Lijiang in southwest China has been a favorite tourist attraction ever since its inclusion in the list of UNESCO’s World Heritage sites. Many have attributed this renown to the legacy of the American botanist Joseph Rock (1884-1962). Few are aware of Ezra Pound’s contribution. In Pound’s Cantos there are beautiful passages about Lijiang and its Naxi inhabitants. Carroll F. Terrell and others have correctly identified Rock’s 1939 bilingual narrative, “The Romance of K’a-²mā-¹gyu ²mi-gkyi”, his 1948 essay, “The ²Muan-¹bpō Ceremony or the Sacrifice to Heaven as Practiced by the Na-hki”, and 1947 book, The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China, as sources of such passages in Cantos 101, 104, 110, 112, and 113. But was Rock the first to introduce Pound to Lijiang and its ethnic culture? But was Rock the first to introduce Pound to the culture of the Naxi, an ethnic group in southwest China? Did Pound ever come into contact with a Naxi native? Rock and Pound corresponded in the late 1950s. While most of the letters exchanged between them are lost or buried among uncatalogued Joseph Rock papers in Hawaii and elsewhere, one from Rock to Pound (dated 3 January 1956) has been discovered in the

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Beinecke Library of Yale University. In it Rock refers to a “Na-khi boy” and two of his papers on the Naxi given to Pound through Professor Giovanni Giovannini of the Catholic University of America:

My friend Pao-hsien Fang, a Na-khi boy whose parents I used to know for many years in Likiang, Yunnan, sent me a letter written by Prof. G. Giovannini of the Catholic University of America. In the letter Mr. Giovannini told Fang that he had given you two of my papers on the Na-khi among whom I lived for 27 years.

Fig. 1: The Fangs to the Pounds, 1957. Courtesy Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University. Courtesy P. H. and Josefine Fang.

Was Pound acquainted with Rock’s Naxi friend? He certainly was. The Beinecke Library keeps two Christmas cards Pao-hsien Fang and

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3 I am indebted to Emily Mitchell Wallace, who graciously shared with me her discovery of this letter in the Beinecke Library.