



# MY FATHER'S JOURNEY

我的父亲和他的忧郁

A XIAODAN HE FILM

和晓丹作品

FILMOPTION INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS A 9337-4106 QUÉBEC INC. PRODUCTION MY FATHER'S JOURNEY

A FILM BY XIAODAN HE PARTICIPATION WITH CHONGREN HE PRODUCED BY XIAODAN HE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER LUCIE TREMBLAY

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAN BELINA BRZOWSKI EDITOR TAO GU ORIGINAL MUSIC MALCOLM SAILOR SOUND DESIGN ANDREAS MENDRITZKI

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY XIAODAN HE





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## Technical Information

Shooting Format: HD

Screening Format: DCP/Bluray/DVD

Available Lengths: 78 minutes

Genre: Documentary

Original Version: Mandarin & Naxi

Subtitles: English & French

Format: Colour 2.39

Sound: 5.1

Production Countries: Canada

Year: 2019

## Synopsis

The protagonist of this documentary is my father: Chongren He, born in 1936, in Li Jiang, a small town close to the border of Tibet. He is a descendent of the Naxi, one of the fifty-six Chinese minorities which has a population of 300,000. What makes the Naxi unique is their ancient Dongba culture preserved through the millenary pictographic writing. This particular pictogram is the only living one in use today and is called the “living fossil”.

Besieged by the constant political upheavals and the assimilation of the dominant Chinese modern culture, my father lives today in his village like on an isolated island surrounded by the endless waves of tourists. This film will explore how an individual of 80 years of age can build his own spiritual castle to protect himself and his frail yet precious culture.

## Crew

Directed by: Xiaodan He

Producer: Xiaodan He

Director of Photography: Jan Belina Brzozowski

Editor: Tao Gu

Original Music: Malcolm Sailor

Sound Design: Andreas Mendritzki

## Director's Intent

Recounting my father's path and destiny, I wanted to immerse myself in the riches of his spiritual world. In the context of the disappearance of his own culture, where a dominant culture assimilates the “smaller” cultures surrounding it; how can an individual cope with China's constant upheaval and change? What is the destiny of a minority in contemporary China? Where does this individual find the strength to follow such a difficult and solitary path till the end? Such are the inquiries of this film.

- Xiaodan He





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### About the Dongba Culture

The Dongba culture is the most ancient culture of the Naxi minority. It has preserved the influences from Chinese buddhism, Tibetan buddhism and also some ancient Persian, Roman, Egyptian and Greek cultural and religious traces. The Dongba culture records, in the classic books, all the aspects of the life of Naxi, including history, wars, religions, divination arts, agriculture and folk customs etc.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

#### Chongren He

Chongren He, Naxi, was born in 1936 in Lijiang, China. Chongren graduated from the Central Minority University in China in 1962. He began his career as a poet, writer and researcher. He is a member of the Writers' Association and the People's Literary Association of China. His main area of research is on the Naxi Dongba culture. His most notable works are «Songs of Love From 'Dragon and Jade'», «Ancient Songs of Sacrifice at Cie», «The Art of Divination in Dongba Culture», «Pedigree of Gods of Dongba» and «Pedigree of Gods of Dongba and Choreography of Dongba» etc.

#### Xiaodan He – Director & Producer

Born in 1975, Xiaodan He, a Chinese-Canadian filmmaker, has studied film production at the Beijing Film Academy from 1993 to 1997. Being from a Chinese ethnic minority, Naxi, she worked for the Yunnan Minority Film Studio as an assistant producer and then as an assistant director. Her short film on the life of the immigrants, *Cairo Calling*, has received a resounding success, with screenings in over 50 festivals around the world and two audience awards. Her documentary, *The Fall of Womenland*, was financed by Canal D and was acquired by National Geographic, playing on television across North American and Europe. In 2013, she founded her own production company, Red Dawn Productions. With her film, *A Touch of Spring*, Xiaodan became the first Chinese immigrant filmmaker in Canada and Québec to receive funding from SODEC, Telefilm Canada and Arts Councils for her first feature-length feature film.





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## **Tao Gu – Editor**

Tao Gu is a film author and editor who started filmmaking in 2005. His award winning experimental film *On the Way to the Sea* (2010) has been shown in more than 40 film festivals worldwide including Sundance and TIFF. *The Vanishing Spring Light* (2011) that he edited has won significant prizes at IDFA and Cinéma du Réel. His latest film *Taming the Horse* (2017) won the legendary Montgolfière d'or at Festival des trois continents in France and Grand Prix at RIDM.

## **Jan Belina-Brzozowski – Director of Photography**

Jan Belina-Brzozowski graduated from the internationally recognized Polish National Film School in Lodz where he finished his masters with distinction in the art of cinematography. Inspired by new environments, a fervent traveler, he lensed beauty, sadness and joy in various cultures. His experiences have rendered him technically proficient with all cameras, whether it's film or digital.

## **Malcolm Sailor - Composer**

Malcolm Sailor is a composer, pianist, and music theorist living in Montreal. His many projects have included chamber music, Balkan jazz and synth pop.

## **Andreas Mendritzki - Sound Design**

Andreas began pursuing his passion in the realm of sound in cinema since his student hood in Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University. Throughout the years, Andreas has designed the sound for a number of films, including Toronto International Film Festival's Canada's Top Ten *Werewolf* and Fantasia International Film Festival's closing film *Mon ami Dino*.





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