

Traveling Through Ethnicity, Forests and Fields in Sichuan

走過四川山區 族群、森林與田地的關係

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在一個寒冷的十二月天，經過一整天在飛機、的士、巴士、小巴上的舟車勞頓，我終於離開寧蒗縣的山區，走進著名的瀘沽湖山谷。我原本計劃在下午三點左右到達，然後北上前往四川省的木里縣。然而，彼時西邊的山脊已開始見落日的餘暉，玫瑰色的柔和光線也穿透樹林，灑落在湖面和周圍的稻田，我知道我的計劃泡湯了，那時往木里的接駁交通已經停駛。幸好我朋友的朋友在當地旅遊局工作，她替我找了個過夜的地方，還好心的把我介紹了給瀘沽湖文化站的站長。在人類學的圈子裡，瀘沽湖由於摩梭人的「走婚」習俗而甚為出名。但楊站長來自一個普米人家庭，普米人在四川被歸納為藏人，於是對當地人複雜的身份背景反倒較有興趣，很想知道他們的身份與務農方式有什麼關係。

After a full, chilly December day of airplanes, taxis, buses and vans, I finally descend out of the mountains of Ninglang County into the famous mountain valley of Lugu Lake. My original plan was to arrive by mid-afternoon and travel on to Muli County to the north in Sichuan. Yet as the sun began to set over the western ridges with rose tinted beams streaming between trees to spread over the lake and surrounding rice fields, my hopes are dashed with the revelation that there are no connections on to Muli. Luckily, a friend of a friend works in the local tourism bureau and helps me find a place to stay. She is kind enough to introduce me to the director of the local cultural station in Lugu Lake. Lugu Lake is well known in anthropological circles for the controversial "walking marriages" of the Moso, but director Yang comes from a Premi family (who are classified as Tibetan in Sichuan) and I am much more interested in the complexities of identity in the region in relation to agricultural practices.





「你還有種蕎麥嗎？」這是我拋給楊站長（和幾乎所有我在旅程中遇到的人）的第一個問題。蕎麥在四川北部的高原地區有很重要的地位，是不少聚落的生計支柱。不過自從四川省自一九九八年起下達禁止砍伐令，當地農民便無法再像其他地方的農民般用「刀耕火種」（也稱火耕）的方法種植蕎麥。此事令許多聚落放棄了在山區種蕎麥。所以當楊站長告訴我鎮外的山上還有蕎麥田的時候，我興奮極了。「但是在禁伐令下你們沒法火耕，怎麼還能夠種蕎麥呢？」我問。他的臉上露出一點點厭惡表情，說道：「普米人從來不火耕。只有諾蘇人會如此對待山上的樹木。」我把視線轉向我的友人，她是摩梭人，希望從她身上了解到多數瀘沽湖附近的民眾是否也認同楊站長的說法。她答：「我們的而且確曾經以火耕來種蕎麥。但我想大多數的摩梭人都會認同，這個方法是從諾蘇人身上學回來的……不過，誰也說不清。」當我遊走在這中國西南部地區，我開始發現原來「蕎麥」、「火耕」之類的概念，原來都是構成當地人身份的重要元素。

My very first question to director Yang (and nearly all the people I meet on this trip) is: "Do you still raise buckwheat?" Buckwheat has played a central role in providing sustenance to many different communities throughout the highlands of Western Sichuan. Yet since the logging ban implemented by Sichuan Province in 1998, preventing the use of swiddening methods I knew were used elsewhere to raise buckwheat, many of these communities had begun to give up raising buckwheat in the mountains. Thus I was very excited when director Yang informed me that buckwheat fields were still grown in the mountains outside of town. "But how can you grow them with the logging ban preventing the use of swidden methods?" I ask. With a slight look of disgust he replies "The Premi have never been swidders. Only the Nuosu would do such a thing to the trees on the mountains." I look to my friend, who is Moso, to see if such an understanding of buckwheat cultivation is found among the majority of the residents of Lugu Lake. She replied: "We actually used to be swidders and certainly grew buckwheat in that way. But I think most Moso would agree that this method was learned from the Nuosu... it's difficult to say for sure though." As I travel through this region of Southwest China I began to realize how important things like buckwheat and swiddening are to one's identity.



在中國西南部的山區以外，不是太多人了解「刀耕火種」這種耕作方式：農民會先砍伐一小片林區，再把砍下來的樹木連同矮樹叢一併燒掉，那麼燒掉的植物便能夠為土壤提供養分，之後才在上面耕種。這種方式初時需要耗費的人力不少，但由於過程中燒掉了會侵擾農作物的雜草，因此當田地開墾後直至收割季節之前，需要投入的勞動力就很少。此耕作法的另一個關鍵是輪耕：每次收割後，就會移至另一塊田地耕作，讓本來的耕地視乎氣候休息七至十五年，長回雜草或乾脆休耕。他們不會把整片山坡燒掉，耕地通常是一小塊一小塊地散落在樹叢之間。不過這種作業確實促進了聚落的人口流動，尤其當他們的人口增長到某個水平之後。上面提到的諾蘇族，其實是中國政府稱為「彝族」的一個分支。諾蘇人自稱祖籍是雲南省北部的昭通市，但現在四川省南部大部分地區都有他們的聚落，我這次到訪的每一處都是他們的聚居地。諾蘇人和周圍環境中的樹木的關係，也許相對於普米人有些許分別。我那位研究了普米人接近三十年的朋友科恩·威倫斯教授後來告訴我：「普米人挺懼怕砍樹火耕這種行為的。他們大多相信樹木裡住了靈魂和鬼魂，砍掉樹木會惹怒它們，甚至可能會回來報仇。」



In China, swiddening is not well understood outside of the mountainous regions of the Southwest. It is an agricultural practice of cutting down small patches of forestland and burning them along with the underbrush to improve the fertility of the soil before planting in the new clearing. Initially, it requires a great deal of labor, but the fire often prevents large infestations from weeds, thus once planted little additional labor is needed until harvest season. The key to the method is moving from one clearing to the next after every harvest, often allowing the clearings to grow wild (or fallow) for 7-15 years depending on the climate. Whole mountainsides are never cleared but rather little patches appear here and there between the thicker stands of trees. Yet such processes do encourage mobility in a community, particularly after they reach a certain population level. The Nuosu described above, a branch of the ethnic group called the Yi by the Chinese government, actually claim Zhaotong City of Northern Yunnan as their ancestral homeland, but today they now reside throughout large swaths of Southern Sichuan, including every place visited on my winter journey. The Nuosu relationship to the trees in their surrounding environment is perhaps slightly different than that of the Premi. As my friend Prof. Koen Wellens, who has been studying the Premi for nearly 30 years, later informed me: "They are quite terrified of cutting down trees to be swiddeners. Most Premi believe that spirits and ghosts reside in the trees and cutting them down would make them angry and vengeful."

清晨的濃霧籠罩著田地（也害我拍不到好照片），我離開瀘沽湖，準備起行往鹽源縣的縣城。這已經是我第十四次到鹽源了，多數我都會到訪該縣北部邊緣的一條農村。近來一次到訪中，我得悉村民有一個新的大計，打算把該村的林地租予一家私人伐木公司。我問我在村裡認的乾爺爺（諾蘇語稱「阿普」）怎樣看這個計劃。「樹木不只是屬於我們的，因此就是不能賣掉。我們自己可以利用那些樹木，但必須是為了將來的子子孫孫而用。」阿普說。聽來有點像〈布蘭特報告〉的內容，其實阿普只不過給出了一個最普通的有關諾蘇人如何看待樹木的詮釋。樹木雖然是用來消耗的，但只要處理得當，它們也可以成為一種可再生資源。從前諾蘇人用過火耕的方法種植蕎麥，今天每座山山頂以下的位置已經換上一格格金黃色的稻田。很遺憾這次我沒有到村內走走，因為我只想盡快轉乘巴士，北上木里縣。



I leave Lugu Lake early in the morning with thick mists still hanging low over the fields (thus sadly preventing any decent pictures) for the County Seat of Yanyuan. This is my 14th trip to Yanyuan and most of those times I had visited an agricultural village along the North edge of the county. During one of my recent past visits to this village I learned of a new proposal by the village to lease local forest land to a private lumber company. When I asked my surrogate grandfather (or Apu in Nuosu) in the village what he felt about the proposal he replied: "The trees are not just ours, and because of that we cannot just sell them. We can use them for our own purposes but we have to ensure that they are there for future generations." While this may sound slightly like something from the Brundtland Report, Apu was simply relating a fairly normal interpretation of how the Nuosu people relate to trees. While trees are meant to be used, they are also recognized as a renewable resource if properly managed. Buckwheat was certainly grown by the Nuosu using swidden methods in the past, but today golden fields of grain make checker board patterns across the entire landscape below the mountain peaks. On this trip I'm unfortunately not able to make it to the village as my goal is to quickly change buses and head for Muli County to the North.



編按：〈布蘭特報告〉於一九八七年由聯合國世界環境及發展委員會發表，首次提出了「永續發展」一詞。
Editor's note: The Brundtland Report was published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, and was where the term "sustainable development" was introduced to the world.



巴士離開鹽源縣廣闊的平原，跨過山脊進入木里縣，雅礮江忽爾在山路下闢出一條水道，把這兒雕琢成我見過的其中一座最陡峭最宏偉的深山峽谷。這兩個縣之間的生態環境變化，著實叫人吃驚。在木里縣，我認識了兩個分別來自藏族不同分支——「旭米」和「里汝」的家庭。旭米家庭的成員向我解釋，說他們從來沒有大量種蕎麥，也從來不火耕，因為他們素來是在水落河上的陡坡開闢梯田種植稻米。即使在隆冬，這些梯田仍然翠綠，像一條生機勃勃的綠色瀑布，從幾乎寸草不生的山坡傾瀉而下。我還跟一位里汝族老人聊過，想了解一下他們和石棉縣的爾蘇人（下文另作描述）有什麼關連。通過重構爾蘇藏族和里汝藏族的語言歷史，我們知道兩個族群間有非常密切的關係。言談之間，我們發現這兩個族群仍然有共同的祭儀領袖，都叫作「沙巴」，而他們最主要的責任——主持讚頌祖先的祭祀，在形式上依然相當類似。話題一轉談到農業，他說他們仍有種蕎麥，而且蕎麥在里汝人的祭典中十分重要，不過他們卻說從來沒有用過刀耕火種的方式，這讓我頗感意外。

As the bus moves from the broad plateau of Yanyuan County over a mountain ridge into Muli County, the Yalong River suddenly opens up below the road and cleaves one of the steepest and most majestic mountain canyons I have ever seen. The ecological shift between the two counties is startling. Here I'm introduced to two families of different Tibetan branches, the Xumi and the Lizu. The Xumi family explains to me that they never really grew much buckwheat nor were they swidden farmers, because historically they have grown rice on the steep terraces they constructed above the Shuiluo River. Even in the deep of winter these terraces still exhibit an emerald green color, like a cascade of vegetation in what otherwise would be a fairly barren mountain slope. I also spoke with an elderly Lizu to understand their connections to the Ersu of Shimian County who I'll discuss below. We know through historical linguistic reconstruction that the Ersu and Lizu are very closely related. Through conversation we discovered that both groups still have the same ritual leader (called Shaba by both groups) and their most important task of leading sacrificial ceremonies to provide praise for their ancestors is still relatively similar. Yet when the conversation turned to agriculture I was surprised to hear that while buckwheat was still grown and crucial to Lizu rituals, the crop had never been grown using swidden methods.



爾蘇和里汝人約在三百年前分道揚鑣，爾蘇人向北長途遷徙到今日石棉縣的所在地。石棉是我這次旅程的終點站，也是我在二零一零年進行了四個月田野考察的地方。那次考察激起了我的興趣，去探尋文化身份與農業方式之間的關係。當時我就發現，在和爾蘇人相關的儀式和歌曲中，蕎麥都佔著重要的中心地位。在這次的路途中，有關農業實踐會影響文化身份建構的觀點，在我走訪過的中國西南地區其他族群得到了再次確認。但我也同時發現蕎麥的種植不單和這些儀式有著錯綜複雜的關係，也與爾蘇和里汝人之間的身份差異有關。全世界的不同文化身份的習俗和表現方式都是在不斷變化的，就如同生態環境的改變，也會令依賴大自然去生產農作品的族群的生活產生巨變。

這次特別的旅程中，我遇上了另一個能夠讓我好好思考的例子。雖然無法探訪在石棉縣的爾蘇朋友，我還是在一條漢人村落度過了聖誕日，那天我住在村裡開設的一家能夠讓旅客體驗「農家樂」的旅館。午飯後我們去登山，還因此發現了兩大驚奇。第一奇是我們看見一群男子在非法伐木，然後把木材滑下山坡，再揹在背上運走。他們顯然沒想過會碰到我們，其中一人還慌忙拔腿逃回山上。下山回村時，我們又遇上另一群男子，他們也在回家的路上，沿途採摘野生植物回家做晚飯。他們告訴我們植物的哪部份最美味，於是我們摘了一大袋帶

The Ersu and Lizu supposedly went their separate ways about 300 years ago, after which the Ersu migrated far to the North to present day Shimian County which was both the final destination of my trip and also where I had conducted 4 months of fieldwork in 2010. It was then that I became interested in the connection between cultural identity and agricultural practices. I discovered that growing buckwheat was central to the rituals and songs associated with being Ersu. On this trip I was reconfirming this connection among other groups in Southwest China, but at the same time discovering that the practice of producing buckwheat was complexly related to both these rituals and the differences in identity between the Ersu and Lizu. Around the world, practices and the representations of cultural identity are constantly in flux, not unlike the shifting ecology where we find these diverse farming communities interacting directly with natural forces to produce these crops.



This particular trip gave me one other example to consider. While I was unable to visit my Ersu friends in Shimian, I did spend Christmas Day in a Han Chinese village which had opened up a bed and breakfast like farmhouse for tourists. After lunch we went for a hike up into the mountains to discover two surprises. The first was a group of men harvesting lumber illegally by sliding it down the mountain side and then carrying it out on their backs. They certainly were quite surprised to see us and one man tried to scramble back up the mountain. On the way back down to the village we also ran across another group of men who were heading home

回去給農家做晚飯。這一帶的漢族農民和我這次探訪過的其他族群一樣，也已深深地和周圍的生態融為一體。漢人和爾蘇人的不同之處，在於他們利用森林與生態的方式有別。和爾蘇人共處了幾個月，我都沒有聽說過爾蘇人非法砍樹的事兒。而且還從爾蘇人口中聽到這樣一個故事：話說在二零零九年，一棵「神樹」遭雷電擊中倒下，起初堵塞著整條道路，卻沒有人膽敢移開它，因為他們相信神樹是一位當地神明的住處。誰知有一天，住在路另外一邊的其中一家人把神樹砍了作柴枝。兩星期之後，這家人就遭逢一次可怕的车禍，全家只有一人生還。許多村民都相信，這是因為他們做了「錯事」。

旅程的最後一段，我們的大巴左拐右彎地爬上石棉縣的雪坡，再回到四川盆地的大平原。再次見到那些幾乎整年不斷輪流耕作的稻米田和菜田之前，我一邊在山路穿梭，一邊回想起在旅程中見過各種耕作模式。實際上，世界上可以做到像四川這一小區域一樣擁有如此多樣化語言和著裝風格的地區並不多；農業實踐的特殊性在於雖然人民所生產的穀物定義著他們不同文化間的界限，但同時這些實踐也被不同地區農民所分享，成為全球農民的共識。也許農民耕種和收割的方式各有不同，但能夠與親朋好友一同享用一桌健康的菜餚，才是我們耕種的最終目的。❖

and picking clumps of wild plants to cook for dinner. They taught us how to pick the tastiest pieces of the plant and we brought a large bag for the farmhouse to cook for dinner. The Han farmers in this area are just as deeply embedded within their surrounding ecology as all the other groups I visited on this trip. Yet, again it is their practice in using the forest and ecology which separates the Han from the Ersu. In the months of time I spent with the Ersu, I never heard of them illegally cutting timber. In contrast, one of the more fascinating stories I heard among the Ersu was about the collapse of a sacred tree after a lightning bolt had killed it in 2009. Although the tree blocked the entire road at first, no one dared move it because it was believed to be the home of a local god. Yet one day a family who lived on the other side of the road cut up the tree for firewood. Two weeks later all but one of the family members died in a terrible car crash which many villagers took to be a sign of their wrongdoing.



The final leg of this trip was on a bus twisting up and over the snowy slopes of Shimian County and back towards the broad plain of the Sichuan Basin. Before reaching the nearly year-round rotation of rice paddies and vegetable fields, I reflected on the variety of agricultural patterns seen while on these mountain roads. Indeed, while language and style of dress is rarely as diverse in such a small section of the planet as it is in this part of Sichuan, what is unique about agriculture is that producing crops can define boundaries between cultures but it also is an activity shared and understood by farmers around the world. We may engage in planting and harvesting in various ways, but ultimately what we desire is to place a wholesome meal on the table to be shared by family and friends. ❖