

The Fiction of State Control: Imagining the Native Chieftaincy in Southwest China

Abstract

The Native Chieftain System (ch. *tusi zhidu*), an array of individual bilateral contracts between the imperial officialdom and the peripheral indigenous hereditary rulers culturally and linguistically distinct from the Empire's majority population, is widely perceived as being abolished during the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor (1723-1735). However, some of the *tusi* offices prevailed until the foundation of the PRC. The present paper describes the history of the peripheral Leibo County (Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province) as seen through the variously constructed narratives concerning native headmen's clans and lineages. The context stems from an analysis of the official and literary accounts (including the omnipresent narrative of Zhuge Liang in *Romance of Three Kingdoms*) as well as from observations, personal recollections, and imaginations gathered through dialogic exchanges during an ethnographic fieldwork. The paper contributes to the history of *gaitu guiliu* by offering a different perspective through analysis of the local particularities within native chieftaincy in Southwest China.

Keywords

tusi zhidu, Native Chieftain System, headman, Nuosu, Yi, Liangshan, Leibo, *gaitu guiliu*

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Introduction

The Native Chieftain System (*tusi zhidu* 土司度) was a particularly loose arrangement of local hereditary rulers in the peripheral regions of the Chinese Empire, often based on the individual bilateral contract between the center and a particular indigenous headman. The designation appears for the first time during the Yuan dynasty. The Mongol rulers synthesized their experiences with previous Chinese systems, namely the "Bridled and Haltered Prefectures" (*jimi*

fuzhou 鞏察府州¹ developed during the Tang and Song dynasties, allowing them a lax reign of their newly conquered lands. Generally speaking, while there were differences in the various approaches made during Chinese history, the principle remained the same, with the imperial court desiring to rule the indigenous population through their indigenous elites. Using ostentatious sounding hereditary titles² bestowed upon the local rulers³, the dynasties appointed them as their extended arm and granted them a considerable amount of autonomy in their decisions. Although these areas were described in the rhetoric of the textual sources as "candidates for membership,"⁴ with some of them already seen as *de facto* part of the empire, the situation on the ground might have been very different.⁵

The Native Chieftain System was not a tool of self-governance, although its original form emerging during the Yuan Dynasty might suggest the opposite. Since the Ming Dynasty⁶, it served as a mechanism for the colonization of vast indigenous areas which were difficult to access. Practices of their inhabitants vastly differed from the majority population of the Chinese realm. The state intend to use migrants coming from hinterlands to cultivate the newly acquired land, attempted to pressure native headmen and their offspring to receive Chinese-style Confucian education and hoped that gradually the land and its inhabitants would become the part of the expanding Chinese Empire.⁷

The local implementation of the native headmen system's policies was diverse – as were the peoples whom the Chinese wanted to persuade to become "civilized." In the Tibetan Kingdom of Muli (Muli wangguo 木里王國), the lamas of three major local temples were appointed as *tusi*.⁸ In the Tibetan Kham area around Batang 巴塘, the headmen emerged from the local nobility – descendants of officials sent decades ago by Lhasa.⁹ In Liangshan, a clan-based society dominated the land without a central ruler, with hereditary titles distributed mainly among the powerful aristocracy. These three geographically neighboring areas featured three different types of local elites and vastly different social organizations. Therefore, the state had to negotiate various obstacles stemming from the distinctive

¹ Took 2005; Herman 2009; Wiens 1954.

² In the beginning, these might have been *wang* 王 (king), *wangzi* 王子 (prince), *hou* 侯 (marquess), *junzhang* 君長 (monarch), etc. After Mongol conquest these would reflect the subject's place within the state bureaucracy, i.e. military pacification commissioner of various levels (*xuanweisi* 宣慰司, *xuanfusi* 宣撫司, *anfusi* 安撫司), battalions (*qianhu* 千戶, *baihu* 百戶), chiefs (*zhangguansi* 長官司), and civil prefects (*zhifu* 知府), subprefects (*zhizhou* 知州) and district magistrates (*zhixian* 知縣). In different times and under different circumstances, these might have possessed a prefix *tǔ* 土 – the "local" or "native" official.

³ In the case of Mongols, these "local rulers" might have been appointed from a very far-away place conquered by them earlier. That was the case of Saidianchi Shansiding 賽典赤·瞻思丁 (also called Wuma'er 烏馬兒), a Muslim from Bukhara loyal to the Mongol court. He was appointed as a governor of the newly-established Yunnan province and his relatives held various hereditary posts in the area. (Long 1993, 130-32).

⁴ Yü 1967, 65.

⁵ Herman 2009.

⁶ The following Ming dynasty continued with this Yuan model and kept bestowing high official titles to the native chieftains. However, the administration of native headmen was marginalized within Ming bureaucratic system. They thus became a second-class officials. (Herman 2007, 105).

⁷ Herman 2007; von Glahn 1987; Wiens 1954.

⁸ Qinrao and Geding, 1993.

⁹ SSBXBW 1993, 54.

mindsets of what it perceived as its diverse subjects. In this light, the modern designation of *tusi zhidu* as being a "system" only (perhaps unconsciously) aligns our interpretations with the imagination of the Chinese officialdom. The usage of the term "regime" in sense of a regular pattern of occurrence or action (of bilateral contract negotiation) might be more appropriate.

This case study wishes to describe the history of one such area, modern Liangshan's peripheral Leibo County 雷波縣 (Nyipmu Mopbbo ㄖㄟㄅㄛˋ ㄒㄩㄢˋ). The first objective is to depict the relationship between the Chinese state and this peripheral region through the description of Leibo's history of native headmen. Such description should reveal the pressure and asymmetry between court policies and the structure of local native clan structures, from which the majority of contemporary Liangshan inhabitants are the descendants. Along with this objective, I aim to unfold the rhythm in the rhetoric of how various types of textual sources portray and imagine the identities of the Leibo native headmen.

The interpretation of textual sources is imbued by the data I acquired during my multiple visits to this region. Apart from observation, it includes seven dialogic exchanges (in Bakhtin's sense)¹⁰ with the locals in Liangshan, either descendant of the native headmen lineages or people living in the vicinity of those former *tusi* offices. Through this analysis, I show how this history is narrativized, understood on the ground, and attached to mainstream Chinese history. In short, I intend to recount the historical events through genealogies of native headmen. The result of this (re)construction, a consciously crafted chronotope¹¹, shows local particularities of *tusi zhidu* with a principal objective to contribute and further diversify the extant academic discourse on native chieftaincy in Southwest China.

The textual sources I analysed include official histories, local gazetteers, personal accounts and literary works. Within the following narrative I try to follow the rhetorics by preserving certain labels, such as "barbarian," "sorcerer," and others. These should be understood as historical labels emanating from the text, and not as author's perception. Concerning the data gathered through oral accounts, I undertook what Tsing¹² calls "walking fieldwork." On my way through the contemporary landscape, I received access to my informants via snowball sampling, as well as through incidental conversations and encounters¹³. I respect the privacy of my informants, so I have named them after the toponym where I met them or after a place-name they talked about.¹⁴

A number of important facts must be borne in mind. The historic records detailing headmen lineages approximately span over the course of 600 years. They might seem rich in content, but considering the time span, they are in fact not very informative in detail. Most of the content of this paper is an interpretation of various historical

¹⁰ Holquist 2002.

¹¹ Bakhtin 1981.

¹² Tsing 1993, 65.

¹³ Schein (2000, 28) coins similar process as an "itinerant ethnography."

¹⁴ Huixi, Mitie, Mixi, Qulimi, Tiangumi, Wumasi, Yousuo.

ethnographies, an endeavor to put the local history into the broader context. Also, it is vitally important to point out that despite the contemporary indigenous inhabitants of Liangshan possessing their own distinct writing system, all sources I gathered information from were either written or spoken in Chinese. The ethnonym "Nuosu-Yi," which I use through this text, is the fusion of autonym Nuosu ꨀꨣ (ch. Nuosu 諾蘇) and the Chinese neutral ethnonym (Yi 彝) given to the Liangshan indigenous inhabitants during the nationalities identification campaign (*minzu shibie* 民族識別) in the 1950's. Throughout their history, they were labeled by other names, such as Luoluo 羅羅 or Yi 夷 ("barbarians")¹⁵, the latter a particularly pejorative designation that was abolished with introduction of the neutral ethnonym. Through my paper I work with the premise that the present Nuosu-Yi are cultural descendants to the various groups of people described by aforementioned ethnonyms within the Chinese historic accounts.

Liangshan, Leibo and the Luoluo

The Liangshan 涼山 or Cold Mountains (sometimes also referred to as Cool Mountains, Nipmu ꨀꨣ or Niepsa ꨀꨣ in Nuosu-Yi language), are located at the southwestern tip of Sichuan province. Leibo is today one of seventeen counties of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (Liangshan Yizu zizhizhou 涼山彝族自治州). Liangshan is geographically and demographically very diverse, each of its counties possess its unique characteristics, and Leibo is not an exception. It lies west of the Jianchang Valley and borders with Meigu County 美姑縣 (Limu Moggu ꨀꨣꨀꨣ) and Zhaojue County 昭覺縣 (Limu Juojjop ꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣ) – the core area of Great Liangshan (Da Liangshan 大涼山) – a haven of the Nuosu-Yi culture in the past as well as today, living there, according to their version of history, since time immemorial¹⁶. Along with the Jinsha River 金沙江 (Axyuo Shyxyy ꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣ), Leibo creates the northeastern border between Sichuan and Yunnan Province. It is perceived as a transitional landscape between the world of Han-Chinese and Nuosu-Yi, with a substantial population of both. Because of the significant presence of the Han-Chinese, it is considered as Lesser Liangshan (Xiao Liangshan 小涼山). I coined it as a "double periphery." It is traditionally viewed as peripheral by the Nuosu-Yi due to its vicinity to Han-Chinese areas. The Han-Chinese considers it marginal mainly because of its "backwardness" and insufficient local economy¹⁷.

¹⁵ In Chinese sources, the ancestors of Nuosu-Yi were labelled by much more ethnonyms – Wuman 烏蠻, Dongcuan 東爨, Yi 夷, etc. Their polities were called Qiongnu 邛都, Yelang 夜郎, Mu'ege 慕俄格 (or Luoshi Guiguo 羅氏鬼國), Zangke 牂柯, etc. (Herman 2009).

¹⁶ According to their written sources, Nuosu-Yi culture as seen nowadays originated in Zhaotong prefecture 昭通市 of Yunnan province after a long series of migrations, and this place is thus treated as an imaginary place of origin. After the death of the physical body, every soul, according to the Nuosu-Yi, should return here. They call the place Zzyppzyppuvut ꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣ. It is an imaginary world, where souls reside. The common ancestor of all Chinese Yi people is Apu Dumu 阿普篤慕 (Axyu Ddutu ꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣ or Axyu Jjutmu ꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣꨀꨣ). The distant six ancestors (*liuzu* 六祖) were descendants of him. After arriving in Zhaotong, they split into various clans and walked into four directions, eventually settling in numerous areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou provinces. (Kopp 2011).

¹⁷ Wumasi, Leibo, Mitie and Tiangumi informants.

A society of the Nuosu-Yi is divided into two major groups of people – the aristocrats *nuohop* 𐄂𐄃 (in Chinese source often designated as "Black Bones" – *heigutou* 黑骨頭) and the non-aristocrats *quhox* 𐄄𐄅 ("White Bones" – *baigutou* 白骨頭). The social mobility between these two groups is impossible, as the status of "Black Bones" is ascribed through inheritance and traces its history back to the two original clan branches which entered Liangshan in ancient times.¹⁸ The non-aristocrat group of people is further stratified into free commoners (*quxnuo* 𐄆𐄇), serfs (*ggapjie* 𐄈𐄉) and slaves (*gaxy* 𐄊𐄋). The "White Bones" consists mainly of the captured slaves of other ethnicities (mostly Han) and the drop-outs from the aristocratic caste.¹⁹ Within the group of "White Bones," there exists a possibility of social mobility – slaves can gradually become free commoners after numerous generations of toiling for their masters.²⁰

The free commoners were still under the influence of aristocrats, but possessed their own land and slaves.²¹ The "White Bones" group thus served as a mechanism for "nuosufication." The captured people tried to adopt the customs of Nuosu-Yi as quickly as possible, so they can move upwards within the hierarchy of their group.²² Despite commoners, serfs and slaves belonging to the same group, the term *quhox* was used exclusively by the free commoners, who (even today) look down upon the former slaves and serfs.

With the arrival of Chinese Empire, a new super-stratum called *nzymop* 𐄌𐄍 ("the one in charge of affairs") emerged mostly from the layer of aristocratic *nuohop*.²³ The most powerful clan was selected by the Empire as a representative for the whole area and the head of the most powerful lineage thus became the *tusi*, who then served as a link between the people and the imperial court. The *nuoho* stratum was strictly endogamous and *nzymop* followed this pattern, forming bonds only within their *tusi-nzymop* strata.²⁴

In the past, the imperial court was trying to graft its own rules onto the distinct Liangshan clan-based society with varied results. The imagination of natives and their headmen were invented and narrated within semi-historical literary accounts and this framework of subdued "barbarians" versus the superior imperial court then penetrated the historical records. Nevertheless, reality apparently often differed from this underlying narrative and the state had to make many compromises to at least maintain the *status quo* within the domain of natives.

¹⁸ The Liangshan Nuosu-Yi believe to be descendants of two such clans – Qotniep 𐄎𐄏 (Qunie 曲涅) and Gguho 𐄐𐄑 (Guhou 古侯). (Kopp 2011; Yi 2000; Qiesa 2002).

¹⁹ One of the main reasons for dropping out from the aristocratic caste was a marriage with the non-aristocrat.

²⁰ Lin 1961, 97-111; Schoenhals 2003, 22-25.

²¹ Lin 1961, 100.

²² Lin 1961, 97, 108.

²³ Schoenhals (2003, 26-27) suggests that most of the *nzymop* came from the *quhox* caste. His claim is based on his own ethnographic data and is opposing the traditional view, that "the *nzymop* blood was the purest." According to him, the power was given to the hands of the "White Bones" to oppose the hegemony of the aristocrats. According to my own historical and ethnographic data, the truth lies somewhere in between of these two extreme statements.

²⁴ LS 1967, 439, 466.

Mothop's tribe and Zhuge Liang

The broader area to which modern Leibo County belongs is mentioned in Chinese writing as early as the Han Dynasty. General Tang Meng 唐蒙 established a military outpost there and the Tanglang County 螳螂縣 which was a couple of years later abolished. This "county" was probably only a symbolic expression of Chinese presence in the new, potentially colonizable area.²⁵

A much deeper imprint was left by a minister and strategist of the Shu-Han 蜀漢 state, the famous general Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮. The short historical account of his actions within the broader area of modern Leibo and its surroundings was preserved in the *San guo zhi* 三國志²⁶, which served as a pattern for Luo Guanzhong's 羅貫中 literary masterpiece "Romance of Three Kingdoms" (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義). This narrative written between the Yuan and Ming Dynasty provides a framework for looking at the context of the form of indirect rule in Southwest China.

During his Southern punitive expedition (*nanzheng* 南征), Zhuge Liang founded three counties here. The one which was lying roughly at the area of today's Leibo was called Mahu County 馬湖縣 Meng Huo 孟獲 (nuo. Mothop 𪛗) emerges as one of the indigenous leaders in both historical and legendary accounts. Within the *San guo yan yi*, he is naturally hostile to the Zhuge Liang and perceives him as an invader of his territory, whereas the general sees himself as a representative of the Empire, which shall rule all under heaven. After Zhuge Liang captures Meng Huo for the first time, both of them engage in the following conversation:

Zhuce Liang said: "The previous Emperor treated you well, how dare you turn your back to him and rebel?" Meng Huo replied: "The Two River Lands all belonged to others. Your lord took it by force and bestowed the title of Emperor on himself. My people have lived here since time immemorial, and then you and those similar to you unscrupulously invaded my land. So what rebellion are you talking about?"

孔明曰：「先帝待汝不薄，何敢背反？」獲曰：「兩川之地，皆是他人所占地土；汝主倚強奪之，自稱為帝。吾世居此處，汝等無禮，侵我土地，何為反耶？」²⁷

Meng Huo is then generously released and benevolently offered horse and refreshments²⁸ on his way back to his settlement, a native administrative unit called "ravine" (*dong* 洞)²⁹. Similar situation occurs seven times altogether.

²⁵ SJ 1997 - *Nan man zhuan* 南蠻傳

²⁶ SGZ 1935, 5.2033.

²⁷ SGYY 1976, 546.

²⁸ SGYY 1976, 546.

Meng Huo is always captured and then finds an excuse why Zhuge Liang should let him go. He then always swears if Zhuge Liang captures him once more, he will submit to his (and therefore the Shu-Han Emperor's) authority.

In these accounts, Meng Huo is depicted as a cunning, false and unworthy opponent. Zhuge Liang, on the other hand, is wise, benevolent and superior in every way. Meng Huo has two brothers. The younger one, Meng You 孟優, is naïve and feeble, as he after his captures often cries and throws himself on the ground in front of the Shu-Han general.³⁰ The older brother, Meng Jie 孟節, lives life in reclusion. Upon meeting with Zhuge Liang, he is treated as an equal, because of his wisdom. He is ashamed of his younger brothers' conduct, regrets the trouble the "rebellion" made for Zhuge Liang so that he had to come all the way to the south, and says, that he "owes general face."³¹

After Meng Huo is captured for the seventh and the final time, he finally submits to Zhuge Liang. Suddenly, he is made equal to the Shu-Han minister, a grandiose banquet is organized and all of Meng Huo's tribesmen offer their submission and throw themselves on the ground, crawl up to their new master, and praise his generosity.³² It is then when Zhuge Liang makes his famous decision. He orders his subordinates to let the native chieftains rule their lands, owing to the three difficulties that exist for outsiders to do so: their feeding, hatred stemming from the past and locals' future distrust.³³ This magnanimous decision is consequently praised by both sides. Meng Huo then accompanies Zhuge Liang on his way back to Chengdu and was permitted to leave after reaching Yuesui 越嶲, the northern border of modern Liangshan, where the new allies parted in an emotional farewell:

[Zhuge Liang] ordered Meng Huo that under his diligent rule, people should be treated kindly and do not forget about their agrarian duties. Meng Huo and others parted from Zhuge Liang with tears rolling down their cheeks and returned [to their homeland].

發付孟獲領衆自回，囑其勤政馭下，善撫民居，勿失農務。孟獲等涕泣拜別而去。³⁴

Local people were so grateful, that they erected shrines and brought to that place gifts of jewels, cinnabar, lacquer, etc. Most importantly, they "pledged themselves not to rebel"³⁵. In some places, the personage of Zhuge Liang subsequently outshined some of the local gods. During the Song dynasty, the suburbs of what is today modern Luzhou 瀘州 were dotted with temples dedicated to him and locals – Chinese and indigenous population – elevated him to the

²⁹ SGYY 1976, 560. "Ravines" as an administrative unit are seen in sources until the fall of the Song Dynasty.

³⁰ SGYY 1976, 554.

³¹ SGYY 1976, 557-58.

³² SGYY 1976, 567.

³³ SGYY 1976, 567-68.

³⁴ SGYY 1976, 569.

³⁵ SGYY 1976, 568.

position of the God of Horsetraders³⁶ and presented their offerings before entering the marketplace.³⁷ Zhuge Liang is thus widely seen as an inventor³⁸ of the loose rule concept through work of popular literature since the Yuan-Ming transition.

Tang Dynasty sources called the Leibo area Mahu bu 馬湖部³⁹, until the Mongols conquered it and transformed it into Mahu district (Mahu lu 馬湖路).⁴⁰ The fact that Mahu was later designated as a native prefecture might indicate it was already quite pacified, but that was not a case for its margins such as Leibo. There was a distinction between military native officials (*tusi* 土司) and civil native officials (*tuguan* 土官). The *tusi* were governing regions, where the degree of assimilation was much lower, that those governed by *tuguan*. The ideal scenario would follow the trajectory from hereditary military, to civil native rule, ending with the non-hereditary position of the Chinese career "circulating official" (*liuguan* 流官), who was not a native local, but appointed by the central court. Areas administered by *liuguan* were considered as an integral part of the empire. The process of connecting the native area firmly to the empire was called *gaitu gailiu* 改土歸流 (in short *gailiu* 改流), literally "converting the native into the official."⁴¹ Since the Ming Dynasty, there are more detailed records about the rule of native headmen. In the case of Mahu, the local powerful Hxala 𠵼 𠵼 clan (ch. Hala 哈拉), in Chinese sources mentioned under the surname An 安, was granted the right to rule their own people.

Hxala and Apzho Clans – From Loyal Officials to Ruthless Villains

It was already during the seventh year of Kaibao 開寶 era (974), when Hxala clan member Dong Chongxi 董春惜 brought horses as a tribute to the imperial court and stated that he was a prince (*wangzi* 王子) of 37 tribes within the Mahu bu.⁴² Since this ritual act of loyalty, almost 400 years passed until another historical record. Presenting a tribute to the court (*gong* 貢) was one of the basic obligations in order to maintain relationship between the superior court and its subjects. The court usually repaid such tribute with much more valuable items to express its superiority⁴³.

³⁶ The Empire was mostly interested in a high-quality horses, which were bred in Liangshan and Guizhou. Horses in most of the cases acted as a tribute from native periphery inhabitants towards the central court. (LS 1967, 458).

³⁷ von Glahn 1987, 15. During the Ming dynasty, temples dedicated to Zhuge Liang were seen as far as in the Guizhou Province.

³⁸ The loose rule was applied since the Qin dynasty by the concept called *huairou* 懷柔, but until Zhuge Liang it was not narrativized in such an extent. (Took 2005, 33).

³⁹ DQYT 1984, 301.5-6.

⁴⁰ Long 1993, 132.

⁴¹ Establishing of the Guizhou Province in 1413 was a result of such large-scale *gailiu*. (Herman 2007, 117-18).

⁴² SS 1977, 496.14238.

⁴³ For such case, see Ürüg Temür and An Pei negotiating with the Ming court. (MS 1974, 311.8016-18).

During the winter of the fourth year of the Hongwu 洪武 era (1371), Mahu district administrator An Ji 安濟, a chieftain of local "barbarians" (*manyi* 蠻夷) and Luoluo (*Luoluo ren* 羅羅人) in origin, sent his son An Ren 安仁⁴⁴ to the imperial court to submit to the imperial authority of a newly established Ming dynasty. An Ji was evidently in fragile health, which was the reason for sending his son along with other chieftains such as Wang Qi 王麒⁴⁵. As a result, one year later the court transformed the district (*lu*路) into the native civil prefecture (*tufu* 土府) by imperial edict, its seat was placed in Pingshan 屏山縣 County's capital and the power into the hands of An lineage. The prefecture ruled the area of the six counties, Leibo being one of them. Furthermore, four new chieftaincies (*zhangguansi* 長官司), Nixi 泥溪, Pingyi 平夷, Manyi 蠻夷, and Muchuan 沐川, were established to rule the prefecture's problematic peripheral regions.

Mahu prefecture was a special case in Liangshan, with military native officials present within a civilian native prefecture. It also depicts the importance of the An lineage, which acted as a representative of the whole area. An Ji was established as the new native prefect (*tuzhifu* 土知府) and this office was proclaimed hereditary within his lineage. In 1373, An Ji memorialized (*zou* 奏) the Emperor that he is again in a poor health and requested that he be replaced by his son An Ren. The Court issued another edict to approve this.⁴⁶ The fact that part of this excerpt is present in the *History of Ming* suggests a high degree of importance for this event.

Development within the Mahu office at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty was parallel to the similar events in Jianchang 建昌⁴⁷ (nuo. Latbbu Orro 𑌎𑌗𑌛𑌗), where another Luoluo lineage also surnamed An (not related to the one in Mahu) competed for the title of local commander (*tuzhihuishi* 土指揮使) with a Mongol governor, Ürüg Temür⁴⁸. This resulted into Temür's uprising,⁴⁹ which affected vast parts of Liangshan, but the violence this time did not spill over into Mahu prefecture.

Another fact worth bringing attention to is the Chinese surnames⁵⁰ bestowed on "Luoluo barbarians." The Imperial court bestowed these Chinese names on peripheral native headmen who submitted to its authority. It was a reciprocity for the loyalty exercised by the local headman. Along with official seals and documents, carrying a Chinese

⁴⁴ In some sources under the name An Ben 安本

⁴⁵ Later established as the headman of Nixi Chieftaincy (*Nixi zhangguansi* 泥溪長官司). (Gong 1992, 414).

⁴⁶ MS 1974, 311.8015-16; TGDB 1984, 2.19.

⁴⁷ Nowadays Xichang 西昌 – the prefectural capital. It lies in the Anning River (Athxuop nyoyy 𑌎𑌗𑌛𑌗) valley, also called Jianchang Valley, and is coined as the "granary of the southwest" (*xinan liangcang* 西南糧倉), as a sharp contrast to the rest of the area which is mostly infertile during to its high elevation.

⁴⁸ In Chinese sources mentioned as Yulu Temu'er 裕魯特穆爾 or Yuelu Tiemu'er 月魯帖木兒

⁴⁹ For details see MS 1974, 311.8016-18.

⁵⁰ The meaning of *an* 安 is "tranquil" or "peaceful" – wishful thinking of the imperial court towards the ordinarily very unsettled regions. Such meanings were given also to many place-names across the whole area of Southwestern China: Anning he 安寧河 ("Tranquil River"), Xining 西寧 ("Western Peace"), Ninyuan 寧遠 ("Tranquil Remoteness"), Yongning 永寧 ("Eternal Tranquility"), etc.

surname was regarded as a matter of a high prestige. This was another way of the "divide and rule" policy of the Ming Dynasty. The closer a native headmen was to the imperial court, the further they were from their roots, in case of Liangshan from other clans of aristocratic "Black Bones." The *nuohop* resented the outsiders,⁵¹ but by fighting with the *nzymop*, the agents of the Empire emerging from their own strata, they theoretically gave a good reason to the court to pacify the region by the force and incorporate it to the inner border of Chinese realm faster.

In the following decades, the office was inherited properly – within the lineage. In the third month of the Yongle 永樂 era (1407), An Ren's son An Jun 安濬 inherited the office. In the second month of the third year of the Zhengtong 正統 era (1438), his son An Hao 安顥 received an imperial order and succeeded his father. In the second month of the third year of the Jingtai 景泰 era (1452), the insignias including the cap and the belt were given to his younger brother An Hong 安洪 – probably because An Hao left this world prematurely. The same destiny struck An Hong three years later – in the sixth month of the sixth year of the Chenghua 成化 era (1455) – and An Ao 安鰲, oldest son of An Hao, ascended the "local throne."⁵²

Such development signified a high degree of order and stability within the area in the first half of 15th century. Contrary to other parts of Liangshan and to the historical development of this area in the future, there are no signs of instability within these years. The office was passed from one relative to another in a very proper manner, with the records mentioning the proper communication between the native prefecture and the imperial court. The successor first memorialized the Emperor, whose office always issued an edict confirming the succession.

An Ao ruled Mahu for four decades, until the eighth year of the Hongzhi 弘治 era (1495). In that year, he was investigated and subsequently the court decided to execute him by a "thousand cuts" (*lingchi* 凌遲). The *History of Ming* elaborates on the details:

Ao was cruel by his nature and afflicted his own people. When he counted the household taxes, he yearly put tens of thousands silver ingots into his own pockets. He often committed improprieties with wives and daughters of local people. With the help of "sorcerers," he [practised] a "black magic" [by which he] killed people. He also sent a person to kill the Pingyi chieftain – Wang Daqing. But Wang Daqing found out and fled, so the assassin killed his younger brother. [Ao] was conducting himself in such an improper manner for twenty years. Governor and imperial censor Zhang Luan asked for permission to punish him. When they

⁵¹ Lin 1961, 30.

⁵² TGDB 1984, 2.19. Such designation is not far from reality, as the native headmen were often labeled as "local emperors" (*tu huangdi* 土皇帝). (Took 2005, 93, 260).

revealed all the truth, [An Ao] was executed and Mahu Native Prefecture was transformed to a prefecture administered by a Chinese career official [Chun Zhen].

鰲性殘忍虐民，計口賦錢，歲入銀萬計。土民有婦女，多淫之。用妖僧百足鬻毆殺人。又令人殺平夷長官王大慶，大慶聞而逃，乃殺其弟。為橫二十年。巡按御史張鸞請治之，得實，伏誅。遂改馬湖府為流官知府。⁵³

The family of An Ao was forced to not only leave office, but to move away from the area as well. An Ao was a typical villain, with sources depicting him in the worst possible manner, even mentioning his promiscuous sexual behaviour. Furthermore, An Ao attempted to kill chieftain Wang Daqing 王大慶, who was one of the military native chieftain offices subordinate to him. Wang was probably his local competitor. It is paradoxical that the native prefect, therefore a civilian native official, tried to kill the military one. An Ao, as a "native civil servant," should have been more acquainted with the right etiquette towards the imperial court, much as less toward his lower subordinate. This example probably points to a clan feud or a power struggle among native officials, which was not uncommon at that time.

What is most stunning is the time span during which he remained in office. Even more interesting, he dedicated half of it to his misconduct. This might point to considerable autonomy that native chieftains had from the government. It might also have been a strategy of the Ming imperial court to accelerate the incorporation of Mahu into the borders of its empire. By depicting An Ao in this manner, the *gaitu guiliu* and installation of Chinese career official was easily justifiable to the local indigenous population. But as the following events will show, this solution was far from perfect and the imperial court had to partially reevaluate its decision.

The banishment of An lineage from Pingshan did not last long. In the second year of Jiajing 嘉靖(1523), the son of An Ao, An Yu 安宇, led an army of 500 men to pacify the "barbarians" and on this expedition punished the "traitors" by subduing around 40 villages in Sichuan. The Grand Coordinator (*xunfu* 巡撫) Ma Hao 馬昊, along with Regional Commander (*zongbin* 總兵) Wu Kun 吳坤 subsequently petitioned the imperial court for approval to bestow on An Yu the title of "Native Police Officer" (*tuxunjian* 土巡檢).⁵⁴ This position had the lowest rank⁵⁵, especially in comparison with his father An Ao (4b), but nevertheless it was a recognized function and the Hxala clan would be again in contact with the Chinese empire through its bureaucracy. But An Yu refused the title and secretly tried to claim back his ancestral land. Because of the uprising of the native prefect Cen Meng 岑猛 in Guangxi during the year 1526, where An Yu originally should have resided after the banishment of the whole lineage from Sichuan, the imperial court forbid

⁵³ MS 1974, 311.8016; TGDB 1984, 2.19.

⁵⁴ JMFZ 1982, *Xiao yi zhuan* 孝義傳2.

⁵⁵ The scale of ranks run from 1a to 9b, every rank had higher (*zheng* 正– thus "a") and lower (*cong* 從– "b") version. (Hu 1981, 72)

An Yu to renew his father's function.⁵⁶ The Empire was evidently worried that the problem of local native prefect would rise again.

Among the most important obligations of native headmen was to provide "native armies" (*tubing* 土兵) to the empire when it was needed, i.e. in case of similar punitive expeditions – be it even on the other side of the whole country. Through native armies, the Empire was successfully practicing their long-term policy of "using barbarians to attack barbarians" (*yi yi gong yi* 以夷攻夷)⁵⁷. An Yu was an opportunist – he simply wanted through good merit to restore the rule of the An lineage and enjoy the advantages of being a part of the Chinese bureaucracy at the local level. He would then have more power and prestige among his own people. He used his native army in service for the Empire, and expected to receive the office of his lineage back. He failed, but at least managed to stay on his ancestral land.

Roughly at the same time as the Hxala (An) lineage received their official title of the newly established Mahu prefecture, another powerful lineage in the broader area emerged. During the Yuan dynasty, there was a "barbarian" (Yi 夷) named Azhao 阿照, in Mahu, where he was known for his manliness and courage. His grandson was named Piye 匹夜 in 1371 submitted to the Ming Dynasty and gained the office of Leibo chieftain (*Leibo zhangguansi* 雷波長官司) along with the Chinese surname Yang 楊. He is thus recorded as Yang Piye 楊匹夜 within all following records. He obtained the military titles of "Commander of Military Virtue" (*wude jiangjun* 武德將軍), "Gentleman for Fostering Uprightness" (*chengzhilang* 承直郎, rank 6a), along with an official seal and nominative documents.⁵⁸

The "Azhao" mentioned in sources is the Chinese designation for the powerful Apzho 阿普卓 clan. The office was passed several times, until it arrived in the hands of Yang Jiuzha 楊九乍, who was a contemporary to An Yu's son An Xing 安興, at that time a "barbarian officer" (*yimu* 夷目)⁵⁹ at Huanglang 黃榔 in Leibo, hence subordinate to the Yang headman. In the fifteenth year of the Wanli era (1587), these two chieftains along with the minor headman Sajia 撒假⁶⁰, from area called Ninai 膩乃, sparked a local rebellion against the Ming Dynasty known as the "Upheaval of Three Heroes" (San xiong zhi luan 三雄之亂).⁶¹ The alliance of An Xing and Yang Jiuzha was not just a mere coincidence, as these two chieftains were related through the marriage of their clan members.⁶²

The violence penetrated the whole of Liangshan. This rebellion corresponds with events in the area of the Qiongbu Pacification Commission (Qiongbu xuanfusi 巧部宣撫司) in the Jianchang Valley. The link between those two

⁵⁶ GXFZ 1992, 30.5.

⁵⁷ Took 2005, 45, 108.

⁵⁸ GLTZ 1992, 30.1.

⁵⁹ SSLXBW 1997, 41.

⁶⁰ MS 1974, 247.6399-400.

⁶¹ GLTZ 1992, 30.1.

⁶² ST 1984, 42.73.

events is embodied in native officer Sajia, who was under the jurisdiction of Qiongbu.⁶³ In both areas, the garrison commander Li Yinxiang 李應祥 was called to duty to put down the revolt (*taoping* 討平). Along with two other commanders, Bian Zhiyuan 邊之垣 and Zhu Wenda 朱文達, he pulled out with his army towards to the hostile land.

The rebels led an army ten thousand strong, pillaged the settlements and for this purpose used the fortresses of other local native officers. That was probably one of the reasons why it took two years to subdue them. At one point, when Li Yinxiang reached the area of Qulimi 祛裡密 where An Xing was hiding, An Xing fled and tossed stolen gold on the road to slow down his pursuers. They subsequently captured his mother and wife and it did not take long before they caught him as well. The captors executed him by slitting his throat.⁶⁴ Yang Jiuzha managed to escape, but was later captured as well and died soon after. This brought the rebellion to the end. The Yangs were restricted from inheriting the office of the Leibo chieftaincy, which was abolished. A number of An Xing's relatives fled to the other bank of the Jinsha River to a place called Huixi chang 檜溪場⁶⁵

The events of 16th century Leibo reveals many characteristics of native headmen. They are depicted as loyal servants of the central court, as well as opportunistic and greedy individuals. Their loyalty was very fragile. It is obvious that native headmen lived in their own world and were manipulating the court for their own profit. The court, on the other hand, was dependent on them as middlemen, who kept their subordinates from hurting the state interests.

After the chieftains from the two most powerful local clans rebelled, all the effort of their ancestors, often praised as brave and loyal, seemingly came to naught. But even such incidents which the court saw as atrocities did not mean an eternal banishment of the lineages from imperial offices in Liangshan. The Ming Dynasty tried to bribe the natives with hereditary titles, but this endeavor turned out to be ineffective. Therefore, towards the second half of the Ming Dynasty, the imperial policy inclined towards punishment of individuals and even whole clans, but the latter proved ineffective, perhaps even impossible. Even though both powerful lineages were banished (the An lineage two times), it did not prevent their descendants from re-acquiring the offices. The following dynastic change again opened new opportunities. As it will be obvious further in the text, the Qing court entirely resigned on the idea of banishing the whole *nzymop* clans, in case of turmoil the direct culprit was punished and the office was placed into the hands of another relative.

Within the regular prefecture, ruled by a non-hereditary Chinese career official since An Ao's execution and subsequent *gaitu guiliu*, the situation concerning the natives was still far from peaceful. The imperial court had to

⁶³ GYTQZ 1992, 5-6.3-5 (citing *Manshi hezhi* 蠻司合志).

⁶⁴ MS 1974, 247.6399-400.

⁶⁵ SSLXBW 1997, 775.

constantly negotiate the local power structures of aristocratic clans to be able to preserve at least some degree of influence.

The Mitie Massacre

The first chieftain to submit to the Qing authority was in the thirty-fourth year of the Kangxi 康熙 reign (1695) a descendant of An Xing – An Yongchang 安永長, who was from an area called Axing 阿興⁶⁶ where his clan branch moved after their ancestor rebelled and was executed. Axing was located on the other side of Jinsha River, right on the border between Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. Since the Yuan dynasty, it was an area supervised by the Wumeng Pacification Commission (Wumeng xuanweisi 烏蒙宣慰司). At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, it was as Mahu similarly transformed into a native prefecture (Wumeng tufu 烏蒙土府) and became part of Sichuan Province. One lineage of the Hxala clan withdrew from Leibo, settled here and began to build up its influence. An Yongchang "civilized" (*hua yu* 化諭) local Miao⁶⁷ "barbarians" (*miao man* 苗蠻) and for this merit obtained the military title "Battalion Commander of 1000 households" (*tuqianhu* 土千戶, rank 5a), received a seal and began his garrison duty at Huixi.⁶⁸

The Apzho clan submitted to the new dynasty eight years later (1703). Yang Lawa 楊喇哇, the thirteenth generation descendant of Yang Piye, went to the provincial government to offer his submission. He was appointed as the Supreme⁶⁹ Chieftain of Qianwanguan (Qianwanguan zheng zhangguansi 千萬貫正長官司). At the beginning of the 18th century, many other chieftaincies in Liangshan were granted considerably high military titles. It was the Yang lineage which stood at the center of one of the major events in Leibo history.⁷⁰

In the sixth year of the Yongzheng 雍正 reign (1728), a "barbarian woman" (*yi fu* 夷婦) Lady Lu 祿氏, wife of the Leibo native headman Lu Yongzhong 祿永忠, organized a large-scale rebellion. The Yang Lawa's grandson, Yang Mingyi 楊明義, significantly supported her actions.⁷¹ Roots of this problem were entangled with the complex relationships within the local social and natural landscape. Lady Lu was native to Mitie 米貼, a place located on the opposite riverbank to Leibo. After the death of her husband, Lady Lu was according to the levirate marriage custom married to his older brother, a native officer (*tumu* 土目)⁷² Lu Yongxiao 祿永孝 from Mitie. Therefore, they aspired for

⁶⁶ Today called Huixi 桧溪鎮 township. The original toponym derived from the given name of the An Yongchang

⁶⁷ It does not necessarily have to mean, that these people were Miao – in the sources such terms had more generic meanings, this designation might simply point to "other natives."

⁶⁸ XZYT 2009, 174.34.

⁶⁹ In sources there is no mention about the deputy chieftaincy (*fu zhangguan* 副長官).

⁷⁰ GLTZ 1992, 30.1.

⁷¹ GLTZ 1992, 30.1.

⁷² The Liangshan *tumu* were the military officers or close relatives of the *nzymop*, who appointed them to the office. They were mentioned in gazetteers, but did not hold any military rank and their office was not hereditary. (LS 1968,

retaining two offices – in Leibo and Mitie. The clan of Lady Lu was related through marriage with many native headmen in Leibo. She was also related to the powerful Shamat 𠵼 𠵼 clan ruling part of Leibo as well as vast areas in Da Liangshan – the core area of "Black Bone" aristocrats – as Shama Pacification Commissioner (Shama xuanfusi 沙罵宣撫司). The Shamat clan was further related to another mighty native headmen clan Adur 𠵼 𠵼 (Adu xuanfusi 阿都宣撫司). This was a powerful social network⁷³ which played a vital role in the whole rebellion. At the same time, the Yongzheng Emperor declared his will to abolish all *tusi* offices in the southern China.⁷⁴ For this task he appointed his loyal prince Ortai (E'ertai 鄂爾泰). By the second month of the sixth year of Yongzheng (1728), Ortai dismantled the Wumeng Native Prefecture and placed it under Yunnan jurisdiction. Around the same time the Mitie uprising broke out after Ortai tried to intervene in the situation when one person – Lu Yongxiao – would control two offices in two different higher administrative unit. It was deemed the illegal conduct. Ortai sent a smaller army to pacify it, but his army was slaughtered. Only one of his men returned with a horrifying testimony. Ortai was furious and ordered his men, Zhang Yaozu 張耀祖 and Ha Yuansheng 哈元生, to drown local natives in their own blood (including women and children), a task in which they eventually succeeded.⁷⁵

The Qing court was more sensitive to the obedience of rules than their Ming predecessors. In 1658, the Shunzhi 順治 Emperor issued an edict, through which he urged all native headmen to make Confucian education accessible to their successors.⁷⁶ In 1672, the Beijing centered court issued new strict succession rules – the inheritance of hereditary title was from now on possible only for the male offspring in a father's lineage. Furthermore, the inheritor must have reached 15 years of age. If he was too young to take care of his hereditary responsibilities, father's brother or some other reliable subordinate can temporarily run the office. Not respecting these rules theoretically could have led to the immediate abolishment of the whole office. In 1680, the Qing court relaxed this rule and allowed the inheritance

439; Lin 1961, 98; Shin 2006, 68; Herman 1997, 52). This was different from other *tumu* designations in Southwest. For example, in Guangxi it was the next highest office to *tusi* and was hereditary. (Wilkerson 2013, 187). The *tumu*, if they had merit towards the imperial court, could have been elevated to the imperial bureaucracy under different title. After the decline of *tusi* power, the title of the *tumu* has been applied without distinction to all and any influential aristocrats. Who went to Leibo to receive Chinese militia training by which he was later involved in the state-making policies, has been upheld by members of his clan as their leader and called *tushe* 土舍 by both Han-Chinese and the Nuosu-Yi. (Lin 1961, 98).

⁷³ This social network often reached far beyond Liangshan. At the end of the Ming Dynasty, the Shamat clan was without an heir. Therefore, they adopted (*ruzhui* 入贅) a son-in-law and therefore the heir of the native headman from the Shuixi 水西 area in Guizhou, another stronghold of Luoluo people. By coincidence, their surname was also An. After coming to the Liangshan, the adopted heir changed his surname to Shama and took the office. There are not written historical accounts of this, as this fact was passed down through the oral history. SSMSLDZ 1963, 1-16; Gong 1992, 352.

⁷⁴ He condemned them as a people who conduct themselves in a despicable manner, therefore the Emperor put himself to the role of savior of his "innocent children" – the *tusi*'s subjects, who suffer under his rule. (Herman 1997, 47). However, in the case of Liangshan he rather failed.

⁷⁵ ST 1984, 20.89; YT 1984, 16b.57-58; SZHZPY 1984, 125-7.17-18; Shen 2011, 107; You 2009, 386-90; Long 1993, 154-55; Hu 1981, 221; Yi 2000, 474.

⁷⁶ Herman 1997, 52.

from male children of the native headmen's daughters (thus the chieftain's grandsons).⁷⁷ The conduct of Lady Lu in Mitie was seen as illegal (*bu fa* 不法), an attempt to accumulate power and land. Apart from this, the root problem was, again, a different cultural mindset – the levirate marriage, which Nuosu-Yi practiced until recently.⁷⁸ The cultural difference accelerated Ortai's effort to abolish the native offices. In the case of the locally most significant Wumeng Native Prefecture he celebrated a victory, retainers of this office (*tuguan*) were banished to exile in Jiangxi.⁷⁹

Ortai's raid brought large-scale demographic changes to the Liangshan, as many different natives from the Yunnan and Guizhou fled the massacre into its depths to seek refuge.⁸⁰ The Jianchang Valley was put under a newly established Ningyuan Prefecture (Ningyuan fu 寧遠府), Mahu prefecture was abolished and its area placed under the jurisdiction of Xuzhou Prefecture (Xuzhou fu 敘州府) and Wumeng Native Prefecture was changed into Zhaotong Prefecture (Zhaotong fu 昭通府) under the administration of the Chinese career official. Ortai also founded military camps (*bing ying* 兵營), two of them in Leibo: Pu'an Camp 普安營 (Leibo Town) and Anfu Camp 安阜營 (Huanglang Township). The latter afterwards became subordinate to the former.⁸¹ Native chieftains were supposed to present their tribute (ordinarily horses and local products) to this camp,⁸² as the imperial court did not want to communicate with them directly as in the past.

Where the court was unable to proceed with installation of Chinese career officials without the hereditary privilege, it divided the land of native chieftains into the smaller units and appointed more native officials with lower ranks to rule them.⁸³ This was essentially the case of Leibo and its adjunct areas. The Apzho (Yang) lineage was not banished as it would be during the Ming, but interestingly enough, its insignias were given to the step-mother (*jimu* 繼母) of the defeated rebel Yang Mingyi – the Lady Yang Sha 楊少氏. This was another "illegal" step approved by the empire, and Lady Sha received a title of *tuqianhu*.⁸⁴

The Hxala clan was not involved in this uprising, as its members did quite the opposite. An Yongchang from Huixi assisted the imperial armies in pacifying the Mitie. In 1730, he was killed by the local "barbarian," and his office was inherited by his son An Tianzhu 安天柱. In the eighth year of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 era (1802), Tianzhu's grandson An Qing 安清 was granted a hereditary military rank. After the death of his son, An Xiangheng 安像恆, he failed to produce a male heir, hence upon his death the office was inherited by the son of a cousin (on the paternal side), An Ruitu 安瑞圖. After his death in the ninth year of the Tongzhi 同治 era (1870), his son An Shaoyang 安少陽 continued the family

⁷⁷ Gong 1992, 121-22; Herman 1997, 56-57; Giersch 2006, 208.

⁷⁸ Lin 1961, 74.

⁷⁹ YT 1984, 24.12.

⁸⁰ Long 1993, 158-59.

⁸¹ LS 1968, 462.

⁸² MXXZ 2012, 8.19.

⁸³ Wiens 1954, 232.

⁸⁴ GLTZ 1992, 30.1.

political legacy and this was the last record of this chieftaincy.⁸⁵ Today in Huixi township, a sumptuous, Han-style tomb with many ornaments and fading steles recounting the lineage history still stands. It was declared a provincial heritage. Among locals, the Hxala lineage is still being revered,⁸⁶ with stacks of flowers in various state of decay adorning the stone panels, standing on a place surrounded by the new buildings and overgrown with weeds.

Another Hxala clan lineage member entered the bureaucracy after Ortai subdued the rebellion at Mitie. In 1728, the native officer (*tushe* 土舍⁸⁷) An Bao 安保 submitted to the imperial authority. Without being granted seal or nominative documents, he ruled his people from a place called Tiangumi 天姑密. His descendants were all loyal to the Empire. Successor An Zhenji 安貞吉 was attending a military school (*wu xiang* 武韋) at the Yongshan 永善 County.⁸⁸ His successor An Guoxi 安國驪 obtained the *tuqianhu* title the usual way – by pacifying the "barbarians."⁸⁹

The place-name Tiangumi still exists, as it is accessible by a road adherent to a steep cliff and copying one of its contours. In its vicinity, the debris of the An clan's old office, with an underground tunnel and couple of Nuosu-Yi style tombs, stands. These tombs are round structures called *xiangtianfen* 向天墳 – "the tomb facing the sky." The Nuosu-Yi practice cremation as a funeral custom,⁹⁰ therefore such tombs did not contain body remnants but ashes. Tombs bear a cosmological meaning attached to the Nuosu-Yi lunisolar ten-month calendar.⁹¹ On the burial ground in the nearby Yantang village 堰塘, similar concrete structures built in the same manner are in evidence. The difference in burial habit between two lineages of the Hxala clan is striking. In Huixi, the tomb is purely of the Han-style design, state-protected and worshipped, while in Tiangumi the gravestones were stolen,⁹² and the place is a source of superstitions and of a silenced, unresolved past, therefore everything concerning the round tombs is treated with great

⁸⁵ XZYT 1992, 174.34; Around the same time, the four stable and generally uneventful Mahu chieftaincies of Nixi, Pingyi, Manyi and Muchuan were abolished due to the absence of the heirs. (PXBWB 1998, 11-12).

⁸⁶ Huixi informant.

⁸⁷ *Tushe* was the alternative designation for *tumu*. (Lin 1961, 98).

⁸⁸ Since 1385, the Ming government called upon the native headmen to send their offspring or inheritors to the Imperial academy (*Guozijian* 國子監). In theory, if the successor was not educated in the Confucian rites, he might not be able to inherit the position of his ancestor. In 1394, the court issued a decree ordering native headmen to build Confucian schools on their territory (*ruxue* 儒學). Despite all these measures, the native headmen remained lax. (Gong 1992, 100-104; Herman 2007, 113-14). In 1702, the Kangxi Emperor ordered the building of a charitable school (*yixue* 義學) in Beijing, a pattern of which should have been replicated locally. (Herman 1997, 65-66). If the preferred heir failed to attend the school regularly and did not successfully pass the exams, which were easier than those for Chinese career bureaucrats, the court intervened and picked another person. (Gong 1992, 126; Herman 1997, 67-68). This measure was much stricter than during the Ming Dynasty rule, but as the sources suggest, within the Liangshan the imperial orders were only partially respected. The schools were the main vehicle for Confucian education, which then was supposed to form a strong bond between periphery and the center. The Yongshan County established Ortai along the Zhaotong prefecture. Ironically, bearing in mind what Ortai did in Mitie, it was named Yongshan – "Eternal Kindness."

⁸⁹ GLTZ 1992, 30.3.

⁹⁰ Hein and Zhao 2016, 274-75.

⁹¹ Tiangumi informant.

⁹² There are two similar graves in Qulimi with gravestones written in the Nuosu-Yi and Chinese characters, one of them from the twenty-ninth year of Guangxu era (1903).

awe.⁹³ This change from native style tombs to Han-style took place especially during the second half of the Qing dynasty, when the court encouraged the natives to abandon cremation as a funeral practice and adopt Han-style burial.⁹⁴ In short, the two opposite banks of Jinsha River display a vastly different degree of native headmen's involvement in the state politics and cultural practices.

In Huanglang, the then native headman of the Ggahat 𣎵𣎵 (ch. Gaha 噶哈⁹⁵) clan submitted one year before the Mitie uprising (1727) and the imperial authorities appointed him as a headman, but did not grant him seal or the documents. Subsequently, he helped the empire to subdue the rebels, thus gaining more recognition. Two years later (1729), he petitioned the court to resign from the headman post. The court viewed this as a respectful deed, hence granted Guo Bao 國保 a minor post within the Huanglang garrison and gave him five thousand *liang* 兩 of silver – so "he and his family can lead a peaceful life."⁹⁶ The sources mentions his successor Guo Chaolong 國朝隆 without any further details.⁹⁷

The headman's office was located at today's Dahai 大海村 village on the banks of the Mahu lake 馬湖. Its debris has already collapsed and is impossible to be located. Above the village, there is a place called Wumasi 五馬寺 with a grave similar to those in Tiangumi, which according to locals is between two and three centuries old. The grave rests on a place overlooking the whole lake and Huanglang township. The agricultural field in its vicinity bears a local legend:

"Approximately at this place there was an entrance to the water-filled tomb serving as a dungeon for those who committed a crime within the jurisdiction of the local emperor. There must be hundreds or thousands of skeletons down there. When we were kids, that is some 20 years ago, the entrance was still visible. The dungeon seemed bottomless. We often played around here. Our parents were worried we would fall inside. So they put a huge boulder at the entrance and covered it with the soil."

「大概是在這個地方是水牢的入口，被當地牢用，關土皇帝管轄範圍內那些認了罪的人。那下面肯定有上百上千個死人骨頭。我們還是娃娃家的時候，差不多二十年前，入口還看得出來。地牢看上去沒得底。我們經常在這邊玩耍。我們的媽老莫擔心我們要掉進去，所以他們就放了一個巨大的石頭在入口，用土把它蓋起來。」⁹⁸

⁹³ Tiangumi and Qulimi informants.

⁹⁴ Mueggler 2014, 22.

⁹⁵ Alternatively transcribed as Gaha 嘎哈 or 幹哈. This clan was an auxiliary branch of the Hxala clan. Jiang 2013, 240. For depiction of the natives see: HQZGT 1968, 6.83.

⁹⁶ SXHSN 1984, 81.21; ST 1984, 18a.27;

⁹⁷ GLTZ 1992, 30.3.

⁹⁸ Wumasi informant.

On my inquiries, whether this water-filled dungeon (*shuilao* 水牢) was of natural origin or man-made, I got the latter answer. A similar atmosphere as in the Tiangumi surrounded this place – awe and respect of the long-perished local headman. This is not the only interesting account connected to this place. In the tenth year of the Yongzheng era (1732), a stonemason Wu Zhanxiang 吳占祥 found four bronze drums⁹⁹ in the rock cavity near Wumasi. He gave them to the Commander of Anfu Camp, Mao Longjia 毛龍甲, who gave them to the general Huang Tinggui 黃廷桂. These bronze drums were supposedly the ritual token of empowering local headmen by Zhuge Liang.¹⁰⁰ This protoarchaeological finding, along with the narrative about Meng Huo and Zhuge Liang's temples covering the landscape, is yet another rather imagined connection of the local landscape to the famous Shu-Han personage. The current whereabouts of these four drums is unknown.

The road to Mitie, today a tiny and forgotten backwater, leads through tunnels and a road carved to the edge of a petrifyingly steep cliff. It is similar to the road to Tiangumi, but in much worse condition. Upon the arrival to the settlement near the mountain ridge, I learned it is demographically very different from the opposite bank. No Nuosu-Yi were living here, probably the legacy of gradual decline of native population and subsequent Han-Chinese settling after Ortai's southwestern campaign. The only witness to this event was the half-millennium old tree. Locals were able to recollect that Mitie was once the administrative center of what nowadays is the Yongshan County, but nothing else. In the upper part of the Mitie village, next to one of the wells, was lying an extraordinary object. The family living nearby invited me for lunch and their eldest son, the only university graduate in the whole area, elaborated:

"My elders told me that this thing was lying here since the times of Zhuge Liang's crusade against the Bo.¹⁰¹ During the expedition, he used a device similar to today's cannon. And this stone should be an unexploded missile from it. A couple of years ago, a few people came with a car and wanted to steal it. But the locals smashed their vehicle and chased them away. Since then, we buried it deeper into the ground."

「我長輩告訴我，這件東西在諸葛亮討伐蠻的時候就在這兒了。交戰的時候，他用了跟今天大砲很像的裝備，這個石頭應該是上頭發射的一個導彈。幾年前，有幾個人開車過來著想把它偷了。但是當地人砸爛了他們的車子把他們趕跑了。那之後，我們把它往地裡埋得更深了。」¹⁰²

⁹⁹ For their depiction see: ST 1984, 1.39-40.

¹⁰⁰ ST 1984, 32.61. Similar drums were found in the sandy bank of Jinsha river. (LS 1968, 503-4).

¹⁰¹ Boren 蠻人, ancient inhabitants of the area previous to the times when the ancestors of Nuosu-Yi arrived.

¹⁰² Mitie informant.

That stone was obviously a meteorite, as the young man later stated, expressing his disbelief of the grandfather's legend. The narrative about the cannon stemmed, again, from *San guo yan yi*.¹⁰³ Once again I have met the spirit of a grand Shu-Han strategist, in this case in the most fascinating embodiment of imaginations into the daily life of Mitie locals, sparked by the famous literary work.

Here it is necessary to summarize this part, often switching between historical records, literary works and utterances of contemporary locals. The Hxala clan, who began ruling this area during the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, was sidelined and became marginal. The most powerful native headmen were now those from the Apzho clan. The Yongzheng Emperor in general succeeded in significant weakening of the Native Chieftain System in the Southwest, but not in Leibo. Even the Mitie massacre, which left behind over thirty thousands dead and the survivors with no other option than to seek refuge across the thundering Jinsha River in the wilderness of Liangshan, did not bring any significant change. Because of its widely known natural resources, especially silver and copper,¹⁰⁴ Leibo started to attract outsiders, who were opening mines. This added to the local turmoil, particularly as Yangs were often confronted with local aristocrats of the Ggetnra ꨀꨁꨂ (ch. Enzha 恩扎) clan. The empire still tried to bribe locals, mostly with the titles of *tuqianhu*, because it still relied on them in terms of order maintenance. And the Yangs knew this, therefore they were able to conduct events their own way. They were satisfied with this situation. In fact, the Yangs were the "local emperors," who held advantageous position in front of the Qing emperors. Imagination of tamed "barbarians" and superior Empire constructed by the narrative of Zhuge Liang and his Southern Expedition was in the case of Leibo a mere illusion. The "barbarians" were not subdued the way as Zhuge Liang, the embodiment of the empire's pious hope. The agency of the Chinese empire had to navigate between the extreme possibilities of violent suppression and autonomous rule of the *tusi* in terms of securing the region's stability.

Female Chieftains, Taipings, and Heroes

As previously mentioned, after the Mitie rebellion, the seal and documents of the Yang hereditary native headman lineage were in the hands of a woman, who later retained a considerably high-profile military rank. The Nuosu-Yi society was different from that of Han-Chinese, where the oldest male members of the older generation usually became the heirs and leaders. It was not strictly patriarchal. Leadership of a Nuosu-Yi clan depended entirely upon the

¹⁰³ SGYY 1976, 567.

¹⁰⁴ YKZ 1983, 26.51.

individual's ability.¹⁰⁵ There was no problem with the woman being a chieftain, because she embodied the power of her entire family to support her.¹⁰⁶

The dependency of the empire on the Leibo chieftains also enabled them to not obey the dynastic rules to the utmost. Apart from the women present in leading roles, the gazetteers suggest that at the end of 18th century most of the local chieftaincies, be it Qianwanguan, Tiangumi or Huanglang, refused to give the prescribed horses as a tribute. Occasionally their deputies appeared with some rations at best. The Qianwanguan accepted the obligation in the beginning of the rule of Lady Sha, but later it refused to present the desired horses.¹⁰⁷

After the death of Lady Sha in the fourteenth year of Qianlong 乾隆 (1749), the younger brother of the Mitie rebel Yang Mingzhong, Yang Mingyi 楊明忠, inherited the office. It returned to hands of the lineage, which the court cannot trust. Until the end of 18th century, there was another woman, Lady Guo 國氏, who took over the office. Yang Mingzhong's grandson Yang Jiqu 楊吉趣 died because of illness after ten years (1759) and because his son Yang Chunwu 楊純武 was too young, his wife¹⁰⁸ Lady Guo administrated the office instead of him. In 1783, Chunwu died and since his son Yang Cheng 楊成 was only three years old, therefore Lady Guo still retained the office. She passed away in 1797 when Yang Cheng was already eighteen years old, thus by far old enough to inherit the office. Only after her death he was able to succeed her. Following this pattern, it is obvious that Lady Guo usurped the chieftaincy for herself even during the time her husband Yang Chunwu was already eligible for the inheritance. Lady Guo ruled Leibo for four decades. Between years 1728 and 1797, the Qianwanguan office was in the hands of women with an exception of the decade between 1749 and 1759.¹⁰⁹

Liu Wenwei 劉文蔚, the author of ethnographic account *Leibo suoji*, visited the area at times when Yang Cheng's son Yang Yinglong 楊應龍 was ruling his area. In his account, Liu addressed him as "*tusi*."¹¹⁰ Although the designation *tushe* ("native officer") started to appear extensively in the official documents from this period, the term

¹⁰⁵ Lin 1961, 29.

¹⁰⁶ Lin 1961, 34-35.

¹⁰⁷ JST 1984, 98.4; GLTZ 1992, 30.2-3. Later ethnographic account of Liu Wenwei suggests, that "the barbarians in this area do not present grain, only horses in tribute," but the gazetteers claim the exact opposite. If the "barbarians" were to present something, it were not horses but local products – buckwheat (*qiao* 蕎) or highland barley (*ke* 稷). (LS 1968, 458).

¹⁰⁸ The Nuosu-Yi prefer an early marriage. (Lin 1961, 77). Considering the fact, that in case of *tusi* the marriage was a matter of an alliance between two local lineages retaining the position of native headmen, wife could had been selected for the male heir already before he was born.

¹⁰⁹ GLTZ 1992, 30.1-2.

¹¹⁰ Following this form of addressing, Liu provided distinction that those living under the *tusi* are the "cooked barbarians" (*shu yi* 熟夷), whether those who do not are the "raw barbarians" (*sheng yi* 生夷), the latter were far more numerous. Such distinction was widespread within Chinese sources since many centuries ago. It used the metaphors of food habits as a barometer of the degree of acculturation of the "barbarians." Apart from this, Liu brought an account suggesting the Yi script was used not only for rituals dominated by the "sorcerers" *bimox*, but for the official documents as a second language written as a bi-lingual text. This would suggest that the ancestors of the Nuosu-Yi had a schooling system parallel to the one offered by the state and the knowledge of the script was not monopolized by the ritual specialists. (LS 1968, 450-51, 458).

"*tusi*" was still prevalent. In the official histories and gazetteers, the demarcations of native chieftains' territory were still recorded. Therefore, it is obvious that the administrative units remained strictly territorial. Whether the "local emperors" were not seen as legitimate old-style *tusi* by the empire after its encroachment, was not important for the native chieftains as long as they were perceived as *nzymop* by their subjects.

Yang Cheng continued the rule of his lineage over territory of his clan. In the seventh year of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 era (1802), he and his uncle,¹¹¹ the native officer Yang Jiwu 楊繼武, subdued local rebellion. That resulted in Jiwu getting the hereditary¹¹² *tuqianhu* title,¹¹³ thus in theory becoming equal with his nephew, but surely did not retained such influence within his own clan. Obviously, the inflation of the military titles' value was rampant. During the Taiping rebellion (1850-1864), the rhetoric of official gazetteers suddenly changed:

Yang Shijin was astute and brave, able to subdue all the barbarians. In the eleventh year of Xianfeng era (1861), he accompanied the imperial army in their conquest against the Dian [Yunnan] bandits. The Emperor was memorialized to bestow upon him the fifth military rank and peacock feathers on his officials' cap as a reward for his deeds. In the fourth year of Tongzhi (1865), he accompanied the imperial army on the punitive expedition (...) against the "barbarians". During this expedition he exerted a great amount of effort and the imperial court was memorialized to change his peacock feathers. Subsequently, an imperial edict was issued to return him the office of Supreme Chieftaincy in Qianwanguan, he was given a seal and documents to encourage his diligence.

楊石金，精明武勇，能制諸夷。咸豐十一年隨司官兵征樂山滇匪，奏賞五品花翎頂戴。同治四年，隨官兵攻克黃江雙龍場匪，在事出力，奏請賞換花翎。四年正月，奉上諭賞還千萬貫正長官司原職，並發給印信號紙，以示鼓勵。

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After more than one hundred and forty years, probably for the first time since the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, there was a truly positive account of the native chieftain. It even reached the extent that Yang Shijin was returned the seal and documents of the chieftaincy, which was officially abolished around the time of the Mitie massacre. During the difficult times of the Taiping Rebellion, the imperial court was desperate for allies. Therefore, the empire relied on the native chieftains in the peripheries even more than before. For almost century and a half, the court

¹¹¹ *Baoshu* 胞叔 – younger blood brother of his father.

¹¹² Later it was inherited by his son Yang Dewan 楊德萬

¹¹³ GLTZ 1992, 30.3.

¹¹⁴ GLTZ 1992, 30.1-2.

seemed to ignore the native headmen and was content with the preservation of the *status quo*. But now the empire has to once again be active, to gain the local rulers' loyalty and prevent them from joining the rebellion. Events from the Jianchang Valley confirms such assumption:

During the fourth month of the second year of the Tongzhi era (1863), [Ling Cheng'en, the Supreme Batalion Commander of 1000 households from Nuandaimi] helped to capture the Yue [Guangdong] bandit Shi Dakai alive. He was bestowed a hereditary title of Native Brigade Commander, which was inherited by his grandson. Furthermore, he obtained prestigious titles of "eternally brave" and "warrior," and he received a new seal and documents along with his portrait in the Pavilion of the Purple Light.

同治二年四月，協防生擒粵匪石達開，奉改給上述擊世職，于孫承襲，仍賞給恆勇巴圖魯名號，頒換印信號紙，并賜紫光閣聯像。¹¹⁵

Shi Dakai 石達開 was the youngest of the Taiping commanders. Allegedly he was truly a legendary person, an outstanding strategist and loved by the people. After his capture, he received the same punishment as An Ao – execution by the thousand cuts.¹¹⁶ Ling Cheng'en received the highest honors in the history of the Liangshan native headmen. The Native Brigade Commander (*tuyouji* 土游擊) title, which he passed further down through his the lineage, had the ranking of 3b – since the Ming Dynasty theoretically the highest rank a native headman could obtain.¹¹⁷ But for the sole capture of the greatest enemy of the state, his rank was elevated to the 2a position – an unprecedented measure adopted in the case of the *tusi*.¹¹⁸ After centuries, a native headman was again invited to the imperial capital Beijing, where in the Pavilion of Purple Light (*Ziguangge* 紫光閣)¹¹⁹ he was given the prestigious titles of "eternally brave" (*heng*

¹¹⁵ GYTQZ 1992, 5-6.8-9

¹¹⁶ Shi 1985, 24-46.

¹¹⁷ Herman 2007, 109, 244.

¹¹⁸ QSG 1977, 513.14237-38.

¹¹⁹ A building in the Beijing imperial garden 中南海, which is adjacent to the Forbidden City on the western side. During the Qing dynasty, it was a place which, especially during the summer, served for the fulfilling of governmental obligations. The building had a specific connection with the cult of military commanders – meritorious servants of the Dynasty (*gongchen* 功臣). The Kangxi Emperor used to conduct parades of his guards here, Qianlong transformed it into the shrine of the military accomplishments. All trophies acquired during the successful victorious campaigns were stored and displayed here (personal communication with Jakub Hrubý).

yong 恆勇) and "warrior" (*batulu* 巴圖魯)¹²⁰ – one of the highest possible accomplishments a military commander could reach.¹²¹

During the 1860s, the two most accomplished native headmen of all Liangshan were celebrated as heroes by the imperial court, which in theory abolished their offices more than one century ago. The cold relationship between the court and native headmen seemed to change as it had been the case at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, it might be interpreted as another attempt to connect Liangshan native chieftains to the state. But after the suppression of one of the biggest upheavals during the Chinese history, with the imperial court busy with a vast range of problems, it began to neglect the native offices again.

In 1867, Yang Shijin accompanied the Huanglang garrison commander Han Tinggui 韓廷貴 on the another punitive expedition, during which he perished at the dike of Mahu lake. The office was inherited by his son, Yang Deshou 楊德壽. After he passed away, there was another woman heading the chieftaincy – Lady An. When she died in 1887, her and Deshou's son Yang Zhongting 楊忠廷 inherited the office. During the past 160 years, the women of three different Liangshan clans intermarried with the Apzho were ruling the Qianwanguan. All of these lineage surnames were carried by the most influential *nzymop* within the Leibo County – Shamat (Sha), Hxala (An), and Ggatha (Guo). It suggests very close marriage relations between the powerful local headmen. The women were the last persons to hold the office during the Republican period.

The Republic and Beyond

After the establishing of the Republic, many of the Liangshan *tusi*, including the Apzho clan, were still able to retain their offices. A number of the native headmen were in close relationship with various high-ranking Guomintang military officers. When the male heir of the Qianwanguan chieftency, Yang Xianlie 楊先烈, passed away in June of 1927, his only heir, the daughter Yang Daidi 楊代蒂, was only four years old, so her mother An Dunliang 安敦良 took care of all responsibilities. The office was official and definitely abolished in 1931 by the Leibo County Magistrate.¹²²

The anthropologist Lin Yaohua 林耀華, whose work I purposely extensively quoted in this paper due to its detailed description of still unsubdued Liangshan inhabitants, entered the Liangshan for his adventurous fieldwork at the beginning of the 1940's. He mentioned Yang Daidi still being seen as *nzymop* authority despite the fact that the

¹²⁰ Originally derived from the Mongol word *baatar*, in Manchu language *baturu*.

¹²¹ Ling Cheng'en later retained up to five different offices – from Tianba to Xichang area. (MXXZ 2012, 8.18–19). Towards the end of the 19th century, this situation was not considered the "illegal conduct" as was the case of Mitie roughly 150 years ago.

¹²² Jiang 2013, 210.

prestige of the clan had gradually declined.¹²³ In 1948, Yang Daidi became wife¹²⁴ of a *nzymop* from Tianba district (Nuandai tianba tuqianhu 爨帶田壩上千戶; in today's Ganluo County 甘洛縣) – the famous personage Ling Guangdian 嶺光電. His office was abolished in 1926 but in another unprecedented, unexpected and fascinating turn of events, he got his seal and documents back in 1937, for the very last time, when Liangshan broke into the chaos.¹²⁵

Between 1906 and 1950, the Liangshan was entangled in struggle for power among various warlords, with opium cultivation becoming widespread.¹²⁶ Its central part was an impenetrable lawless area, to which opium poured from areas where the previous Qing anti-opium campaign took effect. Within this period, many *nzymop* sided with the Guomindang and actively participated in the upheaval.¹²⁷

With the slow transition to communist rule between 1950 and 1956, many of the *nzymop*, including Ling Guangdian, Yang Daidi, Ling Bangzheng 嶺邦正 (who controlled the whole Jianchang Valley) and An Xuecheng 安學成 (Shamat *nzymop*), were given functions in newly formed counties and Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture administration. After mistreatment during the Cultural Revolution, they were praised in similar manner as their ancestors during the Qing. In general, they were seen as "former slavemasters turning into public servants."¹²⁸ Apart from the newly emerged heroes of the "New China," there certainly were villains as well. Ge Shihuai 葛世槐 a native officer of Biqielu (Biqielu tumu 畢苜蘆土目) from Yanbian 鹽邊縣 and Yanyuan 鹽源縣 counties on the western side of the Jianchang Valley, was one of them. He refused to submit to the newly established PRC government, so he and his whole family was annihilated.

Ge Shihuai, according to Ling Guangdian, was a Han-Chinese *tusi*¹²⁹, tracing his descent back to Zhuge Liang, by whom he legitimized his right to retain the office.¹³⁰ His younger brother's wife was a daughter of Ji Shaoyu 吉紹真, the Nuosu-Yi *nzymop* from Puji (Puji zhangguansi 普濟長官司) in Jianchang Valley. Her daughter explained to me the bonds within her family:

¹²³ Lin 1961, 28, 119-20.

¹²⁴ Their marriage lasted until 1964. Ling Guangdian was allegedly a descendant from a native chieftain lineage in Wumeng native prefecture. The sources mentions his ancestors came to the area of Qiongbu Pacification Commission and in 1705 they submitted to the court receiving hereditary office. The ancestor is said to come from Jiangning prefecture 江寧府 in Jiangnan 江南, which might suggest that he was of a different ethnic origin and subsequently became "nuosufied." (JST 1984, 97.15-16)

¹²⁵ Ling 1988, 148–49, 163.

¹²⁶ Swancutt 2012, 59.

¹²⁷ Ling 1988.

¹²⁸ Sun - Tong 2008, 120.

¹²⁹ Modern Chinese scholarship gives him a Mosuo 摩梭 or Mongol ancestry. (Jiang 2013, 691). Mueggler (2001: 150) talks about Han-Chinese usurping the *tusi* offices in northern Yunnan.

¹³⁰ Ling 1988, 104.

"Before the Liberation, basically all the women were Han-Chinese, the men were [Black Bone] Nuosu-Yi. My mother's mother and grandmother were all Han-Chinese. But these Han-Chinese [with whom the clans intermarried] were landlords, so they had a considerably high status."

「解放前，女的基本上都是漢族，男的才是彝族。我媽媽的母親、奶奶都是漢族。但是漢族的地主，還是比較有權勢，比較有地位的。」¹³¹

Her testimony confirms that even the Nuosu-Yi elite, especially that from the peripheries of the Nuosu-Yi world, tended to form bonds within the *tusi* lineages regardless of their ethnic background. It dispells yet another myth of the native chieftaincy in Liangshan, particularly the one about the absolute purity of *nzymop* blood.¹³² Furthermore, it suggests that the *nzymop* and *nuohop* were (and until now still are) mutually incompatible in their clan-binding preferences, both obviously preferred to intermarry within their respective stratum.¹³³ And although most of the *nzymop* were originally selected from the *nuohop* clans (clan leader called *sippo* 𑄎𑄎¹³⁴ was designated as *tusi*), they lost their "purity" by such bonds with outsiders, which along with their empowering ties to the empire caused a lot of dissensions within the Liangshan clan-based society.

Epilogue: Native Chieftaincy in Liangshan and its implications

The narrative of Zhuge Liang, precisely the literary work "The Romance of Three Kingdoms" and the image of Shu-Han strategist taming the wild "barbarian" Meng Huo serves as the framework shaping the perception of the native chieftaincy up to this day. This imagination then transcends borders of Leibo County and connects to the official state narrative. The famous literary work is well-known among the people, who are more familiar with its content rather than the original historical data. Personage of Zhuge Liang appears in different sources from Leibo County repeatedly through the whole course of its recorded history, even in connection with the proto-archeological findings and extraterrestrial objects. To Han-Chinese, he is a hero, but for the Nuosu-Yi, he is a villain who defeated them and pushed their ancestors into the mountains.¹³⁵ I have attempted to listen to the indigenous voice hidden between columns and sentences of the extant textual sources and utterances in the field. My conclusions suggest, that

¹³¹ Mixi informant.

¹³² For such claim see: Lu 2001, 69.

¹³³ The reluctance was proven by recent ethnographic research by Hein and Zhao (2016).

¹³⁴ According to the introduction in Liangshan Slave Society Museum (Liangshan Yizu nuli shehui bowuguan 涼山彝族奴隶社會博物館), the ritual specialists (nowadays called *bimox*), or "sorcerers" as many sources call them, were called *xipo* 奚婆 during the Qing dynasty. This would suggest that the separation of roles mentioned earlier might have happened much later than many Chinese sources would suggest.

¹³⁵ Schoenhals 2013, 345-46.

histories concerning native headmen as well as those of their replacement by “circulating officials” (*gaitu guiliu*) should not be generalized into an over-arching static descriptive academic narrative, which is often imaginative itself. Instead, it should be seen as a complex, dynamic process with the strong local particularities.

The recent argument of David Faure,¹³⁶ that most people (in western Guangxi) subjected to the native headman had no genealogy and therefore the sense of state and community would have been traced via the *tusi*'s single line at the cost of internalizing the imperial logic of authority emanating from the centre, clearly does not apply for Liangshan. The Nuosu-Yi possessed and still possess their own genealogical system, the genealogies are memorized to determine individual's caste affiliation.¹³⁷ The genealogies recorded in imperial histories and gazetteers might have been used only symbolically in relationship with state agents, but in everyday life, indigenous inhabitants of Leibo placed strong emphasis on their own genealogies, names and spoke their mother tongue different from Chinese. As Ling Guangdian mentioned in his memoirs: "The *nzymop* worn the Han-Chinese clothing, but often they could not speak Chinese; they wore the official cap, but were very reluctant to meet their Han official counterparts."¹³⁸

In Leibo County, being a "double periphery" with mixed Nuosu-Yi and Han-Chinese population, there are several temples and ancestral halls.¹³⁹ One of them is Hailongsi 海龍寺 Temple, built on the small island on the Mahu lake. The modern Leibo County gazetteer does not state when exactly it was built, it only mentions repairs in 1783.¹⁴⁰ It is allegedly the only temple in the whole country dominated by the statues of Nuosu-Yi heroes – Meng You, Meng Huo in the middle and Motie 摩鐵, who resembles the *bimox* "sorcerer." All of them are sitting by the Nuosu-Yi traditional hearth (*gaku* 火碓). But interestingly enough, it is a Buddhist temple, a permanent residence for a small number of Buddhist monks. Meng Huo is referred as to "The Barbarian King Bodhisattva" (*man wang pusa* 蠻王菩薩)¹⁴¹. The festivities at this temple, the principal being the *shaoxianghui* 燒香會 on the 18th day of the 6th month of lunar calendar attracts followers from surrounding counties,¹⁴² but is not related to the Nuosu-Yi traditions in any way. The orthodox rituals in the barbarian frontier introduced by the state, elaborated on by Xiaohui Xie¹⁴³ and concerning ancestors of Tujia people in Hunan Province, also does not find a ground in Liangshan. If the state attempted to link Meng Huo through

¹³⁶ Faure 2013, 184.

¹³⁷ Ma 2001, 81-93.

¹³⁸ Ling 1988, 222.

¹³⁹ There are no ancestral halls in the Da Liangshan, the core area of Nuosu-Yi culture. The closest temples and ancestral halls westwards are in Jianchang Valley.

¹⁴⁰ SSLXBW 1997, 676.

¹⁴¹ SSLXBW 1997, 676.

¹⁴² SSLXBW 1997, 802-3.

¹⁴³ Xie 2017, 198.

genealogy to locals, then it was not fully successful. Another attempt is to use Zhuge Liang as an interlocutor within this link, but the narrative obviously did not have any significant impact on the thinking of the native chieftains in relation to their ancestors.

From the practices of the past and present, everything in Liangshan seems to have functioned (and often functions until today) in a parallel manner with the official state measures and policies. The Liangshan case is specific in many aspects, but perhaps the most significant one is that the native chieftains in Liangshan had to deal not only with state and their power-hungry peers, but also with the ever-defiant *nuohop* aristocracy.¹⁴⁴ Its members resented their engagement with state agents as well as the contamination of their blood caused by bonds with outsiders. Description of events I presented in this paper suggests quite the opposite to the prevailing narrative of Chinese state trying to accommodate or acculturate the indigenous population. In the case of Liangshan, the state was constantly failing in grafting its measurements on the ancestors of Nuosu-Yi. In many ways, it was the state which was "tamed" from the perspective of locals and had no choice but to give up their policy designs in favour of the local native chieftains' way. The striking difference between the burial rite within two branches of Hxala clan in Tiangumi (Liangshan) and Huixi (Yongshan) serves as a representative depiction of Liangshan uniqueness. Huixi, even nowadays demographically much more uniform and by its ethnic composition very different than Tiangumi, was definitely under the imperial control. But Tiangumi, as the crow flies not far from Huixi, manifests the exact opposite – a successful indigenous resistance to the practices promoted by the state, which at the end had no choice but to leave the chieftains alone for the most part of 18th and 19th centuries. This fact is confirmed by large gaps and discrepancies within official records concerning their genealogies.

The general implication of the events in Leibo County enriches the historical interpretations of *gaitu guiliu* and weakening of Native Chieftain System by the Yongzheng Emperor and his agents. The general idea of *gaitu guiliu*, especially the one conducted in Yongzheng era, as the end of chieftain rule and incorporation of Southwest into the

¹⁴⁴ The *yamen* of Yangs (Apzhop) had to be moved several times across Liangshan due to the conflict with the feared Black-bones. (Ma 1987, 110).

empire,¹⁴⁵ again, do not apply for Liangshan in its fullest. There were several *gaitu guiliu* attempts in the area of Leibo over the course of history. The first one in 1495 after the execution of An Ao, then during the arrival of Yongzheng's loyal servant Ortai in 1728 and none of them was successful. Ling Guangdian led the last delegation of southwestern *tusi* (including Ge Shihuai and Ji Shaoyu) to Nanjing as late as in 1947.¹⁴⁶ He tried to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to remain the *tusi* in charge, the Republicans returning the seal to him in 1937 evidently encouraged his belief, that this would be possible. Chiang Kai-shek did not give him a clear answer, the ascent of Chinese Communist Party to power did – the native chieftaincy was fully abolished and Liangshan fully incorporated into the Chinese state only after the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949. Because of the case of Liangshan, the whole general notion of *gaitu guiliu* as the end of chieftains' rule is worth reconsideration. The state not only failed to firmly establish the native chieftaincy in Liangshan as a tool for its incorporation its land into state borders, it also failed to abolish the subsequent hybrid, into which it developed over the course of centuries in Ming and Qing dynasties. Obviously, the *gaitu guiliu* was closely tied to the local particularities and as such it should be researched.

I believe to arrive at this conclusion, it was necessary to place the narratives uttered by living people as well as of those deceased centuries ago and speaking to us through the brushes of imperial officials, adventurers and literates, to the same level of importance. Within the textual landscape of official and personal accounts, it is still hard to determine who was a hero and who was a villain, what is an imagination and what is a believable account. Historical sources often contain many discrepancies and ambiguities and the hidden indigenous voice within them is still being largely overlooked. The perception of native chieftaincy differs even now. Some of my interviewees viewed native chieftains as people living in their own world, stubborn and concerned only about their own inherited power,¹⁴⁷ while others saw them as endorsing the progress of the society.¹⁴⁸ I believe, that the historical case study of native chieftaincy within the Leibo County by its "down-top" perspective brings various interesting topics for discussion. It suggests that even now, almost eight decades after the fall of the Republic, the legacy of the native chieftaincy – histories and imaginations concerning the villains and the heroes – are still vivid and worth further perceptive research.

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¹⁴⁵ Giersch 2006; Herman 2007; Faure 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Ling 1988, 103-4.

¹⁴⁷ Yousuo informant.

¹⁴⁸ Mixi informant.

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