

# The Funeral Ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan and Its Cultural Connotation - Based on Field Investigation of Zhuhe Township, Zhaojue County

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**ABSTRACT.** *The funeral ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan is the ancient traditional cremation ceremony of Yi Nationality. The whole process is divided into six stages: dying, first funeral, funeral burial, guarding, hanging and sacred, funeral burial, cremation and gathering in the wild. The ceremony is grand and complex, including the rich Yi Nationality traditional culture, such as Yi Nationality fire culture, heavy mother-in-law culture, martial worship and heroic plot, sheep culture, etc. It is an important carrier of national cultural heritage.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Liangshan Yi Nationality, Funeral Ceremony, Zhaojue*

## 1. Previous Researches and Introduction to the Field Point

Regarding the study of the funeral ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan, there was a lot of narrative about the Yi Nationality funeral in the “Liangshan Luoyi Investigation Report” by Mr. Ma Changshou. In “Yi Nationality Primitive Religious Investigation Report” by Ma Xueliang and Yu Jinxiu, there are a large number of records of the Yi Nationality funeral ceremonies in Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou. The “Yi Nationality Volume of Chinese Ethnic Groups” edited by He Yaohua and others has chapters devoted to the funeral etiquette of each Yi Nationality area, and collected the research results of many scholars. Bamo Ayi’s “Yi Nationality Ancestral Belief Study”[1] discussed in detail the funeral ceremony of Yi Nationality and the Nimuto ritual and its ancestral beliefs. Biqu Erlian’s funeral ceremony of Leibo funeral, the origin and development of Leibo Yi Nationality cremation were sorted out, and the cultural connotation and value of Leibo cremation ceremony were expounded. Ma Shihuo described the origin of ancestor worship and the source of the burial customs of Yi Nationality, and analyzed the negative impact of the thick burial on the social economy of Yi Nationality and proposed reforms [2]. The above-mentioned research on the funeral ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan has accumulated rich materials, but the process of funeral rites and the connotation

of the funeral ceremony are relatively rough. Therefore, on the basis of this, the author will combine the field investigation of Zhaojue County in Liangshan Prefecture to make an in-depth and detailed analysis of the funeral ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan.

Liangshan Prefecture Zhaojue County is located in the southwestern part of Sichuan Province, in the heart of Daliang Mountain. Between 1952 and 1978, as the seat of the Liangshan Yi Nationality Autonomous Prefecture, it is the political, economic, and cultural center of the whole state and the most representative county in the Yi Nationality settlement. Zhuhe Township is located in the northeast of Zhaojue County, only 13 kilometers away from Zhaojue County. It is a representative township in Zhaojue County. The traditional culture of Yi Nationality is well preserved and comprehensive. From 2013 to 2016, the author went to the Zhaojue Bamboo Nuclear Research Institute several times and participated in four traditional funeral ceremonies of Yi Nationality. This article was completed on this basis.

## **2. Liangshan Yi Nationality's Funeral Ceremony**

The general ceremony of the Yi Nationality funeral ceremony in Liangshan is divided into the following steps:

### ***2.1 First Funeral of Elderlies***

When the old man of Yi Nationality was at the end of his life, his son was holding his arms in his arms, and then put a little bit of broken gold or broken silver into the mouth of the deceased. Then the immediate family members or elders of the deceased smeared their mouths and eyes, making them faceless and covering their faces with a white cloth. Then use white wine or warm water to wipe the body for the deceased. The male deceased shaved his head, wearing new clothes, new pants, draped felt, wearing a head-pan, and wrapped his legs in white; Women should comb their hair, and the hairpins are made up of two pieces in life. They wear new clothes, new pants, draped felts, and new hats. The colors of the clothes are mainly blue and blue. Avoid wearing bright colors such as red, yellow, etc., otherwise it is said to become a tempting ghost[3]. Then use a rope to bend the legs, cover the body with a blanket, and place it on a bamboo pole or wooden board to stop at home. The male is lying on his side, the left body is down, and the female is on the right side.

After the body is finished, it is necessary to sacrifice to the deceased. A ram or pig, called "the poor", which means "to accompany the sheep" and is considered to be the companion on the way to the dead. The man who specializes in the deceased will kill the sheep and cattle, twist or die, and cannot use a knife to show that the soul of the deceased will ascend to heaven. After the liver and waist are cooked, together with the shoulders, the sheepskin body, a scorpion and a small bag of oatmeal in the tub, placed next to the deceased, meaning to dry food on the road to the deceased. Then, the family began to cry and mourn. While crying, toast to the

deceased, the first cup is sprinkled on the body, and the second cup is self-drinking, so that the living person will continue to drink with the deceased in the future.

### ***2.2 Prepare for the Funeral***

After the death of a loved one, immediately scream at the gun or firecrackers, express condolences and inform the neighbors that the old man has died. He also sent Bi Mo for chanting, and Bi Mo calculated the cremation day based on the Yi Nationality's October solar calendar. The day of the cremation needs to coincide with the deceased. After the election of Bi Mo, you should immediately send people to the localities to report the funeral and inform relatives and friends. Those who report the mourning must choose smart and clear words. If someone meets the death message on the way to the mourning, they cannot directly say the word "death" and must be told by the rumor. It is necessary to clearly inform the time of the death of the deceased, the memorial service and the cremation day. After counting the cremation of the auspicious day, Degu, Bi Mo and the family of the deceased discussed the specific arrangements for the funeral.

### ***2.3 Keep Vigil beside the Coffin***

When the night comes, relatives must guard the side of the body to prevent the deceased from being disturbed by ghosts. Female filial sons use cloth to catch mosquitoes, and family members and helpers should try to stay with them. The keeper must keep crying the virtues of the deceased's life and the comfort of the deceased. During the period of guarding, from day to night, relatives and friends in the stockade and neighbors came to the funeral to accompany the mourning, play, and express a concern to slow down the grief of the funeral. Teacher Huang Longguang believes that the most direct function of guarding spirit is to drive away people's fear of the dead body and slow down the grief of losing their loved ones[4]. The author believes that guarding spirit can also enhance the feelings of the neighborhood.

### ***2.4 Tribute Paid by Relatives***

On the day before the cremation, relatives and friends brought cattle and sheep, brought wine, glutinous rice cakes, eggs, etc. to the hanging festival. Most of them now send money, and others, such as piglets, chickens, and candy, are given to people on the funeral ground. The funeral home is to make cakes, killing cows and sheep and cooking them into meat. Married daughter took a cow or sheep to hang a sacrifice. Coupled with cattle and sheep sent by other relatives, there are often as many as hundreds. When the hanging sacrifice team approached the road of a few miles away, they fired a gun or set off firecrackers to mourn. The slingers began to lick their chests and screamed, crying out loud, not seeing the tears. Because if the sound is small, the soul of the deceased will not be able to hear it. At the same time, after the funeral family heard the sound of gunshots or guns, they immediately fired

a gun or set off firecrackers. They said that they knew that the guests had come, and immediately sent a pre-arranged knife and dance team to meet. The young men and women are dressed in festive costumes, dressed in black and white drapes, and greeted with swords and swords to welcome guests. The number of sword and dance teams is not limited. The number of swords and dance teams and the firing team of the host and the guest can reach 10 to 12, and the number of the lesser is more than four. There are also young girls in the knife and dance team. Both men and women must dress up and enter the village in a mighty manner. The atmosphere is warm and solemn, showing the heroic spirit and friendly friendship between the host and the guest[5]. After the two sword dance teams arrived at the main house, the knife dances of both sides stopped, allowing the guests to enter the house to filial piety. After the condolences entered the house, the main family welcomed the wine and persuaded them to drink. The pilgrims are going to the front of the spirit, on both sides, or sitting or standing, crying while drinking, getting more and more crying, and comforting each other. Otherwise, the deceased will be unhappy[6].

On the night of the festival, it is generally necessary to guard the spirit all night, during which there are many funeral songs and dances. Singing funeral and dancing and dancing are the most important ceremonies for the sacrifice of the dead. There are various forms such as “Wazi Le”, “Agu He”, “Ze Ge” and “Transfer House”.

“Wazi Le” is a singer between the male of the host family and the male of the mourning guest. There is a bit of eloquence and knowledge. Generally speaking, the more experienced male elders first greet the guests by the host, and the guests comfort the deceased’s family. When you rap, you can take a knife or something on your hand and have a physical movement. The two sides began to argue their own insights, sang the Yi Nationality epic for a while, and then astronomy, geography, figures, current events, and so on. Therefore, the vocabulary of “Wazi Le” is also inherited the traditional culture of Yi Nationality, and continues to enhance the cohesiveness and national identity of Yi Nationality.

“Ze Ge” is generally composed of singular men, such as five, seven, nine, etc., one person sings, others should sing. The lead singer holds the bell, and the others hold the knife or the other in their hands. They stand shoulder to shoulder on the side of the inner room and sway around the body while singing. The content and purpose of the singer is roughly the same as that of the Guided Way, which directs the soul of the deceased to return along the ancestral migration route. In order to make his return journey unimpeded and disturbed, he arrived at the place where Zu Ling lived. Therefore, he should wield a saber to slash while singing, in order to threaten the ghosts and ghosts who dare to stop on the road to spiritual return[7].

The content of “filial piety” is mostly to comfort the undead, not to be sad, such as: “All things are dead, the plants are going to die, the animals are dead, the dead are not sad. The sun is not dead, the clouds cover it and die; Say that the moon is not dead, it will die when the lunar eclipse. It persuades the deceased to return to peace and so on. So, sing until dawn, while drinking and talking.

### ***2.5 Say Farewell to the Deceased***

On the day of cremation, two long poles and some crossbars were used to make a stretcher for the body. It was called “Ya”, and the number of crossbars was also very particular. There were 9 men and 7 women. The body was wrapped in blue, white and blue cloth, covered with a felt and placed on a stretcher. At the time of the funeral, you also need to ask Bimo to count, generally choose in the early morning. At that time, the relatives and friends of the children will sit around the body and cry. When the time is up, the spirits will be moved to the open space outside the house. Farewell to the body by relatives and friends of the family, Bi Mo line the way and the spirits and other rituals.

Before the funeral began, the women flocked to the coffin and cried, and the men stood in the front row of the spirit, facing the corpse, and the right hand was placed on the shoulder of the former person, and with the Pharma chanting the “Guide Way”, the old man was given the way. The road where the ancestors lived, warned them which way to go to the underworld, how to fight the demon on the road. The road to the way needs to enumerate the names of the places one by one until they reach the so-called ancestral residence.

After the road is completed, Bi Mo is also the soul of the immediate family members and descendants of the deceased, in order to prevent the souls of the children from leaving with the soul of the old man. When recruiting souls, all children who have already become married must ask for a Bi Mo to recruit their own family. Every household has a tub filled with cooked eggs, salt, fried noodles, wine, raw rice and other foods, as well as a live yellow hen, a bunch of “Yiyi” grass on the mountain. When recruiting the soul, Bi Mo took the plant and the yellow chicken to the deceased: “Send is to send you, and it is not to go with you; the person who walks in front of you, you have to use the hand to come back; follow you behind, Come back with your ankle.”

At the beginning of the funeral, one person took the torch and led the way, and the four carried the stretcher to follow the crematorium. After the stretcher, follow the mourning family members, relatives and friends, and all the people who participated in the funeral. Some also have to organize fully armed people to “protect the road” in front, while shooting, shooting, or drumming, different places, in short, a very lively, heavy funeral ceremony.

### ***2.6 Cremation and Gathering in the Wild***

Generally, each family has a common cemetery, with a forest on it, which is regarded as a forest of gods. It is forbidden to cut down casually. The crematorium was also cut from this forest. The crematorium is located on a wilderness or hillside not far from the village. With firewood, the men take 9 floors and the women take 7 layers. The remains are placed on the surface of the firewood and covered with green pines and cypresses. The burning of the body must be in the early morning when the sun has not yet come out. The relatives set fire from under the shelf. When

the fire is about to ignite, the relatives who are buried in the fun are divided into two groups, male and female. In the burning place, sitting or standing, crying around the fire, and making a final farewell, the relatives cry more even. After a few minutes, they will disperse and run. The sooner the better. Some relatives are sent to guard the body, and others are not allowed to be present.

At the same time, other people are playing cattle and sheep at a distance from the crematorium, preparing for ceremonies and feasts. One is to sacrifice the dead, the other is to entertain relatives and friends, and all those who participate in the funeral; after the beef and mutton are cooked, everyone gathers for a group meal. Everyone who is present, regardless of the elderly or children, can get a share (bovine, lamb, meat, rice or rice bran). The scene is very spectacular. Almost a thousand people gather, and all those who attended the funeral and heard from the surrounding villages will participate in this final meal. After the funeral ceremony is completed, the funeral family will also ask Bi Mo to choose the auspicious day according to the scriptures, and decide when to give the deceased a “Madu”. The soul of the deceased is invited to the home for worship, usually after the funeral for one or two months or months.

### **3. Yi Nationality Culture in the Funeral Ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan**

In summary, the funeral ceremony of Yi Nationality in Liangshan is complex and grand, full of life care for the deceased, and also reflects Yi Nationality's view of life. Throughout the funeral, the deceased is still provided with everything he needs for life, clothing, food, and even production and living utensils, such as cattle and sheep, pipes, etc. They believe that the human soul will always exist, and the soul of the deceased will return to the ancestral homeland and live a happy and beautiful life together with the ancestral spirit. They believe that after the death of their loved ones, they still affect the well-being of their loved ones. Therefore, the Yi Nationality people attach great importance to the funeral, and must do everything possible to properly treat the body and soul of the deceased, to make it a healthy, holy soul, and to bring about a future for the future.

The funeral of Yi Nationality in Liangshan includes a rich traditional culture of Yi Nationality. Regarding national history, geography, astronomy, folklore, literature, etc., a funeral is a rich display of national traditional culture and an important thrust for the formation of cohesion within the family. The funeral ceremony also clearly shows the unique elements of the Yi Nationality culture, such as the fire culture. On the way to the funeral, there must be a torch to lead the way, and the body is also burned with fire. Its purpose is to purify and sublimate the soul of the deceased in a pure, holy flame, and go to another world with the fire and smoke, returning to the ancestors. Yi Nationality's fire culture is also manifested in the Torch Festival and daily life. If it is forbidden to cross from the fire pit, the dirty things will not enter the fire pit, and the food for sacrifice will be burned on the fire pit to show purification [8.]And Yi Nationality's emphasis on sheep is also evident in the funeral. Yi Nationality regards sheep as a mascot at home, and hospitality and festivals are

inseparable from sheep. In the ceremony, sacrifices were mainly made with sheep, and many families had horns on their doors. Yi Nationality people have to accompany each other from birth to death, and to use the “sheep” as a companion to the road. Yi Nationality people have to accompany each other from birth to death, and to use the “sheep” as a companion to the road. In addition, the pattern of sheep can be seen everywhere in Yi Nationality’s lacquerware, clothing, and houses.

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