

# "The Customs of Various Barbarians"

## by Li Jing (12.51-?)

Translated by Jacqueline M. Armijo-Hussein

### TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

I first encountered this text while carrying out research for my dissertation on Sayyid 'Ajall Shams al-Din (1210?-1279; Ch. Saidianchi), a Muslim official who served the Mongol Yuan dynasty. Although numerous official documents describe his policies towards the indigenous peoples of Yunnan and the various institutions he created to improve their lives, descriptions of the people themselves have proved difficult to find. This dearth of information on local "barbarians" was not surprising, given the priorities of court record-keepers, but it was frustrating. I finally located this text, which although written shortly after Sayyid 'Ajall's death, is close enough in time to give us some idea of the peoples he encountered and worked with closely during his governance in Yunnan.

I translated this text while living in Yunnan, and one of the most interesting aspects of working on it there was the extent to which I could recognize in the present-day population of that region of southwest China the descendants of many of the groups described in the text. As a consequence, when it came to translating some of the more derogatory descriptions of these peoples, I found myself wanting to use less offensive synonyms. My impulse here was clearly misguided, as one of the goals of translation is to convey the attitudes and meanings intended by the author. Another aspect of the text that I found intriguing was its similarity to the account of the indigenous peoples of Yunnan attributed to Marco Polo, who traveled through this region at the same time as the author of this text, Li Jing. Marco Polo, like his Han Chinese counterpart, seems to have focused on the sexual practices, clothing or lack thereof, as well as the eating habits of these peoples. Apparently, at least in this case, a Han Chinese

Confucian official and an Italian Catholic shared common views of the "other."

## INTRODUCTION

What is now known as Yunnan province in southwest China was once a fiercely independent region inhabited by a variety of indigenous peoples ruled by several autonomous kingdoms. For centuries Chinese emperors sought to conquer and subjugate this area in order to colonize it and exploit its extensive natural resources. Ironically, it was during the rule of the "barbarian" Mongols in China that this territory was finally conquered and incorporated into China proper. The Mongols arrived in Yunnan in 1253, and during the first twenty years of their rule military strategies predominated. In 1274, however, the emperor Qubilai decided to change the nature of his Yunnan administration and to that end appointed Sayyid 'Ajall Shams al-Din, one of his most experienced civilian administrators, to be Director of Political Affairs of the Regional Secretarial Council of Yunnan. The arrival of Sayyid 'Ajall signified the end of military rule and the beginning of what can best be described as a "civilizing project."<sup>1</sup> Unlike all other colonizing/civilizing projects in China, however, this one was led by a Muslim from Central Asia.

Whereas earlier Chinese officials had used force, violence, and even terror to subjugate indigenous peoples,<sup>2</sup> Sayyid 'Ajall's approach to governing depended on diplomacy and on convincing the local population of the benefits of being members of the state. In addition to introducing agricultural technology from the heartland, Sayyid 'Ajall also set about introducing traditional Chinese values and customs. Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian temples were built, and schools were established on the grounds of the Confucian temples. While the writings of some Han Chinese officials reveal that many viewed the state's efforts to "civilize" the local people as a means to "humanize" them, the historical records that survive portray Sayyid 'Ajall as a man who sought to improve the quality of life of the indigenous peoples and who treated them with consideration and respect. According to He Hongzuo, the contemporary Superintendent of Confucian Studies for all the counties of Yunnan, when the peoples of Yunnan were convinced of the sincerity of Sayyid 'Ajall, they set off to welcome him:

From the edges of the world people came, climbing over mountains and sailing over seas, and through a myriad of languages, they offered tribute and paid their respects [to Sayyid 'Ajall]. At this time he established temple schools and invited teachers. The exteriors of the temple schools were elaborately decorated, and inside there were images of the great sages, so that the local people could behold them and pay their respects. During the spring and autumn they performed the rituals and music to honor the memory of the sages of old.<sup>3</sup> And thus the orang-

utans and butcherbirds were transformed into unicorns and phoenixes, and their felts and furs were exchanged for gowns and caps.<sup>4</sup>

The choice of the orangutan and butcherbird is highly evocative and reflects common literary and popular perceptions of the time. From earliest recorded history in China, apes and monkeys have been depicted as both magical and diabolical<sup>5</sup>—on the one hand admired for their anthropomorphic qualities, but also used as a trope to dehumanize the non-Han peoples encountered by the Han Chinese. The choice of butcherbird (*ju*), although a less common image, may nevertheless be a more powerful one, as it denotes a species of bird renowned for its clamorous calls and its brutal rapacity.<sup>6</sup> The imagery of transforming the local people of Yunnan into unicorns and phoenixes—creatures that symbolized all that was precious and rare—dramatized the impact of the civilizing process for readers of this text.

In addition to using the imagery of the animal kingdom, the Han Chinese also used a scale based on gradations from "raw" to "cooked" to denote the status of "barbarians." Those whose customs were most different from what was considered "civilized" were labeled "raw" (*sheng*) and were often compared to animals, whereas those who had adopted some of the customs and outward appearances of the Han Chinese, were considered "cooked" (*shu*) and well on their way to becoming civilized/human.

The *Yunnan zhiliie*, written by Li Jing (style name Jingshan) at the beginning of the fourteenth century, has survived as a fairly comprehensive description of the peoples of Yunnan during this period. This text reveals a great deal not only about its subject but also about its author and the values of his culture and society. As the first gazetteer written after the establishment of Yunnan as a province of China, the *Yunnan zhiliie* formed the basis of all later gazetteers written in the Ming and Qing periods. It also represents the earliest as well as the most comprehensive and reliable description of the indigenous peoples of Yunnan and has been the foundation for much of the later research on the history of the different ethnic groups of Yunnan.

Li Jing, a native of Hebei, was appointed Deputy Pacification Commissioner of Wusa and Wumeng (the far northeast corner of Yunnan and the northwest corner of Guizhou) in 1301. According to his own introduction, Li Jing arrived in Yunnan in the midst of the Mongol campaign in Burma. His responsibilities included traveling throughout the province in search of supplies and funding for the military campaign. *Yunnan zhiliie* is believed to have been originally written in 1303 in the form of a report of the author's findings during his two years of travel. It was edited and revised in 1331. In his introduction Li Jing explains that he decided to compile information about Yunnan because so little had been written about that region, and what had been written was not accurate: "Early on I discovered that what had been written before was full of mistakes—for you can hear all sorts of fanciful tales along the road—and that what had been written about were not

things the writers had experienced themselves. And because of all that I have seen, I have interviewed many people and have compiled *Yunnan zhiliie* in four *juan*,"<sup>7</sup>

In the chapter from *Yunnan zhiie* translated here, Li Jing begins with a description of the Bai people, whom he clearly believes are the most "cooked" and to whom he devotes the most comprehensive description, and ends with a rather cursory account of the Pu Barbarians. The Bai, who are the only ones honored with the appellation "people" (*ren*), are described in detail and with respect.<sup>8</sup> His descriptions of the Bai introduce to the reader what it was about these "others" that the Han Chinese found most intriguing and noteworthy.<sup>9</sup> As one proceeds down his list toward the rawest of the raw, characteristics associated with violence receive more emphasis. This may in part be the result of progressively less evidence and thus more reliance on hearsay.

Li's preoccupation with the sexual practices of the peoples he describes borders on obsession.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, from the point of view of the Han Chinese, sexual practices served as a measure of civilization or barbarism.<sup>11</sup> Clothing (or lack thereof) and hairstyles are also emphasized in his account, as are courting, marriage, and burial rituals; these, according to James Watson, are the means by which Han Chinese defined themselves and differentiated themselves from others.<sup>12</sup>

In the translation that follows, present-day equivalents, or the closest approximation thereof, of place names and ethnic group identifications are noted in square brackets.

4H ORIGINAL TEXT<sup>13</sup> |#>

### *The Bai People*

The Bai people have both surnames and clan names. Han Wudi opened the Bo Road, going through the Southwest Barbarian Road in today's Xuzhou county. As a result, Zhongqing [Kunming], Weichu [Chuxiong], Dali, and Yongchang [Baoshan], formerly all Bo areas, have now become Bai areas. During the Tang reign period of Taihe [827-836], the Meng clan captured the three prefects of Qiong, Rong, and Sui [all in present-day Sichuan] and then entered Chengdu. They captured children, women, and craftsmen numbering several tens of thousands and brought them back south. From that time onward Yunnan started producing embroidered silk. In Bai language, the phrase for "donning clothes" is "garbing." The term for eating a meal, which in Chinese would refer to eating rice, is "drink soup-and-vegetable." The phrase for "gathering fuel" in Chinese is "collecting grasses," whereas

in Bai language they speak of "cutting tinder." They call silk "coverlets" and refer to liquor by the name of the vessel, "goblet." Their term for "saddle" is "fear of mud," and all walls in Bai language are "brick battlements." There are countless similar examples. Such linguistic similarities make it plain that the Bai people were formerly Bo people.<sup>14</sup>

Both men and women wear hats [*cigong*], which are similar to the bamboo hats worn by the fishermen of the heartland, except that they are bigger. They weave bamboo to make them and then cover them with black felt. When relatives and old friends see each other, even after a long separation, they do not *kowtow*; they only take off their hats in greeting. Men wear felt and put their hair up. The women do not wear any makeup. They put a type of oily substance in their hair; then they take blue threads and braid them into the hair, then wrap it up around the head making a coil, then gather it in under a black turban. They wear gold earrings and ivory bracelets. Their clothes are embroidered with squares of cloth, and they use a fine felt to cover the upper body. Unmarried girls and widows can come and go as they please without restraint; the young men, who are known as "splendid ones" [*miaozi*], roam about at night, either playing their multi-reed pipes or singing ballads, the harmonies of which express their affections. When their affection is mutual, they then go off in pairs to have sex, and only afterwards do they get married. The roof beams in their rooms are curved eaves, like those found in temples and palaces. Food is preferred raw; for example, pork, beef, chicken, and fish are all minced raw, mixed with garlic paste, and then eaten.

Every year on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth month, they offer sacrifices to their ancestors, like the "going to the grave mound" ceremony in the heartland.<sup>15</sup> On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, throughout the night, they lift up on poles blazing torches that light up the sky. All the children play with the burning pine torches. This is known as the "sacrifice to drive away evil spirits."<sup>16</sup>

Buddhism is flourishing greatly among them, and those who have a spirit of strict discipline are known as the ones of the "virtuous path." Laypeople greatly respect them. The monks who are married are known as teacher monks [*shiseng*] and are responsible for teaching the children. They mainly read Buddhist texts, but few know the Six Classics. After the Duan clan came to power, they selected officials from among these monks. According to local tradition every household, regardless if it is poor or rich, has a Buddhist altar; every morning and evening families strike the drum and come together to pray, and both the young and old never let go of their

prayer beads. Every year they fast [refrain from meat and certain other foods] almost half the year.

All the other barbarians are pig-headed and even enjoy killing. When a slight disagreement arises among close relatives, they always use knives against each other. They do not know how to serve the Buddhist spirit; they are like the unfilial "mother-eating owl and father-eating muntjac tiger." Only the Bai deeply revere the Buddha, and few have the stomach for murder. It can thus be concluded that the establishment of Buddhism has had a beneficial effect on some of the most bizarre customs.

Their refined gentlemen are quite good at calligraphy, and they follow the style of the Jin period. Their own history states,<sup>17</sup> "During the reign of Baohe,<sup>18</sup> the king of Nanzhao sent Zhang Zhicheng [a Bai scholar or official] to study at the Tang imperial court." For this reason the people of Yunnan respect Wang Xizhi<sup>19</sup> even though they do not even know to respect Confucius or Mencius. After our [Yuan] dynasty conquered this area, it [Yunnan] was divided up into administrative units, and Confucian temples were ordered built in every county. The local barbarians regarded Confucius and Mencius as Buddhas of the Han Chinese.

The marketplace is called "the street." It is packed until noon, and everyone leaves by dusk. Cowry shells are used as currency in trading. They are commonly called *ba*: one *ba* makes a *zhuang*, four *zhuang* make a *shou*, four *shou* make a *miao*, and five *miao* make a *suo*.

When a person dies, the body is washed and bound up in a sitting position. The coffin is shaped like a square wooden chest. They beat a copper drum to start the funeral and cut off their hair as a sign of filial piety in mourning. When they cry, it sounds more like singing than wailing. They then burn the corpse and save the bones to inter.

In winter and summer it is neither too cold nor too hot, and in all four seasons there are flowers and trees in bloom. There are many paddies, and they call five *mou* [of land] a *shuang*. The landscape is beautiful, but still inferior to that of Jiangnan. Their hemp, wheat, vegetables, and fruit are much like that of the heartland.

Their king is known as the *piaoxin* and the heir apparent is called the *tanchuo*. The princes are called *xinju*, the premier is the *buxie*, and the literate among those who govern are known as the Pure and Peaceful Officials. Their noblemen wear clothes that are similar to those of the Han Chinese of recent years, and their other customs are also similar.

## *The Luoluo*

The Luoluo [Yi] are also known as the Wu Man, or Black Barbarians.

The men put their hair up in a coil and pluck their facial hair, or shave their heads. They carry two knives, one at each side, and enjoy fighting and killing. When a disagreement arises among fathers and sons and among brothers, they are known to attack each other with military weapons. Killing is taken lightly, and they consider it a sign of valor. They prize horses with cropped tails, their saddles have no trappings, and their stirrups are carved from wood in the shape of a fish's mouth to accommodate the toes.

The women wear their hair down and wear cotton clothing, and the wealthy wear jewelry and embroidered clothes; the humble are garbed in sheepskin. They ride horses side-saddle. Unmarried girls wear large earrings and cut their hair level with their eyebrows, and their skirts do not even cover their knees. Men and women, rich and poor, all wear felt wraps and go barefoot, and they can go as long as one year without washing face or hand.

It is the custom of husbands and wives not to see each other during the day, but only to sleep together at night. Children as old as ten *sui* most likely have never seen their father. Wives and concubines are not jealous of each other. Even the well-to-do do not use padding on their beds, but just spread pine needles on the ground with only a layer of felt and mat. Marriages are arranged with the maternal uncle's family, but if a suitable partner cannot be found they can look elsewhere for a match. When someone falls ill they do not use medicine, but instead call in a male shaman, who is known as the *daxipo*. He uses chicken bones to divine good and evil fortunes. The tribal leader always has the shaman at his side, and he must consult the shaman to make a final decision in all matters great and small.

A woman who is about to get married must first have relations with the shaman, and then "dance" with all the groom's brothers. This custom is known as "making harmony." Only after that can she be married to her husband. If any one of the brothers refuses to go along with this custom, he will be regarded as unrighteous and everyone will be disgusted with him.<sup>20</sup>

The first wife is known as the *naide*, and it is only her children who can inherit their father's position. If the *naide* has a son who dies before marrying, she will go ahead and arrange a wife for him anyway. Anyone can then have relations with the deceased son's wife, and any child born is considered the child of the deceased. If the tribal leader does not leave a male

heir, his wife's [the *naide's*] daughter then becomes the leader. However, she then has no female attendants—only ten or more young male attendants, with whom she can have relations.<sup>21</sup>

When the tribal leader dies, they wrap his body in a leopard skin, cremate him, and then bury his bones on a mountain at a location known only to his closest relatives. After the burial they take images of the Seven Precious Things<sup>22</sup> and place them on a high platform. They then go steal the head of a neighboring nobleman and offer it as a sacrifice. If they are not able to obtain one, they cannot make the sacrifice. At the time of the sacrificial ceremony all the relatives arrive, and they sacrifice more than a thousand cattle and sheep, or at least several hundred. Every year when they celebrate the spring festival during the twelfth month, they take a long vertical pole and a horizontal piece of wood, [and arranging a seesaw] with one person on each side, they go up and down together playing.

They support many soldiers, who are called *juke*, and they generously provide for them. When they go off to battle they view death as "returning home." They expertly craft armor and swords that are worth dozens of horses. On their javelins and crossbow arrow tips they put a poison that kills instantly.

They are found in Shunyuan [near Guiyang, Guizhou], Qujing, Wumeng [Zhaotong], Wusa [near Weining, Guizhou], and Yuexi [north of Xichang, Sichuan].

### *The Gilded-Teeth "Bai" Barbarians*

The Gilded-Teeth "Bai" Barbarians [Jinchi Baiyi (a Dai people)] do not use characters to keep records, but instead use carved pieces of wood as contracts.

When their tribal leader dies, if someone who is not his son or grandson tries to usurp the position, everyone will attack him.

Men are tattooed, and all their facial hair [mustache, beard, hair on temples, eyebrows, and eyelashes] is removed. They put red or white makeup on their faces, tie up their hair with pieces of colored silk, wear red and black clothes and embroidered shoes, carry a mirror, say *a ye wei* when they are hurt, and look just like actors from the heartland. They look askance at farm work and stay home to look after the children. During the Tianbao reign period [742-756], they sent someone with [the Nanzhao ruler] King Cuan Gui to the Tang imperial court, and our present-day drama called *cuan nong*<sup>23</sup> originates from this time.



The women pluck their eyebrows and eyelashes, do not wear makeup, put their hair up in two coils, and wear embroidered clothes, which they adorn by sewing on small shells. They work very hard at farming, never even stopping to take a break. Right up until delivering a baby they hardly ever rest. When they give birth, they immediately take the baby up in their arms, wash it in the river, and then hand it over to the care of the father and return to work as usual.<sup>24</sup> Their chickens do the same: after the hen lays the eggs, the rooster then incubates them.

The topography is such that at lower levels it is very humid and at higher levels it is very hot, so most people put up bamboo houses [on stilts]. They live by the banks of the river and every day bathe up to ten times. Mothers and fathers, older and younger brothers, everyone bathes together without any embarrassment.<sup>25</sup> When they are sick they do not take medicine; they only put a mixture of ginger and salt in the nose. Betel palm, powdered clam, and China root leaves are offered to guests.<sup>26</sup> Their horses are few, but sheep are many.

They have too many leaders and consequently no absolute authority or discipline, so whenever a minor feud erupts, they fight each other violently. When they defeat an enemy, they behead him and put the head at the bottom of a platform. Their military leaders then gather together, and when they have finished fighting, with great bravado they stick the tail feathers of ringed pheasants in their hair coils, grasp their spears, and dance around their captives. They also sacrifice a chicken and have the shaman invoke its spirit saying, "Oh tribal chieftain [of the enemy], you and your people should quickly come surrender to me." When the sacrifice is finished, they recount what happened in battle, mete out rewards and punishments, and then drink wine, make music, and disperse. When they attack a town or destroy a fortified palisade, they do not kill its ruler, but cast out his entire family. Or else, they imprison them until they die.

In marriage they do not make distinctions between close relatives [i.e., they are allowed to marry close relatives]. There is not much importance attached to virginity, and they are as profligate as dogs and swine. Young women wear red headdresses and let their hair down. If a woman dies before marrying, all the men who had relations with her must hold up a banner to see her off, and if the banners number a hundred it is considered the most beautiful. Her parents cry and lament: "How could we have known that a woman with so many lovers could have died so young!"

They gather together to trade once every five days; in the morning the women go, and in the middle of the day the men go to barter for felt, cloth,

tea, and salt. This land has many mulberry trees and orange trees, and they raise silkworms year-round.

The ones who cover their two front teeth with gold are known as the Gilded-Teeth Barbarians, the ones who stain their teeth are known as the Stained-Teeth Barbarians, the ones who tattoo their faces are known as the Embroidered-Face Barbarians, the ones who tattoo their feet are known as the Flowery-Feet Barbarians, and the ones who put pieces of colored silk in their hair are known as the Flowery-Topknot Barbarians. Of the barbarians of the southwest, the Gilded-Teeth "Bai" Barbarians are the most powerful. To the north they border Tibet [Tufan], and in the south they reach Cochin-China [Jiao-chi], and their customs are probably mostly the same.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Moxie Barbarians*

The Moxie Barbarians [Moxie Man, or Mosuo/Naxi] live north of Dali, near the border with Tibet [Tufan], along the Jinsha River. This region is cold, and there are many sheep, horses, and musk oxen, as well as the famous iron. They live along the river in places that are strategically located and difficult to access. Their villages are scattered like stars in the sky and are independent of one another.

The men are expert fighters, enjoy hunting, carry daggers, and adorn themselves with pieces of giant clam. When there is any dissatisfaction, they strike a gong, and the men who are a party to it attack each other. The women from the two families must then get in between them to pull them apart, whereupon they disperse. The women wear felt wraps, black clothes, go barefoot, and put their hair up. Women cut their hair level with their eyebrows, wear wool yarn as a skirt, and are otherwise practically naked without being ashamed. After they marry they change their style of dress and have no prohibitions regarding licentious behavior. They do not worship Buddha or other spirits, but only ascend the mountain on the fifteenth day of the first month to offer sacrifices to heaven. This is a very serious and grand affair in which more than a hundred men and women take part. Everyone holds hands, and they dance in a circle and have a wonderful time.

Their customs are very frugal, and the food they eat is coarse and of poor quality. A year's worth of food might half consist of turnips. The poor families know no other seasoning but salt. The men, who are especially strong, respect their leader. Every year in the eleventh month they slaughter cows and sheep and then compete with each other in inviting guests. They host

banquets every single day, and if even one guest does not attend, it is considered a great insult.

When someone dies, they carry the body up the mountainside wrapped in a bamboo mat. There is no outer or inner coffin, and everyone is cremated at the same place regardless of their status. They do not save the bones. A person who dies from unnatural causes is cremated separately. Except for this, their other customs are similar to those of the Wu Man [Black Barbarians, or Yizu].

### *The Tulao Barbarians*

The Tulao Barbarians [Tulao Man, or Zhuang] are found throughout the region extending from the south of Xuzhou [Yibin, Sichuan] to the north of Wumeng [Zhaotong],

At the age of fourteen or fifteen boys have their two front teeth knocked out,<sup>28</sup> and then they get married, living with their pigs and sheep in the same room. They do not use spoons or chopsticks, but instead roll their food up into balls and eat it with their hands. They walk on stilts, going up and down the hillsides like deer running away. Women go barefoot, wear their hair in a high bun, use birch bark as a head covering, and wear large earrings, black cotton clothing, and a lock-like amulet around the neck. As they go in and out of the forest, from a distance they look like gibbons.<sup>29</sup> When someone dies, the body is placed in a wooden coffin, which is then perched on a ledge built into an eight-thousand-foot cliff. The first to fall is considered blessed.

The hillside land is limited and of very poor quality. They use the slash-and-burn method of agriculture. All the grain they harvest is hung up in a bamboo shed, and then they grind it as needed day to day. They often gather litchis and supplement their living by trading in tea.

### *The Savages*

The Savages [Ye Man, or Jingpo] are located to the west of Xunchuan, scattered among the valleys. *They* do not wear clothes but instead use bark to cover their bodies, and they are repulsive in appearance. The men are few and the women many, so every man has more than ten wives. They arm themselves with wooden arrows for protection from invasion and attack. They do not farm, but rather enter the mountains and forests to collect plants, trees, and animals to eat. They do not have any utensils and wrap their food in banana leaves.

### *The Woni Barbarians*

The Woni Barbarians [Woni Man, or Hani] are located five hundred *li* to the southwest of Lin'an [north of Tonghai] and dwell in the mountains and forests. They live very frugal lives, but hoard cowry shells in their homes, burying them underground in caches of 120. When someone is about to die, they entreat their children: "I have buried a certain amount; you can take some of it, but do not touch the rest, for I will use it when I am reborn." Such is the extent of their stupidity.

### *The Pu Barbarians*

The Pu Barbarians [Pu Man], also known as the Puzi Man, are located to the west of the Lancang River. They are brave and strong, are expert robbers and thieves, and can ride horses bareback. They go barefoot and wear short armor, which leaves their knees and shins exposed. They are masters of the spear and crossbow. They stick ringed pheasant tail feathers on their heads, and when they ride they can fly like the wind.

### NOTES

I would like to thank Professor Fang Hui of Yunnan University and her father, Fang Linggui, Professor Emeritus of Yunnan Normal University, for their extensive assistance in the translation of this text. I would also like to thank Stevan Harrell for reviewing the final draft. I alone am responsible for errors that remain.

1. I use this term as defined in the following manner: "A civilizing project... is a kind of interaction between peoples, in which one group, the civilizing center, interacts with other groups (the peripheral peoples) in terms of a particular kind of inequality . . . [and it] draws its ideological rationale from the belief that the process of domination is one of helping the dominated to attain or at least approach the superior cultural, religious, and moral qualities characteristic of the center itself" (Harrell, "Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them," 4).

1. Von Glahn, *The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times*. See also an account of subsequent Ming campaigns in this region in the biography of the early Ming general Fu Youde (d. 1394) in Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, 1:468-69.

3. During the second month of spring (the second month in the Chinese lunar calendar) and the second month of autumn (the eighth month of the lunar calendar) special offerings were made to honor Confucius and the sages.

4. He Hongzuo, "Zhongqinglu xue liyueji," a stele composed in 1341.

5. The earliest reference to apes and monkeys can be found in the Shang (sixteenth to eleventh centuries, B.C.E.) oracle bone inscriptions. For a comprehensive

description of the etymology of the major characters used to denote monkeys and apes, see Van Gulik, *The Gibbon in China: An Essay in Chinese Animal Lore*, 18-43. This classic work by the great Sinologist includes extensive descriptions of both literary and pictorial depictions of monkeys, gibbons, and other apes over three thousand years of Chinese cultural history.

6. "Butcherbird" is the popular name given to shrikes, "known throughout the world on account of their merciless habits in destruction of life, and their methods of impaling insects and small rodents upon thorn and barbed wire," according to ornithologists Harry R. Caldwell and John C. Caldwell (*South China Birds*, 175). The other unusual trait of the butcherbird is its highly varied warbling song, which is especially evident in duets. This characteristic could explain the Chinese term *jueshe* (butcherbird tongue), which dates back to the second century B.C.E. and refers to the incomprehensible "languages of the barbarians."

7. Wang Shuwu, *Dali xingji [jiaozhu]; Yunnan zhilie [jijiao]*, 66.

8. The imperial Chinese practice of describing and documenting the appearance, cultures, and geographic spaces of the "barbarians" encountered and often subjugated by imperial authorities resembles practices common in the British Empire during its period of colonial expansion. In his work on the British Raj, Bernard Cohn observes: "A large colonial bureaucracy occupied itself, especially from the 1860s, with classifying people and their attributes, with censuses, surveys, and ethnographies, with recording transactions, marking space, establishing routines, and standardizing practices. The total effect exceeded the sum of each appropriation of information: colonial regimes were trying to *define* the constituents of a certain civil society, even as they hid the act of creation beneath the idea that society was a natural occurrence and the state a neutral observer and regulator" (cited in Cooper and Stoler, "Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule," 61 x). On the invention of an Oriental "other" by scholars and the subsequent historical consequences when these inventions are taken as facts and incorporated into political policies, see Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

9. As mentioned in the translator's preface, one of the most interesting aspects of working on this text while living in Yunnan was the opportunity to see the present-day social conditions of the descendants of many of these indigenous peoples. To this day the Bai are held in high regard by the Han Chinese as the most "civilized" of the minorities, whereas the adjective most commonly used to describe the other minorities is *luohou* (backward). Not surprisingly, after centuries of the dominant culture defining what it means to be civilized, many of the minority groups in Yunnan today describe themselves as "backward." By the same token, today many Bai proudly announce that they are the "most civilized of the minorities."

10. Marco Polo, who visited this region at the same time, was equally obsessed with the sexual habits of the indigenous peoples. However, unlike Li Jing, his pre-occupations reflected the values of the Catholic church. For a startlingly similar view of this region, see the account in *The Travels of Marco Polo: The Complete Yule-Cordier Edition*, 2:44-123. A detailed comparison of the two accounts appears in Armijo-Hussein, "Sayyid 'Ajall Shams al-Din: A Muslim from Central Asia, Serving the Mongols in China, and Bringing 'Civilization' to Yunnan."

11. For centuries Yunnan, more than any other place in China, has represented to the Han Chinese majority a place of exotic, promiscuous women and an imagined sexual licentiousness not found elsewhere. Local entrepreneurs are currently taking full advantage of these misconceptions, recruiting poor minority women from the

countryside and offering them jobs in the cities, where they are sold into brothels. Another way in which the exoticization of minority women is capitalized upon is a ruse perpetuated by some of the sex workers themselves. In Xishuangbanna, a Dai region of Yunnan, there are many Han Chinese women from other parts of China who have migrated there to work in the sex industry. Many of them, in order to attract their overwhelmingly Han Chinese customers, dress in the distinctive traditional clothing of the Dai minority group. For an analysis of the social consequences of these essentialized views, see Armijo-Hussein, "Young People and Social Change in China: A Survey on Risk Factors for HIV/AIDS in Yunnan Province." Other scholars who have examined the popular perception of ethnic minority women throughout China include Stevan Harrell ("Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them"), Dru Gladney ("Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities"), and Rey Chow ("Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Films: Cinema and the Exotic"). On contemporary sex tourism, see Hyde, "Sex Tourism Practices on the Periphery: Eroticizing Ethnicity on the Lancang." See also Schein, *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*.

12. See Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites: Elementary Forms, Ritual Sequence, and the Primacy of Performance."

13. Source: Wang Shuwu, *Dali xingji [jiaozhu]; Yunnan zhilue [jijiao]*, 86-96.

14. Here the author of the text seems to be illustrating a linguistic affinity between the Bai and the Bo. To illustrate the terms from Bai language he must transliterate Bai sounds using Chinese characters. Therefore it is worth noting that the characters he selects call attention to the ecological and cultural differences between the Han Chinese and the Bai. For instance, the term he uses to translate "eating a meal" drops the Han Chinese reference to cooked rice, and the phrase for gathering fuel connotes the ready availability of wood for kindling.

15. Probably refers to the Qingming Festival and the early spring "sweeping of the graves."

16. This practice refers to the Torch Festival, an annual celebration held every year down to this day throughout Yunnan province by several indigenous peoples. For more detailed information on the history of this ritual, see Deng Qiyao and Zhang Liu, *The Festivals in the Mysterious Land of Yunnan*, 167.

17. The title of this text is unknown, but presumably refers to a very early work written in Bai.

18. Baohe is a reign period of the Nanzhao Kingdom ruler Quan Fengyou (824-?).

19. Wang Xizhi (321-371) (style name Yishao) is widely regarded as the greatest artist in the history of Chinese calligraphy.

20. This custom of guaranteeing that a new bride is not a virgin when she first sleeps with her husband was apparently widespread throughout what is now southern China. Needless to say, it runs counter to more traditional Chinese values regarding chastity, the paternity of the first child, and the custom of primogeniture. In *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, Wolfram Eberhard identifies a series of "chains" that are in essence cultural traditions found among different groups of peoples in south and eastern China. His description of one of these chains offers a potential explanation for the above mentioned custom: "This chain showed the existence of beliefs and customs characteristic of a folktale type which is based on the idea that a girl to-be-married should not be a virgin because virgins carry a poison and contaminate the first lover" (139).

21. And her children will be considered the rightful heirs.

22. This list was originally Buddhist but evolved over time. There are several different versions of what these seven precious things are, but the most common version includes gold, silver, colored glaze, the giant clam, agate, pearl, and rose quartz.

23. Regarding the genre of drama called *cuan nong*, see West, "Mongol Influence on the Development of Northern Drama," 450-51.

24. For a fascinating and extensive discussion of this practice, which is known as *couvade*, in societies in many different parts of the world, see the scholarly commentary in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 2:91-95 n. 4, and 596.

25. On a research trip to Xishuangbanna in 1997,<sup>1</sup> I joined a tour group organized specifically for local tourists and made up primarily of Han Chinese from other parts of China. At one stop a local entrepreneur boarded the bus and handed out leaflets advertising his special tour to hidden sites along the riverbank to watch the local Dai women bathing.

26. The use of betel nut in this region has continued down to this day. Eberhard has the following to say about the practice: "All Southerners chew betel. They have silver or tin boxes with three compartments, containing the nut, the necessary lime, and the leaves for wrapping . . . The lime is a shell lime or ordinary lime, which is wrapped in the leaf together with the betel" (Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, 288).

27. *The Universal History (Kitab Jami' al-Tawarikh)* by Rashid al-Din also includes a brief description of these people. Written at the same time as both the Chinese and Italian accounts, his descriptions are similar to theirs. Nineteenth-century scholar Colonel Henry Yule noted: "There is another passage of Rashid among Elliot's extracts in which this people is mentioned . . . 'Beyond that is the country of *Katban*, then *Uman* [Wuman], then *Zardandan*, so called because the people have gold in their teeth. They puncture their hands and color them with indigo. They eradicate their beards so that they have not a sign of hair on their faces. They are all subject to the Kaan. Thence you arrive at the borders of *Tibet*, where they eat raw meat and worship images, and have no shame respecting their wives. The air is so impure that if they ate their dinner after noon they would all die. They boil tea and eat winnowed barley'" (Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, 2:274-75, n. 1).

28. This practice is also discussed by Eberhard, who offers the following explanation: "Knocking out teeth is customary among the Liao peoples, mostly as a form of initiation rite. Usually one upper molar and one incisor are knocked out. The reason usually given is that it is an embellishment. The better reason, more rarely given, is that it is intended to prevent a transformation into an evil creature that can bite" (*The Local Cultures of South and East China*, 451).

29. As mentioned earlier, when describing "barbarians," Chinese would often make comparisons with monkeys and apes. The gibbon was an especially favorite example, due to its popularity as a subject of Chinese poets: "The graceful movements of the gibbon and his saddening calls are referred to by nearly every poet who wrote from the 3d to the 7th century," notes Van Gulik (*The Gibbon in China*, 51). The following excerpt from an essay written by Fu Xuan (217-278 C.E.) reflects both the common comparisons made between monkeys, apes, and "barbarians," and several of the captivating attributes of the gibbon and the other primate common in China, the macaque: "When I am merry with wine, and my happy face has not yet been composed, I play with my macaques and let my gibbons have their way. Their admirable features are really staggering. I give them scarlet turbans for hats, and red

cloth for leggings. First they make faces, with their cinnabar lips, lifting their eyebrows and creasing their foreheads. Now they look sad, then they glare angrily. Others just look ahead restraining themselves, others again start bawling and wrangling. Others, assuming a dignified air seem to hesitate what to do, others wail sadly and moan and sigh. Thus they now resemble an elderly gentleman, then a barbarian dancing girl. Now they look down and groom their fur, then they clap their hands and jump about in confusion" (Van Gulik, *The Gibbon in China*, 27).

The tendency to liken non-Han peoples to nonhuman primates was so common that not only were "barbarians" compared with monkeys, but monkeys were also compared with "barbarians." For example, the macaque was known by the appellation *husun* or "grandson of a barbarian" (Van Gulik, *The Gibbon in China*, 35). These types of analogies have remained popular down to this day in China. In his work *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Frank Dikotter documents both early Chinese descriptions, dating back to the eighth century C.E., comparing Europeans with macaques (13-14), as well as more recent ones. In an interesting conflation of Darwinian theories of evolution and Chinese concepts of racial nationalism, a popular zoology textbook printed in Shanghai in 1916 made the following assertion regarding racial origins: "The 'black slave' was classified in the gorilla branch, and the Malays were descendants of the orangutan" (quoted in Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 147). Another Chinese scholar even offered a theory of de-evolution when he stated, "People who are indolent in the use of their intelligence will waste away and become macaques and long-tailed monkeys" (Zhang Binglin [1869-1936], quoted in Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 122.).