

Appropriating Otherness and the Contention of Miao Identity in Southwest China

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The development of the Chinese Empire and Civilisation was predicated on the construction of non-Chinese cultural others in China's long-written history that marked the Chinese frontier and its expansion. Miao was one of the prominent ethnic categories of otherness. The formation and transformation of ethnic frontiers were often registered in the dominant paradigm of Sinicisation in the imperialist perspective, and insurgency and forced migration from the native point of view. This paper attempts to explicate a more nuanced interaction between non-Han natives and the Chinese imperial/national agents centring on Miao otherness in Chinese conception, and in articulation with natives' conception of Chineseness. It argues that in face of imperial expansion and nation-building projects in pre-modern and modern Chinese history non-Han natives actively appropriated Miao otherness to form their own identities, through which the Miao ethnic boundary was constructed and demarcated within the Chinese state.

Keywords: Miao; Otherness; China

Introduction

The cult of Yellow Emperor was promoted as a program for 'patriotic education' (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu*) and flourished rapidly in the 1990s as a focus of Chinese nationalism (Yang Zhiqiang 2010, pp. 103–13). On official occasions and popular media, such as the sacrificial address presented at the Mausoleum and television series featuring the legend of Yellow Emperor, the notion of '*yanhuang zisun*', or 'descendants of Yandi and Huangdi', was often mentioned to refer to the common genealogical origin of Chinese people. In this dominant nationalistic narrative, the Yellow Emperor is said to be joined by his ally Yandi in subduing the paramount

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competitor Chiyou and killing him in the warring site of Zhuolu in Hebei Province, and subsequently laid the foundation for the development of Chinese civilisation. Interestingly, concomitant to the development of the cult of Yellow Emperor during the 1990s, the cult of the demonised Chiyou also flourished among the Miao minority, whose elite claimed that the legendary tragic figure was the common ancestor of all Miao people and petitioned against official and popular discourses that continued to portray his infamy.¹ The Miao elite even ventured to venerate Chiyou as a founding ancestor of the Chinese nation on a par with Huangdi and Yandi, and successfully lobbied for the building of 'The Hall of the Three Ancestors' (Sanzu Tang), an ancestral hall housing the three legendary figures in the warring site of Zhuolu, which was formally opened in 1997 (Yang Zhiqiang 2010, pp. 105–6).

Amid this official promotion of the Yan-Huang Cult and its backlash posed by the Miao elite at the turn of the new century, some Taiwan and Hong Kong affiliated academics discussed the development of the cult as a focus of Chinese nationalism a century ago in modern Chinese history. Shen Sung-chiao and Sun Long-ji argue that the cult of the Yellow Emperor as the legendary ancestor of all Han-Chinese is a modernist invention in the construction of the Chinese nation-state when the Qing Empire was about to collapse in the early twentieth century (Shen Sung-chiao 1997; Sun Long-ji 2000). Wang Ming-ke provides a long historical perspective on the development of this cult of legendary ancestors for explicating the foundation of the modern nationalistic pursuit (Wang Mingke 2000).² He refers to the historical ethnic process whereby non-Han groups claimed their Han-Chinese identities by tracing legendary genealogical linkages to the Yellow Emperor through the mechanism of 'panfu', or what I would call 'mimicry for prestige'. Wang's work on the cult of 'heroic ancestors' (*yingxiong zuxian*) extends the discussion of the imperial *tianxia* universalism and modern Chinese nationalism from the centre of the Han-Chinese polity to non-Han groups on its margin such as the Qiang people in his own study. The historical process of imperial expansion, according to Wang, involved a unidirectional assimilation process that Sinicised non-Han groups to become members of the Chinese political and cultural systems. His discussion draws our attention to the Miao and their relationships with the Chinese state; yet the Miao elite's endeavours are apparently involved in a more complex process than his view of mimicry for prestige and Sinicisation, as I will argue below. At the least, Chiyou in the origin myth of Chinese civilisation stands for exclusion and otherness rather than assimilation and sameness.

The development of the Chinese Empire and Civilisation was predicated on the construction of non-Chinese cultural others in China's long written history that marked the Chinese frontier and its expansion. Miao was one of the prominent ethnic categories of otherness, defined largely in terms of lack and as the counter image of Chinese civilisation, generated during the Chinese Empire's southward expansion. The formation and transformation of ethnic frontiers were often registered in the dominant paradigm of Sinicisation in the imperialist perspective, and insurgency and migration for escape from the native point of view. This paper

attempts to explicate a more nuanced interaction between non-Han natives in Southwest China and the Chinese imperial/national agents centring on Miao otherness in Chinese conception, developed in articulation with natives' conception of Chineseness. It examines the development of Miao identity in the region of southeast Guizhou province with reference to natives' appropriation of otherness built around 'Miao Rebellion' under special historical circumstances when ethnic boundaries were demarcated and identities were articulated for mass mobilisation.

In addressing issues on the Chinese empire at the margins, Crossley et al. (2006) caution that the narrative of Sinicisation 'obscured a multiplicity of institutions and networks outside the imperial imagination that were created by and helped condition the consciousness and practice of locals', and that it 'did not distinguish between a person's adoption of the dominant group's cultural markers, which may be partial and situational, and a more subjective identification with an imagined Chinese political community' (Crossley, Siu, & Sutton 2006, p. 6). This paper seeks to examine the multiplicity of institutions and networks of the locals related to their practices of appropriation of Chinese cultural markers, particularly those referring to the Miao ethnic others, that helped condition the demarcation of non-Han identities and boundaries within the Chinese political community.

This self-imposed exclusion and otherness constituted the major theme of ethnic resistance in the natives' responses to the encroachment of the imperial state in south China throughout history by means of intermittent insurgencies and migrations for escape, which were abundantly registered as common historical memories in oral traditions of various native groups in south China. Such a polar contrast to the Sinicisation paradigm is reflected in James Scott's latest book entitled *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, which explores how disparate groups that resided in upland region of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwest China fled the civilising and subjugating projects of the organised state societies that surrounded them for thousands of years (Scott 2009). According to Scott's analysis, hill groups adapted their cultural practices specifically to avoid inclusion into lowland civilisation, leading to the abandonment of rice farming, literacy and socio-political hierarchy, and developing pliable ethnic identities. While his analysis of these cultural practices and identities has been under debate, Scott seems to be successful in widening the discussion of the formation of civilisation to include not just the examination of state-building but its obverse—it's active avoidance.³ However, this paper seeks to demonstrate a more nuanced twist of this antithesis of civilisation with reference to native groups' active appropriation of Chinese cultural markers for empowerment and mass mobilisation during their insurgencies resisting the encroachment of the Chinese imperial state, which might have led to their subjugation under state domination as well as fleeing the state to become hill peoples. It is the active exchanges and appropriation of otherness with reference to civilisation between the natives and the Chinese state that demarcated ethnic boundaries, rather than the simple antithesis of civilisation.

In-between the dichotomy of total submission in terms of Sinicisation resulting from the practice of 'mimicry for prestige' (*panfu*), as proposed by Wang Ming-ke, and fleeing the Chinese state for self-determination to maintain 'not being governed', as discussed by James Scott, how could the ambivalent non-Han native identity of being the ethnic other be developed under the rule of the Chinese state? Treating this dichotomy as the two polar extremes of an ideal model would be heuristic for examining a space where the natives assert their non-Han identities while being included into the administrative and cultural domains of the transforming Chinese state. Giersch applies the concept of 'middle ground' to his study of the Yunnan/Burma border area in the eighteenth century, describing it as an area of vibrant economic exchange, inter-ethnic marriage, cultural interaction, and flexible identities in the periodic expansion and transformation of the Chinese order, highlighting the individuals' flexible practices of acculturation and assimilation across ethnic boundaries that seemed to be soft and porous (C. Pat Giersch 2001). The central issues of this paper, however, deal with circumstances when ethnic boundaries became more solidified and rigid during the making of the modern Chinese nation-state in the twentieth century: exploring under what conditions and by what means the native created, maintained and asserted their non-Han identities.

Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* redefines the political to include practices of cultural appropriation (de Certeau 1984). He considers the appropriation of imposed symbolisms by marginalised groups to be unavoidable. The politics of recognition constitutes the relationship between those who have the authority to fix the meaning of a sign and those who seek to appropriate signifiers for their own ends through transforming the signified to create other meanings, alternative identities, and new forums for recognition. The Miao category has attracted efforts of appropriation and rearticulation by those indigenous groups who wish to inscribe their own authorial signature on the official social text of their own identities. Rosemary Coombe points out that the tactics of appropriation and processes of identification that are involved in articulating identity and compelling recognition always invoke and transform fields of power:

Situations of subordination are transformed into articulation through *identifications* with *specific* signifiers that hold promise for new forms of political recognition. The aspiration to identity and recognition is a matter of taking advantage of historically available, historically laden signifiers. (Coombe 1993, p. 413, emphases in the original)

This paper argues that the Miao otherness in Southwest China is a specific signifier that indigenous elites sought to appropriate for non-Han groups' assertion of ethnic identity and status within the modern Chinese polity.

In the following pages, non-Han natives' appropriation of otherness to mark their own self-identity will be explicated around the theme of 'Miao Rebellion' for native insurgencies and mobilisation in southeast Guizhou under particular historical circumstances: (1) The age-old Miao millenarian tradition of insurrection against

imperial encroachment in history; (2) their struggle for official recognition as an ethnic minority during the Republican period, and refashioning of Miao identity for accommodating to the Communist regime's discourses and institution of ethnic minorities; and (3) a local native groups' contestation against imposed Miao otherness to struggle for a separate minority identity. Different tactics and conditions of appropriating otherness will be analysed and discussed with reference to the natives' active search for identity in their engagement with Chinese civilisation in imperial expansion, modern nation-building and heritage conservation projects at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Imperial Expansion and Ethnic Resistance: Appropriation of Otherness for Empowerment

Southeast Guizhou, located at the eastern edge of the Yunnan-Guizhou plateau, was the front of the Chinese imperial expansion toward the southwest in early Ming dynasty (1368–1644) at the beginning of the fifteenth century. At its core was an ungoverned native territory bounded by the upper courses of Qingshui River in the north and Duli River in the south, which link to the Yangtze River and Pearl River running toward the eastern and southern coasts of China respectively. This native core was surrounded by the domains of a few native officials (*tusi*) appointed by the former Yuan Mongolian dynasty. To secure its control of the major transportation route extending from the core of the Ming empire to Yunnan for suppressing the remnants of the Mongolian dynasty, a policy of '*gaitu guiliu*', or replacing former native officials with posted Chinese civil magistrates, was implemented in 1413 and a new province of Guizhou was created in the following year. The domains of the major native officials surrounding the core native territory were all turned into prefectures under the rule of provincial administration, while a number of minor native officials were appointed as the buffer zone surrounding the core native region. A dozen garrison bases were established inside the core native region in correspondence with the surrounding native officials, constituting a system of imperial control. The potential for new revenues from this core native region attracted the further expansion of imperial administration in early eighteenth century after Qing dynasty (1644–1911) secured its rule over China. It took five years of military suppression to establish six new prefectures in this frontier for imposing imperial administration.

The population in the core native region was generally called 'Raw Miao' (*shengmiao*), and the territory the 'ungoverned region of the Raw-Miao' (*guanwai shengmiaoqu*), relative to the 'Cooked Miao' (*shoumiao*), or the native population who had been put under civil administration and subjected to taxation and corvée. The implementation of imperial rule in the core native region caused the influx of Han-Chinese immigrants through military-agricultural settlements and trading activities. Unprincipled Chinese merchants and usurers took advantage of simple-minded natives, causing the alienation of native lands, and some native landlords also emerged in the development of commercialisation such as the timber industry. In

imperial administrative seats and garrison bases, public and private schools were established to promote Chinese civilisation, with special quotas of civil examination designated for the native population. Market places, schools and temples connected to administrative and military centres constituted typical 'middle grounds' of economic and cultural contacts, giving rise to blurred identities across ethnic boundaries between the natives and Chinese immigrants as discussed by Giersch noted above. However, maladministration through abusive government taxation and officials' corruption in dealing with Chinese merchants' usurpation activities caused intermittent uprisings and resistance of native populations, leading to confrontation that often reconfirmed ethnic boundaries between the natives and outsiders.

Sporadic insurgencies in southeast Guizhou occurred throughout the Ming period, but massive uprisings were mainly related to the imperial expansion into the ungoverned core native region which started in early Qing period. In a widespread insurgency lasting over a year during the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns (1735–6), it was said that 1,224 villages spreading throughout the six newly established prefectures in the native core region were involved, and more than ten county/prefecture seats were captured. During the Xianfeng and Tongzhi reigns in late Qing period, exploitative practices of the rapidly expanding Han immigrant population, continued maladministration and corruption, compounded by heightened extraction of revenue for military suppression of the Taiping Rebellion in South China, eventually triggered massive uprisings in the core, spilling over the whole province and lasting for eighteen years (1855–72). The ravages of the wide-spread uprisings in Guizhou during this incident were appalling in terms of lives lost, property damage and funds required for suppression.⁴ An estimate addressing the scale of depopulation in the core region of Miao concentration in Southeast Guizhou declares that after the rebellion only tens of thousands of the Miao survived out of the original population of 600,000 (Wang Wenshao 1872, cited in Luo Ergang 1991, p. 2599). Even if some of these figures are overestimates, the magnitude of havoc during the Miao Rebellion was devastating.

The native population who were driven to desperation usually relied on millenarianism to resist imperial domination. Chinese sources often register the process in which the 'Miao King' emerged (*miaowang chushi*) in a general pattern: at the beginning of an uprising, shaman-sorcerers, or simply people who had given to hysterics, appealed to the public with the prophecy of the Miao King's emergence.⁵ These prophets exhorted people to abandon their daily activities and join the ceremonies to receive the Miao King, who was sometimes said to be somewhere near (for example, in a cave). The ceremonies usually involved offering sacrifices, disseminating amulets, demonstrating magic powers, and so forth. The prophets also promised that the Miao King's arrival would bring improvements in life, such as discovering hidden treasure, getting land back from the Chinese and obtaining official posts. Meanwhile agitation continued, with those who had entered trances wielding arms and threatening to kill the Han. Before long, someone would declare himself the Miao King and appeal to the public for support. Messages of

revolt—often in the form of engraved pieces of wood and taboo objects such as chicken feathers and charcoal, sometimes in written form—would be disseminated to the villages in the vicinity. If they had not done so earlier, imperial troops would often arrive at this point, and confrontation would erupt.

The religious fantasy of Miao millenarianism was largely a reversed image of the natives' conception of their lot of subjugation in the contradiction between state and stateless societies. The ideas of kingship and accession to officialdom, the belief in military superiority ensured by magic, and the hopes of finding treasure and recovering land ownership were simply the reflection of the powerful Chinese state. Official titles of generals and commanders abound among leaders of uprisings. The notion of the Miao King was the most prominent sign of native uprisings, from both the native and the Chinese points of view. As a mirror image of the vague native conception of Chinese kingship, the idea of the Miao King is highly abstract, and it manifested in different derivatives in numerous cases of uprisings in southeast Guizhou throughout the Ming and Qing periods. Within the year-long insurgency against the imposition of administrative rule over the core native region in southeast Guizhou during early Qing period, twenty leaders claimed various Kingship titles (Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Danganguan Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Qingshi Yanjiusuo & Guizhousheng Danganguan 1987, pp. 267, 270). Cases of kingship and official titles were numerous during the eighteen years of insurgencies in the mid-nineteenth century.

Miao King as a prominent symbol of power is well reflected in native oral traditions in the region. Two popular local folk legends share similarities in their titles referring to the name of the powerful Miao King, *Dugewang* (King of the Single Dagger) and *Liwang* (King of Strength), and a common theme about the native hero's acquisition of a magical weapon used to subdue the military conquest of the Chinese Emperor and share the throne with him after taking the princess as the wife for reconciliation. The legends then tell about how the treacherous wife spoiled the magical power of the weapon, leading to the Miao King's capture and execution (Zhongguo Minjian Wenyi Yanjiuhui Guizhou Fenhui (1985), cited in Wu Xinfu 1999, pp. 296–9). Such stories of the Miao King often hold an inherent theme of recurrence by the dying Miao King's prophecy of his reincarnation in the future to challenge the Emperor again, thus perpetrating the millenarian dream for the re-emergence of the Miao King as their saviour. The reconciliatory inter-ethnic marriage and its tragic ending also symbolise the difficulties of acculturation/assimilation and reaffirm the insurmountable ethnic boundary.

Another major symbol of power modelling after the Chinese state is writing and literacy, which had long been upheld by the Han as testimony of their own cultural superiority. During native insurgencies, rebel leaders were said to have produced books as a symbol of their magical power, such as the 'book of evil spirit' (*yaoshu*) used as the means of mobilisation in a case of insurgency that took place in southeast Guizhou during the Ming period (Wu Xinfu 1999, p. 263).⁶ The significance of writing for the natives is also reflected in legends about their own ancient script. In a

674-line long folk epic recounting the migration history along the river westward to arrive in present-day Southeast Guizhou, the following lines appear:

The Han were smart,
They stuck their scripts into the bun in which they wore their hair,
Since the water did not rise over their heads while they were crossing the river,
They have kept their script for doing accounting today,
and they record things with pens.
The Miao were anxious while crossing the river,
They put their scripts between their teeth,
and finally swallowed them into their stomachs,
Thus today they do accounting with their hearts,
and feel it difficult to record things. (Ma Xueliang & Jin Dan 1983)

This small section of the epic accounts for the Miao's lack of literacy vis-à-vis the literate Han and their disadvantage in business transaction with the Han because of inferior accounting skill, with reference to the usurpation of their farm lands by the treacherous Han merchants. A common interpretation of embroidery patterns on Miao women's clothes tells that in failing to bring along books while fleeing the encroaching Han after losing the war, native elders told women to carry the Miao script on their clothes by means of embroidery (Wu Yiwen 2000, p. 370).

Apparently, the appropriation of Chinese otherness in native millenarian tradition comprised rich images of the Chinese state and civilisation. In exchange, Miao otherness was constituted abundantly in Chinese accounts of native insurgencies. Thus, '*miaoluan*', or Miao rebellions, became the markers of the ethnic other in the southwest frontier, both in official and popular writings. Sporadic insurgencies culminated in the decimating insurgency against the Qing empire in the mid-nineteenth century, generally known as '*xiantong miaofan*' or the Miao rebellion during the Xianfeng and Tongzhi reigns. Robert Jenk (1994) challenges the term 'Miao Rebellion' in official documents about these mid-nineteenth-century rampant native uprisings, considering it deliberately employed by officials to conceal the main causes, among them he prioritises oppressive government maladministration over ethnic conflicts. Indeed, the Miao category hardly supports the view of a common Miao identity among the diverse native communities during the imperial period. At best, it signifies some form of simplified and generalised otherness imposed by the Chinese world order upon the complex native region.

Such Miao otherness, however, might take on its own life with its role in informing the native people about their identity. Their shared common experiences during uprising incidents might enable them to transform the Miao category in Chinese conception of the natives into 'reverse otherness' as their self-identity. Apparently, the age-old tradition of millenarian uprisings that asserted native identity and ethnic boundary in Southeast Guizhou seemed to be in stark conflict with the political ideology of inclusion and assimilation under the new historical circumstances of a modern Chinese nation-state to be built after the termination of the last imperial dynasty in the 1910s. The natives' new challenges of maintaining distinctive ethnic

identity under national unity required novel strategies in the politics of otherness that we now turn to.

Nation-Building and Politics of Recognition: Appropriating Reverse Otherness for Self-Identity

In mid-1937 two representatives elected by more than thirty ‘native officials’ (*tusi*) in western Guizhou and Yunnan made a formal trip to petition the central government in Nanjing to revise its policy in the region (He Bolie 1937). These two who claimed to represent the whole native population of the Southwest encompassed under the category of ‘Yi-Miao’ made a number of requests, including the right of the native population to elect representatives to the proposed National Assembly (*guomin dahui*), the establishment of specialised central and local official institutions to manage the region’s native affairs and an increase of educational resources for the natives.⁷ They were well received by top officials of many government units, and their visit was well publicised in the media. Yet most of their requests were refused, including the native’s right to be represented in government administration and the proposed National Assembly. In the Republican regime’s blueprint for the National Assembly, first proclaimed in early 1937, 240 seats for representatives were allocated to the recognised ethnic minorities—including the Mongols and Tibetans—in addition to a nation-wide constituency quota system; other non-Han groups—mostly the indigenous population in the Southwest—were all excluded.⁸ Under such institutional formalisation of the Chinese nation’s ethnic composition, local overlords in the Southwest sought to bargain with the consolidating state government for a certain form of self-autonomy.

Due to its long suspension during the anti-Japanese war, the first National Assembly was not held until 1946. In 1945, a group of thirty young ‘Miao-Yi’ intellectuals wrote a petition letter to the Guizhou Provincial Governor to nominate Liang Juwu of the Ge-Nao group in southeastern Guizhou, who are known as ‘Hei Miao’ (Black Miao) in Chinese, as one of the representatives of the ‘borderland people’ (*bianjiang minzu*) for the First National Assembly, yet he failed to get the appointment from the Governor (Zhang Feiran et al. 2010). In his review article of the National Assembly published in a local journal later, Liang requested open elections for representatives instead of appointment, and advocated replacing the *bianjiang minzu* title of representatives from the Southwest with an ethnic category of *Miao-Yi minzu* (Miao-Yi people) and adding this title to the list of national ethnic groups (Liang Juwu 1946). Clearly, this was a move to resist the practice of Sinicisation that registered the natives as ‘borderland people’ of the Chinese state and struggle for political recognition of their status as a non-Han minority within the Chinese nation. This section seeks to examine how Liang Juwu as a prominent native intellectual in Southeast Guizhou responded to the nation-building project of the modern Chinese state through the politics of recognition, modifying the model of

ethnic resistance against military conquest and colonisation practiced in the previous imperial dynasties.

Appropriating Miao Otherness

Born in the indigenous hinterland of Southeast Guizhou in the early 1890s, where one of the most prominent native insurgent forces had arisen during the devastating 'Miao Rebellion' a few decades earlier, Liang Juwu received his formal education from a local public elementary school that was established as part of the assimilation project after the insurgency had been subdued.⁹ In the founding years of the new, yet fragmentary, nation-state during the 1910s, he roamed inland provinces to pursue further education and career opportunities. In the following years, his career oscillated between serving the inland warlords, joining the Republican government and army, engaging in the early Communist uprisings and organising counter-Japanese invasion activities. He roamed all over China, from the non-consolidated southwest onto the central stage of national politics in Nanjing, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan. Disappointed by national politics and the central government's foreign policy toward the Japanese, he returned to his home in Southeast Guizhou. He became a provincial council representative for his home county in the mid-1930s and later a member of the Nationalist Party, after the Republican regime consolidated its power in the Southwest.

While serving in the Nationalist Party's development and education programs for the natives in Southeast Guizhou, he ran the 'Party Training Class in the Border Area of Southern Guizhou' (Qiannan Bianqu Dangxunban), a cadre training centre established in 1938 serving the state policy of 'integrating Guizhou to the Central Government's rule' (*Guizhou zhongyanghua*). This policy implemented during the war period, caused serious political turbulence in southeastern Guizhou and culminated in the 'East Guizhou Incident' (Qiandong Shibian) in 1942.¹⁰ The incident, which had begun in the mid-1930s, was a massive uprising by native communities spanning a dozen counties in response to the state's abuse of power in the region. As a local representative in the provincial council, Liang was enlisted in a delegation from the Republican army to persuade the local insurgent leaders in Xijiang, his home village, to give up their cause. He found himself in an awkward position between the native insurgents and the Republican forces, and witnessed the subduing troops burning down his home village. He was finally dismissed from the pacifying delegation because of his sympathy with the uprising; the chief commander of the subduing troops obtained a pamphlet from Xijiang in which Liang advocated Miao self-rule.

Liang's ambivalence about his commitment toward national politics and his identification with his native community extended to his opposition to the provincial government's policy of cultural assimilation in the mid-1940s. The policy stipulated that all ethnic categories be replaced by the unifying term '*bianbao*' (borderland compatriots) and established the Guizhou Bianbao Wenhua Yanjiuhui (society for

studying the culture of borderland compatriots in Guizhou) to promote assimilation by prohibiting ethnic language and customs, harassing the natives in ethnic clothing, even to the point of destroying their clothes by force, and so on. In various printed media, Liang argued against cultural assimilation, advocated the primacy of Miao-Yi issues in Guizhou's politics, and argued for establishing election quotas for the Miao-Yi according to their population size, to secure due representation of the native people in the county and provincial councils.

Liang's mounting activism in promoting the indigenous people's political status eventually pushed him to embark on textual production about indigenous history. While teaching at the Guizhou Provincial District Administration Cadre Training Regiment (*Guizhousheng difang xingzheng ganbu xunlian tuan*) in 1947, he published two articles in a local journal based on his lecture notes on the history of the Miao-Yi people, entitled 'Miao-Yi minzu zhi youlai' ('The Origin of the Miao-Yi People') and 'Miao-Yi minzu zai guoshishang huoyao de zhanwang' (Overview of the Miao-Yi People's Activities in the National History), which constituted the first two chapters of his book manuscript *Miao-Yi Minzu Fazhan Shi* (*The History of the Miao-Yi People's Development*) in 1949 (Liang Juwu 1982, pp. 1–136). This work, which entangled with Chinese historical documents and contemporary writings by Han scholars in the early twentieth century to redefine Miao identity in Chinese national history, attempts to provide a comprehensive history of indigenous non-Han groups in Southwest China, subsumed under the collective category of 'Miao-Yi', from the mythical inception of Chinese civilisation to the fall of the Republican regime.

The manuscript traces the origin of the Miao-Yi people to the mythical Jiuli State headed by Chiyou, who was said to be the foremost adversary of the Yellow Emperor, the mythical original ancestor of the Han Chinese, in the competition for the settlement in the Yellow River Valley. He sketches the genealogy of the Miao-Yi people from their origin ancestors to establish the linkage among many non-Han groups in South and Southwest China recorded in Chinese historical documents of different dynastic periods. He further relates the Miao-Yi people in China to the dominant groups in Vietnam, Siam and Burma, and explains the diaspora of the Miao-Yi people by referring to the numerous historical incidents of confrontation with the Han and other peoples who invaded from the north. He perceives the Miao-Yi people as fleeing from their homeland continuously, even spilling across the Chinese border and founding countries in Southeast Asia.

Liang recounts the history of the Miao-Yi category in Chinese dynastic chronology, including all the various groups of non-Han people in South and Southwest China, to argue that the natives comprise a legitimate entity vis-à-vis the other five main ethnic groups composing the new Chinese nation, given these non-Han groups' relatedness to each other in terms of genealogy and ethnic consciousness throughout history. He mourns the Miao-Yi people's lot of being deprived of their ethnic status and subjected to the Nationalist regime's assimilation policy and asserts the people's agency by enumerating their uprisings across the entire Southwest throughout the Republican period. Indeed, rebellion against the ruling regime in the successive

imperial dynasties is the recurring theme throughout the whole text, which serves to attest to the revolutionary spirit of the people. In particular, Liang attributes the success of the Republican revolution toppling the Qing imperial dynasty in 1911 to the weakening of imperial troops by the Miao's unremitting uprisings throughout the Qing period, especially the demolition of 'banner battalions' (*qiying*, the elitist troops of the Qing court, mainly composed of Manchu soldiers) by native insurgents during the Miao Rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century.

Unlike traditional millenarianism that sought for outright transformation of the political order to achieve native supremacy and independence, Liang's historical writing understandably purported to offer an alternative way for changing the marginalisation of non-Han natives in southwest China. It was a political agenda that dovetailed to the modern nation-building project of the Nationalist regime, appealing for political recognition of the natives in the Southwest as a legitimate ethnic component of the Chinese nation. Yet formal state recognition of the Miao as an ethnic minority was not harnessed until the founding years of the People's Republic in the 1950s, when the state project of ethnic classification was launched according to the Soviet model. The model and its inherent ideology required some new writing strategies to tame the Miao otherness in history for the construction of the natives' self-identity as a national ethnic minority.

Refashioning Miao Otherness

According to Liang Juwu's biography, he led the Association for Miao-Yi People's Self-Salvation (Miao-Yi Zijiuhui) to give a welcoming speech on behalf of the native population when the Liberation Army first arrived in the provincial capital in late 1949, more than a month after Chairman Mao declared the founding of the new Communist regime in Beijing (Xu Shiren 1991, pp. 104–10). He was invited to Beijing as a representative in the national Political Consultative Conference convened in 1950 and in the same year was appointed by the central government as a member of the Southwest Military Administrative Committee—one of the six supra-provincial regional governments ruling China in the early years of the new regime. As the deputy-director of the Nationality Affairs Commission, Liang was one of the highest representatives of the native population in the regional government who received the state's Central Greeting Delegation during its visit to Guizhou in 1950. Headed by Fei Xiaotong, the chief architect of the new Communist regime's ethnic classification project, the Delegation made visits to major native regions in Guizhou and laid the foundation of the project (Fei Xiaotong 1951).

Liang Zuwu's high political profile in the founding years of the Communist regime made possible his exposure to the official Marxist theories of ethnology and historiography and its application to minority administration work, which apparently had significant impact on his earlier perspectives of Miao identity and history. By 1957, he finished his second book on Miao history, entitled *Guizhou Miaozu Remin Zai Fanqing Douzheng Zhong Yuejin* (The Leap of the Miao people in

Guizhou during the Revolt against the Qing Dynasty), which is largely a Marxist historical account of the change of social formations in Miao society during the rule of the Qing empire (Liang Juwu 1980). Under the invasion of the Qing Empire, original Miao clan society was destroyed and replaced by feudal society, with the consanguineous organisation being supplanted by territorial organisation in the form of garrisons, colonial settlements and civil administration. In terms of the Marxist teleological lineality of social evolution, during their struggles Miao traditional clan society leaped into feudal society while bypassing slave society, a transformation Liang proposes as the central thesis indicated in the title. Imbued with Marxist categories and drawing exclusively from Marxian literature, especially Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Liang's new work shows a significant transformation of his earlier historiography.

This reformulation of Miao identity was largely concomitant with China's restructuring of its ethnic institution, which differed very much from the Nationalist regime's paradigm. In Liang's earlier writing, the category 'Miao', or 'Miao-Yi', subsumes all the non-Han groups in south and southwest China as a unified group vis-à-vis the five ethnic groups officially sanctioned by the Nationalist regime. By comparison, the category in his new work has a much more restricted reference, as the Miao have become one of many non-Han groups in the region, such as the Yi, Buyi, Dong, Yao and Zhuang, all separate and equally sanctioned categories. In this work, the category covers Miao communities in the contiguous regions of West Hunan and Northeast Guizhou, Southeast Guizhou, and West Guizhou and Yunnan; it is noteworthy, that Liang makes no reference to those peoples in Southeast Asia as he had before. On the other hand, sub-categories of the term 'Miao', which designate the individual local communities in Chinese documents, such as 'Red Miao', 'Black Miao', 'Flowery Miao', 'Cooked Miao' and 'Raw Miao', and which appear sporadically and unrestrainedly in Liang's earlier work, completely disappear in his second work (Liang Juwu (1982) [1950]), pp. 90, 92–3, 109). Apparently, the term 'Miao' as an ethnic category in Liang's reformulation has acquired a much more standardised and stringent reference to the project of 'ethnic identification' (*minzu shibie*) launched by the central government to classify diverse groups who identified themselves differently from the 'Han' Chinese.

Although Liang's writing seems to be just a personal endeavour, his work concurred well with the master narratives of Marxist ethnology and historiography contained in an article by Fei Xiaotong and Lin Yaohua, the two leading ethnologists, which appeared in *People's Daily* in mid-1956 as preliminary analysis and guidelines for a massive survey of the social history of minorities, launched by the state to collect data to further the implementation of social reforms (Fei Xiaotong & LinYaohua 1956). Interestingly, even though the Miao category does not fit Stalin's four principles of common language, territory, economic ties and psychological factors, it still became firmly established among the first group of eleven officially recognised minority labels by 1954, before the first national People's Congress.¹¹ As for what should serve as criteria for the existence of a nationality, Fei and Lin point to the

Miao case as an exception, because of historical migratory and refugee movements, so that the area they inhabit is not continuous and the different groups who originally spoke the same language came to adopt certain features that would be unintelligible to each other (Fei Xiaotong & LinYaohua 1956). In his book *Xiongdi Minzu Zai Guizhou* (The brother minorities in Guizhou) about the Central Greeting Delegation's visit, Fei mentions about a Guizhou local proverb, saying that the Miao 'launch a small uprising every thirty years, and a large uprising every sixty years' (*sanshinian yi dafan, liushinian yi xiaofan*), attesting to the existence of a common Miao identity among many diverse native groups with reference to age-old Miao Rebellion (Fei Xiaotong 1985). However, such common Miao identity has been critically challenged by the Ghung-hmung, a native group in Southeast Guizhou who have been resisting state imposition of Miao identity and struggling for official recognition of a separate minority category.

From Ethnic Classification to Heritage Conservation: Sustaining Tactics for Appropriating Otherness

The process of the Ghung-hmung's struggle against imposed Miao identity somehow corresponds to the changing size of the category of 'unidentified nationalities' (*daishibie minzu*) in the successive official census figures. In the 1953 national census, the figure of this category was as big as 1,017,299 even after lumping many of the more than 400 self-proclaimed ethnic identities of non-Han groups into thirty-eight recognised *minzu* (nationality) categories. In the 1964 national census, the size of the unidentified category dramatically reduced to 32,411 after the number of recognised *minzu* categories increased to fifty-three. However, the figure of unidentified population soared to 799,705 when the national census was resumed in 1982 after the Cultural Revolution had ended and the minority institution was under reconstruction. It is said that in the late 1970s many local native leaders wrote to the state authority to demand recognition of their unidentified ethnic categories, probably as a response to the announcement of the state's formal recognition of the Jinuo people in Yunnan as the fifty-sixth *minzu*. The project of ethnic identification was then resumed in the 1980s, but even after the official proclamation of the project's end in 1986, the census figure of the 'unidentified nationalities' in 1990 still maintained a magnitude of 752,347.¹² Among these groups, the Ghung-hmung, with a small population around 50,000 inhabiting about sixty villages in southeastern Guizhou, disputed against the imposed Miao category and struggled for recognition of a separate identity.

Miao Rebellion and the Accentuation of Local Ethnic Boundaries

The Miao Rebellion in the late Qing period was the Ghung-hmung people's nightmare in local social memory. During my fieldwork in Fengxiang, the biggest Ghung-hmung village in Huangping County in the fall of 1992, I heard of many graphic and horrible descriptions about brutal killings, rapes and pillages when the

Miao rebels plundered Fengxiang during their uprisings. Villagers guided me to the sites where hundreds of Ghung-hmung were said to have been killed and buried, and where trees were said to have toppled when too many villagers—mainly the elderly, women and children—hanged themselves for failing to flee the village before the arrival of the Miao rebels.

The Ghung-hmung's social memory of their suffering during the Miao Rebellion has become an entrenched boundary between themselves and the neighbouring Miao groups, as well as their proclaimed cultural and linguistic distinctiveness from the Miao. The Ghung-hmung elite from Fengxiang have been taking a leading role in combating the state project of ethnic classification to struggle for official recognition of a self-claimed identity. During my fieldwork in Fengxiang in the early 1990s, I was shown a set of photographs featuring a couple of historical documents which corresponded to the villagers' social memory of the tumultuous Miao Rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century. One of these documents was an imperial edict issued by the Chief Commander of the provincial army in 1874 (the thirteenth year of the Tongzhi reign) to honour a Ghung-hmung military official, who was from Fengxiang, for his military achievement in subduing the rebellion. Another was a huge banner hung up at the front side of a house and blocking the whole doorway and part of two sides, as it appeared in the photograph. It was conferred on the Ghung-hmung militia of a nearby village by the provincial military ministry in 1869 (the eighth year of the Tongzhi reign), with a line of Chinese characters in the centre: '*zhongshun Getuan Huixiangqi*' (a home-village-returning flag for the loyal and obedient Ge troop).

That the Ghung-hmung sided with the imperial administration, and their military role during the Miao Rebellion, also appear intermittently in Lo Wenbin's and Ling Ti'an's historical writings on the mid-nineteenth-century Miao Rebellion (Lo and Wang 1988 [1879], pp. 63, 94, 110, 176, 417; Ling Tián 1932, pp. 723, 735–6, 711). For example, Lo reports that the chief provincial military commander conferred a banner which read '*Gelao zhongshun tuan*' (the loyal and obedient Ge troop) to the Ghung-hmung militia of the Qingping County (currently Kaili City) in the militia's establishment as early as 1857 (the seventh year of the Xianfeng reign), a few years after the Miao Rebellion took place.¹³ On the same page, he comments that 'since the Black Miao rebellion in Qingping had started, the Flowery Miao also sided with the rebels. However, the Ghung-hmung remained loyal, organised militia to fight against the rebels, provided refugees with food, and sponsored the suppression'. The Ghung-hmung's social memory today regarding their traumatic suffering in the Miao Rebellion seems to be well founded in documentation, for instance, of a case that happened in mid-1858 (the eighth year of the Xianfeng Reign): 'Miao rebels seized Dazhitun, plundered more than thirty Ge villages, killed over two thousand Ge people. . . . Relief supplies were distributed to the Ge, who then felt deeply cared for' (Lo and Wang 1988 [1879], p. 96).

The memory of the historical conflicts has continued to accentuate the ethnic boundary and otherness between the two groups during the re-initiated project of ethnic classification. During my fieldwork research, Ghung-hmung villagers used to

recount the location of former village sites with house-foundations, farming fields and ancestral graves built by the Ghung-hmung, complaining that these sites were occupied by the fierce Miao neighbours who drove away their ancestors, sometimes by tricks such as making fake footprints of extraordinary size to create the image of fearsome enemies. The redistribution of Miao and Ghung-hmung villagers could also be the aftermath of mid-nineteenth-century Miao Rebellion that had caused much destruction of village sites and movements of refugees. These re-interpreted historical events also fuelled Ghung-hmung villagers' memories of harassment when they walked by neighbouring Miao villages. The most direct accusation against Miao oppression in relation to ethnic classification, however, was the rumour that the former provincial governor, who was a Miao and called by local villagers as the Miao King, obstructed the Ghung-hmung's appeal to the central state for the recognition of their non-Miao identity. Again, the demonised image of the Miao King matches well with the entrenched Miao otherness in Chinese historical documents and further accentuated the ethnic boundary between the two groups. However, it was the Ge otherness in Chinese sources that was tapped as the major evidences supporting the Ghung-hmung's self-definition and their claim for an independent identity.

Appropriating Reverse Otherness and the Making of Ge Identity

In the early 1990s, I talked to a group of Ghung-hmung elite members in Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou Province—where they held positions in various sectors of the party, the government, academic institutions and state-run enterprises—who had been leading the Ghung-hmung to press for a *minzu* category separate from the Miao. According to this group, local Chinese and Miao groups used to call them 'Gedou', a derogatory term (in Chinese historical documents the character for *ge* has the radical on the left, referring to being an animal; the character for *dou* means 'stupid'). They stressed the irony that the derogatory name for them in Chinese historical documents was becoming an advantage, attesting as it did to their distinctive existence as a group separate from the Miao in history. They further explained that they chose to keep the first of those two characters as their written designation, which is a homophone of the first character for the term *geming* (revolution) and was now deliberately written as such, with the radical meaning 'animals' replaced by the radical meaning 'human beings'.¹⁴ From referring to a group of 'animals' to referring to a group of 'revolutionaries', the change in meaning of the term *ge* is certainly remarkable. This Ghung-hmung elite have been striving for state recognition of their identity as 'Gezu', referring to the *minzu* status. Yet the Ghung-hmung are generally called 'Gejia' in official and public media, with the collective term *jia* (family) indicating an inferior category not deserving of or entitled to the *minzu* status.

The Ghung-hmung elite have made adamant endeavours to spread their vision of a recognised independent *minzu* identity to their fellow villagers in Southeast Guizhou and to mobilise them to act for the cause. The revival of the paramount ancestral

worship ceremony, held in Fengxiang in the early 1990s after its suspension for more than half-a-century, was a telling case. The ceremony, called *ha-chong* in native language, demonstrates the core of Ghung-hmung culture through a week of elaborate rituals accompanied by reed-pipe music, singing and dancing held in an open field, with corresponding rituals practised at fellow villagers' homes, particularly the family who initiated the ceremony. Fengxiang is the biggest Ghung-hmung village with more than 1,000 villagers who share the same surname and trace to a common male ancestor more than thirty generations earlier. The villagers keep the lineage tradition of explaining illness and misfortunes by referring to their ancestors' demands for sacrifices. All of their ancestors are believed to be residing in a long wooden drum hung horizontally in the house of the villager who makes the offering to deal with his family's misfortune, and the drum will be carried to another villager's home when he finds out through divination that his family's problem is caused by ancestors. However, for serious misfortunes the divination may determine that the ancestors demand an up-graded offering ceremony to be conducted by the whole village. The ancestral wooden drum will be transferred to an open field for a week-long ceremony with the participation of all villagers and their invited friends and relatives, particularly members of related lineage branches. The revival of this tradition in the early 1990s was largely a local effort to re-establish the authority of lineage elders after the rural reform of decentralisation implemented in the 1980s had created new social space for rural leadership. The paramount Ghung-hmung leader, a middle-ranking official in the provincial Communist Party and a fellow villager of Fengxiang, returned to his home village to oversee the preparation of the ceremony. Joined by other elite members, he turned the ceremony into a demonstration of the Ghung-hmung culture to many invited guests from various levels of state administration to voice the plea for official recognition for the people's self-claimed identity. He gave an elaborate interpretation of the early history of the state project regarding their struggle:

Since the founding of New China in 1949, the *minzu* title of the Gezu has been recognized. Appendix no.13 of the report on nationality work, written by Professor Fei Xiaotong. . . . after he led the Central Greeting Delegation to visit Guizhou in February 1951, is specifically on the Gezu. Within that document of fewer than a thousand characters, the term Gezu appears in sixteen places. . . .In his article "The Minorities among Minorities—Brother Nationalities of Guizhou," published in the journal *New Observation* in March, 1952, he asserts clearly that Gezu are the "descendants of the [ancient] Laozu." In the booklet "Concise Table of China's Minority Nationalities (supplemented edition)," printed by the State Commission of Nationality Affairs in December 1951, minority nationalities in our country are divided into two categories: one subsumes those clearly investigated and recognized, and the other includes those that require further investigation. Gezu is subsumed under the first category. . . .In the map "Distribution of Guizhou's Minority Nationalities," printed by the Guizhou Provincial Bureau for Nationality Affairs in April 1957, the distribution of the Gezu is featured, and the term *Gezu* appears in the legend. (field-notes Nov. 24, 1993)

These early official representations of the Ghung-hmung in terms of Gezu in reports, tables and maps related to ethnic classification have provided the Ghung-hmung since the mid-1950s with ammunition to plead their case for official recognition of the Gezu category. Beginning in 1956, Ghung-hmung elite suddenly found their identity in crisis, when they were not recognised as a *minzu* in the founding of the Southeast Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture (Guizhousheng Minwei Minzu Shibie Bangongshi 1987, vol. 1, p. 170). It seems either that the official usage of the term *Gezu* acquired a more specific political denotation than its earlier usage or that the state changed its view regarding the Ghung-hmung's *minzu* status. Since then the Ghung-hmung have been involved in the struggle for recognition and remained as a 'group to be classified' (*daishibie qunti*).

During the Cultural Revolution, the project of ethnic identification in Guizhou was suspended, and the status of the Ghung-hmung was thus undetermined and unsettled. Not until the early 1980s was the classification work on the Ghung-hmung once again undertaken as one of more than twenty 'undetermined' groups under investigation.¹⁵ Members of the Ghung-hmung elite wrote to the central state to request official recognition of their *minzu* title as early as 1979 (Guizhousheng Minwei Minzu Shibie Bangongshi 1987, vol. 2, pp. 75–78). Under the official policy of recruiting native cadres and intellectuals from the group under investigation into the classification work team, the Ghung-hmung elite succeeded in joining the renewed classification project (Guizhousheng Minzu Shiwu Weiyuanzhi Zhengce Yanjiushi 1981, p. 663). Within a few years during the early 1980s, a work team made up mostly of Ghung-hmung elite visited numerous Ghung-hmung villages to collect research data and wrote up voluminous reports (Guizhousheng Minwei Minzu Shibie Bangongshi 1987).

Compared to their role in the earlier classification project, the Ghung-hmung in the renewed project were no longer merely subjects being investigated and represented in reports, tables and maps registering the vision of the modern nation-state. Rather, they were active agents undertaking self-representation, voicing forcefully who they were and how they were related to other groups and to the state. In many research reports and petition letters they wrote for the ethnic classification project, their self-representation, however, was often conducted through creative appropriation of Chinese historical records documenting the non-Han groups with Chinese ethnonyms related to the Ghung-hmung, such as 'Gedou' and 'Gelao', and 'Qutou'. They trace the people's ancestry back to the Eastern Jin period (317–422) in Chinese history with reference to one of the oldest Chinese documents written in that period about the various peoples on the Southwest frontier of the Chinese Empire, including a tribal group registered as 'Qetou', and considered the people as the descendants of the ancient Lao people, who were said to be one of the earliest indigenous people in Guizhou.

In the beginning years of the twenty-first century, the Ghung-hmung elite's struggle faced a series of crises, including registering the Ghung-hmung in southeast Guizhou as Miao in national census survey, and forcing the Ghung-hmung to change

their identity to Miao in making a new version of the citizen identity card nationwide. Instead of claiming to be Miao, some Ghung-hmung people adopted the Gelao identity, which is also considered the descendants of the ancient Lao people, and an officially recognised group with a population size about 580,000, distributing widely in northeastern and western Guizhou province.¹⁶ In the past few years, when young people left Guizhou for job opportunities or study, they were forced to adopt an officially recognised nationality identity when processing necessary documents in the local police station for transferring household registration. Many of them took the Gelao identity for that reason, including migrant workers seeking jobs and students attending universities outside the province. Indeed, some elite members openly suggested that the Ghung-hmung adopt the Gelao identity and give up the struggle for state recognition of the Ge identity, so that their elite could secure their job positions in state administration, and their younger generations would not suffer from the identity issue that might hamper personal development and the people's future. This has caused a serious split among the elite members.

For the hard-liners who insisted on the pursuit for the independent Ge identity, they considered they won a hard battle when the Public Security Commission of the Chinese Central Government issued an official document in August 2003, instructing the provincial and local public security departments and offices to allow the Ghung-hmung to register as 'Gejiaren' (Gejia people), a 'transitional measure' (*guodu banfa*) to deal with the unofficial minority titles, largely in response to a series of petition letters sent to the central and provincial Communist Party, Government, People's Congress, and the Consultative Political Conference, and various related commissions, bureaus and departments by the Ghung-hmung elite who formerly held leadership positions in the county administration. But more likely, it is the hard-liners' plan to organise a petition trip to Beijing to upgrade their protest actions that caused the central government's concession. However, the Ghung-hmung elite's endeavours to appropriate ethnonyms from ancient Chinese documents to transform the reverse otherness into their own self-identity, particularly the term Lao that refers to the earliest indigenous group in Guizhou, has produced unexpected ambivalent effects that the hard-liners have yet to put under control. They needed a new tactic of appropriation politics that could render their struggle more comprehensible to the masses in order to consolidate their support base.

Heritage Conservation and the New Tactics of Appropriating Otherness

In the autumn of 2009, I was invited to attend the ancestral worship *ha-chong* ceremony held for the second time in Fengxiang Village after it was first revived in the early 1990s. At that time, I was the only researcher and one of a few who held a camera to document the ceremony. The 2009 *ha-chong* ceremony had a much increased size of audience, comprised of several television film crews, many newspaper reporters, some folklore researchers, and a lot of professional and amateur photographers. Many of them told me that they got the information of the

ceremony on the internet and from various media. I even encountered several tour groups and quite a few foreign backpackers who followed the tour guides to make the visit. This Ghung-hmung *ha-chong* ceremony became a big fanfare for those who came from all directions to consume exotic images of minority culture. What took me by surprise was the paramount Ghung-hmung leader's opening speech made on the platform that seated rows of invited honourable guests from various provincial and local state administrations, which lacked any reference to the Ghung-hmung's struggle for state recognition for their self-claimed independent nationality identity. Instead, he emphasised the urgent need to preserve the Ghung-hmung's heritage:

Currently, we are in the age of the Chinese nation's revitalization, and a strong tide of heritage preservation and development is surging. The Gezu's *ha-chong* ceremony is no exception within this tide, it will receive proper preservation and development. Hereby, I want to inform my Gezu compatriots, a Guizhou provincial government document issued in December 2005 announced that the Gejia *ha-chong* ceremony was included in the first batch of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" on the provincial list. . . . Let us make bigger effort with unyielding perseverance to promote ethnic culture, and to salvage, preserve and develop ethnic heritage. By cultivating our next generation's capacity of ethnic culture, Gezu's culture will be carried on generation by generation, and it will keep growing. (field-notes Nov. 26, 2009)

When I asked the paramount leader why he did not mention the Ghung-hmung's struggle for identity recognition, he told me that there will not be a quick solution for the issue in the foreseeable future. According to him, the Chinese government decided to keep the fifty-six commemorative stone poles erected in the Tian'anmen (Gate of heavenly peace) Square in Beijing during the 2008 Olympic Games, representing the fifty-six nationalities of the Chinese Nation, as a permanent display after the event was over. This indicated that the hope for a change of official ethnic classification was gloomy. However, he was still optimistic that the project of ethnic classification would be resumed after Taiwan eventually got liberated in order to accommodate the many official ethnic categories of the Taiwanese aborigines, and that would be the opportunity for the Ghung-hmung to press for their claim. He sensed that, nevertheless, it would be a long process and, at the immediate moment, the most urgent job was to preserve the cultural heritage of the people, which was the basis of their identity.

Indeed, the reason for staging the 2009 *ha-chong* ceremony was largely for heritage preservation, although there was also a saying that the family hosting the ceremony had experienced misfortunes and that was interpreted by divination as the sign of ancestors' demand. Ghung-hmung leaders had been very worried that after a long suspension from the last *ha-chong* ceremony held in 1993, the expertise of ritual specialists needed for the ceremony were dying out when one by one those specialists passed away. Indeed, among all Ghung-hmung villages, only those ritual specialists in Fengxiang village still have the capability to stage the *ha-chong* ceremony. It was through holding the ceremony again that a group of new ritual specialists would be

trained, especially during a year of preparation before the ceremony was held, to shoulder the responsibility for carrying on the tradition in the future.

Another Ghung-hmung person who was very concerned about the preservation of the *ha-chong* ceremony was a young man from the county cultural department for intangible cultural heritage. As mentioned in the opening speech of the paramount leader, the *ha-chong* ceremony had been listed at the provincial level as an officially recognised item. According to this young man, however, it had failed to reach the national level as his department's application for the national listing last time in 2006 was turned down because of the Ghung-hmung's unrecognised identity. This time, he attended the ceremony to collect data for strengthening the application that would be resubmitted. It seems their application failed again as the ceremony was not included in the recently announced batch of items on the 2011 national listing.

I was fortunate to meet a Han woman researcher during the *ha-chong* ceremony, who had become the spoke-person of Ghung-hmung cultural heritage in the past decade and thus was an honourable guest of the ceremony this time. She had conducted thorough research on the Ghung-hmung tradition of archery, especially practices and symbols relating to the Ghung-hmung epic telling of their ancient hero who shot down six suns and six moons, leaving a pair for the well-being of the human species. She published widely in newspapers and journals about this archery heritage, but the most influential work was her book that came out in 2002, which links the Ghung-hmung people to the mythical hero of Houyi, who was the one who shot down superfluous suns in the ancient Chinese mythology. Entitled *Xunzhao Yi De Houren* (Looking for the Descendants of Houyi), her book proposes to trace the Ghung-hmung's ancestry to this Chinese mythical hero and the ancient tribe under his leadership (Liu Zhifeng 2002). The book was widely reported in media and on the internet, leading to the filming of that heritage in Fengxiang village by a crew from the Central Chinese Television and broadcasted with the same title on the CCTV channel later in that year.

However, the Ghung-hmung have their own sensibility of otherness relating to their sun-shooting ancestor. In a folk document entitled 'Gezu Shihua' (historical narrative about the Ghung-hmung), the historical narrative traces the origin of the Ghung-hmung to a mythical hero called Wuding, whose prowess in archery enabled him to shoot down six suns and six moons, leaving only a pair and thus provided a big relief for the parched livelihood of human-kind. This mythical hero is said to be defeated by the devilish Chiyou, and during his exile in deep mountains he got married to a dumb woman whose utterance sounded like the Ghung-hmung language today, and subsequently bred the Ghung-hmung people. When Chiyou caused trouble to the world again, Wuding summoned his people to assist Yellow Emperor to subdue Chiyou and finally killed him in battle. After the victory, the supreme ruler Yellow Emperor awarded Wuding with a set of commander armour uniform. Wuding passed the armour uniform to his daughter, which was subsequently used as a traditional model for the Ghung-hmung women's costumes today.

The text of this historical narrative begins with the ancient Chinese myth about the legendary Goddess Nuwo, who repaired the broken sky by alchemy of stones, telling that the stones in five different colours gave rise to human beings in five different kinds (*lei*) corresponding to the different colours, and that 364 stones generated 364 nations (*minzu*) in the world. Rather than being a myth passed down from unknown ancient times, the ideas of the five ‘races’ and numerous ‘nations’ indicate that the story was composed probably not earlier than late Qing period at the turn of the twentieth century, when Western ideas of race and nation were firstly introduced into China. It was under these historical circumstances that the cult of Yellow Emperor as the origin ancestor of the Chinese nation flourished, with the demonised competitor Chiyou as the opposite image of Chinese civilisation and being defeated. Interestingly, the story portrays the origin ancestor of Ghung-hmung as a woman who married Wuding, an adversary of the devilish Chiyou and finally killed him by siding with Yellow Emperor in combat. Wuding in ancient Chinese history was the twenty-third Emperor of the Shang dynasty (circ. 1600 BC–1046 BC), much later in chronological order than the figures of Yellow Emperor and Chiyou, whose confrontation is considered the origin of Chinese civilisation in Chinese mythology. Wuding never appears in Chinese mythology as the hero who shot down the superfluous suns and moons that wrought havoc to human livelihood, a story widespread among many non-Han groups in Southwest including the Miao, and being associated with the Chinese mythical figure Houyi. A much more significant meaning of this anachronistic intervention of Wuding into the competition between Yellow Emperor and Chiyou is that the event is reminiscent of the role of the Ghung-hmung in the mid-nineteenth-century Miao Rebellion, when the Ghung-hmung were plundered by Miao rebels and sought protection from the imperial subduing forces, and finally received rewards from the latter for their assistance in the subduing actions.

After the week-long ceremony had concluded, a session of cultural performances was arranged for visitors like researchers and media reporters, including embroidery, weaving, batik, singing, dancing, reed-pipe music, and martial arts. In the last performance, a square-shaped batik cloth with the image of seven suns and seven moons drawn on it was hung in an open area, and a man holding a cross-bow about 10 yards away shot at the suns. According to the performer’s explanation, it was the demonstration of the mythical story about their sun-shooting ancestor who was called Yi. Indeed, this well-appropriated cultural identity of their sun-shooting ancestor from the Chinese mythology about Hou-yi has secured in the Ghung-hmung’s images for the consumption of heritage and tourism, the two most powerful sources of otherness that have been flourishing rapidly since the turn of the twenty-first century, being prolific on the internet today. In a revisit I made to Matang Village close to the prefectural capital of Southeast Guizhou after attending the ancestral worship ceremony in Fengxiang, the tourist reception team leader, who was my former key informant, showed me a blue-print for building a nine-metre tall statue of the mythical ancestor Hou-yi at the entrance to the village. Apparently, the

national project of heritage preservation and the tourism industry targeting ethnic culture have provided an alternative breeding ground for Ghung-hmung's practices of appropriating otherness to constitute self-identity.

Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discussion of the various practices of appropriating otherness for identity construction in Southeast Guizhou involves following correlated issues for consideration: (1) the historical circumstances of interaction between the Chinese state and the non-Han natives; (2) the nature and sources of otherness under appropriation; (3) the motivation of appropriating otherness; and (4) the tactics of domesticating appropriated otherness. This paper traces the historical circumstances from the imperial expansion into Southeast Guizhou during the Ming and Qing periods, to the modern nation-building projects undertaken by the Nationalist and the Communist regimes to define and institutionalise ethnic composition of the Chinese nation, to the ethnic classification project in the 1950–60s and its resumption in the 1980s, and to the heritage conservation and ethnic tourism development in the 1990s.

Corresponding to these historical circumstances, native groups undertook appropriation of otherness that led to the demarcation and confirmation of ethnic boundaries. During imperial expansion, native millenarian rebellion involved appropriating Chinese otherness such as kingship, officialdom titles, and writing scripts as symbols for empowerment and mobilisation. In the modern nation-building projects, native groups appropriated 'reverse otherness'—Chinese conception about the Miao natives in southwest China—in their struggle for state recognition of their minority identity during the Republican period, and appropriating the Ge category for the politics of recognition in the ethnic classification project during the 1980s to resist the state-imposed Miao identity. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Ghung-hmung natives extended the appropriation of otherness from politics of recognition to heritage conservation and tourism development to sustain their pursuit of Ge identity construction.

Interestingly, these varied native projects of appropriating otherness revolved around the history of 'Miao Rebellion' and its historical allegory tracing back to the defeat of Chiyou, who was appropriated as the natives' mythical origin ancestor, by the Yellow Emperor, whose success allegedly laid the foundation of the Chinese civilisation. The infamous Chiyou and the ruthless Miao rebels constructed as non-Chinese cultural others and defined by lack and antithesis of Chinese civilisation underwent the alchemy of domestication in the politics of appropriation: the Miao King and the Chinese Emperor were subject to a reversion of strength and virtue for the natives' empowerment to combat the encroaching Chinese state; the mythical Miao origin ancestor claimed its merits for its alleged contribution to the Chinese civilisation, whereas Miao insurgents were said to have contributed to the founding of the Republic by weakening the imperial forces in the late Qing period.

The Ghung-hmung who struggled for state recognition in term of Ge identity did not merely rely on claiming its stark existence in history, but also emphasised its legitimacy for the people's loyalty to the imperial state in quelling Miao uprisings, their ancestry tracing to the meritorious sun-shooting ancestor, and their ancestral worship ceremony as an intangible cultural heritage item that sought national listing and touristic appreciation. Indeed, the domestication of Chinese cultural symbols has been an inherent and necessary element in the appropriation of otherness for the native's self-empowerment and struggle for recognition.

I agree with Wang Mingke that a long historical perspective is imperative for our understanding of the modern nation-building phenomena. The millenarian tradition among non-Han groups and 'Miao rebellions' in Southwest China throughout history, the natives' appropriation of Chinese models of kingship, officialdom, literacy, and the demonised Miao identity associated with Chiyou, constitute an important backdrop about the complex exchanges and appropriation of otherness in modern nation-building projects involving interaction between the Chinese state and non-Han natives, and among the different non-Han groups. What I intend to emphasise is that non-Han natives' appropriation of Chinese cultural symbols, including Chinese otherness and the reverse Miao otherness, did not necessarily mean giving up self-identity; it could also be a strategy for claiming self-identity in engaging the mighty Chinese state. As the 'Miao' millenarianism in history and the politics of recognition in the modern nation-building projects show, non-Han natives' mimicry for cultural prestige by appropriating and domesticating otherness were practices of empowerment and identity construction. For the Ghung-hmung, mimicry for prestige and, simultaneously, for identity confirmation could also be tactics for local politics countering local dominance and maintaining local differences.

James Scott's recent study on the 'escape culture' of non-state native people with continuous migration in highland Southeast Asia and Southwest China for maintaining 'not being governed' by the state somehow implicitly presupposes the loss of native identity in cultural assimilation with the dominant group caused by engagement. He also suggests that pliable identity is imperative for fleeing state domination. With reference to the case of the Miao in Southwest China, engagement in the form of 'rebellion' could possibly accentuate ethnic boundaries and consolidate native self-identity. It is the natives' active appropriation of otherness with reference to Chinese civilisation that demarcated ethnic boundaries, rather than simply the antithesis of civilisation.

Between the dichotomy of the 'assimilation model' proposed by Wang Mingke and the 'escape model' suggested by James Scott, there could exist a huge range of different modes of engagement in which non-state natives maintained their identities through exchange of otherness and active appropriation, though these identities could never be considered pure and original as they are usually imagined in identity politics. Anthropological study of Chinese civilisation requires vigilance to our research subjects' agency in identity formation and representation in terms of

appropriation of otherness, both in their conception of the dominant Chinese civilisation and other non-Han cultures, and in the reverse conception of themselves. Appropriation and exchange of otherness also need to be studied with reference to local politics contextualised in national and transnational settings, and in long historical perspectives, for enhancing our understanding of the complex issues related to meaning and power in the practices of civilisation within, and perhaps beyond, the Chinese empire and modern nation-state.

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Notes

- [1] See Xu Xinjian (2008). According to the 2000 national census, the population of the Miao is about 890 million, the fifth largest nationality in China, spreading across eight provinces and minority autonomous regions in the southwest region, see Population Census Office under the State Council (2002).
- [2] Please see also Wang Mingke's acclaimed monograph *Huaxia Bianyuan: li shi ji yi yu zu qun ren tong* (On the margin of Chinese civilization: Historical memory and group identity) (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1997).
- [3] See book reviews, e.g., Thomas J. Thompson (2011) and Cristina Bain (2011).
- [4] A rough estimate suggests that about 4,900,000 people died out of a total population 7,000,000 people in Guizhou; that personal property losses amounted to around 25,000,000 taels of silver; and that the direct costs to the government for military operations amounted to over 100,000,000 taels; in addition to hundreds of villages, some 58 different administrative seats ranging from the county to the prefectural level in Guizhou were lost to the insurgents—most were quickly recaptured, others changed hands repeatedly, and a few were held by the rebels continuously for over a decade, see Ling Tián (1932).
- [5] This description of the incipient state of the Miao millenarian movement is a composite of numerous examples appearing in various sources, most notably Number One Historical Archive. See *Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Danganguan Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Qingshi Yanjiusuo*, and *Guizhousheng Danganguan* (1987).
- [6] The term “Book of evil spirit,” a direct translation of the Chinese term “*yaoshu*” from Chinese documentation, carries a negative meaning. Probably, a translation closer to the native sense is “book of magical power.”
- [7] The usage of the category ‘Yi’ in the Republican period or earlier is different from its current usage defined after 1949, which refers to a number of Tibeto-Burmese groups classified as one of the fifty-six officially sanctioned *minzu*. The old usage refers to many Thai-speaking groups in Guizhou as well as the Tibeto-Burmese groups.
- [8] For a general description of the establishment of the National Assembly of the Republican regime and its quota system, see Ch’ien Tuan-sheng 1950, pp. 313–24.
- [9] For Liang Juwu’s life trajectory during the Republican period, see Xu Shiren (1986), pp. 30–43.
- [10] For the ‘East Guizhou Incident’, see He Changfeng (1986).
- [11] For the Miao case’s misfit with Stalin’s definition of nationality, see Norma Diamond (1995).

- [12] For the result of the ethnic classification project in Guizhou published in 1986, see Long Mingyiu (1986).
- [13] Lo Wenbin and Wang Bingén, (1988) [1879]), p. 63. The term *Gelao* in Chinese is currently an official *minzu* category for a native group wide spread in northeast, central, and southwest Guizhou. However, in Chinese historical documents the term indiscriminately refers to many different groups of similar names, including the Ghung-hmung. According to the geographical location mentioned in Lo Wenbin's text, the term he used refers to the Ghung-hmung in southeast Guizhou.
- [14] The Chinese character for the term *ge* varies in Chinese historical documents. Almost all variations have the radical on the left referring to being an animal. The character with a component on the right written as the first character of the term *geming* appears in some of the documents. See Guizhousheng Minwei Minzu Shibie Bangongshi, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 60–80; vol. 2, p. 42.
- [15] It is said that in the beginning of the renewed classification project in the early 1980s, more than eighty groups (totaling about 900,000 people) were considered 'undetermined' and that after preliminary classification, only about twenty of those groups remained to be investigated, see Guizhousheng Minzu Shibie Gongzuo Bangongshi, 1981, pp. 1–3.
- [16] In China's fifth national census conducted in 2000, the Gelao nationality's population size is 570,940, see Population Census Office under the State Council, 2002.

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