

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Writing Yunnan into China: a case study on Li Yuanyang 李元陽 (1497–1580), a Yunnanese scholar

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(Received 6 April 2022; revised 25 July 2022; accepted 2 August 2022)

Abstract

This article is a case study on the Yunnanese scholar Li Yuanyang under the background of the Ming's incorporating and sinicizing Yunnan, exploring how he views the Ming's actions and writes Yunnan's becoming a part of China. First, it retells Li's life experiences and examines the Yunnan native things and Chinese traditions in his writings. Then, after noting his emphasis of Yunnan's belonging to China, it concentrates on his comments on the Ming's military campaigns. As it analyzes, on the one hand, he justifies these campaigns against indigenous rebellions, on the other hand, he also criticizes unnecessary wars and some imperial officials' selfish deeds. Besides, he considers the constructing and reconstructing projects as a symbol of the central state's righteous governance, which should also bring benefit and benevolence to the indigenes. In a word, Li's case reflects the deep impact of the Ming's invasion on the local elites, as well as how they react to this.

Key words: Constructing and reconstructing projects; incorporation; Li Yuanyang; military campaigns; sinicization; the Ming; Yunnan

It is said that when Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582), the prominent senior grand secretary of the Ming dynasty, first participated in the county-level examination at the age of thirteen *sui*, he was highly appreciated for his intelligence and selected as the champion from a pool of six hundred candidates by the chief examiner Li Yuanyang 李元陽 (1497–1580). Given Zhang's success in his future political life, Li was praised as having the wise eyes to recognize the talent. What is noteworthy, however, is that Li Yuanyang, then prefect of Jingzhou 荊州, was a native of Yunnan, a newly occupied and colonized land of the Ming empire.

For a long period of time during China's dynastic history, Yunnan was actually a relatively independent state located on the southwest borders. The ancient Kingdom of Dian (Dian 滇 also being the abbreviation of present Yunnan province), established by the indigenous Dian people who had created a unique Dian culture, prospered roughly between the third to the second centuries BC. Although it was annexed by the Western Han Empire in 109 BC and afterwards the Yizhou commandery 益州 was established to rule its previous land, the Han authorities' control was to a large extent nominal and only restricted to what is modern-day Kunming, while leaving other parts, especially the mountainous inlands, still in the hands of indigenous chieftains. Such a manner of "rule" was inherited by later dynasties and continued for centuries until the eighth century when a local leader named Puluoge 皮邏閣 (697–748) united various tribes and finally founded the Nanzhao 南詔 Kingdom in 738. With its center in present-day Yunnan, Nanzhao at its zenith also expanded to encroach territories of some Southeast Asian countries, like Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. It even invaded Annam (nowadays northern Vietnam) and Sichuan, both of which then belonged to the Tang Empire. As

an independent kingdom, it played a key role on the then tripartite international stage, together with the Tang and the Tubo (the Tibetan Empire). After several bloody coups Nanzhao declined and eventually perished in the tenth century. Power transited to the Duan 段 family, who established the Dali 大理 Kingdom in 937. This new regime coexisted with Song China until it was conquered by the Mongols in 1253. However, the Duans were still permitted to administer this region as a proxy for the Yuan dynasty. It was only during the Ming period that the central government began to incorporate this land into the empire by launching far-reaching sinicizing projects and sending large-scale Han-Chinese immigrants there. The Qing continued and furthered this progression of sinicization and assimilation. Finally, Yunnan was transformed from an independent state into an imperial province.¹

Previous studies have revealed that China's conquest of the southwest during a long period of several centuries was not as successful and praiseworthy as the official histories announce.² In some border districts, the Ming government still attempted to identify and categorize the non-Han ethnics, so that the demarcation between Han-Chinese immigrants and indigenous barbarians were continuously maintained and even reinforced.³ Additionally, China's presence in this newly occupied land was by no means absolutely dominant, rather, it struggled with and was heavily influenced by indigenous peoples too. During this long and complicated process of Yunnan's incorporation into China, there also gradually emerged a new Yunnanese identity.⁴ However, it seems that these studies mainly focus on major historical events with a macro narrative viewpoint, relatively neglecting detailed and vivid case studies on how the Yunnanese people, including both the descendants of early immigrants and the indigenes, were impacted by, viewed, and reacted to the Ming's invasion and occupation.⁵

This article, by contrast, will study the life, identity, thoughts and writings of Li Yuanyang, a representative of the local elite class, under the background of the incorporation and sinicization of Yunnan. Li would claim himself to be a Yunnanese, but first to be a Ming subject and a Chinese. He instinctively defines himself as an orthodox Chinese scholar and behaves in proper Chinese manners. Well-educated in Confucian learnings, he passed the imperial examination and took office in different places across the country. In this way, he entered the Ming's administrative system and exerted his influence outside Yunnan. His writing of local things demonstrates both obvious Yunnan native features and Chinese literary traditions. He insists that Yunnan has been an integral part of China since ancient times, and therefore, takes the Ming's invasion as a righteous action of recovering the Chinese territories. Furthermore, he legitimizes the Ming's military campaigns against local rebellions, eulogizing them as pacifying the region and saving local people from fierce barbarians.

Surprisingly, it seems that having been cultivated as a typical Chinese literary man, Li Yuanyang, originally a native of Yunnan, warmly embraces both the Chinese assimilation and the Ming's colonization. It might even give us such an illusion that the Ming's sinicization scheme on the local elite

¹This is just a summary of the history of Yunnan. There are numerous studies on this subject. To take one example here, for an in-depth work on Yunnan's history, its interrelationship with the central Chinese state, its transformation from an independent regime to an imperial province, and the emergence of the new Yunnanese identity, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*. As in other places, we use this all across the article. Also accessible on the e-book platform Gutenberg-e: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/>.

²For example, Herman 2006, pp. 135–68; Herman 2009, pp. 241–86; Herman 2007.

³Shin 2006, especially chapters 4 and 5.

⁴Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*.

⁵Here, at least for this article, I should first of all clarify the specific meanings of some commonly used terminologies. The “Chinese” generally refers to both the official recognized fifty-six peoples (the Han and the fifty-five minorities) living in China today and their ancestors who once lived on this land during historical times. But in a narrow sense, it is also a synonym for the term “Han-Chinese”, especially when used in historical texts. The “Han-Chinese” is a historical term mainly referring to the people of China proper who shared the “orthodox” Chinese culture and who were the ancestors of today's Han people. The “Yunnan native (or local)” comprises two groups: (1) the descendants of Han-Chinese immigrants to Yunnan who had been more or less indigenized; (2) the indigenes, or the so-called barbarians, who were originally a different ethnic group from the Han-Chinese. During the long process of sinicization and incorporation, the Yunnan natives (or locals) have gradually evolved into a new category of people – the “Yunnanese”, who hold both the identity of Yunnan and the identity of China. In the end, they become a member of the great Chinese family, and in the meanwhile, contribute fresh energy to this old country.

class was indeed successful. However, this is not the whole story. At the same time, Li argues for the interest of the local people, exposing some imperial officials' evil and selfish deeds and criticizing the unnecessary wars launched by them. He also cares much about what the government's constructing projects would really bring to the locality. For example, in his accounts of the establishment of schools, he despises some scholars' using learning as a means of pursuing fame and wealth. Rather, he stresses a scholar's self-cultivation and practice of the Confucian *Dao*, because only when achieving this, could he fulfill his duties and benefit the local populace. Whereas he recognizes the establishment of governmental offices and shrines to celebrated officials as a symbol of the Ming's righteous rule, he too points out these institutions' functions of making the centrally assigned officials devoted to local affairs and encompassing Yunnan into the national administrative system. In addition, he believes that the infrastructures and public facilities should accelerate the development of this region.

In sum, Li Yuanyang's works should be analyzed from two perspectives. The first aspect is his insistence on his Chinese identity and justification of the Ming's actions in Yunnan, while the other aspect is his arguments and consideration for the sake of the local area. The combination of these two features demonstrates how he writes Yunnan into China. Ahead of further investigation into this subject, let us begin with an observation of his biographical outline.

A biographical outline⁶

Li Yuanyang, courtesy name Renfu 仁甫, was born to a scholarly family native to the Dali 大理 region. Since his family clan had lived for generations at the foot of the Cangshan Mountain 蒼山, which is famous for its eighteen streams, he also gave himself the art name Zhongxi 中溪 (lit. the Middle Stream). It is said that his forefathers were migrants from Qiantang 錢塘, Zhejiang province, and that one of them once took office in the Dali region during the Mongol Yuan dynasty and settled his family down here for his fondness for Dali's beautiful mountains and waters.

Li Yuanyang obtained his *jinshi* degree in the year 1526, and was then selected to be a *shujishi* 庶吉士⁷ in the Hanlin Academy. Yet, shortly afterwards he offended an imperious official and was therefore dispatched out of the capital. Coincidentally, his mother passed away at this time, so he returned to hometown to undertake the funeral rituals. After the mourning obligation was completed, he was appointed magistrate of Jiangyin 江陰 county, Jiangsu province, and sojourned there for two years. Li Yuanyang was memorialized for his benevolent rule in Jiangyin. For example, he trained navies and reinforced fortresses to eliminate the threats of pirates; he solved legal cases and released the innocent people; he revealed the guilt of crafty men and punished them; and he negotiated with the strict provincial governor attempting to cut taxes for the populace. Consequently, local people constructed a shrine in honor of him and inscribed his good deeds into stele.

Perhaps because of his recognized political ability, Li Yuanyang was called back to the capital. At first, he worked at the Ministry of Revenue, and later he was appointed as an investigating censor. Upright, honest and straightforward as he had always been, he fearlessly criticized the Jiajing 嘉靖 Emperor's (1507–1567, r. 1521–1567) misconducts in dealing with state affairs and recruiting officials. Once again, he was sent away from the court. This time, the destination was Fujian where he was assigned to inspect local politics. Impeaching corrupt officials, supervising the imperial examination and selecting outstanding talents, he proved to be successful in fulfilling his duty.

⁶In this part I reconstruct Li Yuanyang's biography based on these sources: Li Xuan 李選, "Shiyu Zhongxi Li Yuanyang xingzhuang" 侍御中溪李元陽行狀; "Li Wensu Gong muzhi" 李文肅公墓誌; (*Tianqi*) *Dianzhi*: "Renwu zhi" (天啟) 滇志·人物志; in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 670–674. They include a *xingzhuang* 行狀 (a form of literature recording a dead person's dates of birth and death, lineage, place of origin, life experiences, important deeds, and other biographical information) and an epitaph, both of which should be written shortly after Li's death by those who personally knew him well, as well as an account from a local gazetteer. They might be the sole primary sources on Li's life. Although they cannot contain every detail, they are almost specific enough and reliable too.

⁷The term *shujishi* refers to those who, after passing the imperial examination and obtaining the *jinshi* degree, were selected to study in the Hanlin Academy with the purpose of developing their administrative skills and becoming prepared for future appointments to official posts.

When the Jiajing Emperor planned to visit Chengtian 承天 (present-day Zhongxiang 鍾祥 county, Hubei province), Li Yuanyang submitted an memorial trying to prevent this. The emperor was enraged, causing anxiety and panic among the advisor officials. However, Li Yuanyang just behaved at ease as if nothing had happened and was therefore praised as a “real censor”. His protest was in vain, and he reluctantly became a member of the retinue escorting the imperial tour. On the way, learning that the grand secretary had recruited palace officials exclusively from the wealthy people of Jiangnan, Li immediately submitted a memorial to impeach him. On arrival in Chengtian, he reported to the emperor once again, but received no responses.

At this juncture, the position of prefect of Jingzhou was vacant. Considering the importance of Jingzhou – which is a port city in middle reaches of the Yangzi River and also located at the center of the Ming’s territory, and Li’s administrative competence, the central government moved him to that position. It was during his appointment there that he met the young and promising Zhang Juzheng. Li had numerous benevolent conducts in Jingzhou as well. The most notable one was his constructing water facilities. He donated his personal salary to the project of drilling wells and supplying drinking water to local people. He resolutely took up the tough mission of building a dyke on the side of the Yangzi River, which his colleagues had failed to complete several times, and fulfilled it on time, protecting the surrounding prefectures and counties from floods. To express their gratitude, local people named the wells and dyke after “the Revered Mr. Li” (Li Gong 李公). And his colleague even compared his feat to that of the legendry king Yu the Great (Da Yu 大禹), who was said to have controlled catastrophic floods and saved the lives of millions of people.

Taking the opportunity of returning home to manage his father’s funeral rituals, Li Yuanyang withdrew from officialdom, probably because he had been fed up with the ups and downs of the official life and wishes to enjoy a quiet retirement – just as numerous Chinese scholars did. Afterwards, he started a reclusive life in the Dali region for the rest of his lifetime, which spanned around forty years. He lived in a peaceful and thrifty way, but was generous in helping those in need and donating to public welfare, such as building roads, bridges, dykes, pagodas, and temples. Also, he had a wide interest in various subjects of history, literature, Confucian classics and Buddhist doctrines, and studied diligently to explore the true meaning of life. He exchanged knowledge with erudite scholars and monks, the most prominent one of whom was Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559), a Confucian scholar-official who was then in his banishment in Yunnan. A genuine, gentle, kind and self-cultivated senior, Li Yuanyang was deeply revered by his fellow villagers and extolled as a great man who had grasped the *Dao* 道 (the Way). He enjoyed a long life and died peacefully at the age of eighty-four *sui*.

Li Yuanyang’s writings were compiled and printed with the assistance of Liu Wei 劉維, an investigating censor then inspecting local politics in Yunnan, and Hu Xi 胡僖, a Zhejiang-born scholar-official who was taking office in Yunnan. A native of Jingzhou, Liu Wei met Li, the then prefect, in his childhood and was deeply impressed by Li’s benevolence. Almost forty years had passed when Liu met with Li again, this time in his monitoring tour in Yunnan. In great admiration for Li, Liu Wei frequently visited his residence and discussed with him on the way of administering the state. Also, Liu proposed compiling and printing Li’s works and Li happily accepted the suggestion. Then, Liu, together with several colleagues of his, carried out the task. Finally, Li’s works came into print under the title *Zhongxi Li Xiansheng Ji* 中溪李先生集 (The Collected Works of Mr. Li Zhongxi) or *Zhongxi Huigao* 中溪彙稿 (The Compiled Manuscripts of Zhongxi), with a preface by Liu Wei and a postscript by Hu Xi. During the early Republican time, this collection was reprinted by the Yunnan native scholars Li Genyuan 李根源 (1879–1965), Shi Ruqin 施汝欽 and Zhao Fan 趙藩 (1851–1927), and was incorporated into a huge cultural project of the *Yunnan Congshu* 雲南叢書 (Book Series on Yunnan).⁸

⁸Liu Wei 劉維, “Ke *Zhongxi Li Xiansheng Ji xu*” 刻中溪李先生集序; Hu Xi 胡僖, “*Zhongxi Huigao houxu*” 中溪彙稿後序; Li Genyuan 李根源, “*Chongkan Zhongxi Jiachuan Huigao xu*” 重刊中溪家傳彙稿序; Shi Ruqin 施汝欽, “*Chongkan Zhongxi Huigao xu*” 重刊中溪彙稿序; Zhao Fan 趙藩, “*Chongkan Zhongxi Huigao xu*” 重刊中溪彙稿序; in *Li*

Yunnan native things and Chinese traditions

Although none of the original sources mentioned above reveals that Li Yuanyang belongs to the Bai 白 ethnic minority and Li himself said nothing on this matter, modern Chinese scholars are inclined to classify him into the Bai writers group.⁹ Both the formation of the Bai people and the identification of the Bai nationality are rather complex issues, and it is almost impossible to identify Li's ethnic identity simply based on the limited records of his life. Therefore, it would be safer to say that he is a Yunnan, or Dali to be more specific, native. One conjecture is that his ancestors did really immigrate into Yunnan from Jiangnan, as stated in his biography, and if so, he might be a Han-Chinese descendant. However, it is equally possible that he was actually of Yunnan origin, because many Bai individuals denied their ethnicity and declared that they were descendants of Han military immigrants from Nanjing, in order to prove that they had a Han root and were thus advanced, cultured and distinguished from the neighboring indigenes, and this might also be applicable to the statement in Li's biography.

Either case could manifest the mixture of Chinese culture and the indigenes, which thereby creates a new Yunnanese identity. Previous studies have shown that the influx of immigrants throughout the Ming period dramatically changed the ethnic structure of Yunnan, even making the Han population overwhelming the indigenes in urban regions. Alongside the sinicization of indigenous communities, those immigrants were simultaneously indigenized through marrying local women, taking local languages, and following local customs and lifestyle. The interaction of sinicization and indigenization – the two sides of one process – eventually generated a group of people who share the same identity: the Yunnanese, also being a proportion of the Chinese.¹⁰ As for the Bai minorities, having been acculturated to the Chinese way of life for a long period of time, many of them were regarded as physically and culturally indistinctive.¹¹ They had become the Yunnanese people as well. Li Yuanyang, whether a Han descendant or a native Bai, did possess his Yunnanese identity and Chinese identity. He has been totally assimilated into the Chinese literati class, and as we see from his life experiences described above, his behaviors and deeds reveal that he held nearly all the virtues that an exemplary Chinese scholar-official would have.

Certain Bai, or Yunnan native, features are still detectable on the recognized “Baizu writers” of the early Ming time. Yang Fu 楊黼 (ca. 1370–1450), a Dali indigenous poet and recluse, is a representative of them.¹² He wrote poems in the Bowen 樊文 script and in the traditional Bai poetic style – the *shanhua ti* 山花體 (the *shanhua* style).¹³ According to Li Yuanyang's record, he once composed several thousand poems of this category. Yet, the most famous one still surviving today is entitled “Ciji

Yuanyang Wenji, pp. 680–685. The project of *Yunnan Congshu* had been launched from the early republican era, and was only completed around 2010. This series of books were published in fifty volumes by the academic publisher Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 in 2009, with one more volume of the overall catalogue published later in 2010. In this article, I use a modern edition entitled *Li Yuanyang Wenji* 李元陽文集 (The Collected Literary Works of Li Yuanyang), which is compiled, edited and punctuated by today's scholars and is of easier availability.

⁹For example, see Zhang Wenxun 1983, pp. 374–78. The notion of “*minzu*” 民族 is modern Chinese invention, and the *minzu* identification and classification is an official project launched from the 1950s to 1980s. For a study on this practice in Yunnan, see Yang 2009, pp. 741–75. I suspect that those scholars label Li Yuanyang as a *Baizu* 白族 writer just by following the government's classification and establishment of the Dali area as a Bai community settlement, and they might hold that the natives, even of ancient times, living there should be *Baizu*.

¹⁰For the immigration of Han people to the southwest, including Yunnan, during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, see Lee 1982b pp. 279–304. For the interaction of sinicization and indigenization and the emergence of the Yunnanese, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*, chapter 5: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/chapter5.html>.

¹¹Wu 1990, pp. 1–13.

¹²For the biographical information of Yang Fu, see Li Yuanyang, “Yang Fu xiansheng zhuan” 楊黼先生傳, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 570–571; Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming Shi*, juan. 298, p. 7629.

¹³The Bowen script is also known as Ancient Bai script, Square Bai script, or Hanzi(-style) Bai script. Heavily adapted from Chinese characters to fit and record the Bai language, it was mainly used by the native Bai people from the Nanzhao period to the beginning of the Ming dynasty. The *shanhua* poetic form regulates that each stanza in a poem should consist of four lines, with each of the first three lines comprising seven characters/syllables and the last line comprising five characters/syllables. (The fact that one character corresponds to one syllable, as in Chinese, is almost applicable to the Bai

shanhua: Yong Cang Er jing” 詞記山花 詠蒼洱境 (“A lyric in the *shanhua* style: Chanting the scenery of Cangshan Mountain and Erhai Lake”).¹⁴ Besides Yang Fu’s poetry, the *shanhua* style is mostly utilized in folk song composition. In contrast, it is no longer adopted by the Yunnanese literary elites from the mid-Ming onwards, including Li Yuanyang, whose works are all written in the standard classical Chinese language and style.

Still, what can embody Li’s Yunnan native identity is perhaps his passion for writing about the local scenery, product and legend. He notices some geographical features of the Cangshan Mountain and Erhai Lake 洱海. The mountain comprises nineteen peaks from where waterfalls drop. The water then flows through valleys between every two adjacent peaks, forming eighteen streams in total. At the turn of summer and autumn, clouds like jade strips surround the mountain’s waist, making a marvelous scene. Thus, a poet writes that it is as if God of Heaven presents a jade belt to the mountain deity. On the east bank of the Yeyu 葉榆 River (also named the Xi’er 西洱 River), there is a watershed cliff as if being scratched by a huge axe. Under the cliff water is evidently separated: to the south is the river water and to the north the lake water. Because of the different salinity of water, the river fish would never swim to the lake and the lake fish never to the river, just returning to their respective field at this junction.

As for the local product, Li Yuanyang in particular records that snow accumulates at the top of Cangshan Mountain and does not melt even in the fifth lunar month, thus local people mix it with honey to make a kind of tasty “ice cream”. He also mentions the Dali stone, a type of marble exploited from Cangshan Mountain and named after Dali for its wide availability here. The stone is of white substance with the black grain, and after being sliced and polished, it is usually manufactured into screens, which thereby have the form of mountains, forests and clouds. In addition, several fishes specific to Erhai or Yeyu and treasured for their delicious meat are noted in his writings as well.

When introducing a scenic spot, Li always refers to relevant local legends. For example, he includes at least three myths regarding the Erhai Lake in an essay on this water. The first one, to the northwest of the lake, there is a mountain named Niaodiao shan 鳥弔山 (The Birds-mourning Mountain), on which a variety of birds gather in flocks during the eighth or ninth lunar month of the year, because according to a tale, phoenix once died here and other birds come to mourn for it. The second one, on one of the three islands in the lake, there is a rock inscribed with vermilion characters in ancient seal script. The legend tells that a long time ago, Rakshasha Luocha promised to present Bodhisattva Guanyin with a piece of land the size his *jiasha kasaya* could cover, and Guanyin let the demon sign a contract as evidence of his word; then Guanyin used divine power to cover all Luocha’s land with his *jiasha* and subdued the demon. Local elders believed that the vermilion script in the rock is exactly the contract between Guanyin and Luocha. The third one, it is said that although the evil dragon was eliminated by Guanyin, its fellows still hid in holes on the east shore of the lake and made storms and huge tides to sink boats. One day a saint monk arrived on the shore and build a temple there in order to suppress the monsters. He frequently chanted sutras in the temple, and one night, there was suddenly a loud sound and afterwards hundreds of boys came up to him, saying,

language, too.) Such a style of three seven-character/syllable lines plus one five-character/syllable line is also named “*sanqi yiwu*” 三七一五 (three sevens and one five) or “*qiqiqi wu*” 七七七五 (seven-seven-seven and five).

¹⁴This poem was inscribed into a tablet in the year 1450. This tablet, thereby named “*Shanhua bei*” 山花碑 (The *Shanhua* Tablet), is now erected in the Dali Municipal Museum in Dali Old Town. For an analysis and Chinese translation of this poem, see Xu Lin 徐琳 and Zhao Yansun 趙衍蓀 1980, pp. 50–56. It begins with an extensive description of local scenery, particularly mentioning these Dali landmarks of Shiba xi 十八溪 (The Eighteen Streams), Wuhua lou 五華樓 (The Tower of Five Glories), San ta 三塔 (The Three Pagodas), Fengyu shan 鳳羽山 (The Phoenix Feather Mountain), Long guan 龍關 (The Dragon Gate) and Yuju shan 玉局山 (The Yuju Mountain). Then, it turns to the discussion of self-cultivation and advocates both Confucian and Buddhist ways to nurture one’s personality, followed by an emphasis on the values of benevolence and righteousness, obedience to rituals, and filial piety and respectfulness. Additionally, it suggests governing the people with kindness and educating the younger generation in the classics of *sanjiao* 三教 (the Three Religions, i.e. Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism). Finally, it falls into a relatively pessimistic tone, sighing at the vicissitudes of fortunes and the doomed dying away of everything. Very probably here, the poet is lamenting the elimination of the Duan reign, as well as his own misfortune and loneliness.

“You, the Master, are destroying our homes when staying here, making us really uneasy. Please move to somewhere else.” The monk righteously replied, “This is the right place to preach Buddhist dharma, so why cannot I stay here?” Then, the boys disappeared. The next day, hundreds of dead pythons were found floating on water under the temple, and thenceforth, the lake is safe for a voyage.

Li Yuanyang did love and take pride in his reclusive life in Dali, remarking that living here surrounded by attracting natural scenes would relieve one’s enthusiasm for pursuing fame and wealth. He also particularly notes the pleasant climate of Dali, which cannot be found in other places. It only gets cool but not cold in winter, and it only gets warm but not hot in summer – it is just like in spring all year round.¹⁵ He might not be the first, nor the only, literary man who wrote about the localities of Yunnan, but he is surely distinguished by his extensive works, vivid depiction, and wholehearted devotion. It seems that he was acting as a spokesman for his homeland, with his writings creating a sense of belonging to Yunnan.

At the same time, Li never forgets to highlight the Chinese traditions by setting his local description into the Chinese cultural context, making his writings of local things full of Chinese elements. When writing about the Cangshan Mountain, he cites the historical records of *Xu Han Shu* 續漢書 (A Sequel to the Book of Han) and *Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書 (The Old Book of Tang). Annotations to the former compare Cangshan with Fufeng 扶風 and Taiyi 太乙, both of which are located in Shaanxi province and are prestigious mountains in Chinese culture, while the latter accounts that during the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign (785–805), the Tang Empire and the Nanzhao Kingdom once held a ceremony to form an alliance at the foot of Cangshan. After writing that shrines on the northwest coast of the Yeyu River are dedicated to a water deity who has a bull’s head and human body, he quotes from the *Shan Hai Jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas), a Chinese classic text of legendary geography and creatures, that “in the mountain of the west wilderness there is a god with a beast’s face and human body”, and concludes that such depiction in *Shan Hai Jing* is probably directed at the Yeyu River deity. Li also refers to literary allusions, stories and anecdotes regarding famous Chinese figures and their relationship with Yunnan. In his writing of the Dali stone, he particularly mentions that this type of precious stone was treasured by the Tang poets Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850) and housed in their villas in Luoyang. He cites the literary masterpiece “Shudu fu” 蜀都賦 (“the Shu capital rhapsody”) by Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–305) which states that Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234) once led the Shu Han army to fight on the south bank of the Yeyu River during his expedition to Nanzhong 南中 (approximately in present Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces). Also, he tells that the Emperor Wu of Wei (i.e. Cao Cao 曹操, 155–220) listed fish from Yunnan lakes on his menu and was aware that they are especially delicious in winter.¹⁶

The description of Yunnan native things within the framework of Chinese traditions can be widely observed in Li Yuanyang’s works. In this way, he incorporates his writings of Yunnan into the Chinese literature tradition. By referring to renowned figures and events in Chinese history, he is very likely to imply that Yunnan has had close connection with China proper for a long period of time, and that Yunnan’s native culture forms part of the great Chinese civilization. He insists that Yunnan was, is and should be an integral part of the Chinese territory, and therefore he justifies the incorporation and sinicization of Yunnan by the Ming dynasty.

The emphasis of Yunnan’s belonging to China

Throughout his lifetime, Yang Fu refused to participate in the imperial examination and never entered the Ming bureaucracy. Therefore, he was classified into the “yinyi” 隱逸 (recluses) category in the official history *Ming Shi* 明史 (The History of Ming). His denial of cooperating with the Ming authority is ascribed to his loyalty to the previous Duan family, who were in charge of Dali during the Mongol rule. It is said that his father Yang Bao 楊保 and uncle Yang Ming 楊名 were both Duan subjects

¹⁵Referenced works here are: Li Yuanyang, “Diancang shan zhi” 點蒼山志, “Xi’er hai zhi” 西洱海志, and “Cang Er tushuo” 蒼洱圖說, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 211–214, 215–218, 221–223.

¹⁶Ibid.

and died for their state.¹⁷ As we know, loyalty is one of the most admirable virtues in Chinese cultural contexts. Yang Fu, equipped with Chinese learnings, did possess such a merit. However, he was loyal to the Duan, rather than the Ming. What's more, he is by no means the sole case. A noticeable number of Bai elites in Dali even strove to safeguard their Bai identity in protest against the Ming invasion. With a strong national awareness, they wrote their own history in their own language – the Bowen script, in order to prove that the Dali area had been highly civilized even before the Ming's "civilizing" project, which only turned out to be an excuse for its invasion.¹⁸

By sharp contrast, Li Yuanyang holds opposite political stance as he is happy to be a Chinese Ming subject and generally appreciates the Ming's incorporation and colonization of Yunnan. This is probably because the Ming's efforts for more than a century had greatly impacted the local elites, who also enjoyed benefits from this sinicization process – for example, many of them entered the officialdom, became ruling class, and obtained high social status. Thus, Li must feel embarrassed at Yang's "different loyalty" when composing the latter's biography. As a result, he did not mention Yang's family background and relationship with the Duan at all. Instead, he only concentrated on Yang's erudition in Confucian classics, practice of filial piety, and cultivation of personality.¹⁹

The incorporation of Yunnan into China is a long and complex process, which not only forms the history of China, but also influences the international politics of East Asia and Southeast Asia.²⁰ However, Li Yuanyang's view on this matter seems to be Sino-centric and is still inherited by some modern Chinese scholars. In the sixth year of the Longqing 隆慶 reign (i.e. the year 1572), the provincial governor of Yunnan Zou Yinglong 鄒應龍 launched the project of compiling a local gazetteer for the province and Li Yuanyang was recommended to be the chief compiler for his erudition and rich experience. The outcome was the *Yunnan Tongzhi* 雲南通志 (The Provincial Gazetteer of Yunnan) completed in the first year of the Wanli 萬曆 reign (i.e. the year 1573). The compilation work was conducted after a relatively steady rule over Yunnan had been established by the Ming. It conforms to the tradition of compiling a gazetteer for an administrative locality in imperial China. Heavily referencing to precedent classic texts, dynastic histories, geographical accounts, maps and gazetteers, the arrangement of its contents also follows what traditional Chinese gazetteers usually contain. It fulfills the political purpose of declaring and legalizing the Ming's incorporation and governance of Yunnan, which by then has been turned into a Chinese territory.²¹

In the preface, Li Yuanyang summarizes Yunnan's history and relationship with China. According to his account, the southwest border of the Han Empire reached Yongchang commandery 永昌郡 (nowadays Baoshan 保山 city, Yunnan province) and during the Yuanhe 元和 era (84–87), schools were widely established across Yunnan and local customs were gradually transformed. Consequently, from the Han dynasty onwards Yunnan has initiated the progression of being civilized and sinicized, with Chinese classics becoming accessible and the sage king's teachings being disseminated here. More importantly, in this region the central government established four prefectures to lead dozens of counties and assigned around thirteen officials to rule.²² Such a narration by Li generates an impression that Yunnan was fully assimilated into China with the influence of Chinese culture penetrating into it as early as the Han period. This conclusion is also widely welcomed by today's Chinese statesmen and historians who always righteously claim that "Yunnan is an inseparable part of China from the very ancient time onwards." Actually, however, those frontier commanderies set up by the Han court only nominally

¹⁷Zhang Wenxun 1983, pp. 358–66. Hou Chong 2011, pp. 75–85.

¹⁸For an in-depth and thorough study on this matter, see Hou Chong's work *Baizu Xinshi: Baigu Tongji Yanjiu*.

¹⁹Li Yuanyang, "Yang Fu xiansheng zhuan", in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 570–571.

²⁰For a comprehensive and in-depth study on this subject, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*, especially chapter 3, 4 and 5: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/>.

²¹For a more comprehensive and in-depth case study on the influence of the compilation of a local gazetteer on the Ming's incorporation and cultural transformation of an area populated mainly by non-Chinese peoples (the case of Mahu 馬湖 prefecture in Sichuan province), see Dennis 2015, pp. 259–72.

²²For the original text of Li's preface, see Li Yuanyang, "Yunnan Tongzhi xu" 雲南通志序, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 283–286.

“ruled” the then “barbarian” land of Yunnan with administrative affairs in fact left to indigenous leaders, and even their existence was always unsustainable and temporary. Also, the influence of Chinese culture was only limited to several Chinese settlements on the fringes of this vast area, seldom extending to the interior.²³

As for Yunnan’s detachment from the central Chinese authority during the Tang Song periods, Li Yuanyang feels indignant at this and diminishes the Nanzhao and Dali regimes. He continues to write that after the Tianbao 天寶 era (742–756) in the Tang, it was the misdeeds of frontier officials that incurred the indigenous people’s resentment and as a result, they rebelled and established separatist states. And for the Song, although it once prospered and partially unified China, Li criticizes its policy of giving up Yunnan. He regretfully judges this historical period:

For three hundred years, Yunnan was isolated and degraded into an alien land. Moral teachings and the transformation of customs initiated from the Han dynasty was unexpectedly cut off and no longer lasting. Alas! As for the educated men living in such an era, it was rare for them not to follow the barbarian customs, let alone learning Chinese classics.²⁴

三百年間，隔為異域。兩漢風猷，斬然莫繼。嗚呼！士生斯時，能不左衽者寡矣，矧文獻哉。

Obviously, Li Yuanyang argues once again from the perspective of an orthodox Chinese scholar, disparaging Nanzhao and Dali as uncivilized barbarian states and illegalizing their independence from Tang Song China.²⁵ He is by no means the sole Yunnanese scholar who firmly stands on the side of the central Chinese government. Yang Shiyun 楊士雲 (1477–1554), another Yunnan native (commonly identified as a Bai) scholar and poet and also a literary friend of Li Yuanyang, even believes that the name “Dali” disobeys decorum and recommends the Ming authority to abolish this appellation. As he argues, the term “Da” 大, literally meaning “the Great”, is a laudatory title indicating that the Chinese emperor rules all land under heaven and is therefore only applicable to the orthodox Chinese empires such as “Da Han” (the Great Han), “Da Tang” (the Great Tang) and “Da Song” (the Great Song). In contrast, the local Duan family regime did usurp this title and overstep etiquette by naming itself “Da”. And now, Dali is merely a prefecture of the Ming, so it should not use the term “Da” anymore.²⁶

Based on Li Yuanyang’s version of the pre-Ming history of Yunnan, the Ming’s colonization is to be reasonably interpreted as rescuing this region from barbarians and reincorporating it into the superior China. He proudly writes:

Our Gao Emperor restored the Chinese territories, consolidating and justifying his governance over the country. He set up prefectures and counties in Yunnan. In comparison with the Han dynasty, his accomplishment is even greater.²⁷

我高皇帝，恢復華夏，莫正區宇。置雲南郡縣，視兩漢有加焉。

²³For more detailed studies, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*, chapter 4: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/chapter4.html>. Additionally, China’s nominal governance during the early times existed not only in Yunnan, but also in the whole southwest areas, see Herman 2009, pp. 241–86.

²⁴Li Yuanyang, “*Yunnan Tongzhi xu*”, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 283–286.

²⁵Modern researchers have reexamined the history of Nanzhao and Dali and their relationship with Tang Song China from a global perspective and on an objective ground. For example, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*, chapter 3: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/chapter3.html>. Additionally, modern scholars point out that the Ming’s sinicizing and civilizing activities in Yunnan were actually inessential, as this area had already been heavily influenced by Chinese culture and became relatively advanced even during the Tang, Song and Yuan periods, and therefore those activities mainly serve as an excuse for the Ming’s occupation and incorporation. See Hou Chong 2011, pp. 42–46.

²⁶Yang Shiyun 2006, pp. 267–70.

²⁷Li Yuanyang, “*Yunnan Tongzhi xu*”, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 283–286.

Here, Li highly praises the Gao Emperor of Ming (i.e. Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, 1328–1398, r. 1368–1398) for he not only defeated the Mongols and restored China proper, but also took firmer control of Yunnan than any previous Chinese dynasty.

Li's views differ from those of the literati prior to his era, especially regarding the relationship between Yunnan and the central authority. For instance, in the *Yunnan Zhilue* 雲南志略 (A General Account of Yunnan) by Li Jing 李京, who was sent to take office in Yunnan by the Yuan dynasty in the early fourteenth century, Li Jing recognizes the symbolical rather than real administration of the Qin Han empires and the rivalry of Nanzhao and Dali against the Tang and the Song respectively. His account was based on his personal observations, and he particularly paid attention to the indigenous customs, lifestyles, and ideologies, which were totally different from those of China proper and which indicate that the local ethnics were actually more tied to the cultures of Tibet or Southeast Asia.²⁸ Even the *Yunnan Tujing Zhishu* 雲南圖經志書 (A Compilation of Maps and Classics of Yunnan) compiled during the Jingtai period (1450–1457) is inclined to identify the autonomous status of Yunnan before the Yuan. As for the Yuan, its direct governance and teaching was still blocked so that the social atmosphere of Yunnan was not the same as in inner China. By comparison, it is only the Ming that made Yunnan fully obedient to the central state and transformed the barbarians into civilized gentlemen.²⁹ Hence, Li Yuanyang's narration of history is somewhat different from that of the preceding scholars in his insistence on Yunnan's being an integral part of China even from the very early times and in his statement that the Nanzhao and Dali reigns were retrogressive ages for Yunnan. His loyalty to China's cultural orthodoxy testifies to the deep and "successful" impact of the Ming's civilizing and colonizing movements, which had been carried out for two centuries, on Yunannese elites.

Justifying and criticizing the Ming's military campaigns

Inevitably, the Ming's occupation and direct control of Yunnan was achieved through a series of continuous military campaigns. During Li Yuanyang's time, there were still several battles launched by the Ming government to suppress local rebellions. Li's attitudes towards these bloody conflicts are somewhat paradoxical. In the first place, he extols the Ming troops' "righteous" actions and victory over the local barbarians. Simultaneously, however, for the inessential wars and some officials' abuse of power, which caused excessive destruction and the loss of numerous lives of innocent victims, he apparently expresses hatred.

He approves of the central government's policy of *gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流 (replacing native chieftains with officials directly assigned by the central government). The example coming to mind is his comments on the Ming's abolition of native chieftain office in Heqing 鶴慶, which took place in the year 1443, more than half a century before his birth. However, this action by the Ming seems to be a planned strategy aimed at expanding its direct governance.³⁰ Not surprisingly, Li intentionally attempted to justify and legalize the Ming's plot by writing that the native chieftain's brutal rule made it almost impossible for the people to survive and that finally the government rightly abolished the chieftainship and installed the imperial official system in this region. Also, he mentions the construction of government office buildings, the division of duties among various government departments, the improvement of administrative efficiency, and the competence of central government assigned officials.³¹

²⁸Li Jing, *Yunnan Zhilue* Jijiao. Bin Yang also discusses Li Jing's description of the indigenous peoples and customs, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*, chapter 5: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/chapter5.html>.

²⁹Chen Wen et al. 2002, xu, pp. 1–3.

³⁰For the record of this event, see Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming Shi*, juan. 314, pp. 8093–8094. For an analysis of it, revealing the Ming's strategies against the local chieftain clan, see Lian Ruizhi 2019, pp. 121–23.

³¹Li Yuanyang, "Heqing fu timing ji" 鶴慶府題名記 and "Fenshou dao Heqing gongshu ji" 分守道鶴慶公署記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 155–156, 157–158.

Li depicts the non-Han bandits of Tiesuojing 鐵索箐³² and Chishiya 赤石崖³³, located on the borders of the neighboring prefectures of Binchuan 賓川, Menghua 蒙化, Yao'an 姚安 and Chuxiong 楚雄 as fierce, bellicose, uncivilized and tremendously harmful to all these regions. They frequently looted merchants on trade routes, slaughtered lives and destroyed villages, making the previously fertile lands unable to live on. Additionally, since they hid deeply in mountains, it was very difficult for government troops to capture them. Until Zou Yinglong and Tang Yang 湯仰 took office in 1573, they were eventually eliminated thanks to these two men's firm determination and wise tactics. Thereafter, a series of measures were taken to restore and rebuilt these war-shattered regions. Several hundreds of Han and local soldiers were moved there to set up a garrison, with Chen Huapeng 陳化鵬, the commander of Dali garrison and also a Dali native, serving as the military governor. It is noteworthy that despite his Yunnan native origin, Chen was recruited into the Ming's bureaucracy as a central government assigned official who would act according to the imperial will, instead of serving the local chieftains. He took the pioneer action of bringing his family with him to the garrison, in order to encourage the fellow soldiers to wholeheartedly settle down. After this military campaign, the Ming government took direct control over the peripheral rural areas on borders of adjacent prefectures, signifying its presence penetrating more and more deeply into Yunnan hinterlands. Apart from eulogizing the martial feats that expanded the Ming's rule, Li emphasizes the state's benevolence and tolerance by citing Zou Yinglong's admonitory talk to the imperial armies, which recognizes the indigenes equally as humans and teaches the soldiers not to harm the innocents. In a word, the Ming's campaign in this case is portrayed as saving and civilizing the local people and is thus fully justified. According to Li's account, hundreds of indigenous households submitted to the government, abandoning their former savage customs, and those wild lands were transformed into fertile farming fields.³⁴

However, Li Yuanyang would never blindly approve of whatever the Ming authority had done in Yunnan. On the contrary, he always argues for the sake of local people, exposing some officials' evil and selfish intentions and censuring unnecessary wars. On the rebellion of Wuding 武定, which was instigated by internal conflicts of the local chieftain family and then taken advantage of by the central government to replace the chieftainship with its direct control, he expresses contradictory views.³⁵ On the one hand, he eulogizes Lü Guangxun 呂光洵, the governor of Yunnan who suppressed the rebellion, for his determination, wisdom, foresight and martial strategy, and even compares him to Zhuge Liang of the Shu Han dynasty and Fangshu 方叔 of the Zhou dynasty for his achievement of making the south of the Ming Empire free of trouble.³⁶ Besides, he also praises a junior official surnamed Yang 楊 who was a literatus (*wenren* 文人) for he applied what he had learnt from Confucian classics, i.e. the way of *wen* 文 (literary capacity) to the martial field and triumphed.³⁷ On the other hand, Li reveals an abnormal phenomenon widely existing in the bureaucracy of the southwest regions. That is,

During the Jiajing reign, the governors of Nanzhong did not care whether their lands were peaceful or disturbed. Instead, in the name of suppressing local chieftain's rebellions, they exaggerated the problems in their memorials and dispatched troops to battlefields on a large scale, so that they could have the reason for soliciting higher ranks and awards from the emperor.... Yet, the

³²Also known as Tiesuochuan 鐵索川, in present-day Dayao 大姚 county, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture 楚雄彝族自治州.

³³In present-day Binchuan 賓川 county, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture 大理白族自治州.

³⁴Referenced works are: Li Yuanyang, "Erhai bingbeidao Tiesuojing junying tingbi ji" 洱海兵備道鐵索箐軍營廳壁記, "Tiesuochuan ping ze ji" 鐵索川平賊記, "Shoubei Chen jun shanzhi xu" 守備陳君善職序, and "Ping Yi kou bei" 平夷寇碑, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 146–148, 149–150, 350–351, 484–486.

³⁵For detailed records of the event of Wuding, see Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming Shi, juan*. 314, pp. 8095–8097. For a recount and analysis of it, see Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds*, chapter 4: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/chapter4.html>.

³⁶Li Yuanyang, "Yunnan ping zhu Yi bei" 雲南平諸夷碑, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 472–475.

³⁷Li Yuanyang, "Taixian Weicun Yang Gong ping Wuding zhu Yi xu" 臺憲魏村楊公平武定諸夷序, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 334–335.

emperor lives in the palace while Nanzhong is thousands of miles away. Just relying on a few words in the memorials, these officials recklessly trampled on the ordinary people.³⁸

嘉靖間，巡撫南中者不付疆場之靖擾，一切以土酋作亂為名，張皇奏牘，興師致討，以邀爵賞。……天子深居九重，南中遠在萬里，但憑咫尺之書，踐蹂黎元。

In addition, he composed a long poem entitled “Wen Wuding shi” 聞武定事 (“On hearing the event of Wuding”) to describe the misery of the commoners in wartime and assail the selfish behaviors of some officials. It reads,

父母生兒時	When parents give birth to their sons,
貧富同護防	They nurture their children very carefully, no matter they are rich or poor.
日夜期長成	Day and night, they expect their children to grow up,
撫摩有百方	stroking them with love for hundreds of times.
中丞一念動	When the governor is prompted by a sudden idea,
驅向兵刃場	he drives these young men to battlefields.
市兒千萬命	He trades on the lives of thousands of boys,
無異豚與羊	differing in no way from selling pigs and goats.
豚羊將殺時	While pigs and goats are to be butchered,
主人勤較量	their owner always consider whether they will be sold at a good price.
奈何視生民	How could the governor see the people
不如一毫芒	as no more valuable than a hair.
……	……
功名在戰伐	His honor and fame are to be achieved through war,
辭命須張皇	therefore, he overstates the fact when reporting to the emperor.
君門深九重	The royal palace is so far away from here,
操持歸廟廊	and the power to manage state affairs is held by the emperor.
廟廊日萬機	Hence, the emperor is occupied with a myriad of state affairs every day,
奚暇商短長	and how could His Majesty have time to discuss all the matters, whether important or trivial.
戰海濤翻血	Waves of blood roar in the sea of war,
但憑書一行	which is just incurred by a line of words in the report.
豈知喜功人	Don't you know that the one who craves for overambitious feats,
背上生剗瘡	will get sores on his back. ³⁹

This poem strikingly depicts that the parents' beloved boys were unmercifully driven to war as cannon fodder by the wicked governor, who did so totally for his own pursuit of high rank and wealth. It also illustrates that Wuding was not an exception when the whole southwest was suffering unnecessary wars.

It is worthy to note that Lü Guangxun's action of releasing and reinstating Zheng Hong 鄭竑, the deadly foe of Feng Jizu 鳳繼祖 who was the heir of the chieftain clan and a key figure in the rebellion, is certainly to blame since it immediately infuriated Jizu and triggered the subsequent uprising.⁴⁰ We

³⁸Li Yuanyang, “He Huanshi Xing Jun xu” 賀澆石邢君序, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 338–339.

³⁹Li Yuanyang, “Wen Wuding shi” 聞武定事, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, p. 597.

⁴⁰In the year 1563, after Qu Shi 瞿氏 (Lady Qu), the female native prefect of Wuding, who had inherited the position from her deceased son Feng Zhao 鳳詔, passed this position to Feng Zhao's wife Suolin 索林 due to her old age, she became regretful and raged since Suolin did not treat her in the right way by following propriety. Consequently, she adopted Jizu, a youth from another family, into the Feng clan, and with the assistance of two local officials respectively from Guizhou and Sichuan she attempted to dethrone Suolin and let Jizu succeed the title, but failed. Then, she turned to the central authority for help, asking Jizu to travel to the capital to submit her memorial in which she claimed that she was imprisoned by Suolin. It is very likely that Jizu in fact never traveled to Beijing, instead, when he came back from somewhere else, he

still wonder whether Lü did this only out of imprudence, or on purpose so that the situation would be inflamed and thus there would be a right excuse for the government's further intervention. It is also difficult to know whether Li Yuanyang is condemning Lü in this poem. If so, this would seemingly contradict the author's admiration for Lü. Perhaps, in the above-discussed essay ("Yunnan ping zhu Yi bei"), which serves as the inscription on a monument in honor of the Ming's suppression of barbarian rebellions, Li is permitted only to praise Lü's good deeds; by contrast, in this poem which expresses his personal sentiments, he is able to criticize Lü's wrongdoing in a relatively free way, but still withholding Lü's name. Yet, it is also possible that Li's censure is actually directed at another official rather than Lü himself. Anyway, the poet firmly holds the conscience of an upright literary man, sympathizing with the common people and cursing those immoral governors who bully the masses while deceiving the emperor.

Whereas Li Yuanyang extols the Ming's overall victory over indigens, he also records the failure of several battles and analyzes the causes in depth. The battle of Yuanjiang 元江, in which the vice-governor Xu Yue 徐樾 was killed because of his carelessness and arbitrariness when he was accepting the rebel's surrender, is an example.⁴¹ In a letter to Zhao Bingran 趙炳然, an imperial censor then inspecting the provincial affairs of Yunnan, Li insightfully reveals the reasons for the loss in Yuanjiang and the death of Xu Yue. Whether encouraged by Li's letter or not, Zhao impeached the chief-general Mu Chaobi and the governor Shi Jian who were in charge of the union of imperial

deceitfully stated that he was chosen by the emperor as the successor, and thus led troops to attack Suolin in order to seize the official seal, a symbol of legitimacy and recognition. Carrying the seal, Suolin ran away to the provincial city, and the imperial inspector came forward to mediate the conflict. Suolin was required to return to Wuding, where she continued to take charge of the local affairs as before, at the same time, Jizu was still allowed to stay with Qu Shi. Obviously, such a solution proved to be of no use for easing the tension. On the contrary, their relationship got so worsened that Suolin conspired with her subordinate Zheng Hong to kill Jizu. Yet, their plot was discovered by Jizu, who immediately sent out troops on a large scale to take revenge, surrounding the prefectural city, plundering the neighboring counties and leading to heavy casualties. Once again, Suolin escaped with the seal to Kunming, probably seeking protection from the central state. But this time she was more or less punished. The provincial governor Cao Bian 曹忭 took back the seal from her and jailed Zheng Hong. On the other side, Qu Shi was ordered to temporarily deal with the prefectural affairs, while Jizu was pardoned and given the chance to mend his ways. In 1566, a new Wuding town was constructed. The (new) governor Lü Guangxun released Zheng Hong and sent him back to Wuding to retake office. This action certainly infuriated Jizu and triggered a series of rebellions and battles. Jizu captured and killed Zheng Hong, and then summoned armies to attack the new town, defeating local forces and killing or capturing native commanders and officials. Until more government troops were dispatched was Jizu defeated and surrounded. Frightened, he fled to Dongchuan 東川 (to the north of present Kunming city and on the border between Yunnan and Sichuan), planning to flee further to Sichuan. However, the local leaders of Dongchuan, who shared the same family name Feng with him and had been in connection with him, betrayed him when observing the overpowering imperial armies in alliance with local forces. Then, Jizu was killed and his body presented to the Ming by his former ally. Meanwhile, his supporters, including the vice-prefect of Yao'an, were all sentenced to death. To demonstrate its benevolence, the Ming government did not immediately remove the Feng clan after this event, even though some officials proposed to do so. Yet, the successors, including a relative of Suolin and the nephew of Jizu, still rebelled several times because of their greed for more power. Finally, in the year 1607, the chieftainship in Wuding was completely abolished with all positions filled with government assigned officials. See Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming Shi, juan*. 314, pp. 8095–8097.

⁴¹In the year 1546, Na Jian 那鑑, a subordinate of the chieftain, killed his nephew and the then prefect of Yuanjiang, Na Xian 那憲, and took away the official seal. On hearing this, the governor sent armies to attack him. Frightened, he conspired with Wu Wenyuan 武文淵, a Vietnamese general, to rebel in 1550. The situation was reported to the emperor by the investigating censors and the chief-general, and the emperor approved of their proposal to suppress Na Jian. At the same time, Na Jian began to plunder more and more villages. Under the command of the chief-general Mu Chaobi 沐朝弼 (d. 1577) and the governor Shi Jian 石簡, the union of imperial and local troops divided into five garrisons and marched forward one after another. After several towns and camps were seized by the Ming forces, Na Jian felt increasingly embarrassed, so he sent the secretary Zhang Wei 張維, together with a few Confucian scholars, to the garrison of Nanxian 南羨 to beg that they be allowed to surrender. Coincidentally, the vice-governor Xu Yue was at Nanxian supervising army provisions. Believing that Na Jian was virtually cornered after hearing Zhang Wei's words, Xu Yue agreed to personally accept the surrender outside the city wall in the next day, even though his associates warned that Na Jian was untrustworthy for his deceitful character. Leading around one hundred men, Xu Yue came out of the garrison at the appointed time to accept Na Jian's submission in person. However, Na Jian suddenly ordered his elephant cavalry to rush out, and consequently Xu Yue and his followers were all killed. For detailed records of this event, see Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming Shi, juan*. 314, p. 8101.

and local troops for their negligence of duty.⁴² First, as Li points out, in dealing with the main rebel Na Jian, who was initially a subordinate of the chieftain and who killed his nephew Na Xian – the then prefect of Yuanjiang before taking away the official seal, the Ming rashly sent troops against him without properly convicting him of a crime ahead, so that there lacked a righteous excuse to declare a war and thus the soldiers' morale could not be highly roused. As for the accusation of murders among clan members, or mutual attacks among indigenous tribes, it is virtually applicable to any chieftain family in Yunnan. If it is considered equal to the crime of rebellion and leads to the death penalty, then almost all the indigenous officials will fall into panic. Moreover, Li continues to argue, the criteria for and the amount of award were not definitely announced, so it was difficult to inspire the soldiers to fight with all their strength. As a result, despite their large quantities they could not excel in quality and achieve high accomplishments. Also, Li criticizes the poor provision of foodstuffs, stressing that some soldiers actually died of starvation rather than fighting, and that while the storage of food was wholly consumed for military purpose, the supplies for civilian use became exhausted, accordingly causing chaos in the city market. What is the most noteworthy is that Li uncovers some details of this event which demonstrate that Xu Yue's death was wholly self-inflicted. Therefore, he objectively criticizes Xu's imprudent actions. By contrast, these details are not included in the official history, which is probably attempting to forgive, or even embellish Xu for his "sacrifice" for the state.⁴³ Li writes,

It is really a blessing to the people of Yunnan when the governor [Xu Yue] was still living and the rebel Na Jian had agreed to surrender. Worrying the honor may not be credited to him, the governor bravely forged out of the garrison in person. This is an injudicious act already. Later, when the common people kneeled outside the city wall, begging that the attack be suspended for a moment, it offered a good opportunity to take. How could he draw out the sabre and kill them, as if declaring: "If you surrender, you will be killed. If you do not surrender, you will be killed too." How would such a deed not incur a fatal disaster to him? Hence, as for the death of the governor, actually the rebels did not kill him.

方伯未死，那賊約降，誠滇人之福也。方伯慮功不歸，已奮身而前，既失計矣。既而生民父老出跪城下，願緩須臾，此其機會可乘也。奈何拔刀殺之，猶曰：“降亦殺，不降亦殺。”安得不招杀身之禍也？然方伯之死，賊實未嘗殺方伯也。

This narration vividly exposes Xu Yue's arrogance, brutality and lack of tactics. What's more, when Xu was eager to accept the surrender, his real intention was to grab honor and award, which reminds us of Li's reprimand on the selfish officials in the case of Wuding. Li once again shows compassion for the local populace, insisting that the ordinary indigenous people should not be blamed, not to mention punished, for Xu's death. In the end, emphasizing that the military activity is an inauspicious omen, so the sage king takes it only when there is not any other alternative, he suggests Zhao Bingran carefully reflect whether it is necessary or not to launch the war in Yuanjiang.⁴⁴

Records of the Ming's constructing and reconstructing projects

The Ming government undertook a series of constructing and reconstructing projects in the newly incorporated land of Yunnan, including the establishment and construction of government offices, Confucian educational institutions, temples and shrines, and various infrastructures and public facilities. Li Yuanyang speaks very highly of these activities, believing that they are essential in making Yunnan a part of the Chinese empire, for they not only strengthened the Ming's presence, but also advanced the local region both physically and culturally. Furthermore, in most cases the projects

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Li Yuanyang, "Yu Jianmen Zhao chayuan" 與劍門趙察院, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 426–427.

were led and supervised by officials assigned by the central state. Li also praises these competent and upright men who in his eyes would bring benefit and benevolence to the indigenes.

After the aboriginal bandits, once active on the borderland between the prefectures of Yao'an and Chuxiong, were crushed, an "official residence suppressing robbery" (*zhidao gongguan* 職盜公館) was established at what is today Dayao 大姚 county in the year 1559.⁴⁵ Similarly, at the suggestion of Li Tengxiao 李騰宵, the commander of Lancang 瀾滄 garrison who was then stationed in Yangbi 漾濞, a borderland with Yongchang to the west, Menghua to the south and Dali to the east, a used shabby official residence there was refurbished as a new "garrison commander's office" (*shoubei shu* 守備署) in 1574. Li Yuanyang highlights the necessity of a stable dwelling, pointing out that without it the commander would have to travel constantly from one prefecture to another, and in such a hurry, he was unable to settle down with enough time to investigate hidden crimes and handle civil and military affairs.⁴⁶ The significance of building these governmental offices can be analyzed from two perspectives. First, for the interest of the central state, it filled the administration vacuum usually existing in the intermediate zone, making the Ming's governance penetrate more and more deeply into the indigenous lands. Second, for the interest of local regions, a constant office would make it easier for officials to devote themselves to local matters, thereby completing the administrative system in these faraway lands.

Throughout the Ming dynasty, Confucian schools were established across the southwest provinces as an important part of its sinicizing and civilizing scheme. In early times, Han-Chinese military immigrants (comprising a large percentage of all the Han-Chinese immigrants) and their descendants were not easily permitted to enter official schools (*guanxue* 官學)⁴⁷, probably because the limited admission quotas were preferentially allocated to the indigenous students so that the mission of transforming barbarians could be fulfilled as soon as possible. Furthermore, in order to fix these military immigrants in the garrisons, the "military-household registration system" (*junhu zhidu* 軍戶制度) demanded that all sons from military immigrant families must inherit their fathers' careers (i.e. continue to farm on and guard the garrison).⁴⁸ Even though these children might be admitted to schools, they were not provided with any financial support by the government. Also, any immigrant who wanted to participate in the imperial examination must travel back to his place of origin to sit for the exam. This situation was gradually being reversed from the 1450s onwards, when more and more imperial officials strongly appealed against restrictions on the education of Han descendants and even suggested that the smarter Han students and the indigenes be educated on different tracks. In fact, what concerned these officials most was the Han students' education and opportunity of entering officialdom, rather than the urgent transformation of the indigenes. Their efforts spurred the prosperity of the education of Han descendants. Numerous schools were established in areas populated by Han immigrants and were attended mainly by Han students. Moreover, more than fifty percent of the *jinshi* degree holders, according to the statistics in a Yunnan gazetteer of the late Ming time, were descendants of Han military immigrants. Of course, many Han-Chinese immigrated to Yunnan (sometimes forced to do so) for other purposes than establishing military garrisons and they were administered by the civil system. Their descendants should make up a large percentage of those who passed the imperial examination too. Then, the rest (only a small proportion) might include the highly sinicized indigenes and the offspring of ethnic intermarriages.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Li Yuanyang, "Yao'an zhidao gongguan bi ji" 姚安職盜公館壁記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 138–140.

⁴⁶Li Yuanyang, "Jian Yangbi shoubei shu ji" 建漾濞守備署記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 153–154.

⁴⁷The official schools comprise the Imperial College (Guozijian 國子監) and regional schools, which are of prefecture, sub-prefecture, county and garrison levels. They are usually built next to the Confucian temple, sometimes also together with the shrine to local worthies (*xiangxian ci* 鄉賢祠) and the shrine to celebrated officials (*minghuan ci* 名宦祠), to form a cultural complex.

⁴⁸For detailed and in-depth research on the military immigrants and garrisons of the Ming dynasty, see Chen Wenshi, 1977, pp. 177–203.

⁴⁹For more detailed studies on the development of education in Yunnan and southwest China during the Ming dynasty, see Herman, 2007, pp. 113–17; Lu Ren, 2001, pp. 288–315.

Here, it is worthy to note that the emperor and the officials seemingly held different blueprints for the educational scheme in the southwest district. The emperor expected that the Confucian education would quickly transform the indigenes into his subjects; by contrast, the officials were more concerned with whether the Han students would succeed in the examination. As for Li Yuanyang, he appreciates the spread of Confucian education in the frontier, highlights the practice of *Dao* and in the meanwhile, severely censures some scholars' ignoring the true meaning of learning.

After the Jianchuan 劍川 prefecture school and temple were reconstructed in 1564, Li Yuanyang composed an essay recording this event at the request of the Jianchuan scholars, in which he summarizes the respective functions of the temple and the school regarding the *Dao*:

The temple is to mark where the orthodox *Dao* origins from. The school is to hand down the *Dao* forever.⁵⁰

夫廟者，所以表道統之傳之所自；學者，所以續其傳於不窮也。

In another essay Li wrote to commemorate the rebuilding of the semicircular pool (*panchi* 泮池) in front of the Dali prefecture school, he believes that the renovation not only meets the demands of the etiquette, according to which a Confucian school should have all its constituent units complete, but will also create an atmosphere of advocating learning in society, encouraging more students to study hard and cultivate themselves. Then, he traces the history of the school, stating that it was firstly set up by the Han, destroyed in the Song, reestablished by the Yuan, taken over by the early Ming, and renovated and expanded by the vice-prefect of Dali, Gao Yong 高鏞, in 1560.⁵¹ This statement echoes his account of Yunnan's subordination to or detachment from the central Chinese state in dynastic history, eulogizing the Ming's contribution to recovering Confucian education in Yunnan. A Confucian school is usually allocated a certain amount of arable land – namely the “school fields” (*xuetian* 學田), which is rented out to local peasants with the rental used to subsidize the school. Li records that under the leadership of the educational inspector of Yunnan, more than one hundred and fifty *mu* of submerged land in Dengchuan 鄧川 prefecture was converted into school fields in 1545. As for the Dali Confucian school, he notes that whereas the school was opened by the Han and the temple was built by the Yuan, the fields were set aside and maintained only by the Ming. He praises the “school fields” policy for being able to support more students' careers without putting extra burden on the government finances.⁵²

Li Yuanyang cares not only about the students' performance in the imperial examination, but far more about their self-cultivation and practice of the Confucian values. He criticizes some people for being too much obsessed with passing the exam and obtaining official ranks, but neglecting the fundamental *Dao*, writing:

Nowadays, the so-called learning only focuses on essays useful for passing the examination, but is almost irrelevant to what is called the *Dao*. However, are the essay and the *Dao* really so distinct from each other? The *Dao* is where the essay derives from, while the essay is an instrument for embodying the *Dao*. Since some scholars in this world soak their hearts in the pursuit of fame and wealth, they have become unaware of what the *Dao* is. They perfunctorily discuss the Six Classics and the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, and write essays only to seek profits from the examination hall... If these men are selected to be officials and the state is still expected to be managed in good order, isn't it difficult?⁵³

⁵⁰Li Yuanyang, “Jianchuan zhou chongxiu ruxue xianshi miao ji” 劍川州重修儒學先師廟記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 191–192.

⁵¹Li Yuanyang, “Dali fuxue xinzuo panchi ji” 大理府學新作泮池記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 189–190.

⁵²Li Yuanyang, “Xuetian ji” 學田記 and “Chongxiu Dali fu ruxue zhi xuetian ji” 重修大理府儒學置學田記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 187–188, 200–202.

⁵³Li Yuanyang, “Jianchuan zhou chongxiu ruxue xianshi miao ji”, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 191–192.

今之所謂學惟工進取之文，而於所謂道渺乎不相關涉。然則文與道果若是判乎？夫道者，文之所自出；文者，載道之器也。自世之學者以功利浸漬其心腹，不知道為何物。其於六經孔孟之說敷衍湊合，而為文以要場屋之利。……夫以此仕進而欲天下之善治，不亦難乎？

Li's worries reveal a widespread phenomenon of the Ming society, in which the scholars were only enthusiastic about producing the eight-legged essay (*bagu wen* 八股文) so as to enter officialdom, but lacked the actual capability to administer the country and paid no attention to the cultivation of personality, reminding us of the brilliant irony in the novel *Rulin Waishi* 儒林外史 (Unofficial History of the Scholars). Such a purely utilitarian interest in passing exams might also be held by some Yunnanese scholars, as these words were written by Li Yuanyang to admonish students from Jianchuan. If so, we should once again feel the influence of the Ming's cultural encroachment: even a bad social phenomenon is now spreading among the elites of Yunnan.

Also, Li elaborates on the right purpose of the school teaching, while expressing his righteous indignation at the corruption of the school. He believes that the school is to guide students to explore human nature and the truth of things, so that they will succeed in their careers by understanding and following the principles of the world. Yet, to his disappointment, at present the school teaches nothing but the skills for passing the exam and is therefore taken as a springboard to higher social status.⁵⁴ In such a situation, he pins his hopes of maintaining the *Dao* and educating the students to be real Confucians to the *shuyuan* 書院 academies. Unlike official schools, *shuyuan* academies are usually privately run, self-sufficient and without specific admission quotas. What's more, they are not simply devoted to preparing for the imperial examinations but can provide a relatively free environment in which scholars can explore the true meaning of the *Dao* and undertake non-utilitarian research. After the Jinhua Shuyuan 金華書院 of Jianchuan was refurbished in 1570, a dozen of local students came to Cangshan requesting Li to write an essay for this event. Li gladly accepted the task, and in his response, he admonished the students to learn how to practice *ren* 仁 (benevolence), one of the Confucian ideals.⁵⁵ In Dali, the vice-prefect Jiang Ying'ang 江應昂 not only renovated the old Cangshan Shuyuan 蒼山書院, but also built a new academy named the Yuanquan Shuyuan 源泉書院. Li particularly mentions that Jiang once studied at the prominent Yuelu Shuyuan 岳麓書院 in his youth, and believes that this experience must have greatly helped him in growing into a righteous and competent official as he is now.⁵⁶

Apart from the Confucian education, some Chinese folk beliefs and customs were imported and became popular alongside the Ming's invasion into Yunnan. Accordingly, temples devoted to performing the relevant rituals emerged. For instance, the *laji* 臘祭 (to offer sacrifices to the gods in charge of the harvest in the twelfth lunar month) has been a traditional Chinese festival since very ancient times. Since there are totally eight gods worshiped, the *laji* is also called the *bala* 八臘 (lit. eight kinds of sacrifices). The *bala* temple, a specific site where the worship ceremonies are performed, could be found in many Chinese provinces, but except the Nanzhong district. It was only in 1563, the third year since Jiang Ying'ang took office in Dali, that a *bala* temple was established under his supervision in the north of the town.⁵⁷ Previous research has examined the connection between agrarian expansion and population growth in the southwest.⁵⁸ Here, in this case, the domination of agrarian economy is embodied by the emergence of a *bala* temple. Also, the concept of prioritizing agriculture, which has been very popular and far-reaching in traditional China, takes root in this new colony.

Quite a number of Chinese officials, both before and during Ming times, are remembered for their contribution to Yunnan's sinicization and incorporation into China. Consequently, shrines to these

⁵⁴Li Yuanyang, "Jinhua Shuyuan ji" 金華書院記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 198–199.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Li Yuanyang, "Yuanquan Shuyuan ji" 源泉書院記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 193–194.

⁵⁷Li Yuanyang, "Bala miao ji" 八臘廟記 and "Dali bala miao bei" 大理八臘廟碑, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 106–107, 108–109.

⁵⁸Lee 1982a, pp. 711–46.

celebrated officials, called *minghuan ci* 名宦祠, were built across the province. In 1559 the vice-prefect of Dali, Gao Yong, established such a shrine next to the Confucian temple. It is worthy to note that this shrine was in honor of celebrated officials not only of the Ming dynasty, but the spirit tablets of more than twenty statesmen of previous dynasties from the Han to the Yuan were also added to worship after Gao and his fellows consulted historical records to find those with meritorious deeds. It also acted as a symbol of China's governance of the local district, since all the worshiped men were officials appointed by the central state. There might be at least two points Li intends to show. First, various Chinese dynasties declared their control over this land, proving Yunnan has been an integral part of China. Second, the number of officials of the present dynasty is definitely the largest, which is evidence that the Ming makes the greatest political achievement in Yunnan. The shrine is also of remarkable importance to an official newly assigned here. It embodies the Confucian political thought of "benevolent heart" (*renxin* 仁心) and "benevolent politics" (*renzheng* 仁政). As Li argues, an official should possess the merits of "sincerity and compassion" (*zhicheng cada* 至誠惻怛) and morally influence the people. Only in this way, could he be addressed as a celebrated official and commemorated in the shrine. Therefore, it would admonish the present officials to be good. A visit to it was almost the first activity Gao Yong took on his arrival. Perhaps he needed to promise that he would proceed with the careers of his predecessors and further the country's cause of advancing and civilizing this region.⁵⁹

In addition to the above-mentioned government offices, educational institutions, temples and shrines, which are mainly aimed at strengthening the government's control, educating the literary elites and spiritually leading the populace, there were also numerous public facilities and infrastructures built or rebuilt for the benefit of the ordinary people. For instance, in 1564 town walls were eventually constructed in Baiyadian 白崖甸, a piece of land affiliated to Dali prefecture and located between Menghua and Jingdong 景東 prefectures, after the local people had consecutively pleaded with the authority for protecting walls for over forty years.⁶⁰ Public granaries (*shecang* 社倉), which stabilize the market and provide basic social welfare for the commoners by storing up grains in normal circumstances and selling them at a low price during famines, were set up by the government with their daily management undertaken by local communities.⁶¹ Since irrigation is of particular significance to the agricultural economy, water facilities were always constructed as soon as the Ming took a region under its control. Shortly after the pacification of western Yunnan, numerous ponds, dams, dykes, ditches, canals, sluice gates, and bridges were built or rebuilt over the Erhai area in the autumn of 1560.⁶² Similarly, after the indigenous bandits of Tiesuojing and Chishiya were eliminated, a reservoir around eight hundred meters in circumference was constructed twenty *li*-miles west of Binchuan prefecture by making use of the remains of a deserted dyke. This project took almost the whole year of 1574. It supplied water to the irrigation system in Binchuan and facilitated the reclamation of more fields. Besides, following local beliefs, a pagoda was also erected near the reservoir to suppress the evil dragon that might threaten the water facilities.⁶³ Even earlier than the construction of the reservoir, a bridge was built under the supervision of the prefect, Zhu Guan 朱官, outside the southern gate of Binchuan town in 1544.⁶⁴ It should be noted that this bridge, which has become a historical and cultural relic today, was, and still is, named the "Nanxun bridge". In Chinese literary tradition, "Nanxun" 南薰, meaning the "mild southern breeze", is an image symbolizing the benevolence and moral influence of a ruler, which is just like the mild southern breeze nurturing the people. Therefore, such a name not only eulogizes the governance of Ming officials, but also reflects the impact of Chinese culture on the indigenous region.

⁵⁹Li Yuanyang, "Dali fu minghuan ci ji" 大理府名宦祠記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 136–137.

⁶⁰Li Yuanyang, "Baiya tucheng ji" 白崖土城記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 141–142.

⁶¹Li Yuanyang, "Dali bala miao bei", "Dali wenchang gong ji" 大理文昌宮記, "Yu Mujing Zhou xianfu" 與木涇周憲副 and "Yu You zhongcheng" 與游中丞, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 108–109, 130–131, 461, 462.

⁶²Li Yuanyang, "Erhai xingzao ji" 洱海興造記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 169–170.

⁶³Li Yuanyang, "Zou Gong tang ji" 鄒公塘記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 151–152.

⁶⁴Li Yuanyang, "Nanxun qiao ji" 南薰橋記, in *Li Yuanyang Wenji*, pp. 204–205.

Conclusion

The case study of Li Yuanyang reveals how the Yunnan native elites view the Ming's sinicizing and civilizing schemes in this newly exploited province. Self-identified as an orthodox literato, Li generally appreciates the incorporation and writes Yunnan into China. His depiction of local things is integrated into the Chinese literary context. Insisting on Yunnan's belonging to China, he justifies the Ming's military campaigns which were aimed at extending the central government's direct control. However, this does not mean he would unconditionally approve of anything the imperial officials had done. On the contrary, he writes on the local people's side with the conscience of an upright literary man, showing compassion for the ordinary people and censuring some officials' wrongdoings. Such a dual character might be widely held by the Yunnanese writers of Li's time, reflecting the negotiation between the Ming's invasion and the local community. The Ming's constructing and reconstructing projects are also extensively recorded in Li's writings. He regards them as a sign of the central government's benevolence and righteous rule, which should help to develop the local districts both physically and culturally and benefit the local populace.

Many educated men of the late imperial times possess double identity: first, they are natives of a certain region and thus are shaped by this region's local culture; second, they are subjects of a Chinese (or highly sinicized) dynasty and therefore become members of the extensive Chinese civilization. In addition to their affiliation to their homeland, they stay loyal to their dynasty and identify themselves as orthodox Chinese literati. Then, what is the distinction of Li Yuanyang, a well-educated man from the remote borderland of Yunnan? This question can be answered with an analysis of the uniqueness of Yunnan. On the one hand, Yunnan had traditionally been disregarded as a barbarian place, where a group of uncultured men lived, and only recently during the Ming period was it fully incorporated into the civilized Chinese reign. On the other hand, despite its status of being independent from the central Chinese state for a long time, Yunnan was always deeply influenced by Chinese culture, and especially the regions of Kunming, Dali and Tengyue (Tengchong) had been highly sinicized and cultured even before the Ming's presence. Also, by Li Yuanyang's time the Ming's incorporation project of over two centuries had already taken some effect on this newly occupied land. In this sense, we might believe that Yunnan was in fact not as "barbarian" as we had imagined, or at least, it was more civilized and sinicized than many other distant areas, such as Guizhou, Guangxi, and Hainan, let alone Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, and Manchuria. The relatively high level of sinicization might also explain why in the Ming dynasty there emerged a noticeable number of Yunnanese writers, including Li Yuanyang and Yang Shiyun discussed in this article, who had completely become members of the Chinese literati group. They were eager to prove that their place of origin had been culturally advanced and been an integral part of the broader imperial entity even since ancient times, in a struggle to integrate themselves into the Chinese literati community. In other words, they wished to prove that they were as "orthodox" as their fellows from the "superior" regions, like the Central Plain, so that they would be accepted, rather than despised, by the latter. This might be how they are distinguished. For this purpose, both Li Yuanyang and Yang Shiyun were enthusiastic about uncovering and eulogizing the Yunnanese exemplars who had successfully performed the Chinese values, in order to demonstrate that they Yunnanese had fully understood and practiced these values, teachings and ideologies, so they were not inferior to anyone else. This concerns another topic: Chinese values and Yunnanese exemplars, which will be dealt with in a sequel article.

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