

Religion as a Civilizing Process? Rethinking Yao Religious Culture and Ritual Manuscripts*

Chen Meiwen

PhD Candidate

Institute for Area Studies (Chinese Studies)

Leiden University

The Netherlands

Abstract: This article suggests that the Yao religious domain should be considered as an interface where the Chinese imperial state attempted to assert its “civilizing” power by incorporating local society into official governance, yet also where the Yao not only assimilated but also transformed imperial influences in the light of their own cultural values. It explores these issues by describing the patrilineal ideology of Yao ordination and its impact on the transmission of ritual manuscripts. Another key issue centres on the ways in which the ideological basis of filial piety, an important Confucian value at the core of ancestor worship, has been re-employed to sustain the practice of Yao ordination as well as their manuscript culture. Yao ritual manuscripts have generally been regarded as literary manifestations of the success of the imperial “civilizing project” among non-Han peoples, with previous scholarship considering Yao ritual manuscripts in terms of their contents and treating them as mere “textual artefacts”. In contrast, this essay argues in favor of conceptualizing Yao ritual manuscripts as “objects of value”, and shows

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how the Yao have projected their diverse perceptions of the state's "civilizing" power as part of the cultural value attached to writing, as well as the object-hood embodied in ritual manuscripts.

Key words: religion, Yao, ritual manuscripts, ordination, Chinese imperial state.

Introduction

1. Rethinking Yao Religious Culture: The “Sinification Approach” and Its Limitations

Since the 1980s, on account of its highly Daoism-influenced ritual performance and manuscripts, Yao religious culture has generally been dubbed “Yao Daoism” (Yaochuan Daojiao 瑤傳道教) in academic circles.¹ The inception of this nomenclature and its extended implication of viewing the Yao as a highly sinicized non-Han people can be traced back to an insightful yet speculative essay, “The Tao among the Yao: Taoism and the Sinification of South China,” written by Michel Strickmann in 1982. Strickmann states,

In the twelfth century, new and simplified forms of Taoist ritual spread throughout south China, with official participation and support. At the same time, the Yao, one of the major ethnic groups of the region, were brought more effectively than ever before under Chinese control. There is still no certainty about when our present-day Yao Taoist rituals were originally composed, but it seems safe to assume that by the thirteenth century a process had begun, which doubtless accelerated with time: the sinification of the Yao and certain other aboriginal groups, through conversion to Taoism.²

Since then, in their discussions of Yao religious culture numerous

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1. Unless otherwise specified, the romanizations used are the Hanyu Pinyin 漢語拼音 system of Mandarin Chinese. I use International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to present the languages of the two Yao groups, Mien and Mun, most concerned here. Diacritics and tone marks are omitted in most cases for sake of simplicity, but will be shown when considered absolutely necessary.
 2. Michel Strickmann, “The Tao among the Yao: Taoism and the Sinification of South China,” in *Rekishi ni okeru minshū to bunka—Sakai Tadao sensei koki shukuga kinen ronshū* 歴史における民衆と文化——酒井忠夫先生古稀祝賀記念論集 (Peoples and cultures in Asiatic history: collected essays in honour of Professor Tadao Sakai on his seventieth birthday), pp. 27–28.

scholarly works have picked up on the Sinification argument, postulated by Strickmann. For example, having based himself entirely on Strickmann Jacques Lemoine states that, in essence, Yao religion and its ritual performance were borrowed from Chinese Daoism (Zhongguo Daojiao 中國道教).³ Inspired by this, Hu Qiwan 胡起望 and various other scholars have proposed the term “Yao Daoism” in an attempt to position the ritual traditions of the Yao as a diffused school related to Chinese Daoism, thereby elevating the Yao and bringing them closer to the centre of Chinese civilization.⁴

Although the Sinification argument has gradually become the dominant discourse in the study of Yao religious culture, it should be noted that the emergence of the term “Yao Daoism” has been largely a scholarly construct. Before Strickmann and Lemoine, the study of Yao religion actually placed an emphasis on “primitive belief,” because this augmented the barbarian image of the Yao.⁵ Most interestingly, an entry, “Taoism and the Yao People,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* uses the term “Yao Taoism,” albeit this has been classified as “Taoism Outside China.”⁶ On the other hand, many scholars have also criticized Strickmann’s argument for its lack of substantial textual evidence and its ignorance of the complexity in-

3. Jacques Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*.

4. Hu Qiwan 胡起望, “Lun Yaochuan Daojiao” 論瑤傳道教 (A discussion of Yao Daoism), *Yunnan shehui kexue* 雲南社會科學 1:61–69. Guo Dalie 郭大烈 et al., eds., *Yao wenhua yanjiu* 瑤文化研究 (A study of Yao culture), p. 100. Guo Wu 郭武, *Daojiao yu Yunnan wenhua: Daojiao zai Yunnan de chuanbo, yanbian ji yingxiang* 道教與雲南文化——道教在雲南的傳播、演變及影響 (Daoism and Yunnan culture: the diffusion, transformation and influence of Daoism in Yunnan), pp. 228–33. Xu Zuxiang 徐祖祥, *Yaozu de zongjiao yu shehui: Yaozu Daojiao jiqiyu Yunnan Yaozu guanxi yanjiu* 瑤族的宗教與社會：瑤族道教及其與雲南瑤族關係研究 (The religion and society of the Yao: Yao Daoism and its influence on the Yao in Yunnan).

5. Xu Zuxiang, *Yaozu de zongjiao*, pp. 1–13.

6. Lowell Skar, “Taoism and the Yao People,” in Fabrizio Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 188–90.

volved in the formation of the Yao people in history.⁷

Whether one is in agreement with the sinicized or primitive aspect of Yao religious culture, Yao religion has undoubtedly displayed a syncretic interaction between Daoist religious tradition and local ritual practice, for Strickmann has noticed that [the Yao documents] “reveal a thoroughgoing adaption of Taoist ritual models to indigenous traditions and practices.”⁸ As Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart have concluded, “Syncretism has presumably always been part of the negotiation of identities and hegemonies in situations such as conquest, trade, migration, religious dissemination and intermarriage.”⁹ Therefore, although it can still be designated superficial, the “Sinification Approach” might have rightly located the religious domain as the interface at which the imperial Chinese states attempted to implement their “civilizing project,”¹⁰ in their process of incorporating local societies in South China by military force, by introducing Chinese literacy and Daoist sacra-

7. David Holm, “The Exemplar of Filial Piety and the End of the Ape-Men Dong Yong in Guangxi and Guizhou Ritual Performance,” *T’oung Pao* 90:32. Barend ter Haar has stated his criticism of Strickmann’s hypothesis on the following website, <http://faculty.orinst.ox.ac.uk/terhaar/yao.htm> (accessed December 11, 2014). Eli Alberts, *A History of Daoism and the Yao People of South China*, pp. 12–16.

8. Strickmann, “The Tao among the Yao,” p. 24.

9. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart, “Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism,” in Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, eds., *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, pp. 19–20.

10. Here, I adopt Stevan Harrell’s definition of “civilizing project.” By “civilizing project,” Harrell means “a kind of interaction between people, in which one group, the civilizing center, interacts with other groups (the peripheral peoples) in terms of a particular kind of inequality,” as “inequality” refers to “the ideological basis in the center’s claim to a superior degree of civilization, along with a commitment to raise the peripheral peoples’ civilization to the level of the center, or at least closer to that level.” See Stevan Harrell, “Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them,” in Stevan Harrell, ed., *Cultural Encounters on China’s Ethnic Frontiers*, p. 4.

ments into non-Han Chinese societies.¹¹

Be that as it may, the “Sinification Approach” proposed manifests a strong top-down perspective and therefore it hinders insight into the different ways in which the Yao had remodelled or negotiated with the religious traditions of universal claims and global dispersal, and the probable imperial influence and state intervention these entailed, in their own cultural-religious schema.¹² Many scholarly works on Daoist ritual traditions adopted and performed in non-Han societies have positively attested the need for a nuanced account of the interaction. For instance, David Holm’s research on the rituals and narratives surrounding a Chinese filial son, Dong Yong 董永, in Zhuang society, shows that “. . . Taoist ritual elements were adopted by local communities to serve as protective covering for indigenous traditions and practices, and that the underlying ‘model’ remained an indigenous one.”¹³ To account for the dynamics in the interaction between Daoism and local religious practices, Paul Katz has proposed a term “trans-hybridity” as a conceptual tool with which to elucidate the simultaneous process of the deliberate transmission of Daoist doctrine and liturgy into village religions and their gradual absorption of indigenous beliefs and practices.¹⁴ Having acquiesced in the proposition raised by the “Sinification Approach” but nonetheless inspired by scholarship that accounts for a nuanced process in the interaction between Daoism and local beliefs, this essay examines the Yao agencies in their practices of Daoist ordination and the transmission of ritual manuscripts.

11. Strickmann, “The Tao among the Yao,” pp. 23–30. Also see James Wilkerson, “Negotiating Local Tradition with Taoism: Female Ritual Specialists in the Zhuang Religion,” *Religion* 37(2): 150–63.

12. With reference to Sherry B. Ortner, *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism*.

13. Holm, “The Exemplar of Filial Piety,” *T’oung Pao* 90:63–64.

14. Paul R. Katz, “Repaying a Nuo Vow in Western Hunan: A Rite of Trans-Hybridity?” *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology* 11(2): 1–88.

2. Rethinking Yao Ritual Manuscript: The “Library Approach” and Its Limitations

Beginning from a local viewpoint, this essay also puts forward a hypothesis that views Yao ritual manuscripts as “objects of value” rather than as merely “textual artefacts.” Apart from the afore-mentioned “Sinification Approach” that stresses Yao acquisition of Chinese literacy and Daoist religious elements as a civilizing consequence of imperial governance, another approach to Yao manuscripts, a recent development that often involves international co-operation and investigation, one to which I refer to as the “Library Approach,” is derived from a consultation of those manuscripts now in print, in Western public collections and in collection projects.¹⁵ Its emphasis is heavily biased towards cataloguing and compiling. Therefore, many scholarly works that have been produced under the influence of this “Library Approach” involve compilations,¹⁶ catalogues,¹⁷ introductory articles¹⁸ and research on

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15. There are projects whose specific goal is to collect and preserve endangered Yao manuscripts. For example, Bradley C. Davis, “A Yao Script Project: ‘Culture,’ Texts, and Literacy in Contemporary Vietnam,” *IIAS Newsletter* 56, <http://www.iias.nl/the-newsletter/article/yao-script-project-culture-texts-and-literacy-contemporary-vietnam> (accessed January 28, 2014). “Preservation of Yao manuscripts from South Yunnan: Text, Image, and Religion” was the result of a one-year project awarded in 2012, that included co-operation with Sun Yat-sen University and the Archive of Yunnan Provincial Administrative Office of Minority Classics, as well as the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), British Library, <http://eap.bl.uk/database/awards.a4d?award=2012;r=41> (accessed January 28, 2014).
 16. Shiratori Yoshirō 白鳥芳郎, ed., *Yōjin monjo* 僜人文書 (Yao documents). Yuenan Laojiesheng wenhua tiyu lüyou ting 越南老街省文化體育旅遊廳, eds., *Yuenan Yaozu minjian guji, yi* 越南瑤族民間古籍一 (Ancient Yao books in Vietnam, volume one).
 17. Thomas O. Höllmann and Michael Friedrich, eds., *Handschriften der Yao* (Yao Manuscripts).
 18. Lucia Obi and Shing Müller, “Yaozu zhi zongjiao wenxian: gaishu Bafaliya zhouli tushuguan zhi guancang Yaozu shouben” 瑤族之宗教文獻：概述巴伐利亞州立圖書館之館藏瑤族手本 (Yao Manuscripts: Introduction to the

categorization.¹⁹

At this juncture, the research carried out under the influence of the “Library Approach” is still in its initial phase. Take, for example, the four European libraries and museums: the Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde (the National Museum of Ethnology) in Leiden (now on loan to the East Asian Library of Leiden University) (hereafter the Leiden Collection), the Bodleian Library of Oxford University (hereafter the Oxford Collection), the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (the Bavarian State Library) in Munich (hereafter the Munich Collection) and the Institut für Sinologie, Universität Heidelberg (the Sinological Institute of Heidelberg University) (hereafter the Heidelberg Collection), of which I have had first-hand visiting experience.²⁰

Collection of Yao Manuscripts in the Bavarian State Library, Religiöse Schriften der Yao. Überblick über den Bestand der Yao-Handschriften in der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek), Chunmei Zhan 詹春媚, trans., *Min-su ch'ü-i* 民俗曲藝 150:227–79. Guo Wu 郭武, “Guanyu Niujin daxue tushuguangcang Yaozu wenxian de diaocha baogao” 關於牛津大學圖書館藏瑤族文獻的調查報告 (A Survey of the Yao Manuscripts Housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), *Daojiao yanjiu xuebao* 道教研究學報 4:287–336. He Hongyi 何紅一, “The Ancient Magical Books of the Yao People: A Study of the Yao Manuscripts in the Collection of the Library of Congress”. This report is only available online as a PDF file, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/asian/YaoMaterial.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2014).

19. Zheng Hui 鄭慧, *Yaozu wenshu dang'an yanjiu* 瑤族文書檔案研究 (Study of Yao documents and files).

20. I have visited the Leiden Collection on numerous occasions since I began my doctoral research in Leiden in October 2009. I visited the Oxford Collection from December 7–9, 2009 and managed to glance through 122 manuscripts during my short stay. I visited the Heidelberg Collection from July 2–6, 2012 and read through all the 210 copies. From August 13–16, 2012, I made a trip to access the Munich Collection. During my short visit, I was able to make a closer reading of twenty-two ritual manuscripts concerning goddesses of fertility. My visits to these collections were helped by Koos Kuiper and A. J. D. L. Sison at the East Asian Library, Leiden University; David Helliwell at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University;

The most accessible library collection for me has been the Leiden Collection. So far, the only mention of this collection has been confined to the chapter entitled “The Yao Manuscripts’ in the book *Catalogue of Chinese and Sino-Western Manuscripts: In the Central Library of Leiden University*.²¹ The chapter lists twenty-nine Yao manuscripts, only those in the University Library, that were acquired independently of the collection in the museum, annotated with basic cataloguing information. The Oxford Collection has been documented in a report written by Guo Wu 郭武, entitled “A Survey of the Yao Manuscripts Housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford” (*Guanyu Niujin daxue tushuguan cang Yaozu wenxian de diaocha baogao* 關於牛津大學圖書館藏瑤族文獻的調查報告). This article is basically a personal note on 289 manuscripts (out of 307), with randomly selected entries extracted from the covers or contents of the manuscripts.²²

Among the four European collections of Yao manuscripts, the

Hanno Lecher at the Sinological Institute, Heidelberg University; and Lucia Obi at the Bavarian State Library in Munich. I am very grateful to them for their help.

21. Koos Kuiper, ed., *Catalogue of Chinese and Sino-Western Manuscripts: In the Central Library of Leiden University*, pp. 42–67.
22. Guo Wu states that there are over 1,000 Yao manuscripts stored at the Bodleian Library (“Guanyu Niujin daxue,” p. 292, footnote 15. Unfortunately, I cannot verify this information by following the website link he provided. Instead, in one of our email exchanges David Helliwell has mentioned that the total number of Yao manuscripts is 307 (shelf marked Sinica 3241–4547). Whereas, Lucia Obi states that there are 311 copies of Yao manuscripts in the Oxford Collection. See Lucia Obi, “Yao Manuscripts in Western Collections,” paper presented at “ヤオ族伝統文献研究国際シンポジウム” (International Symposium on Research of Yao Traditions), Kanagawa University 神奈川大学, November 23, 2010. The website containing information on the Oxford Collection is: <http://www.isca.ox.ac.uk/research/medical-and-ecological-anthropology/eastern-medicines-and-religions/analysing-manuscripts-of-yao-nationality-daoism/> (accessed January 28, 2014).

Munich Collection is the largest with 2,776 copies of texts. So far, the research on the Munich Collection has been the most fruitful, resulting in an exhibition held for two months in late 1999, a catalogue book, *Handschriften der Yao* (Yao Manuscripts), published in 2004, and a substantial article, “Yao Manuscripts: Introduction to the Collection of Yao Manuscripts in the Bavarian State Library” (*Yaozu zhi zongjiao wenxian: gaishu Bafaliya zhouli tushuguan zhi guancang Yaozu shouben* 瑶族之宗教文獻：概述巴伐利亞州立圖書館之館藏瑶族手本), originally published in 1996 and later translated into Chinese and printed in 2005.²³ Nevertheless, the publications relating to the Munich Collection are mostly for introductory and public display purposes. Last but not least, the Heidelberg Collection, with 210 manuscripts in total, has not yet undergone any processing at this stage.²⁴

The “Library Approach” definitely deserves credit for its efforts to give us an overall picture of the Western collections of Yao manuscripts, particularly in terms of genres and purposes. Nevertheless, it has also implicitly risked treating Yao manuscripts merely as “textual artefacts” because of its strong inclination to display and preserve the Yao religious culture and ritual manuscript in a library context. In other words, the Yao religious culture and ritual manuscripts are principally handled in a context that is alienated from their provenance. As Hjørleifur Jonsson points out, in his review article on exhibits and picture books about the Yao before 2000, “a textual approach will miss whatever relevance these texts have had for the Yao. Given social, economic, religious, and other variety among the more than two million Yao people [in Southeast

23. There is an exhibition catalogue: Thomas O. Höllmann and Michael Friedrich, eds., *Botschaften an die Götter. Religiöse Handschriften der Yao. Südchina, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar* (Instructions to the Gods: Yao Religious Manuscripts. South China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar). The exhibition website is <http://willie.itg.uni-muenchen.de:9076/projekte/exhib.htm> (accessed January 28, 2014).

24. The Heidelberg Collection shares the same origin as the Leiden Collection that belongs to the National Museum of Ethnology.

Asia], it is unlikely that there ever was a uniform Yao set of meanings for these texts.”²⁵ In agreement with Jonsson, I also acknowledge that one of the consequences of a “Library Approach” is blindness to how different actors in Yao society engage in writing practice and what kind of ideology the duplication and circulation of texts create and enforce.

To transcend the limitations entailed by both the “Sinification and Library Approaches,” this essay proceeds in the following steps. It commences with a brief account of who the Yao are and the methodologies and field sites used in the research. The essay then makes a comparison between the different forms of ordination among the Yao 瑶, She 畬 and Hakka 客家, revealing the extent to which this ceremony is intertwined with patrilineal ancestor worship and the development of a lineage society, both essential mechanisms in connecting local society with the Chinese imperial state and drawing the societies of the periphery closer to the centre over the last four centuries.²⁶ The next step in the essay is to illustrate how the ideological basis of filial piety (*xiaoshun* 孝順), an important Confucian value that underpins the performance of the rites of ancestor worship, has been employed to sustain the practices of Yao ordination and manuscript culture. Besides its acknowledgment of the strong patrilineal ideology pertaining to the performance and transmission of the Yao ritual legacy, the essay also investigates Yao cultural constructions of the value attached to Chinese literacy and why it is important to approach the ritual manuscript as an “object of value.”

The Yao People

“Yao” is an English transliteration of the Mandarin pronuncia-

25. Hjorleifur Jonsson, “Review Articles,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 88:223.

26. Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿, *Ming Qing Fujian jiazu zuzhi yu shehui bianqian* 明清福建家族組織與社會變遷 (Lineage organization and social change in Fujian during the Ming and Qing).

tion of a Chinese character 獠, 徭 or 瑶.²⁷ As have the terms “barbarian” (*man* 蠻) and “Miao” 苗, Yao was once an umbrella exonym used by the Han Chinese in official records to cover a wide range of southern non-Han Chinese peoples. Evidence in the Chinese official sources suggests that the term “Yao” was initially an administrative and territorial category, and only later did it become an ethnic marker.²⁸ David Faure says that, during the Ming dynasty

27. In Chinese official sources, there have been three ways of composing the character. First is the character 獠, composed of a “dog” radical on the left and a phonetic element on the right. The first appearance of the character might be dated from the year of 1163, and it was used up through early Republican times (1912–1949) (Cushman, pp. 49–55.). The “dog” radical is believed to have an apparent association with wild beasts, expressing contempt toward non-Han groups (Alberts, p. 26). Second is another form of the character 徭, with the radical meaning “step on the left foot” on the left, or, alternatively 徭, with the “human” radical on the left (Ibid., p. 24). The graph 徭 means “corvée.” The character in question has undergone another change after the founding of the People’s Republic of China (1949–). The third written form of “Yao” is 瑶, with the “jade” radical meaning “a precious stone.” Following the guiding principle, *mingcong zhuren* 名從主人 (named after the original owner), set by Mao Zhedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976) in the early 1950s, the Chinese Communist Party used the character with “jade” radical to avoid the unpleasant associations of the earlier forms, be it “wild beasts” or “people subject to corvée.” The modern change in the written form of the character Yao is not only of political significance, but also has cultural impact. In terms of academic circle, especially in China, the cultural impact has been shown in the prevalent modification of the two previous written forms into the present form, even in the reprints of and citations about the official documents and literary works before 1949. The “presentism,” an attitude toward the past dominated by present-day attitudes and experiences, has often caused the loss of the distinctions between and the associations with the two previous written forms. See Richard D. Cushman, “Rebel Haunts and Lotus Huts: Problems in the Ethnohistory of the Yao,” PhD diss., Department of Anthropology, University of Cornell, pp. 49–55. Eli Alberts, *A History of Daoism*, p. 24, 26.

28. Alberts, *A History of Daoism*, pp. 23–95.

(1368–1644), especially from the mid-Ming, status boundaries were rigidified, as a consequence of this process the term “Yao” was transformed into a marker of ethnicity in the modern sense of “nationality” (zu 族).²⁹ As Pamela K. Crossly, Helen F. Siu and Donald S. Sutton rightly note, “Indeed all modern national republics can be shown to have defined their national populations through the backward process of identifying their ‘ethnic’ groups.”³⁰ The present situation in which various local groups are now recognized as a “Yao nationality” is undoubtedly an outcome of the enterprise shown by Chinese bureaucrats in their efforts to create a modern state.

The Chinese Ethnic Classification Campaign (Minzu Shibie Yundong 民族識別運動) in the early 1950s identified the Yao as an ethnic group principally made up of highland peoples living in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Hunan, Yunnan, Guangdong and Guizhou.³¹ According to the demographic survey published in 2010, the “Yao” in China number roughly 2.79 million.³² Currently, the ethnic label “Yao” actually includes diverse peoples who speak different languages and have distinct cultures. It also excludes groups that could be meaningfully included (such as the

29. David Faure, “The Yao Wars in the Mid-Ming and Their Impact on Yao Ethnicity,” in Pamela K. Crossley et al., eds., *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, pp. 171–89.

30. Pamela K. Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton, “Introduction,” in Pamela K. Crossley et al., eds., *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, p. 1.

31. Based on the Stalinist concept of nationality that is defined by the sharing of such common characteristics as language, costume, culture, belief and lifestyle, the campaign was carried out by the government in cooperation with academia and eventually produced a count of 56 officially recognized nationalities, including the Han as the major nationality. See Thomas S. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*.

32. National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 中華人民共和國國家統計局, <http://data.stats.gov.cn/search/keywordlist2;jsessionid=B0BD67C6AAE17277DBA9107507F033A?keyword=2010年瑤族人口> (accessed February 18, 2014).

Miao in Hainan, an omission which is a simple mistake in classification, and even the She).³³ Linguistically, there are at least four different language groups that are classified as ethnic Yao. These four groups include such Miao-speaking groups as the *Pu nu*, such Yao-speaking groups as the *Mien*, such Dong-Sui-speaking groups as the *Lak kja* and such Chinese dialect-speaking groups as the *Piog tuo jo* (autonyms in all cases). Importantly, these four Yao groups cannot communicate with each other in their own languages.³⁴ The long and the short of it is that classification into the same language group does not necessarily indicate mutual intelligibility; for example, within the Yao-speaking group there are at least six different sub-groups speaking different languages that are mutually unintelligible.³⁵ Very significant differences in cultural practice are also found between some of these sub-groups. Although in their adherence to ritual traditions, Daoist beliefs and rituals take precedence in religious life among most of the Yao- and Dong-Sui-speaking groups, obvious borrowings from the Han Chinese religious culture are less prominent in the Miao-speaking group.³⁶

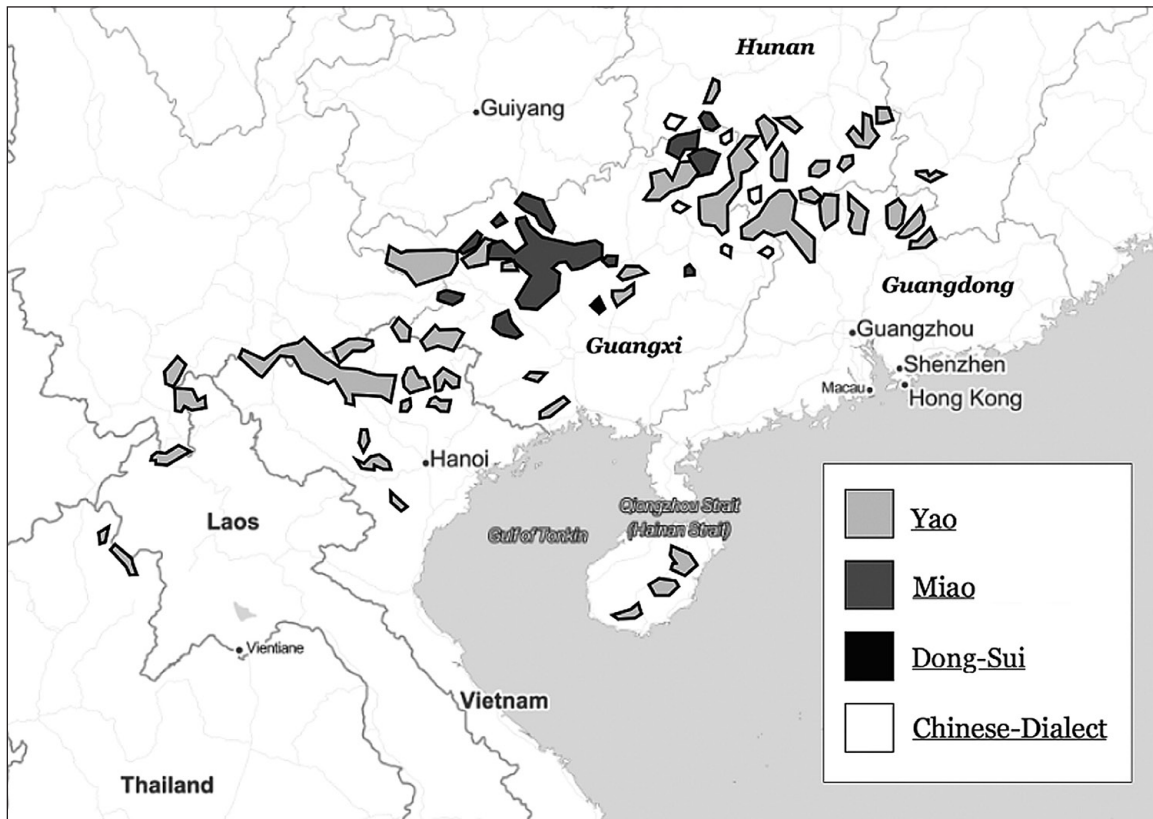
In Vietnam, where they are classified as one of the fifty-four official ethnic groups in that country, the Yao are known as *Người*

33. Huang Guiquan 黃貴權, *Yaozuzhi, xiangwan: Yunnan Yaozu wenhua yu minzu rentong* 瑤族志：香碗——雲南瑤族文化與民族認同 (An ethnography of the Yao, incense bowl: culture and ethnic identity of the Yao in Yunnan), pp. 302–05. Wu Yongzhang 吳永章, *Shezu yu Miao-Yao bijiao yanjiu* 畚族與苗瑤比較研究 (Comparative study of the nationalities of the She, Miao and Yao).

34. Robert S. Ramsey, *The Languages of China*, pp. 278–85. For a further understanding of the constructed nature of ethnic classification with a focus on the Yao, see Chen Meiwen, “Constructed History: Ethnic Yao in Modern China,” *Leidschrift* 26(1): 93–108.

35. Mao Zongwu 毛宗武, *Yaozu Mianyu fangyan yanjiu* 瑤族勉語方言研究 (Research on dialects in the Mien language group).

36. Chen Meiwen 陳玫姣, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende goucheng yu shengming de lai yuan* 從命名談廣西田林盤古瑤人的構成與生命的來源 (Conceptualizations of personhood and the origins of life as seen in naming traditions among the Pangu Yao of Tianlin, Guangxi), pp. 11–15.



Map 1: Language Distribution of the "Yao."³⁷

Dao. They are just one group of the Yao dispersed throughout up-land Southeast Asia who are the descendants of different waves of ethnic migrations that have taken place intermittently within the last 300 to 400 years.³⁸ The Yao populations in Australia, Canada, France and the United States are the result of more recent migrations in the aftermath of the Indochina Wars (1946–1979).³⁹ Wheth-

37. Based on Robert S. Ramsey, *The Languages of China*, pp. 278–85.

38. Takemura Takuji 竹村卓二, *Yaozu de lishi yu wenhua* 瑶族的歷史與文化 (The history and culture of the Yao), Zhu Guichang 朱桂昌 and Jin Shaoping 金少萍, trans., pp. 4–5. But, according to Cushman, "Yao may well have been present throughout their modern range of distribution in South China and Vietnam since the eleventh century" (Cushman, "Rebel Haunts and Lotus Huts," p. 141).

39. Ralph A. Litzinger, *Other Chinas: The Yao and the Politics of National Belonging*, pp. xi–xii.

er the Yao diaspora was voluntary or forced, all the Yao dispersed outside China can trace their roots back to China.⁴⁰



Map 2: "Yao" Migration.⁴¹

Two groups of Yao-speaking people, the Iu-Mien and the Kim-di or Kimmun (autonyms), represent the majority of the Yao outside of China. "Mien" means "people," and "iu" might represent either a name of Chinese origin, presumably in its Cantonese vocalism, or it might be an indigenous self-designation.⁴² There are various exonyms used in Chinese written documents to refer to this Yao sub-group (see Table 1). One of the commonly used exonyms is Pan Yao 盤瑤 (or Pangu Yao 盤古瑤), literally meaning "Plate Yao",

40. Huang Yu 黃鈺 and Huang Fangping 黃方平, *Guoji Yaozu gaishu* 國際瑤族概述 (Introduction to the Yao worldwide). Hjørleifur Jonsson, "War's Ontogeny: Militias and Ethnic Boundaries in Laos and Exile," *Southeast Asian Studies* 47:125–49.

41. Based on Huang Yu and Huang Fangping, *Guoji Yaozu gaishu*, preface 8.

42. Christopher Anthony Forbes Court, *Fundamentals of Iu mien (YAO) Grammar*, p. 2. Cushman, "Rebel Haunts and Lotus Huts," pp. 49–55.

or “the people who believe in the mythic dog-ancestor Panhu.”⁴³ Kimdi or Kimmun (or simply Mun) means “the people in the forest.”⁴⁴ As is the case for the Mien, a number of different exonyms are used to designate this Yao sub-group (see also Table 1). A commonly used exonym, Landian Yao 藍靛瑤, literally means “Indigo Yao”, or “those who make dye.”⁴⁵ In Thailand both “Yao” and “Yiu mien” (iu mien) are used interchangeably; the Yao in Laos are known by both the exonym Yao and the autonyms Mien and Mun.⁴⁶ For sake of convenience, in this essay the label “Yao” is used when referring to the people classified or recognized as “Yao” in a variety of geographical localities. When it comes to addressing the two Yao groups most concerned here specifically and respectively, I prefer to use the autonyms Mien and Mun.

The bulk of the collections of Yao manuscripts from Southeast Asia now kept in various American and European libraries and museums come from these two specific Yao sub-groups. In Southeast Asia, multiple factors, among them poverty, political pressure, loss of knowledge and perhaps even market demand, have caused the Yao to renounce their ritual legacy since the 1970s.⁴⁷ This is the reason so many Yao ritual manuscripts from Southeast Asia have been able to be collected by purchase by the American and Europe-

43. Yan Fuli 顏復禮 and Shang Chengzu 商承祖, eds., *Guangxi Lingyun Yaoren diaocha baogao* 廣西凌雲瑤人調查報告 (Survey of the Yao people in Lingyun, Guangxi), p. 21.

44. Guangxi Zhuangzu zizhiqu bianjizu 廣西壯族自治區編輯組, *Guangxi Yaozu shehui lishi diaocha, diliuce* 廣西瑤族社會歷史調查第六冊 (The social and historical survey of the Yao people in Guangxi, volume six), p. 129.

45. Yan Fuli and Shang Chengzu, *Guangxi Lingyun Yaoren*, p. 12.

46. Jacob Cawthorne, “Taoism and Self-Governance: The Yiu Mien of Laos,” paper presented at the Conference on “Asian Borderlands: Enclosure, Interaction and Transformation, 2nd Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network,” Chiang Mai University (RCSD), Thailand, November 5–7, 2010, p. 4.

47. Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, p. 7.

Table 1: Exonyms for Mien and Mun.⁴⁸

Language	Autonyms	Exonyms
Yao-language speaking	Iu-Mien (Mien)	Pangu Yao 盤古瑤, Pan Yao 盤瑤, Panhu Yao 盤瓠瑤, Guoshan Yao 過山瑤, Daban Yao 大板瑤, Xiaoban Yao 小板瑤, Ban Yao 板瑤, Dingban Yao 頂板瑤, Jiantou Yao 尖頭瑤, Pingtou Yao 平頭瑤, Hongtou Yao 紅頭瑤, Jiangnan Yao 箭桿瑤, Niujiao Yao 牛角瑤, Tu Yao 土瑤 (in Hezhou, Guangxi 廣西賀州), Bendi Yao 本地瑤, Hua Yao 花瑤 (in Yangshuo, Guangxi 廣西陽朔), Ao Yao 坳瑤, Zheng Yao 正瑤, Liang Yao 糧瑤
	Kimdi or Kimmun (Mun)	Landian Yao 藍靛瑤, Shanzi Yao 山子瑤, Huatou Yao 花頭瑤, Sha Yao 沙瑤, Pingtou Yao 平頭瑤, Juzi Yao 坵子瑤

an museums and universities.⁴⁹

Field Sites

In order to conduct my investigation into Yao manuscripts, I travelled to two Yao villages located in western Guangxi 廣西. The first is Weihao, a Mien hamlet in Fanchang Village, Lizhou Township, Tianlin County, Baise City 百色市田林縣利周鄉凡昌村偉好屯 in northwest Guangxi; the second is Dingcao, a Mun hamlet in Kujiao Village, Nanping Township, Shangsi County, Fangchenggang City 防城港市上思縣南屏鄉枯叫村丁草屯 in southwest Guangxi (the area is also known as Shiwan Dashan 十萬大山 [Ten Thousand

48. Based on Mao Zongwu, *Yaozu Mianyu fangyan yanjiu*, pp. 3, 6–8.

49. In his review article that mentions the Munich collection of Yao manuscripts, Jonsson further reveals the ongoing international trade-network, “By asking traders about these goods, I learned that the German library most likely acquired its collection over a few years from a calligraphy dealer in England, who bought them from a ‘tribal and primitive art’ dealer in Thailand. This specialist in Yao materials in turn makes collecting trips.” Jonsson, “Review Articles,” p. 223.

Big Mountains]). Weihao has been an anthropological fieldwork site of mine since I commenced my MA thesis research in 1999.⁵⁰ My familiarity with the Mien language and the people in this particular village made it a natural choice to do research on Yao manuscripts. The reason I went to Dingcao was the connection I had been able to establish there with the help of Deng Wentong 鄧文通 and Wang Meigui 王美桂.

Deng Wentong is a retired teacher of Mun origin and an ordained Daoist priest, who has written widely on many aspects of Yao studies. When Deng learned that I had been researching Yao beliefs and practices centring on the goddesses of fertility for my PhD project, he kindly directed my attention to the *Guangxi Yaozu shehui lishi diaocha, diliuce* 廣西瑤族社會歷史調查第六冊 (The social and historical survey of the Yao people in Guangxi, volume six).⁵¹ He told me that many manuscripts, including the texts containing stories of goddesses of fertility, had been confiscated from the vicinity of Fangchenggang City during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Fortunately, in the 1980s they could be rescued from the police station in Shangsi County by a research team in which Deng Wentong had participated, and some of the contents of the manuscript collection were compiled and published in this volume.⁵² A compelling desire to reposition the printed contents of the manuscripts back in their provenance, including the relevant manuscripts kept in several of the European library collections I had re-

50. See Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*. Based on a revision of my MA thesis, this book is an ethnographic study of the Mien in Weihao with respect to naming and ritual practices.

51. Guangxi Zhuangzu zizhiqiu bianjizu, *Guangxi Yaozu*.

52. The majority of the members of the research team were teachers and researchers from the present Guangxi University for Nationalities (previously Guangxi College for Nationalities 廣西民族學院). Apart from Deng Wentong, the team had also included the late Zhang Youjun 張有雋, another well-known Chinese scholar of Yao studies. Deng said it was mainly thanks to Zhang's efforts that the collection of confiscated texts was able to be processed and published.

viewed, spurred me on to grasp any opportunity to visit one of these Mun villages in the course of this research.

Wang Meigui's connections with and knowledge of several Mun villages in Shangsi, including Dingcao, strengthened my resolve to go to Dingcao. Wang Meiguan was a secretary at the College of Ethnology and Sociology 民族學與社會學學院 of Guangxi University for Nationalities 廣西民族大學 when we met in 2012. She has a master's degree in religion and conducted fieldwork for her master's thesis in Shangsi in 2007. When she learned what the purpose of my investigation was, she immediately pinpointed Dingcao for me, stressing the presence of the many skilled ritual specialists resident there. Through her I was able to visit Dingcao and meet the people and collect the data I present in this article.

Library Survey

The Yao manuscripts I have employed in making my analysis originate from two kinds of sources. The first is my own collection that consists of copies of manuscripts gathered during various field trips to Guangxi and Yunnan between 1999 and 2012. The latter is composed of collections preserved in different libraries and museums in Europe.⁵³ I obtained the first group of Yao manuscripts not by purchasing them but by visiting their present owners and asking their permission to make either digital or hard copies of the texts. In my study of the second group of Yao manuscripts, I have undertaken separate research trips to access the collections of Yao manuscripts preserved in the four different locations in Europe. The library collection most accessible to me has been the Leiden Collection, whose manuscripts will be paid particular mention and employed in the analysis in this essay.

53. There is another library collection of 214 Yao manuscripts outside of Europe, conserved in the Asian Division Collection at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. To have a general overview of the collection, see <http://www.loc.gov/rr/asian/yao.html> (accessed January 28, 2014).

Ordination: Practising the Patrilineal Ideology

The performance of an ordination ceremony can be witnessed among many of the different groups now labelled ethnic “Yao” in China. Apart from the Mien and Mun, the *Lak kja* (Chashan Yao 茶山瑤), *Kjɔŋ nai* (Hualan Yao 花籃瑤), *Dzau min* (Pai Yao 排瑤) and *Piog tuo jo* (Pingdi Yao 平地瑤) also practise ordination.⁵⁴ Only the Mun and *Lak kja* differentiate between the two extant ritual traditions and hold separate ordinations for either Daoist priests or ritual masters. The She and Hakka, two ethnicities originating from the same geographical area and sharing a close proximity of origin with the Yao, once also held ordinations for male members, although these rituals have either been largely transformed into ancestor worship rituals (among the She) or have fallen into a decline (among the Hakka) as will be discussed below.⁵⁵

The terms for ordination and the regulations governing it have varied over time and between different ethnic groups.⁵⁶ The gener-

54. The group names are given in their autonyms, with the exonyms in brackets. Zhang Zehong 張澤洪, *Wenhua chuanbo yu yishi xiangzheng: Zhongguo xinan shaoshu minzu zongjiao yu Daojiao jisi yishi bijiao yanjiu* 文化傳播與儀式象徵——中國西南少數民族宗教與道教祭祀儀式比較研究 (Cultural transmission and ritual symbolism: a comparative study of religions and Daoist worship rituals among ethnic minorities in Southwest China), pp. 35–71.

55. Jiang Bingzhao 蔣炳釗, “Shezu de Panhu chongbai jiqi zongjiao xisu” 畬族的盤瓠崇拜及其宗教習俗 (Panhu worship and religious practices among the She), in Song En-Chang 宋常恩, ed., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu zongjiao chubian* 中國少數民族宗教初編 (First compilation of the religions of Chinese ethnic minorities), pp. 408–17. Chan Wing-Hoi 陳永海, “Ordination Names in Hakka Genealogies: A Religious Practice and Its Decline,” in David Faure and Helen F. Siu, eds., *Down to Earth: The Territorial Bond in South China*, pp. 65–82.

56. Liu Guangyuan 劉光原, “Cong shiwu tantao zhongguo Guangxi Baise Landian Yaoren de zongjiao shijian” 從食物探討中國廣西百色藍靛瑤人的宗教實踐 (A discussion of the religious practices of the Landian Yao in Baise, Guangxi from a dietary perspective), MA thesis, Institute of Anthropology, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan, p. 19.

al terms for ordination in the Chinese language, and also used by the Yao, are *dujie* 度戒 or *chuandu* 傳度.⁵⁷ The Mun refer to the ordination of a Daoist priest as *dou taau* 度道 (*dou*: transfer; *taau*: the Way) and the ordination of ritual masters as *dou θai* 度師 (*θai*: master).⁵⁸ This modest number is surpassed by the Mien who have at least four levels of ordination in their clerical hierarchy. In order of sequence they are: *kwa dang* 掛燈 (hanging the lamps), *tou sai* 度師 (ordination of the master), *chia tse* 加職 (adding duties) and *pwang ko* 封科 (or *chia tai* 加太) (enfeoffing liturgies).⁵⁹ The She refer to ordination as *zuo jiao* 做醮 (performing the jiao [ritual]), *dushen* 度身 (ordination) or *rulu* 入錄 (entering the [Daoist] register) and *jizu* 祭祖 (worshipping the ancestors). In a reference to the Hakka, the *Xinning xian zhi* 新寧縣誌 (The gazetteer of Xinning County) of 1552 indicates that the ordination ceremony was then designated *shoufa* 受法 (receiving the *fa* [method]) or *dushui* 度水.⁶⁰

57. Other Names in Chinese that are used by the Yao are *guofa* 過法, *zhaidao* 齋刀, and *dadaolu* 打道錄. See Chen Bin 陳斌, *Yaozu wenhua* 瑤族文化 (Yao culture), p. 104. Also see Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, p. 111.

58. Liu Guangyuan, "Guangxi Baise Landian Yaoren," p. 19. Huang Guiquan 黃貴權, "Landianyao de hua, 'dou,' renguan: Nahongcun Landianyao dansheng, wenghua, shuadou he dushi liyi de diaocha yu yanjiu" 藍靛瑤的花、「斗」、人觀——那洪村藍靛瑤誕生、翁花、要斗和度師禮儀的調查與研究 (The conceptualizations of flowers, constellations and person: a survey of birth ceremonies, flower rites, rituals for supplementing rice and ordination), *Wenshan xueyuan xuebao* 文山學院學報 16(3): 161–67.

59. The terms are in Mien language. Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, pp. 117–20. Jacques Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, pp. 24–27. David Holm, "Daoism among Minority Nationalities", in Edward L. Davis, ed., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture*, pp. 136–37.

60. Cited in Chan Wing-Hoi, "Ordination Names in Hakka Genealogies," pp. 68–69. A similar pursuit of higher social status via ordination (*jizu*, ancestor worship) can also be found among the She. See Jiang Bingzhao, "Shezu de Panhu chongbai," pp. 408–17.

The ordination ceremony is multifaceted. Among the Yao, it consists of an initiation rite for males that allows the postulants to enter the priesthood.⁶¹ All male Yao have to be initiated by this ritual, because “the Yao ordination is the only way to salvation and consequently must be extended to the whole community.”⁶² Jacques Lemoine uses the term “collective priesthood” to contrast Yao ordination with the contemporary Chinese Daoist system. This collective nature of Yao ordination appears to be a distant mirror of the earliest days of Daoism—namely, the Heavenly Masters’ Church of the second century AD—a time when communal ordination was popular.⁶³ In contrast, the Chinese ordination singles out the ordained priests individually, and the members of this elite act out their spiritual roles on behalf of a community of laymen.⁶⁴

Significantly for this essay, the Yao ordination also acts as a local educational mechanism through which its initiates are given the chance to acquire Chinese literacy, as they are expected to have a grounding in norms and values as well as be able to master the ritual skills required to communicate with gods, ghosts and ancestors.⁶⁵ Although it can be understood as a “rite of passage” (*chengnianli* 成年禮) in which males are initiated into adulthood, in the Mien and Mun communities the age of the postulants can in fact range from as young as five to into the sixties.⁶⁶ Another important dimension of ordination is that it also attributes the initiates

61. Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, pp. 21–33.

62. Ibid., p.33.

63. Holm, “The Exemplar of Filial Piety,” *T’oung Pao* 90:33. Kristofer Schipper, “Vernacular and Classical Rituals in Taoism,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 45(1): 24.

64. Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, p. 33.

65. Deng Hua 鄧樺, “Yunnan Wenshan Landianyao dujie yishi jiaoyu guocheng de yanjiu” 雲南文山藍靛瑤度戒儀式教育過程的研究 (Research on the Educational Process of the *Dujie* Ceremony of the Wenshan Indigo Yao Nationality in Yunnan), PhD diss., Southwest University.

66. Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, p. 24. Huang Guiquan, “Landianyao de hua, ‘dou’renguan,” pp. 161–67.

an ethnic identity. Should he undergo a Yao Daoist ordination, a non-Yao male will be accepted as a Yao.⁶⁷

Most importantly, the clerical hierarchy of ordination (among the Mien) affords gifted families and talented individual males a means by which to attain social status.⁶⁸ One very good example is found in an entry in the earlier-mentioned *Xinning xian zhi* describing a *dushui* ceremony that shares many similarities with the *dujie* practised by the Yao (the Mien in particular). The account clearly records that, "Those who are eager for swift promotion have the rite performed three or four times a year, being raised to a higher rank each time. One or two members of the literati (*shiren* 士人) are known to have shamelessly knelt below such altars and received ordination in this manner."⁶⁹

In the context of the present discussion, one aspect of ordination particularly relevant to the argument is, as Yoshino Akira aptly puts it, that, "It acts as a ritual re-affirmation of the patrilineal kinship system."⁷⁰ Yoshino illustrates three aspects of patrilineal ideology brought to the fore in Mien ordination, with a special focus on *kwa dang* (written as *kwaa taang* in the original) in North Thailand. The first aspect is the importance of fathers and close agnates in the master-disciple relationship.

In *kwaa taang*, an initiate establishes a relation with three *say-tie* (masters). Amongst the *say-tie*, the first master, *tsu pun say*, should be his father, or a close elder agnate if the father is dead,

67. Peter Kandre, "Autonomy and Integration of Social Systems: The Iu Mien ('Yao' or 'Man') Mountain Population and Their Neighbors," in Peter Kunstadter, ed., *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, pp. 584–85. Takemura Takuji, *Yaozu de lishi yu wenhua*.

68. Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, pp. 21–33. Chen Meiwen, *Cong ming-ming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, pp. 117–20.

69. Cited in Chan Wing-Hoi, "Ordination Names in Hakka Genealogies," p. 69.

70. Yoshino Akira 吉野晃, "Father and Son, Master and Disciple," in Suenari Michio, J. S. Eades and Christian Daniels, eds., *Perspectives on Chinese Society: Anthropological Views from Japan*, p. 266.

and the second, *khoy gyaaw say*, should be his close agnate. It indicates that the father-son relation and patrilineal kinship relation are re-affirmed in this ritual process as the master-disciple relation. In particular, the ritual segments of blowing rice grains into an initiate's mouth and of the provision of guardian spirits mean that magical power and guardian spirits are symbolically transmitted through the patrilineal line. . . .⁷¹

Although in reality, “. . . an actual instructor in ritual knowledge might be an expert priest other than one's father,” the evidence seems to show that having one's father or a close agnate as *tsu pun say* is considered the most ideal situation.⁷² Very significantly, magical power and guardian spirits can only be inherited by male descendants.

The second aspect of ordination that reaffirms the patrilineal ideology is the heavy emphasis on surname identity. As Yoshino reports, “The second master *khoy gyaaw say* should be a male with at least the same surname as the initiate.”⁷³ The third dimension of patrilineality in *kwa dang* concerns ancestor worship. Yoshino explains that the Mien people use the concept of *dzip tsow* or *dzip tsong-tsey* to explain the implication of *kwa dang*.

Dzip means “to succeed” or “to join to”; *tsow* means “ancestors”; and *tsong-tsey* means “patrilineal line from the ancestors”. So the joint meaning of the words is “to join the ancestors or to succeed to patrilineal ancestor worship”.⁷⁴

It is noteworthy that having one's own father or a close agnate, or at the very least a man with the same family name, as a postulant's master does not seem to be required among the Mien in Weihao or the Mun in Dingcao. Nevertheless, despite the divergences in detail, the patrilineal ideology of ordination, particularly its affiliation

71. Ibid., p. 270.

72. Ibid., p. 270.

73. Ibid., p. 270.

74. Ibid., p. 271.

with ancestor worship, is still easy to ascertain.

An ultimate expression of the patrilineal ideology behind ordination is that in ordination ancestors and descendants can reciprocally affect each other's status and rank. That is to say, if the ancestors have not been ordained or submitted themselves to a higher-level ordination ceremony, their descendants cannot contemplate their own ordination until the ancestors have been ordained or elevated to the level to which they are aspiring themselves. As Jacques Lemoine states, "If nobody has ever been ordained in the postulant's family, he is enjoined by tradition to invite the souls of his grandfather and great-grandfather to be ordained with him and thus to benefit from the same privileges."⁷⁵ Should this indeed be the case, a postulant will carry a piece of red cardboard in the shape of a pentagon with the Han Chinese-style names or the previous ordination names of his ancestors written on it, a gesture that ensures they will be accepted as participants in a joint ordination.⁷⁶ Conversely, if the ancestors of the household have been ordained into a particular rank, the male offspring are expected to follow in their footsteps and achieve the same level of ordination.⁷⁷

Given this male-centred orientation, it should come as no surprise that having male descendants is an essential requirement if a family is to carry on the practice of ordination. Of course, it is always possible that a family might not produce male descendants. In such cases, diverse marriage patterns and flexibility in ascribing non-Yao people ethnic recognition through ritual—for example, adoptees from other ethnic groups—present the means to mitigate the difficulty caused by a failure in the male line.

The Yao practise three types of marriage, including *sa sie* (women marrying out; virilocal residence), *mai tan* (men marrying out; permanent uxori-local residence) and *i pun tin* (men marrying out; initially uxori-local residence, then virilocal residence).⁷⁸

75. Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*, p. 33.

76. Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, p. 116.

77. Takemura, *Yaozu de lishi yu wenhua*, p. 165.

78. The language examples are from the Mien.

Among the three types of marital practice, the latter two exemplify an idea of gender equality that places the female gender on the same footing as its male counterpart in terms of inheriting land, property, houses and being able to pass on a woman's family name identity to her children.⁷⁹ These two types of marriage practice can also be used to meet the demands of the patrilineal inheritance of ordination, meaning that an uxori-local son-in-law substitutes as a son if there are no sons in the family into which the son-in-law marries. As Yoshino concludes,

A male who has not undergone *kwaa taang*, can become a permanent uxori-local husband. After marriage, he has to be initiated in *kwaa taang* with his wife's agnates and affirm his relationship with his wife's ancestors. However, in the case of a temporary uxori-local husband, he will only hold a ritual to get a permission from his wife's household's ancestors to stay in the house temporarily.⁸⁰

The androcentric ordination structure means that it is susceptible to being linked to or even completely overwritten by the rites of patrilineal ancestor worship and the written genealogies compiled in the literati style, two distinguishing features of Chinese lineage society. The transformation of the ordination ceremony among the She and Hakka, two groups that have been more thoroughly engulfed by Chinese state expansion and consequently developed into lineage society more explicitly than the Yao, gives a glimpse of this sort of transition.

Among the She, apart from being called *zuo jiao* 做醮, *dushen* 度身 or *rulu* 入錄, ordination is primarily considered a rite of ancestor worship, *jizu* 祭祖. Two aspects of ancestor worship are emphasized in it: one is the importance of male descendants; the other is the Confucian norm and value of filial piety. The "Sheminshi" 畬民詩 (Poetry about the She People) written by Zhou Yingmei 周應枚

79. Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, p. 46–55.

80. Yoshino, "Father and Son, Master and Disciple," pp. 271–72.

says: "The most important thing for the nine clans is ancestor worship; the most important thing for a family is to have male descendants."⁸¹ As in the case of Yao Daoist ordination, if the father has undergone ordination, the sons are likewise expected to submit themselves to the ceremony as candidates. A male descendant who has not undergone the *jizu* ceremony cannot be regarded as a filial son and take charge of his father's funeral.⁸²

The external threats, the decline in ordination and its susceptibility to being incorporated into a male-centred literati tradition are attested to in the ways in which the Hakka have written the names of the ancestors in their genealogies.⁸³ Chan Wing-Hoi points out, "Many Hakka genealogies contain names of ancestors described as *langming*, *faming* or *duming*," which are undoubtedly ordination names.⁸⁴ The two forms of the names discovered in Hakka genealogies are:

The first has the character *fa* [法, method] as the first of two characters [after the family name]. The other consists of a non-numeric character followed by a numeral and then the character *lang* [郎, a respected title for men, gentlemen, husband], . . . a variant of the *lang* form found in earlier generations consists of only a numeral followed by the character *lang*.⁸⁵

81. From "The Customs of the She people" (*Fengsu five: Shemin fu* 風俗5：畬民附) in Hu Shouhai 胡壽海, Shi Enwei 史恩偉 and Chu Chengyun 褚成允, compiled, *Suichang xian zhi* 遂昌縣誌 (The gazetteer of Suichang County), volume eleven. The text in Chinese reads "九族推重緣祭祖，一家珍重是生孩。"

82. Hu Xiansu 胡先驊, "Zhejiang Wenzhou Chuzhou jian Tumin Sheke shulue" 浙江溫州處州間土民畬客述略 (A brief description of the Tu, She and Hakka people in Wenzhou and Chuzhou, Zhejiang Province), *Kexue* 科學 7(2): 280–81.

83. Chan Wing-Hoi, "Ordination Names in Hakka Genealogies," pp. 65–82.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Women can receive ordination names courtesy of their husbands. The form of the female ordination name among the Hakka is:

. . . similar names are given in the form of either a numeric character followed by the character *niang* [娘, women, wives] or a two-character given name beginning with the character *miao* [妙, excellent, wonderful, mysterious, subtle].⁸⁶

Although the rules seem straightforward, it is obvious that the forms of ordination names have gradually been corrupted. For instance, in later genealogies the numeric element was disposed of. During the seventeenth century and later, the writing of ordination names disappeared altogether. Chan explains the changes in the names of the ancestors from the perspective of social transformation. Highlighting the connection between ordination names and the ancestors set up in the ritual performance of *fengchao*, Chan defines the use of *langming*, *faming* and *duming* in Hakka genealogies as, “. . . elements of the lineage before the written genealogy became popular.” The disappearance of these names and the dominance of written genealogies in the literati style, “. . . represented the acknowledgement of the supremacy of a new tradition,” that brought the Hakka much closer to becoming a lineage society.⁸⁷

The examples from the She and Hakka show that ordination, or the espousal of patrilineal ideology by a local society, signifies that the society is highly likely to be transformed into a lineage society subject to Chinese state governance. In contrast to the She and Hakka, the contemporary Yao still practise communal ordination and retain ordination names composed in a similar fashion to those that used be written in Hakka genealogies. However, the most significant difference between the Yao and the She and the Hakka is that the Yao, at least the Mien and Mun discussed here, did not seem to put any emphasis on compiling genealogies, elaborate in

86. Ibid., p. 65.

87. Ibid., p. 82.

both content and form, written in Chinese literati style.⁸⁸

The Yao genealogy is interchangeably called *jiapu* 家譜, *jiaxian-dan* 家先單, or *zongzibu* 宗支簿 in Chinese.⁸⁹ The simplest form of Yao genealogy might only contain the ordination names of both the male and female ancestors of the household up to three or five preceding generations, without stating any other information about their lives. The material representations in the genealogy are also by no means elaborate. The names of the ancestors might just be jotted down on several pieces of rice paper (see Illustration 1). The more elaborate form of Yao genealogy might record information about the migratory routes of the ancestors, the places where they were buried and how many offerings they deserve in rituals (see Illustration 2).

Nevertheless, unquestionably the Yao Daoist ordination does display select characteristics of a lineage society that emphasize father-son relations, family-name identity, patrilineal descent and, especially, the Confucian norm and value of filial piety. The next section illustrates how the discourse of filial respect has been employed by the Yao people to justify the transmission of ritual manuscripts and the practice of ordination.

Filial Piety as Motivating Force

The ownership of Yao ritual manuscripts, in most cases, projects the owner's mastery of Chinese literacy as well as his ability to communicate with the otherworldly domain. His literary and religious capacities have in their turn helped generate the social reputation of the owners, as Hjørleifur Jonsson has shown in his study of the Mien headmen in Thailand.⁹⁰ In this sense, the possession of

88. With reference to Taga Akigorō 多賀秋五郎, *Zhongguo zongpu de yanjiu* 中國宗譜の研究 (Studies of Chinese genealogies).

89. Huang Guiquan, "Landianyao de hua, 'dou,' renguan," p. 162. Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, pp. 77–79.

90. Hjørleifur Jonsson, "Dead Headmen: Histories and Communities in the Southeast Asian Hinterland," in Ing-Britt Trankell and Laura Summers,

ritual manuscripts and the attainment of ordination names have been important means by which males acquire “symbolic capital.”⁹¹ In the Yao case, “symbolic capital” denotes social recognition, social status and a better material life as ritual specialists receive meat and, sometimes, money, for their services. In other words, Yao men’s pursuit of “symbolic capital” has been a driving force that has ensured the continuous composition of ritual manuscripts and the practice of ordination ceremonies.

In addition to the appeal of “symbolic capital,” filial piety that stresses loyalty to their male ancestors by male descendants has also acted as an ideological basis to legitimate the continuity of Yao ritual legacy on the household level. When I asked Li Decai 李德才, a Mien ritual master in his sixties in Weihao, why he wishes to pass the ritual manuscripts down to his children, he said it is so that in their turn his descendants will understand how to demonstrate their filial piety to their elders. Li Decai himself has no sons but he does have six daughters and two of them have married-in husbands who have taken up permanent uxori-local residence. One of the married-in sons-in-law has learned how to perform rituals by working alongside Li Decai; the other, who was uninterested, has not. However, neither is the ideal candidate to whom Li Decai would like to transfer his collection of ritual manuscripts, composed of nearly sixty books. Li implicitly hints that these two married-in sons-in-law are remiss in their expressions of filial piety towards him. Therefore Li would like to pass the manuscripts on either to his first grandson, who respects and admires him, or to another daughter for whom he cares very deeply, if this daughter should eventually choose to remain at home when she takes a husband.

Showing filial respect to the elders and ancestors, rather than the mastery of Chinese literacy, seems to have been one of the ma-

eds., *Facets of Power and Its Limitations: Political Culture in Southeast Asia*, pp. 191–212.

91. Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, translated by Randall Johnson.

major motivating forces in the reproduction of ritual manuscripts, not to mention the on-going observation of ordination ceremonies. A similar explanation was given to me when I asked Deng Wentong why he had been ordained a Daoist priest, even though he is not interested in actually practising this role. Deng said that the main reason he underwent the ordination ceremony was to make his mother happy. As the wife of a prestigious ritual specialist, Deng's mother did not want him to continue to be known by his childhood name (*xiaoming* 小名). As an ordination ceremony is the only means by which a Yao male can obtain an ordination name that will be used in rituals after that person dies, Deng Wentong's response indicates that his agreement to undergo the ordination ceremony was more than just a cultural ideal and an outward expression of religious performance. In his case, it was also an emotional choice, the outward and visible sign of showing his filial respect by preserving a family's ritual identity.

Nevertheless, besides its reaffirmation of the patrilineal ideology, the Yao cultural construction of the value attached to Chinese literacy has revealed another important dimension that sustains the performance of Yao ordination and the practice of writing. It is my contention that Yao manuscripts, particularly the manuscripts employed in ritual performances, cannot be regarded simply as "textual artefacts" that represent the ritual knowledge transmitted through ordination. Their value surpasses this and therefore they should also be viewed as "objects of value" that contain talismanic power and symbolize distant authorities.

The Value of Writing and Books

Unlike many societies along the borders of Southwest China and dispersed across the uplands of Southeast Asia that have stories or myths explaining either the origin or the loss of literacy, the Yao have no such story of their own.⁹² When asked where the man-

92. James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, pp. 220–37.

uscripts came from originally, Li Decai told me they were obtained by Xuanzang 玄奘, a fictional character modelled on the historical Tang dynasty Buddhist monk of the same name in the novel *The Journey to the West* (circa 1592). Zhang Zhenzhen 張振針, a Mun Daoist priest in his sixties from Dingcao, suggested the texts might perhaps have been passed down from Confucius 孔子.⁹³ Whereas Li Decai's answer might also betray influences from the popular story of *The Journey to the West*, of which he might have heard at some point in his life, Zhang Zhenzhen's attribution of Chinese literacy to Confucius might have its roots in the ritual texts sung among Yao-speaking groups, in this case, the Ao Yao 坳瑤 in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County 金秀瑤族自治縣 in Laibin City 來賓市, central Guangxi.

One of the songs sung to entertain the deities in vow-honouring (*huanyuan* 還願) rituals is "The Song for King Pan" (*Panhuang shenchang* 盤皇神唱).⁹⁴ In essence, the song narrates the origins of

93. Very interestingly, even if Yao religion has been considered to be a vernacular form of Daoism, labelled "Yao Daoism," by scholars, neither Li Decai nor Zhang Zhenzhen has mentioned any Daoist origins of the manuscripts. However, I did find textual evidence associating scriptures (*jingshu* 經書) with the mythical founder of Daoism, Laojun 老君 (The Grand Supreme Elderly Lord). The story is recorded in the "Song of Laojun" (*laojunchang* 老君唱) from a Mun ritual-master manuscript entitled *Xiuzhai jiexun* 秀齋解玄, owned by Pan Yuanji 盤院機, discovered in Guangnan County 廣南縣, Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture 文山壯族苗族自治區, Yunnan 雲南省 (my own collection). The story tells of how, with the help of a rat, Laojun was able to steal all the scriptures back from Maitreya 彌勒, regarded as a future Buddha in this world, after Maitreya had pillaged the sun, the moon, the stars and all the wealth of the world.

94. The ritual text is possessed by an Ao Yao ritual master, Pan Dalan 盤達蘭, in Luoyun Village 羅運村, Luoxiang Township 羅香鄉 in Jinxiu 金秀. See Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui minzu weiyuanhui bangongshi 全國人民代表大會民族委員會辦公室, eds., *Guangxi Dayaoshan Yaozu geyao gushiji* 廣西大瑤山瑤族歌謠故事集 (Compilation of Yao folksongs and stories on the Big Mountain of the Yao, Guangxi), p. 79.

everything in the world: humankind, households, fire and, most relevant here, literacy. One sentence states, "The Emperor [only a title of respect] Yan Hui had created writing (or a book) and characters; writing and the characters were devised to teach the commoners."⁹⁵ As Yan Hui 顏回 was one of the disciples of Confucius, the lyrics reveal a clear association of literacy with the Confucian schools that have long been a philosophical pillar of Chinese statecraft. Furthermore, in a song devised to entertain King Pan, "Heaven and Earth Move" (*tiandidong* 天地動), the lyrics explicitly correlate writing or books with the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子, namely the Chinese emperor).⁹⁶ Judging from the context, writing or books might be a particular reference to the Registers (*biaozou* 表奏), a genre ritual masters consult to send petitions to the deities. They read, "The Chinese Emperor had created the Registers to be sent back to the capital . . . the Chinese Emperor had created the Registers to be sent back to the prefecture."⁹⁷ Daoist pantheons and ritual practices have run parallel to the Chinese hierarchical bureaucratic system, and the deities inhabiting them are equated with imperial officials.⁹⁸ Therefore it is unsurprising to discover that the Chinese emperor was projected even more explicitly as the creator of a bureaucratic system in which the sending of registers had been one of the means of communication. The creation of Chinese literacy and the registers used for ritual communication were symbolically associated with emperors and Confucian statecraft. In other words, Chinese literacy and its material manifestations, namely, ritual manuscripts, are perceived to be something that originated from a powerful Other, the Chinese imperial state.

That Chinese literacy is not something native to the Yao be-

95. The sentences in Chinese read "顏回皇帝造書字，造成書字教人民。"

96. The song is sung to a melody called "Huang Tiao Sha" 黃條沙 (literally, Strip of Yellow Sand) by the Mien on the Big Mountain of the Yao 大瑤山, Laibin, Jinxiu.

97. The sentences in Chinese are "天子造書歸報京. . .天子造書歸報州." See Quanguo renmin, eds., *Guangxi Dayaoshan Yaozu geyao gushiji*, p. 65.

98. Stephan Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor*.

comes apparent when four words, “reading,” “writing,” “book” and “character,” that all have a clear indication of literacy in the Mien language, are considered. To begin with, it is noteworthy that the spoken languages that the Yao use include three sorts of languages dependent on different settings. The first type of language is referred to as “everyday language,” used in daily interactions. The second type is “folksong language,” used during folksong performances. The last type is “religious language,” used exclusively in religious settings.⁹⁹ To give an example of these three types of language, the Yao term for “no” is *ma* in everyday language, *jam* in folksong language and *pat* in religious language.¹⁰⁰

If these words, “reading,” “writing,” “book” and “character,” as used in different types of linguistic discourse, are juxtaposed, it appears that their pronunciations are almost the same, with the exception of the slight modification in the vowels in the words for “book/writing” and “character” (along with the last consonant being dropped) when spoken in a religious setting. See Table 2.¹⁰¹

Undoubtedly, the reason for these similarities is that the four words were borrowed from the Chinese language. In the following table, I use proto-forms of Old Chinese (OC),¹⁰² Middle Chinese

99. Herbert C. Purnell, “‘Younian’ Yao minjian geyao de yunlü jiegou” 「優勉」瑶民間歌謠的韻律結構 (Prosodic structure of the folksongs of the Mien), in Qiao Jian 喬健 et al., eds., *Yaozu yanjiu lunwenji* 瑶族研究論文集 (Selected research papers on the Yao), pp. 143–55.

100. The examples are from the Mun. See Huang Guiquan, *Yaozuzhi, xiangwan*, p. 7.

101. The IPA has been transcribed by Pan Meihua 盤美花, a linguist who is in her forties and of Mien origin, now a teacher at the Faculty of Arts at Guangxi University for Nationalities.

102. William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *The Baxter-Sagart Reconstruction of Old Chinese* (Personal Communication, 2009), cited in Martha Ratliff, *Hmong-Mien Language History*, p. 272. Also see Appendix: Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese reconstruction http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Baxter-Sagart_Old_Chinese_reconstruction (accessed April 6, 2014).

Table 2. The syllables for “reading,” “writing,” “book/writing” and “character” in the Mien language

	Everyday language	Folksong language	Religious language
Reading	tu ^{ʔ22}	tu ^{ʔ22}	tu ^{ʔ22}
Writing	fiɛ ⁵³	fiɛ ⁵³	fiɛ ⁵³
Book/ writing	sou ³³	sou ³³	si ³³
Character	dzaŋ ²²	dzaŋ ²²	dzi ²²

(MC)¹⁰³ and Mandarin Pinyin (MP) as points of comparison to indicate the proximity as well as the modifications in the vowels and consonants of these four specific words.¹⁰⁴ See Table 3.

Since the pronunciation of the Yao terms is closest to the Middle Chinese and modern Mandarin pronunciations, it seems likely that the loans were not made at an early date when, for instance, final consonants were still in use. Judging from the fact that reading and writing in Chinese is especially common in a Yao religious context, it seems probable that these terms were first adopted in that context and later redeployed in the languages of daily use and folk-

103. William H. Baxter, *A Etymological Dictionary of Common Chinese Characters*. The dictionary is only available in PDF, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~wbaxter/pdf/d001-020.pdf> (accessed April 8, 2014). Cited in Ratliff, *Hmong-Mien Language History*, p. 272.

104. The Mandarin the Yao speak is not Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), but is based on the Pinghua dialect, earlier pronunciations of Chinese and occasionally Southwestern Mandarin (SWM), the Gui-Liuhua 桂柳話. Gui-Liuhua is now the unofficial *lingua franca* in Guangxi, the speech of Guilin and Liuzhou. With reference to David Holm, *Mapping the Old Zhuang Character Script: A Vernacular Writing System from Southern China*, pp. 42–44.

Table 3. Syllables of “reading,” “writing,” “book/writing” and “character” in OC, MC and MP

	Old Chinese (OC)	Middle Chinese (MC)	Mandarin Pinyin (MP)
Reading	*C.l ^ɿ ok	duwk	du ³⁵
Writing	*s-q ^h Aʔ	sjæX	xie ²¹⁴
Book/ writing	*s-ta	syo	shu ⁵⁵
Character	*Cə-[dz]ə-s	dziH	zi ⁵¹

songs.¹⁰⁵ In other words, originally the Yao did not have words for these four semantic fields in their language, but adopted these new ones in the processes of cross-cultural interactions.

The written and colloquial forms of Chinese predominate in the Yao religious domain and have therefore been regarded as a communicative resource. Nevertheless, the following two instances suggest that the Yao have considered Chinese literacy and its material manifestation to be something more than simply a communicative tool. Both are thought to be imbued with talismanic properties.

One instance to support this assertion was given by Zhang Zhenzhen. Zhang has a manuscript in his collection that contains all of the knowledge essential to a Daoist priest. This manuscript is entitled *The Golden Book for Daoist Priests: A Universal Handbook* (*daogong jinshu yiben zainei* 道公金書一本在內, hereafter *Golden Book for Daoist Priests*). Every Mun Daoist priest owns a copy of this book. Zhang himself has two copies. One version is written in an ordinary notebook in black ballpoint; the other has been written with a calligraphy brush on bound rice paper and includes three paintings of the “Three Pure Ones” (*sanqing* 三清) at the beginning

105. Feng Henggao 奉恒高, ed., *Yaozu tongshi, shangjuan* 瑶族通史上卷 (The elaborate history of Yao, volume one), pp. 282–85.

of the book. The contents of the two books are the same. Needless to say, the appearance of the version with the three paintings of the “Three Pure Ones” is much more striking and attractive from an aesthetic point of view. It is also this version of the *Golden Book for Daoist Priests* that unmistakably reveals all the outward and visible signs of the talismanic attributes of a book.

When I was first shown the ballpoint pen version, it did not cross my mind that one owner would have two copies of the same book. It was only at the very end of our interview, when Zhang must have felt more comfortable with me and was prepared to trust me, that he voluntarily displayed the decorative version that had been rolled up and wrapped in a thick plastic covering. He unrolled the manuscript with great care, telling me, “I would never sell this book, even if the buyer offered to give me 3,000 RMB.” (3,000 RMB is the equivalent of about 482 US dollars). When I viewed a video of a Mun ordination ceremony in which Zhang Zhenzhen had participated in 2007, I saw this aesthetically appealing version of the *Golden Book for Daoist Priests* still in its rolled up, carefully wrapped form, held in the hands of the other ritual master who was leading the postulants in their dancing and chanting.¹⁰⁶ The logical conclusion has to be that in this particular case, it was not the contents but the physical presence of the book itself that had the power of ensuring ritual efficacy.

Another example that reveals the Yao perception of books as talismanic is the way childhood names (*xiaoming*) are bestowed. Generally, a Yao, whether male or female, has three names given at different stages of his or her life: a childhood name, customarily bestowed on the third day after birth; a name in the Han Chinese style (*shuming* 書名), traditionally acquired upon attending school (only the men had this style of name in the past); and, as noted before, an ordination name (*faming*), received during their ordination ceremony (women are accorded ordination names along with their

106. The film was shot by Wang Meigui in 2007 and is kept at the College of Ethnology and Sociology of Guangxi University for Nationalities.

husbands).¹⁰⁷ For the sake of argument, at this juncture it is enough to focus on childhood names. In a description of Mien naming practice, I have argued that one of the most significant aspects of a childhood name is its perceived power to act as a talisman that protects children. The bestowal of a childhood name is carried out by a ritual master and is ritually confirmed by the child's ancestors (*jiaxian* 家先). In the name pool of the limited number of names for selection, the Han Chinese loan word "book" 書 (*sou* in Mien) has been one of the sources from which a ritual master can choose an auspicious name that will ensure a child's well-being.¹⁰⁸

From these examples, it is clear that Chinese literacy and its material manifestations entailed a positive dimension of the power of the Other in the eyes of the Yao. Yao cultural constructions of the value surrounding Chinese literacy as something imbued with talismanic power seems to infuse ritual manuscripts with an additional dimension, transforming them into "objects of value" rather than mere "textual artefacts." Having stated this hypothesis, I shall endeavour to show that there are at least two dimensions to Yao ritual manuscripts as "objects of value": as an heirloom and as a commodity. I shall also show that defining Yao ritual manuscripts as "objects of value", particularly as an heirloom, again demonstrates the dominance of the patrilineal ideology in the Yao religious domain.

Ritual Manuscript as "Object of Value"

1. Ritual Manuscript as an Heirloom

In one of our conversations, Huang Guiquan 黃貴權, a scholar of Mun origin who is currently a researcher at Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (Yunnan sheng shehui kexue yuan 雲南省社會科學

107. The Mien still retain the *xiaoming* naming practice, but the system has collapsed among the Mun in Dingcao.

108. Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, pp. 83–105.

院) as well as a Daoist priest, used the precise Chinese term “property” (*caichan* 財產) to indicate the significance of ritual manuscripts to the household of a ritual specialist. He said, “Ritual manuscripts are identical to household property. An owner who puts ritual manuscripts up for sale is not one jot different from a ruined landowner who sells his land. Unless the heirs to the ritual manuscripts no longer have the knowledge of how the ritual manuscripts should be used or only should the financial situation of the household drastically decline, would a Yao ever sell his ritual manuscripts.”¹⁰⁹ Huang’s statement indicates the very important dimension of Yao ritual manuscripts as heirlooms (*chuanjiabao* 傳家寶).¹¹⁰ Naturally, as Yao ordination is the manifestation of an androcentric ideology, it is not surprising that the inheritance of ritual manuscripts is exclusively patrilineal.

A description from the *Maguan xian zhi* 馬關縣誌 (The gazetteer of Maguan County) during the Republican Era (1911–1949) states: “The Yao . . . have books. The books are studied and passed from the fathers to sons.”¹¹¹ This description still aptly applies to the present situation. On either the front cover or last page of a ritual manuscript, a copyist not only writes down his own ordination name to claim merit for transcribing the text, he also states the books are to be passed down to male descendants, sons and grandsons. Such examples are numerous. For instance, a manuscript entitled *Ritual for Facing Heaven and Bowing a Hundred Times for Redemption* (*chaotian baibai ke xiaozui* 朝天百拜科削罪) (UB 2004–15 Folder 216, Leiden Collection) by Pan Chaozheng 盤朝正 (year of composition unclear) has, “This book is preserved for the sons and grand-

109. Interview notes. October 26. 2012.

110. Also see manuscript S3523 in Oxford Collection. The manuscript has the exact wording: *chuanjia guibao* 傳家貴寶 (precious heirloom). See Guo Wu, “Guanyu Niujin daxue tushuguanancang Yaozu wenxian,” p. 330.

111. Zhang Ziming 張自明 and Wang Fuchen 王富臣, *Minguo Maguan xian zhi* 民國馬關縣誌 (The gazetteer of Maguan County during the Republican Era). The text in Chinese reads “瑤人…有書，父子自相傳習。”

sons,” inscribed on the last page.¹¹² Of course, it can sometimes happen that there are no male descendants to inherit Yao ritual manuscripts. In this case, the alternative is to pass the books on to a son-in-law married to the book-owner’s daughter. As noted earlier, to qualify for the honour, he must have taken up permanent uxorilocal residence and have had his surname changed to that of the book-owner.

Another scenario that also cannot be excluded is that there are no ritual manuscripts to be inherited. Even though it is culturally mandatory that every Yao male adult should undergo the ordination and attain literary proficiency, many adult males do not actually have any real interest in religious practice and hence do not bother to have their manuscripts copied.¹¹³ Many ritual specialists I interviewed told me that their families had not left them any ritual manuscripts. Most of the manuscripts they had acquired were obtained by copying books from other ritual specialists, particularly those who had performed the ordination ceremony for them. For example, the father of Li Decai had not owned any manuscripts himself, let alone passed any down. Now Li has roughly sixty manuscripts in total, all of which he has personally transcribed himself. He told me that he had gone to two masters to copy their books: one was one of his ordination masters and the other was not.¹¹⁴ When I asked Li Decai if he had been given any manuscripts by the masters who had performed the ordination for him, his answer was a definite no.

It is a different story among the Mun, among whom the disciple will receive a copy of the Esoteric Words (*miyu* 祕語) transcribed by his ordination master. One example from the Leiden collection is *A Book of Esoteric Words for Ordination, Given by the Master of Ordination Jiang Xuanhong to the Disciple Deng Xian/Xuan-Cai to Apply Extensively to Attain the Way* (*yiben shoujie miyu jiedushi Jiang*

112. The text in Chinese reads “存本與兒子孫。”

113. Chen Meiwen, *Cong mingming tan Guangxi Tianlin Pangu Yao rende*, pp. 105–18.

114. Interview notes. September 19–23, 2012.

Xuanhong geifu dizi Deng Xian/Xuan-Cai yongying shifang shangdao 一本師授械（受戒）祕語械度（戒度）師蔣玄弘給付弟子鄧顯／玄財用應十方上道) (UB 2004–15 Folder 116, Leiden Collection). In this instance the colophon states the ordination names of both the master and the disciple. However, Huang Guiquan told me that *miyu* is the only manuscript that will be transcribed by a master and given to his disciple. In the majority of cases it seems that disciples have to replicate the books themselves. In other words, the collection of ritual manuscripts remains the heirloom of the household of a ritual specialist to be guarded and used by his male descendants, not his disciples.

2. Ritual Manuscript as a Commodity

Commissioning ghost-writers (*daibi* 代筆) to transcribe Yao ritual manuscripts has been one of the conventional channels by which those Yao who do not have manuscripts to inherit gain possession of them. For “non-literate” ritual specialists especially, this recourse is sometimes the only way to obtain books. During his lifetime, Deng Wentong’s father, Deng Yuxiang 鄧玉祥 (1916–1982), was a “non-literate” High Priest. Deng Yuxiang had the capacity to memorize all the ritual texts of both the Daoist-priest tradition and the ritual-master tradition, so that he could use them in ritual performances. The fact that he was not literate in Chinese was not a problem. In spite of what would seem a handicap, Deng Yuxiang was acutely aware of the spiritual property and cultural significance of ritual manuscripts and therefore he commissioned ghost-writers—sometimes people from his own kinship network but in most cases a Han Chinese or a Zhuang—to transcribe the texts for him. In fact, Deng Yuxiang obtained all of his manuscripts by commissioning them.¹¹⁵

It is also possible to find evidence of the commissioning of Yao manuscripts in ethnographic and textual references. Yoshirō Shiratori reports that many Yao ritual manuscripts he collected and com-

115. Interview notes (with Deng Wentong). September 25, 2012.

piled for the publication, *Yōjin monjo* (Yao documents), were purchased not from the Yao ritual specialists but from Tung Sheng-li 董勝利, a Han Chinese from Yunnan. Tung was married to a Yao woman and his job was to transcribe the Yao manuscripts handed down from generation to generation.¹¹⁶ In an acknowledgement of his capacity as a craftsman, a ghost-writer will inscribe either his full name or only his surname in the manuscripts he copies. For instance, the last page of a ritual manuscript (UB 2004–15 Folder 71, Leiden Collection) with an unidentifiable title contains the sentence, “This book was commissioned by the disciple Li Yunkai [and] transcribed by a ghost-writer surnamed Pan from western Guangxi.”¹¹⁷ In only a very few cases is the monetary transaction incurred in the commissioning of manuscript also indicated. For instance, one manuscript (UB 2004–15 Folder 163, Leiden Collection) contains the following account: “The humble book-copyist is a person belonging to the Liu household. The composition of the scripture was paid for at the conventional price.”¹¹⁸ The act of commissioning ritual manuscripts is a striking indication that the Yao regard writing and books as a precious possession and well worth commissioning copies of them.

It is noteworthy that, once handed over into the possession of the person who commissioned it, the ritual specialist, the same manuscript becomes a commodity as a consequence of the economic exchange between the former and the ghost-writer but the act of handing over subsequently transforms it into an heirloom. Once the document has passed into the hands of the person who commissioned it, the sale of a ritual manuscript as an economic commodity is regarded as immoral, as has been made clear by Huang Guiquan; they are heirlooms that objectify the ritual legacy of the household. As Igor Kopytoff rightly concludes, “Such shifts and differences in whether and when a thing is a commodity reveal a moral economy that stands behind the objective economy of visible

116. Shiratori, ed., *Yōjin monjo*, p. 334.

117. The sentences in Chinese are “弟子李雲開置 此粵西人潘氏代筆。”

118. The sentences in Chinese are “抄書之人劉宅屈筆 自依古價造得全。”

transactions.”¹¹⁹

Conclusion

This essay reveals that the patrilineal ideology that permeates Yao ordination makes it susceptible to becoming a candidate for incorporation into the practices involved in building a lineage society. Whereas the ordinations of the She and Hakka have already either been overwritten by ancestor worship or faded into history, the Yao still retain the communal practice of ordination that embraces only select characteristics of a lineage society. The religious domain can be seen an interface at which the Yao might have been under pressures for political and cultural incorporation into Chinese imperial state governance. And yet, it is also the interface at which the Yao have manifested their agencies in assimilating and transforming the impacts of the state “civilizing” power. The three examples discussed above support this statement.

The first example is that diverse Yao marriage patterns and the flexibility of ascribing non-Yao people ethnic identity through the agency of rituals have helped alleviate the strict demand for male descendants for ordination. That is to say, the ideology of gender equality, in terms of inheritance, has not been completely overwritten by the preference for male descendants. The second example is that, in a very straightforward manner, the Yao did not seem to favour the keeping of genealogies in the Chinese literati style. The third example derives from the fact that the Yao do not regard the ability to read and write to be prerequisites for the acquisition of Chinese literacy, unquestionably an important communicative tool in Daoist rituals. The existence of “non-literate” High Priests has proved this point strongly and unequivocally. Instead, they generally view writing and books, the products of state “civilizing projects,” as something representative of distant state authorities but

119. Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, p. 64.

also, closer to home, as a talismanic object. This discovery of the Yao perceptions of Chinese literacy has underlined for me the necessity of viewing ritual manuscripts as “objects of value” rather than as mere “textual artefacts”, a perspective implicit in the “Library Approach.” It has therefore been able to identify two kinds of object-hood pertaining to Yao ritual manuscripts—as an heirloom and as a commodity.

On the basis of the illustrations given, it is evident that the Yao religious interface is where the state has attempted to implement its “civilizing” influence by reinforcing the ideology of patrilineal descent and privileging the male gender. Yet, as far as can be ascertained, unlike the She and the Hakka communities that have been more profoundly integrated into Chinese state expansion in Southeast China, the Yao concerned here do not appear to have been completely transformed into a lineage society.

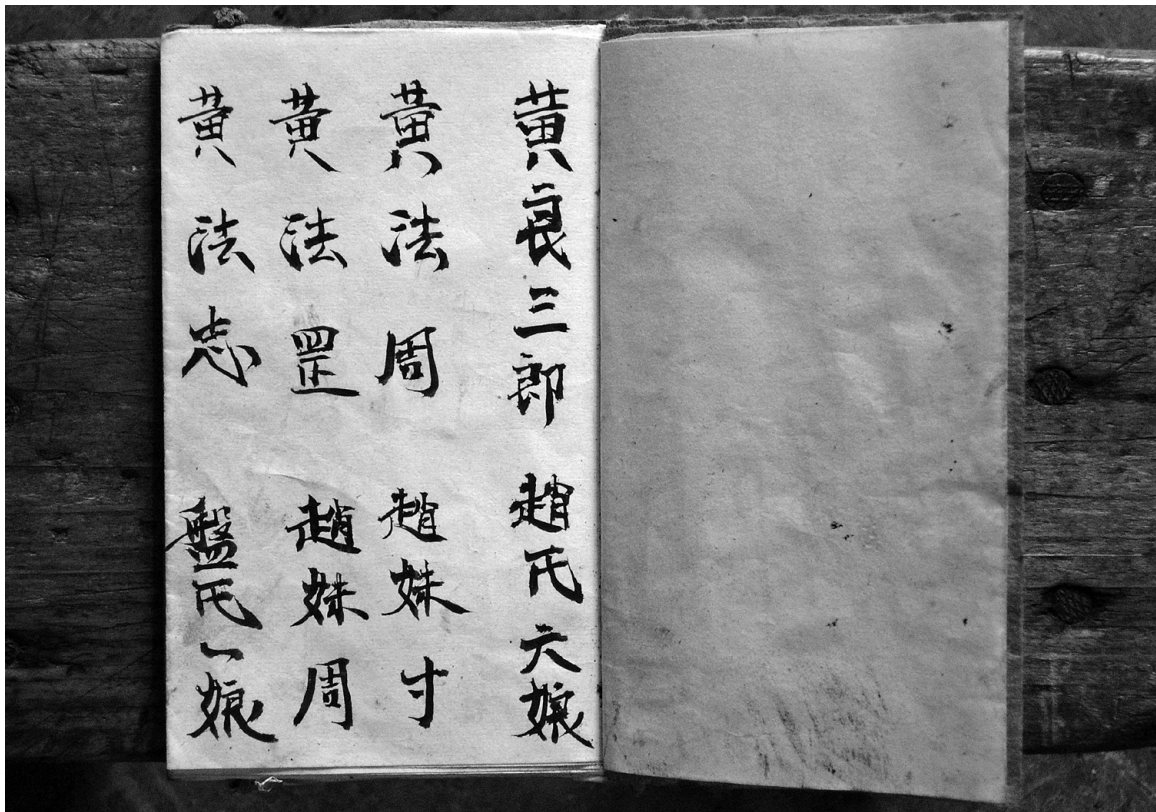


Illustration 1: *Jiaxiandan* 家先單 of Huang Jingui 黃金貴, Jinping County 金平縣, Yunnan. (Photo by Chen Meiwen)

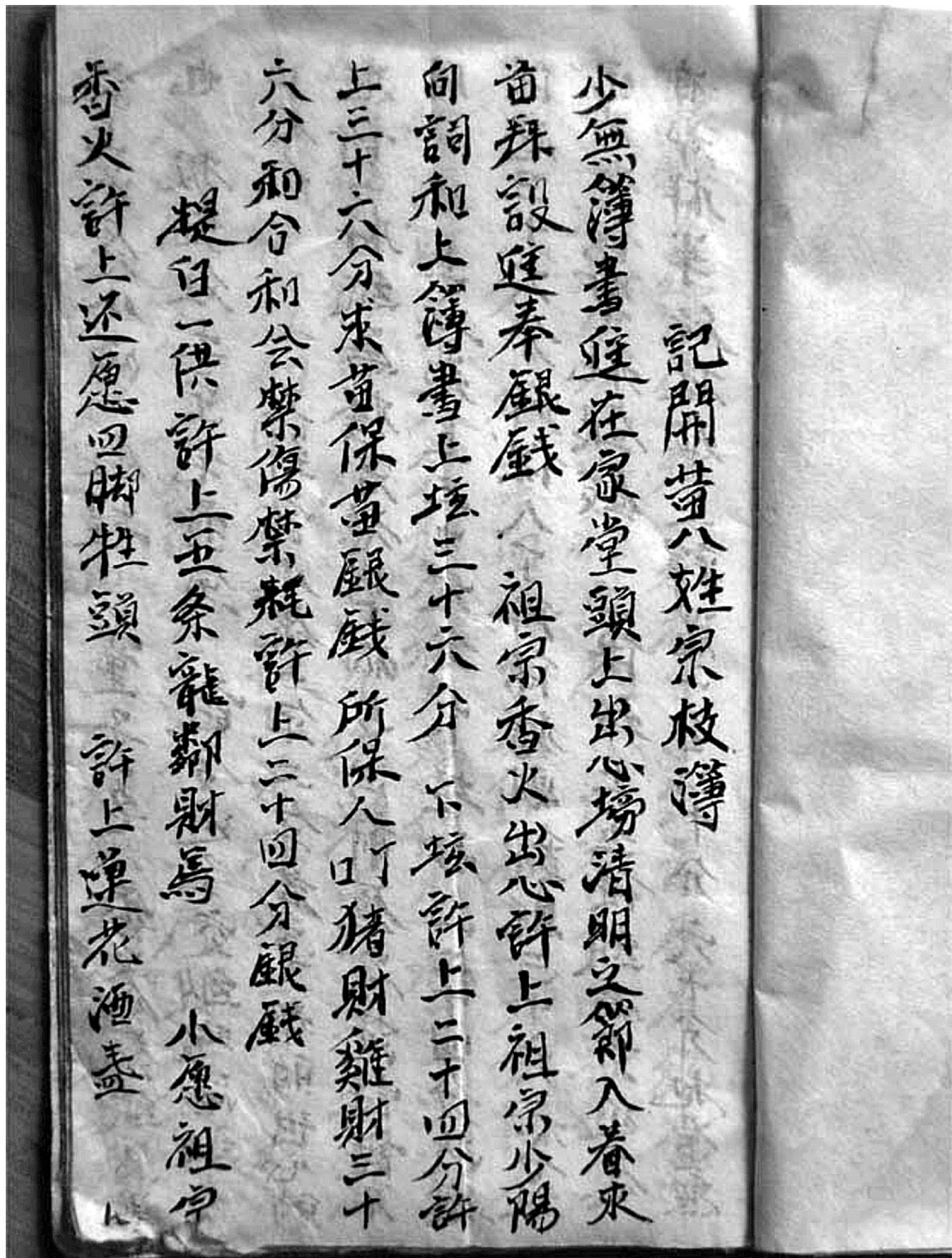


Illustration 2: Zongzhibu 宗支簿 of Huang Jingui 黃金貴, Jinping County 金平縣, Yunnan. (Photo by Chen Meiwen)

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宗教開化？ 針對瑤人宗教信仰與科儀珍本的考察與反思

陳玫奴

萊頓大學區域研究所(漢學院)博士候選人

摘要：本文提出，對於瑤人的宗教信仰應做雙向思考。中華帝國以宗教教化做為收編地方勢力，將之納入國家治理的工具；但另一方面，中華帝國的漢文教育也被瑤人吸收、轉化，成為傳承本族文化的媒介。孝道是儒家推崇的重要德行，也是瑤人傳衍祖先崇拜的根基。瑤人藉由展演度戒儀式來實踐孝道，科儀文書所記載的宗教知識亦藉此得以延續。之前的研究學者，主要將瑤人科儀文書視為國家漢化勢力成功收編並開化地方社會的表徵。本文的不同之處，在於理解瑤人為何視科儀文書為重要珍寶，並說明瑤人如何將本族的文化價值，嵌入國家教化的書寫學習，並以科儀珍本的物質形式代代相傳。

關鍵詞：宗教，瑤，科儀珍本，度戒，中華帝國。