

# A Study on the Poetic Ethics Phenomenon of the ceremony of Dujie among the Yao Nationality in the Area of Dayaoshan

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**Abstract:** From the perspective of national cultural identity, this article through the study of the poetic ethics phenomenon of the Dujie, attempts to question what poetic ethics is and why the ethics is poetic in Dayaoshan. How the complex poetic ethics of the Yao nationality manifests in the ceremony of Dujie; aims to clarify the poetic thinking, poetic logic, and poetic wisdom contained in the poetic ethics phenomenon of the Dujie ceremony, and reveals how the Dujie ceremony inherits the national aesthetic cultural spirit and demonstrates the internal cultural generation mechanism of the national cultural identity.

**Keywords:** the Poetic Ethics; Dujie; Poetic survival; National cultural identity

## 1. Introduction

Among the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, the poetic ethics characteristics of the ceremony of Dujie are particularly prominent in the traditional society. Dujie is also called Duzhai. From the perspective of national cultural identity, Dujie is a ceremony that integrates aesthetic education and moral education, shared by the Yao nationality; is a vital aesthetic activity for understanding the poetic ethics of the Yao nationality; also is one of the behavioral expressions of the Yao nationality's ethics experience, in the area of Dayaoshan.

## 2. Sacred and secular: the poetic thinking of perfecting human relationship

The content of Dujie is basically the same among the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, Guangxi. It includes three aspects: one is to conduct ethical education, the other is to teach Taoism, and the third is to teach traditional aesthetic culture.

### 2.1 Beyond the ordinary and reach the realm of sages, able to be the taoist master

For the initiated, the purpose of Dujie is to make the ordained person "get rid of the 'vulgarity' 'Beyond the ordinary and reach the realm of sages'"<sup>[1]</sup>, "pursue advantages and avoid disadvantages, eliminate disasters and refuge"<sup>[2]</sup>, Enter the door and learn spells, be able to be the taoist master. Taoist master is the abbreviation of taoist and mage. The responsibilities of them is different. The former presides over the ceremonies of expelling diseases and eliminating disasters, while the latter presides over ceremonies such as funeral. The Taoist master is the ceremony leader of the family, "he can participate in and preside over various social ceremonies. Any man who has not passed the ceremony of Dujie loses this ability, and at the same time cannot become a full member of society. He does not have the right to attend the party, or even eat at the same table with people who have passed the ceremony of Dujie."<sup>[3]</sup>

For taoist master, Dujie is for 'alms giver prosper', 'for Taoism to have heirs inherit the cause of their predecessors', also for the inheritance of national ethical culture and national aesthetic culture.

For the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, many family ceremonies cannot be held without the participation of taoists master. The taoists master can keep people safe, eliminate disasters, cure diseases and save people, and bring good luck. The taoists master play an important role in the daily life of the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, and Dujie is the first step that must be taken to become a taoists master.

## 2.2 *Strengthen aesthetic will and inherit ethics experience*

Generally speaking, the target of Dujie is generally an unmarried man or a married unconceived man. They are between 13 and 15 years old. If his wife conceives but he has not yet passed Dujie, this man will forever lose the opportunity of Dujie.

That family that need to hold the ceremony of Dujie generally start preparing for the ceremony of Dujie in November or December of each year. First of all, a good day for holding the ceremony of Dujie is chosen by the parents or parents-in-law of the initiated. Secondly, a two-story bed should be prepared for the initiated at home, with new bedding on the bed, and drums and swords under the bed. Furthermore, new clothes need to be prepared for the initiated.

At the beginning of the ceremony, the initiated need to overcome many difficulties. He is not allowed to eat meat, wine, or oil. He can only eat white rice and sleep on a high bed. The initiated must learn to sing, dance and be a taoist master every day at home from those who have passed the Dujie. The initiated learn songs such as "The Song of Ten Commandments" and "Song of the Trial by Fire". They mainly learn to read and sing scriptures such as "Tao-tsang" "The Singing of Thor".

The initiated must learn to dance "gang bu dance". The ceremony of Dujie generally lasts for 5 days. It takes seven days for those who are over 15 years old to pass the ceremony of Dujie. On the last day of the ceremony, guests are to be treated with wine, and the initiated must dance to the male guest. After the dance, the initiated lie on a high bed to rest. Then, the male guest danced. Women are not allowed to dance, nor enter the house to watch the dance, but are only allowed to watch outside the door. "When the female guests watched the dance outside the door, the amorous man talked to them and laughed. So they began to sing, and they divided into guest and host to sing in response. In this village the man sings firstly as the host: 'You have come here as distinguished guests. We didn't entertain you well. Our place is not good.' The female guest from other villages continued to sing: 'Your place is good, your customs are good, and people are better. You have plenty of meat and wine, and treat others well. We have nothing to repay you.' They sang love songs with emotion, and then there was a rendezvous of exchanging gifts. The ceremony of Dujie provides a good opportunity for the Hualanyao men and women to fall in love. The dancing and singing will continue for three nights."<sup>[3]</sup> It be seen that Dujie is an important cultural carrier for the presentation of poetic ethics. The Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan have expressed their cultural identity for Dujie, and for the poetic ethics contained in it, in the Carnival form of deep participation.

When people take an aesthetic view of Dujie, it is not difficult to see that from the purpose of Dujie to the fact that the initiated overcome the difficulties and finally complete the dance performance, "Will, as an indispensable one of the aesthetic factors, is gradually attracting people's attention in the aesthetic process"<sup>[4]</sup>. The initiated pursue the dual purpose of sacred and secular in the ceremony of Dujie. The initiated has the sacred purpose of communicating with others and gaining sanctification, as well as the secular purpose of gaining social identity and seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages. The initiated clearly and firmly pursues the purpose of Dujie, and implement strict taboos to control the process of achieving the goal. That is to say, the self-control and internal drive produced by the initiated to achieve the purpose of Dujie is not only a clear expression of will, but also shows that the initiated has a high cultural identity for Dujie, and for the poetic ethics contained in it.

Judging from the "Ten Commandments Song" learned by the initiated, the initiated must acquire the strong will in order to adapt to the universal moral principles established by the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, that is the ten commandments—"Quit unfilial piety, infidelity, killing, sexual immorality, stealing, brutality and greed, deception, pride, injustice and intemperance, and frivolity"<sup>[5]</sup>, that is the Yao nationality of Dayaoshan "Moral law". Regarding how to practice moral laws to become holy, in the eyes of the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, it is not enough to strengthen the will without relying on songs, and it is not easy to observe the ten precepts without a strong will. "The complete adaptation of will and moral law is sacredness, which is a certain perfection that any rational being in the sensory world cannot achieve at any moment of its existence."<sup>[6]</sup> It is worth noting that the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan inherited their ethics experience completely through the aesthetics form in the sensory world during the process of Dujie. In other words, the artistic presentation of ethics experience is the poetic ethics.

In the eyes of the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, ethics is a kind of moral concept and code of conduct. Any ethical preaching from a single point of view is difficult to be likable, nor persuade others to accept and abide by it. Ethics is endowed with sacredness and poetry through the ceremony of Dujie, but it is possible to obtain the greatest degree of cultural recognition and

compliance by the initiated.

### **3. The World of the other: the poetic logic of excellent practice and sanctification**

#### ***3.1 The World of the other of the poetic postulat***

During the ceremony, the altar is decorated with solemn portraits of the other, couplets and colorful paper-cut patterns. Accompanied by the crisp and emotional Suona song, the taoist master danced "gang bu dance" vigorously, chanted the scriptures and the clan history. A variety of visually stimulating art forms are interrelated, jointly constructing an art space for the ceremony of Dujie, and triggering a poetic imagination of the world of the other.

The other world is a common poetic suspension for the Yao nationality in traditional society. It is the foundation of the ceremony of Dujie among the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan and the core of the Yaos' poetic ethics. Through the aesthetic imagination of the situation in the world of the other, the Yaos in Dayaoshan ask three old questions during the ceremony: Who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there? Such a questioning is different from logical reasoning from a rational perspective. The Yao people in Dayaoshan use intuitively stimulating rituals to explore from the perceptual perspective. This kind of questioning is different from logical reasoning from a rational dimension. In the area of Dayaoshan, the Yaos use intuitively stimulating rituals to explore from the perceptual dimension.

In the eyes of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan, the art space constructed through the aesthetic form of Dujie has a special aesthetic function for them. This aesthetic function is to communicate with the other in the poetic imagination, obtain the ability to save people, enhance the aesthetic realm, and obtain aesthetic pleasure from it. Regarding this point, the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan believe that only those who have passed the ceremony of Dujie will preside over the ceremony to drive away diseases and eliminate disasters.

#### ***3.2 Poetic imagination of the world of the other***

As a ceremony, only by putting the Dujie into the life of the Yao nationality in the area of Dayao can we realize its value of the poetic ethics.

In the life of the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, the Dayaoshan they live in is an ancient, huge and complex mountain. Dayaoshan is full of peaks, ravines, harsh environment, scarce arable land, and low mountain yields, causing the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan to live extremely poor and backward, frequent diseases, and extremely high infant deaths.

Therefore, for the survival and reproduction of the nation, the poetic ethics value of Dujie is highlighted by the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan. First of all, the poetic ethics value of Dujie lies in the ability to save people, save others and save oneself, and achieve merit. "The Yao nationality believe that they can save people after passing the ceremony of Dujie, and the Dujie are the key to gaining the ability to save them"<sup>[7]</sup>. Taoist master who were promoted through the ceremony of Dujie gained the ability to cure diseases and save people, and save people from danger. In the eyes of the Yao nationality in the area of Dayaoshan, possessing this kind of ability to save lives is a necessary quality for the path to sanctification.

Secondly, the poetic ethics value of the ceremony of Dujie is to enhance the cultural identity and status of the initiated in the world of the other, and then to enhance the cultural identity and status of the initiated in the secular society. The first volume of "Social and Historical Investigation of Yao Nationality in Guangxi" mentioned: "the youths who pass the ceremony of Dujie can get married, and the right to participate in social activities is recognized by others."<sup>[8]</sup> The cultural identity and status of the initiated that is used to enhance by the ceremony of Dujie in the secular society, has a strong authority and is very easy to gain recognition in the secular world of the Yao nationality. Moreover, the Yaos believe that those who pass the ceremony of Dujie will get a seal as a voucher for the Dujie. According to this seal, the initiated can not only preside over the ceremony, but also gain recognition from the world of the other. The initiated regards this seal as a treasure, no matter what, it cannot be lost. "If the initiated loses it, he needs to hold the ceremony of Dujie again or follows others to hold the ceremony again to get another seal."<sup>[8]</sup>

It can be seen that the poetic ethics value of the ceremony of Dujie is to communicate with the other,

cultivate successful virtues, and ensure that life is safe and sound. Therefore, the ceremony of Dujie is also called as an important part of the merit ceremony by the Dayaoshan Yaos.

### **3.3 Poetic ideals living in the moment**

From the perspective of the function and value of the ceremony of Dujie, the poetic logic of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan is suspended from the poetic postulat of the world of the other, to the poetic imagination of being born on the other shore, and further to the poetic ideal of living in the present. This poetic ideal also contains the poetic ethical concepts and behavioral norms of saving oneself and others and becoming sanctified. The poetic ideals "Although they do not have creative power like Plato's ideals, they have practical power (as a regulatory principle) and provide a basis for the possibility of the perfection of certain actions."<sup>[9]</sup> The reason why the ceremony of Dujie is meaningful to the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan is that it has the practical power of poetic ethics, and the poetic ideals that the ceremony of Dujie contains provide a basis for the possibility of improving the lives of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan. Although the ceremony of Dujie is held in a specific time and space, it certainly has limitations in time and space, but the poetic ethics concepts and behavior norms displayed in the ceremony have also penetrated into the daily behavior and psychology of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan. Even the ceremony of Dujie can give the value and meaning of poetic ethics to the life of the ethnic group in which the initiate belong, and have an effect on their current living conditions. It vividly reflects the profound and extensive influence of the poetic ethics which contained in Dujie in the local ethnic groups.

For the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan, the poetic ideals which displayed in the ceremony of Dujie, is the blueprint for the present life. And in their hearts, the yardstick they have to measure their daily behavior is nothing more than this kind of saint's behavior. In this way they "compared and judged themselves, and improved themselves as a result, although they will never be reached this yardstick."<sup>[9]</sup> The poetic ideals of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan have such a nature. They suspend a world of the other and seek the conditions for the existence and happiness of the other. The Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan believe that they have found the conditions for the existence and happiness of the other in this world, that is to be sanctified. On the road to sanctification, the Dujie is an insurmountable identity confirmation and identity recognition, and the piety and perfection is the most effective in the process of Dujie.

## **4. Poetic survival: the poetic wisdom of the piety and the supreme good**

As a virtue, "piety" is more dependent on the appearance of things than other virtues, and it is reflected in respectful attitudes and behaviors"<sup>[10]</sup>.

From the perspective of the whole process of the ceremony, Dujie begins with the initiated expression of awe of the other through external performances such as sleeping in a high bed, eating vegetarian food, and austerity, and it ends with the aesthetic behavior of entertaining others with dance performances. Piety is loved by the other pointed to by the ceremony of Dujie. As an aesthetic induction of whether the other is true or not, the piety of the initiated corresponds to the authenticity of the other. The initiated is more pious to make the other more real, and the other is more real to make the initiated more pious. The interaction between the initiated and the other signifies a relationship: the piety of the initiated constructs the truth of the other, and the truth of the other constructs the piety of the initiated. The piety of the initiated and the truth of the other are constructing and examining each other. "Plato believes that because something is pious, it is beautiful."<sup>[10]</sup> In this case, from the point of view of the process, the emotion expressed in the ceremony of Dujie is that the initiated expresses piety to the other, therefore, the ceremony of Dujie that is pious is beautiful. If the beauty is used to express the highest state of poetic ethics contained in the ceremony of Dujie, then piety is an aesthetic form of poetic ethics, and the supreme good is the fundamental attribute of poetic ethics.

"The realization of the supreme good in this world is an inevitable object of will that can be regulated by moral laws."<sup>[6]</sup> In the ceremony of Dujie, the pursuit of the supreme good relies on moral law to govern behavior, and aesthetic will to practice. The moral law only enacts the poetic ethical task through reason. "This is the first and most important part that leads to the supreme good, namely the inevitable integrity of virtue, and since this task can only be completely solved in a certain eternity, this leads to the postulat of immortality."<sup>[6]</sup> In other words, in the specific process of the ceremony of Dujie, human beings cannot reach the realm of "the supreme good" at this time and place due to the obstacles of perceptual needs, and can only hope for immortality so that it can be realized in the future. Therefore,

in the practice of poetic ethics, the supreme good that is pursued by the ceremony of Dujie can only be possible if immortality is a poetic postulat. With the goal of the supreme good, under the guidance of piety, immortality and moral law are organically integrated. This is the poetic wisdom of piety and the supreme good, which is embodied in the ceremony of Dujie among the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan. A life full of poetic wisdom is happy. From the point of view of the initiated, the happiness of life is poetic survival. It means that everything in life is aimed at reaching the state of the supreme good, happening in accordance with poetic ethics and aesthetic will. It also means that the whole purpose and will of the initiated is completely consistent with the other on the other side, and achieves a state of unity with the other.

## 5. Conclusion

What is poetic ethics, why is ethics poetic. From the perspective of national cultural identity, poetic ethics tells how people develop virtues such as piety, temperance, and willingness to help others from the aesthetic imagination of the world of the other. It is the moral concepts and behavioral norms, which is derived from sacred feelings and based on certain poetic principles to maintain poetic survival. In the traditional society of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan, the poetic ethics that is presented through specific ethical cultural forms can be concentrated in the ceremony of reverence for the world of the other—the ceremony of Dujie. It has the practical value of guiding the Yaos to be pious and the supreme good, which is of great significance for understanding the moral life of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan and promoting the moral construction of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan.

"Ethics" is not only a relationship and rules, but also a cultural phenomenon. It is a reflection of social relations and social rules, and it is also a poetic, collective, and national practice activity. In the ceremony of Dujie, ethics is expressed in aesthetic forms such as songs and dances, so it is poetic; Poetic ethics has gained the broad cultural identity of taoist master—the initiated—the initiated family—the local ethnic groups, which not only demonstrates the internal generation mechanism of national cultural identity—the ceremony expands from point to surface, and the form and content are highly in the ceremony; but also continues and inherits the aesthetic cultural spirit of the Yaos in the area of Dayaoshan: the poetic thinking of perfecting human relationship, the poetic logic of excellent practice and sanctification, the poetic wisdom of the piety and the supreme good.

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