

## Field Investigation Report on “Ayimengge” Children's Day of Khampa Yi Nationality

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**Abstract:** Ayimengge is an ancient custom activity in the Yi area, which means the children festival or children party. It has a history of thousands of years. It is an activity that the Yi people pray for children and pin their good wishes. With the field investigation of the Yi people's settlements in Khampa area, the Ayimengge ritual process of the Khampa people and the attitude of the Khampa people to this festival are recorded to understand the current living conditions of the folk culture of Ayimengge.

### 1. Introduction

Folk custom is a way of life formed by a nation's long-term accumulation in the natural environment and social environment, which is manifested in production, residence, marriage, festivals, taboos and so on. The formation of some customs and habits is related to the major historical events or historical figures of the nation, and is also a reflection of the economy and life of a nation in a certain period of time. In Khampa, the villages inhabited by Yi people still maintain the annual “Ayimengge” Children's Day, but its scenes and rituals have been simplified.

### 2. Ayimengge Children's Day Field Survey

With the historical changes such as the slave uprising in Liangshan in the old society, some Yi people fled from the former dominion of slave owners and aristocrats in Daliang. Along the Jinsha River and Dadu River, they migrated to Luding and Jiulong in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province to live and multiply. Over the past 100 years, the Yi people and the local people of Han, Tibetan and other ethnic groups have coexisted harmoniously and learned from each other to make up for their deficiencies, forming a unique Tibetan-Yi corridor culture. Khampa yi people refer to the yi people living in Khampa area. Khampa yi people mainly live in kowloon county and luding county.

The Yi people in Jiulong County mainly live in Yi villages such as Xiaojin, Dolo, Sanya, Zier and Wanba. The towns of Hailuogou Moxi, Yanzigou, Detuo and Jiajun in Luding County are mixed villages of Yi and Han people, with simple and honest folk customs and industrious development. Families intermarry with each other for several generations. The clansmen are proud of the combination of inheriting their fine traditions and attaching importance to the integration of education into modern civilization. Under the guidance of the party's ethnic policy, Khampa's sons and daughters of the yi people have long been on the road to poverty alleviation and prosperity. “Ayimengge”, an ancient and beautiful custom, still retains a relatively complete festival ceremony with its tenacious vitality in some local Yi settlements.

#### Ayimengge Children's Day

Yi people in Jiajun Township of Luding County hold this activity on schedule every year, with Ayimengge in the spring of 2008 being the most solemn one. All the Yi people whose parents and elders live in Jiajun Township have to take part in this activity due to the tough demands of their elders, so nearly 280 people from more than 60 households took part. Young people working in Kangding, Luding County and Hailuogou all came back to take part in the activities. The author's family also visited the site and experienced the fun of Ayimengge's activities.

Ayimengge Children's Day: It is usually held in March or April of each spring. The specific

dates are determined by the lucky days calculated by Bimo, Sunny or Degu, the elders, etc. according to the October solar calendar.

Ceremonies: birch branches and coriaria branches prepared in advance are cut, some of which are made into combat knives and others into spears. The thickest branches are used as pillars and beams to build a model of the house, covered with wormwood, and the haunted house in Deblomo is finished (see Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1 weapons

Figure 1. weapons



Figure 2 The ghosts house

Figure 2. the ghosts house

Everything was ready and the ceremony of Ayimengge began. The host grabbed the big black cock in his hand, read the prayer sutra and the ghost sutra in his mouth, turned three times clockwise and three times counterclockwise around the crowd, and then killed the chicken. Hang the head of the chicken in the direction towards Deblomo, and distribute the weapons stained with chicken blood, such as war knives and spears, to the children, one for each hand. Under the leadership of the host, the children waved their weapons, took the form of slashing and chanting incantations, and finally rushed to the front of the haunted house, slashing and killing together until the haunted house was destroyed. Then the knives, spears, weapons and haunted houses were set on fire together.

Adults cooked the sacrificial chicken and cut it into small pieces. Each household was given a piece of chicken. Everyone has to take a bite, or “Kexi”. More than ten days in advance to brew fermented glutinous rice wine (every household must gather together rice and corn flour for women to brew fermented glutinous rice wine), and every household must gather together money to buy roosters for ritual activities. For large-scale Ayimengge activities, pigs or sheep should be purchased and slaughtered for food. On the whole, the expenses needed for Ayimengge Children's Day are shared equally by each family, which also indicates that everyone involved in the activity is blessed, safe and protected by ancestors and gods.

In January 2019, the author drove through asbestos to Wanba Yi Township and was warmly received by relatives. In Gaojie Village, my father's cousin's family, killing chickens and cooking bacon enthusiastically entertained me.

According to field surveys, Ayimengge activities are held every year in Wanba Yi Township, which also include the following activities:

“Anemi” activities: Generally speaking, Anemi is held in February and March of the lunar calendar. Children in villages are gathered together and painted their faces with pot bottom smoke and other colors. Then let them go door to door in groups to beg for corn kernels, soybeans and so on. At last, gather the grain together, find an empty place, set up a big iron pot, fry it, and eat it together.

Muershaka Ze: With or without children, every Yi family in the village has to prepare a handful of corn kernels, a handful of soybeans, a handful of Sumatra seeds and a handful of highland barley. Then gather these grains together and take them to the wild to fry them. Everyone should eat them separately. Even if you can't go to the scene to attend, also want to give them back. Muershaka is something everyone must share. According to the old people, eating Muershaka will bless

everyone's peace, good luck and health, and protect people from disasters this year. Both Khampa yi people and liangshan region retain Muershaka Ze.

### **3. The Inheritance and Changes of Ayimengge**

The “Ayimengge” of the Yi nationality is the expression of the emotional appeal of the ancient Yi people in the face of natural disasters and diseases in the long historical process. At the same time, it is also a manifestation of ethnic cultural identity. It is also an effective way to promote the interaction and communication between the Yi teenagers and children, and it provides training opportunities for the most basic skills. The “Ayimengge” of the Yi Children's Day shows the unique characteristics of the traditional culture of the Yi people. On July 13, 2009, the “Ayimengge” Children's Day of the Yi people was identified as the second batch of provincial intangible cultural heritage in Liangshan Prefecture.

#### **3.1 Ayimengge's Origin Theory**

According to field investigation, there are two theories about the origin of Ayimengge in Khampa Yi nationality:

Theories 1: Debromo ghosts eat children's souls. The inheritor of Ayimengge in Luding County, Li Wanfa, is an 83-year-old Yi farmer from Lamagou Village, Yanzigou Town, Luding County. Now living in Liuheba Village, California, I am familiar with the process and ceremony of Ayimengge activities. I have been presiding over Ayimengge activities in the village for decades. Yanzigou Town, Nimato Village and California Township are the areas where Ayimengge customs are completely preserved. In the interview, Li Wanfa, an old man in Luding, said that Ayimengge is a ritual activity that must be held every spring by Yi people. This activity can protect children's health and safety. Legend has it that in the early spring of a year, many children of Yi people suffered from strange diseases, grew red pimples all over their bodies, talked nonsense, and finally died of pus. Bimo read scriptures and divined. The divination results showed that the ghosts in Debromo ghost world who had been sleeping for a winter woke up and went to the earth to catch and eat the children's souls. In order to resist the devil of Debromo and catch the soul of children in the world, the Yi people organized the children and held a grand Monger activity. Since then, this activity has been handed down from generation to generation. This statement is mainly circulated in the areas where the Yi people live together in Luding County.

Theories 2: Children were caught in heaven for sacrificial offerings. According to Hairi's mother-in-law in Wanba Yi Township, Kowloon County, Ayimengge has been active since the ancestors of the Yi people were born. According to the horoscope and the October solar calendar, the Yi people will calculate that whenever they encounter the “Kuguo” year, which means the year of great evil, they must hold a grand Ayimengge series of activities. Including “Anemi, Muershaka Ze”. Ayimengge is held in February and March of the lunar calendar. Legend has it that in March of the lunar calendar, the ancestors who lived in heaven also held nimu and zobi. They will come to the earth to capture some young boys and girls to the sky as “Puwo, Puwa”, that is, sacrificial sacrifices for sacrificial purposes. these children who have been captured will die. Later, in order to prevent the souls of children from being captured in heaven, ethnic groups in yi villages held Ayimengge ceremonies to protect the lives of children. this statement is mainly spread in yi villages and towns in kowloon county.

#### **3.2 Essential Materials for Ayimengge Ceremony**

Ayimengge ceremony must be prepared with wormwood and wormwood branches, birch branches, mulberry branches, red (black) rooster, and wine. In the year of great evil calculated according to the Yi people's solar calendar, the Ayimengge activities of the Yi people in Kowloon also include Anemi and Muershaka, with rich contents. In general, the ceremony of the Ayimengge activity of the Khampa yi people has been simplified, and only wormwood sticks are used to build the model of the house when building the deblo mo ghost house.

In addition to Bimo and Suni, the hosts of Khampa Yi Ayimengge include Degu and Sori, who

can host simple “Waxi” ceremonies.

### **3.3 Ayimengge's Living Situation**

The sense of ceremony in Ayimengge's activities is now weakened, and it is more in the form of “going through the motions”. Most of the time, although this activity is held on schedule, people pay more attention to the results of the activity than to the process of the ceremony. Most people think it is enough to take the “Shefu” of blessing and wishes home for the family to taste. The content and links of children's personal participation are reduced, and the educational effect of this activity on children is weakened or even not reflected. The traditional cultural value it contains has not been highlighted and cannot be recognized by the majority of children, thus facing the danger of gradual extinction.

In the field investigation, whether living in the countryside or working in the city, Khampa Yi people all know that Ayimengge is a festival for children. The main purpose is to pray for children's health and safety, ward off evil spirits and avoid disasters. In interviews with young and middle-aged people, they all believed that this was the custom of their own nation and was necessary and good for blessing and wishing children. Eighty-five percent of the Yi people working in the unit (male) said they did not know the props, skills and methods of making articles needed for the ceremony, and even did not know the scriptures that needed to be recited. Men in the countryside all said they knew about the season of Ayimengge, the various items needed for the ceremony and the method of making them. 10% of them could even host a simple Ayimengge ceremony.

During the interviews with the elderly, most of them knew all kinds of articles and production techniques and methods needed for Ayimengge activities. They believe that this ceremony is a custom left by ancestors and must be held. Young people should be actively encouraged to participate in and learn from this activity.

## **4. Conclusion**

Habwah once said that social communication and group consciousness are important conditions to ensure the continuity of collective memory. Ethnic identity is closely related to ethnic memory. Ethnic identity is the basis of cultural identity. Ethnic historical memory and encounter are the basis of ethnic identity.

Ethnic memory is a history textbook on the origin and historical changes of the tribe. Judging from the changes of Yi Ayimengge, it is closely related to the development of Yi ethnic group and the economic development of the country and ethnic areas. Its change and development are inseparable from the change of Yi ethnic group.

Yi people generally live in cold and barren areas. Spring is also a high incidence season for various epidemic diseases. In the old society. Once people suffer from smallpox, measles, influenza and other diseases, they are short of medical treatment and drugs, and the possibility of recovery is very small. Therefore, Ayimengge is also a way for Yi people to place their spiritual hopes.

Ayimengge exists in the form of collective activities. At the same time, it also relies on festival activities to carry on and carry on. There is no special educational institution and discipline to carry on and carry on, and there is no professional inheritor. Ayimengge of Khampa yi nationality and jiajun township of Luding county have kept the complete ceremony procedure. The Yi people in the rest of the region will hold Ayimengge activities, but the ceremony is incomplete and discontinuous, and the activities will be carried out intermittently. Ayimengge's lineage cannot be examined.

The author believes that it is the best inheritance for Ayimengge to vigorously excavate the traditional cultural connotation contained in the ceremony and enhance its educational value. Ayimengge plays an important role in the cultivation of Yi children's childhood personality. Ayimengge is the only one of many Yi festivals that focuses on children. In folk customs, Ayimengge's main purpose is to eliminate diseases and prevent epidemic diseases, but objectively it is also a festival to cultivate children's excellent quality. At the same time, it is also a children's festival that best reflects the unique educational methods of the Yi people. It is different from the

legal “International Children's Day”. It is a folk festival only seen in Yi nationality. In the Children's Day of all nationalities in the world, its meaning and content are unique.

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