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HITCHES ON THE MOUNTAIN

AN ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE
JINGPO MINORITY OF YUNNAN

BY ANNA MAO

For Ms. Stammerjohann, for teaching and showing me how to persevere,
Mr. Qian, for supporting us all throughout the trip (quite literally, for me),
Ms. Barker, for orchestrating this amazing experience for all of us,
and Zhang Kuangnuo, the Jingpo girl from Mangliang, for being a friend, a support,
and a teacher for so many things that my socially awkward self could never express.

Abstract*

This ethnography examines the challenges and questions faced by the rural youth of the Jingpo minority when making decisions for their future career choices, relationships, higher education, and location of settlement. These challenges and questions come from their educational standards, traditional familial pressure, and cultural norms.

Key Terms*

1. Jingpo minority
2. Rural youth
3. Educational standards
4. Familial pressure
5. Cultural norms

Introduction

How could two groups of people working in the same way produce drastically different results? Why is it that the efforts of one entire community have only ever resulted in failure?

This is an ethnographic research project on the youth of the Jingpo minority in China. The research was conducted in Dehong, Yunnan, the primary base of the minority, from April 13-17, 2017, on a trip lead by several teachers and administrators of THIS. The purpose of the trip was to allow students to become acquainted with some of the youth of the Dehong prefecture, participate in traditional cultural activities, and to collect field research for the later process of writing the ethnography.

My ethnography focuses on the question of the challenges and questions faced by Jingpo youth when making decisions for their futures. This question is of interest to me because in the field, Jingpo youth could be observed working hard for their futures, whether academically or hobby-wise, yet spoke only of the numerous failures of their peers in finding a suitable future for themselves and succeeding. Many youths had clear-cut plans for their futures, yet in the past, only failures of dreams and giving up had occurred, which made me interested in the factors behind the choices youth made for their futures.

As a whole, my research question is significant as it addresses the universal issue of youth in deciding for their own futures and the negative factors that may influence their decisions. On a deeper level, it also explores the ways that one's culture and the inequalities that come with it can be limiting to their future careers and lifestyles.

The following sections document each stage of my ethnographic research, starting from the days prior to my time in the field to long after, when I made use of research conducted in the field and answered my research question.

Firstly, you will find the pre-trip expectations section. Written prior to field work, this section describes the pre-conceptions I had about Yunnan and the Jingpo without having been there.

In this section, I acknowledged my biases and understood ways to minimize their impact on the objectivity of my research. Next is the methodology section, where I described the main methods I used in the field while gathering research data and their strengths, weaknesses, and impacts on the correctness of my results. After that is the basic markers of culture section, where I use my various evidence from the field to describe the twelve basic pillars of traditional Jingpo culture to be used for reference in future sections. Following the basic markers is the literature review section, in which I summarized and critiqued three academic sources related to my research topic to be used as the basis for my analysis, the next section. In the analysis, I answer my research question based on my coded data from the field, analyse the impacts of the issues depicted on Jingpo youth in the present day, and conclude the research. Next is the conclusion of the entire ethnography, where I summarize the ethnography and describe the flaws of my research as well as the areas that were important but not so much touched upon by my own research. This is followed by, finally, the ethical guidelines, in which I detail the ethical restrictions I abided by during the research process.

Pre-Trip Expectations

I have mixed feelings about our upcoming trip to Yunnan, but they are mostly positive. This is because I think that it will be a great learning experience to interact with the children at Prop Roots and experience the rich culture and environment in Dehong, but my prior knowledge and biases leads me to think that the province may be underdeveloped and slightly uncomfortable due to its current situation, what with the rapidly growing drug trade industry and the war happening just on the border.

When I go to Dehong, I expect to find an area that is old-fashioned, rich in culture and has a beautifully preserved environment, but that is also rather underdeveloped. This is due to the fact that my prior knowledge and research tells me that places like Dehong are very culturally rich (Grover, “Yunnan Province, China's spectacular Shangri-La”) but are financially neglected and rather poor rural areas. I think that this preconception may cause me to view the area as if I am looking down from a more well-off province, but I can minimize it by thinking of the area’s beautiful environment and the fact that its economic state does not affect its culture.

I already know from past lessons in Humanities that Prop Roots is a charity home for children in the area, and I know its basic conditions and environment; it is situated in a rural area next to several large mountains and is surrounded by animals such as oxen. I also know from research that Dehong, and Yunnan in general is a more tropical environment with large forests and vines. Also, Yunnan is home to many ethnic minorities such as the Vai minority and the Jingpo minority (“Ethnic Groups in Yunnan”), which we are studying for our ethnographies, and these minorities have each adapted to the environment in different ways, with various forms of traditional dress as well as food, etc.

After a brief search on the internet, I get the impression that this area is very beautiful and is home a lot of remnants of ancient culture. However, along with praise for the area’s

beauty, many sites state that the province's border has led to drug trade being on the rise as well as war and conflict (Hong, "The Tijuana of China"), which gives me the second impression that Yunnan may be slightly unsafe due to its rather unstable border relations.

As a whole, my impression of Yunnan based on my prior knowledge, research and biases is that it is going to be a beautiful, traditionally styled place rich with culture, but will be dangerous due to the war and drug trade.

Methodology

Notes, participant observation, interviews, and visual recordings were crucial methods in the field.

Firstly, field notes were chosen because they capture an extensive view of places and activities of significance. They allow for the observer to get an overview of the field using the senses rather than a selective view; the overall layout, architecture, large groups, and natural environment can all be observed and recorded. These notes are useful because they offer an objective view of the environment and social situation. However, only observing means that people's traditional values and personality traits cannot be learned. For example, while the social tendencies of a group in their environment can be observed, their personal backgrounds and hobbies cannot.

On the other hand, participant observation does allow for deeper understanding and interaction with the culture, which is why the strategy was chosen. Participant observation is useful because it captures an in-depth view of the process and skill behind activities instead of surface-level observations. Knowing the skills required for traditional activities such as cooking and knitting helps the observer gain a deeper understanding of the way the activity is carried out, how, and why. However, notes can only be jotted down during participation and completed later, meaning that they are incomplete and tend to be more subjective, including biased information, as they are written based on memory.

Interviews also have the problem of subjectivity, as they represent only a single individual rather than the community. This means that while responses are personal, showing interviewees' understanding of culture based on their own experiences, they are subjective to themselves and do not represent the larger Jingpo community. Since individuals have varying experiences from their perspectives, interview results cannot be fully accurate. Still, interviews were chosen because they help record details that can only be gained through

interviewees' connection with their own culture, such as the way it influences daily life and social interactions.

Finally, photographs of objects, places, people, and activities were taken to capture moments of significance in an objective way that can be referred to later. They are helpful as they are detailed images that can be looked back upon without bias, which is why the strategy was chosen. The meticulous details of environments, architecture, and the workings of social activities such as barbecues can be recorded clearly. However, as they are only photographs, they fail to provide observations for senses other than sight, and only record specific moments in time. This means that only the visual aspect of events photographed can be referred to, and the process of events cannot be understood using the photos alone.

Basic Markers of Culture

1. Name

The name of the culture is the “Jingpo minority (景颇)”, which translates to “offspring of the mountains” (Zhang). The minority and neighbouring groups use this name. However, the name is regional to Yunnan, and similar minorities are given different names in various regions; the Jingpo of Myanmar are referred to by the name of “Kachin”. (“About Jingpo Minority”). The main problem encountered in the field was that in the field of Dehong as a whole as well as Prop Roots specifically, many people are not of the Jingpo minority, but of Han and Delang.



Jingpo woman in traditional dress.
Photo credit to: Anna Mao

2. Location

My field, the Prop Roots area, is in Yunnan province, China. It is in Gongyin, Dehong. It is located above the Long River, on West Mountain (Yang). The Jingpo minority is based mostly in Yunnan, but is spread throughout China, and also exists in other regions such as Myanmar, with different names (“About Jingpo Minority”).



*Dehong on map, with West mountain range and Dragon River.
Photo credit to: Google Maps 2017*



*Dehong in relation to Mangshi (red border)
Photo credit to: Google Maps 2017*

3. Language

Throughout the field, people spoke in Zaiwa, Yunnan dialect, between themselves, and Mandarin in academic settings and to observers. Zaiwa belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese language family (“About Jingpo Minority”). The government discourages use of Zaiwa; it is prohibited in schools and punishable by beating. In the twentieth century, a written language with characters and alphabetical pinyin like Mandarin was introduced in an effort to modernise the Jingpo (Zhang). I learned two phrases: “wo rang nang ri wu nag ra”, meaning “I like you”, and “nganvik numnang gvut goq”, meaning “let’s be friends” from Prop Roots student Zhang Kuangrui. I learned these social phrases because the people I met did not initiate contact, and conversed about their friendships and romantic relationships above all other subjects.



Bag promoting Mangshi hospital in Mandarin.
Photo credit to: Anna Mao

4. Settlements

During my field observation, I observed scattered settlements on mountains, near fields, pastures, or roads. In terms of public settlements, main streets had various public buildings such as cement and brick, multiple-floored guesthouses. There was also modern cement, brick and/or tile schools and hospitals. Small shops of wood or bamboo could also be found on streets. Main streets were generally concrete for driving, and smaller ones were dirt, gravel or stone.



Three-floored brick guesthouse on concrete road.
Photo credit to: Anna Mao



Modern tile hospital.
Photo credit to: Anna Mao



Small stone road.
Photo credit to: Carolyn Lu

5. Houses

The houses I observed were small dwellings of less than 100m² that had concrete walls and wood or bamboo roofs. They were white, grey, brown and dark red. Many houses have one room with all furniture necessary for cooking food and resting (beds, stoves). Generally, families of women, children, men and sometimes elders live

together in some houses, though some working men (middle-aged or elderly) may move out and live in others, where their workspace is more accessible. However, many school-age children live in public dormitories (Hu).



Concrete and wood house.

Photo credit to: Anna Mao

6. Making a Living

The Jingpo people in Dehong are largely agriculturalists and pastoralists. They commonly grow crops such as sugarcane and corn (Yang). I also observed farmers herding livestock, sheep, chickens and roosters. Some people also still hold on to the traditional practice of hunting for birds, swine, and fish. Most people then go on to sell various produce independently in local markets. However, there are also numerous employment opportunities in public services such as transportation. A small portion of the population become migrant workers in large cities (Yang).



Elderly man cutting wood to sell.

Photo credit to: Anna Mao

7. Political System

The community in Dehong is governed by local mayors that are below state officials (Zhang). However, the laws established by the state and local leaders and its

consequences are not enforced; many individuals under 18 can be seen driving motorbikes and smoking in public, which is prohibited by state law. The current web of drug dealership in Yunnan (of cocaine especially), and the subsequent drug abuse is also not being dealt with effectively. Still, in schools, actions such as Zaiwa usage are dealt with by beating, an action that, in itself, is against the law.

8. Kinship System

The Jingpo kinship system is patrilineal, meaning that surnames and familial traditions come from the father. Jingpo society fits this as it is predominantly patriarchal and values male services (Hu). Jingpo people have specific names for immediate family, such as “brother”, “mother”, and “grandma”, but for same-generation relatives and extended family, there are no specific terms denoting which side of the family the person is on; they are simply referred to as “cousin” (Zhang).

9. Marriage

Much of the Jingpo minority still relies on the concept of arranged marriage. Elders in the youth’s family may still choose a partner for the youth from a family friend’s youngest generation, or a partner that meets family standards. These standards generally require economic stability and a clean criminal record (Yang). In the modern day, some people also choose their own spouse, but they still have to gain approval from elders and generally still get married around 18. Some people choose to abstain from marriage because of family pressure, especially LGBT youth.

10. Sex and Gender

Gender relations between Jingpo people are generally good. Males and females socialise in the same manner between genders. However, there are still traditional gender roles under common usage, and women are expected to do housework and labour while men can leave and pursue careers for money (Hu). Men generally have

control over their own lives and the family, while women must complete set chores. Also, there are still many stereotypes that are accepted by Jingpo society regarding femininity and masculinity, which can be observed through clothing and labour divisions.

11. Religion

The Jingpo community does not have a universal religion accepted by all members. It instead includes members of the Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim religions, but the most dominant set of beliefs is in the traditional idea of polytheism and spirits and monsters governing the world (Zhang). Due to their belief, many practice various magic/spiritual acts such as hanging a figure in the kitchen to ward off evil spirits (Zhang). People also try to appease these deities in their daily lives.



Kitchen spirit figure.
Photo credit to: Carolyn Lu

12. Interesting facts

The Jingpo community uses traditional Chinese ways of curing disease. Throughout my field work, when a person caught a cold or got hurt, Prop Roots students could be observed making broths and poultices from herbs found on the mountainside. Also, to diagnose illness, they pinch a spot on the neck, and redness indicates illness.

Also, most people had pierced ears and many had tattoos, such as the members of the Prop Roots street dance team.

Literature Review

What challenges and questions do young people face when making decisions regarding their future?

Separate and unequal; Rural education in China (The Economist)

Education is a leading influence in the choices children make regarding their future. This article analyses the current situation with rural education in China and the impacts it may have on student's lives. It depicts rural education as drastically substandard, with appalling conditions and inherently present discrimination, stating that less than 10% of students from rural areas go to high school, a stark comparison to the 70% in the city ("Separate and unequal; Rural education in China."). It then goes on to state that the Chinese government is expressing very little resolution toward increasing the quality of rural education, which is necessary as China's ideal workforce shifts from rural labourers to more skilled young people ("Separate and unequal; Rural education in China.").

This article's main strength lies in that it contains evidence from multiple recent studies and clear figures, for example the 60% discrimination rate ("Separate and unequal; Rural education in China."). Next, it also attempts to represent the issue through different perspectives, also providing evidence for improvements made to rural education, the university graduation rate increasing eightfold, while critiquing the situation. The main flaws of this article are that it is written completely from an etic perspective, and that the main body seems biased to a degree, as most of the evidence from the case study only displays the negative side of the issue.

This article connects to my research because it speaks of one crucial challenge to future choice, getting a good education, and provides information that applies specifically to rural areas in China. During my field research in Yunnan, I was able to visit and observe both the Prop Roots educational home and Hula Middle School in order to examine rural

education in the same way as the researcher for this article, and the multiple studies conducted could be very useful. I will use this article for the basis of my education argument; I will reference it as my initial evidence that rural education is discriminatory and below standards.

Ethnic Minorities, Race, and Inequality in China: A New Perspective on Racial Dynamics

This article speaks of the main issues members of ethnic minorities face in China due to discrimination. It first describes the integration of minorities into urban society by the government, bringing up a main point of the 1984 Law on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities, “which provided some rights of self-government to ethnic autonomous areas in the the the political, economic, and cultural arenas.” (Myers, et al.) It then speaks of the autonomy, strategic influence, economic wellbeing, health, human rights, and education of minorities. On education, it states that in 1949 80% of all minority members were illiterate, and despite government efforts to improve rural education, in 2001 “minorities had nearly twice the level of illiteracy as the Han (30.8 % and 17.8 %, respectively) and suffered from lower educational attainment” (Myers, et al.).

One strength of this article is that it is a recently penned overview of the entire situation with the treatment of rural minorities in China, and can be very useful if background information on the current situation of minorities is necessary. It also provides valid evidence that the current educational standard of rural minority areas is much lower than that of the city, and is objective in doing so. One weakness is that much of the article consists of historical data or early 2000s data that may be outdated, though the article was published in 2013. Also, some data is specific to other regions and minorities such as Tibet and its minority, meaning that some data does not apply at all.

This article connects to my main question because the Jingpo are a rural-based minority like those described in the article, meaning that they are a part of some of the overall data, such as the low educational standard (Li). This means that the situations described in this article, such as poor economic condition and poor education, applies to the Jingpo minority. The negative situations are all challenges faced by Jingpo youth when they decide for their futures, thus making the article tie in directly to my question. I will use this article as a reference during my analysis, and a basis for some of my arguments such as the inequality of education affecting Jingpo youth, as the data provided for poor education and lack of employment, etc. includes the Jingpo.

Family sources of educational gender inequality in rural China: A critical assessment
(International Journal of Educational Development)

This article speaks of the challenge of educational gender inequality in rural China based on familial biases. It is based on an 11-month investigation of rural minority families in Gansu, and came to the conclusion that while young boys and girls of rural communities act and think as equals and aspire for similar goals, their families tend to prioritize education of males over that of females, and in 20% of cases still value patriarchy more (Emily, et al.). Furthermore, gender stereotypes of females being caring housewives and men working for the family are still greatly perpetuated despite girls being far superior academically (Emily, et al.). 46% of females and 51% of males wished to achieve higher education despite that they would be first-generation college graduates, however families, especially traditional mothers, strongly vouched for them to marry and stay home (Emily, et al.).

The main strength of this article is that it is clearly written by scholars for academic purposes, and the investigation conducted is shown to be comprehensive, objective, and specific. It could be of great use for evidence and quotes, both from the study conclusions and the participant answers. However, a weakness is that the case study was completed in the

field of Gansu with a different minority, and some ideas may not apply to my field of study, despite the similarities between the two locations of the minorities.

This article connects to my research because it clearly combines the three key factors of education, familial ideals, and gender inequality in the youths' lives to show the great challenges they may face in choosing their future based on the educational treatment they receive based on gender. The idea that, ideally, young women get married and do not progress intellectually while young men find good, intellectual jobs to support the family (Emily, et al.) is clearly very limiting to youth's choices. This has a clear link to my research question, as the three factors stated, especially familial pressure, has a great influence on my chosen issue of future choices. In my analysis, I will use this article as a reference for my argument about familial pressure and gender inequality. I cannot directly use the evidence, as the case study was conducted on a different rural minority, but I can reference it for an example of familial pressure throughout rural China.

Analysis*

The issue of deciding one's future is a widespread struggle for the youth of today, and the issue is only exacerbated for those of the Jingpo minority. They are a prime example of the way that societal pressure, higher authority, and the constraints of one's own culture can influence young peoples' decisions for their futures, and the choice careers of Jingpo youth often fall into a strictly defined set of acceptable roles. In choosing their futures, Jingpo youth are bound by their education system, family, and cultural norms.

The main influence in their choice is the level of education they receive and the standards taught. Education in Yunnan is relatively underdeveloped in comparison to that of urban sectors ("Separate and unequal; Rural education in China."). Much of the young population in Yunnan fails to enrol in school, due to the high cost of education and the tendency of the Jingpo to settle in scattered dwellings throughout the mountains, far away from the schools and main roads. Furthermore, the low educational standard and prejudice to minorities found in the current education system leads to many youth failing to graduate with adequate grades or to graduate and progress to higher education at all. "Only around 1% of kids go to college. It's either that their grades are either too bad or that they have to get married and support the family locally, like by farming." (Li). Academically excellent youth who continue on to higher education also tend to fail once they reach urban education, as the current system is riddled with inconveniences for rural Hukou holders ("Separate and unequal; Rural education in China"). This then leads to a very limited array of job opportunities for youth outside of rural farming and public service jobs in the location at which they already live.

On the other hand, in a government-advocated effort, Yunnan students are being taught to value subjects such as math and science over the arts and to achieve high grades in

order to pursue an “intellectual” career; “They want me to focus more on my school subjects so I can get good grades and get a typical good job, like being a doctor or scientist.” (Zhang), which is considered necessary for a stable financial state. It is also heavily implied that students must act under the standards of city schools in order to advance intellectually; speaking the Jingpo language alone is punishable by beating (Hu), causing minority students to be unfamiliar or even illiterate in their own language “We barely even know how to write our own names anymore, let alone how to use it fluently.” (Zhang). Overall, the education system in Yunnan is partial toward students pursuing careers in science-related subjects, and consider true intellectual development for the future to be based on city, Han ethnic group, standards. Through the education system, youth are being taught that the ideal career choice is one that is city-based and “intellectual”, rather than one that values creativity or the students’ own culture, whether that may be Jingpo, Dai, Delang, etc. (Hu). However, as aforementioned, their low quality of education greatly limits these possible career paths.

Another great influence is the family of the youth. In rural Yunnan, the elders of the youth’s immediate family always have the final say in all affairs of great consequence; “I can’t do anything if my grandparents don’t agree to it. They have to approve of everything I do before I can do it.” (Hu). Multiple interviews show that regarding academic and career-related issues, the youth’s grandparents and then parents must approve all the youth’s choices before the decisions can be finalised (Zhang) (Li). Interviewees typically expressed that their parents limited their career choices to intellectual ones. They also communicated that as Yunnan grows increasingly modern, what with the current influx of new technology, families’ exposure to outside culture grows. As their knowledge mostly comes from glorified shows and media “Cell phones and social media allowed me to watch foreign shows... about city life.” (Zhang), some wish for the youth to pursue a well-paying career in the city, failing to acknowledge the limits of their academic standards and minority background. They also

disallow youth from pursuing creative careers that would be a financial burden to the family. “I like to draw, but paper is too expensive for my family, so they don’t really let me do it.” (Zhang). Nonetheless, some families still wish for the youth to follow family traditions and Jingpo cultural norms and remain in the area to complete a culturally accepted job. Since the youth’s decision for their future depends greatly on family approval, they face the overbearing question of whether they wish to appease to their family and utilise their support or to pursue their career of choice and fend for themselves in society, which is, as stated, not an easy feat for migrants.

In addition, Jingpo families are patriarchal; masculine roles are valued above feminine ones, and in the culture, male youth are defined as intellectually superior to female youth, as they are “smarter, even if the girls have higher grades” (Zhang). Due to this, family guardians typically value male education above female education, as females are expected to be housewives or provide services such as cleaning while males are encouraged to undertake intellectual endeavors to support the family (“Family Sources of Educational Gender Inequality in Rural China: A Critical Assessment”). This is greatly limiting to youth of both sexes, as the only culturally accepted roles for females are domestic, such as farming, cooking, and caring for children, and for males, they must be intellectual (“scientific”).

Finally, the decisions of Jingpo youth for their futures are affected by cultural norms. Despite government efforts to modernise the Jingpo and encourage urban migration, Jingpo cultural norms continue to dictate the acceptable roles of Jingpo youth in society. These include work in farming, public services, and various other domestic positions, despite them having proved to be “tiring and cumbersome, with low pay” (Li). Despite assurances from the education system, there have been extremely few Jingpo to succeed on an intellectual career path, and it remains a social norm in Jingpo culture for youth to remain in their hometown and find a decently paying job (Li), even though their current education causes

them to be unfamiliar with their own language and culture. It is also acceptable to inherit an elder's position in society and carry on their business until the role is passed on to the next generation. Furthermore, in traditional Jingpo society, youth are expected to be married by the age of 20, and once married, women must carry out domestic responsibilities locally. "A lot of us still get married at around 18 and by 20 so that we can have families, clean, cook, and care for the kids." (Hu). In choosing a future for themselves, youth must pit their own aspirations for their future against Jingpo norms, risking not being accepted by Jingpo society for not understanding the culture or wishing to leave. They also face the question of whether they best value their own culture or their chosen future and the ideals their teachers and their family have for them.

That is to say, when Jingpo youth decide for their future, they face the challenges and questions imposed by the norms of Jingpo culture, their families, and their education. These factors serve to limit and influence their possible career choices as well as their choice of living space and relationships. They epitomise the struggle of today's youth in choosing their best future, and the challenges they face are present throughout all cultures, no matter how drastically different they may be.

Conclusion*

The resolution of my research was that in making decisions for their future, Jingpo youth face challenges and questions based upon education, family, and culture. Education is a challenge as it is biased and causes students to lack career opportunities despite encouragement to migrate and find “intellectual” jobs. Familial pressure is an issue as elders encourage youth to stay and perform domestic work, serve the community for money, or migrate, forcing youth to choose between the best interest of the family or their own. Cultural norms such as staying in one’s hometown and getting married young also challenge the youth’s decision and makes them choose between their culture or their choice.

The process of researching these things, however, had many flaws. One main flaw is that the number of interviews conducted and referenced is limited, meaning that the research relies on a few people’s information with their biases rather than the community in general. Next, the research was only conducted in academic environments such as Hula School and Prop Roots, which are close to each other, meaning that the people observed were students or teachers living in one area. This means that the results are only representative of that part of the community rather than the minority as a whole.

The aforementioned are weaknesses because they show that the results of this study are not representative of the entire Jingpo minority and their habits and traditions. This means that results may be correct only for select groups and not all.

If there were more time to complete this project, I would like to further research the issue of gender inequality and homophobia in the Jingpo minority, and I think future researchers should try to gain a deeper understanding of the issue of discrimination in Jingpo culture, because it is deeply rooted in Jingpo cultural norms and has a great impact on every Jingpo, yet is not discussed or understood by most members of the culture. If there were more known information on the issue, the minds of many could be opened.

Finally, the process of travelling to the field, conducting research, and writing the ethnography has had a large impact on me. Before going to Yunnan, I held many biases, and I believed that Jingpo people would live substandard lives in the absence of technology, rendering them less intelligent than those in the city, but I was proved wrong. Staying in Yunnan with the Jingpo children opened my eyes to a new culture which I discovered was not much different from my own, and as I grew closer to the Jingpo youth, I gradually found myself becoming more passionate about the issue of their futures. Despite my handicap throughout the trip, I gained insight on the state of rural youth and the inequality they are subject to, and now, after penning down my knowledge and analysing, feel closer to the culture than ever. I have grown to understand that, looking past social status and financial state, each culture is deserving of respect, and now understand the full value of objectivism.

Ethical Guidelines

Preamble

In this research project, I will be studying the Jingpo minority of Yunnan from an emic perspective by travelling to the minority and becoming a participant in the culture as well as observing, interviewing and taking field notes. These guidelines are the basic ethic regulations for this ethnography, and I must follow them because in the process of gaining knowledge on the culture, it is my responsibility to work under a basic framework of respect and neutrality toward the people so to avoid ethic conflict of any kind.

I. Remain respectful toward research participants.

I must maintain a respectful attitude because the participants are providing me with aid in my research. It is my responsibility to not offend or discredit my participant as they are providing me with ethnic knowledge.

II. Refrain from biased commentary toward the participant's culture/opinions.

I must not insult or give a biased opinion to the participant on their culture or opinions because this would mean forcing my culture or ideals upon them. This would mean far less objective research and conflict of interest with the participant.

III. Avoid unnecessary intrusion into the participant's privacy.

I must not breach the participant's privacy because it is their right to omit some things concerning their private life. It is not my place to cross the boundary in my research.

IV. Respect and consent to the participant's wishes on anonymity.

I must respect the participant if they wish to remain anonymous, as they may not wish to be scrutinized from my ethnography. I must, therefore, use a pseudonym for them.

V. Respect the participant's intellectual property and cite all acquired knowledge.

I must avoid plagiarism when I take the knowledge I have gained into account, because anything I learn comes from them. I must cite them because they have a right to their own knowledge.

Epilogue

The importance of these guidelines is great in terms of preventing conflict of interest between the groups, avoiding ethic/moral conflict, respecting the research participant and taking into account the rights of both parties. They must be followed to avoid offense or misconduct on both sides. However, a shortcoming of these guidelines is that physical property or environment may not be taken into account.

I hereby pledge that I will abide by these guidelines wholeheartedly.

Anna Mao

4/6/17

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