

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Economics and Business Administration

Conghui Wang

Contemporary Belief Narratives and Practices in Everyday Life of the Yi Community (China)

Master's thesis as a monograph

Supervisor: Alevtina Solovyeva

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I have written this Research paper/Bachelor Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

**Table of contents**

Signs and Conventions, Used in the Thesis .....	6
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1 Research Questions and Aims .....	7
1.2 Research Significance and Novelty .....	7
1.3 Introduction to Contemporary Yi and Ethnic Identification of the Yi .....	7
1.3.1 Yi Branches.....	10
1.3.2 China's Ethnic Administrative Division .....	10
1.4 Research Data .....	12
2. Methodology.....	14
2.1 Data Collecting Methodology.....	14
2.2 Theoretical Methodology .....	15
2.3 Vernacular Beliefs: Concepts and Analytical Categories .....	15
3 Historiographical Review .....	16
4. Vernacular Belief of The Yi and The Special Roles in the Yi Community .....	18
4.1 Bimo - The ritual specialist.....	18
4.2 Suni - Yi Shaman .....	19
4.3 Degu - The Judge .....	20
4.4 The Mode of Social Structure in Yi Community .....	21
5. Contemporary Beliefs through Practice .....	22
5.1 The Bimo Transmission of A Magic Tree .....	22
-A Collection of Narratives, Ritual Practices, and Epic Heroes .....	22
5.1.1 Practice: Hero and Ancestor Worship Through Ritual Celebration Events - A Case of The Annual Dragon Offering Ceremony .....	24
5.1.1.1 Nisu Village's Annual Dragon Offering: Narratives from a Local ...	25
5.1.1.2 The Connotations of the Dragon Tree: .....	27
5.1.1.2.1 The Yi's Practices of Habitat Selection and the Transformative Outcome of Polytheism and Hero Worship .....	27
5.1.2 Heroic Epic: Bimo Narrative Exploring Hero Worship and Polytheism.....	29
5.1.2.1 Bimo Oral Chanting and Hero Epics: A Unique Narrative Art of the Yi .....	29
5.1.2.2 Analysis of Oral Narrative From Bimo and Pentagraphic Social Structure .....	32
5.1.3 The Embodiments of Ancestor Worship by Yi House Decoration.....	34
5.1.3.1 “Ancestor’s House” in the Living Room .....	34
5.2 Vernacular Belief of The Yi and the Concept of Intuition .....	36
5.3 The Collective Common Symbols in Yi Vernacular Beliefs .....	39
5.3.1 The Overlapped Memory in Different Genesis .....	39
5.3.1.1 The Legend of Apu Dumu - the Ancestor of the Yi Ethnic Group in Yunnan .....	41

5.3.1.2 The Legend of Apu Dumu - the Ancestor of the Yi Ethnic Group in Sichuan .....	44
5.4 Nature Worship and Reanimalist .....	47
5.4.1 Nature Worship Beliefs and the Notion of Totem.....	47
5.4.1.1 Honoring Ancestors: The Ancestry Spirit Sending Ceremony.....	47
5.4.1.2 The Art of Naming in Yi Culture .....	48
5.4.1.3 The Stone Worship Ceremony .....	49
5.4.1.4 Grafting Longevity Trees(接寿树).....	50
5.5 The Concept of Placelore in the Yi Vernacular Beliefs .....	51
6. The Interaction of Beliefs .....	53
6.1 Yi and Buddhism .....	54
6.1.1 The Indigenous Divine Temple(土主庙).....	54
6.1.2 Mujipo and Buddhism: A Narrative Analysis .....	57
6.2 Yi and Christianity.....	58
6.3 Exploring the Hidden Names of Yi and Taoism.....	59
7. Cosmology and Temporality of The Yi Ethnic Group .....	60
7.1 Ten-Month Calendar and Yi Cosmology.....	60
7. 1. 1 The Use of the Ten-Month Calendar in Naming Conventions.....	61
7.1.1.1 Eating Patterns Based on the Ten-Month Calendar.....	61
7.1.1.2 Exploring the Yi Conceptualization of Time.....	62
8. Conclusion .....	65
Sources:.....	67
List of references.....	68
APPENDIC.....	76
APPENDIX A.....	76
1. Interviewee list .....	77
2. Illustration of Ten Months Solar Calendar .....	80
One Month of Yi Calender - Example of Wood Male Month 12.27.2021-1.31.2022 .....	80
Five Seasons and Ten Months .....	81
3. The List of the Figures .....	81
Figure 1. Ancestry's little house in the center of living room in the new house .....	81
Figure 2: Stone worshipped by villagers .....	81
Figure 3: Villagers offering incense to the stone .....	81
Figure 4: Bimo performing a kowtow towards the stone (From left to right) .....	81
Figure 5: Grafting Longevity Trees in Bimo script .....	81
Figure 6: The first Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province .....	81
Figure 7: The second Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province .....	81
Figure 8: The rabbit god in the second Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province...	81
Figure 9 Grotto Vimalakīrti debates with Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in Ninth cave of the Dunhuang Mogao Caves grottoes.....	81
4. Field Work Pictures .....	82

Resümee ..... 85

### **Signs and Conventions, Used in the Thesis**

In this article, I have used certain conventions to guide the reader when examining the narrative cases presented. I have employed two types of signs to indicate omissions: square brackets [...] for cuts made by me in the translated interview transcript, which can be found in the appendix, and broken brackets ⟨...⟩ for cuts that were already present in the published sources I have quoted.

The abbreviations F and M indicate the gender of the interviewees and y.o. stands for 'years old.' The date of the interview is also provided, followed by the abbreviation for the type of narrative: N for general narrative, L for the legend, B.C for Bimo chanting, and B.S for Bimo scripts.

For example, [26 y.o. M. 6.4.2022 N] indicates that the source is from an interview with a 26-year-old male on 6.4.2022, and the quote is a general narrative.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Questions and Aims**

This work is devoted to the traditional and contemporary cultures of the Yi people's community in southwest China. The purpose of this research is to investigate, describe and analyse vernacular beliefs of the Yi, which play a significant role in the cultural identity, social relations and everyday life of the community. It leads to the questions of what are the characteristics of vernacular beliefs of the contemporary Yi community, what kind of ontology hiding behind their everyday life, and what are the results of the interaction of Yi traditions with other institutional and non-institutional ideologies, religions, and cultures in contemporary society.

### **1.2 Research Significance and Novelty**

It is worth conducting research on the contemporary cultures, traditions and beliefs of ethnic minorities since the Chinese ethnic groups boast high complexity and diversity and also confront modern challenges that incur beliefs changes in the modern world. As Colin Mackerras states: China's fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minorities form about 8% of the Chinese population, with over 100 million people, and occupy over 60% of China's territory. They are very diverse, and the degree of modernization among them varies greatly. Ethnic tensions intensified in a range of other countries in the background of drastic historical change after the collapse of the soviet union. (Colin Mackerras, 2003, 1).

This research aims to deliver the voices of the Yi people's minority of China, to introduce the peculiarity and inclusivity of their beliefs and practices, reflect contemporary features of the life of the community and its interactions with other cultural and social authorities in the Chinese and global society. The research compliments to the several existing works, which regard folklore of the Yi, and also brings new data and materials which is a part of supplementary to the South Yi ethnic group in Yunnan such as practice narratives and Bimo chanting.

### **1.3 Introduction to Contemporary Yi and Ethnic Identification of the Yi**

Ethnic minority Group Yi is the sixth-largest minority group in China, and the written name “YI” was designated as “彝” from “夷” when the ethnic identification (民族识别) conducted with the consensus of Yi people in 1954. According to the ideographic writing and the meaning of those ideographic components, the character means the Yi minority will become a prosperous nation with the Yi minority will have housing( 廛 ), sufficient food( 米 ), clothing( 糸 ), and fortune( 升 ). The reason for choosing people from those three provinces is the population of the Yi nationality is 9,830,327 in 2021, mainly residing in the four provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi, according to China Statistical Yearbook 2021(National Bureau of statistics of China, 2021). In Yunnan, there are 4.05 million Yi people, most of whom live in the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, and the Yi autonomous counties of Eshan, Ninglang, and Lunan. Sichuan has 2.12 million Yi people. With 1.81 million Yi inhabitants, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture is the largest Yi-populated region in the nation, followed by Mabian and Ebian Yi Autonomous Counties, which each have about 100,000 residents. Most of the 700,000 Yi people in Guizhou reside in Bijie, Liupanshui, and Anshun. In the Longlin and Napo counties of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, there are about 7,000 residents. The Chinese government's data indicate that the rest of them are dispersed throughout the nation(National ethnic affair office of China, 2020).

The nationwide Census in China published the latest data on the specific number of the Yi population in all provinces in 2010. The National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China reported that 8,714,393 Yi people were living in China, with 8,525,960 living in just the four southwestern provinces, making up 97.8% of the total. Table 1 lists the number of Yi people living in the other provinces. The southwest region includes the autonomous regions of Chongqing, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Tibet, with a total land area of 2,500,000 square kilometers, accounting for 24.5% of China's land area. (Yu, J., & Xi, W., 2018, 325).



Table 1  
*Yi Population in 30 Provinces*

Country/ Province	Population	Yi Population	Country/ Province	Population	Yi Population
<b>China</b>	1,332,810,869	8714393	<b>Xinjiang</b>	21,815,815	2954
<b>Yunnan</b>	45,966,766	5041210	<b>Shanxi</b>	35,712,101	2867
<b>Sichuan</b>	80,417,528	2643953	<b>Inner Mongolia</b>	24,706,291	2854
<b>Guizhou</b>	34,748,556	834461	<b>Hubei</b>	57,237,727	2748
<b>Zhejiang</b>	54,426,891	49243	<b>Jiangxi</b>	44,567,797	1850
<b>Guangdong</b>	104,320,459	36264	<b>Tianjin</b>	12,938,693	1825
<b>Jiangsu</b>	78,660,941	18896	<b>Henan</b>	94,029,939	1764
<b>Fujian</b>	36,894,217	13536	<b>Liaoning</b>	43,746,323	1693
<b>Guangxi</b>	46,023,761	9700	<b>Shaanxi</b>	37,327,379	1644
<b>Shandong</b>	95,792,719	8298	<b>Hainan</b>	8,671,485	1086
<b>Shanghai</b>	23,019,196	7113	<b>Gansu</b>	25,575,263	870
<b>Anhui</b>	59,500,468	6667	<b>Heilong jiang</b>	38,313,991	730
<b>Chongqing</b>	28,846,170	6336	<b>Qinghai</b>	5,626,723	683
<b>Beijing</b>	19,612,368	5849	<b>Jilin</b>	27,452,815	558
<b>Hebei</b>	71,854,210	4632	<b>Ningxia</b>	6,301,350	530
<b>Hunan</b>	65,700,762	3183	<b>Xizang</b>	3,002,165	396

*Data source: 2010 Chinese census*

In 1954, China Central Ethnic Affairs Commission sent the Yunnan Ethnic Identification Investigation Team to identify ethnic groups over the whole nation. Initially, EIIT identified more than 260 different ethnic groups in Yunnan; later on, they categorized the previous 260 ethnic groups into 22. And the most complicated categorization is the classification of the Yi ethnic group. Lin Yaohua, an ethnic studies professor from Minzu University of China who was the investigation team's leader at the time, wrote in *"Ethnic Identification in Southwest China"*: "The Yi language-speaking units had a large population, including more than 3 million people at that time. Moreover, the existing branches of the ethnic group are complicated and voluminous. (Lin Yaohua, 1984, 145)

Marxist doctrines have influenced Chinese ethnic practice (Fei Xiaotong, 1980, p98). Marxists had developed many theories on nationalities, but the most influential definition of nationality in China came from Stalin (Qin Naichang, 2009, p34). According to him, the nation could be defined as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (Stalin, J., 1975). He observed that the presence of each of the four elements constituted a nation in the epoch of rising capitalism (Id. at 65).

### 1.3.1 Yi Branches

The Yi ethnic group comprises numerous branches that are distributed throughout various regions and exhibit slight variations in their dialects and writing systems. In order to classify these dialects, the Yi have divided them into six regions based on language: the North dialect region, the South dialect region, the Western dialect region, the Eastern dialect region, and the Central dialect region.

The main branches are Black Yi (黑彝), White Yi (白彝), Red Yi (红彝), Huayao (花腰), Axi (阿细), Sani (撒尼), Azhe (阿哲), Luowu (罗婺), Tusu (土苏), Nuosu (诺苏), Niesu (聂苏), Gaisu (改苏), Chesu (车苏), Aluo (阿罗), Aza (阿扎), Awu (阿武), Sama (撒马), Lalu (腊鲁), Lami (腊米), Lalo (腊罗), Lipo (里泼), Gepo (葛泼), Naruo (纳若) (Pu Zhongliang, 2003).

### 1.3.2 China's Ethnic Administrative Division

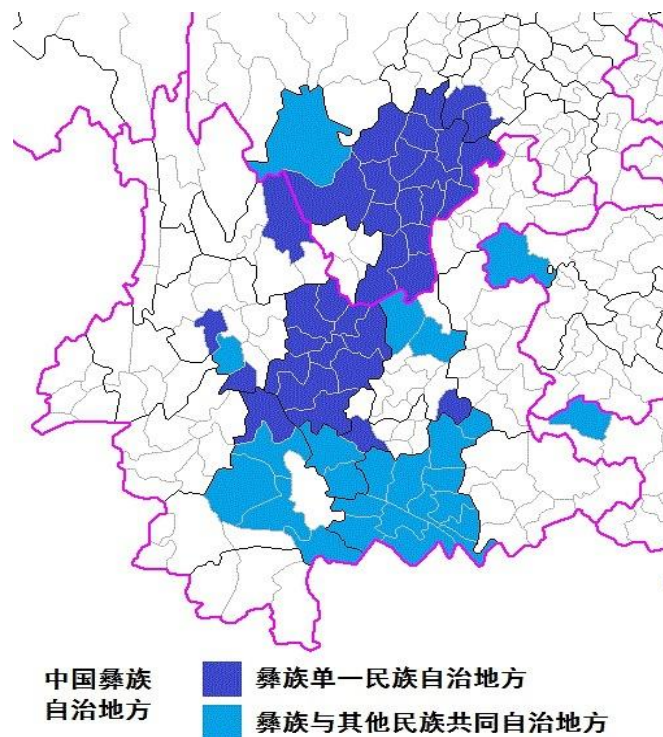
According to China's taxonomy of minority administrative regions, the national ethnic autonomous system consists of three levels: Autonomous Region of Minority Groups,

Autonomous Prefectures, and Autonomous Counties. This classification is based on the region's population and geographic size, historical context, interethnic interactions, and degree of economic development. (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2005)

The administrative category of the Yi Autonomous Region in China consists only of autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties; it does not include autonomous regions. There are two types of autonomous areas for the Yi ethnic group: the first type includes single-ethnic autonomous areas for the Yi ethnic group, such as Ninglang Yi Autonomous County. The second type is areas of joint autonomous jurisdiction with other ethnic groups, such as the Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture.

The governance legislative relationship of joint ethnic groups in Autonomous Prefectures and Yi Autonomous Counties can be parallel or affiliated.

For example, in the case of a parallel structure, there are other ethnic autonomous counties under the Yi Autonomous Prefecture, such as Muli Tibetan Autonomous County under the jurisdiction of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture and Hekou Yao Autonomous County under the jurisdiction of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture. In the case of an affiliated structure, there are other ethnic autonomous prefectures with Yi autonomous counties, such as Yangbi Yi Autonomous County under the jurisdiction of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture.



Map 1 *Yi autonomous regions in China.*

Purple is the single-ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties for the Yi

Blue is the joint autonomous prefectures and counties for the Yi and with other ethnic groups

Data source: ShenChengShaoXueHan, 2011

In China, there are three Yi Autonomous Prefectures: Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan and Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan, and Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan. There are also 19 autonomous counties, including 15 in Yunnan, 2 in Sichuan, 1 in Guizhou, and 1 in Guangxi. As the map 1 listed the Yi autonomous regions in China.

#### 1.4 Research Data

In this study, the author conducted digital fieldwork and collected a total of 23 interviews with members of the Yi ethnic group and three other minority groups living in the southwestern regions of China, including Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou, with a focus on the Yi minority autonomous prefectures of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture and Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. Among the Yi interviewees, representation was drawn from the Black Yi, Red Yi, White Yi, Nisupo, Suni, and Muji po branches.

The transcriptions have been deleted from the annex, but in case of interest, they are accessible through the author.

In addition to interviews, the study also drew on a variety of other research sources, including written materials, bimo scripts, visual data such as video records of rituals, and photographs of contemporary living evidence, to illustrate the Yi people's contemporary understandings of time and cosmology.

The choice of three provinces as research targets and data sources is due to the fact that 97.8% of the Yi ethnic group resides here, and the Southwest region accounts for 24.5% of China's land area. It is worth noting that the preponderance of autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties classified within China's system of administration for Yi minorities are situated within the provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou.

The author was born in the Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, which has the second largest Yi population among the three main Yi prefectures, with a population of 1,170,809 according to the 2021 governance overview published on the Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture government's official website (Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture government, 2021). Meanwhile, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture has a Yi population of 786,624 (Chuxiong Statistical Bureau, 2021). And Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture has a population of 2.89 million (National Ethnic Affairs Commission of China, 2021).

The author belongs to the Yi branch of Mujipo(母基颇/母基). "Mu" (母/母) means the sky, and "ji"(基/基) means the border or boundary, so Mujipo refers to a subgroup of the Yi ethnic group who reside in the mountainous regions near the border. Having spent over a decade living in areas inhabited by the Nisupo and Niesupo branches of the Yi ethnic group, such as Luchun County in Honghe, the author has gained firsthand experience that has served as inspiration for writing about the customs, practices, and everyday lives of these somewhat overlooked groups. This insight has been gained through participation in various forms of events and ritual practices throughout the author's life, as well as through observations of the differences between the Yi near the author's home and other ethnic groups made upon leaving her hometown and group to live in more modernized cities and countries after completing high school.

As seeing the high-speed railway connected two major cities in China when the author in university, traveling hundreds of miles in just a few hours, the author couldn't help but feel a sense of conflict and disconnection from their own cultural roots. While the modern

convenience of the railway was impressive, the author was struck by the contrast of the minority children who lived in the mountains and had to walk for hours every day to attend school.

The sight of these children, trudging through the rugged terrain and harsh weather, highlighted the vast differences between the modernized world and the traditional way of life. The author was torn between the progress and modernization brought about by the railway and the sense of loss for their cultural heritage.

As the author watched the children disappear over the horizon, they couldn't shake the feeling that something important was being left behind in the rush towards modernity. It was a poignant moment, one that stayed with the author and prompted them to consider the value of preserving tradition and cultural roots in a rapidly changing world. And this is my personal reason for writing their neglected culture.

**Key Words:** Vernacular Belief, Belief Narrative, Yi Contemporary Beliefs and Practices, Ethnography, Bimoism

**CERCS:** S220 Cultural anthropology, ethnology, H400 Folklore, H250 Contemporary history (since 1914), H640 Languages and literatures of South and South-East Asia , Chinese,

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Data Collecting Methodology

This article employs an ethnographic method to collect data through the use of semi-structured interviews and "flowing interviews," in which the author follows the topics and footage of rituals provided by the interviewees. The interviews covered a range of themes, including everyday life in the Yi community, Yi identity, the Yi relationship with nature, family and community structure, and contemporary Yi values in relation to historical materialistic ideology. The author served as both an observer and participant in the progress of the interviews and practices. Ethnographers routinely use informal or conversational interviews, which allow them to discuss, probe emerging issues, or ask questions about unusual events in a naturalistic manner. Because of the "causal" nature of this type of interview technique, it can help elicit highly candid accounts from individuals (Scott Reeves, Ayelet Kuper & Brian David Hodges, 2017).

The study included interviews with a diverse group of individuals, including villagers, Bimo, and Suni who reside in the Yi autonomous region, as well as students and Yi individuals living in nonautonomous regions but born in the Yi autonomous region.

In collecting and using the data, I followed the contemporary regulations governing ethics in the social sciences and humanities, as elaborated by international organisations: the guideline paper “Ethics in Social Science and Humanities” 2018; the American Folklore Society’s “Position Statement on Research with Human Subjects” 2011; American Anthropological Association’s “Statement on Race” 1998.

## **2.2 Theoretical Methodology**

### **2.3 Vernacular Beliefs: Concepts and Analytical Categories**

The theoretical methodology employed in this study to examine and articulate Yi beliefs is folklore methodology, with a focus on the concepts of the narrative culture (Honko, 1964), vernacular beliefs (Valk, 2016), and vernacular or lived religion“, proposed by Leonard Norman Primiano (Primiano, 1995). In his article “Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife” Primiano argues for the use of the category of vernacular religion as an alternative to the traditional categories of “folk” or “popular” religion versus “official” or institutional religion. According to Primiano, vernacular religion is a way of studying religion that is based on the criteria of religious validity established by the inner experience and perception of the believer. Vernacular religion is, by definition, religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it. (Primiano, 1995).

In this study, the contemporary beliefs of Yi minority communities were analyzed from a folklore and social perspective through the use of text analysis and comparison of Yi folklores and narratives, as well as through the application of vernacular religious theories. The folkloristic study of religious belief and believers should consider the integrated ideas and practices of all individuals in society, rather than focusing solely on the beliefs and practices of social groups. Religion is a dynamic phenomenon that requires a more holistic approach than the traditional relationship between social groups and folklore can provide. Religion as a subject matter, however, is a far more dynamic phenomenon than such a limited notion can contain. Folkloristic scholarship on religion needs to transcend the accepted parameters of the inherent relationship of social groups to folklore (Primiano., 1995).

### 3 Historiographical Review

"Yi Studies" as an academic discipline can be traced back to the 1900s, but it was not until the 1950s that a foundation was established for its comprehensive development. In the 1980s, Yi Studies became an international discipline, and the term "Yi Studies" gained widespread usage. However, the main focus and concentration of Yi Studies remains in China, particularly among the Yi people themselves. (Huang Jiping, 2006, 3).

Liu Yaohan is considered the first Yi professor in contemporary China, with a specialization in ethnic minority history and anthropology, and a particular focus on Yi Studies. Through his research and writing, Liu explored various aspects of Yi culture and society, including the naming system in which a person follows their father's first name (父氏连名制), the clan slavery system in place prior to 1953 (氏族奴隶制), and the belief in twelve animal totems and a calendar. He also examined practices such as nature worship, ancestry worship, and maternity worship. In the course of his fieldwork, Liu analyzed folklore, traced the spread of various cultural practices in the Yi region, and studied bimo scripture in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Sichuan from 1950 to 1980. (Liu Yaohan, 1980). Liu Yaohan also provided a comprehensive and in-depth summary of Yi cosmology and explored the relationship between Yi and Tao.

BaMoAYi (巴莫阿依) is the first Yi person to earn a Ph.D. and is a scholar specializing in ethnology, with a particular focus on Yi Studies. She was born in Liangshan, Sichuan, and is the daughter of the well-known Yi leader BaMoErHa (巴莫尔哈), who made significant contributions to Yi culture, life, and social awareness as the chief governance officer of Liangshan. The main focus of BaMoAYi's work is to provide detailed explanations and insights into Yi tradition and Bimo, as seen in her publications such as "Disease Belief and Ritual Medicine of Yi Nationality in Liangshan" (BaMoAYi, 2003), "Research on the Yi Nationality's Ancestral Spirit Belief" (BaMoAYi, 1998), and "The Ritual Life of the Yi Mountain People in Liangshan" (BaMoAYi, 2003).

Lin Yaohua is a sociologist and anthropologist who was among the first pioneers in Chinese ethnic studies (Mingzuxue 民族学) in China. He served as an advisor for the Chinese Ethnic Identification Program and conducted extensive research on the Yi in Liangshan, using the name LoLo (啰啰), prior to 1944. In his research, Lin described the social groups of the Yi as comprising clans, families, branches, and marriage relationships, and also addressed issues such as economic conditions, social ranking, and witchcraft in that period (Lin and Pan, 1947).



Lin revisited Liangshan in 1975 and wrote "The Drastic Change of Yi," in which he discussed the challenges faced by Yi culture in adapting to modernization. For example, he noted that Yi culture lacks a strong emphasis on the value of commodities, and that while material living standards had improved after several decades of development, Yi people tended to save and share their surplus products (such as farming output) with friends and neighbors rather than sell them on the market (Lin, 1995).

Zhuang Xueben played a significant role in the study of Yi culture by providing a wealth of visual materials through his fieldwork in 1935-1937, despite the risks he faced during that time. These materials have served as valuable first-hand sources for Yi visual ethnography.

Stevan Harwell is a highly respected western scholar of Yi Studies, known for his thorough research on Yi history and thought based on fieldwork in Sichuan in 2002 (Harrell and Yongxiang, 2003). He taught himself the North Yi language and characters and spent more than a decade living with local Yi Bimo and villagers in Liangshan to learn Yi tradition. Harwell also initiated and organized the World's First Yi Studies Conference and contributed to the publication of "Perspectives on the Yi of Southwest China" in 2003, a collection of articles on contemporary Yi social status, language policy, and reconstructed Yi history written by Yi students and scholars such as BaMoAYi, as well as western scholars. In this book, Harwell stated that the goal was to establish a field of scholarship within contemporary social-studies discourses and provide greater accessibility to this largely unknown part of the world to scholars and students of China, Southeast Asia, and ethnic relations in general (Harrell, 2001). However, his work did not extensively cover the situation and interaction of South Yi in Yunnan, which this article aims to supplement.

Mark Bender is a scholar of Yi literature who has dedicated much of his research to the exploration of creation narratives (Mark Bender, 2009). Specifically, he has sought to understand the connections between animals and plants in Yi mythology, as well as the role of tradition and nature in contemporary Nusu(诺苏) society (Mark Bender, 2008). Bender's interest in these subjects is reflected in his numerous publications on the topic, including his seminal work "The Yi Creation Myth and its Significance in Modern Times" (Mark Bender, 2008). In this book, Bender delves into the rich cultural traditions of the Yi people, examining the ways in which their creation stories continue to shape their understanding of the world and their place in it. Through his research, Bender hopes to shed light on the enduring relevance of these ancient tales and the valuable insights they offer into the human experience.

Névot's work provides valuable insights into the language, religion, and ethnicity of the Yi people and the ways in which these aspects intersect with broader political and social issues in China. Névot's research on the Yi people of China has focused on various aspects of their language, religion, and ethnicity. In "Trembling voices echo: Yi shamanistic and mediumistic speeches" (Névot, 2019), Névot explores the use of language in Yi shamanistic and mediumistic rituals. In "Words beyond writings: how to decrypt the secret writings of the Masters of psalmody (Yunnan, China)?" (Névot, 2021), Névot delves into the intricacies of Yi secret writings and provides a framework for their interpretation. In "The politics of ethnicity in China and the process of homogenization of the Yi nationality" (Névot, 2014), Névot examines the dynamics of ethnicity in China and the efforts to homogenize the Yi nationality.

Zhang Zhongren's work on Yi religion and belief provides insight into the religion and beliefs of the Yi people through in-depth research. The book discusses the emergence of the Yi people's indigenous religion and the various sacrifices, procedures, and taboos of the Bimo tradition's ritual specialists. It also briefly describes the Yi people's belief in man-made religions. The religious beliefs of the Yi people include animism, nature worship, totem worship, and ancestor worship. The Yi people worship nature and believe that everything in nature has gods, which they worship, and also believe in various natural gods and totem figures such as dragons, tigers, birds, bamboo, and gourd (Zhang Dechun, 2008). Ancestor worship is considered a central and important aspect of Yi religion, and is held in higher regard than the worship of natural gods and totems (Zhang Zhongren, 2006).

#### **4. Vernacular Belief of The Yi and The Special Roles in the Yi Community**

Three main types of roles function to constitute the Yi society nowadays. "Bimo", "Suni" and "Degu".

##### **4.1 Bimo - The ritual specialist**

Bimo is a highly respected and influential figure in Yi culture. They are responsible for preserving and transmitting Yi culture and knowledge through written and oral traditions. Bimo serve as the masters of written and knowledge, the hub of Yi culture, and the host and guide of rituals, funerals, and yearly spiritual house cleanings. They are also responsible for communicating with ancestors and acting as mediators in conflicts serving as spiritual icons. Bimo is also sometimes responsible for identifying medicinal herbs. Bimo are usually male and are trained by senior Bimo from a young age, around 6 years old.

Some later learners become Bimo after experiencing unique personal events, such as receiving unsatisfactory results from hospital treatment and being cured by a Bimo, or having a life-changing experience that leads them to believe in Bimo. The knowledge of Bimo can be learned and inherited. MK, an interviewee, decided to become a Bimo apprentice after witnessing the shadows of ancestors while Bimo from Liangshan was conducting ancestry communication rituals at the age of 20. He has witnessed the showing shadows of ancestors when Bimo from Liangshan was conducting ancestry communication rituals.

- (1) "One day, after my Bimo teacher finished his ritual, he brought me to meet another well-reputed Bimo master from Liangshan. I followed them to a household in Zhaotong where the son of the household told them that something bad had been happening to them and they had invited Bimo to come and see what was going on. I had learned some of the Bimo texts, so I could understand what they were chanting, but what was different this time was that the Liangshan Bimo gave me a cup of alcohol to drink before he started the ritual and told me I would see something after drinking it. I drank it, and it turned out that I really could see the ancestors in his house who had come back to collect sacrifices. They were just like ordinary people, that is, I could only vaguely see an image or shadow of them, but I couldn't see their faces clearly. I could see what they were wearing, and one of them was wearing a Chinese tunic suit. I asked the householder later if he had an ancestor who always wore a Chinese tunic suit, and he confirmed it with a description of the person's body size. I had never seen that person in his family, but after I asked, he said it was true. I was shocked."

[26 y.o. M. 6.4.2022 N]

## 4.2 Suni - Yi Shaman

Suni is the ghost communicator among Yi people akin shaman, the power of which can not be mastered by Bimo or learned. Suni was born to be a Suni. Suni is responsible for conducting exorcism, recalling souls, and spelling ghosts. The ability can not be inherited which was gained by accident or naturally mastered. Suni can be both male and female. For example, One Suni in Luchun county, Yunan explained to me how she became one. "It was totally unexpected. One night, I was walking towards home and passing by a pond. The strange white lotus was floating in the pond illuminating with white glooming. I passed by that pond almost every night, there was nothing like those lotus appeared so I thought it was phantom, however,

after that night, I can see things the others can not see. Since then I have started to be invited to communicate with ghosts and spirits for people if I can.”

YG from Liangshan, Sichuan also tells me a story about how a person became "Sunie" in her region.

- (2) "Yes, we have the same role in our community as well but we call this role as-- "Su Nie", mostly the role is undertaken by a female, she is actually similar to Bimo, but they are a little bit different. There is a teenage girl here in my region who is a Sunie but her experience was very unique as we knew. She had a reason for being a Sunie. One day she suddenly died when she was young as a kid. She was dead for sure, but after a few hours, she woke up and was revived. Later, villagers believed that if she can work as Sunie, she will be fine and her health will also be fine. And that girl is indeed amazing. She was not taught by others, but she could recite the words that Bimo and Sunie chanted."

[19 y.o. F. 8.3.2022 N ]

### **4.3 Degu - The Judge**

DeGu-the judge in the Yi community. A sentence has been used to describe the ineffectiveness of the law system or the unable to approach central power historically in the remote border area- “the heaven is high and the emperor is far away” which also can describe the administrative governance situation in Yi community, therefore, in Yi community, a role similarly as judge was generated called “Degu”. “De ” means those who are respected and “Gu ” means round, of which the connotation is to make things settled satisfactorily.

Degu mediates the conflicts according to custom law which were formed chronically and were written in Bimo script,

All the rituals held and wishes the villagers gave out tells a general philosophy or Yi's mindset that "*Ne no ne mu*" means “heaven way, heaven doings”- there are specific actions for all heaven ways(Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture Government, 2012). The heavenly way or natural law is inevitable.

𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>33</sup> 𠂇<sup>55</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup>      𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup>      𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup> 𠂇<sup>21</sup>  
 ne<sup>21</sup> so<sup>33</sup> di<sup>55</sup> mu<sup>21</sup>      ma<sup>21</sup> ne<sup>21</sup> t'a<sup>21</sup> mu<sup>21</sup>      dzɔ<sup>21</sup> zo<sup>21</sup> t'a<sup>21</sup> ts'o<sup>21</sup>  
 是 者 该 做      不 是 莫 做      路 邪 莫 行  
 是 道 则 进      非 道 则 退      不 履 邪 径

(3)

“heaven way, heaven doings”

#### 4.4 The Mode of Social Structure in Yi Community

According to the concentric-circle waves model, the closer one is to the center of the community, the stronger the bonds of relationships become. The closeness of relationships within the community is based on the circle in which a person is located and their distance from the center. In this model, the community is not a static entity but a dynamic scope centered around a unit called - family.

Interviewee LX gave me an example of this kind of “*concentric-circle waves*” community mode.

(4)

In the past, when we built the palm house in the village, the neighbours would come to help lay the bricks or polish the mud wall so that in the future, when someone else starts to build their house, they could have helpers too. This kind of mutual help in our village is tacitly agreed upon.

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

The Yi village is an organic unit where villagers grow together under their own custom, which can vary across different regions and is reflected in different folktales. Other examples of this model can be seen in marriage and funeral rituals. When a wedding is held in the village, other villagers will bring tables, desks, and tableware to the host family to help make up part of the wedding banquet. The host will offer delicate cuisine using these items. After the banquet, those who brought the tables, desks, and tableware will clean up on their own. According to LX,

(5)

"Nobody has taught us these rules for weddings, but we just do it like this because our parents did and our senior friends did."

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

The funeral ritual in the Yi village also demonstrates the "concentric-circle waves" community mode. When someone dies in the village, no matter how late it is, all the men in the village stay awake and one household must dispatch a male member to the family of the deceased to help carry the body. This demonstrates the immediate response of the community to the event, much like waves responding to a stone being dropped in a lake.

## **5. Contemporary Beliefs through Practice**

### **5.1 The Bimo Transmission of A Magic Tree**

#### **-A Collection of Narratives, Ritual Practices, and Epic Heroes**

Polytheism, ancestor worship, and hero worship are prominent tenets of Yi's contemporary beliefs. While the younger generation has been influenced by historical

materialism<sup>1</sup>, Yi people continue to adhere to Bimo scripts such as *Yi Tao Te Ching*( 彝族道德经), *WuDing Yi almanac*( 武定彝族历算书) and the *Bimo ancestral ritual guiding scripts*( 毕摩祭祀经) in regulating their moral standards and conducting important life events and everyday routines.

Polytheism is a belief system that involves the worship of multiple gods or deities. These gods and deities may be thought of as supreme beings who are responsible for various aspects of the natural or moral world (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020). The Yi ethnic group practices a form of polytheism that involves the belief in multiple deities, such as mountain gods, river gods, stone gods, and animal gods. These beliefs are often combined with the worship of totems, heroes, and ancestors who are revered by the Yi. Polytheistic beliefs and practices vary widely and may involve the worship of deities through rituals, offerings, and other forms of devotion (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020). "The Yi ethnic group has several major annual rituals that involve offerings and devotions, such as the "offering oblations to the dragon" (祭龙). These rituals will be described in further detail below."

Maurice Freedman mentioned ancestor worship in China in the book: *Ancestor Worship: Two Facets of the Chinese Case*, that In China, ancestor worship involves the belief in the potential for divine judgment and rebirth of the deceased while also honoring them as ancestors. This practice is often reflected in the complexity of a family's lineage structure and the design of their graves, with deeper and more complex lineages found in southeastern China. Chinese people may also seek benefits from their ancestors through the practice of geomancy in tomb design and view their ancestors as a source of power (Maurice Freedman, 2017, P20).

The Yi ethnic group places a great emphasis on ancestor worship and the importance of maintaining a strong connection with one's deceased ancestors. This belief is reflected in the complexity of a family's lineage structure as *Maurice Freedman* believes above that deeper and more complex lineages are often seen as more prestigious. Male members of the Yi ethnic group are particularly privileged in this system which will be more elaborate in the ritual narrative in the *practice* chapter below, as they are typically the ones responsible for performing ancestral

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<sup>1</sup> Historical materialism is a theoretical approach developed by Karl Marx that explains the development of society in terms of the material conditions (such as economic, technological, and social relations) that shape it. It posits that history is driven by the class struggle between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (the working class). According to historical materialism, the economic base of society (the mode of production) determines the superstructure (political and cultural institutions), which in turn shape the consciousness of individuals. Historical materialism is often seen as a part of Marxist theory and is used as a way to understand and critique the development of capitalism and class societies. It has also been influential in fields such as sociology and anthropology, and has been used to analyze the development of societies in different times and places.(Bukharin, N, 2013).

rituals and maintaining the ancestral shrine. Only male members of the Yi ethnic group are allowed to enter certain divine or ritual places, further reinforcing their privileged position within the community. Through these practices, male Yi individuals are able to derive various benefits from their ancestors, such as protection, blessings, and a sense of connection to their cultural heritage.

In Yi culture, ancestor worship holds a greater significance than belief in traditional Chinese philosophical concepts that are widely known and revered, such as those espoused by Confucius, such as the "Three Fundamental Bonds" (三纲) or the "Five Constant Virtues" (五常). Ancestor veneration is an integral part of Yi tradition and serves as a means of connecting with one's cultural heritage and seeking blessings and protection from one's deceased ancestors. While these philosophical concepts may have gained widespread acceptance and influence within Chinese culture, they do not hold the same level of importance as ancestor worship within Yi culture. As L. Liu mentioned that Confucian philosophy presupposes that the life of each individual is only a link in that person's family lineage and that an individual is a continuation of his ancestors. This teaching puts one's family right in the center of one's life and everyday existence. Luo Lu mentioned that Ancestor worship is an integral part of the Confucian ritual for the mass, and many of the practices are still followed today. Confucian philosophy advocates that one should strive to preserve and expand the prosperity and vitality of one's family (Lu, L., 200, 4).

The focus of this chapter is the dragon tree, a living tree that is present in every Yi village and serves as a symbol of protection for the village. To guide the reader, I must provide a brief overview of this chapter hereof. Keep in mind that the magic tree is the central focus of this chapter. In the Practice section, I provide an example of one of the most important annual ritual events centered around the dragon tree. The Connotation section explains the reasons why the dragon tree is considered the starting point of a village, highlighting its ecological and geological significance. The Heroic Epic section examines why Yi people must respect and worship the dragon tree from a mythological perspective, drawing on the story of Yi hero A Long as narrated by an elder Bimo. The value of this Yi oral narrative is emphasized.

### **5.1.1 Practice: Hero and Ancestor Worship Through Ritual Celebration Events - A Case of The Annual Dragon Offering Ceremony**

The first group of interviewees for this study consisted of Yi villagers living in Luchun county, Niukong Town, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture (绿春县, 牛孔乡, 红



河哈尼族彝族自治州). This region is home to one of the largest Yi villages in southern Yunnan, known for its annual rituals. Through the process of observing and participating in these rituals, it was possible to gain a deeper understanding of the ancestor and hero-worship belief systems of the Yi minority.

#### **5.1.1.1 Nisu Village's Annual Dragon Offering: Narratives from a Local**

The "Ceremony of Offering Sacrifice to the Dragon" (祭龙) is the largest annual event for the local Yi people. Interviewee LX, who has lived in Niukong for more than 50 years and is an authentic Yi local and male with the right to participate in this ceremony every year, provided detailed descriptions of the ritual procedures in our interview.

(6)

The "Ceremony of Offering Sacrifice to the Dragon" is an annual event that takes place on the lunar calendar date of February 2nd, according to the Yi calendar. On this day, male villagers gather in front of a "dragon tree" (龙树) to perform a sacrifice ritual, praying for a smooth living, an abundant harvest, and favourable weather for farming in the coming year. The dragon tree, which must be a teak tree, was selected by the first group of villagers who settled in the village a long time ago. The descendant of the first family to settle in the village carries a large stone during a kowtow tour after the sacrifice is performed in front of the dragon tree. The villagers contribute money to purchase a pig for the ritual and bring raw rice and dishes to the ritual site to be cooked.

Six people are chosen to organize the ritual event, with two of them selected by the Bimo to be responsible for offering sacrificed foods. However, this is not the same as it was when the interviewee was a child, as things have changed over time. When I was younger, two specialists had worked for many years offering sacrifice foods to the dragon. The dragon tree is considered a symbol of the dragon, and at least one male member from each of the 125 families in the village must participate in the event. Bimo leads two chosen villagers in a kowtow tour, with the other participants following, passing by all households in the village. Female villagers are not allowed to attend the ritual site, while Bimo chants the "Script for the Dragon Sacrifice Festival," with content that includes wishes for good health and a smooth new year for all villagers.

After the kowtow tour around the entire village is completed, elderly male villagers carry newborn male infants to kowtow in front of the dragon tree once again, offering sacrifices of cigarettes, alcohol, meat, food, dishes, and money. The elders share the sacrificial offerings and have a meal at the ritual feast. The elder gives the infant a temporary name to be used in

the ritual, and the Bimo prays for the child with this name. However, after the ritual ends, no one is allowed to mention this name again, as it is considered ominous.

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

In this ritual, we can see the changes that have occurred in the contemporary world. Previously, the ritual specialist responsible for arranging the sacrifice offerings and assisting the Bimo was a specialized, unpaid position. However, this role has now been replaced by two randomly chosen individuals who serve on a temporary basis each year. The disappearance of this fixed role in the ritual is a phenomenon reflecting the decreasing importance placed on tradition, which may be due to the shift from agricultural to factory-based production in coastal areas and the influence of modernization. Despite these changes, the ritual itself has been preserved and has not been simplified, which helps to maintain the feeling of honoring ancestors and heroes and helps younger generations understand their history and identity. For the elders, the value of the ritual is still very important, and the ritual itself also constantly reminds them of the respect accorded to the elderly in Yi society.

Having examined the origins of the Yi people as depicted in the dragon offering ceremony, here is a conviction concerning the afterlife. A majority of my interviewees have attested to the sacred nature of Zhaotong(昭通), a place where the spirits of deceased Yi individuals are said to return and where the spirits of their forebears are believed to reside. It is in this location that the Yi are thought to be reunited after death. Another tradition associated with these beliefs, as Rihuo Tiwa has mentioned, involves the utilization of Bimo's road-guiding scriptures to guide the spirit to Zhaotong(昭通)(指路经送亡灵).

(7)

Interviewer: "What is the most memorable part of the funeral tradition in your culture?"

RH: "When a person dies, they are believed to be returned to Zhaotong. We build a small house near the household that lost someone and Bimo recited scriptures to guide the dead one spirit to go back to Zhaotong. Outside the house, all the sheep are slaughtered and arranged neatly with their heads facing the direction of Zhaotong. This is believed to guide the deceased through the underworld. I'm not sure if we also have guiding stones, but we do use sheep to guide the directions."

Interviewer: "Can you explain what you mean by using sheep to guide the directions?"

RH: "We kill the sheep and arrange them in a straight line, with their heads facing the direction of Zhaotong. The recitation of scriptures by Bimo in the small house is believed to guide the deceased to their final resting place in Zhaotong."

[22 y.o. M. 5.3.2022 N]

### **5.1.1.2 The Connotations of the Dragon Tree:**

#### **5.1.1.2.1 The Yi's Practices of Habitat Selection and the Transformative Outcome of Polytheism and Hero Worship**

PMX, an authentic Yi local and researcher at the Honghe Ethnic Research Institute(红河彝族研究所) who has translated several ancient Yi script books from Yi to Chinese, such as *Yi genesis in Honghe*(红河彝族创世史诗), *The daughter of the sun and the son of the moon*(太阳女月亮儿), *Tao Te Ching Of the Yi*(彝族道德经), And she participated in the compilation of *the southern Yunnan Yi dictionary*(通用彝文字典).

She provided additional information about the "Ceremony of Offering Sacrifice to the Dragon" and its connection to the philosophy of habitation selection surrounding the Dragon tree in our interview.

(8)

Longshu grows near a water source. We can't live without mountains and water, right? If you want to find one, go to any village and observe the water sources. Villagers settle near the dragon tree because it's near a water source. Nowadays, the government has built a convenient water system, so it doesn't affect your life as much as it used to. In ancient times, ancestors had to consider the source of life when choosing where to live. Water was the most important, followed by land and ecology. Is the ecology suitable for the life of a nation like ours? We can't live without water every day and we used to burn firewood, so we need forests. We are also farmers and herdsman, so we need land. In an agricultural society, having a means of survival is very important, and the choice of place is crucial.

They usually choose a place near a mountain and build a village near a water source.

The people of Luchun must choose a village with mountains and water, and the front side of the village should be relatively open with good soil and land near a river. You need water for irrigation and drinking, so the choice of ecology is very important. He usually chooses an open place that follows the rules of geomancy, or Feng Shui, which means the natural ecology is suitable for living and meets life needs. This kind of place is considered a treasure land. The dragon tree is usually near a water source, like a dragon pool.

[42 y.o. F. 1. 15. 2022 N]

According to PMX, the dragon tree symbolizes a favorable environment and geographical conditions. The teak tree grows near a water source and provided essential living necessities before the running water system was introduced. Typically, Yi ancestors chose dragon trees that grew near a pool, also known as a dragon pool or stream, because the presence of a teak tree indicated the availability of water, forest resources, fertile soil, and a good environment. This was the most practical and direct way for Yi ancestors, who followed a pattern of agriculture and animal husbandry as their mode of production, to find a habitat within a limited time and with limited tools. The choice of location was especially important for Yi people, who lived in mountainous areas where topography brought both bountiful resources and geological disasters such as landslides and floods.

There is another reason why Yi ancestors chose a teak tree growing near a water source: they believed that where there was water, there was a dragon. The dragon lived in deep and clean water, which was thought to protect locals from disasters and evil spirits. In addition, teak trees grow fast, tall, and strong, symbolizing the power of nature and representing the Yi people's wishes for successful agricultural outcomes. This demonstrates the importance of nature and hero worship in Yi beliefs. However, Pu, as a woman, has not personally seen the dragon tree in her village or walked near the dragon pool.

The role of males in the offering ceremony of the Yi people is significant and culturally significant. According to the interviewee, males are the main participants in the ancestor-memorizing ritual led by the Bimo, a spiritual leader in Yi culture. In this role, males are responsible for various tasks such as bringing newborn males to meet the sacred dragon tree, purchasing necessary offerings such as pigs, cigarettes, rice, and alcohol, and assisting the Bimo in placing the offerings. The Bimo leads the male villagers in chanting during the ritual.

On the other hand, the role of females in the offering ceremony is traditionally more supportive. Females are responsible for tasks such as cooking and taking care of children during

the ceremony. In some villages, females are even forbidden from entering the dragon tree field or participating in the ritual. However, this is not a universal rule among the Yi people. In some villages, such as Mujipo and Gejiu, both males and females are allowed to participate in the ceremony under the dragon tree. This variation in gender roles and participation reflects the Yi people's attitudes towards gender equality and the influence of modernization on their traditional cultural practices.

(9)

PMX: In our village, it is said that girls cannot go to the dragon pool and cannot participate in the activities there, so it's a very mysterious place for me.

[42 y.o. F. 1. 15. 2022 N]

(10)

LXJ: Women are not allowed to go up there. Women are not allowed to go to the dragon tree field.

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

(11)

ZXL: On the torchlight festival, all kids, and indeed everyone, will go to the public square near the banyan tree to light torches and dance.

[33 y.o. F. 6.4.2022 N]

(12)

PQY: Everyone is welcome to rest under the banyan tree, which is also the center for all kinds of rituals.

[27 y.o. F. 9.3.2022 ]

## **5.1.2 Heroic Epic: Bimo Narrative Exploring Hero Worship and Polytheism**

### **5.1.2.1 Bimo Oral Chanting and Hero Epics: A Unique Narrative Art of the Yi**

During an interview, YZZ, a highly respected Bimo in Yuanyang County, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, China, shared a folklore about the origin of the Ceremony of Offering Sacrifice to the Dragon. This festival is a prime example of hero worship beliefs within the Yi minority. Yang began learning about Bimo culture at the age of 17 and has since mastered the Yi characters and scripts.

Bimo culture and narrative are preserved and transmitted within the Yi ethnic minority through various forms of recorded literature, including ancient books and records, oral sacrificial scriptures, and epic narratives of genesis. The term "Bimo" refers to the priests who practice and propagate this aspect of Yi religion, and the Bimo scriptures encompass a wide range of subjects, including indigenous religion, social history, politics, economy, philosophy, educational ethics, customs, ceremonies, astronomical calendar, medicine, literature, art, language, and more. Bimo culture holds a significant place within Yi culture and has had a significant impact on its development.

Here is the folklore that explains the purpose of the ceremony, which is to honor a hero known as Mr. Dragon, as well as how the dragon trees came to be:

(13)

In ancient times, the chaotic world started to change. Heaven was born on the day of Zi. Earth was born on the day of Chou. The human was born on the day of Yin. Pangu separated heaven and the earth from chaos by standing between Yin and Yang. The upper part became heaven and the lower part became earth. There were oceans on the earth, vast and with wild whiteness. The mountains were verdant and stretched out here and there. The wheel of time was spinning round and round without stopping and brought four seasons. New generations replace the old generations but the earth still exists.

The story told: monkeys had been developing into humans while humans stopped evolving. The monkey group expanded increasingly. Monkeys imitated how humans behave when humans were conducting farming work, but the monkeys could not distinguish between grass and crops and left grass instead of crops. Monkeys chatter in the forest. Making mischiefs in the field. Trampling the crops down to death. No crops could grow. Famine broke forth.

World bestowed a savour. A hero was born. His name is Mr. Dragon. His body is as robust as a bull. His fists are as mighty as tiger paws. He called his friends to create two wooden knives and two bamboo basins. One basin was filled with water and another with alcohol. Villagers attempted to attract the monkeys to imitate them by drinking water, dancing, and fighting with wooden knives while villagers left the real knives and alcohol to the monkeys. Monkeys fought and killed each other with real knives while drunk. Only if the monkey king dies, there are fewer monkeys and more people.

They chase and beat the monkey king and run into the forest. The monkeys will always be in the forest.

A few years later, monsters (Zhao) who eat humans and female monsters (rumo) who take humans' souls showed up in the human world. They had eaten villagers all over the earth. Mr. Dagon heard about the tragedy again and sneaked into the village where the monsters and female monsters live. Mr. Dragon entered their home and asked a favour from the monsters' mother- "Madam, I could not reach home tonight before the sunset. Could I stay at your home for one night?" "Monsters' mother answered: "Sorry I can not help you with that. I have nine sons so we do not have enough room for you after my sons reach home." Mr. dragon insisted on staying by conceiving her that his home is too far away from here.

After a while, Mr. Dragon said: "I am hungry." Then he took out iron sand and an iron ball to overawe the monsters' mother. "Could you please help me to burn them up? Because those are my dinner." After he finished eating dinner, he was thirsty and asked for the molten iron to drink. The monsters' mother was so frightened that she could not say anything. Soon, the sons came back and sensed the smell of humans and asked: "if there are any living humans in the house today?" The monsters' mother replied: "you have eaten human flesh, and it must be the smell of blood left on your own body." The monster's sons said: "I come back home every day without the smell on my body." The monsters' mother had to admit there is a human staying at home tonight but she also warned her kids the strange human is too strong for them as prey because he ate the iron sands and drank the molten iron. The monsters leap up and down for joy without considering the warning. Both clashed and fought, but the monsters couldn't beat the dragon. They turned into birds and tried to escape from Mr. Dragon, however, Mr. Dragon chased them tight and turned into a bird as well. The last monster son who survived ran to the underworld and told King Yama what Mr. Dragon did. King Yama released the soldiers underground to fight with Mr. Dragon, and Mr. Dragon was beaten to death in the end. He was shaved into powder and scattered around the village. One day, a tree grew in the village near the palace where Mr. Dagon's ashes were scattered and it became the current dragon tree in the village to protect all villagers from evils.

Since then, all villagers start to hold a sacrifice ceremony and offer oblations to memorise Mr. Dagon under the dragon tree every year. Tens of thousands of birds live on the tree. There are five eggs in the bird's nest on the tree, red, green, yellow, black,

and white eggs. Birds scramble the beautiful eggs so that nobody knows what kind of egg is anymore. It was a wild duck's egg after hatching. The mischievous child took the bird net from the dragon tree. The duck flew away. Darkness and brightness are indistinguishable in heaven and earth. The strong bully and kill the weak, the male is widowed, and the female cannot get married. People felt as though the water had risen to their lips, as though they were singed by fire. Villagers hoped to find the Dragon god to save them again but they could not so they invited sparrows and swallows to live in their home and then the Dragon god came back again. Villagers leave the rooftop for sparrows as their shelter. Sparrows are village gods since then. Villagers invited swallows to live in their homes as Grind Gods. All villagers hold an annual ceremony to offer oblations to the Dragon and prepare colorful eggs for kids to play with on that day since then in case they climb on the dragon tree again. Year after year, the villagers have become rich and healthy. Women and men look truly radiant. Good days have come since then.

[64 y.o. F. 1. 6. 2022 Legend BC]

#### **5.1.2.2 Analysis of Oral Narrative From Bimo and Pentagraphic Social Structure**

According to Fu Guangyu (1984), the Yi people have five myths about the creation of the world, including 1) the combination of materials such as Sha and E or light Qi and Thick Qi; 2) the creation by a heaven god; 3) the creation by Pangu; 4) the evolution of monkeys into humans; and 5) the creation of ancestors from totems.

Fu also categorizes these myths as 1) creation, 2) evolution, 3) creation of change, and 4) separation. In addition, Fu discusses the structure of Yi genesis and myths in relation to the trifunctional hypothesis proposed by French religious scholar Georges Dumezil (1940), which posits a tripartite ideology reflected in the existence of three classes or castes - priests, warriors, and commoners - corresponding to the three functions of the sacral, the martial, and the economic, respectively. Fu argues that the structure of Yi myths follows this pattern due to their connection to the ancient Yi social structure or ranking system, including the stratifications of Zi(兹), Mo(莫), and Bi(毕). However, the author believes that the application of the trifunctional hypothesis from Christianity to explain Yi vernacular beliefs is not rooted in the soil.

In this context, a Yi folklore, chanted in Yi language by local Bimo Yang and translated with the assistance of younger Bimo LongXueyou in Luchun, Yunnan, was passed down from



generation to generation and written in Yi script kept by Yang Zhongzheng. The value of this chanting should not be underestimated.

The story of Mr. Dragon falls into the genesis category of Evolution, and Ancestors Totem came up by Fu. Meanwhile, the author applies pantographic structure to explain folklore. Pentagraphic structure originates from five elements, and the author believes that pantographic structure is the core principle in Yi society. First, Yi social structure can be classified as more than three as mentioned above but five, which are Zi(兹), Mo(莫), Bi(毕), Ge(格), Zhuo(卓). Ge means craftsman, and Zhuo means civilian. The former three stratifications rule the latter two. Second, Five colors were used as the name of mountains, rivers, and directions, and it was also mentioned in the last paragraph of Mr. Dragon's story that "There are five eggs in the bird's nest on the tree, red, green, yellow, black, and white eggs." In the Yi region, according to the ancient names of nowadays rivers, Yi has rivers named by color, Bluewater is Wujiang(乌江), Redwater is Honghe(红河), Blackwater is Jingshajian(金沙江), White Mountain is Cang Sha(苍山).

Furthermore, the branches of Yi are classified as Red Yi, Blue Yi, Yellow Yi, White Yi, and Black Yi, and are named after the directions East Blue, South Red, West White, North Black, and Center Yellow (东方青, 南方赤, 西方白, 北方黑, 中央黄) in ancient Yi script *Yuzhourenwenlun*(宇宙人文论) (Luo, G. Y., Chen, Y., & Ma, X. L., 1984). The author also observed that the location of the branches of Yi, including rivers and mountains, miraculously aligns with the direction of color. The deep roots of the five colors can be traced back to the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth from Chinese philosophy, the Chinese eight diagrams, and the philosophy of change. Additionally, it is a fundamental aspect of Yi cosmology.

The Yi folklore is rich in metaphor and often uses it to convey deeper meanings. In this folklore, for example, the story of Mr. Dragon falls into the category of evolution, while the concept of ancestors from totem comes from Fu Guangyu. The author also uses the pantographic structure to explain the folklore, which is based on the five elements and is believed to be the core principle in Yi society. The Yi society is traditionally divided into five strata: Zi(兹) - chieftain, Mo(莫) - judge, Bi(毕) - Bimo, Ge(格) - craftsman, and Zhuo(卓) - civilian. The five colors are also used as names for mountains, rivers, and directions, and are closely tied to the locations of different branches of the Yi people. These colors – blue, red, yellow, white, and black – are derived from the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and

earth in Chinese philosophy, as well as from the Chinese eight diagrams and the philosophy of change.

Metaphors in Yi folklore often serve a dual purpose, acting as both a phenomenon in and of itself and as a representation of the primary subject being discussed. According to Andrew Ortony, A metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects: the "primary" subject and the "secondary" one. In Metaphor, Andrew Ortony holds the view instead of the "principal" and "subsidiary" subjects. The duality of reference is marked by the contrast between the metaphorical statement's focus (the word or words used nonliterally) and the literal frame. (Andrew Ortony, 1993)

### 5.1.3 The Embodiments of Ancestor Worship by Yi House Decoration

#### 5.1.3.1 “Ancestor’s House” in the Living Room

The Yi people believe that every human has three souls that emerge from the body after death. According to the Bimo guiding scripts for death to the underworld, "one will stay with the body in the tomb, one will go to the underworld to reincarnate, and the last one will stay in the ancestral hall." In Yi families, a unique decorative feature can be found in the living room - a small square hole in the center of the ancestral hall or living room (see Figure 1).

Photographs are particularly good vehicles for such meanings, because they naturalize them. They can be thought of as just ‘finding’ these meanings on the street, as it were, rather than ‘constructing’ them. And they can also be thought of as not quite ‘spelling out’ their message, not saying it ‘in so many words’, so that that message can be construed as ‘read into it’ by the viewer, rather than as communicated by a powerful social institution (Van Leeuwen, T., & Jewitt, C. (Eds.), 2001).



*Figure 1.* Ancestry’s little house in the center of living room in the new house

Source: Photographed by LHM

The daily routine of Yi people, as well as some knowledge about the "Little House of Ancestors," has been shared by LHM, a member of the Yi branch of Mujipo (母基颇/母基颇). Li's village is located in Duimenshang Village, Honghe Hani, and Yi minority Autonomous Prefecture, Gejiu City, Yunnan, China. According to LHM, "We have a square hole in the living room, right in the center of the wall facing the door and above the ancestor sacrifice table. Yi people sacrifice food and dishes on the table and worship ancestors before dinner. The square hole is the ancestors' communication gate or emblem, so Yi people put a small desk made of bamboo and corn straws in the hole. It is considered ominous if a cat can get inside the hole. Even when Yi people build new houses now, we still leave this setting on the wall. It is very disrespectful not to worship ancestors."

Ancestor worship, especially in its supportive form, serves the function of bracing the normative system and providing kinsmen with additional motivation to conform to those norms (Sheils, D., 1975).



Figure 2. Ancestry's little house in the center of the living room in the old soil-palm house

Source: Photographed by LHM

Several antithetical couplets (pairs of lines with opposite or similar meanings) were pasted on the wall near the "Little House of Ancestors." The following is the content of these couplets:

(14)

杨氏祖宗香位， 天地国亲师位， 事业繁荣好， 生活美满月长顺。

*Here, Incense offerings to Yang's ancestors were set.*

*Here, Offerings for heaven, earth, country, teacher were set.*

*Wish career went prosperous,*

*Wish family to live a happy and long life.*

[49 y.o. F. 1. 2. 2022 Materials]

## 5.2 Vernacular Belief of The Yi and the Concept of Intuition

The main difference between "institutional or official ethnology research" and "local ethnology and Bimo literature" is that the former is typically conducted by outsiders, while the latter is typically written by Yi people themselves. This can help to avoid the *reflexive turn* and provides a more authentic portrayal of Yi vernacular beliefs.

This study has collected various individual cases described by Yi people from different regions, which largely avoids the reflexive turn and reflects the indigenous nature of Vernacular belief (Primiano., 1995). This is a significant difference from "the institutional or official ethnology researches, travelers notes/publications from scholars," as the "ethnographers" in this study are the Yi people themselves.

The religion as it lived. Vernacular belief is originally derived from an architectural concept called vernacular architecture(Primiano, 1995, 52). The idea is that buildings in different places are constructed using local materials and in a specific environment. This concept is similar to *Martin Heidegger's* idea of dwelling, in which a building exists because it should be there, not because it was purposely constructed. The existence of a certain structure is taken for granted.

An informant told me that he is worried about the disappearance of Yi's religions and Bimoism because Yi people do not have a church and they perform rituals in random places in the forest, which means that Bimoism is not institutionalized.

Before discussing the beliefs of Yi people in their daily lives, it is worth examining how these beliefs and customs have developed over time, how they differ among Yi communities scattered throughout the region, and how these "concepts" are generated.

The Yi people's idiosyncratic concepts of nature and cosmos worship are prevalent and even form a significant part of their belief system, including practices such as "predicting directions when lost in the forest by bundling grass on a tree," "crying in front of a mountain when disease occurs," and "giving newborn infants names based on directions, time, and nature icons."

(15)

PMX: In the past, when we didn't have phones, I used to go herding cattle with my friends when I was young. We sometimes lost cattle, so we would tie grass onto a tree and see which direction the grass pointed after we circled it nine times. It was said that this was the direction in which the cattle had gone.

[42 y.o. F. 1. 15. 2022 N]

(16)

YG: There is a mysterious mountain that is said to have the power to bring rain. When it hasn't rained for an extended period and you wish for precipitation, you can take a disabled or unhealthy child to the mountain and have them scream and cry at the base of it. Legend has it that this will cause the clouds to open up and release the rain you desire. Some say that the mountain possesses a magical energy that responds to the pleas of the vulnerable, while others believe that it is a spiritual being with the ability to control the weather. Regardless of the explanation, many people have claimed that this technique has brought them the rain they needed in their times of drought.

[19 y.o. F. 8. 3. 2022 N]

(17)

JA: In our tradition, we believe that the direction of the mother's life palace at the time of a child's birth can influence their destiny. Therefore, we choose names for our newborns based on this location. The life palace is divided into eight directions: North, West, South, East, Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast. For instance, if a mother's life palace was in the West when she gave birth, we might name her child Lobure, meaning "son of the East," as a way of honoring this significant location and hoping to bring balance and good fortune to the child's life. This naming ritual is just one of the many ways that we try to imbue our children with positive energy and blessings from the start of their lives.

[25 y.o. M. 5. 3. 2022 N]

One of the most prominent and significant examples of cosmology within the *Ancient Encyclopedia of the Yi Nationality* (西南彝志/哎哺啥额) is the concept of Yir(哎) and Bbop(哺). Yir and Bbop are the Yin and Yang, which were created by Sha(啥) and E(额), representing clear spirit and turbid spirit, respectively (Chan Changyou, 2000). This concept is deeply ingrained in the mythology and cultural traditions of the Yi people.

*The Ancient Encyclopedia of the Yi Nationality* includes a case of cosmology folklore in its first chapter, titled "Genesis," which describes the creation of the world (Chan Changyou, 2000). According to this myth, the world was created when Gold Lock was born.

(18)

*Yir and Bbop were not generated before the sky was formed.*

*Sha and E were formed at the very beginning.*

*Sha produces green and E produces Red.*

*Green turned into darkness and Red turned into clearness.*

*The shadow of Sha looks like a beauty dressed in shining apparel.*

*The shadow of E is like a gorgeous braid. The sun is bright and the moon is gold.*

*The father and mother of Yir and Bbop started to have changed.*

*Silvery Yir and golden Bbop were created thereafter.*

*Yir and Bbop combined together and formed 15 layers of Yir,  
which became the sky later on and the earth was formed as well.*

*Nv Lou<sup>2</sup> appeared to govern the world created.*

*He put white Yir in three directions.*

*Yir looks like a round sun, Yir looks like the moon,*

*He is speaking the celestial language, holding a gold lock key.*

*In his heart, he meditated on knowledge,*

*Earth and The sky, He unlocked the golden lock,*

*The silver gate between earth and sky was unlocked,*

*Li and Kan were separated, Yir and Bbop were separated.*

*Knowledge increased. The sun found its position.*

*Yir and Bbop generated wind, fog, thunder, rainbow, stars, milkyway.*

*Yir and Bbop combined again and generated,*

*blue sky, forest, bear, deers, crane, and cuckoo.*

*⟨Ancient Encyclopedia of the Yi Nationality, BS, 2000⟩*

In Buddhism, *Brahman* and *Atman* are an undifferentiated aesthetic continuum. undifferentiated *Atman-that-is-Brahman* without a difference, which, like the pool embracing its transitory waves, is identical not merely in all persons but also is the divine

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<sup>2</sup> Nv Lou is similar role as Heaven God in Yi language

consciousness(Northrop, F. S. C., 1964, 1). In Taoist philosophy, Yin and Yang are two parts of Tao that belong to a differentiated aesthetic continuum. They are distinct but integral to the whole or the ultimate unity of Tao, known as taiji. These two elements are dynamic and can transform into each other. The concept of Yir and Bbop in the Ancient Encyclopedia of the Yi Nationality as the two elements that created the world is similar to this idea, as Yir and Bbop are differentiated aesthetic continuums of Sha and E, respectively. This philosophy aligns with the idea of Tao as a homogenous unity.

This article argues that the primitive Yi philosophy, as documented in *The Ancient Encyclopedia of the Yi*, shares the same roots as Chinese indigenous religions, specifically Taoism. The Yi people have developed and enriched Taoism with new values and practices through their daily life and religious rituals, using intuition and experience to examine it in life and nature. This process eventually resulted in the creation of Bimoism, which is not just a religion but also a lifestyle and a container of custom law that shapes Yi cultural practices and traditions. *It is a way of communicating, thinking, behaving within, and conforming to, a particular cultural circumstance*(Primiano., 1995, 42). It manifested the art in creativity and artistry in vernacular religions. This human artistry is as meaningful as the creation, performance, and communication of any number of folklore genres that have interesting folklore and folklife scholars for generations(Primiano, L. N., 1995, 44).

### **5.3 The Collective Common Symbols in Yi Vernacular Beliefs**

#### **5.3.1 The Overlapped Memory in Different Genesis**

Ethnic identity is often distinguished by a common or shared memory rather than instinct. According to Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong, culture is the common experience of society that is maintained through symbolic systems and individual memory. (Fei, X., 1992, 812) In this view, culture is passed down from one generation to the next through shared experiences and cultural practices that are remembered and preserved by individuals within a society.

"Historical narrative and its symbolic metaphors and plots" are recognized in ancestor worship ceremonies. Oral narrative as ancestor memory and historical memory and ancestor worship ceremony constitute an organic unity. As Halbwach argues in *"The Social Environment of Memory"* and *"On Collective Memory"*, "Social memory and how memory is

constructed is through the participants' social group identities—kinship, religion, and belonging, to access, locate and recall their own memories(Halbwachs, M., 1992).”

While there are many different versions of the Yi people's creation myths, they all contain common symbols and motifs that have been passed down through the generations. These symbols, such as totems and shared worship icons, have persisted among the Yi people even as they have migrated to different regions over the course of hundreds and thousands of years. Despite their geographic and cultural diversity, the Yi people have maintained a strong sense of shared identity and cultural continuity through these common symbols and practices. This article will introduce several brief versions of the Yi people's creation myths, including classic folktales published in the Chinese language and an oral story collected by the author through an interview with a member of a bimo family in Sichuan. These stories provide insight into the cultural traditions and beliefs of the Yi people, and offer a glimpse into their rich history and sense of identity.

"The Yi people's oral narratives and bimo texts often include common characters and elements that reflect their cultural traditions and beliefs about the creation of the world and humans. These stories may include themes such as big floods, heroes who save the world from disaster, divines who create, and creation through the element of air. These elements help to shape the Yi people's understanding of the world and their place within it. Myth is the misunderstood history biograph(Campbell, J., 2008).

One of the most well-known creation myths among the Yi people is the story of *ApuDumu*(阿普笃慕), an ancestor who is revered by Yi people across all six language regions. *ApuDumu* is often mentioned in oral narratives and bimo texts, and is described as a heroic figure who is central to the origin myth of the Yi people. Much like how many Han Chinese believe they are descended from Yan and Huang, the Yi people view *ApuDumu* as their most influential leader and primogenitor. According to my interviews with JA, YG, MK, and PMX (representatives from the North, South, and Western dialect areas), *ApuDumu* is a common figure in their cultural traditions and is revered as an important symbol of Yi identity.

(19)

RH: All Yi people belong to one family. We seek common understanding and a sense of shared identity. For instance, we are all descendants of Abu Dumu, which helps us feel a strong sense of belonging and connection to one another. This shared ancestry



gives us a sense of unity and the belief that, no matter what challenges we face, we can always come together as a solid, supportive unit.

[22 y.o. M. 5.3.2022 N]

(20)

PMX: After a catastrophic event wiped out humanity, the heaven god embarked on a journey to see if any survivors remained. The god searched far and wide, scouring the earth for any sign of human life. After a long and tireless quest, the heaven god finally found one lone survivor: our ancestor, Abu Dumu. Despite the odds, Abu Dumu had managed to survive the disaster and carry on the legacy of humanity. The heaven god was relieved to find that not all was lost, and Abu Dumu became the progenitor of a new generation of humans.

[42 y.o. F. 1. 15. 2022 N]

ApuDumu is a central figure in the Yi people's creation myths, and is believed to have been born around 9 BC as the son of WuCuoluo(武洛撮) (Wang Tianxi & Zhang Xinchang, 2012). WuCuoluo is associated with the end of the three great cycle years, and ApuDumu is seen as the origin of all Yi branches that currently exist. According to ancient archives such as "*The Origin of the Yi Ethnic Group*"(彝族源流) and "*The Ancient Encyclopedia of the Yi Nationality*,"(西南彝志/哎哺啥额), ApuDumu is the father of six Yi branch ancestors: Wu, Zha, Ni, Heng, Bu, and Mo.

According to these sources, ApuDumu migrated to Zhaotong and Yuannan to avoid catastrophic floods. Later, his six sons had to migrate to other regions in the upper Jinsha river, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Guangxi due to population increase and wars. The Yi people consider this period to be the starting point of the division of the Yi into six branches(六祖分支), or Yi Six ancestors.

This article will compare two versions of folklore about ApuDumu in Sichuan and Yunnan: one recorded by Lizenghua in South Yunnan's Xizhong region in *The Legend of Apu Dumu, the Ancestor of the Yi Ethnic Group* 《彝族祖先阿普笃慕的传说》," and another told by my interviewee JA from a Bimo family.

### 5.3.1.1 The Legend of Apu Dumu - the Ancestor of the Yi Ethnic Group in Yunnan

(21) In ancient times, three types of humans appeared on the earth: those with one eye, those with one vertical eye, and those with one round eye. One-eye humans have a triangle eye, and

round-eye humans only have one eye above their nose. One-eyed humans are savage and absurd. They have never held any rituals to worship earth and heaven, never sacrificed to their ancestors, and committed all kinds of wrongdoings like stealing and robbery. All kinds of evil demeanor enraged the divines on the earth and in heaven; therefore, the divines decided to punish them by sending misfortune to the temporal world, such as drought lasting for ten years. One-eyed humans are distinguished due to the severe drought. Round eye humans replaced one-eyed humans; however, one-eyed humans still went their old ways.

Heaven emperor Cegezi summoned earth emperor Heiduofan and the water emperor to discuss the solutions; therefore, they decided to dispatch three fair children to observe the human world. They will decide if they will release the big floods to the human world.

The fair children wanted to test the quality of humans, so they rode their flying horses to the human world and arrived at a wealthy family's house in the eastern land. The house was supported by gold and decorated with silver tiles, with silk carpets on the floor. The three fair children told the rich man that the wings of the Heaven Emperor Cegezi's horse had been broken and its joints dislocated, and that they needed human blood and meat to cure it. However, the rich man replied: "We drink fine wine, eat tasty meat, wear silky clothes, and use brocade as carpets. We have a full cabin of gold and silver, but these were not bestowed upon us by heaven, so we will not even give you crap, let alone our blood and meat." The three fair children received similar replies when they visited the northern, southern, and western lands, and they were very disappointed.

As they were about to leave, they saw a thin older man plowing in a rural place on a high mountain, where the peak reached into the sky. The soil there was red and unfertilized, amid stones. The older man was ApuDumu, who had been born in the ending period of the round-eyed human era and was miraculously assigned two eyes on either side of his nose, earning him the name of "horizontal-eyed human" and "temporal human."

"We are really starving. Could you please spare us some cold rice?" the three fair children asked. "I'm sorry, I don't have any cold rice, but I still have some rice left at home that I can cook for you," Apudumu replied.

"We haven't tasted meat in days. Do you have any to share with us?" the three fair children asked.

"I don't have any meat, but I do have a small chicken that I can kill for you," Apudumu replied, and he sacrificed the only chicken he had to feed the fairy children.

However, the fairy children demanded more from Apudumu, claiming that they were divine beings from heaven. They told him that the wings of the Heaven Emperor Cegezi's horse had been broken and its joints dislocated, and that they needed human blood and meat to cure it.

"Please give me the dagger hanging at your waist. I will cut some flesh from my thigh and release blood from my finger for you," Apudumu replied.

Fairychildren finally found a good-hearted person and told Apudumu the truth: "We came to this world, not really begging for human flesh and blood from human beings, but the heaven emperor Cegezi sent us to observe if people have good heart, in the near future, there will be a flood from heaven to punish the human beings in the world, and only good-hearted people can escape this disaster." Fairychildren gave Apudumu a gourd seed and told Apudumu: "Plant the gourd seed in spring, build a trellis for it in summer, and the gourd will grow in autumn."

The gourd grew day by day, without stop, and by autumn it was as big as a granary. Apudumu prepared for the flood as the fair children had instructed, and he also spread this information to the world because he didn't want to see others suffer. However, others built gold, silver, and tin cabins to try to escape the floods.

It had been raining for seven days when the flood submerged the villages, fields, mountains, and deep valleys all the way to the Nantian Gate. All the gold, silver, copper, and iron cabinets sank to the bottom of the water.

Apudumu was the only survivor of the flood disaster. He hid inside a gourd that floated up to the sky. After the flood reached the Nantianmen, the heaven emperor created nine suns to burn the surface of the water during the day and eight moons at night for seven days and seven nights. When the flood subsided, the gourd slowly fell down from the sky and got stuck between the branches of a Red Azalea(马樱花). There were two wild bamboos and a clump of sharp blade grass(尖刀草) growing next to the Red Azalea tree. When Apudumu came out of the gourd, he saw no animals, sounds, or fire. He felt so miserable and cried for three days. The heaven god took pity on Apudumu and believed it was too cruel to let him live alone. So, he summoned the youngest daughters of the sun god, the moon god, and the gate god and commanded them to marry Apudumu.

From then on, Apudumu's three wives each gave birth to two sons, resulting in a total of six sons: Mu Yaqie, Mu Ya Kao, Mu Ya Re, Mu Ya Wo, Mu Ke Ke, and Mu Qi Qi. When these six sons grew up, they moved from their original residence to Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi provinces, forming a tribe known as the "Six Patriarch Branch" in history. Apudumu and his six sons developed legal and ceremonial systems for politics, economics, military affairs, taxation, marriage, funerals, and sacrifices. They are revered as the ancestors of the Yi people everywhere.

(Lizenghua, 2020 L)

The Legend of Apudumu, Ancestor of the Yi Nationality" is an epic of the creation of the Yi. In the inhabited areas of the Yi nationality in central and southern Yunnan, there are not only ancient Yi writing records, but also folk myths and legends that have been orally circulated by the people. This article is based on ancient Yi records and folk oral myths and legends.

### 5.3.1.2 The Legend of Apu Dumu - the Ancestor of the Yi Ethnic Group in Sichuan

According to interviewee JA, who was born into a Bimo family and resides in the north Yi dialect region:

(22)

*In ancient times, a catastrophic flood destroyed the human world, filling the earth and heaven with water. ApuDumu was the only survivor because he had a good heart. The divine sent three daughters to marry Apudumu, and they had three sons, but all of them were unable to speak. Apudumu learned from nature that lighting bamboo can produce an explosive sound, so he lit three bamboos. Magically, all of his sons were able to speak. The first son's first word was "Ou ya," making him the ancestor of Tibetan; the second son said "a ya," making him the ancestor of Yi; and the third son said "A ba ba," making him the ancestor of Han. Tibetan, Yi, and Han all originated from the same branch.*

[25 y.o. M. 5. 3. 2022 L]

Some images or symbols mentioned in the first genesis recorded from the south Yi dialect region are still used during rituals as divine messenger symbols. For example, the "Sharp blade grass (尖刀草)" and "bamboo" are used in the dragon worship ritual in Luchun county to bond two bamboo sticks to the dragon tree. Bimo priests entwine sharp blade grass strands around the dragon tree seven times with two bamboo sticks, while singing loudly in Yi language "sen mo" (meaning "wish for more daughters"). Bimo priests also entwine sharp blade grass strands around the dragon tree nine times, while singing "sen pu" (meaning "wish for more sons"), in the hope of having more sons the following year.

The third image is the Red Azalea (马樱花), which is used as a type of cloth pattern for Mujipo and Red Yi women and is considered the ethnic flower of the Yi people. According to the women in Mujipo village, the Red Azalea is the most beautiful flower because it is as fiery and bright as fire, and it is believed to bring good luck. The Red Azalea grows in bushes or under pine trees at altitudes of 1200-3200 meters on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau.

The symbols from ancient mythology, which are used in rituals and exist in reality, serve as conduits and triggers for the enduring ethos of this ethnic group at any location and time. These symbols are beyond the senses and transcendent. This may also explain why Suni can

bring ordinary people into a manic state. "Sharp blade grass (尖刀草)", "bamboo", and "Red Azalea (马缨花)" are not just plants in reality, but also have symbolic meanings in mythology. They act as a bridge connecting the enduring ethnic ethos to our senses rather than having any inherent meaning or significance. These elements are the result of symbolism. The sign, consisting of signifiers and the signified, represents the enduring ethnic ethos (De Saussure, 2011).

To use an analogy, bamboo in relation to the ethos is similar to the word "apple" in relation to a round, red, sweet object. During a ritual, for example, when we see bamboo bonded by sharp blade grass stuck in the soil with people around the collection of these "signifiers" - some of whom may be women wearing dresses with red azalea patterns - the collection of these "signifiers" along with the "signified" (enduring ethnic ethos) becomes a form of expression, a symbol of Yi culture. Just as Westerners knock on wood when they believe something unlucky will happen, wood represents a system for removing bad luck. The connection between the signified and signifier is arbitrary in linguistics but is also connected to the collective unconsciousness among Yi people.

Through the lens of Lacan's theory, the myth of ApuDumu and the flood can be analyzed as a story about the hero's formation of their sense of self and their place within society. At the beginning of the story, the hero is portrayed as being different from the other humans due to his horizontal eyes, which sets him apart and potentially makes him an outsider in society. However, through his actions and interactions with the fair children, ApuDumu is able to develop a sense of self that is centered around compassion and selflessness. He willingly offers the fair children food and shelter, even though he has very little to give, and ultimately sacrifices his own flesh and blood to help them. This selfless behavior is ultimately what earns him the title of "good-hearted" and allows him to survive the flood. Lacan's theory would suggest that the hero's sense of self is formed through his interactions with others and the cultural norms and expectations of society. In this case, ApuDumu's self is shaped by his willingness to help others and his adherence to the cultural values of compassion and selflessness. The myth also highlights the role that language and communication play in the formation of the hero's identity, as it is through his interactions with the fair children that he learns about the impending flood and is able to spread the warning to others.

In this myth, the concept of the "mirror stage" can be seen in the way that the different types of humans are distinguished by their physical features, particularly their eyes. The one-eyed humans, with their triangle-shaped eyes, are portrayed as savage and lacking in moral

virtues. In contrast, the round-eyed humans are wealthy and self-centered, while the horizontal-eyed humans, represented by ApuDumu, are depicted as kind and selfless. These physical differences reflect the way in which the different types of humans perceive and construct their own identities, as well as the way in which they are perceived by others. The myth also touches on the concept of the "Other," or the external forces that shape an individual's sense of self. In this case, the divines and the fair children represent the Other, as they have the power to punish or reward the humans based on their actions. The fair children's test for humans demonstrates how external expectations and evaluations can shape an individual's sense of self-worth and identity. Finally, the concept of language and communication plays a significant role in the myth, as it is through language that the fair children communicate with the humans and convey their expectations and evaluations. The humans' responses to the fair children's requests reveal their own values and beliefs, and the fact that ApuDumu is able to understand and communicate with the fair children sets him apart from the other humans. Language, therefore, serves as a means of both shaping and expressing identity in this myth.

Here is a trial of Lacanian analysis of a myth based on his three orders: the symbolic order, the imaginary order, and the real order (Lacan, J., 2001). Three orders together comprise a complex topological space in which the characteristic disorderly motions of the human mind can be plotted. To analyze the myth of ApuDumu and the flood using Lacan's three orders, one could consider the following:

The symbolic order: The myth is structured around a set of cultural and societal norms that shape the hero's actions and decisions. For example, the fair children test the humans to see if they are good-hearted, which reflects a cultural value that emphasizes compassion and selflessness. Additionally, the hero's willingness to help others and sacrifice his own well-being is in line with these cultural values. The myth also includes elements of language and communication, such as the fair children's requests for food and shelter and the hero's warning to others about the impending flood, which further demonstrate the role of the symbolic order in shaping the hero's sense of self and place in society.

The imaginary order: The myth includes elements of the hero's subjective experiences and perceptions, such as his initial feelings of isolation due to his different appearance and his later sense of pride and fulfillment after being deemed good-hearted. The hero's interactions with the fair children also reveal his imaginations and fantasies, such as his willingness to sacrifice his own flesh and blood to help them. These experiences and perceptions shape the hero's sense of self and identity.

The real order: The myth touches on the unconscious and the unspeakable through the idea of the impending flood, which represents a raw, unmediated experience that cannot be fully understood or represented through language or symbols. The hero's reaction to this experience, including his efforts to prepare and warn others, reveals his unconscious desires and fears. The myth also includes elements of the hero's relationships with others, which can be seen as representing the unspoken dynamics and emotions that shape these interactions.

## **5.4 Nature Worship and Reanimalist**

The Yi people have always had a deep respect for nature and this reverence can be seen in many aspects of their everyday life. They consider a variety of natural objects to be sacred, including animals, plants, fire, trees, stone, mountains, and rivers. These objects serve as totems and symbols of the divine for the Yi people, representing the interconnectedness of all living things and the spiritual forces that bind them together. For the Yi, nature is not just a backdrop to life, but a vital part of it, and they seek to live in harmony with the natural world. This appreciation for the natural world is an integral part of Yi culture and has shaped the way they view the world and their place in it.

### **5.4.1 Nature Worship Beliefs and the Notion of Totem**

#### **5.4.1.1 Honoring Ancestors: The Ancestry Spirit Sending Ceremony**

Totem worship was common in early Yi history, as the Yi ethnic community was originally organized into clans and lineages (Jiazhi). Totems could be unique to each lineage or shared by multiple lineages within the same clan. The Yi people believed that totems had spiritual powers and could protect and guide them. They would often carve or paint images of their totems on their homes, clothing, or ritual objects to honor and invoke their protection. Totem worship was an important aspect of Yi culture and played a significant role in shaping their beliefs and practices.

The Yi term "Linyi" is the equivalent of the "Clan totem" in Liangshan, Sichuan. Instead of the ancestry spirit sending ceremony (SongZhulingDi 利姆比错), or as Han refers to it, "Dojo," the creation of the lineage totem is based on natural selection by sheep.

(23)

The Yi people in Liangshan, Sichuan, hold a traditional ancestral spirit-sending ceremony called *Songzuling* after the death of a relative, usually after one year or several years. During the ceremony, the Yi people send the spirit of their loved one back to the spirit plate Lingpai

after cremation, so that they may reunite with their ancestors. The ceremony is held according to one lineage unit, which means that all people who are related to the ancestor through blood must attend. The *Songzuling* ceremony is an important part of Yi culture and serves as a way for the Yi people to honor and pay respect to their ancestors.

In the "eleventh" ritual of the ancestral spirit-sending ceremony, the Yi people pray for abundant offspring in the lineage through a series of complicated rituals. Two sub-lineages with overpopulated populations that originally belonged to the same lineage choose a female baby sheep and go through the rituals with the Bimo chanting scripts to pray. At the end, the sheep are released to the realm of Limubicuo(利姆比错), and people follow them to see what they touch or do. The items they touch are then defined as the new totem of the sub-lineage. For instance, if the sheep drink water, eat grass and leaves, or rest under a rock, the new totem will be water, a tree, grass, a piece of land, or a rock. If the new totem is a tree, it cannot be cut for a year, and if it is a piece of land, no one can farm it. This ritual is an important part of Yi culture and serves as a way to determine new totems and show respect to the ancestors.

⟨Ma Linying. 2005 N⟩

#### 5.4.1.2 The Art of Naming in Yi Culture

According to interviewees, the second manifestation of nature worship beliefs in the totem is how Yi people give names.

According to JA, Yi people also name their newborns based on objects they worship, which they consider to be totems of their national beliefs. The first and most common object of worship is the tiger, which has a long history among the Yi people.

(24)

JA: "La si" means tiger, and "La Zi" means the son of the tiger, while "La Mu" means the mother of the tiger. "La Mu Zi" and so on are also based on the tiger. The second most common object of worship is the leopard, which is called "La Ri" in Yi and represents power. "Ri ah" means the black panther. Some names are based on the eagle, with "Zhu Ri" meaning the son of the eagle, and others are based on stones, which the Yi people believe have spirits. "Ru Gan" means a slowly growing stone, and "Ganri Fuyu" means a stone, among others. The Yi people's belief that all things in the world have spirits, including stones, is a key aspect of their culture.

[25 y.o. M. 5. 3. 2022 N]



The Yi people have a long tradition of naming their newborns after objects that they worship, which they consider to be totems of their national beliefs. The first and most common object of worship among the Yi is the tiger, which holds a special place in their culture and history. In addition to the tiger, the Yi people also believe that all things in the world have spirits, including stones, trees, and even rivers. This belief in the spiritual essence of the natural world is a fundamental aspect of Yi culture and shapes the way they view and interact with the environment around them. As a result, the objects that the Yi worship and the names they give their children are closely tied to their spiritual beliefs and practices.

#### 5.4.1.3 The Stone Worship Ceremony

LXJ described a stone worship ceremony that is part of the Dragon Offering Ceremony in Luchun County, Yunnan. During this ceremony, an old Bimo chooses a round and beautiful stone, which is placed on a plate and supported by an ugly stone. The Bimo then pours a bowl of white spirit and chants texts while holding the bowl.

According to LXJ, the Bimo says:

(25)

"Stone god, you are so perfect and round growing in the forest and in nature. We worship you and present you with good alcohol on this special day. We hope you can give the village more beautiful and handsome kids as you are in the future." The Bimo and all the villagers then kowtow and chant "Suo Suo! Suo Suo!" which means begging for more good kids. After the ceremony, the stone is moved and placed in the red soil under a tree, where all the villagers offer incense in front of it.

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

Stone worship is another example of the Yi people's reverence for nature and their belief that all things have spirits (Figure 2, 3, 4).



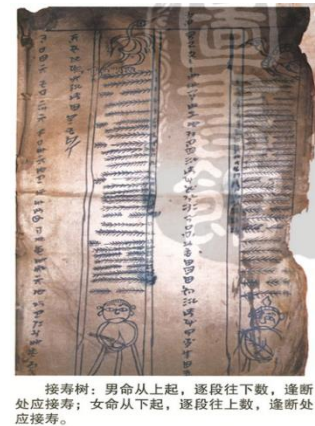
Figure 2: Stone worshipped by villagers

Figure 3: Villagers offering incense to the stone

Figure 4: Bimo performing a kowtow towards the stone (From left to right)

#### 5.4.1.4 Grafting Longevity Trees(接寿树)

The fourth manifestation of nature worship beliefs among the Yi people is reflected in their traditional practice of grafting longevity trees. Yi people view plants, including trees, flowers, and grass, as having the potential to extend their lives, provided they find the right way to communicate and interact with them. One such practice is the "Grafting Longevity Trees(接寿树)," in which people help a flowering tree to graft its broken branches, believing that it will help extend their own lives. According to Bimo drawings published by the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture government, this practice involves finding a tree with blossoms and grafting broken branches based on the gatherer's gender(Figure 5: Grafting Longevity Trees in Bimo script)



(26)

Males count from the top, while females count from the bottom. The belief that plants have the power to extend human life runs counter to the traditional Chinese metaphor of "human lives as grass," which connotes insignificance and lack of value. This belief demonstrates the value that Yi people place on connecting their own lives with nature and on finding ways to communicate and interact with it.

(Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture government. 2012. Bimo Script.)

In Yi culture, Grafting Longevity Trees is a custom that associates the fate of people with flower trees. According to this tradition, specific flower trees symbolize a person's birthday, corresponding to the first through thirtieth day of the lunar calendar. For example, those born on the first day of the lunar calendar should offer money and rice to the deities, receive a branch of flowers, and choose a thorax flower tree as a symbol of their future prosperity. This is believed to ensure that the person's children will have enough clothes and food for the future. In the original language, it is said that the children will receive one dan of clothes and foxtail

millet as a symbol of abundance and prosperity( 初一日生者:宜置,钱米好,受一枝花,花树为梭罗木, 受衣禄小米一石). (Ding Wenjiang, 2011) Similarly, those born on the second day are believed to benefit from having six godparents and visiting them frequently, and are given poplar flower trees. This practice is a way for the Yi people to honor their ancestors and nature, and to seek blessings and good fortune.(or, as the original sentence states, the children will receive one gross dan of clothes. ( 初二日生者:受六个父母,宜寄拜与人,花树是杨柳,受衣禄毛称四斗) (Ding Wenjiang, 2011).

The Yi people believe that the vicissitudes of life, as well as a person's gain and loss throughout their lifetime, can be predicted through the symbolism of trees and flowers. They view the life cycle of a flower tree as analogous to the human life cycle, with stages of germination, growth, flowering, fruiting, and withering. Each flower tree has its own unique characteristics, experiences, and outcomes. This belief demonstrates the Yi people's reliance on the environment and nature, as well as their understanding of ecological values and a relational ontology.

### 5.5 The Concept of Placelore in the Yi Vernacular Beliefs

Places are far more than geographical locations; they are sites of memories and venues of extraordinary encounters in storytelling(Ülo Valk, Daniel Sävborg, 2018).

In different dialect regions, Yi follows Bimoism in slightly or greatly different ways. The representative icon of Bimoism could be a random place in the forest in Shiping south region, could be a place near a dragon tree in the southern dialect region, could be a temple mixing with Bimoism and Buddhism style in the middle dialect region, and could be a cave in the mountain in Guizhou province.

As the geologist, Lefebvre set out the idea of the generation of place: the conceptual triad of perceived—conceived—lived space that he uses throughout his book to analyze the social production of space. He explains how the realms within this conceptual triad are interconnected and the relationships between them complex and unstable.

In the Yi culture of China, place-lore plays a significant role in the belief system and daily life of the community. The concept of sacred places is deeply ingrained in Yi culture, and these places are often associated with legends and myths.

One such example is the highest mountain in Northeast Yunnan, which is considered sacred by the Yi people. The mountain is mentioned in the interview with MK, a local Yi person,

who describes the legend of Zhige Alu, a figure who shot three arrows towards the mountain. The arrows are believed to have landed on the highest peak of the mountain, and their traces can still be seen today. The mountain is also associated with the figure of Zhige Alu, who is believed to have climbed to the top of the mountain and shot a pine tree with an arrow. The tree is said to have withstood the shot and remained straight, even though the mountain has collapsed significantly since then.

(27)

Interviewer: Do you consider your place to be sacred, or is there a specific reason why it is considered sacred?

MK: It's a combination of both. The mountain we are talking about is the highest in Northeast Yunnan and the highest point on our side. A Bimo from Liangshan and I went to see it in person. There are legends about this mountain, such as the story of Zhige Alu, who stood at a place called Su Zuo Bo Nie and shot three arrows. According to the records, the traces of those arrows can still be seen on the top of the highest mountain on our side.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about the traces of the arrows?

MK: Yes, Su Zuo Bo Nie is probably located in present-day Weining, Guizhou. It is said that Zhige Alu shot three arrows at the sun and moon because they were affecting the world. Although it seems unlikely that he could have shot that far, these legends are still interesting to explore.

Interviewer: I see. And why did he shoot those three arrows?

MK: According to the legend, he was trying to stop the sun and moon from affecting the world, because they were causing problems for the world. He practiced his technique and eventually shot them towards the top of the highest mountain. He missed the shot when he was halfway up the mountain, so he climbed to the top and stood on a pine tree to try again. The pine tree was supposed to be able to withstand the shot and not bend, but it ended up straight and bent. The mountain collapsed as a result of the shot and the pine trees on the mountain died. The mountain was originally higher than it is now and was said to be twice as high. A part of the mountain broke off from the middle. Now, the pine tree is still on the top of the mountain. The pine trees now are all dead.

[28 y.o. F. 6. 4. 2022 L&N]

The significance of place-lore in Yi culture can also be seen in the use of the *te ti ni* pine tree for sacrifices. The tree is considered sacred and is often used in rituals.

Overall, the Yi culture places great importance on the concept of sacred places, which are often associated with legends and myths. These places serve as a connection to the spiritual world and are an integral part of Yi culture and belief system.

The interview with MK touches on the concept of perceived space, or the way in which individuals perceive and assign meaning to a particular location. In this case, the mountain mentioned by MK is considered sacred due to its connection to the legend of Zhige Alu and the act of archery. The mountain holds significance for the local community as a place with a rich history and cultural significance.

The concept of conceived space, or the way in which a place is imagined or constructed through cultural and societal norms, also comes into play in this interview. The legend of Zhige Alu and the shooting of the sun and moon reflects the cultural beliefs and values of the local community. The mountain is also referred to as the "highest point" and is given a specific name, further demonstrating the importance placed on this location.

Finally, the concept of lived space, or the way in which individuals experience and interact with a place, is also present in the interview. MK mentions the practice of making sacrifices at the mountain, showing that it is not just a perceived or conceived space, but a place that is actively engaged with and utilized by the community. The mountain is also described as having changed over time, with the collapse of part of the mountain and the death of the pine trees, demonstrating the ongoing relationship and interaction with this place.

## **6. The Interaction of Beliefs**

Buddhism, Catholicism, and Islam have all had an influence on the beliefs of the Yi people through the course of their history. The Yi people's perception and practice of their own beliefs have been enriched by these religions, which are still significant indicators on Yi culture today. The Yi people constantly drew from these diverse traditions to construct their own worldview and sense of identity, whether through the adoption of certain religious rituals or the inclusion of distinct beliefs and ideologies.

## 6.1 Yi and Buddhism

### 6.1.1 The Indigenous Divine Temple(土主庙)

Buddhism has had a long history of influence on the Yi people of Yunnan, dating back to the Tang and Nanzhao state periods. Of all the religions that have impacted the Yi, Buddhism has had the greatest influence.

In the Kunming, Yuxi, and Dali Bai autonomous prefectures, a type of local temple called "Indigenous God Temples" (土主庙) can be found scattered throughout the villages. These temples are used for the worship of Indigenous Gods, also known as the Great Black Heaven God (大黑天神). According to the Qing dynasty's "Yunnan Tongzhi" or "*Yunnan General Annals* 《云南通志》" edited and supervised by *Ortai* (鄂尔泰) - the general governor of Yunnan and Guizhou provinces - *Indigenous God Temples were built in Yunnan during the South State period of King Meng. Local people worshipped Indigenous Gods, and as a result, every village had at least one Indigenous God Temple*(蒙氏城滇时建, 滇人奉为土神, 各村邑奉之). (Ertai & Jing Daomo, 1986).

WZZ, one of the informants, describes an indigenous temple located in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province.

(28)

This temple features a central statue of a local deity with a dark blue complexion, wide-open lips, and intimidating eyes. This deity holds a bell, a red box, a mirror, a cup, a trident, and other ceremonial objects in its six arms, and wears a golden gown with a large crimson dress underneath and a ribbon around its waist. Wenchang, the star of wisdom, holds a book and calligraphy pen on the right, while an unidentified deity or warrior with blue hair, armor adorned with written words, and a bowl, stand guard on the left. The temple also contains eight smaller divine figures, each about 30 cm in height, sitting on either side of the three larger statues, which are over one meter tall. One of these smaller figures is particularly noteworthy for its lack of human features, appearing instead as a combination of a rabbit and a human with clothing. This fusion of animalism, Buddhism, Taoism, and nature worship is indicative of the significant influence these beliefs have had on Yi culture. The paintings on the temple walls depict natural elements such as mountains, clouds, bamboo, pine trees, and lotus flowers on a stand.

[26 y.o. M. 5.11.2022 ]



Figure 6: The first Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Figure 7: The second Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Figure 8: The rabbit god in the second Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Figure 6 and 7 are two indigenous gods in Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province, Diantou village. Figure 8 shows a rabbit god among human divines provided by WZZ.

There are different theories about the identity of the indigenous god worshipped in Yi temples. According to one theory, the indigenous god is XiNvLuo(细奴罗), the first king of Nanzhao state and a member of the Yi minority. Another theory suggests that the indigenous god is Mahākāla (大黑天神), a deity in Buddhism also known as the Great Black Heaven God.

Additionally, the author discovered that the prototype for the indigenous god may have been an ambassador from South and Southeast Asia during the Tang Dynasty. One famous swordsman from the Tang Dynasty, *Mole*, who was skilled in martial arts, was also an example of an ambassador or servant of ambassadors known as *KunLunNu* or the *servant from Kunlun*(昆仑奴). The Yi minority, also known as the Man, shared the ability to ride elephants and tame wild animals with KunLunNu.

As the *old Tang book*, in volume the book of *barbarian* describes: “People who are from the south of Linyi(林邑)<sup>3</sup>, have black and curly hair. We called them Kunlun.”(Fan Chuo, & Bu Shaoxian, 2018). The Kunlun figure in Tang-era artwork and the statues found in temples bear a strong resemblance. The deity wears a silk satin belt and gown, similar to the indigenous deity

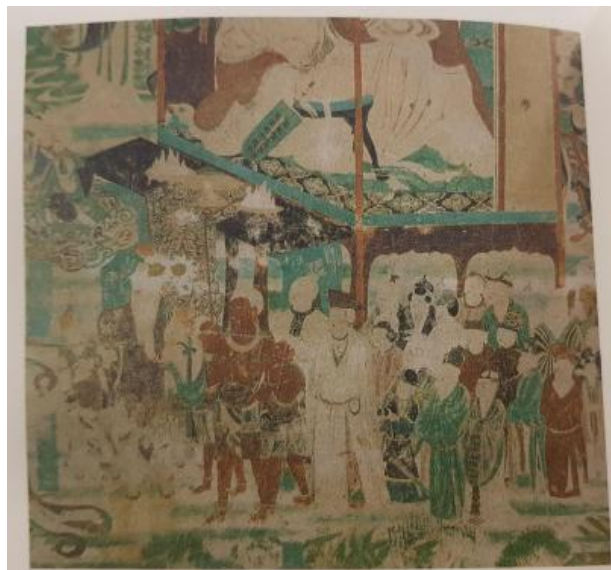
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<sup>3</sup> Linyi is the old name of nowadays” Vietnam



depicted in a *painting of Manjushri* (文殊菩萨图) from the late Tang period. - In this painting, the Kunlun figure is depicted as taming and guiding a lion, which is a symbol of the power of Manjushri. The lion's roar is said to be able to rupture the brains of hundreds of beasts, symbolizing the Kunlun's ability to tame animals. A similar image figure 9 was also found in the Ninth cave of the Dunhuang Mogao Caves grottoes, where Vimalakīrti debates with Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the late Tang period in *Grotto Vimalakīrti debates with Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī*. (Meng Hui, 2017). The Mañjuśrī, concerned about Vimalakīrti's health, paid him a visit. Vimalakīrti was known for his wisdom and debating skills, as was Manjusri, and so it was believed that their conversation would be educational. As Manjushri made his way to Vimalakīrti's home, accompanied by princes from various countries hoping to listen in on their talk, a Kunlun prince wearing similar attire to that of the indigenous divine was depicted standing in front of the grotto. The author therefore posits that the indigenous divine in Yi temples may be Kunlun.

Figure 9 *Grotto Vimalakīrti debates with Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī* in Ninth cave of the Dunhuang Mogao Caves grottoes



The main reason for the spread of Buddhism in the Nan Zhao region of Yunnan among minority villages was due to XiNvLuo seeking military and political support from the Tang emperor. This was due to the frequent conflicts with Tubo, which caused significant losses for Nanzhao. In response, the Tang emperor, Tang XunZong, named Nanzhao PiLuoGe (the fourth king of Nanzhao) as "The King of Yunnan" as a sign of his support for Nanzhao, as recorded in the New Tang book. This helps explain why minority beliefs in Yunnan were combined with Buddhism, rather than those in Sichuan Liangshan, starting in the Tang dynasty, and why indigenous god temples can still be found in minority villages today.



### 6.1.2 Mujipo and Buddhism: A Narrative Analysis

Another example of the great influence of Buddhism on the Yi group can be seen through the experiences of ZXL, a member of the Mujipo, a Yi group living in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Gejiu City, Duimenshan Village. Zhang works as an officer at a local police station, giving her a broad understanding of local minority situations.

The name "*Gejiu*" is a transliteration of a Yi word meaning "place growing Tartary buckwheat." Most of the Yi minority live on top of Lao Ying Mountain and in other villages located near rivers and hills in Gejiu, their living habits aligning with their name. "Mu" means sky and "Ji" means border, therefore "Mujipo" means the Yi who live in an alpine mountainous area.

According to ZXL, a member of Mujipo, a group of Yi people living in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Gejiu City, Duimenshan Village, the influence of Buddhism on the Yi group is evident in the celebration of Chinese New Year and the presence of numerous temples in the region.

(26)

Duimengshan Village is predominantly Yi, but the villagers also celebrate the Chinese New Year and offer incense at Buddhist temples such as Baohua Temple on New Year's Eve. The mid-autumn festival is also celebrated, along with the torch light festival, which is traditional to the Yi minority. There are also Islamic mosques in *Shadian* 沙甸, a town next to her hometown, Shadian is a well-known region in Southwest China for its Hui ethnic and Muslim communities. Although the Yi minority has autonomous rights to celebrate their own festivals, such as the torchlight festival and the Kuzhazha festival, the solar calendar is still followed. In other villages, Zhang Xiaolin has observed small Yi temples where the divines worshipped are different from the major Han divines such as Guanyin and Maitreya.

[33 y.o. F. 4. 6. 2022 N]

Nestled at the foot of a verdant mountain, the Baohua Temple is a beacon of spiritual devotion for ZXL and the villagers. Built during the Qing dynasty with the generosity of the local community and the guidance of a Taoist, this sacred place is a harmonious blend of Chinese Buddhism and Taoism. Within its walls lies a Guanyin cave, a divine court, a dragon king temple, and a fortune god temple, each a testament to the enduring faith of the people.

## 6.2 Yi and Christianity

RH, from Xichang in Sichuan, noted in an interview that some Yi in his area have adopted Buddhism. Given the proximity of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture to Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tibetan Buddhism has had a significant impact on Yi beliefs.

However, some Yi have also turned to Christianity as the narratives above illustrated. With nearly 20 churches and chapels located in Liangshan, 11 in Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, and 18 in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture. This demonstrates the notable spread of Christianity among the Yi population. Christianity was introduced to modern China following the Opium War, and entered Yunnan through two pathways: one from coastal cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, and the other from Chongqing through Zhaotong via the Yangzi River (Pu Zhongliang, 2018). Here are some narratives from interviewees who also confirm this fact.

(29)

WZZ: some cultural concepts remain deeply ingrained. For example, the Yi people continue to believe in mountain gods, even though an increasing number of Yi people have converted to Christianity in recent years

[26 y.o. M. 5.11.2022 N]

(30)

SL: In my region of Sichuan and Xichang, there is a high prevalence of Christianity. From what I know, the conversion to Christianity began during my grandfather's generation.

[22 y.o. M. 26.3.2022 N]

(31)

Interviewer: "How have the people in your region integrated their belief in Christianity with the Bimo religion, or how is it locally referred to?"

MKB: "We call this process 'learning from the gods' (学神仙) in our local tradition."

[25 y.o. M. 5.10.2022 N]

The Inland Mission, the first Christian group to be established, sent missionaries to Yunnan in the seventh year of the Qing Dynasty's Emperor Guangxu (1881) and established churches in Dali and Kunming. It eventually spread throughout most of Yunnan Province. The Inland Mission was established by James Hudson Taylor(戴德生) in 1865 in England and dispatched missionaries to China. (Yunnan Provincial Editorial Group, 2007). The Inland Mission is the most influential and widely distributed sect of Christianity in Kunming. Its

headquarters is located at No. 4, Zhonghe Lane, Wucheng Road, Kunming, and its chapel is called *Holy Trinity Cathedral*. It had 300 to 500 regular visitors as well as more than 1,000 believers, including workers, housewives, doctors, and students. It is present in more than 100 counties (cities) in Yunnan and is particularly influential in the Yi and Miao regions of northern Yunnan. In addition to establishing more than 300 churches, 10 secondary schools, and clinics, the Anglo-American Inland Mission had developed more than 50,000 believers in more than 60 counties (cities) in Yunnan by 1950 (Xiao Yaohui&Feng Guocai, 2004)..

The spread and development of Christianity among the Yi group has been well documented (Long 2012; Dong 2004; Qin 2003). Western missionaries, including J. R. Adam and Samuel Pollard, sent by the British missionary agency China Inland Mission, were responsible for introducing the Christian gospel to Yunnan in the late 19th century. Samuel Pollard (1864-1915), a British Methodist missionary, made noteworthy contributions to the mission work in China. He established a base at the Stone-Gateway intersection of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou provinces and developed the Miao script, which is still in use today. Pollard also brought Western education and medical systems to Shimenkan, which helped many of the region's ethnic minorities.

### 6.3 Exploring the Hidden Names of Yi and Taoism

The custom of the Yi minority to give nicknames to newborns during the sacrifice offering ceremony to the dragon overlaps with the way in which Taoist masters hide their real names from ghosts and evils. LXJ, an interviewee, shared several stories with me about this practice. The idea behind this custom seems to overlap with the way in which Taoist masters would hide their real names in order to protect themselves from malevolent forces.

(32)

*"As I recall, one year we carried a male newborn to the ceremony of sacrifice offering to the dragon tree. The Bimo, or spiritual leader, gave the child a nickname to be used only during the ceremony and nowhere else. It was said that if any human were to utter the child's real name or even their nickname outside of the ceremony, it would bring misfortune as ghosts or evil spirits could potentially hear it and haunt the child. "*

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

JA from Liangshan, Sichuan province shared a story with me about the naming customs of the Yi minority.

(33)

*"If a child is prone to getting sick or experiencing negative events, their parents may give them a slightly ugly name, such as "Small Dog" or "Stone," in order to deter ghosts or evil spirits from liking the child. This is believed to protect the child from future harm."*

[25 y.o. M. 5. 3. 2022 N]

The practice of hiding the real names of divinities in Taoism is based on the belief that once ghosts hear the real name of a divine being, they will be extinguished and turn to ashes. This belief is reflected in texts such as *"NvQingGuiLv,"* a classic of Heavenly Master Taoism found in the *TaoZang*, which records the names of various ghosts and provides examples of how believers can recite these names in order to maintain their precepts, seek good luck, and avoid evil.

## **7. Cosmology and Temporality of The Yi Ethnic Group**

### **7.1 Ten-Month Calendar and Yi Cosmology**

The "Yi Nationality Calendar" is a comprehensive life cycle schedule used by the Yi people, which combines elements of astronomy, climate, and fortune-telling. Its fortune-telling component encompasses a wide range of positive and negative events related to the theories of Gan, Zhi, and the Five Elements, including the behavior of tribes and clans, as well as smaller details of daily life such as hospitality and haircuts. The calendar, which has ten months, serves as a guide for the Yi people to seek good luck and avoid bad fortune in various activities, similar to the function of the Qin daybook. The Yi astronomical calendar plays a significant role in the decision-making of the Yi people, impacting everything from birth names and agricultural production activities to ancestor worship dates, funeral customs, and marriage customs. Time is determined based on the day of the month, ox, tiger, and so on, while the location is determined by the ten directions of north, south, west, east, northwest, southwest, northeast, and southeast. The time concept of the Yi minority differs from that of the majority ethnic groups.

A calendar is a type of rhythm that an ethnic minority group or any certain group observes based on long-standing historical perceptions. It is dynamic and organic in nature. like

Henri Lefebvre believes that everyday life has an organic rhythm rather than mechanical (Lefebvre, H., 2013). It is repetition in time and in space unique for certain groups of people due to the environment where they live.

### 7.1.1 The Use of the Ten-Month Calendar in Naming Conventions

According to an interviewee from Yunnan Ninglang, the Yi minority has a unique tradition of naming infants. The Bimo, a spiritual leader, assigns names to newborns based on the ten-month solar calendar, the baby's birth date, and the mother's age at the time of birth. Specifically, names are chosen based on the twelve animal signs of the Chinese Zodiac and the directions of the "palace of life" corresponding to the mother's age in the ten-month calendar.

(34)

*For instance, my name is Jini AbuWuzhiLuguoRe. Jini is the name of the larger family group. Abu represents the name of a smaller branch within the family. Wuzhi means obey. Luguo is my personal name, chosen based on my zodiac sign and the palace of life corresponding to my mother's age at the time of my birth. Re signifies son. I know some of my friends have names with meanings related to the tiger, dragon, or directions.*

[25 y.o. M. 5. 3. 2022 ]

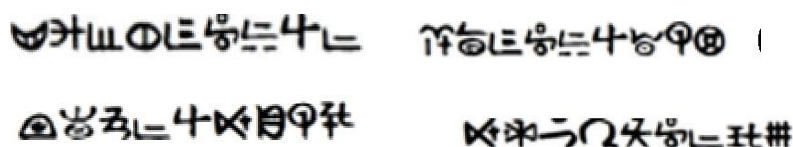
#### 7.1.1.1 Eating Patterns Based on the Ten-Month Calendar

After conducting interviews with Yi people from Liangshan, Sichuan province, I learned about their unique way of naming infants, which reflects the importance of the Ten-month calendar and cosmology in Yi minority daily life. This cultural aspect, which initially appeared simple to me, actually involved a complex cosmological view held by the Yi that includes the Ten-month calendar. As someone who was born in a Yi minority autonomy region and belongs to Mujipo, a group heavily influenced by Han culture, Buddhism, and Islam, I was accustomed to following the custom of having three meals a day. However, when I later moved to Luchun county and encountered the Nisupo, I was surprised to learn that they only have two meals a day.

The frequency of diet among the Nisu Po, a group within the Yi minority in China, is influenced by their cosmological views as reflected in the Ten-month calendar. Despite being unable to explain the reasoning behind their traditional practice of consuming only two meals per day, the Nisu Po continue to adhere to this rule. This adherence can be seen as a manifestation of the Yi philosophy of "catching meaning while forgetting words," as expressed

by Zhuangzi, and the belief in the existence of the concept of "tao."<sup>4</sup> The origins of this dietary practice can be traced back to handwritten Bimo scripts discovered in Liangshan, Sichuan by Waguoquqie.

(35) Here are the original text:



(mu kut mu help suo hxa fut ci nyip) , (gge yyr suo hxa fut ci nyip ne ggut) ;  
(cho chox bu mop shyp hxa nyip ci jji) , (lyp za nge nyip ci chox zze ne shyr)

“年月日数三百六十日, 日影三百六十日就回归;  
早晚两餐七百二十顿, 吃完五日十餐就过年。”

*"The time of three hundred and sixty days, day by day, month by month, year by year, The sun's shadow returns in three hundred and sixty days; Breakfast and dinner, two meals a day, seven hundred and twenty meals a year, Finishing ten meals in five days marks the celebration of the new year."*

⟨Waguoquqie, 2015. BS⟩

A brand new type of cosmological time concept has been hidden behind this simple custom of two meals a day. The close connection between a meal and the time of day can be seen in the meal terminology, though it is important to note that this terminology varies across different locations. By eating certain kinds of meals at certain points in the day people not only structured time but produced themselves as *spatiotemporal beings*(KEINÄNEN Everyday, fast and feast).

### 7.1.1.2 Exploring the Yi Conceptualization of Time

The way in which the Yi people count time reveals their own sense of being spatiotemporal beings within their cosmological order. The Yi people have a unique way of counting the passage of time, which reflects their cosmological order and their understanding

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<sup>4</sup> Zhuangzi: "Nets are for catching fish; when you catch the fish, you forget the net. Words are for catching meaning; when you catch the meaning you forget the word. Oh where can I find someone who has forgotten words, so that I might have a word with them?"

of themselves as spatiotemporal beings. According to the book *Cosmopolitan humanism*, a day is divided into eight phrases: morning (shate), afternoon (zegu), noon (mahuo), afternoon (bujie), dawn (mufei), dusk (shezuo), midnight (sige), and time of crowing (huabumo). This system of measuring time allows the Yi people to structure their days and understand their place in the world (Liu Yaohan, 2009, 112).

In Liangshan, the Yi minority names eight directions as follows: the head of water (north), the tail of water (south), the direction of the ox (westnorth), the direction of the dog (eastnorth), the direction of the dragon (westsouth), the direction of the sheep (eastsouth), the direction of the sun coming (east), and the direction of the sun going out (west).

Numbers such as 360 and 720 have special religious meanings for the Yi minority.

According to the Yi minority's ten-month calendar, a year is composed of 360 days, 10 months, and 5 seasons. The names of the seasons are based on five phrases, and each season is made up of 2 months with names determined by five elements and genders. For example, the first month is called the "wood male" month (木公月). Each month has 36 days and is divided into 3 rounds, with each round consisting of 12 days. Each day is represented by an animal and one unit of the twelve earthly branches. For example, the first day of the "wood male" month is the "mouse" day (鼠日). The Lezelejiu (勒泽勒久) consists of 12 years, each named after one of the 12 animals. One Ji is made up of 10 Lezelejiu, or 120 years.

Bimo, traditional Yi spiritual leaders, use the Lezelejiu to predict fortune and fate, and Yi people often base important life events, such as agriculture, marriage, and house construction, on it. An interviewee, LXJ, even shared a story of a passerby who saw him as a godfather to their baby based on the Lezelejiu.

(36)

*One day, as I was strolling down the street on my way home, a man approached me and asked if I would be willing to be the godfather of his newborn baby. He explained that I was the first person to walk by their table, which was set up according to the customs of the Yi minority. Despite feeling honored, I knew that this was a common occurrence among the Yi people. So, I agreed and gave the baby a nickname as a symbol of my godfatherly duties.*

[54 y.o. M. 1.3.2022 N]

The evidence of the custom of finding passengers as godfathers was found in *WuDing Yi almanac*(武定彝族历算书).

号 仁 以 世 少 子 香 世 耳 为 刀 伤 田 叩 三 爻 拜 与 世 分 列  
tɕ'i<sup>33</sup> ni<sup>21</sup> zo<sup>33</sup> zo<sup>21</sup> so<sup>33</sup> ʃa<sup>21</sup> mb'u<sup>21</sup> zo<sup>21</sup> p'o<sup>55</sup> mo<sup>21</sup> tɕ'u<sup>33</sup> so<sup>21</sup> ma<sup>55</sup> zi<sup>55</sup> so<sup>33</sup> ni<sup>21</sup> ze<sup>21</sup> t'a<sup>21</sup> zo<sup>21</sup> ne<sup>33</sup> de<sup>55</sup>  
狗 日 儿 生 的 鸡 叫 生 父 母 伤 他 拜 睡 三 心 灵 一 位 是 说  
狗 日 生 人 若 鸡 鸣 则 伤 父 母 要 去 拜 干 爹 方 心 地 善 良

"If a child is born on the day of the dog when the rooster crows, they may bring harm to their parents. In order to prevent this, the parents should find a godfather for the child, who will guide them to be kind-hearted in the future."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 彝族毕摩经典译注: 武定彝族历算书. 第一卷, 夜礼斌, 杨红卫, 楚雄自治州政府, 云南民族出版社, 2007 An  
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Yang Hongwei, Government of Chuxiong Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House, 2007



## 8. Conclusion

The Yi ethnic group, a minority group in China, has a rich and diverse set of traditional vernacular beliefs that have received relatively little attention in the study of traditional Chinese culture. This is partly due to a tendency in the field to focus on major religions and ideologies, rather than the unique beliefs of minority groups. The author began by providing a general overview of the Yi ethnic group, including information about their branch and administrative regions within China. By doing so, the author sets the stage for the research and highlights the importance of considering the unique beliefs of minority groups in the study of traditional Chinese culture. The author also emphasizes the importance of using first-hand materials gathered by the Yi themselves in order to provide the most authentic view of the Yi's contemporary beliefs. This approach is crucial in understanding the complexity and diversity of the Yi's vernacular beliefs and avoiding the pitfalls of previous ethnographic studies, which can lead to a dismissal of alternative conceptions of reality as either "facts" or "beliefs", rather than engaging with them as open possibilities.

The research found that the characteristics of Yi vernacular beliefs include ancestor worship, polytheism, nature worship, animalism, and totemism. These beliefs also show regional influences from Buddhism, Christianity, and contemporary ideologies, which are often incorporated in a moderate or syncretic manner. This research seeks to provide a nuanced and detailed understanding of the complex and varied belief systems of the Yi ethnic group in the contemporary world.

To gather this information, the author conducted research-observations of rituals and practices, including the annual ceremony of offering oblations to the dragon, and conducted interviews with participant villagers from different regions in Yi autonomous prefectures and counties. The author also collected images of local architectures and decorations, recorded Bimo oral narratives and chanting from old Yi scripts, and analyzed the images, narratives as various forms of manifestation of the vernacular beliefs. Additionally, the author conducted one-to-one interviews and gathered pictures of the indigenous god temple, reviewing local Yi autonomous prefecture official ethnographic records in the process. The author also identified another possible figure of the great black heaven god, KunLunNv.

The combination of Yi beliefs with other institutional ideologies and religions has resulted in the interactions of religious traditions and architectures and conflicts between modernization and the opening up of ethnic cultures, leading to issues of fading Yi culture, language usage scope, and identity recognition. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, local

beliefs and practices still play an influential role in the Yi community, including in the current social structure and relations, identity constructing and everyday life. The core of Ancestry worship, for example, is still present in the family hierarchy and clan family branches.

One of the key novelties of this article is that it provides supplementary materials about the Yi branches in South Yunnan that have received relatively little attention in historical and sociological research. The focus of previous research has primarily been on the Liangshan and Nuosu branch of the Yi, but this article expands on that by including information about other branches in South Yunnan.

Additionally, the author was fortunate enough to collect a complete Bimo chanting about the annual major customs of the Yi, which is a valuable resource for understanding the traditional beliefs of this ethnic group. This is an important contribution to the field as it provides new insights into the customs and practices of the Yi and adds to the existing body of knowledge about their culture and beliefs. This article is a great addition to the field of ethnography and anthropology, it's a significant addition to the research on Yi people and it's a good reference for anyone interested in understanding the Yi culture.

Another key novelty of this article is the methodology used to gather data. The author conducted interviews with a wide range of Yi participants, who were spread across three provinces. This allows the author to gather a diverse and representative sample of Yi beliefs and practices.

The fact that the interviewees are almost all Yi people, it gives the author the opportunity to gather data in the form of Yi talking to Yi, which is an authentic and valuable way to understand the Yi culture, as the information is obtained directly from the source. This approach ensures that the data collected is accurate and representative of the Yi's beliefs and practices, providing a real voice of the Yi.

However, there is a limitation in this research. The Yi language is complex and varies across different regions, making it difficult for the author to fully understand and accurately translate the words used by the interviewees and in the narratives. Additionally, the Yi writing system is not fully unified among the group, which also poses a challenge for the author. Another limitation is the lack of enough Yi language knowledge, as the author may not have been able to fully understand and accurately translate the words used by the interviewees and in the narratives. As a result, the author had to rely on transliteration based on PinYin, which is a romanization system of Chinese characters, rather than using the correct Yi words. This can lead to inaccuracies in the translations and a lack of understanding of the full meaning and context of the words used by the Yi.

This limitation is important to note, as it may affect the accuracy and completeness of the understanding of Yi's beliefs and practices. However, the author has made a good effort to overcome this limitation by collecting a wide range of data from different regions and using multiple methods, such as observation, interviews, and analysis of images and narratives. Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable and nuanced understanding of the vernacular beliefs and practices.

Overall, this thesis provides a detailed and nuanced understanding of the complex and varied beliefs of the Yi ethnic group in contemporary China, highlighting the importance of taking into account the beliefs of minority groups when studying traditional Chinese culture.

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## APPENDIX A

### 1. Interviewee list

	Alias	Place of Birth	Age	Branch	Gender	Occupation	Native Language	Length of interview
1	LHM	Gejiu City, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	48	Muji Po	Female	Farmer	South Yi dialect	1.5h
2	LX	Luchun county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	54	Nisu Po	Male	Farmer	South Yi dialect	1.5h
3	JA	Ninglang Yi Autonomous, Lijiang, Yunnan	25	Black Yi	Male	Office clerk	North Yi dialect	1h
4	YG	Meigu County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan	19	White Yi	Female	Yi language Student	North Yi dialect	1h
5	SH	Meigu County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan,	21	White Yi	Male	Student	North Yi dialect	20Min
6	PMX	Shiping county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	42	Red Yi	Female	Yi scholar	South Yi dialect	1.5h
7	PQY	Gejiu City, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	26	Yi unknown	Female	Office clerk	Mandarin	1h
8	MK	Zhaotong, Yunnan province	26	Yi	Male	Office clerk	Mandarin	1h

9	ZX	Laochang county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Laochang county, Yunnan	33	Muji Po	Female	Policemen in Yi region	South Yi dialect	1h
10	WH	Kafang county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Kafang county, Yunnan	26	Muji poYi	Female	Teacher	South Yi dialect	0.5h
11	LN	Yuanyang county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	30	Hani	Male		Hani	0.5h
12	LL	Luchun county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Luchun county, Yunnan	28	Hani	Female	Social worker	Hani	1 h
13	YZZ	Yuanyang county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yuanyang county, Yunnan	62	Niesu Po	Male	bimo	South Yi dialect	30 minutes
14	RH	Xichang, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Xichang, Sichuan	22	White Yi	Male	Yi language student	North Yi dialect	1.5 h
15	SL	Dechang county, Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, Sichuan	21	White Yi	Male	Office clerk	North Yi dialect	1.5h
16	HZ	Mile City, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	26	Yi	Female	Translator	Mandarin	45Minutes
17	LT	Laochang county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Laochang county, Yunnan	58	Muji Po	Female	Farmer	South Yi dialect	0.5h
18	AZ	Bijie, Guizhou	40s	Yi	Male		North Yi	20 Min

							dialect	
19	LB	Luchun county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	55	Suni Po	Male	bimo	South Yi dialect	30m
20	SU	Luchun county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	49	Suni Po	Female	suni	South Yi dialect	25Min
21	LO	Luchun county, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan	34	Suni Po	Male	bimo	South Yi dialect	30m translation
22	MKJ	Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan,	25	Black Yi	Male	Office clerk	North Yi dialect	25Min
23	WZZ	YuXi, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Laochang county, Yunnan	26	Han	Female	Folklore Studies student	Mandarin	30Min, provided pictures

## 2. Illustration of Ten Months Solar Calendar

### One Month of Yi Calendar - Example of Wood Male Month 12.27.2021-1.31.2022

	Wood Male Month 12.27.2021-1.31.2022												
The First Circle CiTa	Yi Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Name of the Date	Rooster	Dog	Boar	Rat	Ox	Tiger	Hare	Dragon	Snake	Horse	Sheep	Monkey
	Normal Date	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Second Circle NiTa	Yi Date	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Name of the Date	Rooster	Dog	Boar	Rat	Ox	Tiger	Hare	Dragon	Snake	Horse	Sheep	Monkey
	Normal Date	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
The Third Circle SongTa	Yi Date	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	Name of the Date	Rooster	Dog	Boar	Rat	Ox	Tiger	Hare	Dragon	Snake	Horse	Sheep	Monkey
	Normal Date	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31



### Five Seasons and Ten Months

Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yi Five Seasons	Wood		Fire		Earth		Metal		Water	
Normal Seasons	Spring		Summer		Transition		Autumn		Winter	

### 3. The List of the Figures

Figure 1. Ancestry's little house in the center of living room in the new house

Figure 2: Stone worshipped by villagers

Figure 3: Villagers offering incense to the stone

Figure 4: Bimo performing a kowtow towards the stone (From left to right)

Figure 5: Grafting Longevity Trees in Bimo script

Figure 6: The first Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Figure 7: The second Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Figure 8: The rabbit god in the second Indigenous God Temple in Diantou village, Dianzhong Town, Eshan Yi Autonomous County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Figure 9 Grotto Vimalakīrti debates with Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in Ninth cave of the Dunhuang Mogao Caves grottoes

#### 4. Field Work Pictures



Figure 1 Offering to dragon in Nisu village  
Photographed by LXJ



Figure 1 Dragon Tree in NiuKong  
Photographed by LXJ



Figure 3 Nisu Bimo  
Provided by BL



Figure 4 Temple near dragon tree  
Photographed by LXJ



Figure 5 Temple near dragon tree 2  
Photographed by LXJ



Figure 6 Nisu Woman  
Photographed by LXJ



Figure 7 Muji Women  
Photographed by LTF



Figure 8 Muji Woman Head  
decoration  
Photographed by LTF



Figure 9 Muji Woman wardrobe  
Photographed by LTF



Figure 10 Mujipo woman Bag  
Photographed by LTF



Figure 11 Mujipo woman hat  
Photographed by LTF

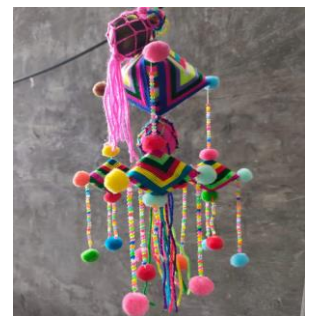
Figure 14 Hani Handcraft Provided by LLS



Figure 12 The celebration of the Hani  
Dragon Offering Festival with social  
workers and villagers 1  
Provided by LLS



Figure 13 The celebration of the Hani  
Dragon Offering Festival with social  
workers and villagers 2  
Provided by LLS





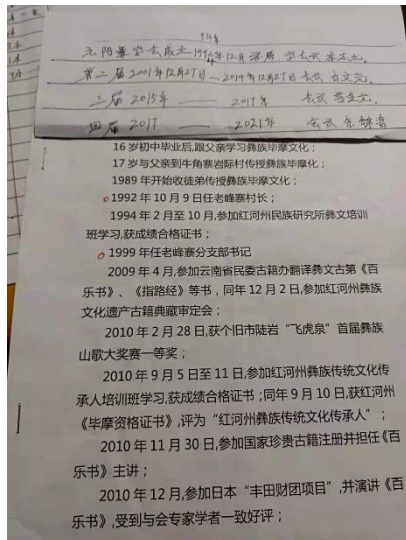


Figure 15 Resume of Yang  
ZhengZhong Bimo 1  
Provided by Yang ZhengZhong

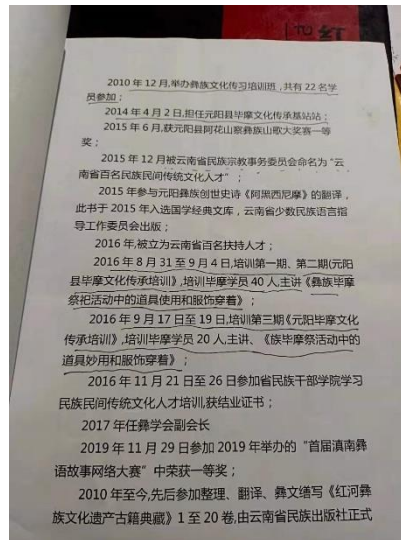


Figure 16 Resume of Yang  
ZhengZhong Bimo 2  
Provided by Yang ZhengZhong

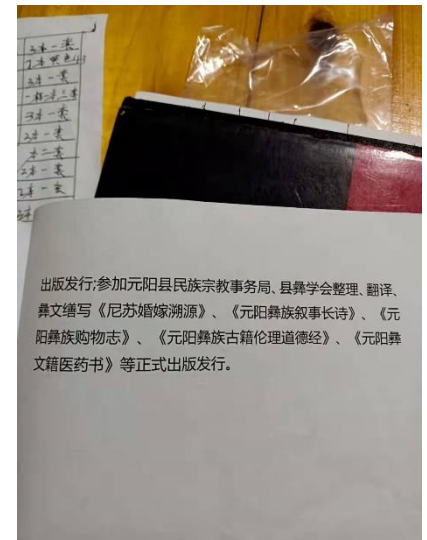


Figure 17 Resume of Yang  
ZhengZhong Bimo 3  
Provided by Yang ZhengZhong



Figure 18 Mountain God Stone  
Provided by WZZ

## **Resümee**

Usunarratiivid ja -praktikad Yi rahva igapäevaelus tänapäeva Hiinas

Wang Conghui

Käesolevas artiklis uuritakse Yi rahva igapäevaelu ja rituaale kolmes provintsis (Sichuan, Yunnan ja Guizhou) Edela-Hiinas, kirjeldades kaasaegseid Yi uskumusi ja tavasid nende igapäevaelus. Uurimismeetodina kasutati üks-ühele struktureeritud avatud intervjuud ji ja vähemal määral hani ja han hiinlastega kolme provintsi ji asulatest, autonoomsetest maakondadest ja autonoomsetest piirkondadest. Teoreetiline lähenemine on "lokaliseeritud kirjeldus", mis erineb peamistest religioossetest kirjeldustest selle poolest, et see kirjeldab Yi uskumusi nende kõige primitiivsemal ja põhilisemal kujul, et iseloomustada nende päritolu. Artiklis kasutatakse ka autori koostatud Bimo kangelaseepose ja esivanemate päritolueepose tekstianalüüsi, et tuvastada laialt lõuna-lääne piirkonnas laiali asuvate yi rahvaste ühist mälu.

Artikkel on uuenduslik, kuna see lisab puuduliku kirjelduse selliste kommete kohta nagu draakonirituaalid ja surnute vaimude juhendamine Yi alamrühmas Lõuna-Junnanis, vastates samas neljale peamisele küsimusele, nimelt esiteks, et Yi on esivanemate kummardamise, kangelaste kummardamise, looduse kummardamise, animismi ja totemismi uskumise rahvas.

Teiseks kirjeldatakse artiklis Yi rahva oktoobrikuu päikesekalendrit ja selle kasutamist igapäevaelus, mis sisaldab kokkuvõtet Yi rahva kosmoloogiast ning aja ja ruumi vaatlusest ning on üks Yi tsivilisatsiooni suurimaid kultuurilisi pärleid. Kolmandaks kirjeldatakse artiklis Yi ja teiste domineerivate uskumuste integreerimise kaasaegseid ilminguid, milles tuvastatakse uusi allikaid Tuzhangi templi Tuzhangi jaoks. Neljandaks kirjeldatakse artiklis Yi inimeste muutuvat sotsiaalset struktuuri, kihistumist ja soolist perspektiivi tänapäeval.

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***12/01/2023***