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Review of Anthropology and Ethnology in Southwest China

(Volume 1)

EDITED BY He Ming and Li Zhinong

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Preface From Colonialism and National Crisis to Nation-state Reconstruction and Cultural Self-concepts: Studies of Ethnic History in Southwest China

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“Southwest” has a variety of meanings in different contexts. Its original and fundamental meaning refers to geographical location, denoting China’s Southwest, even though its borders are uncertain and even ambiguous. On this basis, other meanings of the term are derived. Firstly, it is the Southwest in terms of the geography of cultures or ethnic groups. Early in the Western Han Dynasty, the term “Southwest barbarian”—a concept encompassing ethnic groups within a certain geographical area—generally referred to ethnic groups in the West and South, including Yunnan province, Western Guizhou, Sichuan and southern Gansu. In 1930, Mr. Liang Zhaotao mapped out “The Distribution and Classification Sketch Map of Ethnic groups in the Southwest”^① to clarify the boundaries of the Southwest region. It included the territories which at that time encompassed Yunnan, Sichuan, Xikang, Tibet, Guangxi, western Hunan, Hainan Island in Guangdong, Yushu in Qinghai, Gannan in Gansu and other places. It could be taken as giving a generalized pragmatic idea of how the ethnic groups were visualized geographically. In comparison, Professor Emeritus Fang Guoyu used a much narrower concept of what delimits the Southwest area, referring to “that which is now Yunnan province, the region south of the Dadu River in Sichuan Province and west of Guiyang in Guizhou Province”.^② This is the concept embodied in the title of the Southwest China Institute of Ethnic Studies, which was formally established at Yunnan University in 1981. Its members were ethnologists from the provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Tibet and Guangxi. Secondly, in China ‘Southwest’ is also a political term denoting

① The original map is kept in Sichuan University Museum.

② Fang Guoyu, *An Explanatory of History and Geography of Southwest China, Short Case Studies* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1987), p. 1.

the Southwest Administration Division. On November 23, 1949, the CPC Central Committee Southwestern Bureau was first set up in Changde, Hunan province. It then moved to Chongqing and had jurisdiction over six provinces and regions—namely, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Xikang and Tibet. (Later on, Xikang and Chongqing were placed under the jurisdiction of Sichuan.) During this period, the local board (i.e. the regional system) was abandoned several times. Although it was not restored after being withdrawn in 1966, the formation of the administrative region in itself had a far-reaching influence. Thirdly, the “Southwest” has economic significance, as the five regions comprising Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Tibet are not only connected geographically but also have had similar levels of economic development and close economic exchanges among each other. Hence the “Southwest Economic Cooperation Zone” was established in 1982. Fourthly, it is the “Southwest” in terms of policies. In 1999, when the Chinese government began implementing the Western Development Strategy, the Western Developing Region covered not only the regions of Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Tibet and Chongqing but also the autonomous prefectures of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups (which border onto the regions listed above), plus Xiangxi in Hubei province and En’shi in Hunan province—all of which could also receive the same treatment with regard to the large-scale development of Western regions. Hence, the concept of the Southwest was expanded to include Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Tibet, Chongqing and the two autonomous prefectures in Hunan and Hubei provinces. Even though meanings of what was included in the scope of the “Southwest” altered at various times, in different areas and contexts, Yunnan province and the neighboring parts of Guizhou and Sichuan have always been part of the designation of the “Southwest” and have never been excluded.

Moving on from its geographical scope, we can go on to consider social and cultural aspects of the Southwest, of which the two most obvious characteristics are its nature as a borderland and the composition of its ethnic groups. On the surface, the term “borderland” clearly contains a geographical meaning, but its real significance is a social-historical one, going along with the formation of the country. However it is a product of the development of the modern nation-state in a strict sense. In Southwest China the three border areas of Yunnan, Guangxi and Tibet share borders with several countries, including Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and the region of Kashmir. The long land border of these three provinces together—amounting to more than 10000km—makes up about half the total length of China’s land border. In the Southwest live many kinds of ethnic groups, with the thirty-six people groups indigenous to the area accounting for two-thirds of the total number of recognized ethnic minorities in China. The population of the ethnic minorities in this area is at

present about fifty million, which is about half of the overall population of ethnic minorities in China.

In terms of its unique location and large number of ethnic groups, the perception of the Southwest among foreign scholars, who since the mid-nineteenth century have conducted studies on the ethnic groups of China, has shifted from a marginal position to a focal one. Accompanying the process of Western colonialism in Asia—and also of Japanese colonialism in China—a group of scholars began to carry out anthropological and ethnological studies of ethnic groups in Southwest China. For example, in the late Qing Dynasty an Englishman named Dingle left Shanghai for Myanmar. On his way through the Southwest of China, he observed the marriage, clothing and funeral practices of Han, Miao, Yi, Bai and other ethnic groups living in the area. He recorded all his experience and wrote a book entitled *Across China on Foot: Life in the Interior and the Reform Movement*.^① The British businessman A. J. Little (1838-1908), who in the course of his business activities came to the Shichuan border and Yunnan, wrote *Mount Omi and Beyond: A Record of Travel on the Tibetan Border* (1888) and *Across Yunnan* (1910). G. J. L. Litton (1870-1906), who was the British Consul General in Chongqing and Tengyue, wrote *China: A Report of a Journey to North Ssu-ch'uan* (1898). A British colonial official in India named H. R. Davies studied about Yunnan from 1894 to 1900 in the course of many visits. He studied the geographical environment, language and customs of peoples such as the Yi, Miao and Tibetans and wrote a book entitled *Yun-nan: The Link Between India and the Yangtze* (1909). In July 1902 to March of the following year, a Japanese scholar named Torii Ryuzo was sent by the Science College of Tokyo Imperial University to the provinces of Hunan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan to study the distribution and constitution of ethnic minorities in Southwest China, their relationship with the natural environment and their clothing, housing, customs, language and culture, etc. Among other books, he completed a work entitled *Anthropology in Southwest China: A Report on Studies of the Miao Ethnic Group*.^② The French military doctor A. F. Legendre studied the Yi people and, among other works, published *An Ethnographic Study of the Luoluo People* (1909) and *The Luoluo People in Jianchang* (1911). During the 1920s to 1930s, an American named D. C. Graham went successively as many as fourteen times to various ethnic enclaves inhabited by the Qiang, Miao, Tibetan and other ethnic groups to study their cultures, while the Naxi and Tibetan ethnic groups were investigated by another American named J. F. Rock. Although these studies were more or less tinged

① Edwin J. Dingle, *Across China on Foot: Life in the Interior and the Reform Movement*, translated by Chen Zengguo (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1915).

② Torii Ryuzo, *A Report on Studies of the Miao Ethnic Group* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1936).

with colonialism, they still created precedents for the application of modern scientific theories and methods to the study of ethnic cultures within China.

During this period, with the aggravation of the national crisis and the enhanced sense of a nation-state, research on borderland issues and ethnic groups living in border regions received increased attention from the general population and from the national government. The government's interest was shown by their publishing two books—*Research on Border Issues of Ebian, Mabian, Leibo and Pingbian* and *Research on Agricultural Matters in Three Bian*—which were both based on investigations conducted in four Yi ethnic areas (Ebian, Mabian, Leibo and Pingbian) organized by the Sichuan government in 1912. Since 1934 the Chinese government has been allocating funds for establishing courses on the history and geography of the border regions and for borderland education studies organized by the Ministry of Education in Nanking University, Northwest University, Yunnan University, Daxia University, Fudan University and other schools.^① All these courses are evidence of the greater attention being paid by the government to research on Southwest issues. In academic fields, since the early days of the creation of Ethnology and Anthropology departments in China, the Southwest has been one of the areas on which research has focused in particular. In 1927, the Language and History Research Institute of Sun Yat-sen University edited a publication called *Special Issues of Southwest Ethnic Studies*, which was published by Sun Yat-sen University. Beginning in 1928, Yang Cheng-chi from Sun Yat-sen University and other scholars spent more than a year conducting fieldwork among ethnic groups of Yunnan Province. In 1933, Ling Chun-sheng and Rui Yifu from the Academia Sinica went to the western part of Hunan province to do their research. From these studies emerged a new sub-discipline—Southwest studies—in Chinese academic circles. In 1930s, Wu Wenzao explained the main purpose of the newly established Social Anthropology unit within the Sociology Department of Peking University: “The focus of the community is knowledge of the Chinese border ethnic and socio-cultural situation; incidental attention must be paid to comparing the tribal communities and the rural communities.”^② In the late 1930s, because of the outbreak of the war against Japan, a large number of people came to learn about the Southwest. Therefore, Kunming and Chengdu became incorporated into the China National Research Center for the Study of Anthropology and launched a wave of research on the Southwest frontier. The scholars not only founded the Sociology field research station

① National Government Ministry of Education, *The Second Half Working Plan of Republic Year Thirty-seven of the Republic of China Ministry of Education* (China Ministry of Education printed, 1948).

② Social Academic Field ed., *The Overview from 1934 to 1936 of Sociology and Social Service Department of Peking University* (Social Academic Field, 1936), No. 9 Volume.

known as “Kuige” (in co-operation with scholars from Beijing University), the *Chinese Borderland Society* and *Chinese Frontier Society* (which are political and academic research institutions) but also created academic publications entitled *Borderland Research Communications* (at the Department of Sociology, Nanjing University), *Southwest Frontier* (at the Chinese National Institute), *Chinese Frontier* (at the Institute of Chinese Borders), etc.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese government, starting from the needs of constructing the nation-state, organized the available academic resources and launched surveys on national identification and on social and historical topics. These were followed by the publication of a series on five ethnic issues—namely Ethnic Minorities in China, A Social and Historical Survey of Ethnic Minorities, A Brief History of Ethnic Minorities, Brief Language Records of Ethnic Minorities and Overview of the Autonomous Areas. During this period ethnic studies in the Southwest became a focal issue. Even though it is worth noting that nowadays, from an academic perspective, the national identification and social and historical surveys contained theoretical deficiencies and methodological shortcomings, they nevertheless laid a foundation for the talents and information which were present in the studies of Ethnology and Anthropology. All the survey data publications are still cited by researchers both at home and abroad.

Since the 1980s the Southwestern region has played an important role in the process of restoration and reconstruction of Ethnology and Anthropology. Not only was Southwest China Institute of Ethnic Studies set up, but also the training of personnel and construction of the disciplines of Ethnology and Anthropology were carried out at Yunnan University and other universities. In 1982, Southwest China Institute of Ethnic Studies organized a Comprehensive Ethnic Survey of the Tibetan-Yi Corridor in the Six River Basin, which became the backbone of ethnic field studies and academic research and a symbol of scholarship on the Southwest. Since then, scholars in the Southwest region have on the whole been carrying out large-scale studies of the Southwest Silk Road, the Tea-Horse Trail, the Nanning-Kunming Railway Route, the Three Gorges Reservoir Area, the Three Parallel Rivers Area, the Tibetan-Yi Corridor and cross-border ethnic relations in the Southwest. The integrated research projects organized by Yunnan University include Cross-Century Investigations of Ethnic Minority Villages in Yunnan and the Investigations of Ethnic Minorities in Rural Areas. The edited results of such large-scale research have been published in publications such as *the Southwest Studies Series*, *Yunnan Ethnic Villages Investigation*, *Twentieth Century Chinese Ethnic Family Records*, *the Ethnic Studies in Southwest Borderland Series*, *The Cultural History of the Ethnic Minorities in Yunnan*, *Research on Ethnographic History*, *Studies of Tibetan Civilization*, *The New Ethnography Experimental Series*, and so on. Besides these, there are a large

number of ethnic studies, theoretical studies and results of ethnic historical research. During this period, the study of Anthropology and research on ethnic groups in the Southwest have been prominent features in defining the subjects of study and of imparting significance to them. Two aspects are included in this process. Firstly, prior to the 1930s foreigners had constituted the primary force conducting research on the Southwest but this changed so that in the 1930s-1960s, and again in the 1980s, Chinese scholars from outside the Southwest became the mainstay of scholarship on the region. Secondly, a group of outstanding minority scholars have grown up, scholars who study their own ethnic groups. Such scholars from within the ethnic groups study the results of what research has been done and not only increase the quantity of information but also improve on its quality, thereby raising its level even higher. To a certain degree, the results are of the nature of "cultural self-concepts". The "cultural self-concept" of local academics and scholars, combined with the so-called "etic" "concept of culture" of foreign scholars, has gradually formed a dialogue between the "emic" "self-concept" and "etic" "his concept". The outcome has been one of promoting the stability and prosperity of Ethnology and Anthropology studies in Southwest China.

Yunnan University not only plays a very important role in ethnological and anthropological teaching and research in the Southwest but also is a major force in Ethnology and Anthropology in China. The Research Center of Ethnic Minorities in China's Southwest Frontier at Yunnan University is the only key ethnology research base in Southwest China set up by the Chinese Ministry of Education. The Research Center is committed to organizing academic scholars in the fields of Ethnology and Anthropology, both at home and abroad, to study the Southwest of China and especially the borderland region of Southwest China. Our sincere hope is to establish more extensive and in-depth exchange and cooperation with those scholars at home and abroad who are focusing their research interests on Southwest China, and in this way to jointly promote in-depth research on the development of Southwest China.

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Part *One*

Ethnic Groups and Their Cultures

Reflections on the Relationship Between Na Mu Ji and the “Naq” Ethnic Groups

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Abstract

This paper explores the historical origin, religious belief, social custom, literature and art of the Na mu ji and Na (including the Naxi, Naq hai and Na) and points out the Na mu ji and Na have common origin but not the same branch. The comparative study of the Na and Na mu ji is helpful to further explore the origin and development of the Dongba religion and understand the historical relationship between the Naxi and Tibetan and its change. The author argues that if we want to study a nationality (ethnic groups) well, we should study related nationalities and ethnic groups in a comparative view, especially with the comparative study between the ethnic groups who has common origin but not the same branch.

Keywords

Na mu ji, Na, ethnic relationship

I. Starting from Nationality Identification of the Ethnic Groups of Naq^①

From 1956 to 1964, China conducted large-scale investigation about social history of ethnic minorities and “nationality (called in Han as Minzu) identification”. The Chinese ethnologists took Marxist and Leninist ethnological theories as the guidance, closely combined with the Chinese history and reality, flexibly applied Stalin’s theories about the characteristics of modern nationalities, and conducted historical and comprehensive investigation and analysis about such essences as the languages, writings, domains, economic life, cultural and psychological quality of the nationalities. They strictly identified over 400 ethnic groups claimed themselves as

① Here the modern Naxi Pinyin (Phonetic) writings system created in 1950s is used to refer the original words of the Naxi etc.

“nationalities”(Minzu),^① and scientifically identified 55 ethnic minorities, and laid a stable foundation for the large family of diversified but integral Chinese nation. The deep and wide significances and great contributions of this nationality identification could hardly be deliberated in great details here. However, we should not avoid the issues left over by history due to negligence then. For example, the same ethnic group who referred to themselves as “pai mi” (拍米, per mi, or “拍英米”pai ying mi, “拍日米”pai ri mi, all refer to “white people”白人) was classified as Tibetans in Sichuan, but “Pumi nationality” in Yunnan. Similarly, the ethnic groups who referred themselves as “Naq” (纳) or “Naq Ri” (纳日) were not ethnologically identified, but employed the sayings of certain people of higher classes and referred to as Mongols and Mongolians, which is still in use today.^② However, in Yunnan, “Naq” (纳) people were identified as a branch of Naxi (纳西) nationality. Thereafter, the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of Yunnan Province passed “Autonomous Rules of Ninglang Yi Autonomous County” on the 11th meeting of the 7th session dated April 27, 1990, and determined Naq people as “Mosuo People”(摩梭人). However, on the internal and external propaganda of the Standing Committee and the State Council, Naq (纳) People are still regarded as a branch of Naxi people.^③

What I intend to propose in this article is not to correct the reality of certain ethnic groups having been classified as certain nationality through ethnological classification. I just want to raise another question, i.e., if the study about a nationality (民族, Minzu) is only limited to determining the nationality itself through ethnological classification, and neglect to conduct cross-nationality (Minzu) comparative study about the other related ethnic

① According to the summarized registration data of 1953, there were over 400 names of nationalities(ethnic groups) submitted then, in which some were different names for the same nationalities (ethnic groups), some were names for different branches of the same nationality (ethnic group).

② Li Shaoming, “Ethnic Classification of Naq Ri (纳日) People at the Boarder between Sichuan and Yunnan”, *Research of Social Sciences* (she hui ke xue yan jiu), 1983, Volume 1.

③ Naxi people (“Naq” or “Naq Ri” people) are generally referred to as “Mosuo people” (摩梭人), which is not the way they called themselves. Mosuo(摩梭), Moxie(摩些), Mosha(摩掌) and Moxie (磨些) were the way the Chinese history books referred the Naxi (纳西) people of Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet. Separate names for “Mosuo people” (摩梭人) and “Naxi people” (纳西族) resulted in many people having misunderstanding about the history of Naxi nationality. They might think “Moxie”(磨些), “Mosuo”(摩梭) and “Mosha” (摩掌) in the history books only referred to the “Mosuo people” (摩梭) in Yongning and other places. If it remains what it is, it surely will cause disorders in understandings about the Chinese ethnological history. Therefore, this article followed the principle of “the name following its master”, also followed the self-reference of Naxi people in Yongning as “Naq” (纳), and used the words “Naq” (纳) or “Naq People” (纳人).

groups closely related to this nationality (Minzu) and being of the same origin, it would be very hard to come up with scientific conclusions, and it would also be very hard to inquire deeply into the culture of the nationality, and conduct scientific analysis to tackle the issue at its root. On the contrary, if we can step over the thresholds of the identified nationalities or ethnic groups, and conduct deeper comparative research about the cultures of the nationalities or ethnic groups with the same origin but different clans, we may make more achievements. For example, it would be very meaningful if we can conduct comparative research to the "Ethnic Groups of Naq"(纳) who referred to themselves as "Naxi"(纳西), "Naq"(纳), "Naq Ri"(纳日), "Naq Hai"(纳罕) and "Naq Mu Ji"(纳木衣), which have been quite disputable in today's classification of nationalities (Minzu) and culturally much diversified.

In this article, the author conducted some comparative research about the "Naq Mu Ji"(纳木衣) people who have been classified as Tibetan today, and the Naxi and Naq (Naq Ri) people who share the same origin with them. By analyzing the colorful cultural phenomenon of "same origin but different clans", the purpose is to extend the visions of Tibetan studies and Naxi studies. Moreover, through such comparative studies, it is to come up with more meaningful conclusions about the historical and cultural relationships between these two ethnic groups.

II. Viewing Relationship between Na Mu Ji (纳木衣) and Ethnic Groups of Naq (纳) from Ethnic History and Ethnographies

Naxi people distributed in different areas of Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet referred to themselves as different names, mainly including the following four kinds: The people living in Yongning Township, Ninglang Yi Autonomous County, Yunnan Province, and Zuosuo (lata), Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province referred to themselves as "Naq". The people living in Jinkuang, Muli and Yanbian, Sichuan Province referred to themselves as "Naq Ssee"(纳汝), some scholars translated it by pronunciation as "Naq Ri", while the people living in Bahe, Beiqu, Ninglang Yi Autonomous County and Zhangzidan, Yongsheng County, Yunnan Province referred to themselves as "Naq Hin"(纳恒). The people living in Sanba Township, Shangri-La (Zhongdian) County referred to themselves as "Naq Hai"(纳罕). The people living in Yulong Naxi Autonomous County and Old Town of Lijiang City and beside Jinsha River (Yangtze) in Shangri-La (Zhongdian) County referred to themselves as "Naxi"(纳西). Although there are slight differences in the pronunciations of these five self references of nationality name, their basic nationality name is "Naq"(纳), while "Xi", "Hin", "Hai"