



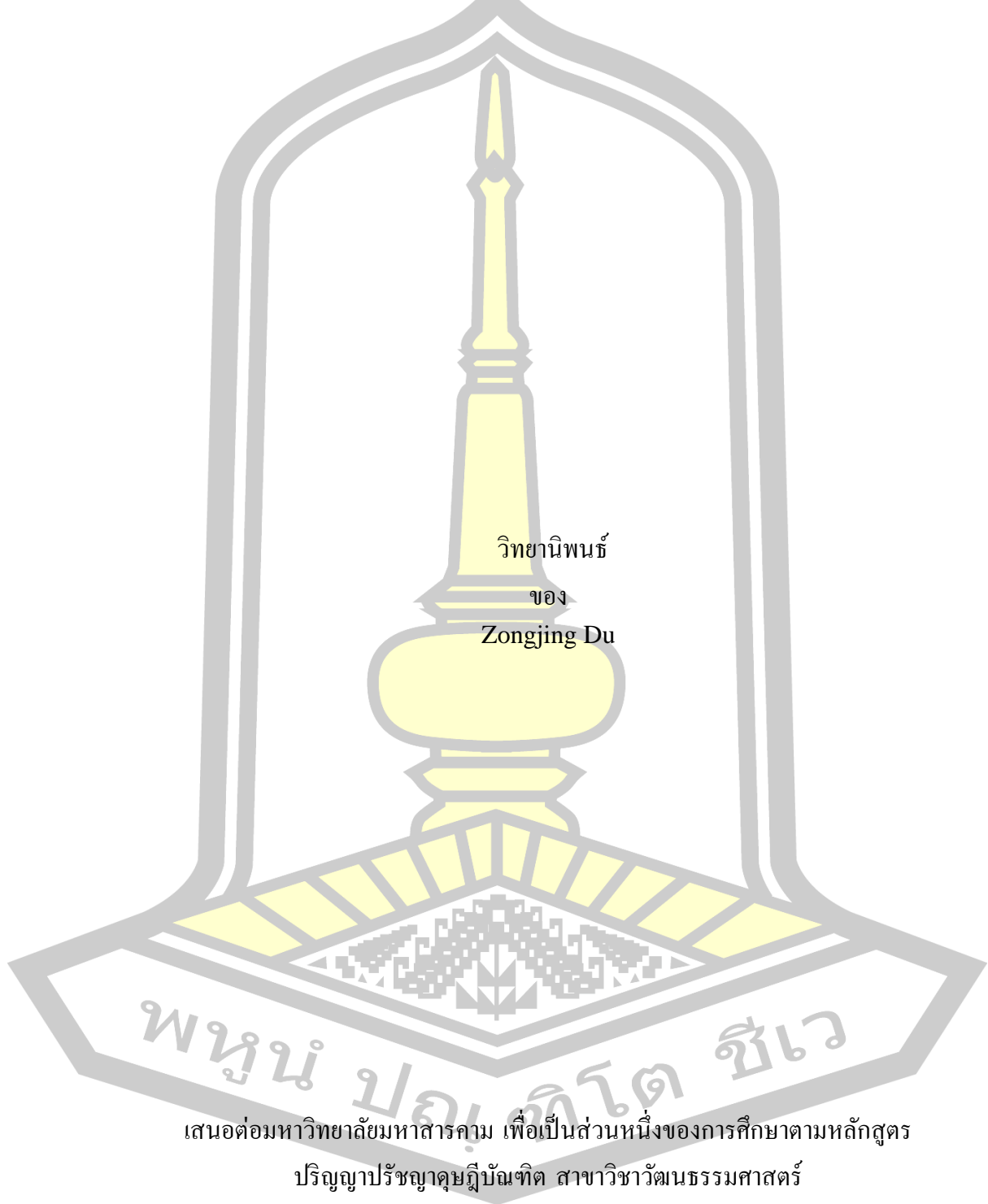
Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region:  
Symbolic Interaction and Ethnicity in the context of China's Poverty Alleviation

Zongjing Du

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
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พิธีกรรมเจิ่งเรินลือ ที่หมู่บ้านหัวหลานเห่า ในเขตปกครองตนเองกวางสีจ้วง: ปฏิสัมพันธ์เชิง  
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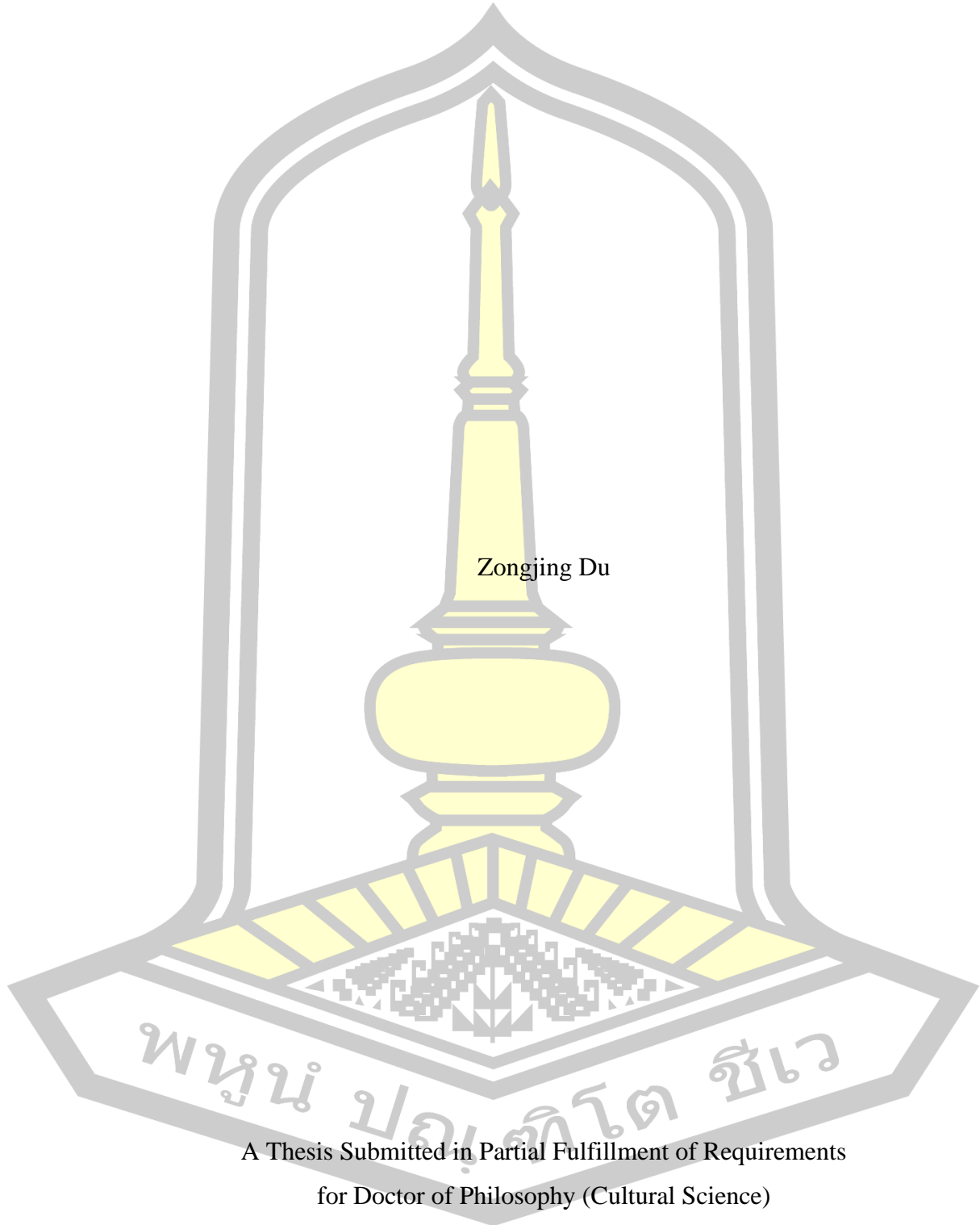
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### ABSTRACT

This research is basic research. Using qualitative research methods, study “Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region” on the issue of Symbolic Interaction and Ethnicity in the context of China's Poverty Alleviation. There are three research objectives: 1) to study the sociocultural historical development of Hualan Yao village; 2) to study the symbolic interaction of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao society before China's poverty alleviation; 3) to study the symbolic change of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao society in the context of China's poverty alleviation. The research results showed that the Hualan Yao village was not fixed and stagnant, but constantly changes with the social environment. The development path of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and its interaction with Hualan Yao village was a complex and multilayered process that is influenced by a variety of factors at the policy, historical, cultural, social and individual levels. The Cheng Ren Li ritual has a long history and tradition. The ritual originated from the needs of the ancient society of the Hualan Yao and signaled a shift in social status or a change in the social role of the young people. As time passes ritual develops, and preserves the Hualan Yao people, symbolically interacting with Hualan Yao society in all situations. Especially in the context of China's poverty alleviation.

Cheng Ren Li ritual at Hualan Yao Village went through four periods: First, the Cheng Ren Li ritual, as an ethnic tradition, built up the ethnicity of the Hualan Yao . It showed "who we are" and "how we are different from others". The second phase after the founding of New China, this ritual continued as before. The third phase: China entered the Cultural Revolution. This was a major cultural crisis. The Cheng Ren Li ritual was banned at this time, but was still protected and remembered by the Hualan Yao people. In the fourth stage, the Hualan Yao village entered the process of China's poverty alleviation. As China developed economically and socially, people were drawn out of the countryside into the cities to work. The social structure of the villages changed. The government's poverty alleviation policies and programs boosted the economy, education, and infrastructure of the Hualan Yao region. Hualan Yao Village has become a new type of rural village where people, especially young people, leave their village affects cultural crisis and poverty alleviation .But the Cheng Ren Li ritual

also served to preserve the ethnicity of the Hualan Yao people. Mentou Village is a very good example.

Thus, the revival of the Cheng Ren Li ritual among the Hualan Yao ethnic group in the context of China's poverty alleviation. This ritual, in addition to ethnicity, is also an important ritual platform for connection, stability, and identity. This study makes us realize that rituals between ethnic groups are not only practices of faith. But it are also an important mechanism for the survival of ethnic groups and societies.

Keyword : Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual, Symbolic Interaction, Ethnicity, China's Poverty Alleviation



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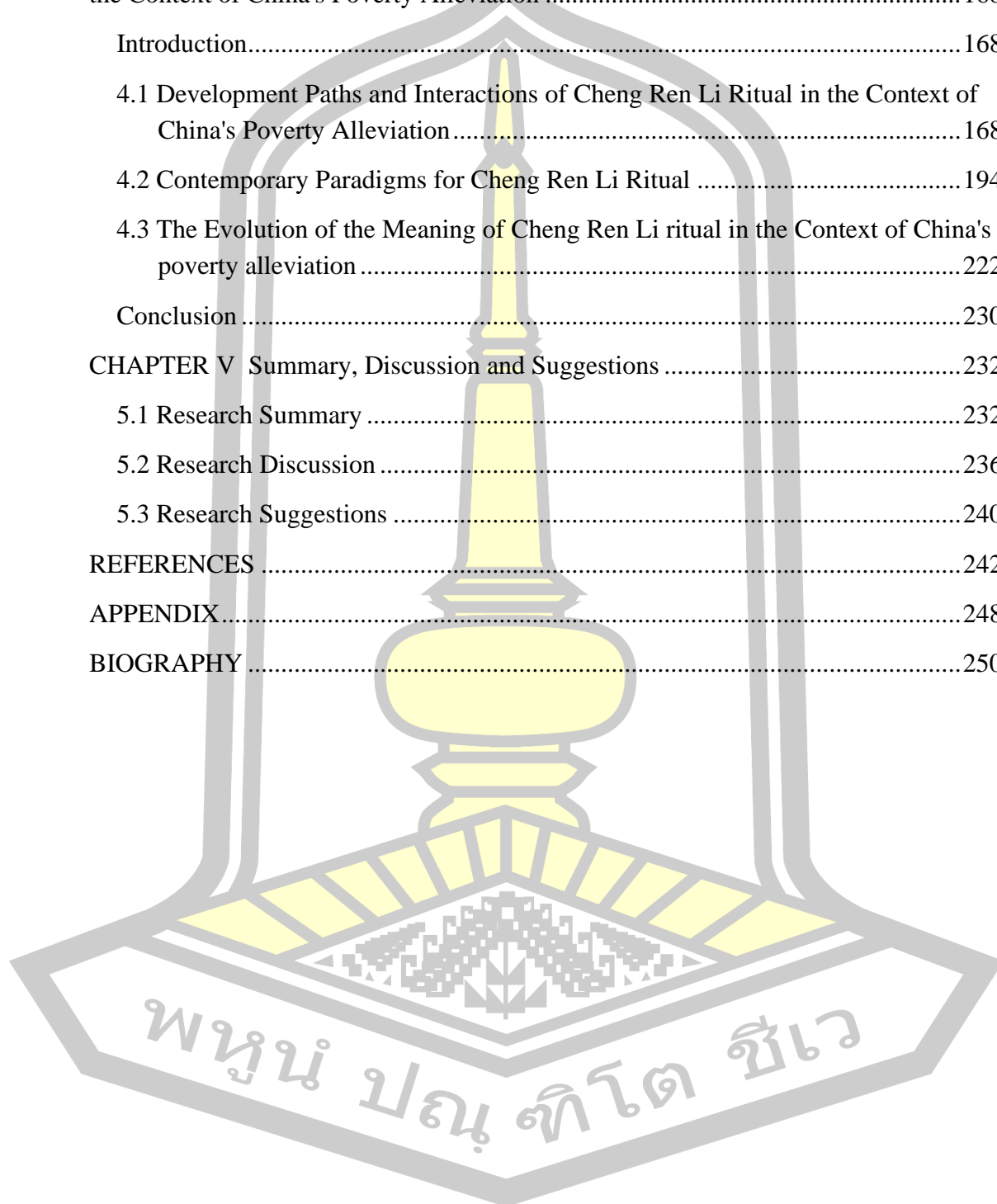
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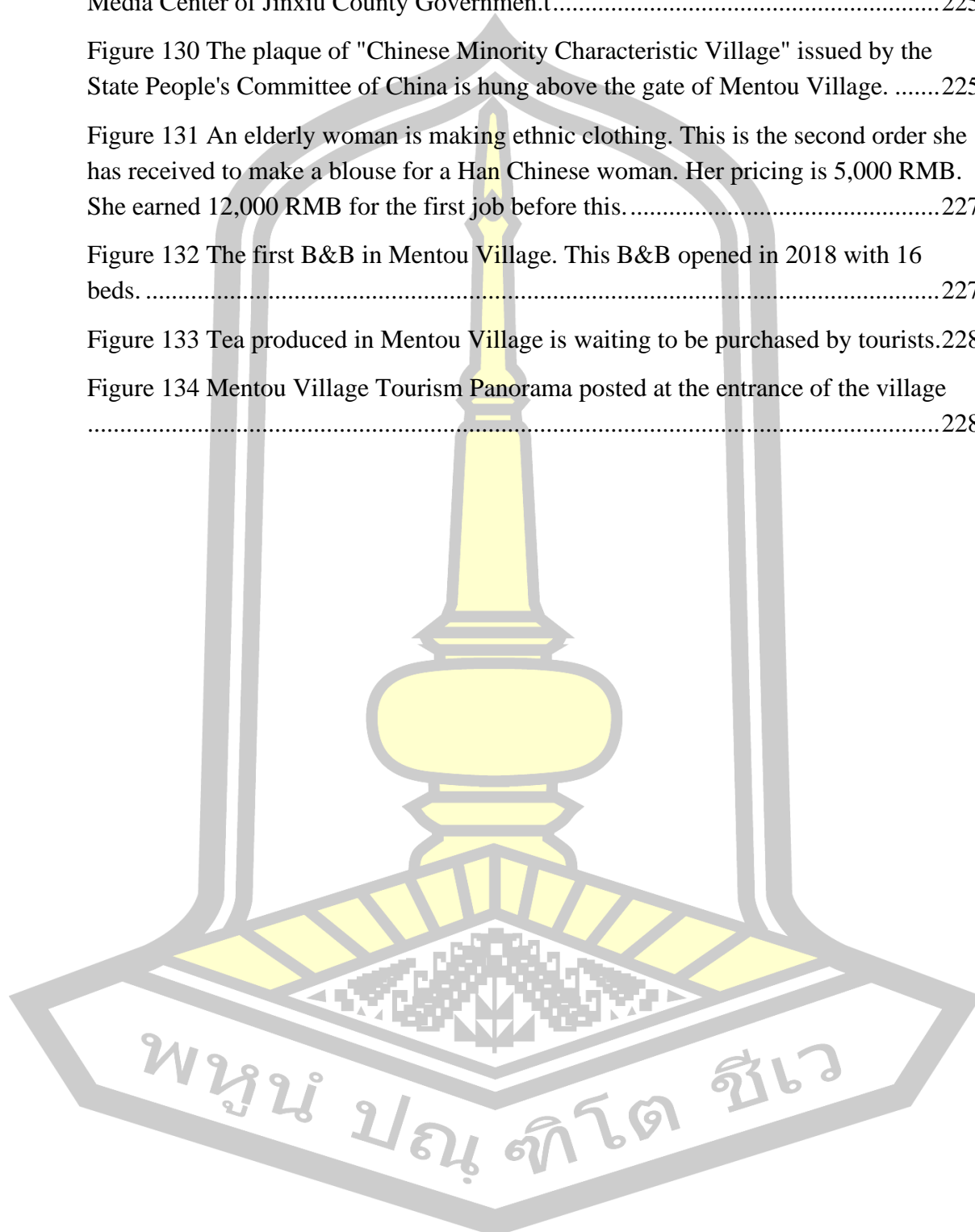
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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of Research

For more than 40 years since the reform and opening of the country. The Chinese government has always attached great importance to solving the poverty of rural people, starting from 1986 when an official poverty alleviation agency was established. The agency clearly defines policies, goals and methods to address poverty in accordance with the urgency and suitability of the area. List of poor villages with the standard of annual income of villagers below China's poverty line. Initially there were 273 primary target villages, then increased to 328 in 1988 and expanded throughout the country. The success indicator of this large project is achieving "two concerns. and three collaterals." (Two concerns mean not having to worry about food and clothing. and three collaterals refer to compulsory education guarantees, basic medical care, and residential safety). In December 2020, President Xi Jinping announced, "After eight years of continuous fighting, China has achieved its goals and obligations of eliminating poverty in a new era in time. About 100 million rural poor people are released from poverty. The poor district that used to be listed on the poverty list is no longer there" (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China,2021).

Under this poverty eradication process brought a major change in the structure of rural society. Due to the combination of rural agricultural economy with industrial and service economy - many villages have developed agriculture with modern science and technology, trained on agricultural knowledge, funded the promotion of enterprises, more than 80,000 kilometers of roads were built to solve the travel problem of people in mountainous and valley areas, some had to evacuate people to improve shelter, workers from rural areas were migrated to work in cities to build employment income. In some areas, poor workers are relocated to places of employment and labor skills training to improve workforce quality to get paid more and have more stability (<http://fpzg.cpad.gov.cn>,2021). This allows these groups of people to send their income to support their families who still live in the villages so that they can continue their careers in agriculture. At the same time, the tourism industry, which aims to "sell" nature, culture - tradition was born and raised in many villages which helps to build the economy in the village as well.

This major change in the structure of rural Chinese society, shifting the classification of people based on agricultural production (farmers, horticulturists, cultivators) to a classification based on industrial hybridization between the service sector, and the agricultural sector. Which consists not only of agricultural producers, it also includes construction workers, industrial workers, restaurant-shopping-store workers, government employees, middle- and lower-level employees of NGOs, etc. None of them are farmers in the traditional sense. With China's poverty alleviation, more and more people, especially young people, are being attracted to the cities. The countryside is no longer a complete geographical space, but is fragmented.

This reflects the rapid urbanization and rural migration that has taken place in China over the past few decades. China's poverty alleviation policies have been



somewhat successful, lifting many rural residents out of poverty. This change has guided more and more people to choose to move to the cities in search of a better life and employment opportunities. This has led to the depopulation of rural areas and the fragmentation of rural communities.

This process has indeed led to the fragmentation of geographic space in rural areas. On the one hand, some villages have become more depressed as a result of depopulation and some have even been abandoned as a result. On the other hand, some rural areas may be affected by urbanization because of their proximity to cities, with land being divided into industrial, residential and commercial areas, resulting in the gradual disappearance of the original rural environment.

Such trends of urbanization and rural migration are prevalent globally, and they present both opportunities and challenges. Cities can provide more employment opportunities and improved infrastructure. At the same time, rural areas may face a lack of resources and reduced community cohesion as a result of depopulation. The solution to this problem requires the comprehensive consideration of a number of social, economic and environmental factors in order to ensure the sustainable development of rural areas.

This thesis aims to study Hualan Yao village who form ethnicity through ritual traditions and the renewed meaning of the past according to the guidelines of the study above. The focus was on the “Cheng Ren Li” ritual, or the status change ritual of the Hualan Yao people, in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County<sup>1</sup>, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region<sup>2</sup>. Because it is the only village out of 11 villages that despite having entered a development process in accordance with the intensive poverty eradication policy in the past 10 years. The Cheng Ren Li ritual has not diminished or disappeared, compared to the other Yao villages in the surrounding area. The opposite trend is increasing every year as well.

In addition, in the early 20th century, Hualan Yao Village was hailed by Chinese sociologist and anthropologist Fei Xiaotong as the "hometown of the Yao people", located in the ancient Yao Autonomous Region, and has the largest number of Yao branches in China. The Hualan Yao people, or as they call themselves Hyundai or hyungnae, which means people living in the mountains, also have a history of more than 400 years. This is equivalent to the Cheng Ren Li ritual of this village has been passed down from generation to generation for a long time.

The attractiveness of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, it is a family ritual but the process of the ritual is related to the public space and other people in the community. It also contains symbolic meanings that reflect the lifestyle, history, beliefs, and beauty of the Hualan Yao people to be able to survive in the current situation. That is families with sons or daughters who have reached 15 years of age (according to the Chinese lunar calendar, their age under the Gregorian calendar may only be 13 or 14 years old) hold this ritual on the morning of the new calendar year to communicate that “those girls and boys are ready to grow into adults, they can have families and make decisions follow the guidelines that adults should be able to do”. This ritual was first performed in each family's home. The ceremonies would then walk through the streets to the village's landmarks to pay their respects and make wishes from the

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County is referred to as "Jinxiu County".

<sup>2</sup> In this study, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is referred to as "Guangxi Province".

elders, giving the other villagers an opportunity. as well as tourists have appreciated and acknowledged this new status.

A highlight as the attendees walk the streets are the intricately tailored and embroidered garments from the mothers who have prepared them since the children were born. It is believed that by wearing these clothes to join the ritual, upon death, the ancestors will be able to recognize that person. In contrast to those who have never attended the ceremony that even in the human world is a good Yao but when they die, the Yao ancestors will not remember them at all. All of this, leads to the understanding that the meaning of the clothes that participate in the rituals here It's not just beautiful clothes. Instead, it became a mark that reflected the rules, social hierarchy, collectiveness, and another identity the Yao wanted to uphold, no matter how much time has passed.

In addition, the exquisite craftsmanship of the Hualan Yao people it has also led to the commissioning of embroidery for other ethnic groups who want to wear their traditional clothes more. Thus, the succession and existence of the Cheng Ren Li ritual played an important role in raising the awareness of ethnicity among the surrounding communities. and if considering the economic, it had created a new career for the old people in the village to earn more. As well as being famous as the "specialist in embroidering ancient patterns" as well.

In the past, no scholars have conducted research on the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China. Before China's poverty alleviation, a few scholars described the ritual process of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual. According to Fei Xiaotong and Wang Tonghui (1935), the Cheng Ren Li Ritual is part of the social organization and culture of Hualan Yao. In the traditional Hualan Yao society, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is a rite of passage because of the need to introduce men and women to society and to enjoy the rights of adulthood as they begin to mature physically. According to Qin Ruijun and Xu Jieshun (2011), after the Cheng Ren Li ritual, "new adults" can participate in social activities and get married. In the context of poverty alleviation in China, they therefore argue that a broader academic perspective is needed to study the Hualan Yao rite of passage. Numerous studies have been conducted on bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies in other peoples and regions. The role of the symbol of the rite of passage has existed for a long time. In ancient China, Han men performed the crown rite and women performed the maturity rite, both of which were marked by a change in hairstyle. In addition, among different ethnic groups in the world, there are various rites of passage that mark the coming of age of men and women, such as Tattooing, tooth extraction, tooth dyeing, circumcision, flogging, etc.

The Bar Mitzvah is an important beginning of the life cycle and is a ceremony that is valued by all ethnic groups. It is a process of saying goodbye to childhood and formally moving into adulthood. After the rite of passage, it is a declaration of a change of role, and from then on, one begins to assume due responsibility and the right to participate in the decision-making process of the community.

Especially in the ancient Han region of China, if the Bar Mitzvah is not held, it is difficult to formally declare "adulthood", and there is no right to formally participate in the activities of the community. Ancient Han rites of passage were divided into male and female rites of passage, called "crown rites" for men and

"maturity rites" for women. The crown ceremony for men was held at the age of 20, and the maturity ceremony for women was held at the age of 15. Crown rites and maturity rites are usually practiced only in the Central Plains, while other ethnic groups have their own ceremonies. This tradition continued from the Western Zhou Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty, but was abolished in the Qing Dynasty. This was because the Qing Dynasty prohibited the Han Chinese from adding a crown ceremony in order to strengthen their rule over the Han Chinese. It is only in the last few years that the crown ceremony has been gradually revived again with the revival of traditional culture.

In the context of China's poverty alleviation, some ethnic groups and regions still have their own unique customs and traditional ceremonies, some of which include bar mitzvah ceremonies.

Han Chinese: The Han Chinese, the largest ethnic group in China, do not have bar mitzvah ceremonies as prominent as those celebrated by certain ethnic minorities. However, in some areas, such as Fujian, Guangdong, and Shanxi, bar mitzvah ceremonies are still a tradition. The "coming-of-age ceremony" is unique to Fujian and Guangdong, and is usually held at the age of 15 according to the lunar calendar. The origin of this rite of passage is similar to the "crown rite" of the Central Plains. In Fujian and Guangdong, many courtyards have a small garden where children play, so the "garden" symbolizes carefree childhood. The "garden" symbolizes the carefree age of childhood. When they grow up, they can no longer play in the garden and should "get out of the garden" to start a family and a career. This is the origin of "out of the garden" of the Chaoshan people. This is the origin of the "going out of the garden" of the Chaoshan people, which is very vivid. Before the ceremony, they will calculate the time for the ceremony according to the birth date of the "new adult" or by consulting the gods. "The ceremony is held by bathing in hot water soaked with fresh flowers and green grass, and by worshipping the "Flower Lady". They believe that the wearing of red clogs by "new adults" is a good omen that they will be successful in the future. With the development of modern society, the complicated traditional rituals of "leaving the garden" have gradually been simplified. Of course, the main worship process remains unchanged, but the offerings have become simpler, and the precautions are not as elaborate as before, which is more in line with the needs of contemporary society (Chen Wanzhuo & Yao Xiaoyun, 2018; Chen Wanzhuo & Yao Xiaoyun, 2019).

In the eastern part of Shanxi Province, people usually organize a coming-of-age ceremony for children when they are 12 or 15 years old, which is called "rounding the locks" or "unlocking the locks". For both men and women, the ceremony is held on any day of the month that coincides with the day of their birth (in the lunar calendar). In some areas of northern China, it is customary for newborns to wear "long life locks". Usually a silver lock is placed around the child's neck when the child reaches the full moon, indicating that the child will be locked up in the hope that he or she will live a long life and be a hundred years old.

The child's life will be a hundred years long. When the child becomes an adult, the "unlocking" ceremony is held. From the wearing of the lock to the unlocking of the lock, it reflects the same cultural theme - the fear of life and the hope of lifting the crisis. In modern society, the ritual of "round locking" has incorporated modern technology and concepts. The process of religious ceremonies has been

simplified, and the speeches and bows of children and parents have been added to express people's inner emotional demands in a more civilized and humane way (Fan Jinxizi, 2015; Sun Junjie, 2012).

**Zhuang:** The Zhuang are an important ethnic minority in southern China. In Xichou County, Yunnan Province, the "Women's Sun Festival" has been practiced for thousands of years. Every year on the first day of the second month of the lunar calendar, all Zhuang women over 16 years of age will go to the village's "Pure Body Tan" early in the morning to bathe and purify themselves. After the purification is completed, they put on the festival dress, and then they gather under the Sun God Tree at the head of the village to hold the ceremony of welcoming the sun, worshipping the sun and sending off the sun. When the sun is returned to the sky, the women share the offerings for the festival. Any woman who has eaten the offerings can fulfill the vocation of a woman, which is also known as the rite of passage. The Sun Festival originated from the worship of the sun by people in matrilineal clan societies. As times have changed, the purification ceremony has also changed. Women simply change into swimsuits and walk into the river holding plastic lotus leaves and flowers.

**Long Horn Miao:** Long Horn Miao male bar mitzvah is a unique rite of passage for Long Horn Miao in Congjiang County, Guizhou Province. There is a saying in Long Horn Miao, "If a man does not keep his hair in a bun and a woman does not wear a white skirt when she gets married, she will be eaten by a tiger". The bun and the white skirt have become the symbols of good luck for Long Horn Miao people. When a boy in Long Horn Miao reaches the age of 15, he has to hold a "coming-of-age ceremony", which is usually scheduled for the end of fall or the beginning of winter. Throughout the bar mitzvah, they have to go through the sickle shaving, bun weaving, gun awarding ceremony, as well as the teaching of how to use guns and the related norms of using them. Only those boys who have gone through the bar mitzvah will be able to take part in all kinds of important affairs in the village and become real Long Horn Miao people. Otherwise, they are not true Long Horn Miao people and cannot be with their ancestors after death. In the context of modernity, the "Long Horn Miao Bar Mitzvah", which is a unique cultural event, is facing the same impact of foreign culture as that of other ethnic cultures in other regions. Due to the continuous development of education and health care, the young generation is receiving education outside the village and working outside the village, and it is easy to be laughed at for having a hairdo. As a result, the idea of avoidance and unwillingness to grow hair has become the idea and pursuit of most young people. Young people consider these as backward lifestyles (Jiang Juan, 2013; Wei Wenhua, 2015).

**Yi:** The Yi also have bar mitzvah, which usually takes place when men reach a certain age. This ceremony includes a series of traditional activities such as rituals, dancing and singing. In the Liangshan region of Sichuan Province, a "dress-changing" ceremony is held when a Yi girl comes of age. The ceremony is called "Shalaluo" in Yi language, which means to take off the skirt of childhood and replace it with the skirt of adulthood. The Yi people call the "changing of children's skirts" a "wedding without seeing the groom". In the past, the Yi people practiced early marriages, and the changing of skirts was held together with the marriage ceremony. Since it is impossible for modern girls to get married before the age of 17, a "fake marriage"

ceremony is held. In this ceremony, different people would choose to assume the important objects such as trees, stone mills, thresholds, etc. as the girl's husband, and perform an imaginative "wedding" (Li Ding, 2011).

Yao: Some Yao also have bar mitzvah, which usually takes place when a man reaches a certain age. This ceremony is known as the "Duo Quang" . In some Yao areas, all boys over the age of 13 or 14 are required to go through a preceptor ceremony, and a boy who has gone through the ceremony is said to have become an adult. There are many religious ceremonies (Taoist ceremonies with primitive religious colors). At the time of the precepts, the master passes on many precepts to the disciple, which are in fact the precepts of Taoism. This is a kind of inheritance education of the Yao folk to teach the history of the nation, the rules of the clan, the etiquette and morality, and the precepts. With social development and cultural contact and change, the process of the precepts ceremony has been omitted and simplified, and it is no longer held in some Yao areas (Hu Jingying, 2012;LiuYu, PanQixin & Chen Quanyao, 2015).

In addition to the above, there are other Chinese ethnic minority rites of passage: the Naxi Mosuo rite of changing skirts and pants, the Tujia rite of wearing a tiantou, the Jinuo rite of ujeke, the Dulong rite of tattooing the face as an adult, and the Tibetan rite of wearing a Tiantou, to name but a few(Farmer,2012;Liu Junjun,2015;Kuan Benjamin,2020;Mao Shuzhang,2014;Yuzhen Ram,2011). These rites of passage and ritual processes are often considered to be transitional celebrations performed at times of social order or life transitions, and the ceremonies are viewed as a process of communication between people and divine forces. Scholars have analyzed the rituals more from the perspectives of ritual history, ritual process, and ritual significance, but there is a lack of comparative studies. Even fewer scholars have studied the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual from the perspective of symbolic interaction and ethnicity.

This thesis therefore wants to add more dimensions to the study of rituals.The main subject of this research is to try to understand how, in the context of modernization, the transition that comes in the form of rural development contributing to the loss of identity and cultural traditions. What does the Cheng Ren Li ritual mean to the people of Hualan Yao? and how it plays an important role in maintaining ethnicity.

To answer such research questions. I divided the analytical units into two main parts: 1) Content, procedure, composition, and significant symbols of Cheng Ren Li ritual; 2) The practices and social activities occurring both within and outside the ritual space of different groups of people. Emphasis is placed on the emotions of those involved in the ritual, which is central to the analysis of the ritual. With the expectation that, the cultural background of the Cheng Ren Li ritual has been linked to the history, society and culture of the Hualan Yao people for over a hundred years. It can lead to an understanding of social phenomena or contemporary life of people in modern Chinese society facing major structural changes and cultural crises.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

1.2.1 To study the sociocultural historical development of Hualan Yao village.

1.2.2 To study the symbolic interaction of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao society before China's poverty alleviation.

1.2.3 To study the symbolic change of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao society in the context of China's poverty alleviation.

### 1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 What is the sociocultural historical development of Hualan Yao village? How does China's poverty alleviation affect Hualan Yao village?

1.3.2 How can the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the symbolic interaction between the ritual and the people involved construct ethnicity before China's poverty alleviation?

1.3.3 In the context of China's poverty alleviation, what changes have taken place in the Cheng Ren Li ritual of Hualan Yao village society to continue to protect Hualan Yao village ethnicity ?

### 1.4 Research Methodology

This paper is a qualitative study, which use the method of field investigation and literature to have a deep understanding of Hualan Yao community. Present the results of the study in a descriptive way through a conceptual analysis of the humanities and social sciences, with photographs and research charts. This research has the following research steps.

#### 1.4.1 Research population

Around the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the population structure of Hualan Yao group is mainly divided into three parts.

People who have always lived in the village

1) The elderly, who mainly live in traditional farming life, are faithful record keepers, inheritors and narrators of the history and national culture of Hualan Yao. Ask them about the history and culture of Hualan Yao people and villages, their understanding of ethnicity and their views on "Cheng Ren Li ritual" in Hualan Yao. In this way, we can better understand the changes of Hualan Yao under the background of Chinese historical development.

2) Minors living in villages. They are usually children around the age of 15. Some children finish primary school in the village, then go to the nearby town or county to attend middle school, and return to the village on weekends or during holidays. Some children go to primary and secondary schools in towns or counties outside and return to the village during holidays. They are the main characters of the Cheng Ren Li ritual .

3) People living in villages. It basically covers the people of Hualan Yao who have the ability to work. These families both farm land and cash crops such as oranges, fir trees and star anise trees. They also work around the village in their spare time. Some families run b&BS, small supermarkets, tea processing plants. They are modern farmer who have always lived in villages. It is an important content of the paper to know their production and life situ.

4) Cadres of Hualan Yao Village. They are the managers, operators and participants of the village and are paid by the government. At the same time, most of them are engaged in business management and are resourceful. Their recognition and attention to the Cheng Ren Li ritual determines its development to a large extent.

Hualan Yao people who moved elsewhere

1) Hualan Yao people living in Jinxiu county and surrounding towns account for a large proportion of Hualan Yao people going out. Because of marriage, work reasons left Hualan Yao village, and divorced from the land. But because of the proximity, and maintain close relations with the village. Some of them are still registered in the village, and many of them are registered in their new place of residence. They work in a variety of forms, some work in government departments, some part-time jobs such as supermarket cashier, advertising design, wood processing and other work, and some run supermarkets and other small commodity economy. It is one of the important contents of this paper to understand their living conditions, their views and understanding of their own nationality.

2) Hualan Yao people living in larger cities. They also left Hualan Yao village for reasons of marriage, work and education, and have their own houses and urban identity. Because of their higher level of education, they have more decent jobs and are more aware of their national culture. Compared to the Hualan Yao people living in Jinxiu county and surrounding towns, they are further away from home and have a new hometown. It is particularly important to understand how they maintain their national identity through long periods of life outside the group.

3) People who live temporarily in big cities. This part mainly refers to the migrant workers and college students, their identity is changing.

Ritual participants and stakeholders

This study finally took a field investigation of a Cheng Ren Li ritual as a case study, so the participants and stakeholders of the ritual are listed separately.

There are 7 types of people involved in the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual:

1) New Adults :15 years old boys and girls.

2) Ritual facilitator :mother or other female elder.

3) Ritual participants :other family members.

4) Ritual bystanders :villagers, tourists, scholars,government staff, etc..

5) Ritual attire makers :women elders, such as mother, grandmother, or female villagers who commission Ritual attire, also can be said to be tailors.

6) Ritual attire production material suppliers :as material suppliers, they are the first to perceive the changes in the life needs of Hualan Yao.

#### 1.4.2 Field of Research

Main place : My main research area is Mentou village, Liuxiang Township, Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. As the most complete preservation of Hualan Yao traditional culture and Cheng Ren Li ritual of the region for research.

Sub place : Other Hualan Yao villages in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, carry out research on Cheng Ren Li ritual .

Data collection

Fieldwork and data collection

1) Interview ; Formal interview, Informal interview, Focus group interview.

According to the research questions, research objectives and different research objects, make targeted and detailed interview outline and submit it to the interviewees in written form. And ask new questions about their answers, or consider a more in-depth interview. At the same time, the Q&A session keeps communication

and flexibility between the two sides, allowing respondents enough time to think about their questions.

2) Observation ; Normal observation (or general observation), Participatory observation.

According to the research needs of the paper and my objective conditions, formulate the investigation plan, including setting the investigation theme, selecting the investigation object, drawing up the investigation outline, making the investigation schedule, the investigation route and the budget. It is very important to select the survey site and survey group and communicate with them in advance. Make the information table of the survey object and identify the main information reporters. Review work records and information collection, adjust investigation progress and improve investigation content in time. Finally, the fieldwork plan and work record are stored in the research data as auxiliary data.

Documentary data collection.

I collected as much historical and cultural information as possible about the field survey sites and subjects through books, documents, images and online media. Hualan Yao is a nation with only language but no writing, so we should pay special attention to the collection and arrangement of the oral materials , including relevant lection, lyrics, ancient songs, folklore and so on, so as to provide first-hand information for the study.

Tool or Equipment for data collection.

- 1) Motion picture (cameras, video recording equipment).
- 2) Voice record .
- 3) Field notebook .

Data synthesis and Data analysis

Using the research framework as an introductory classification tool, I performed data synthesis along with data collection. After that, I sorted out the information in detail according to the outline of each chapter in the research paper. Then describe the analysis in terms of research concepts. My research mainly uses three concepts to analyze the content, procedure, composition, and significant symbols of Cheng Ren Li ritual. Meanwhile, the practice and social activities occurring both within and outside the ritual space of different groups of people are analyzed.

## **1.5 Definition of Terms**

1.5.1 "Hualan Yao village" in this research mean: 11 Hualan Yao villages distributed in 3 townships of Jinxiu County, Guangxi Province. Mentou Village in Liuxiang Township is the main field investigation site. The village is famous for Fei Xiaotong's research in the 1930s. It is also the most economically developed and the best preserved national culture among the 11 villages.

1.5.2 " Cheng Ren Li ritual "in this research mean: The ritual of transitioning from a child to an adult in the Hualan Yao people turns 15 according to the Chinese calendar. The ritual process includes combing hair, putting on clothes, wearing ornaments, walking through the streets and receiving blessings.

1.5.3 "Symbolic interaction" in this research mean: The development path of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and its interaction with the society of the Cheng Ren Li ritual



is a complex and multi-layered process, influenced by multiple factors at the policy, historical, cultural, social and individual levels. As a symbol system, individuals and society are related and interact with each other through symbols. And this set of relationships is their ethnicity.

1.5.4 "China's poverty alleviation" in this research mean: China's large-scale development-oriented poverty alleviation in Rural areas began in 1986, and all Rural areas have been lifted out of poverty by 2020.

1.5.5 "Hualan Yao villagers" in this research mean: The Hualan Yao people living in the Hualan Yao village. They are mainly distributed in 11 villages in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County in Guangxi, China, with a total population of about 2,000 people. The villagers of Hualan Yao today both live in the village and work abroad. Under the background of the change of traditional production and life style, they not only kept the traces of original production and life, but also accepted the new production and life style. Both of them have different experiences with the impact of China's poverty alleviation.

1.5.6 "Ritual attire" in this research mean: Clothes and accessories worn by Hualan Yao boys and girls for the Cheng Ren Li ritual, including clothing, hats, turbans, neckerchiefs, shawls, belts, foot straps and accessories.

## 1.6 Scope of Research

### 1.6.1 Scope of research area

My main research site is Mentou village, Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. This village has the best preserved traditional Hualan Yao culture. The village is about 450 meters above sea level. The temperature here is perfect for living. The village has 49 households and 265 people, of which 255 are Hualan Yao.

In the study of Yao nationality area in China, Mentou village is quite famous. In 1935, Chinese sociologist and anthropologist Fei Xiaotong and his wife Wang Tonghui entered Mentou village to conduct social investigations. In the 1950s, some scholars came and did some research. In 2008, the village built the Yao Hualan Museum and opened it to the public. In 2016, China Central Television (CCTV) came here to shoot a cultural feature film, which was broadcast on China International Channel (CCTV4). In 2017, Mentoutun was named in the second batch of "Villages with Chinese Ethnic Characteristics" by the State Ethnic Affairs Commission.

### 1.6.2 Scope of the Time

I defined a time boundary from 1978 to 2020 in the context of China's poverty alleviation. That is, China's poverty alleviation since China's reform and opening up.

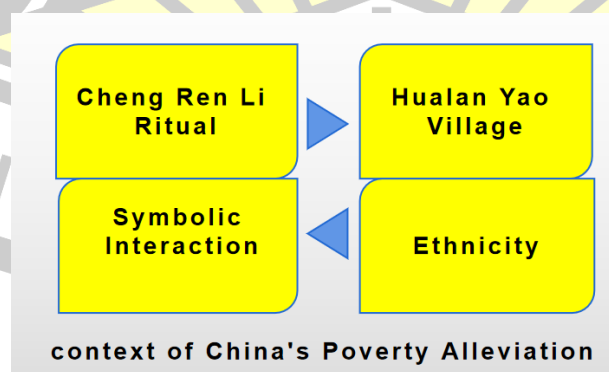
In 1986, China established The State Council leading Group for the Economic Development of poverty-stricken Areas, which marked the beginning of organized, planned and large-scale rural poverty alleviation and development. Over the past 40 years, China's poverty alleviation policies have been constantly changing: from "large-scale development-oriented poverty alleviation" (targeting mechanism targeting counties) to "whole-village-oriented poverty alleviation" (poverty alleviation policies and projects directly favor poor villages), to "targeted poverty alleviation" (targeted poverty alleviation in 2013 based on the conditions of different poverty-stricken regions and different poverty-stricken households, We applied scientific and

effective procedures to accurately identify, assist and manage the targets of poverty alleviation). China has achieved remarkable results in poverty alleviation.

Under the guidance of China's poverty alleviation, the production, life and way of thinking of Hualan Yao Village have undergone great changes. In the 1980s, villagers' livelihoods began to change. In 1999, the first batch of villagers went out to work. In 2009, villagers flocked to cities in search of work. In April 2019, Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County lifted itself out of poverty, becoming one of the first autonomous counties in Guangxi to lift itself out of poverty. By the end of 2020, China had eliminated absolute poverty and is moving towards alleviating relative poverty and revitalizing rural areas.

### 1.7 Research Conceptual framework

My research focused on explaining the impact of the environment on villagers. China's modern rural development plan has had an important impact on the people of Mentou Village, especially in terms of social structure. Their original way of life and economic mode has been impacted, so some of them leave the village to study and work, and some of them still stay in the village. As is the case in other parts of China, such village culture eventually die out. Nationality is assimilated by other nationalities. However, this nation did not, they chose to use the Cheng Ren Li ritual as a tool to stabilize their national identity and maintain their national identity. In this context, the nationality of Hualan Yao not only did not die out, but also became more and more significant, and at the same time awakened the awareness and identification of surrounding villages and ethnic groups to their own nationality. In order to explain this phenomenon, I choose the three concepts of ethnicity, ritual process and symbolic interaction to explain it. That is in harmony with the social structure of the village. This is to find out that in the midst of the changing and difficult times in each period, how did the Hualan Yao people maintain their ethnicity? By analyzing through the ritual process concept combined with the ethnicity concept and the symbolic interaction concept.



## 1.8 Literature Reviews

### 1.8.1 Related documents and research

The researcher divided the documents in this group into two main themes: the research study on Hualan Yao, and the study on the Cheng Ren Li ritual. As detailed below.

#### Research on the Hualan Yao

Hualan Yao is a branch of Yao minority in China. In 1935, Mr. Fei Xiaotong, a Chinese sociologist and anthropologist, and his wife Ms. Wang Tonghui entered Hualan Yao community to carry out social investigations. Since then, the study of Hualan Yao has become a prominent study of Yao minority in China. It can be seen from the previous literature that most of them are about ethnic origin, history, production, living habits and social and cultural changes (Fei Xiaotong & Wang Tonghui, 1988; Fei Xiaotong, 2016; Mo Jinshan, 2000; Mo Jinshan, Zhao Yisheng & Zhao Guikun, 2010; Qin Ruijun, Xu Jieshun & Zhang Jinfu, 2011; Xu Ping, 2006).

Hualan Yao lives in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County in Guangxi, China, and calls themselves "jiongnai" or "Jiongne", which means "people who live in the mountains." "Hualan Yao" is his name, because of clothing and named. Hualan Yao costumes are colorful, with five colors of red, yellow, blue, green and white matching each other, weaving patterns on blue and black cloth. "Hualan" means "colorful". It has been more than 500 years since they moved to Jinxiu Dayao Mountain. The site of their village is located on the mountainside about 500-1000 meters above sea level. As of November 1, 2021, Hualan Yao has a total population about 2,000. They mainly live in 11 villages in Jinxiu: 5 villages in Liuxiang Township, Liuxiang, Mentou, Wangsang, Gubu and Dabeng, 3 villages in Luoxiang Township, Luodan, Liutuan and Zhanger, and 3 villages in Changdong Township, Longhua, Dajin and Nanzhou.

Before 2000, Hualan Yao village was a typical agricultural society, where agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry were the main sources of family economy, with an annual per capita income of less than 2,000 yuan. With the promotion of China's poverty alleviation work, a large number of people in Hualan Yao have moved to cities and towns for employment and business prosperity. The emerging tourism industry has also become the main source of family economy. At present, there are more than 20 households in 11 villages selling local specialties and operating b&Bs, with an annual per capita income of more than 10,000 yuan (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2021).

Before 1949, the academia carried out a series of investigations on the current situation of Hualan Yao community. In 1928, Xin Shuzhi et al., from Sun Yat-sen University, China, carried out investigations in Yao minority villages in Dayaoshan, Guangxi. According to the investigation, there were five different branches of Yao minority, such as Hualan Yao, and their summary investigation report was published in *The Journal of Language History Institute of Sun Yat-sen University* (National Sun Yat-sen University Guangxi Yaoshan Collection Team, 1928). Ren Guorong published a *Two-Month Observation of Yaoshan Mountain in Guangxi* (Ren Guorong, 1928). From 1930 to 1931, Pang Xinmin and others from Sun Yat-sen University in China went to Dayaoshan, Guangxi, and made a detailed investigation and comparative study on the production and living habits of the Yao people in Dayaoshan, Guangxi, and published *A Survey on The Yao Mountain in*

Guangxi and Guangdong (Pang Xinmin, 1935). In October 1935, Fei Xiaotong, Wang Tonghui and his wife went to Dayaoshan, Guangxi to investigate Hualan Yao, and introduced in detail the kinship relationship, marriage form, birth customs, child rearing, adult ceremony, funeral ceremony, economic life, residence, kinship appellation and kinship relationship, population, stone tags, etc. Meanwhile, the mutual relations and interactions among the five ethnic groups were analyzed (Wang Tonghui, 1936).

After 1949, the Chinese government carried out two large-scale surveys and studies on the Yao minority. The first time was from July to November 1951, when the central Delegation visited ethnic minority areas in Guangxi for investigation and visit. The second was in August 1956, under the auspices of the Ethnic Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of China, a social and historical investigation team of ethnic minorities was established to carry out social and historical investigations of ethnic minorities throughout the country until the early 1960s. A series of books and research reports were produced. The first and second volumes of Guangxi Yao Social And Historical Survey systematically collected and sorted out the data of five Yao branches, including Hualan Yao (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Editorial Group, 1984).

After the 1990s, with the economic development of Yao ethnic areas, more and more experts and scholars came to Dayaoshan to carry out investigations on folk customs and social changes. Most of the research results on Hualan Yao in this period are scattered in some works (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Ethnic Affairs Committee, 1990; Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1991; Pu Chaojun, GuoZhu, 1992; Yu shijie & Mongliya, 1992; Zhang Youjun, 1992; Zhang Youjun, 2001). At the beginning of the 21st century, a number of books and articles about Hualan Yao were published successively, involving Hualan Yao 's clothing, music, dwellings, funeral culture and social changes (QinRuijun, Xu Jieshun & Zhang Jinfu, 2011; Yu Shijie, 2012; Xing Xianxian, 2012).

#### The study on the Cheng Ren Li ritual

In the previous literature, there are few studies on the Cheng Ren Li ritual of Hualan Yao. It's only mentioned in a very small number of documents, and very few words. It is not studied from the perspective of nationality, ritual process and symbol interaction.

Hualan Yao society attaches great importance to the continuity of race and the inheritance of "family". The birth and rearing of children plays a vital role in the Hualan Yao family. The importance that Hualan Yao family attaches to reproductive function also directly affects the relationship between family members and the importance of " Cheng Ren Li ritual ". The age of 15 is when children become adults. After the Cheng Ren Li ritual, they can get married and have children. (Wang tonghui. 1936; Xu Ping. 2006).

Hualan Yao has always retained the custom of holding the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They believe that the age of 15 (according to the traditional Chinese method of counting false years, one year is counted at birth and one year is increased with each Spring Festival thereafter). Therefore, the Cheng Ren Li ritual for boys and girls, their actual age may only be 13 or 14 years old) of boys and girls have become adults, so in the morning of the first day of the Chinese New Year of 15 years old will be held for them.

This ritual, held on the first day of Chinese New Year, is of multi-dimensional importance to Hualan Yao.

First, minors become adults through this ritual, realizing the transformation of identity.

Secondly, it brings together the People of Hualan Yao, both those who still live in the village and those who do not, through this ritual.

Thirdly, it reflects the family relationship in Hualan Yao village. Because the leading role of the ceremony is to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual of boys and girls, their clothes are made by their mother, grandmother and other female elders in the family or others. They are then dressed by their mother, grandmother or other female elders. And guide them through the ritual, which reflects their family ties.

Fourth, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is a family ritual, but the process of the ritual is related to the public space and other people in the village. In the three stages of the ritual, after combing their hair and dressing up at home, they cross the street to the landmark of the village, and invite the elderly, relatives and friends of the village to celebrate, express their respect and accept the blessings of the villagers. It shows the emotions, practices and social activities of different groups in the process of ritual.

Fifthly, the Cheng Ren Li ritual has not disappeared, but is more grand, which reflects the awakening of Hualan Yao people to their national consciousness and identity consciousness. For other ethnic groups or villages that have faded away, after seeing the Cheng Ren Li ritual of Hualan Yao, they wake up their national memory and ask Hualan Yao women to make these clothes for them. It shows the importance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, not only to the village of Mentoutun, but also to other villages and nations, so that they realize the original importance of these ritual.

Because of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the lost are reunited. The rite of passage serves as a bond that brings people together within the family, within and outside the community. Through rituals, people get in touch with their ancestors, gain social recognition, and continue their national identity, becoming Hualan Yao people with their real names.

There are different rites of passage in different cultures of different regions and ethnic groups in different parts of the world. Therefore, it is necessary to first understand the whole coming-of-age ceremony culture in order to study the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual. This is an important revelation for understanding the history and development of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual, and provides a more accurate and in-depth research basis for a more comprehensive understanding of how the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual builds up its ethnicity.

Adult rites, also known as "adult rites", "rites of passage", "rites of passage", etc., are a kind of transition rites, which refer to all the rites and ceremonies marking the transition from childhood to adolescence or adulthood in different cultures. It refers to all rituals, ceremonies and practices that mark the transition from childhood to adolescence or adulthood in different cultures (Hong Ming, 2014). Traditional rites of passage carry symbolic meanings of "sexual" maturity and in some regions reflect stereotypical gender norms. Behaviors such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), which are harmful to sexual and reproductive health, still exist in some countries and regions. Therefore, sex education in China involves a proper understanding of "adult etiquette".

In academia, scholars have at one time equated rites of passage with "rites of passage to physical maturity" or "rites of passage to sexual maturity". French scholar Arnold van Gennep countered this view in *Rites of Transition*, citing differences in the age at which circumcision is practiced in different regions as an example: the same rite of passage sometimes marks the beginning of childhood, sometimes the beginning of puberty, but neither has anything to do with physical maturity. Thus, van Gennep suggests that rites of passage mark "social maturity" and are essentially socio-cultural rather than biological in nature (Arnold van Gennep, 2012).

Meanwhile, American scholar Ruth Benedict in her book *Cultural Patterns* also mentions that the age of puberty varies from culture to culture. Adolescence is in fact a socio-cultural issue, and the various rituals for this period are different forms of signaling the child's entry into adulthood. It is not biological maturity that marks the entry into adulthood, but the culturally conditioned rites of passage of adolescence (Ruth Benedict, 1987).

British scholar Victor Turner, in *The Forest of Symbols - An Essay on the Rituals of the Ndembu People*, categorizes the rite of passage as a life-turning rite of passage. What is the turn of life? Briefly, it is a significant moment in an individual's physical or social development such as birth, puberty, or death. In most of the world's simpler societies, and in many "civilized" societies, there are a number of ceremonies or rituals that mark the transition of individuals from one stage of life or social status to another. For example, baptismal ceremonies and graduation ceremonies, the former signifying the arrival of a new social being in human society, and the latter celebrating the individual's successful emergence from a long and often painful process of schooling into a stage of earning one's own living. These "turnaround" ceremonies are not only centered on the individual around whom they are centered, but also indicate a change in the relationships between the people with whom the individual is connected. These connections are by blood, marriage, money, political control, and other means. He depicts the rites of passage that both Ndembu boys and girls go through. Although the form and purpose of these two rites of passage are very different. But both of their rites of passage refer to ceremonies that take place when entering a new stage or joining a new group (Turner Victor, 2006).

The rite of passage is a typical transition ceremony, one of the rites of passage that ensures that an individual can safely pass through important junctures in his or her life or in the survival and development of the group, and the process consists of segregation, transition, and cohesion. Take Mukanda, the circumcision ceremony for male children of the Ndembu people, as an example. The main purpose of the male child circumcision ceremony is to inculcate in the boys, repeatedly, tribal value standards, hunting skills, and to educate them about sex. The boys are taught in isolation in the bush, and the communal nature of the ceremony is emphasized by the need for the boys to follow the teachings of the older generation and to endure hardship. The ceremony takes place in three stages. The first stage Kwing'ija: making entry. This is the stage of pre-preparation, which includes all the preparations for the place of circumcision, etc. and the execution of the circumcision. Second stage Kung'ula: isolation period. This stage is during the period when the boys are recovering from their wounds in the isolation hut and also learning about tribal knowledge, value standards and getting an education. The third stage is Kwidisha: the

ceremony of return. Boys who have undergone circumcision surgery and received education enter a new phase. This is the stage of convergence, when the boy is integrated into adulthood and re-enters daily life from a period of transition. At this point, the rite of passage to manhood ends.

There is no difference on the surface in moving from everyday life to everyday life, but the youth undergoes a qualitative change during the process of segregation, transition, and polymerization. This change is not only manifested in physical growth, but also in psychological maturity and the transformation of social roles. Through the three stages of the rite of passage, youth cross an important point in their life course and are reborn.

In general, the rite of passage is structured as a separation from childhood, a transition from childhood to adulthood, and a new birth into adulthood. Together, they constitute a meaningful and complete rite of passage, allowing youth to become full members of society with all legal rights, and allowing youth to end their old natural, biological state and be reborn as a cultural being (Wang Jiemin, 2010).

Rites of passage vary across cultural and religious backgrounds. For example, Christian baptism is a rite of passage that marks a person as a Christian. The Jewish Bar Mitzvah marks religious adulthood for Jewish teens. In some Hindu cultures, coming-of-age ceremonies may include wearing special coming-of-age clothing, performing religious rituals, and celebrating social events. In some African tribes, rites of passage may involve traditional ritual circumcision and other rituals.

In traditional Chinese culture, "rites of passage" played an extremely important role in ancient Chinese society and culture, and the "rite of passage" was one of the most important rites of passage. Among them, the "Crown Rite" for men and the "Maturity Rite" for women are the most common forms of "rites of passage" practiced by the Han Chinese people in ancient China. At the same time, there are diversified rites of passage in different regional and ethnic cultures (Sun Cui Xiang, 2014).

Crown rite and maturity rite are the rites of passage for Han Chinese men and women in ancient China. It first originated in the primitive society as the "rite of passage", which is an important symbol for young men and women to obtain the qualification of clan adulthood. After entering the class society, the rite of passage became an important means for the Western Zhou ruler to maintain the patriarchal system, that is, "the one who becomes an adult will be responsible for the adult rites. Those who are responsible for the rites of passage will be responsible for the rites of sons, sons and daughters, ministers, and lesser men!" At the same time, men "learn the rites of passage when they are twenty years old" and women "learn the rites of passage when they are fifteen years old and twenty years old", so the qualifications of adulthood conferred on men and women by the rites of coronation and maturity are markedly gender-specific (Jiao Jie, 2011).

Crown rite: "The crown is the beginning of the rite of passage." From the viewpoint of the historical evolution of the crown rite, the crown rite evolved from the "Cheng Ding Rite" began to appear in the Zhou Dynasty. Until the Han Dynasty emphasized the educational function of the ceremony for adult men, and the crown ceremony of the Ming Dynasty was quite political. After the Ming Dynasty, the crown ceremony gradually declined, and in the early Republic of China, the crown

ceremony was gradually merged with the wedding ceremony. In addition, some folk also combined part of the crown rite with child rearing practices, such as friends and relatives or older virtuous people gave adult men new names, called "Qing number" (Xiao Fang&He Shaoya, 2017).

A more complete coming-of-age ceremony can be found in the Crowning Ceremony of the Scholar in the Rites of Passage. The core of the ceremony is "crowning" and "ordaining", and the main procedure is "changing clothes". The basic parts of the ceremony are as follows: (1) divining the day: the master divined in front of the family temple to determine the date of the crown ceremony; (2) precepting the guests: the master informed his friends of the organization of the crown ceremony and invited them to be his guests; (3) divining the guests: three days before the crown ceremony, selecting a guest for the ceremony as the guest of honor, and adding crowns to the character of fate for the crowned one; (4) lodging the guest of honor: two days before the crown ceremony, to the guest's home to invite the guest of honor once again, and at the same time, invite a person to sing the song of honor; (5) the duration: the crown ceremony is performed by a scholar. (5) Duration: one day before the crown ceremony, a ceremony is held outside the family temple to announce the hour of the ceremony and to notify all the guests; (6) Chen ware clothing: on the day of the crown ceremony, the morning wake up, the washing utensils and the crown clothing used are put out one by one; (7) Taking position: the master, relatives, the crowned person and all the executives are in their places; (8) Welcoming the guests: the master meets the honored guests at the front door. When the guest arrives at the door, the host goes out to meet him. The host bows three times and then ascends to the hall; (9) three additions: the guest of honor, with the assistance of the master of ceremonies, performs three additions to the crown. The first addition is the Velvet Cloth Crown, then the Leather Bent, and the third addition is the Duke's Bent, and a toast is given, three different times; the crowned person changes his or her clothes three times; (10) The chief guest gives the crowned person a cup of wine and a toast. The crowned person pays homage to the person who created the food; (11) the crowned person pays homage to his mother; (12) the guests order the "character" for the crowned person and give a toast; (13) the crowned person pays homage to his relatives; (14) the crowned person pays homage to the head of the government; (15) the host hosts a banquet for the guests; (16) the hosts send off the guests, and sends the offerings to the guests' homes (Baihua, 2003).

In this series of rituals to promote the transformation of the natural individual into a social adult, the temporal and spatial environment, specific rituals, and specific language behaviors of the rites of passage all provide centralized ethical discipline and moral enlightenment to the rite-receiving men, and catalyze the rite-receiving men's self-consciousness of adulthood. Thus, the adult society is provided with new members who are morally conscious and behave in accordance with the laws of the society. The performance of this rite of passage symbolizes not only the physical development of the man's adulthood, but also his emergence as a social adult with an independent identity, and gives the man the status of a full-fledged legal heir to the family and an individual's access to the community of power.

Maturity Bun Ceremony is a rite of passage for women of the Han nationality in ancient China. Commonly known as "on the head", "on the head of the ceremony", that is, in ancient times, when a woman reached a certain age, the girl will



be divided on both sides of the children's hair buns converge into a bundle pulled into an adult bun, and then inserted into the maturity of the bun. This is usually done through a ceremony, and the ceremony marking a girl's adulthood is the maturity ceremony. Although there are a large number of written records confirming the existence of the maturity rite in ancient China, due to the low social and political status of women in ancient societies, there are not many records of the details of the ritual details of women's maturity rite (Sun Cuixiang, 2014).

According to the literature, such as "Ten years and five years and maturity," "Women are allowed to marry, maturity and the word," and "It is said that those who should be allowed to marry in the year of maturity, the woman is allowed to marry, and the word is maturity and the word. If she is not married, she will reach maturity at twenty years old". It can be seen from these expressions that a girl who marries at the age of fifteen performs a maturity rite and writes her name. At the same time, the rite of passage for women is not purely based on age, but the "promise to marry" is an important condition for the performance of the maturity rite. At the age of fifteen, a woman can be promised marriage, but if she has not yet been promised marriage at the age of twenty, she will have to undergo the maturity rite, during which she will be promised marriage, i.e., "maturity", and will be given a character. If a woman is not yet married at the age of twenty, she must hold a maturity ceremony, during which she will be "maturing" and take the word "maturity". The "maturity rite" is not a real rite of passage for women, and the actual criterion for women's adulthood is marriage (Mo Xiaoyan, 2015).

For women, maturity rite on the one hand reinforces the gender division of labor and gender role shaping for women in ancient society. It meant that individuals reached marriageable age and had taken on patriarchal-centered female functions such as daughter-in-law, wife and mother. On the other hand, it did not qualify ancient women to become independent members of society. Instead it deprived them of the right to go to society through the implementation of the maturity rite, forcing them to go from one family to another and to attain adulthood in life through marriage (Jiao Jie, 2011).

Rites of passage to adulthood under local folklore. Adulthood ceremonies also exist in many regions and ethnic groups in China. In the Han region of China, which is roughly bounded by the Yangtze River, there are two types of rites of passage in the north and the south, namely, "turning twelve" and "turning sixteen". These are "child-rearing bar mitzvahs", which play an important role in the physical and mental growth of children, the harmonious development of the family, and the adjustment of community relations (Zhong Jingwen, 2009).

The prominent feature of child-rearing adult etiquette and customs is the childcare function. It places the child's minor stage in the protection of gods or external forces, and repeats with the growth process. This is different from the general sense of one-time completion of the "transitional etiquette", more in line with the actual formation of a person's social role process. Secondly, there is a clear gender bias and a certain character distinction. In various places, the tradition of preferring boys to turn twelve and sixteen is influenced by the preference for boys. Due to material constraints, they are usually held only for boys or the first child in the family. In recent years, with the deepening awareness of gender equality, it has been widely realized that both male and female adolescents are held at the same time, but there are

gender distinctions and gender expectations. For example, in Changzhi County, Shanxi Province, the father of the child will take a whip or a broom to "whip" the child, and the woman's whip is wrapped with fifteen jujubes to signify an early marriage. Men use the whip with fifteen copper coins wrapped around it, symbolizing the early earning of money to support the family and take responsibility for the family. Finally, it has a clear color of faith. These rites and customs all believe that after a child is born and reaches a certain age, he or she needs to be protected by external forces, especially the divine, in order to reach adulthood peacefully, so adulthood before and after the ceremony also means that he or she is transformed from a half-human being who is "locked up" or "encircled" by the divine power to a full-fledged lay person (He Shaoya, 2018).

child-rearing adult etiquette and customs can be categorized into two types: symbolic and return-of-wishes. The sign-symbol type is a relatively mild form of rite of passage, which signals different age groups and gender distinctions by changing the recipient's hair style, clothing, jewelry, and other external physical features. For example, in Huai 'an City, Anhui Province, boys begin to grow their hair when they are one or two years old and cut it when they are twelve. The cutting of pigtailed hair has to be held on an auspicious day and is done by a man of full happiness. The full-blessed person requires that both children, parents and husband and wife are alive. The boy's uncle waits with a sieve in his hand containing a big cake, a red egg, green onions, a pen, a book and a red cloth. The head shaver shaves the head while saying happy words, and the shaving must be completed before noon. After the pigtailed hair is shaved off, it symbolizes that the boy is now free from the control of the gods and has become a man of the world. With the boys cut pigtailed hair, on the contrary, in Wu County, Jiangsu Province, Shengpu Township, the woman thirteen years of age on the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar to store hair, commonly known as "stay hair". By female elders for girls to shave the hair, the original comb of the long braids, change into adult women's hair, tie a scarf, wear patchwork clothes, skirt, wear embroidered shoes. From then on, they end their lives as young girls, participate in adult labor, and can be recruited for marriage .

Passing the test and returning the wish. This type of rite of passage is repeated every year from the birth of a child to the age of twelve or sixteen, and has different forms of expression. Taking the twelfth year as an example, its manifestations are mainly as follows: First, to bless children with peace by sending their names to gods and Buddhas. In Wanquan County, Hebei Province, in the past, the third day of a child's birth to provide grandma wishing for the child to recognize the gods as relatives, meaning that the child is given by the gods. After the worship of the gods and Buddha, every year when the Grandmother Temple Fair, the family has a child must be sent to the Grandmother Temple about five inches high clay figure, written on the back of a nephew of a family, a family of children, known as the "double", to the age of twelve years old to stop. Twelve years old, the year of the Grandmother Temple, you must personally go to the temple to return the wish, said that the future out of the grandmother's sphere of influence. The second is to pray for the child's growth by recognizing his or her godparents. Godparents can be deities, such as Guan Di, sacred trees, stones, etc., or unrelated godparents. The third is the more common "padlock" and "unlocking". In Shanxi, generally speaking, the child was born a few months or a week old when the grandmother's family to padlock.

After the child is padlocked, every year on his birthday or a specific day, will be held to celebrate the ceremony. The ceremony is most solemn at the age of twelve, symbolizing the child's independence from the control of the gods.

In addition, there are also those of a testing nature. In western Hunan, northern Hunan area that, after the birth of the boy, if the fate of the "Guanxia", you must make a "Nuo wish", and in its three, six, nine years old, ask the sorcerer to cross the "small pass" (also known as the "Flower Tree Pass"). To be twelve years old when the ferry "child pass". At that time, the sorcerer is invited to build a bridge, the child crosses the bridge, gets a haircut and wears new clothes to indicate adulthood (He Shaoya, 2018).

In addition to the Han Chinese, other ethnic minorities also have bar mitzvah ceremonies. For example, the Yi ethnic group. When a Yi girl chooses a single age (15 or 17 years old) according to her development, she holds the adult ceremony of changing the child's skirt. To change the hair style, the original comb in the back of the head of the single braid separation, behind the comb tied into a double braid, and will be far to wear around the type of bandana replaced by a tile type bandana. You should also change your earrings by replacing the red or blue wires that were used as earrings with silver earrings. At the same time to change the skirt, the original light-colored top and bottom of the two sections of the skirt, replaced by a medium tube of black and blue three sections or four sections of the pleated skirt. After the skirt-changing ceremony was held, women could socialize and could talk about marriage (He Shaoya&Bi Xiaonan, 2017).

In summary, a rite of passage is a cultural or social event that celebrates an individual's transition from adolescence to adulthood and the moment when they take on more responsibilities and duties in society. Such ceremonies have different names and traditions in different cultures and regions. However, they usually share the following common elements.

(1) Social recognition. Coming-of-age ceremonies usually mark the change of a person's status in society from adolescent to adult. Such ceremonies usually follow a certain age or a specific life event, such as marriage, college enrollment, or military service.

(2) Nature of the ceremony. A rite of passage usually includes a series of ceremonies and activities, such as religious services, family gatherings, social events, the wearing of traditional dress or attire, and symbolic acts, such as lighting candles, receiving a blessing, or completing a specific task.

(3) Gifts and Blessings: During a Bar Mitzvah, it is common to give gifts or receive blessings as an expression of family and community support and blessings for the adult.

(4) Social Responsibility: A rite of passage also usually marks a time when an individual takes on more responsibilities and duties in society. This may include participation in family, community, or national affairs, as well as adherence to social and cultural norms

### 1.8.2 The theoretical concept

The studies in this group, the researcher has applied three concepts to create a research framework and be a guiding tool for accessing knowledge and analyzing knowledge: the Ritual Process by Victor Turner (Victor Turner,2006), the Symbolic Interaction by Herbert George Blumer(Herbert George Blumer,1969) and

the Ethnicity by Moerman (Michel Moreman,1965) and Keyes (Keyes Charles F,1992) details as follows.

#### Ritual Process

Rituals and ritual processes are phenomena that we are constantly exposed to. Using the concept of Ritual Process, this paper discusses the different stages of the " Cheng Ren Li ritual " and the significance of Hualan Yao " Cheng Ren Li ritual " in this question. What influence does it have on the participants and those who hold the ceremony and those who watch the ritual? Through previous literature reviews on "ethnicity", the concept of "ethnicity" explains Hualan Yao "who I am" within the framework of my research. In the context of social development and transformation, Hualan Yao insiders, especially "new rural people", how to pursue their roots and maintain their ethnicity. I chose the concept of "Ritual Process" for further study. I used a book by Turner, Victor, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

Arnold Van Gennep first put forward the concept of "rite of Passage" in his book *Rites of Passage*, and divided rite of Passage into three stages of separation, threshold and aggregation. He collected various rites of passage in human society and classified them according to their different emphasis on the three stages. Victor Turner inherited Van Gennep's distinction between the three stages of rite of passage and deepened the analysis and study of the threshold stage. In addition, Victor Turner uses Max Gluckman's "process change" theory to study ritual processes. He regarded ritual as a process of mutual transformation between structure and anti-structure, and put ritual in the context of social development and transformation to show the role and function of ritual in the process of social operation. The society also develops dialectically in the transition between the blending of structure and anti-structure. He believes that "every person's life experience contains alternate experiences of structure and communion, condition and transformation". In this process of alternation, the individual completes the process from separation (symbolic death), threshold (return to the mother) to aggregation (regeneration) in the ritual process of vortex shaping of structure and anti-structure.

In the Cheng Ren Li ritual of Hualan Yao, the separation stage is the grooming stage. We see 15-year-old boys and girls get up early while others are still sleeping. They were not allowed to speak during the whole process. They wear different clothes from daily life to show that they are different and they have been separated from the crowd.

Limen stage -- the stage when people go out to the east and walk to the entrance of the village. Boys and girls, as threshold people, are all kinds of contradictory and entangled strange state. Walking on the road, has not been recognized the uneasy, elders remind, onlookers look at words, to inform the world, the sound of ancestors firecrackers, sacred exchanges become the most important thing in the threshold stage. Ritual attire, firecrackers and other sacred objects instill basic assumptions about Hualan Yao culture into the hearts of boys and girls.

Aggregation stage -- At the entrance to the village to receive the blessings of villagers, banquet for relatives and friends. When boys and girls come into the public arena as newly acquired adults, they become the focus of attention. All the villagers would draw close to them, and the men would often give a congratulatory look or a brief word. Women often express their blessings by judging the level of clothing production and embroidery skills, as well as the economic status and importance of

the family holding the ceremony. For a boy or girl who is the subject of the ceremony, this is his or her initiation ceremony and an exciting and self-fulfilling moment in her life. At the moment when they reintegrate into the group, they seem to be mysteriously combined with the society they live in and leave a mark. They made contact with their ancestors and got their real "name".

As mentioned above, in the Cheng Ren Li ritual, each participant of Hualan Yao provides a review and acquisition of national culture, religion, social customs, social norms, group technology and national historical knowledge. In the process of participation and experience again and again, this knowledge has become an important part of their memory. And deposited in their bodies, preserved and transmitted, so as to realize national identity.

#### Symbolic Interaction

"Symbolic Interaction" is one of the main concepts of this study. Because the influence of the Cheng Ren Li ritual on individual social behavior lies not in the secularized content and function contained in the ceremony itself, but in the symbolic meaning of the ritual itself relative to the individual, which comes from the interaction between individuals and others. I used Herbert George Blumer's book "Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method" for the concept to explain the Symbolic interaction associated with the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Herbert George Blumer (1937) formally put forward the concept of "Symbolic Interaction" and elevated it to a social theory in his book published in 1969. In his opinion, "symbolic interaction" refers to a process in which people consciously read and interpret the symbolic information sent by each other, and make their actions depend on the gestures of the other party. When individuals interact with each other, each adjusts his or her own behavior according to the behavior of others. These behaviors are expressed through symbols, thus creating different meanings, which are interpreted and understood subjectively by individuals, and then corresponding symbolic responses are made. The core of symbolic interaction theory is to investigate the interaction between people through symbols (especially language). Meaning, social interaction and interpretation are the three main concepts of symbolic interaction theory.

The theory of symbolic interaction has its theoretical background and origin. Scottish ethicists represented by David Hume and Adam Ferguson advocate studying real life, examining daily life experience and summarizing theories from it, believing that only through experience can we find useful knowledge. American philosopher and psychologist William James put forward the idea of "multiple selves", James Mark Baldwin put forward the three-stage theory of self-development, and American idealist philosopher, sociologist and educator John Dewey put forward the idea of social interaction. James, Baldwin, Dewey and others have laid the foundation for the emergence of symbolic interaction theory from philosophical and psychological perspectives, but their theory is not equal to symbolic interaction theory. The basic principle of symbolic interaction theory and the establishment of the theory owe to the early American sociologists Cooley, Thomas, Mead and others.

In his book *Social Organization*, American social psychologist Cooley (1909) proposed the concept of primary group and secondary group and "self in the mirror". He believed that people's behavior largely depends on their self-knowledge, which is mainly formed through social interaction with others. Others' evaluation and

attitude towards them are a "mirror" reflecting the self, through which individuals understand and grasp themselves. American sociologist William Thomas put forward the idea of "situational definition". In his opinion, the task of sociology is to analyze the behavior in the process of adjustment between people and groups. The process of people debugging each other is caused by the situation, which is the reflection of individuals or groups to the object environment.

Mead, an American social psychologist, is the founder of symbolic interactivity theory. His paper and lecture collection "Mind, Self and Society" has an important influence on the formation of this theory. From the point of view of evolution, Mead put forward the theory that human mind and self are produced and developed from society, and emphasized the thought of interaction between organism and environment, individual and society. Mead's published views on the interaction and organization of human behavior are the conceptual basis for much of the modern exposition of symbolic interaction in the social sciences. His student Blumer formally proposed the symbolic interaction theory on this basis.

In the theory of symbolic interaction, sign is a basic concept. Symbols refer to all things that can represent a certain meaning, such as language, characters, actions, objects and even scenes. A thing becomes a sign because it is given a meaning that is universally accepted. In the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual, ritual taboos, instructions from elders, blessings from relatives and friends, ritual attire, firecrackers, street parades and dinner parties are all symbols. The ritual attire is the biggest symbol. People get to know the main characters of the ritual through the ritual attire. The ritual connects the present and the ancestors through the ritual attire and connects the different groups inside and outside the ritual.

The social context of ritual itself also has symbolic significance. To ensure the smooth operation of the ritual, the female elders began to make the ritual attire after the birth of the child. The ritual protagonist is aware of what might have happened when confronted with a formal ritual, because the occasion represents a special meaning in people's experience. The Hualan Yao people act according to their knowledge of ritual, and symbolic acts, ritual attire, rituals and blessings are generated in the process of "social interaction" and interpreted by themselves.

Ethnicity

This thesis draws on the concept of ethnicity based on the approaches of Moerman (1965) and Keyes (1992) to consider why the Hualan Yao people have put forward the Cheng Ren Li ritual to define their own ethnicity and choose any story to present. How does this selection relate to government rural development programs and community dynamics?

"Ethnicity" is a key concept adopted by Western anthropologists in the post-World War II era to study peoples with specific cultures and languages that have been passed down through generations. It replaced the "race" concept because "race" originated with the idea that differences between races were determined by immutable biological and genetic traits. Such logic leads to racism as well as genocide in order to maintain the purity of race. It also replaced the "tribe" concept, is explained by emphasizing identity and isolated culture which the researchers saw were unique and different from the indigenous peoples. They are believed to be characterized by remote settlements and lack of interaction with other ethnic groups (Keyes Charles F, 1979).

The Ethnicity concept suggests a view of culture and self-definition in relation to other ethnic groups especially in relation to the nation state. They also saw that ethnicity in this new context was flexible. It flows through social space, situation and power relations with other peoples, including the nation state. In other words, Ethnicity is a strategic of self-presentation among ethnic groups which continually shifts depending on conditions, circumstances, and interests (Michel Moreman,1965; Keyes Charles F,1992).

The empirical research on ethnicity began in the 1960s after the civil rights movement. Many scholars focused on the division of identity patterns and ethnic relations. With the upsurge of research on the identity of vulnerable ethnic groups, western researchers have put forward many models of ethnicity research to explain the status of identity development of specific ethnic groups. J. P. Hinnery developed Erikson's identity development theory and proposed that individual's ethnicity mainly experienced the stages of dispersion, exclusion, delay and integration. Feliks Gross proposed a five-stage model for the development of black ethnicity, namely, pre-encounter stage, encounter stage, immersion and emergence stage, internalization stage, commitment and belief stage. (Wan Minggang&Wang Zhou, 2007). This model delineates the direction of identity development of black adolescents, which initially shows excessive identification with white people and demeaning their own culture, and this identification is extremely unhealthy. To identify with their own black community, to a healthy identity. After J.E. Holmes put forward the white national identity development model in 1996, he put forward a more inclusive national identity development model suitable for all colored people in the same year. In addition to studying the division of identity mode, some foreign scholars tend to explain ethnic phenomenon from the perspective of ethnic boundary and its maintenance. Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth first proposed to explain ethnic groups from the perspective of ethnic structure differences and the resulting ethnic boundaries. He believes that ethnic group is mainly a category identified and constructed by its members, and ethnic group exists in the interaction with other ethnic groups. The main factor of its formation and maintenance is its social boundary, which is usually situational and constructive(Fredrik Barth, 2021). Studies by Anthony Giddens, Charles Taylor, Jurgen Habermas, Manuel Castells and others focus more on the significance of globalization and modernity to individual or group identity. It also points out that in the context of globalization, the rapid development of cultural industrialization makes people's identity increasingly blurred.

Since 1990s, There are many research papers about ethnic groups and ethnicity published in various academic journals in China. While borrowing the concept of "ethnic group", Chinese scholars also try to redefine and explain it in order to adapt to China's national conditions. Wang Xi 'en defined national identity as the cognition and emotional attachment of social members to their own ethnic affiliation(Wang Xi 'en, 1998). Zhuang Xichang further divided the types of national identity, believing that national identity in a broad sense refers to the identity of a sovereign nation-state, namely, national identity. ethnicity in a narrow sense refers to the identity of each ethnic group to its own national culture, namely ethnicity.Zheng Xiaoyun believes that ethnicity is people's sense of belonging to their own ethnic group, that is, their view of which ethnic group (Zheng Xiaoyun, 1992). Wang Yapeng, based on the definition and basic elements of national identity proposed by J.

Carla, holds that group attitude is the most critical element of national identity. The attitude of group identity is reflected in national identity, which has two kinds: positive national identity and negative national identity. The former refers to that members are proud of being a member of their own nation, have a sense of superiority to the language, culture, religion and customs of their own nation, and strive to safeguard the interests of their own nation in behavior. Positive ethnicity not only makes ethnic members have strong cohesion, but also shows certain exclusion and resistance to external group members. This pattern of identity is prominent in the dominant ethnic groups. On the contrary, members with negative ethnicity view their own language, culture, religion and customs with a pessimistic or even inferior attitude. The stigma of belonging to one's own ethnic group resulted in a sense of identification stigma. The result of this negative operation of ethnicity is that some ethnic members are unwilling to expose their ethnicity in behavior.

Through to the related literature collection and sorting, at present China's national identity maintenance research focuses on four aspects: one is from the perspective of globalization on Chinese research of ethnicity, national identity, globalization, national identity, cultural self-confidence, Chinese culture, the Chinese nation community consciousness and other words, is a prominent keywords. The second part is the research of ethnicity corresponding to national identity in multi-ethnic countries, mainly discussing the relationship between nation and state and the mutual relationship between ethnicity and national identity based on it. The third is the research on ethnicity of cross-border ethnic groups, which focuses more on their multiple identities. Fourth, the significance, status quo and development of national identity are shown through the factors that maintain national identity.

## 1.9 Benefits of Research

1.9.1 This research made a contribution to the academic community at least 3 main issues.

- 1) The issue of the maintenance of Ethnicity in the midst of social development and transition.
- 2) Raising ethnic awareness through the community rituals.
- 3) Discussion on the study of rural people in the background of social change with predecessors

1.9.2 Research results can be used for planning community development in similar situations.

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## CHAPTER II

### Sociocultural Historical Development of Hualan Yao Village

This chapter explores an overview of the social development of Hualan Yao villages in relation to the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Among the Hualan Yao villages, I would only elaborate on the history and development of Mentou Village in Jinxiu County as a basis for the phenomenon described below. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes Hualan Yao society and history and culture. These traditional social and cultural factors created the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The second part describes the Hualan Yao villages under China's poverty alleviation, showing the regional changes under major structural changes. This chapter provides the necessary background and preparation for the subsequent chapters to explain the rites of passage in two different contexts.

#### 2.1 Development of Hualan Yao ethnic group before 1978

This part elaborates the traditional material and cultural characteristics of Hualan Yao related to the rite of passage, including the development of the ethnic groups, the natural environment and the production and life style, and other material characteristics. Cultural features such as the social organization system, customs and habits, and folk beliefs are also included. The long historical migration, harsh geographical environment and rich natural resources of the Hualan Yao have shaped the unique material environment and ritual and cultural characteristics of the Hualan Yao. This part explores in depth how historical factors and geographic environments have shaped and influenced the Hualan Yao and Mentou Village.

##### 2.1.1 Historical development of the Hualan Yao

The Hualan Yao is a branch of the Yao minority in China, which shares the ethnic name "Yao" with other branches, and is closely related to its historical origins, cultural traditions, values, festivals and customs, religious beliefs, social structure and organization. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the history of the Yao people in order to study the Hualan Yao. This is an important revelation for the understanding of the history and culture of the Hualan Yao, and would help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the origin of the name, historical background, cultural inheritance, and social structure of the Hualan Yao, thus providing a more accurate and in-depth basis for research.

##### 1) Ethnic origin culture of the Hualan Yao

Ethnic origin is a complex and diverse concept, usually referring to the origin or lineage of an ethnic group or population. It involves the ancestry, migratory history, cultural traditions, ethnic characteristics, social structure and links with other ethnic groups. Through the study of ethnic origin, we can better understand and trace the historical background of the formation and development and evolution of an ethnic group; we can also better understand the cultural heritage of the ethnic group, such as cultural characteristics, values, folk beliefs, customs, traditional arts and other aspects. It also enhances the pride and self-knowledge of one's ethnic identity, and forms a sense of identity and belonging. It is also possible to understand the mutual influences, exchanges and integration among ethnic groups, to promote understanding and harmonious development among different ethnic groups, and to discover the

diversity and commonalities among different ethnic groups, etc. Each ethnic group has its unique ethnic origin and history, and may also share common cultural elements and historical experiences. The Yao minority is no exception.

#### Origin: Descendants of PanHu

The Yao are one of the oldest ethnic groups in China. The Yao are one of the "Jiu Li" in the ancient Orient of China, and are said to be the descendants of PanHu and the third princess., the daughters of the King of Evaluation. Because of their frequent migrations throughout history, the Yao are one of the most complex ethnic minorities in China and the most widely distributed in South China. Although there are many branches, they are relatively clustered yet widely dispersed, making the Yao tribes survive in different natural and humanistic environments. As a result, there is a diversity of cultural patterns among them. However, as they are of the same origin, the kernel of their cultural inheritance is the same. That is, no matter how dispersed the Yao people are and how many branches they have, and no matter how different branches call themselves and others, "Yao" is always the common name of the ethnic group. This is similar to Mr. Fei Xiaotong's discussion of the formation of the pluralistic and integrated pattern of the Chinese nation. In fact, the Yao people are also a "pluralistic unity composed of different clans, each with its own individuality" (Feng Daiyu & Huang Zhongying, 2013). Ethnic identity and identity are the common insistence of all Yao clans, including the Hualan Yao.

The origin of the Yao minority has always been the focus of much debate among Chinese historians and Yaoists, and in the 1990s, experts and scholars have conducted in-depth studies and research on the origin of the Yao ethnic group by comprehensively applying data from anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology, folklore, religion and other aspects. The conclusion reached was that the Yao people were closely related to the Jiu Li and San Miao in the ancient times. The original settlement of the Yao was in the lower reaches of the Yellow River basin and the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River basin in ancient China. The Yao were one of the "Jiu Li" or "Nine Yi" in the ancient East, and then migrated towards Hubei and Hunan. During the Qin and Han dynasties, the Yao were included in the "Changsha and Wuling barbarians" (or Wuxi barbarians) (Zhang Youjun, 2001).

It is inconceivable that a people without legends of their origins could not have a long history. Legends are always romanticized. Within the Yao folklore, the legend of PanWang is the most widely circulated, the most influential and the best known. Some studies regard PanWang as a myth because of its exaggerated and magical elements (Nong Xueguan, Huang Rigui & Su Shengxing, 2001), while others regard it as a legend because it has been passed down orally from generation to generation (Wu Yongzhang, 1993). However, no matter whether it is a myth or a legend, "PanHu" is an indispensable chapter in the historical development of the Yao people, and it is also the deepest, the most intimate and the most genuine root in the ancestral memory of the Yao people.

Although there are some differences in the specific content of the legend of "PanHu" in different regions and clans, the main idea is the same, that is, to recognize "PanHu" as the founding father of this nation (or clan). The legend goes like this: In ancient times, the king was the emperor. One day, the queen's ear was not feeling well. The queen went to all the good doctors in the country, but they could not

cure her. The empress's ear hurt for three whole years. Later, the doctor picked out a golden worm like a silkworm from inside the empress's ear. This worm was about three inches long. As soon as this worm was picked out, the empress's ear was healed. The queen thought it was amazing, so she held the worm in a "Hu"<sup>3</sup> and covered it with a plate. After a while, the bug turned into a "Longquan"<sup>4</sup> with five colors on its body and a bright look on its face. Because Longquan came out of the plate and Hu, King Ping named it "PanHu". King Ping loved "PanHu" so much that he didn't move away from him. Later, another king, King Gao, invaded with his army. The war lasted for a long time. King Ping sent out a royal notice, promising to marry a princess to anyone who could kill King Gao. The whole country was afraid of the powerful King Gao, and no one dared to take the order to go to war. PanHu quietly came to the palace of the High King and gained his trust by pretending to surrender. When the king was not on guard, he bit off the head of the king and returned to the palace of King Ping. The king was so happy that he honored his promise by marrying his third daughter to him. At that time, the gourd suddenly became able to speak. He said that if he was put into a cage made of gold and steamed for seven days and seven nights, he would become a human being. The first time I saw him, I was so surprised that I did what he told me to do. I didn't expect that the gourd would turn into a human being. "After his marriage to the third Princess, he settled in the Huijishan Mountain in Nanjing. A few years later, the couple gave birth to six sons and six daughters. The king was so happy that he issued an imperial decree, naming the twelve children as the twelve descendants of Wang Yao. These twelve Wang Yao descendants reproduced and developed into the Yao minority, and "PanHu" was therefore worshipped as the ancestor of the Yao minority (Feng Dai Yu & Huang Zhong Ying, 2013).

The legend of PanWang was not only widely circulated in the Yao region, but also had a profound impact on the culture of later generations of the Yao people; in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Chinese Government organized scholars to carry out a major survey of the social history of the ethnic group. In the Yao folklore of Guangxi, Hunan, Guangdong and other provinces, the "PanWang Song", which mainly tells the history of the ethnic group and glorifies the achievements of "PanWang", was commonly sung, and the "PanWang Festival", which is a festival of worship and entertainment, was held in order to celebrate the achievements of "PanWang". "PanWang Festival" with the theme of rituals and entertainment, wearing costumes with the meaning of commemorating "PanWang", using artifacts related to the story of "PanWang", and abstaining from eating dog meat to show their respect for "PanWang". The worship of PanWang has become the core content of the traditional culture of the Yao people.

In addition to the legend of "PanHu", the Yao folklore is also widely circulated with legends of ancestors fighting against floods. In Hunan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and other places have been circulated, such as "how people come", "Fuxi brother and sister", "brother and sister into a marriage", "Zhang Tianshi and the King of Thunder", "drowning the bottom of the sky". Zhang Tianshi and the King of Thunder", "drowning the bottom of the sky" and so on. Although these legends have

<sup>3</sup> "Hu", an ancient Chinese bronze wine vessel, the shape of the pot modeled after the natural plant "GuaHu".

<sup>4</sup> The dragon is a divine animal in ancient Chinese legend, and is the greatest of the Chinese gods. The dragon is also a symbol of nobility, preciousness and power. The addition of the Chinese character "dragon" to the name of an animal means to increase, enlarge or heighten. Thus, "LongQuan" refers to a large and powerful dog.

different titles, their contents are similar. They all tell of a great flood in the world, in which all people except two siblings were drowned. Later, the two siblings married and raised their descendants. Among them, the "Fuxi siblings" legend is more typical.

In ancient times, there were floods all over the world. All human beings were drowned. Only two siblings, Fuxi and Fuxi, survived by hiding in a big gourd. In order to reproduce human beings again, Fuxi siblings got married under the guidance of a turtle. Later, they gave birth to a meatball. The sister was angry. She chopped up the meatball and threw it to the four winds. Wherever this minced meat was thrown, there were human beings. The legend of "Fuxi's brother and sister made man" is also slightly different in Yao legends around the world. For example, the legend circulating in Jinxiu Dayao Mountain. After the siblings gave birth to meatballs, the meatballs were chopped up and thrown to the mountains. The one that landed in the mountain pass became Ao Yao; the one that landed in the tea forest became Chashan Yao; the one that landed in the cornfield became Shanzi Yao; the one that landed in the colorful bamboo basket became Hualan Yao; and the one that landed in the mountain became Pan Yao; from then on, there were five Yao ethnic groups in the Dayao Mountains (Pu Chaojun&Guo Zhu, 1992).

Fuxi is a widely known figure in ancient Chinese legends, which have been recorded in Chinese historical records. Similar legends have been passed down in many ethnic groups such as the Han and Zhuang. In the Yao flood myths, the name "Fuxi" also appears frequently, so the Yao folk legend about "Fuxi siblings to create people" does not exclude the influence of the above Han historical records. Perhaps, the legend is just a kind of reminiscence in the image, always with a kind of romanticism. Legends about our ancestors can, in many cases, interpret for us the questions that have been lingering in our minds for thousands of years: where do we come from? Where do we go? This is a kind of root inheritance. It is precisely for this reason that, despite all the migrations, the lineage of the Yao people has never been interrupted. With a vitality beyond imagination, the Yao people have prospered and inherited from generation to generation.

The bloodline of "PanHu" eventually gave rise to the barbarians of Wuling and Changsha. Therefore, the Yao people were initially called "barbarians". Of course, the "barbarians" here is a collective term for the ethnic minorities of the Central China, not just the Yao.

Here, the "barbarians" existed primarily as a culture distinct from the civilized orthodoxy of the Middle Kingdom. But it was also the legend of "PanHu" that created a structure and entity for later generations to connect with the civilization of the Central Plains and the various ethnic groups. (1) PanHu was a subordinate of the king, in a position of subordination to the ancient Chinese emperors, which may be a metaphor for the subordinate relationship between the Yao ancestors and the Central Chinese; (2) PanHu built up the achievements of the political powers that be, and on this basis The relationship with the social system of the Central Plains was established through a series of procedures such as marrying a princess; (3) The birth of 12 children established the originators of the Yao clans. At the same time, the cultural boundaries with the Han Chinese in terms of language, customs, etc. also began; (4) recluse into the mountains. This determined the migratory life of the community for generations of living in the mountains and living in separate areas; (5) because of the security of identity and privileges from the Han political rulers, the

right to free use of the mountains and exemption from all kinds of rents and taxes was obtained. This laid the historical foundation for the later emergence of the appellation "MoYao". Therefore, the Yao ancestors were initially mixed in the barbarian system, constituting a different but relatively constant coexistence with the culture of the Central Plains as well as other ethnic cultures in the long-term historical process. On the one hand, the two systems were divided into different social and cultural realms; on the other hand, they had to maintain a symbiotic relationship that was based on mutual exchange to ensure the survival of both sides. This system is concretely expressed through the myths and legends of the distant ancestors. The most direct and most expressive of the relationship of subordination with the culture of the Central Plains, especially with the Central Plains dynasty, is the tax and corvée. As the ancestor "PanHu" helped the king to kill the enemy, his descendants were exempted from the corvée. Therefore, because of the political factor and the name, the Yao people from now on and "Yao" have an indissoluble relationship. It should be said that "Yao" is not the name of the Yao people. Rather, it is the name given to them by foreigners, mainly the Han Chinese, or the Central Plains dynasty. It was initially associated with corvée. Therefore, the word "Yao" was originally the word for "corvée".

After the founding of New China, the Party Central Committee and the State Council, according to the wishes of the majority of Yao people, used the word "Yao", which has a good meaning. As a result, the title of Yao was fixed and has been used until now.

The Hualan Yao are an integral part of the entire Yao ethnic group, and they have an inherited relationship with the entire Yao ethnic group. Scholars believe that the Hualan Yao originated from the "Wuxi Barbarians" (Huang Zhihui, 2012), based on the songs sung by the Hualan Yao throughout the ages and the oral narratives of the elderly.

The Ancestor Song of Hualan Yao records: "Fuxi invented green vegetables, and his sisters invented sesame seeds. Fuxi invented green vegetables, and his sisters invented sesame seeds. Fuxi invented sesame seeds and sowed them all over the world. The bok choy was sown to the ancient states."

Chucai<sup>5</sup>: "Pangu opened up the sky and created everything in the world. Pangu created us, in Guzhou." (Huang Zhihui, 2012). Guzhou is now the area of Rongjiang and Congjiang in the eastern part of Guizhou Province. Geographically, Rongjiang and Congjiang are located in the eastern part of Guizhou, neighboring western Hunan. In ancient times, the "Five Streams" were located between the western part of Hunan Province and the eastern part of Guizhou Province, and Guzhou belonged to the "Five Streams" area. Therefore, we believe that the original residence of the ancestors of the Hualan Yao was in "Wuxi".

Historically, the Hualan Yao were an ethnic group that was brutally oppressed by feudal rulers and forced to migrate continuously. During the Ming Dynasty, the uprising of the Yao people in the Dato Gorge, which lasted for more than 100 years (from the beginning of the 15th century to the 1930s of the 16th century), ended in failure. The majority of Yao people living in the Dato Gorge area

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<sup>5</sup> HuaLan Yao is good at using oral folk literature to record history and tradition. Oral folk literature is divided into four main categories. The first is "chucai" and "caihua", which are used in wedding ceremonies; the second is scriptures and chants that are characteristic of the nation; the third is ballads that have been sung through the ages; and the fourth is folk tales and myths and legends.

were forced to move from the fertile plains to the high forested mountains of the Jinxiu Dayao Mountains. After that, the rulers of the Ming and Qing dynasties adopted the extermination policy of besieging the Yao people in the Dayao Mountain area and prohibited all kinds of materials from entering and leaving the mountain. The Yao people survived and developed with tenacity.

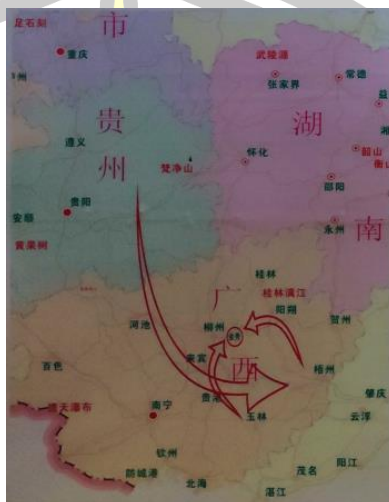


Figure 1 Hualan Yao migration roadmap. Due to the cruel oppression of the feudal rulers, they entered Jinxiu Dayao Mountain in three routes around the 16th century. This road map is now preserved in the Mentou Village Hua Lanyao Museum.  
Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

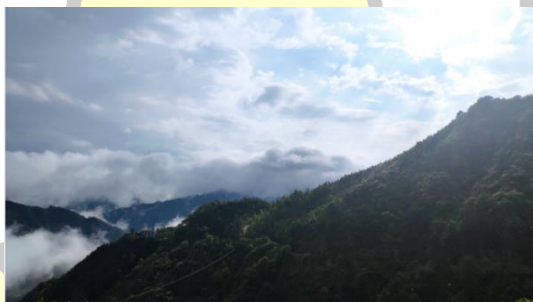


Figure 2 A view of Jinxiu Dayao Mountain. All the 11 villages of Hualan Yao are located in the deep mountains of Jinxiu County. Mentou village is about 450 meters above sea level, which is one of the villages with lower altitude.  
Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

According to the legend of the old people in Mentou Village, after the ancestors of the Hualan Yao left their place of origin, the whole clan traveled downstream in 18 boats (one says 120 boats). After passing through a dangerous beach in Liuzhou, the current was so strong that half of the boats unfortunately sank there. The remaining Hualan Yao people came to Xiangzhou and entered Jinxiu only after a lot of difficulties. From this, it is easy to see how serious the disasters suffered by the ancestors of the Hualan Yao in the process of wandering and migrating were.

In short, the Hualan Yao ethnic origin includes their ancestry, history, traditions, culture and identity. They have their own ancestral legends and migration stories which are used to explain their origins and connections. These stories involve legends and historical events. Ethnic origins are linked to cultural transmission and the Hualan Yao endeavor to preserve and pass on their cultural traditions to ensure that their ethnic origins continue. The Cheng Ren Li Ritual itself has specific origins and meanings that are linked to the Yao people's ancestry, region, identity, and historical events.

## 2) Ethnic designation: identity

The emergence of a clan name is one of the main signs of the formation of a people. It represents the identity and cognition of a people. The study of clan names can provide insights into how a people sees itself, how it expresses its culture and values, and how it distinguishes between the self and the other. It can also help us explore and understand the historical origins, cultural traditions and social development of an ethnic group. It can also reveal information about social relations, power structures, and communication and interaction among peoples. It reveals to us the uniqueness and diversity of an ethnic group, and provides important perspectives and references for ethnic studies, cultural studies and social science research.

"Hualan Yao" is a clan name. They became a specific ethnic name only after they entered the Jinxiu Dayao Mountains. The origin of the name "Hualan Yao" can be explained in three ways: 1) The name is due to the colorful features of the clothes. The sleeves, lapels, hems and backs of the Hualan Yao women's blouses are embroidered with colorful patterns. The patterns are unique and lifelike. Therefore, they are called "Hualan Yao". The word "Hualan" means "very rich in color". 2) The name is given to the fabric of the clothes. In the past, every Hualan Yao family planted cotton, and the fabrics used to make clothes were woven by Hualan Yao women themselves. The woven white cloth was dyed with indigo. Because the dyeing technology was not high, the fabric was easy to lose color. When the clothes are made and worn, the skin is often dyed blue and white due to the loss of color. Therefore, they are called "Flowery Blue Yao People" by the Han Chinese. 3) Named for their language. The first person "I" of Hualan Yao is pronounced as "wa". "Wa" and "hua" are very similar. The language of Hualan Yao is the most difficult to understand among the five Yao clans in Dayao Mountain. Very few people can understand their language. In conversation with them, the most common word heard is the first person "wa" "I". Among this group, the Blue surname is the most populous and influential, and it is the earliest of the five surnames of the Hualan Yao people to enter the Dayao Mountains. In order to distinguish themselves from the other Yao ethnic groups in the Dayao Mountains, they are called "Hualan Yao" (Mo Jinshan, Zhao Yisheng & Zhao Guikun, 2010). "Lan" is a family name. According to the information available so far, this ethnic name was first mentioned in the Guiping County Record, which was compiled in 1920. It states: "There are various kinds of barbarians, including Pan Yao, Arrow Yao, Hualan Yao, and Shanzi Yao" (Huang Zhanmei & Cheng Dazhang, 1968).

Along with the Hualan Yao, there were 4 other Yao clans that moved into Jinxiu County. There is a legend in Mentou Village about the origin of the names of these five Yao clans.

In the past, the Yao people did not have to pay food and taxes, but after the establishment of the Ming Dynasty, the practice was changed, and not only did they have to pay food and taxes, they also had to pay corvée. The Yao people couldn't stand it and had to revolt, but the revolt failed and they were chased by the government soldiers and fled everywhere. Some of the Yao people fled into the Dayao Mountain, some hid in the barn made of wooden boards, which was later called "Pan Yao" or Pan Yao; some hid in the tea bushes, which was later called Chashan Yao; those who hid in the mountain passes and caves were later called Au Yao and Shanzi Yao, and the ancestors of the Hualan Yao hid in a large flower bush. The rosy flowers were not only beautiful, but also saved people's lives. After escaping from danger, the people embroidered these beautiful flowers on their clothes in order to thank them, and when seen by outsiders, they were called Flower Blue Yao. The origin of the names of the other four clans is also taken from the meaning of not forgetting the kindness, each named after its hiding place at that time, and embroidered on the clothes or evolved into a kind of decoration.

According to my fieldwork, regarding the origin of the clan name, the Hualan Yao of Mentou Village are more inclined to the first statement. They believe that clothing is the primary symbol that distinguishes them from other ethnic groups.



Figure 3 Young girls of five Yao sub-clans in Jinxiu County. There are five branches in Yao minority: Pan Yao, Chashan Yao, Hualan Yao, Shanzi Yao and Ao Yao. Jinxiu County is one of the counties with the largest number of Yao minority branches in China, and the Yao minority culture has been maintained very well.

Source: <http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/> [Accessed on April 1, 2023]





Figure 4 Women in Hualan Yao in 1928. This picture is from Ren Guorong's book *Two Month Observation of Yaoshan in Guangxi*. This picture is a good record of the ethnic costumes of Hualan Yao at that time.  
Source: Ren Guorong photoed. July 5, 1928.



Figure 5 Hualan Yao villagers in Mentou village wearing ethnic costumes. They are very fond of their ethnic costumes. They consider ethnic costumes to be an important symbol that distinguishes them from other Yao.  
Source: Photographed by the author . July 25, 2006.

According to the classification of ethnic languages, Hualan Yao belongs to the Bunu Yao of the Miao branch of the Miao Yao language family of the Sino-Tibetan language family among the four major Yao subfamilies. The Hualan Yao speak the "Jiong Nai" dialect. The Hualan Yao call themselves "Jiong Nai". It means "people who live in the mountains". The Hualan Yao are an ethnic group with only language but no writing. It was only after the founding of New China that they began to use Chinese characters for record-keeping.

In conclusion, the name of Hualan Yao is not innate, but it is only through the precipitation of history that it finally forms the name of its own ethnic group. It is

the primary embodiment of the identity of the Hualan Yao ethnic group and the cultural root of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual.

#### Mentou Village: Favored Location

The origin and development of ethnic villages is a complex and diverse process that may vary from region to region and from ethnic group to ethnic group. The origin of Mentou Village is related to the history, culture and migration of the Hualan Yao. The village was historically founded by a group of Hualan Yao people assembled and established at a certain point in time through a series of events.

The Hualan Yao of Mentou Village are all surnamed Hu, and their ancestors have three branches, each with a different route and time of entry into the mountains. Counting from the first generation they entered the mountains, there have been 21 generations of more and 16 generations of less. Early marriages are prevalent among the Yao people. If we take 20 years as a generation, 21 generations would be more than 400 years of history. If we trace back more than 400 years from now, it can be projected that the Hualan Yao of Mentou Village had entered the Dayao Mountain in the middle and late Ming Dynasty.

It was through twists and turns and paranormal events that the ancestors of Mentou Village finally settled there. Legend has it that after entering the Dayao Mountains, they initially chose to make their home in the nearby hills. But the poor environmental conditions there made it difficult to live. A man named Hu Gongbai in the village often went hunting in the deep mountains behind the village. He noticed that every night on the first and fifteenth day of the lunar calendar, he could see a column of colorful light shooting into the night sky on the opposite riverbank (that is, the present central location of Mentou village). Hu Gongbai felt very strange and went to check it out. He saw that the place where the light shone was a small piece of flat land with no grass, above which there was a big camphor tree, often surrounded by colorful clouds. Hu Gongbai went home to ask the Shigong<sup>6</sup> divination, found that this is a piece of feng shui treasure. In order to verify, Hu Gongbai in the flat land around eight small oil lamps. Despite the storm, the lamps still three days and three nights do not go out. In the spring of the next year, Hu Gongbai planted crops on the flat land and got a big harvest. When the news spread, everyone thought it was a piece of rare feng shui land. Surrounding villagers have moved to build a village to live, and the village name as "door", meaning "dragon door dragon head" place. In order to pray for the Dragon God would always bless, wind and rain. Villagers every three years in the village in the middle of the year Hu Gongbai saw the light of the small flat land, held a dragon activities, sacrifices to the Dragon God. Over time, we called this small flat land "Anlong Ping"(Huang Zhihui,2012).

Feng Shui Treasure Land is a concept that has an important place in Chinese culture and is related to factors such as geography, natural terrain, topography, water sources and direction. The legend about Feng Shui Treasure Land shows the special belief of Mentou Village in geography. It is believed that geographical features can influence people's lives, fortune and destiny, and therefore specific locations are considered auspicious.

Feng Shui concepts also emphasize the harmonious relationship between man and nature. They believe that a suitably sited residence or building can be

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<sup>6</sup> Shigong is the name given to male shamans by the Hualan Yao people. Hualan Yao society believes in Taoism. The Shigong is the spokesman for the world of ghosts and gods, and is therefore very easily embraced and respected by the masses.

supported and blessed by nature, contributing to a smooth and prosperous life. Feng Shui concepts also play a key role in the architectural planning of Mentou Village. Village planners take into account Feng Shui factors to ensure harmony and prosperity of buildings and villages. Feng Shui concepts have been passed down from generation to generation as part of the traditional culture of the Mentou Village community.

These legends and beliefs have played a key role in the location and development of Mentou Village. Mentou Village maintains its own culture, language, religion, festivals and traditions. These cultural elements are reflected in daily life, rituals and celebrations, including Cheng Ren Li ritual. For Mentou villagers, choosing the right place to hold the Cheng Ren Li ritual is seen as crucial to ensure that the new adult and his family are protected by the ancestors and are blessed with good luck, wealth, health and longevity. This belief stems from the notion of the influence of geography on one's destiny. This belief is also the soil in which the Cheng Ren Li ritual is rooted.

In conclusion, the establishment and development of the Mentou village is a multi-layered process closely related to geographical, historical, cultural and economic factors. The Mentou village has its own unique development history and cultural traditions, so studying it requires an in-depth understanding of the history and background of the area and of the Hualan Yao.

This way, they migrate along the mountains and live in the mountains. As a typical mountain-dwelling ethnic group, the Hualan Yao live in high mountain forest areas. On this journey, although they have been displaced and dispersed, the name "Yao" has always been the name of the Hualan Yao. However, the name "Yao" has always been the common and persistent name of Hualan Yao for thousands of years. The migratory history of Hualan Yao not only records the life and struggle of Hualan Yao in the initial stage of social development, but also leaves behind the ancestors' interpretation and views on everything in the universe and human society in their childhood. From this history, we can learn about the arduous history of Hualan Yao and its socio-economic situation, appreciate their primitive, mysterious and rich customs, savor their noble ethical and moral sentiments, and touch their dreams of persistently pursuing a bright future. This is not only the great epic of Hualan Yao, but also the spiritual pillar of Hualan Yao.

In general, the origin and migration of the Hualan Yao ethnic group is a complex historical process with different origin stories and migration histories. The name of Hualan Yao is not innate, but was finally formed through the precipitation of history. These cultural elements are the embodiment of the identity of the Hualan Yao ethnic group and the cultural roots of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The Cheng Ren Li Ritual itself has a specific origin and meaning, which is related to the ancestors, region, characteristics and historical events of the Hualan Yao.

## 2) Ethnic Development of Hualan Yao into the 20th Century

After the 20th century, the development of the villages of Hualan Yao underwent a series of political, social and economic changes that encompassed several historical events and periods. China experienced the Civil War, the Japanese invasion of China, the Nationalist-Communist Civil War and the establishment of the Republic. The political upheavals of this period affected the social and economic conditions of the Hualan Yao villages.

### Administrative history and ethnic population

Before the Xinhai Revolution, Jinxiu Dayaoshan was not a unified administrative unit, but belonged to various counties along the mountain and delineated the boundaries of each county in Dayaoshan. In 1940, the Kuomintang (KMT) government began to set up the Jinxiu Police District Office in Dayaoshan.

In 1942, the Kuomintang's forces penetrated into the Yao Mountains and forced the Yao people to be "enlightened". In Dayaoshan, the Jinxiu Police District Office was established, which was later changed to the Jinxiu Governance Bureau, a county-level organization. Under the Bureau, there were administrative districts such as townships, villages, and a-listed districts, with township chiefs, village chiefs, and a-listed chiefs. Militarily, it was in charge of the Dayaoshan area, but administratively, it was still divided into seven counties, including Xiuren, Lipu, Mengshan, Pingnan, Guiping, Wuxuan and Xiangzhou. Mentou Village was divided into Xiangzhou County, where it remained until 1952.

In August 1951, Xiuren County was abolished and incorporated into Lipu County, Jinxiu Yaomin Autonomous Region belonged to Lipu County, and Tongmu, Qijian, Toupai and Sanjiang districts of the former Xiuren County were also transferred to Lipu County. The remaining townships are still under the jurisdiction of Xiangzhou County, Wuxuan, Guiping and Pingnan Counties.

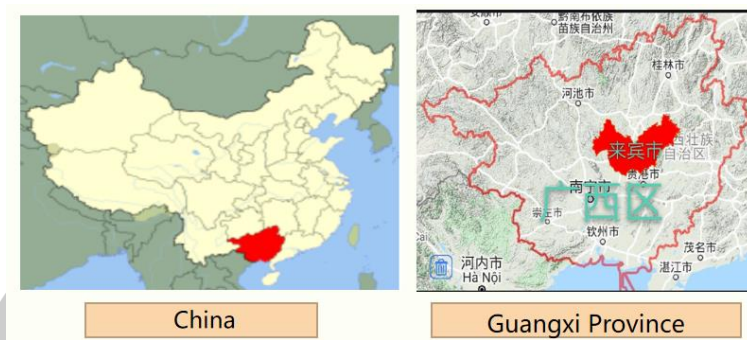
By the decision of the Guangxi Provincial People's Government, the Central People's Government, approved by the State Council, May 28, 1952, the formal establishment of the Dayao Mountain Yao Autonomous Region (county level), under the jurisdiction of the Pingde Prefecture. The district governs Jinxiu.

On August 26, 1955, it was renamed Dayao Mountain Yao Autonomous County. In 1958, it was transferred to Liuzhou Prefecture.

On April 8, 1966, with the approval of the State Council, it was renamed Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County. In 2002, Jinxiu County was transferred from Liuzhou City to the jurisdiction of Laibin City.

The Hualan Yao is found only in Jinxiu County, Guangxi Province, China. It is the earliest established Yao autonomous county in China with the largest number of Yao clans. It is valued by the Chinese government because of its poverty and ethnic diversity.

Jinxiu County is located on the main mountain range of Dayaoshan in the east-central part of Guangxi, and the whole terrain is high in the middle and low in the surroundings. The mountainous area accounts for 73% of the total land area of the county, and the altitude is between 500 meters and 1979 meters. Rich in forest resources, it is the largest water source forest area and national nature reserve in Guangxi. Jinxiu County has a remarkable subtropical mountain climate characterized by warm winters and cool summers. With an average temperature of 17°C throughout the year, it is a well-known tourist and summer resort in the two Guangdong regions of China (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2022).



China

Guangxi Province



Figure 6 Location Map of Guangxi Province and Jinxiu County. Jinxiu County belongs to Laibin City, Guangxi Province, located in the eastern part of Guangxi Province, Laibin City northeast of Dayao Mountain main range.

Source: <https://www.gov.cn/> [Accessed on December 23, 2020]



Figure 7 Jinxiu County in 1960. At that time, Jinxiu County was very poor and its economic and social development was backward.

Source: Nation Pictorial, No. 5 [Accessed on April 7, 2023]

The Hualan Yao are mainly distributed in the central and western parts of Jinxiu County, living in the depths of the Dayao Mountains. It is distributed in 11

natural villages, including Liuxiang, Gupu, Mentou, Wangsang and Dadeng in Liuxiang Township, Longhua, Dajin and Nanzhou in Changpangdang Township, and Zhanger, Liutuan and Luodan in Luoxiang Township, etc. The average elevation of the 11 villages is 700 meters above sea level. Hualan Yao is intertwined with Han, Zhuang and four other Yao clans. Longhua Village is 25 kilometers from Jinxiu County. This is the closest Hualan Yao village to Jinxiu County, with more than 20 large mountains separating the two places. The continuous mountains block the connection between the Hualan Yao. Shengtang Mountain, the main peak of Dayao Mountain with an altitude of 1979 meters, separates Hualan Yao in Liuxiang Township from Hualan Yao in two other townships, forming two regions. Due to the closed transportation, the Hualan Yao people of the two regions have to climb over the towering ShengTang Mountain and climb more than 60 kilometers of mountain road to meet each other. Therefore, they seldom communicate with each other and have few marriages. According to Fei Xiaotong's record in "Gui Xing Newsletter", the mountain road is extremely difficult to travel, they waded into the water six times, more than ten times off the sedan chair, over a 500-meter-high mountain range, took most of the day. "All through the steep evil difficult road, suddenly edge cliffs, suddenly over a single tree ..... all the way only feel that the intention of the creation is really no beauty is not ready, no wonder." At that time, from a village to another village, all need to walk most of the day.



Figure 8 Distribution map of 11 Hualan Yao villages in Jinxiu County. Geographically, it forms a triangle with Jinxiu County. Here, there are about 2,000 Hualan Yao people living.

Source: <http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>. [Accessed on April 7, 2021]

There are mainly Yao, Zhuang, Han and other ethnic groups living in Jinxiu County. There are five branches of Yao: Pan Yao, Chashan Yao, Hualan Yao, Shanzi Yao and Au Yao. With its rich ethnic flavor, it is known as the "township of Yao" in China. Before the establishment of the autonomous county, the county was divided into surrounding counties, with no specific population statistics. Some scholars have investigated the population of Yao when they examined the Yao society in Dayao Mountain. 1937, Tang Zhaomin published "The Economic Life of Yao People in Daiteng Mountain of Guangxi" in Shanghai "Declaration" and estimated that there were about 17,000 people of Yao, among which there were 800 people of

Hualan Yao. 1951, in August, the central delegation investigated and the population of Hualan Yao was 831 people. 1957, Guangxi Provincial Government carried out the survey of the social and historical survey of Yao and found that the population of Hualan Yao was 822 people. In the third national census in 1982, the population of Hualan Yao was 1,434 (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Records Editorial Committee, 1992).

According to the old people in Mentou Village, in the past, the population of Hualan Yao was relatively large, and the population was reduced only after many people were killed by the officials and soldiers during the Daitouxia Uprising in the Ming Dynasty. There are also natural disasters, which are an important reason for the decrease of Hualan Yao population. The old people still remember that more than 100 years ago, some villages where Hualan Yao used to live, due to natural and man-made disasters, there are no Hualan Yao people living now.

In October 1935, Mr. Fei Xiaotong went to Mentou Village to conduct a social survey. He counted the number of households in the Hualan Yao villages around Mentou Village. According to the villagers' self-report, the number of households decreased by 64 compared with the time when the village was founded. From 1952 to 1957, the population of Hualan Yao still declined. It was not until 1982 that the population increased to 1,434.

Analyzing the reasons for the negative population growth of Hualan Yao in the past, apart from wars, natural and man-made disasters and lack of medical care, there is also the factor of self-control of the population. The Hualan Yao all live deep in the mountains, with high hills and steep slopes on all sides. They have limited paddy fields and are not good at plowing. As a result, the food they produce each year is at most enough to keep them fed. In this way, they regarded paddy fields as the basis for their survival and had to use population control to maintain their livelihood. If the population is too large, a family would inevitably be divided into two, and it would be even more difficult for the paddy land that feeds one family to make ends meet for the two families. In the absence of a better way out, raising as many children as there is paddy land is a proven solution. For this reason, most families follow the principle of "single lineage", whereby a couple has only two children (male or female), with one staying at home to carry on the family line and the other getting married. If two girls are born, one would be married off and the other would be recruited as a son-in-law.

In the past, there were three kinds of measures to control the birth rate of children in the Hualan Yao people: first, contraception with ancestral herbal recipes; second, abortion with ancestral herbal recipes; and third, drowning of babies. After the 1950s, with the improvement of material life and health and medical conditions, the popularization of the scientific knowledge of maternal and child health care was improved. They gave up the bad practices of population control in the past and consciously accepted scientific contraception. To date, a couple only has two children, and the concept of fertility has been passed down for hundreds of years. In this regard, the Hualan Yao have always attached great importance to harmonizing the development of material production with the development of human beings themselves, which is in line with today's concept of ecological development.

My Field Point Mentou Village belongs to Liuxiang Township of Jinxiu County. Located in the southwest of Jinxiu County, Liuxiang Township is a township

with a relatively high concentration of Hualan Yao, 96 kilometers away from the county town. It borders Luoxiang Township and Pingnan County in the east, Baizhang Township and Zhongping Township in Xiangzhou County in the west, Dazhang Township in the south, and Changpangdang Township in the north. It has a total area of 203.1 square kilometers, with a forest coverage rate of 90%. It is named because it is the township government seat.

Liuxiang Township is now under the jurisdiction of Liuxiang, Qingshan, Wangpiao, Mentou and Daling 5 village committees, 50 natural villages. With a total population of 5,572, it is a township inhabited by Zhuang, Han and Yao ethnic groups. Yao is the main population, accounting for about 48.4% of the total population. Among them, there are 765 Hualan Yao, 1,140 Pan Yao, 449 Shan Zi Yao, 330 Au Yao, and the rest are Zhuang and Han<sup>7</sup>. There are five natural villages in the township: Liuxiang, Gubu, Mentou, Wangsang and Daxue. Among them, Liuxiang and Gub belong to Liuxiang village committee, Mentou and Wangsang belong to Mentou village committee, and Da chair belongs to Daling village committee.

The villages of Hualan Yao were originally homogeneous, with the Lan surname in Liuxiang, the Hu surname in Mentou and Wangsang, and the Xiang surname in GuBu and DaYou. After the founding of the new China in 1949, and especially after the 1980s, the number of surnames increased as a result of the exchange of marriages between the Han Chinese, the Zhuang, and the various sub-clans of the Yao minority.

Mentou Village Committee has 5 natural villages under its jurisdiction, including Mentou, Wangsang, Wenfeng, Jieli and Xincun, with a population of 758. Apart from Mentou and Wangsang, which are two villages of Hualan Yao, the other three villages are inhabited by Shanzi Yao and Ao Yao respectively. Mentou Village is the seat of Mentou Village Committee. The current head and deputy head of the village committee of Mentou Village are all from Mentou Village.



Figure 9 Mentou village is situated halfway up the mountain. Most of the houses in the village are yellow mud houses built before the reform and opening up.

Source: Photographed by the author. July 17, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Data from Liuxiang Township government.



Mentou Village is a Hualan Yao settlement village. The whole village is built in a stepped arrangement, situated at an altitude of about 450 meters halfway up the mountain, surrounded by vast fertile mountains and dense forests. The village has 49 households with 265 people, divided into four villagers' groups. Among them, there are 255 Hualan Yao, 10 Zhuang, Shanzi Yao and Pan Yao<sup>8</sup>. The main surname in the village is Hu, and a few other surnames are Qin, Zhao, Li, Lu, Chen, Lan, Xiang, Jiang, Pan, Wu, Li, Yang and Deng. All of the foreign surnames became registered in Mentou Village through inter-ethnic marriages. Among them, Qin, Zhao, Li, Lu, Chen and other five surnames have changed their ethnic composition to Hualan Yao because they have been living in Mentou Village for several generations or their children have remarried here with their mothers.

For a long time, Hualan Yao has been living in Jinxiu County intermingled with Han, Zhuang, Miao, Dong and other ethnic groups. The unity and harmony among the various ethnic groups and their mutual exchange have formed an intermingled but different ethnic relationship. After absorbing many cultural nutrients, Hualan Yao still maintains its unique ethnic characteristics and has formed its distinctive ethnic culture.

#### Land systems and production methods

Prior to the rural cooperative in 1955, farmers of all nationalities within the county mainly carried out individual agricultural production on a family basis. Before liberation, due to the small labor force, insufficient investment, poor natural environment and backwardness in culture and science technology, the income of individual rural economy was very low. The Yao in the mountains generally lacked food rations for three to four months a year, while the Zhuang and Han farmers outside the mountains produced slightly more food than those in the mountains, but the varieties of agricultural products were monotonous and the economic income was insufficient, so that a family that could have one meal a day or two meals of congee was considered to be a relatively well-off household. According to Fei Xiaotong's description at the time, he drank the villagers' homemade white wine. There were no lights at night, so the villagers used scented pinewood strips to light a fire for light. "A melting room, hosts and guests laughed, and I, who hadn't been back to my hometown for many years, felt the depth of human kindness even more in this aroma."

After the founding of New China, the Government embarked on a series of reform policies aimed at improving land distribution, infrastructure development and social welfare in rural areas. This has had a positive impact on the development of the villages of Hualan Yao. Land reform policies were implemented to redistribute land to farmers. This has brought about changes in land rights and increased agricultural production in many rural areas, including the Hualan Yao villages.

After liberation and before the implementation of the people's commune in 1958, the political status of peasants of all ethnic groups was improved, and the implementation of rent and interest reductions or national solidarity pacts led to a high level of enthusiasm among peasants for production and the development of agricultural production. However, during this period, the old relations of production had not been broken and the new socialist relations of production had not been established, so the rural economy still did not develop rapidly. In 1952, the per capita gross agricultural output value of the rural areas in the county was 140.76 yuan, with

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<sup>8</sup> Data from Mentou Village Council.

233.8 kilograms of grain; in 1954, the per capita gross agricultural output value was 155.68 yuan, with 232.4 kilograms of grain (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Records Editorial Committee, 1992).

Land reform was carried out in 1954, realizing the right to land for the cultivator. This was followed by the launching of the mutual aid and cooperative movement, which led to the establishment of primary and senior cooperatives, and the introduction of the people's commune in 1958, thus ending the system of individual rural economies. In 1960, the central government launched a rectification campaign to rectify the bad phenomena in the people's communes, and in 1961, the people's communes were reorganized to implement the three-tier ownership system of "commune, brigade and production team", with the production team as the basic accounting unit, and the means and tools of production were transferred to the production team. At the same time, the principle of "distribution according to labor" was implemented, and during the "Cultural Revolution" from 1966 to 1976, class struggle was used as an outline in politics, and the "Dazhai" campaign was carried out in agriculture, with "food as an outline" and "food as a platform". "Grain is the program", blindly opening up fields and destroying forests on a large scale, leading to the waste of a lot of labor and financial resources, and the stagnation of the various undertakings of the people's commune. Many traditional cultures have been destroyed, which poses a challenge to their development. This includes the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual.

In traditional agricultural societies, the natural environment provides different conditions of water, heat and topography, resulting in different crops and farming systems. The natural environment provides the material basis for agricultural production and influences the geographical division of labor and the scale of production.

When the Hualan Yao entered the Dayao Mountains, the area in which they lived was characterized by rolling hills, craggy cliffs and streams, with almost no flat land. They reclaimed terraces and watchtowers at the foot of the mountains by the streams and on the slopes of the mountainsides to plant rice. They planted dryland crops and cash crops in the mountainous areas. All production activities were hand-operated, with primitive and backward production tools, high labor intensity, insufficient labor, and very low productivity. Despite years and years of non-stop labor, in the centuries before the 1950s, economic development was extremely slow, living a life of hardship. It was only after the reform and opening up in the 1980s that the economy of Hualan Yao developed rapidly and the living standard improved significantly.

Most of the paddy fields in Mentou Village are located at the foot of the mountain and halfway up the slope, mostly terraced, with small fields, and there is a saying that "an ant jumps over three fields". Due to the scarcity of flat land near the village, their farmland is far away from the village, which makes farming very inconvenient. In contrast, Mentou Village has more land in the mountains and forests. Most of the land cannot be reclaimed as paddy fields because of the high and steep slopes and the dense and large woods.

For objective reasons of geography and history, Mentou Village had little interaction with the outside world. As a result, it was late in accepting more advanced labor techniques. Until the 1950s, the village followed the "slash-and-burn" method of

farming practiced by their ancestors. When plowing, a small hole was poked in the ground with a sharp, hard wooden stick, and seeds were put into the hole and covered with soil. When agriculture became cooperative, the people's government instructed them to use hoes and scrapers to turn over the soil for planting, changing the primitive farming methods of the past and increasing crop yields.

Before the 1950s, Mentou village paddy fields were mainly planted with japonica and glutinous grains, which were large in grain size, relatively high in yield, soft and tasty in cooking, and necessary staple food for three meals a day; glutinous grains, which were white and sticky, but low in yield and planted in small quantities, were the main raw material for making patties at Chinese New Year festivals. Very few people in Mentou Village grow dryland crops, and only a few people grow some dryland crops incidentally. Dryland crops mainly include dry grass, corn, corn, sweet potatoes, taro, ginger and red beans.



Figure 10 Traditional farming method of Hualan Yao. Before the founding of New China, Hualan Yao lived a slash-and-burn, hunter-gatherer life, and the social and historical development was extremely slow. This photo was taken from the Huayanyao Museum in Mentou Village.

Source: Photographed by the author .May4, 2021.

Jinxiu Dayao Mountain is the largest water source forest area in Guangxi, with a forest area of 3.195 million mu and a coverage rate of 87.2%. The area inhabited by Hualan Yao is even more densely forested, therefore, Hualan Yao attaches great importance to forestry production and has made great contributions to the protection of the original forest. Forestry products are mainly rich in fir, pine, bamboo, oil tea, oleander, palm skin and so on.

Cedar trees, many large cedar trees held by two people grow around the village of Mentou. The mountains they own are filled with patches of fir forests. Fir trees have traditionally been ranked first in forestry production. Some of the Hualan Yao also used to cut down the fir trees close to the rivers and transport them by water to sell them outside the mountains. However, because the waterway is too long, it takes 20 to 30 days to be transported to the mountains, and their own strength is very limited. And they were not good at management, so they did not make much profit. Most of the cedar forests have to be sold at low prices to foreign traders. Most of these traders are snobs who buy at a low price and try their best to exploit the Yao

people. Therefore, although Mentou Village owns more cedar forests, it has little profit.

Pines, mostly horsetail pines. Although everywhere, there are many ancient pines with sky-high trunks. But there are very few artificially cultivated, basically natural growth. In the past, transportation was inconvenient. And pine trees are growing in the high mountain peaks, villagers have no way to turn it into a commodity. Just cut the pine light for lighting, sometimes cut some for firewood. After the establishment of new China, under the guidance and support of the government, the Yao people know that the pine tree is also useful for national construction, and during the period of people's communization, they began to cut down pine trees to process products such as sleepers and wooden rolls for sale to the forestry department. Due to little cultivation of pine trees, and only pay attention to cutting not planting, now the old pine trees have not seen much. Later, when the people's government called for reforestation, people began to cultivate some pine trees.

Bamboo is also a forestry product. There are a lot of bamboo forests in the Huarangyao area, both naturally grown and artificially cultivated. The naturally grown ones are bitter bamboo, pandanus bamboo, sweet bamboo and so on. These wild bamboo forests cover a wide area, some of which are connected for more than ten miles. Artificial cultivation of yellow bamboo shoots, bamboo, big head bamboo and so on. Most of them belong to each family or family-owned, the area is generally not very large. Hualan Yao has always valued bamboo, because bamboo has many uses, in addition to the collection of bamboo shoots for daily consumption, the annual bamboo shoots also collect bamboo shoots drying as a commodity for sale.

Shiitake mushrooms are the most important specialty of the Hualan Yao. Most of the Hualan Yao have a large area of virgin forests and green mountains, and there are many species of trees that can grow mushrooms, which they call mushroom wood. There are nearly 10 kinds of common ones, including various kinds of vertebrae trees, red, white and green roundwoods, maple trees and wood bamboo fruit trees. In the past, every winter solstice, they went to the mountains on sunny days to cut mushroom wood and cultivate mushrooms according to the traditional method. After the 1960s, the cultivation technology of mushrooms was developed. In order to develop collective economy, the people's government organized the technicians of production teams to go abroad to learn the advanced artificial cultivation technology, and since then, Hualan Yao area began to adopt the cultivation of shiitake mushrooms. The shiitake mushrooms of Jinxiu Dayao Mountain are famous all over the country.

Livestock and poultry rearing. In the past, the livestock raised in Mentou Village were mainly cows and pigs, but not sheep or horses. Therefore, there is a saying that "Yao people have never seen a horse". The purpose of raising cattle is to plow the field, there are two kinds of buffaloes and yellow oxen, with more yellow oxen. They regard cows as treasures and generally do not sell or slaughter them easily.

Pig raising is very common in Mentou village. Whether rich or poor, every farmer has a pig, as few as one, as many as three or five. In the past, pigs were not sold. In addition to weddings and funerals to kill pigs, most of them are kept until the New Year to kill. Therefore, there is a "cattle plowing, raising pigs for the New

Year" jingle. In addition to solving the problem of raising pigs for meat, it is also the main way to solve the problem of cooking oil. Therefore, they attach great importance to pig rearing.

Poultry are mainly raised as chickens and ducks. Chickens and ducks are usually kept for personal use and never sold. They are never sold and are not easily slaughtered except during festivals and for guests. However, those used as offerings for worship are a different story, and they are used in large quantities. For a funeral or a large-scale sacrificial event, dozens of slaughtered chickens would be laid out as offerings.

Fishing and hunting. Mentou village lives deep in the mountains, birds, animals, fish and frogs are very rich in resources. In the past, in order to make up for the lack of meat, to improve their lives, and to prevent wild animals from spoiling their crops, they adopted many unique fishing and hunting methods. They adopted many unique ways of fishing and hunting, fully reflecting the ingenuity of Hualan Yao.



Figure 11 Hualan Yao man are hunting. Hunting was an important production mode of Hualan Yao , and it is also the expression of Hualan Yao 's male ability. Giving guns was an important part of the ancient Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao. This photo was taken from the Hualan Yao Museum in Mentou Village.

Source: Photographed by the author .May4, 2021.

Before the 1950s, the river section under the jurisdiction of Hualan Yao was shared by the whole village according to the river rules, therefore, the big action of poisoning fish must be carried out collectively by the whole village, and all the people who could go to each family could participate in the catch of fish and shrimp of different sizes and distribute them evenly. Even without the ability to participate in the elderly widows and orphans also have to half. Fish poisoning activities are generally carried out in the fall and winter dry season, fish poisoning drugs are tea bran, hickory leaves, fish vine and so on. There is an unwritten rule that the pregnant woman's husband should be the first to put the medicine. It is said that this is the way to get more fish.

Hunting. Flower blue Yao hunting way in the past to round up, keep hunting, mounted hunting three kinds for the most common. Hunting is a collective action hunting activities, the object are larger beasts, such as game meat, mountain pig, stone sheep and so on. Hunting time is not divided into seasons, once someone found the whereabouts of wild animals, would immediately return to the village

report, the village men see call that should, organize teams to go to the roundup, especially found that the wild boar spoil crops is more so, no matter how busy farming, but also take the initiative to carry a gun with a dog to participate. Distribution of prey. 1960s, has been according to the "see the share" of the primitive society distribution. That is, before the prey was carried into the "head gun" (killed the prey) home, all people who saw the prey, regardless of men and women, young and old, would be able to share the meat.

The handicraft industry in Hualan Yao is not well developed, there are no professional handicraftsmen, let alone industrialization. The products made by the handicrafts mentioned here do not become commodities, but are for the needs of one's own family life. It can be said that the vast majority of handicraft activities are carried out in the spare time of labor. Looking at the handicrafts of Hualan Yao, there are several aspects, such as bamboo weaving, spinning, weaving, indigo dyeing, embroidery, ironware making and carpentry, which are commonly used.

Spinning, weaving, sewing, indigo dyeing, and embroidery were indispensable handicraft activities for the women of Mentou Village, where cotton was grown and spinning and weaving were practiced until the 1960s. Therefore, the clothes and pants they wore and the headscarves and bandanas they wore were all homemade.

Although the textile process of Hualan Yao is roughly the same as that of the Hanzhuang area outside the mountains. But the weaving tools are much inferior to those common in the Han and Zhuang areas outside the mountains. All the weaving equipment is homemade, simple and clumsy, the spinning yarn is uneven and coarse, the weaving cloth is narrow and uneven, the weaving efficiency is low, the average woman weaves less than one foot and two inches wide cloth a day. After the cloth is woven, it is dyed black with indigo extracted from home-grown bluegrass. Clothes are sewn by hand, with low sewing skills and simple cutting, using four narrow pieces of long cloth to sew the back and the left and right sides together, and then cutting two pieces for the sleeves to be sewn on as a collarless lapel blouse. The pants are made of four pieces of narrow or two pieces of wide cloth sewn together to form headless shorts. Although the sewing of the clothes and pants is simple, they all pick colorful floral patterns on the clothes, which are very beautiful.

Flower picking is the embodiment of Hualan Yao women's high level of craftsmanship. Generally girls start practicing ribbon embroidery since they are seven or eight years old. Their clothes are decorated with many beautiful patterns or colorful ribbons of silk thread. Young people, old people, full dress and simple dress are all different, constituting a colorful dress culture.

พหุ ประถมศึกษา ชีว



Figure 12 Women in Mentou village are embroidering. Embroidery and garment making is an important production and life content of Hualan Yao women, and it is also the embodiment of women's ability. Teaching embroidery and costume making skills was an important educational content of the ancient rite of passage.

Source: Photographed by Jiang Yuanluan. February 7, 2007.



Figure 13 Women in Mentou Village are weaving brocade. There are two forms of Hualan Yao garment making techniques, embroidery and brocade weaving. The headscarves, belts and bindings of the Hualan Yao garments are woven on looms.

Source: Huang Huayan photoed. February 5, 2007.

In conclusion, from the Xinhai Revolution to the pre-Reform and Opening Up period, the villages of Hualan Yao experienced a variety of challenges and changes such as political upheavals, wars and social changes. While there were periods that adversely affected the development of the villages, there were also periods when measures were taken to improve the living conditions and economic status of the rural areas. The implementation of China's poverty alleviation policy after the Reform and Opening Up has marked the tremendous development and improvement of rural China and the villages of Hualan Yao in the following decades.

In general, the origin and development of the Hualan Yao is a complex and varied process involving a number of factors such as history, culture, geography, population migration and politics. As a branch of the Yao people, the Hualan Yao has evolved through a long history. It was formed by migration and integration. Geographic factors played an important role in the formation of the Hualan Yao and Hualan Yao villages. Their living in geographically isolated areas led to the

uniqueness of their culture and language. The topography of the mountainous terrain influenced the way of life and economic activities of the Hualan Yao. Government policies, rulers' policies, and ethnic conflicts have affected the development of Hualan Yao. Therefore, the study of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual requires an in-depth examination of their history, geography, and culture, taking into account a variety of complex factors. Ethnic minorities also have important cultural and historical values at the international level, which are crucial for the preservation of multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

#### 2.1.2 Traditional material life culture of Hualan Yao

Hualan Yao has a rich and colorful traditional material life culture, which includes elements of their housing, clothing, food, transportation and so on. Clothing, food, housing and transportation are the most basic material conditions for human survival activities and the basic needs of people's social life. They directly affect people's quality of life and sense of well-being, objectively demonstrating the ability of people at that time to produce and create the material life itself, which is the materialized main part of social life.

##### 1) Housing construction and spatial layout

There is no trace of the house construction of the ancestors of Mentou Village before they entered Dayao Mountain. Since they entered the Dayao Mountains, their house structures have gone through the evolutionary process of "wooden frame and fence", "mudstone wall and wooden frame", and "mud brick wall and wooden frame and tiles".

At the early stage when the ancestors of Mentou Village entered the Dayao Mountains, they lived in wooden-framed hedges and grass houses. The structure of these houses is relatively simple, with three groups of three pillars high in the center and low on both sides, eight yards on the frame, trusses in rows, and thatched roofs. The walls are mostly made of bamboos or small bamboos. If the thicker bamboo is used to make bamboo boards or wood veneer for the wall, it is a better straw house. The quality of these houses is poor, generally live on one or two years would have to update. Normally, when there is a storm, the house would be shaken by the columns and the roof would leak. You can imagine how difficult the living environment of the ancestors was.

There are two types of walls in the mud and stone walled wooden frame houses. One is made of short straw mixed with yellow mud and bricked with stones or pebbles. The other is to use old cedar trees to make movable wall panels (also called wall boards), pouring in the appropriate amount of yellow mud each time and tamping it down with a special pounding hammer (locally known as "dry bases"), and so on to form a wall over and over again. This kind of house is of horizontal and broad type, synthesized by four walls, with only doors and few windows, and no wall to separate the bedrooms inside, so it is called "four-square house". Since there is no partition wall to support the trusses in the center, two large cedar beams are set up on the flat water wall. In order to reduce the pressure of the beams on the wall, the large cedar beams were broken open, and the two ends of the beams were held up against the wall inside the house, and the center was held up by cedar pillars that were cut into six faces. Eight yards of trusses were placed on the beams. The roof was covered with cedar bark and bamboo tiles. Later, some people built locally made tiles. Although there are skylights and bright tiles, the light is insufficient and the air is not good.



Indoor layout, in terms of the front of the house, generally more than the back wall in the center of the shrine, the shrine is before the eight immortal table, the main hall; the main hall right in front of the fireplace, against the wall on both sides of the shelf wide wooden benches; right after the use of boards or cabinets partitioned into the young couple's bedrooms; left in front of the door for the beds; left behind the wall open the door to the kitchen. Some people install a wooden pestle for pounding rice in the chamber against the kitchen door, while others install it in the kitchen. Pillars and walls are mostly studded for hanging clothes, pockets and other things. Chicken coops and corrals are located outside the house. All the barns are built at a certain distance from the house, and nine piers of about 1 meter are built up with large stones, laying wooden beams and about 15 cm thick straw and yellow mud, making an overhanging quadrilateral platform. With a large block of yellow mud brick walls, and then thick planks of wood and straw yellow mud sealed into a flat roof, covered with a slope of wood veneer or soil green tile. Wo warehouse only a small door, the rest of the fully enclosed building, all the food all put in the warehouse. It is said that this has two advantages, one is to prevent rodent damage; the second is in case of fire, the food would not be burned. To this day, there are still two of them in Mentou Village.



Figure 14 Traditional house architecture of Hualan Yao. The traditional house building form of Hualan Yao is called "four-square house". This picture was taken from the Hualan Yao Museum in Mentou Village.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 4, 2021.

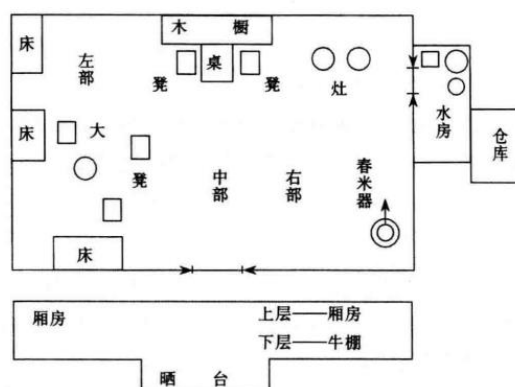


Figure 15 The spatial layout of the traditional house of Hualan Yao. The house has no partition and accommodates all the functions of living room, bedroom, kitchen and dining room. This diagram is a hand-drawn drawing by Mr. Fei Xiaotong, from a book by Wang Tonghui.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 4, 2021.

The arrangement and combination of houses form the village. The overall layout of the village has not changed since Mentou Village was founded. The houses, streets, Shipai Ping, Anlong Terrace, and the community temple together form the physical space for the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

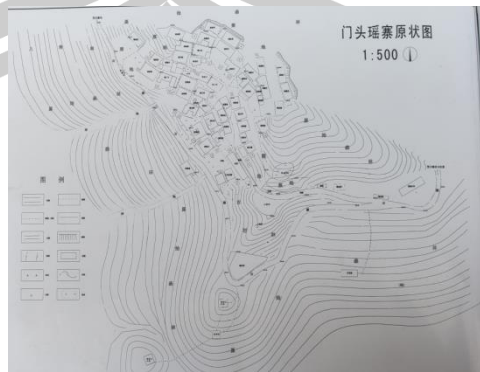


Figure 16 Original map of Mentou village. When Mentou Village was founded, there were 42 households, living centrally halfway up the mountain at an altitude of about 450 meters. This map is from the Mentou Village construction plan.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

No matter in the past or at present, the Hualan Yao people all emphasize on feng shui in choosing the village site. Most of the villages are built on slopes and valleys surrounded by mountains and water, emphasizing the direction of the mountains around the villages. The mountain beams behind the village are called dragon veins, the left mountain beams are called green dragons, and the right mountain beams are called white tigers. The peak in front of the village is called Shimonoseki. Conditions permitting, houses are mostly oriented north to south. They do not build houses in cemeteries, societies, temples and other sites, which are said to be yin lands where yang people cannot live. Selection of the house, first asked Mr. Geography with a compass according to the gossip to set the seat to the direction, and then according to the master's birth date to choose the auspicious day of the foundation. The entire housing construction process is very auspicious, from start to finish can not speak unlucky words at the construction site to ensure construction safety. An gate, to choose the hour, and with three 30 centimeters long, 12 centimeters wide red paper, respectively, written on the "Anmen Daji", "Ding Cai two thriving", "wealth and prosperity," the words pasted in the lintel on the lintel. Then, firecrackers are burned and red packets are given to the master and people present. In addition, firecrackers are also set off to give red packets to the master and those who participated in the construction of the house, such as the head of the door and the roof beams.

In conclusion, architecture and spatial layout, as a material culture and aesthetic object, contain a lot of ecological wisdom and humanistic thinking of Hualan Yao. It is not only the embodiment of a unique way of life, but also the material space for the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The architectural and spatial layout of Mentou Village demonstrates their close relationship with the natural environment and their cherishing of traditional culture. The village built on the mountain and by

the water, the characteristic "four-square houses", the spatial layout of the village, and the rich and diversified cultural activities all reflect the pursuit of harmony, comfort and beauty in the life of Hualan Yao. This unique architectural style and spatial layout is part of the cultural tradition of the Hualan Yao, and is also the unique spiritual home of the Hualan Yao people.

## 2) Clothing styles and wearing customs

Clothing refers to all aspects related to people's clothing and dress in daily life, including wearing, dress style, material selection, dress production and decoration. It is a comprehensive expression of people's attitudes, habits and cultural traditions towards clothing. The traditional dress of Hualan Yao is not only their choice of dress and style expression, but also has a close connection with the local society and culture. It reflects the geographical environment, economic conditions, cultural beliefs and ethnic identity of the Hualan Yao.

The Yao people have been wearing five-colored clothes since the Han Dynasty. The earliest reference to the costumes of the Hualan Yao is in the Gui Ping County Record of the Republic of China (R.O.C.), which is dated the ninth year of the Republic of China. In Volume 3.1 of the book, "Jizheng Customs", it is mentioned that "the men of the Hualan Yao wear long robes with wide sleeves and lapels, embroidered with fringe flowers. The women's high buns are similar to those of Japanese women" (Huang Zhanmei&Cheng Dazhang,1968). The men's costumes here are somewhat different from those recorded by later generations. During the Republic of China (R.O.C.) period, a part of today's Dayao Mountain once belonged to the jurisdiction of Guiping County, so the Hualan Yao of the county recorded in the R.O.C. Guiping County Record should be the Hualan Yao in today's Dayao Mountain territory. Later on, Mrs. Wang Tonghui, who was deeply involved in the Dayao Mountains, mentioned in his book "The Social Organization of the Hualan Yao" that "women's clothes are embroidered with various kinds of patterns on the two sleeves and the lower edge", "men's clothes are not embroidered", and men's headscarves are "embroidered with blue lace on both ends". Men's clothes are not embroidered," and men's headscarves are "embroidered with blue lace at both ends" (Wang Tonghui, 1936). Ren Guorong, in his Two Months' Observations on the Yao Mountains of Guangxi, said that by 1928, the women of Hualan Yao in Luodan (now Luodan Village in Luoxiang Township) had embroidered flowers from the collar to the lapel of their garments. Combining the above historical materials and field research, we make a brief analysis.

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Figure 17 Hualan Yao women and children in ethnic costume in 1929. Until they reach the age of 15, Hualan Yao children wear very simple attire, with long hair and no bun. This photo was taken from Ren Guorong's book.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 4, 2021.



Figure 18 Adult male in ethnic costume in 1935. Before the founding of New China, Hualan Yao men wore their hair in long buns and earrings like women. After the founding of New China, this custom gradually disappeared. This photo was taken from Wang Tonghui's book.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 4, 2021.

Hair has a very important meaning in the traditional society of Hualan Yao. When a child is about 100 days old, they cut the child's hair once, and again when the child is half a year old. After these two times, they would never cut hair again. Until the age of 14, boys' pull their hair back into a bun, which is much simpler than the adult bun. Girls wear their hair in two braids evenly spaced from side to side, coiled from behind the ears around the forehead on the head, and then knotted at the back of the head without a headdress. It means that children under the age of 14 have not yet grown up and are blessed by the Goddess of Flowers and have not yet left the garden. The headdress is not worn until the morning of the first day of the first month

of the Chinese lunar calendar in the year in which the child turns 15, when a "Cheng Ren Li ritual" is held.

Women grow their hair long from childhood to old age. before the 1950s, adult women wore their hair in two parts, front and back, bounded by the ear. The back part of the hair was pulled up to the top of the head, tied securely and knotted in a bun. The front part of the hair was inverted to the forehead and smeared with lard. For middle-aged and elderly women, place the hair at the level of the eyebrows, and for young women, place it at one finger above the eyebrows. Fold the hair flat and pull it up to the top of the head in a bun, and hold it in place with a silver clip. With cloth wrapped into a hair cap, commonly known as "hair cap". After fixing the hairstyle with lard, rich women use two silver hairpins with a length of 14 centimeters, while the poor use bamboo hairpins, which are inserted on the left and right sides of the bun as a headgear support. There is a difference between the headscarves of young women and those of middle-aged and old women: the headscarves of young women are made of white cotton yarn for the warp and black cotton yarn for the weft. The length of the weaving is about 40 centimeters, the width is about 27 centimeters, and the length of the towel at both ends is about 30 centimeters, without picking flowers. When tying the bandana, the scarf must be crossed at the back of the head and tied with a red rope, hidden in the folded seam of the bandana, with the remaining 10 centimeters at both ends hanging on both sides of the bandana. Middle-aged and elderly women's headscarf is a piece of pure white cloth, the same length and width as the young women's headscarf, but there is no scarf. In the center of the white cloth, there is a flower in the middle line of each side of the headscarf. When tying the headscarf, the upper two corners are placed behind the bun and fastened with a silver hairpin.

After the 1950s, with the change of times, the women of Hualan Yao reformed the "hair cap". They replaced the unhygienic and annoying "hair cap" with the black headband. The black headband is a piece of trapezoidal black coarse cloth with an upper edge length of 27 centimeters, a lower edge length of 40 centimeters and a width of 20 centimeters. With a strip of red cloth along the diagonal and the short side of the bundle into a red line, the long side of the two corners of the intersection of the composition of the topless cap. A 23-centimeter silver hairpin with hooks at both ends is placed across the top half of the front of the cap for support. The silver hairpin is beautifully decorated with the sun in the center and dragons at both ends. When dressing up, the black headgear is on the bottom and the white headgear is on the top, and the black headgear is opened up in the forehead by using a silver hairpin after fastening the knotting bun. Although the eyebrows and ears are covered, it does not affect the original style and vision.

The headdress of adult men was still customary until the 1950s, when long hair was kept in a bun on top of the head. A special silver hairpin was inserted into the bun and a saffron headband was wrapped around it. Later on, although there was no longer the practice of keeping the hair in a bun, the custom of wrapping the saffron headscarf has been inherited. The saffron headscarf is made of a piece of black cloth 40 centimeters long, 20 centimeters wide, and 30 centimeters long with a scarf at both ends. With a big red silk thread in the middle of the pick on the dragon head flower, the two sides of the corresponding pick full of silver flowers, cedar tree flowers and eye flowers. When wrapping the head, the saffron headscarf is folded into

an 8-centimeter wide band, wrapped around the forehead around the head, and the scarf must be knotted and hung at the back.

The men's and women's tops of Hualan Yao in Mentou Village are ancient garments with no collar and lapel, no buttons or buttons, deep slits on the left and right, long flat knees, and short big sleeves. The men's clothes are not patterned, but the women's clothes have colorful and unique patterns on the sleeves, lapels, hems and backs. Numerous floral patterns are not the same for every piece of clothing, in addition to the main pattern of each part, according to the different favorites of each person, the floral pattern has its own variations, and some of the two sleeves on the pick of the flowers are not the same.

The clothes are worn with overlapping lapels and waistbands tied at the waist, much like the ancients. Both men and women wore black coarse cloth shorts, women's shorts were not over the knee, men's shorts were over the knee. Sewing method is very primitive, with a narrow width of coarse cloth staggered together. Sewing on the bone seams, they are shorts without a front end in the shape of a zigzag. Men's and women's pants are sewn in the same way.

Both men and women tie their legs; men's legs are not patterned; women's legs are patterned. When tying the legs from the bottom up, women's knees are exposed, and men's legs are tied with a finger-width 3-needle silk ribbon to tie them tightly.

Jewelry is mostly silver, and jewelry such as gold and jade have not been found in the survey. Both men and women wear silver jewelry wear. Women usually wear headpins, earrings, flat bracelets, rings, matchboxes and decorated with ear dug, toothpicks, silver bells to ward off evil spirits, small thin knives and swords and other flowers and silver plates. Only when dressed up to wear necklaces, silver horses, dragon head bracelets, the unicorn to send a son, long life and wealth and other hanging cards. Men wear jewelry is not as much as women, but a lifetime of wearing earrings, bracelets, rings are also there. Therefore, in the past, it was common to see the earlobes of elderly people being pulled long by earrings.

In addition, both men and women like to carry long knives whenever they go out. The long knife is 30 to 40 centimeters long and 5 to 7 centimeters wide, made of high-quality steel forging, with a thin and light blade and a sharp and durable edge. The blade is 60 to 80 centimeters long with a wooden handle. The sheath is made of moso bamboo, and the knife is inserted into the sheath and carried on the left side of the waist, which is very distinctive.

In general, the traditional dress culture of Hualan Yao is full of unique cultural elements and local characteristics. They emphasize on handicraft production and embroidery decoration, and display their identity and aesthetic pursuits through their costumes. These would be discussed in the next chapter on Bar Mitzvah Ritual Symbols.

### 3) Food groups and dietary practices

Diet, which is the basis of human survival, is the natural nature of human beings. Dietary tradition refers to the way of eating, dietary habits and food-related lifestyles adopted by a person or a group in their daily lives, which includes the individual's or group's access to food, methods of food preparation and cooking, times and occasions for eating, dietary customs and culture of dietary etiquette, and so on. It is influenced by a variety of factors such as geography, production methods, economic conditions

and cultural traditions. Dietary life can vary considerably between different regions, ethnic groups and individuals.

The staple food of Mentou Village is mainly home-grown rice. In the past, it mostly planted traditional Japonica and glutinous grains with low yields of 200-250 kilograms per mu. The side grains are corn, grits (a kind of corn), millet, sorghum and so on. Except for corn, the yield of other secondary grains is very low and not easy to shell, now basically no one grows. Miscellaneous grains are sweet potatoes, cassava, taro, large potatoes (also known as potato) and so on. In the past, when there was a famine, we used to use wild huayama, mountain horseshoe, wild plantain root, mountain potato scorpion, mountain water chestnut, fern grass root and so on to satisfy our hunger.

Vegetables are indispensable dishes for three meals a day. Therefore, every family has its own vegetable garden. In addition to eating self-grown vegetables, they also eat wild vegetables that grow on the mountains. There are many types of wild vegetables, which can be broadly categorized into vegetables, mushrooms and bamboo shoots. Shiitake mushrooms, fungus, and bamboo shoots are the most common. Among the vegetables, bamboo shoots have been eaten for the longest time, and there are different kinds of bamboo shoots in different seasons, so there are bamboo shoots to eat all year round.

There are many types of meat in Mentou Village, roughly speaking, including poultry, birds and animals, fish and frogs, and insects. Pigs, chickens and ducks are the main types of meat, and every family raises pigs, chickens and ducks. The main purpose of raising cattle is to plow fields, and they are seldom sold. They regard cows as treasures and never slaughter raw cows.

The traditional cooked food of Hualan Yao is not raw food, and the taste is slightly saltier than that outside the mountains, less spicy, and lighter. There are two kinds of rice: dry rice and porridge, which can be cooked by adding water after panning rice. In the past, due to food difficulties. Some people ate dry rice in the morning and in the middle of the day, and ate porridge for dinner. Some people cooked a pot of porridge in the morning for three meals, and could not eat a dry meal for several days. In order to take lunch to the field to do farm work, they had to cook mixed grains into mixed grain dry rice. In order to supplement the shortage of rice, it is very common to cook congee with mixed grains.

Every family has a number of large and small earthenware jars for pickles and preserved meat. The fact that "yao is inseparable from preserved meat" has a lot to do with the living conditions in the past. In the absence of refrigerators and other refrigeration equipment, the method of making preserved meat is an effective measure for storing meat. The custom of preserved meat in Hualan Yao has a long history and is said to have existed since ancient times.

Pickled pickles and preserved meat are primitive and simple ways of storing meat and vegetables that cannot be eaten in a short time, so that they can be used in times of shortage. Therefore, Hualan Yao mostly treat their friends and relatives with preserved meat that has been cured for more than two years, and if they can eat preserved meat without steaming, they would be warmly treated.

Making bacon and dried vegetables is also one way to store meat and vegetables. Dried vegetables are lettuce dried directly in the sun or roasted. Making bacon is a little more complicated than drying vegetables. To make bacon, you only use

fire to roast the raw meat without solarization. Dried meat dishes, stored for more than half a year would not deteriorate, at any time to cook, the flavor is excellent.



Figure 19 Making bacon is one way to store food. Smoked bacon, stored for more than half a year will not deteriorate, the flavor is delicious.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2022.

There are three big festivals in the year in Hualan Yao, namely the Chinese New Year, Qingming, and the 14th day of the 7th month, while the others are all small festivals. Regardless of whether they are big or small festivals, all of them are celebrated by eating and drinking. Foods for the festivals are mainly pork, chicken, duck, fish, mountain flavors, preserved meat and mochi. The mochi in particular best represents the festivities. On normal days and small festivals, patties are not made (except on special days for weddings and funerals), but only on big festivals. On New Year's Day, some people used to make one or two hundred pounds of glutinous rice "white patties". "The rice patties had to be made before New Year's Eve, saying that they could not be preserved if they were made after New Year's Eve. The way to make mochi is to soak the glutinous rice in cold water overnight, then strain the water out. It is then steamed in a steamer and put into a wooden mortar and pounded with a pestle. The finer the pounding, the better. Grab the glutinous rice ball, kneaded into a goose egg-sized rice ball, pressed into a bowl-sized round cake with the palm of your hand, it would become a "white mochi". When they harden, they are baked over a fire or fried in cooking oil and dipped in honey, making them sweet and savory. In addition to eating them for themselves, they are also an important gift for New Year's Eve. Pork is used more often for New Year's. From the first to the fifteenth, three meals a day are inseparable from pork, visiting friends and relatives to pay tribute to the New Year to bring pork. Therefore, every family kills a pig for the New Year, so there is a saying that "raising cows to plow the fields and raising pigs for the New Year".

In Mentou Village, other must-have foods for New Year's Eve include yellow rice, soup made with mushrooms, red beans, rice beans, and pork, and drinking Qingming tea. It symbolizes the removal of bad luck and good health. The Hualan Yao like to drink tea and do not like to drink plain water. Tea is the main beverage in daily life. Every family has a tea pot by the fire, and more tea is fried, not



used to making tea. Guests must be tea to honor, which is a common courtesy. Less tea, more wild tea on the mountain, tea tree up to several meters, Qingming this day on the mountain to pick back the young tea, put the steak pot frying soft, poured in the dustpan with hand rubbing, rubbing and frying, and so on many times, until the tea into a needle-like, roasted and dried into the "Qingming Tea". "Qingming tea" is the flower blue Yao tea in the boutique, usually not easy to drink, only in the New Year's Day and came to the guests only when cooking "Qingming tea". Most of the tea they drink everyday is the coarse tea called "Old Tea Lady". On hot days, they also like to use the skin of the thick park and thick park fruit simmering tea, thick park tea fragrance, have to solve the chagrin, summer heat, dehumidification, gas and other effects.



Figure 20 Steam rice with yellow gardenia water. Steaming rice with wild yellow gardenia soaked water is an important food custom of Chinese New Year in Hualan Yao. They think eating such rice can get rid of disease and be healthy.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2022.

Overall, the food customs of the Hualan Yao reflect their close connection with the natural environment and their beliefs and taboos. Their food materials are the main source of the patterned patterns of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual costumes, and the festival day food is also the food that must be eaten at the Cheng Ren Li Ritual. The Hualan Yao people make full use of the local natural resources and combine them with unique cooking techniques and seasonings to form a distinctive food culture and express socialization, celebration and inheritance through food.

To summarize, the Hualan Yao have rich and diverse traditional social and material life activities. These activities and traditions play an important role in the Hualan Yao society, not only satisfying the material needs of life, but also reflecting the Hualan Yao people's respect and reverence for nature, family and culture. These activities of material life reflect the mode of production and cultural inheritance of the traditional Hualan Yao society. With the process of poverty alleviation in China, the lifestyle and customs of the Hualan Yao have changed. Modern technology and urbanization have had an impact on the material life activities of traditional Hualan Yao society, and some of the Hualan Yao population has gradually shifted from agriculture to urban employment. Nonetheless, the Hualan Yao people still maintain an important identity and value for their traditional culture and way of life, and strive to pass on and protect their traditional cultural heritage.

### 2.1.3 Culture of traditional social organizations of Hualan Yao

The culture of the traditional social organization of the Hualan Yao reflects their social structure, values, traditional habits and cultural characteristics. This culture is reflected in social organization, family structure, religious beliefs, social customs and other aspects. This organizational culture has played an important role in the long development history of Hualan Yao, which can unite the sense of belonging and identity of Hualan Yao, and also plays a key role in the inheritance and development of the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

#### 1) Traditional social organization of Hualan Yao

The basic feature of the organizational structure of Hualan Yao, which is built on the basis of a self-sufficient natural economy, is a social structure that is centered on the family and gradually spreads out.

#### Differential order pattern: home as the core

The family is the basic unit of the Hualan Yao society. It is called "bia", which means house, in the Hualan Yao language. It is a family system organized on the basis of male lineage, with no end in sight. The members of the organization are usually three to four generations of daughters from the same male ancestor. Families of the Hualan Yao are usually of three or four generations, with a family size of no more than 10 persons.

The social organization of the Hualan Yao is characterized by a "differential pattern". The family is the core of the social structure of the Hualan Yao. All social relations are organized around this core. Mr. Fei Xiaotong put forward the concept of "differential pattern" in his book "Native China". He believes that the social structure of traditional rural China is a network of kinship relations centered on "oneself" and expanding outward according to the proximity of kinship relations. It is like the ripples that appear when a stone is thrown on the water surface, pushing farther and farther away and getting thinner and thinner (Fei Xiaotong, 2021). Similarly, the social structure of the traditional Hualan Yao is also a water ripple structure with blood relations as the link from self to others. However, in the social structure of Hualan Yao's differential order pattern, the "self" at the center is actually the family. The family is the core of the social structure. Because the "self" is always a member of the family and represents the interests of the family in relation to the society. It is completely different from the "individual" in Western society. In Western society, individualism and equality are emphasized, and the individual is related to the society through participation in various social organizations. Therefore, rather than the individual, the core of the traditional social structure of the Hualan Yao is the family, which is at the center of society (Xu Ping, 2006).

#### Kinship: the amplification of the family

Family-centered people with the same ancestors and in-laws within four or five generations are regarded as relatives by the Hualan Yao. When the ancestors of the Hualan Yao entered the Dayao Mountains, they lived in villages according to their family names. In the earliest days, a village was often inhabited by one or several blood relatives with the same surname, which could be called a "clan". Under the same surname and the same clan, the descendants continued to multiply and divided into various clans, which were divided into different sizes of "the same ancestor group" according to the closeness of the blood relationship and whether the

ancestors were buried on a mountain. In Mentou Village, there are 49 households, divided into 9 "same ancestor groups".

In the Hualan Yao society, the "Same Ancestor Group", which consists of families whose blood relatives and ancestors are buried together, has very close ties with each other and needs to assume certain rights and obligations.1) Relatives of the same ancestor cannot intermarry.2) If there are widows, widowers, orphans and orphans, the relatives of the "Same Ancestor Group" have to take care of them.3) If a family has no heirs, they have to choose a successor first.4) They help each other and share their needs and wants. If any of the families in the "Same Ancestor Group" has a big wedding or funeral, each family should not only contribute to help. Moreover, when there is not enough money, pork, rice, wine, etc., each family is obliged to lend its own family first. When their own family organizes a big event, they would likewise help out with their ancestors. In normal farming and house-building activities, the same ancestral families also help each other and exchange labor to improve work efficiency.

In-laws are also very close in Hualan Yao. In normal times, helping each other, exchanging goods and services, and visiting each other and giving gifts on New Year's festivals are all basic ritual interactions between in-laws(Xu Ping,2006).

Vernacular structure: intermingling of blood and geography

Chinese villages can be categorized into agglomerative and diffuse forms according to their planar shape, which is constrained by economic, social, historical and geographical conditions. Villages with a long history tend to be clustered.

The villages of the Hualan Yao are regimented, with all villagers living together. Compared to other scattered ethnic villages, the Hualan Yao cultivate paddy fields and are more productive in terms of land production. The concentration of their dwellings is conducive to self-defense and cooperative farming, thus allowing for the formation of permanently concentrated villages.

In traditional agricultural societies, people are used to living and interacting in the vicinity of their villages, and interpersonal interactions are generally limited to kinship and neighborly relations. The long-standing intra-ethnic marriage system of the Hualan Yao has led to the formation of close and intertwined relationships between households and villages in the villages. Several villages of the Hualan Yao intermarry, often with mothers marrying out of the village and their children marrying back to the village. As a result, over the centuries, several villages have become close to each other. Therefore, the geographic relationship has become a spatial projection of the blood relationship, and the blood relationship overlaps with the geographic relationship to a large extent.

Although villages are linked by blood and geography, there are times when conflicts and disputes occur. The most frequent disputes between villages are over land issues, which are often resolved by fighting. This is especially true among villages of different ethnic groups. In the case of large-scale disputes, villages and ethnic groups join together in self-defense groups to fight for their own interests(Xu Ping,2006).

Ritual Order and Rule of Elders

According to Mr. Fei Xiaotong, unlike modern "rule of law" societies, native societies are "rule of etiquette" societies. "The so-called rule of etiquette is the obedience to traditional rules", and "it is the responsibility of everyone to know the

etiquette; society assumes that everyone knows the etiquette, or at least society has the responsibility to make everyone know the etiquette". To make people aware of etiquette is to indoctrinate them, and the implementation of etiquette actually becomes an educational process. Therefore, the way to solve disputes in the countryside is to find an elder to judge, because such a person has the most knowledge of traditional rules and would consciously uphold them, which forms the so-called rule of elders (Fei Xiaotong, 2021).

The stone tablet system of the Hualan Yao is a kind of "rule of the elders" in a ritualistic society. The Shipai system is a legal system and social organization with the nature of self-defense and autonomy established by the Hualan Yao in order to survive and develop throughout history. It is a kind of national customary law and a political and legal system with primitive democratic nature (Jinxu Dayaoshan Yao Historiography Committee, 2002). The Hualan Yao people have broken down the principles related to the maintenance of production order and social security into a number of specific rules and treaties. These treaties were adopted collectively by the heads of villagers who participated in the Shipai organization, and then the treaties were carved on stone tablets or wooden boards and erected in the public collective places of the villages. This is how the Shipai system got its name. The place where the stone plaques are erected is called shipaiping (old name: the multitude deliberation ping). Not every Hualan Yao village has a shaiping, but those that do would regard it as the political and cultural center of the village. To this day, the shipaiping in Mentou Village is still functioning.

There are two stone plaques in Mentou Village, which are still standing in the shipaiping at the entrance of the village. The first one is a stone plaque erected in 1822, the second year of Daoguang in the Qing Dynasty. It is a stone plaque of the same clan that was erected in the three villages of Mentou, Xiaoling, and Wangsang, where the Hu family name of Hualan Yao was common. The content of the stone plaque: it is publicly announced that if something happens in the three villages, no one is allowed to mediate outside the three villages. Any violation of this would be heavily penalized. This fully embodies the determination and philosophy of the Hualan Yao to reject foreign interference in their own affairs. The second one is a stone plaque erected in 1881, the seventh year of Guangxu in the Qing Dynasty. The content is to warn the children and grandchildren to remember the origin of their ancestors and to accumulate blessings and do good deeds. Cutting down trees near the village, occupying other people's land and stealing are prohibited. Otherwise, they would be heavily punished.

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Figure 21 Stone plaque erected at Mentou village shyaiping. This stone plaque records the history of Mentor Village and its rules and regulations. The content is an admonition to children and grandchildren to remember the origin of their ancestors and to do good deeds. Cutting down trees, taking over other people's land and stealing are prohibited.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 17, 2007.



Figure 22 Mr. Fei Xiaotong and Hualan Yao headman of the stone tabletops. The headman of the stone tablet is the title of the maker, organizational leader and supervisor of the execution of the stone tablet in Hualan Yao. This photo was taken from Wang Tonghui's book.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 2, 2022.

The headman of the stone tablet is the title of the maker, organizational leader and supervisor of the execution of the stone tablet in Hualan Yao. The headman is usually an adult man. The headman is a public servant of the Hualan Yao society, without salary. He goes out to handle cases and mediate disputes. As long as the losing party bears the cost of his food and lodging. A headman of the stone tabletops is not detached from productive labor and has no privileges. The headman of the stone tabletops is usually a person who knows the traditional rules, is a fair person, can speak well, has courage and knowledge, and has prestige among the masses. When the village encounters big or small disputes, they go to him for mediation. If he handles the matter well, his prestige increases and he may become a

bigger leader. If he does not handle the situation well, the villagers would think of replacing him and find someone else to be the headman. Historically, a total of four people in Mentou Village have served as the headman of the Stone Plate. HZG, the son of HGL, the last Stone Headman, was a member of the village committee of Mentou Village for more than 20 years.

Back then, Mr. Fei had witnessed the elders of Mentou Village mediating a family dispute between a father and his son over a trivial family matter. He noticed that the person in charge of mediation was a village squire, also known as a Shihpaitou man. His method of mediation was to teach the father and the son the error of their ways in accordance with ethical principles and make them admit their punishment. The bailiff was also present, but never spoke. This is because he did not have social status in the township (Fei Xiaotong & Wang Tonghui, 1988)

The stability and immobility of the Hualan Yao society is the basis for the existence of this ritual order and the rule of the elders. The rule of the elders maintains the social order of propriety, and generations live by traditional experiences and rules.

#### Changes in social organization

In the 20th century, China experienced radical social changes, with the Xinhai Revolution destroying 2,000 years of feudal rule. The warlords and wars of resistance against Japan made the Chinese people suffer from the hardships of war. The Communist Party of China (CPC) led the Chinese people to overthrow the Three Great Mountains, ending the era of oppression and slavery and establishing a socialist society. The "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution" caused socialist construction to take a detour, and the people suffered from hunger and class struggle.

From the establishment of the Republic of China until 1930, the situation in Guangxi was extremely chaotic, with warlords and warring. The society of Dayao Mountain was also affected and the law and order situation was terrible. In order to pacify the banditry, Hualan Yao held two large stone tablet conferences covering the whole Yao Mountain. This unprecedented scale of Shipai Conference marked the heyday of Shipai development. At the same time, with the government meddling in Yao affairs and appointing Shihpai leaders to official positions, the Shihpai system began to decline, and in 1934, the Guangxi provincial government of the Kuomintang began to implement the Baojia system in Jinxiu. During this period, all kinds of disputes were solved by township chiefs, village chiefs and their assistants, while major cases were dealt with by the county government, and the power of Shipai headmen to adjudicate cases was gradually weakened. To the founding of new China, the stone system exists in name only. However, it laid the foundation for the implementation of village rules and regulations after the reform and opening up (Xu Ping, 2006).

After the founding of New China, there was the period of the people's commune, which led to the implementation of the three-tier ownership system of "commune, brigade and production team". The production team was the basic unit of accounting, and the means and tools of production were transferred to the production team. After the reform and opening-up period, villagers' groups and administrative villages were introduced.

After a series of institutional changes, the social organization of the Hualan Yao society, which has been incorporated into the central administrative system, has also undergone a transformation from traditional to modern: the past

structural system from “family → kinship → village → clan” has been broken down and transformed into a bottom-up structural system from “family → production team → villagers' group → administrative village → township → county”. From the point of view of its change, the traditional social organization system is a social organization system based on blood and geographic relations in terms of both form and content, and geographic relations are the expansion and extension of blood relations. The current organizational system is still based on the family as the basic organizational unit. Formally, however, it is an organizational system that has been incorporated into the central administrative system, seemingly divorced from the basis of blood and geographic ties. In essence, however, the villagers' self-governance system under the transformed administrative system, including administrative villages, villagers' groups and production teams, is still based on blood and geomantic relations. To a large extent, the ritual order and rule of elders in the vernacular society still perform their functions of social integration (Xu Ping, 2006).

The traditional social organization structure of the Hualan Yao is composed of the bloodline organization and the geographic organization. These traditional social organizations play an important role in the traditional society of Hualan Yao. Together, they maintain the social order of the traditional Hualan Yao, and carry the inheritance and presentation of traditional culture. This in itself is a manifestation of the cohesion and centripetal force of the Hualan Yao ethnic group, as well as an important cultural tradition of the Hualan Yao.

## 2) Religious Beliefs in Hualan Yao

Religious belief life refers to the cultural and customary activities of individuals or groups based on their beliefs. Religious beliefs play an important role in the traditional cultural life of the Hualan Yao, involving the values, moral codes, social norms and spiritual pursuits of the Hualan Yao people. Religious beliefs influence the behaviors, customs and moral concepts of individuals and communities in Hualan Yao. It is also an important part of the traditional culture and social life of the Hualan Yao.

### Nature worship

For a long time, in the conception of Hualan Yao, all things in heaven and earth, like human beings, are spiritual, thus generating the idea of dependence on and fear of natural objects and natural forces, and thus consciously worshiping them and praying for blessings. Their worship of heaven and earth, sun, moon, stars, rainbows, rocks, rivers, trees, etc., as well as natural phenomena such as wind, rain, clouds, thunder and electricity can be seen everywhere.

### Ancestor worship

Hualan Yao strongly believes that the soul of a person is eternal after death, and it lives in the nether world, leading the same life as on earth. Because it is in the netherworld, the world is in the yang world, so it can see the yang people all the time, the yang people can not see them. Yang every move, ancestors are very clear, worship ancestors, ancestors would give him the blessing, the family way to prosperity and development; on the contrary, the family shall not be safe, all things do not go well. Therefore, the Hualan Yao people for the ancestors are very revered. Every family has an ancestor shrine in the front of the hall, dedicated to their ancestors. Ancestor shrine is called "incense", the so-called succession, is to receive "incense", so that the incense is passed down from generation to generation. If the

family has no children, the generation is broken, broken generation that is broken "incense", broken "incense" that is cut off from the children and grandchildren, extinction of the family dead households. Ancestor worship is extremely pious, worship rituals are also varied, summarized, roughly, "send water", "meal", "do full seven", "rice-supplying", "observing filial piety", "doing Ching-ming", "doing 14th", and offering good food on New Year's festivals, daily The traditional way of praying to the gods is to avoid them.

#### Taoist activities

Hualan Yao believes in Taoism, and Taoist activities are presided over by Taoist priests and masters. Their general division of labor is as follows: Taoist priests preside over the dojo and send the dead, etc.; Shigong and Taoist priests work together to do the dojo and send the dead, and also preside over the activities of sacrificing ancestors, settling down, asking for guidance, redeeming souls, erecting bridges, sending ghosts, sending monsters, raising water, collecting cars and criminals. It can be seen that the Taoist priests and the Shigong work closely together, but the activities of the Shigong are richer than those of the Taoist priests, and their scope is much wider.

The formation of Taoist priests and masters is not hereditary, not by conferring titles, and not by whoever wants to be one, but only those who have learned the mantras, familiarized themselves with the classics of the rituals of the gods, and have been recognized by everyone during their long-term participation in Taoist activities can become Taoist priests and masters. Otherwise, even if you have memorized the mantras and the classics, if people do not trust you and do not invite you to perform the rituals, you would not be able to become a Taoist priest or a master priest for the rest of your life.



Figure 23 Hualan Yao Shigong is sacrificing to the gods. Rituals are an important part of the spiritual life of the Hualan Yao society. They hold a series of rituals according to the agricultural arrangement to pray for good weather and prosperity.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2007.

#### Contraindication

There are beliefs and there are taboos. In the past, most of the Hualan Yao people avoided eating dogs, cats, snakes, seven star fish, crows, cows, turtles, carp



and other meat, especially the Taoist public, the master public and the people who spend the precepts are more to be avoided. Children avoid eating chicken claws, chicken intestines, chicken neck, chicken head, chicken blood, chicken haze, chicken eggs and so on. Said to eat chicken claw writing like chicken crawling, not good-looking; eat chicken intestines cry long; eat chicken neck temper argument, disobedience; eat chicken head into the mountains to cause mosquitoes lying on the head; eat chicken blood face would be black spots, not white; eat chicken haze memory is not good, reading is not smart; eat eggs love to talk about bragging. Girls avoid eating chickens, ducks have not been born eggs, eat this egg after the child would be stillborn; avoid eating Siamese fruit, melon, etc., after eating would give birth to Siamese children; avoid using vegetable soup with rice, with vegetable soup with rice after the marriage to be rained on.

The choice of the house base is very careful, avoid in the society, temple, grave old site to build houses, houses before and after the avoidance of watercourses, avoid streams, rivers straight to the front and back. Leveling a good home base, please Shigong choose an auspicious date and time to lay the foundation, whether the construction time is auspicious, affecting the future whether to live in peace and happiness. Therefore, most of the construction time in the middle of the night when people are asleep, avoid in the daytime, for fear that the children do not know what to say unlucky words. In the whole process of house construction, avoid people jumping down from the wall, avoid the wall pounding tools thrown down. If there are traumatic injuries, avoid blood on the wall, has been stained with the earth to dig out. Conditional villages, human and animal drinking water should be drawn to the left side of the village water, the left side is the green dragon water, the right side is the white tiger water. Taboo to the community mountain, temple mountain cutting bamboo and wood, violators would be the king of the community, the temple god's punishment, light is sick, heavy death.

#### Moral concept

Beliefs and taboos have guided the good customs of the traditional society of Hualan Yao, including respecting the old and loving the young, not closing one's house or picking up the road, solidarity and mutual help, hospitality, harmony, loyalty and trustworthiness, love of the woods, and zeal for public welfare, and so on.

Respecting the old and loving the young is the traditional custom of Hualan Yao. "Having an old man in the family is better than a treasure, honoring the old is a blessing, honoring the field is a grain" is the creed that the younger generation abides by. "Being unable to be a vine is like being a gimlet" is the younger generation's understanding of the elderly. Everyone regards having an old man in the family, especially a long-lived old man, as the greatest blessing. When they are working, the younger generation would let the elder do the light work; when the elder is sick, the younger generation would take good care of him; no matter how busy they are, they would bring gifts back to visit their relatives outside. When an old man dies of illness, he is indebted to do funeral rites for him and consciously observes filial piety for three years.

The elders cared for the children so much that they collectively called them "wan" or "man". "Tease the old man to get a cup of wine, tease the child to get a face ugly", "bully the mountain, bully the water, don't bully the kid" is the elders' admonition. When children do wrong, they are seldom scolded and reprimanded, but

are always earnestly induced, explaining the reasoning of being a human being, telling them what they can't do and what they have to do more of. Children were taught to sing, to embroider and weave, and were taught various skills. Regardless of their receptivity, they never used sarcastic language such as "stupid pig", but always said encouraging words. They cared about the children's growth, and in the early years, they were allowed to play to their strengths. Youngsters work within their means, and they often bring their children along on social events.

**Solidarity.** A thing, all help, a house, friends and neighbors take the initiative to help each other, strong force, have things out of things, take turns to help, every day to ensure that enough labor, ten days and a half months, do not pay, the master only tube food can be, until the new house is completed. When a cow is lost in a house, all the people would search for it. New Year's pig, help each other, kill the previous family, and then kill the next family; weddings and funerals, how many people need to help, how many people take the initiative to help, especially the funeral, no matter how busy, the village people would put down their work, automatically do things for the family, until the funeral is done.



Figure 24 Hualan Yao are helping each other to build houses. When a family has a problem, everyone helps. When a family builds a house, friends and neighbors come forward to help. This is the tradition of Hualan Yao.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2007.

**Hospitality.** When a guest comes to the house, he or she would be warmly received, and it is common knowledge among women and children that "you don't bring your family home with you when you go out". Therefore, the host would serve the best food and wine in the house and invite the neighbors to drink and chat with the guests until late at night. It is considered a shame if a guest is not treated well. When a stranger stays with them, they do not turn them away. They would ask for the reason, treat them with courtesy, and entertain them with wine and food. As the saying goes, once you're born, twice you're born, and that's how many good friends are made.

**Love the woods.** Hualan Yao loves the woods very much. The village of Mentou Village, surrounded by two people hugging the ancient trees and lush green woods. They regard the lush woods around the village as a symbol of the prosperity of the village, and no matter adults or children, they never cut the bamboo and trees in the forest, even if it is a bamboo whip, they don't cut it indiscriminately. Adults often

educate children about caring for the woods, and if they see someone using a knife to cut bamboo trees, they would insert thatched markers as a warning. If someone cuts down the trees near the village, no matter who it is, they would be punished.

In the Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty, Hu Gongxin of Mentou Village owed Baizhang Panqi piggyback money, and privately asked Panqi to pick the cap leaves of the Zhongshan Mountain to pay off the debt, and was fined 3 yuan and 6 milligrams of silver according to the law of Shipai; in the 1920s, Hu Gongpang of Mentou Village chopped down a withered tree on the edge of the village to use it as firewood, and was fined Dongmao 12 yuan according to the law of Shipai. In the 1930s, Hu Gongding and Hu Gongming of Mentou Village chopped down the village tree on their own firewood hill, and were each fined 3 yuan and 6 milligrams of silver according to the law of Shipai. Shipai Treaty Laws were each fined 3 yuan and 6 milligrams of silver. In addition, Anlong activities were held, and all men, women and children of the village went around the village to plant four trees voluntarily to expand the area of the woods.



Figure 25 Mentou Village Surrounded by Ancient Trees. The Hualan Yao people regard the lush woods around the village as a symbol of village prosperity. Anyone is forbidden to cut down trees, not even a bamboo whip.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Overall, religious belief is a primitive religious system linked to nature, ancestors and the forces of the universe. It plays an important role in Hualan Yao society, influencing people's daily lives, values and social customs, and is an important part of Hualan Yao culture and tradition.

### 3) Traditional social customs of Hualan Yao

The social custom of Hualan Yao refers to the spiritual way of life shown by people under the influence of traditional culture and values. It covers the recognition, respect and inheritance of traditional culture and morals and values, which are mainly manifested in the corresponding festival and customary life and life ritual life. These festivals and rituals are usually associated with natural seasons, agricultural production and religious beliefs.

#### Festivals

Festive customs refer to the customs and lifestyles that people display during the celebration of specific festivals. Festivals are a universal cultural phenomenon of mankind, having an external sensual material form, but also

containing an internal sacred and transcendent value meaning. People express their feelings, express their joy, pray to God, remember their ancestors, remind farming and celebrate the harvest in festivals and celebrations, and through the transmission and inheritance of history from generation to generation, they have formed their own distinctive national festivals and celebrations. Some of them are directly rooted in real life, some are originated from religious beliefs, and some are originated from myths and legends. Different festivals have different customs, which are usually related to specific religions, cultures, histories and traditions, and the national spirit of Hualan Yao can be cohesive and sublimated permanently through the summons of all kinds of festivals.

The folk of Hualan Yao customarily use the lunar calendar instead of the Gregorian calendar, and all the festivals are calculated according to the fixed days of the lunar calendar or according to the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches. Therefore, they only celebrate traditional festivals. In addition to the same "Spring Festival", "Ching Ming", "July 14th" and other festivals with other ethnic groups, there are many other festivals of their own in a year, even if they are the same festivals, the custom of celebrating them is not quite the same. Even for the same festivals, the customs of celebrating the festivals are not quite the same.

Hualan Yao regards New Year's Eve as the last day of the year and the first day of the first month as the first day of the beginning of the New Year. From New Year's Eve to the first day of the first month is the transition from the old year to the new year. Therefore, the people of Hualan Yao call the Spring Festival "New Year", not "Spring Festival". "New Year's Day" is the biggest festival of the year and also the most solemn.

After the 15th day of the Lunar New Year, Hualan Yao basically stopped doing farm work. Those who have been away from home also rush back home. Men repair houses, clean drains, and clean up; women carry firewood and pound rice. On the 26th and 7th, families are busy killing pigs, filling pig intestines and pounding rice patties. New Year's Eve, whether it is the 29th or 30th day of the lunar calendar, is called the "30th night". At three or four o'clock in the afternoon, all the doors and gates of each house are covered with rectangular red paper 25 centimeters in length and 10 centimeters in width, which is called "Paste Li Shi". Five sheets were put on the main door, three sheets on the small doors, and one sheet on the doors of other buildings. In short, the barn, stove, firewood room, cattle pen, pig pen, chicken coop, toilet and so on are posted. Some people also in the main door, hall door with spring couplets. After the posting of the "profit market", it is taboo to pay money and food from home to home. Even if there are people to collect debts, but also do not pay the debt, and so on after the New Year and then pay.

After the New Year's dinner is prepared, the "Mangong" ancestor worship service is held, which lasts for about an hour. The family members sing to the shrine and pay homage to the gods. After the sacrifice, firecrackers are set off and the family gathers for the New Year's dinner. After the meal, the whole family takes a bath and puts on new clothes, which is called "getting rid of the old". It is said that this would wash away illnesses and bad luck and lead to good health and good fortune in the coming year.



Figure 26 Villagers hold ancestor worship ceremonies at their homes. The Spring Festival is the biggest and grandest festival in Hualan Yao. One of the most important activities is ancestor worship. This is also an important part of the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

Before midnight, everyone sits around a fire to "observe the New Year". The whole family drinks Qingming tea and eats soup made of pork with mushrooms and red beans, which symbolizes freshness and good health. Adults continue to add oil and incense to the shrine until dawn. Children and young people light bonfires in the courtyard to burn bamboo firecrackers. "Bamboo firecrackers are made by burning raw bamboo with knots on both ends in an open fire, and the gas inside the bamboo tube expands when heated, causing the bamboo to explode and make a loud noise. When burning "Bamboo Cannon", some let it explode naturally, and some take out the bamboo burned to a certain extent and hit it on a hard object to trigger an explosion, the sound of which rises and falls, and the whole village is filled with a festive atmosphere and immersed in joy.

On the morning of the first day of the Lunar New Year, the village's most respected elders, the Shiraoi, get up and open the gates. He walks eastward in the direction of Oli, which is recorded in the almanac, to the outskirts of the village. Burn incense to the auspicious direction first, and then to the other three directions. Stick the blade of a wood cutter on the ground towards the unlucky direction, set off firecrackers, and fire three shots in the unlucky direction. When the villagers hear the gunshots, they open their doors and come out to set off firecrackers and fire birdshot competitions to see whose family has shot more and louder.

On this morning, the doors of the houses are opened early, waiting for the children of relatives to come to celebrate the New Year. The children, in groups of three to five, came outside the gate and set off small rows of firecrackers, and entered the house, shouting "Congratulations on your wealth". The head of the family replied happily: "We are all rich, I wish you grow up fast!" He gave them sugar cakes, small bonbons and small firecrackers. The children take their leave and go to the next house to celebrate the New Year. This way of paying New Year's greetings is called "Gong He" in Hualan Yao.

After breakfast, all the men, women and children of the village, dressed in full costume, sit outside the door and in the sun roof, picking flowers and weaving ribbons; men move around outdoors, listening to the old people speak in colorful language, and greeting and wishing each other well. The young people go in groups to sing at the Songling between the two villages and return only at night.

From the first day to the fifteenth day of the New Year, there is no agricultural work. Since the second day of the New Year, those who should pay New Year's call are busy paying New Year's call, and those who should visit friends and relatives are busy visiting friends and relatives. Mostly the younger generation visits their elders, bringing with them chickens, pork, sticky rice patties and so on. Close to the meal that is to return, far away from the residence of a couple of nights before returning. Unmarried young men and women, take this opportunity to walk through the village, blowing wood leaves, singing love songs, looking for the love of their lives, not want to return. Men who aspire to be master, regardless of age, concentrated in the master's home, learning to sing the scriptures, teaching dance, familiar with the drums, gong sound.

In the solemn atmosphere of the New Year, boys and girls who have reached the age of 15 according to the lunar calendar are expected to hold a Cheng Ren Li ritual.

According to the lunar calendar, there are festivals in Hualan Yao every month from the first month to the lunar month. These festivals are related to natural seasons, agricultural production and religious beliefs.

Traditional festivals and customs are an important part of the long history and culture of Hualan Yao, with various forms and rich contents. The formation of traditional festivals is a process of long-term accumulation and cohesion of the history and culture of Hualan Yao. These ancient traditional festivals cover humanities and natural cultures such as primitive beliefs, sacrificial culture, astronomical calendar, Irony and mathematics, etc., and contain profound and rich cultural connotations. The traditional festivals developed from the ancient ancestors not only clearly record the rich and colorful social life and culture of the Hualan Yao ancestors, but also accumulate profound historical and cultural connotations.

#### Customs of life

Life rituals and customs refer to the Ritual and customary activities of life, meaning the different ceremonies, rituals and customary activities held at various important stages of one's life, i.e., the rituals and activities on various occasions, such as births, marriages, funerals and rituals, socializing and so on. The traditional life rituals and customs of Hualan Yao mainly include marriage customs, childbirth customs, funeral customs and so on. Here, we mainly introduce these three customs. Cheng Ren Li ritual customs would be discussed in Chapter Three.

Traditional Hualan Yao marriages go through four stages, namely, asking for marriage, getting engaged, getting married, and organizing a big banquet on the first child's full moon.

The marrying party chooses an auspicious date for the marriage and notifies the marrying party half a month to a month in advance. On the afternoon of the day before the wedding date, the marrying party sends two people from their blood relatives (two men for the aunt, two women for the daughter-in-law), led by the matchmaker to receive the bride. Go to receive the marriage should be selected good

life, that is, on the parents are alive, under the children, husband and wife. Divorced people or widows and orphans are not allowed to go to the marriage. Marriage since ancient times do not talk about the bride price, to receive the bride only with a collar, a set of clothes, preserved meat, rice, boiled wine 6 kilograms each can be. The marrying party does not invite relatives to see the door, there is no wedding, no banquet, and most people in the village do not know that someone is getting married.

Early marriage is one of the most important factors in the destabilization of marriages. Therefore, the birth of the first child is, in a sense, a levee of marital stability. As soon as the child is born, the parents would erect an eaves-high bamboo pole in front of the main door, on which the "birth standard" is inserted to show (called "Senyi Jin" in Yao language). The "birth standard" is divided into male and female standard, the boy inserted camellia tree branches, said the boy is like a camellia tree as upright, elegant. The girl is inserted into the end of the golden bamboo, which means that when she grows up, she would be as graceful, gentle and pure as the golden bamboo. Whether it is camellia or golden bamboo, are taken from the end, in order to foretell the future of life on the road to eternal youth and vigor.

When the first child reaches the full moon, the parents have to organize a "double celebration". The first is to celebrate the "marriage" of the child's parents; the second is to congratulate the child on the full moon. Therefore, the "Double Happiness Reception" is the grandest of all wedding banquets. The most important guests are the family members of the marrying party called "in-laws" and "out-laws" and their blood relatives. The "outside" relatives usually consist of about 20 people, called "great-uncles," who are the brothers of the bridegroom. Regardless of whether they are adults or not, those who are seven or eight years of age or older are of course representatives of the "outside" relatives and are always treated with the highest respect by the "maternal uncle."

"Double happiness wine" is normally two meals. On the first night, there is a wedding reception, and on the second morning, there is a full moon reception. Those who come to celebrate the wedding should prepare two gifts, one for the child's parents to "get married" and one for the child's full moon. The male guests who come to the wedding go to the front door of the main house and set off firecrackers, the more they set off, the happier they are. In the past, most of the gifts sent by grandmothers were: covers, mosquito nets, blankets, pillows, backpacks, quilts, closets, buckets, kettles, clothes worn during the Cheng Ren Li ritual of the married person, silver jewelry and so on. Other guests mostly send mirror screen, basin, kettle, bed sheets, backpacks, quilt, children's clothes, skirts, shoes, hats and so on.

The "double happiness wine" is organized and the children are given Yao names. Yao names are given by grandmothers and grandfathers. Each person's Yao name has its own special meaning, which is hard to be understood by others without the person's explanation. The Hualan Yao people only call each other by their Yao names. Therefore, as soon as a child is born, grandmothers and grandfathers would come up with a Yao name for the child according to different situations. It is up to the ancestors to decide whether the proposed name can be used or not. On the morning of the first full moon, offerings such as chickens, pork, preserved meat, and joss paper are prepared, and the master of the house is invited to come to Manggong to pay homage to the ancestors and decide on the proposed Yao name for the child.

These traditional life rituals and activities reflect the traditional Hualan Yao society and culture's emphasis on and celebration of the various stages of life, as well as the bonding and respect for the family and the ethnic group. They play an important role in traditional Hualan Yao society, carrying the role of cohesion for the community to pass on traditional cultural values.

In conclusion, the traditional social practices of the Hualan Yao have an important role to play in maintaining community cohesion, cultural heritage and identity, and have deep cultural and social significance for members of the Hualan Yao community.

In general, the traditional spiritual life of the Hualan Yao reflects the belief system, traditional culture, values and artistic creations of the traditional society. It is part of people's daily life and not only contributes to the identity and sense of belonging of individual Hualan Yao, but also makes an important contribution to the cohesion and stability of the Hualan Yao society. The Cheng Ren Li Ritual and its costumes, as symbols of ethnic identity, also appear in all these traditional spiritual lives. At the same time, traditional spiritual life is also facing new challenges and changes in modern society, and a balance needs to be sought in the interplay between tradition and modernity in order to protect and pass on cultural heritage while meeting the needs and values of modern people.

The material and spiritual lives of the Hualan Yao are closely linked. In these traditional material and spiritual lives, the Hualan Yao people acquire material wealth through productive activities, and at the same time emphasize religious beliefs, folk art and traditional celebrations to satisfy their spiritual needs, which together constitute their rich and colorful way of life and cultural traditions.

## **2.2 Hualan Yao Villages in the Context of China's Poverty Alleviation (1978-2020)**

This section shows China's poverty alleviation policy and the developmental changes in Mentou Village. China's poverty alleviation policy has produced profound changes in the Hualan Yao region, changes that involve regional development, economic growth and social changes triggered by population mobility. The fixity and tradition of production and life, interaction and communication that were originally formed in a closed space have been weakened, and mobility continues to increase. Together, this constitutes a comprehensive analysis of Mentou Village, which helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the changes in Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China.

### **2.2.1 The evolution of China's Poverty Alleviation(1978-2020)**

This section elaborates on the meaning of poverty alleviation, poverty alleviation policies at various stages, and developmental changes in villages. China's poverty alleviation has eliminated absolute poverty in rural areas and facilitated the transformation of rural modernization. This section would explore in depth the impact of poverty alleviation policies at different stages on rural villages, especially ethnic villages.

#### **1) Meaning of poverty alleviation**

The eradication of poverty is an ideal dreamed of by mankind, and the history of human development is the history of the relentless struggle against poverty.



Poverty is a complex and simple phenomenon. It is complex because the meaning of poverty and the criteria for its measurement have been debated among scholars until now, and the debate seems to be getting more and more complicated. But on the other hand, the phenomenon of poverty is simple, because no matter how much you argue about definitions, poverty exists in a plain and objective way.

China's poverty alleviation is a major strategic measure taken by the Chinese Government in response to the reality of unbalanced development in rural areas during the process of reform and opening up, in order to alleviate and eliminate poverty and ultimately realize common prosperity (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2001). China has been an agriculture-based country since ancient times. The countryside is the lowest level and most basic material security of Chinese society. Guaranteeing farmers' income, agricultural development and rural stability has always been an issue to which successive Chinese governments have attached great importance. For a considerable period of time in the past, poverty has plagued China and rural China for many reasons.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Government has been committed to the development of production and the elimination of poverty. It has carried out land reforms and abolished the feudal land system. Socialist reforms were carried out in agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce, and the basic socialist system was established. Large-scale socialist construction was carried out, and an independent and relatively complete industrial system and national economic system were established. Vigorously develop the collective economy and vigorously promote agricultural irrigation. Large-scale organization of rural education and cooperative medical care, and exploration of the establishment of a primary social security system in rural areas have provided the most basic institutional guarantee to fundamentally solve the problem of poverty (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2021). However, China's real poverty alleviation in the strict sense was proposed and implemented on a large scale after the reform and opening up. Until December 2020, all of China's rural poor have been lifted out of poverty.

As President Xi Jinping has pointed out, "eliminating poverty, improving people's livelihoods and gradually realizing common prosperity are the essential requirements of socialism and the important mission of our Party". It can be said that China's poverty alleviation is a policy practice that bridges the top-down political goals of the central government with the bottom-up demands of the lower strata of society; it is a manifestation of the will of the State, as well as the commitment to govern rural affairs, promote the equalization of public services, and help impoverished farmers achieve common prosperity. China's poverty alleviation implies "deployment from the national level, giving full play to the main role of the poor, participation of the whole society, top-level design and integration of interests by the central government, the limits of power and operational logic of local governments in the process of policy implementation, and the effectiveness of governance of grass-roots village-level organizations in the process of policy implementation," etc. These three logics of behavior of the central government, local governments, and farmers' three behavioral logics.

The central government's logic of behavior, the promise under common wealth. China's poverty alleviation is based on the interests of the rural poor. In order

to promote the equalization of public resources and fulfill the promise of common wealth, the central government makes public decisions. Poverty alleviation is an important manifestation of grassroots governance in China. The implementation of poverty alleviation in China has its own special historical background and practical basis. On the one hand, the government has long been in a leading or dominant position in the cause of poverty alleviation, i.e., embodying policy planning and administrative directives in the top-level design; on the other hand, it controls the direction of the flow of financial poverty alleviation and the region in the concrete implementation. Poverty alleviation with Chinese characteristics is in line with the political would of the state. From this perspective, we can view poverty alleviation in China as the modernization and transformation of rural communities through administrative power. on August 1, 2014, the State Council established October 17th of each year as "Poverty Alleviation Day", with specific activities co-organized by the relevant departments of the Poverty Alleviation Office. The establishment of the Day fully reflects the great importance that the central government attaches to poverty alleviation. It is an important initiative by the Chinese Government to continue to wage war on poverty, and an important institutional arrangement for mobilizing the participation of all sectors of society in poverty alleviation.

The logic of grass-roots government behavior, behavioral choices under pressure-based institutions. The logic of grassroots government behavior is based on the national macro policy and the choice of behavior under the pressure system. In the Chinese political system, local governments usually combine administrative orders with material incentives in order to fulfill the administrative tasks and directives given by the central government, and at the same time to promote local socio-economic development. This kind of operation mechanism is the pressure-based system. Under a pressure-based system, economic development tasks are quantitatively broken down from county, township, village, and individual farmer, resulting in a top-down pressure. In general, grassroots governments mainly involve provincial governments, county governments, township governments and village organizations. Under the pressure-based system, the central government continues to decentralize and local interests are institutionally recognized, but after decentralization, the higher levels still maintain an administrative pressure on the lower levels. Poverty alleviation in China relies on the logic of top-down administrative operation, whereby the state achieves social mobilization through the formulation of macroeconomic policies; the grassroots government achieves supervision and goal coordination in the process of poverty alleviation and development through the compilation of records and performance appraisals; and the provincial government, county governments, and county poverty alleviation offices, as the grassroots recipients of the state's would to alleviate poverty, mainly carry out poverty-alleviation tasks assigned by their superiors.

Behavioral Logic of Farmers, Political Participation Guided by State Policies. Farmers in poor areas are the target subjects of poverty alleviation in China. Only through genuine political participation from the establishment of a file card to the implementation of poverty-alleviation projects can poverty eradication and the completion of a well-off society in all respects be better realized. The State has popularized the contents of poverty alleviation and various policies in villages, especially in the remote rural areas in the west, through a variety of ways, such as policy lectures, the production of propaganda films, and the broadcasting of

explanatory videos, so that farmers are fully aware of the policies on poverty alleviation, the help they may receive, and the ways and possibilities of getting rid of poverty and becoming rich, while at the same time, it has also comprehensively raised the level of awareness of farmers about poverty alleviation and its policies, so that farmers are able to take part in. At the same time, it has also raised farmers' awareness of poverty alleviation and its policies, enabling them to participate in poverty alleviation. In this way, the work of poverty alleviation and the realization of comprehensive poverty alleviation would be promoted in a comprehensive manner.

With regard to poverty alleviation, two other concepts need to be distinguished. Absolute poverty and relative poverty. Marx first put forward the concepts of "absolute poverty" and "relative poverty". He believed that under the capitalist system, the proletariat is characterized by both absolute and relative poverty. As long as the capitalist system exists, the proletariat is bound to be exploited by capital, and the condition of the working class would deteriorate day by day and be in absolute poverty. Relative poverty refers to the poverty of the proletariat in comparison with the bourgeoisie. The concepts of absolute and relative poverty have changed with economic and social development and cultural differences. Absolute poverty focuses on basic survival protection at the economic level, while relative poverty emphasizes social equity and sharing of fruits. For China's poverty alleviation, it is to accomplish the arduous task of eliminating absolute poverty and solving overall regional poverty. As President Xi Jinping pointed out, "After building a moderately prosperous society in 2020, we would eliminate absolute poverty, but relative poverty would still persist. By then, the poverty eradication initiatives now targeting absolute poverty should be gradually adjusted to daily support measures for relative poverty, and be integrated under the framework of the rural revitalization strategy." This poses a new research task for the government and the theoretical community.

## 2) Poverty alleviation under policy change

Along with the overall development of China's national economy, the Chinese government has formulated a series of poverty alleviation policies. These include areas such as infrastructure construction in impoverished areas, rural development, education, medical care and security, employment training, and social security (Information Office of the State Council, 2021). According to three government white papers released by the Information Office of the State Council of China, China's Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development (2001), New Progress in China's Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development (2011), and China's Practice of Poverty Alleviation for Humanity (2021). This study categorizes China's poverty alleviation into 4 stages.



Figure 27 Press conference on the Government White Paper "China's Practice of Human Poverty Reduction". Poverty alleviation in China is a major strategic measure taken by the Chinese Government in response to the reality of unbalanced development in rural areas during the reform and opening-up process, in order to alleviate and eliminate poverty and ultimately realize common prosperity.

Source: <http://www.scio.gov.cn> .[Accessed on April 1,2023]

#### Stage of institutional reforms to promote poverty alleviation (1978-1985)

In 1978, according to the poverty standards set by the Chinese Government, there were 250 million poor people, accounting for 30.70 per cent of the total rural population. The causes of widespread poverty during this period were manifold, mainly due to the fact that China's national economy was on the verge of collapse as a result of the devastation of the previous decade of the Cultural Revolution and the inappropriate institutional arrangements and policy guidelines. Therefore, institutional change became the main way to alleviate poverty.

China's reforms, which began in 1978, began with a change in the land management system, i.e., replacing the collective management system of the people's commune with the family contract management system. This change in the land system greatly stimulated the enthusiasm of peasants to work, thus greatly liberating the productive forces and increasing the rate of land output. At the same time, the gradual liberalization of agricultural prices in the countryside and the vigorous development of township and village enterprises, among other reforms, also opened the way to solving the problem of the rural poor. These reforms have facilitated the rapid development of the national economy and, through the three channels of raising agricultural commodity prices, transforming the structure of the agricultural industry into one with higher added value, and employing rural laborers in non-agricultural fields, have passed the benefits on to the poor, enabling poor farmers to escape from poverty and become rich, and the phenomenon of rural poverty has been substantially alleviated.

At this stage, the Chinese Government did not set up a specialized poverty-alleviation agency. Poverty alleviation was undertaken directly by the central government. Poverty-alleviation policies were characterized by three main features: (1) relief-type poverty alleviation for impoverished areas; (2) the poverty-reducing effects of economic growth; and (3) the organization and implementation of the 10-year "Three Wests"<sup>9</sup> poverty-alleviation development plan. Relief poverty alleviation

<sup>9</sup> The "Three Wests" refers to the Hexi and Dingxi regions of Gansu Province and the Xihai region of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, one of the most difficult regions in China in the early period of reform and opening up. In December 1982,

was the main measure taken by the state at that time to control absolute poverty. The so-called relief poverty alleviation was the central government's efforts to maintain a minimum standard of living for the people in poor areas through the allocation of relief items such as food and clothing as well as financial subsidies to the poor areas. It is also known as "blood transfusion" poverty alleviation.

Successful institutional changes have triggered rapid economic growth and brought about large-scale poverty reduction. The number of people living in absolute poverty in rural areas fell from 250 million to 125 million, or 14.8 per cent of the rural population; on average, the number of people living in poverty fell by 17.86 million per year (Information Office of the State Council, 2001). Institutional reforms have not only substantially alleviated rural poverty, but also promoted the renewal of farmers' attitudes and diversified choices for increasing their incomes. It also gave birth to and shaped the first generation of migrant workers in China. The term "rural migrant worker" was born, forming the first stage in the development of rural migrant workers, who "left their land but did not leave their hometowns, and entered factories locally".

Large-scale developmental poverty alleviation phase (1986-2000)

This phase is subdivided into two parts.

a: Developmental Poverty Reduction Stage (1986-1993)

In order to further increase poverty alleviation efforts, two major changes have occurred in the field of poverty alleviation and development work in China since 1986. First, the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development was established (in 1993, the name was changed to the State Council Leading Group of Poverty Alleviation and Development. in 2021, the whole group was reorganized to form the National Rural Revitalization Bureau). Headed by the then Vice Premier of the State Council, it is responsible for organizing, leading, coordinating, supervising, and inspecting the economic development of impoverished areas. Correspondingly, corresponding specialized agencies were established in governments above the county level, creating a nationwide administrative system responsible for poverty alleviation and development. The Chinese Government has implemented a series of poverty-alleviation policies and projects, including the development of specialty industries, the provision of loans and financial support, technical training and job transfer. These policies and programs have helped farmers in poverty-stricken areas to increase their sources of income and improve their living conditions. Secondly, specialized policies and measures for poverty alleviation and development have been formulated for poor areas and the poor population. The most important of these was the establishment of the basic policies of development and regional poverty alleviation. These two major decisions marked the beginning of the Chinese Government's nationwide, planned, organized and large-scale poverty-alleviation and development efforts.

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China launched the implementation of the agricultural construction of the "Three Wests," which involved 47 counties (cities and districts) (expanded to 57 in 1992), and the construction of the "Three Wests" is now underway. In December 1982, China launched the "Three Wests" agricultural construction program, involving a total of 47 counties (cities and districts) (expanded to 57 in 1992). The "Three Wests" agricultural construction project has pioneering, pioneering and exemplary significance in the course of China's poverty alleviation and development, and has successfully explored such aspects as reforming pure relief poverty alleviation to development poverty alleviation, concentrating on the implementation of area development, relocating poverty alleviation to new areas, and combining poverty alleviation and development with ecological construction, etc., and has been very important for the development of large-scale, planned and systematic poverty alleviation programs throughout the country since 1986. It has had a profound impact on the large-scale, planned and organized development of poverty alleviation throughout the country since 1986.

The developmental approach to poverty alleviation, i.e., providing the necessary support to impoverished areas. By utilizing local natural resources to carry out productive projects and infrastructure construction, it gradually cultivates the ability of poor areas and poor people to accumulate and develop themselves. By relying on their own strength, they would ultimately realize the goal of getting rid of poverty at its root. On the basis of this approach, China has adopted a series of targeted policies. For example, poverty-alleviation funds have shifted from being distributed equally among the poor to being distributed according to the effectiveness of the projects. It has supported production and development projects that provide opportunities for poor farmers to participate in economic development, and has mobilized government agencies and all sectors of society to participate in poverty alleviation and development work. The most important of these is the establishment of a county-based targeting mechanism, whereby the State supports poor counties through three main means: financial poverty alleviation funds, funds for work in lieu of food, and subsidized loans for poverty alleviation (Han Jialing, Sun Ruomei, Pu Hongyan & Qiu Aijun, 2009).

As a result of a variety of factors, including social and natural conditions, the gap between some remote and backward regions and the rest of China, especially the developed coastal regions, in terms of economic and social development is widening day by day. Most of these areas are located in the mountainous regions of central and western China, which are relatively backward in terms of economic development, forming 18 concentrated and contiguous poverty-stricken regions. Most of the poor people in China's rural areas are also located in these poverty-stricken areas. Based on this judgment, the Chinese government clarified the basic policy of regional poverty alleviation and included it in the national economic development plan for the seventh five-year plan (1986-1990). In 1986, the State Council's Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development established a list of 331 counties that would be the focus of national support for poverty alleviation. At the same time, poverty-alleviation standards were formulated. Each province identified 368 provincial-level poor counties on the basis of its own criteria. In addition, most provinces and regions have also identified and given special support to poverty-stricken townships in wealthier counties. This ensures that the poverty alleviation policy reaches every region.

In contrast to the first-stage strategy of relying on national institutional changes to solve the poverty problem, the policy of regional poverty alleviation and development obviously has a more specific and direct anti-poverty meaning. It has played a positive role in promoting the development of impoverished areas and alleviating or eliminating local poverty. After eight years of unremitting efforts, the per capita net income of peasants in the State's key poverty-supporting counties increased from 206 yuan in 1986 to 483.70 yuan in 1993; the number of poor people in rural areas was reduced from 125 million to 80 million; and the proportion of the poor population in the total rural population declined from 14.80 per cent to 8.70 per cent (Information Office of the State Council, 2001).

b: Stage of Poverty Alleviation (1994-2000)

Entering the 1990s, the most notable change in China's poverty situation was the widening gap between the economic development of the east and the west. The poor were increasingly concentrated in the central and western regions. With the

publication and implementation in March 1994 of the National Plan for Poverty Alleviation in 1987, China's poverty alleviation and development entered an offensive phase. The National Eighty-seventh Poverty Alleviation Plan clearly stated that by the end of 2000, the problem of food and clothing for the rural poor would be basically solved. This was the first action program for poverty alleviation and development in the history of New China to have clear goals, targets, measures and deadlines.

The core measure of the 87th Poverty Alleviation Plan remains regional poverty alleviation and development. However, it also attaches great importance to the management of poverty alleviation work, and the difficulty for poor farmers to benefit from financial funds for poverty alleviation and from poverty alleviation and development projects carried out in various regions. A series of targeted policy measures have been formulated and implemented.

First, the policy of poverty alleviation and development from village to household has been put forward. The core is that poverty-alleviation funds, cadre support and poverty-alleviation projects and other measures are truly implemented in poor villages and households. The Measures for the Administration of State Funds for Poverty Alleviation have been formulated. It clearly stipulates that planting and breeding industries and processing industries using local agricultural and sideline products as raw materials, which help to directly solve the problem of food and clothing for the masses, should be the focus of poverty-alleviation development, in order to prevent a repetition of the past mistake of regional poverty-alleviation development evolving into a developmental strategy of "industrialization projects in impoverished areas".

Secondly, the national priority counties for poverty support have been redefined. In the light of the changes in the distribution of the poor population at that time, 592 counties were re-designated as key counties for State support of the poor, covering more than 72.00 per cent of the country's rural poor population. Of the 348 ethnic minority autonomous counties in the country, 257 have been listed as national priority counties for poverty support (Information Office of the State Council, 2001).

Thirdly, the focus of poverty alleviation has been tilted towards the impoverished regions of central and western China and ethnic minority areas. Preferential policies have been formulated to actively promote horizontal alliances and counterpart collaboration in poverty alleviation between eastern and western regions. All sectors of society are mobilized and organized to participate in poverty alleviation. The State has prioritized infrastructure, ecological environment and resource development construction projects in the western region and ethnic minority areas, and has continuously increased regional inputs and financial transfers, playing an important role in promoting the development of the western region and in solving the problem of food and clothing for the impoverished population.

Fourth, the export of labor from impoverished areas. With the development of the socialist market economy, there is a growing demand for labour in the rapidly industrializing eastern coastal areas and large cities. In order to help the labour force in impoverished areas to find full employment and increase their incomes, the Government encourages and organizes the export of labour from impoverished areas that are in a position to do so. A large number of surplus rural laborers have gone to the cities to work and do business, forming the second stage of

the development of migrant workers, who "leave the land and the countryside and go to the cities and the factories."

By the end of 2000, China had made great achievements in poverty alleviation. The number of people living in absolute poverty in rural areas had been reduced to 30 million, and the incidence of poverty in rural areas had fallen to about 3.00 per cent. Among them, the number of poor people in the State's key poverty-support counties was reduced from 58.58 million in 1994 to 17.1 million in 2000. These people are mainly special hardship cases living in areas with poor natural conditions, a small number of social security recipients, and some persons with disabilities. In the poor counties in minority areas that are the focus of State support, the net income per capita of farmers has increased to 1,189 yuan, which is higher than the average level of growth in the poor counties that are the focus of State support. The per capita net income of farmers in Guangxi's 49 poor counties rose to 1,836 yuan, taking the lead in ethnic areas nationwide in realizing the "87" poverty-alleviation goals. The vast majority of poor rural areas have access to electricity, roads, postal services and telephones, and are able to receive radio and television broadcasts. Remarkable results have been achieved in the basic universalization of nine-year compulsory education and the basic eradication of illiteracy among young and middle-aged people, and the rapid development of vocational and adult education has effectively raised the quality of the workforce (Information Office of the State Council, 2001).

On the whole, poverty-alleviation policies at this stage have not been able to go beyond the theory of economic poverty, and have always made economic development and raising income levels the core of poverty-alleviation policies. Inequities in institutional arrangements still exist, including discrimination against peasants under the urban-rural household registration system, the persistent "scissors gap" between the prices of industrial and agricultural products, the heavily skewed distribution of public resources in favor of the cities and developed regions in the east, and insufficient investment by the State in public welfare services in rural areas, such as education, health, infrastructure, and poverty alleviation. Insufficient investment in rural education, health, infrastructure, poverty alleviation, and other social welfare programs. These unfair systems and policies have resulted in farmers being unable to express their own would and needs, and have exacerbated the vulnerability and risks of their livelihoods. They prevent the poor from escaping poverty and even cause some farmers to return to poverty. These, in turn, have pushed peasants and the countryside even more sharply toward the cities. The social structure of China's rural areas has undergone dramatic changes. The concepts of "left-behind children," "left-behind elderly," and "hollowed-out villages" have emerged. Traditional villages and national and local cultures are in a state of increasing decline. It is against this background that Hualan Yao started to have villagers who went out to work and chose the rite of passage to enhance their ethnicity.

Participatory "Whole Village Promotion" Poverty Reduction Phase (2000-2012)

In 2001, the Chinese Government began to implement a village-level targeting mechanism. On the basis of the 592 national key counties for poverty alleviation, 148,000 poor villages have been selected as targets for poverty alleviation, and a participatory "whole-village promotion" approach to poverty alleviation has



been implemented. In other words, a new model of poverty alleviation and development is being implemented, with the whole-village push as the mainstay, vigorously promoting industrial poverty alleviation and the training and transfer of labor. Actively carrying out poverty alleviation through land relocation and ecological migration. Implementing national regional development strategies, such as the development of the western region, the revitalization of old industrial bases in the northeastern region and other areas, and the rise of the central region, in order to promote the coordinated development of regions and urban and rural areas. Agricultural taxes have been abolished, and a series of rural social security systems, including a new type of rural cooperative medical care, have been established, so that the heavy burden on farmers has been fundamentally altered.

As we enter the twenty-first century, the distribution of China's rural poor has become more decentralized. In 2001, China promulgated the Outline of Poverty Reduction and Development in Rural China (2001-2010), which clearly sets out the goals of poverty reduction and development in rural areas for the period 2001-2010. The Outline clearly sets out the goals, basic guidelines, targets and priorities, and major policy measures for rural poverty alleviation and development from 2001 to 2010. The working design of the whole-village promotion process is based on the following procedures: first, poverty identification is carried out on a village-by-village basis. Within the identified poverty-stricken villages, a participatory approach is adopted in the preparation of village-level poverty alleviation plans, which cover three main areas, namely, improvement of community infrastructure, development of community public welfare and cultivation of income-generating industries. In order to realize villagers' participation and openness and transparency, a participatory system and a public announcement system have been designed and implemented in the whole-village promotion. The goal of adhering to the scientific concept of development and promoting the construction of a new socialist countryside has been put forward.

The Outline also points out that labor export from impoverished areas should be actively and steadily expanded. Vocational skills training for labourers from impoverished areas should be strengthened, and a healthy and orderly flow of labourers should be organized and guided. Developed coastal areas and large and medium-sized cities should, in accordance with the principle of equal priority, actively absorb laborers from impoverished areas for employment in their own regions. Although the previous poverty alleviation policies have also made relevant provisions for the training of laborers. However, against the background of labor income accounting for an increasingly high proportion of farmers' income, the government advocates the need to guide the reasonable mobility of labor. It also puts the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of migrant workers in cities in a prominent position, reflecting the systematic and effective nature of the poverty alleviation policy. 2001, after China's accession to the World Trade Organization, industrialization and urbanization accelerated. The number of rural migrant workers has continued to increase and their quality to improve, creating a third stage in the development of rural migrant workers in the form of the transfer of surplus rural labor across provincial boundaries.

By the end of 2010, China's rural poor population had been reduced to 26.88 million, with the incidence of poverty falling to 2.80 per cent. The industrial

structure of poverty-stricken areas has been further optimized, characteristic and advantageous industries are developing rapidly, and the comprehensive strength of county economies is increasing. Compulsory education in rural areas has been strengthened, and the average number of years of education for young and middle-aged laborers has reached eight. While helping to realize employment and increase incomes, labor force training has also enabled them to learn new techniques, come into contact with new concepts, and enhance their confidence in life. A large number of capable farmers and breeders, wealth leaders, farmers' and herdsmen's technicians, craftsmen and managers, leaders of farmers' cooperative organizations and rural brokers who are urgently needed for the industrialization of agriculture have emerged in the countryside. The rural road network has been improved, the reconstruction of dilapidated buildings in rural areas has been carried out, and the construction of rural drinking water safety projects has been promoted.

At the same time, along with the development of China's Internet technology, cell phones and computers began to enter the countryside; in 2004, the Ministry of Agriculture took the lead in implementing the first round of electronic information into rural areas, extending the Internet's reach into the countryside; in 2007, a number of farmers in the eastern coastal areas took the lead in opening online stores on Taobao to sell their agricultural products, which pushed the development of rural e-commerce into the stage of online transactions. 2012 saw the first "Taobao village" officially appear. In 2012, China's first "Taobao village" officially appeared, and by the end of December 2012, there were 156 million rural Internet users, accounting for 24.29% of the rural population (Han Changfu, 2019). The expansion and advancement of communication technologies from print media to electronic media has led to modernization that has become the opportunity and choice for new cultural identities. All of this affects the lives of people at all levels of individuals, groups and nations. Social change has further intensified in rural China. The gap between rural areas and developed regions, cities and even rural populations continues to widen, and relative poverty is becoming increasingly prominent. There is a long way to go in realizing sustainable development by giving equal importance to the protection of the ecological environment and national culture.

Implementation of the Precision Poverty Reduction Strategy Phase (2012-2020)

In 2011, China raised the poverty alleviation standard to 2,300 yuan. Under the new poverty-alleviation standard, China's poor population was 122 million (State Council Information Office, 2021). The phenomenon of returning to poverty in the countryside occurs from time to time, and the problem of relative poverty in rural areas has been highlighted, and shows the coexistence of concentrated and contiguous distribution of special difficulties and individual poverty. China has formulated the Outline of China's Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Program (2011-2020), which identifies concentrated and contiguous areas of special difficulties as the main battlefield for poverty alleviation and elimination. At the end of 2013, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the requirement of precise poverty alleviation. Since then, China's poverty alleviation and development has entered a new stage of precise poverty alleviation.

The so-called precise poverty alleviation means solving the problem of identifying the poor and implementing measures to alleviate poverty. Six precise

measures are to be taken: the target of support, the organization of projects, the use of funds, measures to be taken to households, the assignment of people to villages, and the effectiveness of poverty eradication. The implementation of the development of production, relocation, ecological compensation, development of education, social security pockets "five batch". Solve who to support, who to help, how to help, how to retreat, how to stabilize "five problems". Enhance the targeting of poverty alleviation and improve the overall effectiveness of poverty alleviation.

Poverty-stricken villages and populations were identified, and a unified national poverty-alleviation information system was set up. For the first time in the history of poverty alleviation in China, precise information on poverty has been realized from village to household to individual, the causes of poverty and the needs for poverty eradication have been analyzed on a household-by-household basis, and a national poverty-alleviation information platform has been constructed for the first time, providing powerful data support for the implementation of precise poverty alleviation and poverty eradication. A system of cadres stationed in villages to help the villages has been established, with a cumulative total of 255,500 village teams and more than 3 million first secretaries and village cadres being selected and dispatched (State Council Information Office, 2021). Strategies are being implemented on a person-by-person and location-by-location basis, and precise poverty alleviation is being realized through the implementation of the "five batches". A poverty exit mechanism would be established to clarify the standards and procedures for the exit of poor counties, villages, and populations, and to prevent "being lifted out of poverty" such as digital poverty elimination and false poverty elimination, as well as "not being withdrawn" such as unwouldingness to exit after meeting the standards. Tracking and monitoring to prevent the return of poverty.

By the end of 2020, China has completed the goal of poverty eradication in the new era on schedule, and all 98.99 million rural poor people have been lifted out of poverty under the current standard. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of poor people in China's five autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Xizang, Ningxia, and Xinjiang, as well as the three multi-ethnic provinces of Guizhou, Yunnan, and Qinghai, has been reduced by a cumulative total of 15.6 million people. The 28 less populous ethnic groups have all realized poverty eradication for their entire ethnic groups (State Council Information Office, 2021). Overall regional poverty has been resolved, and the arduous task of eliminating absolute poverty has been completed. In 2021, China would have moved to a new stage of development of comprehensive rural revitalization.

I am afraid that no other country in the world has such a deep understanding of poverty as China. Nor is there any country as determined as China to solve the problem of poverty. Since the founding of New China, from the setting of overall goals to the quantification of specific targets; from the construction and improvement of infrastructure to the universalization of legislation on education; from the proposal to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects to the implementation of precise poverty alleviation; China is the only country in the world that has addressed the problem of absolute poverty by starting from a top-level design that is well thought out, and then insisting on it for several decades until the goal is finally achieved.

Of course, there have been twists and turns and bumps in the process. Policies that emphasize the goals of equity and the principle of participation still have a long way to go. Policies for more inclusive urban-rural development are urgently needed. Social safety nets for vulnerable rural groups still need to be improved. The massive brain drain from the countryside is limiting the development of the countryside itself. The government needs to pay more attention to the sustainable development of the ecological environment and ethnic-local culture. As General Secretary Xi Jinping said, "After the completion of a moderately prosperous society in 2020, we would have eliminated absolute poverty, but relative poverty would still persist. By that time, the poverty eradication initiatives now targeting absolute poverty should be gradually adjusted to daily support measures for relative poverty, and be integrated under the framework of the rural revitalization strategy." This poses a new research task for the government and the theoretical community.

In summary, China's poverty alleviation policy after the reform and opening-up has directly affected rural development. On the economic front, China's poverty alleviation policy has focused on expanding productive capacity to rural areas and building a mass economy. "When the economy is good, poverty disappears." On the structural side, we find many villages disappearing as they are broken up into new communities. After the 1990s, there was a dramatic change in the social structure of rural China. Villages and ethno-local cultures, in the traditional sense of the word, encountered intensifying challenges. The development of electronic media technology after the 21st century has intensified this trend. This has triggered a wave of change, movement, and confrontation. This has taken the form of a revival of traditions, history, cultural movements, and the process of negotiating or confronting the issues of contemporary life with cultural identity as the "core" of power. Against this backdrop, the development and transformation of the village has become an important dimension in viewing the profound changes in rural China.

#### 2.2.2 Changes in the development of Hualan Yao village

China's poverty alleviation policies have produced profound changes in the villages of Hualan Yao, transforming them from poor, backward areas to relatively prosperous, modernized ones. These changes involve regional development, economic growth, and social change triggered by population movement. These changes are the result of long-term efforts by the Chinese Government and all sectors of society.

##### 1) Regional development

The development of the Hualan Yao villages in the context of China's poverty alleviation involves a number of aspects, reducing poverty, improving infrastructure and increasing employment opportunities. Poverty alleviation policies have changed the face of the Hualan Yao region through increased investment, infrastructure development and rural reforms. The Hualan Yao region began to have better transportation, power supply and infrastructure facilities, improving the quality of life of its residents. These changes were achieved mainly through the government's poverty alleviation measures and programs.

Reduction of poverty. Hualan Yao has significantly reduced the number of poor people through poverty alleviation efforts. As of December 2019, villagers in Mentou Village have been lifted out of poverty and their living conditions have improved significantly. This includes the provision of basic food, housing, education

and medical services. Infrastructure improvement in ethnic areas is an important part of the effort to improve living conditions, promote economic development and alleviate poverty in these areas. Pro-poor policies usually include infrastructure development, such as the improvement of roads, bridges, power supply, water supply systems and communication networks. The construction of these facilities improves the accessibility of transportation, energy supply and communication and contributes to the quality of life in the Hualan Yao region.

Road construction. The Government has invested in the construction and improvement of road networks in ethnic areas, including highways, rural roads and bridges. The improvement of these roads has helped to improve traffic circulation, connect remote areas with cities, increase the efficiency of agricultural product transportation and expand market coverage.

The way people get around has gone through a change from measuring the land with their feet to bicycles, motorcycles and cars.

"Traveling on the palm of the foot, transportation on the shoulder", "two mountains can talk to each other, meet half a day", this is a true picture of the past Jinxiu County traffic. 1987, the county has 12 rural roads, can only cover the townships and half of the administrative villages. The roads were all mountain highways, narrow and scarce, and a road could only be used by pedestrians. The rugged mountain roads made bicycles not popular in rural Jinxiu County. It was not until after 2010 that the use of oxen and horses to carry people and goods on packs came to an end. The closed roads made it a big project for people to go to distant places, isolating the countryside from the outside world. 2011, all administrative villages in the county were connected to highways (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Volume Compilation Committee, 2013). 2020, all 77 administrative villages and natural villages with more than 20 households would be connected to hardened roads. Jinxiu has realized the development from "sheep's intestine path" to "double highway" of Wu Liu and He Ba to reach all directions.

Transportation has realized that villages are connected to highways and towns (districts) have access to highways for a short period of time, which has boosted the enthusiasm of rural residents to buy motorcycles and automobiles. According to information provided by the Jinxiu County government and visits to farmers' families, in the late 1990s, farmers who became rich first bought motorcycles and tractors. In addition to facilitating their own use, they also started a transportation business. The price of transportation from the township to the village was priced according to the distance, usually 10-30 yuan. In 2005, Liuxiang village owned 11 motorcycles and 2 bicycles. Along with the widening and hardening of roads, more villagers purchased cars after 2015. In 2022, the number of household cars owned by farmers per 100 households was 47 (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2022).



Figure 28 Mentou Village which has realized poverty eradication. The construction of new villages represents a success in poverty alleviation. Since 1995, Mentou villagers began to leave their hometowns and lands to work in the cities. The income from part-time work accounts for an increasing proportion of the villagers' income.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2007.



Figure 29 Motorcycles have become a new type of transportation for villagers. Thanks to China's poverty alleviation, the villagers in Mentou village are getting richer. Motorcycles, tractors and other new means of transportation have entered people's lives.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2007.



Figure 30 Mentou Village with Parked Cars. Along with the widening and hardening of the road, the number of villagers buying cars increased after 2015.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

Electricity supply. Pro-poor policies have contributed to improved electricity supply, ensuring that residents and businesses in ethnic areas have access to a reliable supply of electricity. This has helped to improve the quality of life and support the development of rural industries and productivity.

Water supply systems. Water is one of the key resources in rural areas. The Government has invested in improving water supply systems, including the construction of wells, pumping stations, water pipelines and reservoirs. This has helped to improve the quality and accessibility of drinking water and alleviate water scarcity.

Communication networks. Pro-poor policies support the development of communications infrastructure in ethnic areas, including cell phone signal coverage, Internet access and television broadcasting. This helps to improve access to information, social interaction and business opportunities.

If cars have widened the radius of people's lives, cell phones have connected the world. In the past, people needed to contact the outside world, mostly by letter. If villagers had urgent matters, they could only go to the post office in the township to send telegrams. Telegraph was the fastest and most advanced way of communication at that time. The telephone was out of reach for villagers. Therefore, villagers often described the rural areas at that time as "basically relying on walking for transportation and yelling for communication".

In the early 1990s, China's communications industry ushered in rapid development. Jinxiu County post and telecommunications began to "two" (i.e., digital circuit transmission, telephone exchange program-controlled) construction, agricultural telephone program-controlled transformation has also been carried out. 1997, the county and township telephones are all program-controlled. Program-controlled telephone to bring great convenience to people's communication, with the substantial reduction of the initial installation fee, some visionary, mindful villagers have put the phone "please" into the home, to facilitate contact with the outside world. 1998 the end of the year, 3,853 farmers installed a telephone (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2022). People's dream of "upstairs and downstairs, electric light and telephone" has become a reality in the countryside.

With the liberalization of tariffs and the gradual improvement of wireless communication facilities, cell phones have slowly become popular in rural areas since 2005. When going up the mountain to cut firewood or working in the fields, villagers can also take out their cell phones to communicate with the outside world anytime, anywhere. In the past, if there was something that needed help from outside the village, or if a relative came to visit, it was necessary to send someone to inform them, and it would take a day to go back and forth to a distant village, but now it can be done with a single phone call. In 2022, the number of mobile telephones owned by each 100 farmers was 290 (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2022). Compared to urban residents, farmers have a higher demand for cell phones, which reflects the importance of cell phones in infrastructure development, information access and communication in rural areas.



Figure 31 Landline telephones are popularized in villages. Program-controlled telephones have brought great convenience to people's communication. Villagers have installed landline telephones to facilitate communication with the outside world. This photo was taken from Xu Ping's book.

Source: Photographed by the author .January1,2023.



Figure 32 People playing with cell phones in Mentou Village. Since 2005, cell phones have slowly become popular in rural areas. When going up the mountain to cut firewood or working in the fields, villagers can also take out their cell phones to communicate with the outside world anytime and anywhere.

Source: Photographed by the author .January1,2023.

Fiber-optic broadband network, 3G and 4G networks have covered the rural areas and led to the application of the Internet in the countryside, opening up a new life for villagers on the Internet. In the past, villagers who did not know what the Internet is, slowly know how to use computers, cell phones to access the Internet, access to production and life information. 2003, Jinxiu County townships began to have Internet cafes on the street. Broadband Internet not only opens up the "information gap" between mountain villages and the outside world, but also brings great convenience to the production and life of villagers. The outside world, for the



first time so clearly in front of them. Through broadband Internet, the villagers also watched high-definition television.

Technology changes life, technology changes the world is no longer a slogan for people today. The integration of urban and rural areas has contributed to a steady climb in farmers' expenditure on transportation and communication. The popularization of the Internet in villages, online sales, shopping and online bill payments have also contributed to further integration of urban and rural lifestyles. This in itself is mobility.

Educational facilities. The Government has invested in the construction and improvement of schools and educational facilities to raise the level of education in ethnic areas. This includes the construction of new schools, improvement of classroom conditions, provision of teaching materials and training of educators, which has raised the level of education and health of the population.

After 1979, in order to popularize primary education, Jinxiu County education department combined with the characteristics of mountainous areas, took various forms of schooling, and tried to make students study without going out of the village, setting up farming schools and simple elementary school in various places. 1986 began to popularize compulsory education. 1987, for all the county's primary school students and junior high school students, the implementation of tuition-free enrollment. In 1987, tuition-free enrollment was introduced for primary and junior high school students throughout the county, and ethnic junior high school classes and senior high school classes were set up to enroll poor ethnic minority children from rural areas; in 2000, nine-year compulsory education was basically popularized in Jinxiu County, and illiteracy was basically eradicated among young adults.

The continuous integration of urban and rural lifestyles and life philosophies has prompted farmers to attach increasing importance to education, and consumption of education at all stages has increased at a faster rate. Expenditures on the education of villagers' children have shown an increasing trend in the proportion of daily household consumption expenditures. For families with children attending school, the cost of their children's education is a major burden for the family. Since 1999, the cost of education for children in Chinese families has continued to rise. In 2005, the annual cost of education for elementary school students in the elementary school in Liuxiang Township was 200-300 yuan. To attend vocational high school or university, the annual cost was 5,000-6,000 RMB<sup>10</sup>. In 2004, Jinxiu County implemented "withdrawing points and merging schools" in order to centralize financial resources and improve the quality of teaching. Many rural children need to go to school in more distant townships. Going to school is a good opportunity to create favorable conditions for children to study in a relatively good environment. But for the average and relatively poor family, there are many practical difficulties. Many children do not want to go out to school because they are too young to adapt to the environment. Of course, the biggest problem is that the cost of going to school outside the home is significantly higher than that of going to school locally, twice or more than that of going to school locally, and the burden on the family has increased significantly.

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<sup>10</sup> Data from Liuxiang Township government.

After 2010, more and more rural families chose to enter the city to rent or buy houses in order to have better educational opportunities for their children. Nowadays, the most obvious growth rate in education consumption in Mentou Village is the consumption of secondary vocational high school education, followed by preschool education. It shows that the concept of early education of rural residents is close to that of urban residents, and all kinds of training courses and online courses are convenient and meet the rural market demand; vocational education and skill training are recognized by rural residents, and the demand for self-improvement is increasing (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2022).



Figure 33 Kids who used to walk to school. Focusing on family education and schooling is a tradition in the Hualan Yao society. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, Mentou Village established a private elementary school.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 5, 2007.



Figure 34 Reconstructed and Expanded Mentou Village Ethnic Schools. In 2006, Mentou Village repaired and expanded the village elementary school on the same site. Located on the east side of the village, the village elementary school symbolizes hope and the future.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.



Figure 35 Young People in Recreation. These young people are the hope and future of Mentou Village. They represent the modern way of life and are the inheritors of the national culture.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

Traditional cultural entertainment is gradually fading out, and there is a growing trend towards modern forms of entertainment. Mountain people are multi-talented. Singing and dancing were their traditional forms of entertainment, and after the 1990s, watching television, singing karaoke, watching video discs, playing mahjong and other forms of entertainment became mainstream. Basically, every household has a color TV and a video player. And using home satellites one can receive more satellite TV stations than in many small cities. More than half of the people in the countryside are involved in playing mahjong, and some families have a hobby for the whole family and spend a lot of money on it. The amount of money spent on mahjong is unquantifiable, and after 2010, with the accelerated movement of people from the countryside, it is hard to see people sitting around in villages playing mahjong. Young people stay at home to swipe the phone, play computer games, shopping, in and out of the theater has become the mainstream of consumption.

Medical facilities. The pro-poor policy has also paid attention to medical and health conditions in ethnic areas, improving the health of the population. The Government has invested in the construction and improvement of health centers, medical clinics and hospitals, which has increased the accessibility of medical services. Refers to the total cost of medicines, supplies and services used for medical treatment and health care. Includes medical instruments and medicines, as well as medical services. Rising prices of medical services, the inadequacy of the medical insurance system for farmers and the growing importance of health for rural residents are the main reasons for the higher consumer spending on health care. In 1988, health clinics were set up in all administrative villages in Jinxiu County. In 2002, the popularization of a new type of rural cooperative medical care was begun. An effective medical security system has yet to be formed. There is still an imperfect emergency response and protection mechanism for major diseases, a weak response capacity of prevention and protection organizations in the face of major epidemics and public health emergencies, and an unreasonable allocation of health resources. Farmers' insurance for major illnesses is based only on a coordinated fund, with no individual accounts, seriously affecting the process of equalizing basic medical and

health services. The problem of "difficult" and "expensive" access to health care for farmers still exists.



Figure 36 Mentou Village Health Center. The pro-poor policy also focuses on the medical and health conditions in the Hualan Yao area, improving the health of the population.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 4, 2021.

Rural gas supply. In some areas, the Government has also promoted improvements in rural gas supply to provide cleaner fuel and improve the living environment.

Resource management and environmental protection. Pro-poor policies pay attention to resource management and environmental protection to ensure the sustainable utilization of resources. A number of projects have focused on improving land use, water resource management and forest protection, while promoting ecological and environmental protection.

Inter-regional balance. The pro-poor policy has also helped to reduce the development gap between different regions and promote inter-regional balance. This has helped to alleviate the long-standing problem of poverty in some regions and raised the overall level of development in ethnic regions.

Cultural preservation and inheritance. The Government has also paid attention to the preservation and transmission of ethnic cultures in its poverty alleviation policy. A number of projects support activities such as traditional arts, handicrafts and cultural festivals to help residents of ethnic areas maintain their cultural identity.

In general, the Hualan Yao villages have endeavored to improve a number of aspects of rural areas in the context of China's poverty alleviation efforts in order to improve the living standards of rural residents and promote the development of rural areas. Specifically, they are relying on poverty alleviation policies to focus on building facilities that both facilitate life and promote production, including rural water, electricity, roads, communications and logistics infrastructure. These efforts are aimed at achieving the goal of comprehensive poverty eradication, making the development of rural areas more modern and sustainable, and narrowing the gap with the cities. These regional changes reflect the success of the pro-poor policy, helping to improve the quality of life of people living in ethnic areas and alleviating the problem of poverty.

## 2) Economic development

The economic development of Hualan Yao villages in the context of China's poverty alleviation encompasses a multifaceted effort to raise the economic level of rural areas, increase the incomes of residents, and promote rural industries and entrepreneurship. These include changing production methods to modernize agriculture, liberalizing the market economy to expand farmers' sources of income, and training the rural workforce to improve employment opportunities.

The pro-poor policy focuses on supporting the development of industries in poor areas, including agriculture, breeding, handicrafts and tourism. These investments have helped to improve the industrial skills and income levels of farmers, contributing to poverty eradication and prosperity. Pro-poor policies have improved agricultural production in rural areas through technical training, the introduction of new varieties and the promotion of agricultural science and technology. This includes improved crop cultivation techniques, better quality of agricultural products and increased yields, thereby increasing farmers' incomes. Pro-poor policies have encouraged the development of diversified industries in rural areas, such as farming, handicrafts and tourism. The Government has provided financial support, technical training and market promotion to help rural residents to set up small businesses and develop industries, which has improved employment opportunities and income levels.

**Agricultural Income.** Mentou Village is no longer a traditional farming community. The economic source of households is no longer a single field cultivation. Agricultural production of rice, cassava, sweet potatoes, taro, vegetables, etc. basically sustains the family's food rations and is rarely sold. Peasants' enthusiasm for farming and growing food has greatly declined, believing that as long as they have enough to eat, the key is to earn money. According to the "Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County 2022 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin" (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2023), the primary industry (including planting, forestry, animal husbandry, aquaculture, and other industries that directly use natural objects as objects of production) accounted for about 28% of the annual countywide GDP, and the tertiary industry, i.e., all kinds of service industries or businesses, accounted for about 50% of the annual GDP.

**Income from economic forests and cash crops.** Jinxiu County is rich in forest resources. Under the guidance of the government, Mentou Village vigorously planted cedar trees, star anise trees, oil tea trees, tea, sugar oranges, ginger, medicinal herbs and other economic forests and cash crops. In the 1990s, farmers relied on the sale of cedar and star anise trees to buy modern electrical appliances, which greatly improved the living conditions and quality of life. In the 21st century, because of the increase in planting anise trees, competition intensified, resulting in a significant drop in prices. Ginger has become a new economic growth point, replacing anise as an important source of family income. Ginger has risen from 0.2-0.4 yuan per catty in previous years to about 1 yuan, with annual income reaching an average of about 3,000 yuan (Xu Ping, 2006). Around 2015, farmers began to plant satsuma oranges and tea again. The diversified planting structure of cash crops has brought great vitality to the family economy.

**Income from part-time work.** The position of income from part-time work in the economic structure of the family is rising. According to the Statistical Bulletin of National Economic and Social Development of Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County in

2022 (<http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/>, 2023), out of the per capita disposable income of 14,315 yuan of rural residents in Jinxiu County, the income from part-time work is 5,290 yuan. The proportion of part-time income in Mentou Village is even higher.

Every year, foreign bosses who buy timber and anise need to hire local people to load and unload goods, and the villagers of Luk Lane can get a certain amount of remuneration by doing casual work in the neighborhood. With the implementation of the Western Development Policy, the state and government have strengthened investment in infrastructure construction. The income from part-time jobs became the main source of family economic income. Especially in 2005, two-thirds of the families in Mentou Village earned much more than the planting income from casual work in the area, with incomes ranging from several thousand dollars. LQF, LCG and other famous village working professional households, income is even more lucrative. HQF himself said that the couple in 2005 only working income of nearly 20,000 yuan. HCG often take the village a few people to the nearby woodland weeding, the daily pay is 30 yuan, the income of a year is also 1 to 20,000 yuan, mainly relying on the income of the work of the three children to go to school. Now, HQF has become a well-known contractor in the vicinity, and has set up an engineering team of about 50 people, contracting organizations and individuals to build roads, houses and other infrastructure projects. HQF's family income is about 200,000 yuan a year.

There are also a few families in Mentou Village that have become rich by working outside the village, and HFZ's family is a typical example. His daughter, son-in-law, and son and daughter-in-law all went out to work at an early age, and in 2005, his daughter built a three-story house at a cost of about 80,000 yuan with the money she had saved from her job. According to his son, the income of the whole family in 2005 was about 100,000 RMB. 2010 onwards, more and more young people went out to work, contributing more and more to the family's economic income. More and more young villagers are renting or buying houses in Jinxiu County or other cities, and HFZ's daughter and son have bought houses in nearby Xiangzhou City, and his grandchildren are going to school in the city.

Nowadays, more than 90% of the families in Mentou Village have someone working outside the home, and some people work outside the home, and their income from working outside the home accounts for more than 40% of the total family income. Outside workers are mainly engaged in forestry, catering, construction, transportation, supermarkets, government workers, and employees of non-profit organizations, with an average monthly income of about 5,000 yuan. According to the data of the seventh national census on November 1, 2020, compared with the sixth national census in 2010, the urban population of Jinxiu County increased by 12,424, the rural population decreased by 6,148, and the proportion of urban population increased by 8.13%.

**Commercial Income.** The geographical location of a village has a significant impact on business operations. Rural villages that are closer to towns and cities and have convenient transportation have more farmers doing business; on the other hand, rural villages that are remote and have poor transportation have fewer farmers doing business, even though farmers' concept of commodities has increased. Take Six Alley Village as an example. There are 51 households and 217 people in the village. Among them, 27 households are engaged in commercial business. 7 farmers

are engaged in the business of buying cedar wood and star anise in their spare time, 6 households are engaged in a variety of businesses such as tea, medicinal herbs, and timber processing, and 14 households are engaged in stores, lodgings, and other fixed stores. Business income varies. Local businessmen who buy cedar wood and star anise on behalf of foreign bosses can make a profit ranging from several thousand to several tens of thousands of dollars per year. HQC, who operates businesses such as tea and medicinal herbs, earns an average of 100,000 yuan a year. His brother and his wife, HQS, run a restaurant that earns 80,000 yuan a year, and HQS also cooperates with others to sell pork, earning about 40,000 yuan a year. The other three families run small stores and can earn 60,000 to 70,000 yuan a year. The income from B&Bs has become an important pillar of rural tourism income in Jinxiu County. There is a B&B in Mentou Village.. As of December 2021, there are 82 B&Bs in Jinxiu County villages and towns with about 2,000 beds<sup>11</sup>. Other than that, the remaining households had little commercial income.

**Government subsidies.** This mainly consists of government subsidies for returning farmland to forests, water source forests, and public welfare forests. Take Six Lane Village as an example. The subsidy for returning farmland to forest is 230 yuan per mu. The public welfare forest protection fee is 130 yuan per person per year. Water source forest protection started with subsidized grain and also a little cash, 60 pounds of rice per person per year. after 2005, all of it was exchanged for cash. More than half of the households in Jinxiu County have this income, which averages about 1,000 yuan per year (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Overview Writing Group, 2008).

**Wage income.** With the popularization of compulsory education, the level of education of farmers has increased year by year. In every village, there are villagers working in the local government, schools, etc. In 2005, there were a total of 19 families in Mentou village whose members earned wages. Retired cadres, employees, and teachers from various departments of the village government earn more than 10,000 yuan a year in wages. Village cadres had meager salaries, earning from 100 to 400 yuan per year (Xu Ping, 2006. By 2022, these retirees and village cadres are earning more than 50,000 yuan per year in wages<sup>12</sup>.

**Other income.** Relying on the mountain to eat the mountain. The vast majority of Mentou villagers go up to the mountains every year to pick wild tea leaves, mushrooms, *Ganoderma lucidum*, *gynostemma* and other plants, dry them in the sun for sale or sell them directly to buying stations or tourists after picking them. This is a precious gift from the mountains.

In summary, the source of economic income for rural households in Jinxiu County is no longer the exchange of a single agricultural product. Rather, it is the differentiated individual choices of different people to work locally or outside the village, to engage in farming, animal husbandry and business, which constitute the important pillars of family income and structure the entire process of economic transformation in the countryside.

After the reform and opening up, Mentou Village was no longer a self-sufficient rural community. Its economic life was deeply involved in the market economic system and modernization. With the growth of income, the farmers' means

<sup>11</sup> The data comes from the Jinxiu County Cultural and Tourism Bureau.

<sup>12</sup> Data from Mentou Village Council.

of living have been gradually enriched. The proportion of subsistence consumer goods in the farmers' material consumer goods has been declining, while the proportion of commodity consumer goods has been increasing. They rely mainly on the market for their daily consumer goods and services.

**Food and Tobacco and Alcohol Expenditures.** Refers to expenditures on all kinds of food and tobacco and alcohol. Food is the most important thing for the people. After the reform and opening up, people's diet has also changed from filling their stomachs at the beginning to eating well, eating well and eating out.

Because of China's involvement in grass-roots governance in ethnic minority areas, the Jinxiu County government was no less responsive to national policies than elsewhere: in early 1980, some production teams in Jinxiu began to implement the household contract responsibility system. In only one year, forestry, grain production and various businesses were developed, and the per capita cash income was substantially higher than that of the previous year. By the end of 1983, all production teams in the county, all the implementation of various types of production responsibility system, including land, agricultural tools, forests, industrial and commercial enterprises, etc. In October 1984, Jinxiu County canceled the people's commune system, the establishment of townships and townships, the commune changed to townships or townships, and the brigade changed to villages. The villagers enjoyed the right of production autonomy and product management, which greatly stimulated the enthusiasm of production. The average amount of food available to the rural population in the county increased from 233.8 kilograms in 1952 to 391.5 kilograms in 1987; the per capita agricultural output of farmers increased from 192.4 yuan in 1978 to 289.9 yuan in 1987 (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Records Editorial Committee, 1992).

Behind the figures is the fact that farmers have solved the problem of subsistence and increased their incomes. I interviewed a number of people over 60 years of age in Mentou Village. When they recalled the life before the reform and opening up, they always said "it was very hard". Their first memory of the reform and opening-up was "having enough to eat".

People had a hard time before 1949. Life was a little better after liberation, but they still didn't have enough to eat. They only produced enough food for eight or nine months each year. Food was mainly corn, cassava and wild vegetables. During the time of the people's commune, all people had to work in the production team, and when they finished their work, they all went to the cafeteria to eat, and they didn't have to pay for their meals. There were staff members specializing in urging farmers to work in the fields. Many people didn't work when they got to the fields, they just chatted and sunbathed. They could not sell anything they produced. Otherwise, they are considered "capitalist tails". People were constantly being dragged out and criticized for selling medicinal herbs, mushrooms, and other items. After the land was distributed to the households, everyone worked in the fields without being pushed. The first year the fields were divided, they had a good harvest of grain. After removing the rations and what was given to the state, there was still grain left over. Their living conditions got significantly better, and in 1983, some families were able to eat rice and pork. Each family had a little cash to buy daily necessities.



In Jinxiu County, the proportion of farmers' investment in reproduction is very low, while "food" accounts for a large proportion of farmers' daily consumption expenditures. In terms of the structure of product consumption, most families basically produce their own food. Only a few families with a large number of businessmen or laborers do not have enough rice to eat and have to buy some food to supplement their family needs. Most people need to buy vegetables, pork, eggs, etc., and villagers' consumption is increasingly dependent on the commodity market. Because home-grown vegetables are not enough or are not available in a wide variety, villagers are increasingly dependent on the commodity market. Fish, meat, eggs, cigarettes and alcohol (non-essential items) have a prominent place in villagers' daily consumption, indicating that villagers' consumption capacity is gradually increasing.

The villagers in Mentou Village attach special importance to "food", unlike farmers in the plains who are more willing to earn money to buy household goods and build houses. They smile and say they want to eat meat every day. Meat, cigarettes and alcohol are the most expensive items in their diet, with an average family needing about 2,500 yuan per year to buy meat. Mountain people have a tradition of preferring alcohol. In the past, they used to make their own wine, but nowadays it is too troublesome and fewer and fewer families make wine. Villagers drink liquor basically in the market to buy. On average, they need about 1,000 yuan a year for cigarettes and alcohol.



Figure 37 Meat products are the main food for villagers' festivals. Fish, meat, eggs, cigarettes and alcohol occupy a prominent place in villagers' daily consumption, indicating that villagers' consumption capacity is gradually increasing.

Source: Photographed by the author .February4,2007.



Figure 38 Farmer Families Eating Hot Pot in Winter. The present-day way of life is fully integrated into the villagers' homes. People's diets have also changed from filling their stomachs at first to eating well, eating well, and eating in fancy ways.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

**Clothing expenditures.** This refers to expenditures related to residents' clothing, including expenditures on clothing, clothing materials, footwear, other clothing and accessories, and clothing-related processing services. Based on clothing alone, there is no longer any difference between Jinxiu County villagers and urbanites, or between ethnic minorities and Han Chinese. The traditional costumes of Yao, Zhuang and other ethnic groups are only worn by a few elderly people. And the garments that villagers usually wear are purchased from the market or online stores. Few people sew their own garments.

Villagers have become more and more demanding in terms of clothing. At the beginning of the reform and opening-up period, villagers' clothing was relatively simple and plain due to poor economic conditions. Most of them wore traditional cotton clothes and basically sewed their own clothes. Several children took turns wearing a piece of clothing. When the clothes were torn, they were mended and continued to wear them. This is the memory of all farmers in the 1980s. 1990s, chemical fiber fabrics, such as polyester and nylon, were commonly used in the countryside. These new materials were not only waterproof and breathable, but also easy to clean and care for. Farmers wore pants and jackets more often, making it easier and more comfortable for them to work. Their clothes are mainly practical, with more emphasis on durability and comfort. Entering the 21st century, with the advancement of poverty alleviation in China, the material and cultural life in rural areas has also been upgraded. This has had a greater impact on farmers' clothing. Farmers began to pursue fashion and individuality, and they began to buy more diverse clothing. A wide variety of clothes have appeared on the rural market, from traditional cheongsams and Tang suits to modern casual and sportswear, and farmers have more choices. Farmers have also begun to pay attention to the quality and brand of clothing. They are more willing to buy brand-name clothing, considering it a symbol of status and identity. From the simple and plain to the rich and varied, from the practical and comfortable to the fashionable and personalized, the changes in farmers' clothing reflect the fruits of rural economic development and the improvement of farmers' living standards.



Figure 39 People wearing traditional and fashionable clothing. Traditional costumes are only worn by a few elderly people and during festivals. And the costumes that villagers usually wear are purchased from the market or online stores. Few people sew their own garments.

Source: Photographed by the author .January1, 2023.

Housing expenditure. Refers to expenses related to housing, including expenses on building houses, water, electricity and property management. Most of the traditional farmers' houses in Jinxiu County are mud-walled tiled houses. The height of the houses is short and the light inside the houses is insufficient. In the late 1990s, the farmers who became economically rich began to remodel their housing conditions. In the late 1990s, farmers who became economically rich began to improve their housing conditions, and those who became rich through business and work in the village built two and three-story buildings. Due to the destruction of the flood in 2005, they had to relocate to the foot of a nearby mountain with several other families in the village. With the help of the government, the houses were rebuilt. Because of the remoteness of Mentou Village, the building materials were all transported from outside the mountains. The cost of building the house and transportation was high.

In 2008, the Chinese Government began to implement a policy of subsidizing the reconstruction of dilapidated houses in rural areas. Jinxiu County, as a national-level poverty-stricken county, received a subsidy of about 15,000 yuan per farmer for the reconstruction of dangerous houses. Since 2009, farmers have started a building boom. By 2020, all of the county's original rural dilapidated houses would have been rebuilt. This also means the disappearance of traditional dwellings. Villagers who have improved their rural residential environment have turned their attention to the cities. In February 2016, the Guangxi provincial government issued a new policy. Eligible new citizens, such as migrant workers, are given a subsidy of 10,000 yuan per housing unit to buy commercial housing in cities. According to the field survey, 28 out of 100 peasant households in the two villages visited have purchased commercial housing or rented accommodation in the county or larger cities.



Figure 40 New and clean houses and rural environment. At the end of the 1990s, farmers who were becoming economically affluent began to remodel their housing conditions. 2006 saw the start of large-scale construction of a new rural village in Mentou Village.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Expenditures on household goods and services. It mainly refers to all kinds of household and personal household goods and household services. It includes furniture and interior decorations, household utensils, household textiles, household miscellaneous goods, personal goods and household services. In the 1980s, household appliances had already entered the countryside. According to the statistics at the end of 1990, there were 7 television sets, 5 recorders and 4 watches in the village (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Records Editorial Committee, 1992).

With the rapid development of the economy, the living conditions of farmers continue to improve. At the same time, energy-saving, environmentally friendly, fashionable and novel household items are emerging. These have accelerated the renewal of furniture and household appliances. Farmers' requirements for living comfort are rising, and interior decoration, small appliances, and high-tech electrical appliances are also coming into farmers' homes. The possession of many electrical appliances has a lot to do with the construction of Jinxiu's overall infrastructure. High-voltage electricity has changed farmers' way of life. The traditional use of dry wood fires for cooking transitioned to the use of liquefied gas stoves. Many families now use electric rice cookers and induction cookers. The material consumption structure of these household durables has gradually transitioned from traditional to modern, reflecting an increase in the modernization of household lifestyles.

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Figure 41 Household appliances for ordinary families at the beginning of the 21st century. With the rapid development of the economy, the living conditions of farmers continue to improve. Farmers' requirements for living comfort are rising, and interior decoration, small appliances and high-tech electrical appliances are also coming into farmers' homes.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2007.



Figure 42 Young People Watching Internet TV. The gradual transition of the material consumption structure of these household durables from traditional to modern reflects the increased modernization of household lifestyles.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2023.

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Figure 43 A farmer's family kitchen at the beginning of the 21st century. Traditional cooking with dry wood fires transitioned to the use of liquefied gas stoves.  
Source: Photographed by the author. February 7, 2007.



Figure 44 Mentou Village Villagers Using Induction Cookers for Hotpot Eating. Nowadays, many families use rice cookers and induction cookers.  
Source: Photographed by the author. February 5, 2022.

**Economic diversification.** The pro-poor policy has reduced the dependence of the Hualan Yao region on a single industry by promoting diversified economic development. This has helped increase the region's economic resilience and mitigated the risks associated with fluctuations in a single industry.

**Cultural and tourism development.** The Hualan Yao region is rich in cultural heritage and scenic spots. The pro-poor policy supports the development of cultural heritage and tourism, creating new economic opportunities for the region by promoting traditional culture and attracting tourists.

**Employment opportunities.** The poverty alleviation program also encourages the establishment of rural industrial parks and poverty alleviation workshops in the vicinity of ethnic villages to provide employment opportunities and help rural residents to escape from poverty and become rich.

In short, development measures in these areas will help to improve the standard of living in the villages of Hualan Yao, reduce poverty, promote sustainable growth of the rural economy, and realize the goal of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. At the same time, these efforts will also help to narrow the gap

between urban and rural areas and raise the overall level of development in the Hualan Yao region.

### 3) Outward labor mobility

Pro-poor policies have encouraged the Hualan Yao to seek better work and life opportunities, which has led to urbanization and rural migration. Rural migration and urbanization have led to changes in the age, gender, and family structure of the Hualan Yao village population. The weakening of community cohesion and the widening gap between the rich and the poor are also included. Some families are separated because family members are working in the city, while others may have improved their family economic situation because of better employment opportunities. Population mobility has an impact on the cohesion of rural communities. As a result of population mobility, community ties in Hualan Yao have weakened. Poverty alleviation efforts and rural population mobility have changed the distribution of income and wealth in the Hualan Yao community. Some households that escape poverty may accumulate more wealth and assets, while others may continue to rely on government support.

There has been an exodus of young labor. Pro-poor policies have improved infrastructure and living conditions in rural areas, while promoting the development of rural industries. This has led to more employment opportunities for some farmers, but it has also led to the movement of rural laborers to the cities as migrant workers. They work in the cities and support their families through their wage income, alleviating poverty in rural areas. Rural areas may lack a young labor force to support agriculture and rural industries.

**Changes in age structure:** Poverty alleviation efforts have helped lift many rural families out of poverty and improve their living conditions, which has led to changes in the age structure in some rural areas. As incomes increase, some young people may leave the countryside to work in cities, leading to aging in some places.

**Changes in gender structure:** Rural mobility and poverty alleviation efforts may also lead to changes in gender structure. The fact that some men leave for the cities in search of work, leaving women and families behind in the countryside, may lead to gender imbalances in some rural communities.

**Changes in family structure:** Improved living conditions and employment opportunities may lead to changes in some family structures. Some families may be separated as a result of family members working in the city, while others may see their economic situation improve as a result of better employment opportunities. Because some family members go out to work, only a few stay at home. This may have led to the nuclearization of families and reduced the number of multigenerational families. This may affect the social life, cultural heritage and economic activities of the village, which in turn affects the overall social structure.

**Changes in community relations:** Population mobility and urbanization have an impact on the cohesion of rural communities. The dispersal of family members to work in different places may reduce the interaction between family members and the connectivity of the village social network. This also leads to changes in social support systems. Weakened community ties in Hualan Yao.

**Socio-cultural heritage:** The exodus may affect the socio-cultural heritage in rural areas. Younger generations may be more exposed to urban lifestyles and cultures, with less connection to traditional rural cultures.

Educational and vocational opportunities: Improving education and providing vocational opportunities are part of poverty alleviation efforts. This may lead to higher levels of education for rural residents, increasing the likelihood that they will find more career opportunities in the cities.

Changes in income distribution and wealth: Poverty alleviation efforts may lead to changes in income distribution and wealth distribution in rural society. Some households that escape poverty may accumulate more wealth and assets, while others may continue to rely on government support.

China is a vast country with a large number of villages. According to statistics, the number of villagers' committees (administrative villages) nationwide was close to 950,000 in 1985, and in 1990 it reached more than 1 million. Since then, the number of villages has begun to decrease; in 2010, the number of administrative villages was 563,500, and in 2021, the total number of administrative villages would be 481,300 (<https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/>, 2021). The number of administrative villages has decreased by nearly 50 percent from 1985. The number of natural villages in China is even greater, and the reduction of natural villages is accelerating. According to the Statistical Yearbook of Urban and Rural Construction (2021), the number of natural villages declined from 3,773,200 in 1990 to 2,360,300 in 2021, a decrease of 37.37% (<https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/>, 2021).

Compared with administrative villages, natural villages are the product of historical precipitation, carrying the historical changes of rural China. That is, villages in our usual sense. We extracted the number of natural villages from the Statistical Yearbook of Urban and Rural Construction from 2010 to 2021, as well as the data on the resident population of villages, to share an overview of the changes in villages and village population in each province during the 11-year period. The results show that the number of natural villages decreased by 367,000 nationwide. The number of natural villages in most provinces, showed a significant decline. The provinces with the highest number of decreases are: Sichuan, Anhui, and Hunan. Unlike the majority of provinces that showed a downward trend, individual provinces showed an upward trend in the number of natural villages, such as Jilin Province, Hebei Province and Inner Mongolia.

The disappearance of villages usually means the migration of people living in villages. 769 million people (rural household registration) lived in villages in 2010, decreasing to 646 million (rural permanent household registration) in 2021. There are ten provinces where the number of permanent village residents disappearing reaches 5 million: Sichuan, Hunan, Chongqing, Anhui, Henan, Shandong, Guangdong, Hubei 7.26 million, Jiangsu, and Guizhou.

Urbanization and rural population transfer are the driving forces behind the decline in the number of villages. Based on the specific location of villages, their resource endowment and their "space-time compression" characteristics, the development and change of Chinese villages show extremely different patterns. Chen Wensheng points out that villages in the suburbs of developed regions have more opportunities than challenges; villages in the suburbs of central and western regions have more challenges than opportunities; and traditional agricultural villages far from towns and cities have both challenges and opportunities (Chen Wensheng, 2014).

In the transformation of the countryside, two dimensions are extremely crucial: one is the relationship between farmers and the land, and the other is the



relationship between farmers and the village (Liu Shouying & Xiong Xuefeng, 2018,). For a village, one of the most important elements is people, i.e., people with the ability to work. Otherwise, it would lack vitality. Therefore, Liu Binbin and other scholars classify villages into five types from the perspective of labor mobility: "Expansion-type", "Contraction-type", and "Expansion-Contraction-type", "contraction-expansion type" and "irregular type". They correspond to the five types of labor flow in villages over time: continuous net inflow, continuous net outflow, net inflow to net outflow, net outflow to net inflow, and irregular change. A village with a continuous net inflow is characterized by a constant inflow of laborers and a potential for development, and is defined as an "expanding village". Continuous net outflow villages are defined as "contracting villages" because they are characterized by continuous loss of labor force and loss of vitality. The 5872 annual sample villages were further analyzed to compare their differences in material capital, geographic location, industrial structure, human capital, political resources and public facilities. It is found that: 1) Factors such as abundant financial resources, favorable geographic location, and high education level of village cadres reduce the probability and proportion of labor outflow from villages, and are conducive to the development of villages. 2) Inconvenient geographic location reduces the probability and proportion of labor outflow from villages, and also hinders the development of villages. 3) Villages with poor transportation accessibility and a large proportion of agriculture are inclined to have outflows of their labor force. 4) There is a spatial heterogeneity of the effects of village characteristics on labor force. There is spatial heterogeneity in the effect of outflow<sup>13</sup>. The increase of fixed capital wood in villages significantly reduces the probability of eastern, central and western villages becoming net labor outflow villages, but the magnitude of the effect decreases in turn. Compared to the plains, hills and mountains significantly reduce the probability of western villages becoming net labor outflow villages. An increase in the number of village enterprises decreases the probability of a net outflow of labor from western villages. A high proportion of laborers with junior high school education significantly increases the probability of western villages becoming net labor outflow villages (Liu Binbin, Gao Jingjing & Shi Qinghua, 2021).

In fact, the development of Chinese villages is the result of a combination of endogenous and exogenous development<sup>14</sup>. For most villages, the influence of policy or structural factors external to the village is more significant.

Chinese rural society is characterized by very prominent complexity, heterogeneity and diversity in the transition from tradition to modernity. Or "Reform and opening up China is then confronted with the unprecedented great convergence, collision and synthesis of tradition, modernity and postmodernity. Tradition, modernity and postmodernity, the three different eras, are concentrated and compressed into a single space and time. In contemporary China, however, these three

<sup>13</sup> Spatial heterogeneity (spatial heterogeneity) refers to the unevenness in the spatial distribution of ecological processes and patterns and their complexity. In this paper, we refer to the vast differences between rural areas in eastern, central and western China. Variables that affect the net labor outflow ratio from villages produce different results in different parts of the countryside.

<sup>14</sup> Endogenous modernization means that social changes are mainly caused by the continuous maturation of the elements of modernization within the society, and that the driving force of development grows gradually within the society, which is a gradual and active process of change. Exogenous modernization, on the other hand, refers to the fact that the main reason for change lies in the influence of the external environment, which is the result of the impact of the external industrial civilization on the original traditions, and the process of introducing or accepting the elements of modernization, and therefore contains more passive elements.

originally conflicting things must be formed into a relationship of mutual coordination, mutual inclusion, and optimal synthesis, so that they can complement each other's strengths and shortcomings, overcome their shortcomings, and complement each other's strengths in their development" (Jing Tiankui, 1999).

The village is the foundation of China's vernacular civilization. In traditional Chinese agrarian society, stasis is the hallmark of vernacular society. But in fact there is no such thing as a completely static society. Vernacular society has only become slower than modern society. By slower, I mainly mean the speed of change. After the reform and opening up, along with the rapid development of the national economy and the promotion of poverty alleviation in China, the speed of change of the vernacular society has accelerated rapidly. The demographic structure, housing pattern, employment structure, industrial organization, governance structure, village layout, and ideology of the countryside have all undergone profound changes. China has accomplished in 40 years what developed countries have accomplished in several generations, realizing a kind of time-space compression<sup>15</sup> development.

"In contrast to the rapid development of industry, the slow development of agriculture can give an impression of security and stability, of millennial equilibrium. In contrast to the frenzy of industry, the moderation of the peasantry seems eternal: the city and industry attract all energies. But the countryside always feeds the idyllic pastoral dream of quiet beauty and security". And the iron law of industrialization and urbanization upset the original balance, shaking and changing the entire social structure (Henri Mendras, 1991). "Two billion peasants stood at the entrance to industrial civilization. This is the main question that today's world poses to the social sciences in the second half of the 20th century" (Henri Mendras, 1991). Some villages, which have become hometowns that some people can never return to, have become fond memories written by literary writers. As a matter of fact, in the Hualan Yao region, this process already started in the 1980s.

In conclusion, the structural changes in the social fabric of the Hualan Yao under China's poverty alleviation are a complex and diverse process, influenced by poverty alleviation policies, urbanization, economic development and socio-cultural factors. These changes have brought both opportunities and challenges. At the same time, these changes have had a far-reaching impact on the development of the Hualan Yao society and the Hualan Yao rite of passage.

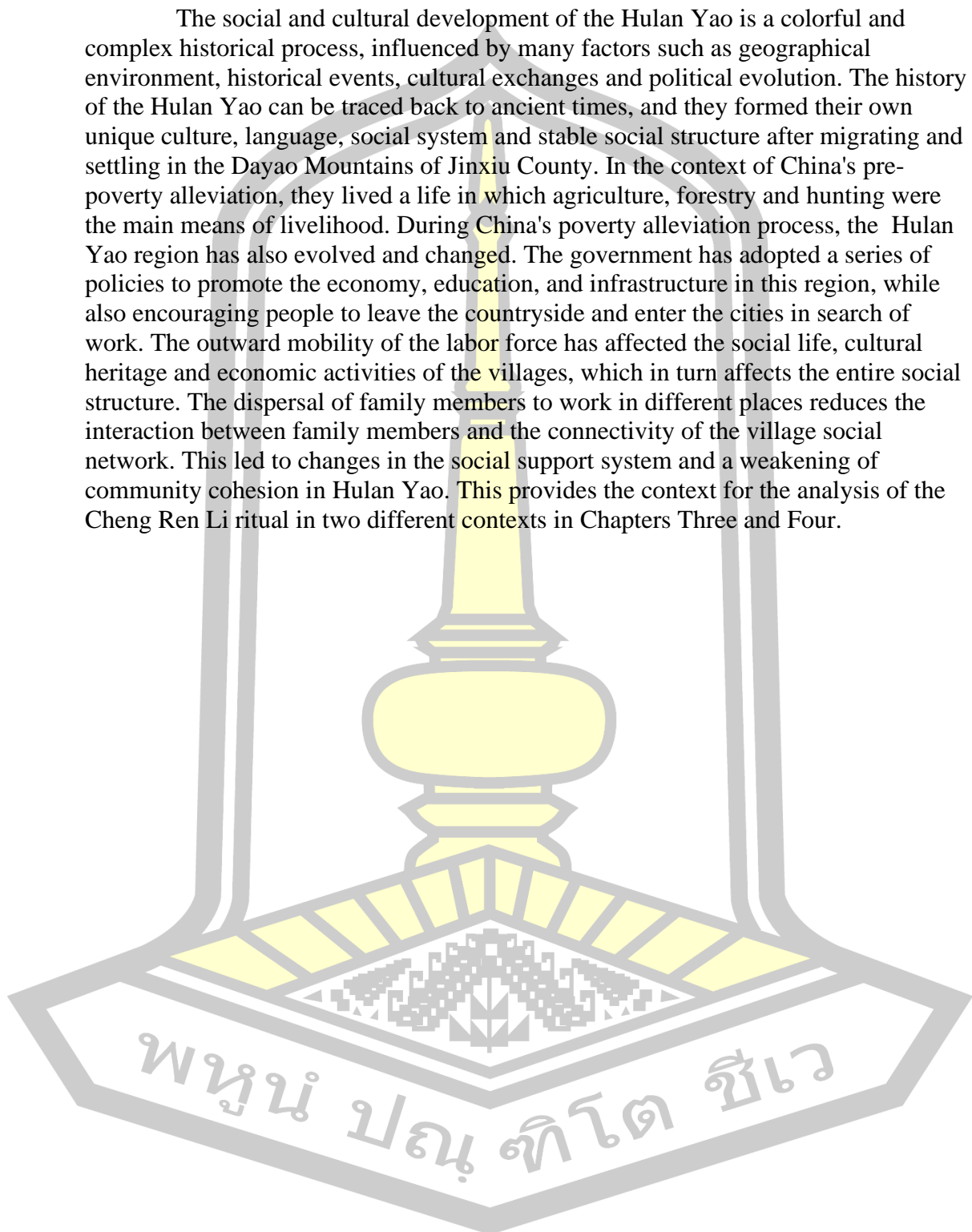
Overall, China's poverty alleviation policies have produced positive changes in the Hualan Yao region, helping to improve the living standards of the population and alleviate the problem of poverty. However, these changes have also been accompanied by some challenges, such as social change, population mobility and cultural inheritance, which require further attention and response. While promoting poverty alleviation, the villages of Hualan Yao are also considering how to balance the relationship between economic development and social stability.

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<sup>15</sup> The theory of "spatio-temporal compression" is a concept put forward in the 1980s by David Harvey, a representative of American globalization and modernization studies, in his book *The Postmodern Condition*. Its core connotation is that developing countries, as a result of their catching-up strategy and leapfrog development, would, in a relatively short period of time, go through the same distance that developed countries have gone through in a long historical period. Time and space seem to have been compressed in relation to the developed countries.

## Conclusion

The social and cultural development of the Hulan Yao is a colorful and complex historical process, influenced by many factors such as geographical environment, historical events, cultural exchanges and political evolution. The history of the Hulan Yao can be traced back to ancient times, and they formed their own unique culture, language, social system and stable social structure after migrating and settling in the Dayao Mountains of Jinxiu County. In the context of China's pre-poverty alleviation, they lived a life in which agriculture, forestry and hunting were the main means of livelihood. During China's poverty alleviation process, the Hulan Yao region has also evolved and changed. The government has adopted a series of policies to promote the economy, education, and infrastructure in this region, while also encouraging people to leave the countryside and enter the cities in search of work. The outward mobility of the labor force has affected the social life, cultural heritage and economic activities of the villages, which in turn affects the entire social structure. The dispersal of family members to work in different places reduces the interaction between family members and the connectivity of the village social network. This led to changes in the social support system and a weakening of community cohesion in Hulan Yao. This provides the context for the analysis of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in two different contexts in Chapters Three and Four.



## CHAPTER III

### **Cheng Ren Li Ritual: Symbolic Interaction in Hualan Yao Society before China's Poverty Alleviation**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examined how the Cheng Ren Li Ritual helped Hualan Yao construct ethnicity before China's Poverty Alleviation. The concept of "ethnicity" explains "who I am" in Hualan Yao within the framework of my study. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the development path of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the social interaction of Hualan Yao, and analyzes the developmental changes of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The second part introduces the interaction between the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the Hualan Yao society, where people are associated with the society through the symbol system. The third part describes the symbolic significance of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual for individuals and groups of Hualan Yao before China's poverty alleviation. This chapter focuses on analyzing how the Cheng Ren Li ritual helps Hualan Yao individuals to complete the construction of their identities, and how it reflects and influences social processes. This chapter provides the necessary support and paves the way for the subsequent chapters on the symbolic changes of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of China's Poverty Alleviation.

#### **3.1 Development Paths and Interactions of Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual before China's Poverty Alleviation**

The path of Cheng Ren Li Ritual development and interaction is a complex and multilayered process, influenced by a variety of factors at the historical, cultural, social, and individual levels. This section details what a Cheng Ren Li Ritual is and what Cheng Ren Li Ritual were like in the three periods before China's poverty alleviation, including ceremonies before the founding of New China, ceremonies after the founding of New China, and ceremonies during the Cultural Revolution. For the Cheng Ren Li Ritual after the founding of New China, it focuses on the changes in the ceremonies from the perspective of state-society relations, reflecting the evolution of "state-society relations" since the founding of China.

##### **3.1.1 The Rise and Popularization of Cheng Ren Li Ritual Before the Founding of New China**

Before the founding of New China, the rise and promotion of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual was a complex and varied historical process. This process was influenced by a variety of factors, including political, cultural, social and religious. The Cheng Ren Li ritual has a long history and tradition. The ritual originated from the needs of ancient societies and signaled a shift in social status or a change in the social role of young people.

According to the lunar calendar, when a child reaches the age of 15, the "Cheng Ren Li Ritual" is held. The Cheng Ren Li Ritual is held on the first day of the first month of the Chinese New Year. The main family invites an uncle or aunt of the same generation as the child's parents, who is alive and has both children; the man is

the uncle and the woman is the aunt, to dress up the child and put him or her into the Hualan Yao dress, complete with silver ornaments. Men's clothes are relatively simple compared to women's, cut from indigo-dyed black cloth, usually worn in two to four pieces, with a machine-woven headband and belt. Women's clothes are extremely fine and complicated, with embroidered patterns on the sleeves, collars and hemlines, and it takes about a year to make a piece in the free time of work, embroidered by hand, depending on the family's preparations, generally ranging from 4 to 16 pieces, with layers upon layers, in pursuit of the "overlapping shirts like dragon scales".

On the morning of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, the head of the family performs an ancestor worship ritual to report to the ancestors that the child is having a Cheng Ren Li ritual today, and to pray for the child's future strength, courage, establishment of a family and a long and healthy life. After the ancestor ritual, the family faces the east, in the direction of the rising sun, and an uncle or aunt is invited to comb the child's hair into an adult bun and recite a prayer in their heart for the child to rise like the sun. After dressing up, the family would walk to the east in the direction of the village entrance, and firecrackers would be set off when the child turns back outside the village entrance. This is known as the "way out" ritual, and the child is prayed for safe passage to and from the village. When the child returns to the village entrance, he or she displays the Bar Mitzvah costume to the entire village and receives the blessing of the entire village. Elderly people gather around the children to carefully examine the patterns of the costumes, comment on whether the costumes are in line with the traditional aesthetic of the ethnic group, and wish the children good luck and good fortune. Afterwards, you are free to do your own activities.

The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual has three meanings: 1) The child has grown up, gained acceptance and recognition from the social group, and is able to participate in adult social activities, such as collective labor, hunting, and rituals, etc. 2) After the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the child becomes an adult, and the man is called a "white-flower boy" (gua ban no de), which means a young man who wears a white scarf and belt, and a young man who has become an adult. Men are called "gua ban no de", meaning youngsters wearing white scarves and bands. A woman is called a "saffron maiden" (xi ban no pie), meaning a maiden who wears red. In the past, when marriage was generally early, they were free to fall in love, get married and start a family. 3) During the Shipai system, men became "Shipai soldiers" at the age of fifteen, when they came of age, and then at the age of sixty, when they had the duty and responsibility to defend their villages and protect the people. In the event of a battle, they had to follow the unified dispatch of the head of the Shipai. In ancient times, the Cheng Ren Li ritual had the ritual of wearing a knife with a gun. The knife is the commonly used knife of Hualan Yao, and the gun is the musket. In the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the elders instructed the boys to shoot, aim, and taught them how to use the gun, indicating that they would become a resolute, brave, and righteous warrior of Hualan Yao. The ritual of wearing a sword and a gun gradually disappeared after the establishment of New China, but other rites of passage have been passed down to this day.

Ethnic lore earns folkloric reverence

Ethnic legends have earned folkloric reverence and importance in the Hualan Yao society due to their special importance in culture, history, values and identity. There are three legends associated with the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual,

the Legend of Discus, the Legend of the Fuxi Siblings and the Legend of the Human Bear.

Like other Yao clans, the Hualan Yao recognize "PanHu" as the founder of their people (or clans). He was originally a dragon dog under the banner of King Ping of Yaoshan, one of the three kings and five emperors of the ancient times, and his name was Pan Gou. King Ping fought against King Gao. King Ping offered a reward to whoever could behead King Gao, he awarded a thousand taels of gold, ten thousand Eups, and married his daughter to him. This was overheard by the dragon dog, Discus. He immediately ran to kill the Gao King and returned the human head of the Gao King to King Ping. Then King Ping did not break his promise and promised the princess to Disc Gourd. Afterwards, Pan gourd and the princess gave birth to six men and six women, and each of them was given a family name, which became the earliest 12 family names for the Yao people, and their descendants are the current Yao descendants.

There is a rather mysterious custom in the Yao people, which is the Pan Wang ritual . It is a religious ritual for the Yao people to remember their ancestors and the founder of the nation and to gather people's hearts, and it is also the grandest festival of the Yao people, with a history of more than 1700 years. The 16th day of the 10th lunar month of every year is the Panwang Festival of the Yao people. On that day, a grand sacrificial ritual is held in which the Yao people, led by their elders, put on their festive costumes and bring offerings to worship PanWang. In 2006, the Yao Panwang Festival was officially listed as a national intangible cultural heritage by the State Council.



Figure 45 Activities of the Ninth China Yao Panwang Festival. The "China Yao Panwang Festival" is held every two years, initiated by three provinces and districts of Guangdong, Hunan and Guangxi, where the Yao people live, and has become the biggest festival of the Yao compatriots all over the country.

Source: Photographed by the author .November16, 2007.

The legend of "PanHu" is not only widely spread in the Hualan Yao region, but has also had a profound impact on the culture of Cheng Ren Li ritual . Comb your hair like a dragon's horn, layer upon layer of clothes like dragon scales, avoid eating dog meat, wear clothing that commemorates the meaning of "PanWang," use artifacts related to the story of "PanWang," and avoid eating dog meat in order to show reverence for "PanWang". PanWang" reverence has become the core content of

Yao traditional culture. Cheng Ren Li ritual and other ceremonies and festivals and autumn and winter, adult women like to wear several pieces of clothing, 4, 6 or even 12 or more pieces of clothing embroidered with exquisite patterns but different sizes of layers stacked together, from inside to outside in order to shorten the rows into a fishtail shape, very rich sense of hierarchy. This way of dressing has been practiced since ancient times and is reflected in the song "geshu"<sup>16</sup> "Marrying to the House of the Temple". The lyrics of this old Yao song, which has been sung for a long time in Hualan Yao, are about a woman who is dissatisfied with her life after marriage and misses her life as a young girl, with phrases such as "When I was still in the house of my mother's master, the lapels of my shirts were folded over each other like the scales of a dragon", and "When I was still in the house of my mother's master, my waistband was wrapped around my waist in two or three layers".(Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Editorial Group, 1984).



Figure 46 Wang Tonghui and the women of Hualan Yao pose for a photo. The layered hemlines can be seen in this photo in the shape of dragon scales.

This photo was taken from Wang Tonghui's book.  
Source: Photographed by the author. February 4, 2022.

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<sup>16</sup> The word "geshu", meaning folk song, is a direct translation from the Yao word "Siesin", which means old songs passed down from generation to generation.



Figure 47 New adult's hair being plaited. The Hualan Yao people call the "dragon's horn" when the two sides of the braid are folded back to form the shape of the hair.  
Source:Photographed by the author.February1, 2022.



Figure 48 Headscarf worn by male new adults. The headscarves and belts for men and the neckbands, waistbands, and leggings for women are embroidered with "dragon's eyes" and "dragon's head" motifs.  
Source:Photographed by the author.February1, 2022.

In addition to the legend of "PanHu", the Yao folklore is also widely circulated with legends of ancestors fighting against floods. In Hunan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and other places have been circulated, such as "how people come", "Fuxi brother and sister", "brother and sister into a marriage", "Zhang Tianshi and the King of Thunder", "drowning the bottom of the sky". Zhang Tianshi and the King of Thunder", "drowning the bottom of the sky" and so on. Although these legends have different titles, their contents are similar. They all tell of a great flood in the world, in which all people except two siblings were drowned. Later, the two siblings married and raised their descendants. Among them, the "Fuxi siblings" legend is more typical.

Fuxi is a well-known figure in ancient Chinese legends and is also recorded in Chinese historical records. Many ethnic groups, such as Han and Zhuang, have similar legends. In the flood myth of the Yao people, the name "Fuxi" often appears, so the Yao folk legend about "Fuxi brother and sister created man" cannot be ruled out by the influence of the above-mentioned Han historical records. Perhaps, the legend is just a kind of memory image, always with a romantic color. Legends about our ancestors can often shed light on the questions that have haunted us for thousands of years: Where do we come from? Where are we going? It's a legacy of roots. Because of this, despite the migration, the blood of the Yao people has never been



interrupted. Hualan Yao minority with unimaginable vitality, multiply and survive, from generation to generation.

There is a popular legend in the Hualan Yao society about the creation of the embroidery pattern of Hualan Yao costumes. According to the old man, in the past, I don't know in what dynasty, there were a lot of human bears on the mountain where Hualan Yao lived. These bears were male and female, male and female, and they could speak human language and understand human affairs, and the patterns were created by them. Because the bears never cut their hair, their hair was very long, and after a long time, they would harbor a lot of lice, so they would let the villagers down the hill to help catch the lice. In order to allay the villagers' fears, the bear said that not only would not eat people, after catching the lice, he also gave them an embroidered pattern of flowery clothes. But the villagers are still very afraid, but do not dare to disobey them, they came up with a way to prevent the unexpected, while catching lice and quietly the human bear's hair wrapped around a stump on the side. After catching lice, human bears really reneged on their word to eat people. The villagers were on guard, picked up the flowery clothes and ran. The bear could not catch up with them because his hair was wrapped around the stump, and he could only roar like thunder around the stump. The villagers took the flower clothes and returned home safely, and since then they have been learning embroidery according to these patterns tracing and painting samples, and changing and improving them, applying them to different decorative parts, forming the Yao dresses that we see nowadays.

The story of human bears in the Mentou, six lanes, Gub have legends, not a family, just the so-called "human bears" exactly why people and things, can not be deduced. According to the Ming Dynasty Tian Rucheng's "YanXiJiWen" contained: "Tea Mountain, Luo Yun of the col. Its cliffs and valleys, is born actor. Carved title high bun, like a scarlet baboon. Floral clothing blood food, speech Jiu Li, so the four surnames of the Yao, but also can not be re-translated." Pinglefu Zhi" contains: "Lipu Xidong, there are Ling, common and Yao different, but the nature of the vicious." And according to the 20th century 50's Guangxi minority historical survey group in jinxiu da yao mountain investigation, when the flower blue yao, tea mountain yao, mountain yao, pan yao, au yao and other five yao tribes into the Dayao mountain, the mountain already has a ferocious nature of the actor, "tea eaters" live. The "human bears" orally circulated by the Hualan Yao should also be one of them. Since they once lived together with the Yao in the Dayao Mountains, no matter what their attitudes were, whether they were friends or foes, their living customs might have had some influence on the Yao (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Editorial Group, 1984). The colorful costumes of the Hualan Yao may also have been influenced by their "high buns" and "floral clothes" and evolved. From the legend of the human bear, we can not only see the living environment and aesthetic mentality of the Hualan Yao people, but also deduce that the embroidery pattern of Hualan Yao clothing is not only the crystallization of the wisdom of the people, but also the product of the fusion with other ethnic groups or local cultures.

For little girls under 14 years old, their hair will be evenly divided into two braids, starting from the forehead plate behind the ears, and they will not wear headdresses. In other words, children under 14 years old will not grow up, have flowers and God's blessings, and will not go out of the garden. , wait until the

morning before the "rite of passage" in the first month of the first day of your 15th year to wear the headdress.

Women have long hair from childhood to old age. Before the 1950s, adult women combed their hair into two parts, the front and back. The hair at the back was pulled to the top of the head and tied firmly into a knot and a bun, bounded by the ears. Pull the front part of the hair upside down to the forehead, apply lard, use a finger on the eyebrows for middle-aged and elderly women, and use a finger on the eyebrows for young women, then spread the hair flat and buckle it onto the bun on the top of the head, and use silver Clamp it and wrap it with cloth to form a hair cap, commonly known as "hair cap". After fixing the hairstyle with lard, the rich use two silver hairpins with a length of 14 cm, and the poor use bamboo hairpins, inserted on the left and right sides of the bun as headdress support. There are differences between the headscarfs of young women and the headscarves of middle-aged and elderly women: the headscarves of young women are made of white cotton yarn as the warp yarn and black cotton yarn as the weft yarn. They are woven into a length of about 40 cm, a width of about 27 cm, a length of about 30 cm, and silk scarves at both ends. , not picky. When tying the headscarf, you must cross the headscarf behind your head, tie it with a red rope, and hide it in the folded seam of the headscarf. The remaining 10 centimeters at both ends hang down on both sides of the headscarf. The headscarf for middle-aged and elderly women is a piece of pure white cloth, the same length and width as the headscarf for young women, but without a headscarf. In the center of the white cloth, there is a flower on each side of the turban. When tying the headscarf, place the top two corners behind the bun and secure it with silver hairpins.

Headgear for grown men, dating back to 1950, still includes a dreadlock on top of the head, special silver hairpins and a saffron headband. The saffron scarf is a piece of black cloth 40 cm long, 20 cm wide and 30 cm long. A scarf is tied at both ends. A big red silk thread is used to pick dragon head flowers in the middle. On both sides, silver flowers, cedar flowers and eye flowers are picked accordingly. . When wrapping your head, fold the saffron scarf into an 8 cm wide band and wrap it around your head on your forehead. The scarf must be knotted and hung behind.

The two sleeves, lapel, hem and back of the Yao blue and white women's clothing are all selected with colorful and unique patterns. To sum up, there are roughly the following categories:

The main flower on the sleeve is a three-headed flower. Other flowers include: Wacang flower, large round flower, small round flower, spicy insect flower, horse head flower, silver flower, dragon scale flower, waterwheel flower (also called bird flower), and turtle cup flower.

The lapel fringe is 2 cm wide, and the corsage is symmetrically long along the lapel and neck.

The main flowers on the skirt are pine flowers. Other flowers include panyao, barracuda, chicken claw, melaleuca and valerian.

The main flower of the belt is the tiara flower. Other flowers include girdle silver, ram's horn, pine flower and saber flower.

The main irritation of leg binding is eyesore. Other flowers include leggings silver flower, dragon flower and king flower.

The flowers on the back of the clothes are relatively uniform and are basically wooden cross flowers.

Wear clothes in pairs, with lapels overlapping and belts stopped and knotted, just like the ancients.

Both men and women wear black coarse cloth shorts, women's shorts below the knees and men's shorts above the knees. The sewing method is very primitive, using narrow pieces of coarse cloth staggered together. Sew at the bone seam so that the shorts are shaped like a herringbone without the pants. Men's and women's pants are sewn in the same way.

Both men and women tie their legs; men's legs are tied without flowers; women's legs are tied with flowers. When putting on leggings, tie them from bottom to top, with women exposing their knees and men tying their trouser legs, and then tie them with a three-needle ribbon one finger wide.

It is not possible to say exactly when the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual originated. It is just like any other cultural phenomenon. When we interviewed the villagers of the Hualan Yao, their uniform statement was "This has always been our tradition. We have been holding Cheng Ren Li Ritual since the beginning of Hualan Yao". The oldest living person in Mentou village, 94-year-old HZG, said.

This tradition has been in place since we entered Jinxiu Dayao Mountain. Whether there was a Cheng Ren Li Ritual before entering Dayao Mountain, we don't know. This is our tradition.

In 1935, Mr. Fei Xiaotong and Ms. Wang Tonghui learned about the Cheng Ren Li Ritual when they entered the village of Mentou to conduct a social survey (Fei Xiaotong & Wang Tonghui, 1988). Meanwhile, combined with my fieldwork, the Cheng Ren Li Ritual during this period is described as follows.

It has been a custom since ancient times to hold a Cheng Ren Li Ritual in Hualan Yao. They believe that after the age of 14, boys and girls have already entered the ranks of adulthood, so on the first day of the first month of the lunar calendar in the year when they reach the age of 15, a Cheng Ren Li ritual would be held for them in the morning.

In Hualan Yao, young boys and girls who are not married are not regarded as formal laborers in the family. But they are not idle, they follow the adults to work everywhere. In the process of "playing around", which is not regarded as formal labor, they learn the skills to make a living. Children as young as three or four years old would feed the chickens with grain in the morning and evening, and girls as young as six or seven years old would learn to work with needle and thread and embroider beautiful lace. Older boys would carry guns and go bird hunting. When the fields were busy, the older boys and girls would go down to the fields to help out, and at night they would pick up the "sheaves" and follow the adults home.

At the age of 15, both men and women undergo a Cheng Ren Li ritual. At this time, men and women begin to mature physically, and they are able to take on heavy tasks in the workplace. More importantly, the development of their sexuality leads to many new forms of life that were not present when they were children. These physiological changes affect the social life of the individual so much that at this time the parents of the child hold a ritual for them. A child who has become a human being is introduced to society so that he can enjoy the rights of adulthood.

A woman's bar mitzvah is relatively simple. Her parents pick a good day for her and ask an elderly woman who knows how to comb her hair to change the bun of an adult woman. An adult woman's bun is made by putting a large amount of lard

on her hair and forming a "hair cover" to cover her eyes. On top of the hair cover is a white cloth cover similar to the cap worn by nurses in hospitals. This cover just covered the bun on top of her head. When viewed from a distance, her hair looked like a black velvet hat with a white heart. From other people, it looked beautiful. But combing the hair was extremely time-consuming, and it was not easy to wash and irrigate. The first time they combed their hair, it seemed to them to be an omen for a lifetime of happiness. So they must hire the best woman to comb their hair. Her family would even organize a banquet to invite the woman who combed her hair and her close clansmen to drink. If a woman marries before the age of 15, she would change her hairstyle to that of an adult woman on her wedding day.

Bat mitzvah ceremonies for girls emphasize sex and fertility and highlight family responsibilities. Often it is in preparation for a wedding. In the vast majority of cases weddings follow closely behind. My fieldwork confirms this.

The Cheng Ren Li Ritual for boys emphasizes more on social responsibility and highlights the need for faith.



Figure 49 Hualan Yao Women's New Adult. Cheng Ren Li ritual for girls emphasize sex and fertility and highlight family responsibilities. Often it is in preparation for a wedding. In the vast majority of cases weddings follow closely behind.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.



Figure 50 Hualan Yao Male New Adult. The Cheng Ren Li ritual for boys emphasizes more on social responsibility and highlights the need for faith.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

Traditional ceremonies and celebrations. Some legends are associated with the country's traditional rituals and celebrations, which are held in communities to commemorate specific legends or historical events. These celebrations help promote legend and strengthen community cohesion.

cultural heritage. National legends usually carry the cultural traditions of a specific nation, including language, religion, values, history, and moral norms. These legends are passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition and written records, helping to preserve and spread the cultural identity of the people.

Historical Memorialization. Legends are related to the historical events and heroes of the nation and have become an important part of historical memory. These legends can promote the historical achievements of the nation and inspire future generations to inherit the spiritual traditions of their ancestors.

Values and moral education. Legends often contain moral and ethical lessons, teaching people how to make good choices, respect others, and adhere to social norms. These stories help shape social values and convey moral messages. Identity and cohesion. Legends can strengthen national identity and make people feel that they belong to a common group. Shared legends and stories can promote social cohesion and unite people within a nation.

Explain the world and natural phenomena. Many legends are used to explain the origin and causes of the world and natural phenomena. These stories provide a unique understanding of the workings of the world and help people understand the mysteries of the natural world.

Fun and entertaining nature. Legends are often full of drama and fascinating plots and are therefore also popular as an entertainment medium to some extent. People love to hear stories, and legends provide interesting and engaging narratives. This helps expand the impact and legacy of the bar mitzvah.

In general, the legend of the Hualan Yao people is an important part of the culture of the Hualan Yao people, and it is also the root of the coming-of-age ritual . They provide the "meta-culture" and "core culture" for the ritual structure and behavior of rites of passage. These legends not only help maintain ritual traditions but also play a variety of important roles in society, from cultural transmission to social cohesion and moral education. Therefore, they have won the reverence and respect of the Hualan Yao people.

## 2)Village development and Feng Shui lore

The development of Hualan Yao village is closely related to Feng Shui legend. These legends and beliefs played a key role in the location and development of Mentou Village. Mentou Village retains its own culture, language, religion, festivals and traditions. These cultural elements are reflected in daily life, rituals and celebrations, including the Chengren ritual . According to the villagers of Mentou Village, choosing the right place to hold the Incarnation ritual is considered crucial to ensure that the new adult and his or her family are protected by ancestors and gods and receive good luck, wealth, Health and longevity.

A Feng Shui treasure place is a place with special geographical Feng Shui significance that is believed to have the characteristics of good luck and good luck. Legends of Feng Shui treasures often involve geographical features such as mountains, rivers, lakes and ridges. It is believed that those living in villages near Feng Shui treasures can enjoy good luck and prosperity.

Legends of Feng Shui often originate from the ancient Chinese doctrine of Feng Shui, a religious and philosophical belief that emphasizes the relationship between the natural environment and human life. According to Feng Shui, the aura and energy flow in a geographical environment have a significant impact on a person's destiny and happiness. Therefore, site selection and environmental layout have become important issues.

The ancestors of Mentou Village finally settled here after going through untold hardships and supernatural events. Legend has it that after entering Dayao Mountain, they initially chose to settle in the nearby mountains. But harsh environmental conditions there make life difficult. There was a man named Hu Gongbai in the village who often went hunting in the mountains behind the village. He noticed that every night on the first and fifteenth day of the first lunar month, he could see a column of colored light shooting into the night sky from the other side of the river (now the center of Mentou Village). Hu Hongbai thought it was strange, so he went to take a look. He went to take a look. It turned out that the illuminated area was a small piece of flat land with no grass. There was a large camphor tree on it, which was often surrounded by colorful clouds. Hu Hongbai went home and asked his master for divination, and found out that this was a Feng Shui land. To verify, Hu Gongbai lit eight small oil lamps around the plain. Despite the storm, the lights stayed on for three days and three nights. In the spring of the next year, Hu Gongbai planted crops on the flat land and achieved a bumper harvest. After the news spread, everyone thought it was a rare Feng Shui land. The surrounding villagers moved to build villages one after another, and named the village "Mentou", which means the place of "Dragon Gate and Dragon Head". In order to pray for the eternal blessing of the Dragon God, come rain or shine. Every three years in the middle of the village, when Hu Hongbai sees the light on the small flat ground, the villagers hold a dragon event to worship the dragon god. As time went by, we called this small flat land "Anlongping".



Figure 51 Anlongping of Mentou Village. In the past, the landmark of this place was a stone. The Hualan Yao people believe that the stone is a symbol of stability.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

The village of Hualan Yao chooses the location for its construction based on the legend of Feng Shui Treasure Land. Local residents believe that siting near a feng shui treasure brings good luck and prosperity. As a result, villages are often built

following the principles of Feng Shui doctrine to ensure the good fortune and destiny of the community. Around Anlongping, Mentou Village built houses lined up and constructed the main street leading out of the village. They constructed the Shewang Temple at the entrance of the village facing east. These buildings became Ritual places for Cheng Ren Li Ritual . The residents would also hold regular rituals and celebrations to thank the Feng Shui treasure for its blessings and protection. They set up the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the hope that the new adults would recognize and understand the ethnic and village culture and be recognized and blessed by their ancestors and spirits.



Figure 52 SheWang Temple in Mentou Village. Shewang Temple is located at the eastern part of the entrance of Mentou Village. The function of Shewang Temple is the same as that of the Han land temple, which is a local protection deity. It blesses Mentou Village with good weather, good harvests and prosperity of people and animals. In the past, there was no temple building. The big tree behind the building is the symbol of Shewang Temple.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 2, 2023.

**Design of the ritual space.** Mentor Village sets aside specific spaces for Cheng Ren Li Ritual . These spaces are carefully designed to fit the needs of the ritual . They include houses, the main street connecting Anlongping, the Shewang Temple, and Shipai Ping. These spaces use traditional architectural styles and materials to maintain the consistency of the cultural heritage.

**Socializing and Collective Experiences.** The architectural spaces of the Mentor Village help to facilitate socialization and collective experiences. Cheng Ren Li ritual are collective community events, and the layout and architecture of the village promotes the gathering of people to participate in the ritual together. The main street, SheWang Temple, and Shipai Ping can accommodate large crowds, while the social spaces and locations help people celebrate, communicate, and interact together.

**Cultural Symbols and Ritual Symbols.** Architectural spaces often contain cultural symbols and ritual symbols. These symbols and signs are reflected in architectural decorations, murals, carvings, etc., and help to emphasize the importance of rituals and cultural traditions.

**The flow and interaction of rituals.** Architectural space can influence the flow of the ritual and how it interacts. Different rooms or areas can be used for different stages of ritual. For example, one's own house is where preparatory activities are carried out and ancestors are worshipped, the Shewang temple at the entrance to

the village is where the gods are worshipped and prayed to, and the main street and Shipai Ping are where social events are held. Architectural layout and spatial design can shape the way in which rituals are conducted to ensure that they run smoothly and achieve their intended purpose.

Atmosphere and emotion of the ritual . The atmosphere and emotion of a building's space can also have a significant impact on a ritual . Factors such as a building's aesthetics, lighting, music, and décor can influence the emotional experience of participants. A stately building can enhance the solemnity of a ritual , while a welcoming space can promote social interaction and an atmosphere of celebration.

In conclusion, the legends of Feng Shui treasure have a unique form and content in the region and culture of Hualan Yao, playing an important role in the history and society of the village and influencing the lifestyle and values of its inhabitants. These legends reflect ancient wisdom and reverence for the natural world. The legend of Feng Shui has created the architectural space of Mentou Village. The architectural spaces in Mentou Village have a significant impact on the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, not only providing a place for the ritual to take place, but also reflecting the values and identities of specific cultural and religious traditions. These architectural spaces play a key role in the solemnity, interactivity and symbolism of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They help to shape the belief system and cultural identity of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual, while also influencing the planning and development of the community.

3)Support from traditional social organizations amplifies the impact of Cheng Ren Li Ritual

The support of traditional social organizations in Cheng Ren Li ritual can significantly expand the impact of the ritual . Traditional social organizations usually have prestige and influence in the community. This includes the community elder system and the stone tablet system in Hualan Yao. Their support and participation can give the Cheng Ren Li Ritual more social recognition and identity. This means that the Cheng Ren Li Ritual is more likely to be seen as an important social event and receive wider participation and attention.

One of the religious beliefs of the Hualan Yao is the belief in the She Shen. After settling in the Yao Mountains, the Hualan Yao built shrines and temples near their villages. Most of the societies are built under a big tree in the woods near the villages, and usually no temples are built. Usually, there is one community for each village and one name for each community. The society in Mentou Village is called Jia Sha She.

The community elder is a natural leader of the people who combines religion, production and civil affairs. The social elder mainly has the following duties: 1) to represent the village in the lunar calendar on the first and fifteenth day of each month to the site of the community to burn incense and offer sacrifices to the community god; 2) to organize and preside over the annual spring and autumn two days of the community's sacrificial rituals, and to carry out the "words of information": that is, to warn the people of the community to abide by the statute, the order and the agricultural time, to arrange for a good life, production, shall not be violated and delayed farm time They should talk about unity, not to be divided, disputes, etc.; 3) to deal with all kinds of civil disputes within the society, to maintain



social order. That is to say, presided over by the old man of the society, put the past wrongs and wrongs on the table, commented by the people, and then mediated according to the reason. Both parties make peace in front of the god of the society and say that they would never be in conflict again. Otherwise, the god of the society would punish him.

After the emergence of the Shihpai organization, the Shihpai headman gradually replaced the duty of maintaining social order in the community. The social elders, on the other hand, were weakened to become "clergymen" who mainly served to educate the villagers and no longer intervened in production and civil affairs.



Figure 53 Hualan Yao Shihpai headman in the 1930s. After the emergence of the Shihpai organization, the Shihpai headmen gradually replaced the duties of the community elders in maintaining social security order.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 2, 2021.

The scale of the ceremonies and celebrations. Social elders and stone heads will assist in organizing and managing the initiation ritual, including large celebrations. They provide venues, resources and assistance to ensure that the ritual runs smoothly and that as many people as possible can participate.

Continuity and inheritance of traditional rituals. Community elders and stone heads are often key forces in the spread of culture. They can ensure that the traditions of the rite of Passage remain coherent and are passed on from generation to generation through the transmission of knowledge, skills and values associated with the rite.

Social support system. Chengrenli marked an era in which individuals assumed more responsibility in society. Social elders and Stones can provide social support and guidance to new adults to help them better adjust to new social roles and responsibilities.

The symbolism of the ritual. Community elders and stone chiefs can help explain and emphasize the symbolic significance of the rite. They can convey the deeper meaning of ritual to the younger generation, giving them a better understanding of the connection between ritual and cultural, religious and social values.

Community interaction. The initiation ritual involves extensive community interaction. Community elders and stones can help organize community

events, encourage active participation of community members, and enhance community cohesion.

In conclusion, the support of traditional social organizations is crucial to the impact of Cheng Ren Li ritual. They not only help to ensure that these ceremonies are carried out successfully, but also help to reinforce the social, cultural and religious significance of the ceremonies, giving them greater impact and meaning in society. Such support contributes to the emergence and promotion of Cheng Ren Li ritual.

In general, the rise and promotion of the Hanalangyao rite of passage among the Hanalan Yao community before the founding of New China was a process of historical evolution, closely related to the culture, religion, social structure and historical development of the Hanalan Yao region. This ritual has its own unique form and characteristics and plays an important role in maintaining and passing on the culture. They play an important role in helping individuals make the transition to adulthood and in deepening cultural identity and social cohesion.

### 3.1.2 Cheng Ren Li Ritual after the Founding of New China and before the Cultural Revolution: Government Shaping of Ritual

Since the founding of New China, the rite of passage has undergone remarkable changes and interactions. These changes were mainly influenced by social, political and cultural factors. Based on the changes in national policies, I categorize the Cheng Ren Li ritual during this period into two phases: before the Cultural Revolution and during the Cultural Revolution.

Since the founding of New China, the government has shaped and managed the rite of passage to a certain extent. This shaping has been largely influenced by the ideology, social policies and cultural heritage of the Chinese Government.

#### abolish feudal superstitions

In the early days of the founding of New China, the government took active measures to get rid of some superstitious customs of the feudal society. Breaking down superstitions also helps to promote modernization and the spread of scientific ideas. Superstitions are often based on religious or supernatural beliefs, and their abolition helps people focus more on reason, science, and the real world.

The New Chinese government encourages the benevolence ritual to embody socialist values such as communism, solidarity and fraternity. These new rituals emphasized collectivism and social responsibility instead of the superstitious individualism of feudalism.

Encourage modern and scientific ideas. Breaking down superstitions also helps to promote modernization and the spread of scientific ideas. Eliminating superstitions, often based on religious or supernatural beliefs, helps people focus more on reason, science, and the real world.

Cultural inheritance and reshaping. Breaking superstition is not to completely abandon traditional culture, but to eliminate unreasonable and reactionary elements in it, so as to better protect and inherit the reasonable parts of traditional culture. These reasonable parts can be preserved and reshaped to meet the needs of modern society.

The abolition of feudal superstitions had a positive impact on the rite of passage, contributed to the construction of a more equal, just and modern society, and reflected the promotion of socialist values and scientific concepts. It also helps to

preserve the legitimate parts of traditional culture, enabling them to adapt to new social contexts.

#### Implementation of the first marriage law

The first marriage law after the founding of New China had a notable impact on the Cheng Ren Li ritual . Enacted in 1950, this marriage law was the cornerstone of China's modern marriage legal system, and introduced major reforms in the area of marriage and the family, with far-reaching implications, including many aspects of the Cheng Ren Li ritual .

The Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China was adopted by the Seventh Session of the Central People's Government Committee on April 13, 1950, and came into effect on May 1 of the same year; it was the first law with the nature of a basic law to be introduced after the founding of New China. The implementation of the Marriage Law has had a positive effect on the protection of women's rights and interests, the advancement of women and the quality of marriage. It was the first basic law introduced after the founding of New China. Officially promulgated and implemented on May 1, 1950, the Law consists of 8 chapters and 27 articles covering all aspects of marriage and the family, abolishing the feudal marriage system, which had been arranged and forced and which had infringed on the rights and interests of women and children, and establishing a new marriage system characterized by freedom of marriage, monogamy and equality between men and women, which is of great significance in the history of the new China.



Figure 54 China's first marriage law. The explicit provisions of the Marriage Law have directly affected and changed part of the meaning of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual . The Cheng Ren Li ritual is no longer closely linked to marriage.

Source:[https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao\\_17572927](https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_17572927) [Accessed on April 1,2023]

The new marriage law abolishes some of the marriage systems in feudal society, such as arranged marriages marriages. This means that marriages are no longer arranged solely by parents or elders, but are chosen voluntarily by adult men and women. Cheng Ren Li Ritual are no longer bound by these feudal customs.

Emphasizing the principle of equality. The Marriage Law clearly stipulates the principle of equality in marriage, including equality between men and women and voluntary marriage. The emphasis on this principle has influenced the

nature of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, making it more likely to emphasize autonomous choice.

Regulating the procedure for registering marriages. The Marriage Act regulates the procedure for registering marriages and requires couples to register their marriages. The age of marriage registration is 20 years for men and 18 years for women. This means that Cheng Ren Li ritual are no longer closely linked to marriage.

The explicit provisions of "Marriage Law" have directly affected and changed part of the meaning of "Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual". After the founding of New China, the first marriage Law had a profound impact on the rite of benevolence. It promoted the modernization and legalization of the field of marriage and the family, emphasized the principles of equality, freedom and legal duty, and changed the nature of marriage and the manner in which the initiation ritual was performed. The law laid the foundation of China's marriage system and had a profound impact on social family and gender relations.

Carrying out rural sanitation and epidemiological work

The promotion of rural sanitation and epidemiology has helped to raise the population's awareness of health care. This has had an impact on Cheng Ren Li Ritual, as people have become more conscious of their physical health and hygiene. Some traditional Cheng Ren Li Ritual customs have changed for hygiene and epidemic prevention reasons. Hualan Yao women cut their hair short. They reformed the "bun hat" by replacing the unhygienic "bun hat" with a black bandana. Men no longer wear their hair in a bun.

Since the founding of New China, the government has carried out vigorous sanitary and epidemiological work in both urban and rural areas, and in June 1950, a national symposium on rural sanitation was held, which called for "the focus of future sanitary construction to be on the countryside", and for sanitary workers to "clearly recognize the importance of rural sanitation, to eliminate neglectful attitudes and biased perceptions of rural sanitation", and to be unafraid of difficulties in relieving the suffering of the peasants. The conference also called on health workers to "recognize clearly the importance of rural health and to eliminate the neglectful attitudes and biased perceptions of rural health work", and to work without fear of hardship to relieve the suffering of the peasants.

In August 1950, the first National Health Conference was held. On the premise of in-depth discussion and consultation, the conference established the following general guidelines for future national health work: "oriented towards workers, peasants and soldiers", "prevention as the mainstay", and "unity between Chinese and Western medicine". Mao Zedong wrote an inscription for the First National Health Conference: "Unite the old and new Chinese and Western medical and health workers of all parts of the country to form a consolidated united front to fight for the development of the great people's health work!" The summary report of the First National Health Conference stated, "In the last few years, the focus of our health construction has not been on the big cities, but on the small and medium-sized cities, rural industrial and mining areas and the army." Mao Zedong made health work one of the important pillars of the cause of the whole people and the construction of a new China.



Figure 55 Rural sanitation and epidemiological work is carried out in the countryside.

This has had an impact on bar mitzvah ceremonies. Some traditional bar mitzvah ritual customs have changed for hygiene and epidemic prevention reasons.

Source: [https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/386844154?utm\\_id=0](https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/386844154?utm_id=0) [Accessed on April 1, 2023]

In September 1951, Mao Zedong instructed the Party committees at all levels that "hygiene, epidemic prevention and general medical work must be regarded as a major political task", and that not only regular supervision and inspection should be carried out, but also financial guarantees should be given, and in September 1965 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) issued its "Report on Placing the Emphasis of Health Work in the Countryside". Since then, "putting the focus of medical and health work in the countryside" has become an important element of the health work policy. With this as its guide, the Ministry of Health has increased its investment in rural areas in terms of human, material and financial resources. In 1965, for example, rural areas accounted for only 40 per cent of the total number of hospital beds in medical and health institutions nationwide; by 1975, that proportion had risen to 60 per cent, and more than 65 per cent of the nation's health-care expenditure was spent in rural areas. Rural cooperative medical care is in full bloom, traveling medicine is widely practiced, and the ranks of "barefoot doctors" are growing rapidly. Thanks to the joint efforts of urban and rural medical workers and the general public, the health situation in rural areas has improved considerably.

In 1952, Jinxiu County established a health center in the county town. Soon after, seven districts in the county set up health centers one after another. The medical staff of the health center cared a lot about the sufferings of the Yao people. With few medical staff and lack of medicines, they actively publicized the scientific knowledge of hygiene and disease elimination. This was praised by the majority of Yao people, who began to have a new understanding of scientific treatment of diseases.

During the period of the People's Commune and the Great Leap Forward, each brigade had a health office. These health personnel often sent medicines into the villages to treat common illnesses among the Yao people, making it easier for the masses to seek medical care. Later, "barefoot doctors" were set up in brigades or larger villages, who received equal pay for the same work as the members of the community and used a combination of traditional Chinese and Western medicine to treat the sick. Many ancestral recipes have been put to good use.



Figure 56 The newly built Jinxiu County People's Hospital. This was praised by the general Yao people, who began to have a new understanding of scientific treatment of diseases.

Source: Nation Pictorial, No. 5 [Accessed on April 7, 2023]

The spread of hygiene and sanitation has promoted changes in some traditional rite of passage customs. Hualan Yao women cut their hair short. They have reformed the "bun hat", replacing the unhygienic "bun hat" with a black bandana. Men no longer wear their hair in a bun.

Rural sanitation and epidemiological efforts have had a positive impact on Cheng Ren Li Ritual, particularly in terms of raising health awareness, controlling the spread of infectious diseases and improving health facilities. However, it may also lead to changes in some traditional ritual practices to accommodate healthier and safer ways of celebrating. This impact has important implications in terms of maintaining community health and safety.

Youth festivals and major events. The Government organizes youth festivals and other major celebrations, which often include ritual events for youth representatives. These celebrations are intended to emphasize the concepts of patriotism and socialism and to train a new generation of young people as loyal citizens. In 1949 the Central People's Government officially proclaimed May 4 as China's Youth Day, but it was not a national holiday; only young people between the ages of 14 and 28 were allowed a half-day off.

Advocacy and education. The Government shapes the perception of the Cheng Ren Li ritual through the education system, the media and publicity campaigns. It encourages people to participate in education and training in socialist values and civic responsibilities.

Cultural heritage and festivals: The Government encourages the transmission and promotion of traditional culture, and a number of traditional Cheng Ren Li Ritual are supported and protected by the Government. For example, celebrations of traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival often include elements of Cheng Ren Li Ritual.

In general, the Chinese Government has shaped the rite of passage since the founding of the new China, with the aim of emphasizing socialist values, civic responsibility and patriotism in order to adapt to the new social context and ideology. This shaping is usually accomplished in a variety of ways, including through laws and

regulations, propaganda, education, and celebratory activities. Individuals and collectives of the Hualan Yao still have a certain degree of freedom and choice with regard to the rites of passage, and the rites of passage still play an important role in the Hualan Yao region.

### 3.1.3 During the Cultural Revolution: prohibited and interrupted Cheng Ren Li Ritual

During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese society suffered a tremendous shock, and many traditional cultures and rituals were rejected as symbols of old ideas. This led to the banning and interruption of traditional Cheng Ren Li Ritual .

The Cultural Revolution was a major social and political movement in Chinese history that lasted from 1966 to 1976, and one of its goals was to completely subvert and destroy traditional culture and social structures. Traditional rituals were severely disrupted. Rituals were often simplified and even banned in some areas. The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual involves religious ceremonies, celebrations and community gatherings. It was therefore restricted and banned during the Cultural Revolution.

#### Rituals banned and disrupted

The Cultural Revolution targeted the destruction of traditional culture and values, and a large number of cultural heritage, ancient books, works of art and historical relics were destroyed, burned or stolen. The leaders of the Cultural Revolution encouraged the Red Guards to organize the "Destruction of the Four Olds", which included the destruction of old ideas, culture, customs and habits, resulting in the destruction of many ancient buildings and cultural heritage.

The architectural space of Mentou Village has been extensively destroyed and altered. This was due to the political campaign of the Cultural Revolution, which encouraged the Red Guards and other radicals to destroy and reform traditional cultural, social and architectural structures.

Destruction of traditional buildings. The Red Guards and other radicals destroyed many traditional buildings, including temples, ancestral halls, Shipai Ping, Anlong Ping, ancient forts, and village gates. These buildings were regarded as feudal relics, symbolic and reactionary objects, and thus became targets of the Cultural Revolution.

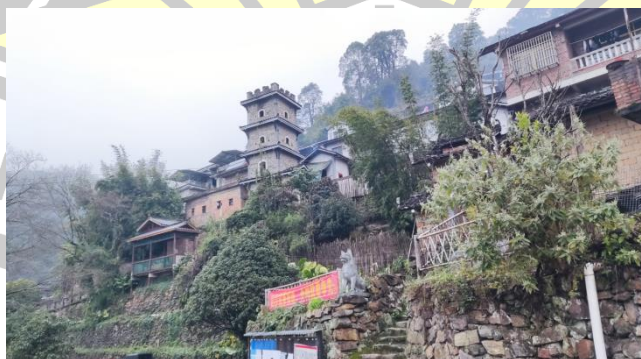


Figure 57 Ancient Fortress in Mentou Village. It was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in 2006.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Disruption of the collective life of the villages. The social structure of the village suffered disruption, and the Red Guard organization and political campaigns led to disruption of the social order. The use of village building space may have been changed to meet the needs of political activities. In some villages, building space was used by the Red Guards as bases and headquarters for organizing political campaigns, criticism meetings and propaganda activities. These activities changed the use and nature of the architectural space. The Natural God Temple in Mentou Village, where Fei Xiaotong used to conduct his social surveys, was used as the office of the Mentou Village Revolutionary Committee.

Conversion of traditional buildings. Traditional buildings in some villages have been converted to different uses to remove symbols and signs associated with the feudal society. This includes the conversion of Shihpai Ping into a community center, renamed Crowd Ping.



Figure 58 Nature God Temple in Mentou Village. Hualan Yao means "the palace of the gods of heaven and earth". The Hualan Yao people worship the sun, moon, thunder, rain, wind, fire, mountains, water, earth, trees and other natural phenomena that are closely related to human existence as deities, praying for the blessings of heaven and earth, and warning the villagers to respect and protect nature. This temple was used as the office of the Mentou Village Revolutionary Committee during the Cultural Revolution.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

During the Cultural Revolution, the architectural space of the village was extensively destroyed and transformed, mainly as a result of political campaigns and the encouragement of Red Guard actions. This has caused serious damage to traditional culture, historical heritage and social fabric, and has had a profound impact on village communities and rites of passage. While some of the architectural Spaces were later restored or rebuilt, the destruction during the Cultural Revolution remains an indelible historical memory.

Rituals are forbidden. The destruction and transformation of the architectural space in Mentou Village is accompanied by severe restrictions and suppression of traditional cultural customs. The ritual was also affected and banned.

Oppose the feudal tradition. The official policy of the Cultural Revolution emphasized the abandonment of all feudal traditions and old habits that symbolized



feudal society. The rite was seen as part of the feudal system and was therefore subject to repression.

Opposing the "Four Old" policies. The Cultural Revolution encouraged Red Guards and radicals to carry out a campaign to destroy the "Four Olds," which included old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. Cheng Ren Li Ritual was listed as one of the "old customs" and "old habits" and became the target of political movements.

Strict thought control. During the Cultural Revolution, the government tightened control over people's minds, encouraging whistleblowing and fighting. Cheng Ren Li Ritual is considered part of traditional culture and is seen as contrary to the goals of the Cultural Revolution.

The social order is in disarray. During the Cultural Revolution, social order was chaotic and political movements were frequent. The gathering of people for the initiation ritual is seen as a factor of social instability. It was banned in order to maintain political stability.

Shift of focus. During the Cultural Revolution, the government preferred people to focus on political movements and political struggles rather than traditional rituals and customs. This has led to the marginalization of traditional activities such as the initiation ritual .

The disintegration of the family structure. The Cultural Revolution encouraged Red Guards to disrupt the traditional family structure and encouraged children to report on their parents and family members in order to break up so-called "feudal rule." This leads to the breakdown of family ties and the disintegration of society.

The role of social organizations is limited. During the Cultural Revolution, the government relied on people's communes to administer villages. The role of traditional social organizations of Hualan Yao is limited and they cannot participate in community public affairs. Although they were not persecuted, they were denied all religious and secular rights.

The disintegration of the education system. During the Cultural Revolution, the education system suffered greatly. The Mentou Village primary school was closed, the level of education plummeted, and students joined the Red Guard organization in place of the school.

In short, during the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government encouraged fundamental subversion of traditional culture, including the prohibition of traditional rites of enlightenment. This led to great changes in the social culture of Hualan Yao society, and the traditional customs such as benevolence ritual were severely suppressed and restricted during this period.

#### Preserving Ritual Memory

During the Cultural Revolution, due to the Cultural Revolution policy carried out by the government, the traditional Ritual culture was severely damaged and suppressed. As a result, preserving the memory of traditional rituals becomes extremely difficult. However, some people try to preserve the memory of these traditional rituals in different ways. This is the case despite intense political surveillance and potential dangers.

Word of mouth. Many ritual memories are preserved through word of mouth. The older generation will verbally teach the younger generation the specific

steps of the ritual, the meaning and the story behind it to ensure that the cultural traditions are not lost. This includes the history of the ritual, the steps of the ritual, and the stories and traditions associated with it. The knowledge and procedures of the ritual are usually passed down orally from elders or those with traditional knowledge to younger generations. This method not only helps to preserve the traditional nature of the ritual, but also allows it to remain secret without involving written materials. In Mentou Village, elders act as transmitters who orally pass on the knowledge and procedures of the ritual to some trusted young people. These young people would come to visit the elders from time to time to learn and memorize the details of the rituals.



Figure 59 The pavilion at the entrance of Mentou Village. This pavilion is a place where villagers usually sit together to chat and have a fire. It is far away from the village buildings and is surrounded by open space. During the Cultural Revolution, this pavilion became a place where the old people taught rituals orally.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2022.

The ritual was on a smaller scale. Even during the Cultural Revolution, the Hualan Yao ethnic group continued to celebrate traditional festivals and ceremonies on a small scale. These celebrations are usually conducted in a low-key manner to avoid political issues. They will choose to hold the ritual among family, relatives and friends or in private to avoid attracting the attention of political authorities. These rituals may only be attended by a small, intimate group of people to minimize the risk of detection. They only perform ceremonies in secret or hidden locations to avoid government surveillance and interference. These sites are often known only to members of the local community and are difficult for outsiders to access.

**Coding and metaphor.** They will use coded language or metaphors to discuss rituals and traditions to avoid the risk of government surveillance. This makes it difficult for outsiders to understand their true intentions.

**Timing.** They may choose to perform their rituals during a relatively calm or relaxed period of political movement to minimize the risk of detection. They usually avoid holding ceremonies during periods of political tension or on sensitive dates. Mengtou villagers gather in secret at night or other inconspicuous times to pass on traditional rituals. This approach reduces the risk of government surveillance. Villagers would try to avoid the attention of government officials and pass on the ritual by spending time working in remote fields to reduce the likelihood of detection.



Figure 60 Sacred Stone of Mentou Village, which has been preserved in secrecy. Because of its pig-like shape, the villagers of Mentou Village called it "Divine Pig Stone". It is said that this stone fell from the sky. It is believed to have the effect of blessing the village. After the Cultural Revolution, it was placed in Shipai Ping.  
Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2022.

A written record. Some rituals and traditions may be recorded in writing to prevent forgetting. The documents may be circulated privately to protect them from political campaigns.

Cultural exchange. In the Hualan Yao community, cultural exchanges take place between different rural communities, sharing and exchanging rituals and traditional knowledge. This approach helps preserve and pass on cultural memories.

Small cultural events. Residents of the village use the Lunar New Year name to preserve some of the ritual elements in order to showcase the tradition when the political environment is a bit more relaxed.

These practices remain risky, as the government may take steps to suppress any activity that is not in line with Cultural Revolution policies.

Save files and items. So far, the Hualan Yao people have preserved ritual utensils and ritual costumes related to traditional ceremonies. These items could help people restore or rebuild traditional rituals in the future.

Spread underground or in remote areas: The remote location of Hualan Yao communities allows people to keep these ritual memories in a relatively safe environment due to weak government control.

During the Cultural Revolution, the preservation and inheritance of traditional ceremonies became very difficult due to the high pressure of the political environment. However, the Hualan Yao people strive to preserve the memory of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual in various ways so that it can be passed on to future generations. As the political environment changed and China re-examined its cultural traditions, the rite of passage was revived and promoted.

In short, during the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government attempted to destroy traditional cultural and social structures, leading to the banning and interruption of the rite of Passage. However, the Hualan Yao people strive to preserve the memory of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual in various ways so that it can be passed on to future generations. With the change of political environment and the re-

examination of Chinese cultural traditions, the rite of benevolence has been revived and promoted.

Since the founding of New China, the rite of passage has undergone a transformation from tradition to modernity. Political, social, and cultural factors have combined to shape the evolution of rituals, which have manifested themselves in different ways at different times. Despite this, coming-of-age rituals still have great social and cultural value in Chinese society and continue to evolve and adapt to new social environments.

Overall, the path of Cheng Ren Li Ritual development and interaction is a complex and multilayered process, influenced by a variety of factors at the historical, cultural, social and personal levels. The rite of passage has a long history and tradition. The rite originated from the needs of ancient societies, marking a shift in the social status of young people or a change in their social roles. Cheng Ren Li Ritual have unique ritual elements. Cultural elements include religious beliefs, values, traditional customs, and social structures, which together shape the form and meaning of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual . Over time, the rite of passage develops, evolves, and adapts to social change. Social change affects the development of the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, and it is defined and reshaped in new social contexts. But all Cheng Ren Li Ritual play an important role in society, helping individuals transition to adulthood, making social connections, and passing on cultural traditions.

### **3.2 The Interaction between Cheng Ren Li Ritual and the Development of Hualan Yao Society**

Brummer's theory of symbolic interaction can be used to explain the relationship between the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the social development of the Hualan Yao. The influence of the Cheng Ren Li ritual on the social behavior of an individual does not lie in the secularized content and function contained in the ritual itself, but in the symbolic meaning that the ritual itself has in relation to the individual. This symbolism comes from the interaction between the individual and others. In adult liturgical rituals, interaction is a dynamic process that includes ritual actions, words, reactions, and responses. Through these interactions, ritual participants co-construct the meaning of the ritual while shaping their own social identities. This section details symbolic use, social construction, and participant roles in ritual. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is a socially constructed process that gives meaning to new adult status and social position. During the rite of passage, ritual participants work together to create and maintain the social identity of the new adult.

#### **3.2.1 Ritual Symbols and the Use of Symbols**

Brummer emphasizes the critical role of symbols in social interaction. A variety of symbols are used in adult rites of passage ceremonies, including ritual attire, ritual sites, ritual actions, speech, and symbolic objects. These symbols are not just part of the ritual, but also represent the meaning of adulthood, responsibility and social status through which participants send and receive messages.

1) Characteristics of Ritual costumes and their significance in the dissemination of Hualan Yao culture

Ritual costumes often play an important symbolic role in Cheng Ren Li ritual . These costumes include specific clothing, jewelry, and headdresses that

represent adulthood and cultural identity during the ritual . The selection and wearing of ritual attire is a symbolic act that communicates to society the identity of the individual and the purpose of the ritual .

Symbolic meaning of symbols. Symbolic interaction theory suggests that symbols are more than just physical or superficial; they also have symbolic meaning. In a Cheng Ren Li ritual , the Ritual attire is more than just actual clothing; it also represents a cultural and social symbol. These costumes symbolize an individual's transition, marking their passage from childhood into adulthood and their new identity in society.

To ensure the smooth running of the ritual , female elders have to start making ritual costumes and preparing silver jewelry three days after the birth of the child.

The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual costume is top and bottom, no skirt. Women wear a greenish-brown mesh hat with an open forehead and a wide lower part, covering the ears, eyes and eyebrows, covering the front and buckling at the back, with a roof in the center and two corners hanging down. The head scarf is worn over the head. Wearing a greenish-brown buttonless cross-collar coat, long sleeves, wide mouth, shoulder and sleeve straight, collar, sleeve, edge are embroidered with exquisite patterns, and the ancient "clothes for embroidery, brocade for the edge of the" system in line. And the brocade edge is heavy, constituting the frame of the clothes, which is conducive to the stability of the clothing form and wear the body, its practical value than the artistic effect occupies a more important significance. Clothes are longer than the stock, wider, with white cloth embroidered belt or red, green, white, green, yellow five-color fine yarn woven sash harness, the body of the clothes in front of the cover after the cover, and the back of the longer than the front body, and the ancient cover in front of the cover after the open, kneepad or the so-called "red thighs across the skirt," a class of clothing is similar. Underneath, they wore shorts that were 10 centimeters long above the knee, and below the knee, they wore shin clothes, i.e., black-and-white brocade footbands, and colorful yao brocade bands to tie the footbands tightly, with colorful tassels hanging down on the sides of the calves on either side of the brocade bands, and they were barefoot or wore wooden clogs.



Figure 61 Ritual attire of Cheng Ren Li ritual .ritual attire are the biggest symbols of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Ritual attire have different meanings for different occasions.

Source: Hu Qiulan photoed.January5, 2020)

In Yao, a girl must not only look beautiful and have a beautiful heart to be praised, but her needlework must also be good. Therefore, Yao women are very good at weaving and embroidery, and Hualan Yao women are especially good at it. After the farm work, everywhere you can see the girls sitting around together, threading the needle, picking and embroidering the red, green, yellow, green and white patterns on the greenish-brown or black cotton gauze, which is very skillful and ingenious. As early as in the Qin and Han dynasties, there are records about the characteristics of Yao clothing. After the death of Discord, his children were recorded in the Houhan Book South Barbarians and Southwestern Barbarians, "weaving performance of wood skin, dyed grass, good five-color clothes, sanctioned by the shape of the tail, clothing spotted orchids." During the Western Han Dynasty, Yao's textile technology has reached a high level, after Emperor Wu ruled Wuling County, it was "yearly order adults to lose a cloth, small mouth two zhang, is called Binbu." The Song Dynasty Zhou Qufei in the "Ling outside the generation answer" said that the Guibei Yao more bun trickster, "or spot cloth robe pants, or white head scarf, women on the shirt under the skirt, spotting Burr Rustling, but its top coat mottled pattern is very fine, the common fashion is also." The Yuan Dynasty Ma Duanlin's "Documentation" also has a "bun and barefoot, dressed in variegated cloth and brown". The Qing Dynasty "Guangxi Tongzhi" still has "skirt with five-color velvet color weaving for the text embroidery" records, visible Yao clothing habits, as early as the world's attention. Until now, this kind of "colorful" Yao clothes are still most of the Yao people's favorite holiday dress.

Hualan Yao clothing embroidery not only has exquisite and colorful patterns with high decorative value, but also increases the durability of clothing with its precise and meticulous embroidery process, making it a handicraft that is both ornamental and practical. According to the processing method, the embroidery culture of Hualan Yao can be divided into two kinds: hand-picked embroidery and weaving embroidery. Hand embroidery refers to the use of fabric warp and weft threads, cross-stitch and flat picking with colorful silk threads, cotton threads, etc. to pick out patterns on clothing and fabric blanks, which are mainly used in the production of clothes and flower bags. Weaving embroidery is the use of a variety of floral threads in the process of weaving patterns, cotton threads for the warp, floral threads for the weft, in the front and back of the cloth to form a symmetrical pattern, usually used in the production of head scarves, waistbands, foot straps and so on. Before the use of textile machines for embroidery, all floral patterns were hand-picked and embroidered, therefore, the embroidery technique of Hualan Yao is also known as picking flowers.

These geometric patterns and geometrized natural objects picked out with red, orange, yellow, green, blue, white, black and other floral threads on greenish-brown, white or black plain cotton fabrics with clear interweaving of warp and weft threads are very abstract and idealistic, and are good at composing using techniques such as dispersion and grouping of features. Many of the patterns are taken from parts of certain animals or plants, such as eyes, snake skin, fish fins, fish tails, chicken feet, goat horns, earthworm heads, flower barns and so on. Women do not have to depict the pattern on the cloth beforehand, completely relying on memory and imagination, according to the national customs, aesthetic concepts and practical needs, hand pick embroidery a variety of very neat and symmetrical, colorful and harmonious, highly

decorative patterns, very creative. These geometric patterns are generalized and concise, square or round, line or surface, sparse or dense, with distinctive layers, and their rhythm and rhyme give people a strong sense of visual pleasure. The motifs have a wide range of subjects, including flowers, birds, insects, fish and people, and are mostly taken from life and nature, reflecting the harmony between man and nature.



Figure 62 Sleeve Patterns for Women's Blouses. Hualan Yao clothing embroidery is not only beautiful and colorful with high decorative value, but its precise and meticulous embroidery process can also increase the durability of clothing, which is both ornamental and practical handicrafts.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.



Figure 63 Sleeve and Hem Patterns for Women's Tops. Patterns such as the dragon's eyes and the connecting bird represent the ancestor worship and the expectation of married life in Hualan Yao.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.



Figure 64 Female Lacing Patterns. The dragon head motif on the straps echoes the bun that is coiled like a dragon head. This is a tribute to our ancestor, PanHu.  
Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Like other Yao tribes, their ancestors were called "You people", and they were the descendants of the Jiu Li and San Miao, the same as the Miao. The Jiu Li and San Miao were initially active in the southern part of China, but were forced to migrate southward after losing a war with the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor, who were moving eastward. For a long time in history, the Miao and Yao were not separated, and were collectively called "barbarians" together with some other minorities in the south. Until the Song Zhu Fu in the "stream barbarians series of laughs" in the south of the "hole people" "there are five: said Miao, said Yao, said loud and clear, said boy, said Gelao", and pointed out that they "customs and habits, generally similar". Since then, the world has been on the Since then, the world has a clearer understanding of Yao. The Song Dynasty, is also a period of great development of embroidery technology, Yao clothing embroidery also has a great development, on the basis of practicality, began to pursue more aesthetics. Such as the Song Zhou to go in the "ridge outside the answer" said, when the Yao women in Guibei, "on the shirt under the skirt, colorful Bur rustling, but its top coat pattern is very fine". Rongshui Yao people in Guangxi "are all buns and symmetrical clothes, with green and red dyed ramie, woven into a flower mantle for clothing." On the fabric woven from ramie, the embroidery of colorful patterns, has begun to take shape as the beginning of the modern Yao embroidery culture. In the Ming Dynasty, with the large-scale cultivation of cotton, a series of novel styles, exquisite craftsmanship, and extremely rich in national characteristics appeared within the Yao society. Wang Shi sex in the "Gui Hai Zhi continued," said the southwest barbarians women, "with colorful silk and silk adorned with two sleeves in front of the lapel to the waist, the back of the width of the hanging to the knee, the name of the dog tail shirt, show that we do not forget our ancestors." At this time, a portion of the Yao people began to enter Guangxi Dayao Mountain, on the basis of the original dress embroidery, by the natural environment and economic conditions, and gradually developed into five kinds of distinctive dress culture. The Qing Dynasty Tongzhi "Xiangzhou Zhi" said in the next volume: "Yao women are good at weaving Yao brocade, the color is beautiful and durable". According to the interviews in the Republic of China's Guiping County Records and Customs, "the name of the Yao is due to the color of



their costumes". It can be seen that at that time, the embroidery characteristics of Hualan Yao costumes were already known to outsiders. In the 1930s, when Fei Xiaotong and Wang Tonghui entered the Dayao Mountains, the embroidered features of their costumes still remained unchanged, "the tops of Yao women were embroidered with lace at the cuffs and along the bottom edge", and the sleeves "were embroidered with full pieces, as if they had been woven". In the 1950s, Guangxi minority social and historical survey group into the Dayao Mountains, these Yao women "like to pick embroidery colorful pattern on the clothes, and the various ethnic groups of the pattern, each with a different ethnic form, quite beautiful." The art of weaving and embroidery of the Hualan Yao women is very good, and they are really skillful in weaving and embroidery.

**Self-expression and social roles.** Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the concept of self-presentation, that is, how individuals present their social roles through their clothing and appearance. During the initiation ritual, young people wear special gowns as an act of self-presentation that expresses their adult and cultural identity. These costumes help shape their role in the ritual and their social image.

**Social identity and identity transformation.** Ritual clothing helps to express social identity and identity transformation in the initiation ritual. Young people wear certain gowns to signal that they have entered adulthood and have new identities and responsibilities in society. This symbolic shift in identity is expressed and conveyed through clothing.

**Social interaction and the Social function of ritual.** Symbolic interaction theory considers the role and function of social interaction. In the initiation ritual, the dress is not only a way for individuals to present themselves, but also a part of social interaction. Other participants, family members, and community members participate in the ritual through the recognition and appreciation of the dress, jointly building the social meaning and function of the ritual.

**Symbolic face work.** Symbolic interaction theory also deals with "face work", that is, how individuals maintain their social face and image through symbols. Wearing special Ritual clothing during the initiation ritual is a way to preserve the individual's face and ensure that they are recognized and respected in society.

In general, the symbolic interaction theory helps us to understand how Cheng Ren Li ritual clothing constructs and conveys specific cultural and social meaning through symbolism, self-presentation, social identification and social interaction. The dress is not only an external decoration, but also a sense of ritual. They also reflect deeper social interactions and cultural characteristics of individuals and societies.

#### Symbolic action of ritual objects

Cheng Ren Li ritual usually involve a series of ritual objects such as firecrackers, knives, guns, and food. These objects are symbolic and represent particular values, traditions and beliefs. They are used in the ritual to perform symbolic actions and rituals that convey the meaning of the ritual.

**The symbolic significance of ritual objects.** Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the symbolic significance of symbols, that is, objects not only have practical functions, but also represent deeper cultural and social meanings. In a Cheng Ren Li ritual, ritual objects such as firecrackers, knives, and guns are symbolic in that they represent specific values, traditions, and beliefs.

The firing of bamboo cannons during the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual is a traditional way of celebrating the occasion. The practice of firing bamboo cannons is often symbolic, representing the coming of age of the individual and the transformation of social roles.

Bamboo cannons are the precursor to firecrackers in the modern sense. Bamboo cannons are a traditional celebratory pyrotechnic device, usually made of bamboo or other combustible material, with gunpowder or explosive substances inside. They produce loud noises and sparks when burned or detonated and are used to celebrate special occasions or ceremonies. Bamboo cannons date back to ancient times and they have been used traditionally in many cultures.



Figure 65 Swords awarded to male new adults at the Cheng Ren Li ritual. A male new adult is given a sword to wear, signifying that he can go hunting on his own and take responsibility for the defense of the village.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Modern firecrackers usually use paper rolls or wrappings to contain the gunpowder and produce sound, sparks or colored smoke when ignited. Compared to bamboo firecrackers, modern firecrackers are more diverse and can produce different visual and auditory effects. Although the forms and materials of firecrackers may have changed, they still retain their traditional celebratory and symbolic character.

In many cultures, firecrackers are associated with celebrations, weddings, festivals, and Cheng Ren Li ritual. They often symbolize joy, blessing and celebration and are an important element of special occasions. Whether bamboo firecrackers or modern firecrackers, they play an important role in celebrations and symbolic ceremonies, representing the welcome and commemoration of special moments in life.

Symbol of jubilation and joy: Bamboo firecrackers are often used to express jubilation and joy, so lighting firecrackers in a coming-of-age ritual can convey the emotion of celebrating adulthood. The sound of firecrackers and fireworks can add entertainment and ritual sense to the ritual .

Symbol of blessing and protection. In some cultures, firecrackers are part of the traditional rite of passage. These cultures may have viewed firecrackers as a form of blessing and protection to help individuals enter new social stages.

Display to the community and family. Firecrackers are usually held in public places, such as community gatherings or family celebrations. This attracts more attention and shows the community and family the growth and maturity of the individual.

Symbolizing new beginnings. Firecrackers and fireworks are usually accompanied by bright lights and sounds, symbolizing new beginnings and hope. Entering adulthood, individuals may face new responsibilities and challenges, and firecrackers can express the determination to meet these challenges.

There is a Chinese folk saying that "opening the door with firecrackers". That is, at the dawn of the new year, the first thing that families do when they open the door is to burn firecrackers to get rid of the old and welcome the new with the sound of beeping and blazing firecrackers. Firecrackers is a Chinese specialty, also known as "firecrackers", "firecrackers", "firecrackers", "firecrackers". Its origin is very early, on the evolution of firecrackers, "popular arrangement of excellent" recorded: "ancient times firecrackers. All with real bamboo fire, so the Tang poetry is also known as popping rod. Later people rolled paper for it. Called "firecrackers". Whether it is the New Year's festivals, or marriage, into the school promotion, as well as the completion of the building, store opening, etc., as long as in order to express the festivities, people are accustomed to firecrackers to celebrate. On behalf of the festivities, lively and peaceful, and the blessings of the new year. In ancient times, firecrackers are to drive away the ghosts and gods to protect the peace.

This custom has a history of more than 2,000 years in China. The Jing Chu chronicle once recorded that on the first day of the first month of the year, when the chicken crowed once, everyone got up and set off firecrackers in their own yards to expel the plague gods and evil spirits. At that time there was no gunpowder, no paper, people would use fire to burn bamboo, so that the bursting sound, in order to expel the plague God, although this is just superstition, but reflects the ancient people's desire for peace and prosperity of the good wishes.

To the Tang Dynasty, firecrackers are also known as "popping rod", is a longer bamboo pole section by section burning, continuous sound of blasting. Nanchang poet Lai Guan's "early spring" poem: "the new calendar would only be half-paper open, small pavilion is still gathered popping pole ash. Written at the time of the Spring Festival burning bamboo poles. Later, the alchemist after continuous chemical tests, found that saltpeter, sulfur and charcoal together can cause combustion and explosion, so the invention of gunpowder. Some people put gunpowder in a bamboo tube to burn, the sound is louder, making the fire burning bamboo this ancient custom has undergone a fundamental change. Northern Song Dynasty, the folk have appeared with a roll of paper wrapped in gunpowder ignition, as well as the difference between single and double ring, renamed "firecrackers", and later changed to "firecrackers".

Firecrackers, also known as "firecrackers", "cannonballs" and "firecrackers", are a specialty of China and have a very early origin. If we trace the origin of the firecrackers, we would understand the ancient people burning firecrackers and its derivation of the history of the original intention.

According to The Divine Anomaly, in ancient times, when people camped out in the mountains, they would light bonfires at night, firstly, to cook food and keep warm, and secondly, to prevent wild animals from attacking them. However, there was an animal in the mountains that was not afraid of people or fire, and often took advantage of people's defenses to steal food. In order to deal with this animal, people think of burning firecrackers in the fire, with the cracking sound of bamboo to make it far away from the approach. The animal mentioned here, called "mountain shame". The ancients said that it can make people hot and cold, is to make people get hot and cold disease ghosts, scared away the mountain shame, that is, to expel the plague, can get lucky and safe. To the beginning of the Tang Dynasty, the plague, a man called Li Tian, nitrate in a bamboo tube, ignited so that it emits a greater sound and more intense smoke, the results dispersed the mountain miasma, to stop the epidemic. This is the earliest prototype of nitrate firecrackers. After the emergence of gunpowder, people would be saltpeter, sulfur and charcoal, etc. filled with bamboo tubes burning, resulting in "firecrackers". To the Song Dynasty, the folk began to commonly use paper tubes and hemp stems wrapped in gunpowder woven into strings made of "braided cannon" (i.e., firecrackers). On the evolution of firecrackers, "popular arrangement of excellent" recorded: "Ancient firecrackers. All with real bamboo fire, so the Tang poetry also known as popping rod. Later people rolled paper for it. Called "firecrackers".

China's ancient beliefs: fire, can remove ominous; sparks, is the omen of happy events; sound, can scare ghosts, dispersal of the bad gas; smoke makes the rise of Yang Qi. Fireworks firecrackers in the discharge of just such a number of sound, fire, smoke, light and other effects, very naturally combined with people's concepts, and thus become the ideal celebratory items.

Both men and women like to carry long knives whenever they go out. The long knife is 30 to 40 centimeters long and 5 to 7 centimeters wide, made of high-quality steel forging, with a thin and light blade and a sharp and durable edge. The blade is 60 to 80 centimeters long with a wooden handle. The sheath is made of moso bamboo, and the knife is inserted into the sheath and carried on the left side of the waist, which is very distinctive.

Ritual actions with ritual objects. Ritual objects are often used to perform symbolic actions during a Cheng Ren Li ritual. Actions such as lighting firecrackers, wearing a sword or gun, and receiving a sword or gun are all part of ritual objects that help to communicate the purpose and cultural significance of the ritual .

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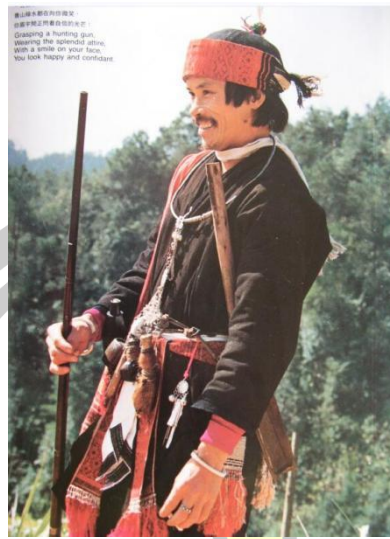


Figure 66 Adult Men with Shotguns and Swords in Hualan Yao. This photo was reproduced from the book "Yao" published by the Guangxi Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission in 1990

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Social interaction and ritual objects. Symbolic interaction theory considers the role and function of social interaction. In the rite of benevolence, the rites are not only personal material props; They also communicate specific messages through social interaction. Participants, family members, and community members interact with ritual objects to build the social meaning and value of the ritual.

Cultural transmission and ritual. Rites help to spread culture. They transmit the values, traditions and beliefs of a particular culture from generation to generation. Participants in the ritual learn about the character and importance of their culture through interaction with these objects. Identity and ritual objects. In the initiation ritual, ritual objects are also associated with the transformation of identity and identity. Young people in rituals often interact with specific objects that symbolize their transition from childhood to adulthood and their new identity in society. This interaction helps individuals and social groups understand the change and importance of identity.

To sum up, symbolic interaction theory can help us understand how Chengren rites construct and convey specific cultural and social meanings through symbolism, social interaction, cultural transmission and identity. These objects are not just physical props; They are an important part of ritual and help individuals and social groups understand the deeper meaning and value of ritual.

#### Symbolic elements of Ritual sites

Symbolic interaction theory suggests that places themselves can become symbols, representing socially and culturally specific meanings. The ritual sites of Cheng Ren Li ritual are usually specific locations, such as houses, streets, Shewang temples, and Shihpai Ping. These locations carry specific symbolic and cultural meanings.

The social role of places. Places also play a symbolic role in society. In the rite of benevolence, the ritual place is not only a geographical location, but also reflects the role and function of the community. For example, the house represents the

family, the street and the seven eight Bridges represent the community. The Main hall of the Stone Emperor Temple represents religion and holiness, and the ritual of benevolence will be held here, which highlights the importance of religion.

A family place. The ritual to become a child begins first in the family and is held in the hall of the home. This emphasizes the role and support of family and close relationships in personal growth.

In the early days of Dayao Mountain, Hualan Yao lived in a hut surrounded by wooden frames and hedges. This kind of house structure is relatively simple, three sets of three pillars on the tree, high in the center and low on both sides, set up eight yards, rows of trusses, and cover the thatched roof; The walls are mostly bar people or small bamboo woven around them. If you use thicker bamboo to make bamboo boards or use wooden boards to clamp walls, even the best straw hut. This kind of house is of poor quality and must be updated after a year or two. Usually, in stormy weather, the house leaks. It can be seen that the ancestors of Hualan Yao had a very difficult time in the early days when they entered Dayao Mountain.

There are two kinds of walls of wooden structure houses with mud and stone walls: one is to use short straw mixed with yellow mud as pulp, and stone or pebble as brick; The other is to use short straw mixed with yellow mud for pulp, with stones or pebbles for bricks. The other is to use old fir trees to make movable wall panels (also known as wall partitions), pour an appropriate amount of yellow mud each time, and use a special rammer (locally known as dry beating) to tamp the wall. Base), etc., repeat the cycle to form a wall. This kind of house is horizontal and broad, composed of four walls, only doors, few Windows, there is no wall inside to separate the bedroom, so it is called "square house". Since there was no partition wall supporting trusses in the middle, two large cedar beams were set up on the flat water wall. In order to reduce the pressure of the beam on the wall, the large fir beam is folded, and the two ends of the beam are topped on the wall of the house, and the center is supported by the chopped fir column. Divided into six faces. Eight yards of trusses are placed on the beams. The roof is covered with cedar bark and bamboo shingles. Later, some people built locally made tiles. Although there are skylights and bright tiles, the light is insufficient and the air is not good. The interior layout, as far as the front of the house is concerned, is generally more than the back wall of the center of the shrine, and the front of the shrine is the eight immortals terrace and the main hall; In front of the fireplace in the atrium, large wooden benches were set against the wall; After using boards or cabinets to block off the young couple's bedroom; There is a bed in front of the door; Open the kitchen door behind the wall. Some people put the wooden pestle used to pound rice against the kitchen door installed in the room, some people installed it in the kitchen. The pillars and walls were mostly studded with nails for hanging clothes, pockets and other things. The chicken coop and corral are located outside the house. All the barns are built at a certain distance from the houses, and nine piers of about 1 meter are built with large stone blocks, laying wooden beams and about 15 centimeters of straw and yellow mud to make a hanging quadrangle platform. With large yellow mud brick walls, and then with thick boards and straw yellow mud sealed into a flat roof, covered with sloping wood veneer or earth tile. There is only one small door in the Wo warehouse, and the rest of the buildings are completely closed, and all the food is put in the warehouse. It is said that this has two advantages, one is to prevent the infestation of

rats; The second is to prevent the breeding of rats. Secondly, in case of fire, the food will not be burned. To this day, Mentou Village still retains houses in the "Sifuya" style.



Figure 67 The traditional "square house" in Mentou Village. This is also the family place where the Cheng Ren Li ritual is held.  
Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Wood frame tile mud brick wall houses, mud walls are still "playing dry base", brick walls are using locally fired bricks, fundamentally changing the "four-sided house" model of housing structure. Most of these houses are of the transverse width binary type, (there are also a few of the ternary type, large into several households). The first is the lower seat, and the second is the main room (called the upper seat). The main house consists of three rooms, with the main hall in the center and the master bedroom on both sides, on wooden floors. On either side or one side of the main house are kitchens and utility rooms that are lower than the main house. Some connect the lower seat to the front room on either side of the main house; Some connect the lower seat to the front room on either side of the main house; Some people connect it with a fence. The lower seat is shorter than the upper seat, and the middle is the living room, and the two sides are the stalls; Between the upper and lower seats is a courtyard patio. The ceiling is covered with locally fired earth tiles and Anliang tiles, and the Windows are open for better light and air circulation. The ternary structure is to set a wall in front of the next seat to form a corridor, and a gate is set at one end of the corridor. Some families in the villages of Liu Xiang and Mentou erected a low wall in the middle of the lower block and set up a sun deck in front of it.

The mud-brick wall house with wooden structure tile, the foundation of the house is built with stone on the hillside, in the shape of "half hammock", the house is scattered and unique style.

Compass according to the gossip to determine the seat to the orientation, and then according to the master's birth date to choose the auspicious day to lay the foundation stone. The entire house construction process is very auspicious, from start to finish can not speak unlucky words at the construction site to ensure construction safety. An gate, to choose the hour, and with three 30 centimeters long, 12 centimeters wide red paper, respectively, written on the "Anmen Daji", "Ding Cai two thriving", "wealth and prosperity," the words pasted in the lintel on the lintel. Then, firecrackers are burned and red packets are given to the master and people present. In addition,

firecrackers are also set off to give red packets to the master and those who participated in the construction of the house, such as the head of the door and the roof beams.

**A social place.** The ritual is held in a specific social place. These places represent social interaction and social networking, emphasizing the importance of social relationships and social roles.

After the ritual participants walk out of their homes, they first walk through the central streets of the village. The main street in the center of the village is the main place for villagers to walk and communicate daily.

It is unusual, but possible, to hold a rite of passage in a social place like Central Street. Such occasions usually occur within a particular community or culture, and the specific symbolism may vary by region, tradition, and social context. The following are some possible symbolic meanings and contexts for holding a rite of Passage in a public place such as a central street: **Community identity and celebration:** In some communities, rite of passage may be seen as a celebration for the entire community, rather than just for individuals. Arranging the ritual on a central street can attract more community members to participate and demonstrate community unity and identity.

**Public display of growth.** The central street, as a public place, provides a broader stage for individuals to publicly display their growth and maturity. Such public displays may help emphasize the individual's new social roles and responsibilities.

**Cultural or social change.** In certain cultural or social movements, the rite of passage may be used as a symbolic act intended to convey social change and reform. Holding such a ritual on Central Street can attract more attention and spread a specific message or values.

**Celebrate special events.** Initiation rituals can be combined with special events, such as major social, cultural or political events. Holding such a ritual on Central Street can attract more people and increase the popularity and influence of the event.

It is worth noting that holding the initiation ritual in a public place may require consideration of some additional security and organizational issues to ensure the smooth running of the event. In addition, the symbolic meaning of the ritual is often linked to local culture and traditions, so the local social background and values should be respected when planning and organizing the event.

**Religious Places.** The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual is associated with religion. Participants in the ritual walk through the center street to the entrance of the village to the places that represent the rising of the sun and express their respect. These sites represent piety and faith, as well as the recognition and acceptance of the individual within the religious community. The fact that the Cheng Ren Li Ritual takes place in a religious site also emphasizes the importance and influence of religion.

Participants in the ritual would walk through the streets to the village landmarks to pay their respects and receive teachings and blessings from the elders.

Hualan Yao believes that the rise and fall of villages, temples and ancestral tombs are dominated by the Dragon God, therefore, new villages, temples and ancestral tombs should be installed with dragons; old villages are disturbed by



people and animals, roosters don't crow on time or don't crow at all night, and dogs don't bark, etc., which are believed to be caused by the lack of prosperity of the Dragon God and the Dragon God's uneasiness or the Dragon God's departure, which are confirmed by fortune-telling and have to be installed with dragons.

Ancun Long, is the village's collective rituals, large-scale, to invite the master of many people, all through the host of the Ancun Long rituals master through the precepts of the disciples, all to the scene, before and after the use of three days and two nights, during which the whole village to eat fasting, to show piety.

Anlong has to choose an auspicious day. On the first day, a hut is built on a flat area in the village, and straw is spread out and new mats are put on it. Three rows of "Pung" and three rows of "Companions" cut out of colorful paper are hung on the top, and a square table for the tree altar is set up against the wall in the middle. In the center, a square table for the tree altar was set up against the wall. On the front side, portraits of the Jade Emperor, the Three Pristine Ones, and the Four Handsome Ones were hung. Square table in the middle of a bowl of rice, standing on the wooden statue of the ancestor, like the left side of the wooden jade seal, both sides of the rice tube inserted with red paper cut "Ding Ding flowers". Offerings of rice, wine, chicken, fruit, joss paper and so on. The next day after breakfast, the planting of bamboo and wood activities, the village men, women and children are all mobilized, each to the village side to plant a bamboo or wood, so that the woods are more full of vitality.

"Redeeming the Soul of the Harvest" is an important part of Anlong's activities. A basket is filled with half a bucket of grain seeds, a woman's dress and headdress are put in it, a small scale is inserted, and placed under the table; on the table, there is a dustpan full of rice. The master reads the sutra to redeem the soul of the harvest, and after divining that the soul of the harvest has been redeemed, he distributes the seeds evenly among the village people, and grabs the rice in the dustpan and scatters it towards the crowd. People have pulled up the hem of their clothes or open their pockets to receive rice, until the master of the rice scattered. People to receive more rice for the lucky, take home into the rice tank, the seventh day to cook the whole family to eat; grain seed into the barn, seven days not open barn to hit the rice, and do not lend rice to others.

Before sweeping the altar, seven chickens are killed, boiled with their blood and entrails and put into a large basin, which is brought to the altar, where the master recites sutras and sends the five dragons back to thank the Jade Emperor, the Three Pristine Ones, the Four Handsome Ones, and the Ancestors of the past generations. Send the "human flower" to the village of the new bride's family, the blessing of an early addition to the family. Come back to incinerate the hanging "list" and "companion", "inverted streamers", sweep the altar. At this point, the Shikong congregation can open meat dinner, Anlong end.

The Anshe Temple Dragon is roughly the same as the Ansumura Dragon, with slight variations in certain details, which, in the words of the Master, is like sewing clothes into men's and women's clothes, depending on the object of the sewing.

The Ancestral Tomb Dragon is a small-scale ritual for a family or a family of the same clan, which is usually done in half a day by hiring a master. The procedures and practices are a simplification of the Ancestral Dragon.

Historical buildings. Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual are held in places of historical and cultural significance. These sites represent cultural traditions and heritage, emphasizing social continuity and values.

The Shippai, the main historical building in the Cheng Ren Li Ritual. Social education is an important form of traditional education. The social education of Hualan Yao focuses on moral education, including education on national consciousness, national history, religious beliefs and folk statutes. Although they do not have the education of systematically passing on the various knowledge accumulated by their ancestors over a long period of time to the next generation in a fixed way, they are able to educate their children and grandchildren about the major historical events of their own nation in the way of oral transmission. In order to prevent future generations from forgetting their roots, the old-timers made songs about major events in history and taught children to sing them from the time they were learning to speak in order to educate them socially. The root song "Han people chasing, Zhuang people catching up" "Into the top of the Yao Mountain each set up a village, into the root of the Yao Mountain each built a village " is an account of the arduous journey of ancestral migration.



Figure 68 Shipai Ping is a major ceremonial site. It is the primary ceremonial site in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. It represents cultural traditions and heritage and emphasizes social continuity and values.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

Natural Places. The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual would be held in natural places, such as at Shipai Ping, which is located next to a forest. These sites symbolize the connection with nature and the growth of the individual, as well as the respect and cherishing of nature.

Hualan Yao is a tree-loving ethnic group, and Mentou Village even maintains a good ecological environment. The primitive forest behind Mentou Village is full of green trees, and there are more than 100 old trees around the village. Guangxi's largest cedar tree king is growing in the lower Lingtian side about two kilometers from Mentou; the cedar tree king is 51.8 meters high, with a diameter of 158 centimeters at breast height, a volume of 34.8 cubic meters, and an age of more than 230 years, it is still leafy and lush. This is the result of careful protection by the people of Mentou Village. Nowadays, there are safflower trees, banyan trees, camellia trees, mountain mahogany trees and so on planted at the edge of the village. Mentou

Village is covered with green trees, which makes people feel the harmony between human and nature everywhere.



Figure 69 Shipai Ping surrounded by trees. These sites symbolize the connection with the natural world and the growth of the individual, as well as the respect and cherishing of nature.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

The ecological environment of Mentou Village is good, and the humanistic landscape is also good. At the head of the village, there is a village gate with Yao characteristics, engraved with a couplet: the door to the green mountains reflecting the sun and the moon, and the head of the blue sky to write spring and autumn. The banner reads: "Ancient Wind and Moon". There is a "Pavilion of Merit" at the side of the village, looking out from the pavilion, the reckless mountains come into view. In the village, there is the former site where Mr. Fei Xiaotong, a famous sociologist, conducted a social survey of Hualan Yao in Mentou, and a monument is carved in the village. In addition, there is also the "China Hualan Yao Museum", in which the history and folklore relics of Hualan Yao are displayed, demonstrating the excellent traditional culture of Hualan Yao.

The good natural ecological environment has brought benefits to the people of Mentou village. The clear mountain springs from the forest streams continue to flow all year round, the air is fresh, there is no air pollution, no soil erosion, and in 2005, "6.21" a hundred-year flash flood struck Luxiang, many villages were hit by landslides and other serious natural disasters, but Mentou village was safe and sound, but really all depends on the protection of the forest.

Different venues give different symbolic meanings to the ritual, reflecting the cultural, religious and social values of Hualan Yao. These places not only provide a place for the ritual to take place, but also reinforce the meaning of the ritual and help individuals and communities collectively recognize the maturity and maturity of the individual.

Location and ritual action. ritual field is the activity place of benevolence ritual, and it is the place where all kinds of ritual actions and ritual words occur. The choice and layout of the venue usually matches the purpose and symbolism of the ritual. The decoration and layout of the site emphasize the transformation of individual identity and cultural identity.

Social interaction and place. Symbolic interaction theory considers the role and function of social interaction. In the initiation ritual, the place is not only the

physical environment of the individual, but also the platform for social interaction. Family members, community members, and other participants interact together within the ritual site to build the social meaning and value of the ritual.

The social significance of the place. A ritual place is not just a physical space, it is a space. It reflects the values and meaning of society and culture. The choice of location is influenced by religion, tradition, culture and social context. These places convey cultural identity and social values in their rituals.

To sum up, the symbolic interaction theory helps us to understand how Cheng Ren Li ritual places carry symbolic meaning and social functions. A ritual place is not only a physical environment, but also a place. It also represents cultural, social and personal specific meanings. Through the selection and arrangement of ritual venues, ceremonies can convey profound social and cultural information and help individuals and social groups to understand the deep meaning and value of ceremonies.

#### Expressions of ritual language

Symbolic interaction theory also emphasizes the importance of ritual rhetoric. Ritual rhetoric includes vows, blessings, and teachings, which are the verbal symbols of the ritual that convey the individual's commitment, beliefs, and cultural identity. Rhetoric helps to clarify the goals of the ritual and the symbolic meaning of the ritual.

The process of learning is an important popularization of social education, which not only educates people about history, but also about law and order, ethics and morality. More importantly, it educates people about law and order, ethics and morality.

In order to make future generations remember history, inherit and carry forward the national spirit of hard work, diligence and courage, selflessness and fearlessness of our forefathers, and adhere to the principles of being good to others, helping others, respecting the old and loving the young, making a clear distinction between love and hate, and hating evil as if it were an enemy, the Flower Ranch Yao people have always attached great importance to family education. They regard family education as the cornerstone of a tall building, and the success or failure of family education is related to the success or failure of children's life. Therefore, in addition to teaching by word and example, the elders often give their children in-depth explanations of the principles of human behavior.

Family education has a wide range of contents, especially education on how to treat others, which is an important part of family education. In daily life, children are taught to treat others with courtesy and respect, so that they know how to be courteous from an early age. Therefore, all men, women and children in Hualan Yao are very polite, no matter who they meet outside, the younger generation would take the initiative to greet the elders, asking "good", "good morning", "where to" and so on. This is regarded as being polite and praised by the people; on the contrary, it is regarded as not being polite and blamed.

The elders of Hualan Yao educate their children from childhood with the idea of helping others, so that the children develop the virtue of treating others with courtesy and helping others, giving way to elders on the road, helping elders to pick a load; when others have difficulties, they should sincerely help each other; when someone in the village builds a house or organizes a red and white affair, we all help

each other. There is a back-and-forth, forming a culture of "when one side is in trouble, all sides would help".

Hualan Yao also attaches great importance to gratitude education. In their ritual activities, they have to carry out the "Tong Lecture". They read out the original places where their ancestors have lived, so that future generations would remember their ancestry. For example, the couplet of the Hu family name in Mentou Village reads, "The origin of the family is far away from the Yingshan Mountain, and the branch is moved to Mentou to revitalize the family's voice." When the children get married, the great-uncle

When giving money to a brother-in-law or sister-in-law at a banquet, it is necessary to talk about "giving money", and when the main family thanks them, it is also necessary to talk about "returning money". In other words, the representatives of both sides of the marriage introduce their family history to everyone. In addition, the elders also make up old folk songs and pass them down from generation to generation.

Hualan Yao live deep in the mountains, with poor production conditions and difficult sources of living, and they believe that a lifetime of hard work and thrift is the basis for keeping a family. Therefore, the elders, whether in labor or by the fire, teach the younger generation to be

Thrift and frugality, love of food. Sometimes children eat rice dropped on the table, adults would pick up the rice to eat, but also told the children to follow the adults like the rice dropped on the table to pick up and eat. If it falls to the ground, the child is allowed to pick it up and feed it to the chickens.

They are more patient and meticulous in educating the younger generation about production techniques and handicrafts. They teach the younger generation how to plow and harrow the fields, and give demonstrations of rice-planting and rice-planting. At the age of seven or eight, girls are taught by adults to pick flowers, spinning and weaving, and by the age of fifteen or sixteen, they are able to master the complex techniques of picking embroidery and spinning and weaving.

Family education in Hualan Yao is basic, long-term, continuous and easy to understand, and plays a positive role in the growth of young people.

#### Symbolism of ritual actions

The actions and words of the Cheng Ren Li ritual also form part of the symbol system. This includes reciting specific vows, performing symbolic acts, giving blessings or prayers, etc. These actions and words convey the purpose and cultural values of the ritual .

Symbolic nature of ritual actions. The theory of symbolic interaction holds that ritual actions are not only behaviors, but also symbolic. In the Cheng Ren Li ritual, various actions, such as worshipping ancestors, eating Ritual food, combing the hair in a bun, sitting facing the east, changing costumes, lighting firecrackers, and wearing swords and spears, all have deep cultural and social meanings. These actions represent specific values, traditions and beliefs and convey the purpose and symbolic meaning of the ritual .



Figure 70 Ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is an important part of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Prior to the ritual, the male elders of the family report information about the new adult to the ancestors through the ritual.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

Ritual actions and social roles. Ritual actions help construct and express an individual's social role. During Cheng Ren Li ritual, new adults typically perform specific actions, such as combing their hair, putting on Ritual clothing, walking to a specific location, and receiving a sword or gun, that mark their identity transformation and cultural recognition. The performance of these roles is manifested through ritual actions.

Hair has a very important meaning in the traditional society of Hualan Yao. When a child is about 100 days old, they cut the child's hair once, and again when the child is half a year old. After these two times, they would never cut hair again. Until the age of 14, boys' pull their hair back into a bun, which is much simpler than the adult bun. Girls wear their hair in two braids evenly spaced from side to side, coiled from behind the ears around the forehead on the head, and then knotted at the back of the head without a headdress. It means that children under the age of 14 have not yet grown up and are blessed by the Goddess of Flowers and have not yet left the garden. The headdress is not worn until the morning of the first day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar in the year in which the child turns 15, when a "Cheng Ren Li Ritual" is held.

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Figure 71 Female new adults are wearing their hair in a bun. Wearing a dragon head bun is an expression of honoring the ancestor, PanHu. It also symbolizes becoming a real person like PanHu.

Source: Photo by Photographed by the author .February1, 2022.

Women grow up with long hair. Before the 1950s, adult women dressed their hair, dividing it into front and back sections with the ears as the boundary. Pull the back of your hair to the top of your head and tie it in a tight bun. Tip the front of your hair to your forehead and dab it with lard. Middle-aged and old women at the level of the eyebrow, young women at one finger above the eyebrow. Then fold the hair flat upside down to the top of the head knot, with a silver clip. With cloth wrapped into a hair cap shape, commonly known as "hair cap". After fixing the hair with lard, the rich women used two silver pins with a length of 14 centimeters, and the poor used bamboo pins, which were inserted in the left and right sides of the hair as a head brace. There is a distinction between the head of young women and middle-aged and old women: the head of young women is made of white cotton yarn for warp and black cotton yarn for weft. The woven length is about 40 cm, the width is about 27 cm, and the two scarves must be about 30 cm long, without cross-stitching. When tying the head, the scarf must cross the back of the head with a red rope, hidden in the head of the crease, the two ends of the remaining 10 cm hanging on both sides of the head. The head of middle-aged and elderly women is a pure white cloth, the same length and width as the head of young women, but there is no beard. White cloth center, four sides of the middle line each pick a headscarf flower. When tying the head patch, the top two corners should be placed behind the bun and fastened with a silver pin.



Figure 72 Female Cheng Ren Li ritual New Adults Changing Dresses. Wearing the ceremonial costume is both an expression of remembrance of our ancestor, PanHui, and a way of gaining recognition from our ancestors. Only by wearing ceremonial costumes can the ancestors of the Hualan Yao recognize the person. It is also only then that the new adult receives a real name from the ancestors.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

After the 1950s, with the changes of The Times, Hualan Yao women reformed the "hair cap". They replaced the unhygienic and annoying "hair cap" with a black headband. The black headband is a trapezoid black coarse cloth, 27 cm long on the top side, 40 cm long on the bottom side and 20 cm wide. With a red cloth along the diagonal and the short side of the red line, the intersection of the two corners of the long side to form an open cap. The upper part of the front of the cap is inserted with a 23cm long silver pin with hooks at both ends to play a supporting role. The silver pin is beautifully decorated with the sun in the center and a dragon at both ends. When dressing up, the black headdress is at the bottom, the white headdress is on the top, and after tying the hair, the black headdress is opened with a silver pin on the forehead. Although the eyebrows and ears are covered, it does not affect the original style and vision.

Headwear for adult men remained the custom until the 1950s, when long hair was worn in a bun on top of the head. A special silver bobby pin was placed in the bun and a saffron colored headband was wrapped around it. Although the custom of wearing hair in a bun no longer existed, the custom of wearing headscarves with red flowers was passed down. The saffron headscarf is made of a piece of black cloth 40 cm long, 20 cm wide and 30 cm long, with a scarf tied at each end. Use a bright red silk thread to pick the dragon head flower in the middle, both sides of corresponding pick full of silver flowers, pine and cypress flowers and dazzling. To wrap the head, fold the saffron bandana into an 8cm wide band, wrap it around the forehead, wrap it around the head, and tie the bandana into a knot and hang it at the back.



Setting off bamboo cannons during the ritual is a traditional way to celebrate the festival. The practice of firing bamboo cannons is often symbolic, representing an individual's maturity and changing social role.

Bamboo cannon is the predecessor of firecrackers in the modern sense. A bamboo cannon is a traditional festive pyrotechnic device, usually made of bamboo or other combustible materials and filled with gunpowder or explosive substances. They produce loud noises and sparks when burned or detonated and are used to celebrate special occasions or ceremonies. Bamboo cannons date back to ancient times and are traditionally used in many cultures.

Modern firecrackers usually use paper rolls or wrappers to hold gunpowder, which when lit produces sounds, sparks, or colored smoke. Compared with bamboo firecrackers, modern firecrackers are more diverse and can produce different visual and auditory effects. Although the form and materials of firecrackers may have changed, they still retain the traditional celebratory and symbolic characteristics.

In many cultures, firecrackers are associated with celebrations, weddings, festivals, and Cheng Ren Li ritual. They often symbolize joy, blessing and celebration and are an important element of special occasions. Whether bamboo firecrackers or modern firecrackers, they play an important role in celebrations and symbolic ceremonies, representing the welcome and commemoration of special moments in life.

Symbol of jubilation and joy. Bamboo firecrackers are often used to express jubilation and joy, so lighting firecrackers in a coming-of-age ritual can convey the emotion of celebrating adulthood. The sound of firecrackers and fireworks can add entertainment and ritual sense to the ritual .

Symbol of blessing and protection. In some cultures, firecrackers are part of the traditional rite of passage. These cultures may have viewed firecrackers as a form of blessing and protection to help individuals enter new social stages. Display to the community and family. Firecrackers are usually held in public places, such as community gatherings or family celebrations. This attracts more attention and shows the community and family the growth and maturity of the individual.

Symbolizing new beginnings. Firecrackers and fireworks are usually accompanied by bright lights and sounds, symbolizing new beginnings and hope. Entering adulthood, individuals may face new responsibilities and challenges, and firecrackers can express the determination to meet these challenges.

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Figure 73 New Adults walk to a designated spot to set off firecrackers. Firecrackers and fireworks are typically accompanied by bright lights and sounds, which can symbolize fresh starts and hope.

Source: Photographed by the author .February1, 2022.

Social interaction, ritual behavior, and rhetoric. Symbolic interaction theory considers the role and function of social interaction. In the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, the ritual acts and words are not merely individual acts and expressions; They also play an important role in social interaction. Other participants, family members, and community members work together to construct the social meaning and value of the passage of the ritual by reacting to the acts and words of the ritual.

Cultural identity and ritual behavior and speech. Ritual acts and words help build cultural identity. They convey the values, traditions and beliefs of a particular culture. Individuals and social groups express their identity and commitment to their culture through ritual behavior and speech.

To summarize, symbolic interaction theory helps us understand how ritual actions and rhetoric in Cheng Ren Li ritual construct and convey specific cultural and social meanings through symbolism, social roles, social interaction, and cultural identity. These actions and words are more than just surface behaviors; they also represent the profound meaning of the ritual and help individuals and social groups understand the symbolism and value of the ritual.

Brummer emphasizes the important role of symbols in social interaction. The various symbols in a Cheng Ren Li Ritual, such as ritual attire, Ritual places, Ritual objects, actions, and language, carry specific cultural and social meanings. These symbols are not just superficial symbols, but also reflect the values, beliefs and cultural identity of a particular community. Symbolic systems in rituals help to pass on culture and traditions. By participating in rituals and understanding the symbols within them, the younger generation learns the values, beliefs and traditions of their own culture. This contributes to the transmission and continuation of culture.

Overall, Brummer's theory of symbolic interaction emphasizes the critical role of symbols in social interaction. The symbolic system of Cheng Ren Li ritual is a complex system of dress, places, objects, actions, speech, and social interactions used to convey specific cultural and social meanings. The Cheng Ren Li ritual serves as a symbolic social ritual that conveys meanings of adulthood, responsibility, and social status through the use of symbols. These symbols are not merely formal, but carry deep cultural and social meanings that help individuals establish their identity in society, while also strengthening social cohesion and identity.

### 3.2.2 Social role-playing by ritual participants

Symbolic interaction theory focuses on the roles of individuals in interaction. In the Cheng Ren Li ritual, different participants take on different roles, including the ritual facilitator, the new adult, family and community members, and the audience. These roles are intertwined in the ritual and together they form the social dynamics of the ritual.

According to Brummer, social roles are more than just an individual's place in society; they also include symbolic meanings. In the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the participants of the ritual are usually assigned specific social roles, such as adults, culture bearers, and members of the family. These roles symbolize an individual's identity, responsibility, and cultural identity.



Figure 74 Female Emerging Adults and Masters of ritual , Ritual Aides. New Adult. This is the primary participant in a Cheng Ren Li ritual. The new adult wears special clothing, participates in specific ritual actions, and receives special gifts, all of which represent their role change from adolescent to adult. New adults need to demonstrate symbols of adulthood, responsibility, and social status in their social roles.

Source: Photographed by the author .February1, 2022.





Figure 75 Male New Adults and Master of Ceremonies, Ritual Aides. Family members often play an important role in a Cheng Ren Li ritual. They may provide support, guidance, and blessings to help the young person navigate this important transition. Family members may participate in the celebration and share in this special moment.

Source: Photographed by the author .February1, 2022.



Figure 76 Participants of Cheng Ren Li ritual. Cheng Ren Li ritual are often community events as well, so members of the community may participate in the celebration to show their congratulations and support for the adult candidate. Community participation can reinforce the social and cultural significance of the ritual .

Source: Photographed by the author. February1, 2022.

New Adult. This is the primary participant in Cheng Ren Li ritual who is approaching or has reached the age of majority at 15 years of age, marking their transition from the adolescent stage to adulthood. These individuals typically complete a series of tasks, trials, or ritualistic activities during the ritual to demonstrate their readiness to assume the responsibilities and duties of adulthood. They wear special clothing, participate in specific ritual actions, and receive special gifts, all of which represent their role change from adolescent to adult. New adults

need to demonstrate adulthood, responsibility, and symbols of social status in their social roles.

**Family Members.** Family members often play an important role in a Cheng Ren Li Ritual . They may provide support, guidance, and blessings to help the young person navigate this important transition. Family members may attend the celebration to share in this special occasion.



Figure 77 New Adult with her family members. Rituals involve interactions between family members, community members, and other participants. These interactions help to confirm and reinforce the new social roles of the participants in the ritual .

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

**Master of Ceremonies.** The ritual is usually guided and conducted by a Master of Ceremonies. They would provide guidance to the adult candidate, explain the meaning of the ritual , and ensure that the ritual is conducted in accordance with traditions and regulations.



Figure 78 Ritual Facilitator Helping New Adults to Put on ritual Attire. During the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the interaction and words of the new adults and the Master of Ceremonies express their mentoring relationship.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

Community Members. Cheng Ren Li ritual are often community events as well, so community members may participate in the celebration to show their congratulations and support for the adult candidate. Community participation can reinforce the social and cultural significance of the ritual .



Figure 79 Community Members Participating in Cheng Ren Li ritual. All community members will participate in the celebration to show their congratulations and support for the adult candidate.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

Friends and peers. Cheng Ren Li ritual usually also involve friends and peers of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They may attend the celebration to share the special occasion with the candidate, as well as participate in various ritual activities and entertainment.



Figure 80 New Adult Contemporaries. The Cheng Ren Li ritual also involves the friends and peers of the new adult. They also join in the celebration and share this special moment with the new adult, as well as participate in various ritual activities and entertainment.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

Role Playing and ritual attire. ritual attire plays an important role in social role-playing. ritual attire in Cheng Ren Li ritual is usually special, and wearing these costumes means that the ritual participants are taking on new social roles. Boys and girls who wear ritual costumes are then playing the role of new adults, which is a symbolic process.

Social interaction and social roles. Social interaction plays a key role in social role-playing. Cheng Ren Li ritual typically involve interactions between family members, community members, and other participants. These interactions help to confirm and reinforce the new social roles of the ritual participants. During a Cheng Ren Li ritual, the interactions and words of the new adult and the officiant express their mentoring relationship.

Cultural identity and social roles. Social role-playing helps to express cultural identity. Cheng Ren Li ritual often reflect the values and traditions of a particular culture. By playing specific social roles, ritual participants express their identification with and commitment to their culture.

Symbolic interaction theory suggests that social reality is constructed through the interaction and interpretation of symbols. In the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, a variety of participants, including the officiant, participants, family members, and community members, engage in symbolic interactions that collectively construct the meaning and value of the ritual. The results of these symbolic interactions help define ethnicity.

In summary, participants in Cheng Ren Li ritual play many different roles, including the new adult, the presider of the ritual, family members, and the audience. These roles interact with each other during the ritual, utilizing symbols and interactions to convey and shape their roles and participate in the process of social construction. Cheng Ren Li ritual was an important occasion for social role-playing that helps individuals and social groups understand the importance of cultural identity and social responsibility.

### 3.2.3 New Adult Roles and Self-Presentation

Symbolic interaction theory focuses on how individuals play specific roles in social interactions and express their identity through self-presentation. During a Cheng Ren Li Ritual, new adults take on specific roles, wear special clothing, and perform specific actions and rituals to express their adulthood and cultural identity. These roles and the process of self-presentation are part of the construction of ethnicity.

According to Brummer, social action is composed of individual and collective activities carried out by people involved in social interaction I - that is, by those activities that form themselves in accordance with each other's activities. According to him, man is a social being who possesses a self and who, while making external things and others the object of his knowledge, also makes himself the object of his knowledge. In this process, man is able to recognize himself, to possess his own ideas, to communicate or transmit them to himself, and to be able to act upon himself. This interaction with oneself - "self-interaction" - is essentially an internalization of social interaction with others, that is, the reflection in the individual's mind of social connections or social relations with others. However, self-interaction is not simply a mental reproduction of social interaction with others, but has its own unique characteristics.

During the process of self-interaction in Cheng Ren Li ritual, expectations about others emerge in the new adult's brain. These expectations have certain meanings. New adults consider what these expectations mean for them. However, they do not accept these expectations as they are. In the process of intrapersonal transmission, new adults will dynamically understand, interpret, select, modify,

process, and recombine the meanings of others' expectations along the direction of their own stance or behavior. The expectation of others after this process is no longer the expectation of others in the original sense, and the self it forms is no longer the self in the original sense, but a new behavioral subject.

Brummer's theory of "self-interaction" helps us to understand the relationship between the social transmission of the rite of passage and the individual's self. It tells us that the new adult communicates not only with others in society, but also with himself or herself, i.e., self-propagation. Self-propagation is equally social in nature; it is the reflection in the individual's mind of the socially propagated relationship with others. Self-propagation is of great significance to the individual. Through self-propagation, a person is able to recognize and transform himself or herself in connection with society and others, and continuously realize self-development and perfection.



Figure 81 New adults are actively presenting themselves. New adults construct their self-identity through the use of symbols in rites of passage ceremonies. They do not just passively accept roles and symbols, but also construct their adult identity through active participation in the ritual.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

**The Construction of Self-Identity.** New adults construct their self-identity through the use of symbols in rites of passage ceremonies. They do not just passively accept roles and symbols, but also construct their adult identity through active participation in the rite of passage. This construction of self-identity helps them find their place in society. They experience and reinforce this identity through ritual actions, words, etc.

**Reinforcement of social identity.** The Cheng Ren Li ritual is part of a social interaction in which the individual participates in the ritual with the family, the community, and society as a whole. This interaction helps the individual to establish an identity within society, as well as to strengthen social cohesion and identity. Rites of passage ceremonies help new adults strengthen their social identity. By participating in the rite of passage, they establish a connection with the community and cultural traditions, gain social acceptance, and become part of the community.



Symbols are negotiated and shared. Symbols and meanings in social interactions are not fixed, but are negotiated and shared in interaction. In a Cheng Ren Li ritual, different participants may assign different meanings to symbols, but through the ritual, they jointly negotiate and confirm the meaning of the ritual. This process of negotiation helps the social group to develop a common understanding and at the same time strengthens the social identity.

**Reflection in interaction.** The theory of symbolic interaction emphasizes that interaction is a dynamic process in which participants constantly reflect on and adjust their behavior. In a Cheng Ren Li ritual, new adults may reflect on their roles and behaviors during the interaction to ensure compliance with social expectations.

**Importance of self-presentation.** Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the concept of self-presentation, which is how individuals present their social roles through appearance, behavior, and speech. During Bar Mitzvah ceremonies, new adults typically display traits of confidence, pride, and maturity to express their readiness to assume the responsibilities of their new social roles.

**Expression of Cultural Identity.** Cheng Ren Li ritual often reflect the values and traditions of a particular culture. By participating in the rite of passage and assuming their new social roles, new adults express their identity and commitment to their culture. The way they participate in the ritual, the ritual words and ritual actions reflect their cultural identity.

In summary, symbolic interaction theory can be used to explain the roles and self-presentation of new adults in Cheng Ren Li ritual. This process involves the playing of social roles, the symbolism of ritual attire, the importance of self-presentation, social interaction and recognition, and the expression of cultural identity. The Cheng Ren Li Ritual is a symbolic event that helps new adults construct and maintain their adult identities through symbols and social interactions, and also reveals the important role of social interactions in an individual's self-identity and social identity.

In conclusion, using Brummer's theory of symbolic interaction to analyze adult liturgical ceremonies contributes to a deeper understanding of the process of symbolic use, social construction, and participant interaction in the ceremonies. This analysis can reveal the importance of the adult liturgical ritual as a social ritual and how it shapes social identity and cultural traditions through the co-negotiation of symbols and meanings.

### **3.3 Identity Construction: The Meaning of Cheng Ren Li Ritual before China's Poverty Alleviation**

Identity construction is the process by which a person or individual perceives, shapes, and expresses his or her individual or social identity in a variety of ways. This process can encompass a number of aspects, including an individual's personality, values, culture, social roles, gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and other social factors. Identity construction is a complex and dynamic process. For the Hualan Yao, the Cheng Ren Li ritual helps Hualan Yao individuals and groups to complete their identity construction. Through the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the Hualan Yao prove "who I am".

Identity construction is a dynamic process that is shaped and changed through interaction with others and the influence of the social environment. The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual emphasizes the transition of young people from adolescence to adulthood. This process involves not only physical changes, but also changes in cultural and social identity. The ritual marks their new identity through special ritual attire, symbolic gestures and words that reinforce their identification with their cultural and social roles.

The social transmission of Hualan Yao cultural information is the basic premise for the continuous development of Hualan Yao history. The Cheng Ren Li ritual, as a kind of living field, takes the ritual as a way to carry the psychological demands of Hualan Yao to satisfy the life experience by means of ritual costumes, ritual places, ritual objects, ritual movements and language, constituting the collective psychological experience of the ethnic group. A ritual symbol is not only an object or a geographical place, but also a polymer for people's participation and perception in the scene. In the seemingly simple ritual symbols, the new adult's heart is infected with the embodiment of the meaning schema, and he/she trains himself/herself to become a "body that can be passed on" to continue the ancient tradition of cultural creation in the village. This confirms the cultural argument that the relationship between the ecological environment on which human survival depends and the cultural landscape created by human beings is interactive and mutually nurturing. As Turner argues, symbolic objects and symbolic behaviors in the form of symbols constitute the basic molecular units of a ritual pattern, and a ritual is an aggregate of symbols (Turner Victor, 2006).

Ritual garments play multiple roles and meanings in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They are not only symbolic, but also contribute to the transformation of social roles, cultural transmission, confirmation of social identity, and strengthening of social cohesion, while also enhancing the solemnity and sanctity of the ritual. These costumes play an important role in the whole process of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, helping individuals and society to jointly construct the meaning and value of the ritual. The wearing of ritual attire by new adults is a symbol of adult status, which represents a change in social roles from dependence on family to roles with more social responsibilities. The special nature of ritual attire lends an atmosphere of solemnity and sanctity to the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They are beautifully crafted to emphasize the importance of the ritual. Participants who wear these costumes feel that they are participating in a special ritual, which helps to increase the respect and importance they place on the ritual. The use of ritual costumes creates empathy in the ritual. All participants wear similar or shared symbolic costumes, which helps build social cohesion and identity. Ritual attire strengthens bonds between social groups through the sharing of symbols. Ritual costumes in Bar Mitzvah ceremonies are a way of displaying culture and tradition. They attract the attention of spectators and family members, enabling them to learn about and appreciate the cultural traditions of the community, while also promoting the transmission of culture.

Ritual sites are more than just a place to hold a ritual in Cheng Ren Li ritual; they have deep symbolic and social significance. They contribute to symbolic transitions, cultural transmission, social recognition, social cohesion, and the display of historical traditions. The selection of specific ritual sites usually reflects the cultural traditions and values of the community. These sites may be associated with

the community's history, ancestry, or other important events that help to reinforce the cultural identity of community members. Cheng Ren Li ritual sites can be seen as part of a cultural legacy that helps young people construct their own cultural identity. And the fact that the ritual site is perceived as a solemn and sacred location helps to increase the importance and significance of the ritual. Participants and spectators will hold the ritual site in reverence and see it as part of the ritual. This solemnity contributes to the success and effectiveness of the ritual. Specific ritual sites can also increase the social acceptance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. These sites are associated with social authority and tradition, and participants and family members who wear special attire are respected and recognized by the community and society at these locations. Ritual sites also provide a common gathering place for community members, which promotes social interaction and empathy. Participants and family members celebrate together at ritual sites, creating emotional connections and strengthening social cohesion. Ritual sites have historical and traditional value. The selection of these sites helps to showcase the history and traditions of the community, attracts the attention of the audience and family members, and reinforces the social and cultural heritage.

Ritual objects are not only symbolic in Cheng Ren Li ritual, but they also contribute to the transformation of social roles, cultural transmission, social recognition, social cohesion, and the symbolic meaning of the ritual. Through their symbolism and social significance, these objects help participants understand the importance of the ritual and emphasize the interaction between the individual and society. They are an important part of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and help ensure that the ritual is successful and meaningful. These items can include specific clothing, jewelry, tools, or other ritual objects. They represent a change in social roles, from dependence on family to roles with more social responsibilities. Ritual objects are seen as having a special solemnity and sacredness. They are specially prepared and blessed during the ritual to emphasize their importance. Participants and spectators hold these objects in reverence and consider them to be one of the central elements of the ritual. Completion of the Cheng Ren Li ritual is accompanied by the giving or receiving of special ritual objects. These objects represent social and community recognition and are respected by the community.

Ritual language is more than just a verbal expression in Cheng Ren Li ritual. These words help participants understand the importance of the rite of passage through their symbolism and social significance and emphasize the individual's interaction with the community. They represent specific values, responsibilities, and social roles. These symbols can be conveyed through the wording, phrasing, and content of the rhetoric. Ritual language contributes to the communication of the meaning and values of a ritual. Ritual language is recited or proclaimed in a particular way during a ritual to emphasize its importance. Participants and audience members honor these words as one of the central elements of the ritual. Participants are recognized by the community and society for having completed the Cheng Ren Li Ritual by pronouncing these words.

Ritual actions are associated with the beginning and end of the ritual. They are performed in a special way to emphasize their importance. Ritual actions are often symbolic in that they represent specific values, responsibilities, and social roles. These symbols can be conveyed through the specific steps of the action, the posture,

and the sequence of ritual actions. Ritual movements help to communicate the meaning and values of a ritual. Ritual actions are shared by members of the community during a ritual. They help to build social interaction and empathy, where participants and spectators share and understand the symbolic meaning of the actions, thus strengthening the bonds between social groups.

These ritual symbols are endowed with specific symbolic meanings, making the presence of the Hualan Yao people in time, both statute and repeatedly made by experience. As a result, as a means of expressing the internal psychological core of a particular culture, these ritual symbols are the accumulation of Hualan Yao wisdom, which occupies the high ground of the Hualan Yao people's rationality in recognizing the world and dealing with the interrelationships between human beings and society. In a specific spatial and temporal environment, the ritual symbols and the interaction between individuals and the society become the core of the rituals. They are at the religious end of the spectrum as spatial presentation and physical symbols of the belief system. In the inheritance process of ritual education, the production of ritual costumes and ritual diets is closely related to the production and life of the Hualan Yao people, and is at the folklore end. In the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, people complete the witnessing of the same historical event and experience the review of the same memory in the same space. In this sacred space, the psychological appeal provided by the emotion of bloodline, common language, and the same attire provides a reconstructed field for the construction of their identities, which enables the continuation of the common culture and history and transcends the boundaries of the village. On such occasions, people of the same ethnic group maintain social stability and intra-ethnic unity, and strengthen harmony and communication with other ethnic groups through the clash of minds. Such physical practice serves as a kind of validation yardstick, which seeks to verify the ability of new adults to perceive the ritual, and accomplishes the acquisition and transmission of ethnic cultural experience and local knowledge. Through the Cheng Ren Li Ritual, it realizes the purpose of transmitting the cultural traditions of the ethnic group from generation to generation and constructing the self-identity of the members of the society.





Figure 82 Emerging Adult Interaction with Ceremony Participants.. The process of identity construction in Hualan Yao is the process by which new adults interact externally with others and internally with the self. Rather than simply being externally given, prescribed, or freely self-created, the formation of the Hualan Yao identity is formed and constructed in the interaction between ritual process and agency.

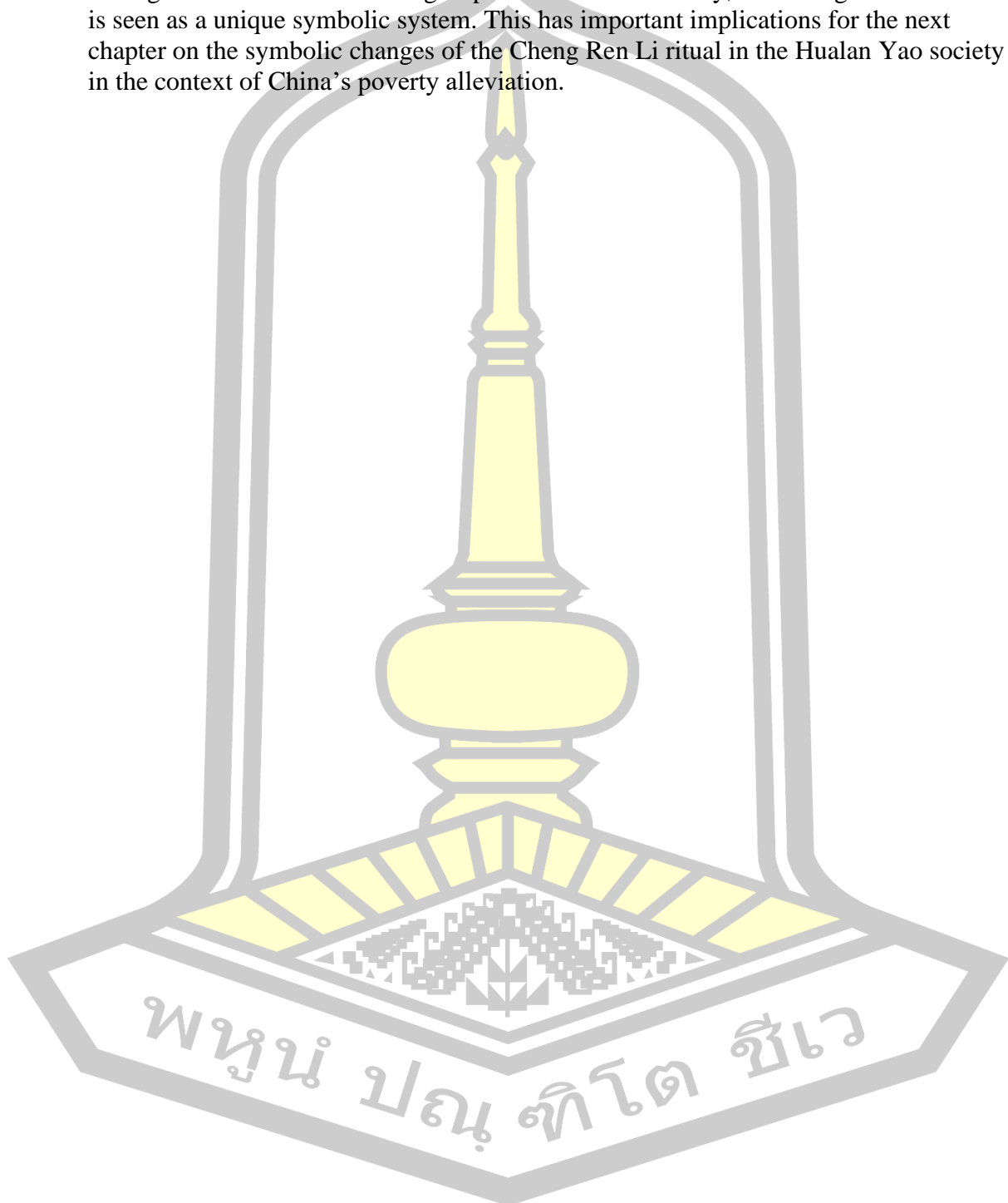
Source:Hu Jiejin photoed.February5,2020.

In short, the inheritance of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual is intrinsically logical and related to the value orientation and psychological composition of the people in a particular region. The Cheng Ren Li ritual, as a kind of "physical practice" in a specific context, reveals that the participants in the rite realize the role of communicating with each other in the folklore activities, and communicating with people and gods in the field of belief through the means of symbolic interaction. The interaction between the collective experience of Hualan Yao and the social order before China's poverty alleviation is described in depth, with the intention of illustrating how the rite of passage, as a kind of contemporary existence that transcends history and time, and its externalized symbols, using the rite as a pathway and symbols as a carrier, satisfy Hualan Yao's collective demand for life experience, and achieve the realization of the Hualan Yao cultural traditions passed down from generation to generation through the "bodily practice" of Hualan Yao. It also fulfills the purpose of passing down the cultural tradition of the ethnic group from generation to generation and constructing individual identity through the "physical practice" of Hualan Yao.

### Conclusion

Cheng Ren Li ritual and the Ethnicity of Hualan Yao suggests that what is presented in Chapter 3 about the Cheng Ren Li ritual is directly related to the ethnic development and socio-cultural practices of Hualan Yao. These two cases are strung together. In order to understand something better, therefore, we must investigate to find another connection. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is a symbol system which contains a series of symbols. It has significance to the Hualan Yao, and it helps to shape and maintain the uniqueness and identity of a people through cultural transmission, identity, community cohesion, transmission of cultural values, and national unity. Therefore, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is a mechanism for constructing and strengthening

the ethnicity of Hualan Yao. In this context, the rite of passage is a good indicator of "self-ethnic identity" or "self-ethnic minority identity". It is a multi-dimensional and multi-layered cultural symbol. It has become a symbolic mark of Hualan Yao to distinguish it from other ethnic groups. In terms of ethnicity, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is seen as a unique symbolic system. This has important implications for the next chapter on the symbolic changes of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the Hualan Yao society in the context of China's poverty alleviation.



## CHAPTER IV

### **Cheng Ren Li Ritual: Symbolic Interaction in Hualan Yao Society in the Context of China's Poverty Alleviation**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China. Because of China's poverty alleviation policy, Mentou Village has developed from a poor village to a new village. More and more laborers are drawn away from the village. This has brought about a cultural crisis and affected poverty alleviation. But Mentou village has its unique mechanism to maintain its ethnicity, protecting and sustaining their ethnic identity in the new context. In order to show the difference from the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the traditional social context, I use a similar structure to analyze the Cheng Ren Li ritual in this chapter. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China, showing the changes in the ritual and the reasons for the changes in three periods. The second part introduces the contemporary paradigm of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, and analyzes a case study of the ritual using the Ritual Process Theory to explain what function the Cheng Ren Li ritual fulfills. Part III describes the evolution of the meaning of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. This chapter focuses on analyzing the ritual through a case study to explore how differently the Cheng Ren Li ritual has functioned in the context of poverty alleviation in China, and through what mechanisms this function has been performed.

#### **4.1 Development Paths and Interactions of Cheng Ren Li Ritual in the Context of China's Poverty Alleviation**

In the context of China's Poverty Alleviation, the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual has entered its fourth stage. In order to better show the changes in the rites of passage, this part analyzes the rites of passage in three time periods, including the rites of passage from 1981-1995, the rites of passage from 1996-2005, and the rites of passage after 2006. The reasons for the changes in the Cheng Ren Li ritual are examined from the perspective of the relationship between the state and society, and the impact of social change is explored.

In 1996, Mentou Village began to see the emergence of migrant workers who had "left the land and the countryside," and in 2005, the traditional cultural crisis faced by Hualan Yao reached its peak when three boys refused to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual, and in 2006, the villagers of Mentou Village voted to approve the "Mentou Village Construction Plan," which initiated the remodeling of the Ritual space. Therefore, in conjunction with my fieldwork, the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China is categorized into three periods.

##### **4.1.1 1980-1995: restoration and development of Cheng Ren Li Ritual**

Everything is in a process of constant change and development; change and development are absolute, and equilibrium and stability are relative. Therefore, with the combined influence of social, economic, cultural and technological factors, the Hualan Yao society is bound to undergo constant changes, which in turn lead to

changes in ritual symbols, ritual concepts and so on. Regardless of the cause, for the Hualan Yao, all changes are historical choices made by man in the process of continuous development of productive forces.

Between 1981 and 1995, the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual was active, with the trend of restoring and respecting tradition and expanding the scale of the ritual. This process of restoration and development was influenced by a variety of factors, including government policy, social demand and cultural identity. This is manifested in six main areas.

(1) Adjustment of government policies. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government implemented the household contract responsibility system, which liberalized the stranglehold on the countryside. While the government encouraged rural communities to develop economically, it also encouraged the restoration of traditional ceremonies.

(2) Spontaneous action in rural communities. During the Cultural Revolution, Mentou Village secretly preserved elements of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. As the general social environment gradually opened up, villagers acted on their own initiative to restore and pass on traditional ceremonies. This included the Cheng Ren Li ritual and other traditional ceremonies.

(3) Improvement of economic conditions. China's poverty alleviation policies have improved the household economic level of residents in Mentou Village and reduced the pressure of poverty. This has led to a willingness on the part of Hualan Yao families to spend more and expand the size of their Cheng Ren Li ritual in order to demonstrate the prosperity and social status of their families.

(4) Reinforcement of cultural identity. The Hualan Yao have gradually realized the importance of traditional ceremonies in maintaining cultural identity and community cohesion. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is not only a form of cultural expression, but also helps to build ties and mutual support among community members.

(5) Promotion of social needs. Mentou Village became more conscious of the importance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in promoting social interaction in the process of ethnic integration and social development. The expansion of intermarriage in Hualan Yao has promoted the restoration and promotion of the Cheng Ren Li ritual to meet social needs.

(6) Improvement of educational standards. China's poverty alleviation includes investment in rural education. The increased level of education among villagers has facilitated their understanding of and participation in Cheng Ren Li ritual. Schools and villages focus on education about traditional cultural heritage. This includes education on the history, meaning and form of traditional ceremonies to ensure that the younger generation understands and respects the tradition.

The early period of reform and opening up was a phase in which China's institutional reforms promoted poverty alleviation. The Chinese Government implemented the household contract responsibility system, encouraging farmers to run their own businesses and develop family side businesses. Farmers gained more economic freedom and decision-making power. In May 1980, Mentou Village implemented the "contracting of fields to households", and in the Spring Festival of 1981, children from three families participated in the Cheng Ren Li ritual.



Restoring the Cheng Ren Li ritual is not an easy task. Although they secretly kept elements of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Some families secretly prepared ritual costumes. But the question of whether and how they could organize it cost them a lot of time and energy. The villagers tried, asked and hesitated repeatedly. Fortunately, they got help from HDC. He was the first university student in Mentou village and was already working in Jinxiu county government at that time. Eventually they got the acquiescence of some officials of Jinxiu County Government. There were originally eight children from Mentou village who were supposed to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual that year, but in the end, only three of them managed to participate. This was confirmed in my fieldwork.

HZC, male, 77 years old, Hualan Yao. His father was one of the three former temple masters of Mentou village and the head of the clan. He was the head of the production team in Mentou Village during the Cultural Revolution. He was also the first village chief of Mentou Village after the reform and opening up.

In the Spring Festival of 1981, his eldest daughter attended the Cheng Ren Li ritual along with HZG's eldest daughter and HHG's youngest son. At that time, HZG was the village accountant, and his father was one of the three main temple masters of Mentou Village. HHG was the village vice-captain, and his father was the last Shihpai headman of the village. They had discussed for a long time with the village temple masters about whether to resume the Cheng Ren Li ritual, mainly because the government had not given a clear policy. The villagers also had concerns and were afraid of problems. At that time, other villages in Hualan Yao also wanted to resume the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They asked the township government and the county government. Then it was HDC that helped find the main officials of the Jinxiu County Government. Some families still did not dare to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual because they only got the acquiescence of some officials of Jinxiu County Government. After serious discussions, the 3 families finally decided to organize the ritual on a small scale and did not set off firecrackers.



Figure 83 HZC chatting over a roaring fire, as the first village chief of Mentou village after the reform and opening up, he has always been respected by the villagers. In 1981, under his leadership and that of his colleagues, the Cheng Ren Li ritual was resumed in Mentou village. Now his son is the head of the village committee of Mentou Village.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.

The Cheng Ren Li ritual for these three teenagers ended on a very calm and low-key note. By 1982, the Cheng Ren Li ritual finally showed a restored revelry.

HYT, HLD, HQP, HQM Cheng Ren Li ritual experience.

In the Spring of 1981, HYT and HLD attended a Cheng Ren Li ritual. Their mothers and grandmothers had secretly prepared their costumes for the ritual for a long time. Because of the policy, they had thought that they would not be able to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Finally they were able to attend and were very happy. Although not many villagers watched the ritual. They still got a lot of envy. Especially from those who were not able to participate because the Cheng Ren Li ritual was restricted. It was the first time since they were born that they wore flower blue Yao costumes and they were very excited. On the night of New Year's Eve, the girls stayed up all night. In the wee hours of the morning, they started combing their hair. They each wore four outfits. By the time HQP and HQM held their Cheng Ren Li ritual in 1982 it was very crowded. So many people from the surrounding villages came. In the early hours of New Year's Eve and in the morning, they set off a lot of bamboo firecrackers. The villagers sang and danced around Shipai Ping, where HQP and her husband met at her Cheng Ren Li ritual. Her husband is a Hualan Yao from another village.



Figure 84 Hualan Yao women gathered to chat and make Ritual costumes. HYT, HLD and HQM, are among them. Some of the older women were not able to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual because of the Cultural Revolution. This is considered a regret in their lives. They even joke that "if they had participated in the ritual, they might have found better husbands".

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.

The experience is still fresh in their minds. Because of their Cheng Ren Li ritual, the village of Mentou, which had been dormant for 15 years, came alive again. The resumption of the Cheng Ren Li ritual is the result of a combination of governmental permission and villagers' spontaneous action, reflecting the interaction between the state and social relations.

In the context of poverty alleviation in China, the system of social elders and the system of stone tablets in the traditional society of ritual rule have disappeared, though. Instead of the social elders and the stone tablet headmen, village affairs are resolved by the production team leaders, village group leaders, and administrative village chiefs elected by the villagers. This is the villagers' self-governing organization under China's current administrative system. In essence, however, when they deal with village affairs and settle disputes, they basically rely on traditional rules and do not need the "laws" of modern society. The heads of these organizations, their fathers and even their grandfathers, are all representatives of, or

successors to, or learners of, the traditional ritualistic society of the Hualan Yao. The traditional Ritual culture, which has been deeply rooted in the bones of the people for a long time, is still very much alive after the policy was liberalized, even after the 15-year ban. After the policy is liberalized, it can still be well released and passed on. Of course, this also has to do with the fact that the Cheng Ren Li ritual does not require too many ritual artifacts and is not a religious ritual. As a folk belief ritual, festival custom or even a form of social organization, it did not suffer much impact during the Cultural Revolution. The ritual was just restricted. Ritual memories were secretly preserved and eventually recovered by Hualan Yao.

The Cheng Ren Li ritual, which has been revitalized, has been passed down and developed very smoothly, and has a tendency to expand in scale. With the promotion of China's poverty alleviation policy, Mentou village has reduced the pressure of poverty. The implementation of the household contract responsibility system and the freedom to run family side businesses have raised the economic level of families in Hualan Yao. With the gradual improvement of transportation and education, Mentou Village has had more and more exchanges with other regions and ethnic groups. In the process of ethnic integration and social development, they have become more conscious of the importance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in promoting social interaction. The expansion of intermarriage and the two-way interaction of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao have promoted their understanding of and participation in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The Hualan Yao have gradually realized the importance of traditional ceremonies in maintaining cultural identity and community cohesion. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is not only a form of cultural expression, but also helps to build ties and mutual support among community members.

The expansion of the scale of the Cheng Ren Li ritual is mainly reflected in the increased consumption and the expansion of the scale of participation of people to show the prosperity of the family and enhance the cohesion of family and community members.

**Cheng Ren Li ritual Preparation and Conduct.** The preparation and hosting of a Cheng Ren Li ritual usually requires a certain amount of resources and organizational skills. Families are able to plan and host a decent Cheng Ren Li ritual for the new adult, arranging a relatively hearty meal. In particular, they were able to invite the participation of HDC and village committee cadres who work for the Jinxiu County government, which would be seen as a symbol of the family's prosperity and social status. This was not a phenomenon before. This is because the HDC and village committee cadres played a big role in restoring the Cheng Ren Li ritual. It was also the village council cadres who took the lead in restoring the Cheng Ren Li ritual. During this period, they were informed about which family was organizing the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

**Gifts and Favors.** The amount of the ritual money given to the master of ceremonies in a Cheng Ren Li ritual has increased. It has increased from 2 silver milliards (equivalent to the purchasing power of 1 kilogram of rice) before the Reform and Opening Up to a range of 2 yuan 5 yuan in 1995 (5 yuan is equivalent to the purchasing power of 5 kilograms of rice). Gift money given to new adults by family members and community relatives and friends has also increased by about 10 times. The amount of gift money can reflect the economic strength of the family. For some families, these gifts can provide financial support and help reduce the pressure

of poverty. However, the overall economic level of villagers was consistent during this period. There was no large gap between the rich and the poor, so the Cheng Ren Li ritual did not cost much.

**Social Networking and Social Connections.** Social networks and social connections are established during the Cheng Ren Li ritual when family members and community relatives and friends come together. Having an extensive social network is often easier for gaining support and resources in the community, which is also related to the family's social status.

**Traditional and cultural values.** In the Hualan Yao community, Cheng Ren Li ritual are seen as an expression of traditional and cultural values, sometimes closely linked to prosperity and social status. Following the traditional rites of passage helps to maintain the reputation and social status of the family.

In conclusion, however, with the interaction of policy, social and cultural factors, the Cheng Ren Li ritual has gradually recovered and developed in the context of poverty alleviation in China and continues to play an important role in Hualan Yao society. This process also reflects a renewed awareness and appreciation of traditional culture in Hualan Yao society. People have re-recognized the importance of traditional culture and are striving to preserve and pass on this valuable cultural heritage in order to enrich the cultural life of the society.

#### 4.1.2 1996-2005: Questioned Cheng Ren Li Ritual

From the perspective of the entire historical process of human society, productive forces have always been the ultimate decisive factor in promoting the forward development of human society. The development of the means of labor, mainly the tools of production, the objects of labor introduced into the production process, and the laborers with a certain degree of production experience and labor skills are the driving force for the development of all material and spiritual cultures. Along with the advancement of poverty alleviation in China, the awakening of the consciousness of market economy in rural areas and the movement of labor force population is an inevitable result. With the combination of the two, the change of the Hualan Yao rite of passage under the dual effect becomes an irreversible trend.

During this period, Cheng Ren Li ritual showed a trend towards continued expansion, personalization and modernization of the ritual scale. People are pursuing more personal choices and happiness, but a part of the population still retains a sense of respect for traditional culture. Different groups of people have different trends and manifestations. This has led to two very different concepts of rituals. A cultural crisis has arisen in the Hualan Yao society, triggering thoughts about ethnicity.

##### 1) Expansion of the size of the ritual

Economic development usually raises people's standard of living and disposable income, making it easier for families to afford the cost of Cheng Ren Li ritual. As a result, Cheng Ren Li ritual become more elaborate. Families can more easily organize the ritual, including by providing more food and drink, giving more mitzvahs, and enhancing the decorative features of the ritual garments.

The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual, which was born out of the natural economy, has been developing slowly and steadily in line with the self-sufficient agricultural society. In the history of more than 400 years since it entered Jinxiu Dayao Mountain, its ritual clothing fabrics and embroidery floral threads have gone through the development process from hand-woven cotton and linen to machine-made

synthetic fibers, which basically reflects the development level of the productivity of its ethnic groups. "Lard combed buns without turbans, sparse patterns without silk" (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Editorial Group, 1984), again fully demonstrates the decisive influence of the productivity level on the craftsmanship of Ritual clothing production.

China's poverty alleviation, which began in 1978, promoted the establishment of a market economy in the Hualan Yao region. Advanced economic and cultural ideas spread throughout the villages, and the impact of economic culture represented by modern industrial civilization on the traditional culture of ethnic minorities began. This fundamental impact has caused the socio-economic soil on which the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual is based to change, gradually moving closer to the modern mechanical industrial civilization.

Compared to other plains, Mentou village, as a poor village in a national-level poor county, has been relatively slow in economic development and social change. By the mid-1990s, most villagers were still living in an agrarian mode of "working at sunrise and resting at sunset". However, the rise of planting, farming, and commerce greatly changed the village's economic system and made it show a diversified development. The traditional agricultural economy of Mentou Village, which emphasized both farming and weaving, began to diverge.

People's purchasing power has increased, and finished clothes such as flower shirts, jeans, fit pants, and Zhongshan suits have become the primary choices of young men and women, including a part of the elderly. The whole process of growing their own cotton, spinning and weaving their own cloth to make national costumes gradually faded out of the social life of Hualan Yao. In the 21st century, only some old women still wear traditional clothes. The practical function of the traditional ethnic costumes of Hualan Yao has been replaced and gradually developed in the direction of dresses. The decorative function of the ritual clothing for the Cheng Ren Li ritual is emphasized.



Figure 85 The people of Hualan Yao are busy making preparations for the New Year. Except for the elderly, no one among the young and middle-aged people wears ethnic costumes anymore. The young people think that wearing modern clothes is a fashion.

Older people think that wearing modern clothes is more comfortable and convenient. This photo is a remake of Xu Ping's book.

Source: Xu Ping photoed. January 24, 2006.



Figure 86 Hualan Yao people walking on the street in traditional national costumes during the Spring Festival. The national costume, which is only worn on festive days, has become the biggest highlight of the Spring Festival in Hualan Yao. If any family has a child to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual that year, then the whole family would dress more grandly. They believe that wearing ethnic costumes together is a way to honor the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the company of the family. This photo is a remake of Xu Ping's book.

Source: Xu Ping photoed. January 24, 2006.



Figure 87 Elderly couple wearing ethnic and modern clothing respectively. The wife is wearing modern shoes. The husband still keeps the custom of wearing earrings.

They were asked why they wore these clothes. The wife replied, "I am used to wearing them". The husband replied, "It is more comfortable, convenient and keeps me warm."

Source: Photographed by the author. February 6, 2007.

In the 21st century, the Chinese government began to implement the village-level targeting mechanism and "whole village promotion" to alleviate poverty. Mentou village was included in the poverty alleviation target, and became one of the 148,000 poor villages in China that were given priority assistance. The training and export of labor force has contributed to the awakening of the economic consciousness of the Hualan Yao people. Some quick-witted Hualan Yao people took the lead in

starting family side businesses and became the first families to get rich. They found that as long as they could earn money, they could buy back from the market the living necessities they needed, including clothes for the whole family. The folk proverb of "a man plows hard to get enough to eat, a woman weaves hard to get enough to wear" is no longer accepted by the modern Hualan Yao people.

More and more Hualan Yao families are doing business and transportation without leaving the farmland. The role of women has also changed. In the traditional social context, it was originally impossible for them to spend all day at home embroidering and making clothes without doing farm work. Nowadays, sewing, weaving and embroidery are not their main functions. The main thing is to be able to keep a family, to be hard-working and capable, and to develop a family side business to help the family become rich. The time-consuming production of national costumes and embroidery can only exist as leisure time entertainment.

HJR, male, 52 years old, Hualan Yao, from Mentou village. Because he had relatives in Liuzhou, after graduating from junior high school, he went to Liuzhou to learn how to drive. In 2005, he drove a truck for a family owner in Six Lane Village.

Before 2000, the economic situation of every household in the village was similar. Because there were no other sideline businesses, they mainly relied on growing crops and selling cedar trees and star anise, and could only have a subsistence life. After 2000, the situation has changed a lot. Especially after the highway to Zhongping Township was repaired, the vehicles brought prosperity to Hualan Yao. From the houses and home furnishings, one can tell which family is rich and which is poor. Those who have some money at home are those who do business and transportation. His family was also like that. Before, because his sister went to school, the family was in financial difficulty. Since he learned to drive, his life has been getting better and better. So, those who are a bit economically minded think about how to do business.

HQL, female, 42 years old, Hualan Yao, middle school education. She has two children. Now, her family runs a B&B and a supermarket.

In 2005, her husband was a village cadre and was usually busy with his work. Her husband also had a timber business in partnership with a friend in Zhongping Township. Her husband had a younger brother who often went out to help others transport timber. The two brothers did not separate after they got married, and they both lived with their in-laws. She and her in-laws were responsible for farm work. Her sister-in-law was responsible for taking care of the children, cooking and feeding the pigs at home. They both have a lot of things to do. Therefore, both she and her sister-in-law have very little time to embroider and make ethnic clothing. Only when it rains and they can't go out to do farm work do they embroider and knit sweaters as entertainment to pass the time. The clothes are basically bought. With few hands and many things to do, there is no time to make clothes. The child's Cheng Ren Li ritual clothes were made by her mother-in-law in her free time. Calculating from the time cost and economic cost, it is not cost-effective to make the clothes by oneself. When she goes to the mountains to pick tea leaves during the Ching Ming Festival of the lunar calendar, an adult woman can pick at least about 20 kilograms of wet tea leaves every day, which can be sold for more than 100 yuan. Her family feeds four or five pigs every year, so she can keep enough for herself and sell them at a

good price. There are several families like them in the village. As long as they are hardworking and have a little bit of brains, they can earn money.



Figure 88 Elderly Hualan Yao women making a ritual garment belt on a loom. In the villages, there are no longer any groups of women sitting around embroidering and making clothes. The young and middle-aged laborers are busy on their way to prosperity. The mainstay of ritual costume making are grandmothers, grandmothers and even older grandmothers.

Source:Huang Huayan photoed.February5,2007.

The evolution of ritual attire from the practical to the decorative is a common cultural phenomenon, usually associated with social, economic and cultural factors. As societies prosper and economies grow, people usually have more time and resources to devote to celebrating rituals. This is especially true of Cheng Ren Li ritual , which are already inexpensive. The symbolic nature of the ritual clothing itself better reflects an individual's social status, occupation, or identity. This change is reflected in three main ways.

(1) More time is spent on making, selecting and decorating Ritual garments to make them more ornate and decorative. People are wouling to use finer embroidery, fabrics and decorations to create Ritual garments. More pieces of clothing are made

(2) Decorative Ritual costumes add to the entertainment and presentation of the celebration.

(3) Ritual garments are no longer used as everyday wearable garments and wedding gowns, and would be carefully preserved and worn only on New Year's Eve or important occasions.

HQL, female, 42 years old, Hualan Yao, middle school education. She has two children. Now, her family runs a B&B and a supermarket.

Nowadays, the number of dresses worn by girls for Cheng Ren Li ritual is higher. in 2005, one girl in the village wore 12 dresses. in 1998, she wore 6 dresses for her Cheng Ren Li ritual, which is already the highest number of dresses worn by anyone in the village. Four of the dresses were embroidered with floral patterns. She kept these 6 pieces of clothes well and only wore them during the New Year festivals. The more pieces a girl wears, the better she looks. Nowadays everyone has money and is wouling to spend money and time on this. Children nowadays are very smart and they themselves ask for their clothes to be made to look better. The more



beautifully a girl dresses, the more people pursue her. Unlike in the past, every family's living conditions were not good. Adults made a few dresses for a few people to wear. She was born in 1982. As far as she can remember, she basically grew up without wearing ethnic clothing. She felt that the Cheng Ren Li ritual was getting more and more solemn. The ritual costumes are also getting better looking. The floral threads used for embroidery are also different from before, and the quality is getting better and better. The patterns have become increasingly elaborate, pursuing a fine, rich and full visual effect. The fabric used by people to make their costumes is still basically the cotton cloth they weave and dye themselves. This kind of cotton cloth has a rough texture and the colors are not good but it is easy to embroider patterns. More and more women are experimenting with machine-made chemical fiber fabrics and threads for clothing and embroidery.

HMQ, female, 94 years old, Hualan Yao, the oldest female elder in Mentou village.

In the 1940s, it was common for girls to wear four tops for their Cheng Ren Li ritual. She did too. At most, 6 blouses were worn, but very few families did this. Only the outermost piece of the ritual garment was embroidered with flowers; the inner garment was the same as the regular clothes worn in everyday life, with no or fewer flowers. The inner garment has no or fewer patterns, just like the regular clothes worn in daily life. For the clothes with embroidered patterns, there are only some simple patterns on the collar, sleeves, and the front lapel of the garment. After organizing and completing the human rite ritual, the outermost piece of clothing would be well preserved and would only be worn on New Year's Day or important occasions. The inner garment would be worn in daily life. After the founding of New China, it was the same situation. Now that the living conditions are better, young people don't wear ethnic costumes anymore. After the reform and opening up, the shawls of girls' ritual costumes began to have plastic beads for decoration. After learning the more advanced indigo dyeing method from the Han and Zhuang outside, the color of the cloth dyed by Hualan Yao has also become even. The color and quality of the floral threads are better, and the embroidered patterns are fuller and better looking than before. It is certainly better for the Cheng Ren Li ritual to be held decently and for the boys and girls to be dressed beautifully. In recent years, some museums in Guangxi Province and other areas have purchased two sets of male and female costumes from her as exhibits.

HXC, male, aged 60, Hualan Yao, retired from Jinxiu County Government. His brother is a retired senior official of the Guangxi provincial government. The family is the most prestigious family in Mentou village.

He thinks the more solemn the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the better. It was a crucial time for the children. Because of their work, neither he nor his brother lives in Mentou Village. When his daughter and his brother's daughter turned 15, they specially came back to Mentou Village to hold the Cheng Ren Li ritual. In 2004, when he held the Cheng Ren Li ritual for his daughter, his daughter wore 12 dresses. In 2000, when his brother's daughter held the Cheng Ren Li ritual, she wore 12 dresses as well. His brother believes that the Cheng Ren Li ritual is the first big ritual in the life of a Hualan Yao person, and only after attending the Cheng Ren Li ritual can they start a family. Therefore, the Cheng Ren Li ritual must be grand.

QHG, male, 74 years old, Zhuang minority, is a native of Zhongping Township, Xiangzhou County. He is the main provider of embroidery threads for Hualan Yao garments.

In the 1930s, his father carried goods on a flat stretcher to sell in the Hualan Yao area. In 1980, he took over his father's work and bought all the silk threads used in Huaranyao embroidery from the Han and Zhuang people. In recent years, he obviously felt that the silk thread used in Hualan Yao was less. He comes to Mentou Village about every six months. In the past, he could sell about 10 kilograms of silk thread each time. Now, he can only sell 6 kilograms of thread each time. Hualan Yao doesn't even make his own clothes anymore. Silk thread is only used to make Ritual clothes. Before reform and opening up, his father sold hand-spun cotton thread. He sells machine-spun cotton yarn and cotton cloth, which he gets from a cotton spinning factory in Nanning, Guangxi Province. This machine-spun cotton yarn is of uniform thickness, bright color and good quality. An embroidery needle can pass through about 30 threads. In contrast, hand-spun cotton yarn is processed in a backward way, has thicker lines, costs more labor hours and is of poorer quality. The patterns used for embroidery are rough and unrefined. Therefore, the soil cotton thread and floss are gradually replaced by woven cotton thread. In these years, there are also Hualan Yao women who buy machine chemical fiber cloth and chemical fiber thread from him.



Figure 89 The Hualan Yao people wearing ritual costumes to show their confidence and beauty. This is a picture hanging on the wall of a villager's house. Almost every family has a similar photo on the wall. They are woulding to show and introduce their family members in this way. This represents remembrance and happiness.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.

The move toward decorative ritual garments is more than just a visual representation; they carry important messages about cultural, social and individual values. Ritual garments continue to have special symbolic significance in ceremonies and help to emphasize the importance of Cheng Ren Li ritual activities. But the over-emphasis on decorative garments has reduced the opportunities for people to wear and learn to make them. The community of costume makers is shrinking. The generation of skilled craftsmen is aging and the new generation is unfamiliar with the craft. The art of costume making is facing a shortage of successors. This would be discussed in the concept of ritual below.

In conclusion, the changes in the ritual costumes of the Hualan Yao reflect the evolution of society, culture and fashion to meet the needs of the people for Ritual activities. Ritual symbols have been preserved and passed on, while modern elements have been incorporated to accommodate social and cultural changes. It is important to note that while individuals have chosen to adopt modernized elements, there are still more people who adhere to traditional ritual attire in order to preserve and pass on cultural traditions. The balance between tradition and modernity reflects Chinese society's respect for traditional culture and its pursuit of modern fashion.

## 2) Bifurcation of ritual concepts

Ritual perceptions are people's views and beliefs about rituals, celebrations or Ritual events, including their purpose, importance, form and value. These perceptions are usually influenced by cultural, social, religious and individual values. Along with China's poverty alleviation, ritual concepts in Hualan Yao have polarized. These changes are mainly influenced by social, cultural and economic factors.

(1) Modern lifestyle. With the popularity of modern lifestyles, some young people pay more attention to personalized and modernized celebrations. They believe that traditional ceremonies no longer fit into their lifestyles. Traditional ceremonies are seen as outdated and not suited to their values and interests.

(2) Economic situation. China's poverty alleviation has improved the living standards of villagers and reduced the pressure of poverty on people. But it has also brought new values. Some people focus more on material enjoyment than on traditional rituals.

(3) Cultural Diversity. The open-door policy, Internet technology and convenient transportation have expanded cultural exchanges between Mentou Village and other places. This has made Mentou Village society more culturally diverse, absorbing elements from different cultures. This may lead to the integration or change of Cheng Ren Li ritual .

(4) Individualism. The concepts of individualism and free choice are gaining ground in Mentou village society. Some people, especially young people, believe that rituals should be the result of individual free choice rather than the expectations of society or family.

These four factors above have led to a bifurcation in the ritual concepts of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual.

(1) Simplifying rituals. Some people wish to simplify traditional rituals to accommodate modern values and lifestyles. This includes changing the form, content or celebration of the ritual . For example, not wearing ritual clothing and not organizing meals for family and friends.

(2) Emerging rituals. Some young people want to participate in new rituals and ways of celebrating that reflect modern values. For example, they want to be able to organize new ways of celebrating such as bar mitzvah dances and bachelor parties. They felt that traditional rituals limited their freedom and therefore preferred to decide on their own ways of celebrating.

(3) Reluctance to participate in rituals. In a multicultural society, some people believe that traditional ceremonies are in conflict with modern culture. This cultural conflict leads to their reluctance to participate in traditional ceremonies. In addition, traditional ceremonies are accompanied by family and social expectations,

including pressure to marry, to have a career and to establish a family. Some young people feel that this pressure is too heavy and are therefore reluctant to participate in traditional ceremonies.

(4) Reluctance to learn about rituals. Some people believe that traditional rituals are in conflict with modern culture. Some are reluctant to learn information about the purpose, form, history, cultural background and symbolism of rituals. This includes a reluctance to learn to make ritual costumes.

(5) Awareness of cultural heritage. While some people may be more modern and individualized, there is a segment of the population that maintains a strong interest in and awareness of traditional culture and rituals. They recognize the importance of traditional ceremonies and try to pass on and maintain cultural traditions. This represents the fact that different people may have different attitudes and perceptions of traditional rituals.

HLF, male, 45 years old, Hualan Yao, middle school education. He is now in the tea buying business.

In 2005, he was 27 years old. When he got married in 2003, he did not wear ethnic clothing. He thought that national dress was very rustic and only grannies were fit to wear it. When he worked outside, he was once teased by some people that his hometown was poor. He believes that times have changed and people's lifestyles and concepts of life should also change. His friends around him also recognized his view. They agreed that the Cheng Ren Li ritual could be simplified or organized in a new way. They don't think it is necessary to wear such complicated Ritual costumes. They think it would be fashionable to have a bar mitzvah ball. This is because they have seen such ceremonies on TV and movies. They told their siblings and friends about these views. They got a lot of support. HLF's parents and grandfather also support his view. They think it is most important to go out to work and earn money, and it is not necessary to attend a Cheng Ren Li ritual. But his grandmother thinks he should attend a Cheng Ren Li ritual. His sister, who is married and has children, does not know how to do or want to learn the art of dressmaking. Their mother also did not teach her daughter to make ethnic clothing. He and his sister think that ritual knowledge is all but useless. He wants his children to attend bar mitzvah dances in the future.

HMM, female, 28 years old, Hualan Yao. Now she is working in an advertising agency in Jinxiu County.

In 2005, she was 15 years old. She had just attended a Cheng Ren Li ritual. She was forced to attend a Cheng Ren Li ritual. She didn't like it. She thought it was a very troublesome thing to do. She felt like a puppet in a fancy dress surrounded by a crowd of people watching. She felt that the Cheng Ren Li ritual put a lot of pressure on her. It made her very unhappy. She never wanted to get married and have children, nor did she want to learn to make ethnic clothing and embroidery. None of her peers had ever learned to make ethnic clothing either. Her mother's costume making skills were also not good. Her ritual clothes were made by her grandmother. She thinks the clothes sold in the stores look better and are more suitable for the current lifestyle. There are two tailors in Six Lane Village who specialize in making modern clothes. The villagers wore clothes they bought, and only the grandmothers wore ethnic clothes. Cheng Ren Li ritual should be like wedding ceremonies, where

you can choose for yourself what kind of clothes to wear and where to hold them. She is looking forward to her future wedding in a white wedding dress at the church.

Echoing this is the simplicity and diversity of wedding ceremonies in Hualan Yao. The traditional marriage of Hualan Yao roughly passes through four stages, namely, asking for marriage, engagement, marriage, and organizing a big banquet on the first child's full moon. Nowadays, the wedding customs of Hualan Yao have changed a lot, and very few weddings are held according to the traditional rites and customs. There are two main reasons for this.

(1)The expansion of intermarriage has led to significant differences in wedding customs among ethnic groups and sub-groups. As a result, wedding customs have changed accordingly in marriages with other ethnic groups or sub-groups.

(2)With the integration of ethnic groups, social development and progress, the concepts of marriage and family in Hualan Yao have also undergone great changes.

As Mr. Fei Xiaotong said, in Chinese vernacular society, the stable triangular relationship in the family begins to take shape only after the birth of a child. The relationship between husband and wife without children is unstable and "it is not appropriate to announce it to the society". Therefore, one of the most important ceremonies in the marriage of the Hualan Yao, the "marriage wine", which announces the marriage contract to the society, is not held until the birth of the first child, when the "full moon wine" is celebrated. However, under the influence of modern culture, many young people do not want to have children soon after getting married. In popular parlance, they want to spend a few more years in the "two-person world". Therefore, most of them have separate wedding wines and full moon wines. In addition, with the development of the market economy, the economic concept is deeply rooted in people's hearts, simple and practical has become more and more the principle of people's wedding wine. Therefore, modern weddings have become much simpler (Xu Ping, 2006).



Figure 90 Newly married couple in national costume. This is a picture of them at their wedding ritual . They said they would think about having children in a few years.

They plan to work in Guangzhou first.

Source: Photographed by the author. August 1, 2006.

With the emerging wedding ritual as a point of comparison, there has been an increasing number of calls, especially from young people, for a change in the traditional Cheng Ren Li ritual. A few boys who resisted particularly strongly were severely beaten by their fathers as a result. As a result, their families had in-depth conversations with the village committee and the village's most powerful elder, HGL, but were unable to resolve the problem. Finally, through the intervention of HDC, who had already served as an important official of the Guangxi Provincial Government, they finally participated in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. This incident became a topic of discussion among the villagers of Mentou village for many years.

HLG, male, 47 years old, Hualan Yao, with a secondary school education, is currently the deputy head of the village committee of Mentou village. His father is the aforementioned HZG, who served as the accountant of the village committee of Mentou Village. He is the one who can preside over pujas after strict religious ceremonies and serious study. Although he did not become a Master Gong, he is one of the few men among the Hualan Yao men who know a lot about the rituals and the history of the ethnic group.

Before the Spring Festival of 2005, three boys refused to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They were negotiating and doing communication with their parents separately. Two of the families thought it was necessary to attend the Cheng Ren Li ritual. After ineffective communication with the boys, the angry father beat them severely. Another boy got permission from his parents and grandparents and decided to forgo the Cheng Ren Li ritual. But the respected elders of their family and some of their relatives and neighbors did not approve of this behavior. After receiving input from others, the family changed their minds. But the boy was very stubborn. So he was also beaten by his own father. Forcing and beating children is a rare and unapproved behavior in the Hualan Yao society. The village committee approached the three families to talk to them. At that time, HLG was the deputy head of the village committee. He participated in the conversation. The opinion of the village committee was that traditions and children's opinions should be respected, and that children should not be scolded, which is an inappropriate way of family education. Elder HGL believed that all children must participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Otherwise, without the approval of the ancestors, Mentou Village would mean that there would be no successor. Later, HDC knew about this matter. He made it clear that he wanted to pass on the traditional culture and that all the Hualan Yao people should participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. HGL personally also believed that they should participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Although he knew that there were some people including young people and middle-aged and old people who no longer recognized the traditional ritual.



Figure 91 HGL, one of the last temple masters of Mentou Village, was one of the most recognized and prestigious old men of Hualan Yao in Luk Lane Township. He was also the only living temple master at that time. He was familiar with all the history, culture and traditional ceremonies of the Hualan Yao. He passed away in March 2009.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2007.

The traditional moral rules, the order of propriety, still function to a large extent as a means of community integration, but in some areas or with some people this integration of traditional moral rules has lost its effectiveness. One obvious example is the emergence of a large number of young people in Mentou village who have nothing to do after graduating from junior high school. They do not know how to do farm work and are too lazy to do it. They spend their days loitering in the streets, smoking, drinking and gathering for gambling. This has caused resentment among the elderly, who are always complaining about the poor social climate nowadays. People in the village feel disgusted, but no one can do anything about it. This is indeed a worrying problem (Xu Ping, 2006).

The development of modernization since the 1980s has brought about a great impact on the Hualan Yao community. Modern media technologies such as television, cell phones and the Internet have entered these ancient communities and have had a great impact on the mindsets of young people. In the process of accepting foreign cultures, many bad ideas and vices have eroded the minds of young people. The rule of the "elders" under the traditional order of ritual rule, whose system of moral norms has been broken down, has lost its integrating effect on young people who have accepted foreign ideas. However, the modern rule of law has not yet been perfected, making it difficult to enter the depths of the mountains. As a result, the youth of the Hualan Yao society are to some extent in a state of "dereliction". Before the emergence of a new moral system, they are on the verge of losing their moral rules (Xu Ping, 2006).

There was also too much uncertainty among the young people who went out to work. During this period, Mentou village was in a difficult labor transfer process. In 1995, there were individual migrant workers in Mentou village, and HFZ's oldest daughter and HDS's oldest daughter were the earliest migrant workers at that time. Starting from the end of the twentieth century, the number of migrant workers increased. According to my fieldwork, as of 2005, the total number of laborers who

went out to work in the village was 17. There were 11 male villagers and 6 female villagers, all of whom were unmarried youths around 20 years old. The number of laborers moving out of the village continues to grow. Their main destinations for outward labor are Beijing, Wuhan, Shenzhen and other small and medium-sized cities under the jurisdiction of Guangdong Province such as Dongguan, Huizhou, Sihui and Zhongshan. Guangdong, as a processing and manufacturing base developed after the reform and opening up, needs a large amount of labor resources, providing opportunities for outsiders to work here.

In terms of time, young people generally work outside the home for shorter periods of time. Boys generally do not work in a particular place or factory for more than six months. They work for one or two months or less and then return home. When they get tired of staying at home, they would come out to work again. Girls are easier to find jobs than boys, have a better ability to adapt to their environment, and work for a longer period of time. The main purpose for the boys to go out to work is to go to the city to gain knowledge and change the traditional way of life in Mentou Village. They themselves lack the motivation and sense of responsibility to work. Their families have low expectations of them, as long as they can support themselves.

HLJ, HLF, HZC part-time jobs.

In September 2004, they went to Dongguan to work together in a hanger factory for only five days. The work was introduced by the county government organization. On their first day of work they earned only 7 yuan because they did not know that they were paid by the piece. They ran to a restaurant for a meal at noon on impulse because they missed the cafeteria meal time and spent more than 30 yuan. They went out again in the evening after work and drank beer together. The three of them made more than 9,000 pieces of hangers in five days. Because most of them failed and were asked to rework, they quit their jobs as a result. When they came out to work, each of them brought three to four hundred yuan. They decided to go to Wuhan to seek help from a friend. With the help of their friends, they entered a private shoe manufacturing company through recruitment. As a result, they quit after working only one night, because night work was tiring and dangerous. They didn't want to suffer. Later, HLJ's aunt introduced them to a handbag factory. The monthly salary was about 600 yuan. Because the boss was so bad-tempered, they didn't want to put up with it. After working for a month, they resigned and went to Beijing. They didn't find a suitable job in Beijing and didn't have the money to buy a ticket home. HZC asked his family to send him 800 yuan. In the end they returned to Mentou Village (Xu Ping, 2006).

The young people who go out to work take Mentou Village as their permanent safety and security, and keep moving in a cycle. The boys even repeat the cycle of "going out coming back going out again", starting and ending at their original villages. However, this does not stop the migrant workers from going out to work again and again. The speed of labor mobility in Mentou Village is accelerating.

The loss of effectiveness of traditional moral rules and ritual order for community integration is also reflected in social organization. "Economic problems" and "trivial matters of life" have become the main issues of conflict in Hualan Yao families. Of course, there are many families that choose to have few or no conflicts. Among the 37 families in Mentou Village, there are two families with obvious family conflicts. In the first family, there are three generations of "bachelors" grandfather,



father and son living together. In this family, the grandfather is widowed, the father is divorced, and the son is unmarried at the age of 25. In 1995, his parents divorced because the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law did not get along, the mother-in-law did not take care of the children, and the husband was lazy and did not go out to work, making life very difficult. As a result, his mother remarried to Pingnan County with another child. In the second family, the in-laws and the son and daughter-in-law live in the same courtyard, but they do not eat or do farm work together. This family is a special case in the Hualan Yao society where parents and children are not separated. The main reason for their conflict is that the daughter-in-law resents her husband and father-in-law for earning less money, and her mother-in-law forbids her to over-supervise the children. This is contrary to the traditional Hualan Yao custom of respecting the elderly and loving the young.

In the long run, how would farmers who are addicted to bad hobbies and do not know how to farm inherit the traditional family business? How would this generation survive in the mountains? would the village still exist? What would happen to Hualan Yao? A series of "out-of-order" conditions have aroused more people's concern and thoughts about ethnicity.

HHG, male, 86 years old, Hualan Yao, the master of Mentou Village. He attended a new school run during the Kuomintang period and was a village cadre for more than 20 years. His father was the last Shipai Tou in Mentou Village, and in the 1950s, when the Chinese government organized a staff to conduct an ethnic survey in Mentou Village, they stayed in his house.

In the past, those government workers who came to conduct ethnic surveys praised the traditional culture of the Hualan Yao. That has all changed. The villages are now full of women over 65 years of age who are skilled in the art of garment making. Only half of the women in their 30s and 40s are skilled. None of the women in their twenties are able to reach a very skillful level anymore. Other girls, even younger, have never even touched a needle and thread. Younger people are even less knowledgeable about the ritual. Fewer and fewer people know how to coil their hair. In the future, no one would even know how to make national costumes, and the Flower Blue Yao would cease to exist.

While some may be more modern and individualized, there is a segment of the population that maintains a strong interest in and awareness of traditional culture and rituals. They recognize the importance of traditional ceremonies and strive to pass on and maintain cultural traditions. This represents the fact that different people may have different attitudes and perceptions towards traditional ceremonies.

HQC, male, 76 years old, Hualan Yao, a doctor in Mentou village. His grandson has inherited his ancestral profession and is a doctor at the health center in Mentou village. He keeps a female Cheng Ren Li ritual costume from more than 100 years ago in his home.

Although most of the villagers don't wear national costumes anymore, each of them has a set. You can't just lose what your ancestors have handed down to you, or you won't be able to see your ancestors in the future. The clothes of each ethnic group have their own characteristics, and the clothes of the Hualan Yao are also very beautiful. His mother, LMX, 94 years old, married from Hualan Yao in Liuxiang Village. She said that the patterns on the clothes were handed down from her ancestors and have been worn this way for generations. The Hualan Yao is

different from other Yao ethnic groups in that everyone is expected to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. His granddaughter, HYR, was the only high school student in Mentou Village at that time. She has loved embroidery since she was a child. She didn't have much time to go to school, and she always regretted not being able to learn the complete technique of making ethnic costumes. She thought the clothes of Hualan Yao looked good. Later she went to the Central University for Nationalities. Now she works in the Guangxi government department. His grandson, HZC, is 38 years old. He got married in 2004 and his wife is Shanzi Yao. When they got married, both he and his wife wore the Hualan Yao national costume. His wife also thinks that the clothes of Hualan Yao are very nice with many patterns.

HZC, 28 years old, male, Hualan Yao, is now working for the Guangxi provincial government. He also works as the secretary of the Guangxi Yao Research Association and is dedicated to promoting Yao culture.

In 2005, he was 13 years old and a junior at Jinxiu County High School. Because his family had preserved the tile drums of Mentou Village for generations, he was one of the three main temple masters of the village. He grew up with the history and customs of Hualan Yao. He is very interested in these traditional cultures. He often pestered the old man to talk about ethnic history and sing Yao songs. He also went around looking for books related to the Flower Blue Yao to read. Compared with other children of his age, he has a very strong sense of ethnicity. He was very sorry to see that the other four Yao clans in the Dayao Mountains of Jinxiu County had recorded their histories, but only the Hualan Yao did not. He hopes that when he grows up, he can write a book about the history of his ethnic group. He saw his mother making his sister's Cheng Ren Li ritual costume, and he felt that his ancestors were so marvelous that they could create so many patterns. He looks forward to his own Cheng Ren Li ritual next year as soon as possible.

HLQ, female, 25 years old, Hualan Yao, now working in a kindergarten in Jinxiu County.

In 2005, she was 10 years old and a fifth grade student at Six Lane Township Elementary School. She loves the costume of Hualan Yao. Her mom had already prepared the ritual costume for her Cheng Ren Li ritual. Although embroidery is hard to learn, she still wants to learn it. She thinks all the girls in Hualan Yao should know how to embroider and make national costumes.





Figure 92 Children attending middle school at the middle school in Liuxiang Township. They are the participants of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and represent the hope and future of the Hualan Yao village. Some of them want to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual to pass on the ethnic tradition. Some of the children said they did not want to participate or wished to have the emerging ritual . This represents that different people have different attitudes and views on traditional ceremonies.

Source:Photographed by the author.August5, 2006.



Figure 93 The people of Hualan Yao who are offering sacrifices to the gods. They are participants and strong supporters of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. They hope that their children and grandchildren would be able to participate in the Cheng Ren Li ritual because it represents a connection with their ancestors and gods. They hope to be protected and blessed by their ancestors and gods.

Source:Photographed by the author .February3, 2007.

It can be seen that these causes and phenomena are not applicable to all the people of Hualan Yao. Different individuals may have different values and views. Some young people still actively participate in traditional ceremonies and respect cultural traditions and family values. However, some young and middle-aged people believe that traditional ceremonies are no longer adapted to the modernized way of life. They want to change or abandon the traditional ceremonies in order to gain more freedom. This has brought about a cultural crisis for the Hualan Yao and aroused concerns about ethnicity in the Hualan Yao society. The balance between tradition and modernity is an evolving process that reflects social and cultural changes.

In short, ritual concepts are pluralistic and culturally relevant, and they reflect different understandings and perceptions of rituals by individuals and societies. Economic development and population movements have changed the ritual concepts

of some people, making them more diverse or influenced by different cultures. Different groups would respond to these changes in their own ways, while maintaining the core values of traditional rituals.

In general, economic development and population mobility have influenced the ritual elements and ritual concepts of Cheng Ren Li ritual, making them more diverse or culturally diverse. Different populations have different trends and manifestations. This has led to two distinctly different conceptions of the rite of passage. There is a cultural crisis in the Hualan Yao society, which triggers people's thinking about ethnicity.

#### 4.1.3 2006-2020: the revival and prosperity of the Cheng Ren Li ritual

The revitalization and flourishing of the Cheng Ren Li ritual is a complex process influenced by a number of factors. It is the result of a combination of timing, conditions and organizational efforts and reflects the interaction of State and social relations. It reflects the interest in and importance attached to traditional values and cultural traditions. Whether because of the need for cultural identity, the challenges of social change or the efforts of cultural revitalization, the revival and prosperity of the Cheng Ren Li ritual provides an important platform for connectivity, stability and identity for the Hualan Yao society.

As China's poverty alleviation process accelerates, the challenges of the cultural crisis faced by the Hualan Yao include the following four main aspects.

(1) Social changes. The rapid changes in modern society have led some people to believe that the Cheng Ren Li ritual has lost its original social function. People's lifestyles, values and socialization patterns have changed, and the traditional rite no longer adapts to these changes.

(2) Population mobility and urbanization. Population mobility and urbanization have challenged the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Because people leave their hometowns, they lose the roots of their traditional cultural existence.

(3) Generational breaks. Bar Mitzvah ceremonies are an important way for one generation to pass on to the next. However, younger generations may no longer be interested in traditional ceremonies, leading to a break in transmission. Traditional ceremonies may be gradually forgotten due to the decline in the number of inheritors.

(4) Cultural globalization. Cultural globalization has caused elements from different regions and cultures to merge with each other, resulting in elements of traditional rituals being influenced by new cultures.

(5) Influence of the education system. Traditional ceremonies are no longer included in the education system of Hualan Yao families, leaving the younger generation without the opportunity to learn about and participate in them.

In the face of these challenges, the Hualan Yao society has taken a series of measures to pass on the Cheng Ren Li ritual. These include measures such as promoting ethnic legends, repairing village buildings, changing the concept of village development, and strengthening ritual education and community cooperation, among other ways, to ensure the transmission and continuation of the traditional ritual culture. At the same time, there is also a need to adapt to changes in modern society on the basis of respect for traditional culture so that traditional ceremonies can continue to exist and develop meaningfully.

Re-recognizing and promoting national legends can contribute to the prosperity of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Ethnic legends are the valuable cultural heritage of a people; they contain profound values, historical stories and spiritual meanings that are closely related to the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Organizing cultural festivals and events is one way to integrate ethnic legends into modern life. Communities can encourage residents to participate in creating, performing and sharing ethnic legends. This helps build community cohesion and makes ethnic legends a common cultural resource for the community. Parents can pass on ethnic legends in their families and integrate them into family education. This helps family members to better understand and pass on their culture. The Government and cultural institutions support the research and preservation of ethnic legends, including the recording of oral traditions, the collation of legend texts, and the preservation of related cultural heritage. This helps to ensure the transmission and preservation of legends.

By re-conceptualizing and promoting national legends, traditional cultural elements can be integrated into modern society, providing richer cultural resources for the Cheng Ren Li ritual. This not only helps the younger generation to better understand their cultural identity, but also enhances the cultural depth and significance of the rite by incorporating elements of national legends into the Cheng Ren Li ritual. This helps to promote the prosperity and inheritance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of modernity.

Repairing village buildings can help the Cheng Ren Li ritual flourish and enhance the cultural attractiveness of the village. Improving the infrastructure of ethnic villages, including roads, water supply systems and electricity facilities, improves the quality of life of villagers while providing better conditions and facilities for the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Cultural heritage preservation. Protecting and restoring cultural heritage such as historical buildings and religious sites in villages to ensure that these important cultural elements are passed on and preserved.

Cultural education and transmission. Establishment of cultural education centers in villages to provide training and education on traditional culture for the younger generation. This helps to ensure that traditional culture is passed on, including traditional rituals and practices in the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

In 2004, under the guidance of HDC, his brother, HDS, demolished the old house and built the first "new Yao-style" house on the same site. This two-storey chic "new Yao-style" house aroused the villagers' great concern and formed a consensus, and in the spring of 2006, with the advocacy and help of HDC and LQH, Mentou Village formulated the "Mentou Village Construction Plan". This plan is the first plan for the construction of a natural town in the county, and it is an epoch-making document of Yao architecture in the county's natural towns. The plan not only clarified the policy basis, guiding ideology and planning principles, but also was detailed, specific and complete. Specific requirements and regulations were made for the overall layout, rational use of land, taking and giving up of house foundation, architectural style, lane construction, public facilities, protection and restoration of historical buildings, water supply and drainage, public hygiene, environmental beautification and protection, and authority and responsibility of the management organization, and so on. Fully discussed by all the villagers, on May 8, 2006 in Shipai

Ping vote, unanimously adopted the "door head Yaozhai construction planning", and put into practice.

Under the unity and cooperation of all villagers, after more than two years of efforts, by the end of 2008, HJX, HLG, HWP, HZC, HRS, HQC, HZG and other people have built "new Yao-style" housing. At the same time, the construction of houses was synchronized with the conversion of kitchens, stoves, latrines and hoops.



Figure 94 The Construction Plan of Mentou Village. This plan started the reconstruction and expansion of the traditional ritual space of Mentou Village. In 2017, Mentou Village, which was built according to this plan, was recognized as a "Traditional Characteristic Village of Ethnic Minorities in China" by the National People's Committee of China.

Source: Photographed by the author. May 4, 2021.



Figure 95 Village gate under construction. This is one of the ritual places for the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Its reconstruction has made this place a symbol of Mentou village. People have become more woulding to show their village and national culture.

Source: Huang Huayan photoed. February 4, 2007.



Figure 96 Shi Pai Ping was being expanded. This is the most important Ritual place for the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Source: Huang Huayan photoed. February 4, 2007.

By renovating ethnic villages and promoting cultural activities, better venues and conditions can be provided for Cheng Ren Li ritual, while at the same time contributing to the preservation and transmission of local cultural heritage. Such initiatives can help the Cheng Ren Li ritual to flourish in the context of modernity and enhance the cultural attraction of the village, drawing more people to participate and experience it.

Changing the concept of village development and incorporating cultural, social and environmental factors into village development strategies can provide better contexts and conditions for bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies, while also helping to enhance the cultural attractiveness and sustainability of villages. Such an initiative could help the Cheng Ren Li ritual flourish in the context of poverty alleviation in China and promote integrated village development.

**Culture and Tourism Development.** Incorporate cultural and tourism development into village development strategies. Attract tourists to visit and experience local culture by providing cultural experiences, traditional handicraft markets, and cultural festivals. Cheng Ren Li ritual can be part of the attraction for tourists and increase the appeal of cultural tourism. Make the village a folk culture village and provide opportunities for tourists to experience the traditional way of life and participate in the production of traditional handicrafts. This can promote local cultural heritage and provide an attractive venue for bar mitzvah ceremonies.

**Community participation and cultural heritage.** Encourage village residents to actively participate in cultural preservation and transmission. Establish a cultural education center to provide training and education on traditional culture for the younger generation, including the significance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the ritual process. Establish partnerships, including with government, non-profit organizations and businesses, to provide resources and support for village restoration and development.

**Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development.** Incorporate environmental protection and sustainability into the concept of development. Ensure that the development of the village does not irreversibly impact the natural environment. Cheng Ren Li ritual can demonstrate respect for the environment through environmental initiatives such as energy conservation and waste reduction.

Social interaction and cohesion. Foster community cohesion and social interaction. Cheng Ren Li ritual can be used as part of community events to increase connection and empathy among residents. Social interactions help strengthen the social capital of the village.

Diversify the economy. Promote a diversified economy that does not rely solely on traditional agriculture or handicrafts. Consider developing small businesses, cultural and creative industries, and rural tourism to increase economic vitality.

Help from modern technology. Modern technologies, such as the Internet and social media, make it easier to pass on traditional rituals. People can use these tools to record, share and disseminate traditional ceremonies so that more people can learn about and participate in them. The spread of digital technology and social media in the 21st century has changed the way people interact with traditional ceremonies. People are now more likely to share ritual experiences through social media and interact with friends and family who are far away. They are more likely to participate and share rituals through social media to interact with friends and family far away.



Figure 97 A little girl participating in a Cheng Ren Li ritual. She is happily and confidently displaying her national costume.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2023.

The Cheng Ren Li ritual shapes Mentou Village in many ways, not only reflecting the culture, values, and social structure of the village, but also playing an important role in social cohesion and individual growth. Mentou village's role in shaping the village has been further strengthened through the remodeling, expansion, and new construction of the ritual space.

Overall, in the context of poverty alleviation in China, the intense changes in the Hualan Yao community have affected the situation of the village. But the Hualan Yao villages have their own means of negotiation, struggle and confrontation, and in 2005, the flooding in Jinxiu County gave them an opportunity to change. They strengthened the role of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in shaping the village by renovating the Ritual space, changing the concept of village development, and strengthening



Ritual education and community cooperation to ensure the continuity and development of the ethnic group and the village in a modern society. In this phase, modernization has turned from a challenge to an opportunity, driving the development of Cheng Ren Li ritual. Cheng Ren Li ritual can be more widely disseminated and documented on social media. This has helped the Hualan Yao people to increase awareness and participation, and to connect the rite of passage to the wider community. The balance between tradition and modernity is an evolving process that reflects social and cultural changes.

In conclusion, over time, the Cheng Ren Li ritual develops, evolves and adapts to social changes. Social change affects the development of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and is defined and reshaped in new social contexts. But all Cheng Ren Li ritual play an important role in society, helping individuals transition to adulthood, making social connections, and passing on cultural traditions. We view the rite of passage as a cultural form, and through its intrinsic connection to the social world, we examine in depth the interactions of the various subjects involved in the process of rite of passage transformation, their interactions with social institutions and organizations, and the resulting structural and spatial order. In the following I will reveal the interactive relations and the logic of the actors behind the rite of passage through ritual case studies that reflect the evolution of the meaning of the rite of passage.

#### **4.2 Contemporary Paradigms for Cheng Ren Li Ritual**

The Cheng Ren Li ritual is a vibrant tradition. Over the years, its content and form have become more standardized and regulated, driven by heritage, innovation and practice to ensure its authenticity and cultural significance. Efforts have been made to preserve the traditional elements of the ritual, including the composition of the participants, the ritual costumes, the ritual space, the music and dance, the ritual food and drink, and the ritual text. Mentou Village has thus developed a contemporary paradigm for Cheng Ren Li ritual that has been imitated and borrowed by other Hualan Yao villages. In the following, I would apply the theory of ritual process to show the interactive relationship and behavioral subject logic of the Cheng Ren Li ritual and reflect the evolution of the meaning of the Cheng Ren Li ritual through a case study.

##### **4.2.1 Ritual symbols re-recognized and redefined**

Ritual symbols that have been re-recognized include various participants, objects, movements, music and dance, and ritual texts. These symbols have special significance in traditional rituals and have been re-recognized or given new meaning through the passage of time or the adaptation of change.

##### **1) Composition of participants**

In the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the arrangement of participants blends tradition and innovation. It retains traditional elements and introduces new features compared to ceremonies in traditional social contexts. Ritual participants are mainly categorized into roles such as facilitators, auxiliaries, new adults, witnesses, community members, and guests of the ritual.

**Facilitator.** She is the leader of the ritual and is responsible for organizing, guiding and conducting the entire process. She is usually an older woman in the new adult's family. She possesses the conditions required for previous ceremonies, including good health, children, and familiarity with all ritual procedures and

knowledge, in addition to the requirements of previous ceremonies. Her family should be among the better off. The officiant is chosen from among those of high repute in economic, political or social circles.

**Auxiliaries.** They are the performers who assist the officiant in completing the ritual and are the ones who assist in performing the ritual behaviors and ritual actions. They are generally female elders of the new adult's family, including but not limited to their mother, grandmother, aunt, grandmother, etc. There are usually 2-3 of them.

**New Adults.** They are the primary beneficiaries of the ritual. They play a major role in the ritual, participating in ritual acts and symbolic gestures. They are clearly defined as being 15 years old according to the Chinese lunar calendar. Their ethnicity is not limited to Hualan Yao. Nor is their hukou necessarily located in the village of Mentou. They are not necessarily related to their Hualan Yao family. In other words, one can be a New Adult as long as he or she has a legal and social relationship with the Hualan Yao. For example, HFY, the stepdaughter of HLJ from Mentou Village, was brought in by his second wife. HFY is of Zhuang ethnicity, and she changed her surname to Hu after her own stepfather. She participated in her own Cheng Ren Li ritual in the Spring Festival of 2019. HXT, granddaughter of HDS. HXT's mother married into Tongmu Township, and her father's surname is Qin, which is Zhuang. She took her mother's last name and her hukou is in Tongmu Township. She participated in her own Cheng Ren Li ritual on the Spring Festival of 2022.

**Witnesses.** Witnesses are eyewitnesses to the ritual. They are present during the preparatory stages of the ritual and during the ritual to witness and validate the ritual. They are often family members or friends of the new adults. This includes parents, siblings, elders, friends, etc. They provide support, blessings, and participate in the acts of the ritual. Even if they are working out of town, they make a point of coming back for the ritual.

**Community Members.** During a Cheng Ren Li ritual, members of the community participate collectively in celebrating and supporting the rite of passage of the new adult. Community participation enhances the social and cultural significance of the ritual. They are often an entire village.

**ritual guests.** They are people who have been specially invited by the new adults, as well as uninvited people. They include relatives and friends from other villages and ethnic groups, tourists, and scholars. They generally participate in the celebration of the ritual.

These participants play different roles in the ritual, and they perform a variety of functions and responsibilities during the ritual. The success of the Cheng Ren Li ritual relies on the collaboration and joint efforts of the participants to ensure that the ritual runs smoothly and achieves its intended purpose and meaning.



Figure 98 The villagers of Mentou Village held the ritual at Shipai Ping. For the Hualan Yao people, the Chinese New Year with Cheng Ren Li ritual is always particularly lively. The crowd of participants is the biggest blessing to the new adult. They believe that the more people watching the ritual, the more blessings the new adult receives. It is also a demonstration of their family status and economic strength. Source: Photographed by the author. February 1, 2022.

An increase in the size of the participants in Cheng Ren Li ritual can make the tradition more vibrant, while also contributing to the transmission of cultural values and community cohesion. In scaling up, there is a need to ensure that the core values and meaning of the ritual are maintained in order to preserve the authenticity and purpose of the ritual.

## 2) Ritual clothing

Ritual attire is specific attire worn on special occasions or ceremonies and is usually symbolic and formal in nature. It represents an individual's maturity and ability to think independently in terms of ritual education. The wearing of a new adult to wear ritual attire symbolizes the individual's maturity of mind and readiness to face family and social responsibilities.

Cheng Ren Li ritual costumes retain traditional elements while taking into account the need for ritual display. Costumes become more decorative. The number of pieces of clothing worn by women is increased, with 12 pieces generally being worn. Women uniformly wear purchased black cloth shoes. White scarves and neckbands have been removed from women's costumes, and red neckbands have been added. This was a decoration previously worn only by men.

Fabrics for ritual costumes continue to be made of cotton hand-woven by the women of the Hualan Yao. They gave up the machine-made chemical fiber cloth and silk threads that were revered by the women in the previous period. This reflects Hualan Yao's identification with traditional culture. This is mainly manifested in the following aspects.



Figure 99 Handmade Cotton Fabrics for Garments. The cherished handmade cotton cloth represents the traditional culture of the Hualan Yao people.  
Source:Photographed by the author.February3, 2022.



Figure 100 Traditional silk threads and machine-made chemical fiber threads used for embroidery. The villagers of Hualan Yao want to buy traditional silk thread. They think that machine threads have no luster and fluffiness, which makes the embroidery patterns unattractive. These machine threads were once their favorite.  
Source:Photographed by the author.February3, 2023.

Traditional culture and cultural identity. They recognize that ritual clothing is a symbol of traditional culture. The use of traditional natural materials for clothing is seen as respecting and preserving cultural traditions. Therefore, the women preferred to follow this tradition. They showed great care and caution in the making and preservation of the garments. In order to avoid staining the garments, the women would wear plastic gloves to make them. Each family has a special cabinet and place for storing the ritual costumes. The garments are kept on the second floor of the house because the second floor is drier and more hygienic and there is less movement. This facilitates the preservation of the ritual garments.

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Figure 101 Hualan Yao women wearing plastic gloves to make garments. This is to avoid contaminating the garments with sweat and dirt from their hands. They believe that this minimizes the number of times the garments are washed and ensures that they look good and last longer.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.



Figure 102 Hualan Yao women carefully put their garments into boxes for preservation. Each family has a similar handmade traditional wooden box. They believe that the garments are better preserved in such boxes. Such boxes are more natural and environmentally friendly and insulate the garments from moisture. They believe that composite boxes are not suitable for preserving garments.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.

The quality and feel of the material. Natural fibers such as cotton are usually more comfortable, breathable and skin-friendly than synthetic fibers. Handmade cotton and traditional silk threads are of higher quality and value. As a result, villagers find wearing these garments more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing, as well as more valuable.

Artisan skills are passed on. Making ritual garments requires great handcrafting skills. Handmade cotton fabrics and traditional silk threads are easier to embroider and decorate. The use of machine-made chemical fiber cloth and silk thread would weaken the heritage and value of these craft skills. The Hualan Yao pay great attention to the transmission of garment making skills. They believe that these skills need to be passed on from generation to generation. Young girls are picking up needles and threads again in addition to their studies and work.

Personal satisfaction. Making traditional clothing can give women a sense of satisfaction and pride. This is because they can demonstrate their craft skills and creativity. This satisfaction may go far beyond what can be provided by using machine-made garments.



Figure 103 Women, both young and old, making ritual garments. They maintain the traditional way of making costumes and exchanging their skills. The process of exchanging skills among the women gathered together is also a process of learning and passing on traditional culture. In this process, ritual knowledge and national culture are passed on and developed.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.

Sustainability and healthy environment. People in Flower Rangoon have also become concerned about sustainability and environmental protection. They believe that the use of natural materials is in line with environmental and health principles, whereas synthetic fibers may have a negative impact on the environment and health.

Resistance to industrialization and globalization. The people of Hualan Yao may resist the effects of industrialization and globalization. They believe that the use of traditional materials and handicrafts helps to protect their culture from foreign influences.

These reasons and manifestations may vary from person to person. As garments worn in daily life, there are those who wish to combine traditional and modern elements in order to create garments that are both traditional in style and adaptable to modern life. However, as ritual clothing, they prefer to follow tradition. Therefore, an individual's values, cultural background and personal choices play an important role in creating ritual clothing.

It should be pointed out that the hand-woven cotton cloth and traditional silk thread used by the women of the Hualan Yao are "non-renewable" items. The cotton cloth they currently use was preserved in the past and would not be available when it is used up. The silk thread they use is no longer made or sold. According to the field survey, the average family in Mentou Village owns only enough cotton cloth and silk thread to last them for the next five years. They only use it to make Ritual garments worn by their own families. They take orders for garments that use machine-made chemical fiber cloth and chemical fiber thread. They tell this plight to every

scholar and government worker who arrives. It now seems that the only solution is to revive the traditions of cotton cultivation, indigo-dyed cloth and hand-weaving. The village committee of Mentou Village is also discussing the feasibility of restoring these traditional cultures. They plan to link the restoration of these traditional cultures with the tourism economy to attract more tourists. They hope to create more jobs and bring more economic benefits by showcasing traditional culture.

### 3) Ritual spaces

The traditional ritual space has a strong cultural history and symbolism that better reflects the ritual culture and the tradition and identity of the Hualan Yao. People want to pass on and promote their cultural heritage by organizing Cheng Ren Li ritual in such spaces. People also hope to gain the shelter of their ancestors in such a ritual space and gain a better and more dignified life.

**Ritual symbolism.** Traditional ritual spaces have ritual symbolism that helps to enhance the meaning and value of the ritual. These spaces are associated with specific religions, legends and historical events, giving the rituals added depth.

**Community participation and cohesion.** Traditional ritual spaces are important cultural and historical places in Hualan Yao, and they can encourage greater participation in ceremonies and strengthen community cohesion. Hosting ceremonies in these spaces allows for the participation of more family, friends, family members and community members to celebrate important moments in new adulthood.

**Sacredness and solemnity.** Traditional ritual spaces, such as the large intersection outside the village and the Shihpai Ping, have a special sacredness and solemnity. Holding the ritual in such spaces helps to give the ritual a higher sense of sacredness and ritual, and gives the new adults and participants a sense of solemnity and reverence.



Figure 104 Hualan Yao Museum in Mentou Village. The new Fei Xiaotong's former residence, temple, Cheng Ren Li ritual Stone Pillar, and Hualan Yao Museum in Mentou Village. These Ritual spaces were originally just marked with a stone or a few several pieces of wood. Now, people have built new landmarks on the original old sites. People have expanded the ritual spaces.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.

**Availability of Traditional ritual Symbols.** Traditional ritual spaces are already equipped with symbols, decorations, and amenities for ritual use that enhance the ritual without the need for additional preparation.



Figure 105 New community symbols in Mentou Village. Newly erected stone figures of Hualan Yao, stone pillars of the Divine Dragon, and statues of dogs (*Canis lupus*) in Mentou Village. These symbols of traditional culture are erected at the most prominent and central location of Mentou Village. These symbols originally existed only in the legends and memories of Hualan Yao. Now, people have physicalized them. People use tangible objects to embody ritual history and culture in every day of their daily lives. People have expanded the imaginative space of the ritual .

Source: Photographed by the author .February3, 2023.

Emotional connections and memories. New adults and their families have special emotional connections and memories in traditional ritual spaces. They prefer to hold their Cheng Ren Li ritual in these places because of their special emotional value.

The "Xinyao-style" houses in Mentou Village are all two-story houses built on the hillside. The foundation of the building is made of slate, and it is in the form of a half hammock. The main body is a brick reinforced concrete structure with a sloping roof covered with small green tiles. The main room is three rooms, the center hall, and the left and right are four bedrooms. There is a corridor in front of the door of the hall, and some shorter rooms are built on both sides. In the center is an open courtyard with a wide view and good lighting. At both ends of the main house, there is a small one-storey room, one for the kitchen and one for the utility room. The main door is mostly set on the left side, with a number of steps in front of the door, so that when you walk out of the house, you have the feeling of being in a superior position. Entering the house from the outside, there is the meaning of ascending step by step. On both sides of the gate, stone dogs are placed to protect the house. Wooden couplets are hung on the front door of each house. The meanings of the couplets mostly express the superior natural environment of Mentou Village and the elegant taste of the owners. This is different from the symbolism of warding off evil spirits and welcoming auspiciousness and good fortune that is pursued in other places and during the Chinese New Year. For example, the couplet of HDS's house. Banner: Green Peaks and Clouds, the first couplet: Mountain high and long accompanied by



the joy of the breeze, the second couplet: Valley secluded and everlasting with the fragrance of Zhilan. It adds a lot of elegance.

The "new Yao-style" housing, with its rational and practical indoor layout, bright ventilation, dryness and comfort, has greatly improved the quality of life of the villagers. At the same time, the style and pattern of the traditional "four-square house" of Hualan Yao has been preserved. All the doors of the houses are wooden doors. There are door head, lintel, door frame, threshold and door pier. All the big and small doorways are equipped with two pivoting doors, which are equipped with metal door rings such as copper and iron. These are the traditional elements of the houses of Hualan Yao. The village has deliberately preserved the "wooden frame and fence" grass houses and yellow mud houses to contrast with the "new Yao style" houses. These traditional houses are not just for display. The villagers still use these traditional houses to store agricultural tools, wood and food. Old people often return to the old houses to burn the fire and sit around chatting.



Figure 106 New Ceremonial Venue in Mentou Village. Newly constructed houses, streets, moral pavilions, and stone tablet pings in Mentou Village. These original ritual spaces have been rebuilt and maintained their original locations and styles.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.



Figure 107 Traditional buildings specifically preserved in Mentou Village. These original ritual spaces have been well preserved and continue to be used. They continue to play the role of cultural transmission.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 3, 2023.

The reconstructed streets, village gate, Shipai Ping, Merit Pavilion, Ritual Song Building, elementary school building, newly built Hualan Yao Museum, Fei Xiaotong's former residence and other ritual spaces are all in the "new Yao style" architectural style, preserving the local ethnic characteristics of Hualan Yao.

#### 4)Ritual diets

Ritual foods are symbolic and represent specific values, beliefs or meanings. By consuming these foods, participants can communicate the theme and purpose of the ritual . Ritual foods for Cheng Ren Li ritual retain traditional elements and flavors while showing individual differences. Ching Ming tea, mushroom and red bean soup, yellow rice, rice made from pigs raised in the traditional method itself and dumplings wrapped in a bun. In addition to these standard items, the family meal after the ritual is extra hearty. A variety of seafood and meat dishes are served. Foods made from wild animals, representing hunting traditions and bravery, are replaced by animals that are legally allowed to be farmed in captivity. Dietary taboos remain.

**Traditional cultural and ritual heritage.** Ritual foods are part of a specific cultural or religious ritual and are used to pass on and promote traditions. Eating these foods is a way for participants to honor and participate in cultural traditions.

**Sharing and social cohesion.** The consumption of food during the ritual promotes social interaction and social cohesion. Participants share food, which promotes connections and friendships with each other. This social interaction contributes to the atmosphere and sense of unity of the ritual .

**Celebrate and enjoy.** Ceremonies are occasions to celebrate special moments, and food is part of the celebration. Eating delicious food adds to the pleasure of the ritual and makes it easier for participants to enjoy it.

**Body and ritual connection.** By consuming ritual food, individuals can connect their bodies to the ritual and deepen their participation in it. Food serves as a practical action that makes the ritual more authentic and experiential.

**Blessings and Prayers.** Some foods are used in blessings and prayers for blessings and divine power. Food in this case is of a religious nature.



Figure 108 Yellow rice made from yellow gardenia water with red beans and mushrooms. By eating these foods, the people of Hualan Yao hope to ward off evil spirits and achieve health and longevity.

Source:Photographed by the author.February3, 2023.

**Banquets and Feasts.** A family meal after the ritual provides participants with the opportunity to enjoy a variety of delicious foods and dishes. This can add to the grand and celebratory atmosphere of the ritual .

Rituals evoke memories. Specific ritual foods are associated with individual or family memories and traditions. Consuming these foods during rituals can evoke fond memories and emotional connections.

In summary, foods often play an important role in Cheng Ren Li ritual, not only because they fulfill a physical need, but also because of their ritual nature and symbolic significance. Food connects participants to the ritual through taste, touch, and social interaction, enhancing the meaning and experience of the ritual. As a result, people are more likely to eat ritual foods at traditional ceremonies in order to celebrate together, pass on traditions and convey specific symbolic meanings.

#### 5) Music dance and instruments

Since ancient times, music and dance have played an important role in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Music and dance is not only an important way of communication in the Hualan Yao society, adding solemnity and festivity to the ritual. It is also an important carrier of ethnic and ritual education in the Hualan Yao society. Elders teach singing ethnic songs word by word and dancing ethnic dances hand in hand at Shipai Ping.

In modern times, the music and dance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual have been innovated on the basis of the traditional ritual. Literary and artistic works created with the folk music materials of "Jidongnuo" include: the songs "Never Separate" and "Spring Sends Auspiciousness to All New Things"; the folk music ensemble piece "Mountain Ballad"; the musical pieces "Ruling the Mountain Yao," "Lianxin Dam," "Five Volumes of Mao Selection Warming the Heart," "Bamboo Buildings Installed with Televisions," "Bird-Mounted A Brother," "Unity Dam," and the dance piece "Deer Sounding the Green Mountain," "Drum Ballad," "Cutting the Harvest Handle," "Chopping the Tianji," and so on. Green Mountain", "Drum Ballad", "Cutting the Harvest Handle", "Chopping the Field" and so on. Dance works created with Hualan Yao dance materials include: "Deer Sounding on the Green Mountain", "Chopping Tian Ji", etc.

The innovative Hualan Yao songs and dances are characterized by a strong sense of life, outstanding features, diverse forms, new content, close to the aesthetic requirements of modern young people, and enjoyable for the general public.

"Jidongnuo used to be just a narrative song, but after innovation, it has developed into a small opera combining rap and singing. It fills in the blank of the Yao ethnic group that there is no music and opera. The innovation of its tunes, on the basis of retaining the original tuning and the basic tone patterns, the application of pitch, rhythm, melody, tune line and other factors of modern music performance boldly reformed and innovated, so that the range of the musical tunes from the past only 6 degrees to 14 degrees, greatly enhancing the expressive ability of the tune art. The rhythm has also developed from one or two to many, and the speed has developed from the original slow speed to fast, medium and slow, which well expresses the various emotions of joy, anger, sadness and happiness in the plot, and provides a powerful help for the successful shaping of the characters (Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Volume Compilation Committee, 2013).

The innovative Hualan Yao dance, in terms of performance content, breaks through the general folk dance framework, and strives to express the ritual traditions of Hualan Yao and the spirit of the new era at a deeper level from the perspective of historical development. The development of the times and the progress

of the society have impacted the traditional concepts and thoughts of the nation and pushed the nation to a new height of civilization.



Figure 109 Mentou Village represented Hualan Yao to participate in the celebration of the 16th Yao Pan Wang Festival in China and performed songs and dances.

Source: Photographed by the author. November 16, 2020.

The innovative songs and dances of Hualan Yao are very popular among the audience. Some of these songs and dances participated in the cultural and artistic performances held by districts, regions (cities) and counties; some were used as the celebration programs for the 60th and 70th anniversaries of the establishment of the autonomous counties; some were brought to Beijing to report to the central leadership for the performances; and some were brought by the county cultural team to perform in some of the large and medium-sized cities, and brought to the rural areas to perform for the people in Yao, Zhuang, and Han as well as to perform for the tourists in the tourism scenic spots.

#### 6) Ritual Texts

In a Cheng Ren Li ritual, the ritual texts, also known as prayer texts, are chants or recited verses, usually in rhyming form, that express homage and wishes for the ancestors. These ritual texts are recited and prayed by the officiant and meditated upon in the hearts of the new adults. These ritual texts not only express reverence for the ancestors and gods, but also reflect the sincere feelings of the participants.

In the context of poverty alleviation in China, traditional ritual symbols have been re-recognized, given new meanings or redefined for new uses. These symbols reflect different values, cultural trends and social changes in modern Hualan Yao society. These symbols are not only symbols but also expressions of social movements, health consciousness, cultural identity and social progress in the modern Hualan Yao society. By conveying specific messages and values, they help to promote social change and raise public awareness in Hualan Yao.

#### 4.2.2 Ritual process after being regulated

Turner's theory of ritual processes is not only applicable to religious rituals, but can also be used to explain a variety of social rituals, including Cheng Ren Li ritual. It emphasizes the role of rituals in society, including the maintenance of social order, the transformation of individual identities, and the cohesion of communities. This theory is important for understanding rituals, symbols, and social interactions in culture and society. This section uses Turner's Ritual Process Theory to

analyze and analyze a case study of a rite of passage, explaining what function the Cheng Ren Li ritual fulfills and by what mechanism this function is fulfilled.

Turner's theory of ritual processes emphasizes the structure and function of rituals (Turner Victor, 1985; Turner Victor, 2006). The theory consists of the following three key stages.

**Separation:** At the beginning of the ritual, the individual or group is separated from its usual social state and enters a special space or state. This stage marks the preparation of the individual or group to move out of their daily lives and into the special realm of the ritual. At this stage, they usually divest themselves of their usual identities and roles.

**Liminality:** Liminality is the core of Turner's theory. During this phase, the individual or group is in a state of "liminality," no longer belonging to the original social or cultural group, but not fully integrated into the new identity or society. This stage is usually accompanied by ritualized activities, symbols and teachings designed to change the individual's perceptions, values and social status.

**Reintegration Stage (Incorporation):** In the final stage of the ritual, individuals or groups are guided back into society, but with new identities, experiences and knowledge. They reintegrate in society and begin to fulfill new roles and responsibilities. This stage marks the completion of the ritual and the rebirth of the individual or group.

According to Turner's theory of the ritual process, the Hualan Yao people divide the Cheng Ren Li ritual into three stages: 1) Bangjia, the entering stage; 2) Qingli, walking towards Shipai Ping; and 3) Nanguai, leaving Shipai Ping. Shipaiping is the central place of the political and cultural center of Hualan Yao, a social place, a religious place, and a historical building. Therefore, the whole ritual can be seen as taking Shipaiping as a clue, and the above three stages can be regarded as preparing to enter it, staying in it, and leaving it, respectively. I take the Cheng Ren Li ritual of HXT in January 2003 as a case study to explain the complete ritual process. HXT, a female, was born on November 7, 2009, and is a native of Hualan Yao in Mentou Village. She is a student in her second year at Jinxiu County Middle School. In 2015, her parents divorced. Her sister lives with her mother. She has been living with her father. Her Cheng Ren Li ritual was prepared by her grandmother. Her grandmother was the main aider of the ritual.

#### 1) Bangjia: entry stage

Just like the Mukanda ritual of the Ndumbu people, the Bangjia ritual stage of the Hualan Yao has both secular and sacred parts. The last segment begins with the coiffure and change of costume in preparation for the walk to Shipai Ping.

The Bangjia ritual consists of the pre-preparation phase of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. I would begin my description with the preparation of the ritual diet.

#### Prepare the ritual diet.

I arrived at Mentou Village on the morning of January 18, 2023, the twenty-seventh day of the Lunar New Year in the lunar calendar. According to the custom of Hualan Yao, the 27th day of the Lunar New Year is the day to kill pigs and prepare New Year's goods. People who worked outside had returned to Mentou Village one after another. The whole village was very lively. Killing pigs is a big work and lively thing for the countryside. When a family kills a pig, the men and children of the whole family would basically be there.

This year, the HXT family killed two pigs. This was specially prepared by their family for her Cheng Ren Li ritual. In previous years, her family had killed one pig for the Chinese New Year. Since I had already made an appointment in advance, I saw the men preparing to kill the pigs when I went to her house. The bloody scene did not scare the crowd of onlookers. The men said it was a necessary life skill for them as adults. The children said that they had grown up watching the killing of pigs every year, and that when they turned 15 they would be able to participate as helpers.

It is worth mentioning that the traditional Cheng Ren Li ritual has three meanings: 1) to gain acceptance and recognition from the social group, and to be able to participate in the social activities of adulthood, such as collective labor, hunting, rituals, and the making of national costumes; 2) to fall in love freely and to marry and start a family in the social context of the past when marriages took place earlier in the year; and 3) to be a "Shipai soldier" during the period of the Shipai system, which made the men naturally become "Shipai soldiers". 3) During the Shipai system, men naturally became "Shipai soldiers" and had the obligation and responsibility to defend their villages and protect the territory and the people. With the change of time and the change of society, Hualan Yao has made appropriate adjustments. Hunting, getting married and becoming a "Shipai soldier" have become anachronistic. When they pass on their ritual knowledge, they pay more attention to the education of family responsibilities, villagers' obligations and social morality, and at the same time, they also tell the next generation about the original ritual traditions.



Figure 110 This is the scene where the HXT family is killing a pig. There are 9 families in her family. Each family has an adult man who comes to help kill the pig and stays at her house for lunch. After lunch, HXT's grandmother delivers the split pork to the other 8 families. These 8 families would also be represented at the family feast after the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

A portion of the children and young people watching the pig-killing event would also lament that they could not hunt and participate in battles with guns and swords like their ancestors could not. Listening to their tone of voice, there is a great deal of sentiment that heroes have no use for them. Therefore, a significant portion of the population would like to see the resumption of the Cheng Ren Li ritual of wearing swords and the ritual of going into the mountains to hunt. What they may not realize is that these things, which are not permitted in the present rule of law society, are the

very misfortunes that befell their ancestors in the previous traditional society. Of course, there are those who realize this and prefer to enjoy the good life now. From this, we can see the role of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in shaping Hualan Yao. At the same time, we also see the attitudes and choices of different groups towards the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

The killed pig would be split and cut into pieces right away. Fresh pig's offal is considered the most delicious and valuable by the people of Hualanhuayao. Therefore, these pig offal would be washed out immediately and made into lunch to thank the men who come to help. In the past, the way they cooked animal offal was usually boiled or fried. Now, they are usually used for shabu-shabu. Pork prepared specifically for New Year's and Cheng Ren Li ritual is considered a symbol of family status and family reunion, as well as being able to bring good luck. So after lunch, HXT's grandmother delivers the split pork (roughly 1-2 kilograms per portion) to the homes of friends and relatives, signifying added good fortune. The families who receive the pork express their gratitude and blessings to HXT's family and ask about the preparation of the Cheng Ren Li ritual.



Figure 111 The men are having a meal at HXT's house. At such feasts, men and women are usually seated separately. They think this is more conducive to communication and eating. Because the men usually have to drink. The men are also concerned about the preparations for HXT's Cheng Ren Li ritual. HXT's father and grandfather answer the questions.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

During this stage of the preparation of the ritual diet, HXT was not very involved as a girl. Her main job was to record the whole process of killing the pig and post it on her Shake and WeChat. She gave the pig-killing video she posted a funny name, "My Cheng Ren Li ritual Begins." Her relatives and friends who saw the video liked and retweeted it and asked for specific details. Her classmates from other ethnic groups and regions did not know the details of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual, and she explained and answered them all carefully and wittily. Her friends asked her to do a live broadcast of the ritual, hoping to see her in her Ritual attire. She agreed to her friends' request.

This year, there are seven new adults in Mentou Village, four women and three men. They naturally became partners with common topics. HXT has a very cheerful personality, and she set up a group chat on WeChat. HXT and another new

adult, HYN, are good friends. After the winter vacation, they often get together to chat and play games. Of course, they also discuss their Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. HXT is a beautiful and confident girl. She was very much looking forward to the ritual, which meant she could post more videos. Jieyin is her main position for posting videos. The villagers of Mentou village are very fond of watching and posting videos on Shakeyin. It is their online position to show their life and attitude towards life. Her good friend HYN is not as cheerful as she is and prefers a low-key approach to publicity. HYN is also looking forward to her Cheng Ren Li ritual. One of her family's aunts is a graduate of the Central University for Nationalities. She hopes that she would be able to walk the streets of Beijing in her ethnic costume like her aunt. She believes that participating in the Cheng Ren Li ritual means that she is closer to her dream.

Preparation of food for the ritual continued. HXT's father discussed with his grandparents the dishes to be served at the family banquet after the ritual, and he completed the purchasing ahead of time. HXT's grandmother prepared food ingredients such as tea leaves, dried shiitake mushrooms, yellow gardenia, red beans, glutinous rice, and rice dumpling leaves. HXT's father also prepared the food for the ritual, and his grandmother prepared the tea leaves.



Figure 112 Grandma HXT preparing leaves for wrapping rice dumplings.  
Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

Although HXT did not talk much with the rest of the family during the process. Nor did her fathers ask her to do anything. But with the influence of the ritual atmosphere and the subtle effect, she knows the kinds of ritual food needed and the preparations she should have. Of course, *she doesn't know how to do it yet. She thinks she lacks the opportunity to practice. She said, "I know what needs to be done. I believe that when I grow up, I would prepare these foods for other people and my children"*.

Lay out the ritual space.

After the fifteenth day of the Lunar New Year, basically no more farm work is done, and those who have been away from home rush back home. Men repair houses, clean drains, and clean up; women carry firewood and pound rice. On the 26th and 7th of the lunar month, families are busy killing pigs, making pig intestines, and pounding rice patties. New Year's Eve, whether it is the 29th or 30th day of the lunar calendar, is called "30th Night". At three or four o'clock in the afternoon, rectangular red paper 25 centimeters long and 10 centimeters wide is pasted on the front door of every house, called "Paste Lixi", with five sheets pasted on the main



door, three sheets on the small door, and one sheet pasted on the door of other buildings. In short, the barn, stove, firewood room, cattle pen, pig pen, chicken coop, toilet and so on are posted. Some people also in the main door, hall door with spring couplets. After posting the "Lishui", avoid paying money and food from home to home, even if there are people chasing debts, but also do not pay the debt, and so on after the New Year and then pay back.



Figure 113 The HXT family is setting up the ritual space. They cut red paper and replace the old red paper with new red paper. And clean the room and polish the furniture.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

Rehearsals for the ritual .

We certainly won't forget the key person of the ritual the officiant, HXT's officiant was HLY, the wife of her grandmother's cousin, whom HXT also called Grandma, 61 years old, a native of Hualan Yao, Mentou Village. Her family members including her are in good health. Her grandmother is 94 years old and in very good health. She has a son and a daughter and 2 grandchildren. Her son is in the wood processing business and is doing well. Her daughter married into another Hualan Yao village and lives a happy life. She is cheerful and has very good neighborly relations. She is familiar with the ritual process and ritual knowledge. She has already served as a ritual officiant for five new adults. In short, she is a suitable ritual officiant.

Two years ago, HXT's grandmother made an appointment with HLY to be the Master of Ceremonies. HLY was very happy to accept the job and the responsibility. She saw it as an affirmation to her and her family that it was a decent job. HXT's family was also very happy. They thought HLY was the right person for the job and she agreed to take it. HXT's grandfather said "This is not only good for the Cheng Ren Li ritual. This is not only good for the Bat Mitzvah, but also for the continued relationship between our two families. We belong to the same family. Only by interacting with each other would we be more connected."

In fact, in their daily lives, these two families are very closely connected. Their houses are right next to each other. HLY gave HXT very much love and care when she was growing up. HLY also helped HXT's grandmother in preparing HXT's costume for the ritual .

The parties do not need to fulfill formalities or rituals to agree on a Master of Ceremonies. They are making a verbal agreement according to the plan of both parties. Usually, as long as there is not a time conflict or some sudden unfortunate situation occurs, the invited Master of Ceremonies happily accepts the job and fulfills it conscientiously.

HXT's grandmother and HLY agreed to spend the afternoons of January 20 and January 21 rehearsing coiffures and buns and wearing costumes.

HXT's grandmother and HLY said that there used to be no rehearsal. They stayed up all night for their own Cheng Ren Li ritual . They started combing their hair into a bun and putting on a bun hat after 12:00 am. This process takes about 4-6 hours. Nowadays, young people don't wear very long hair and it doesn't take that long. However, no one nowadays wants to do this without sleeping. "Now that living conditions are better, no one wants to do this overnight. People have other better ways to entertain themselves even if they don't want to sleep. It's definitely all about relaxation and entertainment during the Spring Festival."

Although, Cheng Ren Li ritual no longer begin in the early morning hours. But combing the hair and putting it in a bun must still start before the sun rises. For the village of Mentou, which is in the mountains and in winter, the ritual starts at 6-7 am. Hair and head are considered by them to be a symbol of the vitality and health of the human body, as well as a symbol of strength and courage, wisdom and knowledge. It is like the rising sun. Therefore, to ensure that they could start the ritual when the sun was about to rise and finish combing their hair before breakfast. It was natural for them to choose this way of rehearsal.

The reason why people rehearse their ritual outfits ahead of time is the same. It's not easy for them to help girls put on a dozen tops and three layers of hats in a short period of time and organize them to look as beautiful as they should be displayed. Therefore, people now choose to put a dozen tops together in advance. After the rehearsal, they just need to put them on and organize them directly as if they were wearing a single dress.

Of course, the boys don't need to rehearse the ritual . They don't even wear long hair these days, and their costumes are usually only two pieces. Their elders just need to prepare all the accessories for their ritual outfits ahead of time.

January 20th and January 21st in the afternoon. HLY came as promised. HXT washed her hair ahead of time. HXT's grandma brought out the ritual attire to be worn. The process of combing the hair into a bun and putting on the bun hat is actually two processes. HXT has a lot of hair, which means that it looks great in a bun and supports the bun hat very nicely. I won't describe this process in detail here. Because this process would be shown in detail in the upcoming formal ritual . What I would tell here is that I saw the seriousness with which they rehearsed.

Rehearsals lasted all afternoon on both days. HXT's hair was brushed three times until they were all satisfied. HXT had a little trouble putting on her bun hat. The hat that HXT's grandmother had prepared for her was a little too big. After trying it on again and again, they decided to take apart the stitches and re-sew it. After the hat was resized, the silver supports on the hat needed to be adjusted. HXT's grandpa got out a tool and recalibrated the length of the silver supports. When rehearsing the ritual attire, HLY and HXT's grandmother repeatedly put the 12 pieces of clothing together in order to determine the best order. Finally they decided to replace one of the dresses. Because HLY felt that the length of the dress was not particularly appropriate, HXT's grandmother took out a spare dress and replaced it. During this time, HXT's grandmother's mom came over.

HLY and HXT's grandma showed immense patience and conscientiousness during the process. As an observer, I couldn't see what was wrong

with the hat that was readjusted and the dress that was replaced. When I asked them about it, the answer I got was, "They don't look good. The hat is too big and covers one's eyebrows. The hat is too big and covers the person's eyebrows, and the dress is too long and doesn't look good layered together." HXT is very cooperative and enjoys it. She often pulls out her cell phone to take selfies and passes photos and videos to her friends. Because her other women, new adults, were going through the same rehearsal. Sharing with each other makes them feel very interesting.

Of course, it was something to share. Some of HXT's friends came to the rehearsal. These friends included her new adult, HYN, and her family's older siblings. They were also witnesses to the ritual. The arrival of the friends made the rehearsal process more fun. They praised each other and made harmless jokes. HYN has completed this rehearsal. So she is in a position to give proper guidance and help to HXT. The group of girls looked at their elders in a serious and cute manner and they understood that this was an important matter. So they were cooperative and went to make the proper moves as requested.



Figure 114 The girls are rehearsing over and over again combing their hair and putting it in a bun and wearing their costumes.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.



Figure 115 They are rehearsing combing their hair and putting on hats. HLY and HXT's grandma is rehearsing over and over again very carefully. HXT is taking a selfie and sharing it with her friends. HLY and HXT's grandma is rehearsing over and over again very carefully.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 1, 2023.

New Year's Eve.

After the New Year's dinner is prepared, the "Mangong" ancestor worship is performed, which lasts for nearly an hour, and the family sings to the shrine, called "Worshiping the Gongtai". After the sacrifice, firecrackers are set off, and the whole family gathers for the New Year's dinner. After the meal, the whole family, men, women and children, take a bath and put on new clothes, called "getting rid of the old", which is said to wash away diseases and bad luck, so that the coming year would be a healthy year, and all would be well.

On New Year's Eve, when there was no clock, the villagers would start the series of activities mentioned above when they heard the rooster crowing. Therefore, the "Cheng Ren Li ritual" of Hualan Yao is closely connected with the Chinese New Year, and the "Cheng Ren Li ritual" ritual begins after the New Year's Eve ceremonies are held. After dressing up, the boys and girls go out of their homes to the east and walk outside the village, set off firecrackers, and then go to the village entrance to the Council Ping (also known as the Crowd Ping, a place for villagers to gather to discuss things and have leisure and recreation) to receive the blessing of the elders. This process of walking from home to the outside of the village is also a ritual that all other villagers of the Hualan Yao have to perform on the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year. Regardless of whether or not the Cheng Ren Li ritual is held, on the morning of the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, the villagers of the Hualan Yao go out of their homes to the east and walk outside the village, set off firecrackers, and then go to the entrance of the village, where they chat and send their blessings to the council ping, banging on gongs and drums, singing and dancing, and then return home to have dinner only at midday. Therefore, on this day, the council ping is the liveliest place in the village in a year. From the perspective of folklore life, the Hualan Yao "Cheng Ren Li ritual" is held on the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, which makes it more lively and Ritual, and at the same time, it gives them the right to participate in adult social activities in the presence of more clansmen. As a kind of social behavior, the Hualan Yao "Cheng Ren Li ritual" is also based on physical practice, which is a process of individualization. Through physical practice, social memory can be deposited in the participants' bodies, and in this way, social memory can be preserved and passed on to realize cultural identity and identity.

Prior to the 1980s, male and female juveniles of the Hualan Yao held their "Cheng Ren Li ritual", which required them to start combing their hair and dressing when the rooster crowed (around 0:00-1:30). With the passage of time, at present, it is usually at dawn (about 7:00 a.m.) that they start combing their hair and dressing.

Before midnight, everyone sits around the fire pit to "observe the New Year", the fire pit plus burning incense vine, adults continue to add oil to the shrine to renew the incense, until dawn. Children and young people in the yard to light a bonfire to burn "bamboo firecrackers", "bamboo firecrackers" is the two ends of the raw bamboo with knots in the open fire, the gas inside the bamboo tube by the thermal expansion caused by the bamboo explosion, making a big sound. When burning "Bamboo Cannon", some let it explode naturally, some would be burned to a certain extent of the bamboo out of the hit on a hard object to trigger the explosion, the sound of one after another, the whole village is full of festive atmosphere, immersed in the joy.



Figure 116 First stage of New Year's Eve. After the New Year's meal is prepared, the men perform an ancestor worship ritual. The women prepare the yellow rice and red bean and mushroom water to be eaten on New Year's Eve.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 2, 2023.



Figure 117 Second stage of New Year's Eve. Before midnight, everyone sits around the fire pit to "observe the New Year", the fire pit plus burning incense vine, adults continue to add oil to the shrine to renew the incense, until dawn. Children and young people set off fireworks in the courtyard, and the whole village is immersed in joy.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 2, 2023.

The purpose of the separation stage is to help new adults recognize that they are about to move into adult society and begin to prepare for their new social roles and responsibilities. The symbolic actions and psychological experiences of this phase contribute to the maturation of the new adult and the establishment of self-identity, paving the way for the ritual process that follows. The separation stage is often a very crucial part of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, marking the transformation and growth of the individual.

## 2) Qingli: Towards Shipai Ping

Turner emphasizes the importance of the transition phase as the most transformative and spiritual awakening part of the ritual. During the transition stage, individuals or groups experience a blurring of social boundaries, and their identity, social status, and perceptions undergo profound changes. For the Hualan Yao Cheng

Ren Li ritual, this transitional state is accompanied by symbolic activities during the ritual, such as combing hair and coiling it in a bun, changing costumes, prayer ceremonies, walking out of the house and crossing the main street, setting off firecrackers at the entrance of the village, and receiving blessings and guidance at Shipai Ping.

On the morning of the first day of the first by the village of the highest prestige of the elders get up and open the door towards the calendar records the direction of Dali came to the village, burn incense to worship the auspicious side, and then worship the other three sides, a wood knife blade towards the inauspicious side of the inserted on the ground, set off firecrackers, towards the inauspicious direction of the shot three shots. The village people heard the sound of gunfire, open the door to come out to set off firecrackers, birdshot competition, to see whose family hit more, hit loud.

On this morning, the doors of the houses are opened early, waiting for the children of relatives to come to celebrate the New Year. The children, in groups of three to five, came outside the gate and set off small rows of firecrackers, and entered the house, shouting "Congratulations on your wealth". The head of the family replied happily: "We are all rich, I wish you grow up fast!" He gave them sugar cakes, small bonbons and small firecrackers. The children take their leave and go to the next house to celebrate the New Year. This way of paying New Year's greetings is called "Gong He" in Hualan Yao.

The "Cheng Ren Li ritual" of Hualan Yao is the highlight of the Spring Festival activities in the villages of Hualan Yao, and is often the center of attention. Boys and girls who participate in the rite of passage get up early on the first day of the Lunar New Year, and their parents invite their relatives in the same village who have parents, children and husbands and wives to dress them (if the elderly members of the family also know how to comb their hair and put on their clothes and meet the above conditions, the job of combing their hair and putting on their clothes would be taken on by the grandmothers, grandmothers or great-grandmothers of the family). Before eating breakfast, they comb their hair and put on their hats and headbands (during the process of combing their hair and putting on their hats and headbands, male and female adolescents are not allowed to speak, nor are they allowed to twist their necks or stand up and move around, or else they would not be able to recognize their ancestors after they pass away). When combing the hair, the middle of the forehead is combed up first, and when combing the first comb, the elders would say the colorful words (that is, the blessing words): combing the makeup on the head, combing the horns on the ears (the so-called "horns" refers to combing the hair on the temples, braiding it into a braid, and tying it to the top of the head where the tips of the ears face each other, just like the two horns). This person has reached the age of 15, and it is hoped that she or he would be the same as the pillar and the wood, the stone and the rocky mountain, the sky and the earth, and the sun and the moon for a thousand years and ten thousand generations.

On the morning of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, the head of the family performs an ancestor worship ritual, reporting to the ancestors that a certain child is having a Bar Mitzvah today, and praying for the child's future strength, courage, establishment of a family and a long and healthy life. After the ancestor ritual, the family would face the east, in the direction of the rising sun, and an uncle or aunt

would comb the child's hair into an adult bun and recite a prayer in their heart for the child to rise as the sun does in the east. After dressing up, the family clustered around the child toward the east in the direction of the village entrance, outside the village entrance back to the firecrackers, known as the "way out" ritual, praying for peace in and out of the village. After returning to the village entrance to show the Bar Mitzvah dress, accept the blessing of the whole village folks, the old artisans around the child seriously appreciate the dress pattern, comment on whether the dress production is in line with the traditional national aesthetic, and bless the child with good luck. Men's clothes are relatively simple, cut from indigo-dyed black cloth, and are usually worn in two to four pieces, with a machine-woven turban and belt. Women's clothes are extremely fine and complicated, with embroidered patterns on the sleeves, collars, and hemlines, and it takes about a year to make one in their free time, embroidered by hand, depending on the family's preparations, usually ranging from 4 to 16 pieces, with layers upon layers in pursuit of "clothes stacked on top of each other as if they were dragon-scale".

The most complicated part of the Hualan Yao women's costume is the layering of the hemlines of several pieces of clothing to resemble dragon scales (i.e., fish scales). This is one of the most striking features of the Hualan Yao costume.

Women grow long hair from childhood to old age, adult women combed their hair and divided it into two parts, the front and back, with the back part of the hair pulled up to the top of the head, tied securely in a knot and bun, with the ear as the boundary. The front part of the hair upside down to the forehead, smeared with lard, middle-aged and elderly women in the flat eyebrow, young women in the eyebrow at a finger, and then fold the hair flat upside down to the top of the head bun, with silver clamps clip, wrapped in cloth into a hair cap, commonly known as the "hair cap". After fixing the hairstyle with lard, the rich use two silver hairpins with a length of 14 centimeters, and the poor use bamboo hairpins, which are inserted in the left and right sides of the bun as a headgear support. There is a difference between the headscarves of young women and those of middle-aged and old-aged women: the headscarves of young women are made of white cotton yarn for the warp and black cotton yarn for the weft, and are woven to a length of about 40 centimeters, a width of about 27 centimeters, and a length of about 30 centimeters with scarves on each end, without picking out the flowers. When tying the dupatta, the scarf must be crossed at the back of the head and tied with a red rope, hidden in the folded seam of the dupatta, with the remaining 10 centimeters at both ends hanging on both sides of the dupatta. Middle-aged and elderly women's headscarf is a piece of pure white cloth, the same length and width as the young women's headscarf, but there is no scarf. In the center of the white cloth, there is a flower in the middle line of each side of the headscarf. When tying the headscarf, the upper two corners are placed behind the bun and fastened with a silver hairpin.



Figure 118 Comb your hair, put it in a bun, and wear a bun hat. This is a key part of the ritual and the real beginning of the ritual .

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

With the change of the times, the women of Hualan Yao reformed the "hair cap", replacing the unhygienic and annoying "hair cap" with the black headband. The black headband is a piece of trapezoidal black coarse cloth with an upper edge length of 27 centimeters, a lower edge length of 40 centimeters and a width of 20 centimeters. With a strip of red cloth along the diagonal and the short side of the bundle into a red line, the long side of the two corners of the intersection of the composition of the topless cap. A 23-centimeter silver hairpin with hooks at both ends is placed horizontally across the upper part of the front of the cap for support, with the sun in the middle of the hairpin pattern and dragons at both ends, which is very exquisite. When dressing up, the black headgear is under the white headgear on the top, and the silver hairpin is tightened after fastening the knot bun, so that the black headgear is open on the forehead, covering the eyebrows and ears, but not affecting the original style and vision.

The headgear of adult men. Although there were no more buns, the custom of wrapping saffron headscarves has been inherited. The saffron turban consists of a piece of black cloth 40 centimeters long, 20 centimeters wide, and 30 centimeters long with a scarf at both ends, with a big red silk thread in the middle picking on the dragon's head flowers on both sides correspondingly picking full of silver flowers, pine and cypress flowers and eye flowers. When wrapping the head, the saffron head scarf is folded into a 8-centimeter wide band around the forehead around the head, and the scarf must be tied in a knot and hung at the back.

After breakfast, dress up and wear your silver jewelry. Under the guidance of the elders, they go out and walk towards the east to the village outskirts to the village entrance of the council ping to receive blessings from the elders. While the villagers give their blessings, they also judge the family's economic condition, the importance they place on it, and the level of the women's garment-making and embroidery skills. After the event, the family would set up a banquet and invite village elders, relatives and friends to come and celebrate.





Figure 119 Ritual participants eating breakfast. After combing the hair, the new adult and family members share breakfast. The new adult must eat yellow rice, which means peace and health.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.



Figure 120 New adults change into ritual attire. It is believed that by wearing these clothes for the ritual, the ancestors will be able to recognize that person after death.

Compared to those who have never participated in the rituals, they are a good Yao people even on earth, but when they die, the Yao ancestors will not accept them at all.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.



Figure 121 Preparation activities and home demonstration activities before walking out the door. After breakfast, dress up and wear your silver jewelry. Guided by the elders, you will go out and walk towards the east to the outskirts of the village to the council ping at the entrance of the village to receive the blessing of the elders.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

As the participants walked through the streets, the most noticeable garments were those that had been carefully cut and embroidered by mothers for their children from the time they were born. It is believed that by wearing these clothes for the ritual, the ancestors would be able to recognize that person after death. Compared to those who never participated in the ceremonies, even on earth they were a good Yao people, but when they died, the Yao ancestors would not accept them at all. All of this makes us realize that ritual clothing means more than just pretty clothes. Instead, it becomes a symbol that reflects rules, social hierarchies, collectivism, and another identity that the Hualan Yao want to preserve, no matter how much time has passed.



Figure 122 Participants walk out of their homes towards the village entrance. As attendees walked down the street, the most noticeable garments were those that had been carefully cut and embroidered by mothers from the time their children were born.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.



Figure 123 Participants' demonstration activities at Shihpai Ping. Community members will appreciate and evaluate the new adult's clothing and mannerisms to determine if they are able to fulfill the role.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.



Figure 124 Participants singing and dancing recreational and educational activities at Shihpai Ping. Community members celebrate and teach new adults with song and dance.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

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Figure 125 Gaze from people outside the village. It used to be that the Cheng Ren Li ritual was a very small, closed ritual that took place within the nation or even the family and was not open to the outside world. But now, it has become much more connected to the outside world. It is exposed to the outside world and presents itself positively like the outside world.

Source: Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

The transition stage is central to Turner's theory. During this stage, the new adult is in a "liminal state", no longer belonging to the original social or cultural group, but not fully integrated into the new identity or society. This stage is accompanied by special activities, symbols and teachings in rituals designed to change the new adult's perceptions, values and social status.

### 3) Nangui: Departure from Shiping

In the final stage of the ritual, the new adults are guided back into society and their families, but with new identities, experiences and knowledge. They reintegrate in society and begin to fulfill their new roles and responsibilities. This stage marks the completion of the ritual and the rebirth of the new adult.

**Completion of the ritual.** The reintegration phase marks the completion of the entire rite of passage. The individual or group has completed the transitional phase of experience and transformation and is now ready to return to the community, but with a new identity and status.

**New social roles.** During the reintegration phase, individuals usually assume new social roles. This may include individuals where the new adult actually becomes part of the family and has a special place in the community. This stage marks a change in the social status of the individual.

**Social acceptance and support.** Social acceptance is an important aspect of the reintegration phase. Communities usually welcome new members or new social roles and provide support and guidance to ensure their successful integration.

**Responsibilities and Obligations.** During the reintegration phase, individuals are often required to take on new responsibilities and obligations related to their new social roles. New adults may need to fulfill social and family roles.

**Community Participation.** The reintegration phase also includes the process by which individuals or groups re-engage in the community. They may become actively involved in social activities, family gatherings, and community affairs to build closer ties.

**Continued growth and development.** The reintegration phase does not represent the end of life, but the beginning of a new life phase. Individuals continue to

grow and develop, adapting to their new social roles and establishing themselves in society.



Figure 126 Activities for participants to return to their families, including exchange of insights and feelings about the ritual , and moments of conviviality at family feasts.  
Source: Photographed by the author. January 3, 2023.

In conclusion, the reintegration stage is the final stage in Turner's theory of the ritual process, which signifies that the individual or group has completed the ritual transformation and preparation and is now ready to reintegrate into society with a new identity. This stage is important for the stability of society and the growth of the individual, and helps to establish the social status and responsibility of the adult. Overall, Turner's theory of the ritual process helps us to understand that bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies are not only a process of individual transformation, but also involve social and cultural transformation, reconfiguration, and transmission. This theory emphasizes the importance of rites of passage as social and cultural expressions, and their cohesive and transmissible role in communities and cultures.

#### **4.3 The Evolution of the Meaning of Cheng Ren Li ritual in the Context of China's poverty alleviation**

The evolution of the meaning of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China is a complex process involving a number of economic, social, cultural and policy factors. As Chinese society continues to change, the traditional Cheng Ren Li ritual has gradually evolved or been reinterpreted to fit the needs and values of modern society.

The Hualan Yaoshe area has achieved tremendous economic development and social change since China's poverty alleviation. This has led to improved economic conditions in rural areas, but has also triggered changes in culture, values and social structures. The traditional rural way of life has been impacted, including the traditional way of performing Cheng Ren Li ritual .

The implementation of pro-poor policies has resulted in the improvement of infrastructure, health care and education in the Hualan Yao region, thereby narrowing the urban-rural gap. This has led to greater acceptance of urbanized lifestyles and

values among farmers. Government policies and poverty alleviation programs have encouraged farmers to receive modern education and vocational training. As educational opportunities expanded, more rural youth received a better education, and they became more focused on modern lifestyles and career development. A large number of rural laborers have shifted to urban employment. Instead of being a continuous geographic space as before, the countryside has been fragmented into many small pieces spread over a wide range of locations.

The spread of modern media and the Internet has made it easier to disseminate information between urban and rural areas. These media reinforce modern values, which in turn have an impact on traditional rural communities. In modern society, it is even more important that people recognize and respect cultural diversity. The Hualan Yao community has begun to rethink its traditional culture to better adapt to the demands of modern multiculturalism.

These changes have exposed the Hualan Yao village to the outside world and the challenges of modernization, even as it has been shattered by isolation. However, the Cheng Ren Li ritual still serves an important function that allows the Hualan Yao to survive in the new environment. As Chinese society continues to change, the traditional rites of passage have gradually evolved or been reinterpreted to fit the needs and values of modern society.

#### 4.3.1 Interaction and Development of Cheng Ren Li ritual and Local Culture

In the context of poverty alleviation in China, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is closely related to the interaction and development of the local culture of the Hualan Yao, and this interaction helps to preserve and pass on the local culture, while also providing a useful way to alleviate poverty.

Passing on and promoting local culture. The Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual still plays the role of passing on culture and reinforcing identity. It contributes to the preservation and transmission of local cultural heritage through the transmission of specific cultural values, traditional practices and identity. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is rooted in the local cultural traditions of the Hualan Yao, including specific rituals, costumes, music, dance and food elements. By organizing this ritual, it helps to pass on and promote the local culture and makes the younger generation more aware of and respectful of their cultural heritage.



Figure 127 Three Hualan Yao people were invited to participate in an academic activity about Yao culture in a university. In front of a large number of experts and scholars and people from other ethnic groups, they confidently presented their ethnic and local culture.

Source: Hu Jinrong photoed. November 10, 2022.

Enhance community cohesion and the significance of helping each other. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is accompanied by the education of young people and the teaching of social responsibility. This helps develop a sense of social responsibility and encourages young people to contribute to the development and improvement of the community. Cheng Ren Li ritual are community co-organized events that require the cooperation and participation of community residents. This helps to strengthen community cohesion, make the community more vibrant and increase the sense of social responsibility among residents. The ritual promotes ties between community members, strengthens cooperation and helps each other to overcome poverty and difficulties.

**Social Recognition and Celebration.** Cheng Ren Li ritual remain a time of social recognition and celebration, but their significance is more related to social development and personal achievement. It helps to build a young person's self-confidence and social status.

**Impact of new technologies and media.** With advances in information technology, Cheng Ren Li ritual can be more widely disseminated and documented on social media. This can help increase awareness and participation and connect the rite of passage to the wider community.



Figure 128 Hualan Yao people are keen to present their ethnic and local culture through social media.

Source: Photographed by the author .January3, 2023.

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Figure 129 Internet Publicity on Hualan Yao Culture Published by the Integrated Media Center of Jinxiu County Government.  
Source: Photographed by the author. September 10, 2023.

Gender equality and inclusiveness. In the context of modern society, Cheng Ren Li ritual place greater emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion. This means that women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities during the ritual, and that socially marginalized groups also receive attention and respect.

Thus, the Cheng Ren Li ritual has an important role and significance in many aspects of the cultural life of the Hualan Yao community. It creates the power of rituals that generate a sense of ethnicity. Because of its typical cultural value and role in community life, in February 2016, China Central Television (CCTV) went to Mentou Village, a Hualan Yao village, to shoot a cultural feature film, "Mentou Village: Respecting Nature and Protecting the Homeland". In March 2017, Mentou Village was named the second batch of "Chinese Minority Characteristic Villages" by the State People's Committee of China. In November 2018, the Cheng Ren Li ritual was held as a traditional folklore activity in Guangxi. In November 2018, the Cheng Ren Li ritual was displayed as a traditional folklore activity at the First Culture, Tourism and Art Festival of Jinxiu Hualan Yao.



Figure 130 The plaque of "Chinese Minority Characteristic Village" issued by the State People's Committee of China is hung above the gate of Mentou Village.  
Source: Photographed by the author. May 3, 2021.



Overall, the interaction and development of Cheng Ren Li ritual with local culture has a positive role to play in the Hualan Yao community. It not only helps to pass on and promote local culture, but also provides diversified development opportunities for the local economy, improves the quality of life of the community and its residents, and contributes to the sustainable development of poverty alleviation efforts. By supporting and encouraging the development of these ceremonies, the Government and social organizations can better promote the transmission of local culture and economic prosperity.

#### 4.3.2 Interaction and Development of Cheng Ren Li ritual and Local Economy

Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China are closely related to the interaction and development of local cultures, and this interaction helps to preserve and pass on local cultures, while also providing a useful way to alleviate poverty.

**Economic Opportunity and Development.** Cheng Ren Li ritual can be combined with economic opportunities and development programs to attract more farmers who work outside the village back to the countryside. For example, they can provide skills training and entrepreneurial opportunities for Hualan Yao villagers to help them get out of poverty. In 2013, three villagers from Mentou Village participated in a training course on tea-making crafts organized by the Jinxiu County government. In 2015, five villagers from Mentou Village participated in a training course on lodging organized by the Jinxiu County government to learn how to develop the tourism economy and the cultural industry through the opening of lodging houses. In 2018, two women attended a training course on Yao embroidery skills organized by the Jinxiu County government. Cheng Ren Li ritual require special clothing, ornaments and decorations, which inspires the development of the local handicraft industry. Local craftsmen can make these items and improve their livelihoods. Now, 11 women over the age of 60 in the village are receiving customized ethnic clothing. A set of male clothing is customized for 6,000 yuan. A set of women's clothing (only 1 blouse), 15,000 RMB. Other clothing items are priced separately.





Figure 131 An elderly woman is making ethnic clothing. This is the second order she has received to make a blouse for a Han Chinese woman. Her pricing is 5,000 RMB. She earned 12,000 RMB for the first job before this.

Source: Photographed by the author. January 4, 2023.

Enhancing local tourism. Cheng Ren Li ritual feature unique rituals, costumes, music and food elements that attract visitors to the area. The renovation of the ritual space in Mentou Village in recent years has added more culture to the village. This can boost tourism, increase local tourism revenue and increase employment opportunities. The arrival of tourists also helps promote and sell local agricultural products, providing farmers with opportunities to increase their income.



Figure 132 The first B&B in Mentou Village. This B&B opened in 2018 with 16 beds.

Source: Photographed by the author. February 4, 2022.



Figure 133 Tea produced in Mentou Village is waiting to be purchased by tourists.  
Source:Photographed by the author.January4, 2023.



Figure 134 Mentou Village Tourism Panorama posted at the entrance of the village  
Source:Photographed by the author.January4,2023.

**Community Participation and Co-Creation:** Conducting a Cheng Ren Li ritual usually requires the joint efforts of community residents, including the preparation, organization and celebration of the ritual. This helps to build community cohesion and a spirit of cooperation and lays the foundation for sustainable community development.

Increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of local residents. Cheng Ren Li ritual are a form of social recognition and celebration, and participants often feel a sense of pride and self-confidence. This helps to increase the self-esteem and self-confidence of local residents, leading to more active economic and social participation.

Overall, the Cheng Ren Li ritual has become an important driving force for the local economic development of the Hualan Yao, providing a variety of development opportunities in the region through the promotion of cultural tourism, handicraft industries, sales of agricultural products, and community co-construction, and helping to improve the economic situation and quality of life of the local residents. At the same time, the government and social organizations can also provide more support and resources to the Hualan Yao community by supporting and

promoting the development of this ritual . The following is the relationship between the Cheng Ren Li ritual and local cultural development:

#### 4.3.3 The Far-Reaching Impact of Cheng Ren Li ritual in the Post-Poverty Era

According to the Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022) released by the State Council of China (State Council Information Office, 2018), Chinese villages are divided into four categories.

The first type of village: the cluster and upgrading type of village. This type of village refers to the existing large-scale central villages and other general villages that would still survive, accounting for the majority of village types, and is the focus of rural revitalization.

The second category of villages: peri-urban integration villages. Such villages are those in the suburbs of cities and in the county towns, which have the advantage of being the backyard of cities and the conditions for transformation into cities.

The third category of villages: villages with special characteristics for protection. Such villages are villages rich in natural, historical and cultural characteristics, such as historical and cultural villages, traditional villages, villages with minority characteristics, and villages with characteristic landscapes and tourist villages, which are important carriers of the manifestation and transmission of outstanding traditional Chinese culture.

Fourth category of villages: relocated and annexed villages. Such villages are those located in areas where living conditions are poor, the ecological environment is fragile, and natural disasters are frequent, villages that need to be relocated due to the construction of major projects, and villages where population loss is particularly serious.

The text above describes the characteristics of different types of villages and represents the national philosophy. Through categorized planning, different types of villages would receive targeted development support and assistance, and the lives and well-being of farmers would be better safeguarded.

It is because over the years people have carried out a series of ritual space renovation and traditional culture preservation work around the Cheng Ren Li ritual, according to this document, the Jinxiu County government has planned Mentou Village as a Category 3: Characteristic Preservation Village. With the support of government policies and related programs, in December 2022, Mentou Village was named an AAA-level rural tourism area in Guangxi Province, China, and received matching construction funds of 8 million yuan.

In the context of China's rural revitalization, the far-reaching impact of Cheng Ren Li ritual on ethnic villages can be seen in the following ways.

Passing on and promoting national culture. Cheng Ren Li ritual are usually rooted in national cultural traditions and include elements such as specific rituals, costumes, music, dance and food. This contributes to the transmission and promotion of national culture and enables the younger generation in the village to better understand and respect their cultural heritage.

Cultural tourism promotion. The Cheng Ren Li ritual in many ethnic villages have unique cultural features that attract tourists to visit and experience them.

This can promote the development of cultural tourism, increase the visibility of villages, generate tourism revenue and drive local economic development.

**Cultural and creative industry development.** Cheng Ren Li ritual require a variety of traditional clothing, jewelry, crafts, etc. This can stimulate the handicraft industry in ethnic villages, providing opportunities for artists and artisans to create and sell their work and promoting the development of cultural and creative industries.

**Social cohesion and identity.** Cheng Ren Li ritual strengthen the social cohesion and identity of village residents. The participation of the inhabitants in the preparation and organization of these ceremonies strengthens community solidarity and cooperation and makes the inhabitants of the villages feel more belonging to their community.

**Agricultural product promotion and rural industry upgrading.** Cheng Ren Li ritual are usually accompanied by rich cuisine and feasts. This helps to promote local traditional cuisine, increase the sale of agricultural products and the development of local agriculture, and provides farmers with opportunities to increase their incomes.

**Community involvement and cooperation.** The preparation and organization of Cheng Ren Li ritual usually requires the cooperation and participation of community residents. This helps to foster a sense of social responsibility and cooperation among community residents and enhances the village's capacity for self-management and development.

**Increase the village's self-confidence and self-esteem.** Cheng Ren Li ritual are a form of social recognition and celebration, and participants usually feel proud and confident. This helps to increase the self-esteem and self-confidence of village residents and motivates them to become more active in economic and social activities.

In short, the far-reaching impact of the Cheng Ren Li ritual on the Hualan Yao community involves a number of aspects, including cultural heritage, community cohesion, economic development and social participation. It can provide the village with opportunities for economic and cultural development, while also helping to preserve and pass on the national culture and improve the quality of life and self-identity of village residents. In the context of the rural revitalization strategy, the Government and social organizations can better promote the development and prosperity of ethnic villages by supporting and encouraging the development of these ceremonies.

Overall, the significance of Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of poverty alleviation in China has undergone an evolution in poverty alleviation and modern society. They remain important for community cohesion, cultural heritage and social development, but have also adapted to the needs of modern society in terms of local cultural and economic development. This evolution has helped to ensure that Cheng Ren Li ritual continue to fulfill their role in society and culture.

## **Conclusion**

The symbolic interaction of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual in the context of China's poverty alleviation show that the evolution of the symbols and meanings of the Cheng Ren Li ritual is directly related to the social changes in Hualan Yao. In the context of China's poverty alleviation, the village of Hualan Yao has become a new village from a poor village. Even though the village has been

fragmented by isolation, the Hualan Yao community is still struggling to maintain their ethnicity. The most important tool they use is the Cheng Ren Li ritual, which enables Hualan Yao and the Hualan Yao village to survive in the new environment. The Cheng Ren Li ritual functions to pass on culture and strengthen identity through mechanisms of ritual, social participation, education and social recognition. This interaction helps to preserve and pass on local culture, while also providing a useful way to alleviate poverty. The Cheng Ren Li ritual has been revitalized among the Hualan Yao ethnic group. In addition to its ethnicity, this ritual is an important ceremonial platform for connection, stability and identity.



## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Discussion and Suggestions

“Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region: Symbolic Interaction and Ethnicity in the context of China's Poverty Alleviation” is a qualitative study. The important research question is to interpret the Cheng Ren Li ritual that builds and maintains the ethnicity of Hualan Yao. The Cheng Ren Li ritual changes with the social environment. It is not only a practice of faith, but also an important mechanism to maintain the existence of the nation and society. The purpose of this study is to examine the “Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region” in the context of “symbolic interaction”, “ethnicity”, and “China's Poverty Alleviation”. This study collects research data through literature research and fieldwork, and presents research results through descriptive analysis and pictures. The researcher's summary, discussion and suggestions are as follows:

#### 5.1 Research Summary

There are three research objectives: 1) to study the sociocultural historical development of Hualan Yao village; 2) to study the symbolic interaction of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao society before China's poverty alleviation; 3) to study the symbolic change of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in Hualan Yao society in the context of China's poverty alleviation. The results of the study are summarized as follows according to the research objectives.

##### 5.1.1 Sociocultural Historical Development of Hualan Yao Village

The sociocultural development of the Hualan Yao villages is a colorful and complex historical process, which has been influenced by various factors such as geographic environment, historical events, cultural exchanges and political evolution. The history of the Hualan Yao can be traced back to ancient times, and they formed their own unique culture, language, social system and stable social structure after migrating and settling in the Dayao Mountains of Jinxiu County. These cultural elements are the embodiment of the identity of the Hualan Yao ethnic group and the cultural roots of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. In China's pre-poor-relief context, they lived a life in which agriculture, forestry and hunting were the main means of livelihood.

China's poverty alleviation is a major strategic measure taken by the Chinese government in response to the reality of unbalanced development in rural areas during the process of reform and opening up, in order to alleviate and eliminate poverty, and ultimately to realize common prosperity (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2001). It can be said that China's poverty alleviation is a policy practice that articulates the top-down political goals of the central government with the bottom-up demands of the lower strata of society, and it is a manifestation of the will of the state. China's poverty alleviation can be seen as the transformation of rural groups into modernization through administrative power. In the process of China's poverty alleviation, the Hualan Yao region is constantly developing and changing. The government has adopted a series of policies to promote

the economy, education, and infrastructure of this region, while also encouraging people to leave the countryside to work in the cities. A large number of villagers have been attracted to work in the cities. The village of Mentou faces the impact of the outside world and the challenge of modernization. The social structure of the Hualan Yao villages has changed to become new rural villages. Although cultural traditions are still valued, some traditional cultural elements are gradually weakened or challenged due to modernization and globalization. The Hualan Yao villages have suffered a cultural crisis as a result of poverty alleviation.

#### 5.1.2 Cheng Ren Li Ritual: Symbolic Interaction in Hualan Yao Society before China's Poverty Alleviation

The path of Cheng Ren Li ritual development and interaction is a complex and multilayered process, influenced by a variety of factors at the policy, historical, cultural, social and individual levels. The rite of passage has a long history and tradition. The rite originated from the needs of ancient societies and signaled a shift in social status or a change in the social role of young people. The Cheng Ren Li ritual has unique ritual elements. Cultural elements include ethnic origins, religious beliefs, values, traditional customs, and social structures, which together shape the form and meaning of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Over time, the rite of passage develops, evolves, and adapts to social change. Social change affects the development of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, and it is defined and reshaped in new social contexts. But the Cheng Ren Li ritual play an important role in society, helping individuals transition to adulthood, establish social connections, and pass on cultural traditions.

Before China's poverty alleviation, Cheng Ren Li ritual passed through three stages in the villages of the Hualan Yao. Prior to the founding of New China, the rise and promotion of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual was mainly influenced by the history of the ethnic group, the development of the village, and the culture of social organization. The legend of the ethnic group is the source of the emergence of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. It provided the "meta-culture" and "core culture" for the ritual structure and behavior of the rite of passage. The legends of the village reflect the local wisdom of the Hualan Yao people and create the architectural space of Mentou Village. They not only provide a place for the ritual to take place, but also reflect the values and identities of specific cultural and religious traditions. These architectural spaces play a key role in the solemnity, interactivity and symbolism of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The support of traditional social organization and culture is critical to the impact of Cheng Ren Li ritual. Not only do they help to ensure that these rites of passage are carried out successfully, but they also help to reinforce the social, cultural, and religious significance of the rite of passage, giving it greater impact and meaning in society. This support has contributed to the rise and promotion of bar mitzvah ceremonies.

The government's shaping of Cheng Ren Li ritual after the founding of New China reflects the evolution of "state-society relations" since the founding of China. The Chinese government's shaping of the Cheng Ren Li ritual after the founding of New China aimed to emphasize socialist values to fit the new social context and ideology. This shaping has been achieved in a variety of ways, including the elimination of feudal superstitions, the promotion of marriage laws, and the dissemination of health information and education. Individuals and collectives of the



Hualan Yao still have a certain degree of freedom and choice in the rites of passage, and the rites of passage still play an important role in the Hualan Yao region.

In the third stage, China entered the Cultural Revolution. This was a major cultural crisis. During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government tried to destroy the traditional culture and social structure, which led to the banning and interruption of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. However, the Hualan Yao people endeavored to preserve the memory of the Cheng Ren Li ritual through various means in order to pass them on to future generations.

The Cheng Ren Li ritual and the Ethnicity of the Hualan Yao shows that the Cheng Ren Li ritual is directly related to the ethnic development and social and cultural practices of the Hualan Yao. These two cases are strung together. Brummer's theory of symbolic interaction (1969) can be used to explain the relationship between the Cheng Ren Li ritual and the social development of the Hualan Yao. The Cheng Ren Li ritual serves as a symbolic system, which contains a series of symbols, such as Ritual costumes, Ritual places, Ritual objects, Ritual actions, and speech. Through this symbolic system, the individual is associated with the society. In the process, the Cheng Ren Li ritual helps new adults and community members to express their cultural identities and social roles, as well as contributing to cultural transmission and social cohesion. It has significance for the Hualan Yao in that it helps to shape and maintain the uniqueness and identity of a people through cultural transmission, identity, community cohesion, transmission of cultural values, and national unity. In this context, the Cheng Ren Li ritual, as a traditional ethnic ritual, builds the ethnicity of the Hualan Yao. It is a good indicator of "self-ethnic identity" or "self-minority identity".

### 5.1.3 Cheng Ren Li Ritual: Symbolic Changes in Hualan Yao Society in the Context of China's Poverty Alleviation

In the context of China's poverty alleviation, the village of Hualan Yao had become a new village from a poor village. Even though the village has been fragmented by isolation, the Hualan Yao community is still struggling to maintain their ethnicity. The most important tool they used was the Cheng Ren Li ritual to keep the Hualan Yao and the Hualan Yao villages alive in the new context.

From 1980-1995, with the changing political environment and China's re-evaluation of its cultural traditions, the Cheng Ren Li ritual was restored and promoted. The restored rites of passage have been successfully passed on and developed, and have tended to expand in size. With the promotion of China's poverty alleviation policy, Mentou Village has reduced the pressure of poverty. The implementation of the household contract responsibility system and the freedom to run family side businesses have raised the economic level of families in Hualan Yao. With the gradual improvement of transportation and education, Mentou Village has had more and more exchanges with other regions and ethnic groups. In the process of ethnic integration and social development, they have become more conscious of the importance of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in promoting social interaction. The expansion of intermarriage in Hualan Yao has promoted their understanding of and participation in the Cheng Ren Li ritual. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is not only a form of cultural expression, but also helps community members to establish ties and mutual assistance among themselves.

From 1995 to 2005, economic development and population mobility affected the ritual elements and ritual concepts of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, exposing them to multicultural influences. Different groups have responded to these changes in their own ways. Some still actively participate in traditional ceremonies, respecting cultural traditions and social values. Some, however, believe that traditional ceremonies are no longer adapted to modern lifestyles. They want to change or abandon traditional rituals in order to gain greater freedom. More and more villagers are attracted to the cities and Mentou Village is no longer a traditional village. Modernization has brought a cultural crisis to the Hualan Yao.

From 2006-2020, the intense changes in the Hualan Yao community affected the situation of the village, and they chose the Cheng Ren Li ritual as a means of negotiation, struggle, and confrontation. In 2005, the flooding in Jinxiu County gave them an opportunity for change. They strengthened the role of the Cheng Ren Li ritual in shaping the village by repairing the Ritual space, changing the concept of village development, and enhancing Ritual education and community cooperation to ensure the continuity and development of the nation and the village in the modern society. In this phase, modernization has turned from a challenge to an opportunity, driving the development of Cheng Ren Li ritual. Cheng Ren Li ritual can be more widely disseminated and documented on social media. This has helped the Hualan Yao people to increase awareness and participation, and to connect the rite of passage to the wider community. The balance between tradition and modernity is an evolving process that reflects social and cultural changes.

In order to explain the function of rituals in a changing environment, this study analyzes a ritual case using Turner's Ritual Process Theory (2006). It emphasizes the role of rituals in society, including the maintenance of social order, the transformation of individual identity, and community cohesion. It is through the mechanisms of rituals, social participation, education and social recognition that the Cheng Ren Li ritual functions as a means of passing on culture and strengthening identity. Cheng Ren Li ritual not only help preserve traditional culture, but also provide an important form of social support and identity for individuals and society. In the context of poverty alleviation in China, these mechanisms work together to promote cultural transmission and social cohesion, and help to shape and strengthen the identity of individuals in their communities and cultures.

Through the case studies, the interactive relationships and the logic of the actors in the Cheng Ren Li ritual are demonstrated, reflecting the evolution of the meaning of the Cheng Ren Li ritual. In the context of poverty alleviation in China, it is even more important for people to recognize and respect cultural diversity. The Hualan Yao community rethinks traditional culture to better adapt to the requirements of modern multiculturalism. The revival and prosperity of the Cheng Ren Li ritual is closely related to the interaction and development of the local economy and culture of the Hualan Yao. This interaction helps to preserve and pass on the local culture, and at the same time provides a useful way to alleviate poverty. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is combined with economic opportunities and development projects to attract farmers who work outside the village to return to the countryside. It provides new jobs and creates new identities for villagers in Mentou Village. Villages have seen the emergence of lodges, tea processing factories and tailors specializing in ethnic clothing, helping them escape poverty.

Mentou Village has been imitated and modeled on by other villages and ethnic groups because it has formed a contemporary paradigm for the Cheng Ren Li ritual. Mentou Village has become the village with the best preserved traditional culture and the best economic development among the 11 villages of the Hualan Yao. Participants in the Cheng Ren Li ritual have also expanded to include government workers, scholars and tourists. The Cheng Ren Li ritual became an expression of the ethnicity of the Hualan Yao, and it became the glory of Mentou Village. Mentou Village has been named the second batch of "Chinese Minority Characteristic Villages" by the State People's Committee of China and AAA Grade Rural Tourism Area in Guangxi Province. Taking the Cheng Ren Li ritual as an entry point, it connects ethnic culture, natural scenery and rural tourism. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is no longer just through rituals. It provides an important platform for connection, stability and identity for the Hualan Yao society. This makes us realize that the Cheng Ren Li ritual is not only a practice of faith, but also an important mechanism to maintain the existence of the Hualan Yao ethnic group and society. It is a symbol of a multi-dimensional and multi-layered culture. It has become a symbolic mark of Hualan Yao to distinguish it from other ethnic groups.

## 5.2 Research Discussion

This thesis is entitled "Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region: Symbolic Interaction and Ethnicity in the context of China's Poverty Alleviation". I have come to an understanding of the phenomenon of "Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village". Key concepts include symbolic interaction, ethnicity and ritual processes.

Herbert George Blumer(1937) formally put forward the concept of "Symbolic Interaction" and elevated it to a social theory in his book published in 1969. In his opinion, "symbolic interaction" refers to a process in which people consciously read and interpret the symbolic information sent by each other, and make their actions depend on the gestures of the other party. When individuals interact with each other, each adjusts his or her own behavior according to the behavior of others. These behaviors are expressed through symbols, thus creating different meanings, which are interpreted and understood subjectively by individuals, and then corresponding symbolic responses are made. The core of symbolic interaction theory is to investigate the interaction between people through symbols (especially language). Meaning, social interaction and interpretation are the three main concepts of symbolic interaction theory. Because the influence of the Cheng Ren Li ritual on individual social behavior lies not in the secularized content and function contained in the ritual itself, but in the symbolic meaning of the ritual itself relative to the individual, which comes from the interaction between individuals and others. I use Herbert George Blumer's book "Symbolic Interactionsim:Perspective and Method" for the concept to explain the Symbolic interaction associated with the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

This thesis draws on the concept of ethnicity based on the approaches of Moerman (1965) and Keyes (1992) to consider why the Hualan Yao people have put forward the Cheng Ren Li ritual to define their own ethnicity and choose any story to present. How does this selection relate to China's poverty alleviation? The Ethnicity concept suggests a view of culture and self-definition in relation to other ethnic

groups especially in relation to the nation state. They also saw that ethnicity in this new context was flexible. It flows through social space, situation and power relations with other peoples, including the nation state. In other words, Ethnicity is a strategic of self-presentation among ethnic groups which continually shifts depending on conditions, circumstances, and interests (Michel Moreman, "Who are the Lue? ethnicity in a Complex Society", 1965; Keyes Charles F, Who is the Lue? Revisited ethnicity in Laos, Thailand and China, 1992).

Rituals and ritual processes are phenomena that we are constantly exposed to. Using the concept of Ritual Process, this thesis discusses the different stages of the " Cheng Ren Li ritual " and the significance of Hualan Yao " Cheng Ren Li ritual " in this question. What influence does it have on the participants and those who hold the ritual and those who watch the ritual? Through previous literature reviews on "ethnicity", the concept of "ethnicity" explains Hualan Yao "who I am" within the framework of my research. In the context of social development and transformation, Hualan Yao insiders, how to pursue their roots and maintain their ethnicity. I chose the concept of "Ritual Process" for further study. I used a book by Turner, Victor, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

These concepts helped the researcher to study the phenomenon of "Cheng Ren Li Ritual at Hualan Yao Village" and to see new academic discoveries in the research text.

#### 5.2.1 Cheng Ren Li Ritual : An Important Mechanism for Maintaining the Ethnic and Social Existence of the Hualan Yao People

Prior to this study, scholars' research on the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li Ritual was generally limited to the description of the ritual process. The focus and direction of the research has also been mainly on presenting the ritual as part of the social and organizational culture of the Hualan Yao . There is little research on the Cheng Ren Li ritual in different contexts, much less from the perspectives of symbolic interaction and ethnicity. Therefore, a broader academic perspective is needed to study the Cheng Ren Li ritual of Hualan Yao . On the basis of previous studies, this study explores and researches the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual from the perspectives of symbolic interaction and ethnicity, which is of great significance in broadening its research field.

According to Fei Xiaotong and Wang Tonghui (1935), the Cheng Ren Li ritual is part of the social organization and culture of Hualan Yao . In the traditional Hualan Yao society, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is a rite of passage because of the need to introduce men and women to society and to enjoy the rights of adulthood as they begin to mature physically. According to Qin Ruijun and Xu Jieshun (2011), after the Cheng Ren Li ritual, "new adults" can participate in social activities and get married. In the context of modernity, they also noticed that most of the Hualan Yao villages no longer hold the Cheng Ren Li ritual.

Through the historical development and descriptive analysis of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual , this study finds that the Cheng Ren Li ritual is not only a part of the social organization and culture of the Hualan Yao. It is also a product of the social and cultural life of the Hualan Yao , an expression of local wisdom, a symbol of ethnicity, and an important mechanism for the construction of Hualan Yao identity. Its development is closely related to national identity. The Cheng Ren Li ritual itself has a specific origin and meaning, associated with the ancestors, region,

characteristics and historical events of the Hualan Yao . It serves as a symbol system which contains a series of symbols. Through this system of symbols, various links interact with people, and individuals are associated with society. And this set of relationships is what makes them ethnic. Even in a changing environment, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is still chosen by the Hualan Yao people of Mentou Village as a tool to maintain the survival of the village and the existence of the nation.

In the case of this study, the Hualan Yao community in the context of China's poverty alleviation has undergone extremely drastic changes. These changes have severely affected the situation of the village, but the village has a means of negotiation, struggle, and confrontation to maintain its survival and ethnicity in the face of the drastic changes in the external environment. And this one mechanism is the Cheng Ren Li ritual . This study examines the rite of passage through the concepts of ethnicity, symbolic interaction, and ritual process, and finds that the rite of passage is an important mechanism in the Hualan Yao society, which attracts and captures the people in the community in order to enable them to cope with, and even defend themselves against, sharp and intense shocks from the outside world.

Therefore, the Cheng Ren Li ritual is a good indicator of "self-ethnic identity" or "self-minority identity". The Cheng Ren Li ritual has become a strategy of self-presentation for the Hualan Yao people, which develops, evolves and adapts to social changes. The ritual itself, as a symbol, has become an important means of maintaining ethnic boundaries and identity for the Hualan Yao. The Hualan Yao people consciously use their own distinctive ritual features and symbols to show the difference between the "self" and the "other", to draw a clear line between themselves and the "other", and to maintain their ethnic identity. The study of the Cheng Ren Li ritual will be conducted in this study.

With regard to the Cheng Ren Li ritual, this study further elevates the reflection on social organization and culture to the expression of ethnicity, and extends it to a mechanism for constructing and maintaining the ethnicity of Hualan Yao . Through the previous research, it was found that the Cheng Ren Li ritual is not superstitious and stagnant, but rather a kind of sanctity, a mechanism used by the Hualan Yao to unite their people. The Cheng Ren Li ritual is not only a practice of faith, but also an important mechanism to maintain the ethnic and social existence of the Hualan Yao . It is a symbol of a multi-dimensional and multi-layered culture. The Hualan Yao people of Mentou Village believe that the Cheng Ren Li ritual is closely related to their ethnic development.

#### 5.2.2 Cheng Ren Li Ritual: Coexistence of Ethnicity and Modernity

China's poverty alleviation is the transformation of rural groups into modernity through administrative forces. The Chinese poverty alleviation context is a stage of modernity. This study shows that under the influence of globalization and modernity, nationhood is not a static, fixed and static construct. It is flexible. It flows through social space, situation and power relations with other peoples, including the nation state. especially with the advent of the Internet and social media. This has made it easier for individuals and groups to experience different cultures. This has given the opportunity to both the Hualan Yao and outsiders to redefine the Cheng Ren Li ritual . Both of these components have influenced the development of the Cheng Ren Li ritual .

Thus, in the context of China's poverty alleviation and the ethnic culture of Hualan Yao, it has become a shared asset of the Hualan Yao community and will increasingly expand to a wider area. It has also changed the meaning of the Hualan Yao community. As a new rural community, in the context of China's poverty alleviation, the tradition has become an origin and national cultural capital of value to the human community. The Cheng Ren Li ritual provides a useful way to work on poverty alleviation. It is spiritual and it drives a circular economy that creates a dynamic for the infinite renewal and replication of the Hualan Yao people and villages.

The concerns of modern society also bring funding and other resources to the Cheng Ren Li ritual to support its continued existence. For example, cultural tourism has stimulated outside interest in the unique culture and rituals of Mentou Village. Modern media technology and communication have contributed to a wider awareness and understanding of the Cheng Ren Li ritual, thus increasing the likelihood of its transmission. With the government's emphasis on cultural diversity and minority cultures, there are more policies and regulations to support and protect these traditional ceremonies and cultures.

### 5.2.3. Cheng Ren Li Ritual : Interaction of the "New Rural People" of Hualan Yao

The Cheng Ren Li ritual change as the social environment changes. All changes are in interaction with the Hualan Yao people in the process of continuous socio-economic and cultural development. China's poverty alleviation has affected the lives of groups and individuals in the Hualan Yao region. The traditional rural society's stable relationship of "agriculture, countryside and farmers" has been reorganized. Agriculture breaks through the traditional category of cultivation and combines with industry and services to create new economic forms. The Hualan Yao villagers who interact with the Cheng Ren Li ritual are no longer farmers in the traditional sense. This study refers to them as "new rural people".

The emergence of the "new rural people" is consistent with the changes in the Cheng Ren Li ritual, both of which came about in the process of modernization. In the case of Hualan Yao, through China's poverty alleviation, modernization has become an opportunity and a choice for a new cultural identity for farmers. All of this has affected people's lives at the individual, group and national levels. It even leads to a wave of change, movement, countermeasure, in the form of a revival of tradition, history, cultural movement, and the process of building cultural identity as a "core" of power for negotiating, or confrontation with various problems in contemporary life. This also proves the previous new findings that modernity can contribute to the development of Cheng Ren Li ritual.

The "new rural people" is a development of Turner's idea of "threshold" (Turner Victor, 1985) and Baba's idea of "third identity" (Baba, 2003), which refers to people who are at the edge or in a certain state. of being on the edge or in a certain state of being. critical moment of transition that influences the expression of a unique identity. The reference here is to those who are between the urban and rural economies. There is an intersection between modernity and tradition (Kriengsak, 2010), which is related to Benjaporn Deekhuntod's City People (Benjaporn Deekhuntod, 2010).

The emergence of "new rural people", "third identity", and "urban rural people" is consistent with what Keyes and Tanabe call "identity crisis" and "cultural crisis" arising from the move towards modernity (Keyes Charles F & Shigeharu Tanabe,2002). The emergence of "identity crisis", "third identity", and "urban villagers" is consistent with what Keyes and Tanabe call "identity crisis" and "cultural crisis" that arises in the process of progressing towards modernity (Keyes Charles F & Shigeharu Tanabe,2002). In the case of China, modernization has become an opportunity and choice for new cultural identities through the expansion and advancement of communication technologies from print to electronic media. All of this has affected the lives of people at all levels of individuals, groups and nations. It has even triggered a wave of change, movement, and confrontation in the form of revival of traditions, history, cultural movements, and the process of negotiation or confrontation of cultural identities as the "core" of power in relation to various issues in contemporary life. Jun Jing (Jing Jun,1996), Keyes (Keyes Charles F & Shigeharu Tanabe,2002), Pham Quynh Phuong (Pham Quynh Phuong,2009), Supachai Singyabuth(Supachai Singyabuth,2010), Kriengsak Chetpatanavanich (Kriengsak Chetpatanavanich,2010) and Benjaporn Deekhuntod (Benjaporn Deekhuntod,2010).

### 5.3 Research Suggestions

#### 5.3.1 Suggestions for the Academic Community

Academics should conduct a comprehensive, multidimensional study of the Hualan Yao Cheng Ren Li ritual . Explore in depth the interaction between modern technology and tradition, emphasizing community participation and sustainability. Study the complex relationship between ritual culture and the market, focusing on the challenges facing traditional culture. And how to integrate training in dressmaking techniques into the education system to ensure the continued development and inheritance of the techniques. This is an issue that needs to continue to be studied and addressed in depth by both the academic community and the Chinese government.

#### 5.3.2 Suggestions for Hualan Yao Community

**Persistence and inheritance of culture:** Cheng Ren Li ritual include both tangible material culture, such as ethnic villages, historical buildings, ritual costumes, etc., and intangible non-material culture, such as ritual activities, costume-making techniques, religious beliefs, etc. In the face of the lure of the market, adhere to the authenticity of culture and the development path of distinctive ethnic villages. Motivate the younger generation to actively participate in learning and teaching garment-making techniques to ensure that this ancient skill is not gradually lost.

**Combine innovation with tradition:** encourage the revival of cotton cultivation and traditional indigo dyeing techniques. Develop cultural tourism activities based on the unique idyllic ecosystem and the distinctive farming patterns on the fields. Relying on the Cheng Ren Li ritual to enhance the added value of agricultural production and increase villagers' income, creating a win-win situation where traditional cultural heritage and tourism and leisure are mutually beneficial.

**Education and training:** Enhance the transfer of technical and business knowledge carried out in the Hualan Yao community through workshops, seminars and training courses. Strengthen cooperation with scholars and institutions to create a

research and training base for cultural heritage, so that the Ritual culture can be brought into the institutions by way of display and other means. Make full use of social media to proactively showcase the unique ritual culture to the outside world.

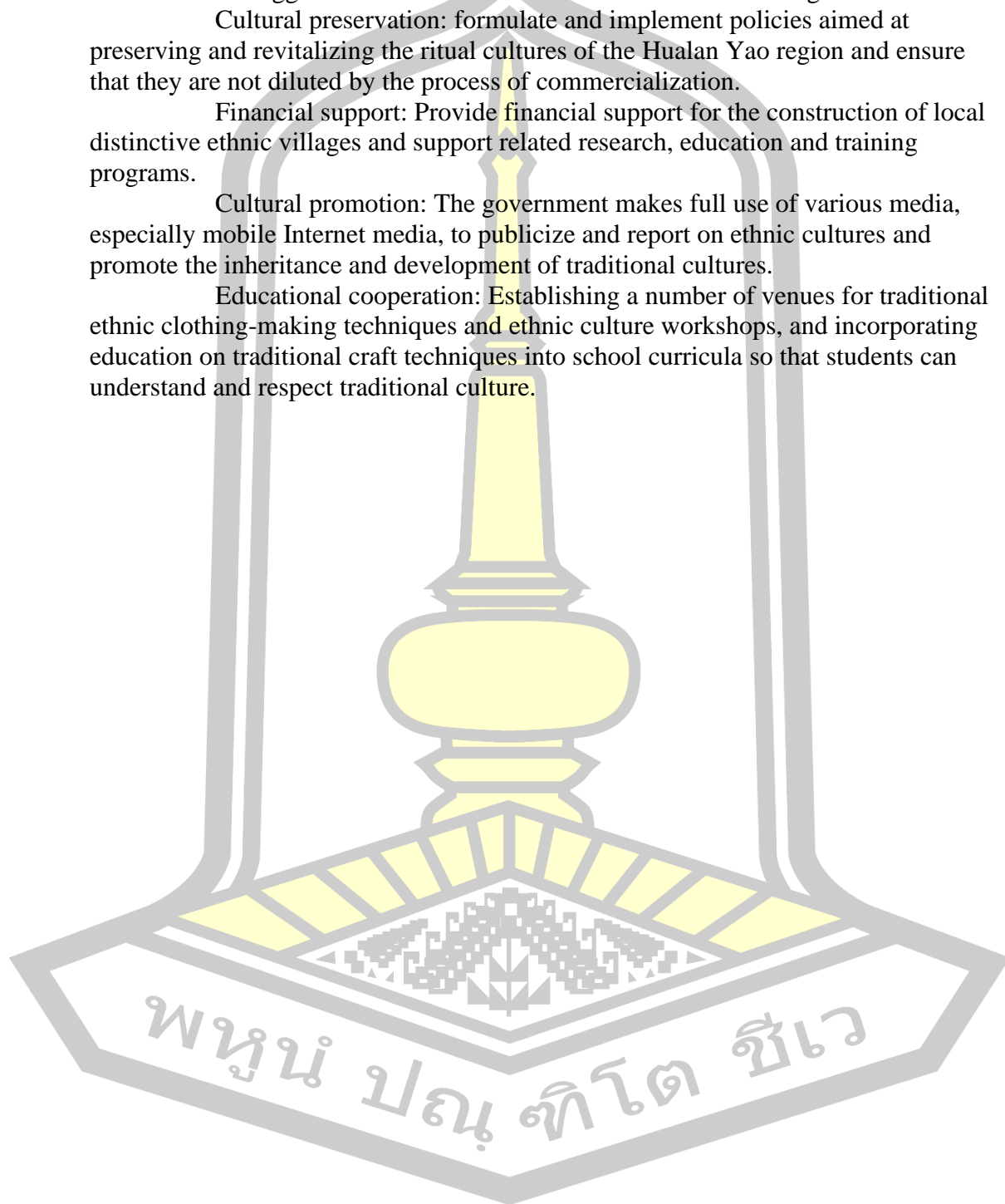
### 5.3.3 Suggestions for the Governments of China and Guangxi

**Cultural preservation:** formulate and implement policies aimed at preserving and revitalizing the ritual cultures of the Hualan Yao region and ensure that they are not diluted by the process of commercialization.

**Financial support:** Provide financial support for the construction of local distinctive ethnic villages and support related research, education and training programs.

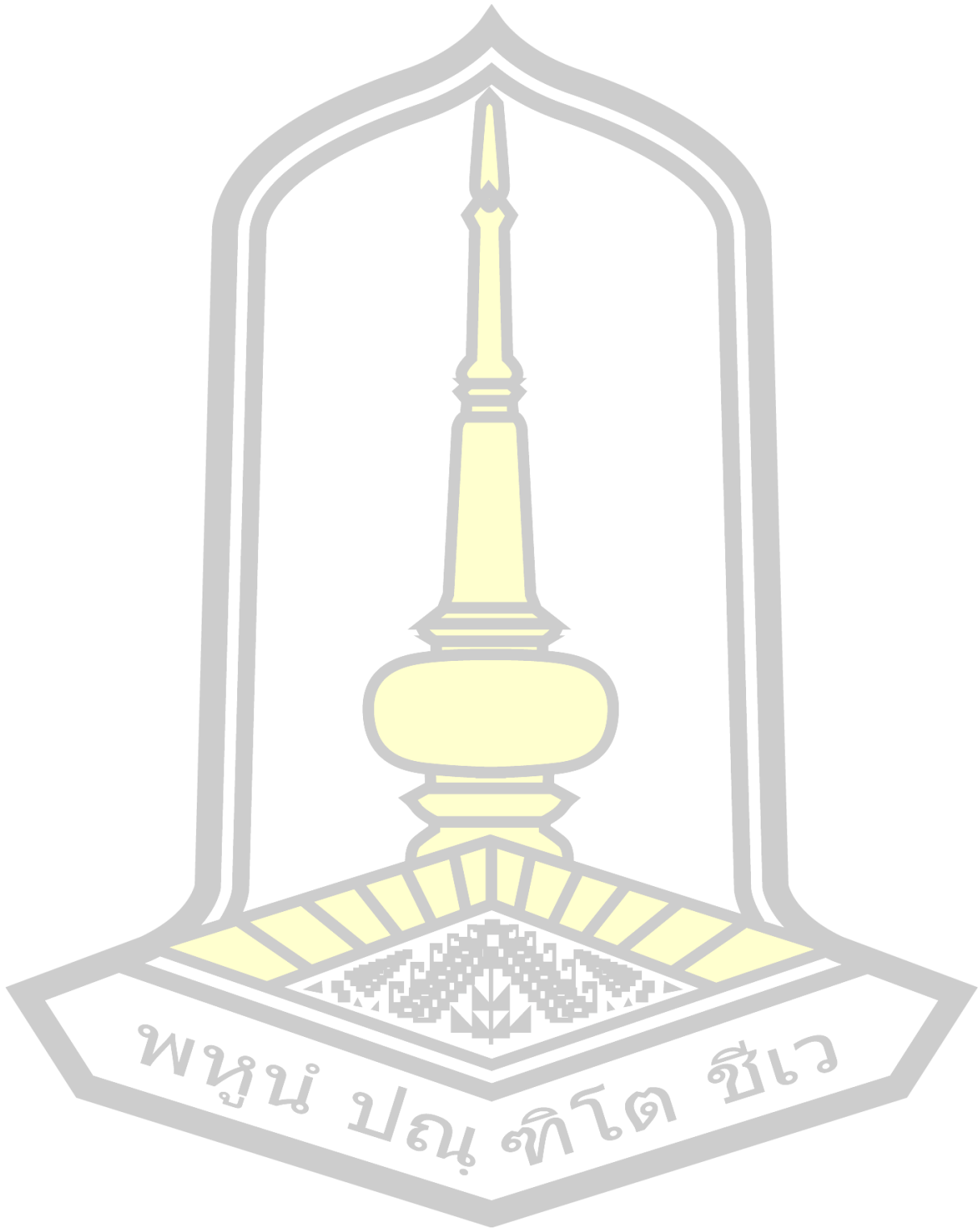
**Cultural promotion:** The government makes full use of various media, especially mobile Internet media, to publicize and report on ethnic cultures and promote the inheritance and development of traditional cultures.

**Educational cooperation:** Establishing a number of venues for traditional ethnic clothing-making techniques and ethnic culture workshops, and incorporating education on traditional craft techniques into school curricula so that students can understand and respect traditional culture.





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## REFERENCES

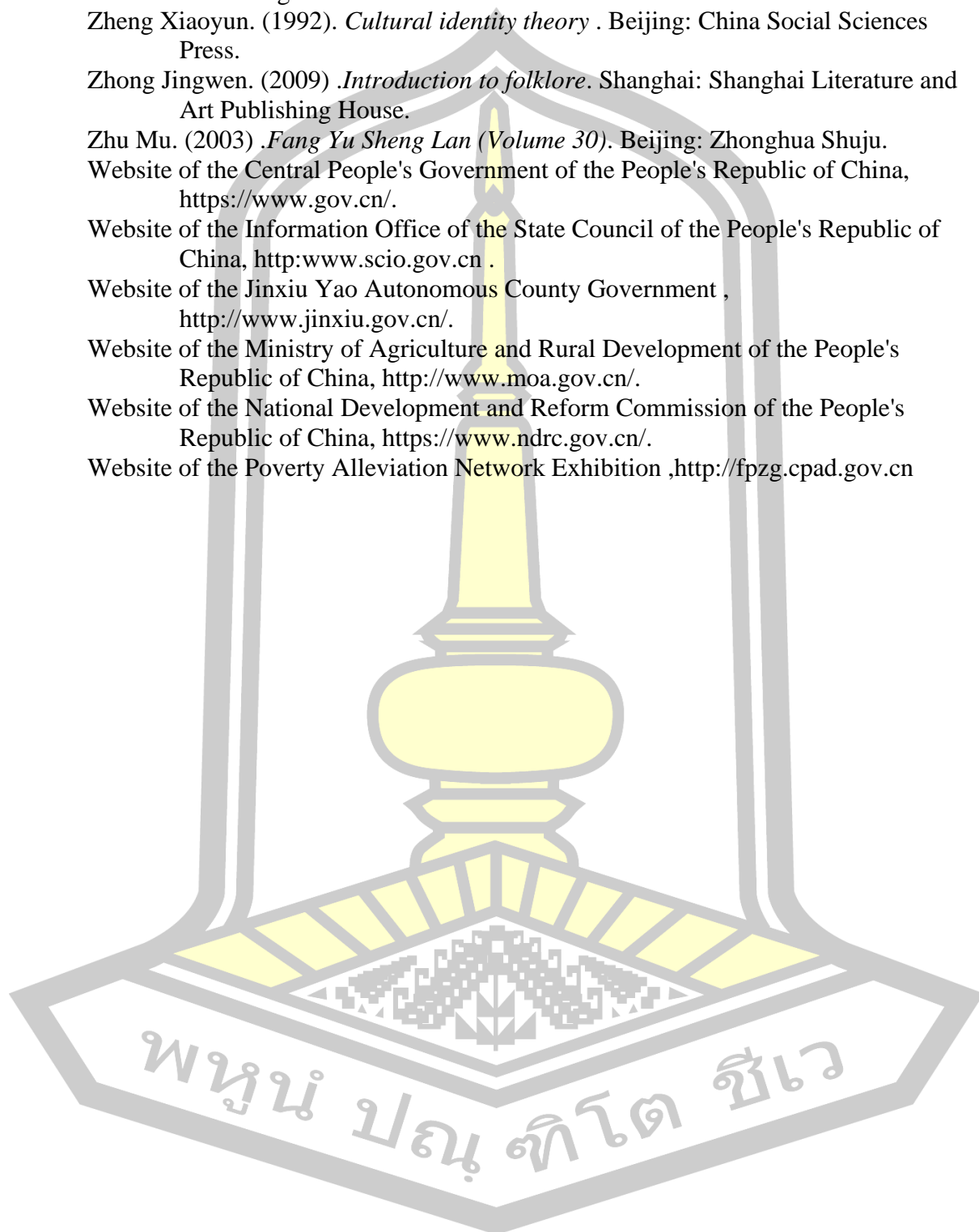
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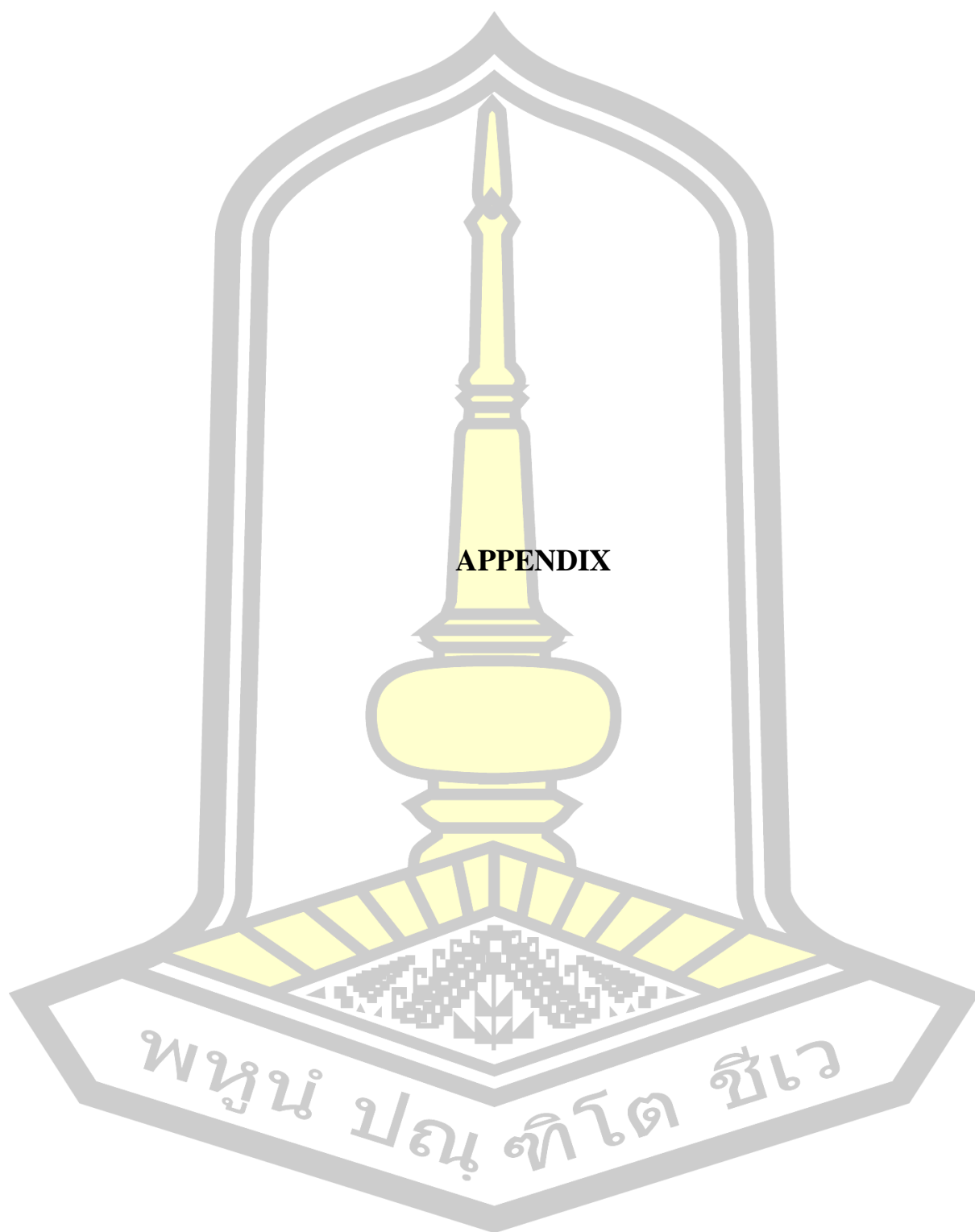
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- Website of the Poverty Alleviation Network Exhibition, <http://fpzg.cpad.gov.cn>





**APPENDIX**

พหุ ประจักษ์ วิทยา

## LIST OF INTERVIEWERS

- HDC.Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. Former Director of the Poverty Alleviation Office of Guangxi Province. Interview.
- HFY.Female, Hualan Yao. February 1, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HFZ.Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HGC.Male, Hualan Yao. February1, 2007.People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HGL.Male, Hualan Yao. February1, 2007.People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HHG.Male, Hualan Yao. July 25, 2015. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HJR.Male, Hualan Yao. January 18, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HLD.Female, Hualan Yao. January 18, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HLF. Male, Hualan Yao. May 4, 2021. Director of Mentou Village Committee. Interview.
- HLF.Male, Hualan Yao.February 8, 2022. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HLG. Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. Deputy director of Mentou Village Committee. Interview.
- HLJ.Male, Hualan Yao.February 8, 2022. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HLQ.Female, Hualan Yao. February 3, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HLY.Female, Hualan Yao. February 1, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HMM.Female, Hualan Yao. February 8, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HMQ.Female, Hualan Yao. February 8, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HQC.Male, Hualan Yao.February 8, 2022. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HQL.Female, Hualan Yao. January 20, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HQF.Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HQM.Female, Hualan Yao. January 18, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HQP.Female, Hualan Yao. January 18, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HQS.Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HXC.Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HXT.Female, Hualan Yao. January 18, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HYT.Female, Hualan Yao. January 18, 2023. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HZC.Male, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- HZC.Male, Hualan Yao. February 8, 2023. Staff of the Guangxi Provincial State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission. Interview.
- LMX.Female, Hualan Yao. May 1, 2021. People from Mentou Village. Interview.
- QHG.Male,Zhuang minority.February 8, 2022. Salesman of clothing production materials, Hualan Yao. Interview.



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