those individuals who were in a position to cultivate relations and alliances outside of the village, which gave them privileged access to raw materials, markets and market information.

I will have to learn personal skills, because I cannot survive on the basis of agriculture alone. I need more money than before, starting with the school children's sweets, book fees, hospital visits, etc. Also, I need to establish good relationships with my neighbors and outside bosses. This is more important than other work (a farmer in Xiaten village, 2002).

The survey shows that in the Tageba motivated farmers who had adopted fruit tree cultivation and were more fast absorbing the new technologie. It also shows that need to be done in order to enhance economic and social capital in rural areas. The Miao adjusted traditional clan relation to adopt new economic environment because they needed access to market, information, land and technology in order to make much money. Depending on what they needed and wanted, Miao farmers have now started to construct social relations with different members of other clans both inside and outside of the village. However, in general the Miao stayed rather inexperienced in negotiating prices and were not unable to neither expand their market networks nor establish more connections with middlemen and companies.

#### **5.3.4 Images of the Cadre as Servant of the Community**

The market economy has brought about important changes in the cadre's role. After the

implementation of the HCRS, control over production, labor allocation, and investment decisions shifted from the village committee to individual households. Although cadres still played a role in the negotiation of household contracts and in the contracting of collective farms, the scope and centrality of their role within the village sharply diminished. Cadres were no longer in charge of managing the entire range of economic activity. Instead, their function in the village today involved responsibility to local government and little responsibility to the village. So Cadres complained to us that they no longer got to organize the collective affairs, and that nobody wanted to listen to them anymore, whilst the people criticized them for not doing their jobs well.

Under the collective era the cadres organized everything. We planted fir, constructed the roads, managed forestry, logging, and so on. Cadres were powerful men who operated everything. At that time, many public infrastructures have been established and everyone was had the same position. But now everything has been destroyed, nobody organizes these actions anymore. Cadres work for their own families and do not care much for the affairs of the village (a elder in the Dade village, 2002).

Today, cadres must work on their own assigned fields just like everybody else, but in addition, they were expected to serve the public interest without many of the benefits that formerly came with the cadre's status. For some cadres, serving as village cadres was perceived as a burden that distracts them from the pursuit of their own household's economic interests. As one cadre in Pingqiao village, where cadre morale was noticeably at low ebb described to us: "Nowadays, if I don't work, I will have nothing to eat. I have tons of work to do for my family. How can I have enough energy to take care of the village's affairs? Besides, if I do a good job for my family, I'll earn more, but a good job for the village earns me nothing. Why bother?"

In contrary, villagers continued to believe that managing forestry, developing economy, and repairing schools were the responsibilities of the village committee. Recently, approximately two-thirds of the farmers in Tageba agreed to establish co-operative offices to provide technology services for agricultural production. They expected the cadres to introduce some new technology, species, and funds to develop their economy and take most of the responsibility, just like in the collective era. The cadres were expected to have a collective responsibility. They were supposed to care for to common welfare funds and organize collective action in public affairs, such as, product distribution, collective forestry management, road construction, bridge repair, and village school building maintenance. When it came to expressing opinions about village cadres, about 38 per cent of the farmers in

Tageba said that local cadres were 'working hard to help people get richer'; however, almost half of the remainder said that local cadres were 'only interested in how to get richer themselves', 'they took government allowances but didn't work', 'they didn't follow the Party's rural policy' and 'they abused their power for their own interests'. In the five villages of Tageba, 80 per cent of the old men mentioned that the village committee did not have many functions, so cadres didn't have enough responsibility to take care. For nearly 30 years since the economic reform, villagers never participated in meetings held by the village. In Shangten village, one old man pointed out to a large building and told us of its past:

This house was used in collective era. Every night, people would gather here to discuss work points and to check about the points they earned during the day. It was a place where quarrels took place. They often squabbled over work points, especially when someone else got one point higher than everybody else. It has been a long time since anyone has used this building. No wonder the gate is sealed by overgrown grass. This place has gradually been forgotten by younger generations (a farmer in Shangten village, 2002).

#### 5.4 Interpretation of the Youths

The shift within rural communities towards livelihood strategies which avoided agriculture, whether by necessity (a shortage of land) or design (a wish not to be a farmer), tended to generation (Rigg, 1996). The younger generation and children were being encouraged by their parents to look for opportunities other than agriculture. In Tageba, according to the household survey, family members under the age of 15 were students and children before schooling. There were 58 people between 16 and 25 years old, that is, 70% of the people in this age group, whose principal occupation were in off-farm activities. There were 35 people in the age class 26 to 35 years old, that is 37% of the people in this age group, who were engaged in off-farm activities. In both of the age classes 36-45 years old and 46-55 years old, 17 people found their occupation in off-farming activities. Four people between 56-65 years old took part in off-farming activities. These statistics indicate that most people younger than 35 years old were engaged in off farm. Many people under 25 years were single and wanted to go out their village.

Many young people labored (*dagong*) in the city, because there they can earn more than one thousand yuan per month. Our village has 34 young girls working as laborers in Guangdong province. Some of them often send money back to their family while others maybe not. Actually, finding a job in city is not easy, but they still want to go out of the community and enjoy urban lifestyles. My son last year worked in Wenzhou city. He not only earned no money for me, but also used up my two thousand yuan for transport costs. So, this year I persuaded him stay at home and work with me, but he is

not interested in farming activities (a farmer in Shibanzhao village, 2002).

Under the economic dilemma, a number of families allowed their children to work in restaurants as waiters or dishwashers, or to work in factories in Guiyang. Many were paid very low wages by their employers. Girls usually received 400-600 yuan per month, while boys received a little higher wage, 500-800 yuan per month. Those who remained in their village, chose to work as wage laborers in tree farms or at rice harvests. A few went to other villages to work as loggers and carpenters.

Nonetheless, when youth was asked whether they wanted to continue doing farming activities, none of them expressed a direct unwillingness to do farming. Instead they all stated that they had to work to earn money for their families, and they did not have time for farming activities. Most of them believed that the market had not brought substantial changes to their economic livelihood. Some youths from the poorer families mentioned that their parents could not afford the costs of trip to sell labor or do business, and viewed agriculture as an activity just for those with leisure time and who did not need to struggle to earn cash income for their families.

Indeed, when they were asked, "Are you interested in growing fruit trees?" Generally, the youth thought that growing trees was "a waste of time." One young man said: "I am not interested in growing trees. It is a stupid work. Take care of seedlings, grafting, weeding, and selling produce. You do so much hard work and waste [all your] time. For me, I have not time to do this." The principal occupation of this younger generation is off-farm employment. However, in the age group above 35, more people stayed at home to take part in farming activities. Family members with different ages have different views and have mastered different skills. They have different employment opportunities and relationships developed close to the land. Urban lifestyle seemed to attract the younger generation. They were less dependent on land and did not want stay at home to work on family land. They went to work for a higher income outside of the family farm. In Shianten village, more than 60 per cent of the young men had no work on farm.

Out-migration has been the most common way of youth responses to market economy. A young girl told me, "I sell myself as a laborer in Guiyang City. My purpose is to earn money. My parents are old, so I support my brother in finishing his high school. In addition, I am expected to dress like urban people, and I will probably spend most of my earnings on clothes,

hair care and possibly even entertainment such as audio cassettes.” Another young girl told me, “Well, whenever I have time and money I go to Guiyang. I like to walk around in the streets, to go window-shopping or to go to the cinema. It is also easier to talk to men in the city. Here, whatever we do, we are afraid of gossips.” This is part of the views of young girls about the market in Tageba. Since the markets opened, women have usually chosen out-migration, over staying in the village, especially for young girls. People in Tageba have often spoke of a “lost generation” of young people forced off farms, not because of the wish to leave or any lack of need for their labor, but because of the “work for two, pay for one” syndrome in farm labor wage payment. This means that much of the time if the youth work in the farm, they will only get paid for every second day that they work.

The other important thing which is interpreted differently by young people is marriage. Marriage is a very important thing to the family (*Jiazu*) in Miao society. Despite state Marriage Laws which are strict about early marriage, Miao parents often expect their sons to marry early in order ‘to drink a cup of wine provided by the son,’ and “want a grandson born quickly’. Marriage is an important thing for the young generation as well as for the family in Miao society. When someone marries the relatives and villagers will gather and drink for two or three days and give away small gifts or money. Recently, Miao marriage has become more and more commercialized. It seems symbolic that the spending of money is a chance to show off a household’s financial status. Gossips will compare the family’s flourish or downfall depending on how rich the wedding proceedings are. Generally, even a simple marriage needs more than ten thousand yuan, such as, paying for gift certificates, buying new dresses, and preparing wine, meat and furniture.

As one youth said “If you marry and you don’t give away many gifts at the wedding, you will be disregarded by the villagers. I cannot get married, even though I have a girl friend because I don’t have enough money for marriage.” In practice, the age of marriage in Tageba has become later than before. Even though they have girlfriend and are at the legal minimum age of marriage, they delay at the legal age for marriage. Legal age of marriage is twenty years for girls and twenty-two years for boys. Now at legal age of marriage, more than 40 per cent of young people have not found wives or husbands, especially for poor families in remote villages.

When we were young, marriage was not so difficult. When I was born, our parents introduced a wife to me on from the neighboring village. I did not spend much money

and time for marrying her. But now for the rural people, if you do not have ten thousand yuan, a big building, and handsome face, marriage is not easy. At the least, you should prepare 5-6 thousand-yuan for finding a wife. I have a grandson who is twenty-eight years old. He never married, because his family did not have enough money. He had to wage labor in Guangdong with his girl friend last year (an elder in Dade village, 2002).

Interestingly, the older generation sees selling labor as a bad thing to be avoided and the younger generation likes it. The 28 year old might say "I finally had the chance to go and sell my labor," when he talks about this.

Today, most of beautiful girls are betrothed into cities. In fact, I had to work hard to earn much money to allure the girl betrothed to me. The girls have an ambition that being married to a better family. Actually, under market conditions, all the younger generation has an aspiration to earn more and get rich quickly, because they also hope to marry soon and produce a son quickly for their parents (a boy in Dade village, 2002).

As a result, young people have had to work harder to make money faster. But based on unequal access to land, young people are confined to marginalized land access due to land unadjusted after 1984. Under these pressures, young people have to look for off-farm employment for income. Generally, the off-farm activities of young people have led most of them to lose interest in agricultural production. As some young people in Dade village said "working on the farm is a weary activity, and even if you work hard every year, harvests are limited and slow. Tree planting belongs to our parents, young men are meant to earn more money." In fact, the young generations in Tageba were not much interested in fruit tree growing.

Family members of all generations have been pressed into income-generating activities. As mentioned above, most of parents understand that education is important for their children's future development. In practice, after-school children often are used as assistants in housework. So the dropout rate of children in schools in Tageba has been rising. A document published by the Taijiang County government in 1998 expressed concern about the rise in school dropouts where children were compelled to work in the fields or help their parents operate private shops, and businesses. This document required each household would bear their children finish primary school. Actually, a total of 40 child laborers (10-18 years old) from Tageba were employed in Taijiang city or in other cities. In addition, 20 of them served as baby-sitters in urban areas, 10 of them became helpers in private companies, 8 of them worked as laborers in construction teams and others were peddlers on city roadsides. In fact, when 4 of them were asked whether they want study in the school again, 3 of them said, "I

strongly want to study in the school, but my family gives no money support.” A teacher thought that the cause was the farmers’ pursuit of quick profits, as he said, “work earns money, study takes money.”

### **5.5 Dependency or Sustainable Development?**

In the collective period, Tageba community underwent egalitarian development. Miao farmers in this community were more dependent on the state’s support in that period. Before the market reform, the production system in Tageba involved subsistence-oriented practice. After the market intervention, the Miao’s attitude toward to land and trees changed. People’s behavior became more economically oriented. In briefing, Wu Qiwen, an official from the Taijiang Forestry Bureau stated, “now the gap between poor and rich is becoming larger. A disparity among individual households or among various community and regions has gradually become obvious. People’s worldviews have changed. All people just think of money and developing their own benefits.”

In the collective period, the leaders of village allocated tasks and work points to farmers. Now farmer households control their own production timetables and only worked in the fields when necessary, leaving time for alternative activities. It was certainly evident in the conversations that villagers appreciated and enjoyed this new degree of flexibility and control over their own working timetables, although many of them also recognized what this meant in practice was that when they worked they had to work much harder than before.

The old egalitarian pattern is certainly being changed. Many less competitive economic activities have been inherited from the collective period. In Tageba, some farmers have been able to better adapting the market economy through increasing farm size and personal skill. Others have survived by intertwining activities from the subsistence needs. In fact, those families that have excellent personal skill and good social relation were easier to adapt to the market, which, in turn, facilitated further increases in the size of the farms. As a result, some people have become quite wealthy. For instance, in Shangten village those former cadres and veterans have become rich households. These are the people who are skilled, entrepreneurial, have favorable family labor conditions, and are lucky in production and trade. They also are those who are fortunate in their political connections, so they can take advantage of government credit programs, and become rich households. As a consequence of the modernization of agriculture, many traditional communal practices have been abandoned or

transformed, contributing to the emergence of on the one hand a small group of well-to-do farmers, and the other hand an increasing number of landless laborers. Tageba has undergone a steady process of social differentiation during the past decades.

The issue of village equality within the village is very important. Industrial fruit production company has caused more regional specialization and trade. Who will benefit more? If wealthy villages (e.g., Dade and Shibangqiao) with a good agricultural condition and transportation can invest more and grow more rapidly, inequality will increase. It might be better if poor, backward villages, such as, Shangten could shift to more livestock and wood products. In this way they might be able to grow more rapidly and close the gap between rich and poor villages. New agricultural policies and the market economy are contributing to an increase in villages' differences. The introduction of industrial fruits production has aggravated village's differences in Tageba.

The market intervention has reduced traditional practices. The normal role of young people in Tageba is to be the farmers. They are confined to being wage laborers, and because their experiences differ from past generations, they welcome this. It seems that market mechanisms are induce the modernization of rural economies which did not happen during the collective era. As a result of the production orientation of new systems and commodification of labor, land ownership has gradually become concentrated larger family farms, and redundant labor will have to seek a livelihood from other activities. The younger people are likely be forced to migrate out. If no opportunities exist for displaced farmers or their children, increasing social problems are likely to occur in the society of Tageba. Peasant settlements have lost their identity as exclusively agricultural. Youths are more interested in modernized lifestyle.

Yes, youth today are much more modern than we are. They refuse to work in the fields with their parents without feeling ashamed. They are no longer interest in dragon-boat performance in Miao festival. They watch TV or listen to music at home everyday. If we, the elders, talk to them, they will not listen to us. Sometimes they ridicule us. We only have little ability to control their behavior (an elder in Xiaten village).

When my son came back from Guiyang City after several years, he forgot some things about rural life. Sometimes he wants to join us in the fields, but he doesn't know what to do. For example, he forgot how work with the hoe or to drive oxen cart. So he does not know what he can do here (an elder in Pingqiao village).

Indeed, with the introduction of the market into Tageba the local conversation has changed toward economic topics. Traditionally, news disseminated and spread through the



village focused on illness, deaths, births, love affairs, marriages, and misfortune. Today, however, local information spreads in a more selective way, at least outside kinship and neighborhood networks. Local associations, which link members from virtually all socioeconomic groups that otherwise, have very little contact with one another, have taken over the communicative function from the traditional house to house talking. In meetings this becomes most evident when the agroforestry agenda reaches the part where all the members eat together. Using their local dialect they exchange various news, ranging from gossip to innovative ideas in agriculture. Here, it has to be noted that the communicative role of the association goes beyond that of information dissemination: news about jobs, tree grafting, or and pear storage, as a new local cash crops may be picked up at a meeting of the association, and these types of exchanges involve decisions which have direct effects.

### Summary

Forestry is a system that can be evolved indefinitely, moving toward greater human utility, greater efficiency of resource use and a balance with the environment which is more favorable to humans and most other species. However, with society changes, people look at forestry in a different ways, which depend on their interests and experiences. Under the market economy, Miao farmers' values and attitudes toward forest management have changed fundamentally. Agroforestry is linked to both personal family subsistence and industrial cultivation in Miao community. For farmers trees seem to be a "body" for earning incomes and producing forest products. They have planted trees grounded in meanings which relate to their understandings and life-experiences.

Agroforestry development in Tageba seem dozen of development narratives or discursive practices in which different meanings are mobilized among women, elders, youth, and officers. The market economy led to resource meaning changes in Miao society. Miao farmers began to interpret subsistence and market in different ways. Depend upon different context with market and resources, farmers gave different meanings on the tree cultivation. Someone interpreted timber tree good while other thought it wasted time. Someone interpreted fruit faster make money while other thought it damaged traditional herbal medicine. Agroforestry development involved different needs discourses as the reasons of farmers changed their behavior of tree cultivation. This chapter shows the great diversity local perceptions and interpretations of tree cultivation. How these perceptions influence farmer's rationalized actions and decision-making will be presented in the next chapter.