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The omen system of Eastern Minyag (Sichuan, PRC)

Master's thesis

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1	5
Literature review	5
1.1. The definition of the omen	6
1.2. Superstition: Categorization and Critique	7
1.3. Folk and Vernacular Belief: Transition and Terminology	8
1.4. Contemporary Perspectives on Vernacular Knowledge	11
1.5. Omen Studies in China and Tibetan Context	13
1.6. The Religion and Folklore Studies of Minyag	14
Chapter 2	16
Exploring Minyag: Fieldwork and Conceptual Background	16
2.1. Fieldwork overview	16
2.2. Background of Minyag concept	21
Chapter 3	25
Omen system in Minyag	25
3.1. Standard omens	28
3.1.1. Unnatural appearance	28
3.1.2. Zodiac.....	33
3.1.3. Time	35
3.1.4. Suffering.....	39
3.2. Special omens	42
3.2.1. Liva tae.....	43
3.2.2. Zutae.....	45
3.2.3. Ndumbu.....	49
Chapter 4	52
Interpreting Omens: Sources and Responses	52
4.1. The source of omen	52
4.2. The ways to address the omens	55
Conclusion	63
References	65
Appendix: List of interviews	72

Introduction

“Hey there, kiddo! Sit tight on that rock and listen up! Remember: if any voice calls out to you, never respond!” an old Miyag herdsman told me. I still vividly recall that dim twilight. With my parents off shearing yaks at the 4000-meter-high summer pasture, the responsibility of tending to our flock fell solely on me. It was my first time alone with the sheep. The rustle of the wind, the chorus of insects, the bleating of the sheep, the calls of other shepherds, and the distant roars of wild beasts all conspired to create a cacophony of unsettling noises. Lost amidst the chaos, too young and weary to locate the missing sheep, I felt a rising panic. That's when an old shepherd, after imparting those cautionary words, took it upon himself to help me search. And there I sat, alone and afraid, perched upon the rock, waiting for his return.

That scenario is my memory of childhood. As a little herdsman on the mountain, I grazed with old herdsman who told me how to protect myself in the wild. They did not teach me how to survive in nature physically but taught me how to avoid unnoticeable spiritual or energy dangers, such as not answering people's calling when I am alone, cutting unnatural-looking plants, not saying that you are hungry, and not looking at any holes in the wild, covering snakes with my sweaty clothes when they are molting. This unusual education throughout my childhood still influences my present behavior sometimes. Growing up, I gradually realized this related to what in Minyag language is called “tæŋæ (in English omen).” Long-time life experiences in the community and fieldwork associated with Minyag folklore compelled me to explore the process of Minyag omen operations and its effects on Minyag people.

Minyag omens are similar to the negative or unlucky signs perceived across different cultures, such as seeing a black cat crossing the road or a crow's appearance, which means misfortune or death. Unlike a shared understanding of an omen, an event regarded as a portent of good or evil, a Minyag omen is a particular genre that occurs depending on different people. Minyag omens have long played a significant role in Minyag culture, serving as markers of fortune, warning, and guidance for individuals and communities. Compared with Western omen, Chinese omen (预兆), and Tibetan omen (ལྷ་ལྟུང་།), Minyag omen are different and more complex. Minyag omen is a distinctive dynamic process that combines the future and past, and the Minyag omen system is a sort of vernacular knowledge to understand individual life and collective surroundings. This

dissertation aims to introduce the Minyag Omen system to more folkloristics and examine the cultural knowledge, social functions, and religious interpretations dimensions of Minyag omens, focusing on their role in Minyag people's individual experience and collective memory.

My research questions focus on three main aspects:

- First, what are the defining characteristics of Minyag omens?
- Secondly, what does the concept of an omen signify for the Minyag people?
- Lastly, how does the Minyag omen operate within their society?

The study of Minyag omens does not only shed light on how the omen system influences Minyag people's lives and behaviors, but it will also contribute important materials to the comparative analysis of the social functions of beliefs, memory, and folktales in folkloristics. First, the Minyag omen system interprets the unique cultural phenomena of the Minyag community, which provides a Minyag perspective on understanding the world and life. Therefore, by studying Minyag omens, we can first deeply explore and understand the Minyag people's moral values, fears, and aspirations as well as getting insights into Minyag's religious practices, rituals, and interpretations of the natural world. Second, we can appreciate the omens system's critical role in regulating the community. Third, in the broader field of religious and folkloristic studies, the Minyag omen system is an example of the relevance of vernacular knowledge over textual knowledge. Additionally, the study of Minyag omens has contemporary relevance, shedding light on the ongoing dynamics of Minyag culture and its adaptation to modernity.

As the only MA student from the whole eastern Minyag community, I stand at the swing of a pendulum, going back and forth between country and city, field and college, inside and outside of Minyag. At the same time, I try to reconcile emic and etic perspectives to analyze the Minyag omen system in folkloristics. These unique personal circumstances provided me the opportunity to combine the data I collected through conversations with Minyag interlocutors and my own life experiences in the community. The textual sources include Chinese government reports and gazetteers.

Chapter 1

Literature review

The manifestation of an omen is the combination of specific signs that predict specific consequences. In this thesis, the term omen is used in folklorist discourse, meaning a specific genre of folklore that preserves knowledge by codifying it in concrete and objective form (Pasichniuk, 1999). Accordingly, omens are part of vernacular knowledge, and as such, they pertain to individual experience as much as they generate collective memories. Minyag people call ‘omen’ ‘tæŋæ’ (Minyag IPA transcripts), a concept that is actually more similar to the evil or bad luck omen in the Western context. In contemporary scholarship, the definition of omens is without too much controversy among scholars, while discussions regarding their classification within religious or folkloristic studies are worth continuing. The interdisciplinary nature of omens, straddling the realms of anthropology, sociology, psychology, religious studies, and folklore, presents a significant challenge in categorization, constrained by the definitions and boundaries of the respective academic disciplines.

Here, I use the term “omen” since I considered the following reasons. Firstly, I translated the Minyag word “tæŋæ” as “omen” because compared with other words, such as “portent,” “harbinger,” and “embodiment,” that emphasize future events, “omen” is a more accessible and more acceptable concept for outsiders of Minyag community. Secondly, “omen” has a rich historical background. Its Latin roots trace back to “osmen,” a word of unknown origin, indicating foreboding or augury (Online Etymology Dictionary). Over time, it evolved to encompass occurrences believed to portend future good or evil events. In scholarly discussions, “omen” continues to serve as a pivotal term, capturing the essence of predictive signs and their cultural significance. Thirdly, the “omen” term is historically associated with ‘superstition’ and ancient beliefs; its usage persists across cultures, reflecting humanity’s fascination with predicting the future. The term “omen” aligns with vernacular knowledge and religion in Minyag culture, where adverse phenomena are considered omens. Finally, “omen” has been stigmatized as a misunderstanding of recognizing signs. I try to use the Minyag “omen” to eliminate this

bias and see it as vernacular knowledge. In Minyag culture, omens are traditionally linked solely with adversity. However, they also serve as a vital signal for preventing future suffering. By recognizing and addressing these omens, people can mitigate potential hardships. Consequently, the concept of omens in Minyag culture holds both complex emotional and practical significance. It encompasses a positive aspect concealed within the negative, making the term "omen" preferred due to its alignment with vernacular knowledge and religious beliefs.

In this literature review, I aim to trace the trajectory of omens' classification from superstition to vernacular knowledge. I will examine how omens were initially categorized within the domain of superstition, then integrated into folk belief practices, replaced by vernacular beliefs, and ultimately transformed into forms of vernacular knowledge. By exploring the historical development and contemporary discourse of omen terminology, we can better understand how omens have evolved within folkloristic frameworks. Then, we will compare omen studies in Western and Eastern countries and situate the omen in the Tibetan context. Finally, I will give a brief introduction to the religion and folklore studies of Minyag.

1.1. The definition of the omen

The word 'omen' is worth discussing in folkloristic terms. In the early study of omen, Bonnerjea defined it as "an occurrence supposed to portend or show the character of some future event" (1920:166). Minyag omen follows this basic idea of foreseeing the future as well. Noticeably, we should distinguish between omens and related concepts. Cannell defined the difference between an omen and a portent: "An omen being an indication of some future event, while a portent is an omen of ill, a warning of the approach of evil or calamity" (Cannell, 1933:7). Simmons emphasized the human agency of omens and suggested that omens are distinct from divination; omens are phenomena believed to foretell future events, and their interpretation has already been decided by the society to which the interpretation belongs (1956:223). However, in Minyag, omens and divination are tightly combined, although the omens' interpretations depend on the divination results.

Later, certain definitions use the word "sign" to explain the omens. Jarvis's famous and influential definition of omens is that omens are signs that some individuals believe indicate what will come in the future (1980:291). In folklore and religious studies, signs

“take in not only omens but various small magical practices and taboos as well” and can be cognitive as “prophetic signs” or “control signs” [positive or negative] (Puckett 1926:311-312). From a semiotic perspective, “many omens combine the signs of several semiotic models” (Tyshchenko 2021:157). The sign originates from an occult source and stands for, thereby, a warning about an event in the future (Guinan 1990:9). Omens are signs that believers regard as predictions of the future (Lepori 2009:5). But “omens are not best understood simply as a “cultural system” of signs” (Humphrey 2018). Scholars generally put signs and omens at the same level or use them for mutual interpretation. Here, in the Minyga omen system, the concept of the “sign” is equal to the “unnatural appearance,” which is only one sign sort of the omen system(see 3.1.1.). In previous studies, the term omen is seen as a sign, mainly referring to ‘superstitious signs.’ Baur (2024) took a new term and used the ‘ominous signs’ to describe the omens in India.

From 1920 to 2024, the definitions of omen remain similar, but the classification of omen is rarely discussed. Tyshchenko did good work on cognitive categorization principles of omens and even traced the history of omens’ classification (2021:139). However, the classification is too brief and lacks reference outside Slavic contexts. Therefore, for Minyag's omens, the categorization should be in Minyag's context.

1.2. Superstition: Categorization and Critique

Scholars have often conflated omens with superstitions, leading to confusion and ambiguity in the literature. Early studies, such as those by Bergen (1912), Cannell (1933), and Jarvis (1980), categorized omens within superstition. This lack of distinction persisted in later works by Saenko (2005) and Lepori (2009), perpetuating the association between omens and superstition without justifying it.

While the terms omen and superstition frequently appear together, distinguishing between them remains challenging (Thurston 1912, Best 1898, Sopilniak 2023). For instance, Minyag's omen of snake molting and the Western omen of seeing a black cat both face the dilemma; they all mean unluck, and both could be interpreted as either a superstition or an omen, blurring the lines between the two concepts. This ambiguity extends to instances where superstition is erroneously attributed to causal relationships, as noted by Mameniškienė (2024). Till today, people did not pay too much attention to the terms; most of the time, omens as the sub-aggregate of superstition can be called superstition or superstitious omen, while by contrast, superstitions cannot be called omen.

The classification of omens within the broader category of superstition has influenced research methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Despite their shared connection to belief systems, superstition lacks a universally agreed-upon definition (Lindeman & Aarnio 2007). The term's ambiguity is reflected in various scholarly works, from Drake (1900) to Campbell (1996), highlighting the challenges in defining superstition. Last century, the classification of Minyag omens and other religious practices in China as 'superstition' reflects the ongoing challenge of defining and interpreting belief systems and cultural practices. "There is little agreement among definitions as to precisely what superstition is, or of what it consists" (Goodall 2010:30). "Superstition is an elusive and slippery term" (Foster 2009:4).

"What is religion to you is superstition to me" (Lesser 1931:617), which indicates that superstition is relative in various discourses. Cameron summarized three points: superstition can be the opposition of specific or valid religions, The last one is that any belief system lacks rationality according to today's secular society (2010:4). Or "the term of superstition refers to belief and influence that cannot be suited with rational thought"(Ulya, Hasnul 2018:423). That implies that the definitions of superstition are inescapably influenced by rationalism. According to rationalism, the Minyag omen is categorized as a superstition that is "not aligned with objective scientific truth" (Dundes 1961:2). Martin noted that superstitions are prevalent in various cultures and that what is considered superstition is often opposed to science (2009:12).

To sum up, "superstition is a problematic expression" (Valk 2008:14). The term indicates that some messages need to be noticeable, similar to Yoder's criticism of the term "folk religion." In this thesis, I discarded the notion that omens should be classified as 'superstition.' Instead, I placed them in the broader category of 'knowledge,' which is less burdened by stereotypes and lacking in rationality, thereby empowering the concept. Thus, "few people like to self-identify as superstitious" (Lindeman, Svedholm 2012:242). We need to reflect on the use of the term superstition and be aware of its ambiguity in various contexts.

1.3. Folk and Vernacular Belief: Transition and Terminology

Folklore experts prefer the term "folk beliefs" rather than "superstition or superstitious," which contains more value judgment and less sympathy (Valk 2008:14). For instance, Yoder preferred "to scrap the word 'superstition' and substitute 'folk belief'" (1974:13).

Classifying omens as 'folk beliefs' serves as a good inspiration for understanding Minyag omens because this choice reflects a preference for a more respectful and encompassing approach to understanding cultural beliefs.

Superstition is replaced by folk belief, meaning the research methodology is more extensive than before, and changes in terminology are reflected in the theoretical development too (Kawahashi 2005, Shinno 1993). By considering superstition as part of the broader category of folk belief, the omen is also elevated to a folk living phenomenon that seems free from the stereotypes of irrationality, supernatural, and ignorance attached to it. Hiiemae summed up the folk belief, the term expanded urban and internet communities (2016:7). However, the dispute over the definition of superstition never stopped in folkloristics as it did not entirely remove the cloth of prejudice and created more problems that are common to the definitions of folk belief as a whole.

As Mullen (2000) and Honko (1964) suggest, the broadness of 'folk belief' is a challenge to a precise definition. Additionally, the term 'folk belief' still did not eliminate rationalism. Alternatively, sometimes it is related to the folk religion as opposition since "those who limit the term religion to organized forms prefer the term folk belief (Yoder, 1974: 10)". Folk belief critics argue that the term can impose artificial boundaries on cultural practices and beliefs, neglecting their fluidity and diversity. The term folk presents the meaning of opposing the elite, which is always seen as "false faith" (Valk 2008:15). Similar to the term "folk religion," which is "conditioned by the preconceptions held by various disciplines concerning non-standard religious phenomena in culture" (Yoder 1974:2). This perspective is particularly relevant to Minyag omens, which, like other folk beliefs, embody a rich cultural heritage that transcends rigid scientific and religious classifications.

Honko has suggested that "relating supernatural tradition to social roles, values, and norms is necessary before we can say anything about the function of folk belief" (1964:19). Within this discourse, exploring Minyag omens offers a nuanced perspective, highlighting how these cultural phenomena reflect complex social dynamics and beliefs beyond simplistic categorizations. However, some scholars argued that the term might carry connotations of primitiveness or backwardness, reinforcing stereotypes about non-Western or marginalized cultures (see Primiano 1995, 1988:12). Especially a model of dichotomous, which is "The two-tiered model of high and low opposing Christianity and superstition, religion and popular beliefs, elite, and the folk was, however, deeply rooted as a cognitive pattern." (Bowman, Valk 2014: 4). Primiano's statement of this phenomena

is considerable: “Scholars within the discipline have consistently named religious people's beliefs in residualistic, derogatory ways as "folk," "unofficial," or "popular" religion, and have then juxtaposed these terms on a two-tiered model with "official" religion” (Primiano 1995:38). As ‘Folk belief’ did not eliminate the term's ambiguity, some scholars suggest using a more considered lexicon. This shift in terminology is particularly relevant when examining Minyag omens, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding that respects their cultural context and significance.

‘Vernacular belief’ is the substitution of ‘folk belief,’ which folklorists have recently preferred. In 1995, Primiano introduced the concept of “vernacular religion,” with the main purpose of resolving the dichotomy between “folk religion,” presented as “unofficial,” and opposed to institutional “official religion.” Primiano emphasizes that “vernacular religion is, by definition, religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it” (1995: 44). It is easy to see that one characteristic of vernacular religion is the emphasis on ‘individuals,’ ‘communities,’ and ‘living or daily beliefs’(Hiemae 2016:7). After Primiano’s groundbreaking exploration of folklore, certain scholars attributed it to the derivation of ‘folk belief’ based on these features. Within this framework, studying Minyag omens provides valuable insights into how vernacular beliefs manifest within specific cultural contexts and everyday practices.

Folkloristics increasingly focuses on lived belief practices, individual meanings, and expressive forms. The theoretical and methodological applications of “vernacular religion” are explored by Bowman and Valk, who discussed the broad topic of belief as it appears “in various genres and expressive forms (2014:10),” extending the “vernacular religion” to the expression of “vernacular belief” (2014: 3). Vernacular belief is a term wider than vernacular religion. Valk gave a clear idea: “In vernacular epistemology, belief can indicate faith in God and attachment to certain values, but it can also refer to opinions and sentiments regarding everyday life” (2022: 5). According to the definition of vernacular religion (Primiano, Bowman, Valk) I tried to provide an understanding of vernacular belief as the beliefs and practices of people. These beliefs often arise from everyday experiences and individual or collective memories or experiences, encompassing a wide range of topics, including vernacular religion. ‘Vernacular belief’ is used to move beyond the religious discourse and is more suitable for the Minyag omen system context.

As a new tendency for folklore studies, vernacular belief became known by more people but applied in different ways. Aside from Valk and Bowman, some researchers

have applied theory in their studies, which has exemplary significance for Minyag omen system analysis. Alybina discusses the “Mari vernacular beliefs” and notes the emergence of an official system of ethnic religion in Mari, which had evolved from local vernacular belief traditions. This has resulted in forming the Mari ethnic belief system at the vernacular and institutional levels. (2014:90) Howard did a very exciting and innovative topic about institutional religious expression transformed into a vernacular way (online web), which shows individual everyday beliefs in the vast web's vernacular discourse (2009:404). This theme is highly vernacular to emphasize the individual's belief that the vernacular web empowers a person to express won theology doctrine and freely link different categories (406). In some way, the process of vernacular belief appearance is de-Western or de-Europeanism, as scholars are looking for contexts outside of Christian or non-institutional religions.

1.4. Contemporary Perspectives on Vernacular Knowledge

Valk based on the “vernacular religion” and “vernacular belief,” he further elaborated the concept of “vernacular knowledge” in the following way:

“Vernacular knowledge is not a systematic and consistent doctrine but rather an expressive strategy and its never-finalized product, which appears in manifold forms, both verbal and non-verbal. It can be expressed in oral, written, and printed genres but also acted out in visual art, symbols, music, rituals, and behavior. It can be finalized in writing or works of art, but more often, it occurs in private and public interaction” (2022:9).

He wrote that knowledge empowers people and that "belief implies trust in that which upholds knowledge. (Valk, 2022)” then, the “vernacular knowledge” possesses the same function as “vernacular religion” to remove “the dichotomy between secular and religious.” Vernacular knowledge jumps out at Kapalo's critique: “does not limit reality by fixing it within definite frames but leaves its existential horizons open.”(9) “Vernacular knowledge wipes out the dichotomy between secular and religious, extends the religious connotations of belief and covers its secular forms, which equally shape our understanding of reality” (8). Integrating Minyag omen systems within this framework reveals the profound utilization of vernacular knowledge in understanding and navigating cultural beliefs and practices.

Vernacular knowledge shows strong life power and pragmatic function in the practices. As Valk wrote, “There is a long path from collecting superstitions as weird reminiscences or survivals from the past or expressions of mental backwardness to conceptualizing belief as an integral part of human life.” (Valk, 2022:2). Having been considered part of superstition, omens remain difficult to classify into an unambiguous category. However, in the move from “superstition” to “vernacular knowledge,” we can see how the scholars endeavor to eliminate dichotomy, Eurocentrism, and singularity. New methodologies, interdisciplinary dialogues, and theory developments emerged in this process. Starting from the standpoint of the development of folkloristics, this academic “path” stretches to far arenas.

In this thesis, I have employed the term "omen" to denote the specific manifestation of the Minyag "omen" system, and I have utilized Valk's concept of "vernacular knowledge" to characterize Minyag's understanding of omens. However, recognizing the potential stigma associated with the term "superstition" and the oversimplified dichotomy present in the classification of "folk belief," which may not adequately capture the nuanced nature of Minyag knowledge, I propose reclassifying the Minyag omen system under the broader category of Minyag knowledge. This classification acknowledges the historical context of folkloristic terminology while avoiding the limitations of overly generalized labels.

The initial Minyag omen system emerged as an application derived from institutional religion. However, this religion was often perceived as black magic and superstition and even labeled as "non-Buddhism" by the prevailing Tibetan religious framework. Consequently, navigating this intricate landscape makes interpreting it solely through a religious lens challenging. Furthermore, the Minyag omen system, though rooted in religious practices, diverges from traditional religious dogma. Instead, it draws heavily upon individual and collective memory, serving as a mode of expression for the beliefs of the broader Minyag populace. The Minyag omen system encapsulates many elements, including collective oral history, traumatic memories, philosophical reflections on survival, individual life experiences, personal cosmologies, and both individual and communal expressions of social stress. These components defy simplistic categorizations as mere "superstition," "folk belief," or "vernacular belief." Instead of attempting to delineate the Minyag omen system exhaustively, it may be more prudent to approach it through the lens of vernacular knowledge. This approach blends the insider's perspective

(emic) with the outsider's analysis (etic), allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the system's intricacies.

1.5. Omen Studies in China and Tibetan Context

Omen indicates fate, and luck influences omen (Burne 1913). The common understanding of an omen should be tightly related to the person, which is also presented in Minyag omens. However, Western studies of omens usually contain every affair that can be predicted in the so-called ancient persuasion science. Such as: “If a seagull has landed on the water, good weather is on the way” (Pasichniuk 1999:11) or “When swallows fly close to the ground, it’s going to rain” (Nazarova 2012: 251). However, the activity of birds and weather is not due to luck or is related to individual fate or the future. These kinds of omens are controversial. Therefore, some scholars carefully classify the omens into omens of death (Bergen 1889), omens of bad luck, or signs (Cannell 1933), or just generally put all omens into the box of ‘superstition’ (Dundes 1961). In general, the studies of omens in Western countries engaged folklore, religion, vernacular knowledge, society, politics, culture, economics, psychology, biology, archaeology, etc. These rich studies offered abundant examples and significant discussion to my analysis of Minyag's omen.

Unlike Western omen studies, which predominantly focus on Western cultures, Chinese omen studies remain deeply rooted in analyzing ancient omen literature. Xia examines the imagery of pagodas through a historical ecological lens (2013), Wan explores the transmission methods of folk omen information (2001), and Zhou delves into weather omens (1993), all drawing on ancient Chinese texts. However, Chinese omen studies primarily center on the knowledge of the Han Chinese population, neglecting research on minority groups such as Minyag omen or others. Furthermore, a notable aspect of omen studies in China is the categorization of omens into "good" (吉兆) and "bad" (凶兆) for analysis. For example, Zhao's research on rainbow omens and taboos in China (1999) predominantly focuses on the negative aspects of rainbow omens. Presently, omen studies in China remain intertwined with taboos and superstitions, often disconnected from the daily lives of the common people. This research on Minyag omen certainly will provide a living instance in China from the insider’s perspective within the vernacular approach. In conclusion, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and

integrating vernacular knowledge systems is essential for advancing omen studies in the Chinese context.

Omen studies in Tibetan culture share similarities with Chinese traditions but exhibit distinct characteristics. Tibetan omen studies primarily revolve around religious texts and divinations, yet they remain closely intertwined with everyday life. In my research, the discussion of Minyag omens focuses less on institutional religious aspects and more on their interpretation as living practices. An early milestone in this field is Norbu Chophe's translation of Karma Chagmed's collection of Tibetan omens, offering insight into the daily omens observed by Tibetans (1982). Tibetan omen studies often explore the spiritual aspects of Tibetan life, such as divination and meditation. Ekvall (1963) and Roney-Dougal (2018) have approached Tibetan traditions from various angles, with the former focusing on the function of divination and omens, while the latter delves into psychic awareness and their significance in omens. Additionally, Tibetan omen studies often involve comparative analysis with other cultures. For instance, Ai Nishida's research on bird divination in old Tibetan texts investigates its philological origins and compares similar practices in India(). Similarly, examining the Minyag omen system can benefit from comparative analysis, exploring parallels with other vernacular omen knowledge and revealing shared patterns and unique variations in interpreting 'signs.'

1.6. The Religion and Folklore Studies of Minyag

To date, little research has been conducted on the omens of the Minyag people. Existing academic studies of the Minyag primarily focus on their history and linguistics. Early investigations into the Minyag people traced their origins to the belief that they were descendants of the Western-Xia empire. Scholars such as Gele (1988), Huang (1998), Yang (2013), and Mu (2013) have offered various interpretations of the Minyag people's origins and their relationship with the Western-Xia. Subsequent studies began comparing the Western-Xia language with the Minyag language. The Minyag ethnic group, a small sub-group of Tibetans in China, comprises Western and Eastern Minyag, with recent research focusing more on the Western Minyag. Yang and Cunmei (2019) argued that in the study of the Minyag language, emphasis should be placed on the eastern dialect.

Turning to folklore and anthropology investigations of Eastern Minyag, Dingyuan conducted the first fieldwork on the Minyag people's belief in mountain gods in the

Eastern Minyag village of Mengzhong (1990). However, Dingyuan perceived the Eastern Minyag people's beliefs as primitive worship, advocating for their elimination due to what he saw as a misguided reverence for the powers of nature. Following him, Jing produced the first ethnography of the Minyag people, systematically documenting their folklore, festivals, folktales, religion, architecture, and social structures (2006). Jing's mentor, Xingxing, also contributed to Minyag's studies with his fieldwork in the Minyag community, offering insights into Minyag ethnic culture and other aspects based on his ethnological narratives (2007). Zailing later joined a fieldwork team led by Xingxing to investigate marriage and dowry practices among the Minyag (2007). While these ethnographers provided detailed descriptions of Minyag culture, they often examined and criticized local culture from outsiders' perspectives, lacking an understanding of insider thinking and objective description. Language barriers led to misunderstandings of certain Minyag terms, further complicating their interpretations and highlighting the need for a more nuanced and empathetic approach to studying Minyag omens and cultural practices. Recent interest in the Minyag religion has emerged as Tibetan researchers began to notice Minyag Bonpo's beliefs. Chulong and Tengyun first interpreted ancient Minyag religious calendar manuscripts, revealing their close connection to the Minyag omen system. Similarly, Dehe and Liming compared the Minyag calendar with those of surrounding minority groups in China. Qingmu and Xianbacairang, based on the Minyag Bon Buddha Festival in Mengzhong, conclusively demonstrated that Minyag belief is a blend of Tibetan Buddhism and Bonpo religion through textual analysis of Tangka (2024). However, this research highlights the limitations of Tibetan studies on Minyag folklore. Though closer to the Minyag people's lifestyle, Tibetan researchers often interpret Minyag beliefs through the lens of Tibetan institutional religion. The principles of Tibetan Buddhism are not suitable for understanding Minyag omens, which own their own knowledge framework distinct from Tibetan Buddhism.

In summary, folklore and religious studies of Eastern Minyag remain underexplored and require a greater focus on daily beliefs, viewing them as Minyag or vernacular knowledge rather than institutional religion. Due to language barriers and cultural differences, there is a lack of insider perspectives on Minyag folklore. This thesis marks the beginning of research into Minyag folk culture, focusing on the Minyag people's omen system using vernacular methodology from an insider's perspective.

Chapter 2

Exploring Minyag: Fieldwork and Conceptual Background

2.1. Fieldwork overview

In my fieldwork, I focused on the omen concept (tæŋæ) for Minyag people. I looked at how the omen system and Minyag people influence each other, how the omen system developed following urbanization and immigration, and what kind of the embodiments of Minyag's cosmology and worldview are reflected in the omen system. Simultaneously, I hypothesized about Minyag's lifeways and the relationship between omens.

My data collection relies on in-person and online interviews, participant observations, and my life experience in the Minyag community. I also analyze the text of archival research from the local Shimian county gazetteers. I found the history of workplace accidents in the asbestos mining industry, which connects to Minyag's collective memory of omens. I selected my research participants by age, gender, occupation, and education, which included thirteen people and about ten hours of conversation.

During my fieldwork interviews, I engaged with a diverse cohort of thirteen individuals, eight males, and five females, all hailing from the Minyag community. Spanning ages from twenty-four to eighty-two, the group encompassed a broad spectrum of life experiences, with five participants aged sixty and above, five between forty and sixty, and three between twenty and forty. Their educational backgrounds varied equally, ranging from seven illiterates to individuals with degrees from primary, middle, and high schools and one from a technology school. Occupationally, the group represented a cross-section of the community, including farmers, herdsman, religious specialists, and individuals engaged in diverse professions. Despite their differences, all participants shared a common bond: their upbringing in the Minyag community and proficiency in the Minyag language. This diversity within the participant group provided invaluable insights into the community's cultural, social, and linguistic fabric. Among these elements, I pay more attention to the different generations and vocations of Minyag people's

attitudes and recognition of omens. More specifically, I compared the perspectives of common Minyag herdsmen and farmers with those of Sutcywu, who are the religious specialists in all Minyag communities.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I only collected the oral history, tales, individual experiences, and memories about omens. However, after I visited Sutcywu, I realized they possessed some manuscripts, including those concerning omens, so I also tried to document them. Comparing ordinary Minyag people's vernacular knowledge and traditional religious manuscripts could be an exciting way to dig out the inner logic of Minyag people. However, these books are owned by Sutcywus, who did not allow me to digitalize them. Even so, I made a comparison between text and living knowledge. During my fieldwork, I was careful concerning the rights to use ancient manuscripts, participants' informed consent, and people's privacy. Firstly, Minyag people are concerned that publicizing manuscripts might attract antiquities dealers to buy them, thus causing a loss for the entire community. For instance, when I was younger, a family burned most of their manuscripts to prevent them from being profaned through business activities. In the context of my fieldwork, Sutcywu and I agreed that we should only take pictures of what they allowed. Secondly, there are two layers of informed consent. One is complicated as Minyag communities are small, and most villagers are relatives, so informed consent is difficult. People may answer interviews and give informed consent out of deference instead of voluntarily sharing their stories. It is hard to get their sincere opinions. Still, due to my experience of having already conducted fieldwork for five years in the Minyag communities, we built a good level of trust that allowed them to tell me their sincere opinions. The other layer of informed consent concerns people being more likely to talk about others' omen stories. This is because the direct experience of omen is often accompanied by personal trauma. Therefore, people are unwilling to talk about their own omens, but other people's stories can be gossiped about. For this, I decided to use anonymity to avoid hurting the people mentioned in the conversation. To maintain anonymity, I assigned each participant common Tibetan names like "Dawa" and "Lhamo" to safeguard their privacy.

My academic engagement in fieldwork about Minyag folklore started in 2018 with a preservation project of Minyag folktales, which aimed at recording and documenting the living Minyag oral culture in the whole eastern Minyag region of Shimian County (Sichuan Province, China). From 2020 till now, I have continuously collected Minyag folklore. In the summer of 2023, I concentrated on the omen system and chose my village as the fieldwork location. The fieldwork was conducted for three months, from July to September. My village is called Mutcyka in the Minyag language (猛种 Mengzhong, in Chinese). It is a about 2,000-meter altitude mountain village that is the only surviving original Eastern Minyag village after a heavy earthquake happened in 2023 in Luding County, which is close to the Eastern Minyag.



(Figure 1. Mengzhong village, 2020)

Historically, this village is located on the border between Tibet and China, and 100% of the villagers are Minyag people. Like other typical Minyag villages, it is half-farming and half-herding. Since it is the biggest Minyag village in the county, I could easily encounter people of different generations and occupations. One issue is that this village has no Sutcywu, and I have to visit other villages to meet them. Therefore, my fieldwork also took place in the three Sutcywus' hometowns. During my fieldwork, I interacted with most of the villagers in Mutcyka. I grew up in this village, and it is easy for me to talk with them without language and cultural barriers (some of them cannot speak Chinese, only Minyag). However, I still could not gather much information about some specific

kinds of omens, such as the one of seeing two people having sexual intercourse in the wild, which is only known by a specific group that I didn't have access to. Another challenge is that some older generations refuse to discuss this omen topic since it is taboo. Fortunately, my relatives and some young guys helped me deal with this.

Through my observations and fieldwork in Mengzhong village, I have uncovered significant insights into the omens prevalent among the Minyag people. My research focuses on the concept of "omen (təŋæ)" in Minyag, which pertains specifically to negative omens. Originally borrowed from ancient Tibetan manuscripts, "təŋæ" was associated with rituals for good fortune, but over time, it evolved to signify bad signs or misfortune within the Minyag community. Remarkably, there is no equivalent term for "positive omen" in the Minyag language, as confirmed by four key informants. Thus, when Minyag individuals speak of omens ("təŋæ"), it invariably denotes ominous signs pointing toward future hardships. Following omens, people always experience death, sickness, injury, and panic memories of individuals and also collective. Therefore, I deduced that individual and collective traumas, rather than exclusively ancient manuscripts, are the basis for the formation and transmission of omens. Furthermore, in this context, the omen became a recording tool for Minyag's collective history and individual life experiences supernaturally, acting as a mediator to adjust the relationship between the individual and the past. Also, I am attracted by how the ancient religious omen texts are applied in the context of Minyag people's daily lives and became folk pragmatically living omen beliefs. Different generation participants narrated distinctive stories with different attitudes, reflecting that the omen system gradually developed by picking, practicing, normalizing, creating new omens, and repeating this process. This pattern recurrently emerged in the materials.

Minyag omen is a daily belief or knowledge that tightly connects the Minyag people's traditional and modern lives. The social transformation of Minyag communities is taking place, presenting the conflicts between new and old world views and lifestyles under the pressure of urbanization. In some way, the theme of the Minyag omen system summarizes the clash between the community's old and new spiritual order. Before a new scientific materialistic worldview was built up and the previous animistic was not wholly destroyed, during this "anomie" (The theory of "anomie" was introduced by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim. In his seminal work, "The Division of Labor in Society" (1893), and later in "Suicide" (1897), Durkheim described anomie as a condition of normlessness or a breakdown of social norms and values. He argued that anomie occurs

during periods of rapid social change or crisis.) , the Minyag omen system retained a strong vitality. Moreover, my fieldwork has two unexpected discoveries: the omen system still preserves the historical remnants of true gods or super gods under institutionalized Buddhist religious influences, and most Minyag people do not know them. Additionally, I learned about the transferability of the Minyag omen system, which means certain omens and the bad luck of omen can be transferred to other people to protect witnesses.



(Figure 2. Fieldwork during the herding of sheep, Baobao)

As a member of the community, doing fieldwork in my village is a great practice and also a challenge. Emic and etic, as two distinct field research approaches, offer insiders' and outsiders' perspectives to explore the cultural significance of the ominous phenomena. Observing members' views in the Minyag communities while analyzing them through the lens of methodological and theoretical resources from outside the community impelled me to keep reflecting on my roles during the fieldwork. In the beginning, I played a participant who also practiced the omen system and attended the rituals of the omen till I jumped out from it and tried to be a “fly on the wall.” While I inherently accept the logic of the Minyag omen system because I am from this community, I should keep an objective description. In culture fields, scholars emphasize the importance of participating in observation (see Wolcott 2005, Marshall and Rossman 1999). However, in my case, I share a similar vernacular worldview with my interlocutors,

but I should scrutinize my own culture simultaneously. I hope that leaving the Minyag context is another way of returning to it, which can be a considerable advantage for folklorists concentrating on their own culture.

To sum up, the Minyag omen system is a unique genre of Minyag folklore that is living, dynamic, and unstable. Folkloristics studies a specific area of humanity, but it is hard to reconstruct the origins and the history of folklore. Collecting data causes us to get close to the “truth” we want. My fieldwork is in a natural context, which helps me collect substantial data. Based on these materials, which include personal stories, histories, legends, placelore, and ancient manuscripts, I improved my analysis and made it more comprehensive.

2.2. Background of Minyag concept

Minyag is a term of multiple meanings that can refer to a region, a language, and an ethnic group in Tibetan areas. Minyag is the transcription of the Tibetan word མིལྷག and the name of the Minyag language, also known in Mandarin as the Muya language, which belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese and Qiang branches of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family (Sun 1983; Huang 1985). The language spoken in the Southeast of Sichuan province is spoken by the communities surrounding Minyag Gangkar Mountain.

Minyag language consists of the Western Minyag language (about 10,000 speakers), which is more influenced by the Kham Tibetan dialect (Huang 1985), and the Eastern Minyag language, which is more influenced by Mandarin (about 5,000 speakers). Although these two languages are classified as Minyag languages, the Western and Eastern Minyag languages are not mutually intelligible since the two communities have been separated for a long time. According to the oral history of the Eastern Minyag Riwa family (a family famous for their religious hereditary kinship), the Eastern Minyag migrated from the Western Minyag place 18 generations ago (Jing 2006, Xingxing 2007). Both the Western and Eastern Minyag languages are different from the Tibetan language, but the Eastern Minyag religious specialists use the Tibetan alphabet as their writing system for religious purposes, and there are a lot of synonym words and loan words from Tibetan in both Minyag languages.

As already mentioned, Minyag is also the name of a region which, according to ancient Tibetan texts such as *A Scholar's Feast* (མཁས་པའི་དགའ་སྟོན། Pawo Tsuglag Threngw 1564; Huang, H. (Trans.)1989), *The Blue Annals* (དེབ་ཐེང་ཐོན་པོ། Gö Lotsawa Zhönnu-pel 1476), there are two Minyag places. “Upper Ngari Three Circles, Middle Ground Four Corners, Lower Dokham Six Mountains” is an expression used to identify the whole of Tibet. The Minyag region is one of the “Dokham six Mountains” called Minyag Rekang (Bradgonpa Dkonmchog-bstanparab-rgyas 1865).

The geographical scope of Minyag always changed during different periods of political power regimes. Under the rule of the Western-Xia empire (1038-1227), Minyag indicated both the people and the area located in the northwestern Chinese provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, parts of Qinghai, Shaanxi, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Outer Mongolia (Wang 1993, Bian 2005, Li 2005). However, nowadays, the Minyag area usually refers to the Minyag people and the area of Rekang, which is described as west of Zheduoshan in present-day Kangding County, south of Daofu County, east of Yajiang County, and north of Jiulong County. (Sangye, 1986)



(Figure 3. Mengzhong Minyag woman, Zhou Wenan, 2012)

Minyag is both an exonym and an autonym. Lijing, in her master's research on Minyag, thought the term Minyag in Tibetan indicates both the name of the Western-Xia

empire and the Minyag people who live in Minyag Rekang (2003). As the Minyag language is close to the West Xia language, certain scholars hypothesized that the Minyag language speakers are the descendants of the West Xia empire (Tianxi 1944, Shaoqing 1945, Qunhua 1993). However, there is no direct evidence of this hypothesis. Minyag in Tibetan scholarship refers to the people in the Minyag region that contain other ethnic groups like Jiarong and Zhaba; therefore, today in linguistics, Minyag refers to Western and Eastern Minyag language speakers. However, in this thesis, Minyag exclusively refers to Eastern Minyag language speakers who live to the south of Gangkar Mountain (Shimian County, Ya'an City) and were recognized as Tibetans by the Chinese government in 1949~1950 (Shimian County annual, 1999) at the time of the first ethnic identification.

Based on the local oral family histories, religious history, and folktales, one piece of information can be confirmed: the Eastern Minyag has been separated from the Western Minyag for a long time. One of the reasons that caused the migration of part of the Minyag community is religion, which specifically refers to the conflicts between Bon and Buddhism or the Bon religion proselytizing mission. Unlike the Western Minyag people who practice Buddhism, the Eastern Minyag still practice a special form of Bon that involves some blood sacrifice rituals, which may be the reason for an unsolvable contrast with Buddhism and caused these conservative Minyag to choose to flee and explore a new living environment for preserving their beliefs. The new environment, with its different geographical and climatic conditions, shaped the escapees' unique view of the world, which underlies the Eastern Minyag's omen system. Here, Minyag people preserve and practice their original beliefs while developing new Minyag festivals and inventing Minyag's calendar related to the special Minyag omen system.

Before the diffusion of Buddhism on the Tibetan Plateau, Bon was the main religion (Samuel 2012). The academic study of Bon is controversial due to the blurred available historical documents. However, traditional Tibetan scholars argue that there are several classifications of Bon, which did not specifically refer to any organized religious system but were rather a Tibetan umbrella term that included different ancient indigenous religious beliefs and worshipping rituals to various classes of gods in the ancient Tibet (Nuowurangcai 1999). Based on different development pattern periods, Bon should be defined as divided between Srid pa Bon and Yungdrung Bon (Cairangtai 1996, Dunzhulajie 2006, Awangjiacuo 2013). After Buddhism spread into Tibet, Bon started to

lose its religious position until the confrontation with Buddhism and the collapse of the Tubo dynasty. The Bon religion eventually lost its important political position but remained alive among the folk. (Lihao 2016). Awangjiacuo is a scholar of Bon who suggests that the development of the Bon Religion went through three stages, namely the Primitive Sridpa Bon stage, the modified Bon Religion stage during the confrontation with Buddhism, and the Buddhisized Yungdrung Bon Religion stage (2014). According to Awangjiacuo, Minyag's Bon beliefs should be considered Sridpa Bon or the stretch of the Buddhisized Yundrung Bon into folk life.

Chapter 3

Omen system in Minyag

In Minyag culture, an omen occurs when individuals encounter "unnatural appearances," signaling a future event. The Minyag omen system comprises two main categories: standard omens, which adhere to four strict conditions, and special omens, which satisfy only one condition but are connected to spiritual phenomena. Both categories are integral to the omen system, called “tæŋæ” in Minyag.

Tæŋæ is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) rendering of the Eastern Minyag word that means omen. As it is a paronym word with Tibetan, we can find it in Tibetan writing, which is ལྷས་ངན།, which is transcribed as ‘ltas ngan’ in Wylie (the official Romanization system used for the Tibetan language) and bears a similar meaning to the word in Eastern Minyag. We can consider Minyag ‘tæŋæ’ equal to Tibetan Ltas ngan and tinae in IPA, but some nuances must be noted.

Both Tæŋæ and Ltas ngan (ལྷས་ངན།) denote a connection with visual perception. Semantically, the Tibetan word Ltas ngan (ལྷས་ངན།) can be split into Ltas (ལྷས) and Ngan (ངན). According to the Tibetan-Chinese dictionary, Ltas (ལྷས) means ‘omen’ and ‘portent’ is the derivation word that adds the suffix “s” (ས) from the original form Lta(ལྷ) which means ‘to see’ or ‘to watch’. Ngan means ‘sickness’ and ‘badness’. However, in Minyag, ‘tæ’ also means ‘to see’ but in the grammatical passive form. And ‘ŋæ’ implicates the “negative” meaning but also has another meaning, “mine.” Therefore, this word in Minyag means omen, but Minyag speakers also perceive it with the nuanced meaning of “It was seen by me” or “Badness was seen by me.” In this nuance, Minyag people’s attitude is subtle when coming across omens or talking about them. Emphasizing passiveness in the Minyag context is crucial for understanding that the omen or the portent signs are unavoidable, but the consequences of their effect can be avoided (Dundes, 1961). In Tibetan, omen consists of negative harbinger Ltas ngan (ལྷས་ངན།) and positive indication Ltas Sang (ལྷས་བཟང།) which means auspice. However, in the context of Minyag, the omen has exclusively negative connotations instead of involving an optimistic side.

Intriguingly, Minyag people only need signs of bad things to explain the dangerous risks, but propitious signs are needless. However, it is worth remembering that Minyag people do not have their writing system and use the Tibetan one. Based on Minyag's ancient religious manuscripts in Tibetan writing, we can understand the Tibetan-related etymological origins of contemporary Minyag *tæŋæ*.

“There are many kinds of such (omens) like the sow eating her piglets. We here (Mengzhong village) did not see such a thing. In (the village) of Lufanggou’s Tamdin Tso’s family (a person's name who died related to an omen), their family’s sow ate her piglets. The sow was supposed to give birth very soon; day by day, the pregnant sow’s belly slowly diminished. Where are the piglets? All were eaten up by sow. It didn't take long for this to happen, Tamdin Tso was struck by a rolling stone and died. It was around 2011 or 2012. When a person's luck is not good, everything around him/her is going in the direction of bad, and omen (*tæŋæ*) or not *tæŋæ* has nothing to do with a person with great fortune on their side, even gods and ghosts cannot provoke them.”

Pasang is a 65-year-old Minyag man from the local powerful family Phawo. He is the person who has experienced a lot of omens and has particular authority in Meng Zhong village. In the interview, I asked him how many omens exist in Minyag, and he answered like above. One primary term for omens in Minyag is ‘*tæŋæ*.’ This term of the Minyag people is only concerned with luck. Below, I report some qualifying features of omens that we can infer from my interlocutors’ answers.

Choekyi, who is a Sucywu learning rituals and spells from a young age from his master (a Minyag monk, like a Lama who is a religious specialist) who has the authority to explain Minyag omen also said: "Just as (someone) hears the cries of wild beasts around the village (a kind of omen in Minyag), it is not the whole village that hears it but the individuals who hear it, and so it is all the individuals doing the ritual regarding problems (of omens) rather than the whole village doing the ritual regarding omens. Omen can only be heard by those who are low-fortunate, unlucky."

Nima is from Mengzhong, a 30-year-old veteran who has been in school and traveled to Chinese cities often. He said in an interview in Minyag when I asked about what an omen is, “When someone sees a snake eating a bird or when someone sees a snake molting its skin (these two are omens in Minyag), those who have bad intentions will call the people next to him to come and see. “A guest is coming to your house,” people used to say. After you agree, this bad luck will be transferred to you; if your

energy (luck) is enough, then nothing will happen. In short, it is all about luck; if your luck is good, no matter what happens, it is fine; maybe because of this point (i.e., not having enough luck), it results in a lot of diseases and suffering within the family, and serious problems may occur.”

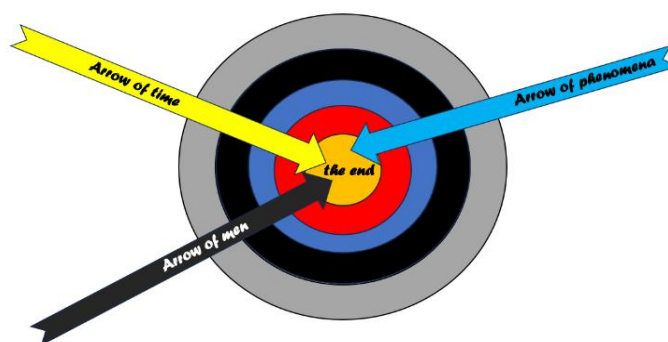
Many omens are a signal of previous individual or collective bad actions. In Minyag, we can understand this connection from three different men’s descriptions: that omens only relate to luck, that luck is related to personal life energy. According to the narratives, I summarize Minyag Omen’s three principles:

1. All the omens and consequences have happened after the premise that someone is in a weak-luck situation. Therefore, if someone is in his time of good fortune, he can remain unaffected by any omens.
2. The omen is based on weak luck that only low-energy people can see. However, though a lucky guy may also witness an omen, it may not be because of him but because of his close relatives (two generations from the same family) who were in a lucky downturn at the time. Therefore, the omens are not the lucky guy’s omens but his family members.
3. The omen only signals a lack of luck from previous times and the consequent suffering that is arising now.

To sum up, the concept of omen (tæŋæ) I discussed above prevails in Minyag. In addition, there is a particular omen type, which is not related to the witnesses’ luck but is instead just a signal of events in the future for other random people (especially non-Minyag people). In Minyag, these omens are not regarded as normative “omens.” They are more like signs I classified as ‘special’ developed by the Minyag folks. In fact, they also follow the principle of standard omens (conditions and results that I will elaborate on later) and can be generally considered by outsiders’ understanding of omens. For this reason, I divided the Minyag omen system into two. On the one hand, it is a standard omen that is most characteristic of the Minyag and is reflected both in religious manuscripts and folk beliefs. On the other hand, there are three types of special omen, each with its own characteristics and Minyag name: seeing a soul (Liva tae), seeing a ghost (Zutae), seeing a zombie (Ndumbu).

3.1. Standard omens

Minyag standard omens refer to signs that are referred to in manuscripts and have the potential to manifest in real life situations. They encompass four key elements: individual zodiac signs, unusual phenomena, timing, and potential consequences, often mitigable through specific rituals or actions. Illustrated in the diagram (Figure 4: The Standard Omen Diagram), three arrows of conditions converge on the target of consequences. Only when all three arrows hit the bullseye does the outcome occur. This entire process constitutes an omen in Minyag culture.



(Figure 4. The standard omen diagram)

3.1.1. Unnatural appearance

In some way, the omens we are talking about are all rooted in some unnatural or abnormal appearances that make people panic. This is a cross-cultural phenomenon in both ancient and contemporary times. For example, in Mesopotamia, there was an old Babylonian omen concerning wild animals appearing in the city (Annus 2009); Roman omens predicted particular messages for the nation like “many prodigious births reported by Livy, such as the birth of hermaphrodites, a two-headed boy in Veii, a one-handed boy, or a girl with teeth” (Ripat 2006); today in India an evil omen is to see a fight between animals (Thurston, Edgar, 1935, 3-4). For Minyag, it is a bad omen to see two people having sexual intercourse in the wild or to see a snake eating another snake. In a modern view, these phenomena seem natural to outsiders, but they are unnatural appearances for insiders because they are considered manifestations of omen. Commonly, not everything

can be counted as an omen of the future, but only some specific phenomena are fixed in the collective memory and folk tradition with this function (Wisdom, 2021). As a rule, the omens include interpretations based on the collective experience and fixed in the collective memory (Agapkina & Belova, 2009: 279). Minyag has 15 types of signs of omen (twelve are standard and three are special) related to domestic animals, wild animals, wild plants, human beings, astronomic phenomena, evils, souls, and zombies (see the chart).

These signs and interpretations of omens exist in mainly three different vehicles. The original formulation in Bon manuscripts about omen, the authoritative explanations given by the Bon religious priests in the family lineage who own the manuscripts, and the collective memories of the signs the ordinary Minyag people remembered.

Name	Sort	Manifestations	Source	Solution	Interpretation (Certain special meaning)
teiae ji tænjæ	Chicken	1- Chickens eating their eggs 2- The hen laying hard eggs 3- The hen laying soft eggs	Script Folk interpretation (1-3)	1-ritual 2-cutting chicken's head	Suffering
te ^h i ji tænjæ	Dog	Dogs eating their puppies	Script	Big Ritual	Suffering
p ^h a ji tænjæ	Pig	Pigs eating their piglets	Script	Big Ritual	Suffering
zimbiki ji tænjæ	Snake	1- Snake eating snake 2- Snakes mating 3- Snake eating frog 4- Snake eating rats 5- Snake eating geckos 6- Snake eating birds 7- Snake shedding its skin 8- Snake entering the house	Script(1) Folk (2-8)	1- Taking the snake away 2- Using sweaty cloth to cover it 3- Calling another person to watch 4- Ritual	Suffering and disease Difficulty
teywæ ndzipi teiki tænjæ	Mice	Mother mouse carrying baby mice	script	Ritual	Suffering
wupu xwaxwa ndzipi tænjæ	Fox	Hearing foxes barking around the village	script	Ritual	Children of the village will die
ts ^h atir ji tænjæ	Vines	Seeing vines forming a circle	script	1- Cut it and throw it away 2- Ritual	Suffering
ndogo ji tænjæ	Bamboo	Seeing bamboo branches growing	script	1- Cut and throw it away 2- Ritual	Suffering
teiateiate ^h y tænjæ	Bird	1- Birds pooping on people 2- Birds dying in front of people 3- Birds flying into the house 4- Seeing an eagle in the sky catching a snake 5- Eagle attacking people 6- Eagle sitting on the roof	Script 4 Folk interpretation(1,2,3,5, 6)	Ritual	1- Suffering 2- Squabble
Swowæ nupu teipi tænjæ	Deer	Saw a deer near the village	Script	Ritual	Fight with the knife in the village
Nik ^h ælæ ji tænjæ	Sky	Solar eclipse	Script	No record	No record
Mi ji tænjæ	Human being	1- Hearing someone calling you when nobody is there. 2- Someone answering you, but the voice is from the wrong direction. 3- Hearing someone talking around the village at night. 4- Hearing people's voices, but nobody is there. 5- Seeing people having sexual intercourse in the wild	Script Folk interpretation(1-5)	1- Do not answer 2- ritual 3- Use underwear to bit the place where people had sex and leave the underwear there	Suffering
Livatae	Soul	Seeing the souls of other	Folk		The soul's owner will die
Tumbu	Zombie	Corpse coming back to life	Folk	Burn body	Zombies eat people
Zutae	ghost	Seeing or hearing the ghost	Folk		Blood accident

(Table 1. Minyag “tænjæ)

Minyag ancient religious manuscripts written in Tibetan script are the earliest textual recordings where we find explanations of the omens. The texts present a classification into 12 unnatural phenomena that are considered ‘tæŋæ.’ They are given according to the format xxx’s omen (xxx་ཡི་སྐྱེས་ངན།). Although these manuscripts are consulted during purifying or exorcism rituals, they do not offer any explanation or interpretation of the tæŋæ omen. Nevertheless, the Sutcywus provide orthodox explanations for each of them. For example, བྱ་ཡི་སྐྱེས་ངན། (from the scripts), the literal translation is “bird’s omen” in Tibetan, but in Minyag, it sounds like ‘tchi ji tæŋæ’ which means “all chickens are omens” or “all chicken’s omen.” Choekyi is the other Sutcywu who inherited ritual knowledge from his master (his uncle). When I first interviewed him and Namkhatsili, they performed a funeral ritual. He explained the chicken omen signs to me as below:

“བྱ་ཡི་སྐྱེས་ངན། (tɛiæ ji tæŋæ) , vilimi vae wa nizhu sae” “chicken is omen” (said in Tibetan language) means that “the hen eats her own eggs” (noted in Minyag language).

Phuntsok is their student, a young Minyag man (30 years old) who studied rituals and manuscripts with them. He told me that in the manuscripts, there are only “chicken’s omen”(བྱ་ཡི་སྐྱེས་ངན།) but without any explanation. Sentences like “the hen eats her eggs,” said in Minyag language in the latter part of the sentence above, do not exist in the manuscripts. So, where is this interpretation coming from? Considering this example, I will introduce more exciting omen signs as they are interpreted in the broader Minyag context. Three ordinary Mengzhong villagers gave me three different explanations about the chicken’s omen.

Gendun: “What is called tæŋæ omen at home is when a hen pecks her eggs or eats her eggs.”

Lhamo Kyab: “Chicken omen is that (a hen) lays soft eggs because, in the past, local chickens would be fed hot rice and hot water. If they laid soft eggs, people in the past thought this was an evil omen and would kill the chickens and chop off their heads.”

Pasang: “Chicken lays an iron egg (hard egg) rather than a soft egg. The kind that is very small and extremely hard to break egg belongs to the chicken omen.”

Manuscript	Sutcywu	Common Minyag
བྱ་ཡི་ལྷ་སྐྱེ་བའོ།	བྱ་ཡི་ལྷ་སྐྱེ་བའོ། (tɛiæ ji tæŋæ) , vilimi vae wa nizhu sae	བྱ་ཡི་ལྷ་སྐྱེ་བའོ། (tɛiæ ji tæŋæ) , vilimi vae wa nizhu sae; vilivae zu wolwawo wotuo; vilivae wolowo vili wotuo
Chicken's omen	Chicken's omen is hen eating eggs.	Chicken's omen is that the hen eats eggs, lays down ghost eggs, and lays down soft eggs.

(Table 2. The different forms of omen in other contexts)

Minyag ordinary people and Sutcywu have different understandings of textual sources. The omens in the manuscripts are general and abstract without any specific explanation. However, the Sutcywu points at unnatural phenomena when interpreting the manuscripts and ordinary people reinforce this interpretation. As a result, this became the popular view of omen in the entire Minyag community (even Sutcywu also believes the two folk explanations). This convergence of specialists' and folk views is not accidental. Examples include snakes, birds, and human beings omens (see the chart). However, the most uncommon tæŋæ omens (which hardly happened) only have one manifestation, as Sutcywu said.

Minyag's omen signs undergo three steps of elaboration from their mention in manuscripts to their folk interpretation. The social position of Sutcywu in the Minyag community confers them the authority to be the exclusive readers of ancient Minyag manuscripts. Although Sutcywu claimed to elaborate their interpretation of the omen signs based on reading manuscripts, they are also affected by the folk knowledge of ordinary Minyag people. Different from that, Minyag folk perspectives about the tæŋæ omens are elaborated by combining their indirect knowledge of manuscripts, Sutcywu's interpretations, ordinary people's own life experiences, and collective memories transmitted from generation to generation. These different components enrich the folk knowledge of Minyag tæŋæ omen signs.

I consistently emphasized the manifestation of unnatural phenomena in that I stand on the perspective of the Minyag people, who consider phenomena unnatural when they do not conform to ethical criteria. "How can you imagine parents eating their kids?" said Namkhtsili when he explained why chicken omen is terrible. This phenomenon, which embodies Minyag's morals, may be considered natural by outsiders. These perceptions of unnatural and natural phenomena are based on people's experiences in

different contexts. The Sutcywu wield power through their monopoly on manuscripts, while the ordinary Minyag people derive empowerment from their collective and personal life encounters. Despite lacking access to the manuscripts' contents, the Sutcywu and ordinary Minyag individuals offer interpretations of omens, with Tibetan writing as the impetus. However, it is noteworthy that the Sutcywu, as a religious specialist, played a role in shaping the unique system of omen signs among the Minyag, integrating it with the common perceptions derived from their lived experiences.

3.1.2. Zodiac

"When Gyaltsen, a young man from Valwawai, was driving his car, a bird suddenly flew over and crashed on the vehicle, resulting in its death—an omen in Minyag culture. Subsequently, Gyaltsen's family sought divination from a Suckywu, revealing connections to the zodiac animal of Gyaltsen's mother and his deceased uncle, Jaekaeambai. Although Jaekaeambai wasn't present during the incident, his zodiac sign emerged during the divination. Due to their close familial ties, Gyaltsen's family initially attributed the omen solely to him. However, upon reflection, Jaekaeambai's wife realized the significance, lamenting their failure to address the omen. Tragically, Jaekaeambai passed away from lung cancer shortly after the bird collision."

I interviewed 12 Minyag people in Mengzhong village who defined what can be considered an omen. They always mentioned that even though people might see horrible signs, those will not necessarily count as omens. The conditions of people or time also need to be satisfied to trigger the omen. Chimey (1975) is my second aunt, who lives in Mengzhong and is a conservative woman who has never attended school. She is a herdsman and a farmer with three kids. When we talked about omens, she told me a secret story (above) that happened in our village.

My aunt revealed some crucial points in this tragic story, such as the bird crashing into the car being an omen related to the Luzai of Jaekaeambai. Gyaltsen encountered omen signs for his grandma and uncle as their Luzai appeared. Here, I will explore the Luzai as a decisive factor in establishing ownership of the omen. Luzai is a Minyag word that means personal zodiac animal, which is highly similar to the Chinese zodiac (十二生肖), which is a system of 12 animal signs that are based on the lunar calendar. In the Chinese zodiac, each year in the cycle is associated with an animal and its reputed

attributes, such as personality, compatibility, and fortune. The 12 animals are Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep (Goat), Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig).



(Figure 5. Minyag Tiger Calendar, Choekyi)

Each year has its zodiac animal, so if the person is born in the year, his zodiac sign will be the same as that year. This is a common characteristic in the Minyag and Chinese calendars. There are not enough materials in Minyag to prove the origins of the Minyag zodiac, in particular, whether it is Tibetan or Chinese. However, one thing we can be sure of is that Minyag is still using their calendar, called the Tiger Calendar, which is different from the Tibetan or Chinese lunar calendars. The personal zodiac depends on the birth year instead of the month, but the Minyag Tiger Calendar, of course, is a calendar for calculating the 12 months of the year. However, it influences individual zodiacs as the Minyag people's new year is on the 12-14th of December every year, while the Chinese Spring Festival is the new moon of February. For example, the Tiger year is the same for Minyag and Chinese, but the Minyag Rabbit year is about three months earlier than the Chinese Rabbit year. The Chinese calendar completes a zodiac cycle (循环) after 12 years, which means after 12 years, there will be a new circle starting from the Rat year, but in Minyag, the cycle will restart in 13 years.

Tiger	Rabbit	Dragon	Snake
Horse	Goat	Monkey	Rooster
Dog	Pig	Rat	Ox

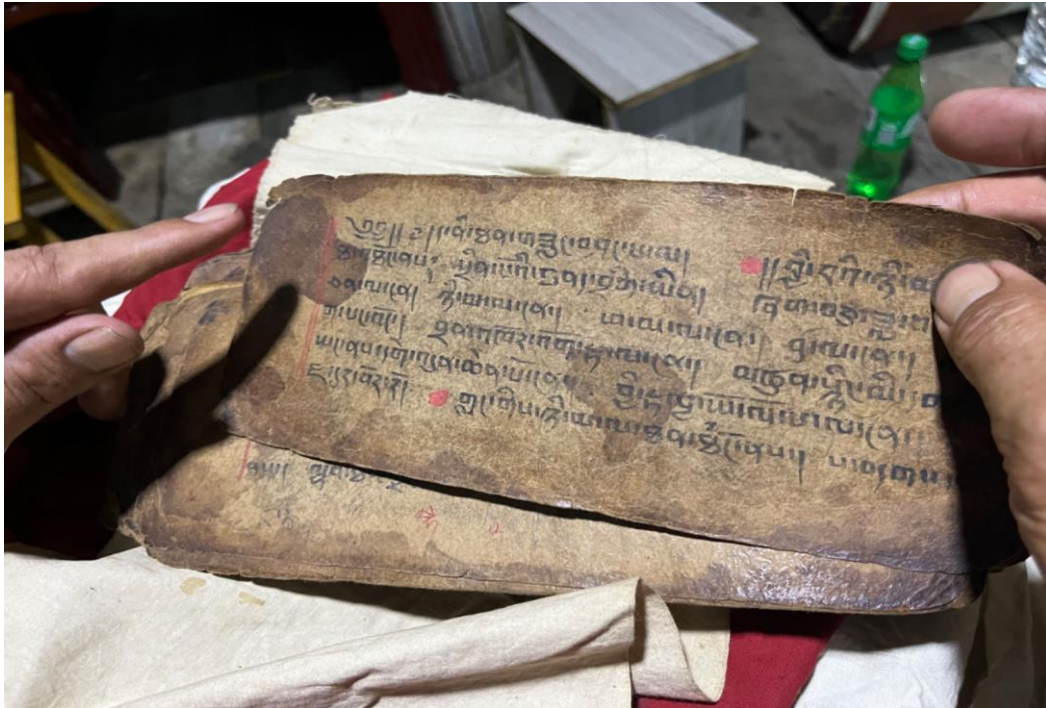
(Table 3. The zodiac of Minyag)

A trio of compatible animals is called "Thumbae," signifying that these three zodiac signs won't clash and share similar characteristics. The personal zodiac (Luzai) is a flexible factor that makes the omen more dynamic as different people have different Luzai. For example, one person with tiger Luzai is fine after encountering a fox omen, but maybe for other people with a pig zodiac sign, seeing foxes coupling can be an omen. Gyaltzen's family experience shows that his family did not just do the divination for Gyaltzen but also for the entire family. However, they forgot to include the uncle. Indeed, Luzai tightly connects with the factor of the time when it comes into conflict with the individual personal zodiac.

3.1.3. Time

Time refers to the day when the person encounters an unnatural phenomenon. The personal zodiac and the day of the encounter as ominous signs are time-dependent variables. Therefore, it means that if there were already two emergences of elements (zodiac and unnatural phenomena), the person does not know if that is an omen for him since he needs to see the day's characteristics. The characteristics of the day correspond to whether it is favorable or unfavorable for individuals encountering omens. It's crucial to consider one's zodiac sign to determine compatibility or discord with the prevailing zodiac of the day. For instance, in the manuscript 'Thwatuo,' primarily used for divination, Sutcywu interprets that encountering an unnatural appearance on a day associated with the chicken zodiac indicates potential challenges related to stone and water during daylight hours. This suggests an unfavorable day for those born under the horse, dog, and rabbit signs. Thus, individuals with these zodiac signs who encounter an unnatural sign on a day governed by the chicken sign may anticipate difficulties.

The Sutcywu will rely on the two elements and combine them with the day, and only then can he find information about the day from the Thwatuo. I visited Sutcywu Namkhatsili twice, the second time in his house, where he keeps his manuscripts. He was asked by someone who had raised some hens, as one of his hens had laid a hard egg like a potato (see Figure 8). The person realized it was a sign of an omen, so he sent the image of the egg and his family member's Luzais to the Suctywu. And Sutcywu showed me how he dealt with this omen.



(Figure 6. The Thwatuo manuscript)

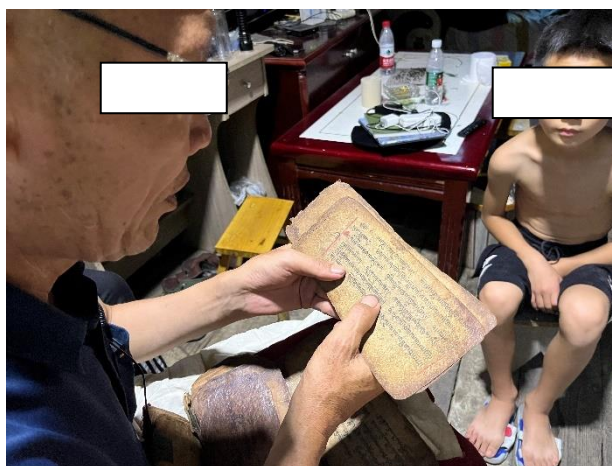
First, he introduced me to the Thwatuo, which shows all the information about the day and then uses this information to estimate whether the day is good or bad for the person's zodiac. Thwatuo is a short book of only 7-8 pages containing 12 paragraphs, which present 12 different days of the Zodiac. Firstly, it shows who gives the omen. Only the protector or some world gods will show the omen, like mountain gods, family protectors, temple protectors, water gods, tsilin, and earth gods (more details on these different beings are in 5.). Then, there is information on the reason for the omen, usually about the previous actions done by the receiver. Lastly, it says what the responder needs to do, and here Namkhatsili told me, "If the text says to do something, it is a good signal, but if it says that nothing needs to be done, it is the most terrible situation. However, in some cases when the answer is that nothing needs to be done, the severity of the omen can be reduced, or its suffering consequences can be completely avoided."



(Figure 7. The hard egg picture in Namkhatsili's phone)

Then, he started to analyze the omen. The hard egg was discovered on the 5th of August, which is Horse Day. Therefore, he read the Horse Day paragraph and said:

“The fifth day is the horse, and the text says that this omen relates to his relatives who sent a piece of raw meat to his family from the south long ago. But in sending the meat to his family, an evil ghost followed the meat and was sent to his family simultaneously. This is the reason why this ghost omen appeared. Yes! Here, the scriptures again confirm that this is caused by a piece of raw meat and his family members, who are rats, dragons, chickens, and rabbits, will be affected, but if they do not have such zodiac signs in their family, insistence on rituals (will not be necessary) and everything will be fine, or they can choose to burn more incense, which the book says that God needs. So there's no big problem with the family; they need to respect the family's spirits more, and if they do the ritual, the evil will go back south.”



(Figure 8. Namkhatsili is using the Horse Day Thwatuo, and his little student is listening)

He said the 5th day is the horse, based on the Minyag Tiger calendar I mentioned above. Minyag has a different zodiac sign for each day. The first day of the first month is Tiger, followed by Rabbit on the second day, Dragon on the third day, and so on, in the order of the Chinese zodiac. There are thirty days in a month. Accordingly, the first days of the odd-numbered months are all Tiger, called Tiger Month; the first days are all Monkey, called Monkey Month (Liu, Huang 2013). Therefore, generally, the year is for Minyag Luzai, and the day is for the prosperity of the time when the omen was seen. In a nutshell, time is an element that makes Minyag omen more abstract and dynamic. As Pasang said, “Different from the Tibetan or Chinese people, we Minyag ngu (ngu means rude and barbaric) think every omen is demonic, but actually, it is not easy to trigger the omen.” He is right. As I mentioned, the three conditions (the person’s zodiac, the unnatural phenomena, and whether the day is good or evil) only occasionally happened simultaneously, thus creating the essential foreground for a Minyag omen. However, there are 12 personal zodiacs, 15 unnatural ominous signs, and 30 days, each day having different descriptions for different signs and people’s zodiacs. This makes the Minyag omen system very complex.

Conditions	Numbers	Features
Person zodiac	12	Dynamic
Unnatural phenomena	15	Static
Days in a month	30	Dynamic

(Table 4. The Minyag omens conditions)

3.1.4. Suffering

A complete standard omen in Minyag culture typically brings about a sense of impending suffering among its people. However, Minyag individuals, upon recognizing such omens, engage in rituals to mitigate the potential suffering, thus sometimes averting the anticipated consequences. The Minyag omen system defies simple explanations like the formula "If A, then B," as proposed by Pasichniuk (1999). Dundes categorized superstitions by their conditions, highlighting single or multiple conditions leading to specific outcomes (1961:28). In Minyag culture, standard omens must meet three conditions to yield one or multiple suffering-related results, hence my use of the term "suffering." While recipients of ominous signs and those affected by the omen may differ, the consequences are often intertwined.

Gyaltsen's encounter with a bird omen serves as an example. Such omens can manifest in various forms of suffering, including illness, death, physical harm, or misfortune, affecting individuals and their families. Sometimes, the suffering extends to the entire community or village. For instance, a snake omen may bring disease or hardship to individuals, while a fox omen may endanger infants in the village. A bird omen might signal family discord, while a deer omen could foretell village conflicts involving knives. However, only these four omens yield specific outcomes, while others result in more generalized suffering. It's worth noting that birds and snakes exhibit a broader range of omen manifestations, suggesting potentially more specific forms of suffering—a notion supported by some of my discussions with locals. Lhamo Kyab told me the following story:

"Your uncle () met a snake changing skin. We were very young then, and his younger brother Tsering came to help their family with the farm work on the Delek family's land, which now belongs to your uncle. There, they met a snake that was molting,

and the clothes (Minyag robe) of that time were not very convenient (not easy to take off). As a result, they went straight back home, and their wife scolded them (for not taking off their clothes and leaving them at the place where they saw the snake) and then hurriedly told them to go down to that place again and cut off the pockets of their clothes and leave them there. That thing (snake omen) is a thing that foretells difficulty, for the snake is molting, and man is afraid that he is also in trouble. This is the time to say, Where is yours (the snake's skin foreshadowing suffering)? Let us see who is faster! And then, one should quickly take off one's sweaty clothes and throw them to the place where one sees the snake molting. One has to say, "Let's see who is faster, you or me."

In this snake omen, the two men met the snake molting its skin, which is the omen foretelling difficulties in the future. Simply put, the snake molting process reflects the Minyag people's survival after the difficulty or some significant fate changes. Also, Pasang explained this with a proverb: “Even if you do not die, you must shed a layer of skin. (不死也掉一层皮)” The snake loses its skin for a new life during that time, and it is fragile and possibly dies. People are similar to snakes who do not die but must pay high prices. This type of specific suffering is connected to the particular animal's habit. It can be concluded that an animal's natural behavior is assumed to be related to the future of the person who meets it, and this association depends on a vague similarity between the two. This similarity is closely related to the survival habits of animals. Therefore, according to this logic, we can find similarities in why foxes' omen cause specific suffering.

“Wupuxwaxwateipi tæŋæ is said about fox (ndzi), and if a fox comes around the village and yells and no one hears it but you (it is an omen). If a (fox) roars in front of the houses in the village, either the children in the family or the children in the village will die prematurely. Regarding the ndzi, we have even done the rituals related to it for those Han people down there in Shimian County. In the old days, the bodies of prematurely dead babies were thrown away carelessly at the county hospital, and then foxes came to those places and used to eat the bodies of the babies and then came to those places and roared. We were invited by the Han Chinese who are Chen and Wang families in Shimian County to perform the rituals for them because of this matter.”

Choekyi (Sutcywu) told me the above fox omen. Foxes are essential in Minyag villages, particularly in the Mengzhong village. In Mengzhong, “body should be worried by fox (ndzilae tisae ndili)” is a demonic sentence to curse children. Minyag people have

a unique funeral for dead infants. After an infant passes away, their parents will take the corpse to the South of the village where there is a cliff. The corpse will be left under the cliff, and the ndzi or other wild animal will eat the body. When I was young, there were twins born in the village, and one of them died after one day, and that baby's body was left at the spot by the cliff. My brother and I went to check it, but we could not go down the cliff. I have a blurry memory of a fox that sounds just like a baby crying. Therefore, it is straightforward to understand some suffering related to specific omen manifestations, like foxes eating baby corpses. If a fox appears around the village, the Minyag people quickly conclude the infants in the village will die. The inner logic of these specific suffering results is related to Minyag's unique custom and collective cognition of the invisible boundary between nature and domesticity. For example, wild animals entering the house will be an omen, as animals only frequent deserted dwellings.

The Sutcywu usually avoids the result of an omen by performing rituals. Sometimes, they can reduce the seriousness but not altogether prevent it. Choekyi told me of another case:

“Last year, a badger-like animal (ndzæ) entered Bibi's house. It was neither a badger nor another animal. It's not a good thing to have those things entering home. Bibi said that Ndzae had entered his home and had jumped up and down everywhere. Also, such a beast entered Guoqun's house in Xiaoheba (place name). I went down and performed relevant rituals for their family. Later, Guoqun's hand was cut off in a machine that cut corn stalks, and the whole hand was cut off. The flesh and tendons on the hand were all crushed by the machine, but the bones were not affected. Fortunately, Guoqun performed a ritual to prevent more serious consequences. Otherwise, she would die. But the book has no such animal entering the house (tænjæ). But it is still a terrible thing. We all say that it is a wild beast. How bad it would be if the wild beasts entered the house. There was also a member of the Hongba family, a Green Muntjac (Lu), who ran into the house, so the family performed some rituals. I told them they could not go far away before July and had to stay home. It was June 28th. At that time, a family member went to the pasture and was washed away by the river that we called the 'Eat Shit River.' Even I did perform the ceremony for their family.”

The Sutcywu performed the rituals in these two cases, but the terrible suffering still happened. He explained that in the first case, it was reduced, but not for the other who did not follow his advice. However, this kind of omen-related accident is not typically heard in my interviews and life experiences in Minyag. Usually, people who did

not notice or just ignored omens and did not take action to address the situation encountered suffering consequences. As a result, the cases of suffering consequences are always accompanied by traumatic memories for the experiencers who prefer to keep their privacy and do not share their stories with others. I can only hear it from the villagers' gossip.

To sum up, suffering (the result of an omen) is always related to how people take action after the other three conditions manifest. As it can be avoided, in many standard omen cases, an omen is only the combination of three conditions without any outcomes. However, it is essential to define the omen one has encountered, and also, in the case of standard omens, the suffering consequence is stable. As I mentioned about the standard tæŋæ omen, when one's fortune is declining, both his fire of life and energy of fire are also downcast. In such a situation, due to the weakening of one's power, the surrounding things develop in the wrong direction (unfavorable to oneself or undesirable). During this period, the person can easily see some abnormal phenomena, and people should be susceptible to this to understand their status or that of their family members. Therefore, to some extent, the alleged "omen" (tæŋæ) by the Minyag people is considered a beneficial sign of one's future. This signal usually is from the family protector, mountain god, temple god, monk's spirit, and half-air god. Conversely, special omens are unrelated to the witnesses' luck, and the omen receiver is more like an observer of another's tragic fate. I will elaborate on this in the next part.

3.2. Special omens

Compared to standard omens, special omens deviate from the typical rules of Minyag omens. Their distinctiveness manifests in several points. First, while standard omens adhere to a rigid format ("xx tæŋæ"), special omens display a flexible structure and are bestowed with unique appellations. Second, standard omens can be traced back to ancient Minyag religious manuscripts, whereas special omens of a unique nature cannot be pinpointed within any such texts. Third, standard omens are intertwined with notions of fortune, whereas special omens lack a connection to personal luck or vitality. Fourth, in standard omens, the recipient, typically an unfortunate individual, perceives the unnatural occurrences and fulfills specific criteria. However, anyone may observe or discover special omens without imposing conditions. Special omens primarily target individuals

outside the Minyag community, their repercussions remain isolated, rendering the significance of time and personal conditions irrelevant. Consequently, the defining features of a special omen boil down to a singular condition of appearance and its resultant effect. Fifth, the conditions for special omens often revolve around supernatural entities such as souls and ghosts. Interestingly, most occurrences of special omens coincided with significant societal shifts within Minyag communities over the last century, with many accounts sourced from the collective memories of these events. Unlike the visual-centric nature of standard omens, special omens occasionally involve auditory encounters with spirits or evil entities, emphasizing their abstract and elusive nature. The table below summarizes the three special omens that I shall discuss:

Signs	Results	Rituals
Liva tae (seeing someone's soul)	The soul's owner will die	\
Zutae (seeing or hearing ghost)	Bloodshed will happen	\
Dumbu (zombie)	Zombies will kill people	cremation

(Table 5. The special omens)

3.2.1. Liva tae

Soul (Liva) saw (tae) means ‘saw the soul’ in English. It is quite a typical special omen which happens before someone dies. Mengzhong Minyag have a taboo about showing excitement and talking about your next day's plans as it is believed that the soul of the person will go to do it earlier than the body. People generally believe it is dangerous if the soul leaves the body, and what’s worse is if others see the soul, this is a signal of death. Nima told me about his friend Desi’s father’s decease in such circumstances. It happened in my second year of high school (2015). I also attended Dexi’s father’s funeral, so I have some memories of him.

“Desi's father, at the time he was going to die he was without life energy left in the body. He had not gone out (from home) for many days, but Gyatso (the name of the person) from the Lava (the entrance of the village far away from Desi’s house) found out that he (Desi's father) suddenly was walking up through the corn field below his house.

Gyatso was behind him and kept chasing him. As a result of the time when he (Gyatso) came to some place to rest for a while, suddenly Desi's father slowly walked up from behind him. It seems he saw Desi's father's spirit in front of (the body). (Later, someone found out that Desi's father had died at home).”

Gyatso knows Desi's father did not come out for several days, and he wonders why he was in the cornfield and went to chase him, but he just saw the soul. Later, people found Desi's father had died in the house. The soul omen is someone's soul encountered by others, and then the soul owner will die quickly in one or two days. First, there is nothing that can be remedied for this type of omen. At least I never heard about people surviving after soul omen. Second, the consequences manifest very quickly. Pasang told me another story about his own experience of soul omen.

“That's why parents never let us (kids) say that we are going here or there tomorrow, the parents would scold the kids. We used to be resting under a huge rock at Powo (a place near the ranch as a resting place). It was about dawn that day, and it was almost time for the chickens to crow. I heard something and said to the person beside me, "Quick! Get up!" As soon as I heard some people coming down from the distant lindzi (place name) peaks, I said to the person next to me again, "Quick! Quickly! Get up; some people are coming to here," and he replied, "Get up for what? It's almost time for the rooster to crow. Where are the people?" Suddenly, he also seemed to hear some people chatting, coming down from the lindzi peak, and I heard another *dong-dong-dong* sound from underneath the big rock of the Powo, but I did not hear the sound of a person anymore, as I was sliding towards my left side under one of the rocks. I then heard someone walking (above our heads). There were nine of us under the rock, and I thought I was the only one who heard it, but it turned out that we all heard it. Then we didn't say a word, except that someone said, "Someone should come tomorrow," and I didn't say anything, and then I covered my head, and when someone got up from wherever they were, I went in and slept in the spot where they got up. The next day, we heard that two Yi people had fallen to their deaths at the bottom of a cliff in Bingdong (place name at the bottom of Powo), and what we saw were the souls of those two people, who had left at night.”

Here there are some interesting points. First, nine Minyag herdsmen experienced the omen (hearing the sounds); second, everyone only listened to the sound without seeing. Third, just after one day, the two Non-Minyag people fell from where they slept and died. It is not strange that by connecting the two deaths with hearing the soul and the “dongdong”

sounds, they interpret it as the omen of two Yi-people's death. However, this collective affair about soul omen offers a more critical reading: pasture conflicts. Yi people are another small minority living at lower altitudes than the Minyag people. I know they always came to dig for valuable caterpillar fungus (a traditional parasitic fungus used in Chinese and Tibetan pharmacopeia and highly quoted on the market) in Mengzhong pastures. There were conflicts between Yi and Minyag over the digging. The Minyag people did not allow Yi people to come to their pasture. In 2012, some Yi people stole Minyag people's yaks. After this episode, anti-Yi people's attitude among Minyag people in Mengzhong became more common. Nevertheless, the Yi and Minyag people still share one pasture. This was not the first death of Yi people in the pasture. In 2007, there were two Yi people frozen under a rock, and some Minyag herdsmen claimed they heard the soul's actions that night. But at that time, nobody saw any omen about it. Minyag people felt the threat from the Yi people as they tried to take Minyag land, and Minyag people had some omen embodiment about it. This might sound like an accidental episode. However, if we move the discussion to the zutae omen (seeing ghosts omen), we can find more similar examples of how collective subconsciousness triggers special omens.

3.2.2. Zutae

The Minyag term zutae is another particular omen, which translates as "seeing the ghosts," which illustrates the distinct outcomes of visual and auditory experiences of the supernatural. The "seeing ghosts" examples indicate that seeing ghosts is followed by death. Accordingly, those who saw the ghosts will die in a short time. In contrast, only hearing the ghosts' sounds often led to severe repercussions for the non-Minyag people, such as disease, death, or insanity. Hearing ghosts, classified into the zutae, is interesting as it implies that the Minyag culture prioritizes sight and sound as a mode of cognition and communication within the spiritual domain in different contexts (Minyag and non-Minyag). According to the County Records of Shimian County, Ya'an City, Sichuan Province (1999), on June 25, 1951, the 13th Administrative Conference of the People's Government of Xikang Province decided to merge the fourth district of Hanyuan County and the fifth district of Yuexi County to establish a new county, which was named Shimian County (石棉 Shimian means asbestos) because of the high-quality asbestos mines in its territory (1999 35-36). During the "Great Leap Forward" period, in the two

years from 1958 to 1960, Forty-three people working in asbestos mines died at work, an average of fourteen per year. During the thirty-five years from 1950 to 1985, there were one hundred network-related deaths, two hundred and thirty-eight serious injuries, and six thousand seven hundred and eighty-five minor injuries. During this period, there were nine significant accidents with multiple casualties, two with three deaths, and seven with two at one time (1999, 573-574). Shimian County government found an asbestos mine in Mengzhong Minyag and Ezu Minyag villages. The Shimian government saw asbestos yield as a political indicator and sent many mining workers to the Ezu to dig the asbestos. During that time, zutae omen started to occur frequently. Pasang told me a special omen started when Han people dug asbestos when he was 5-7 years old in Ezu village, and after he was an adult, this omen still happened when he dug crystal mines with Han people in Mengzhong. These zutae omen, mine accidents, Han people, Minyag collective memory and history, obscurely entwine together in his narrative.

"Did you hear that?" Your grandfather said.

"Yes."

For no reason, there was a "woo-woo" sound at the bottom of the cliff, which usually didn't happen in the daytime but started to appear when the sun was about to disappear.

Then your grandfather told me that there was a leader of the asbestos mine who could not reconcile the accounts by 15 Yuan, and at that time, "the country's 10,000 people went up to the mountain"(万人上山运动), and thousands of people from all over the country were working in the place (Ezu) . The more he thought about it, the more he felt it was his responsibility. At that time, the headquarters of the asbestos mine was located in the place of Bailu, and after he went down there, he could not get the 15 Yuan, and he could not reconcile the accounts, so he jumped off the cliff. He jumped off the cliff and died. That's what happened at that location since he jumped (i.e., the ghost sound). At first, none of the Han people (miners) said they were afraid. They said nothing would happen. Later, the other Han people (who heard those sounds) did not dare to work and fled. As the sun was about to disappear at that moment, on that cliff, a sound from the lower place rose to the top of the cliff and then seemed to descend again; I experienced that at that time. Another time was when we went to dig for crystals because I knew that there was such a thing (the ghost's sound) happening; they (villagers) said that ti (violent death) was crying. At first, when it was calling, it was mainly like wild animal like deer's

(k^hiei) call, but later on, I realized that there was no echo of such a thing's call, and there was no echo in a canyon-like that. That day, I saw that the sun had already set in the west, so I stopped what I was doing and went back to my tent to rest (but the Chinese continued working).

"Hey, a man is coming," a Han Chinese said. (he heard the ghost sounds and thought it was a man).

"Come to your mother's head! (来你妈的脑壳)" Angrily, I cursed him.

"What's up! Stop what you're doing! Stop what you're doing!" I continued.

Because that's what they do for the communal enterprise (公社企业), if they do not finish work, they can not get the work points (工分) .

"Hey, we'll be scolded," said the Han Chinese.

"Who will be scolded? Whoever yells at us he should do the work! I'm not doing it," I said.

Then, a Han Chinese guy, he's from the Xiyoufang (a Chinese village in the footage of Mengzhong) wouldn't listen to me and go on "pung pung" (sounds of digging) and fiddled with the mining machines, and after a while, I heard.

"Ouch!"

"Ouch, hey?" I went on to say, "You deserved it."

Because I knew that once those things started screaming, something would happen, and no matter what, there would be blood. And what happened? It turned out that the disobedient Han Chinese lad had taken the steel rod to the top of the pit, and who knows, it slipped and hit him on the foot because he was down there. Luckily, it didn't fall on his head! There were two of them; I told him not to do it, then he brought the steel rod up, and I kept warning him not to do it, and the result is that no one knows how the steel rod fell after it fell it smashed his foot.

This story's period spans between the childhood of the teller (1964~1966) to after he was an adult who could work at the end of the Commune Movement in China after 1978, suggests that the individual omen experience embodies the trauma of communities when their original life is violated and destroyed by outsiders. At that time, critics and resistance would be seen as "anti-nation" and "anti-revolution." During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China, Minyag people used their omen events to record their emotions and unsatisfied feelings. Suddenly, more than ten thousand Han Chinese people came to the village and dug their land for asbestos mines. Minyag people could not stop

them, but the omen helped them achieve their target. Interestingly, this omen still happens in the village, and people talk about the ghost's source. I can hypothesize that if the relationship between Minyag and Han Chinese is unfriendly, the omens will exist forever based on the recessive conflict between these two groups. It is also interesting that the omen-triggering place is fixed. Only the place where the leader jumped down had the ghosts crying. We can argue that this is a placelore, a shared piece of collective knowledge passed down from generation to generation. It is illustrated that not only will omen knowledge be transmitted, but so will its context and hidden history. The special omen always happens in times of huge social transformations. The next example shows how, after the cultural revolution, omen still satisfied the Minyag people's collective desires.

“Whenever (hearing) someone crying at night in that place (a place at the foot of Mengzhong Mountain), something big happens. The blind man (he was living near that place), a friend of mine, heard someone knocking on his door at night and asking him to make a fire. He was not afraid of anything, but then suddenly there was a violent and terrifying sound coming from the forest on the right side of the house. “gu ngu ngu,” and then suddenly he said that he heard the sound like a lynx that had just been captured in a stone trap, Ki! Seems some people's souls had been taken away by force by the devil. The next day, there was a landslide behind the stone factory below his house; two workers were buried in it, one was washed into the river, three died, and one had arms and legs separated from the body.”

This story (told by Pasang) happened in the 1990s when, following the Chinese reform and opening-up policies inaugurated in 1978, the national economy began to revive, and outsiders' exploitations restarted in the Minyag area. These Chinese investors opened stone factories, built hydropower stations and tunnels, and logged forests, which triggered omens to occur again. Omen is always related to when Minyag's original lifeways were seriously affected by external shocks and era influence. The blind man in this story is just a witness to the omen who anticipated the accident that happened the next day. Even though the victims did not appear at any point in the story, the consequence of the omen is biased towards non-Minyag people: they will suffer.

I still remember that in 2009 summer, a Chinese government enterprise was building a power station under the Mengzhong mountain. One day, while walking back from school, we saw two bloody bodies put into a tractor going down from the mountain. Villagers said the two Chinese workers were killed by ghosts after offending them. It is very interesting to notice that villagers did not think the death was the result of an accident

or due to safety issues. Similar to the above two stories, being killed by a ghost implies that death is an inevitable result and that the victim deserves the consequence. Accidents are never attributed to faults or incompetence of the people in charge or machine failure; they are always attributed to certain superstitions (Dissa 2017). Both Pasang and Blind's narratives illustrate that a distinctive omen, possessing a unique purpose, is meeting the expectations of the Minyag people. This is a metaphor for seeking justice by being vindicated against a powerful, dominant group. Accordingly, this special kind of omen can be considered the embodiment of the Minyag community's collective psychological stress. In short, when outsiders crossed the border and entered traditional community life, omens began to change their roles. They turned into reliable emotional recorders, concealing the Minyag people's dissatisfaction and allowing a space to express resistance through unnoticed stories in the face of the greater social changes. Like a standard omen, it expresses the fear of the unknown future and the desire to control one's destiny. Standard omens tend to draw on individual experiences, but special omens focus more on collective matters and are more flexible and biased.

3.2.3. Ndumbu

Special omens not only express the personal inclinations of Minyag people but also combine with folktales to connect with the ancestors' lives and explain the present. Ndumbu means zombie. The omen of zombies happened once in my village, Mengzhong. I have heard about it in the past, but Pasang provided me with more details.

“Jamyang's father was blind before his death. In the days before his death, he always shouted toward the door, "The ghost is coming." Fortunately, their family made the correct decision. Otherwise, something would happen in their family. You should not tell others why their family held a cremation for his father. The coffin was originally prepared (Minyag people only cremate for Sutcywu and people who die distressingly). When Jamyang's father died, Jamyang cut his father's nails that day, and they (the nails) grew back the next day, which is why he was cremated. (When Jamyang's father was young, his father had rolled down from the mountain while he was alive, and there were traces of his blood everywhere). Their family is still very smart. Later, the son told me, he said:

"Brother, I am not an unfilial son. I have prepared everything, even the coffin." He walked over to the group of people chatting with us.

"I'll be honest that if I cut (my father's) nails today, they will grow again tomorrow! Keep cutting and keep growing." He kept cutting every day!

We Minyag people call this phenomenon of corpses coming back to life 'ndombu.' There is an old saying in Minyag: "ndombu li ndindɛi ti tu ku li ndindɛi pi" If it were not for tuku (monk), there would be no way for this ndombu to be subdued.

According to a legend, there was a family inviting the Sutcywu to do the Dojo (the ritual after death). During the nguwa ceremony, the corpse (p^humbu) that was placed in the middle of the main room stood up, picked up the lamp that was lit for the corpse, and waved the lamp above the head of Sutcywu in a circle, then ran back and lay down. The Sutcywu found out. The Suctywu master asked the apprentice next to him to leave the nine gates. You must lock the door upside down every time you go out. After locking it up, use the firewood pile at the door to set a fire, and then no one can be let out, and everyone inside will be destroyed. If a Ndumbu appears, he will eat people, so the disciple should burn the house and everyone together. This has not occurred here yet in our village, but there are some places where it has happened. Do you know why our Minyag houses are tall, but the doors are so short? Because that 'ndumbu' will stand up and start running. The door is made small to prevent this 'ndumbu'. Ndumbu will not squat down and walk like a human. He will walk upright. Once he falls, there is nothing he can do. If he falls, he disappears, and I don't know what to do next. But since there is this legend, it may have appeared.

We Minyag people are also why Sujuewu put the p^humbu there to start the ceremony. One person must guard that place to prevent the light and cedar incense from going out. Someone must be there to guard it and make sure the body does not revive life. This is not only a legend but has also appeared before."

This story about the zombie Ndumbu undoubtedly fuses folktale and real events together to embody the fear of death. Unlike the other special omens, the zombie one harms everyone. After the body becomes a zombie, regardless of whether you are a Minyag person, it will eat everyone. The folktale presents this point in which the nine closed doors, burned people, and zombies are together. Commonly, folktales try to explain some life phenomena. In this case, Minyag people use the zombie example to explain why traditional houses' doors are very small. Moreover, the folktale supports

Minyag's special omen's authority based on the knowledge passed on by generations. Otherwise, the omens' emergence simultaneously increases the trustworthiness of the folktale. In this way, the omen and folktale relationship is mutually demonstrated. In this demonstrative circle, they reinforce each other. We can predict that in the future, if Minyag forgets folklore about zombies, then the zombie omen and the reason why doors are small will also be forgotten.

To sum up, with a comparison of the special omens with the standard omens, special omens are less strict concerning the conditions of time (like the personal zodiac and the time of the day). We can even claim that time does not matter for special omens. However, the specific location is crucial as that space triggers the special omens, such as the cliff where the leader died and the blind man's place. These places indirectly and subtly indicate ongoing historical and political tensions or current news. Therefore, time can be disregarded in a special omen, but the place must be fixed as the place proves the event has happened. Without the place, the omen cannot occur. Special omens are abstract and spiritual processes without concrete signs (except the zombie omen). In this respect, they differ from standard omens, such as snakes entwined together or a bitch eating puppies. Therefore, special omens are more subjective and uncontrollable. There are no rituals or methods after encountering such omens to prevent the unfolding of the results. Special omens are only encountered in the living folklore of the Minyag people, and we cannot find related information recorded in the manuscripts. Interestingly, special omens can be encountered by a group of people like nine Minyag herdsmen who heard the souls' sounds, which will confirm the omen's authority. It is worth noticing that the special omen's expression as a Minyag vernacular refers to "life's forms of expression" (Valk 2022). Valk argues that folklore is often ephemeral as it emerges in direct response to recent events, the breaking news of the day, acute social issues, and political tensions (2022:3). Minyag special omens that usually manifest in periods of social changes demonstrate this theory. However, the Minyag example of special omens is more like the embodiment of "Minyag Social Anomie," which reacts to the external challenges posed to the lifeways of Minyag people. In the past, Minyag people lived in a small community without any communication with outsiders, but the arrival of outsiders impelled Minyag reactions. This point is traceable in the consequences of special omens.

Chapter 4

Interpreting Omens: Sources and Responses

4.1. The source of omen

In the early study of the omen, scholars did not pay much attention to the origins of the omen. Who gives the omen to the receivers? Different cultures and religions have different understandings of the sources of omens. The simple dichotomy that divides omens into those sent by gods or non-gods is insufficient and oversimplifies the diversities among different worldviews while ignoring the vernacular features of communities. Ancient Mesopotamia developed the first record of concepts of omen (third millennium b.c.) based on observing the physical world and portent of the future (Annus 2010). Later, knowledge of Mesopotamian omen literature was widespread and influenced other civilizations like Classical, Hebrew, Chinese, Indian, and Arabian cultures (Pingree 1992; Williams 1995; Annus 2010). According to the ancient Mesopotamian worldview, everything had its place according to the divine will, a typical source for omens sent by a specific god, a group of gods, or a universal force. Minyag standard omen *tæŋæ* can belong to this category. However, according to the current research, it is not yet possible to determine where the Minyag special omens originate. Therefore, I separated Minyag omens' sources into three categories: from the gods, from life luck, and from ghosts.

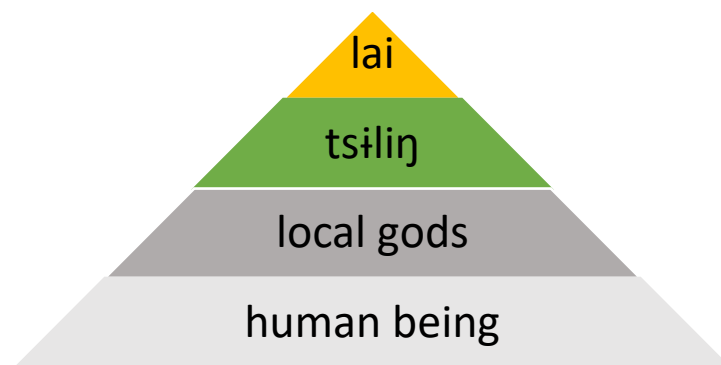
The local Tibetan manuscripts, religious paintings (*thangka*), religious chants, and rituals in Mengzhong show that Minyag people believe in and practice the Bon religion. Foregoing that Minyag's Bon beliefs should be *Srid pa Bon* or as developed from the later Buddhistized *Yundrung Bon* into folk life. Previous researchers about Minyag people agree that Minyag religious life has some components of primitive worship, such as Tibetan Buddhism mixed with Bon culture. Minyag people generally believe in the *Nyingmapa* (the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism) (Zailin 2003, Jin 2013). However, until now, no one has clearly defined Minyag's Bon beliefs. Minyag beliefs have always

been labeled as Bon regardless of the specific components. In investigating who sends the sign of omens, common Minyag people think it is unimportant to discuss where omens are from. Still, after talking with two Sutcywu, I discovered that a substratum of Minyag beliefs in real gods is hidden under the layer of Bon or institutional Yundrung Bon exterior.

When I asked two Sutcywu who give omens (standard) to us, Choekyi said:

“This signal is given to you by a mountain god or a god (others). This god means a deity that is three feet off the ground (离地三尺有神明), a deity called tsilin in mid-air is giving you an omen. tsilin is a deity in mid-air. Above him are the supernatural gods (lai), and in the natural environment is the mountain god. The deities in the sky are not our Buddhas; like Dongpa Sinrao Buddha, he also belongs to the local deities. He is a king and human only. They are the same as the mountain gods, with tsiling above them and then the gods (lai) above them.”

Choekyi said there are local deities (mountain gods and Bon’s creator Dongpa Sinrao), middle air god (tsilin), and above tsilin gods (lai). In this deity system, the positions of the deities suggest that it is a hierarchy. Interestingly, most Bon adherents believe the Bon’s creator, Dongpa SinRao, is the most important Buddha. However, for Minyag he is just a normal local deity who regulated the Bon doctrines. He has the same position as the local gods. Choekyi thinks the omen is from the tsilin, which is a special god living in the middle air under the super gods and over the local gods.



(Figure 9. The Minyag deities hierarchy)

Namkhatsili supplied more information about tsiling and the local gods when I asked the same question to him.

“The tsilin is the one who can see what is happening in our world and read whether you are doing good or bad things, in the same way as a mediator. If you do Qiongdu (a ritual)

today, it is through tsilin that you inform the gods and the mountain gods. In Chinese, it's said that people are doing things and the sky is watching, but in Minyag, there's nothing that the gods can see. Only the tsilin can see what you're doing.”

Namkhatsili gave me more information; he said tsilin gives omens to the people as the local gods, such as mountain gods, so human beings have to transfer information through the tsilin. Gods (super gods) don't understand what happens in the secular world. Only the middle air tsilin know. He also said local gods, like family or temple gods, would ally with tsilin to disturb people's lives. He gave “Thila” and “Powo” examples.

“The thila inside the temple is a half-god, and I (Sutcywu) will become a thila when I die in the future, so the thila inside our house must not be offended by it, and it will give us protection, which is called thækæ in our Minyag language. nit^ho means greed. Because of greed, he can't respect it, and the thila will work with tsilin to do bad things.”

“Ndælæ is the protector of the hunter (Powo), and (hunters) have chants after killing their prey. The hunter who dies and becomes ndælæ is a demigod or something like that. So, he was in league with the local mountain god (Miwo). That's why our ancestors used to say nduwu ti ndi fi, pawo ti ndi fi (becomes a hunter), suteywæ mu mæ ndi ndi (becomes Sytcuwaewu). , Powo used to chant and praise (titæi swats^hu) when he hunted. The mountain environment was very clean and pure, so he was pure in the mountain while hunting.”

According to Namkhatsili, hunters and Sutywu will become half-gods after they pass away. Half of the gods belong to local gods, but they are more like spirits. Super gods are above all local gods and tsilin, but they are unimportant as they do not know the human being's life. But tsilin and local gods are important as they can disturb life by omens and resolve practical issues like hunters worshipping Miwo to get the animals. Local gods and people living in the same space are lower than tsilin. Choekyi said the creator of Bon Dongpasinrao is also a common person who just became a thila. Super gods do not know people, just as people do not know super gods - they are too far apart. But we know local gods and tsilin who need to receive blood sacrifices. This is the reason why in Yungdrung Bon, we do not offer any blood ritual to Dongpa SinRao, who is the highest Buddha, whereas in Minyag, he is seen only as a local god, so we can offer him the animal sacrifices as his position is different in the two systems. We make offerings to those who give us the omen. Aiming to resolve the omen, Minyag people got accustomed to performing blood rituals to avoid and reduce the consequences.

4.2. The ways to address the omens

When an omen appears, people will try to solve it. All the standard omens have resolutions except special omens. Since special omens concern others and the effective time is short, people are not sensitive. However, as Pasang mentioned, in his experience, he stopped working when he heard a ghost crying. In this case, prevention and anticipation are the only ways to stop the consequence of a special omen from manifesting.

Seeking help from the Sutcywu and inviting them home to perform the correct ritual is the most common way to reduce or avoid the sufferings of standard omens. All the standard omens have their corresponding ritual to be performed, which depends on what the Mutciae (the book mentioned before) prescribes. Usually, there are five types of rituals. Ngwaetchy, tsholo, vivi, twozo, nguwae.

Choekyi told me he did a vivi ritual for a family:

“I remember one time at Wang’s house in Ndwakhwa (a Minyag village). They had two dogs, and I didn’t know which dog ate the puppies. Wang said four puppies were born the day before; they are local ranch dogs. Four different color dogs were their own ranch dogs. After he moved the dog’s nest, the puppies were eaten (by a dog) the next day. He (Wang) said, “They were eaten by the dog. They were eaten by the dog.” So their family wanted to do a t^hivivi (a ritual), and then my father and I went over to do this ceremony. That happened about 30 years ago (1990s) because the only thing that happened was that the dog ate its own child. There are a lot of rituals like Ngwaitcyhy and tsholo, and there are quite a few small rituals like this.”

Here, Choekyi said the family discovered the omen and decided to do the vivi ritual, which means one of the few cases in which the witnesses, rather than the Sutcywu, hold the decision-making power about what ritual to perform. Sutcywaewu first checked the book of thwato and found which rituals should be undertaken. Choekyi and Namkhatsili mentioned they are “fundi (手艺人),” like consultants who provide information to clients. The clients will decide which kinds of services they want. Namkhatsili said, “The book says what (the ritual) should be done, and we give (the client) suggestions. Then the master (the head of the family) decides (to do it or not).” Although people have the right to reject the advice, I hardly hear about anyone who does this. They have this right, but in fact, if they looked for the Suctywu to do the ritual, it means that

they already accepted all the services. The relationship between Sutcywu and the clients is interestingly similar to that between a buyer and seller. I mentioned that suffering cannot be totally avoided, but it can be reduced (the two examples of Choekyi). However, this service possibly creates the risk that Sutcywu can suffer (or die) because of performing the ritual.

The story of Nimadeshi's father, who is an old Suctywu, passed away because he did a ritual with Choekyi for my uncle's family. This story is known by all villagers and Chimey, as the eyewitness gave me the details of what happened:

“About tɛiatɛiatɛ^hy tæŋæ is an omen like a bird that has pooped on you. Not seeing a bird or anything but having magpie, crow, or other bird droppings on your body then that (is an omen). It happened quite a lot in the village of Mengzhong, your uncle's eldest daughter and your brother's daughter; the two daughters were studying in Xiyoufang (Mengzhong does not have school; students have to go down the mountain to the Xioufang at the foot of Mengzhong). They came home in the afternoon, and when they arrived at the place Suwa (middle of the Mengzhong mountain), a bird pooped on them, and it was a very bad day. We looked through the book and found out that we needed to do a eliminating evils(Thuwuwu) ceremony. First, your brother's house did the ceremony, and then the day after that, we went to do the same ceremony inside your uncle's bid house. Because both of them (the daughters from the two households) had bird droppings on them, and it was the same bird. There were actually four or five of them at the time, but only two of them came up with zodiac (Luzai). At that time, when I was doing the ceremony for the Naitcai family, I didn't notice anything, and the day after, when I was doing it for your dada Jango's family, the father of the Nima Deshi from the village of Muer and I did that ceremony together. At night, while exorcism (Twazo) was going on, I saw rows and rows of ghost-like shadows coming in from outside! From the top of the Julou (corridor of a traditional house) of their house, and then the water tank of their house was on the inside, and a lot of young and strong men were sitting on the tank, I could clearly see the visitors (ghosts) passing through the youths, and this happened three times. We threw out the antelope horn (khwater), a religious object used to suppress evil spirits, made from wild antelope horn (regarded as a vajra) but could not get rid of it (there is a part of the Minyag exorcism ritual where you have to throw the antelope horn and judge whether the exorcism is successful or not according to the direction of the tip of the horn if the tip of the horn is toward the door it means it is a success, if it isn't then you need to re-do the ritual and use more powerful religious measures). Then Nematzadeh's

father put the antelope horn into his mouth about this long (a finger's length). I said, "The evil spirits (ndeipæ) are a bit strong tonight." He said to me, "It's all right, don't be afraid, the ghost's arrow feathers won't affect you. The two of us were saying this secretly to ourselves when suddenly the group of young adults outside "peng-peng-peng's (onomatopoeia)" ran into the house, and like cats they came to us, and all of them were saying, "There is something on the right side of the TV satellite dish (the site of the house of the most famous Yogi from the eastern Minyag region) was making a noise! (sounds like someone's been taken (by a ghost)!" It turned out that at that time, the father of Nimrodes suffered the tænjæ by himself. Once a person's temperament has been lowered, at the time of such a ferocious tænjæ ceremony, he may not have done a good job at any step of the ceremony. Then, his soul would be taken away.

In the evening at ændutei (after the evening ceremony, people need to take the tsholo, mbi (a ritual utensil used to ward off evil spirits), to the fork in the road that leads into the village), he refused to go out. He asked me to go out and finish the ceremony. I said, "I'm just a beginner. It's better if you go out," but it was because I had already seen so many ghosts and spirits in twazu that I was still scared. He said, "Don't be afraid; just go out and finish the ceremony. I will recite the sutras at home; go!" Then there was no other way, so I went, and now Wangjian's grandfather, who was using a torch to illuminate the path in front of him, so he was in the front, and behind him were those with mbi and I was in the middle of the group of people with mbi. I hadn't even gotten to the door of my current elder brother æwætei's house when, suddenly, the one at the front turned his head and came over, then dropped t^ha on the ground and immediately ran over. The guy behind us said, "Why is this person running up to us? He should go over there!". The guy who dropped the torch replied, "There are five times as many things (ghosts) as us over there at the Lava (the entrance to the village near the main road, which is thought to be a place where ghosts gather), so go over there! I didn't dare to go there," and he immediately ran back to the house. The more he talked like that, the more we heard ghost noise. Luckily, Gyatso's father was drunk and picked up tha, saying, "It's okay, I'll do it," and then he was the first to take the lead and start moving forward again so that all the people could go over because you know these things can't be dropped inside the village, they have to be thrown out of the village. We didn't see anything when we went there (Lava), and after we finished all the prayers, we returned home. When we returned home, it was probably after two o'clock, and I was very sleepy, so I said to the Venerable Master, "I need to take a rest. Because our family lives in a makatæwæ (a distant village in a river

valley), we are the only family, and our children are still young, so I thought I would go home early to do some farm work. But when I woke up in the morning, I realized that he was faster than I was and had been sitting by the fire since early in the morning, burning vigorously. I was curious and asked, "Why do you get up so early?" He answered softly, "I don't know. I was afraid you'd leave, so I got up early." Then he continued, "Don't go home today, okay? Let's have a nice chat together today, and *ɲutĩ* (the sacrificial thigh meat given by the host family after the ceremony), don't think about saving it for the children; we'll both cook it and eat it". Thinking about that atmosphere at the *twazu* the night before and the look he showed at the end, I had a feeling that he had shriveled up as a person, then I stopped his words and stayed there without going home. At breakfast, Chongqing (name) came down and helped us cook the *ɲutĩ* after cutting it up. Then Nimadesh's brother began to weep and cry (in the Minyag region, for a child who is supposed to die young to survive, it is necessary to change the name of the father or the mother, and the parents are usually called "brother" as a way of avoiding the calamity of destiny). He said, "This has happened to me more than once, and this time, I will never be good again. Why did I tell you last night not to be afraid? Because it is me (my soul) that is being held on to". He passed away just two short months after that. At that time, I saw that Nemadeus's father was already depressed, and I could feel that his spirit was suddenly not so full. I took a look at his face and saw that there was no longer any blood on his face, and although I couldn't see it elsewhere, I could feel that his spirit had changed greatly, and then his face seemed to be curling up as well."

In this narrative, Nimadeshi's father dies after two months, and he knows his soul has been caught by evil. Not only one person but other youths also heard the evil sounds that implied Nimadeshi's father's future fate. The sound can be considered as a special omen of Nimadeshi's father, which shows that in some cases, standard omens and special omens will combine in an event. Even the antelope horn can be an omen, or more like the divination, that shows if the evil has left. Bird omens, ghost omens, antelope horn sign, and Nimadeshi's father, who is in his lower energy time, were all related to his death. And it is not just a coincidence; Nimadeshi's father said, "This has happened to me more than once, and this time I will never be good again," which means doing rituals can cause suffering to the *Sutcywu*. Because of this kind of high-risk occupation for Minyag people, *Sutcywu* can gain good rewards like a normal ritual *tsholo* (the smallest ritual only takes about two hours) and can be paid five hundred Yuan (about seventy euros). Still, if they perform a bigger ritual like *ngywaetchy* (a big ritual will take one day), they can get as

much as 1,500 Yuan (about two hundred euros). Based on my knowledge, thirteen years ago, people paid fifty totwo hundred Yuan, but the price is very high these days. This cost is not limited to the money transaction but also includes the leg of a sacrificial animal. (if the sacrifice is a sheep, the payment should include one thoundsand five hundred Yuan in cash plus a thigh of the sheep). The cost is quite high for most common Minyag people who live in the mountains and do not have any cash or jobs and who cannot offer such high rewards to the Sutcywu. Therefore, some people will try to solve omens by themselves.

There are multiple financial considerations for common people to solve the omens themselves. Solving omens by ordinary Minyag people is quite common. To avoid the suffering of omen, people have two options. One is performing specific activities to address the omen. The other is transferring the omen (see the section on transferability below) to other people. Here is a list of all the omens that can be solved by common people:

Omen	Way to address it
Chicken eating eggs	Chopping off the chicken’s head and making a chicken stand
Snake entering the house.	Taking it to another place
Snake’s molting	Taking off clothes and covering the snake with them
Bamboo branching growth	Chopping the bamboo, chanting and cursing
Ring-shaped vines	Cutting the vine in the wild and throwing it far away
People having sexual intercourse in the wild	Taking off the underwear and beating the place where people had sexual intercourse with it

(Table 6. The omens can be transferred)

Choekyi told me how people acted when they met the Creeping Vine and Bamboo omen in the past.

“About ts^{hat}ir ji tæŋae is the omen of the creeping vine. Normally, vines should spread out, but some vines keep spinning and twisting to form a circle, and then one end

penetrates from the middle if you see such vines (a bad omen). In the past, people didn't have any ropes and used vines often, so things like this were often encountered. People in the past knew some spells. When encountering such a situation, you would need to curse and then pull out a knife and cut the vine into three sections, and then find a bamboo or other stick or the like, and the vines should be inserted into the stick and vines to draw out all the evil, then shout "xoxo." Then, circle your body with the stick and vine to draw out the evil and throw it away so that you (remove bad luck).



(Figure 10. Vine omen, Wuhan Botanical Garden)

Tokowa tænjæ is bamboo (omen). If a certain part of the bamboo is flat, then another section of bamboo will branch out and grow from that position. Logically speaking, bamboo is very straight, with few bifurcated bamboo. Therefore, it is not good to see two-pronged bamboo. If you encounter such bamboo, you can curse it, cut it off and open it, put some old clothes on it, curse it, and throw it away. People in the past had many patches on their clothes, then they would tear off the patches and tie them on, curse, and throw them away. Quite a few people are doing related rituals for such things because most of these things can be handled by oneself in the wild.”

Choekyi said some people do not perform rituals for vine and bamboo omens as they can address them by themselves. That means it happens frequently, and it is easy to solve it instead of paying too much money and preparing complex rituals. Minyag people have now started normalizing these common omens, which they can solve alone. My aunt and grandma’s conversation showed me how to prevent the chicken omen.

Question: What if the chicken eats its eggs? Has this ever happened to our family?

Grandma: If something like this happened, it could only be called *tænæ*. They would say this is bad, and then certain rituals must be done at home. As for the Tcyclomi (name), she will wait before the chicken lays the eggs and take them out as soon as they are laid. Otherwise, they will be eaten.

Aunt: Now, by taking out one immediately after giving birth or cutting off the beak (of the chicken), this situation will not happen.

Question: How will they eat if their mouths are cut off?

Aunt: Just cut off the sharp part where it can peck the eggs. Also, we shouldn't feed eggshells to chickens now. His (my son's) aunt said, "Egg shells should be fed to hens. I see those Han people always feed egg shells to chickens." Then I threw the shells before the chickens, and they started eating them like crazy. If I want to throw away (the eggshells), I might as well feed them to chickens. As a result, those chickens will eat every egg they lay. After I found out, I quickly cut off their mouths, and they were fine.

Mather: Oh, the neighbor's chickens on the right have been bleeding for the past few days. The owner cut off the lower teeth of the chicken.



(Figure 11. Bamboo branching growth, China Daily Yunnan Reporter Station)

Here, Grandma, someone from the older generation, knows that chickens will eat the eggs, and some people just wait for them to be laid to take them away. The aunt also knows chickens will eat the egg even if she explains why she feeds them eggshells. She addresses the issue by cutting a bit of the chicken's beak. Others also said that feeding hot water and rice to chickens causes chickens to lay soft eggs. Therefore, due to the evolution of the chicken omen, people started to remove the suffering it caused by interpreting the omen in new ways.

Conclusion

Omens represent a distinctive genre within folklore, illustrating connections between objects based on collective and individual experiences. Rather than debating their veracity, it is crucial to recognize omens as a knowledge system akin to present-day natural sciences, explaining the unknown future. No longer should omens be dismissed as mere superstition or folk belief; they embody an epistemological model reflecting humanity's desire to anticipate advantages and avert disadvantages. The Minyag omen system, a vernacular knowledge system, enables the Minyag people to navigate their surroundings and make informed decisions for the future. The transmission of vernacular knowledge is contingent upon membership within specific groups, highlighting its distinct mode of dissemination.

Unlike other cultures where omens encompass positive and negative signs, Minyag omens denote negative occurrences exclusively, which contributes significantly to the diversity of omens worldwide, prompting new perspectives. However, within Minyag omen practice, these negative omens are crucial warnings of impending risks, often mitigated through rituals and specific actions. Thus, Minyag omens, though seemingly negative, prove indispensable as proactive measures. A positive agency is hidden behind the negativeness of omens, implying that pragmatism is the main thread running through the whole omen system. The basic principle of the Minyag people is to choose what should be practiced and preserved in this tradition. Minyag people selectively appropriate omen phenomena from the manuscripts and create abstract layers where omen can be used to predict the future and make a beneficial decision for themselves, which shows how pragmatism helps us understand the functions of omen in different contexts in the community.

This study challenges previous neglect of omens' functional significance, presenting omens as reflective of individual and collective memory transformation through the metaphorical lens of a "time hourglass." The hourglass metaphor illustrates the relationship between individual and collective memories: memories pass between the two ends, filtered by family values and representations (Cordonnier, Rosoux, Gijs, & Luminet, 2022). In Minyag communities, the omen system similarly acts as a filter between individual and collective memories, enabling their mutual transformation. The Minyag omen system is a mirror of the Minyag people's social, cultural, and political

history, intertwining collective and individual memories that cannot be neatly separated. By adopting an emic and etic approach, blending insider and outsider perspectives, this research embeds omens within the Minyag people's vernacular knowledge framework. Minyag omens underscore that omens are not manifestations of ignorance or irrationality but constitute a rich vernacular compendium documenting various aspects of local life.

Besides the discovery of the transferability of Minyag omens, there are other unique characteristics — privacy, traceability, and deterioration — that I did not elaborate on, which contribute significantly to the diversity of omens worldwide and prompt new perspectives. In the future, these aspects will be my next focus from the perspective of sympathetic magic research. Moving forward, folkloristics must endeavor to contextualize omens within a pluralized approach to knowledge production. The scant attention given to contemporary omens underscores the need for interdisciplinary methodologies in future studies. By bridging traditional folklore with contemporary understanding, scholars can shed light on the enduring significance of omens in shaping human perception and decision-making.

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Appendix: List of interviews

Name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education	Supplement
Gendun	Male	70	No	Middle school	Gendun was the only teacher in Mengzhong village when he was young. He also has been the village leader of Mengzhong. Now he is the Minyag threat heritor (木雅戏剧文化传承人). He has a lot of experience in omen rituals.
Lhamo Kyab	Female	51	Farmer	Illiterate	She remembers what her father did when a chicken omen happened in her family. She also encountered the snake omen and called her sister, who got angry.
Grandma	Female	82	No	Illiterate	She thought the omen topic was taboo but shared her experiences of snake and soul omen.
Chimey	Female	48	Farmer	Illiterate	A woman who knows the secret omen stories of villagers. She also told me about her and her husband's omen experiences.
Choekyi	Male	53	Sutcyawewu	Primary	One of the two Sutcyawewu in the whole of Eastern Minyag. He studied manuscripts, calendars, rituals, and Tibetan from his father and uncle. He has been Sutcyawewu for more than 30 years. He shared his clients'

					and his family's omen stories with me. He shown and allowed me to see his manuscripts.
Namkhatsili	Male	63	Sutcyawewu	Illiterate	The other Sutcyawewu, who studied rituals from his father. He is known as divination in Minyag. Choekyi and him are classmates who learned from same teacher. He showed me the calendar and elaborated on the book of Thwato.
Nima	Male	30	No	Technical secondary school	He is a young man who is a veteran. He experienced the omen ritual that caused Nimadeshi's father's death. He is an active person who always goes to help with other families' preparations for rituals in the Mengzhong village. His cousin died because of a pig omen.
Pasang	Male	62	Herdsmen	Primary	He experienced the social transformation of Minyag community. He owns plenty of vernacular knowledge and special omen experience.
Nimadeshi	Male	27	No	High school	He is my brother from the same peer group. As a result, he told me some ominous stories, such as making love in the wild, which I could not hear from the older generations.
Songtsen	Male	83	No	Illiterate	A strong, lonely guy in Mengzhong. He is a retired logger who worked in the forest for half of his life. He does not like to talk about

					omens as he thinks it is not good. He memorized an omen story in Mengzhong when he was young.
Sonam	Female	58	Farmer	Illiterate	A typical Minyag woman is open to talking about omen that happened in her family (her son and her own experiences). She has always lived in Mengzhong village and has never been to other places.
Dolma	Female	53	No	Illiterate	She is the Choekyi's (Sutcywu) wife. When Choekyi said there was no omen in his family, she said they received birds and snake omens, which caused her nephew to die, and she also broke her legs and her finger cut by her grandson.
Phuntsok	Male	34	Sutcyawu	Primary	He was a very smart young Sutcywu who studied rituals and the Tibetan calendar from his father (Namkhatsili) and his grandfather. He can do any rituals by himself and is accepted by all Minyag people. After he turned 25 years old, he stopped to be a Suctywu and opened an alcohol shop in the county seat. He is the only young Sutcywu in the whole Eastern Minyag community.

RESÜMEE

Ida-Minyagi ennete süsteem

Minyagi kultuuris peetakse endeks seda, kui inimene puutub kokku „ebaloomuliku nähtusega,“ mida usutakse viitavat tulevasele sündmusele. Eristatakse kahte tüüpi endeid: tavalised ended, mis järgivad rangelt nelja tingimust, ja erilised endid, mis vastavad ainult ühele või kahele tingimusele, kuid on seotud spirituaalsete nähtustega. Ended kujutavad endast omaette folkloorižanrit, milles põimuvad kollektiivsed ja individuaalsed kogemused. Minyagi ennete süsteem kui rahvapärane teadmiste süsteem võimaldab Minyagi rahval oma ümbruses orienteeruda ja teha tuleviku osas teadlikke otsuseid.

Kasutan magistritöös terminit „enne“ tähistamaks Minyagi ennete süsteemi konkreetset ilmingut ning tuginen Minyagi arusaamade selgitamisel Ülo Valgu käsitlusele rahvapärases teadmisesest (*vernacular knowledge*). Panen ette käsitleda Minyagi ennete süsteemi osana laiemast Minyagi teadmiste kategooriast, et vältida terminiga „ebausk“ (*superstition*) kaasnevat võimalilikku häbimärgistamist ja terminis „rahvausk“ (*folk belief*) avalduvat lihtsustavat dihhotoomiat, mis ei pruugi edasi anda Minyagi teadmiste nüansirikkust

Erinevalt teistest kultuuridest, kus ended hõlmavad positiivseid ja negatiivseid märke, tähistavad need Minyagide süsteemis ainult negatiivseid sündmusi, mis juba iseenesest rikastab teadmisi ettetähenduste kohta ja toob esile uusi vaatenurki. Ettetähendused hoiatavad liginevate riskide eest, mida sageli leevendatakse rituaalide ja spetsiifiliste toimingutega. Kuigi näiliselt negatiivsed, on Minyagi ended proaktiivsete meetmetena asendamatud ja omavad positiivset toimet, mistõttu võib öelda, et see ennete süsteem on olemuselt pragmaatiline. Minyagi inimeste viis noppida käsikirjadest sobivaid endeid ja kasutada neid tuleviku ennustamiseks ning endale soodsa otsuse tegemiseks näitab, kuidas pragmatism aitab mõista ennustuste funktsioone kogukonna erinevates kontekstides.

Ida-Minyagi kogukonnast pärit üliõpilasena liigun edasi-tagasi maa ja linna, põllu ja ülikooli, sees- ja väljaspoole vahel. Minyagi ennete süsteemi folkloristikult analüüsides püüan lepitada eemilist ja teadlaste analüütilist vaatepunkti. Need ainulaadsed isiklikud olud võimaldasid mul kombineerida Minyagi inimestega peetud vestluste käigus kogutud andmeid ja oma kogemusi. Tekstilised allikad hõlmavad Hiina valitsuse aruandeid ja teatmikke. Magistritöö koosneb kuuest peatükist, millest mahukaim, 4. peatükk käsitleb Minyagi ennete süsteemi.

མི་ཉག་རིག་གནས་ཁོད།

མི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རྒྱན་ལྷན་མིན་པའི་སྤང་ཚུལ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་འབྲུང་འབྱུང་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་སྟོན་པ་ཞིག་རེད། མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གི་མ་ལག་ལ་རིག་ས་ཆེན་པོ་གཉིས་ཡོད་དེ། ཚད་ལྡན་གྱི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་དང་དམིགས་བསལ་གྱི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་སོ། །ཚད་ལྡན་གྱི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་ལ་ཚང་དགོས་པའི་ཆ་རྒྱུན་བཞི་ཡོད་པ། དམིགས་བསལ་གྱི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་ལ་ཆ་རྒྱུན་གཅིག་ནས་གཉིས་ཚང་བས་འབྲས་མོད། རྣམ་ཤེས་མི་འདྲ་བའི་སྤང་ཚུལ་དང་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད། ཕྱ་ལྷན་ནི་དམངས་ཁོད་རིག་གནས་དམིགས་བསལ་བ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ཏེ། མི་སྐྱེར་དང་ཚོགས་པ་གང་རུང་གི་ཉམས་སྤོང་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དངོས་པོའི་འབྲེལ་བ་གསལ་བར་བྱེད་པ་ཞིག་ཡིན། མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གི་མ་ལག་ནི་ས་གནས་དེ་གའི་རིག་གནས་གི་ཁོངས་ཤིག་ཡིན་པའི་དོན་རྣམས། མི་ཉག་བས་ཁོང་ཚོའི་ཁོར་ལུག་ལ་རྒྱས་ལོན་དང་འབྲུང་འབྱུང་གི་དོན་ལ་སློབ་རིག་གསལ་བོས་ཐག་གཅོད་བྱེད་དུ་འཇུག་ཐུབ། དཔུང་ཚོར་འདིའི་ནང་དུ། ངས་ “ཕྱ་ལྷན་”ཞེས་པའི་ཐ་སྐད་འདི་བཞེད་ནས་མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གི་མ་ལག་གི་བྱ་བ་དཔེ་ཡོད། དེ་དང་ལྷན་དུ་འཇུག་ས་སྐྱེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་བྱ་ཞེས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་མི་ཉག་གིས་ཕྱ་ལྷན་ལ་བརྒྱུང་བའི་གོ་རྟོགས་ཞིབ་འཛིན་བྱས་ཡོད། གཞན་“མོངས་དང་”དང་“དམངས་ཁོད་དང་མོས་”ཞེས་སྐབས་བདེ་ཐལ་པའི་རིགས་གཉིས་སུ་དབྱེ་བའི་བྱེད་ཐབས་འདིས་མི་ཉག་གི་རིག་གནས་ཀྱི་སློབ་གྲུབ་ཀྱི་ཆ་དེ་འབྲེལ་བ་དཔེ་བྱེད་ཐབས་མེད་པས། ངས་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལ་མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་མ་ལག་འདི་བརྒྱུར་དུ་ཞིབ་འཇུག་དང་སློབ་ཚན་འགོད་དགོས་པ་ཞིག་རེད།

རིག་གནས་གཞན་པའི་ཁོད་གྱི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་ལ་བཟང་ངན་གཉིས་ཡོད་པ་དང་མི་འདྲ་བར། མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གིས་ལྷན་པ་མ་གཏོགས་མི་སྟོན། འདིས་འཛིན་སྤོང་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གི་རྣམ་གྲངས་རྗེ་མང་དུ་བཏོང་བ་མ་ཟད། ལྷ་ཚུལ་གསར་བ་ཞིག་ཀྱང་བཏོན་ཡོད། འོན་ཀྱང་། མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གི་ལག་ལེན་ཁོད། ལྷན་པ་ལ་འདི་དག་གིས་མི་རིང་བར་འཕྲད་སྲིད་པའི་ཉེན་ཁ་ལ་བརྟེན་གཏོང་བ་ཡིན་ཞིང་། རྒྱན་པར་ཚོགས་དང་བྱ་སྤོང་དམིགས་བསལ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་ཉེན་ཁ་རྒྱུ་དུ་གཏོང་བ་རེད། དེ་བས་མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་འདིས་སྤྱིར་བཏང་ལྷན་པ་ལ་སྟོན་པ་ཡིན་ཡང་། ཐབས་འདི་ནི་མེད་མི་རུང་བ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ཏེ། ལྷན་པ་གྱི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་སུ་དག་མཚན་ལྡན་པའི་བྱེད་ལུས་སྤོང་པས། བན་ཡོན་རིང་ལུགས་ནི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་མ་ལག་གི་མགོ་འཇུག་བར་གསུམ་ན་ཡོད་པའི་གཙོ་རྒྱུན་ཡིན་པ་ལྟགས་ཀྱིས་བཟུང་ཡོད། མི་ཉག་པའི་རྩ་དོན་ནི་སློབ་རྒྱུན་འདིའི་ནང་ནས་ལག་ལེན་དང་རྒྱུན་འཛིན་བྱ་དགོས་པའི་རིགས་གཞན་གསལ་བྱ་རྒྱ་དེ་ཡིན། མི་ཉག་བས་ཚོས་དཔེ་ལས་ཕྱ་ལྷན་དག་གཞན་གསལ་གསལ་ལྡན་པའི་སློབ་རྒྱུན་དང་ལེན་བྱས་ཏེ། སྤྱི་མཚན་གྱིས་བང་རིམ་བྱས་ནས། ཕྱ་ལྷན་སྤྱད་དེ་འབྲུང་འབྱུང་སྟོན་དུ་དཔག་ནས་རང་ལ་གང་ཕན་པ་ཐག་གཅོད་པ་དེས་ཕན་ཡོན་རིང་ལུགས་ཀྱིས་ང་ཚོར་ཚོ་བའི་ཁོད་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོངས་མི་འདྲ་བའི་གནས་ཚུལ་འོག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་གྱི་བྱེད་ལུས་ལ་རྒྱས་ལོན་བྱ་བར་རོགས་བྱེད་ཐུབ་པ་བཟུང་ཡོད།

མི་ཉག་ཤར་མ་ནས་ཡོང་བའི་སློབ་མ་ཞིག་ཡིན་པའི་ཆ་ནས། ངས་གོང་གྲེ་དང་གོང་ཁྱེད། ལུལ་དངོས་དང་སློབ་ཆེན། མི་ཉག་གི་བྱེད་པ་དང་དཔུང་འབྲུལ་གྱི་དཔུང་དོ་བཞིན་ཡར་མར་གཡོས། དུས་མཚུངས་སུ། ངས་བྱི་ནང་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ལྷ་ཚུལ་སྟོན་སྤྱོད་བྱས་ཏེ། དམངས་སློབ་རིག་པའི་ཁོད་གྱི་མི་ཉག་གི་ཕྱ་ལྷན་ལ་དབྱེ་ཞིབ་བྱེད་པར་འབད། མི་སྐྱེར་གྱི་གནས་ཚུལ་ཁྱད་པར་བ་འདི་དག་གིས་ངས་མི་ཉག་ལ་གཏམ་སྐྱོང་བྱེད་པ་དང་འབྲེལ་བ་བྱེད་དུས་བསྐྱེད་བྱས་པའི་གྲངས་ཚོ་དག་ང་རང་ཉེད་ཀྱི་འཚོ་བའི་ཉམས་སྤོང་དང་རྒྱུང་འབྲེལ་བྱས། ཡིག་ཆ་འི་འབྲུང་ཁྱད་པར་ལྷན་གོའི་སྲིད་གཞུང་གི་སྐྱོན་ལུ་དང་ལུལ་ལྷང་དཀར་ཆག་ཚུད་ཡོད།

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