



# The Nuosu *Book of Origins*

A CREATION EPIC FROM SOUTHWEST CHINA

Translated by Mark Bender and Aku Wuwu

*from a transcription by Jjivot Zopqu*

STUDIES ON ETHNIC GROUPS IN CHINA

*Stevan Harrell, Editor*



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## Foreword

STEVAN HARRELL

*The Book of Origins* (Hnewo teyy) is the story the Nuosu Yi people of Liangshan in southwestern Sichuan tell themselves about how they got where they are and how they fit in—to the cosmos, the spirit world, the natural world, and the social world. The book exists in many versions, all of them written in the Nuosu syllabic script, mostly in five-syllable lines. People recite parts or all of it on important ceremonial occasions.

Translating something like *The Book of Origins* is really difficult. The language itself is both poetic and archaic; a native speaker of Nuosu reading the text or listening to a recitation would understand it about as well as an American high-school student would understand *The Canterbury Tales* minus CliffsNotes. A translator must deal with a lot of obscure terms, puzzling ellipses, unfamiliar names for people and places, and obtuse allusions. It is the sort of text where you pretty much have to know what it means already if you hope to understand it. And then, of course, you have to put it into the target language in a way that readers can understand. Often no one person is capable of doing all this.

Fortunately, *The Book of Origins* has found a team of translators and interpreters worthy of this challenge. Mark Bender has been translating, presenting, and analyzing folklore, particularly ritual texts and origin stories, of various peoples of southwest China for many years, and his most intense specialty has been the folklore of the Nuosu. Through his interest in Nuosu folklore he has become a close friend and collaborator of Aku Wuwu (Luo Qingchun), who is both a professor of Yi studies in Chengdu and one of the best-known poets among the Nuosu—one of the few Nuosu poets who writes in both Nuosu and Chinese languages. Nuosu Yi children learn some

of his poems by heart in school. Mark and Aku have previously worked together to produce written and audio versions of Aku's poetry.

In approaching *The Book of Origins*, this team needed to find the right version of the text to translate, as well as the right expert to explain some of the more obscure passages. They found both in Jjivot Zopqu, a Nuosu traditional mediator who has also served as a local government official. Jjivot had compiled and transcribed a relatively complete version of *The Book of Origins*, written in a notebook with Mao on the cover. Hours of consulting with Jjivot and listening to recitations of the text gave Aku and Bender the additional understanding they needed to begin their translation, which we are proud to present here, along with Bender's extensive introduction and analysis.

What a rich text it is! Its story begins as the world begins, continues through several destructions and re-creations of the natural and social order, explains the origins of our current world, and ends with stories of the migrations and genealogies of today's widespread Nuosu clans. The story involves not just gods, spirits, and humans but also animals, plants, and landscapes, including all of them in a web of relationship that comprises the nature of the world the Nuosu and their ancestors have lived in for two millennia or longer.

Through the story and through Bender's detailed and authoritative introduction, we learn of an integrated cosmos, a "pluriverse" where gods and mortals, animals and plants, parents and children are all part of a single, interconnected order. Humans are special, but only a little—they share a common origin and genealogy with gods and spirits, on the one hand, and with animals and plants on the other. To be human is to be part of a complex web of social relationships, but also of an equally complex web of natural or ecological relationships. To relate to other humans is also to relate to other beings and to landscapes and the creatures that inhabit them. This cosmic order is the basis for the ethical order as well, for the proper and improper ways to interact with fellow inhabitants of this cosmos.

Nuosu literature and folklore, including *The Book of Origins*, realize that this order is not perfect. People need to make a living, and they alter the environment in doing so; sometimes clans or ethnic groups feel the need to fight with each other; sins and offenses have their consequences. The Nuosu themselves are progressively integrating into the Chinese national political and environmental order. But in the ever-advancing Anthropocene, we, as inheritors of a very different idea about humans and the natural world, need to contemplate something: How would we deal with environmental problems such as biodiversity loss, water shortages, and the biggest of all—climate

change—if we recognized our relationships to the earth and its other denizens as genealogical and reciprocal rather than just utilitarian? In reading *The Book of Origins*, we not only learn of a rich cultural and literary tradition that is unfamiliar to most of us, but we also open our eyes to different possibilities for dwelling in this world.



## Preface

On a mild summer day in 2005, Aku Wuwu and I traveled by jeep into a narrow valley in Xide County, in the Liangshan Mountains of southern Sichuan.<sup>1</sup> Our mission was to find a folk version of *The Book of Origins*, which relates the origins of the life-forms of earth and sky, including the early human lineages. The epic is key to the ritual life of the Nuosu, the largest subgroup of the Yi ethnic group in southwest China. Versions of the epic are transmitted by way of oral performances and written texts in connection with various ritual events. We hoped to find a content-rich version written in Yi script, one suitable for translating into Chinese and English for local, national, and global audiences.

This folk epic is called *Hnewo teyy* in the Xide dialect of Northern Yi, which is recognized as the standard Yi dialect in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, the major administrative unit of the Yi areas in southern Sichuan. A lead from one of Aku's former students brought us to Mishi (Mishi Zhen), a small town located at a crossroads alongside a winding stream within a patchwork of green fields, forested hillsides, cliffs, and hidden waterfalls. We settled there in the local government compound, where anthropologist Stevan Harrell and Yi scholar Bamo Ayi had conducted fieldwork on Nuosu culture in 1994. The red-brick buildings surrounding an empty courtyard contained all the offices needed for running the upland township.

The next afternoon we were joined by a diminutive elder named A Yu *bimo*, who had walked for hours down slippery mountain pathways to visit with us. He had taken time away from preparations for the upcoming buckwheat harvest for the journey. A Yu *bimo* was a ritual specialist, a kind of folk priest. The *bimo* are venerated for their knowledge of ancient script traditions and their ability to interface with the supernatural world.





In the summer of 2007, *bimo* priest A Yu traveled a whole day down a mountain road to meet Jjivot Zopqu, Aku Wuwu, and Mark Bender in the Mishi government office.

A Yu *bimo* wore a small black turban, a well-worn felt cloak, and muddy, knee-high rubber boots. Over one shoulder was slung a mesh bag made of hemp fibers filled with scrolls and ritual implements; over the other was a smoking pouch made from the soft leather of a water deer, known for its fragrant, magical musk. For Aku and the local Nuosu people involved in the project, the *bimo*'s presence throughout our visit legitimized our engagement with *The Book of Origins* text on the planes of both the mundane and numinous worlds.

Arriving later the same day from another upland village was a lanky, middle-aged man by the name of Jjivot Zopqu. One of the roles he played in his community was that of *ndeggu*. *Ndeggu* were the traditional conflict arbitrators and wise counsels in many Nuosu communities before those duties were taken over by government cadres during social reforms in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Harrell 2001, 96). Highly regarded for their wisdom and oratory, such wise men are still important bearers of traditional lore. Although *ndeggu* do not normally conduct rituals like the *bimo* priests, many have deep knowledge of ritual and related texts (Ma 2004, 90–92).



The *bimo* priest A Yu, who gave ritual sanction to the translation of *The Book of Origins*, and Aku Wuwu. They are holding scrolls written in Yi used in the conducting of rituals. *The Book of Origins* is typically written in such a format.

We soon discovered that Jjivot Zopqu was indeed a vast resource of traditional knowledge, and a good communicator in both Nuosu and standard Chinese. Aside from his informal activities as a wise man, Jjivot had served in the military as a young man and had held several local-level official positions (attested to by a small pile of certificates with red plastic covers he had garnered over the years). He also kept a farmstead high in the mountains at which he and his family raised goats, pigs, and chickens, and farmed potatoes, maize, buckwheat, and fruit trees.

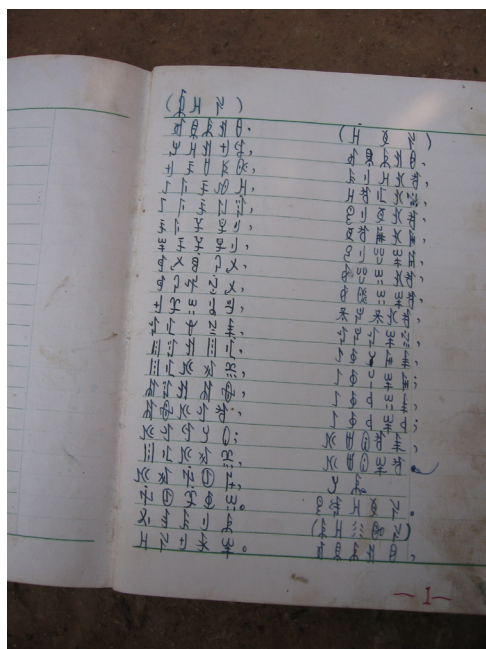
Once we had settled into the deep leather chairs of the Mishu office, Jjivot drew from his pocket one of two notebooks he would eventually share with us. This first, smaller one had a picture of Chairman Mao Zedong on the cover. (The other cover, we would learn, featured a smiling young woman in modern dress.) As Jjivot opened the notebook, he revealed page after page of lines written in traditional Yi script. He explained that some years earlier he had copied the contents of a dilapidated scroll (now lost) that had belonged to a *ndeggu* who was related to a former upper-class family. Although the exact age of the scroll is unknown, it likely was one in a series of hand



Jjivot Zopqu, in traditional dress, holds a handwritten copy of *The Book of Origins* and other texts before the start of a performance at a family gathering, Xide County.

copies that dated back many decades if not centuries. Sometime after transcribing the scroll, Jjivot recast the content word for word into the Liangshan Standard Yi Script. This modern syllabic script is based on the traditional local variant of traditional Yi script used by *bimo* of the Xide area. The standard script was formulated by government scholars in the mid-1970s and promoted at local levels as a way to increase literacy in the mother tongue. Aku Wuwu was proficient in reading both script traditions, making the discovery of the ancient script version and the modern revised script version opportune. Jjivot later allowed us to make photocopies of both notebooks. The translation in this volume is based on these written versions rescued and transliterated by Jjivot Zopqu. Though not a *bimo* ritualist, he acted in the spirit of the transmission tradition by copying and preserving the text.

Over the following days, both Jjivot and the elder *bimo* commented at length on various facets of *The Book of Origins* and local Nuosu customs that were paralleled in the narrative. Using the version in standardized graphs, Jjivot explicated the content line by line, speaking mostly in Nuosu and sometimes in Chinese. One day he read the entire poem aloud (in one long go) in order to convey to us his understanding of the sound and rhythm of



A page of Jjivot Zopqu's transcription of *The Book of Origins* using revised Northern Yi graphics created after 1949

the Nuosu poetic register. At the beginning of the narration, about fifteen officials and office workers and a few of their friends and relatives were present, though the number dwindled as the event proceeded. Jjivot read at a rather even pace, vocalizing certain passages with more speed and intensity, especially the last few stanzas. The reading lasted well over two hours (for 112 pages of the handwritten text), with only a few short breaks when recording tapes were changed. During the delivery he smoked several cigarettes and afterward indulged in a handmade metal smoking pipe. In the years that followed, Jjivot read (or, at times, recited from memory) passages of the poem for us and other small audiences in the same rapid manner, with text always at hand.

The most memorable performance was at a gathering in the summer of 2009 held to mark our visit to his mountain home (Bender 2012, 240–42). The dwelling was a stockade of earth and wood positioned near the crest of a high hill bordered by a steep gorge on one side and higher cliffs to the rear. After hours of walking up the gorge, which was lined with pines, cypress, fir, and rhododendrons, our small group of folklorists and photographers crawled up a long, deep trench of earth and stone that led to the gate of the compound. We were met there by Jjivot, his family, and a representative of every family in the valley. They honored us with a feast of a freshly killed goat



From left: Mark Bender, Jjivot Yyzu, Aku Wuwu, and Jjivot Zopqu discussing *The Book of Origins*

and chicken, along with potatoes and buckwheat cakes, all washed down with store-bought beer. After the eating, Jjivot disappeared into a small adobe chamber connected to the main house. In a few moments, he reappeared wearing a black turban, black tunic, and broadly cut blue pants. In accord with custom, these were the clothes he would wear when cremated at the end of his earthly existence.

In Jjivot's hands were six texts, all original or photocopied handwritten copies of traditional narratives and chants. He took a seat in the sunlight on one side of the courtyard and spread the texts out on the ground. One of the local men bent forward and straightened the reciter's wide pant legs, allowing him to assume a dignified position. The *ndeggu* paused for a moment as the audience of thirty or so kin and friends assembled, and then proceeded to perform a *kenre*, a sort of oral poetry riff used to both welcome and cajole the guests. He then took up a text from the ground and, barely glancing at it, recited several passages of verse. The lines, which he seems to have memorized, were from the Nuosu classic on proper conduct known as *The Book of Teachings* (Hmamu teyy). After delivering the passages aloud,



he set down the text and took up a copy of *The Book of Origins*. In his quick and clipped manner, he read aloud the section on the origin of the sky and earth and a short passage about the birth of the mythic hero Zhyge Alu. This succinct performance was the highlight of our visit and provided an opportunity for Jjivot to revive awareness of the epic tradition among individuals in the community. Some audience members, such as his daughter, who was on vacation from her factory job in eastern China, are cut off from the daily flow of tradition due to work outside the community (Liu 2010, 18–19; Heberer 2014, 36–38).

After that first visit in Mishi, we began translating into Chinese and English the text that Jjivot Zopqu had copied in two formats from the ancient scroll. We returned many times to the Liangshan Mountains to experience and research aspects of culture related to the epic, and review the translation with Jjivot, who tirelessly offered explanations and advice. Jjivot's helpful nephew Jjivot Yyzu, an official in the county cultural bureau who helped his uncle copy the epic into the standard script format, also answered questions about the meaning of certain passages, terms, and lore. We made every attempt to convey the meaning of each line, often spending hours on a single passage. We were also aided at points by Jjissyt Motie and Lama Itzot, Aku's former graduate students in Yi literature who have strong backgrounds in English. Ziwo Lama, a professor of Yi linguistics at Southwest Minzu University, reviewed portions of the translations.

We decided to use standard Yi romanization (which, like the standard script, was created in the 1950s) for all Nuosu names and terms and to provide ample notes where needed. In some places the lines of the translation are unclear due to Jjivot's occasional retention of nonstandard graphs from the original scroll in his version, graphs used in unusual contexts, unclear language, or obscure references. In a few places we reconstructed missing lines based on other existing versions and corrected obvious irregularities in the use of the Yi graphs in names. Despite all our efforts, however, certain breaches of understanding at the literal level of the text still exist. We have indicated several of these places in the notes. To supplement the translation, we have provided an introduction relating basic information on Nuosu culture, the local environment, and the epic tradition to aid readers in approaching *The Book of Origins* as a unique form of folk literature that exists both in written form and as oral performance. For those interested in the original language, the text written wholly in the standard Yi romanization may be accessed at <https://doi.org/10.6069/9780295745701.s01>.

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## Pronunciation Guide and Conventions

In this book, Northern Yi (Nuosu) words are represented using a romanization system introduced in the 1970s. Although the Yi have both classical and modern script traditions that use graphs to represent sounds, romanization was developed to make reading easier to learn.

Each syllable of a Yi word is a separate unit consisting of an initial consonant and a vowel. These syllables, depending on context, can represent different words. For example *bbo* (the graph written as 𑄑 in the modern script) can mean “go,” “tree,” “mountain,” etc. In some cases, two or more syllables are combined, as in *pobbo* 𑄑𑄑 (flag). For a complete guide to the sounds and pronunciation of modern Northern Yi graphs and romanization, see *Nuosu Yi–Chinese–English Glossary*, compiled by Ma Linying, Dennis Walters, and Susan Walters (2008, 6). Their glossary also offers a table comparing Northern Yi romanization and the International Phonetic symbols for the language (ibid., 804; <http://nuosuyi.webonary.org/?lang=en>).

Like Chinese, Yi is a tonal language. In the Northern Yi romanization system, the speech tone indicators are attached to the end of a monosyllable. They represent the tone contour of the word. The tone indicator letters are not part of the spelling of the word and should not be pronounced.

The four tones are:

- t** = high tone
- x** = mid-high tone
- [no letter] = mid-level tone
- p** = low, falling tone

For example, the word *bimo* 𑄑𑄑 (Yi priest) is written *bimox* with the tone indicator *x* attached, indicating that *bimo* should be pronounced with the mid-high tone. Since the tone indicator convention can be confusing to



readers not familiar with the system, tone indicators are not attached to Yi words in this book with the following exceptions: passages of Northern Yi romanization in the introduction (to illustrate the tone patterning of the epic), the version of the table of contents in the appendix, the glossary, and the official names of some contemporary Nuosu people (such as Jjivot Zopqu). When the tone-indicating letters *t*, *x*, and *p* are included, they are distinguished with bold type, with the exception of several contemporary names. In some places, words both with and without tone indicators are provided to aid specialists.

Double consonants (bb, dd, gg, zz, ss, rr, jj) represent certain sounds (phonemes) at the beginnings of syllables. Other initial sounds not found in English or standard Chinese (Mandarin) phonology are: hm, nd, hn, mg, ng, nr, nj. Many names with these features appear in the epic text, especially in the early and final sections. Words are pronounced as a series of monosyllables, which are made of either vowels alone or a consonant and vowel unit. The letter “r” is sometimes used as a final consonant, although most syllables consist of or end with a vowel.

Here are a few examples of names with the syllabic breakdown in parentheses (without tone indicators):

Ngeti Gunzy (nge ti gu nzy)  
Anyu Ddussy (a nyu ddu ssy)  
Dishy Shuonuo (di shy shuo nuo)  
Pumo Hnixyyr (pu mo hni yyr)  
Bilu Hendi (bi lu he ndi)  
Nyirryr Aho (nyi rryr a ho)  
Anre Bburfur (a nre bbur fur)  
Jodda Tihxa (jo dda ti hxa)  
Hxorrryryr Lyngge (hxo rryr ly nge)

Care should also be taken in attempting to pronounce place-names such as Syrodazhy (syr o da zhy) and Milinduxy (mi li ndu xy). A complete chart of the sounds of Northern Yi is included in the Ma, Walters, and Walters (2008) glossary.

Finally, conventions vary on how to separate romanized syllables. For most nouns and proper names we have linked the syllables together (*bimo*, rather than *bi mo*). Nuosu (N:) and Chinese (Ch:) words are distinguished as necessary in the text. The lines in the epic text generally follow Jjivot Zopqu’s version as copied into Northern Yi. In some cases, however, long lines have been divided, with the runover line indented.



Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, People's Republic of China



## Introduction

The Nuosu *Book of Origins* tells the story of the creation of the world, centered on landscapes in southwest China. Transmitted in oral and written forms, the epic has circulated for centuries among a people known today as the Nuosu, whose former upper-caste members were once overlords of vast tracts of farmland and forest in the uplands of southern Sichuan and neighboring provinces. Versions of the narrative are performed by priests called *bimo* and other tradition-bearers familiar with its content. The story unfolds as an all-encompassing genealogy that generation by generation plots the origins and relatedness of celestial bodies, landforms and waterways, and the plants, animals, and peoples that populate the diverse ecological niches of earth, water, and sky.

This relatedness between the environment and its inhabitants is in ways similar to contemporary themes in the emerging fields of literature of the environment and ecocriticism.<sup>1</sup> Some ecocritics see life-forms, the landscape, and ultimately the cosmos as part of a diverse “pluriverse,” a view that has been influenced by the worldviews of some indigenous peoples, especially in parts of South America, who recognize a connectedness and relatedness between humans, other life-forms, and the environment (de la Cadena 2010). Although the Nuosu model of connectedness expressed in *The Book of Origins* is different in certain major ways from the societies on which pluriverse thinking focuses—given that traditionally Nuosu society was highly stratified and located on the fringes of imperial China—the idea of being genealogically linked to a family tree of life-forms is inherent in traditional Nuosu mythology (Bender 2011, 274). Nuosu connectedness also bespeaks an intimacy with local conditions and the knowledge of agriculture and livestock-rearing needed in the diverse upland environments of southwest China.

Since the 1950s, Chinese scholars have seen the creation epics and narrative poems from the various ethnic groups in southwest China, including *The Book of Origins*, as “encyclopedias” of local knowledge (Zuo 2006, 127). The detail given to aspects of the landscape and life-forms that appear in such texts could be aptly described as “cosmographic,” a term coined by the late nineteenth-century anthropologist Franz Boas that has been revived by the indigenous-literature scholar and ecocritic Joni Adamson (2013). As a repository of knowledge of human culture and environmental lore, *The Book of Origins* (in its many written and oral versions) is the cosmographic urtext among the ancient narratives and rituals of the Nuosu.

*The Book of Origins* begins with an era of transformation in which nascent life-forms are carefully placed within the newly made landscape by a god sent from the sky. In what might be called an “animistic” era, all living beings possess supernatural powers, and all creatures can speak (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 472–74). This phase, however, is cut short by a period of intense warming caused by the presence of too many suns and moons. The crisis of overheating is resolved by the intervention of a mythic archer who stands atop a fir tree and shoots down all but one sun and one moon. Thereafter comes a reseeded life on earth, brought by red snow that falls from the sky. Multiple life-forms again populate the landscape, and human customs and protocols take shape; but this age is also cut short by an inundating flood.

Only one earthling survives this second era of destruction. The youngest of three sons, he manages with the aid of animals rescued from the floodwaters to ascend to the sky and wed the youngest daughter of the sky god. Ultimately, the couple’s progeny divides into groups that fan out and integrate into their respective places in the rugged landscape. Even in the early decades of the twenty-first century, many customs and practices described in the epic continue to serve as templates for marriages, rules of hospitality, sacrifices to the spirits, and the genealogies of Nuosu clans.

The Nuosu, who number more than 2.3 million, are regarded as the largest division (out of more than eighty subgroups) of the Yi ethnic group (Ch: Yizu). One of China’s fifty-five official ethnic minority groups, the Yi are a diverse people of around 10 million whose many dialects are classified in the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The Nuosu speak a cluster of dialects called Northern Yi. The Yi homelands are in the uplands of southwest China, also home to other peoples, such as Tibetans (Zang), Pumi, Naxi, Lisu, Hani, Lahu, and Han (China’s majority ethnic group) (Harrell 2001, 130). Most Nuosu live in the southern part of Sichuan, though about two hundred years ago some families migrated into the border area between Sichuan and northwest Yunnan near Lake Lugu.

Where *The Book of Origins* was first written down and its earliest area of circulation are still in question, though hints from ancient Yi writings, oral tradition, and historical and archeological evidence suggest the textual hearth is the area that includes northeast Yunnan, the western quadrant of what is now Guizhou, and parts of present-day Liangshan Prefecture in southern Sichuan (Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000, 128). The epic continues to exist in many written versions handed down by generations of *bimo* priests and other tradition-bearers. The ritual specialists perform portions of the epic orally during rituals, sometimes cued by the written scripts and sometimes from memory. At certain life-cycle events, particularly weddings and funerals, folk singers elaborately extemporize passages of the poem, based on oral or written versions with which they are familiar. Thus, the epic is not considered as solely a text of ritualists (that is, a *bimo teyy*, or *bimo* book) but is shared among differing transmitters whose versions comprise the epic in all its written, orally dynamic, and imagined forms. Along with the written texts, oral performances, and the singers' mental templates, themes and



A group of *bimo* enacting a community protection ritual at the Fourth International Conference on Yi Studies, Meigu, Liangshan, 2005. Note the ritual scriptures and accoutrements, including felt hats and a spirit fan (*qike*). The cherrywood fan is appointed with small carvings of a tiger, a Eurasian otter, and an eagle, representing the realms of earth, water, and sky. Photograph by Aku Wuwu.

motifs in the epic are found in many other aspects of Yi verbal art, including folktales, origin chants, and proverbs.

The sum of these variegated expressions of the epic and epic material make up what might be called the “pool of tradition” of *The Book of Origins*, available to transmitters, audiences, and the occasional ethnographer (Honko 2000, 218, 223–26). Similar narratives about the origins of peoples and things are also part of the cultural heritage of many other ethnic minority groups in south and southwest China, including Miao (Hmong), Yao, Dong, Zhuang, Wa, Lahu, Lisu, Hani, and Naxi. Some themes and motifs in *The Book of Origins* and in other epics from the southwest are also found in ancient myths associated with local cultures of the Han people, as well as among some tribal groups in Southeast Asia and Northeast India.

#### PEOPLE, PLACE, AND CULTURE

The term “Yizu” (Yi ethnic group) was officially adopted in the 1950s as part of a larger census and ethnic identification project in which the Chinese government gave “minority nationalities” (*shaoshu minzu*) official recognition and status (Harrell 2001, 39–45).<sup>2</sup> After linguistic, cultural, and historical data were analyzed, several dozen local cultures in southwest China, going by many different names, were recognized as being similar enough to be classified in the single Yizu category, despite often stark differences between them at the “on-the-ground” local level (Mullaney 2010, 6–7). Some of these peoples were once known to outsiders as “Lolo,” a term that often carried a pejorative meaning though in some instances was a self-referential name, especially in certain areas of Yunnan (Mueggler 2001, 15). The name “Ni” (sometimes written as “Gni” and “Nip,” with the addition of the falling tone marker, ꞑ) is a very ancient name for many of the cultures likely making up the contemporary Yizu. The term “Ni” appears in the latter parts of *The Book of Origins* that relate the migrations of the early Yi groups.

As noted, the Nuosu are the largest subgroup of the Yi ethnic group. They speak Nuosuhxo, also known as Northern Yi. Northern Yi has several mutually intelligible dialects, although the dialect spoken in Xide County is the official standard. Like the other Yi languages (also called Loloish, Ngwi, or Nisoic), Northern Yi is in the somewhat problematic grouping called Tibeto-Burman, a subset of the Sino-Tibetan language family (Bradley 1997, 43; Lama 2013, 1–5). Tibeto-Burman includes hundreds of languages in southwest China and the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau, parts of Southeast Asia (especially Myanmar), and hundreds of small groups in Northeast India and westward into Nepal. The dozens of Yi subgroups speak different,

often mutually unintelligible languages (Bradley 2001, 206). Among these subgroups are the Lolopo, Lipo, Nisupo, Nesu, and Gnipa of north and central Yunnan, and the Sani, Azhe, and Axi of east-central Yunnan, east of the provincial capital, Kunming. Western Guizhou is the home to many Yi people, often self-referencing as “Nasu.” A few Yi speakers are also found in the western part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Although most Nuosu now live in the Liangshan Mountains of southern Sichuan and nearby northwest Yunnan, written records and oral traditions suggest the Nuosu ancestors were once a prominent presence in the broken uplands of northern Yunnan and western Guizhou.<sup>3</sup> Though the origins of the Yi ethnic group are continuously under debate, it is likely that in ancient times there were cultural links to areas farther north (in what is now northern Sichuan, Qinghai, and beyond), facilitated by migrations and intermixture between immigrant and local populations (Harrell 2001, 84–85). Intrusions of Mongol troops into the southwest in the thirteenth century and the Manchus by the seventeenth are more recent links to the north. Among the “northern” cultural features still observable among the Nuosu are felting, shamanism, horse and herding culture, styles of armor and weapons, eating utensils, and household arrangement. The questions of origins is complicated by the fact that many Han and people of other ethnic groups were captured and assimilated as lower-caste slaves, a practice that continued into the early 1950s (Lin 1961, 107–8).<sup>4</sup>

#### LAND AND WATERS

With their population of more than 2.3 million, Nuosu in southern Sichuan and bordering areas of northwest Yunnan comprise about 51 percent of the area’s population of more than 4.5 million. The area is a rough triangle encompassing Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (Liangshan Yizu Zizhi Zhou). Liangshan Prefecture, at roughly 60,423 square kilometers, lies in the center of southern Sichuan. It includes the seventeen counties and urban zones of Mianning, Zhaojue, Dechang, Yuexi, Yanyuan, Huidong, Huili, Xide, Ganluo, Meigu, Leibo, Puge, Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, Jinyang, Ningnan, Butuo, and Xichang City. Other areas with large Nuosu populations are the Ninglang Yi Autonomous County (Ninglang Yizu zizhi xian) in northwest Yunnan, near Lake Lugu; Yanbian County in Panzhihua Municipality; and Ebian and Mabian Counties at the eastern extreme of the Nuosu areas, close to Mount Emei and the Sichuan basin. Throughout this work, the term “Liangshan” refers to the areas of Liangshan Prefecture.<sup>5</sup>





*Shuoma* flowers (varieties of rhododendron), which are mentioned several times in *The Book of Origins*, represent beauty and wisdom

Xichang, the rapidly developing capital of Liangshan, is the most prominent administrative and urban cultural center in the Nuosu areas. Other major cities and large towns include Puge, Yuexi, Zhaojue, and Mianning to the north and east of Xichang. Meigu, lying farther to the east, is regarded as a stronghold of traditional Yi culture, with a population of over 98 percent ethnic Nuosu.

In his ethnographic survey made in the early 1940s, Lin Yaohua described the Liangshan region as being dominated by mountain ranges running north to south, as well as a series of eight ridges extending east that made the whole region seem like a “multiple-legged insect” (Lin 1961, 3). The average elevation in the Liangshan Mountains is around 2,300 meters. The Hengduan range borders the west of the Liangshan area; the Sichuan basin lies to the northeast. The area is earthquake prone, and landslides on the mountain roads are common. The major rivers in the Yi regions in Sichuan are the Jinsha (Upper Yangtze) River to the south and the Dadu River in the north. Other large rivers include the Anning and Yalong. Lake Qionghai, near Xichang, is the largest lake in the area. In Mianning County lies Lake Yihai, the site where in 1935 Chinese Communist troops on the Long March negotiated with Nuosu leaders (including a *bimo* ritualist) to be granted passage through the Nuosu-controlled mountains.

Until recent decades, large forests of pine (*Pinus yunnanensis*), fir (*Abies*), cypress (*Cupressus*), spruce, alder, oak, and willow covered many upland

areas. Logging, carried out periodically since the 1960s, created extensive deforestation in many areas of Sichuan, including Liangshan, though widespread cutting was ended in 1998 (Shapiro 2015, 43–44). Numerous other species of trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges, and medicinal herbs inhabit the region in zones that range from subtropical to alpine (Poling et al. 2003). Of the many flowering species, varieties of rhododendron (N: *shuoma*) with white and pink blossoms are found throughout the mountains and are an important feature in Nuosu folklore, representing beauty and wisdom.

Among the animals historically inhabiting the area are hares, monkeys, musk deer and other cervids, Asian black bears, red pandas, serows, foxes, otters, leopards, tigers (now extinct in the region), weasels, eagles, hawks, vultures, songbirds, waterfowl, and various frogs, toads, snakes, fish, and insects. As will be seen below, many plants and animals found in the area are mentioned in *The Book of Origins* (Bender 2008, 16–21).

#### CLAN AND FAMILY

Clan and family affiliation are paramount in the social relations among the Nuosu.<sup>6</sup> For several centuries—the dates are not clear—the Nuosu were a stratified caste society based on a fairly limited number of patrilineal clans (*cyvi*). These clans were in constant armed feuds over natural and human resources that sometimes involved cycles of revenge killings. As late as the 1950s, the caste system was still overtly in effect. In the former system, the population was divided into four castes: the relatively small upper-caste *nuoho* (Ch: black Yi); the larger caste of serfs (Ch: white Yi), consisting of a caste called *quho*, a yet lower caste called *mgajie*, and the caste called *gaxy*, which included slaves of the lowest status. This last caste was partially comprised of peoples captured from other ethnic groups—especially Han living in outposts within the Liangshan area or in settlements on its margins. Both *mgajie* and *gaxy* were typically without clan affiliations.

The upper-class group known as *nzyimo*, even more powerful than the *nuoho*, were affiliated with the imperial regime by the *tusi* system. This system, which was utilized in the Yuan (1271–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties, was based on the principle of granting official titles to native leaders as a means to control the mountain areas of the southwest (Harrell 2001, 81–87; Whitaker 2008). From at least the Ming, some of the *nzyimo* elites were ensconced as *tusi* (Wu Jingzhong 2001, 35–36). The word *nzyimo* (or simply *nzy*) appears numerous times in this version of *The Book of Origins*, especially in part 12, “Genealogy of Shyly Wote,” when

recounting the marriage of Shyly Wote. In the present text, the term is usually synonymous with the word *tusi*.

Among the upper classes there was strict caste endogamy, meaning these elites could marry only among themselves. Punishments for infractions against this code could be as harsh as death. The caste system was dismantled in the late 1950s in one phase of the national land reform movement during which private property was taken under state control. In the Nuosu areas this event included the suppression of a prolonged insurgency led by upper-class *nuoho* in the late 1950s whose status was threatened by the policies of change being implemented by the new Chinese government (Harrell 2001, 88–89; Winnington 2008, 76–87). Today, descendants of the previous castes are aware of the former divisions (marked, for instance, by subtle nuances in designs used on women's traditional clothing), which still informally influence certain social situations, especially the selection of marriage partners.

#### RITUALISTS: *BIMO* AND *SUNYI/MONYI*

The most respected ritual specialists of the Nuosu are known as *bimo*. In areas of Yunnan and Guizhou the *bimo* are called *beima*, *bumo*, or other similar names. The *bimo* priests conduct rituals connected with births, marriages, coming of age, deaths, and community welfare (Lin 1961, 127; Bamo Ayi 2001, 125–28). Rituals also include sacrifices to departed ancestors, calling back wandering souls, purification rites, and divination (Bamo Ayi 1994). The grandest ritual is the elaborate *Nimu cobì*, a rite in which one or more *bimo* direct the soul of a dead person to the land of the ancestors. Other rites are enacted to protect an individual, a family, or village against maladies and disasters. Such calamities are invariably attributed to a huge variety of ghosts, including ghosts of smallpox, leprosy (a rare but endemic disease in Liangshan), skin maladies, and hereditary diseases. During the rituals a *bimo* determines that a certain number and complement of chickens, sheep, goats, pigs, or cattle (the latter being a very serious offering) are to be sacrificed.

*Bimo* are virtually all male and inherit the role from fathers or uncles. A distinguishing mark of a *bimo* is his ability to read the traditional scriptures and perform passages from them in the various rituals. *Bimo* are regarded as specialists learned in ritual, genealogy, astrology, local geography, history, and traditional lore who can engage with the spirit world. *Bimo* do not charge set rates for their services, though it is customary for clients to give foodstuffs (often portions of sacrificed animals) and cash in acknowledgment of



A *bisse* (apprentice *bimo*) painting a ghost board (*nyicy sypi*) in preparation for a healing ritual, Ebian County, Sichuan

services rendered. Most *bimo* rely on other means of support, such as farming, to sustain their families. In a number of instances *The Book of Origins* mentions the acts and genealogies of important *bimo*.

In Liangshan, the accoutrements of a full-fledged *bimo* typically include a ritual hat (*hlevo*) of bamboo and felt, a brass bell (*biju*), a special fan (*qike*) of bamboo (or copper) with a cherrywood handle carved with animal effigies (representing sky, earth, and waters), a spirit quiver (*vytu*) in the shape of a wooden tube (with one end styled as a bear's mouth) used as a weapon against malevolent ghosts, and a mesh bag (*hxiekuo*) of plant fiber used to hold the sacred written scriptures (Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000, 52–59). In the course of a ritual, the *bimo* will erect an assemblage of sacred grasses and shrubs and use the blood of sacrificed animals to paint “ghost boards” (*nyicy sypi*) depicting various mythical figures. Such boards typically include images of the culture hero Zhyge Alu, along with his dog, a great snake, a peacock, and spirit winds. Among the types of ghost boards are those named Scabby Head Ghost, Purification Rite, Unnatural Death, and Harmful Creatures.

To combat ghosts, the *bimo* may also employ effigies (*rybbur*) of them made of intricately twisted bundles of grass which are burned after the rituals. In some areas, small clay figurines (*zabbur*) of ghosts are also used. Among these figures of grass or clay are the Wicked Spirit, Flatland Ghost,

Cattle-Eating Ghost (used when cattle are sacrificed), Riverside Ghost, Bride-Protecting Ghost, Insane Person Ghost, Critical-Illness Ghost, and others. In grand ritual events, such as the *Nimu cobí*, the *bimo* create intricate pathways of peeled sticks that serve as the route of travel for the departing soul. In some places, the ritualists place a large buckwheat cake pierced with a hole within the stick pathway, signifying the passageway between this life and the realm of the ancestors.

The soul-calling rituals (*yyrhla*) are commonly held for a person (often a child) who seems despondent or is otherwise out of sorts. The Nuosu believe that the life essence or spirit, *Gefi*, is attached to the body of all Yi women at birth, allowing them to become pregnant. It is commonly held that during life a person has a soul (*yyr*) that may sometimes leave the body due to illness. The rituals for recalling lost souls first involve the *bimo* setting up a *mguva*, or assemblage of ritual objects, in one corner of the main room in the afflicted person's household. The items in this space typically include clumps of sacred *yy yyr* grass (Ch: *maidong*; Ophiopogon *japonicus*), some leafy willow (N: *yy hxo*; Ch: *liushu*; *Salix babylonica*) branches, wood-chip "bullets" for throwing at ghosts, a container of sacred water, small rocks (which are heated during the ritual), ghost boards, etc. The ritual process entails the performance of a long series of chants that typically concern the genealogies of heaven and earth, the hero Zhyge Alu, the local clans and family, ghosts, and so forth. Content often overlaps with that found in *The Book of Origins*. The soul-calling rites always include the initial sacrifice of one or more chickens (in some places a big red or black rooster is used) or even a small pig to draw away the harmful ghosts and malevolent forces. During the ritual the wandering soul is entreated to return, lured by promises of food, drink, and the joys of home life. At the climax, the returning soul follows a hempen thread leading from a needle stuck in the lintel of the doorway into a lidded wooden jar placed beside the *bimo*. Once the ritualist has determined that the soul is inside the container, he slams the lid shut, exclaiming, "Ha!"

Soul-calling may be combined with home-purification rites, still very common today and usually held in the main room of a house (including urban apartments). At one point in the ritual, the family crouches together in the center of the room and the *bimo* waves a live chicken around them several times to gather the harmful forces. The chicken is sacrificed and cast out the door—hopefully landing with its head pointing outward. It is generally understood that the souls of the sacrificed creatures carry away the harmful ghosts to a remote area distant from human inhabitation. Around Yuexi and Ganluo such a place is a great ravine known as Ddabbulomo





A *monyi* shamaness conducting a divination ritual using an egg in a market in the old part of Xichang, Liangshan

Gorge. By custom, the meat of the sacrificed animals is ritually cooked and divided among the *bimo*, his helper, the family, and all guests present.

Other ritualists in Nuosu society are the (male) *sunyi* and (female) *monyi*. They share many attributes with shamans in North Asia and the Himalayas (Sidky 2011; Blackburn 2010, 134–39). These Nuosu shamans are recruited to the vocation by experiencing bouts of mental and physical illness that can be alleviated only by becoming a practitioner. Both *sunyi* and *monyi* typically go into trance states while beating a hand drum made of wood and leather. A trance state is attributed to the presence of a tutelary spirit called a *was*a. Some of the *sunyi* demonstrate their powers by whirling a water-filled bowl or burning board on their head, licking hot plowshares, fire-walking, fire-eating, running barefoot through pots of burning oil, and other feats. One well-known *monyi* lifts a dead sheep by her teeth and twirls it around while in a trance state. Although normally unable to read the Yi script (which a *bimo* priest can do), some *sunyi* and *monyi* do display written scriptures during their rituals, especially when soliciting business in marketplaces. Shamans are usually engaged by individuals or families to deal with illnesses caused by lesser malevolent ghosts and to conduct fortune-telling practices using raw eggs or sticks nicked with tiny cuts.

## BIRTH AND MARRIAGE

Either a *bimo* or a *sunyi* may participate in some phases of a young child's life. Three to five days after birth, a child is taken outside into the sunshine for the first time and is washed by a ritualist. For a girl, a fertile married woman trims the infant's hair and places it in an amulet tied to its clothes. A red or white thread is tied on a baby's arm—left for a male and right for a female. A boy has his left ear pierced; a girl has both ears pierced. Thread loops are placed in the ears. A child's name is important and multilayered, reflecting clan and birth-order status as well as positive aspirations that include livestock, gold or silver, mountains or waters, wild animals, and other powerful or worthy items or concepts (Ma 2001, 83–90).

Marriage customs play a prominent role in *The Book of Origins*. In part 12, the early ancestor Shyly Wote goes looking for his father. Some Chinese scholars, following anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's idea that primitive matrilineal societies existed in North America since pre-Columbian times (an idea that influenced Marx and Engels's theory of social evolution), interpret this process of searching for a father as reflecting a supposed ancient transition from matrilineal to patrilineal structures in Nuosu society. Content-wise, the story relates how Shyly Wote becomes married to an upper-caste *nzyimo*'s daughter—thus establishing Nuosu marriage customs. Later in the same part, Jjumu Vuvu, the lone survivor of a great, cataclysmic flood, marries Hnituo, a daughter of the sky god Ngeti Gunzy. Their marriage eventually results in the rupture between the gods in their heavenly palace and the relatively poorer earthlings. Before the bonds with the sky are broken, the celestial bride secretly brings to earth staples of the Nuosu lifestyle, including buckwheat, hemp, and the turnips (*Lepidium*) called *voma* in Nuosu (Ch: *yuangen*) (Chen et al. 2015, 654).

Traditional marriages in Liangshan today follow a general pattern, though there is much local variation. In the recent past, wedding customs differed significantly between the castes in the traditional hierarchy. Many weddings are now a combination of Nuosu, Han, and Western traditions. One aspect that ties present-day traditions with earlier ones is the concept of a suitable pairing. The ancestral lines of the bride and groom are examined carefully by the respective families to determine if the young people are of equivalent status, lineage background, and wealth. Besides incompatible bloodlines, other factors that could derail a potential marriage are grave illness in the family line (especially leprosy) and offensive body odor—though historically pairs sharing this condition could marry. Cross-cousin marriage between the children of elder brothers and sisters was once the norm, and even today

permission must be gained from the groom's maternal uncle if other arrangements are made (Lin 1961, 70–74). Normally, a female go-between of some standing in the community will investigate the respective families, and if one side attempts to hide or withhold faults, conflict will result.

An outline of the traditional marriage process includes the following steps. As noted, the first step is the connecting of elders of the two families by way of a go-between (*furgumga*). In some cases, this engagement occurs when the children are very young. In the past, the future couple did not meet before the actual marriage (though that is not the case today). Once suitability has been established, the next step is the formal engagement (*vussamu*), which includes selecting the date of the wedding and the presentation of a predetermined amount of money by the groom's family to the bride's family, who kill a pig or sheep for a mutual feast. The gallbladder of the slaughtered creature is examined carefully. Ideally, it is heavy with gall—if not, or if it cannot be located—the marriage may be called off.

At her coming-of-age ceremony, usually held at age fifteen or seventeen, a girl changes her single braid into the two braids used to tie over her new headdress. She will also exchange the red strings in her ears for silver earrings and her light child's skirt for a full-length, pleated young woman's skirt (which is pulled on over her head during the ritual). Thus, though pants or other modern clothes are usually worn in everyday life, she is ritually marked as a young adult. Until they marry, young adults are free to be intimate with anyone in their status and age cohort other than members of one's own clan. Eligible males, however, cannot force intimacy on their female counterparts. One folk belief related to this taboo is that deer musk applied to an overly aggressive man's privates will make him impotent. It is said that even before modern birth-control there were few premarital pregnancies; those that occurred were regarded as a loss of face for the clan. Young women were said to be skilled in counting the days in their cycles, and deer musk applied to the body could prevent conception. Young women today normally marry after age seventeen, depending in part on age taboos and the results of divination. After the engagement date is set (which may be years earlier) and gifts and money are exchanged, the bride may no longer have casual relations with the opposite sex, giving up the freedom gained at the coming-of-age ceremony.

On the night before the bride departs for the groom's home, women in her village sing bridal laments all night long. The bride passively internalizes the lyrics and prepares emotionally to leave her family. One of the most popular laments is called "Mother's Daughter" (Amo hnisse). It tells of a



young woman who initially resists leaving home to marry but is eventually persuaded to go. Here are a few lines showing the reasoning behind her reluctance:

“If daughter is sent away,  
who will tend the sheep and pigs?  
If daughter is sent away  
who will care for mother and father?”

The lament is regarded as a template of proper filial behavior in Nuosu society, the bride showing reluctance to leave home. The next day male representatives of the groom’s family arrive at the bride’s house and escort her to the groom’s home. The bride has been kept on a restricted diet so she will not have to answer nature’s call during the trip. For at least part of the way she is carried on the back of a young male relative from her father’s side. In the cross-cousin marriage arrangement, the appropriate carrier is determined by generational and family relationships. During the carrying process, it is bad luck for the bride’s family if her feet touch the ground. If the groom’s home is some distance away, the escort party may use horses or motor vehicles for much of the way. A reception is held at the groom’s home at which guests and relatives from the groom’s family and village are served meat, potatoes, buckwheat cakes, other edibles, and alcohol. After three or so days (in some cases one day is enough), the men who brought the bride escort her back to her family, along with gifts of alcohol, meat, and other food items. During her stay at the groom’s home, the bride is with her new female relatives and has no physical contact with the groom. She may visit the groom’s family several times before moving in permanently. Afterward, the couple may begin to have children. Many aspects of the traditional marriage process have been altered in recent decades due to government policies, formal education, the improved economic situation, interaction with other ethnic groups, and movement of young people to urban areas in search of work.

## FUNERALS

*Bimo* and other tradition-bearers have different ideas about the nature of souls, ghosts, the afterworld, and intricacies of funeral rituals. As there is no universal doctrine among the various Yi or Nuosu groups, beliefs and customs vary significantly.<sup>7</sup> That said, scholar of religious studies Benoit Vermander argues that among the Nuosu, at least, there is a recognizable “world

vision” regarding the relation between humans and the spirit realm that is communicated through the rituals and beliefs (1998, xii).

Beliefs concerning souls vary widely and are subject to interpretation. Some say that a person has up to three souls, while others say there is in fact only one soul, but it may move about, especially after death. Some believe that at death three souls are present: one that remains at the cremation (or burial) site, one in the bamboo soul container that is kept in the home, and one that is guided to the land of the ancestors. Others say it is the same soul in all these instances.

The plaited bamboo soul vessel (*maddu*) plays important roles in customary behavior and ideas about lineages. Each year, or every specified set of years, household members must attend to the proper upkeep of the vessel. For instance, depending on local custom, white wool thread is added to the tiny bamboo carving inside the vessel that represents the deceased. Though upkeep details differ, there is a consistent emphasis on proper maintenance of the soul vessels.

After a certain number of years, as determined by a *bimo*, a ritual is held to inter the soul vessel, which has been hanging in the house, in a cave or crevice on the sunny side of a cliff. Such a position is associated with fecundity, as a sunlit slope is optimal for growing grain. Ideally the site is surrounded by verdant forest, representing flourishing descendants (Bamo Ayi 1994, 69). The importance of the bamboo soul vessel is reflected by the many references to it in *The Book of Origins*. In part 12, Shyly Wote is instructed by his elder sister on the importance of properly caring for the soul vessel. Later, animal agents from earth foul the sky god’s palace and steal his family’s soul vessels. In part 22, “Migration of Ahuo,” when the three sons of Puhoo bicker over how to divide their mother’s inheritance, the result is the establishment of protocols for hanging soul vessels in the home.

Funerals are complex events that can play out over several years. The *bimo* are chiefly responsible for chanting a scripture that guides the soul of the deceased on a long journey across the landscape to Zzyzypuvu, the ancient homeland of the Yi ancestors, which by some accounts is near Zhaotong in northeast Yunnan, though ideas on the location vary (Bamo Ayi 1994, 63–74; Huang 2012, 13–15). (For instance, another name for the ancestral hearth is Joturmuggu—sometimes spelled “Joturmuggur”—which may be the place of the same name referenced in part 23, “Genealogy of Nzy Clan.”) During the ritual the *bimo* gives the soul specific directions about navigating mountains, rivers, and towns encountered on the way. The soul-guiding chant is known in Liangshan as *gguhma ggahma*, or “pointing/directing the way.” The term for these chants in Chinese, often used by researchers, is *zhilu jing*

(pointing-the-way scripture). The soul-guiding ritual itself is known in Nuosu as *Nimu cobi* and may be held years after the initial funeral and cremation, in accordance with the directions of a *bimo* and the ability of a family to bear the substantial costs to host the ceremony. Family members parade to the ritual site dressed in their best traditional clothing, the men holding colorful clan banners. The *bimo* chants at various stages of the ritual in the presence of the soul vessels and their contents. Some provisions used by the soul on its journey are part of the ritual assemblage, including paper images of clothing and money and foodstuffs such as buckwheat and oats. Such soul-directing rituals are common among the Yi subgroups (though going by different names) as well as among some other ethnic groups in southwest China and the Eastern Himalayas (Blackburn 2010, 74–76, 276).

While the death of a young person is unlucky, dying is considered the natural end of this life for elders. Funerals for those with progeny are lavish, expensive affairs replete with sumptuous food and drink. Unlike weddings, where all but the bride wear plain clothing, women dress in their finest for funerals of elders. Funerals for those not following ideal life patterns are less lavish. Souls of unmarried persons or those without children are subject to becoming ghosts that will be denied access to the land of the ancestors. Souls of suicides, murderers, or those killed in unnatural calamities may become extremely harmful lingering ghosts that must be ritually dealt with by the *bimo*.

The steps in the funeral process include washing the corpse and dressing it in fine clothes (often prepared years in advance) for viewing on a bier. All relatives from far and wide must, if possible, attend the nightlong wake. During the viewing, groups of women of blood kin and nonblood kin perform folk songs. As described below, young men may participate in a kind of antiphonal song and dance known in the Xide area as *vazyrhli*. In such a performance, two singers stand opposite each other and turn from side to side as they sing origin stories (*bbopa*) and parts of *The Book of Origins*. These exchanges begin with a style of rhythmic delivery like the common *kenre* riffs performed all over Liangshan by folk singers to invoke good luck and fortune. These passages are part of the first stage in the performance called *gebi*, which as the performance unfolds will include the singing of the *bbopa* origin stories. The second stage of the performance, which is held only if singers capable enough to perform are present, is known as *mazyr* and consists of reciting of passages of *The Book of Origins*. Such performances may include two pairs of singers. One pair, known as the “lead oxen” (*lesi*), begins the story, which is echoed, passage by passage, by the other pair, the “plow oxen” (*lemosu*). These antiphonal exchanges are a contest of knowledge and

verbal skill, and the competency of the singers is subject to informal evaluation by the listeners (Bauman 1977, 12).

Later in the night, the *bimo* begins to recite various origin narratives, including the creation of life on earth and the origins of the local clans, finishing before dawn. The recital is held in front of the bier, to which a black pig is tied. The pig is said to aid the soul in rooting through various barriers on the way to the land of the ancestors. Visitors sleep where they can and eat the meals of meat, buckwheat cakes, potatoes, and soup in rotating groups. Early the next day the corpse is transported to a secluded spot in the mountains and cremated, leaving behind no trace of earthly existence. A stack of nine layers of wood is used to cremate men, and seven layers for women. For cremation, a woman is laid on her right side, whereas a man is laid on his left side. It was once common for Nuosu women to tattoo their hands, often with the shapes of circles. At death, these circles are considered as money for buying water on the journey to the land of the ancestors as well as an identifying mark in the other world.

It is believed that when a woman dies, a female child is born somewhere, and likewise with males. In some instances, a living widow may choose to have her funeral at the time of her husband's death. In the interim between that time and her own physical death, she leads a simple and reserved existence in a medial state known as *jjobiqi*. Although her body is in this world, her soul is already in the land of the ancestors.

#### MATERIAL CULTURE

Many items of material culture—the objects of everyday life and the processes surrounding their manufacture and use—are mentioned in *The Book of Origins*. Some of the items are still part of local traditions in Liangshan, though modern products are rapidly displacing the once handmade culture. The largest expressions of material culture are the farm and village settlements, consisting of architecture and field patterns that vary somewhat within the Liangshan region. Many upland settlements consist of a few homes, stock pens, and outbuildings, often placed in niches on steep hillsides above or near a water source. Potato, maize, and buckwheat fields tend to surround dwellings, and every available inch is cultivated. Homes are made of adobe brick, rammed earth, logs, or even boards. In the lowlands along the banks of the Anning River, where many Nuosu farmers raise rice and cash crops, houses are adobe or fired brick structures with courtyards similar to Han styles (Harrell 2001, 57–58).

Traditional upland Yi houses are rectangular, with a large central room and smaller rooms for storage and sleeping on each end. Courtyards, where many activities take place, are common. Many homes have open timbers in the ceilings, a fire pit to one side of the main room, and no chimney. Smoke exits through cracks in the roof; the insides of older homes are black from years of accumulated soot. The hearth may have a three-legged iron trivet, or three granite hearthstones cut like giant commas that arch over the fire pit. A wooden or bamboo rack is typically hung above the fire to hold certain utensils and to dry foods and animal bladders (used as containers for liquids). According to *The Book of Origins*, the Apuyoqo bird, after eavesdropping on a conversation between the sky god and his wife about the secret of human speech, flew through such a hearth in the sky palace and burned off its tail feathers.

Furnishings in traditional Nuosu homes tend to be sparse. Most have several large storage chests and a chest-like family altar in which heirlooms and valuables are stored. Sometimes families sleep hunched up in their felt cloaks around the hearth or on low wooden or bamboo pallets covered with animal hides. Dirt floors are typical in traditional upland homes.

Architecture varies and certain patterns reflect the former stratified society. For instance, some houses in Meigu County feature the intricately carved and pointed wooden gables and roof beams that were once a mark of upper-class Yi houses. In the poorer upland areas with access to timber, some homes are made of debarked logs, carefully fitted together with a minimum of mud chinking. Such homes have roofs of split shingles or slabs of bark, often secured with lines of field stones. In recent years newly styled villages with modern accommodations and standardized decorative patterns painted on the outsides of houses have been erected in Mianning, Puge, Zhaojue, Butuo, and elsewhere, which may signal the future of rural “Yi-style” housing and village organization. Some modern housing projects have been built specifically for families relocating from the uplands into the valleys.

Despite the increasingly rapid inroads of modernization, some traditional crafts are still practiced today (Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000). These include weaving, embroidery, blacksmithing (for making knives, axes, hoes, and other tools), silversmithing (for making jewelry), carpentry, woodworking (including the use of foot-powered lathes to shape bowls), stonework (for creating the uniquely arched hearth stones), and the crafting of musical instruments such as brass mouth harps. In *The Book of Origins*, tools used by the spirits involved in the work of creating the earth include blacksmith hammers, tongs, a forge, and bellows (traditionally these were wood or bamboo pump-bellows or sewn animal hide bags pressed by hand), axes, metal

forks (once used in hunting or warfare), hoes, and a tool for tamping earthen floors and constructing rammed-earth walls.

Other traditional craft items (some now made only for the antique replica market or as festival garb) include leather body armor and arm guards, bows and arrows, steel swords and spears, wooden and leather saddles, other horse tack, muzzle-loading firearms, cattle horns for storing gunpowder, and various tools for fishing, hunting, farming, and household implements. Certain items, particularly wooden eating utensils and saddles, are painted with traditional yellow, red, and black patterns (Harrell, Bamo, Ma 2000, 32–33). Examples of many of these items are on display at the Museum of the Liangshan Yi Slave Society in Xichang.

The production of felt, usually done by men, is an important skill for making a common type of cloak (*jieshyr*) and bed mats. The felting process, associated with cultures of the northern steppes and Central Asia, involves shearing sheep for wool, washing the wool, separating the fibers, shaping large pads of wet wool into cloaks or bedding material, dyeing (an optional step), and rolling the felt to lock the fibers. In the final steps of cloak making, the folds and creases are set in wooden drying frames, and drawstrings are added. Though felting is also practiced by Qiang, Tibetans, and a few other groups, it is foreign to most cultures in southwest China. Weaving wool or hemp was once a requisite skill for all Nuosu women and is still practiced in



Folding pleats in a traditional felt cape, Zhaojue, Liangshan



some places today. Yarn is made with drop spindles and woven on backstrap looms. The fringed cloaks (*vala*), emblematic of Nuosu culture, are made by sewing together panels woven on a loom and leaving long yarn fringes. Sometimes hemp is used to weave cloaks, which may also have cotton panels.

## FOODWAYS

Foodways, or the customary manner of preparing and utilizing food, are often mentioned in *The Book of Origins*, and there are many recognizable parallels to contemporary Nuosu eating and hosting customs in the text (Toelken 1996, 200). Basic Nuosu food consists of buckwheat flour (prepared as pancakes, boiled or steamed cakes, or roasted flour mixed with honey or water), potatoes, and maize (both imported to China from the Americas by the sixteenth century), the *voma* turnip, and soups called *ducha* or *dulieba* made of dried turnip greens cooked with soybean meal. Dishes were traditionally eaten without seasoning, or with flakes from a tart-flavored root known as *hmuku* (Ch: *xiangzhang*; *Cinnamomum camphora*).

Meat was rarely eaten by the common castes, though chicken, eggs, pork, and goat meat were prepared at special events. If affordable, beef was served to honored guests and at major ritual sacrifices, a custom that continues today. In some areas, however, poor hosts can still substitute two chickens for an ox. It was (and sometimes is) customary for animals to be killed within hearing range of the guests—as the squeals attest to the freshness of the proffered meat. Due to economic gains in the early twenty-first century, there was a marked increase in animal slaughters at weddings and other occasions involving guests. Since clan, family, and individual “face” and connections depend on adherence to such gifting rituals, some families and even whole communities brought economic hardship on themselves by trying to keep up with or outdo their peers. In response, government restrictions were issued on the number of cattle slaughtered.

A traditional home meal involves the family squatting around two or three wooden bowls filled with potatoes, buckwheat cakes, chunks of meat (if available), and a soup, positioned on the ground near the hearth. Each person has a wooden spoon (*ichy*) with the handle affixed on the side rather than the end. There are no individual food bowls. Everyone is careful to dip out just enough soup or broth so as not to drip into other food bowls. Chunks of meat (with bones), innards (which may include lungs, livers, or braided small intestines), potatoes, and buckwheat cakes are taken gingerly with the right hand and often looked over slowly before eating. Potatoes,



A feast meal of buckwheat cakes, potatoes, goat meat, and *voma* turnip greens soup

roasted or boiled, are deftly skinned by hand. Guests and elders eat first, and younger people and children eat last. A good guest does not eat too much, does not take the best pieces, and eats quickly, knowing that others are waiting for a share. Such an arrangement is very practical at events like funerals or weddings in which dozens or many hundreds of guests must be fed (a task often divided among the local families, who each feed a certain number of guests). In some instances, guests are expected to bring gifts (*hlypu*) of food or money to help communally defray the financial burdens on the host family. In an increasing number of homes (and at banquets) chopsticks, individual bowls, and tables, along with hot pepper sauce and a more diverse range of dishes, are popular, especially in areas influenced by urban ways.

Any visit or festive occasion calls for liquor—at least among male participants. Besides commercial alcohol (Ch: *bai jiu*) and beer there is homebrew made from a volatile mix of grains and herbs fermented like beer in crocks. In some places, homebrew was commonly sipped from a large communal crock with long straws.



## YI LITERATURE

Since 1949, collections of oral, and when relevant, written texts have been assembled by scholars, cultural officials, and publishers to form the literary traditions of each of China's fifty-five ethnic minority groups, creating and recognizing a new literary category within the tradition of Chinese literature—that of “ethnic minority literature” (Ma, Liang, and Zhang 1992; Bender 2016, 261–62). These texts, some of which were collected in the pre-1949 era, include traditional oral songs, stories, proverbs, and epics, as well as modern-style works of authored fiction and poetry. Most works in both categories are published in standard Chinese (whether as translations from native tongues, or as original compositions). In some cases the oral texts are published in bilingual or multilinear formats, and there are bodies of contemporary authored literature published solely in Mongolian, Uyghur, Tibetan, Korean, Kazakh, and Yi. About twelve groups had traditional written scripts, though many groups now have romanization systems of modern invention that are used in varying degrees. In a process similar to the recognition of literatures of other official Chinese ethnic groups, a body of oral and written texts have since the 1940s been identified as Yi literature. Thus, the translation of a written version of *The Book of Origins* in the present volume can be understood as an example of Chinese ethnic minority literature as well as a representative of traditional Yi literature from the Liangshan Mountain region within China and globally.

Written versions of *The Book of Origins* are part of a vast array of texts written by hand in various Yi scripts (orthographies) that have survived the ages. The texts—all of which are cast as poetry—include lyrics for rituals dealing with harmful ghosts, worshipping dragons, mountain gods, other local gods, and reverencing ancestors; “pointing the way” lyrics and other funeral chants; chants to call back wandering souls; moralistic texts like *The Book of Teachings* (N: *Hmamu teyy*) that give advice on proper conduct; historical accounts (including narratives of the great flood and battles with outsiders); clan genealogies; origin stories; astronomy and divination texts; folk medicine; poems; folk stories and songs; long narrative poems; treatises on poetics and philosophy; and translations from traditional Chinese literature.<sup>8</sup>

The Yi literary tradition features both written and oral dimensions. Written texts have been produced for centuries, if not much longer, by *bimo* and possibly other tradition-bearers. These written texts, however, can be either read or recited from memory by the ritualists. Thus, they can be considered as “oral-connected” texts that exist as written texts yet are subject to oral

delivery. Moreover, versions of some texts are performed by folk singers who cannot read the written Yi and have a different delivery style from the ritualists. All told, the relation between orality and writing is complex and multifaceted in the various Yi script and oral performance traditions. Additional layers of complexity are already being added as traditional texts move by various avenues into the print and digital world.<sup>9</sup>

The content of texts from the various Yi areas is often quite different, and narratives, for instance, known in one area were not known in other places or are markedly different variants on a theme. For instance, the story of Ashima, a folk heroine of the Sani people of the Stone Forest area of eastern Yunnan, was confined to that area in both written and oral forms until the 1950s and 1960s, when Chinese translations and a film were popularized (Zhao 2003; Bender 2009). A somewhat similar oral narrative of a Nuosu heroine named Gamo Anyo, from the Ebian area of southern Sichuan, was not only unknown among other Yi groups in southwest China but was unknown until recently in many other areas of Liangshan (Wang Changfu 2003, 140–43). Another example is *Chronicles of the Southwestern Yi* (Ch: *Xinan Yizhi*), a corpus of texts from Guizhou assembled by Yi scholars that is rich in historical, genealogical, cosmology, and folk knowledge and that differs in specific content from texts documented elsewhere (Wang Yunquan 2008). A number of similar collections of texts, again with different content, have been collected in Yi areas throughout Guizhou, Yunnan, and in Guangxi.<sup>10</sup> Variants of the Nuosu *Book of Origins* (including the version in this volume) that have been documented in the Liangshan Mountains share some themes and motifs with origin epics such as *Chamu* (typically represented phonetically in Chinese, as there is not an official romanization system for the local dialect) from Chuxiong Prefecture in northern Yunnan and those in other Yi areas, but are otherwise distinctly different and should be considered as local traditions (Guo and Tao 2009). It is only in recent decades that scholars have created an awareness among Yi intellectuals and others of a common, but multifaceted, Yi literary tradition.

Yi traditional literature seems to have been composed and transmitted largely by the *bimo* priests. That said, some evidence suggests that other sorts of persons may have known the script. For instance, the existence of Yi graphs on stone or bronze objects from Guizhou and Yunnan may indicate there were once literate administrators and officials in the hierarchies of local Yi polities (Bamo Qubumo 2000).

Since the early twentieth century, large numbers of texts have been collected from Yi areas in the southwest, especially in Guizhou and Yunnan, as well as southern Sichuan. The scripts used to write these texts are a unique

creation of early cultures in southwest China and are one of two major writing systems invented in China—the other being the Chinese script. The Chinese term *Yi wen* (Yi script), the present catchall term to describe traditional forms of Yi writing, became popular only after 1949, when the term “Yizu” was first used to categorize the various Yi subgroups. The Yi script tradition, however, may date to nearly two thousand years ago, and its variants have had many names in different times and places. Other written languages of southwest China and border areas of Southeast Asia include Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Dai, and Burmese. Southwest China also has highly localized traditions of writing such as Naxi “pictographs” of the Lijiang area of northwestern Yunnan, Shui writing of Guizhou, and ancient Bashu pictographs (Ch: *Bashu tuyu*) of Sichuan.

Chinese scholars have identified four major orthographic traditions associated with Yi groups (Huang 2003, 36–37; Bradley 2009, 170). Like the spoken languages (of which there are six large divisions), each of these local script traditions varies considerably from the others and has local variations. The scripts consist of graphs that represent syllables, unlike alphabets, which use combinations of letters to represent sounds. Thus, the traditional scripts have been described as syllabaries, though “less systematic and standardized” than syllabaries for other languages such as Japanese (Ramsey 1987, 259). That said, certain scholars consider some of the graphs as pictographs, ideograms, or logograms, and debate continues among scholars in China about how to characterize the traditional Yi writing system.

The earliest examples of what some scholars consider Yi writing are inscriptions on pottery, stone tablets, and bronze castings dating back well more than one thousand years. Texts written on paper, which are of most concern here, date to at least as early as the late Ming dynasty. These and later texts were transmitted by a process of hand-copying by *bimo* priests in a teacher-to-student dynamic. None of the scripts were standardized beyond the demands of the various lines of transmission by the *bimo*. Thus, even texts by different lineages of *bimo* in an area show variation, including certain differences in script. Whereas the local variations can be explained by intentional or unintentional changes introduced in the transmission process, the larger differences between the regional script traditions invite other explanations.

One theory suggests this variation could come about only after lengthy periods of separation of the groups, which supposes that at one point the Yi peoples lived in a cultural core area from which many (or all) emigrated or were otherwise separated. Some scholars argue that since the Yi groups are descendants of early Qiangic peoples who lived in present-day Gansu and

northern Sichuan, the possible birthplace of antecedents of later Yi scripts is somewhere in that area. Scholars have even proposed a very early link between a now-lost Qiangic script that influenced both the creation of what would eventually become the Yi scripts and Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE) oracle bone writing—the earliest form of written Chinese (Huang 2003, 91–96).

Yi texts from the Ming and Qing dynasties relate that in the past a population of Yi (or whatever the ancient names, such as “Gni,” may have been) lived together for generations under the sway of local rulers. This place may have been located on the borders of Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou. After many formative generations, the local clans held a massive ritual marking the separation and dispersion of the so-called “Six Tribes” (Ch: Liu Zu). The clans or tribes migrated along the regional rivers in search of new settlements. Accounts of migrations, whether attributed to the Six Tribes or later groups, are part of many Yi written texts and oral epic performances. Some accounts relate the diaspora event to a great flood that supposedly occurred near the end of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 BCE) (Bamo Qubumo 2000, 101; Herman 2007, 20). Accordingly, the diversity of later Yi scripts is attributed to this early breakup, at a time when the script was supposedly more uniform.

Ultimately, however, like many other events in these texts, the dates of the breakup and migrations cannot be pinpointed. It is assumed (or wished) that the accounts detailing early events were copied and recopied over the centuries and that many of them are of great age. There are several names of persons who either re-created or attempted to standardize the Yi script that appear in both Yi and Han records of the Han, Tang, and later dynasties. One name often cited is A Ke from northern Yunnan, who is thought to have lived in either the Han or Tang dynasty and is said to have created 1,800 graphs (Huang 2003, 85–89). However, all told, there is not strong enough evidence to say exactly who did what when. Thus, the dilemma is whether to consider the ancient genealogies, migration accounts, events, and personages as at least legends with some historical basis or to regard them as rhetorical compositions created to gain or maintain some sort of legitimacy within a family, clan, or other form of social organization.

Some scholars have attempted to date the origin of a given text by factoring the lists of generational “begats” linked by the clan genealogies that are often present in the texts. Thus, using a figure of between seventeen and thirty-four years (depending on local tradition) to represent a generation, a text that is dated to a certain known date (such as the presumed great flood) is used as a starting point in the calculation. For instance, a surviving copy

of a work from Guizhou known as “Discussion of Yi Poetics,” attributed to an early, great *bimo* named Jushezhe (in Chinese transliteration), has a date of 1664 (early Qing dynasty) written on the text. But using dates estimated in relation to legendary/historical figures, the final calculation puts the composition of the original text at about AD 550, using twenty-five years as the length of a generation (Kang et al. 1997, 24–25; Shama Layi 2010, 1–10). Following this idea of early origins, the long period spanning the Wei-Jin (AD 220–420), Tang (AD 618–907), and Song dynasties (AD 220–1279) is thought to be the developmental period of the script and rituals associated with their use (Bamo Qubumo 2000, 105–8).

One of several Chinese names for what seem to be antecedents of later Yi scripts, is Cuan *wen* (Cuan script). This term appears in local administrative documents written by government officials in Yunnan in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The name Cuan is associated with a powerful clan or ruling group dated to at least AD 339 and lasting into the twelfth century, at times controlling much of what is now the eastern areas of Yunnan and parts of western Guizhou and Guangxi (Bradley 2001, 201; Huang 2003, 51–53). The capital of the Cuan kingdom (which had Eastern and Western phases) was located around Lake Dian (Dian Chi), in the present provincial capital of Kunming. Though not a Yi term, the term “Cuan script” was used by Han administrators and scholars well into the twentieth century. Other historic Chinese names for the Yi script tradition used at various times and places include *Wei shu* (interpreted as “standard graphs”), *Lolo wen* (Lolo script), *yi zi* (“savage” characters), *bimo wen* (*bimo* script), and *kedou wen* (“tadpole” script), related to names for local styles, local cultures, ritualists, or, in the latter case, the shape of the graphs (Huang 2003, 49–58).

The earliest purported examples of the Yi script tradition are inscriptions in natural and worked stone, bronze castings, pottery, and bone.<sup>11</sup> Among the inscribed items are a crudely cast bronze “mortar” and a carved stone tablet that were found in Guizhou and have been dated to the Western Han period (206 BC to AD 9). On the casting, which includes figures of frogs, snakes, and floral motifs, are five graphs that some scholars claim are words meaning, “Pass on the Mortar of the Ancestors Forever.” The tablet, of which only a part remains, is dated to the Jian Xing period of the Shu Han period (AD 223–37) and is titled “The Tablet Commemorating Tuo Azhe.” Fifteen incomplete lines in graphs that are clearly Yi remain in the surface of the stone. Other stone inscriptions from Guizhou and Sichuan date to the thirteenth century, including one in a cliff face at Tiantai Mountain, Sichuan, that has been translated as “Stairway to Heaven.” A cast bronze bell from Guizhou, dating to the Cheng Hua reign of the Ming dynasty (AD 1465–87)

has both Yi and Chinese inscriptions. A large tablet commemorating the building of a bridge over the Dadu River in Dafang, Guizhou is dated 1592 in the Wanli era of the Ming dynasty.

These and other examples clearly demonstrate the use of Yi in formal contexts by the early Ming and point to earlier origins of the script. Aside from these and other inscriptions and castings, the earliest Yi texts written on sheepskin parchment and various sorts of paper date to around 1500 and have been found in northeastern Yunnan and Guizhou. Thus, while the era and locus of invention are still being debated, historical and textual evidence suggests that by the Ming dynasty, variant forms of the Yi script were in use within Yi communities spread across a large region comprised of eastern Yunnan and western Guizhou.

Chinese scholars presently recognize four related, but not wholly mutually intelligible, major script traditions that constitute the Yi script tradition. Assuming the varieties of written Yi originated from an initial form or a close-knit group of forms, it is difficult to ascertain which graphs were among the ur-forms and which were later added in local varieties. Nevertheless, it has been estimated that there is only about 60 percent mutual recognition of graphs between the varieties (though this varies case by case) (Zhongyang 1996, 70–71). Even texts from the same dialect area show variation, such as those collected from the three major subgroups of Northern Yi speakers in the Liangshan area. These local traditions of Yi script are part of what can be considered the regional textual traditions of Yi literature, in which both script and content vary significantly.

The Yi regional textual traditions can be roughly divided (as there is overlap) into the Eastern (western Guizhou and northeast Yunnan), Southeastern (southeastern Yunnan), Southern (southern and parts of central Yunnan), and Northern (southern Sichuan and some contiguous areas in Yunnan) (Bradley 2001, 202). Texts have also been collected in western Guangxi. Although it appears that there were attempts to standardize the scripts at points in the ancient past, *bimo* familiar with different script traditions have difficulty reading texts from other areas without considerable training (Bradley 2001, 206–12).

In parts of Yunnan, these scripts are known as *si* (or similar-sounding words in the various dialects) and “*bburma*” among the Northern Yi speakers. Some scholars have noted that the term *si* is similar phonologically to the word for “blood” and suggest that the term for writing is linked to the use of blood of sacrificed animals as ink when writing on wooden slats used in rituals dealing with the supernatural (Huang 2003, 49–51). The script traditions vary in number, composition, shape, and details of the basic strokes

making up the graphs. There are also differences in the sounds (phonetic and speech tones) associated with the graphs and in punctuation in the texts (if present). Other differences include orientation of the text on the page, differences in delivery format (pages or scrolls), the style and incorporation of illustrations (which can also vary within a tradition), cartouches, colored ink, and content in terms of customs, beliefs, narrative plots, etc. (Zhongyang 1996, 63–68). Pagination is present only in relatively recent texts. Some scholars believe that early texts with five graph lines did not need punctuation, but when conventions of differing line lengths developed (alterations between three- and five-syllable lines, for instance), punctuation was needed and developed independently from systems used in other script traditions such as Chinese (Huang 1993, 107–9).

Most early texts and many later ones have no author, and even later ones may only include the author's name or the name of the copyist's parents in an attribution such as “the son” of “so and so” (Huang 1993, 77–80). This phenomenon may be due in part to the transmission process, involving both oral teaching and actual copying, used by the ritualists who customarily copy versions of the texts. Attributions of authors, such the great *bimo* Jush-ezhe or the influential female *bimo* and poet Amaini, are rare.<sup>12</sup> Dates in texts are also rare, though are encountered, sometimes in a mix of Chinese and Yi dating systems. Likewise, prefaces are found only occasionally and are often more in the vein of a “disclaimer of performance” about the author's lack of knowledge than commentary on the content of the work (Bauman 1977, 21–22). For instance, the preface to *Shidi tianzi* (named for a great *bimo* in the time of the mythic Yi ancestor Apu Dumu), a religious narrative from Honghe Prefecture, Yunnan, includes examples of several of these phenomena:

My inclination for copying this book is to let the reader be somewhat moved by the story. At sunrise on the day of the pig, in the 12th month of the year of the snake, in the 19th year of the reign of Emperor Guangxu, [I] began to copy it, and finished it on the day of the cow, hour of the dog. This mother's son, ah, copied this at age 36; this mother's son, ah, doesn't know many words, and is familiar with few books, and copies books following no standard, the words written poorly. [I] can't write, ah, it is like one word too high, one word long, one word short. (Shi 2006, 147)

In the Northern Yi areas, the transmission of the texts from teacher to student differed somewhat depending on the age of the student (Zhongyang



1996, 46–52; Huang 2003, 175–81). Sons of a *bimo* could carry on the family tradition in a process of homeschooling and were the usual transmitters. In some cases, however, a student from another family could be apprenticed to a *bimo*. According to interviews with *bimo* in the Liangshan Mountains, male children of the teacher's family or other students would begin learning the ritual texts around age seven or eight. The process involved daily lessons—usually given in the evening when the distractions of daily life were minimal. The *bimo* teacher would recite a passage, and the student would repeat it and then be required to memorize the entire lesson that night. The next morning the student would recite the lesson to the *bimo*, who would correct any mistakes. In some cases a more advanced student would be required to write out what was memorized orally the night before. The process would begin again later in the day.

One *bimo* schooled before 1949 recalled that his *bimo* teacher wrote portions of a text with a wooden stylus on a slip of smooth wood and hung it on the student's cloak. When out herding or otherwise working, the student would memorize the graphs and be tested on writing them later in the day. When taking a *bimo* as a teacher, younger students (accompanied by older relatives) would bring homemade wine to ritually toast him. Foodstuffs and even money would also be given. Throughout the learning process, which could last five to seven years, the student was exposed to aspects of *bimo* practice and eventually participated in rituals and the copying of texts before ending the apprenticeship. For adult students the procedure was less formal, though wine and nominal gifts or sums of money were given. The same process of first an oral version, then a written one seems also to have been followed by the adult learners, some of whom had already studied with other *bimo* and wished to increase their knowledge.

The number of component parts that comprise the graphs in the traditional Northern orthography is twenty-six, whereas in southern areas (such as in the Southeastern Sani texts) it is twenty-five. The basic shapes of these parts vary significantly from place to place, and though they appear similar can often be written in several ways. In more complex graphs there is a main part and at least one secondary part. When writing, the parts are combined thus: top/bottom; top/middle/bottom; to the left of the main element; to the right of the main element. Except for those graphs written with only one stroke, each graph has one prominent component part, which is written first, and one or more secondary elements. Also, while certain component parts can be combined to form graphs, others cannot.

Traditionally, many Yi texts in Yunnan and Guizhou were written and read from top to bottom and left to right (unlike early Chinese, which was



written and read top to bottom, but right to left). However, when the Northern script traditions are read (horizontally right to left), the graphs appear to southern readers to be written sideways because alignments on the page differ between north and south. Thus, *bimo* in Liangshan will turn the southern texts sideways when reading them.

The graphs are written using a small stylus of wood or bamboo, or with brushes fashioned of hair, wool, vegetable matter (even pine needles) fastened in a bamboo, wooden, or a makeshift hempstalk handle (Huang 2003, 180). Ink was sometimes made of charcoal or soot mixed with pig blood. Paper was made of bark and other plant material or, like better-quality ink, obtained from Han merchants. Rectangles of paper were folded over a bamboo slip to create double pages and bound as books with string, or made into scrolls. Wood slats, used in rituals, and processed goat hides were other mediums for writing. In many texts collected in the Southeastern Honghe region of Yunnan, graphs are written within columns of red ink lines.

Though attempts are under way to develop a universal Yi script, there is presently no standard Yi writing system in use throughout all the Yi areas. Thousands of books and scrolls written in Yi have been collected by scholars since the late nineteenth century and especially during the 1940s. Unfortunately, many were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), when traditional cultural practices were violently suppressed all over the country. Nevertheless, thousands of volumes have been archived in collections in China, Europe, and the United States.<sup>13</sup> An undetermined number of texts are said to still be in the hands of *bimo* living throughout the southwest (Bamo Qubumo 2001, 456n7). Many *bimo* continue to copy the traditional texts by hand or with photocopiers; apprentices (*bisse*) must commit the texts to memory under the guidance of elder ritualists. In the Liangshan areas, at the death of a *bimo* his scriptures are left to his sons or apprentices, which is an important factor in the transmission and preservation process.

The Liangshan Standard Yi Script was created and popularized between the 1950s and early 1980s (Huang 2003, 164–67; Su et al. 2017, 134–39). The 819 graphs are based on older scripts in the Northern Yi area of Liangshan, and therefore the script is useful only in the northern areas. Thousands of texts have been published in the Liangshan Standard Yi Script, ranging from official documents, to newspaper articles, to literary works—including versions of traditional ritual and epic texts, which sometimes appear in bilingual Yi/Chinese multilinear versions) (Harrell and Bamo 1998, 64; Bradley 2001, 206–7).

It is this standard script that Jjivot Zopqu used to record the version of *The Book of Origins* translated in this book. After copying the content of an ancient scroll once belonging to a local *ndeggu* wise man into the Mao notebook, he cast the original graphs, one by one, into the new standardized writing system, copying that version in the notebook with the modern young woman on the cover. Jjivot's original intention seems to have been to make a copy in the new script that was easier to read for those not necessarily schooled as *bimo* and as a more secure means of preservation.

#### HNEWO TEYY: THE BOOK OF ORIGINS

The Nuosu title of *The Book of Origins*, *Hnewo teyy*, has been interpreted by scholars in several ways (Zhongyang 1996, 283–84). The word *teyy* means “book” in Nuosu, which refers to various sorts of handwritten scrolls and string-bound volumes. Such texts, written on handcrafted paper or goatskin parchment with a bamboo or wooden stylus or brush, are known as *bimo teyy*, or *bimo* books. Another general term is *teyy shybo*, or books of history. The term *ka mga* literally means “comes out of the mouth” and can be used to describe oral delivery of the texts (Bamo Qubumo 2001, 465). More problematic is the meaning of *hnewo*. The term may mean “passed down through mouth and ears,” or “turn pages,” as by a ritualist in a recital. Another possible meaning is “segments” or “joints” (as in a stalk of bamboo)—an interpretation that recognizes the stages in the narration of the creation of the world and could be related to steps in ancient rituals. More than twenty versions of portions or complete texts of the *Hnewo* have been edited and published in Chinese translation, and in some cases in bilingual, multi-linear formats (Bamo Qubumo 2003, 121, 251–52; Ganluo xian n.d.). (The translators chose to translate the present version because of its direct links to the folk context, rich content, and the rapport developed with Jjivot Zopqu. Beyond minor standardizations of some graphs, he did not alter the original *bimo* scroll text when he copied it and transcribed it into standard written Northern Yi.)

Probably the best known of the published versions is Feng Yuanwei's Chinese-language translation, released in 1986. That text is based on eight versions collected in the city of Xichang and Zhaojue, Meigu, and Butuo Counties, which Feng edited into a master version comprised of thirteen parts (Feng 1986; Bamo Qubumo 2003, 22–23; Zuo 2006, 206). The texts Feng consulted varied in length and content. By careful editing he spliced together an enriched text that exhibits more content than any single version. The creation of a composite version, in which a number of similar texts

are collected and melded into an ideal version, has been a common method used in Chinese folklore studies since the 1950s. Although the individual nature of a given version and its social context may not be well represented in the final product, if done conscientiously (without intentional distortion for political correctness or other reasons), such texts do serve the purpose of presenting a readable and informative “master text” that represents the tradition to contemporary and future tradition-bearers and various reading audiences (Bender and Mair 2011, 9–10; Bender 2012). In contrast, the present version is based on one folk version of the text copied by Jjivot Zopqu from the *bimo* scroll.

Several passages in the Feng version are similar to those in the version copied by Jjivot, though other collected versions differ quite radically from either of these. One major difference between the Jjivot and Feng versions is length. The Jjivot version has twenty-nine parts, in which the last seventeen are genealogies and migration accounts of various Yi clans. In the Feng version, only one part is devoted to these migrations. Another difference is the ordering of the major episodes. In the Feng version, the “twelve sons of snow” section, in which animals and plants transform from red snow, appears before the age of multiple suns and moons that parch the earth. In the present version, the offspring of snow reseed the earth in a second phase of creation after the extra suns and moons are shot from the sky by the hero Zhyge Alu.

*The Book of Origins* is characterized in the folk culture in several ways. According to Eqi Luoluo (as written in Chinese *pinyin* romanization), a seventy-eight-year-old *ndeggu* wise man from Meigu County interviewed in 2005, the content of *The Book of Origins* (Hnewo teyy) can be divided into sections concerning specific events and genealogies, and into major portions that cover the origins of the gods and culture heroes such as Zhyge Alu. According to Yi folklorist Bamo Qubumo, who interviewed Nuosu tradition-bearers in the late 1990s, some parts of *The Book of Origins* are known by tradition-bearers as the “black Hnewo” (*hnewo nuo* or simply *anuo*) and “white Hnewo” (*hnewo qu* or simply *aqu*) (2003, 144). The black portions concern the origins of gods, culture heroes (especially Zhyge Alu), and the living beings that dwell on the earth, in the waters, and fly in the sky. These portions are performed primarily by *bimo* as part of the complex funeral rituals. The white *Hnewo* portions concern accounts of early ancestors of today’s humans and the final genealogies concerning the migrations of the descendants of the three sons of Jjumu Vuvu and Hnituo, daughter of the sky god. The white portions feature passages such as the marriage of Shyly Wote (in part 12) that are performed at weddings and other festive occasions.

The parts that describe the creation of animals and plants—that is, the beings with blood and those without blood—were once known by the now obscure term “mottled *Hnewo*” (*hnewo azzi*). The color differentiation may be related to ancient Yi clan groups or may even reflect a pattern of hierarchy similar to that of the former categories of social order that distinguished between “black” (upper) and “white” (lower) castes in Nuosu society (which before the 1950s was characterized by a small ruling elite and several lower divisions of commoners, serfs, and slaves [Lin 1961, 99–101; Harrell 2001, 93–96]). Alternately, the first seven segments detailing the creation of the sky and earth are sometimes referred to as “male” (*abu*) parts, and the latter parts recounting the actions of protohumans, para-humans, and humans on earth are called the “female” (*amo*) parts (Bamo Qubumo 2003, 139).

*The Book of Origins* is enmeshed in a strong intertextual tradition. In the taxonomy of Nuosu folk literature, the text is considered as a megaversion of the sort of origin narratives that Bamo Qubumo has called “ritualized epos” (2001, 453). Such origin narratives are chanted in a verse format as part of various rituals and performances of the song-and-dance form called *vazyrhli*. These short oral origin narratives are called *bbopa* and, when written, *bbopa teyy*. The stories tell the origins, typically in the form of a genealogy, of things as diverse as water, disease, tobacco, iron, sheep, dogs, hemp, the *voma* turnip, buckwheat, and oats, as well as rites of clan division and unification, marriage, death, ghosts, and the origin of *bimo* ritualists (Liangshan 2006, 82–152). The “Genealogy of Lightning,” related in part 4 of *The Book of Origins*, is very similar to these shorter *bbopa* and could stand alone as such, as could several other parts of the epic. In both *The Book of Origins* and the shorter narratives, the origins of everything is either directly attributed to the sky god Ngeti Gunzy (or his agents), or to the sky, clouds, mountains, fairies, or the ancestors. In some areas *The Book of Origins* and its panoramic narrations of the creation are also referred to as the “Grandfather *Hnewo*” (*Apu Hnewo*), whereas the shorter *bbopa* stories of the origins of very specific things are called the “Grandmother *Hnewo*” (*Ama Hnewo*).

The *bbopa* are typically performed near the beginning of rituals and in some contexts before recitations of passages from *The Book of Origins*. As Bamo Qubumo (2001, 458) notes: “The *bimo* typically performs *bbopa* songs at the very beginning of a ritual, and continues inserting them into sub-rituals as the need to articulate the objects being employed at that very moment arises.” Although origin accounts may be told as individual stories or chants in contexts apart from recitations of parts of *The Book of Origins* per se, ultimately many of the stories are related to events conveyed in the epic.

Elements of what folklorists call myths, legends, proverbs, and a style of folktale that the Nuosu call *bbudde* also echo throughout the written and oral versions of *The Book of Origins* (Bamo Qubumo 2001, 457–58). Many *bbudde*, collected from all over Liangshan, are related to events transmitted in the origin stories called *bbopa teyy* and *The Book of Origins*. Often the tales themselves offer differing versions of events from the origin verse narratives, though they can be seen as part of the greater *Hnewo* tradition. For instance, one published collection of folktales from Yuexi County has four stories about Zhyge Alu, including the shooting down of the extra suns and moons (and details about where the extras went), punishing the lightning spirit, setting things in order on earth after downing the suns and moons, taming water buffaloes, and dealing with a fierce dragon (Zhang and Yang 2005, 226–32). In other written versions of *The Book of Origins* some of the tasks attributed to Zhyge Alu are accomplished by other beings, while certain episodes in the folktales may not appear at all in some epic versions. As is to be expected in oral literature, most of the folktale versions both echo and diverge from written ones. In many instances, the tales are more fleshed out than in written versions of *The Book of Origins*, which suggests that in one sense the epic in its written forms is a relatively stable repository of themes and motifs that is subject to referencing, explication, and enhancement in performance at the will and needs of the *bimo* or other tellers. Whether *The Book of Origins* is the source of these tales, or whether it was constructed in part from oral folktales is a subject for continued research.

#### ORAL DELIVERY

When Jjivot Zopqu reads passages of *The Book of Origins* aloud, he chants verbatim the words of the epic, following the version he transliterated into the Liangshan Standard Yi Script. At some points, he may recite parts from memory, though the text is always at hand. His idiosyncratic style of delivery, however, differs from both performances by *bimo* ritualists and skilled folk singers in the local communities.

Depending on the performer and situation, specific portions of *The Book of Origins* are delivered in various oral or oral-connected formats at births, marriages, and funerals, as well as at house-raising and festivals. The vocal tradition-bearers may be *bimo* ritualists, *ndeggu* wise men, or folk singers. Portions of the epic are also performed inside homes during rituals of curing, calling back lost souls, and home purification. At the home events, a *bimo* and his assistant(s) will mark out a corner of a room and erect a small



Jjivot Zopqu reciting passages from *The Book of Origins* at a family gathering at his home in Xide County

structure of sacred grass and green branches that indicates the presence of their *bimo* ancestors. Seated on mats, the ritualists proceed to recite the genealogies of the family and local clans, perform the compulsory short origin narratives (*bbopa*) (which may include passages similar to those found in versions of *The Book of Origins*), and offer sacrifices to drive off ghosts and bring good fortune (Bamo Qubumo 2001, 453–58). At any event where a *bimo* performs, the handwritten *teyy* texts are on-site and often displayed prominently within the *bimo*'s performance space. As tangible items related to recitation, the texts are numinous objects that, like the *bimo*'s hat, bell, fan, and the “ghost-catcher” quiver, lend authority to the ritualist and enhance a sense of ritual efficacy.

The oral performances by folk singers of *The Book of Origins* have been well-researched by Bamo Qubumo. She has described situations in which *ndeggu* or skilled local folk singers (called *zoma zosse* or other names) perform content from *bbopa* origin narratives and *The Book of Origins* in the verbal dueling genre known in the Xide area as *vazyrhli* or *kenre* (riffs) elsewhere (Bamo Qubumo 2001, 467; 2003, 160–66). The style of delivery impacts form and depends largely on the performance situation.





Two singers performing in antiphonal style, alternately turning as they sing. This style is used in performances of passages of *The Book of Origins* at funerals and weddings. Ebian County, Sichuan.

An example of the dueling style is a performance (witnessed by the authors) that took place in the summer of 2007 at the funeral of an elderly Nuosu man in the suburbs of Mianning, near the border of Xide County. The wake was held in the courtyard of an older apartment complex where hundreds of kinfolk and guests gathered for the event. Designated members of the family registered the gifts of food and money near the entryway. The attendees sat or stood in small groups near the bier, under which was attached a live pig that would help guide the deceased's soul to the land of the ancestors, led by the chants of a *bimo*. As the evening unfolded, successive groups of kin were fed in a dining hall from tubs full of freshly steamed buckwheat cakes, potatoes, and boiled beef.

At moments, small groups of young and older women stood in front of the bier in traditional dress. They sang laments while facing the other attendees, many of whom were bustling about the courtyard. The atmosphere was at times charged with emotion generated by the singing and conversation. At one point, a pair of young men walked before the bier. Each was a representative of one side of the deceased's family. They proceeded to perform the antiphonal *vazyrhli*, mentioned earlier in the discussion of the funeral process. Though dressed in modern street clothes, they borrowed traditional

cloaks from two of the women singers. Thus appropriately garbed, they performed portions of a narrative about the origin of death, moving back and forth in front of the bier. Standing about five feet apart, they sang energetically, alternately shifting right then left and back again in half turns. This style of turning is also used by male epic singers in the Meigu County area. Women in Ebian County employ a similar technique when singing bridal laments about the ill-fated runaway bride Gamo Anyo (Bender 2007, 215–20).

After that performance, several other young men linked arms and sang similar lyrics about origins that overlapped with the content from *The Book of Origins*. This performance was followed by a group of women singing more laments, who were in turn followed by other singers. Later in the night, other singers, as well as a *bimo*, sang passages from *The Book of Origins* about the origins of the sky and earth and the “sons of snow.”

While the various singers during the funeral were an obvious presence, they were not necessarily the focus of everyone’s attention. They were a necessary, expected part of the happening. The songs needed to be sung to fulfill the ritual content of the event. Moreover, the ordering of the various passages that were sung did not conform to the typical chronology of the written texts that have been collected.<sup>14</sup> This performance of content that, compared to a fixed written text, is “out of order” or otherwise different is typical of live epic recitals around the world and a direct result of the “multiplicity of performance contexts,” as seen in the Nuosu performance situations (Honko 2000, 223–26).

#### POETIC AND RHETORICAL DEVICES

The outstanding feature of Nuosu epic verse is the process of entwining and unfolding various combinations of poetic and rhetorical means.<sup>15</sup> Among the many expressive devices woven into the structure of the written *Book of Origins* are differences in line lengths, rhyming of words, patterning of speech tones, repetition, parallelism, and shifts between narration and the speech of characters in the story.

Although a frequent unit of expression in Nuosu oral delivery is a line with five syllables, in the act of performance there may appear syllable units of four, five, six, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, or other groupings. Written texts also have variants on the common five-syllable line. During performance, the line units can be manipulated to create, maintain, and alter the pace of delivery. In many cases patterned chunks of text, or “multiforms,” are utilized in the presentation of various scenes in *The Book of Origins* (Honko 2000, 19–20). Multiforms are used to depict typical social situations



and action-rich scenes. In Nuosu epic poetry, weddings, feasts, battles, leave taking and returns, and other events are organized in multiform structural formats. Multiform passages may be only a few lines in length or comprise much longer passages. They may share similar forms and themes, though the specifics vary. The latter parts of the epic in which the clan migrations are described are especially formulaic and consist largely of repeated multiform structures.

Although rhyme occurs in *The Book of Origins*, regular rhyme schemes are not a part of the prosodic structure of the poem. Short parts may have either head or end rhyme, but the patterning is local. More common is the patterned repetition of speech tones. Like Chinese, and many other languages of the region, Northern Yi (Nuosu) is a tonal language. The “standard” Xide dialect has four speech tones: high (**t**), mid-high (**x**), mid-level (no marking), and low falling (**p**) (Ma, Walters, and Walters 2008, 6). A number of prosodic features (including the tone markers) are present in the following passage from part 8, “Zhyge Alu,” concerning the lineage of Pumo Hniyyr (**Pupmop Hnixyyr**), mother of the epic hero:

1. **sup** sse lur sse yur, A
2. **ggup** chox cho hxo **jjip**. B
3. **ggup** chox cho hxo ne C
4. **ggup mop** ax rryr yur; A
5. **vop ndip** hlyt qu **jjip**. B
6. hlyt qu hni nrat yur, A
7. di shy shuo nuo **jjip**, B
8. di shy ma jie yur, A
9. o lux **zzip vop jjip** B
10. **zzip mop** hni mo yur A
11. **op rro ndap ssyp jjip** B
12. **zyt zyr** ap my yur A
13. **zyt ap** my qit ddu **jjip** B
14. git **ap** my **pup** ddu **jjip** B
15. **pup mop** hni suo yur A
16. **pup jy** ma jy ddu **jjip**, B
17. **pup mop max** ma ma ddu **jjip** B
18. **pup mop hnix** yyr zzy D

A dragon was born in the fir forests,  
and lived in Ggucho Chohxo.  
Ggucho Chohxo was

where Celestial Swan Woman, Ggumo Arrayr, was born.  
 She later lived at the mountains in Vondi Hlyqu,  
 where the beauty of Hlyqu was born.  
 She later lived in Dishy Shuonuo,  
 where Dishy Majie was born.  
 She later lived in Olu Zzivo,  
 where Zzimo Hnimo was born.  
 She later lived in Orro Ndassy,  
 where Zyzyr Amy was born.  
 A woman of the Zy family married into the Gi family;  
 a woman of the Gi family married into the Pu family,  
 and gave birth to the three daughters of the Pu family.  
 The Pu daughter Jy married into the Jy family;  
 the Pu daughter Ma married into the Ma family,  
 leaving only Pumo Hniyyr, who did not marry.

In this passage, the end rhyme patterning is: ABC, AB, AB, AB, AB, AB, BA, BB, D. The regularity of the rhyme shifts as the focus of the content highlights Pumo Hniyyr and her strange condition of not marrying. The passage also exhibits parallel head rhyme, as in lines 2 and 3 (gup), 6 and 7 (di), 11 and 12 (zyt), and 15 to 18 (pup). There are various other kinds of repetition and parallelism, especially in lines 11–17. The tone patterning is very complex. In lines 2, 5, 11, 16, and 17 the dropping **p** tone appears at the head and end of the line; moreover, the **p** tone is the dominant end tone for most of the passage. The overall structure of the passage can be considered as a multiform—a template for a certain kind of content. In this case, that of a genealogy. *The Book of Origins* and similar origin texts contain many genealogies. This is one style of an origin or genealogical multiform structure.

Repetition and parallelism are common structural features of the poem. In part 5, “Separation of Sky and Earth,” the gods raise pillars in the four directions to separate the sky from the earth and allow the creation to proceed. In this passage cardinal directions of the newly coalesced land are associated with named mountains positioned at the point of the rising and setting sun or the headwaters or tail waters of the earth, corresponding to the names of the directions East, West, North, and South in modern Nuosu. Each position of a pillar is presented in the repeated parallel formula consisting of two lines, the entire sequence creating a multiform structure:

mux ly ddip wa dur  
 ggex ddu la mgex jox

mu vut hap ndep bbox la dur  
gge jji la mge jox  
mu ke do lit bbox la dur  
yy o la mge jox  
nip mu hxo sa bbox la dur  
yyx hmy la mge jox  
huo mu di ci bbox la dur

Four pillars that supported the sky and earth  
stood in the four directions, supporting them.  
In the place of the rising sun,  
Muvu Hande Peak was the support.  
In the place of the setting sun,  
Muke Doli Mountain was the support.  
In the place of the headwaters,  
Nimu Hxosa Mountain was the support.  
In the place of the tail waters,  
Huomu Dici Mountain was the support.

Part 12 contains many examples of direct speech—usually in the form of monologues but with occasional short dialogues. The content concerns the marriage between Hnituo, the daughter of the sky god, and Jjumu Vuvu, the honest young man who survived the great flood. The pair wed and produce three mute sons. The Apuyoqo bird flies to the sky and succeeds in obtaining the key to speech by overhearing a conversation between the sky god Ngeti Gunzy and his wife: In this passage, the narration shifts between the third-person narrative mode into the direct speech of two characters:

ax pu yox qo nyi  
it mu it go shex  
vat bu rryr ddip gu go ne  
nge tit gu nzy xyp mop tit da jjyt  
ne jjix li jji vex ne  
kep mu ti go ap ge ddix  
nge tit gu nzy ddip go ne  
hni sha bbux hmu jjo  
lot sip vop li chyr  
nga cyx nzur yy ddi  
cyx li ap nge ne

shy**p** mu nge jyx jjo**x**  
nzy o**p** lur nyiet bbo go  
mo**p** nyip suo dda zzi**t**  
bo la sse ge suo you lo  
yy mge suo pu**p** mge  
sse ge suo yuo lo vex ne  
cyp ddo**p** cy ti la yip ddi**x**

The Apuyoqo bird  
was sleeping soundly,  
sleeping until the roosters crowed.  
Ngeti Gunzy's wife asked,  
"If you know the reason,  
why don't you tell them?"  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
"My ill-fated daughter, in her in-laws' home  
must use her hands to wipe the door frames.  
If I wasn't so angry with them,  
I would just  
go to the human world—  
to the top of Nzyolurnyie Mountain  
and cut three stalks of bamboo,  
then heat them to scare the three mute sons.  
Boil three pots of water,  
dip the water out, then splash it on the three mute sons—  
who would then naturally begin to speak."

During performance events, the situation determines the content of *The Book of Origins* performance. The origins of the sky and earth and other early portions of the narrative are usually performed at funerals. During weddings, there is a tendency to perform parts intricately describing the marriage of Shyly Wote, a descendant of the original "sons of snow," that appear early in part 12 of the present version. Another important scene later in the same part is the marriage between Hnituo and Jjumu Vuvu, mentioned above, whose union results in the creation of various ethnic groups and Nuosu clans. At weddings, knowledgeable male singers from each side create a song dialogue in which each side praises its knowledge and ability in singing songs concerning wedding lore. The singers usually begin with *kenre*-style recitations about wedding themes and then, depending on the skills of the singers, shift to content of *The Book of Origins*. These passages are

regarded as propitious and describe factors highlighting a happy, prosperous life replete with good harvests, ample offspring, and adequate food, clothing, and shelter.

Any performance of *The Book of Origins* or related tales is a dynamic process in which the ritualists or singers constantly shift between the means of expression, even in the recitation of a static written text. In some performance situations, the shifting involves the physical turning of the bodies of two or more folk singers (who are standing half-facing each other) and the use of a limited range of eye and facial movements when speaking in the infrequent character roles. There are also shifts in volume, speed, and voice quality, especially when acting in the mode of a character in the story, but at other moments as well, depending on the content. The recurrence of shifting between the various means of performance helps to attract and retain audience focus (which may vary from rapt attention to passing interest) and allows the performers to mentally and physically sync with the delivery. *Bimo*, however, tend to sit when reciting passages of the epic, thus making their performances less physically dynamic. Depending on the proclivities of the ritualist and the situation at hand, the pace, volume, intensity of the delivery and postures may shift, but these Nuosu traditions typically do not feature the highly stylized and intricately patterned hand, facial, and bodily movements found in certain styles of professional Chinese storytelling in Sichuan or the Yangzi delta that have been influenced by traditions of Chinese opera (Bender 1999).

#### OUTLINE OF THE EPIC NARRATIVE

One important thread in *The Book of Origins* is the relation between the realms of sky and earth. Life originates in the sky, and there are crucial points of contact between these different realms in the text. Mythology may encode ancient knowledge and may include keys to events and practices that are now in the murky realms of the distant past (Barber and Barber, 2004, 1–4). Knowledge of long-past events, such as the eruptions of volcanoes and even the effects of retreating glaciers on water tables, is available to those moderns who can crack the mythic code of a text (Dundes 2000, 133). A theme frequently encountered worldwide describes the original links—and the cutting of those links—between the earth and sky. Although it is difficult to imagine what could trigger such an event, it is an example of a theme that appears in many mythologies and raises (and often answers) numerous questions. Some of the questions relating to the account of the separation in *The Book of Origins* are: How close is the earth to the sky realm? What are the

ultimate origins of life on earth? What does the epic say about the relations between humans and other beings on earth and the beings in the sky? How do beings travel between the sky and earth?

Indeed, these questions on passages describing the separation of the sky from the earth in the early parts of *The Book of Origins* resonate strongly with similar mythic traditions in the ancient Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, North America, and elsewhere, as does the theme of the great flood in part 12, “Genealogy of Shyly Wote.” Moreover, both the themes of the flood and the separation of the earth from the sky are very prominent in many mythologies of ethnic minority groups from southwest China and Southeast Asia (Yang, An, and Turner 2008, 20–24, 66–67).

A few names in the genealogy of Zhyge Alu’s mother correspond to geographical places, and a few appear in the latter parts charting the clan migrations. In other cases, the prominence of lightning and the local conditions described in the latter parts of the epic may have links to actual environmental features and remembered experiences. Exploring these and other themes involving environmental dynamics and aspects of Nuosu cosmology may help us to better understand traditional Nuosu conceptions of being and situate their beliefs within the context of other cultures of southwest China and contiguous regions in Asia and beyond.

#### THE GENEALOGY OF THE SKY AND EARTH

The initial two parts of the epic that relate the genealogies of the sky and earth are the first of many origin accounts in the text. It cannot be overstated that a trope of genealogies underlies the entire *Book of Origins*, and multi-forms cast in a genealogical format are commonly repeated throughout. This structure is closely linked to the pervasive Nuosu interest in clan genealogies. *Bimo* and clan tradition-bearers claim that some clans can be traced more than seventy generations into the past. Whether or not to some degree fictive, these deep genealogies suggest huge webs of family relations. In everyday life, it is of extreme importance that clan affiliations be clarified in any major social situation, such as weddings and funerals, as well in daily situations where those unfamiliar with each other meet. Indeed, the entire content of the latter part of the epic concerns the movements of various early clans. These clans are thought to be offshoots of the original Six Tribes who at some early date split apart at a cultural hearth in northeast Yunnan and went their various ways, some entering the Liangshan region of southern Sichuan.

Among historical events that could have prompted clan ruptures and mass migrations in southwest China are the invasion of Zhuge Liang in the early third century CE, the rise and fall of the Nanzhao-Dali kingdom (a regional power from the seventh to thirteenth centuries CE), which fell during the catastrophic Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, the rise and fall of small powers in western Guizhou, and the flight of the last Ming emperor to the southwest (and his capture by Qing troops on the Burmese border in 1662).<sup>16</sup> Another factor during the Ming and Qing could have been the *gaitu guiliu* policy enacted in southwest China that sought to gradually replace native rulers (who at points in the process were often given the title of *tusi*) with non-native officials. Like so many other things in *The Book of Origins*, the migrations of the clans are all cast within the frame of genealogies, and it is difficult to link most of the place-names with places on today's maps. It could be said that the Nuosu stance toward the past is genealogical rather than historic.

The first part of *The Book of Origins*, "Genealogy of Sky," begins:

In the most ancient past,  
in the vast expanse of the heavens,  
was the home of the sky spirit, Ngeti Gunzy.

The passage ends:

And thus is the genealogy  
of the sky above.

In part 29, "Genealogy of Qoni," the epic ends with a pattern that has dominated the last thirteen parts and parallels the form in which Nuosu males recite genealogies today (minus the rhetorical "ggo" at the end of the line) in everyday life:

the generation of Bivie Jjizha, followed by  
the generation of Jjizha Bburvie, followed by  
the generation of Bburvie Age, followed by  
the generation of Age Qidda, followed by  
the generation of Qidda Aqo, followed by  
the generation of Aqo Liwo, followed by  
the generation of Liwo Nzyggu which  
settled at Syyi Loggu.

This is the genealogy of the Alunuo *bimo* family.  
The genealogy of the great *bimo* Asu Lazzi is included here.

The genealogy of the sky and earth is comprised of a description of how the sky god enlisted various capable supernatural beings to stand on various mountains to herd the sun and moon into the clouds and hammer the rising mists into dark clouds, which then emitted sunlight, brightening the earth below, which according to its genealogy was a place that still did not exist—but if it did, it would not have forests, trees, water, or grasslands. In part 3, “Transformation of Sky and Earth,” things shift over several generations of beings until the spirits go to work in the realms of the sky and earth:

Four sides of the sky were opened,  
and four pieces of the earth  
were bound together by copper and iron.

Thus, for the first time in the epic, a pathway connecting heaven and earth is noted. A subsequent part relates the genealogy of lightning. Lightning often appears in the epic and is personified as “twelve types of iron wire” that sleep with their mouths shut during spring, when they live beyond the skin of the sky and emit snores that sound like thunder. Overall, in the first three parts there is a concern with the sky and the state of the forthcoming realm of earth. There are also hints of the realm of the sky god, which seems to have some features of the ensuing human world.

#### THE SEPARATION OF THE SKY AND EARTH

Part 5 concerns the separation of the sky and earth. The directionality of the earth has been determined, and there are rivers in each cardinal direction. At this point Ngeti Gunzy’s family produces forty-eight immortals, four of whom are associated with the cardinal directions. He assembles them all to discuss the separation of the sky and earth. During this grand palaver, which lasts nine days and nights, they slaughter nine cattle and drink nine crocks of wine. In other words, the gods behave in very much the same way as the latter-day Nuosu do when having a great feast. Finally, giant metal forks are forged and used to pry apart the cracks between sky and earth. Some light comes through the cracks, and Ngeti Gunzy “looked down on the world below.” Seeing that the sky and earth were still not separate, he directs others into action. This occasional peering down from the heavens occurs at several



other points in later parts. The sky god seldom seems wholly engaged with what happens on earth and prefers to delegate rather than directly interfere. Finally, the four giant copper and iron balls are placed on the land to hold it down. Nine fairies are given metal brooms and proceed to sweep the sky to where it is today, leaving a vast, barren land. Once all is set in place, four pillars stand on mountains in each direction to support the sky. Afterward, various gods set to work contouring the land and preparing it for life.

IMPLANTATION OF LIFE ON EARTH FROM THE SKY:  
STAGE ONE

In part 6, “Great Bimo,” the *bimo* Awo Shubu descends from the sky on a heavenly steed, wearing his ritual hat and clothes, carrying his ritual texts and ghost-defeating accoutrements, leading along his in-laws. After seeing the earth has no trees, grasses, animals, birds, or insects, the *bimo* brings seeds and creatures down from the sky and places each in its niche. This is the first instance in the epic of life on earth coming directly from the sky, the earth literally being seeded with life. In the parlance of scientific theory, this is comparable to an act of “panspermia” in which life on earth is stimulated by seeding from a comet or other vehicle from the sky (Hoyle and Wickramasinghe 1981, 35–49). However, this first age of life, seeded by the will of the sky god, ultimately ends in fire, during a period of intense warming. The end of this era begins when the spirit monkey, Anyu Ddussy, sacrifices a chicken and ritually calls out the stars, suns, and moons. The earth soon begins to overheat, until all the trees shrivel and die, all waters dry up, and grasses and crops disappear. Nothing is left but a special water-retaining fern, a stalk of hemp, a white-clawed cat, and a gray water deer. Thus, a minimal number of beings from the realms of the wild and domestic survive, but most perish. Only a hero can solve this problem.

EARTH-SKY LINK AS A RESPONSE  
TO CATASTROPHIC WARMING

In part 8, the response to the crisis is the birth of a chimera, or in the modern parlance of genetic engineering, a “para-human” named Zhyge Alu (Bender 2016b, 93–95). The part begins with the birth of a dragon that has relations to both the sky and the earth. As the genealogy unfolds, the mother of Zhyge Alu, who is an unmarried woman of the Pu clan, Pumo Hniyyr, appears in the story. One day, while weaving under the eaves of her home, she spies several dragon-eagles flying overhead and wishes to go play with



A statue of the epic hero Zhyge Alu shooting down the extra suns that are overheating the earth, located in Xide, Liangshan

them. Three drops of blood fall from the eagles in the sky and splatter her body, making her pregnant. Under the care of a *bimo*, she gives birth to a strange and “perverse” child named Zhyge Alu who refuses to nurse, sleep in his mother’s bed, or wear clothes. Eventually she abandons her son in a cave, where he is raised by dragons. As the boy grows to manhood he assembles his weapons, along with magical hunting dogs and horses. As noted earlier, in one of his first acts as an adult, he seeks out his roots in the sky and earth, then demarcates the borders of his homeland by shooting arrows in each direction.

In part 9, “Shooting Down Suns and Moons,” Zhyge Alu sets out to shoot down the extra suns and moons that are overheating the earth. In this role, his actions echo heroes in other Chinese myths, including Hou Yi of Han classical literature and Hsang Sa in Miao (Hmong) oral epics in southeast Guizhou (An, Yang, and Turner 2008, 75–76; Bender 2006, 66–70). In this Nuosu version of the archer-hero myth, Zhyge Alu stands on various shrubs and trees until he finds a fir tree that gets him close to the sky. He then shoots down the extra suns and moons—but so terrifies the remaining sun and moon that they must be coaxed out, bringing with them regular divisions between day and night. Thus, a being with roots in both sky and earth acts in the defense of life on earth to literally save the planet for the next expansion of life.

THE SECOND SEEDING AND SUBSEQUENT FLOOD:  
STAGE TWO

Part 11, concerning the reseeded of life on earth, is one of the most dynamic and detailed in the entire text. In some versions this passage comes before Zhyge Alu's shooting down of the suns and moons, but the Jjivot text seems to be more complete than many other versions, and the placing of the second seeding of life on earth is logical in the story-world of the epic. The key element is a spirit talisman that falls from the sky and begins a raging fire that burns day and night. The burning is essential to transformations of life. The fires are followed by elements such as copper and iron to aid in the process. Yet it is only when yellow and red snows fall from the sky that things start to happen. However, the creatures produced are nothing more than freakish prototypes of humans.

Finally, the most advanced of these anthropomorphs sends a spider to the sky to see what is going on. Ngeti Gunzy treats the spider poorly, ripping it to bits. This eruption of personality foregrounds later angry outbursts by the impatient sky god, who seems ambivalent about life on earth. However, the burst of temper costs him dearly—his wife soon grows a spider web in her eye, which is surely a cataract, an ailment common throughout the reaches of the Himalayas. Ngeti Gunzy then does what future generations of Nuosu would do in the case of an illness. He searches for a *bimo*, who consults his written scriptures and tells him that the spider was sent from the earth. The sky god sends rats, then otters to search for the pieces of the spider to make amends.

Hunting dogs eventually find the head and tail—but not the waist—which is why spiders have no waists today! A *bimo* is invited to the earth, and sacrifices are made to rid the anthropomorphs of parasites living on their bodies. But they still are unable to become real living beings. Finally, the life force called *Ge* falls from the sky. After it rots for three years and red snow falls three times and melts for nine days and nights, the direct ancestors of contemporary living beings transform:

Then ice became bones,  
snow became meat,  
the wind became breath,  
falling snow became blood,  
stars became eyes,  
and in the end they became the people of snow—  
the twelve sons of snow.

These twelve “sons” or “tribes” or “offspring” of snow (interpretations vary), however, are divided into two groups: those with blood, and those without blood. Trees and grasses make up the bloodless beings, while frogs, snakes, birds, bears, monkeys, and humans make up the beings with blood—humans being the sixth and final beings listed. Humans and animals are divided by drinking either the waters of dullness, or waters of wisdom from the petals of a lovely rhododendron flower. Thus, the creatures of the earth are seeded from the life force falling out of the sky. The text does not say clearly whether this life force was sent by the sky god or has another origin. Nevertheless, the genealogy of life is traced back to the sky.

#### A CELESTIAL AND AN EARTHLING WED

A descendant of the second seeding from the sky is the “son of snow” Shyly Wote. As described in part 12, he was born in an era before the institution of marriage. Thus, he sets out to find a father—but ultimately finds a wife. Though first tempted by the daughter of an upper-caste *nzyimo* leader, who asks him a series of questions he can answer only with the help of his wise younger sister, he rejects the marriage and sets off to roam the land. Finally, after many travels and the rejection of many brides, he “stuck an arrow in his hair, / and wrapped his hair high above it” and accepted a suitable woman as his wife. The couple become the progenitors of generations of descendants.

In the process of finding a wife—and becoming a father—templates for many protocols of Nuosu social interaction, especially the treatment of guests and comportment in social situations, are illustrated. These examples still carry weight in Nuosu society today. However, the age of Shyly Wote is only another unfolding segment in the narrative of creation.

After several generations, three brothers are born with the name Jjumu. One day while guarding wild lands they have just plowed, they are approached by an elder who is wearing black clothes and leading a wild yellow hog. While the two elder brothers cry out that they should kill or beat the man, the younger brother suggests they first question him as to his motives. The man declares to them that he is an incarnation of their ancestors and has come down from the sky. He reveals that the sky god Ngeti Gunzy sent a fairy named Sisse Abbu to earth to harvest crops. One of the helpers, the hero Ddiwo Layi, decided to take on the earthling hero Ssedi Shuofu. In the end Ddiwo Layi was insulted and then killed by the earthling, and sparrows reported the death to the sky god. In a rage, Ngeti Gunzy decided to flood the earth in revenge for this untoward conduct. After making his report, the

man in black then instructs each of the sons to prepare an enclosed vessel described as a wooden bed. The mean-hearted elder brothers are instructed to store heavy metal tools inside, while the honest younger brother is told to store life-sustaining grain. The flood inundates the earth.

As the waters begin to recede, Ngeti Gunzy looks down and spies only a few animals on the peaks of the highest mountains. As for the brothers, Jjumu Vuvu survives and, with the aid of chickens, calculates when to open the wooden bed. As he looks out on the receding floodwaters, Jjumu spies a rat, a snake, a frog, a crow, and a ring-necked pheasant, all creatures that will later help him connect with the sky. After a while, Ngeti Gunzy again peers down and spots a spire of smoke rising from atop a mountain and realizes there is human life on earth. Meanwhile, with the help of the wise Frog King and his animal helpers, Jjumu tries to connect with the sky in search of a bride, since he is the only remaining human.

Jjumu manages to gain consent from Ngeti Gunzy after a rat steals the bamboo vessels holding the sky god's ancestral spirits, and a snake bites the god's foot. After consultations with many *bimo* and long negotiations with representatives of the sky god, a compromise is reached in which the god will be cured of snakebite and the all-important soul vessels will be returned to him. In return, Ngeti Gunzy lets down iron and bronze wires and helps Jjumu Vuvu to raise iron and bronze pillars on earth to connect with the sky. He allows his youngest daughter, Hnituo, to marry the poor earthling, who brings only a black mountain goat as an offering.

All goes according to the agreement, and Hnituo and Jjumu Vuvu (who appears to have traveled up to the sky after the Frog King enacted the cure) accompanies her groom to earth. When leaving, however, she stealthily takes along her horses, as well as the seeds of three Nuosu staples: the *voma* turnip, hemp, and buckwheat. Once Ngeti Gunzy discovers the theft, he makes eating horse meat disagreeable and curses the flourishing food plants, making them harder to grow and process than other crops—which is why the Nuosu have such a hard life in the high mountains today. He also seems to have severed the links between sky and earth. This is made clear later when the couple have three children, all of whom are mute.

Though easy access to the sky has ended, a series of animal creatures attempt to get to the sky palace to learn the secret of speech. A spider, several birds, a rabbit, and snakes all fail, and even despoil the palace with feces. Finally, the Apuyoqo bird succeeds in overhearing a conversation between the sky god and his wife and flies back to the earth with the secret. Following directions, the couple boil pieces of bamboo on the highest peak, Nzyolurnyie

Mountain. As the bamboos burst, the sounds stimulate the children to speak, giving voice to the different languages of the region: Nuosu, Hxiemga (presumed to be Han), and Ozzu (the Nuosu name for several local peoples classified as Tibetan by the government). Thereafter, the various clans of these people spread out across the land.

Twenty-one years later, it seems that Hnituo has somehow returned to the sky, and news of her illness stimulates Jjumu to revisit the sky palace once more, again leading a black mountain goat as an offering. Jjumu later returns to earth accompanied by other women from the sky. However, conflicts between them soon arise, and after one sabotages the foundations of another's house, heaven and earth "were no longer joined in marriage." In the final lines of part 12, there is a reference to the sky god placing gold, silver, and wooden bowls of water atop sacred Turlur Mountain. Each living being on earth drinks the water, and in the end, only humans can speak. After this, Ngeti Gunzy is not mentioned in the passage, and neither he nor his palace appear in the last fifteen parts of the epic text.

The major difference between life in the sky and on earth is that the latter is a place where humans toil at a subsistence level, their crops sometimes even harvested by visitors from above. All told, the earth is a sort of inferior colony of the sky, which is a place where grains flourish, vegetable crops are easily harvested, and hemp seeds are made into wine. Those in the sky are immortal, but an earthling's existence lasts only until death, when his or her soul is directed by the *bimo* across the landscape to the home of the ancient ancestors. Yet, inhabitants of the sky palace, like the sky god Ngeti Gunzy, have emotions and values similar to those of the earthbound Nuosu. They also have a record, when in their best interests, of responding to negotiation and clever scheming of the inferior earth dwellers. Or at least that is what *The Book of Origins* relates. Thus, like Chinese emperors of the past, the sky god is far away, with an attitude toward earth that is indifferent at best. The more immediate concern for everyday Nuosu is dealing with the spirits of ancestors who failed to make it to the land of the ancestors and wander as malevolent ghosts on earth, wreaking havoc and causing all sorts of disasters.

#### THE EPIC AS COSMOGRAPHIC REPOSITORY

"Cosmographic" folk knowledge (Adamson 2013, 170–71) is common to traditional societies like the Yi, whose ways of perceiving the world reflect an intimacy and relatedness with their environments (both the "natural" world and human society) that has its own validity and logic. Parts 1–12 have the

richest examples of cosmographic knowledge in passages that detail the various phases of the creation and the seeding of life on earth.

The projected sense of relatedness places humans in a family tree of other sentient beings that is explicitly consanguinal—the beings are all among the offspring of red snow, though some have blood (fauna) and other have no blood (flora). Toward the end of the first twelve parts, actors from sky and earth form affinal bonds through marriage, yet the sense of kinship with the nonhuman world is still maintained through relationships based on mutual aid (Carsten 2000, 4–5). One example is flood survivor Jjumu Vuvu’s rescue of several creatures from the waters, some of whom later attempt to help him establish contact with the sky god. The content and presentation of these parts tend to be more intricately descriptive than the material presented in the final parts of the epic (discussed below) that report migrations of clans and ethnic groups who are the forerunners of contemporary humans within Liangshan.

The folk knowledge and ideas in the epic can be combined with contemporary accounts of Nuosu life created by folklorists, anthropologists, and other specialists to understand the cultural context of the narrative. Images and allusions in oral literature are metonymic in the sense that references to places, objects, or names often are linked to rich extratextual knowledge (Foley 2002, 117–21). Thus, the mention of a name, item, or place will have certain meanings to those aware of the associations behind the references. This factor of “traditional referentiality” is certainly a feature of *The Book of Origins*. Many images in the text are rich in associations if understood in the context of traditional Yi culture. While there is a great deal in *The Book of Origins* that can be compared directly to contemporary practices in less assimilated areas, there remain images or passages that are troublesome even to the most learned of *bimo* and elders today.

Along with the everyday cosmographic knowledge embedded in the text, the grand scale of mythic knowledge allows a panoramic view of the epic. In its totality of perspective, the embedded knowledge can be broken down into general categories:

- Primary information about the events of creation and transformation, such as the genealogies of the sky and earth
- Insight into the dynamics of the cosmos, such as the relation between metals and lightning and the movements of celestial bodies
- The relations between the realm of humans and nature and the beings of the sky



- Primary accounts of mythical beings, such as the Great *Bimo*, Awo Shubu; the Spirit Monkey, Anyu Ddussy; and the culture-hero Zhyge Alu
- The relation to and position of the Yi (Ni, Gni, Nuosu) within the local environment
- The origin of creature traits, such as the rooster's comb and spider's body shape
- Templates for ethical, ritual, and customary behavior, such as the treatment of various ranks of guests and protocols for weddings and sacrifices
- Information on traditions of writing and performance, such as a *bimo*'s scriptures and the use of riddles in the marriage process
- Information on material culture, such as felt cloaks, martial armor, weaving and blacksmithing implements, architecture, herding, farming, and foodways
- Morphologies of creatures and plants, often in lists and categories, as in the twelve "sons of snow"
- Genealogical information of the early Nuosu clans
- The origins, via a sort of evolutionary dynamic, of the present-day Nuosu people and their neighbors
- An intertextual dimension shared with many shorter origin tales, folk stories, songs, and proverbs related to events in *The Book of Origins*

The text holds referential keys to a wealth of knowledge about the Nuosu conceptions of the various dimensions of the cosmos as they perceived it.

#### LAYERED REALMS, LIGHTNING, DIRECTIONS, AND CALENDAR

The traditional Nuosu world consists of three layers: the sky realm (*shymu ngehxa*), where gods such as Ngeti Gunzy dwell; the realm of humans and other living beings (*jjumu*); and the underworld (*shymu ngejji*), where diminutive troglodytes called *ddeco* exist (Laoban Salong 2012, 24–28). The major content of *The Book of Origins* concerns the origin of the sky and earth, their separation, and the successive eras of life-forms in the middle *jjumu* realm. In the present version, no mention is made of the underworld, but many passages are dedicated to relations with the sky.

*The Book of Origins* carries information on celestial bodies, weather phenomena, and coordinates that demarcate the expanse of the earth and the specific territory—at least in myth time. Some of this information is relayed in parts dealing with catastrophic events including a scorching die-off of

life-forms, strange meteorological conditions at the time of reseeding, and a great flood. There is much folk knowledge about natural phenomena like lightning that have highly dynamic traits capable of creating the dramatic—or traumatic memories that Barber and Barber suggest underlie some myths and beliefs. In part 4, we hear of “two loud sounds” that arise from certain mountains and are accompanied by white mists and clouds. The skies continue to thunder, rousing lightning (*muhlit*)—which is described in human terms as raising its head and stretching out its hands to “pull down treetops” and chomp and kick rocks with its teeth and feet. There is also mention of a family of “twelve types of lightning” that live “in the crags where the sun rises” and that, in the three spring months, “lived beyond the skin of the sky.”

Aspects of lightning, which comes in an awesome array of forms, remain unexplained by science (Oliver 2005, 451–53). It sometimes strikes in columns from cloud to earth (and sometimes back), sometimes within or between clouds, and as ball lightning or other forms that appear strange even to modern observers. Lightning can be triggered by volcanic eruptions, has the power to scorch or explode trees, and may even strike loose sand or soil, the intense heat sometimes creating glass channels in the earth.

The epic notes the conductivity of copper as well as iron, and this phenomenon is crucial to a tale about Zhyge Alu taming lightning. Although the incident is not part of this version of *The Book of Origins*, other versions, and many folktales, tell of this great service to humankind. In the gist of the story, Zhyge Alu comes upon an idyllic mountain village where he discovers a hospitable old woman who—like her neighbors—is afraid to dry buckwheat seeds over her household hearth and must resort to drying them in the fields. Discovering that this inefficient practice is due to fear of lightning striking the hearth each time someone starts a fire, the hero decides to face the lightning by donning a copper cooking pot for a helmet, holding a net bag of copper (similar to cord bags used to hold dried grain stuffs), and wielding a copper club. Hiding on the roof above the hearth, he instructs the old woman to light a fire. When the smoke rises, lightning strikes. A bolt hits Zhyge Alu’s helmet and slides off into the copper bag. The hero quickly closes the bag and beats the lightning with his copper club until it promises to return to the sky and never strike household hearths again (Zhang and Yang 2005, 227–28). Images of Zhyge Alu on ghost boards and scrolls usually show him wearing the copper helmet and holding the copper tools.

In part 10, “Calling Out Single Sun and Single Moon,” the being Bake Arra, who affixed the single sun and moon in the sky (once Zhyge Alu had shot down the others), is born at a moment when “man-eating” lightning “screamed three times.” In fact, the being looks rather like

lightning—described as having a red topknot, a band of yellow hair on his waist, and white hair on his feet. He also gives an iron needle to the sun—which becomes its eye—suggesting a relation between the sun in the sky, iron/conductive metals, and the earth in the form of sunlight and lightning strikes. It is notable that in part 5, during the separation of the sky and earth, the earth is held down by giant copper and iron balls, and various metal tools are used by gods and fairies in the separation process. In part 12, Ngeti Gunzy's sky palace is at one point linked to earth by iron and bronze strands or pillars.

The four cardinal directions and acts of locating and centering things within terrain feature prominently in the early parts of *The Book of Origins* and relate to Nuosu traditional concepts of where they are in the cosmos. In the separation of the sky and earth, several passages involve the directions and ideas about where light, water, and wind go during the cycle of day and night that comes to pass. When the being Ddebbu Sysse is given a metal fork, he goes to open a small crack at the place the sun rises (East), and as he does so a glimmer of light appears, and the wind comes out. In the place where the sun sets (West), he also opens a crack, where a glimmer of light appears, and the wind goes back in. Sysse Dihni was sent to separate a place “at the northern headwaters,” a place that also allows a glimmer of light to emit, as well as the waters, which flow south (as do most rivers in Liangshan Prefecture) to the crack that Momu Sysse has opened.

Soon after, four wooden pillars are installed to support the sky—one standing in each of the directions just named. Furthermore, the four pillars connect the four directions to the ancestral lands, like a “rope,” and stones are brought from the cardinal directions to stake out the Yi lands, thus affixing them in time and space. It is interesting that in common parlance today, the Nuosu name their directions as East-West-North-South, in accord with the mythic directions, in contrast to the East-West-South-North order of directions in classical records of the Han people. The Nuosu directions are further subdivided into East-South, West-South, West-North, and East-North. According to Nuosu astrology, the four directions are associated with stars having these animal names: East (White Tiger, *laqu*), West (Red Dragon, *luhni*), North (Red Cow, *nyuhnike*), and South (Peacock, *volenjy*).

In part 9, when Zhyge Alu grows to manhood (marked by his acquisition of a wooden bow), he carries out another act of centering and orientation. After seeking out his ancestors and his roots in heaven and on earth, he measures the ancestral grounds on horseback (magic horses and dogs in tow) and stakes out the boundaries of the Nuosu world by shooting arrows

East-West-North-South. According to the text, there are still marker stones to prove the feat and verify the borders.

Female persons are associated with North, whereas males are associated with South. Before age two (understanding that the child's time in the womb is considered a year), a boy will not be taken anywhere in a southerly direction, and likewise a girl will not be taken northward, out of fear of calamity. Great attention is also paid to the direction of movement within the four directions—especially in distinctions between in-group and out-group and between the living and dead. Among traditional Nuosu, gesturing counterclockwise with the right hand indicates “in-group,” or “one of us.” Gesturing clockwise with the left hand indicates “out-group,” or “not one of us.” Also, in some local traditions, food prepared for the living is stirred counterclockwise, whereas offerings to the dead are stirred clockwise. Likewise, food given to living people is presented in at least two spoonfuls, whereas to the dead only one is given. These customs are further indicators of the constant Nuosu emphasis on proper protocol, an overarching concern reified in many places in *The Book of Origins*.

In Yi rituals, everything is clearly positioned in the ritual space so as to alert the spirits where the event is taking place. This is echoed in part 7, “Genealogy of Spirit Monkey,” when the spirit monkey Anyu Ddussy sacrifices a heifer, a sheep, and a chicken in separate purification rites and places pieces of the roast meat in the “four corners of the house” before calling out the six suns and seven moons, two groups of seven and six stars, respectively, the lone *ta* star, and finally, four other stars.

In ancient times the Yi also developed or adapted at least two calendar systems. One is a lunar calendar similar (and undoubtedly related) to the Han calendar of twelve months in a year based on sixty-year cycles (Luo 1984, 124–25). The ancient Yi in Yunnan used a ten-month solar calendar, as represented in the elaborate Ten-Month Solar Calendar Park in Chuxiong, Yunnan, which features carefully arranged columns carved with images of beings from Yi myth. The animals representing the months in the two types of calendars were similar, though otters, serows, and pangolins were also included in some systems in Yunnan (Wang and Zhang 2012, 122).

#### ECO-GENEALOGIES OF THE PLURIVERSE

Theorists studying literature of the environment, or “ecoliterature,” have probed the place of humans in relation to other life-forms on planet earth. In the Anthropocene epoch, as long imagined in religion and myth, humans have finally achieved a position in which the fates of the planet and its

life-forms are in the hands of governments and controllers of technology. At the same time, voices are also raising alternative models of the relations between life-forms on earth. An interest in the social and political rights of animals and plants and the idea of “multispecies ethnography,” in which species besides humans are acknowledged, are two recent trends in thinking (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010, 248–49). Joni Adamson has reflected on contemporary ecocritical writing, especially the work of Marisol de la Cadena that links traditional ideas from the heritages of indigenous cultures in Peru and other parts of South America with contemporary concerns over both indigenous rights and the environment (Adamson 2012, 146–49; de la Cadena 2010, 341). In discussing perceptions of the “pluriverse” by many indigenous groups in the Americas, Adamson emphasizes how indigenous voices, in alliance with the voices of animals, plants, and the terrain, can challenge contemporary trajectories of development and “recognize the right of Mother Earth to maintain and regenerate the cycles necessary for the survival of life” (2014, 188). Thus, the perceptions of the relatedness between species detailed in *The Book of Origins* can be understood, in contemporary terms, as an indigenous discourse that offers opportunities for thinking about not just the local concerns of the Yi in relation to their world, but also to the interactions of a plurality of “other indigenous and nonindigenous groups in the twenty-first century” from all over the globe.

That said, the realities of traditional Nuosu life suggest that the view toward the connectedness with the natural world is tempered by agricultural practices that require exploitation of local environments. On one hand, it seems that the natural world of the mountains that surround the local villages is a source of many products for sustaining life, yet on another level, the creation myths narrate that humans are directly linked into and emerge from the created worlds. At times they must radically modify the environment for survival—clearing fields and protecting their crops from raiding animals. Yet, the idea is always present that there is a connection with the primal forces behind the unfolding of the chronological ages of creation and the power of certain places in the landscape where spirits reside that may affect human activity (such as mountain gods and hunting). Thus, the human relationship with the environment projected in the epic should be considered as “complex, nuanced, and multifaceted and deserve more sophisticated treatment involving both textual and field studies to fully understand and appreciate” (Bender 2011, 274–76).

Many creatures and plants native to southwest China are mentioned in *The Book of Origins*. The origins of these beings is conveyed within

genealogies, much like the genealogies that appear elsewhere in the text for the various ages of humans. These origin accounts link the life-forms, including groups of humans, to exacting niches in the environment. I have suggested the term “eco-genealogy” to describe the relatedness of humans and other creatures to the natural world as depicted in the genealogical framework of *The Book of Origins* and other epics from southwest China. A defining feature of such eco-genealogies are the specific and intimate ways of linking the origins of particular creatures, including humans, to niches in the environment presented in the narrative, which, in the case of *The Book of Origins*, are local and regional environments recognizable today (Bender 2016b, 93–95). An example, described elsewhere, is that of Shyly Wote, a direct descendant of the first humans created from falling red snow after the era of catastrophic warming, who searches the landscape for his father. In the process, many natural features and creatures are described, the details of which increase in subsequent parts dealing with the migrations of later generations of local peoples. Contemporary humans are thus linked by myth to earlier generations of humans, protohumans, other creatures, sky beings and gods, not only by blood but also by the local environments in which they dwell (Ingold 2000, 42).

Two parts of the narrative provide catalogues that comprise a folk taxonomy of “what” lives “where” in the Liangshan bioregions—although it is unclear whether the twelve “sons of snow” listed in part 11 are based on life-forms found in Liangshan, farther east in the Yunnan-Guizhou borders where the forebears of the Nuosu lived before migrating into Liangshan, or elsewhere. The offspring of red snow are comprised of those groups of creatures with blood and those without blood, somewhat along the lines of Aristotle’s classification of animals with blood and those without (Leroi 2014, 111–19). *The Book of Origins* lists the six groups with no blood first, naming several grasses and trees, including ones very useful to humans like the cypress and fir (the Nuosu term *shu* also includes spruces). The list of groups with blood shows greater variety, though both lists are still meager in comparison to the actual diversity of species dwelling in the southwest. Besides humans, which are listed last, the “with blood” list has frogs, snakes, several birds, and some mammals. Several creatures are humanlike in shape (frogs, bears, monkeys), suggesting a sort of Darwinian evolutionary principle. The lists can also be understood in the framework of Nuosu folk taxonomy, which, according to Stevan Harrell, divides creatures as either *vondi* (with claws, dangling digits), *bindi* (with hoofs, except horses), and the bird taxon of *ddurndi* (pers. comm., October 2015). The following passages

give the eco-genealogy of the “twelve sons of snow” (*vo nre sse ci nyix*)  
without blood and with blood:

Of the twelve snow tribes,  
six groups had blood;  
six groups had no blood.  
Of the six without blood,  
one group was grasses.  
Black-headed grass grows  
in the grassy places,  
in three hundred grassy places.  
The second group was trees—  
white cypress was a snow tribe.  
The third group was fir trees—  
the fir trees growing in the high mountains.  
The fourth group was *bbyzy* grass—  
the long-legged *bbyzy* grass was a snow tribe.  
The fifth group was *punuo* grass—  
black *punuo* grass was a snow son,  
the *punuo* grass growing in the marshlands.  
The sixth group was green vines,  
growing at the foot of trees and in caverns.  
The six groups with blood were:  
One group was frogs.  
The frog groups had three brothers,  
living in the marshy places.  
The frog tribe’s eldest son,  
became Uoba Nyuomgu,  
and lived in the black earth place.  
The frog tribe’s second son  
was Uoba Qihni,  
and lived in the marshy places.  
The frog tribe’s youngest son,  
became the frog species Frog God,  
and lived in people’s houses.  
And there were more and more types of frogs.

The second group was snakes.  
The snake tribe’s eldest son



Became a *tusi* dragon,  
and lived in the high, barren cliffs.  
The snake tribe's second son  
was the *shyjobbohlyr* snake,  
that lived in the top of the fields.  
The youngest son of the snake tribe  
was the *bbujjiekhni* snake,  
that lived in the muddy places.  
The snake tribe became larger and larger.

The third group were large vultures,  
the king of the winged creatures;  
the vultures of the vast sky,  
living in the white clouds and mountains.  
The *tusi* of the winged creatures  
was the peacock,  
living at the Diepa Shunuo Sea.  
The head of the winged creatures  
was the swan,  
living in the Ggucho Chohxo Gorge.  
The second son of the vulture  
was an eagle.  
The eagle's eldest son  
was the big-headed black eagle,  
living in the fir forests.  
The eagle's second son,  
was the spotted-face white eagle,  
living in Shuonuo Mountain.  
The eagle's smallest son,  
was the short-winged cliff eagle,  
freely soaring around.  
The vulture's third son  
became the red-winged hawk,  
living in the Ganluo area.

The fourth group was the old bears.  
The black bear had one mother and two sons.  
They spread out into the fir forests,  
and the black bears became plentiful.

The fifth group was monkeys.  
The red monkeys had one mother and two sons.  
They spread out into the forests,  
and the red monkeys became plentiful.  
The sixth group was humans.  
The humans lived in the human world,  
and the humans, in their realm, became plentiful.

Although the list is not comprehensive, many more life-forms and their specific niches in the environment are named in other parts of *The Book of Origins*. One category of wild animals, for instance, not mentioned in the “sons of snow” catalogue is deer—in particular, species of musk deer that inhabit the region. The Northern Yi term *qyle* is a compound designating the muntjac (*Muntiacus*) and water deer (*Hydropotes inermis*) (Geist 1998, 44–48, 26–28). Both are primitive deer with fangs—the muntjac with short antlers, and the water deer without antlers, but with long fangs that measure more than 50 mm in some males. The water deer appears frequently in Yi folk literature, including *The Book of Origins*, and is a prominent image in modern Yi poetry (Bender 2009, 131–33). Many beliefs surround the water deer, and children once wore charms made of its thin sharp teeth. The creatures like grassy, reedy environments, though are sometimes found on shrubby slopes. There are several varieties of muntjac in China and Southeast Asia. Like water deer, they subsist on easily digestible plant life (shoots of grasses, fruits and seeds, soft types of bark, etc.) and occasionally birds’ eggs or small creatures. When mating, both deer make a variety of calls (buzzes and whines, among them) that Yi hunters learned to emulate. Though it is presently illegal to hunt both deer, in recent times hunters would trail them with dogs and sometimes employ nets or snares to capture them.

Predators mentioned in the epic are red foxes (*ajju*), leopards (*ssy*), and tigers (*la*). Bears (*wo*) appear in several places and are probably races of the Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*). They are found in mixed conifer and hardwood forests and eat a variety of fruits, insects and larvae, inner tree bark, and any larger mammals they can capture (Domico 1988, 113–15). Although giant pandas (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) and red pandas (*Ailuris fulgens*) have ranged in confined parts of Liangshan, they are not mentioned in this version of *The Book of Origins*. Monkeys (*anyu*), both supernatural and natural, appear in several places in the text and are among the “sons of snow.” Raptors, including kestrels and hawks, are mentioned, as well as magpies, several species of sparrows, crows, and wild ducks. The megaraptors,

eagles, and the mythical creatures, dragons (*lu*), both appear in part 8, in connection with the birth of the hero Zhyge Alu. Among the various “creepy crawlies” are frogs, snakes (*bbushy*), horseflies (*yomu*), honeybees, grasshoppers, and spiders—some of which were huge monster-like creatures until Zhyge Alu mashed them to their present sizes and sent them to their respective niches in the Liangshan environment. In part 12, spiders lost their waists—after being ripped apart by the hot-tempered Ngeti Gunzy. Advised by a *bimo* to make amends, the sky god delegates a pair of rats, an otter (probably a small-clawed otter, *Aonyx cinerea*), and two splendid hunting dogs (*kevie*) to find what they could of the dispersed parts.

Some Nuosu hunting customs can reveal traditional attitudes toward animals and nature. Animals were considered the property of the mountain god. A god of a mountain range is called *musi*, or of a single mountain, *bbosi*. When an animal was killed, the hunter cried out, “The animal ran away!” and the prey was covered with grass in an attempt to hide the kill from the god. In Xide County, hunters offered chickens and wine in a sacrifice to the mountain god before a major hunt. Although hunting has been largely curtailed since the late 1990s, many middle-aged and older men are conversant in hunting lore. According to an elder informant in Meigu County, hunters once performed purification rituals before setting out. A hot rock was put in water (at a fire outside the home), and the hunter would let steam touch his body, his dogs, the leash, gun, and other hunting accessories.

Since wild creatures have souls, they had to be skinned according to protocol (like large domestic animals), with crosscuts on opposing feet. With the animal lying on its back, hunters of the *quho* commoner caste cut the right leg (just above the hoof or paw), then the left rear leg, then the left front leg, and the rear right leg. The lower-caste *mgajie* hunter began on the left front leg, then right rear leg, right front leg, and left rear leg. When skinning, a hunter had to chant, “I have committed a crime by killing you, but,” then adding reasons for taking the life. The tongue and two other cuts of the meat were cooked on-site and offered to the mountain god. Meat was distributed to family and neighbors (differing cuts, depending on the relation), and anyone met along the way home was given a share. Skins were tanned with animal fat and herbs. Rules regarding hunting and dividing meat are followed strictly, or else violation would impact future success in hunting.

In Liangshan there are many taboos against killing certain animals. Snakes, regarded as small dragons, and frogs should not be killed, though they are regarded as unclean. Cuckoos (since they signal when to begin planting corn), magpies, pandas, and monkeys are also spared. Animals that

could traditionally be killed included tigers, leopards, foxes, and deer (as long as not pregnant), though the meat of carnivores (classed as *vondi*), such as tigers, leopards, and eagles could not be eaten. The feet of eagles were used as legs for wine cups, and the heads were once part of some *bimo*'s ritual accoutrements. If wild geese were killed, it would evoke the wrath of the sky god. Crows are regarded very negatively by the Nuosu as they are said to breathe the smoke of funeral pyres and are thus harbingers of bad luck. On the other hand, a cuckoo's cry is a link to the world of the ancestors.

There is also lore on ways to deal with threatening wild animals. The grandmother of a twenty-eight-year-old scholar recalled that she told him to escape from a black bear attack by running downhill, so that the bear's fur obscured its eyes. One must stand one's ground against a wolf or dhole—howling and staring at it to acknowledge that you—like the wolf—feel lonely and in need of company. Other hunters speak of escaping from wild boars by suddenly turning direction, as it is said pigs can run only in a straight line. Some hunters had the ability to cry like an eagle and could draw one down from the sky.

The first domesticated livestock in *The Book of Origins* appear in part 5 during events leading up to the separation of the sky and earth, when the family of Ngeti Gunzy prepares feasts of meat and drink during the discussions on how to proceed. Thereafter, when the four gigantic copper and iron balls supporting the earth are to be moved, young horses, heifers, goats, and pigs are sent to attempt the task. These creatures sent by the sky spirits may be considered numinous beings (or the property of spirit beings, later dwelling only in the sky), as their mortal counterparts had yet to populate the earth. It is also interesting that after the separation, the places that receive first attention are the mountains and valleys—followed immediately by the goat-herding area, flatlands (for farming and dwelling), rice fields, bull-fighting grounds for festival entertainment, and higher up on the hills, plots for buckwheat. Once places that would eventually support the livelihoods of humans are refined, in succeeding passages the waters, forests, and grassy areas are made, and the great *bimo* Awo Shubu determines the ecological niches of the flora and fauna of the natural world beyond that of the later human settlements.

Trees, shrubs, ferns, and flowers appear frequently in the *Hnewo*, often in contexts that belie a deep, practical knowledge of the interconnectedness of subtle features of the local biotic community that seem to go beyond simple personification (Stewart 1995, 161). In part 7, as the earth is parching, there is mention of a now unknown fern that “knew how to interact with the invisible Lake Amoshurti”—a lake that had dried up, leaving only the

*hxosyr ndadi* fern to survive on its now invisible waters. Several identifiable plants come into play when Zhyge Alu attempts to shoot down the extra suns and moons. The characteristics of these plants today still recall the event: the *ndabbo* ferns and *vomosywo* tree (actually, a shrub) bend over toward, or into, the ground; bamboo is jointed; pines don't grow suckers after being cut. The worthy fir tree on which the hero made his successful shots is still split and used as shingles on some upland homes. In many Yi areas, especially in Yunnan, sacred groves (with names like "dragon tree forests" [Ch: *long shulin*]) are kept near villages and cutting is not allowed. Ancient, solitary trees traditionally are also not cut. Violating these taboos could bring calamity upon individuals or the community.

The epic mentions a few domesticated plants and ancestors of plants later domesticated. The sole survivor of the catastrophic warming era is a stalk of hemp (*Cannabis*). Hemp (N: *mu*) is still a common cultivant in many Yi areas and was an important source of raw material for rope and clothing (Mueggler 1998; Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000, 18). Part 8 of *The Book of Origins* recounts how Pumo Hniyyr, the mother of the hero Zhyge Alu, sets aside her weaving to go and "play" with the dragon-eagles, whose blood falls from the sky and impregnates her. The weaving process is presented in these lines:

Pumo Hniyyr  
for three years prepared the weaving equipment,  
took three months to set up her backstrap loom.  
The ground spike was like a star;  
the batten glimmered like eagle wings;  
the shuttle moved through the warp like a honeybee;  
the loom beam jumped up and down;  
the weft threads were like a rainbow.

The details of the backstrap loom are wholly recognizable to Yi weavers today, and such devices are still found in other communities in the eastern Himalayas. Among the Nuosu, the common practice is to attach one end of the long weft threads (that are braided together) onto a wooden or metal spike that is driven into the ground. In some areas several women may attach their looms to one stake and arrange themselves in a circle as they sit on the ground weaving and chatting.

Beings that appear in the epic, such as Shyly Wote, who on his search for a father ends up marrying the *nzyimo's* daughter, utilize ladles, carts, fabrics (silks and satins), and other items associated with daily life—and even



Nuosu women in Zhaojue, Liangshan, using a backstrap loom

upper-class wealth. A number of specialized items—the bamboo vessels used to hold family souls in the home, cloth, and warrior’s armor—are mentioned in the riddles the *nzymo*’s daughter asks of Shyly Wote. His younger sister, Nyingemo Ala, supplies him with answers:

“The three dogs that cannot hunt  
are puppets in the Nuo opera.  
The red-cheeked chicken unable to cry  
is the fern-dwelling wild pheasant.  
The three pieces of wood that mustn’t be burned  
are the three bamboo soul containers in the home.  
The three pieces of cloth that can’t be woven  
are the rainbows in the sky.  
The three piles of wool that can’t be fluffed,  
are the misty mountain clouds.  
The three *jin* of salt that can’t be eaten,  
are the icicles in the deep forest.  
The upper part of the war armor—  
the war vest with the front and back—  
is missing a piece made from antler skin.  
The middle part of the war armor—  
made of 6,600 leather plates—





Traditional Nuosu warrior armor made of leather plates, Liangshan. In part 12 of the epic, the the *nzymo*'s daughter asks Shyly Wote questions about parts of the warrior armor to test his knowledge and assess his suitability as a suitor. Courtesy of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, catalog no. 1998-83/258.

but lacking one,  
is made of the thick skin on a wild boar's neck.  
The rear part of the armor—  
that has two plates—  
is the skin of a water buffalo's knee.”

#### SEARCHING FOR AN IDEAL PLACE: NICHE SELECTION IN THE ANCESTRAL MIGRATIONS

The last fifteen parts of *The Book of Origins* describe migrations of Nuosu clans across landscapes of what appears to be southwest China—though migration stories through landscapes similar to those in the epic are told in the folklore of many other peoples of the Eastern Himalayas (Blackburn 2010, 59–60). The migration passages are in some ways the most enigmatic in *The Book of Origins*. Overall, they lack the detail and action of the first



twelve parts that concern the various phases of the creation. The passages mainly relate the migrations of individual groups throughout the postflood world. As noted, all of the flora and fauna catalogued as the “sons of snow” were assigned specific ecological niches in the landscape and were part of the domains of water, sky, or earth. Various trees and grasses all had their specific place, as did the frogs, snakes, birds, monkeys, and bears. Although the sixth group of creatures with blood was humans, the passages do not specify their niche.

According to legend, many generations ago the Gguho and Qoni clans migrated into the Liangshan region from a place called Zzyzypuvu, which may be somewhere in the Yunnan-Guizhou borderlands. These migrating clans were part of the Six Tribes said to have migrated in different directions to populate the Yi areas in southwest China (Bamo Ayi 2001, 101). Accounts of these early migrations are comparable to those of other Yi groups, many ethnic groups in southwest China (including Miao, Dong, Jingpo, Naxi, Lahu, and Han), and other peoples in contiguous areas in Southeast Asia, Northeast India, and Nepal.<sup>17</sup> Some of these migration narratives may be linked to actual experiences of the forebears of contemporary clans, especially in the details of searching for suitable places to settle and criteria that instigate actual settlement. Among the reasons for migrating are depletion of local resources, overpopulation, and warfare. One or more of these factors motivate the migrants to begin a search for a place with better conditions or at least amicable ones. The searches are processes by which groups of a given people move through a landscape on foot or by boat as they encounter situations of varying degrees of favorability and unfavorability. Thus, one way of appreciating the latter part of *The Book of Origins* is to examine structure and content in light of criteria for finding a suitable or “ideal” niche in which to settle and prosper (Wu Jingzhong 2001, 38–40).

As the story of Shyly Wote and the first generation of the “sons of snow” unfolds, there is much cosmographic information about the environment, especially in the mention of plants and animals specific to southwest China. There are also references to crops, geographical locations, and adaptations to local environments that give clues to the sort of places the ancestors lived. After the great flood destroyed life on earth, the survivor Jjumu Vuvu and Hnituo, his wife from the sky, initiated the present descent lines of several peoples in southwest China by bearing three sons. These children, however, were mute. After the Apuyoqo bird brought back the secret of speech from the household of the sky god Ngeti Gunzy, Jjumu Vuvu followed the instructions and boiled three pieces of bamboo until they exploded, and then splashed the boiling water on each mute son. The children were thus shocked

into speaking—but each spoke a different language. The groups are identified as “Hxiemga” (probably Han people), Ozzu (local groups now classified as Tibetan who speak Tibetan or Qiangic languages), and several Nuosu clans.

Parts 13–20 outline the genealogies and migrations of these groups and how they spread out and fill various niches in the landscape. Although not mentioned in the previous sixteen parts, parts 17 and 18 of *The Book of Origins* acknowledge the existence of “Foreigners” (Yiery), who seem to be people other than those indicated as descendants of the three once-mute brothers. This reference to peoples originating outside the pairing of Hnitu and the earthling flood survivor is noteworthy, as other published versions of the epic do not include the parts on “Foreigners.” Who these foreigners are is unknown, although French, English, and American explorers had entered the Liangshan Mountains by the early twentieth century. Several American pilots crashed in the region during World War II and were rescued by local Yi villagers. Given the many oral and written forms of *The Book of Origins* and the custom of copying versions by generations of *bimo*, it is possible that fairly recent content could find its way into the epic.

As the original groups spread out, all find suitable niches in the landscape and are thereafter associated with these places. The Hxiemga live in the lowlands, the Ozzu somewhat higher up, and the Nuosu in the still-higher areas. The text also gives clues or specific criteria on the merits of places to settle. Unlike animals and plants, who entered their niches naturally, humans must go in search of them. The decision to settle in or reject specific places demands the meeting of certain quite specific criteria. Although nearly all of the migration accounts in parts 13–20 make some mention of searching for a suitable place or suitable conditions for settlement, the criteria for settling are most detailed in part 23, the “Genealogy of Nzy Clan.”

In part 23, the various families wend their way through the landscape in search of ideal places to settle. In some places, they leave behind a few families; in other cases, it seems the entire group moves on. The text very explicitly states whether a place is suitable or unsuitable to the migrants. As the trek continues, certain criteria for suitability accrue. By examining these criteria, we can begin to imagine what sort of “ideal niche” the Yi migrants were searching for and what sorts of places some of them accepted. The part begins with the passage:

The Wuwu Gizy,  
when they came to Sagukenyie,  
they looked at the place Aqybilu.

At Aqybilu,  
black cows plowed the earth,  
spoons with broken handles were used to eat.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down,  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.

In these lines the lineage called “Wuwu Gizy” is explicitly named. In succeeding parts, the group is referred to either as the “Nzy” or by a pronoun such as “they.” The first eight lines contain a multiform structure that is repeated throughout the rest of the passage. The multiform consists of four moves: (1) arrival at a vantage point; (2) surveying a place within sight; (3) assessment; (4) decision. In the first move, the group comes to a particular place, and from that vantage point they enact the second move by looking at (surveying) another place. The surveying results in an evaluative comment on unsuitability or suitability. At this point a decision is made either to settle (or settle part of the group) or leave.

Throughout part 23, this multiform pattern is repeated twenty-five times. The basic four moves are repeated in each instance, though the length and degree of elaboration is different in each case. There is no set line length, and many of the multiforms are as short as eight or nine lines; a few are many lines in length. The spatiality evoked in moves 1 and 2 suggests a landscape of hills and valleys that can serve as overlooks onto territory waiting to be crossed or avoided.<sup>18</sup> The landscape is often already inhabited, though in some cases wild areas are described or implied. In this first passage, two factors are judged as negative: the cattle used to plow, and spoons with broken handles. The reference to “black cows” may show a preference for another type of cattle or buffalo, or the term may be a marker for a certain caste or economic level. In any case, the implication is that the local cattle (assuming they are cattle and not a symbol for something else) are markers of an unsuitable place. The other unsuitable factor is that the locals use spoons with broken handles to eat—suggesting the area is very poor—and therefore not a suitable place to settle. Thus, the Nzy continue on their way, not settling there because the “niche conditions” have not been met.

The next passage replicates the multiform structure:

They stood at Aqybilu,  
and looked at the place Nieyyurjjo.  
At Nieyyurjjo  
one’s skin burned in the day,  
and long clothes were needed at night.

The Ni came there and ran off,  
The Shuo came there and ran off.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.

Here again, we have the moves of arrival, surveying, assessment, and decision. In this case, there are also two unsuitable factors: the sun is extremely bright during the day, and it is so cold at night that special clothes are needed to keep warm. These conditions may entail high altitude and lack of cloud cover, or other factors. The conditions are so unsuitable, so hostile that neither the “Ni” (an ancient word referring to the Yi or Nuosu) or the Shuo (Han or “Hxiemga”) people can bear them. Thus, the search continues.

In the next passage, cultural mixing is the basis of the negative assessment:

They stood at the place Nieyylurjjo,  
and looked at the place Leggeorro.  
At Leggeorro  
Ni people spoke Hxiemga speech when born,  
Shuo people grew Nuosu braids when born;  
water buffalo and yellow cows plowed side by side,  
plowed in one direction,  
and split up when finished plowing.  
Ni and Shuo customs were mixed,  
Going outside together,  
but returning home to two places.  
Shuo people grew long braids,  
Shuo women wore long pants.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.

What is apparently a mixed community could be an area where Hxiemga and Yi people lived in close proximity and some customs were shared. Although similar in many ways, cultural distinctions were maintained. Speech, draught animals, and ways of braiding hair seem to have been borrowed mutually or in one direction. Today, in common Nuosu parlance, water buffalos (*yy nyi*) represent Han people, whereas black cattle/oxen (*nuo nyi*) represent Nuosu. In the lines, the Hxiemga women are differentiated by wearing pants. Historically, Nuosu women have worn long,

pleated skirts, though many Yi women in Yunnan and Guizhou wear pants. Such mixed communities have been documented in places throughout southwest China (Lin 1961, 12; Harrell 2001, 153–55; Ma 2001). Nevertheless, the mixing renders the place unsuitable for the Nzy, who seem to haughtily disdain the situation, wishing to maintain their pure ways.

In the next several passages the Nzy confront environmental niches they find unsuitable. There is much grass, but few trees and shrubs.

They stood at the place Leggeorro,  
and looked at the place Mutedoli.  
At Mutedoli,  
the trees and shrubs were very few,  
but wild grass grew everywhere;  
the children and grandchildren looked very poor.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.

Herding sheep and goats in grassy areas is an important part of Nuosu culture, though they are not a grasslands people in the sense of Mongols or some Tibetans. The forests of the Nuosu regions supply trees and shrubs for raw materials for dwellings, tools, and ritual paraphernalia. Thus, vegetation or its lack is a determining factor for moving on. Many more examples could be pointed out in the remaining lines of part 23.

In sum, the “niche criteria” embedded in *The Book of Origins* offer insight into the sort of environmental niches that the migrants in the text found to be unsuitable or suitable for settling. The negative criteria that caused the migrants to avoid settling in certain places include general ones such as weather, geophysical state of the locale, poverty, unacceptable social relations, harmful supernatural beings, freakish animals or animal behavior, lack of mutual languages, lack of resources, lack of ritual flora, unsuitable food, and contamination by death. The positive criteria that induced the Nzy migrants to settle are very specific: Hillsides for tending sheep, grasslands for grazing horses, and wet spots for pigs all meet the “suitable” criteria. A varied diet including fish is available, as are pine resources for light and fuel. In the long-sought place domestic animals prosper in ways that seem “magical”—growing quickly and sturdily. The strong, fecund livestock that wear out plows and supply copious oil and lard show the suitability of the place. As the generations pass, the self-sufficient martial power of the group is reflected by the glimmering swords and horses, reinforcing the self-image

of the Nzy as a dominant, highly successful force in their environmental and cultural realm.

### A CONTINUING TRADITION

*The Book of Origins* today exists in many formats. All clans in Liangshan are connected to it by ritual as the origins of each local clan must be recited in any given ritual event. In this way *The Book of Origins* is an open-ended text that expands to include new versions at every recital. Weddings, funerals, and the various rituals introduced above continue to be sites for live performances. At such events, the performers may be *bimo* priests with their scriptures, or young male folk singers who deliver portions antiphonally while standing and turning. Unique tradition-bearers like Jjivot Zopqu may recite passages from memory or directly from a written text. These contexts, however, depend on the continued desire of individuals, families, and communities to include portions of *The Book of Origins* within life-cycle events.

As urban and global influences increase, new contexts for the expression of the epic content have appeared. These include the government-sponsored midsummer Torch Festival held in Xichang, readings and writings by urban-based poets, school performances, pop songs, television shows, children's



Welcoming guests with a song near Zhaojue, Liangshan

books, ethnic tourism, ethnic-themed restaurants, public art, and rituals tailored to the needs of urban based populations. For instance, in May 2017, a group of Aku Wuwu's Nuosu college students garbed in traditional dress recited the opening passages of *The Book of Origins* in Nuosu language as the opening performance at an interethnic poetry event held in a major Chengdu bookstore. Thus, a narrative recounting the genealogy of humans in connection with other life-forms inhabiting the earth and sky of southwest China continues to extend its meanings locally among new generations of Nuosu and increasingly onto the global stage.





*THE BOOK OF ORIGINS*



## GENEALOGY OF SKY

*Momu cy*

In the most ancient past,  
in the vast expanse of the heavens,  
was the home of the sky spirit, Ngeti Gunzy.  
If Ngeti Gunzy lived a day,  
in that day he would accomplish his goal.  
Capable people helped;  
incapable people also helped.  
The Pumo clan was sent.  
Hnaly of the Pumo clan,  
stood atop Ngejjiejjieli Mountain;  
he sat on a cloud and flew up to the moon.  
He came to shepherd the sun,  
to shepherd the sun out below the clouds;  
he came to hammer the rising mist,  
hammer the mist into dark clouds,  
the dark clouds that send the drizzling rains.  
Once the sun was herded and pressed within the clouds,  
there was sunlight beneath the clouds;  
everywhere was bright, glimmering sunlight.  
And thus is the genealogy  
of the sky above.

## GENEALOGY OF EARTH

### *Mudde cy*

In the most ancient times,  
there was no sky above;  
were there a sky, there were no stars.  
There was no earth below;  
were there an earth, there was no grass.  
In between there were no clouds,  
the clouds had not yet formed;  
thus there was no light within the clouds.  
“Here” and “there” were indistinguishable,  
“East” and “West” had not been formed.  
In this dale were forests,  
in that valley as yet no trees;  
in this dale was water,  
in that valley as yet no water.  
In this place were grasslands,  
in that place as yet no grasslands.  
And thus is the genealogy of the earth below.

## TRANSFORMATION OF SKY AND EARTH

*Momu zzyqo cy*

In the most ancient times,  
before the cosmos began,  
and before the great flood had retreated,  
things changed one day in the dark of night,  
changed in the darkness of night;  
another day things changed in daytime,  
changed in the light of day.  
Shyzyyy was the first generation to change,  
Yyhlihli was the second generation to change,  
Hlihlishy was the third generation to change,  
Shymujzyzy was the fourth generation to change,  
Jyzygy was the fifth generation to change,  
Gunrelo was the sixth generation to change,  
Lonrelo was the seventh generation to change,  
Lowala was the eighth generation to change,  
Ngejygy was the ninth generation to change,  
Ssujygy was the tenth generation to change.  
Thus is the history of  
the transformation of the sky and earth.  
Many came to endlessly  
discuss the transformations.  
Four sides of the sky were opened,  
and four pieces of the earth

were bound together by copper and iron.  
At Turlurhquovo  
the capable craftsmen,  
Ayi Sunie and  
Sunie Legge,  
put felt cloaks on their heads.  
Of the sixty-six suns,  
and the seventy-seven moons,  
there is only one sun today,  
and there is only one moon today.  
Thus is the genealogy of the sun and moon.



## GENEALOGY OF LIGHTNING

*Murzyr cy*

After this,<sup>1</sup>  
the sky produced two loud sounds;  
one sound arose from Gulu Mountain,  
one sound issued from Gulu Mountain,  
arose from the mists on the right,  
issued from the mists on the left;  
arose from right ridges of the mountain  
issued from the left ridges of the mountain.  
Arose from the slopes of Gulu Mountain,  
issued from the slopes of Gulu Mountain.  
Arose from Jiejielajjie  
issued from Jiejielajjie;  
arose from the mists of Mabur,  
issued from the mists of Mabur;  
arose from the peaks of the white clouds,  
issued from the peaks of the white clouds.  
Rumbling thunder resounded in the human world.  
Lightning raised its head to look at the sky,  
looked at the sun from the corner of its eye,  
then stretched out its hand to pull down the treetops,  
so the treetops snapped one after another;  
opened its mouth to chomp the cliffs,  
so the cliffs crumbled one after another;  
then used its feet to kick the ground,  
kicked it into four pieces.

The twelve types of lightning,  
during the three months of winter,  
lived in the crags where the sun rises.  
The Mother slept with its mouth shut,  
the Son slept with its mouth shut;  
during the three months of spring,  
they lived beyond the skin of the Sky;<sup>2</sup>  
the Mother snored, “Gu-lu-lu,”  
the Son snored, “Gu-lu-lu.”  
Thus is the genealogy of Lightning.

## SEPARATION OF SKY AND EARTH

### *Muvu mudie po*

In the ancient past,  
before the separation of the sky and earth,  
in the vast expanse of the heavens,  
the family of the sky spirit Ngeti Gunzy  
produced forty-eight immortals.  
The place the sun rises,  
produced the spirit Ddebbu Sysse.  
The place the sun sets  
produced the spirit Ddeshe Sysse.<sup>1</sup>  
The headwaters of the north  
produced the spirit Sysse Dihni.  
The tail waters of the south  
produced the spirit Momu Sysse.<sup>2</sup>  
In the vast expanse of the heavens  
lived the sky spirit Ngeti Gunzy.  
If not sent, he must be sent—<sup>3</sup>  
send Ddebbu Ahly to go  
and stand atop Tului Bbo'o Mountain  
and summon the spirit Ddeshe Sysse.  
The spirit Ddeshe Sysse  
summoned the spirit Sysse Dihni.  
The spirit Sysse Dihni  
summoned the spirit Momu Sysse.  
The spirit Momu Sysse  
summoned the spirit Gemo Ahly.

The spirit Gemo Ahly  
passed over Tulus Hxuoovo Mountain,  
arriving at Shymu Ngehxa in the sky.  
The family of Ngeti Gunzy  
prepared to separate the sky and earth,  
and invited all spirits and immortals to talk of this great event.  
They talked of it for nine days until dark.  
During the talks they slaughtered nine cows,  
discussing it for nine nights until dawn.  
During the talks they drank nine crocks of wine:  
Hlyshy Awo gave his opinion to  
Ayi Sunie;  
Ayi Sunie gave his opinion to<sup>4</sup>  
Poli Ayo;  
Poli Ayo gave his opinion to  
Awo Shobbu;  
Awo Shobbu gave his opinion to  
Momu Sysse;  
Momu Sysse gave his opinion to  
Sysse Dihni;  
Sysse Dihni  
talked of it for one day until dark,  
and slaughtered a cow while talking of it;  
one night talked of it until dawn,  
and drank a crock of wine while talking of it.  
Sysse Dihni  
broke apart nine huge copper and iron pots  
and gave them to Gemo Ahly.  
This person, Gemo Ahly,  
this strange craftsman,  
with his strange methods,  
used his knee as an anvil to smithy,  
used his fist as a hammer to smithy,  
used his fingers as tongs to smithy,  
and hammered out four copper and iron forks.  
One fork was given to Ddebbu Sysse  
to go and separate the place where the sun rises in the east.  
In the place where the sun rises,  
a small crack was opened,  
and a faint glimmer of light appeared;

and there the wind came out.  
 One fork was given to Ddeshe Sysse  
 to go and separate the place where the sun sets in the west.  
 In the place where the sun sets,  
 a small crack was opened,  
 and a faint glimmer of light appeared;  
 and there the wind went back in.  
 One fork was given to Sysse Dihni,  
 to go and separate the place at the northern headwaters.  
 At the headwaters,  
 a small crack was opened,  
 and a faint glimmer of light appeared;  
 and from there water flowed out.  
 One fork was given to Momu Sysse,  
 to go and separate the place at the southern tail waters.  
 At the southern tail waters, a small crack was opened;  
 and there the water flowed back in.  
 Gemo Ahly  
 hammered out a copper door bar,  
 hammered out an iron door bar,  
 and used them to push the sky to the place of the sky,  
 and used them to push the earth to the place of the earth:  
 cracks shone in all four directions.  
 Ngeti Gunzy stood up,  
 and looked down upon the world below.  
 He saw that the separation of the sky and earth  
 was not complete.  
 Four gigantic copper and iron balls  
 still lay in the human world below.<sup>5</sup>  
 The family of Ngeti Gunzy  
 had to send them; it could not be otherwise.  
 They sent young steeds  
 to the human world of Shymu Ngejjy  
 to kick the copper and iron balls.  
 Could they be kicked away?  
 They could not be kicked away.  
 They sent young heifers  
 to butt them with their horns.  
 Could they be butted away?  
 They could not be butted away.

They then sent a pair of yellow and red goats  
to go and dig away the copper and iron balls.

Could they be dug away?

They could not be dug away.

They sent a pair of yellow and black pigs  
to go and root away the copper and iron balls.

Could they be rooted away?

They could not be rooted away.

Sysse Dihni

then sent Gemo Ahly

to go and hammer the nine copper and iron balls  
into nine copper and iron brooms.

He then gave them to nine female fairies  
to go sweep the sky and earth.

They swept the sky to the place of the sky,  
and the vast blue skies appeared;

they swept the earth to the place of the earth,  
and it became the vast, barren land.

Four pillars that supported the sky and earth  
stood in the four directions, supporting them.

In the place of the rising sun,

Muvu Hande Peak was the support.

In the place of the setting sun,

Muke Doli Mountain was the support.

In the place of the headwaters,

Nimu Hxosa Mountain was the support.

In the place of the tail waters,

Huomu Dici Mountain was the support.

The four pillars pulled the sky and earth  
from the four directions, pulled apart the sky and earth,  
crossing from east and west to pull apart the sky and earth.<sup>6</sup>

Four stones were used to affix the sky and earth,

brought from the four directions to affix sky and earth.

The person who separated the sky and earth was  
Sysse Dihni.

The person who finished making the sky and earth  
was Muddie Yozu.

Sysse Yozu<sup>7</sup>

—was not to be sent, but was still sent—  
 sent to get Gemo Ahly  
 to hammer out nine copper and iron axes;  
 and to give them to nine young immortals;  
 and to go with Sysse Yozu.  
 Sysse Yozu  
 prepared to refine the shapes of the sky and earth.  
 At dawn,  
 “You and I” excitedly discussed it;  
 by afternoon  
 “You and I” went into action.<sup>8</sup>  
 They shaped the mountains into mountains;  
 they shaped the valleys into valleys.  
 One place that was shaped into mountains,  
 became a goat herding area.  
 One place that was shaped into flatlands,  
 became a bullfighting grounds.  
 One place that was shaped into rice fields,  
 became a place where rice is raised.  
 One place that was shaped into mountain slopes,  
 became a place to raise buckwheat.  
 One place that was shaped into ridges,  
 became a battleground.  
 One place that was shaped into small valleys,  
 became a place of flowing water.  
 One place shaped into tablelands,  
 became a place to establish homes.  
 Sysse Dihni,  
 having done the things in the sky,  
 having done the things on the earth,  
 having done the things with copper and iron,  
 passed through Tulus Hxovo Mountain  
 where he came to send the spirit Ayi Sunie on a task.  
 Ayi Sunie  
 smashed the rocks to get water,  
 and water flowed out and circled around the earth.  
 Sunie Legge  
 used a *shipur lizzi* hoe<sup>9</sup>  
 to flatten the Earth, and then plant grass;  
 and the grass grew very green.



Ngeti Gunzy stood up and  
went and strolled three times below his house.  
In one place there were trees;  
in one place were no trees.  
In one place there was grass;  
in one place there was no grass.  
In one place water flowed;  
in one place no water flowed.  
In one half were grasslands;  
in one half there were no grasslands.  
In one half there were living things;  
in one half there were no living things.

## GREAT BIMO

*Awo Shubu*

In the ancient past,  
on the vast land lived the  
Spirit Ddebbu Ahly.  
Ddebbu Ahly  
was sent to see Awo Shubu  
about planting living things.  
Afterward, Awo Shubu  
led the heavenly steed Ami Hlo<sup>1</sup>  
while wearing a *hlymido* ritual hat,  
carrying a bag of ritual texts;  
wearing the *jjiejiehl* ritual clothes,  
shouldering the *shuvyvu* ritual ghost-catcher,  
holding the *kuhlevo* ritual fan.  
He brought all his in-laws,  
returning to the foot of Nyuni Mountain.<sup>2</sup>  
The earth had no trees,  
so he returned to the sky and got  
the seeds of three kinds of trees,  
and spread them across the wide earth;  
forests grew in nine places.  
Among the trees, the fir is most valuable.  
The fir forest had no living creatures,  
so he led deer into the forests.  
The fir trees then brightened up,  
as the fawns happily played.

Thus, the fir forests had living creatures.<sup>3</sup>  
There were no green grasses on the earth,  
so Awo Shubu  
returned to the sky and got  
the seeds of three kinds of grasses,  
and spread them across the wide earth;  
grasses grew in nine places.<sup>4</sup>  
The flatlands are where grasses grow,  
but the flatlands had no living creatures.  
So he took sparrows to the flatlands;<sup>5</sup>  
so the flatlands brightened up  
as the sparrows trilled;  
he brought a pair of grasshoppers  
to be their food.  
So the flatlands had living creatures.  
There was no flowing water on earth,  
so Awo Shubu  
returned to the sky to draw the waters forth.  
He got ahold of three rivers,  
and sent them to the wide human world,  
so waters flowed in nine places;  
broke apart the stones so the waters could flow.  
The waters seemed alive,  
but there were no living creatures in the waters.  
So he drove otters into the water;  
the water had green ripples,  
and the otters glistened as they swam.  
But the otters had no food,  
so he drove a pair of minnows into the water  
to become the otters' food;  
thus the water had living creatures.  
The wide earth had no stones,  
so Awo Shubu  
returned to the sky to get them,  
and grabbed three kinds of rocks,  
and spread them across the earth.  
Nine layers of rocks were formed.  
Craggs are the hardest part of rocks,  
and the cliffs had no living creatures;  
so he drove the bees to the cliffs,

so the cliffs brightened up.  
The bees buzzed about,  
but the bees had no food;  
so he caught a pair of *yomy* fly larvae<sup>6</sup>  
to become the food of the bees;  
thus the cliffs had living creatures.  
The creator of living beings  
was the spirit Awo Shubu.

## GENEALOGY OF SPIRIT MONKEY

### *Anyu Ddussy cy*

The one called to hang the sun and moon in the sky  
was the spirit Anyu Ddussy.<sup>1</sup>

Muvu Geddu was the first generation,  
Geddu Gessy was the second generation,  
Gessy Geche was the third generation,  
Geche Asu was the fourth generation,  
Asu Hxamu was the fifth generation,  
Hxamu Pumi was the sixth generation,  
Pumi Zhajy was the seventh generation,  
Zhajy Zhadi was the eighth generation,  
Zhadi Anyu was the ninth generation,  
Anyu Ddussy was the tenth generation,  
Ddussy Vole

was the eleventh of the generations to move.

Sysse Dihni,  
sent Anyu Ddussy  
to call the sun and moon.

Anyu Ddussy  
prepared to go call the sun and moon.

On Turlur Mountain<sup>2</sup>  
he hammered silver into a silver hammer;  
hammered gold into a gold hammer;  
then built a house of gold and silver.

He brought a heifer for a purification ceremony,  
took out the four pairs of heifer guts,

put them at the four corners of the house, then called.<sup>3</sup>  
 For nine days he called until dusk,  
 until he called in six suns.  
 For nine nights he called until dawn,  
 until he called in seven moons.  
 Anyu Ddussy  
 returned to the middle of Turlur Mountain,  
 and hammered copper into a copper hammer;  
 hammered iron into an iron hammer;  
 and made a house of copper and iron.  
 He brought a white gelded sheep for a purification ceremony,  
 took out the four pairs of sheep guts,  
 put them at the four corners of the house, then called.  
 For seven days he called until dusk,  
 until the seven *shanyie* stars came out;<sup>4</sup>  
 for seven nights he called until dawn,  
 until the six *chyku* stars came out.  
 Anyu Ddussy  
 returned to the foot of Turlur Mountain,  
 cut down trees and made a wooden hammer;  
 cut bamboo and made a bamboo hammer;  
 and built a house of bamboo and wood.  
 He brought a pullet for a purification ceremony,  
 took four pieces of roasted chicken,<sup>5</sup>  
 put them at the four corners of the house, then called.  
 For three days he called until dusk,  
 until the *suota* star came out.  
 For three nights he called until dawn,  
 until the four *nyuhni* stars came out.  
 Thus, the sky was filled with stars.  
 From this time on,  
 in the human world, six suns came out at dawn,  
 and seven moons came out at dusk.  
 But all the trees and plants disappeared,  
 leaving only a fern.  
 All the flowing waters dried up,  
 leaving only an invisible lake.  
 The *hxosyrndadi* fern<sup>6</sup>  
 knew how to respect the invisible lake.  
 The invisible Lake Amo Shurti

knew how to care for the *hxosyrndadi* fern.  
All the grasses disappeared,  
leaving only *paqiqu* grass.  
All the crops shriveled up,  
leaving only a stalk of hemp.  
All the farm animals died off,  
leaving only a white-clawed cat.  
All the wild animals died off,  
leaving only a gray-white water deer.<sup>7</sup>



## ZHYGE ALU

### *Zhyge Alu*

In the ancient times,  
a dragon was born in the sky,  
and the dragon lived on the earth.  
A dragon was born on the earth,  
and the dragon lived in the rivers.  
Adult fish played with the dragon,  
    comparing each other's beauty.<sup>1</sup>  
Fingerlings were the dragon's playmates;  
fish fry were the dragon's good friends.  
A dragon was born in the rivers,  
and the dragon lived in the cliffs.  
Rocks played with the dragon,  
    comparing each other's beauty.  
Honeybees were the dragon's playmates;<sup>2</sup>  
little honeybees were the dragon's good friends.  
A dragon was born in the cliffs,  
and the dragon lived in the fir forests.  
Deer played with the dragon,  
    comparing each other's beauty.  
Muntjac were the dragon's playmates;  
water deer were the dragon's good friends.<sup>3</sup>  
A dragon was born in the fir forests,  
and lived in Ggupcho Chohxo.  
Ggupcho Chohxo was  
where Celestial Swan Woman, Ggumo Arryr, was born.<sup>4</sup>

She later lived at the mountains in Vondi Hlyqu,  
where the beauty of Hlyqu was born.<sup>5</sup>

She later lived in Dishy Shuonuo,  
where Dishy Majie was born.<sup>6</sup>

She later lived in Olu Zzivo,<sup>7</sup>  
where Zzimo Hnimo was born.

She later lived in Orro Ndassy,<sup>8</sup>  
where Zyzyr Amy was born.<sup>9</sup>

A woman of the Zy family married into the Gi family;  
a woman of the Gi family married into the Pu family,  
and gave birth to the three daughters of the Pu family.

The Pu daughter Jy married into the Jy family;  
the Pu daughter Ma married into the Ma family,  
leaving only Pumo Hniyyr, who did not marry.

Pumo Hniyyr

for three years prepared the weaving equipment,  
took three months to set up her backstrap loom.

The ground spike was like a star;  
the batten glimmered like eagle wings;  
the shuttle moved through the warp like a honeybee;<sup>10</sup>  
the loom beam jumped up and down;  
the weft threads were like a rainbow.

There at Zhazhajielie  
a pair of eagles soared above,<sup>11</sup>  
coming from Dihxo Gulch.

On the earth was pair of eagles,  
that flew from Zhyng Mountain.  
In Suopyr was a pair of eagles,  
that flew from the middle of Black Fern Mountain.<sup>12</sup>

A pair of eagles in the human realm  
came from Nyuluvi.

Finally, four dragon-eagles  
came from within the fir forests.

As Pumo Hniyyr  
prepared to go see the eagles,  
prepared to go play with the eagles,  
three drops of eagle blood splattered down  
onto Pumo Hniyyr's body;  
falling down so strangely.

One drop fell on her head,  
 and seeped into nine strands of her hair;  
 one drop fell on her waist,  
 and seeped through nine layers of her cape;  
 one drop fell on her lower body,  
 seeping through nine layers of her skirt.  
 Pumo Hniyyr  
 thought it was the polluting force of a pervert ghost.<sup>13</sup>  
 No matter what, someone must be sent to deal with it.  
 "Send Vaddur Vawa.  
 Have him go and invite a *bimo*."<sup>14</sup>  
 He made three circles at the head of the village,  
 but there was no *bimo* at the head of the village.  
 He made three circles at the tail of the village,  
 but there was no *bimo* at the tail of the village.  
 There was, however, a *bimo* in the middle of the village.<sup>15</sup>  
 But the grand *bimo* was not at home,  
 only the *bisse* apprentice Gaga was at home.<sup>16</sup>  
 The *bisse* apprentice Gaga sat thus:  
 The bottom layer was a bamboo mat;  
 the middle layer was a wool felt mat;  
 the top layer was loose hair of muntjac and water deer.<sup>17</sup>  
 His left hand opened the scripture box;  
 his right hand reached in to the bottom,  
 and took out the sacred scriptures.<sup>18</sup>  
 He turned to the first page, but it had no answer;  
 the ink gave no remedy.  
 He turned another pair of pages—  
 it said it had to do with a pervert ghost.  
 He turned another three pair of pages—  
 It said it had to do with a living being.  
 Lastly, he turned to the fifth pair of pages,  
 saying, "It said to use a yellow hen,  
 and use a sacred willow branch to summon *Gefi*,  
 the life-giving soul."<sup>19</sup>  
 In this manner, will be produced a sacred being."  
 The *bimo* came to Pumo's house,  
 came to find the life-giving *Gefi* spirit.  
 Pumo Hniyyr  
 at dawn gave off a white mist,

and at noon gave birth to Alu.  
Zhyge Alu,  
on the night he was born,  
refused to drink his mother's milk.  
On the second night after birth,  
refused to sleep alongside his mother.  
On the third night after birth,  
refused to wear the clothes his mother made for him.  
Because of this perverse behavior,  
his mother put him in a cave.  
In the cave lived dragons;  
Alu understood dragon language  
and called himself a dragon.  
The days he was hungry, he ate dragon food,  
the days he was thirsty, he drank dragon milk,  
and when cold he wore dragon clothes.<sup>20</sup>  
Zhyge Alu  
was born on the day of the dragon,  
in the year of the dragon.  
His birth was in Lu Ddi Ho, to the southeast,  
and his name was called Alu.  
A year after  
Zhyge Alu's birth,  
while out with those tending pigs,  
he made a bow of a bamboo strip,  
and used grass stalks as arrows.  
Two years after his birth,  
while out with those herding sheep,<sup>21</sup>  
he carried a bamboo-stalk bow.  
Three years after his birth,  
while out with those conducting their affairs,  
he carried a wooden bow.  
In battles he was cool-headed;  
his archery stance was steady.  
In the fourth and fifth years after his birth,  
he sought for his ancestors in the sky;  
he sought for his roots on earth.  
He carried four magical bows,  
and carried four magical arrows.  
He wore four sets of magical armor,

and led four packs of magical dogs,  
and rode four magical horses.  
As he prepared to measure the ancestral grounds,  
as he prepared to measure the homeland,<sup>22</sup>  
he shot arrows from the east and west.  
The arrows stuck in Joturmuggur.  
He shot arrows crosswise from the north and south,  
and again the arrows stuck in Joturmuggur;  
If you don't believe it,  
there are still marker stones there to prove it.

## SHOOTING DOWN SUNS AND MOONS

### *Gge nbie hle nbie*

Zhyge Alu

prepared to go shoot down the suns,  
prepared to go shoot down the moons.  
Shouldering his magic bows,  
carrying his magic arrows,  
he stood first on the *ndabbo* ferns to shoot the arrows.<sup>1</sup>  
But he was unable to shoot down the suns;  
he was unable to shoot down the moons.  
So, from that time on *ndabbo* ferns curled down.  
Some days later,  
he stood atop the *vomasywo* tree to shoot.<sup>2</sup>  
But he was unable to shoot down the suns;  
he was unable to shoot down the moons.  
So, thereafter the top of the *vomasywo* tree  
bent down to its roots to grow suckers.  
Arriving at Turlur Gulch,  
he stood atop a horse mulberry tree to shoot.  
But he was unable to shoot down the suns;  
he was unable to shoot down the moons.  
From that time on the horse mulberry did not grow tall.<sup>3</sup>  
Arriving at the foot of Turlur Mountain,  
he stood atop a bamboo stalk to shoot.  
But he was unable to shoot down the suns;  
he was unable to shoot down the moons.

From that time on, the bamboos were jointed.  
 Arriving at the middle of Turlur Mountain,  
 he stood atop a pine tree to shoot.  
 But he was unable to shoot down the suns;  
 he was unable to shoot down the moons.  
 From that time on, pine stumps didn't grow shoots.  
 Arriving at the top of Turlur Mountain,  
 he stood atop a fir tree to shoot,  
 and he hit the suns with his arrows,  
 and he hit the moons with his arrows.  
 From then on, fir trees grew very straight and beautiful.  
 The fir trees on the mountaintop,  
 in the third month of autumn,  
 are split into shingles to cover log houses,  
 allowing humans to establish homes;  
 benefiting humans in many ways.  
 In the third month of spring,  
 the trees growing on the mountain ridges  
 benefit the cows and sheep.  
 After the shooting, there was only one sun left—  
 a single sun, Nyojji.  
 After the shooting, there was only one moon left—  
 a single half-moon.  
 The six suns and seven moons  
 were shot down by Zhyge Alu.  
 After they were shot down he pressed them  
 underground beneath boulders.  
 In the human world,  
 snakes were thicker than dikes in rice fields,  
 frogs were like piles of rocks,  
 horseflies were the size of doves,<sup>4</sup>  
 ants were the size of pigeons,  
 grasshoppers were the size of heifers.  
 Zhyge Alu  
 went one day to smash the snakes down to size,  
 and smashed them as thick as fingers,  
 and pressed them under the field dikes;  
 went one day to smash the frogs down to size,  
 and smashed them to the size of a hand,



and pressed them above the dikes.  
He then smashed the horseflies down to size,  
    giving them double-paired wings,  
and pressed them on the grasslands.  
He then smashed the grasshoppers down to size,  
    giving them curved legs,  
and pressed them into the grass meadows.<sup>5</sup>

## CALLING OUT SINGLE SUN AND SINGLE MOON

*Gge di hle di gu*

After this time,  
the sun fled behind the mountains,  
and the moon followed the sun.  
For nine days no sun came out,  
for nine days no moon appeared;  
all was as black as paint under the sky.  
If women sat under the eaves of the houses,  
they fidgeted listlessly;  
gray pullets walked under the porches,  
weaving back and forth;  
torches were lit on the cows' horns  
as the fields were harrowed to plant crops.  
Bake Arra was born,  
and he sat at Dijy Hlewa.  
After that age the clouds covered the moon.<sup>1</sup>  
White clouds and black clouds came out in turn,  
and man-eating lightning  
wildly screamed three times.  
Bake Arra  
wore a coiled red topknot,  
a red topknot wound up on his head.  
At his waist he wore a band of yellow hair,  
a yellow band of hair wrapped around his waist.

On his feet he wore white hair,  
his feet wrapped in white hair.  
He sent a white rooster  
to call the sun and moon out into the sky,  
but the sun and moon did not listen.  
So, now the rooster has nine ridges on its crest,  
and has nine powers to resist opposing forces.  
Grasping an iron needle,  
he gave it to the sole sun, Nyojji,  
and it became the eye of the sun.  
Calling for three days until night,  
he called out to the sun;  
life stirred under the sun,  
and day and night were differentiated.  
It was decided when the rooster would crow:  
At dawn the rooster would crow,  
calling to welcome the sun.  
At noon the rooster would crow,  
watching the sun as it crowed.  
In the evening the rooster would crow,  
crowing to send off the sun.  
For three nights it crowed until dawn,  
and the moon appeared and  
the moon had phases.  
The ten thousand living creatures arose under the moon,  
and the moon waxed and waned.  
When the white dog saw the moon it howled;  
afterward, the ten thousand living beings flourished.

## TWELVE BRANCHES OF SNOW

*Vonre sse cinyi*

In the ancient past,  
a *nijju* talisman fell from the sky,  
fell onto Mount Ngejjiejjeli,  
and started a raging fire.<sup>1</sup>  
The nine skies burned until night;  
for nine nights burned until dawn.  
by day the burning made clear spires of smoke;  
by night the fires were very bright.  
The sky was burning;  
the earth was burning.  
Burning to transform the ancestors;  
burning to transform the parents.<sup>2</sup>  
Transforming, transforming,  
two sons of Gewo were thus transformed.  
The earth was round as a drum;  
the spring winds blew wildly.  
Could they be transformed into ancestors?  
They were unable to be transformed into ancestors.  
Could they be transformed into progenitors?  
No, they were unable to be transformed into progenitors.  
White clouds and the yellow clouds  
were sent to the human world.  
Could they change into living creatures?

They were unable to change into living creatures.  
Could they change into creatures that produce life?  
They were unable to change into creatures that produce life.  
Male copper and female iron  
were sent to the human world.  
Could they change into living creatures?  
They were unable to change into living creatures.  
Could they change into living beings?  
They were unable to change into living beings.  
Yellow snow and red snow  
were sent to the human world.  
Could they change into living creatures?  
They were unable to change into living creatures.  
Could they change into living beings?  
They were unable to change into living beings.  
Transforming, transforming,  
at this time, the Ssussevoqe Man was born.<sup>3</sup>  
About this Ssussevoqe Man—  
The first generation was as tall as a person sitting;  
the second generation was tall as a person standing;  
the third generation was as tall as a pine tree;  
the fourth generation was as tall as a mountain peak;  
the fifth generation was as tall as the sky.  
They dully hulked along,  
wavering back and forth,  
wobbling back and forth,  
listing back and forth,  
floating all about,  
neither dead nor alive.  
Magpies lived on their heads;  
honeybees lived on their waists;  
*susy* birds lived in their noses;  
pine squirrels lived in their armpits;  
*jyli* birds lived in their navels;  
ants lived on the soles of their feet.  
Could they change into living creatures?  
They were unable to change into living creatures.  
Could they change into living beings?  
They could not change into living beings.

Then, at that time,  
Ssussevoqe's family  
sent a giant spider,  
to go up to the sky to ask the reason.  
The big spider  
went to the world of the sky  
and sat on the Sky Spirit Ngeti Gunzy's knee.<sup>4</sup>  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
"Dirty things from the world below have entered my home."  
And he angrily broke the spider into three parts:  
Its head was thrown in a pile of rocks,  
its waist was thrown in a river,  
and its tail thrown among pine trees.  
Seven to thirteen days later,  
Ngeti Gunzy's wife  
got a spider web in her eye.<sup>5</sup>  
Because of this situation,  
Ngeti Gunzy  
began to look everywhere for a *bimo*,  
everywhere searching for those telling fortunes and divining;  
going three times around the head of the village;  
going three times around the tail of the village.  
In the middle of the village he found a *bimo*.  
But the grand *bimo* was not at home,  
only a *bisse* apprentice was at home.  
The apprentice Gage  
turned the pages of the sacred book.  
The paper pages had things to say;  
the black ink had things to tell:  
"On the wide expanses of the world below,  
in Ssussevoqe's family,  
there lived a giant spider.  
When someone came to your house to invite a *bimo*,  
the spider was cut into three pieces.  
The head was thrown into a pile of rocks,  
the waist was thrown into water,  
the tail was thrown in among pine trees.  
As for Ngeti Gunzy's wife,  
her eyes grew spider webs.  
This is the reason."

After that,  
Ngeti Gunzy  
sent a pair of rats  
to circle the top of the rocks three times,  
and circle the end of the rocks three times,  
and return to the middle of the rocks,  
to search for the spider's head.  
It was found beneath the rocks.  
He then sent a pair of otters  
to circle the head of the waters three times,  
to circle the ends of the waters three times,  
and return to the middle of the waters to search;  
but they did not find anything in the middle of the waters.  
Finally he sent a pair of hunting dogs  
to circle the head of the fir forest three times,  
to circle the end of the fir forest three times,  
and return to the middle of the fir forest to search—  
and they found the spider's tail in the fir forest.<sup>6</sup>  
Across the way lived Anre;  
Anre wove silver thread.  
On this side lived Vosa;  
Vosa spun gold thread.  
And they used the threads to connect the head and tail of the spider.  
They connected the head and tail,  
so today spiders have no waists.  
After that,  
a *bimo* was invited,  
invited to the world of humans,  
to come and do a ritual.  
A wild pig was captured for a sacrifice,  
a small pig was caught to bring as an offering;  
so the magpies living on the being's heads were flung off,  
flung into the deep forests.<sup>7</sup>  
After that,  
an old bear was captured as a sacrifice;  
a small bear was caught as an offering.  
The bee nests in their waists  
were flung onto the steep cliffs.<sup>8</sup>  
The *sysy* birds that built the nests in their noses  
were flung into the mountain valleys;

the squirrels that built nests in their armpits  
were flung out onto the earth;  
the *jjizy* birds who made nests in their navels  
were flung into the middle banks of the fields;  
the doves that made nests in their waists  
were flung into the mountain forests.  
After that,  
a small pig was caught as a sacrifice;  
a small chicken was caught as an offering.  
The ants that built nests on the soles of their feet  
were flung onto the earthen mountains.  
Were the persons able to become real living creatures or not?  
They were not able to become real living creatures.  
Were the persons able to become real living things?  
They were not able to become real living things.  
After that,  
*Ge* fell down from the sky.<sup>9</sup>  
*Ge* rotted for three years,  
three columns of white mist  
rose up to the sky,  
then red snow fell three times.  
For nine days it melted until dusk,  
for nine nights melted until dawn;  
melted to become our ancestors,  
melted to become our progenitors.  
Common purification rites were done nine times;  
vaunted purification rites were done nine times.  
Then ice became bones,  
snow became meat,  
the wind became breath,  
falling snow became blood,  
stars became eyes,  
and in the end they became the people of snow—  
the twelve sons of snow.<sup>10</sup>

Of the twelve snow tribes,  
six groups had blood;  
six groups had no blood.  
Of the six without blood,  
one group was grasses.



Black-headed grass grows  
in the grassy places,  
in three hundred grassy places.  
The second group was trees—  
white cypress was a snow tribe.<sup>11</sup>  
The third group was fir trees—  
the fir trees growing in the high mountains.  
The fourth group was *bbyzy* grass—  
the long-legged *bbyzy* grass was a snow tribe.  
The fifth group was *punuo* grass—<sup>12</sup>  
black *punuo* grass was a snow tribe,  
the *punuo* grass growing in the marshlands.  
The sixth group was green vines,  
growing at the foot of trees and in caverns.

The six groups with blood were:  
One group was frogs.  
The frog groups had three brothers,  
living in the marshy places.  
The frog tribe's eldest son  
became Uoba Nyuomgu,  
and lived in the black earth place.  
The frog tribe's second son  
was Uoba Qihni,  
and lived in the marshy places.  
The frog tribe's youngest son  
became the frog species Frog God,  
and lived in people's houses.<sup>13</sup>  
And there were more and more types of frogs.

The second group was snakes.  
The snake tribe's eldest son  
became a *tusi* dragon,<sup>14</sup>  
and lived in the high, barren cliffs.  
The snake tribe's second son  
was the *shygobbohlyr* snake,  
that lived in the top of the fields.  
The youngest son of the snake tribe  
was the *bbujjiekhehni* snake,

that lived in the muddy places.  
The snake tribe became larger and larger.

The third group was large vultures,  
the king of the winged creatures;  
the vultures of the vast sky,  
living in the white clouds and mountains.

The *tusi* of the winged creatures  
was the peacock,  
living at the Diepa Shunuo Sea.<sup>15</sup>  
The head of the winged creatures  
was the swan,  
living in the Ggucho Chohxo Gorge.

The second son of the vulture  
was an eagle.

The eagle's eldest son  
was the big-headed black eagle,  
living in the fir forests.  
The eagle's second son  
was the spotted-face white eagle,  
living in Shuonuo Mountain.

The eagle's smallest son  
was the short-winged cliff eagle,  
freely soaring around.  
The vulture's third son  
became the red-winged hawk,<sup>16</sup>  
living in the Ganluo area.

The fourth group was the old bears.<sup>17</sup>  
The black bear had one mother and two sons.  
They spread out into the fir forests,  
and the black bears became plentiful.

The fifth group was monkeys.<sup>18</sup>  
The red monkeys had one mother and two sons.  
They spread out into the forests,  
and the red monkeys became plentiful.

The sixth group was humans.  
The humans lived in the human world,  
and the humans, in their realm, became plentiful.

After that,  
Four eggs dropped from the snow  
and fell onto the grass.  
The sparrows thought they were their eggs,<sup>19</sup>  
so the sparrows took them to hatch.  
But they would not hatch,  
so the sparrows threw them aside.  
Doves and hawks took them to hatch,  
but they would not hatch.  
So the doves and hawks left them.  
A sharp-eyed rat came to hatch them.  
But they would not hatch,  
so the sharp-eyed rat left them.  
When the butterflies from the deep forests and valleys  
found out, they came to hatch them.  
Clearer and clearer,  
brighter and brighter,  
the front feet were like artificial limbs,  
the back feet were round,  
the mane was like a bamboo fence,  
the tail was like a bundle of bamboo,  
eyelashes were like dried branches,  
eyeballs were like deep pools.  
Of the strange steeds,  
Hali Anuo was the strangest,  
and the types of horses multiplied.<sup>20</sup>

After that,  
while following the other sorts of creatures  
to drink the waters of wisdom and waters of dullness,<sup>21</sup>  
it was discovered that the spirit frog had been kicked off the road.  
The elder spirit frog said to  
Shyly, the son of snow,  
“If you please, put me back on the road,  
then I’ll tell you which is the water of wisdom.”  
Shyly, the son of snow, put it back on the road.  
The elder spirit frog  
said to Shyly, the son of snow,  
“Below, the waters of wisdom are held in the leaves of  
the *shuoma* flower;<sup>22</sup>

above, the waters of dullness are held in the painted wooden bowl."<sup>23</sup>  
The frog told this to Shyly, the son of snow,  
and Shyly, the son of snow, drank  
the waters of wisdom held in the petals of the *shuoma* flowers.  
Other sorts of living beings  
all drank the water of dullness.  
The *shuoma* flower petals  
were pecked by a crow,  
so that is why crows are intelligent.<sup>24</sup>

## GENEALOGY OF SHYLY WOTE

### *Shyly Wote ssy*

In the ancient past,  
in the generation of Shyly, son of snow,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the second generation of Shyly's son, Nzy,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the three generations of Nzy's son, Ddili,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the fourth generation of Ddili's son, Sunie,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the fifth generation of Sunie's son, Ashu,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the sixth generation of Ashu's son, Awo,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the seventh generation of Awo's son, Shyly,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
In the eighth generation of Shyly's son, Wote,  
sons did not know their fathers.  
Shyly's son, Wote,  
prepared to go and buy a father;  
prepared to go and find a father.<sup>1</sup>  
He took nine helpers who  
carried nine silver ladles;  
carried nine gold ladles.  
Nine horses packed silver dust;  
nine horses packed gold dust.

Foxes guided the silver carts;  
 hares guided the gold carts.  
 Departing from the Nuusu areas,<sup>2</sup>  
 then entering the Han areas;<sup>3</sup>  
 departing from the Han areas,  
 then entering Vamge Lievur;  
 departing from Vamge Lievur,  
 then entering Cycho Cicho;  
 passing through Ggucho Chohxo,  
 then leaving Ggucho Chohxo;  
 passing through Cyrro Cirro,  
 then passing through Ajjo Hxomu.  
 On the right of the carts hung satins;  
 on the left of the carts hung silks.  
 Above the place called Vamge Kehxa,  
 the trees were bright red,  
 just like red gems—  
 with their right hands they [the travelers] grabbed a bunch.  
 In fact, they were *anji* fruits.<sup>4</sup>  
 With their left hands they grabbed a bunch.  
 In fact, they were *sypy* fruits.  
 Shyly Wote  
 came to Yote Jjielie.  
 In the *tusi* Ddi'ndu's home<sup>5</sup>  
 was a girl named Shysi  
 who was sitting in the doorway weaving.

She stood up and said,  
 "Nephew from down the road,<sup>6</sup>  
 where do you wish to go?  
 The day is already late.  
 If it's late, come rest at my home;  
 if it's not late, still come rest at my home.  
 When bees are traveling, and though it's not late,  
 if they see a cliff, they should stop to rest.  
 When crows are traveling, and though it's not late,  
 if they see a forest, they should stop to rest.  
 When cattle and goats are traveling, and though it's not late,  
 if they see a shepherd, they should stop to rest.  
 When sparrows are traveling, and though it's not late,

if they see the grasslands, they should stop to rest.  
When otters are traveling, and though it's not late,  
if they find a river, they should stop to rest.  
When young men are traveling, and though it's not late,  
if they find a familiar home, they should stop to rest.  
This evening,  
even if it's late, you must stay in my home;  
even if it's not late, you must stay in my home."

Shyly Wote said,  
"I'm hurrying to buy a father;  
I'm hurrying to find a father.  
Even if it's late, I won't rest;  
even if it's not late, I won't rest."

The *nzy's* daughter Shysi said,  
"Nephew from down the road,  
in this world, there are three dogs  
that cannot be used for hunting;  
there is a red-cheeked chicken unable to cry;<sup>7</sup>  
there are three pieces of wood that cannot be burned;  
there are three pieces of cloth that cannot be woven;  
there are three piles of wool that can't be fluffed;  
there are three *jin* of salt that cannot be eaten.  
What are they?  
On the upper portion of the war armor  
there is a front and back.  
What piece is missing on the sides?  
The waist portion of the war armor  
has 6,600 leather plates,  
but is missing one—what is it?  
The tail of the war armor  
has two leather plates—  
if one is missing, what is it?  
If you are able to guess the answers,  
Shysi, the *nzy's* daughter, is willing to marry you.  
If you cannot guess the answers,  
then you will forfeit the gold and silver packs,  
and forfeit the tens of thousands of cattle and sheep."  
Shyly Wote

had no way to answer the riddles of Shysi, the *nzy*'s daughter.  
 After that,  
 Shyly Wote  
 had to forfeit the packs of gold and silver,  
 and forfeit the tens of thousands of cattle and sheep.  
 Shyly Wote had no way out.  
 So, he went back and asked his younger sister, Nyingemo Ala,  
 for Nyingemo Ala knew everything.  
 Nyingemo Ala said,  
 "The three dogs that cannot hunt  
 are puppets in the Nuo opera.<sup>8</sup>  
 The red-cheeked chicken unable to cry  
 is the fern-dwelling wild pheasant.<sup>9</sup>  
 The three pieces of wood that mustn't be burned  
 are the three bamboo soul containers in the home.<sup>10</sup>  
 The three pieces of cloth that can't be woven  
 are the rainbows in the sky.  
 The three piles of wool that can't be fluffed,  
 are the misty mountain clouds.  
 The three *jin* of salt that can't be eaten,  
 are the icicles in the deep forest.  
 The upper part of the war armor—  
 the war vest with the front and back—  
 is missing a piece made from antler skin.<sup>11</sup>  
 The middle part of the war armor—  
 made of 6,600 leather plates—  
 but lacking one,  
 is made of the thick skin on a wild boar's neck.<sup>12</sup>  
 The rear part of the armor—  
 that has two plates—  
 is the skin of a water buffalo's knee."<sup>13</sup>

So she guessed all the riddles.  
 After that,  
 Shyly Wote's gold and silver packs were all returned;  
 the tens of thousands of cattle and sheep were all returned.  
 There was still a ewe with small, drooping horns,  
 a ewe with nice, small drooping horns—  
 and it, too, had to be returned.  
 There, too, was a ewe with short ears,



a nice, short-eared sheep—<sup>14</sup>  
it, too, had to be returned.  
There, too, was a petite ewe that often left the herd,  
left the herd, then came back—  
it, too, had to be returned.

After that,  
Shysi, the *nzy's* daughter,  
said to Shyly Wote,  
“In the human world,  
no matter how beautiful a woman is,  
she does not discuss her own worth.  
Go back and ask Nyingemo Ala.”<sup>15</sup>

Nyingemo Ala  
asked Shyly Wote,  
“Where will you hang your bamboo soul vessels?”  
Shyly Wote said,  
“I will hang the soul vessels at the base of the walls.”  
She asked, “Where will the soul vessels be sent?”<sup>16</sup>  
He said he would put them in the waters.  
Nyingemo Ala  
said to Shyly Wote,  
“The soul vessels cannot be put at the base of the walls;  
the soul vessels must be hung in the home.  
The soul vessels must not be put in the waters;  
the soul vessels must be housed in the cliffs.”  
From this point on, sons would know who their fathers are.<sup>17</sup>  
After that,  
Nyingemo Ala [required that]:  
Those sitting received a gift of money,  
those standing were given food to eat,  
and the bridal escorts were given some money.<sup>18</sup>  
A black cow was given  
so that Shysi, the *nzy's* daughter,  
could marry Shyly Wote.  
Shysi, the *nzy's* daughter,  
also said to Shyly Wote,  
“Cousin from down the way,  
cousin of the Legge family,

[is he] the sort of guest for whom to kill a cow to eat?  
If so, quickly go and invite him to the *tusi's* family to sit.  
Is he the sort of guest for whom to kill a goat?  
If so, quickly invite him to a clan member's home to sit.  
Is he the sort of guest for whom to kill a pig?  
If so, quickly go and invite him to a slave's home to sit before the house.  
Is he the sort of guest for whom to kill a chicken?  
If so, quickly invite him to a slave's home to sit.<sup>19</sup>  
Cousin from down the way,  
cousin of the Legge family:  
The lowest layer is a bamboo mat,  
the middle layer is a wool felt mat,  
the top layer is of loose muntjac and water deer hair  
—come and play on them.<sup>20</sup>  
Bring gold and silver to play with,  
bring 100,000 head of cattle and sheep to play with.  
Nice, cultured elder cousin,  
don't think that you'll lose out with us.  
Firstly, we won't let your collar wear out,  
nor your cuffs unravel."<sup>21</sup>

After that,  
the *Hnewo* had ten thousand parts,  
"Shyly Wote" is the first part.<sup>22</sup>  
The beautiful bride was  
brought to marry Shyly Wote.  
Shyly Wote,  
when speaking, did not attend to his relatives;  
when shooting arrows, did not heed his friends.  
Shyly Wote  
carried a white cloak in his hands,  
and covered his body with a black cloak.  
His pant cuffs dragged in the mud;  
his hair was coiled high on his head.  
He was not willing to marry the woman.  
Before dawn he rose,  
and when crossing a high mountain,  
pairs of tigers and leopards were caught  
to purify Shyly Wote's body.  
But, he was unwilling to accept these people's hospitality;

he was unwilling to have the purification rites.<sup>23</sup>  
Shyly Wote  
arose before dawn,  
and crossed a great grassland.  
On the grassland, a pair of sparrows were caught  
to entertain Shyly Wote.  
But, he was unwilling to accept these people's hospitality;  
he was unwilling to have the purification rites.  
Passing through a fir forest,  
a pair of black crows were caught  
to entertain Shyly Wote.  
But, he was unwilling to accept these people's hospitality;  
he was unwilling to accept the purification rites.  
Crossing the mountain precipices,  
a pair of little honeybees were caught  
to entertain Shyly Wote.  
But, he was unwilling to accept these people's hospitality;  
he was unwilling to accept the purification rites.  
When crossing a river,  
a pair of small fish were caught  
to entertain Shyly Wote.  
But, he was unwilling to accept their hospitality;  
he was unwilling to accept the purification rites.  
Crossing through the areas where the Nuosu people live,  
a pair of spotted cows were led  
to entertain Shyly Wote.  
But, he was unwilling to accept their hospitality;  
he was unwilling to accept the purification rites.  
On a later day,  
when a bride named Vuma Shyqi  
was brought to marry Shyly Wote,  
Shyly Wote  
cared for his relatives and friends,  
and shot arrows along with his relatives.  
He carried a bronze bow in his hand,  
and held it very firmly;  
he stuck an arrow in his hair,  
and wrapped his hair high above it.<sup>24</sup>  
And he accepted Vuma Shyqi's feelings.  
After that,

he went to look for a good place to live,  
went to look for a place to prosper.  
And thus Wohni Vole was born,  
and Vole Qobu had three sons.  
Qobu Jjuzzi had no descendants;  
Qobu Jjuni had no descendants;  
but Qobu Jjumu produced descendants;  
Jjumu had three sons.  
Jjumu's three sons  
herded yellow-mouthed black cows.  
Using a single-tree made of *poyi* wood,  
using a yoke made of *shuoma* wood,  
using a plowshare made of *mgehni* wood,  
they went to the Amgaddituo flatland to plow.<sup>25</sup>  
Jjumu's three sons,  
plowed the wild lands in one day,  
but the fields were overgrown by the next day.  
Jjumu's three sons said,  
"I don't know if we can come live here."  
A few days later,  
they prepared to reclaim the plowed land;  
prepared to guard the plowed land.  
When hiding there on guard,  
an elder in black clothes  
led a wild yellow pig  
to the place that had been replowed.<sup>26</sup>  
Jjumu the eldest brother said,  
"Grab him and kill him!"  
Jjumu's second son said,  
"Grab him and beat him!"  
Jjumu's youngest son said,  
"Grab him and question him."  
Jjumu's youngest son  
said to his elder brothers,  
"There is no need to kill him.  
There is no need to beat him.  
It is possible that he is in some difficulty—  
let's just hold him and find out the reason."  
Jjumu's youngest son  
said to the elder in black clothes,

“Please give us the reason for your actions.”  
The elder in black clothing said,  
“I am an incarnation of your ancestors.  
You certainly don’t want to kill me.  
And do not want to beat me.  
Listen to what I have to say:  
This year,  
you needn’t plow again.  
The sky spirit in the heavens,  
intends to release nine great seas of water  
to drown the people of the earth.  
The waters will completely cover heaven and earth.”<sup>27</sup>  
Jjumu’s youngest son asked,  
“What is this?”  
The elder in black clothing said,  
“[It’s about] Ngeti Gunzy in the heavenly palace.  
A fairy named Sisse Abbu,  
was sent by Ngeti Gunzy  
to the human world to harvest crops and grain.  
On earth there was a hero  
named Ssedi Shuofu.  
Among those sent to harvest the crops and grains  
was one called Ddiwo Layi.  
He thought to find Ssedi Shuofu to wrestle,  
but Ssedi Shuofu went to feed salt to the sheep.<sup>28</sup>  
When he came to Shuofu’s home  
Shuofu’s mother said, ‘My son eats copper and iron balls,’  
and she brought forth iron balls  
to entertain Ddiwo Layi.  
Ddiwo Layi said,  
‘I was raised eating turnips and potatoes,<sup>29</sup>  
I can’t eat copper and iron balls.’  
He took a bite of the iron balls,  
then hurriedly ran outside.  
After Ssedi Shuofu let the sheep lick salt,  
he took a ewe that died from eating too much salt,  
and stuck it under his arm.  
He then hoisted a huge block of salt on his back,  
and returned home.  
When his mother gave him food to eat,

Shuofu, mystified, asked,  
 ‘Today there was certainly some strange insect  
 that left teeth marks in my food.’  
 His mother quickly answered him,  
 ‘From the heavens above came a supernatural being,  
 who wanted to wrestle with you.  
 I gave him some of your food to eat,  
 but he couldn’t eat it and left.’  
 Ssedi Shuofu excitedly said,  
 ‘What sort of thing is this!’  
 He pursued the being into the forests below the mountains.  
 The god Ddiwo Layi  
 hid himself inside a piece of wood.  
 When Shuofu pursued him to that place,  
 he did not see anyone anywhere.  
 So he smashed the wood to pieces,  
 and the god Ddiwo Layi  
 was crushed there inside the wood.  
 When a *zyrzyrvachyrku* bird<sup>30</sup>  
 came there and made a nest,  
 it discovered the situation  
 and told the sparrows.  
 The sparrows flew up to the palace in the sky  
 and told the god Ngeti Gunzy.  
 Ngeti Gunzy said,  
 ‘It is definitely the orphan Bbylu.’  
 He blamed the orphan Bbylu for committing the crime.  
 So, to clear his name of the crime,  
 he went up on Mount Mandi Hluqu and cried out an oath,  
 ‘If it was really me,  
 all the trees on the mountain will turn black,  
 all the rocks on the mountain will turn black;  
 If it really was not me,  
 all the trees on the mountain will turn white,  
 all the rocks on the mountain will turn white.’  
 The trees on the mountain all turned white,  
 The rocks on the mountain all turned white.  
 Now Mount Mandi Hluqu  
 is white every year—and this is the reason.<sup>31</sup>  
 Ddiwo Layi,

who doesn't know, who hasn't heard that he  
was killed by Ssedi Shuofu.  
In the heavenly palace in the sky,  
it is said that out of revenge for Ddiwo Layi's death,  
the nine seas of water will be released  
so as to flood the whole earth.  
On the day of the cow it will grow dark;  
on the day of the tiger it will become darker;  
on the day of the hare it will start to thunder;  
on the day of the dragon it will begin to rain;  
on the day of the snake the waters will begin to cover the earth."<sup>32</sup>

He [the old man] spoke to Jjumu's three sons.  
He said to the eldest son,  
"You must make an iron bed on which to sleep,  
and hang hoes and other farm tools inside,  
and hang parched flour and grain outside."  
He spoke to the second son of Jjumu,  
and said to the second son,  
"You must make a copper bed on which to sleep,  
and put iron tools and other implements inside,  
and place parched flour and grains outside."  
He told Jjumu's youngest son to carefully remember his words,  
and to the youngest son said,  
"You must build a wooden bed in which to sleep,  
and place the hoes and other farm tools on the outside,  
and carry the parched flour and grain inside."<sup>33</sup>  
When the floodwaters reached the sky,  
Jjumu's eldest and second sons  
were all drowned at the bottom of the waters.  
The surviving youngest son  
needed to calculate the years and months.  
"Put the seeds and dried provisions inside your home,  
and stealthily place a chicken egg in your armpit.  
After brooding the egg for twenty-one days,  
when the hen clucks,  
and the chicks peep, wanting to hatch out,  
your wooden bed can be opened."<sup>34</sup>  
Later, when heaven and earth were flooded,  
As the waters rose to the sky,

Jjumu's youngest son,  
 Jjumu Vuvu followed the waters to the sky.  
 When the floodwaters flooded the earth,  
 Jjumu Vuvu sat on the earth;  
 and Jjumu's youngest son  
 followed the floodwaters, floating about,  
 until arriving at Mount Mohxo Lyrnyie.<sup>35</sup>  
 As for that pure white chicken egg—  
 the hen began clucking  
 and the chick began peeping “*zi, zi*,” wanting to hatch out.<sup>36</sup>  
 So Jjumu Vuvu  
 opened the wooden door.  
 When Ngeti Gunzy, in the heavenly palace in the sky,  
 looked down on the wide earth, he saw<sup>37</sup>  
 the Lurnuo [Black Stone] and Chyhxo [Goat Raising] Mountains,  
 where a goat survived;  
 Abbu Cielo [Deer] Mountain,  
 where a deer survived;  
 Shuonuo Aju [Fox] Mountain,  
 where a fox survived;  
 Teka Munuo [Black Horse] Mountain,  
 where a black horse survived  
 Ieyi Ngaha [Duck] Mountain,  
 where a wild duck survived;  
 Yohly Vasha [Sheep] Mountain,  
 where a sheep survived;  
 Muhxo Hxopu [Hemp] Mountain,  
 where a stalk of hemp survived.  
 Jyply Jypssy [Leopard] Mountain,  
 where a leopard survived.  
 Jjumu Vuvu  
 looked back behind him  
 and saw a rat floating by,  
 which he rescued and befriended.  
 He saw a honeybee floating by,  
 Which he rescued and befriended.  
 He saw a poison snake floating by,  
 which he rescued and befriended.  
 He saw a frog floating by,  
 which he rescued and befriended.



He saw a crow floating by,  
which he rescued and befriended.  
He saw a ring-necked pheasant floating by,  
which he rescued and befriended.<sup>38</sup>  
After that,  
rats found dried grass,  
dried grass used as tinder.  
Ring-necked pheasants collected kindling chips  
used to start fires.<sup>39</sup>  
Looking down from the palace in the upper world,  
it was discovered that there on the earth,  
on Nzyolurnyie Mountain,  
there was a column of smoke,  
as thick as the stem of a tobacco pipe,<sup>40</sup>  
in which smoke was rising.  
The one in the palace of the upper world said,  
“Perhaps I have not seen clearly.”  
So for nine days he looked from dawn to dusk;  
so for nine days he looked from dusk to dawn.  
After that he sent  
one called Ahly,  
and a second called Ala,  
and a third called Nzymo.  
They all went to Nzyolurnyie Mountain to investigate,  
to see clearly whether there were humans or not.  
After that,  
the Frog King, Ssey Amur, said,  
“Things with branches depend on things with branches to survive;  
things with blood depend on things with blood to survive.  
So, we three depend on each other to live.”<sup>41</sup>  
They prepared the marriage of Jjumu Vuvu,  
prepared the marriage of Ngeti Gunzy’s daughter.  
A crow said it could fly up to the sky,  
but there was no way it could do so.  
A poison snake said it couldn’t go to the heavenly palace,  
but it did have venom.  
A honeybee said it could not go to the heavenly palace,  
but that it also had venom.  
They demanded that they marry into Ngeti Gunzy’s family,  
but Ngeti Gunzy’s family was not willing to marry into

a dragon's family from the earth.  
 Jjumu Vuvu  
 returned and assembled his friends.  
 They sent the crow to go,  
 with the poison snake coiled around its neck,  
 a rat hidden in its wings,  
 and a honeybee hanging onto its tail:  
 "Ho," they left the earth;  
 "Bu," and plopped down in the heavenly palace.  
 The rat chewed into the house,  
 and stole away the soul vessels.  
 The poison snake coiled beside the hearth;  
 the top of Ngeti Gunzy's foot was bitten.  
 The honeybee entered through the eaves of the house;  
 the *nzy's* daughter, Hnituo, was stung by the bee.<sup>42</sup>  
 Ngeti Gunzy  
 went all about trying to divine the situation,  
 everywhere inviting *bimo* to help.  
 A great *bimo* prognosticated,  
 "The one on earth with the twelve types of knowledge is Vuvu;<sup>43</sup>  
 Jjumu Vuvu  
 is the one who meant to harm Ngeti Gunzy."  
 Ngeti Gunzy sent  
 Shyzu Nramu to the human world,  
 to go and ask Jjumu Vuvu,  
 "Are you the one who meant to harm the *tusi*?"  
 Jjumu Vuvu said,  
 "Jjumu Vuvu  
 only gave him a little pain,  
 he didn't mean to kill him.  
 As for me, Jjumu Vuvu,  
 it is hard for me to live.  
 Poor me, I just seem like  
 a four-legged snake on earth, gazing at the sky."<sup>44</sup>  
 After that,  
 Ngeti Gunzy sent  
 Byzzy Alu to the human world,  
 to ask Jjumu Vuvu for a cure,  
 and what to do about a bee sting,  
 and what to do about a snake bite,

and what to do about  
the soul vessel stolen by the rat.  
The Frog King, Ssey Amur, said,  
“I really don’t know much,  
but there is one method.  
Only after Ngeti Gunzy’s daughter Hnituo marries Jjumu Vuvu  
will the *tusi’s* foot heal.”  
After Byzzy Alu returned to the heavenly palace  
he reported to Ngeti Gunzy,  
“If you marry your daughter, Hnituo,  
to Jjumu Vuvu,  
afterward the *tusi’s* foot will get better,  
and the *tusi’s* daughter’s arm will get better.”  
After that,  
Byzzy Alu returned to the human world  
and said to Jjumu Vuvu,  
“The *tusi’s* daughter, Hnituo, agrees to marry  
Jjumu Vuvu.  
Jjumu Vuvu said,  
“I haven’t grown wings.  
How dare I marry Ngeti Gunzy’s daughter?”  
After that,  
Ngeti Gunzy  
erected a bronze pillar and an iron pillar in the human world,  
so that Jjumu Vuvu could come up to the heavenly palace.  
The bronze and iron pieces were raised in the human world,  
so that Jjumu Vuvu could come up to the heavenly palace.  
Jjumu Vuvu said  
he was unable to give the *tusi’s* family wedding gifts of gold.  
But he was prepared to present a black mountain goat instead of gold,  
a black mountain goat tied on a green vine.  
When the mountain goat saw the vine it was happy,  
making the *tusi’s* daughter, Hnituo, laugh.  
After that, the daughter laughed when seeing her husband.  
After this,  
Jjumu Vuvu sent  
the Frog King, Ssey Amur, to go a first time.  
When it went it had effective medicine;  
when it returned it had harmful medicine.  
When it went the second time,

it had harmful medicine;  
 when it returned it had effective medicine.<sup>45</sup>  
 Only after that  
 was it known that the frog understood medicine.  
 For a poisonous snakebite,  
 swan dung and musk are able to cure it.  
 For honeybee stings,  
*hlyvo* grass can cure it.  
 As for the soul container stolen by the rat—  
 the rat ran beneath some rocks and hid itself.  
 The rocks were broken apart in the search.  
 A piece of rat scat was found, then carried to a *bimo* to chant over it.  
 After passing through the *bimo*'s hands,  
 the rat scat was used as a soul container.<sup>46</sup>  
 After that,  
 Ngeti Gunzy said,  
 "As for my eldest daughter,  
 if something is given, it must be gold;  
 if something is worn, it must be gold.  
 As for my second daughter,  
 if something is given, it must be silver;  
 if something is worn,  
 it must be silver."  
 Jjumu Vuvu said,  
 "Gold and silver are hard to find,  
 if marrying, it must be the youngest daughter,  
 and she can just wear rags."  
 Ngeti Gunzy  
 pulled bronze and iron threads  
 to unite with the human world below.<sup>47</sup>  
 As for Jjumu Vuvu—  
 when the bronze and iron pillars were set up,  
 reaching to the heavenly palace above,  
 the upper world and lower world could unite in marriage.  
 Thus, the *nzy*'s daughter, Hnituo, married Jjumu Vuvu.  
 The *nzy*'s daughter, Hnituo,  
 was taken to live in the human world.

Ngeti Gunzy said,  
 "As for the human world below,

all that was given to my daughter's new family has been given,  
except for the seeds of the *voma* turnip.<sup>48</sup>  
Yet turnips are planted all over the earth.”  
Ngeti Gunzy blamed his daughter  
for taking some turnip seed without his consent.  
He angrily said,  
“Carrying turnips will be harder than carrying stone,  
eating turnips will be like drinking water.”  
Thus it is down to today.  
“All that was given to my daughter's new family has been given,  
except for the seeds of hemp—everyone knows that  
the world of humans has hemp as tall as firs.”  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
“Without my consent the hemp seeds were taken.  
In the future the hemp won't last long;  
if there is a poor harvest,  
old hemp seeds won't be able to be distilled as wine.”<sup>49</sup>  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
“All that was given to my daughter's new family has been given,  
except for the seeds of sweet buckwheat—  
everyone can see that  
the earth's hills are covered with buckwheat flowers.  
In the future, harvesting buckwheat will be like chasing a shadow,  
flailing buckwheat will be as hard as preparing a corpse,  
and eating sweet buckwheat will be like not eating at all.”<sup>50</sup>  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
“What has been given to my daughter has all been given,  
except for horses.  
Everyone knows that in the wide human world,  
steeds are in large herds.”  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
“Without my permission horses were taken.”  
He swore,  
“When a steed is born it is more precious than gold,  
but when it dies it is 'wild' food.”<sup>51</sup>  
And thus it is so today.  
The *nzy*'s daughter, Hnituo,  
was taken by the youngest son of Jjumu to live in the human world.  
After marrying for three years,

she gave birth to three mute sons.  
No one knew what to do.  
Someone had to be sent to solve the problem,  
so they sent one from the mysterious insect world—  
sent a spider to go.  
The spider spit out a thread uniting the sky and earth,  
and went to ask for advice.

Ngeti Gunzy  
was not willing to give the reason for the mutes' condition,  
and scolded the spider as an evil-acting insect,  
and picked up a stick and started to strike,  
beating the spider until it was stoop-shouldered.  
Later, a spirit duck and a magic pheasant were sent,  
and a pair of ring-necked pheasants were sent.

Ngeti Gunzy said,  
“You nefarious birds,  
you have polluted the purity of the heavenly palace.”  
He flailed about inside the house like thunder;  
he jumped up and beat the ring-necked pheasants.  
Because of the beating, the pheasants' mouths were red.  
In the ancient past they were red,  
and thus they are still red today.<sup>52</sup>

Spirit snakes were also sent, as were spirit hares.  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
“You meddling creatures,  
have polluted the purity of the heavenly palace.”  
So he jumped around inside the house like thunder,  
then gave the hares a split nose.  
In the past hares had split noses,  
and today hares have split noses.

A cloud god was also sent;  
the white mist was sent.  
Ngeti Gunzy  
felt that the clouds were dirty  
and had polluted the heavenly palace;  
so he jumped around the house,  
and used fire to drive them out.  
So they fled to the second story,  
and hid inside a calabash to listen.<sup>53</sup>

The Apuyoqo bird  
 was sleeping soundly,  
 sleeping until the roosters crowed.<sup>54</sup>  
 Ngeti Gunzy's wife asked,  
 "If you know the reason,  
 why don't you tell them?"  
 Ngeti Gunzy said,  
 "My ill-fated daughter, in her in-laws' home  
 must use her hands to wipe the door frames.  
 If I wasn't so angry with them,  
 I would just  
 go to the human world—  
 to the top of Nzyolurnyie Mountain  
 and cut three stalks of bamboo,  
 then heat them to scare the three mute sons.<sup>55</sup>  
 Boil three pots of water,  
 dip the water out, then splash it on the three mute sons—  
 who would then naturally begin to speak."  
 The Apuyoqo bird  
 having stealthily heard the secret  
 excitedly flew up to the top of the house.  
 They hurried to catch it—  
 its tail was torn—  
 as it flew underneath the cooking pot.  
 The Apuyoqo bird  
 was white in ancient times,  
 but after this turned black.  
 In ancient times its tail was not short,  
 but it later changed into a short-tailed bird.  
 The Apuyoqo bird  
 told the secret to the human world.  
 Jjumu Vuvu  
 happily and hopefully ran up on  
 Nzyolurnyie Mountain  
 and cut three stalks of spirit bamboo to make a loud explosion.  
 He boiled three pots of water  
 and splashed water on his three sons:  
 One cried out, "*O ddi o ddo!*"  
 This one became the ancestors of the Ozzu,<sup>56</sup>  
 and kneeled as he sat down.

Another followed the sound of an exploding joint,  
 saying, “*A zy gi!*” twice.  
 This one became the ancestor of the Nuosu people,<sup>57</sup>  
 and jumped over to the bamboo mat to sit.  
 Then he exploded one before the youngest son,  
 who said, “*Bi zi li gi!*”  
 And he became the ancestor of the Hxiemga people,  
 running to sit on the threshold.<sup>58</sup>  
 Jjumu Vuvu had three sons,  
 and each spoke a different language—  
 they spoke, but couldn’t understand each other.  
 Jjumu Vuvu’s three sons,  
 their families went to three different places:  
 Vuvu Layi was a Hxiemga person,  
 and his knowledge was comparably great.  
 Stones marked the land he controlled,  
 and he controlled the flatlands.  
 The one living by the shores of Shuonuo Lake—  
 Vuvu Gizy—was a Nuosu person.  
 He cut bundles of grass as his mark,  
 and lived in the high mountains.  
 The outer lineage was Abbu Ahly,  
 of which the inner lineage was Qoni Gguho.<sup>59</sup>  
 Vuvu Syrsha was a Ozzu person.  
 His mark on the land was pounded stakes of wood,  
 and he lived in the highlands.  
 The inner lineage was called the Ozzu,  
 and the outer lineage was called the Lama.  
 The Ozzu family names were:  
 Vololo,  
 Vosishy,  
 Volama,  
 Vojyzy,  
 Vondituo,  
 Vozygo,  
 Vojjyjy,  
 Vobboddur,  
 Vopopi.  
 The Ozzu farmed nine pieces of land,  
 and lived in many layers of mountain gorges.



The Hxiemga people farmed three pieces of land,  
and lived in three layers of mountain places,  
divided as white and black Hxiemga.  
The Hxiemga were divided into twelve lineages;  
Hxiemga people lived in every place in the world.<sup>60</sup>  
Nuosu people farmed only one piece of land,  
and lived on only one layer of mountain gorge.  
Twenty-one years after Jjumu Vuvu married,  
news of Hnituo's illness arrived.  
Jjumu Vuvu  
went with three people,  
leading a black mountain goat,  
to go cure Hnituo's illness.  
When Vuvu returned to the human world,  
the woman Hxuo went with him,  
but Hxuo and He were nowhere to be seen.  
The woman He got up to follow,  
but Vo and Fur were nowhere to be seen.  
Wooden boards were taken, along with silver,  
but the Bbu and Hmu families did not notice.  
Hxuo and He were the eldest;  
Vo and Fu were in the middle,  
Bbu and Hmu were the youngest.  
When giving the valuables and money to Fu,  
they did not give valuables and money to Bbusi;  
when giving things to Fu to eat,  
they did not give food to Bbuvu to eat.  
So, Bbusi grew hateful,  
and dug holes in the foundation of the house,  
weakening it in each direction.  
Bbuvu crossed the field,  
and drilled holes in the foundation of Hxuo's house;  
Hxuo fell deep into the earth.  
Thus, the heavenly palace lost two sons.  
If it hadn't been for Bbusi and Bbuvu's falling out,  
heaven and earth would still be joined in marriage.  
Ngeti Gunzy said,  
"In the land of the humans,  
beastly Bbusse thought he was most capable,  
and beastly Hlursse thought he was most capable."<sup>61</sup>

Hatred was growing deeper in their hearts.  
One day the water of dullness was released;  
one day the water of wisdom was released.  
It was said the water of knowledge,  
was placed atop Turlur Mountain.  
In the top position was a golden bowl;  
in the middle position was a silver bowl;  
in the lower position was a wooden bowl.  
When the nine wooden and stone bowls were drunk dry,  
and after all of the plants had drunk,  
and after all the animals had drunk,  
in the end only humans could speak.<sup>62</sup>

## OZZU (TIBETAN) LINEAGES

### *Ozzu cy*

Vuvu Syrsha became an Ozzu.<sup>1</sup>

The generation of the Ozzu named Jyjie was followed by the generation of Jyjie Sidi, followed by the generation of Sidi Bbojju, followed by the generation of Bbojju Puojy, who lived outside the Yalong River area. This is the genealogy of the Ozzu.

## OZZU (TIBETAN) MIGRATIONS

### *Ozzu muche*

Migrating to outside the Yalong River area,  
they settled inside the Yalong River area;  
migrating to the Yalong River area,  
Hlyzhur Yzyzy settled there;  
Hlyzhur Yzyzy migrated there,  
settling in Jololadda valley;  
migrating from Jololadda valley,  
they settled at the Vomu flatlands;  
migrating from the Vomu flatlands,  
they settled at the stream at Vyjieyydda valley;  
migrating from the stream at Vyjieyydda valley,<sup>1</sup>  
they settled at the bridge at Ajie;  
migrating from the bridge at Ajie,  
they settled at the Vole flatlands;  
at the Vole flatlands,  
they got what they wanted,  
they had what they wanted.  
The Ozzu chose to settle there,  
and this is the migration account of the Ozzu.  
[The houses had] golden beams above,  
golden thresholds below,  
and golden pillars in-between.

## HXIEMGA (HAN) PEOPLE'S LINEAGE

### *Hxiemga cy*

Vuvu Layi became a Hxiemga person.  
The generation of Layi Laly  
was followed by the generation of Laly Lama,  
followed by the generation of Lama Guzy,  
followed by the generation of Guzy Vuyie,  
followed by the generation of Vuyie Layie,  
followed by the generation of Layie Gulu,  
followed by the generation of Gulu Gujo,  
followed by the generation of Gujo Punbo,  
followed by the generation of Punbo Puvi,  
followed by the generation of Puvi Avie,  
followed by the generation of Avie Nieyy,  
followed by the generation of Nieyy Agge,  
followed by the generation of Agge Shuotu,  
who settled at Syrodazhy.  
This is the genealogy of the Hxiemga people.

## HXIEMGA (HAN) PEOPLE'S MIGRATIONS

### *Hxiemga muche*

Migrating from Syrodazhy,  
they settled at Lurodazhy;  
migrating from Lurodazhy,  
they settled at Syrmudalo;  
migrating from Syrmudalo,  
they settled at Milinduxy;  
migrating from Milinduxy,  
they settled at Laquzzigo;  
migrating from Laquzzigo,  
they settled at Shuomufuli;  
migrating from Shuomufuli,  
they settled at Jichayyvü;  
migrating from Jichayyvü,  
they settled at Rruonuolurkur;  
migrating from Rruonuolurkur,  
they settled at Orrolurkur;  
migrating from Orrolurkur,  
they settled at Vychylurkur;  
migrating from Vychylurkur,  
they settled at Nyiddilurkur.  
Nyiddilurkur was  
where the Hxiemga people settled.

They divided into white Hxiemga and black Hxiemga.  
The black Hxiemga migrated and settled in Chaojue;  
The white Hxiemga spread out and settled in every direction.<sup>1</sup>  
This is the account of the migrations of the Hxiemga people.

## FOREIGNERS' LINEAGE

### *Yiery cy*

La yi gu zy was a foreigner [whose generation was]  
followed by the generation of Yiery Guzy,  
followed by the generation of Guzy Yiezy,  
followed by the generation of Yiezy Yiemu,  
followed by the generation of Yiemu Luhly,  
followed by the generation of Luhly Kepo,  
followed by the generation of Kepo Vihxa,  
followed by the generation of Vihxa Luzu,  
followed by the generation of Luzu Shuonyie,  
followed by the generation of Shuonyie Nzyla,  
followed by the generation of Nzyla Shogi,  
followed by the generation of Shogi Bitu,  
followed by the generation of Bitu Yyhxa,  
followed by the generation of Yyhxa Jiejie,  
that settled in the foreigner's place.  
This is the genealogy of the foreigners.<sup>1</sup>



## MIGRATIONS OF FOREIGNERS

### *Yiery muche*

The Yiery foreigners migrated,  
following along the foreigners' river gorges,  
settling at Didilurkur.  
Migrating from Didilurkur,  
they settled at Lololurkur;  
migrating from Lololurkur,  
they settled at Bozzylurkur;  
migrating from Bozzylurkur,  
they settled at Dichelurkur;  
migrating from Dichelurkur,  
they settled at Avyzzigo;  
migrating from Avyzzigo,  
they settled at Xynilurkur;  
migrating from Xynilurkur,  
they settled at Yiecheladda.  
After settling at Yiecheladda,  
[the houses had] golden beams above,  
golden thresholds below,  
golden pillars in-between.  
That was where the foreigners lived.

## NUOSU LINEAGES

### *Nuosu cy*

Vuvu Gizy was a Nuosu [whose generation was]  
followed by three Gizy sons,  
followed by the generation of Gizy Shyma,  
followed by the generation of Shyma Shysi,  
who settled at Nzyolurnyie.

On Nzyolurnyie Mountain,  
a white-colored tree grew,  
putting forth white leaves,  
flowers blooming everywhere,  
as if birthed by a goddess.

The generation of the godly Puji  
was followed by the generation of Puji Gaji,  
followed by the generation of Gaji Gajie,  
followed by the generation of Gajie Miho,  
followed by the generation of Miho Qielur,  
followed by the generation of Qielur Doji,  
followed by the generation of Doji Doga,  
followed by the generation of Doga Ddibo,  
followed by the generation of Ddibo Vomu.

The four sons of Vomu  
settled in four different places.

One son settled in Yosyyoli;  
one son settled in Ysyyvali;  
one son settled in Ysypiniarra;  
one son settled in Yomga Kehxa.

Nuosu people used grains  
to pay the taxes to Emperor Ddibo Vomu.<sup>1</sup>  
Emperor Ddibo Vomu  
made an iron name seal  
and let Lili Ngajie administer things,  
overseeing the four directions and eight subdirections,  
yet he was still unable to administer everything.  
The Ozzu used gold  
to pay taxes to Emperor Ddibo Vomu,  
Emperor Ddibo Vomu,  
made a golden name seal,  
and let a *lama* of the Ozzu people administer things,<sup>2</sup>  
overseeing the area outside the Yalong River,  
but he was still unable to administer everything.

The Hxiemga people used silver  
to pay taxes to Emperor Ddibo Vomu.  
Emperor Ddibo Vomu  
made a silver name seal,  
passing Yiliyomga,  
passing Hxazzynjieli,  
passing the mountain settlement,  
passing the mouth of the cliffs  
to outside Azho settlement.  
White and black rivers flowed together at this place.  
White paired with white,<sup>3</sup>  
the rooster decorated with silver ornaments came to wait;  
[yellow paired with yellow,]  
the hen wearing gold ornaments came to wait.  
Cows and goats grazed freely,  
cows and goats were tended here.  
Emperor Ddibo Vomu,  
made up forty-eight name seals,  
giving them to forty-eight families for local administration.  
The Ozzu took nine,  
holding them until white-haired, dying of old age.  
The Hxiemga *nzyimo*  
took thirty-nine,  
and from that time on,  
controlled all under the heavens.  
This is the genealogy of Emperor Vomu.

## EMPEROR VOMU AND NI AND VI GENEALOGIES

### *Vomu Ni Vi cy*

At that time, two families cooperated and lived together;  
Ni and Vi cooperated, living in harmony together.

Two families, Pubo and Jjissy,  
enjoyed a harmonious life there.

At the time of Abo Lurha,  
the rulers of that place were thus:

The head was Saguekha,  
the tail was Muniessujy;  
the left was Lurnyiechaho,  
the right was Yynuopoche.<sup>1</sup>

Two families, Oqy and Ladda,  
enjoyed a harmonious life together, settling there.

At the time of Muhly Bbovu,  
the rulers of that place were thus:

The head was fastened to Nzyngogobu Bluff,  
the tail was connected to Momulege flat;  
the left was fastened to Hxomgacaqie Mountain,  
the right was connected to Hlymupusa Mountain.

The two families, Punuo and Hxuonuo, helped each other.  
When living along the river,

the rulers of that place were thus:

The head was fastened to Nuoyygacha Bluff,  
the tail was connected to the waist of Syyyoche Mountain;

the left was fastened to the top of Mihogozzi Mountain,  
 the right was connected to the foot of Yizobbovu Mountain.  
 The two families, Zyqu and Zzisse, helped each other.  
 When living at Zytubbohxa Mountain,  
 the rulers of that area were thus:  
 The head was fastened to the foot of Zyzyrbbovu Mountain,  
 the tail was connected to the top of Vabulietuo Mountain;  
 the left was fastened at the mouth of the Gololipi Mountains,  
 the right was connected to the Hmurpaladda Mountain stream.  
 The family of the official Nzymo Sygi  
 and the Huomu Yiery family—  
 these two families cooperated in settling the area.  
 When Saho Yydda  
 ruled the area  
 the head was fastened at the top of Turlurlur Mountain,  
 the tail was connected at Jiezhyyydda Gorge;  
 the left was fastened to the foot of Susu Mountain,  
 the right was connected to the foot of Muhly Mountain.  
 The two families, Uomur and Aho,  
 cooperated in settling the area.  
 When the Aho place  
 was ruled,  
 the head was fastened at Ahohxiqu Gorge,  
 the tail was connected at Ahohxinuo Gorge;  
 the left was fastened at Ahossulolo Gorge,  
 the right was connected at Ahohlylolo Gorge.  
 The family of Bbuddi Nivi  
 and the family of Bbuvu Nivi—  
 these two families cooperated in settling the area.  
 When Bbuddi Ladda  
 ruled the area,  
 the head was fastened at the Guluwajo cliffs,  
 the tail was connected to the Syjy flatlands;  
 the left was fastened at Jotishyphu Mountain,  
 the right was connected at Jotur Mountain.  
 In the ancient past,  
 when two families, Sisse and Aho,  
 lived at Alo Lipi,  
 Nivi Losa made a name seal,  
 and the eldest, the head, took it to rule.

Lili Ngajie came to rule,  
ruling Diepakehxi.  
The youngest, the tail, took it to rule.  
The *nzyimo*, Awo, came to rule,  
ruling the Hxiemga people's area.  
When Synzy Nisse ruled,  
ruled the Yi areas,  
the area was thus ruled:  
The head was fastened at Symubbuyo Mountain,  
the tail was connected at Kamulindi Mountain;  
the left was connected at Ddihxayy,  
the right was connected at Mgussugatuo Peak.  
In the east, lived Hxessu Guda,  
In the west, lived Hxexy Hlydda.  
On Nimuhxuosa Mountain,  
lived Sysse Aho, and Ozzu;  
on Huomudici Mountain  
lived Sysse Ngefu,  
and on Jylyjy Mountain  
lived Sysse Dihni;  
on Turlur Mountain  
Bake Arra lived.<sup>2</sup>  
This is the genealogy of Vomu Nivi.<sup>3</sup>  
Wuwu Gizy was a Nuosu,  
Gizy Nyoto was a Hxiemga.

## GENEALOGY OF AHUO

### *Ahuo cy*

The generation of Gizy Nyoto was followed by the generation of Nyoto Nyoyi, followed by the generation of Nyoyi Ayi, followed by the generation of Ayi Mijie, followed by the generation of Mijie Shuozu, followed by the generation of Shuozu Njysse, followed by the generation of Njysse Syrbbur, followed by the generation of Syrbbur Ayi, followed by the generation of Ayi Shoti, followed by the generation of Shoti Ashy, followed by the generation of Ashy Cusse, followed by the generation of Cusse Biedda, that settled at Hliyy River.

This is the genealogy of Ahuo.

## MIGRATION OF AHUO

### *Ahuo muche*

Migrating to outside the Hliyy River,  
they settled at Yyhmysuolo;  
migrating from Yyhmysuolo,  
they settled at Yyhmyvanyo;  
migrating from Yyhmyvanyo,  
they settled at Quloladda;  
migrating from Quloladda,  
they settled at Hxuoqu Bbonyie;  
migrating from Hxuoqu Bbonyie,  
they settled at Muzzyamo;  
migrating from Muzzyamo,  
they settled at Lindibbovu;  
migrating from Lindibbovu,  
they settled at Bbujjilolo.  
Bbujjilolo is the place  
of the ancestral homeland of the Ahuo.



## GENEALOGY OF NZY CLAN

### *Nzyzzur pu*

The Wuwu Gizy,  
when they came to Sagukenyie,  
they looked at the place Aqybilu.  
At Aqybilu,  
black cows plowed the earth,  
spoons with broken handles were used to eat.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
They stood at Aqybilu,  
and looked at the place Nieyylurjjo.  
At Nieyylurjjo  
one's skin burned in the day,  
and long clothes were needed at night.  
The Ni came there and ran off;  
The Shuo came there and ran off.<sup>1</sup>  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
They stood at the place Nieyylurjjo,  
and looked at the place Leggeorro.  
At Leggeorro  
Ni people spoke Hxiemga speech when born,  
Shuo people grew Nuosu braids when born;  
water buffalo and yellow cows plowed side by side,  
plowed in one direction,  
and split up when finished plowing.

Ni and Shuo customs were mixed,  
 going outside together,  
 but returning home to two places.  
 Shuo people grew long braids,  
 Shuo women wore long pants.  
 It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 They stood at the place Leggeorro,  
 and looked at the place Mutedoli.  
 At Mutedoli,  
 the trees and shrubs were very few,  
 but wild grass grew everywhere;  
 the children and grandchildren looked very poor.  
 It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From Mutedoli,  
 they looked at the place Pushurgatuo.  
 At the place Pushurgatuo,  
 the Nzy's living space was very narrow,  
 and the commoners' space was very wide;  
 the grass growing there was *changpu* grass.<sup>2</sup>  
 It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Pushurgatuo,  
 they looked at the place Salandipo.  
 At the place Salandipo,  
 the sky above was wide,  
 the earth below was vast;  
 the fir trees wore silver garments,  
 from the cypress trees dangled little bells;<sup>3</sup>  
 the earth clods wore head ornaments.  
 Work was endless with no result;  
 the water was good only for washing horse hoofs;  
 this was not water the Nzy would drink;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Salandipo,  
 they looked at the place Syrkieladda.  
 At Syrkieladda,  
 a son was killed while washing in the river;  
 this was not water the Nzy would drink;

the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
From the place Syrkieladda,  
they looked at the place Joturmuggu.  
At Joturmuggu,  
the Ni winds of the south gusted,  
the Shuo winds of the north gusted.  
It was a place where ghosts gathered,  
carrying cut-off heads in hand.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
From the place Jotturmuggu,  
they looked at the place Hxuoggurjuojjo.  
At Hxuoggurjuojjo,  
a lone pine stood in the sun,  
icy snow grew in the shadows.  
Gaunt horses competed for fancy saddles;  
the owners rode on horseback,  
the slaves also rode on horseback.  
The relations between people were not clear.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
From the place Hxuoggurjuojjo,  
they looked at the place Limuzhuhxi.  
At Limuzhuhxi,  
guests came and went.  
There were enough wooden bowls,  
but wooden spoons were too few;  
one could eat warm food,  
but could not drink warm soup.  
It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
From the place Limuzhuhxi,  
they looked at the place Njyishuonuo.  
At Njyishuonuo,  
long and poisonous grass was everywhere.  
If Ni people touched it, the Ni were poisoned;  
if Hxiemga touched it, then Hxiemga were poisoned:  
people could thus be poisoned and die.  
This was not a suitable place to settle down;  
the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.

From the place Njiyishuonuo,  
 they looked at the place Rawalomo.  
 At Rawalomo,  
 sheep could be herded above,  
 bulls could fight below,  
 grains could be planted in the middle.  
 In later times, the trend was that  
 poor, cold Black Nuosu lived in this place;  
 and here the Black Nuosu rose in prestige.  
 The Nzy wanted to live there,  
 but the prestige of the Nzy would be lowered.  
 It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Rawalomo,  
 they looked at the place Tejjoladda.  
 At Tejjoladda,  
 the pines grew tall,  
 the land was wild and cold;  
 To get a wife one had to trade grain.  
 It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Tejjoladda,  
 they looked at the place Nyungelolo.  
 At Nyungelolo,  
 there were rocks, but too many pines,  
 so millstones couldn't be made;  
 all the trees were horse mulberry,  
 so it was hard to make plows.<sup>4</sup>  
 It was not a suitable place to settle;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Nyungelolo,  
 they looked at the place Animahxo.  
 At Animahxo,  
 the trees there were all sumacs,  
 so there were no sacred branches for soul-calling rites.<sup>5</sup>  
 It was not a suitable place to settle;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Animahxo,  
 they looked at the place Yshytebbu.  
 At Yshytebbu,

frogs roared like tigers,  
 cicadas squealed like pigs.  
 It was not a suitable place to settle down;  
 the Nzy were not willing to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Yyshytebbu,  
 they looked at the place Yyshybbaka.  
 At Yyshybbaka,  
 the three sons of Puho were born.  
 The three Puho sons fought about things they shouldn't:  
 They fought about the amount of clothes between them,  
 they fought about the amount of land between them.  
 The eldest son, Atu, felt responsible for his mother,  
 and thought his mother should be with him;  
 the middle son, Agge, had no stake in the matter,  
 but thought the mother should be with him;  
 the youngest son, Jjimi, said that  
 since the youngest son hangs the spirit containers in his home,  
 the mother should be with him.<sup>6</sup>  
 So, they cut their mother into pieces,  
 first smashing her to death with a whetstone,  
 then chopping her up on a stone slab.  
 The head was placed in the upper position,  
 the waist was placed in the middle,  
 and feet were placed in the lower position.  
 The head became the property of the eldest son, Atu,  
 who stood at the place Gguchepuli;  
 the waist was taken by Agge,  
 who stood at the place Huomugatuo;  
 the feet were taken by Jjimi,  
 who stood at the place Huomujjiejy.  
 The youngest son, Jjimi,  
 wanted to conduct a ceremony to worship the ancestors,  
 so he invited some *bimo* to come:  
 Tebi Nramu was invited,  
 Hxibi Shyzu was invited,  
 Addi Bisse was invited.  
 Bringing their sacred accoutrements,  
 carrying their ritual scrolls,  
 the *bimo* arrived at the host's home,  
 the *quho bimo* sat in the position below,

the *nuoho bimo* sat in the position above,  
 and in the marshy middle place sat their apprentices.<sup>7</sup>  
 Tebi Nramu spoke forcefully,  
 “Use the shoulder blade of a water deer of the fir forests as an offering,  
 use the image of an eagle of the heavens as an offering,  
 use the image of the mouse-like creatures as an offering;  
 use gold and silver branches for a sacred staff,  
 catch a muntjac as a ritual offering,  
 capture a water deer as a blood sacrifice,  
 pull up a small pine to waft up the spirit.”<sup>8</sup>  
 Hxibi Shyzu then said,  
 “At home divine with the shoulder blade of a sheep,  
 make offerings to pictures of chickens under the eaves,  
 use fir and cypress to make sacred branches,  
 catch a piglet as an offering,  
 capture a small bird as a blood sacrifice,  
 use *a jji* trees as objects of worship,  
 pull up bamboo roots to make soul vessels;  
 if not done in this way,  
 the son’s generation may be able to do it right,  
 but the grandson’s generation may not be able.”  
 Hxibi Shyzu got up,  
 and after conducting some rites for the soul,  
 the soul vessel was henceforth hung in the home.  
 The third son of the Puhosons,  
 stood in the place Yshybbaka,  
 looking at the Imuhxomu flatlands.  
 At the Imuhxomu flatlands,  
 the bamboos were hung with bells,  
 the grass blades were thick as door bolts;  
 axes were used to clear the snow,  
 water was carried in salt mortars.<sup>9</sup>  
 It was not a suitable place for the Nzy to settle;  
 they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
 When arriving at Huogguryynuo,  
 the earth grew long, wild grass,  
 and the children all looked terribly poor,  
 so they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
 From the place Huogguryynuo,  
 they looked at the place Sagukenyie.

At Sagukenyie,  
the common folk lived in the upper part of the village,  
the Nzy lived in the lower part of the village;  
when the Nzy spoke, the locals did not understand,  
so they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
When arriving at Tienbiemuwa,  
they found that at Tienbiemuwa,  
most people rented plots to farm.  
Water buffalos raised their horns as they plowed,  
and the Nieyy River was to the rear.  
They were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
When arriving at the place Nyiepuvocho,  
they found that at the place Nyiepuvocho,  
slaves rode horses,  
snakes and dogs fought,  
so they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
When arriving at Huoggurssikuo,  
they looked at the place Viwangaha,  
and found that at Viwangaha,  
the *bimo* all gathered  
at the *nzy* Ahoa's home.  
A hundred chickens and dogs were killed,  
killed to give the lower part of the village;  
A black dog was killed,  
killed to give the upper part of the village.  
thereafter the slaves could never raise their heads,  
and they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
When arriving at Ssuwalurqo,  
the winds were very fierce,  
and arriving at Mucheolo,  
heaven and earth were dark,  
and wolves snapped at the horse riders.  
In the future,  
snakes would swallow snakes here,  
pigs and chickens would lead sheep,  
weird snakes would bite tigers,  
and the tigers would hide behind pigs;  
the tigers wouldn't bite the pigs,  
but the pigs would harm the tigers,  
and the tigers would run into the forests.

There was but one lucky day a year;  
 so they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
 When they were considering Vowahxuoggur,  
 there at Vowahxuoggur,  
 a white yak was led as an offering,  
 and the gallbladder was divided into four parts:  
 One part was offered to the misty clouds,  
 so mists would waft through the blue sky;  
 one part was offered to the rains,  
 so the rains would fall to earth;  
 one part was offered to the sun,  
 so the would sun rise to whiten everything;  
 one part was offered to the moon,  
 so the moon would rise and shine brightly;  
 so they were unwilling to migrate and live there.  
 When standing at Vowahxuoggur,  
 they looked at the place Munyiegulu.  
 At Munyiegulu,  
 there were four sorts of magic helmets and armor,  
 and the steel swords and armor glimmered;  
 they were unwilling to migrate there to live.  
 Standing at the place Munyiegulu,  
 they looked at Munyiebati.  
 At Munyiebati,  
 dogs were born with four eyes,  
 wild deer captured tigers to eat,  
 muntjac came to catch pigs.  
 It was not a suitable place for the Nzy to settle down;  
 they were unwilling to migrate and live there.  
 Standing at Munyiebati,  
 they looked at Nieyypushu.  
 From Nieyypushu they migrated on;  
 at Zzyzzylajjie they settled there;  
 from Zzyzzylajjie they migrated on.  
 When migrating to Zzyzzypuvu,  
 the horse halter armor broke;  
 the metal tips of their canes wore smooth.  
 At the place Zzyzzypuvu,  
 above the dwellings were mountains for raising goats,  
 below the dwellings were paddies for raising grain,



and in the middle were dwelling places;  
 there were also grasslands for racing horses,  
 and there were wet spots for raising pigs.  
 There were places for maidens to find shade under the eaves.  
 So, the children and grandchildren of the Nzy  
 were willing to migrate to Zzyzypuvu to live.  
 At the place Zzyzypuvu,  
 above the dwellings they cut pine kindling and gathered resin;<sup>10</sup>  
 below the dwellings they took in fish fry.  
 One day while doing fieldwork and herding,  
 they drove a magic sheep,  
 and released it on Zzyzy Mountain;  
 drove a magic goat,  
 and released it on Zzyzy Mountain;  
 drove a flock of magic chickens,  
 and released them on the Zzyzy bottomlands;  
 drove a herd of magic horses,  
 and released them on the Zzyzy grasslands;  
 drove a magic hunting dog,  
 and took it to Zzyzy Mountain Gorge to hunt;  
 drove a herd of magic cows,  
 and released them on the flat Zzyzy fields.  
 At the place Zzyzypuvu,  
 when the colts were just a year old,  
 they had already broken nine belly bands;  
 when the calves were just one year old,  
 they had already worn out nine plow frames;  
 when the goats were just a year old,  
 their rendered oil already gave nine double-handfuls.<sup>11</sup>  
 Seven generations of swords glimmered,  
 eight generations of steeds were ridden,  
 nine generations of *ndeggu* spoke their wisdom,  
 the foundations of the ancestors' homes were laid,  
 the children and grandchildren's industries were founded.  
 The Nzy divided into the three sons of Sywo,  
 the Nuo division divided into Gguho and Qoni;  
 the Jji division divided into the three sons of Amo.  
 Of the three sons of Puho,  
 the eldest was Atu,  
 the middle son was Agge,

Atu was a Gguho,  
Agge was a Qoni.<sup>12</sup>  
The Gguho went to the left,  
the Qoni went to the right.  
The Gguho gathered together,  
and settled at the place the sun comes up.  
The Qoni gathered together,  
and settled at the place the sun sets.

## HIGHPOINTS OF MIGRATIONS OF GGUHO

### *Gguho cy bo*

The Gguho migrated from Hozzy,  
settling at Hozzymuva.  
Muwavur was the first generation,  
Vulolo was the second generation,  
Lolobbo was the third generation,  
Bo'o'nge was the fourth generation,  
Ngewaho was the fifth generation,  
which arrived at Honetushy,  
at the place Ddiboqulo.  
Jienengeddi's family  
rode five water buffaloes,  
crossing the ridge of Lolo Mountain,  
to invite maidens to come plant crops.  
The maidens did not agree to come;  
they laughed "*ha ha*" and played on the hillsides.  
They invited their mothers to act as *nimu*,  
and conduct the soul sending-off ritual.<sup>1</sup>  
The mothers were unwilling to do so,  
and climbed into the tree branches to play.<sup>2</sup>  
They migrated to Syrongevo to settle down;  
migrating to Syrongevo they found  
the sounds from the forests were very loud.  
So, they migrated to Labasado to settle down,

then migrated from Labasado,  
then settled down in Vovyshuli.  
they migrated from Vovyshuli,  
then settled down in Syrddaawo;  
they migrated from Syrddaawo,  
then settled down in Ggeddurhxoke;  
they migrated from Ggeddurhxoke,  
then settled down in Yotejielie;  
they migrated from Yotejielie,  
then settled down in Munyihovi;  
they migrated from Munyihovi,  
then settled down in Nyieniepushur;  
they migrated from Nyieniepushur,  
then settled down in Imonzivo.

At the place Imonzivo,  
Hxuo killed his mother and cut her apart;  
a black cow was also brought and cut apart.  
The sons of Nzy did not know how to live properly:  
Brothers and sisters mixed up their clothes.  
Thus, the Nzy killed three pairs of dholes  
and hung them up the road.<sup>3</sup>  
Thus, they could hold their heads high.  
When hunting and herding,  
the cries of the high and low were not clearly distinguished,  
as were not the cries of male and female, old and young.  
Thus, they killed three pairs of hunting dogs,  
and hung them down the road.  
Thus, the position of the slaves became lower;  
from then on the slaves had to obey the Nzy.  
The rules of the high and low were set;  
the realms of master and slave were thus divided.<sup>4</sup>  
This is the migration account of the Ho.

## MIGRATIONS OF QONIE

### *Qonie cy bo*

The nine sons of the Hxuo migrated,  
and settled at the place Chayuryur.  
Migrating from Chayuryur,  
they settled at Ssuwaggeddur;  
migrating from Ssuwaggeddur,  
they settled at Ggeddurnyone;  
migrating from Ggeddurnyone,  
they settled at Yyhmuypy;  
migrating from Yyhmuypy,  
they settled at Amgaddituo;  
migrating from Amgaddituo,  
they settled at Guwalumu;  
migrating from Guwalumu,  
they settled at Sykezahni;  
migrating from Sykezahni,  
they settled at Zhyngessuge.  
At the place Zhyngessuge,  
the *bimo* from all four directions gathered,  
and killed a cow and goat at one ritual.<sup>1</sup>  
In the place below the village,  
the *bimo* came to recite the sacred incantations.  
As for the black and the white [classes],  
the white lived in the places of white,  
the black lived in the places of black.<sup>2</sup>  
Of the nine sons of the Hxuo,

six lineages migrated to Muvu,  
three lineages migrated to Muke.  
The Hxuo returned to the place Muvu and  
Muvu Hxao was the first generation;  
Hxao Hxake was the second generation;  
Hxake Hliwa was the third generation;  
Hliwa Asi was the fourth generation;  
Asi Ddimgo was the fifth generation;  
Ddimgo Ahxi was the sixth generation;  
Ahxi Adur was the seventh generation;  
Adur Lupu was the eighth generation.  
Adur Lupu, this generation,  
twelve years after birth  
invited Nyuhni as their protector spirit;  
found the protector spirit Nyuhni;  
sixteen years after birth  
invited Sheshe as their protector spirit;  
found the protector spirit Sheshe;  
eighteen years after being born  
invited Momy as their protector spirit;  
found the protector spirit Momy.  
Hxuo migrated to the place Muke.  
This is the migration account of the Hxuo.

## CHANGES IN HXUO VILLAGES

### *Hxuoqo hxeqo*

The three sons of Puho  
led a pack of spirit and fairy dogs,  
deep into the valley Mahni to hunt.  
There were three groups of Syxiesixie men.  
In that first group,  
was it not Jjimixie?  
It was not Jjimixie.  
In the next group,  
was it not Aggexie?  
It was not Aggexie.  
In that last group,  
was it not Atuxie?  
It was indeed Atuxie.  
At the place Zzyzypuvu,  
the spirit troops and generals flew out like bees.  
The three sons of Puho,  
smashed the ten thousand troops,  
pushing back the spirit troops and generals.  
When driving them to Galolipi,  
thousands were killed,  
hundreds were captured;  
three hundred steeds and a dragon-steed saddle brought back.  
[The father] Puho Anzi sacrificed beasts  
so that his elder son Atu would become Gguho,  
that the second son Agge would become Qoni.<sup>1</sup>

The two families, Hxuo and He,  
 fought over things they shouldn't.  
 They fought over Puhō Anzi's funeral expenses,  
 resulting in bad feelings.  
 They fought over their lands, making more bad feelings.  
 They fought over their slaves, making more bad feelings.  
 They also fought over sows and seedlings.  
 They also fought over hens and spring water.  
 They fought over who had less and who had more.  
 They fought over who lacked skill and who was able.  
 They fought over the emperor's silver bowl.  
 They fought over the official's golden seal.  
 They were instigated by meddlers;  
 they were instigated by loose tongues.  
 The two families, Hxuo and He:  
 The Hxuo felt there was no way to outdo the He;  
 the He felt there was no way to outdo the Hxuo.  
 So, the day before, they transformed.  
 Hxuo transformed, and He did not see it;  
 He transformed, and Hxuo did not see it.  
 So, the day after, they transformed.  
 Hxuo transformed, but He did not know it;  
 He transformed, but Hxuo did not know it.  
 Hxuo retreated from down the upper road;  
 He retreated from down the lower road.  
 The slaves stood in ranks.<sup>2</sup>  
 The two families, Hxuo and He,  
 competed in shape-shifting.  
 When Hxuo changed into a white sheep,  
 He changed into an evil wolf.  
 Wherever the cows and sheep ran to hide,  
 the evil wolf chased after to bite them.  
 The first day He was victorious.  
 When Hxuo changed into paddy grass,  
 He changed into a plow ox.  
 When the ox came to chew on the grass blades,  
 the grass flipped down to cover the ox's head.  
 The second day Hxuo was victorious.  
 When Hxuo changed into the shape of a chicken,  
 He changed into the shape of an eagle.



Wherever the chicken ran to hide,  
the eagle chased after to peck it.  
The second day He was victorious.  
When Hxuo changed into a red tree leaf,  
He changed into an iron ball.  
When the iron ball rolled to the bottom of the water,  
the tree leaf floated atop the water.  
The second day Hxuo was victorious.  
When Hxuo changed into a sow,  
He transformed into a dhole  
Wherever the sow hid,  
the dhole chased after to bite it.  
The third day He was victorious.  
When Hxuo transformed into a maiden,  
He transformed into a bracelet.  
The maiden took it and wore it.  
The third day Hxuo was victorious.  
Hxuo changed into the shape of a man,  
He transformed into the shape of a bear.  
The bear wanted to come and harm the man,  
but the man carried a crossbow.  
So, the two families came to a draw.  
As for the two families Hxuo and He,  
an arbitrator came and  
said not to kill Hxuo,  
said not to shoot He,  
“It is not proper to kill those one knows.  
So, stop a while and gain some understanding.”  
On the first day,  
they sat on Turlur Mountain to palaver.  
Ndajji Syhli came as a go-between to speak.  
he came riding the black horse Shyqu.  
One day later,  
they came to palaver at a brook on Turlur Mountain.  
Sysse Avu was the go-between.  
He came riding a red-mouthed magic horse.  
Sysse Avu,  
grazed his horse below the fields,  
putting his saddle in the field above the wall.  
A spotted-face white tiger came

and bit the magic horse to death.  
 The magic horse was killed by the tiger,  
 and this interrupted the palaver.  
 Everyone then ran in pursuit,  
 and killed the spotted-face white tiger.  
 Sysse Avu came along and  
 from his club spread four drops of white tiger blood,  
 and offered wine in four directions.  
 One drop of wine was put on the sun's head,  
 then the sun hid its head in the clouds.  
 One drop of wine was put on the clouds,  
 then the clouds scattered in four directions.  
 Thereafter, the cloudy mists were unwilling to go past the peaks,  
 and rain was unwilling to fall down to earth.  
 The two families of Hxuo and He  
 were again willing to come together in marriage;  
 in the morning they ate the "placating dispute cow."<sup>3</sup>  
 Fierce winds, hard rains, heaven and earth were black.  
 At noon they ate the "cow of understanding,"  
 autumn rains fell lightly, the sky was misty.  
 In the afternoon they ate the "gathering kin cow."  
 In the four directions the clouds were red.  
 The cow gallbladders were taken out,  
 wine was offered in the four directions,  
 and three red snows fell.  
 Four cow skins were laid out,  
 hung in the four directions, and eight subdirections.  
 Afterward the clouds and mists were willing to come out;  
 rain was willing to fall to earth.  
 As for the two families, Hxuo and He:  
 Hxuo solved the disputes;  
 it was Hxuobi Ajjie who came to mediate.  
 He solved their disputes.  
 It was Hebi Niemge who came [from the He] to mediate,  
 to further the communication.  
 Ssohxo Shydo came as a head,  
 acting as a go-between.  
 Nieyy Munji came as a head,  
 to resolve things among kin.  
 Ndiq Suoshy also came as a head.

Three families who did not get a share of the gallbladder  
were called to participate in the discussions:

The foals in the stables had gotten no gallbladder;  
the pheasants in the ferns had gotten no gallbladder;  
the fawns in the deep forests had gotten no gallbladder.

Three families without hair  
were called to participate in the discussions:

The fish in the waters have no hair;  
the snakes below the field walls have no hair;  
the frogs below the field walls have no hair.

The three families that do not grow white  
were called to participate in the discussions:<sup>4</sup>

The black sows aren't white;  
the bear cubs in the forest aren't white;  
the crows in the mountains aren't white.

The three families that aren't black  
were called to participate in the discussions:

The white snows in the high mountains aren't black;  
the great geese in the sky aren't black;  
the *mgobu* birds in the deep forests aren't black.

When all was spoken, the decisions were not overturned.

As for the two families of Hxuo and He:

Hxuo drove tens of thousands of horses  
to wed the He maiden Shyha,  
who married Hxuobi Ajjie.

The bridal gifts were worth thousands of gold pieces.

The Hxuo descendants were in the tens of thousands,  
and Hxuo was divided into nine clan groups, spreading out.<sup>5</sup>

He also drove thousands of cows and horses  
to wed the Hxuo maiden Qulu,  
who married Hebi Niemge.

The bridal gifts were worth thousands of gold pieces.

the He descendants were in the tens of thousands,  
and the He were divided into nine clan groups and spread out.

The Gguho spread to the right,

The Qoni spread to the left.<sup>6</sup>

## GENEALOGY OF GGUHO

### *Gguho cy*

In the place Limumoggu,  
they crossed the river upstream at Bake,  
crossed the middle of the river Lurnjy,  
crossed the river downstream at Vocho.  
One day horses were taken across the river.  
Three hundred mares were taken across;  
three hundred colts were left behind.  
One day the cloven-hoofed stock was taken across.  
Three hundred ewes were taken across;  
three hundred lambs were left behind.  
Three hundred nanny goats were taken across;  
three hundred kids were left behind.  
One day three hundred sows were taken across;  
three hundred piglets were left behind.  
One day the winged fowls were taken across.  
Three hundred hens were taken across;  
three hundred chicks were left behind.  
In this way the river was crossed.  
On the hill Luoluohxoke,  
the nine sons of the Gguho migrated.  
The generation of Gguho Vuwa  
settled at Vulolo;  
Ciejjie Nisse, this person,<sup>1</sup>  
settled at Bulofike,  
and he controlled the area

from the foot of Addibbovu,  
as far as the middle of Mamalomo Valley.  
The generation of Gguho Didi  
settled at Jienyiepuvi.  
Lajjie Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from the mouth of Mamahxoke Mountain,  
as far as Marrolurha.  
Gguho Vani spread out,  
and settled at Moojjita.  
Azho Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from Banyolievu,  
as far as Batibbogo.  
Gguho Vanra migrated,  
and settled at Mahxojjite.  
Ggahxa Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from Hahxijjieggur,  
as far as Galumobbo.  
The generation of Gguho Zzyzzy  
settled at Nieygapu.  
Bbopu Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from Nzyhxibbovu,  
as far as the foot of Shuonuolievu Mountain.  
The generation Gguho Vizho  
settled in Tatalomo.  
Siqu Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from Hlyddurnyulo,  
as far as the middle of Hxicibbogo.  
The generation of Gguho Disse  
settled at Ddibo Gapa.  
Ggurzzur Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from the foot of Ddihxolievu Mountain,  
as far as the side of Monyiyouhxo Hill.  
The generation of Gguho Mabbu migrated  
to the foot of Hxuosabbovu Mountain.

Mabbu Nisse, this person,  
controlled the area  
from the middle of Hehribbogo Mountain,  
as far as the middle of Saddibbogo Mountain.  
This is the account of the nine outer Gguho clans.<sup>2</sup>

## MIGRATIONS OF NINE SONS OF GGUHO DURZHY DDIWO

*Kurdie Gguho Durzhy Ddiwo sse ggu cy*

The nine sons of the Gguho Durzhy Ddiwo migrated.

The generation of Ddiwo Muly migrated,

and settled at Alynyieddi—

this son was Nrevur Nisse.<sup>1</sup>

The generation of Ddiwo Hoa migrated,

and settled at Dicibbovu—

this son was Bbuddi Nisse.

The generation of Ddiwo Gea migrated,

and settled at Addibbo'o—

this son was Yyshy Nisse.

The generation of Ddiwo Marry migrated,

and settled at Hxotuobbovu—

this son was Huosa Nisse.

The generation of Ddiwo Vihxo migrated,

and settled at Muggur Yieto—

this son was Lehxo Nisse.

The generation of Ddiwoaly migrated,

and settled at Yyrnuolyrsha—

this son was Azho Nisse.

The generation of Ddiwo Ga'a migrated,

and settled at Gaggugalo—

this son was Gahxa Nisse.

The generation of Ddiwo Quwa migrated,

and settled at Qiesayyvu—  
 this son was Qiesa Nuoho.  
 After the generation of Ddiwobbi,  
 the spirit fairy Bbisse Tezy migrated,  
 living at Tepuvoli.  
 Tezy Tazy migrated,  
 and settled at Shuomuladda.  
 He was killed by Shuo;  
 because of this,  
 Shuo and Nuo fought.  
 Bbiwa Zhola  
 understood Shuo's situation,  
 and began to attack Shuo.<sup>2</sup>  
 For nine years the Anre resisted;  
 for nine months the Vasa resisted;  
 the Uomur were defeated before they even stood up;  
 gaining control over eighty-eight sorts of officials,  
 Muggur Ajjy thus became an official.  
 Of seventy-seven *nuoho*,<sup>3</sup>  
 Gahxa Sseyy became an official.  
 Of sixty-six *quho*,  
 Hlyjj Shega became an official.  
 Of fifty-five *shuosse*,  
 Shuosse Valyr became an official.  
 The generation of Ddiwo Muly followed,  
 and settled at Alynyiejy.  
 Nrevu Nisse  
 settled at Alynyiejy.  
 The generation of Muly Bbuddi was followed by  
 the generation of Bbuddi Ssely, followed by  
 the generation of Bbuddi Hoqu, followed by  
 the generation of Hoqu Tipo, followed by  
 the generation of Tipo Yyhxa which  
 settled at Ssuhxaggeddur.  
 The generation of Bbuddi Momo was followed by,  
 the generation of Momo Zhassi, followed by,  
 the generation of Zhassi Zhajie, followed by,  
 the generation of Zhajie Tisy which  
 settled at Ggeddursuolo.  
 The emperor conducted a *xuobbur* ritual,<sup>4</sup>



and everyone under heaven saw it.

The generation of Bbuddi Hxaddi,  
settled at Kemusuolo,  
and survived on *bary* grass.

The generation of Bbuddi Manyie was followed by  
the generation of Manyie Ssyti, followed by  
the generation of Ssyti Nzydda, followed by  
the generation of Nzydda Wati, followed by  
the generation of Yoto Zyho, followed by  
the generation of Ddiwo Hoa, followed by  
the generation of Bburvu Nisse  
which settled at Dicibbovu,  
that place called Dicibbovu.

The generation of Bburvu Ssenyi was followed by  
the generation of Bbuvu Hovie, followed by  
the generation of Hovie Quhxa, followed by  
the generation of Quhxa Nzypo, followed by  
the generation of Nzypo Shyni which  
settled at Yyhmyvanyo.

The generation of Bbuvu Azyr was followed by  
the generation of Azyr Ahlo, followed by  
the generation of Ahlo Mupo, followed by  
the generation of Mupo Ggehxo, followed by  
the generation of Ggehxo Johxa which  
settled at Yotezygo.

The generation of Ddi Woge was followed by  
Bbuhlu Nisse who  
settled at Titilomo.

From the place Titilomo,  
came three sons of Bbuhlu.

The generation of Bbuhlu Gazu  
settled at Vumuvujjie.

The generation of Bbuhlu Sizu was followed by  
the generation of Sizu Jyssy, followed by  
the generation of Jyssy Jihxa which  
settled at Mussijjiegur.

The generation of Bbuhlu Nyizu was followed by  
the generation of Nyizu Shypo, followed by  
the generation of Shypo Shuobu, followed by  
the generation of Shuobu Ladda, followed by

the generation of Ladda Yypo which settled at Zhuwalurnyie.

Voba Loxy Nisse was followed by the generation of Ladda Yypo, followed by the generation of Yypo Quhxa, followed by the three generations of Quhxa.

The generation of Quhxa Anzi settled at Arronihxa.

The generation of Quhxa Pusse, settled at Arronihxa.

The generation of Quhxa Shyni was followed by, the generation of Shyni Diebur which settled at Yyhmywanyo.

This passage concerning these generations is the genealogy of the nine sons of the inner layer of the Durzhy Gguho Ddiwo lineage.

The generation of Ddiwo Quwa was followed by the generation of Quwa Pole which settled in Qiesayyvu.

In this place, Qiesayyvu, were five sons of Pole.

The generation of Poleazzy was followed by the generation of Azzyali which settled at Alilava,

where they oversaw nine plots of land.

The generation of Pole Avo was followed by the generation of Avo Hxielie which settled at Kurchybbovu.

The generation of Avo Jjinyie followed and settled at Syge Vonyie.

The generation of Pole Bbuggu was followed by the generation of Bbuggu Yyhxo which settled at Yyhxojjieggur.

The generation of Pole Hxielie was followed by the generation of Hxielie Adur, of which there were seven groups of masters and slaves who migrated to Viloladda to live.

The Muly Cyrro was the first group; the Jjisi Awo was the second group;

the Ahxi Boshy was the third group;  
the Lili Adur was the fourth group;  
the Jjingu Ashy was the fifth group.  
At this place called Viloladda,  
the generation of Adur Bishy was followed by  
the generation of Bishy Yyhxo, followed by  
the generation of Yyhxo Sysse, followed by  
the generation of Sysse Ati, followed by  
the generation of Ati Awo, followed by  
the generation of Awo which had two sons.  
The generation of Awo Nifu was followed by  
the generation of Nifu Sugga which  
settled at Limuzhuhxi.

The generation of Awo Nyibbu was followed by  
the generation of Njila Bbute, followed by  
the generation of Gguhu Ddiwo, followed by  
the generation in which Ddiwo Onyi was born illegitimate.<sup>5</sup>  
Ddiwo Luli was a *nzyimo*;  
Ddiwo Adi was a Qiesa  
and settled at Qiesayyvu.<sup>6</sup>

The generation of Ddiwo Ddiwa was followed by  
the generation of Ddiwa Uomur, followed by  
the generation of Uomur Zzyzzy, followed by  
the generation of Zzyzzy Biho, followed by  
the generation of Biho Lurho, followed by  
the generation of Lurho Shyli, followed by  
the generation of Shyli Shyte, followed by  
the generation of Shyte Lursse, followed by  
the generation of Lursse Ssebo, followed by  
the generation of Ssebo Ggogga, followed by  
the generation of Ggogga Tihxa which  
settled in the place called Tihxo.

Yyhxo understood *bimo* lineages;  
this is the genealogy of the *bimo* lineages.<sup>7</sup>  
The generation of Gguhu Liwa was followed by  
the generation of Liwa Uomur, followed by  
the generation of Uomur Hxaxi which  
settled at Shuonuolievur.

The generation of Asho Nisse was followed by  
the generation of Uomur Sunyi, followed by

the generation of Sunyi Binge, followed by  
the generation of Binge Bisse, followed by  
the generation of Bisse Jjila which  
settled at Animahxo.

The generation of Bisse Hliny, followed by  
the generation of Hliny Ggohxa, followed by  
the generation of Ggohxa Munyie, followed by  
the generation of Munyie Poche which  
settled at Viloladda.

This is the genealogy of the Awo.

The generation of the Gguho Liwa was followed by  
the generation of Liwa Uomur, followed by  
the generation of Uomur Lurnbo, followed by  
the generation of Lurnbo Syjy, followed by  
the generation of Syjy Asho which  
settled at Chyhxolivu.

At this place, Chyhxolivu,  
the generation of the six sons of Asho was followed by  
the generation of Asho Curbbur, followed by  
the generation of Ali Niddu, followed by  
the generation of Asho Jjijji, followed by  
the generation of Syrpy Niddu, followed by  
the generation of Asho Ssenyo, followed by  
the generation of Shama Niddu, followed by,  
the generation of Asho Lolo, followed by  
the generation Gery Niddu, followed by  
the generation of Asho Shami, which  
settled at Nzyhxo Lievu.

The generation of Asho Lasse  
settled at Hxogguladda.

Did you know that at this place called  
Joqurmuggur,

Asho Lasse was the most famous?

This, at the place called Chyhxolievu,  
is the genealogy of the six sons of Asho.

[They were] officials, but the positions were not permanent;  
there were only the six sons of Asho.

In that place, Dishybbovu,  
the generation of Niyi Gguho was followed by  
the generation of Gguho Kabbur, followed by

the generation of Kabbur Kama, followed by the generation of Kama Muvu, followed by the generation of Muvu Vubbur, followed by the generation of Vubbur Vuma, followed by the generation of Vuma Miejyr, followed by the generation of Miejyr Mieyie, followed by the generation of Mieyie Anyo, followed by the generation of Anyo Avo, followed by the generation of Avo Hxielie, followed by the generation of Hxielie Mahxie, followed by the generation of Mahxie Hxabbur, followed by the generation of Hxabbur Hxange, followed by the generation of Hxange Suni, followed by the generation of Suni Agga, followed by the generation of Agga Shuoze, followed by the generation of Shuoze Bikur, followed by the generation of Bikur Nyovu, followed by the generation of Nyovu Biessy which settled at Yzylievu.

This is the genealogy of the Hxoga.

The generation of Nyovu Ddibo was followed by the generation of Ddibo Puvu, followed by the generation of Puvu Puche, followed by the generation of Puche Birre.

The descendants of Birre migrated to Jiezhryydda to live.

In this place called Jiezhryydda, did you know that

the descendants of Birre were the most famous?

The generation of Birre Biggu was followed by the generation of Biggu Gabur, followed by the generation of Gabur Kesy, followed by the generation of Kesy Jjibbo, followed by the generation of Jjibbo Yyfu, followed by the generation of Yyfu Jjihxo, followed by the generation of Jjihxo Ngongo, followed by the generation of Ngongo Sinyie, followed by the generation of Sinyie Gifu, followed by the generation of Gifu Jjine, followed by

the generation of Jjine Munyie, followed by the generation of Munyie Avy which settled at Hlezhynihxa.

The generation of Jyrre Luge was followed by the generation of Luge Age, followed by the generation of Age Worry, followed by the generation of Worry Bivu, followed by the generation of Bivu Jjizhy, followed by the generation of Jjizhy Mojji, followed by the generation of Mojji Gizu, followed by the generation of Gizu Yopo, followed by the generation of Yopo Nyila, followed by the generation of Nyila Shyqie which settled in Syrхоjjieggur.

The generation of Birre Luxy was followed by the generation of Luxy Jjizha, followed by the generation of Jjizha Abbur, followed by the generation of Abbur Bburhlur, followed by the generation of Bburhlur Bbugo, followed by the generation of Bbugo Lupo, followed by the generation of Lupo Shyzu, followed by the generation of Shyzu Gieddo, followed by the generation of Gieddo Biqu, followed by the generation of Biqu Luho which settled at Dapulurkur.

The generation of Jjizha Anzy was followed by the generation of Anzy Sinyie, followed by the generation of Sinyie Zugi, followed by the generation of Zugi Sasa which settled at Jiezhryrydda.

The generation of Birre Bike was followed by the generation of Bike Ashy, followed by the generation of Ashy Ssehxa, followed by the generation of Ssehxa Aho, followed by the generation of Aho Nyidi, followed by the generation of Nyidi Nzyhlur, followed by the generation of Nzyhlur Shuzu, followed by the generation of Shuzu Jjike, followed by the generation of Jjike Qijji which settled at Jiezhryrlehxe;

lived at Jiezhhyrgapur.

This is the genealogy of the descendants of Birre.

In this place called Amibboxy,  
the generations of the nine sons were followed by  
the generation of Mieyie, followed by  
the generation of Mieyie Nrede, followed by  
the generation of Nrede Kehni, followed by  
the generation of Kehni Yieqyr, followed by  
the generation of Yieqyr Bbudi, followed by  
the generation of Bbudi Xyyi, followed by  
the generation of Xyyi Ashu, followed by  
the generation of Ashu Ache, followed by  
the generation of Ache Asu, followed by  
the generation of Asu Hlurte, followed by  
the generation of Hlurte Wo'o, followed by  
the generation of Wo'o Bio, followed by  
the generation of Bio Puzzur, followed by  
the generation of Puzzur Nzyggu, followed by  
the generation of Nzyggu Lege, followed by  
the generation of Lege Yyfu, followed by  
the generation of Yyfu Shyzu, followed by  
the generation of Shyzu Pozu, followed by  
the generation of Pozu Dayi which  
settled at Joddurlievu.

This is the genealogy of the Ggehle.

Among the Gguhu, Gguhle was the eldest son.

In the place called Ggunravaxy,  
did you know that

Pozu Dayi was the most famous?

The generation of Bbudi Hxozzi was followed by  
the generation of Hxozzi Hnizzi, followed by  
the generation of Hnizzi Aho, followed by  
the generation of Aho Ahmo, followed by  
the generation of Ahmo Shelu, followed by  
the generation of Shelu Hnaqu, followed by  
the generation of Hnaqu Lechu, followed by  
the generation of Lechu Biyie, followed by  
the generation of Biyie Shyla, followed by  
the generation of Shyla Bbaqi, followed by  
the generation of Bbaqi Vuhxa, followed by

the generation of Vuhxa Dagi, which settled at Lurnjylavu.

The generation of Miyie Jjijji was followed by the generation of Jjijji Jjibo, followed by the generation of Jjibo Jjini, followed by the generation of Jjini Syrdur, followed by the generation of Syrdur Pusse, followed by the generation of Pusse Yyli, followed by the generation of Yyli Yyjie, followed by the generation of Yyjie Yyvu, followed by the generation of Yyvu Aho which settled at Wengelievu.

The generation of Yyli Hxielie was followed by the generation of Hxielie Adur which settled in Murzyrbbovu.

The generation of Puhxo Jjijji was followed by the generation of Jjijji Agge, followed by the generation of Agge Yosa, followed by the generation of Yosa Leo, followed by the generation of Leo Lejji, followed by the generation of Lejji Jjiyie, followed by the generation of Jjiyie Shuotuo which settled at Shypugavur.

The generation of Aho Andu was followed by the generation of Andu Hxonge, followed by the generation of Hxonge Puggu, followed by the generation of Puggu Azhy, followed by the generation of Azhy Aza, followed by the generation of Aza Lurge, followed by the generation of Lurge Hxoche, followed by the generation of Hxoche Curti, followed by the generation of Curti Puti, followed by the generation of Puti Woti, followed by the generation of Woti Ngase, followed by the generation of Ngase Honyi, followed by the generation of Honyi Bitu which settled at Ggohxolievu.

Aho was the eldest in the family.

The generation of Aho Hnego was followed by the generation of Hnego Agga, followed by



the generation of Agga Bilu, followed by the generation of Bilu Munuo, followed by the generation of Munuo Hoqo, followed by the generation of Hoqo Vachy, followed by the generation of Vachy Ssyho which settled at Nyizhylievu.

The generation of Agga Shuoly was followed by the generation of Shuoly Fuji, followed by the generation of Fuji Jjike which settled at Majjilievu.

The generation of Aho Nego was followed by the generation of Nego Sate, followed by the generation of Sate Bivu, followed by the generation of Bivu Arre, followed by the generation of Arre Hmogi, followed by the generation of Hmogi Puti, followed by the generation of Puti Visse, followed by the generation of Visse Nzytu, followed by the generation of Nzytu Dati which settled at Nzipuladda.

This is the genealogy of the eastern Aho. The generation of Miyi Puti was followed by the generation of Puti Vidda, followed by

the generation of Vidda Vijie, followed by the generation of Vijie Yyjie, followed by the generation of Yyjie Yylu, followed by the generation of Yylu Ddiwa, followed by the generation of Ddiwa Apu, followed by the generation of Apu Woli, followed by the generation of Woli Ajjie, followed by the generation of Ajjie Nyipo, followed by the generation of Nyipo Nyiwe, followed by the generation of Nyiwe Biwe, followed by the generation of Biwe Bilu, followed by the generation of Bilu Hendi, followed by the generation of Hendi Hejie, followed by the generation of Hejie Gaga, followed by the generation of Gaga Nzyfu, followed by the generation of Nzyfu Ache which

settled at Bburburlietuo.

Did you know that in  
this place Bbubburlietuo,  
Nzyfu Ache was most famous?

Did you know that  
in the place called Jjiegurgalo,  
the seven sons of Woli were most famous?

The generation of Nyipo Bburvie was followed by  
the generation of Bburvie Lurgga, followed by  
the generation of Lurgga Hmogi, followed by  
the generation of Hmogi Bbaqi, followed by  
the generation of Bbaqi Lursa, followed by  
the generation of Lursa Jjissyr, followed by  
the generation of Jjissyr Vijy which  
settled at Bbubbulietuo.

The generation of Hmogi Lurdda was followed by  
the generation of Lurdda Viho, followed by  
the generation of Viho Zhyhxa which  
settled at Qimojjogo.

The generation of Nyipo Bburvie was followed by  
the generation of Bburvie Ssehxo, followed by  
the generation of Ssehxo Jjishy, followed by  
the generation of Jjishy Bilu, followed by  
the generation of Bilu Hodur, followed by  
the generation of Hodur Sinyie, followed by  
the generation of Sinyie Shynyie, followed by  
the generation of Shynyie Giedda, followed by  
the generation of Giedda Shyndi, followed by  
the generation of Shyndi Sinyie, followed by  
the generation of Sinyie Gaga, followed by  
the generation of Laqu Jjogo, followed by  
the generation of Shyndi Shynbie, followed by  
the generation of Shynbie Pusse, followed by  
the generation of Pusse Lasse which  
settled at Njosholiko.

This is the genealogy of Woli.

The generation of Ssehxo Jjishy was followed by  
the generation of Jjishy Bilu, followed by  
the generation of Bilu Ajji, followed by  
the generation of Ajji Lurvie, followed by

the generation of Lurvie Yyli, followed by the generation of Yyli Gifu, followed by the generation of Gifu Nyipo, followed by the generation of Nyipo Vihly, followed by the generation of Vihly Lyly, followed by the generation of Lyly Hnaly, followed by the generation of Hnaly Vohxi which settled at Syrjyryry.

The Nuohuo<sup>8</sup>

had a famous person named Hnaly Vohxi.

The Nzyho

had a famous person named Adur Jiejie.

The generation of Miyi Nrede was followed by the generation of Nrede Ggabo which settled at Sagujjogo.

In the place called Sagulurjjo,

the generation of the five Bige sons was followed by the generation of Bige Ati which settled at Hmupaladda.

The generation of Ati Zzingo was followed by the generation of Zzingo Shaga, followed by the generation of Shaga Woli, followed by the generation of Woli Suddi, followed by the generation of Suddi Vienyi, followed by the generation of Vienyi Laly, followed by the generation of Laly Chegi which settled at Mgewalomo.

The generation of Bige Binyi settled at Vaqubbovu.

The generation of Bige Jjizu was followed by the generation of Jjizu Bburyie, followed by the generation of Bburyie Laly, followed by the generation of Laly Shuogo, followed by the generation of Shuogo Gifu, followed by the generation of Gifu Nzydda, followed by the generation of Nzydda Gizu, followed by the generation of Gizu Chahxa which settled at Hmupaladda.

Did you know that

in the place called Hmupaladda,

Gizu Chahxa was most famous?

The generation of Bige Bivu was followed by the generation of Bivu Womu, followed by the generation of Womu Shuguo, followed by the generation of Shuguo Hlygo, followed by the generation of Hlygo Shyzzur, followed by the generation of Shyzzur Lussu which settled at Mohxoladda.

The generation of Bige Biyie was followed by the generation of Biyie Shyhli, followed by the generation of Shyhli Nzyzu, followed by the generation of Nzyzu Tiho, followed by the generation of Tiho Age, followed by the generation of Age Nzyla, followed by the generation of Nzyla Bilu which settled at Hxeqyladda.

In this place called Hxeqyladda did you know that

Nzyla Bilu was most famous?

The generation of Miyi Puti was followed by the generation of Puti Hxobbur, followed by the generation of Hxobbur Hxorry, followed by the generation of Hxorry Apu, followed by the generation of Apu Shelu, followed by the generation of Shelu Aci, followed by the generation of Aci Ahlur, followed by the generation of Ahlur Oqu, followed by the generation of Oqu Jjinyi, followed by the generation of Jjinyi Lizha, followed by the generation of Lizha Zizzur, followed by the generation of Zizzur Lilu, followed by the generation of Lilu Ddadda which settled at Dieburlavu.

This is the genealogy of Apu Shelu.

The generation of Gguho Nyiewa was followed by the generation of Nyiewa Shymo, followed by the generation of Shymo Tihxa, followed by the generation of Tihxa Asu, followed by the generation of Asu Tuli, followed by the generation of Tuli Yimo, followed by

the generation of Yimo Ddiwo, followed by  
the generation of Ddiwo Liyi, followed by  
the generation of Liyi Uomur, followed by  
the generation of Uomur Mujjy, followed by  
the generation of Mujjy Lahni, followed by  
the generation of Lahni Kuly, followed by  
the generation of Kuly Bily, followed by  
the generation of Bily Bitu, followed by  
the generation of Bitu Bisso, followed by  
the generation of Bisso Alu, followed by  
the generation of Alu Ddirry, followed by  
the generation of Ddirry Ssenyo, followed by  
the generation of Ssenyo Luzzy which  
settled at Olujjogo.

Did you know that  
in this place called Olujjogo  
the most famous person was Ssenyo Luzzy?  
This is the genealogy of the Hxinuo.<sup>9</sup>  
Scattered all about, the Qoni  
settled in the west.

A Gguho family lived mixed among them,  
living there in the place called Olujjogo—  
this was the family of Ssenyo Luzzy.

The myriad Gguho families  
settled in the east.

A family of Qoni lived there among them—  
this was Alu Nuobi,<sup>10</sup>  
of the Asu Lazzi family.

The generation of Pohxo Yyli was followed by  
the generation of Yyli Yyjie, followed by  
the generation of Yyjie Yylu, followed by  
the generation of Yylu Andi, followed by  
the generation of Andi Yopo, followed by  
the generation of Yopo Jjimo, followed by  
the generation of Jjimo Surgga, followed by  
the generation of Surgga Yovie, followed by  
the generation of Yovie Lurvu, followed by  
the generation of Lurvu Afu, followed by  
the generation of Afu Jjiyie, followed by

the generation of Jjiyie Shuotu, followed by  
the generation of Shuotu Shyzu, followed by  
the generation of Shyzu Bburddur which  
settled at Vapulievu.

This is the genealogy of the Jjimo Surgga family.

## GENEALOGY OF QONI

### *Qoni cy*

A son of the Hxuo  
was the luck of the He;  
a son of the He  
was the luck of the Hxuo.  
The Hxuo migrated to a distant place,  
and after entering the distant place  
they selected a red cow right away.  
Over one hundred pack cows came along in front;  
the pack cow Lunra led the way on the return.  
The livestock were uncountable.  
One day they went to select horses,  
the spirit and magic horses led the way back.  
The creatures without cloven hoofs were uncountable.  
Quarried stone was selected in the middle,  
gold and silver were set in a row,  
their uses were uncountable.  
Lastly, the pack string leader was selected.  
Over one hundred youths followed in front;  
over one hundred maidens followed in front.  
Things in the human world were uncountable.  
A red cow brought forth luck;  
it was selected to open the wilds for the human world.  
[As for those] living in the distant place:  
Jiwala was the first generation;  
Cyamy was the second generation;

Mumyxy was the third generation;  
 Xylavu was the fourth generation;  
 Mulavu was the fifth generation;  
 Uomur Ali was the sixth generation;  
 Ali Jjurjie was the seventh generation;  
 Jjurjie Lama was the eighth generation;  
 Lama Uomur was the ninth generation;  
 Uomur Ddeshuo was the tenth generation;  
 Ddeshuo Anyie was the eleventh generation.  
 Thereafter,  
 when they came to find paternal uncles  
 to ask for permission to wed,<sup>1</sup>  
 Shynge Niewa was the one to give it.  
 The Hxuo produced nine sons:  
 Six tribes migrated to the edge of the sky;  
 and three tribes migrated to the end of the earth.  
 Of the eldest sons of the Hxuo,  
 Zzii Labbu was a *nzy* ruler,<sup>2</sup>  
 and Ssyhxo Lonzy was a *mo*.  
 They settled at the place Zhyggala.  
 Muvu Synzy was a *ni*;<sup>3</sup>  
 Voge Hxuosa was a *mo*;  
 Mashy Ddoni was a *bimo*.  
 For breakfast they killed seven cows;  
 for supper they killed seven cows.  
 Of the middle sons of the Hxuo  
 Syge Vonyie was a *nzy*;  
 Wajjie Shuzzur was a *mo*;  
 Vimu Nieyy was a *bimo*.  
 Of the youngest sons of the Hxuo  
 Nimu Lili was a *nzy*;  
 Lywa Nimga was a *mo*;  
 Alu of the Hxuo was a *bimo*.  
 Of the youngest sons of the Hxuo  
 the youngest son, Jjihmy, was one generation;  
 the three sons of Jjihmy were one generation;  
 the generation of Jjihmy Pusi was followed by  
 the generation of Pusi Hxasi of which  
 Nimu Lili was a *nzy*  
 who settled at Nieyylurjjo.



The generation of Jjihmy Jjizy  
settled at Jjizylohmu.

Aho cooked a pot of *voma* turnips,  
and the Jjizy family had seven sons.

The generation of Jjihmy Bbohxo was followed by  
the generation of the two sons of Bbohxo, followed by  
the generation of Bbohxo Hxorryr, followed by  
the generation of Hxorryr Lynge, followed by  
the generation of Lynge Aly, followed by  
the generation of Aly Acur, followed by  
the generation of Acur Nzunzu, followed by  
the generation of Nzunzu Hlopo, followed by  
the generation of Hlopo Voqy, followed by  
the generation of Voqy Bijji, followed by  
the generation of Bijji Woyi, followed by  
the generation of Woyi Yogo, followed by  
the generation of Yogo Hxoche, followed by  
the generation of Hxoche Lemo, followed by  
the generation of Lemo Nyirryr, followed by  
the generation of Nyirryr Aho, followed by  
the generation of Aho Nieggo, followed by  
the generation of Nieggo Jysi, followed by  
the generation of Jysi Lesse, followed by  
the generation of Lesse Nganga which  
settled at Bbutejjogo.

The generation of Yogo Hoqo was followed by  
the generation of Hoqo Jjike, followed by  
the generation of Jjike Shuohmo, followed by  
the generation of Shuonjy Hojy, followed by  
the generation of Hojy Lurli, followed by  
the generation of Lurli Gazu, followed by  
the generation of Gazu Vadda, followed by  
the generation of Vadda Yienjie, followed by  
the generation of Yienjie Vaku.

When Vaku grew up,  
he settled at Ndipoladda.<sup>4</sup>

This is the genealogy of the Lynge family.

The generation of Bbohxo Bbohxa was followed by  
the generation of Bbohxa Shuozi, followed by  
the generation of Shuozi Yyvu, followed by

the generation of Yyvu Yyndi, followed by  
 the generation of Yyndi Asho, followed by  
 the generation of Asho Nigge, followed by  
 the generation of Nigge Sajjy, followed by  
 the generation of Sajjy Sange, followed by  
 the generation of Sange Niyi, followed by  
 the generation of Niyi Mahxie, followed by  
 the generation of Nigga Chumo  
 and Olur Bbudie,  
 followed by the generations of Churmo Churgi,  
 Mushy Lahni,  
 and the Mushy Anyie.  
 This is the genealogy of the Mose Shuogo.  
 The generation of Lapu Shequ  
 settled at Olulavu.  
 Ceramic tiles covered the roofs;  
 one swath of white-tiled roofs;  
 four posts inside each tiled house  
 in the four directions of the house;  
 ensuring victory over attackers,  
 ensuring victory over enemies.  
 Four tigers were kept—  
 one in each direction.  
 Four red cows were killed  
 in an offering to the four tigers.  
 The generation of Lapu Ddiwo  
 Settled in Bbuyoryshy.  
 Bamboo was cut to build bamboo homes;  
 one shining white swath of bamboo homes.  
 Four female vultures were kept—  
 one in each direction.  
 Four sows were killed  
 in a sacrifice to the vultures.<sup>5</sup>  
 The generation of Lapu Jjumu  
 settled at Nremuyyshy.  
 They built rammed earth houses,  
 with earthen firepits,  
 and the Lapu Jjumu died out.  
 At the Lapu Ddiwo's place  
 the stars in the skies above could clearly be counted,

but the members of the Lapu Ddiwo family were uncountable.  
The grasses on the earth below could be clearly counted,  
but the members of the Lapu Ddiwo family were uncountable.  
The generation of Lapu Ddiwo was followed by  
the generation of Ddiwo Ddini, followed by  
the generation of Ddini Lyrni, followed by  
the generation of Lyrni Azyr, followed by  
the generation of Azyr Ahxie, followed by  
the generation of Ahxie Bbylu, followed by  
the generation of Bbylu Ati, followed by  
the generation of Ati Ayi, followed by  
the generation of Ayi Nzyggu, followed by  
the generation of Nzyggu Bonbu, followed by  
the generation of Bonbu Lyrguo, followed by  
the generation of Lyrguo Ake, followed by  
the generation of Ake Bihxie, followed by  
the generation of Bihxie Jjisse, followed by  
the generation of Jjisse Hxiesse, followed by  
the generation of Hxiesse Kepu, followed by  
the generation of Kepu Yyndi, followed by  
the generation of Yyndi Lurhxa, followed by  
the generation of Lurhxa Lazzi.

Lazzi was the eldest and  
settled at Bbaqijjieggu;  
Bbaqi of the Qoni was the eldest.  
This is the genealogy of the Bbaqi.

The generation of Ahxie Ahxi was followed by  
the generation of Ahxi Suhxo, followed by  
the generation of Suhxo Gejji, followed by  
the generation of Gejji Lomupi, followed by  
the generation of Lomupi Wonyi, followed by  
the generation of Wonyi Bizu, followed by  
the generation of Bizu Jjiehwo, followed by  
the generation of Jjiehwo Nyisa, followed by  
the generation of Nyisa Sysy, followed by  
the generation of Sysy Keayi.  
Shuobu of the Keayi family was the eldest son and  
he settled at Ndipobbosho.  
This is the genealogy of the Lomu family.

The generation of Ahxie Nzybbi was followed by the generation of the Nzybbi Lubbi, followed by the generation of the Lubbi Agge, followed by the generation of the Agge Amgo, followed by the generation of the Amgo Ajie, followed by the generation of the Ajie Yochu, followed by the generation of the Yochu Pusse, followed by the generation of the Pusse Wondi, followed by the generation of the Wondi Syrgo, followed by the generation of the Syrgo Hxoche, followed by the generation of the Hxoche Hoddur, followed by the generation of the Hoddur Quhli, followed by the generation of the Quhli Lurdda, followed by the generation of the Lurdda Lapo. The eldest son was Lapo Gguti and he settled at Syrmiquundi. This is the genealogy of the Zhulu family.

In the generation of Ddiwo Wondi Wondi Adur was of the Vazha family,<sup>6</sup> and Wondi Amgo was of the Lohxo. The generation of Wondi Adur was followed by the generation of Adur Zybbu, followed by the generation of Zybbu Yobbu, followed by the generation of Yobbu Jieashy, followed by the generation of Aho of the Jieashy family, followed by the generation of Aho Ozzu followed by the generation of Ozzu Gacy, followed by the generation of Gacy Acu, followed by the generation of Acu Jjindu, followed by the generation of Jjindu Ache, followed by the generation of Ache Binyi, followed by the generation of Binyi Suddi, followed by the generation of Suddi Hxary, followed by the generation of Hxary Jjinjy, followed by the generation of Jjinjy Yozu, followed by the generation of Yozu Hedda. Hedda Layi was the eldest son and he settled at Shuohxuolievu. This is the genealogy of the Vazha family.

The generation of Wondi Amgo was followed by the generation of Amgo Lemgo, followed by the generation of Lemgo Lesi, followed by the generation of Lesi Hnegge, followed by the generation of Hnegge Ali, followed by the generation of Ali Amy, followed by the generation of the nine sons of Amy.

Amy Wozzi was the eldest.

The generation of Amy Shepur settled at Pochelievu.

The generation of Amy Shelu settled at Vajji Lievu.

The generation of Amy Ahle settled at Voviejjomo.

The generation of Amy Shezur settled at Yoyoulijo.

The generation of Amy Shepur was followed by the generation of Shepur Uojuo, followed by the generation of eight sons of Uojuo.

Uojuo Woti was the eldest.

The generation of Woti Libby was followed by the generation of Libby Liyi, followed by the generation of Liyi Chashu, followed by the generation of Chashu Jjihuo, followed by the generation of Jjihuo Kebbi, followed by the generation of Kebbi Jjizo, followed by the generation of Jjizo Vofu, followed by the generation of Vofu Shepu, followed by the generation of Shepu Lurcu of which Lurcu Shyha was the eldest son.

He settled at Zziyoladda.

This is the genealogy of the Lohxo family.

The generation of Ddiwo Ddini was followed by the generation of Ddini Hlyrni, followed by the generation of Hlyrni Yoho, followed by the generation of Yoho Suolo, followed by the generation of Suolo Bbu Ani, followed by the generation of Ani Jjimge, followed by the generation of Jjimge Shabo, followed by

the generation of Shabo Sheza, followed by the generation of Sheza Legge, followed by the generation of Legge Woyi, followed by the generation of Woyi Luge, followed by the generation of Luge Shuobi, followed by the generation of Shuobi Nzynyie, followed by the generation of Nzynyie Lemo, followed by the generation of Lemo Jodda, followed by the generation of Jodda Tihxa of which Tihxa Muzzi was the eldest son.

He settled at Vabbulietuo.

This is the genealogy of the Lovu family.

The generation of Lapu Shequ was followed by the generation of Shequ Shejje, followed by the generation of Shejje Abbo, followed by the generation of the five sons of Abbo, followed by the generation of Abbo Jjige, followed by the generation of Jjige Jjisho, followed by the generation of Jjisho Voqy, followed by the generation of Voqy Ati, followed by the generation of Ati Ache which settled at Pohxoladda.

This is the genealogy of the Ggojy family.

The generation of Shejje Zajjie was followed by the generation of Zajjie Legge, followed by the generation of Legge Viwe, followed by the generation of Viwe Viwa, followed by the generation of Viwa Nyipu, followed by the generation of Nyipu Oshyr, followed by the generation of the six sons of Oshyr. the generation of Oshyr Hnamgumgu was followed by the generation of Hnamgumgu Bbupo, followed by the generation of Bbupo Luzu, followed by the generation of Luzu Nirra, followed by the generation of Nirra Aly, followed by the generation of Aly Viho, followed by the generation of Viho Shyzzur, followed by the generation of Shyzzur Quho, followed by

the generation of Quho Shypo of which Shypo Ddayi was the eldest son. He settled at Gavuladda. This is the genealogy of the Ssenyi Oshyr family.

The generation of Jjihmy Muvu was followed by the generation of Muvu Vubbur, followed by the generation of Vubbur Vuma, followed by the generation of Vuma Lovu, followed by the generation of Lovu Azzi, followed by the generation of Azzi Moni, followed by the generation of Moni Madda, followed by the generation of Madda Bige, followed by the generation of Bige Lahni, followed by the generation of Lahni Yondi, followed by the generation of Yondi Yoly, followed by the generation of Yoly Yozhy, followed by the generation of Yozhy Yogo, followed by the generation of Yogo Kenyo, followed by the generation of Kenyo Nzyzzur, followed by the generation of Nzyzzur Bihlur, followed by the generation of Bihlur Binry, followed by the generation of Binry Puvu, followed by the generation of Puvu Azzur, followed by the generation of Azzur Wopu, followed by the generation of the seven sons of Wopu. The generation of Wopu Ake was followed by the generation of Ake Lurzy, followed by the generation of Lurzy Zyrdda, followed by the generation of Zyrdda Zyzy, followed by the generation of Zyzy Shoggu, followed by the generation of Shoggu Jjihxo, followed by the generation of Jjihxo Bburjie, followed by the generation of Bburjie Adur, followed by the generation of Adur Jjishy, followed by the generation of Jjishy Gitu which settled at Limuzhuhxi.

The generation of Wopu Ssehxo was followed by the generation of Ssehxo Jjiyie, followed by the generation of Jjiyie Yiegg, followed by

the generation of Yiegu Lyzi, followed by the generation of Lyzi Shuotu, followed by the generation of Shuotu Aly, followed by the generation of Aly Bbugo, followed by the generation of Bbugo Amy, followed by the generation of Amy Niqo, followed by the generation of Niqo Muga which settled at Symubbuyo.

This is the genealogy of the Ggahama family.

The generation of Bige Anre was followed by the generation of Anre Bburfur, followed by the generation of Bburfur Gebbu, followed by the generation of Gebbu Genuo, followed by the generation of Genuo Yobi, followed by the generation of Yobi Biessy, followed by the generation of the nine sons of the Biessy who settled at Shuoggaggajjy.

The generation of the Bissy Amy was followed by the generation of the Amy Nuogge, followed by the generation of the Nuogge Bite, followed by the generation of the Bite Anzi, followed by the generation of the Anzi Ayy which settled at Lurrylievur.

The generation of Yibi Lovu was followed by the generation of Lovu Aka, followed by the generation of Aka Gejji, followed by the generation of Gejji Lyrgur, followed by the generation of Lyrgur Shynyie, followed by the generation of Shynyie Hlyhxa, followed by the generation of Hlyhxa Dazzi settled at Chyhxolievu.

The generation of Lovu Ozzu was followed by the generation of Ozzu Yonyi, followed by the generation of Yonyi Hxiemga, followed by the generation of Hxiemga Qupo, followed by the generation of Qupo Shyyi, followed by the generation of Shyyi Dienuo, followed by the generation of Dienuo Nihly, followed by the generation of Nihly Bbosse which



settled at Nyiqielievu.

The generation of Jjihmy Owa was followed by the generation of Owa Alu, followed by the generation of Alu Kiekie, followed by the generation of Kiekie Bbywo, followed by the generation of Bbywo Byddie, followed by the generation of Byddie Bia, followed by the generation of Bia Su Lazzi, followed by the generation of Lazzi Gechy, followed by the generation of Gechy Geyi, followed by the generation of Geyi Gemgo, followed by the generation of Gemgo Azzy, followed by the generation of Azzy Yyli, followed by the generation of Yyli Cassi, followed by the generation of Cassi Hxieyi, followed by the generation of Hxieyi Ssenge, followed by the generation of Ssenge Yiegge, followed by the generation of Yiegge Hoge, followed by the generation of Hoge Vige, followed by the generation of Vige Ahle, followed by the generation of Ahle Nzytu, followed by the generation of Nzytu Tihxa which settled at Shuonuosapu.

The generation of Yyli Bizzy which was followed by the generation of Bizzy Bibbo, followed by the generation of Bibbo Ggabbo, followed by the generation of Ggabbo Biyie, followed by the generation of Biyie Sseci, followed by the generation of Sseci Hola, followed by the generation of Hola Shuogo, followed by the generation of Shuogo Mare, followed by the generation of Mare Tufu, followed by the generation of Tufu Nidda which settled at Xinziladda.

The generation of Yyli Jjizy was followed by the generation of Jjizy Jjibbo, followed by the generation of Jjibbo Bitu, followed by the generation of Bitu Ogggu, followed by the generation of Ogggu Ddivo, followed by the generation of Ddivo Amy, followed by

the generation of Amy Arre, followed by the generation of Arre Bivie, followed by the generation of Bivie Jjizha, followed by the generation of Jjizha Bburvie, followed by the generation of Bburvie Age, followed by the generation of Age Qidda, followed by the generation of Qidda Aqo, followed by the generation of Aqo Liwo, followed by the generation of Liwo Nzyggu which settled at Syyiloggu.

This is the genealogy of the Alunuo *bimo* family.<sup>7</sup>

The genealogy of the great *bimo* Asu Lazzi is included here.



## Appendix

### *The Book of Origins Contents with Tone Indicators*

Nuosu titles with tone indicators follow English and simplified Nuosu titles.

1. Genealogy of Sky / *Momu cy* (*Momu cyt*)
2. Genealogy of Earth / *Mudde cy* (*Muxdde cyt*)
3. Transformation of Sky and Earth / *Momu zzyqo cy* (*Momu zzyqot cyt*)
4. Genealogy of Lightning / *Murzyr cy* (*Murzyr cyt*)
5. Separation of Sky and Earth / *Muvu mudie po* (*Muvut muxdie pop*)
6. Great *Bimo* / *Awo Shubu* (*Awop Shutbu*)
7. Genealogy of Spirit Monkey / *Anyu Ddussy cy* (*Anyut Ddussyt cyt*)
8. Zhyge Alu / *Zhyge Alu* (*Zhyge Axlu*)
9. Shooting Down Suns and Moons / *Gge nbie hle nbie* (*Ggex nbie hlep nbie*)
10. Calling Out Single Sun and Single Moon / *Gge di hle di gu* (*Gge di hle di gu*)
11. Twelve Branches of Snow / *Vonre sse cinyi* (*Vonre sse cinyix*)
12. Genealogy of Shyly Wote / *Shyly Wote ssy* (*Shyply Wote ssy*)
13. Ozzu (Tibetan) Lineages / *Ozzu cy* (*Opzzup cyt*)
14. Ozzu (Tibetan) Migrations / *Ozzu muche* (*Opzzup muche*)
15. Hxiemga (Han) People's Lineage / *Hxiemga cy* (*Hxiemgat cyt*)
16. Hxiemga (Han) People's Migrations / *Hxiemga muche* (*Hxiemgat muche*)
17. Foreigners' Lineage / *Yiery cy* (*Yieryp cyt*)
18. Migrations of Foreigners / *Yiery muche* (*Yieryp muche*)
19. Nuosu Lineages / *Nuosu cy* (*Nuosu cyt*)
20. Emperor Vomu and Ni and Vi Genealogies / *Vomu Ni Vi cy* (*Vomu Nip Vi cyt*)
21. Genealogy of Ahuo / *Ahuo cy* (*Ahuo cyt*)
22. Migration of Ahuo / *Ahuo muche* (*Ahuo muche*)
23. Genealogy of Nzy Clan / *Nzyzzur pu* (*Nzyzzur pux*)
24. Highpoints of Migrations of Gguho / *Gguho cy bo* (*Gguho cyt bop*)

25. Migrations of Qonie / *Qonie cy bo (Qotnie cyt bop)*
26. Changes in Hxuo Villages / *Hxuoqo hxeqo (Hxuotqot hxeqot)*
27. Genealogy of Gguho / *Gguho cy (Gguho cyt)*
28. Migrations of Nine Sons of Gguho Durzhy Ddiwo / *Kurdie Gguho Durzhy Ddiwo sse ggu cy (Kurxdie Gguho Durzhyp Ddipwox sse ggu cyt)*
29. Genealogy of Qoni / *Qoni cy (Qotnip cyt)*

## Glossary

All terms are in Northern Yi (Nuosu) unless specified as Chinese (Ch). The Northern Yi words are given both without (as elsewhere in this volume) and with boldface tone indicators (syllables ending in **t**, **x**, or **p**) for specialists. (See also Appendix: *The Book of Origins* Contents with Tone Indicators.)

- bai jiu (Ch): commercial alcohol  
bbopa: oral origin stories  
bbopa teyy / bbopa **tepyy**: written origin stories  
bbudde: folktale  
bburma: Yi script  
bimo / bimox: folk priest  
bimo teyy / bimox **tepyy**: written texts used by bimo priests  
bisse: apprentice bimo  
Cuan wen (Ch): Cuan script; a name for early Yi script  
cy / **cyt**: genealogy  
cyvi / **cytvi**: patrilineal clan  
Dduzi / Ddut zi: Torch Festival  
*Hmamu teyy / Hmatmu **tepyy**: Book of Teachings*  
*Hnewo teyy / Hnewo **tepyy**: Book of Origins*  
Hxiemga / Hxiemgat: Han people  
gaitu guiliu (Ch): system in Ming and Qing that sought to replace native rulers  
gaxy: slave caste  
Gefi / **Gepfi**: life spirit  
jin (Ch): Chinese measurement of about 1.1 pounds  
kenre / **kepnp**: oral poetry riff  
kevie: splendid hunting dogs  
long shulin (Ch): dragon tree forests; sacred groves  
maddu: soul vessel  
mgajie / mgajie: lower-caste serfs  
monyi / **mopnyit**: female shaman (also called nimu / **nipmu**)  
ndeggu / **ndepggup**: conflict arbitrator  
Ni / **Nip**: ancient name for Yi  
Nimu cobo / **Nipmu** cobo: rite for directing soul to land of ancestors  
nuoho / nuohop: upper-caste Nuosu (Black Nuosu)  
Nuosu: subgroup of Yi ethnic group  
Nuosuhxo: northern Yi language  
nzymo (*nzy*): elite ruling class caste  
Ozzu / **Opzzup**: local Tibetan groups  
quho / quhox: serf caste (White Nuosu)

- shaoshu minzu (Ch): ethnic minority group(s)
- Shuo: old word for what are likely Han people
- shuoma / shuoxma: varieties of rhododendron
- sunyi / sunyit: male shaman
- tian gou (Ch): mythological dog that eats the sun
- tusi (Ch): government-appointed native leader
- vala / vapla: fringed wool cloaks
- vazyrhli: antiphonal song and dance performed by young male singers
- vondi / vondit: creatures with claws, dangling digits
- vonre sse cinyi / vonre sse cinyix: twelve sorts of flora and fauna transformed from red snow
- voma / vopmat (Ch: *yuangen*): turnip
- Xinan Yizhi* (Ch): Chronicles of the Southwest Yi
- Yiery: name in the epic text for “foreigners”
- Yiwen (Ch): Yi script
- Yizu (Ch): Yi ethnic group
- yy yyr: sacred grass

## Notes

### PREFACE

- 1 “Aku Wuwu” is the standard Chinese *pinyin* romanized version of his Nuosu Yi name, which (including the tone indicators) is Aku Vvyv / Aḽkḽp Vytvy (the latter including the tone indicators of Northern Yi, explained in the pronunciation guide). Aku’s official Chinese name is Luo Qingchun.

### INTRODUCTION

- 1 See Glotfelty and Fromm 1996; Garrard 2011; and Thornber 2012.
- 2 The following sections provide background on *The Book of Origins*, a Nuosu tradition that exists in a dynamic interplay between oral performance and written formats. Much of the information on local culture is drawn from Aku Wuwu’s personal experiences growing up in the Liangshan region, and our mutual fieldwork with dozens of local tradition-bearers that took place on yearly fieldtrips to the Liangshan area from 2004 to 2015. This introduction also draws heavily on the work of many other scholars and folklorists, particularly Lin Yaohua (Lin Yueh-hua), whose cultural survey of the Nuosu was made in the early 1940s, and more recent work of Bamo Qubumo, Bamo Ayi, Ma Erzi, Stevan Harrell, Thomas Heberer, Ann Maxwell Hill, and others.
- 3 Wu Gu 2001; Harrell 2001, 84–90; Herman 2007, 19–21.
- 4 Genome studies indicate complex genetic relationships of ethnic groups in southwest China with other areas of Asia (Lin et al. 2010).
- 5 See Harrell 2001, 57–60; Hill and Diehl 2001, 52.
- 6 See Lin 1961, 41–47, 111; Harrell 2001, 91–96; Hill and Diehl 2001, 55–60; Ma 2001, 81; Bamo Qubumo 2001, 454; Heberer 2014, 26–27.
- 7 Bamo Ayi 1994, 1–4; Li Yongxiang 2001, 135–37; Mueggler 2001, 5–6; Mueggler 2017, 14–15.



- 8 Chen, Bian, and Li 1985; Li Li 1994; Bamo Qubumo 2000; Bamo Ayi 2001; Luo 2002; Bamo Qubumo 2003; Bradley 2001, 206–12; Huang 2003, 26–49; Shama Layi 2004, 120–22; Zuo 2006; Lu and Hu 2016, 204–6.
- 9 Bender and Mair 2011, 7–11; Bender 2012; Foley 2002, 22–23.
- 10 Shi 2006; Pu 2006; Wang and Chen 2014.
- 11 Huang 1993, 9–48; Zhongguo Yiwen shufa 1998, 1–17; Ding, Wang, and Li 1998, 114.
- 12 Kang et al. 1997, 45n1, 92n2; Huang 2003, 175–81; Shama Layi 2010, 152n2.
- 13 Thousands of traditional Yi texts reside in script and digital formats in archives around the world. The Cultural Palace of Nationalities (Minzu wenhua guan) in Beijing has a collection, as does the ancient scripts museum on the campus of the Central Minzu University. Along with a significant collection of Tibetan texts, the Southwest Minzu University in Chengdu, Sichuan, has a large archive of Yi texts. There are also holdings at local research centers in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Sichuan. Significant collections are housed at Cambridge University, Harvard University, and other locations outside China.
- 14 In recent years new contexts for epic performance have emerged. These include recited passages by Aku Wuwu and other poets at poetry readings in China and abroad, recitals in college classrooms by Nuosu professors or invited tradition-bearers, recitals of portions of the epics by *bimo* for groups of scholars at international conferences, and performances by Yi college students during poetry readings at high-end bookstores in Chengdu. In 2005, more than sixty *bimo* participated in ritual reenactments at the International Yi Studies Conference held in Meigu County. Such events draw attention to both transmitters of the tradition as well as to the epic itself.
- 15 The major devices and structures that make the text a powerful poetic medium are explored in the following paragraphs, drawing on terminology and interpretive strategies from the performance school of folkloristics and related approaches to epic literature (Bauman 1977; Toelken 1996; Bamo Qubumo 2003, 160–92; Honko 2000; Webster 2006).
- 16 Harrell 2001, 84–85; Herman 2007, 24–38; Whitaker 2008.
- 17 Ma, Liang, and Zhang (1992, 146–74) briefly introduce many epic narratives from all across southern China that include portions about the origins of humans and subsequent migrations. For information on migration accounts collected among Nagas in North East India, see Shimray (1985, 18); and Vashum (2000, 22). See Thohe Pou (2006) for a digital source with charts.
- 18 It is fascinating that many of Lin Yaohua's observations on the daunting geographical and unique social features of Liangshan resonate with descriptions in *The Book of Origins*, including overlooks, dense forests, precipitous trails, and mixed communities of Yi and Han (Lin 1961, 2–25).

#### 4. GENEALOGY OF LIGHTNING / *MURZYR CY*

- 1 “Genealogy of Lightning” does not have a title. The editors have added a title here for stylistic conformity. This is the first of many appearances of lightning in *The Book of Origins*. Lightning storms are common in the Liangshan Mountains, and lightning appears in many other traditional narratives. The mythic culture-hero Zhyge Alu, introduced in part 8, is said to have used a copper trident and copper net to tame lightning that was striking people’s indoor cooking fires. Mueggler (2017, 44–46, 88–89) provides information on beliefs about the “god of lightning” from Yi (Lolopo subgroup) in northern Yunnan, noting that the god “claims the soul at the moment of death,” and the living relatives must appease it to allow the soul to go on its journey.
- 2 This line has a meaning similar to that of “beyond the blue sky” in English.

#### 5. SEPARATION OF SKY AND EARTH / *MUVU MUDIE PO*

- 1 *Sysse* has the meaning of “a son who dies and lives again,” or generally just “spirit.”
- 2 In this tradition, the source of all rivers is in the north, and their estuaries are in the south. Rivers figure in the origin and migration accounts of many peoples of the Eastern Himalayas.
- 3 This sentence exhibits an omniscient voice that employs a common rhetorical pattern of, “If not . . . , then must . . .” This device appears elsewhere in the poem. This and other sorts of shifts in narrative point of view occur quite frequently in the text, often with no foregrounding. These features may also reflect the written medium, which exists in relation to a more fluid tradition of oral performance.
- 4 This line does not appear in the Jjivot text. It is reconstructed here from the Feng (1986, 8) version. The line may have been omitted when an earlier version was copied.
- 5 The metal balls (understood as giant metallic rocks) were put in place to keep the earth from rising up; the pillars were erected to keep the sky from falling.
- 6 The ancestral grounds are the site of the activities of the earliest mythic ancestors of the Yi.
- 7 Another name for the being who is mentioned in the previous line.
- 8 The meaning of these lines is that the gods went into action.
- 9 Hoes with long wooden handles and steel heads are still important implements for working earth in the rural areas.

## 6. GREAT BIMO / AWO SHUBU

- 1 Horses with supernatural powers, including the ability to fly and even speak, are part of the folklore of many peoples from Mongolia through Tibet. Another “heavenly steed” appears later in the *Hnewo*, as a companion of the mythic culture-hero Zhyge Alu. In drawings by *bimo* and in sculptures and portraits by contemporary artists, Zhyge Alu is often depicted with his horse. In part 12, the daughter of the sky god brings horses to earth for use by the Nuosu. Traditionally, small horses were used by the Yi and other upland peoples, such as the Miao.
- 2 These ritual instruments are still in use by Nuosu *bimo* priests. The *vytu* is a bamboo tube, described as an arrow container; one end is carved like a bear’s mouth (Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000, 52–54).
- 3 The Nuosu word *sho* refers to many types of fir trees (*Abies*) and spruces (*Picea*) found in southwest China. These tall, straight trees appear frequently in Nuosu lore. Numerous deer of several species appear in *The Book of Origins*.
- 4 Here, as elsewhere, “nine” means “many.” Numerous grasses, some with ceremonial usages, grow in the Liangshan area and appear throughout the narrative.
- 5 A kind of small bird or sparrow (N: *jusse* or *zyju*; Ch: *yunqie*).
- 6 Refers to a kind of insect.

## 7. GENEALOGY OF SPIRIT MONKEY / ANYU DDUSSY CY

- 1 This being is in the form of a monkey. In some versions, he is called Anyu Jjussy or other names.
- 2 The sacred Turlur Mountain often appears in Nuosu myth and folk literature.
- 3 Purification ceremonies held at the four corners of the house show the importance of directionality and boundaries in traditional thinking. In part 12, the Bbuvu “drilled holes in the foundation of Hxuo’s house,” in an instance of rivalry and sabotage that helped break the links between sky and earth.
- 4 The seven *shanyie* stars are known as the “Seven Sisters” (*qi jiemei*) in Chinese and as the “Big Dipper” in the West. The *chyku* stars are a constellation of six stars. Constellations mentioned below are made up of the number of stars indicated. Many constellations and individual stars are identified in Yi astronomy, although many names in *The Book of Origins* are now obscure.
- 5 Chickens figure prominently in many rituals conducted by *bimo* ritualists, and like other sacrifices serve as vehicles for ridding a person or situation of malevolent forces.

- 6 Ferns (Ch: *juecao*; *Pteridium aquilinum*) are used at New Years' time to scorch the hair off butchered pigs, done out of respect to the ancestors and the pig itself. The plant is regarded as ancient, and it has many uses among the rural folk, including a food source in the form of the young fiddleheads. *Paqiqu* grass, mentioned in subsequent lines, is also a common plant and is used to feed livestock.
- 7 Water deer (*Hydropotes inermis* [N: *le*]) are numinous creatures that often appear in Nuosu lore. They are sometimes shape-shifters. For instance, in the story "Origin of Ghosts," a water deer transforms into a beautiful woman with monstrous powers (Bamo Qubumo 2001).

#### 8. ZHYGE ALU / ZHYGE ALU

- 1 In Yi folklore, dragons usually live in water, though dragon lore varies among the Yi groups. In some Yi areas in Yunnan dragons are thought to inhabit forests near water sources and are the focus of many rituals to ensure adequate water supplies. In some Nuosu areas, a small legless lizard is identified as a dragon. In some Yi areas, snakes are regarded as immature dragons. The Nuosu words for mature fish, immature fish, and fish fry, are respectively *hxeshy*, *hxebbu*, and *hxesse*.
- 2 Honeybees are kept by many Yi groups, including the Nuosu. Hives are made of hollow logs and fastened under the eaves of a house. References to bees as messengers or go-betweeners are common in Yi folk literature.
- 3 Along with water deer, muntjac (N: *qi*; *Muntiacus*) are sometimes shape-shifters and considered as numinous beings. Magical powers are attributed to the musk of both deer.
- 4 Many places in *The Book of Origins* are associated with beings or legendary persons that are now obscure.
- 5 According to Jjivot Zopqu, this name refers to a famous beauty in the region.
- 6 This is likely a reference to a famous person named Bamboo Stalk, a resident of the area. This may be an incidental addition to the poem made by an earlier transcriber.
- 7 A mountain in Xide County.
- 8 This is likely a reference to Mount Lushan near Lake Qionghai in Xichang, the capital of the Liangshan Yi Nationality Autonomous Prefecture.
- 9 This is the only genealogy of a female person in this version of *The Book of Origins*.
- 10 The weaving implements and practices mentioned in these lines are still in use today, as explained in the introduction.
- 11 The eagles are likely male golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*). In later lines, hybrid "dragon-eagles" appear.
- 12 N: *Ndanuobbo*.

- 13 A “pervert ghost” (*shufi*) is thought to be the cause of abnormal pregnancies.
- 14 This is the most detailed depiction of *bimo* priests (of various ranks) and their accoutrements in the narrative.
- 15 Visitors enter at the “head” of the village and exit at the “tail.” Village structure may vary according to the terrain. One traditional village, surrounded by a low stone wall, is located on the road between Yuexi and Xichang in Liangshan Prefecture. The villagers claim the layout is in the shape of a fish—with a head, middle, and tail.
- 16 An apprentice *bimo* is known as a *bisse*.
- 17 The apprentice *bimo* is sitting on several layers of mats on top of a box of sacred scrolls. The bamboo mat (*nbiega nbiiedda*) would probably be similar to those used when fluffing cotton with a metal bowstring. The reference to a felt mat (*wonbo zziehly*) suggests ancient technological, if not cultural, links to more northern parts of China or Central Asia, where felting was once an integral part of nomadic life. Note that the muntjac and water deer are again mentioned, this time directly in association with a *bimo*. The top mat is made of loose tangles of deer hair, pulled or scraped off in the skinning process. The hair is loose because it lacks the meshing fibers of wool, which when wetted can be made into felt.
- 18 The description here seems to indicate the scriptures were, as is typical, constructed of folded sheets of paper sewn together with cord. Such texts have been collected in many Yi areas, along with scrolls and sewn volumes made up of single pages. Such scriptures are typically carried in mesh bags made of hemp string. The individual scrolls are often protected by thin cloth bags.
- 19 This willow branch (*zziego hxobbo*) is dipped in water during rituals and used by the *bimo* to tap one or more live chickens that will be sacrificed. *Gefi* is the life spirit, consisting of both male (*ge*) and female (*fi*) aspects. The spirit attaches itself to young women and “activates” each time a pregnancy occurs. Like the creatures at the beginning of this part, the *Gefi* is said to enjoy playing in forests and lakes (Bamo Ayi 2001, 125). A yellow hen is considered lucky, and today they are sacrificed and eaten at the birth of a child in the hope of having a healthy and prosperous life.
- 20 The uniqueness of the mythic future culture-hero Zhyge Alu is augured by the time and date of his birth and certain signs such as the white mist emitted by his mother and his unusually precocious actions after birth. His dragon lineage manifests after his mother sends him to live with the dragons and he immediately acculturates. The place he was born, Lu Ddi Ho, is the term for “southeast” and contains the word for “dragon” (*lu*). Likewise, the *lu* in Zhyge Alu’s name means dragon. Dragons are conceived of in various ways throughout the Yi areas. In Liangshan, illustrations in the *bimo* scriptures often show Zhyge Alu accompanied by a supernatural reptilian

called Bbahxa Ayuosse, a creature regarded as being related to dragons (Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000, 62–64). Some people we interviewed claim to have seen dragons, though the creatures were very small, in some cases lizard-like.

- 21 Compared to the pig pens, located near Nuosu homes, the areas where sheep and goats are grazed tend to be relatively far away from the settlements. These lines also describe the arming of the future mythic culture-hero with bows and arrows in various gradations of strength (along with other hunting/warrior accoutrements) in accordance with his age rank. The line “those conducting their affairs” refers to capable persons in the community who resolve problems and disputes.
- 22 The magic weapons, steeds, and hunting dogs resonate with similar images in heroic epics of the Mongol and Tibetan peoples to the west and north of the present Yi areas. The reference to the “homeland” (which here is Jotur-muggur) is the site of the original Yi peoples, who later divided into the Six Tribes and moved to various places in southwest China, including present-day Liangshan Prefecture. An alternate name for the original homeland is Zzyzypuvu. Some Yi scholars suggest the homeland was near the present city of Zhaotong in northeastern Yunnan. Such sites where peoples divide and migrate in different directions are found in the lore of many peoples in the Eastern Himalaya region, including Miao in Guizhou and Tangkul Nagas in Manipur and Nagaland, Northeast India. Boundary stones, sometimes with Yi and or Han engravings, have been located in some areas of southwest China once controlled by Nanzhao (thought to be founded by ancestors of the Yi peoples) and other ancient kingdoms (Wu Gu 2001, 25). Stone megaliths, for various purposes, are also found in parts of Southeast Asia and North East India (Marak and Jangkhomang 2012, 67–70).

#### 9. SHOOTING DOWN SUNS AND MOONS / GGE NBIE HLE NBIE

- 1 *Ndabbo* (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is one of several ferns known as *juecao* in Chinese.
- 2 The branches on the *vomosyo* shrub (*Tetrastigma formosanum*; Ch: *yan-pateng*) arch outward into the ground, and new suckers grow up from the tips.
- 3 The horse mulberry (N: *ji sy*; Ch: *masang*; *Coriaria sinica*). It appears in the myths of some other peoples of southwest China. For instance, in the creation epics of the Miao people from southeast Guizhou, the hero Hsang Sa (“Hsangb Sax” with tone indicators used in Miao Romanization in southeast Guizhou) also stands in the top of a horse mulberry to shoot down the extra suns—and the tree was later punished for its complicity, resulting in its short stature (Bender 2006, 66–70). In the Yi version, Zhyge

Alu finally succeeds in his task by standing in the top of a fir tree, which actually benefits from the association and is praised for its future use to humankind. Again, Turlur Mountain—whose whereabouts is presently unknown—is the major mountain in the mythic world of the narrative.

4 Horseflies are called *yomu*.

5 This episode of Zhyge Alu “downsizing” the insects is often counted as among his greatest contributions. Evidence of giant creatures abound in southwest China, and both Sichuan and Yunnan are well-known for their dinosaur excavations. It is interesting to speculate about the relation—if any—between dinosaur fossils and the imagery of insects and dragons in Yi folk imagination. Some local people are known to have found dinosaur bones and teeth, which they keep as curiosities.

#### 10. CALLING OUT SINGLE SUN AND SINGLE MOON / *GGE DI HLE DI GU*

1 Bake Arra is a mythical character remarkable for his unusual dress and for appearing in this epoch when the sun and moon were hiding. These lines also relate the folk idea that a needle is associated with the “eye” of the sun, reveal the origins of certain traits of roosters, and tell of a white dog that barks at the sun. The rooster in the myth is very powerful and can resist forces from every direction. Chickens are widely used in rituals in southwest China. The idea of a “heavenly/celestial dog” (Ch: *tian gou*) that eats the sun during eclipses is common in the folklore in Sichuan. This passage is pivotal in the epics, as once the sun and moon came out of hiding, life as we know it could flourish on earth.

#### 11. TWELVE BRANCHES OF SNOW / *VONRE SSE CINYI*

- 1 The name of this magic object is *nijju*; the place-name is obscure.
- 2 The literal phrasing is “fathers,” though carrying the meaning of parents, or ancestors.
- 3 This is a reference to an early species of human—literally the “fir tree sons.” Yi myths from other areas also recount former ages of “protohumans” or anthropomorphs. In Chuxiong Prefecture in Yunnan, the epic *Chamu* of the Nisupo Yi describes the ages of the single-eyed people, the protruding-eyed people, and finally the horizontal-eyed people (Guo and Tao 2009, 16–81). *Cuotaji*, a type of folk drama (Ch: *nuo*) from the Yi of eastern Guzhou, relates the various stages in human evolution from monkeys and other anthropomorphs (Qu, Xu, and Schechner 1989, 104). Various forms of *nuo* drama have been documented in southern China among several ethnic groups, one common feature being the use of wooden masks.

- 4 The sometimes short-tempered sky spirit is understood as living with his family in a palace in the sky. He seems to spend quite a bit of time looking down on the world below, though he does not have direct control over the activities there. In the following passages, the origins of many things, including the shape of spiders, are explained.
- 5 His wife was losing her sight, possibly to cataracts. This ailment is common in the higher uplands of Asia.
- 6 Spiders thereafter have only heads and tails. Because of their appearance in *The Book of Origins*, it is against tradition to kill spiders in Nuosu homes.
- 7 It is understood here that the magpies were flung off by the *bimo*'s guardian spirit.
- 8 Refers to the Ssussevoqe anthropomorphs described above.
- 9 The following passages contain many sexual metaphors and deal with the mysteries of pregnancy, including the life-bringing *Gefi* spirit.
- 10 Taboos are divided between white and black. A common, or white, violation, is when a woman passes over rather than around a hearth. A serious, or black, violation, would be eating dog meat or killing a relative. In this passage the *bimo* had to perform the rituals in order for the creatures to evolve into real humans.
- 11 The cypress (N: *shubo*; Ch: *baishu*; Cupressaceae) appears frequently in Yi traditional lore. The tree is regarded as sacred and is used by *bimo* in certain rituals. Fir trees (N: *ssubo*; Ch: *shanshu*; Abies) likewise are sacred and highly regarded trees. These trees also have utilitarian uses in architecture. Fir shingles are used to cover some rooftops.
- 12 *Punuo* grass (Ch: *changpu*; *Acorus gramineus*) has medicinal value, especially for curing loose bowels. It is also used by Han people in parts of Sichuan to bathe children during the Dragon Boat (Ch: *duanwu*) festival in late spring in order to ward off disease and bring good luck.
- 13 Some Nuosu speak of having seen a small green frog that is thought to bring luck into the home.
- 14 Local officials or overlords (Ch: *tusi*) were appointed by the imperial government and ruled many parts of southwest China in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Thus, a *tusi* dragon is the most powerful of (local) dragons. The Nuosu term *nzymo*, or simply *nzy*, refers to the upper ruling caste from which *tusi* officials were recruited. *Tusi* were part of a system whereby the Chinese imperial government used local leaders to control ethnic minority areas in southwest China (Whitaker 2008). The role was gradually phased out in the Qing dynasty as the ethnic areas came under direct government control by officials from outside.
- 15 Possibly Lake Dianchi in Kunming, Yunnan.
- 16 A small hawk or kestrel (Ch: *yao*). The exact species represented in the epic is unclear.



- 17 This is likely a reference to the Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*). A stable family unit consists of a mother and two cubs (Domico 1988).
- 18 Monkeys in southwest China include Tibetan macaques (*Macaca thibetana*) and the threatened golden snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus roxellana*).
- 19 The sparrow is known as *jusse* or *zyju* in Nuosu. The Chinese term *yunque* can refer to various sparrows.
- 20 The above passages enumerate many of the native species once common in parts of Sichuan and surrounding areas. However, horses are an example of non-native domesticated creatures that occasionally appear in *The Book of Origins*.
- 21 The following story of the waters of wisdom and dullness and the relation to human speech is a very important point in the myth narrative. It marks the end of the era when all creatures could speak to each other.
- 22 *Shuoma* is the Nuosu name for a variety of flowers in the huge rhododendron genus. The flowers frequently appear in Yi folk literature, especially in reference to women's beauty. There is much folklore about the flowers, including *bimo* chants.
- 23 The wooden eating bowls and spoons, as a set, are known as *kurbbur iesa*.
- 24 Although crows are regarded as intelligent, they are seen as harbingers of evil and are much disliked by the Nuosu.

## 12. GENEALOGY OF SHYLY WOTE / SHYLY WOTE SSY

- 1 All of the men mentioned above are considered to be sons of the early ancestor Shyly. This episode is the basis upon which Chinese scholars have suggested that in fairly recent times the Yi were matrilineal, in an age when men had no fathers and had to search for them. Many customs surrounding marriage are attributed to events portrayed in this part.
- 2 The term "Gni" (or "Ni"), is an early name for the Yi and often appears in texts from Guizhou. It appears occasionally throughout this version of *The Book of Origins*. In this context, the term refers to the Nuosu, and we have used the term "Nuosu" in the translation.
- 3 In this context, "Han" is a term for the local groups of Han Chinese people. The Nuosu name is "Hxiemga," a term that will appear later in the parts narrating the migrations after the great flood. A more traditional name, "Shuo" (which literally means slaves, or those without clans), also appears in the latter part of the text.
- 4 The fruits mentioned in these lines are edible.
- 5 As explained in the introduction, the Nuosu word for the local ruler known by the Han Chinese term "*tusi*" is *nzymo*, or simply *nzy*.
- 6 A person from "down the road" is not of the same social standing. The questions posed by the *nzymo*'s daughter have echoes in the "riddling song"

(Ch: *pange*) traditions common in southwest China. It is interesting to note that Shyly Wote can solve these questions only with aid from his youngest sister. In the Tibetan epic of Gesar, the hero often relies on the aid of his three celestial sisters to shepherd him through difficulty (Hummel 1974, 5–6).

- 7 This line and the next are not part of Jjivot's version. The lines have been reconstructed following the Feng (1986) version and the context of the narrative.
- 8 Various types of local drama collectively known as *nuo* were historically part of many cultures in southern China, including some groups of Yi. In many cases wooden masks were used by the performers. In some versions of the riddle, the answer is "foxes."
- 9 In other words, the pheasant cannot make sounds like a domesticated chicken.
- 10 These containers, which hold one of a person's souls, are kept in the home for a certain length of time (determined by a *bimo*) until they are ritually interred in mountain crags.
- 11 Certain Asian deer, particularly roe deer (*Capreolus*) and muntjac, have several inches of skin on the pedicles (bases) of the antlers.
- 12 The war armor is a sort of carapace comprised of a top part covering the breast and upper back made of pieces of leather, and a sort of waist-skirt of laminated rectangles of leather, not unlike Mongol and Japanese samurai armor (Bottomley 2017, 184). Certain parts of an animal's hide are thinner or thicker and thus used in making particular parts of the armor. A part of a boar's neck is especially thick and useful in making warrior's armor.
- 13 The knee skin of bovines is cuplike when properly dried and could be used to form the flanges on the rear of the war carapace or other parts. In various places around the globe, such knee skins were once used to protect the firing mechanisms of flintlock firearms from inclement weather.
- 14 Several types of sheep and goats are kept by Yi herders, and many meanings are associated with the animals. Goats are sometimes said to represent the Han people (Hxiemga) while the noble sheep are associated with the honorable traits of the Nuosu. Thus, when ritual sacrifices are made, goats may be killed with a knife, but sheep must be smothered by gripping their mouth and nostrils. (Among the ancient northern steppe cultures, nobles sentenced to death were smothered in carpets so as not to spill their blood.)
- 15 Shyly must consult with his sister Nyingemo Ala about the betrothal gifts as it was unseemly for a bride, especially a noble, to discuss these details. The number of the betrothal gifts is a sign of the status of a bride's clan. The *nzymo*'s daughter, of course, has an extremely high status. It is interesting that Shyly's sister innovates the templates of propriety for this first marriage, requiring that persons of certain social status and enacting

certain roles be given proper treatment and face in what is both a social and economic dynamic. These rules of propriety still factor prominently in Nuosu weddings today.

- 16 As explained in the introduction, the soul of a deceased parent is kept in a small vessel made of bamboo hung on a household wall. All other things aside, the care, placement, and ultimate disposal of the vessel mark the emphasis on kin relations in Nuosu society, as Nyingemo Ala's directions to Shyly exemplify. Thus, in this first marriage after the era of "no fathers," Shyly must understand how his future lineage will be charted and maintained.
- 17 These lines explain the origin of the custom of hanging the bamboo soul containers in the home, after which they are eventually interred in crags in the mountains.
- 18 These lines refer to the origin of customs concerning treatment of guests and helpers at weddings. Those sitting are elders, who have higher status; those standing are younger or less connected to the family. As this was the first couple to marry, the proscriptions became guidelines for future generations, down to today.
- 19 The lines above outline social hierarchies and protocols. The *nzy*'s daughter is saying in an indirect way that Shyly Wote, who is referred to as "cousin of the Legge family," is of suitable background and wealth to marry her, despite being from "down the road." The number and type of livestock used in specific situations (especially involving honored guests) are still of great importance today. Large numbers of livestock may be butchered during festivals and life cycle events like weddings and funerals that involve all relatives and huge numbers of guests from within the surrounding areas.
- 20 The layers of the mat recall the seat of the *bimo* in an earlier part of the epic and may indicate high social status.
- 21 In other words, the relationship will not have problems.
- 22 These lines specifically mention the *Hnewo* in an instance of reflexivity that helps identify the text and secure its place in ritual, historical, and genealogical discourse.
- 23 The above lines indicate Shyly's indifference and haughtiness—traits not well thought of by the Nuosu. Once he tempered his proud behavior, he was assimilated into the group. The cloaks are of favored colors, black signifying solemnity, white as purity, blue as vitality. The pairs of creatures offered him reflect the pairing of humans in a wedding.
- 24 This reference is obscure. Nuosu males traditionally wore a coiled braid, or "warrior's horn" (Harrell, Bamo, and Ma 2000, 20–21), above the forehead, thought to be the locus of the soul. About 500 hundred miles east of the Nuosu areas, in the Arunachal Pradesh state of Northeast India, is a Tibeto-Burman-speaking people known as the Apatani. Apatani men traditionally placed pointed metal skewers in the knotted braids above their

- foreheads (Blackburn 2010, 145). Based on the reference in the text, a similar custom may have once been practiced in some Yi areas. Also, wooden or metal frames or skewers have been a part of local hairdos in many areas of the southwest. An extreme example is the huge wooden “buffalo horn”-shaped frames used by Miao women in Suoga village, southwest Guizhou.
- 25 The woods mentioned in these lines are traditionally used to make specific parts of plows. The *shuoma* wood is cut from large rhododendron trees. *Mgehni* is a species of paperbark cherry (the exact scientific name is yet to be determined) that is also used to make large containers, the trunks being of greater circumference than the *shuoma* trees.
  - 26 The elder in black clothes is an ancestor who has come from the sky to warn the people of the impending disaster launched by the sky god Ngeti Gunzy.
  - 27 The elder in black clothes then relates the story behind the sky god’s anger and warns of a great flood that will destroy the earth. Only the kindhearted third son survives. Comparable flood stories abound in Chinese mythology, especially in local traditions of southwest China (An, Yang, and Turner 2008, 21–24).
  - 28 Livestock must be fed salt to keep them healthy. The salt is usually mixed with water in a wooden trough. Goats and sheep are also led to natural salt licks in the mountains.
  - 29 As noted in the introduction, the *voma* turnip is used as a staple food, and possibly predates the potato as a root crop.
  - 30 An obscure bird name.
  - 31 It is unclear where the mountain is located.
  - 32 As in the Chinese lunar calendar, animals correspond to months, days, and segments of the day in traditional Yi solar and lunar calendars.
  - 33 The items were kept inside so that the youngest son’s vessel would not sink and to provide provisions during the flood.
  - 34 The old man in black clothes tells the kindhearted third son to place the parched flour and grain inside the vessel in order to serve as provisions during the flood and as seed stock thereafter. The other brothers were drowned by the weight of the metal in their beds.
  - 35 In these lines, the youngest son’s name is repeated in two different forms in a parallel formula.
  - 36 As mentioned elsewhere, chickens are important sources of food and are used in many Yi rituals. Eggs are used to diagnose the causes of illness.
  - 37 The sky god looks down onto the flooded earth and sees wild and domestic animals clinging to life in various places. Only one plant, a stalk of hemp, survives.
  - 38 As noted in the introduction, there are taboos against killing frogs and snakes, though many Nuosu today consider crows as harbingers of ill luck.
  - 39 This may refer to the custom of using dried grass found in animal dens as tinder.

- 40 Tobacco is another crop introduced from the Americas. Today it is an important cash crop in many Yi communities in southwest China.
- 41 Various creatures bonded with Jjumu Vuvu after he rescued them from the flood. This is the reason for the taboo against killing frogs and snakes.
- 42 This is a reference to Ngeti Gunzy's daughter. The god is referred to as a *tusi*, the same term once used for local rulers appointed by the Imperial government. In these passages, *tusi* alternates with the Nuosu term *nzymo*, meaning elite ruler.
- 43 Here the number twelve means "many."
- 44 Probably a reference to a lizard.
- 45 The clever frog made him well and ill in turn in order to convince him to marry off his daughter.
- 46 Names for the soul container include *maddu*, *hieqy* (rat scat), and *ni*. The cures in the previous lines are folk remedies still in use.
- 47 In some instances, the text says heaven and earth were joined by metal columns; in other places, the term "metal threads" is used, which may refer to how the pillars were raised. In any case, iron and gold once joined heaven and earth.
- 48 The "turnip" here is the bulbous tuber (N: *voma*; Ch: *yuangen*) common in the Nuosu diet. Heavy, because of high water content, they are not filling.
- 49 In the sky, hemp seeds can be distilled for alcohol, but after the curse, not on earth.
- 50 "Sweet" or common buckwheat (N: *mgeqy*; *Fagopyrum esculentum*) is regarded as being nutritionally inferior to bitter or "black" buckwheat (N: *mganuo*; *Fagopyrum tataricum*), which is the desired strain. Both are used to make a variety of steamed or baked cakes. It is said that sweet buckwheat cakes are not filling. The characteristics of the two buckweats are often used in love songs to describe a lover's attributes.
- 51 The reference to "wild food" indicates that horse meat is not considered as proper "domesticated" meat like pork or beef. According to Harrell (personal communication, 2015), it has hanging claws (in this case, dew claws) and is thus in the *vondi* category of animals that cannot be eaten. Hunted meat made up an occasional portion of the Nuosu diet, but there were taboos against killing and eating many sorts of animals.
- 52 This is an etiological story about why this species of pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) has red spots on the sides of its head.
- 53 Calabash gourds were used as storage containers for a variety of things, including foodstuffs and gunpowder. The calabash figures in many creation myths from southwest China, often as a vehicle for surviving a great flood (An, Yang, and Turner 2008, 21–24).
- 54 This is the most famous bird in Nuosu mythology. It is called *xiao baique* (little white sparrow) in Chinese. The exact species is unclear.
- 55 The sound of bursting bamboo is explosive.

- 56 The Tibetan peoples (Ozzu) in the Liangshan areas are also known as Xifan in Chinese, and as Ersu and other names in their own languages, which some scholars have classified as Qiangic rather than Tibetan, though opinions vary on where to place them in the Tibeto-Burman family (Wu 2006, 120–21). The Qiang (Ch: Qiangzu) are an official ethnic group living mostly in southwest China.
- 57 This expression representing a local Tibetan dialect and the following in Nuosu and Hxiemga languages are all exclamations made when touching something hot.
- 58 These people are regarded as groups presently designated as Han.
- 59 The “outer groups” refer to those groups that already migrated from the area, while the “inner groups” still live there. These lines relate that early on some groups left for another place.
- 60 The division between “black” and “white” Han may parallel the Nuosu idea of black as upper-caste (*nuoho*) and white as lower-caste (*qoho*). The settling of the black Han in a particular settlement might indicate a seat of power, with the white Han dispersed throughout the vicinity.
- 61 “Bbu” and “Hlur” are rendered as “beastly” by the suffix “*sse*.”
- 62 This passage seems to be a reenactment of the portioning of the waters of wisdom described at the end of part 11.

### 13. OZZU (TIBETAN) LINEAGES / OZZU CY

- 1 All of the following parts include long lists of genealogies, somewhat similar to the “begats” in the Christian Bible. The structure of these names, whether Ozzu, Hxiemga, Foreigner, or Nuosu, all follow the style seen in other Nuosu traditional texts. As Ma Erzi has explained, there are only a limited number of large Nuosu clans, but the names of the clans making up these large clans “are innumerable” (Ma 2001, 81). As can be seen in the following lists of names, part of a father’s name is linked to part of a son’s name. As Ma explains: “When one recites the genealogy, one ordinarily leaves out the clan name and the birth-order name, and uses only the third level [father’s name] of the system to link names together. In order to make a recitation easier and prevent omissions one can change this to a recitation in a linked fashion: Abo Ddezze—Ddezze Zuluo . . .,” etc. (2001, 92–93).

### 14. OZZU (TIBETAN) MIGRATIONS / OZZU MUCHE

- 1 In these lines, two terms, *ladda* and *yydda*, mean “valley.”

### 16. HXIEMGA (HAN) PEOPLE’S MIGRATIONS / HXIEMGA MUCHE

- 1 See part 12, note 60, concerning black and white Han.

17. FOREIGNERS' LINEAGE / *YIERY CY*

- 1 This lineage is unique to the Jjivot version of the text. Who these “foreigners” actually are is unclear, but the reference seems to be to a people who are neither Han, local Tibetan groups, nor Nuosu. As the next part shows, they are associated with what may be a golden dwelling or palace.

19. NUOSU LINEAGES / *NUOSU CY*

- 1 Emperor Ddibo Vomu is an obscure reference. It may refer to an early local ruler, warlord, or possibly a *tusi* official, of which there were many in south-west China in ages past.
- 2 The mention of a *lama* (a Tibetan monk) indicates that the Nuosu, though not practitioners, had at least a peripheral awareness of some version of Tibetan Buddhism and its adherents.
- 3 These lines seem to indicate chickens being sacrificed at the confluence of these rivers. One line, “yellow paired with yellow,” seems to have been omitted. It is reconstructed here based on the structure of the passage. White (*qu*) and yellow (*shy*) can also mean the precious metals silver and gold.

20. EMPEROR VOMU AND NI AND  
VI GENEALOGIES / *VOMU NI VI CY*

- 1 A structural multiform is repeated over and over in the verses of this part. The form begins by naming an era, then listing the places where local rulers governed, using variations on the pattern of “head,” “tail,” “left,” and “right,” often including specific place-names.
- 2 Sysse Dihni and Bake Arra are beings that appear in the earlier parts of *The Book of Origins*.
- 3 The graph representing the *vi* in this instance does not have the falling *p* tone marker as in the original Northern Yi title. This is an instance of Jjivot using a graph for its general sound value, reflecting the folk nature of the text.

23. GENEALOGY OF NZY CLAN / *NZYZZUR PU*

- 1 Here “Ni” and “Shuo,” respectively, mean “Yi (Nuosu)” and “Hxiemga,” presumably the people known today as Han.
- 2 This grass is called *punuo ry* in Nuosu.
- 3 The image of “bells” hanging from the tree may refer to pine cones, the sound of the wind in the trees, or icicles. The “silver garments” and “head ornaments” may refer to frost on the tree branches and ground.

- 4 Plows are needed to break the soil for planting crops. Plow beams, which hold the iron plowshares, must be made of hardwood. Tree trunks are carefully selected for strength and curvature in order to make plows that handle properly. See part 9, note 3 for more on horse mulberry.
- 5 This is a reference to a rite for calling back wandering souls of the ill. Only certain tree branches are used in the rite, though the species may vary. The “sumac” is also known as Chinese sumac (N: *posur*; Ch: *wubei*; *Rhus chinensis*). The gall nuts (Ch: *wubeizi*) of this small tree are used in herbal medicine.
- 6 According to present Nuosu custom, the spirit containers of the parents are kept in the youngest son’s home. This passage graphically highlights sibling rivalry and offers a script for dealing with family disputes in real life.
- 7 The respective positions correspond with the lower-class *quho* (white) *bimo*, the upper-class *nuoho* (black) *bimo*, and the apprentices (*bisse*), the latter of whom are assigned to sit in the least desirable spot.
- 8 The lines in this passage detail steps and accoutrements in various rites dealing with souls of the dead. This refers to waving about a small pine tree to gather up the soul at a cremation site; the pine then becomes a vessel where the spirit resides. Later in this passage, bamboo is used to make the soul vessel that is hung in the home, a common practice today. After a couple dies, the soul vessel (of whatever type) is deposited in mountain crags.
- 9 Again, the imagery has to do with frigid conditions in which flora is covered with ice.
- 10 At festivals like the midsummer Torch Festival (N: *Dduzi*; literally, Fire Festival), powdered pine resin is thrown onto blazing torches to make fiery bursts.
- 11 Two hands cupped together to hold liquid is a traditional form of measure.
- 12 In ancient times, Gguho and Qoni were elder and younger brothers, respectively. They formed two major moieties (which incorporate all sorts of clans) and migrated into the Liangshan regions. Many Nuosu in Liangshan are part of these clans.

#### 24. HIGHPOINTS OF MIGRATIONS OF GGUHO / GGUHO CY BO

- 1 *Nimu* is a name for female shamans. Today female shamans are often called *monyi*.
- 2 In some places people seek shade in trees, sometimes dallying there while making music by blowing on folded tree leaves, singing, or chatting.
- 3 These lines refer to some sort of canid, most likely the dhole (N: *hxele*; *Cuon alpinus*), also known as Asian wild dogs, which are native to parts of Sichuan.



- 4 As seen in several instances in the migration genealogies, stress is placed on constructing and reinforcing hierarchies that are still current in living memory. The appearance of the “high” and “low” in the text may in some ritual contexts have served to legitimize and explain the origins of the status quo.

25. MIGRATIONS OF QONIE / QONIE CY BO

- 1 Normally three kinds of animals (cow, goat/sheep, and pig) are used in major rituals.
- 2 Again, the colors refer to lower (white) and upper (black) social divisions.

26. CHANGES IN HXUO VILLAGES / HXUOQO HXEQO

- 1 Puhō Anzi was the father of the sons who fought against the spirit army. He sacrificed animals in a ritual. After his death his sons founded the Gguho and Qoni clans, the two major moieties in Liangshan, and they and their families quarreled over their father’s estate.
- 2 The lower road indicates those of lower social status, such as slaves.
- 3 This and the following rituals were held to resolve disputes, and each involved sacrificing and eating a cow.
- 4 Literally, the following lines all say “do not grow white.”
- 5 The term for clan groups is *cy*.
- 6 The directionality (left and right) may indicate points of entry into the Liangshan region from outside areas such as northeast Yunnan or Guizhou.

27. GENEALOGY OF GGUHO / GGUHO CY

- 1 The final “*nisse*” that is part of this and other names in the next two parts of the text means the person is a Yi and, in this context, a Nuosu. The word *ni* is an ancient word for “black.”
- 2 The inner and outer Gguho refer to the relation among various groups in the early settlements of the Gguho moiety.

28. MIGRATIONS OF NINE SONS OF GGUHO DURZHY  
DDIWO / KURDIE GGUHO DURZHY DDIWO SSE GGU CY

- 1 The multiform pattern used in this part relates how the nine sons of Durzhy Ddiwo migrate and find places for their respective lineages to settle. This pattern is used elsewhere in the migration accounts.
- 2 Shuo are Han troops of the era; possibly referring to the Han general Zhuge Liang’s incursions into and settling of the southwest territories early in the third century AD.

- 3 The names in this and the following lines refer to the dispensation of the various clan groups in the conflict. The Nuosu designations *nuoho*, *quho*, and *shuo sse* refer to upper, lower, and lowest classes of Yi.
- 4 Again, the “emperor” is likely a local or regional ruler. The nature of the *xuobbur* rite is to create harmony between the conflicting sides.
- 5 An illegitimate child stayed with its mother and was traditionally of lower social rank than its peers.
- 6 Qiesa is a clan name.
- 7 The record of a *bimo*’s line of descent is called *bibbu*.
- 8 *Nuoho* is literally “Black Group,” often understood as “Black Yi,” indicating an upper class.
- 9 Literally, the “Black Hxi.”
- 10 Alu is a family of Black Yi.

#### 29. GENEALOGY OF QONI / QONI CY

- 1 This seems to refer to a custom in which permission to marry was sought from paternal uncles.
- 2 A *nzy* is a native local ruler (often translated by the Chinese term *tusi*, meaning a government-appointed native official), whereas a *mo* is a judge-like official (both terms are shortened forms of *nzymo*).
- 3 *Ni* is a term similar to *nzy*, a kind of native local official.
- 4 The term *vaku* literally means “chicken thief.” This is an example of a Nuosu naming practice (see Ma 2001, 88–89).
- 5 The vultures were likely the common *Aegypius monachus*.
- 6 The Vazha and Lohxo families were both upper-class *nuoho* (“Black Yi”).
- 7 An upper-class *nuoho* family.



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