

What the Skirt Remembers: Returning Home Through Image-Making

彝 The Yi nationality

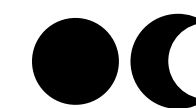
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Fashion Photography year 3



(1) This project explores the visual reconstruction of Yi ethnic identity through an internal lens. As a Yi woman returning from diaspora, I sought to reconnect with my cultural roots in Liangshan by combining image-making with ritual, memory, and lived experience. Guided by themes of nature worship, female initiation, and visual storytelling, I conducted fieldwork across Butuo County (incl. Gokedde Village), Puge, Zhaojue and Mianning, engaging in local interviews, participatory observation, and collaborative shoots.

(2)

Rather than observing from the outside, my approach embraced the internal gaze — one based on trust, intimacy, and co-creation. The outcomes include a short film structured around the rites of Yi womanhood, from birth by the hearth to the ceremonial skirt-changing ritual, a subversive love story resisting arranged marriage, and the symbolic journey of a girl becoming the “Daughter of the Moon.” These narrative threads are woven together with recurring visual motifs — fire, animals, celestial symbols — to express a layered Yi aesthetic. Alongside the film, I produced a series of fashion editorials reinterpreting traditional Yi attire through contemporary styling, and a portrait series that archives lived memory across generations. This research is not simply ethnographic documentation, but a process of cultural return, reinterpretation, and visual ritual-building — where image becomes both archive and emotional bridge.





(1)

Photographer **Kin Coedel** is known for his delicate portrayal of traditional ways of life and his profound exploration of human emotional connections.

One of his representative works is the series *Dyal Thak*, which documents the daily lives of Tibetan nomadic communities, illustrating how they maintain a harmonious relationship with tradition and nature amid modernization. This project not only showcases the lifestyle of Tibetan people, but also reflects their resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change and economic transformation. (Musee Magazine, 2021).



(2)

Both my work and Kin Coedel's photography share a deep sensitivity toward indigenous identity, nature-based spirituality, and the embodied rituals of marginalized communities. Like Coedel's poetic portrayal of Tibetan nomads, my short film explores Yi culture through natural light, female-led ceremony, and landscape-rooted mythology, using the camera not to document from afar but to witness from within.



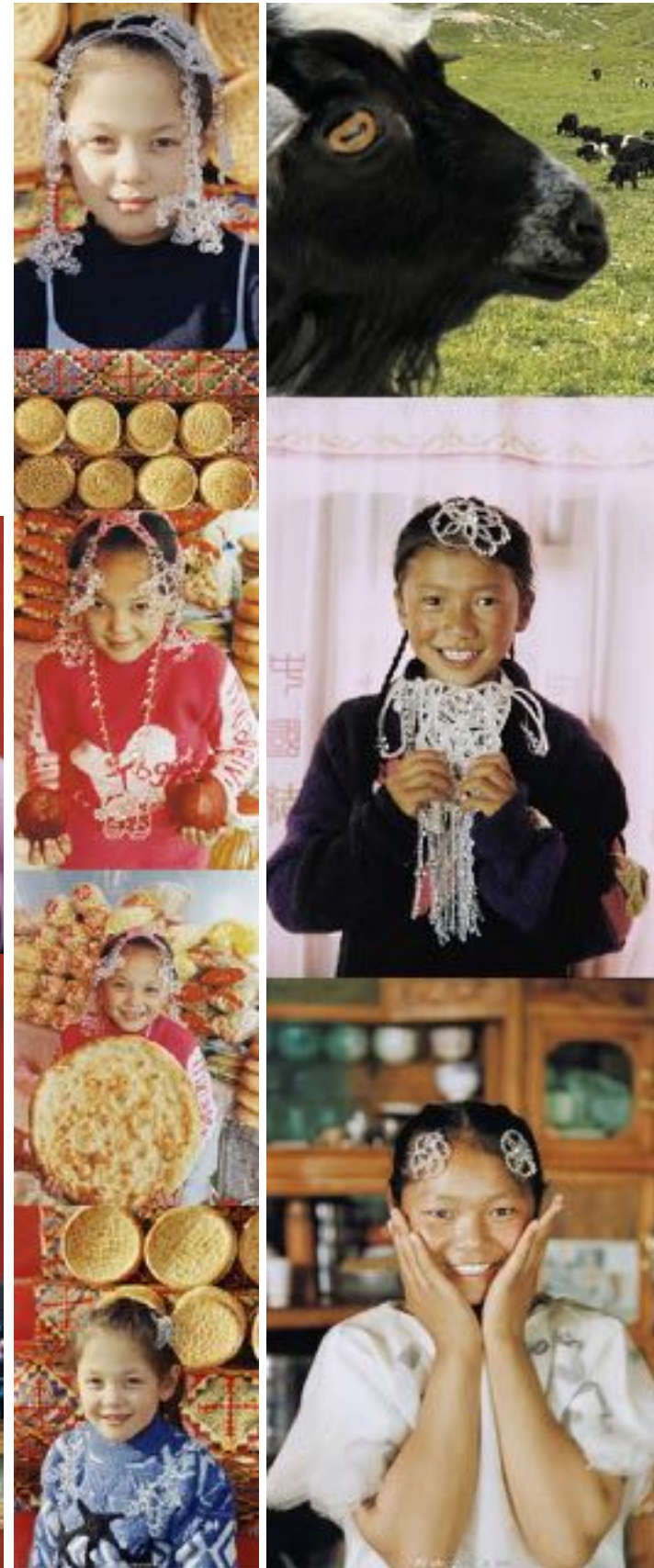
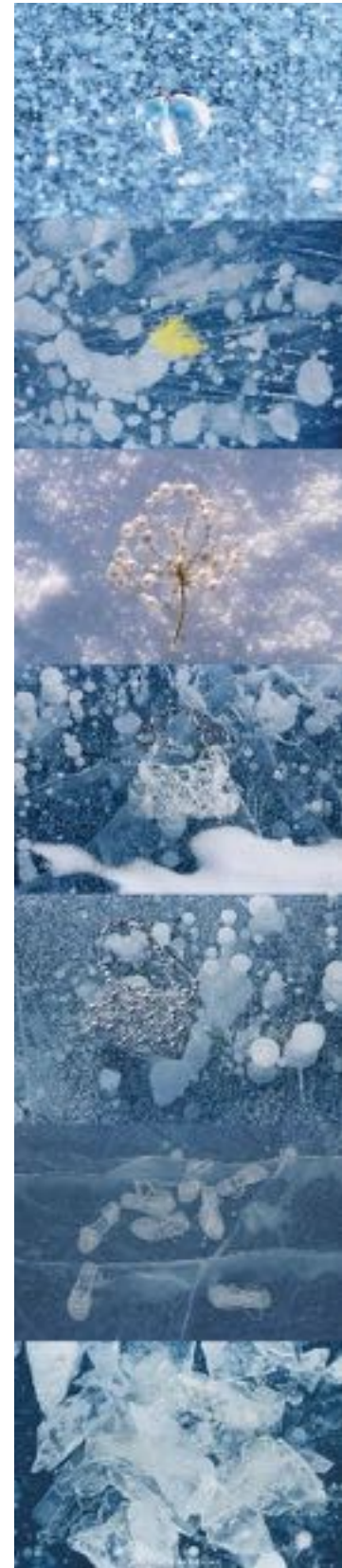


(1) Ahei Huan is a highly acclaimed Yi ethnic culture photographer, best known for his renowned series Daughters of the Moon, which captures the lives of Yi women in Liangshan. Through portraits of three women of different ages—Lu Fang, Ma Ka, and A Wai—his work embodies their resilience "like mountains" and purity "like moonlight," blending traditional attire and intangible cultural heritage elements such as indigo dyeing. His photographs are regarded as a "wordless chronicle of the Yi people," fostering broader understanding of Liangshan culture by showcasing its symbols, from silver ornaments to the Torch Festival.



(2) His art has also ignited in me an urgent desire to document my own ethnic roots. Every time I encounter his work, I feel a burning passion to return to my Yi homeland—a profound inspiration that has greatly encouraged my own creative journey.





(1)

Independent designer brand **Susan Fang** and her team went to Yushu, Qinghai to shoot their 2019 image campaign. The photographer was **@Charles Guo Puyuan**. Without any specific planning, no models, makeup, or hairstyling, they encountered Tibetan locals one after another on the grasslands, by the roadside, in front of schools, and before temples, inviting them to participate in the creative process.

Those simple faces, wearing their own clothes without any affectation or contrivance. The sky was so blue, the distant mountains clear, the people so genuine. Every photo captured beauty, touching viewers with its authenticity. Even the designer's signature bubbles blended in naturally without seeming out of place, merging with the environment. Using a special visual language, they told a pure and dreamlike Qinghai story. (Dai, 2019)

(2)

Guo Puyuan skillfully and perfectly integrates minority cultures with fashion content by selecting characteristic scenes in ethnic minority-inhabited areas, employing local residents as models, and using local materials for styling. In my upcoming photography work, I will also attempt to incorporate the content of fashion brands into the aesthetics of ethnic minorities in this way.

(1)

In 2024, during the Torch Festival, the Chinese edition of **W magazine** came to my hometown and shot an editorial series. The theme was to explore the story between the Yi ethnic group and fire. It was the first time I had seen the Yi culture expressed in a fashionable way. The combination was harmonious and appropriate. When traditional Yi clothing like Habuliedi was paired with Prada, it didn't look out of place at all. This made me see the possibilities of the shooting plan I had in mind. It also further inspired my passion to let more people know about my ethnic group through photography.



(Yang,2024)

(1)

Aniu Aga is a prominent **Nuosu Yi ethnic fashion designer, cultural inheritor, and innovator** from Liangshan, Sichuan Province, China. She is celebrated for revitalizing Yi traditional craftsmanship through contemporary fashion design while preserving ecological and cultural values.

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1. 2018 China International Fashion Week

- Debut **"Between the Clouds" Collection**: According to Zhao(2018)'s article, Modernized Yi woolen cloaks (Chaerwa) using national intangible heritage felting techniques, challenging stereotypes of ethnic attire.

2. 2019 "Mountain Dreams" Series

- Lightweight Design**: Simplified embroidery motifs + plant-based dyes (indigo, walnut), making heritage wearable in urban life.

3. 2024 Louvre Exhibition (60th Anniversary of Sino-French Relations)

- "Oriental Splendor" Showcase**: Global premiere of zero-waste Chaerwa cloaks and modular silver ornaments, hailed as "ceremonial elegance" by French art institutions.

4. 2025 Beijing Fashion Week "Indigo Spirits of Danhong"

- Sustainable Innovation**: Collaborated with **Butuo Blue** brand to demonstrate oxidation aesthetics of plant dyes, championing low-carbon fashion.

Core Impact: Revitalized Yi intangible heritage through global platforms, empowered women artisans, and pioneered a Chinese model for cultural sustainability.



(ThatsChina,2025)



(shot by me, 2025)

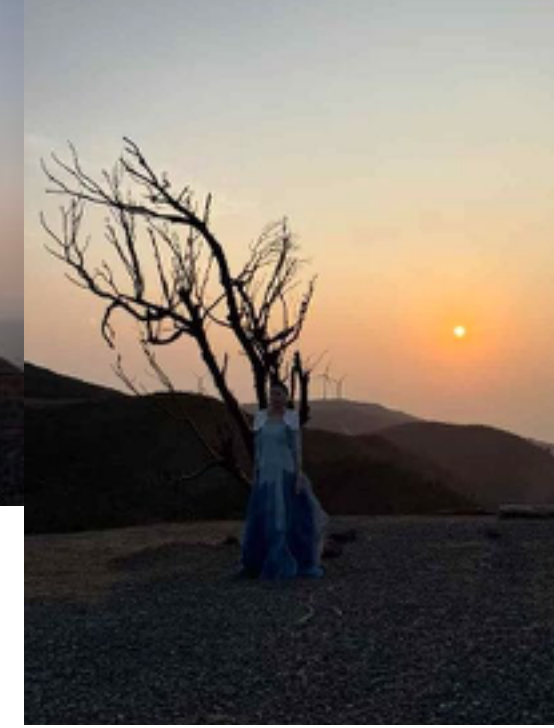
(Huan, 2022)

I met **Aniu Aga** (ꨀꨁꨂꨃꨄꨅꨆꨇꨈꨉꨊꨋꨌꨍꨎꨏꨐꨑꨒꨓꨔꨕꨖꨗꨘꨙꨚꨛꨜꨝꨞꨟꨠꨡꨢꨣꨤꨥꨦꨧꨨꨩꨪꨫꨬꨭꨮꨯꨰꨱꨲꨳꨴꨵꨶ꨷꨸꨹꨺꨻꨼꨽꨾꨿ꩀꩁꩂꩃꩄꩅꩆꩇꩈꩉꩊꩋꩌꩍ꩎꩏꩐꩑꩒꩓꩔꩕꩖꩗꩘꩙꩚꩛꩜꩝꩞꩟ꩠꩡꩢꩣꩤꩥꩦꩧꩨꩩꩪꩫꩬꩭꩮꩯꩰꩱꩲꩳꩴꩵꩶ꩷꩸꩹ꩺꩻꩼꩽꩾꩿꪀꪁꪂꪃꪄꪅꪆꪇꪈꪉꪊꪋꪌꪍꪎꪏꪐꪑꪒꪓꪔꪕꪖꪗꪘꪙꪚꪛꪜꪝꪞꪟꪠꪡꪢꪣꪤꪥꪦꪧꪨꪩꪪꪫꪬꪭꪮꪯꪰꪱꪴꪲꪳꪵꪶꪷꪸꪹꪺꪻꪼꪽꪾ꪿ꫀ꫁ꫂ꫃꫄꫅꫆꫇꫈꫉꫊꫋꫌꫍꫎꫏꫐꫑꫒꫓꫔꫕꫖꫗꫘꫙꫚ꫛꫜꫝ꫞꫟ꫠꫡꫢꫣꫤꫥꫦꫧꫨꫩꫪꫫꫬꫭꫮꫯ꫰꫱ꫲꫳꫴꫵ꫶꫷꫸꫹꫺꫻꫼꫽꫾꫿꬀ꬁꬂꬃꬄꬅꬆ꬇꬈ꬉꬊꬋꬌꬍꬎ꬏꬐ꬑꬒꬓꬔꬕꬖ꬗꬘꬙꬚꬛꬜꬝꬞꬟ꬠꬡꬢꬣꬤꬥꬦ꬧ꬨꬩꬪꬫꬬꬭꬮ꬯ꬰꬱꬲꬳꬴꬵꬶꬷꬸꬹꬺꬻꬼꬽꬾꬿꭀꭁꭂꭃꭄꭅꭆꭇꭈꭉꭊꭋꭌꭍꭎꭏꭐꭑꭒꭓꭔꭕꭖꭗꭘꭙꭚ꭛ꭜꭝꭞꭟꭠꭡꭢꭣꭤꭥꭦꭧꭨꭩ꭪꭫꭬꭭꭮꭯ꭰꭱꭲꭳꭴꭵꭶꭷꭸꭹꭺꭻꭼꭽꭾꭿꮀꮁꮂꮃꮄꮅꮆꮇꮈꮉꮊꮋꮌꮍꮎꮏꮐꮑꮒꮓꮔꮕꮖꮗꮘꮙꮚꮛꮜꮝꮞꮟꮠꮡꮢꮣꮤꮥꮦꮧꮨꮩꮪꮫꮬꮭꮮꮯꮰꮱꮲꮳꮴꮵꮶꮷꮸꮹꮺꮻꮼꮽꮾꮿꯀꯁꯂꯃꯄꯅꯆꯇꯈꯉꯊꯋꯌꯍꯎꯏꯐꯑꯒꯓꯔꯕꯖꯗꯘꯙꯚꯛꯜꯝꯞꯟꯠꯡꯢꯣꯤꯥꯦꯧꯨꯩꯪ꯫꯬꯭꯮꯯꯰꯱꯲꯳꯴꯵꯶꯷꯸꯹꯺꯻꯼꯽꯾꯿가각갂갃간갅갆갇갈갉갊갋갌갍갎갏감갑값갓갔강갖갗갘같갚갛개객갞갟갠갡갢갣갤갥갦갧갨갩갪갫갬갭갮갯갰갱갲갳갴갵갶갷갸갹갺갻갼갽갾갿걀걁걂걃걄걅걆걇걈걉걊걋걌걍걎걏걐걑걒걓걔걕걖걗걘걙걚걛걜걝걞걟걠걡걢걣걤걥걦걧걨걩걪걫걬걭걮걯거걱걲걳건걵걶걷걸걹걺걻걼걽걾걿검겁겂것겄겅겆겇겈겉겊겋게겍겎겏겐겑겒겓겔겕겖겗겘겙겚겛겜겝겞겟겠겡겢겣겤겥겦겧겨격겪겫견겭겮겯결겱겲겳겴겵겶겷겸겹겺겻겼경겾겿곀곁곂곃계곅곆곇곈곉곊곋곌곍곎곏곐곑곒곓곔곕곖곗곘곙곚곛곜곝곞곟고곡곢곣곤곥곦곧골곩곪곫곬곭곮곯곰곱곲곳곴공곶곷곸곹곺곻과곽곾곿관괁괂괃괄괅괆괇괈괉괊괋괌괍괎괏괐광괒괓괔괕괖괗괘괙괚괛괜괝괞괟괠괡괢괣괤괥괦괧괨괩괪괫괬괭괮괯괰괱괲괳괴괵괶괷괸괹괺괻괼괽괾괿굀굁굂굃굄굅굆굇굈굉굊굋굌굍굎굏교굑굒굓굔굕굖굗굘굙굚굛굜굝굞굟굠굡굢굣굤굥굦굧굨굩굪굫구국굮굯군굱굲굳굴굵굶굷굸굹굺굻굼굽굾굿궀궁궂궃궄궅궆궇궈궉궊궋권궍궎궏궐궑궒궓궔궕궖궗궘궙궚궛궜궝궞궟궠궡궢궣궤궥궦궧궨궩궪궫궬궭궮궯궰궱궲궳궴궵궶궷궸궹궺궻궼궽궾궿귀귁귂귃귄귅귆귇귈귉귊귋귌귍귎귏귐귑귒귓귔귕귖귗귘귙귚귛규귝귞귟균귡귢귣귤귥귦귧귨귩귪귫귬귭귮귯귰귱귲귳귴귵귶귷그극귺귻근귽귾귿글긁긂긃긄긅긆긇금급긊긋긌긍긎긏긐긑긒긓긔긕긖긗긘긙긚긛긜긝긞긟긠긡긢긣긤긥긦긧긨긩긪긫긬긭긮긯기긱긲긳긴긵긶긷길긹긺긻긼긽긾긿김깁깂깃깄깅깆깇깈깉깊깋까깍깎깏깐깑깒깓깔깕깖깗깘깙깚깛깜깝깞깟깠깡깢깣깤깥깦깧깨깩깪깫깬깭깮깯깰깱깲깳깴깵깶깷깸깹깺깻깼깽깾깿꺀꺁꺂꺃꺄꺅꺆꺇꺈꺉꺊꺋꺌꺍꺎꺏꺐꺑꺒꺓꺔꺕꺖꺗꺘꺙꺚꺛꺜꺝꺞꺟꺠꺡꺢꺣꺤꺥꺦꺧꺨꺩꺪꺫꺬꺭꺮꺯꺰꺱꺲꺳꺴꺵꺶꺷꺸꺹꺺꺻꺼꺽꺾꺿껀껁껂껃껄껅껆껇껈껉껊껋껌껍껎껏껐껑껒껓껔껕껖껗께껙껚껛껜껝껞껟껠껡껢껣껤껥껦껧껨껩껪껫껬껭껮껯껰껱껲껳껴껵껶껷껸껹껺껻껼껽껾껿꼀꼁꼂꼃꼄꼅꼆꼇꼈꼉꼊꼋꼌꼍꼎꼏꼐꼑꼒꼓꼔꼕꼖꼗꼘꼙꼚꼛꼜꼝꼞꼟꼠꼡꼢꼣꼤꼥꼦꼧꼨꼩꼪꼫꼬꼭꼮꼯꼰꼱꼲꼳꼴꼵꼶꼷꼸꼹꼺꼻꼼꼽꼾꼿꽀꽁꽂꽃꽄꽅꽆꽇꽈꽉꽊꽋꽌꽍꽎꽏꽐꽑꽒꽓꽔꽕꽖꽗꽘꽙꽚꽛꽜꽝꽞꽟꽠꽡꽢꽣꽤꽥꽦꽧꽨꽩꽪꽫꽬꽭꽮꽯꽰꽱꽲꽳꽴꽵꽶꽷꽸꽹꽺꽻꽼꽽꽾꽿꾀꾁꾂꾃꾄꾅꾆꾇꾈꾉꾊꾋꾌꾍꾎꾏꾐꾑꾒꾓꾔꾕꾖꾗꾘꾙꾚꾛꾜꾝꾞꾟꾠꾡꾢꾣꾤꾥꾦꾧꾨꾩꾪꾫꾬꾭꾮꾯꾰꾱꾲꾳꾴꾵꾶꾷꾸꾹꾺꾻꾼꾽꾾꾿꿀꿁꿂꿃꿄꿅꿆꿇꿈꿉꿊꿋꿌꿍꿎꿏꿐꿑꿒꿓꿔꿕꿖꿗꿘꿙꿚꿛꿜꿝꿞꿟꿠꿡꿢꿣꿤꿥꿦꿧꿨꿩꿪꿫꿬꿭꿮꿯꿰꿱꿲꿳꿴꿵꿶꿷꿸꿹꿺꿻꿼꿽꿾꿿

When I shared my photo series on disappearing Miao silver-smithing techniques, her eyes lit up. Inspired by this exchange, Ms. Aga personally guided me through ethnographic fieldwork across Yi communities, with a focus on the **Butuo region**. This immersive journey unveiled the diversity of Yi traditions—from **folk narratives and ceremonial poetry to ritual dances and intricate costume traditions**. Witnessing how patterns like the sun-moon symbols encode ancestral environmental knowledge profoundly deepened my connection to the land and renewed my passion for preserving Nuosu Yi heritage through art.

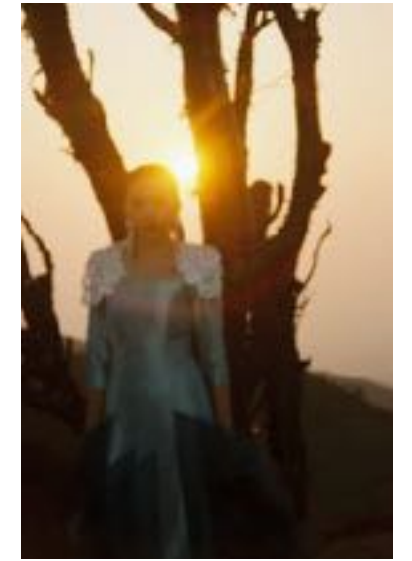
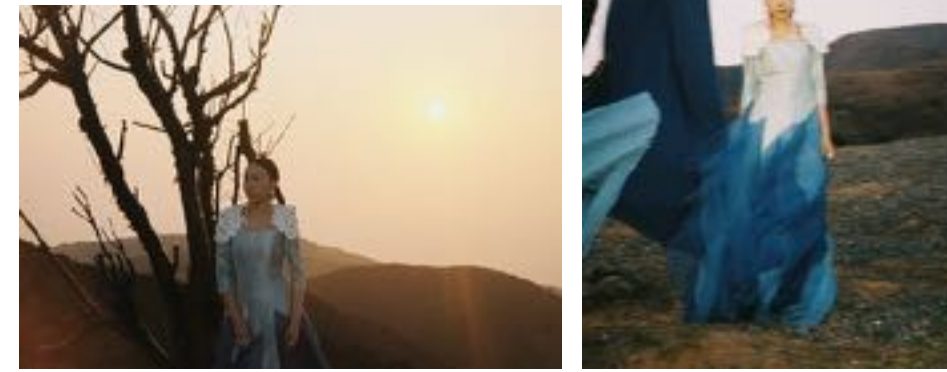


(GeekGreen,2018)



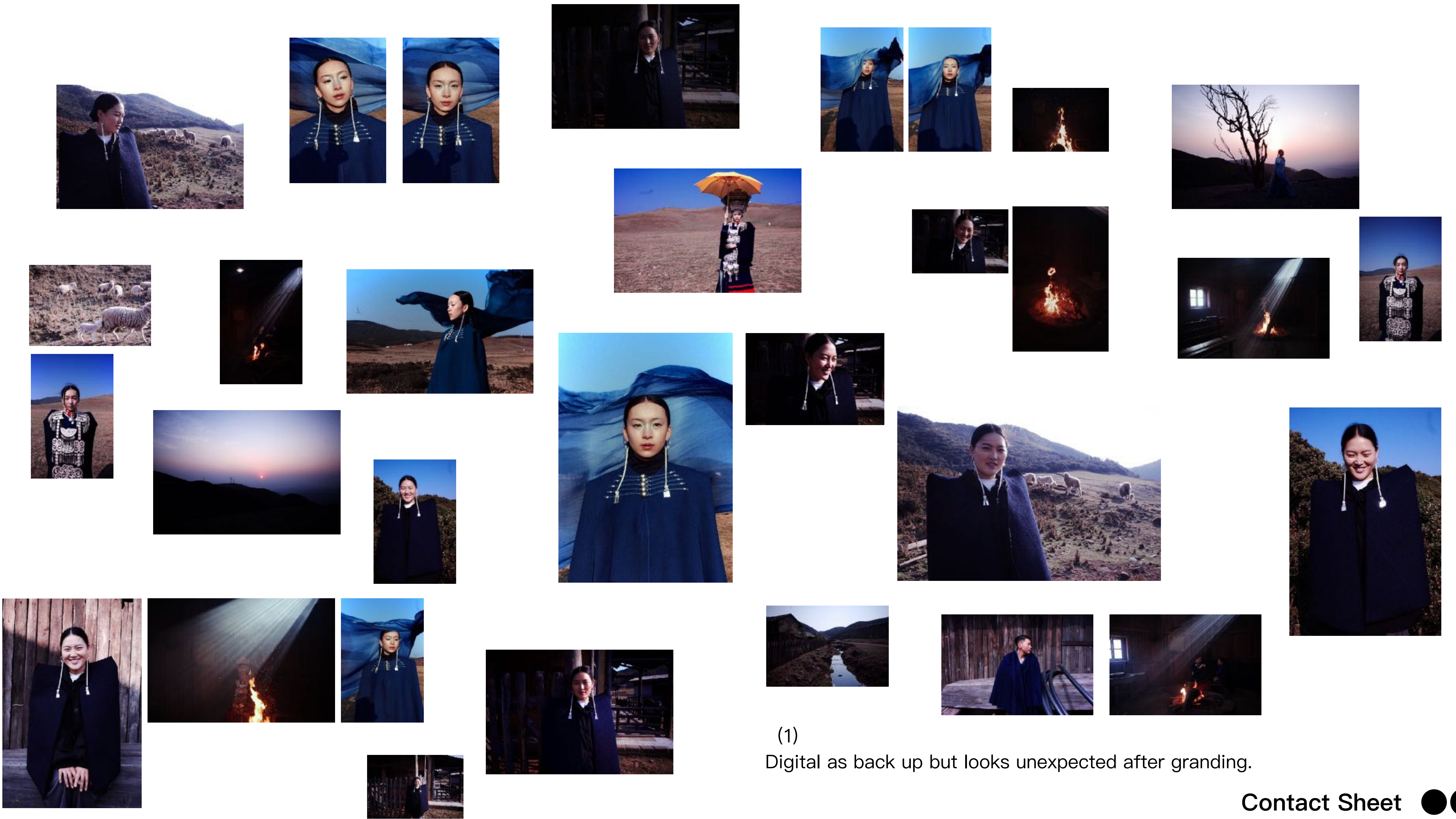
(1)
After finishing the location scouting in Gukede, Professor Aniu Aga invited me to join their campaign shoot for the 2025 Beijing Fashion Week project "Indigo Spirits of Danhong", in collaboration with the Butuo Blue brand. We photographed three outfits in total. Due to the tight preparation schedule, I chose film as the medium and abandoned artificial lighting in favor of natural light. The shoot went smoothly—sunlight was abundant and the weather was mild.



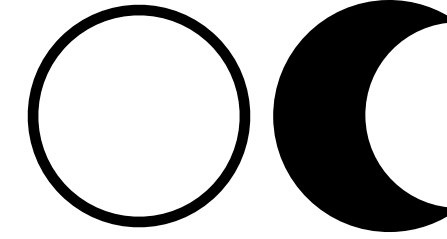


(1)
The shooting at Gukede with Aniu Aga made me extremely happy. I liked almost every single photo. These photos are like poems, gently narrating the beauty of the Yi ethnic group. I plan to compile them into a small album because I don't want to miss any of the photos, even those that are out of focus.



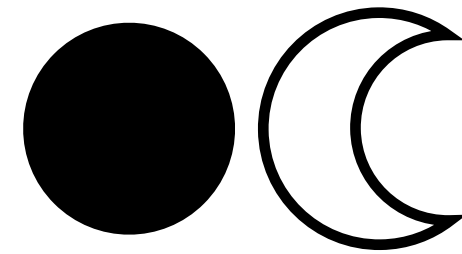


(1)
 Digital as back up but looks unexpected after granding.



ᠪᠤᠲᠤᠨ
Bu Tuo

(shot in BuTuo county , 2025)



Field Research in Butuo County: The Home of Yi Silver Craftsmanship

Accompanied by renowned designer Aniu Aga, I visited Butuo County, the renowned center of Yi silver craftsmanship. Our research included:

2 (1)

3 Cultural Symbols in Urban Space

- In the county center, we observed streetlights designed as Yi women's headdresses.
- Saw ubiquitous **sun-moon** and ram horn motifs throughout the town, reflecting Yi natural worship traditions.

3 (2)

4 Distinctive Adu Yi Clothing

- Documented Adu Yi women's daily wear of characteristic tall hats.
- Explored the vibrant silver street filled with local silversmiths.
- Studied the iconic large silver buttons essential to both everyday and ceremonial attire.



1 (3)

2 Traditional Craft Industries

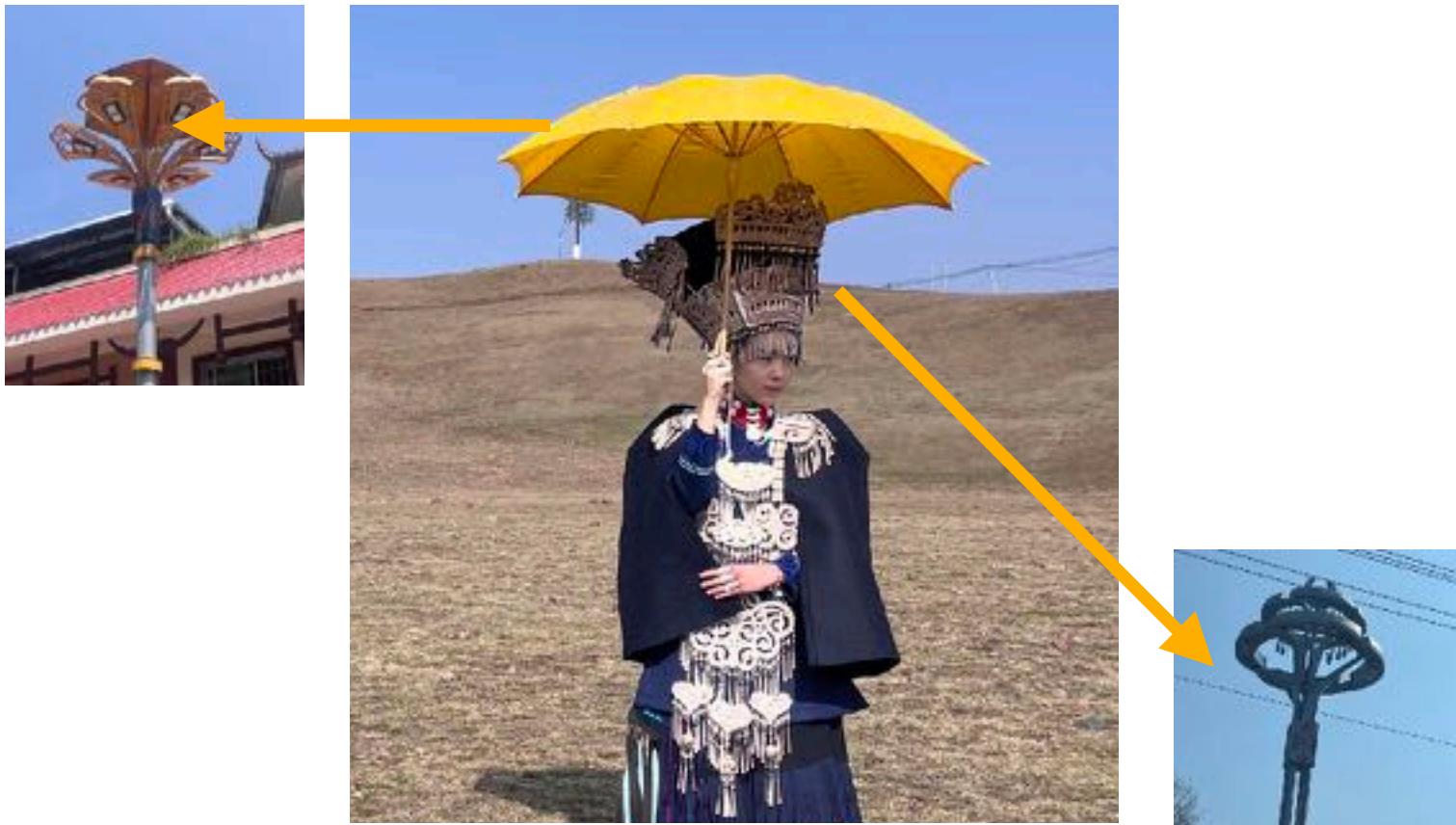
- We toured the local indigo dyeing center and visited fields where farmers grow dye plants like *Persicaria tinctoria*.
- Interviewed local officials about agricultural programs promoting dye plant cultivation and the establishment of dye factories to alleviate poverty, create jobs, and preserve Yi clothing culture.

4 (4)

5 Social Observations

- Noted many unsupervised children and elderly residents playing cards along roadsides.
- Observed the scarcity of middle-aged adults, most having migrated for work.
- Recognized that while Butuo remains one of Liangshan's less developed areas, this relative isolation has helped preserve intact Yi cultural traditions.





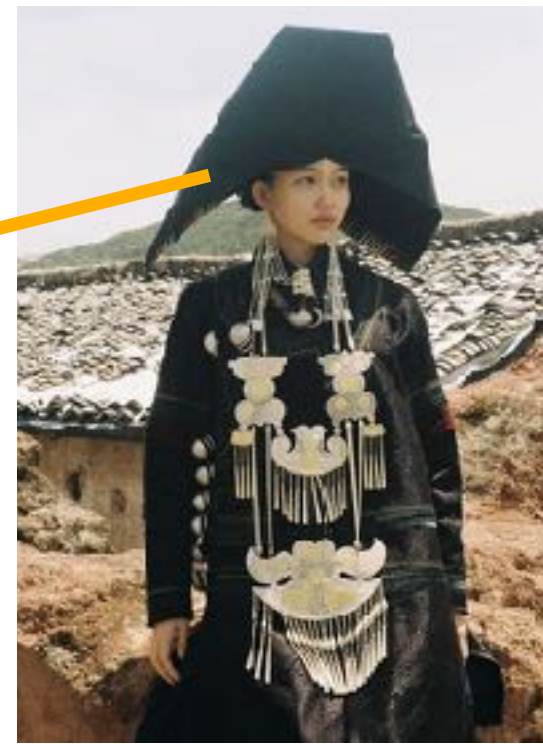
(1)

The streetlight designs pay homage to two Yi cultural icons: the golden-hued butter umbrellas used in rituals and the intricate silver headdresses worn by women.



(2)

The modernized hospitals of Butuo County feature animated wayfinding characters modeled after the Adou branch's distinctive Yi costumes—silver-studded jackets, pleated skirts with 365 folds, and signature oversized silver buttons—creating a culturally-grounded patient navigation system.



(3)

The iconic tall hats of the Adou region — a daily staple for adult Yi women, towering with cultural pride.



(2) Butuo County, which is renowned as the "Hometown of Yi Ethnic Silver Ornaments", is decorated with Luoguo hats.

In the profound soil of Yi ethnic culture, silver ornaments are symbols of good fortune and happiness.

Quwoga (back decoration)

Qu Naiga (chest ornament)
Auspicious cloud pattern



(1)

Habolete (Wool Felt Vest)



The Yi ethnic culture collection "Gu Hou Liao Fu" records: In ancient times, when people were competing to create various industries, there was a capable person named Ayo Axian. In order to enhance human beings' resistance to nature, adapt to harsh natural environments, shelter from wind and rain, and keep warm, he pioneered the great craft of making felt by rolling out wool.

It has short cuffs but is not worn. There are two or three triangular felt pieces for decoration at the back of the collar A "fur coat" specially made by the Yi people of Butuo, which is unique in ethnic characteristics and local charm. (TANYI, 2025)

A Yi girl in traditional costume that I photographed in the BuTuo.



(4) Unmarried girl wearing a headwear is called a "hapa". The edge of the cloth is locked with floral thread. A rectangular piece of black or blue cloth is selected. The way to wear a hapa is to first comb the braids into two strands and wrap them around the forehead. Then, fold the hapa into a trapezoid shape and wear it on the head. (TANYI, 2025)



(3) Cloth tubs and silver ornaments are renowned for their large volume, heavy weight and simple and ancient patterns. Take pride in wearing large silver ornaments.



This photo was taken at Teacher Ximei's studio in Xichang.

It is a representative garment of a cloth tote that is 30 to 40 years old

布托火把节 *The Torch Festival*



(3)

While traveling between Butuo and Puge counties, I came across a mural on the mountainside depicting the origin story of the Torch Festival. I interviewed a local scholar, Xiao San, who explained the legend, which is also recorded in the book *The Passionate Torch*.

According to AduRiyi(2014)'s book and Xiao San(2025)'s interview, in ancient times, the heavenly god Enti Guzi sent the evil deity Sire Abi to wreak havoc on earth. The Yi hero Ati Laba challenged the demon to a wrestling match and defeated him. Enraged, the heavenly god unleashed swarms of locusts to devour the crops. On the 24th night of the sixth lunar month, Ati Laba led the people in lighting torches to drive away the pests and protect their harvest. To atone for the death of the heavenly god's servant, humans were required to offer sacrifices of livestock. This event became the origin of the Torch Festival.

(1)

Butuo County Roadside Murals Depicting the Origin of The Torch Festival



(2)

Butuo County Roadside Murals Depicting the Origin of the Torch Festival



(Babibu, 2024)



(Huan, 2024)



(Huan, 2024)

Sacred Flames: Fire in Yi Cosmology and Life

1. (1)

2. Cosmic Origin: The Cosmological Meaning of Fire

- **Mythological Roots:** The Yi creation epic Le'e Teiyi records that the world began with "fire emerging from chaos, and all life springing from fire." Fire is regarded as the "seed" of the universe, alongside snow and water, forming the three elements of life.
- **Zhige Along Shooting the Suns:** After the hero shot down the excess suns, he reignited human vitality with fire, making it a symbol of "life's rebirth" in Yi culture.

3.

2. (2)

3. Mediator Between Humans and Spirits: The Ritual Power of Fire

- **Bimo Rituals:** Priests communicate with deities by burning pine branches and scattering ash, with fire smoke seen as a "ladder to heaven" for conveying messages.

4.

1. (3)

2. Social Ethics and Family Structure

- The hearth symbolizes a family's legitimacy and continuity; leaving it means abandoning kinship.
- In traditional Yi villages, each hearth belongs to a single bloodline unit, and its inheritance order is a key marker of identity.
- The division of fire also signifies family restructuring, such as branching households.

5.

6. (4)

7. Emotion and Collective Memory

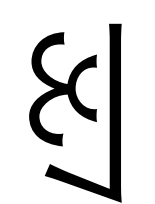
- 8. Yi folk songs, epics, and oral traditions are often shared by the hearth, making fire a medium for emotional exchange and cultural education.
- 9. Festivals like the Torch Festival mark peaks of collective emotional release and tribal identity.



Fire in Yi culture transcends its practical purpose, embodying cosmological, ritual, social, and ecological dimensions.

It is a convergence point of spiritual symbolism, social order, ecological practice, and emotional memory. Today, this flame, burning for 3,000 years, still flickers in Yi hearths, torches, and bloodlines.

Flame





(XiongMaoYouTu, 2022)



(Huan, 2023)



Huan, 2023)



(Huan, 2023)



(AGaMo, 2022)

ꨀꨃꨆ

Duo Luo He

(1)

“Suddenly, as if swept in overnight by a golden wind, thousands of yellow flowers bloom”—on the vast open field, dozens of yellow oil–paper umbrellas spin gracefully. Sunlight pours down, casting dazzling flashes of silver. (Liu, 2012)

“**Duoluohé**” is a traditional choral dance performed exclusively by women during the **Torch Festival**, the most important cultural celebration among the Yi people of Liangshan. In Yi language, duo means "fire" and he means "song," making “Duoluohé” literally “song of fire” or “torch song.” (Zhang, 2019)

(3)

In Butuo County—known as “the hometown of the Torch Festival”—the inheritance of Duoluohé most vividly embodies the Yi people’s cultural wisdom. The performance lasts nearly an hour. Dozens of women dressed in traditional Yi garments, holding yellow oil–paper umbrellas, sing moving songs as they slowly emerge onto the field.

“In the folk tradition, this is almost a required skill for every Yi woman. Duoluohé is a large–scale performance art with no instrumental accompaniment. The dancers (often in large numbers) sing and dance live, in joyous unison. The dance is dignified and slow, and the songs are lyrical and melodic, often more like singing than dancing. Outside the Torch Festival, it’s common for people to sing Duoluohé without dancing.” (Li, 2019)

(3) **Duoluohé** may be a blessing, a call, a conversation with the divine—or a hymn of reverence... It may be older than anyone I know, older than any time I can imagine. I suppose only a torch that has burned and gone out, and burned again, can truly explain its meaning.



母寨匪魁

Folk tale

of

Ma Bu Fei Kui

Cliffs

རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་། རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་།

This poem was shared with me by a scholar GUI from Butuo County. It is an orally transmitted story about MabufeiKui:

*The whirlwind blowing from Abchiru
The sound of hooves on the way to see off the wedding was blown away
The torches lit in Ridodisa
The Duoluohe that lit up Adubatolinium
The mouth harps hanging from the treetops—whose lost love do they represent?
The shawl fluttering in the valley is my heartfelt blessing
Even if one cannot hear the mournful cry of the lark,
The mountain springs in Ridodisa still flow day and night.*

Later, the music group **Little Frog** adapted this poem into a song.

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MabufeiKui *Cliffs*

(XiaoQinWa, 2023)



This story weaves together elements of cliffs, snowstorms, disappearance, and remembrance into a cultural framework of nature’s sanctity, **reflecting the Yi people's cosmology in which nature is ancestral spirit**, and mountains and rivers possess souls. The act of hanging personal belongings becomes a form of symbolic offering—a gesture of reverence, emotion, and appeal to the spiritual forces of nature. I have also incorporated this story into the narrative of my short film.

(1)

Crossing the lush and fertile grasslands of Ridudisa, one arrives at the eastern cliff belt—**MabufeiKui**. Since ancient times, this has been a vital passage for merchants, travelers, marriage processions, and migrating herders between Butuo and Puge. It also serves as a watershed between the two regions. (Zier Rihe, 2023)

(2)

Today, when you gaze upon the cliffs, you'll see them adorned with all kinds of Yi clothing, accessories, mouth harps, and personal belongings—forming a unique and striking cultural landscape.

(3)

Legend has it that long ago, a young woman named **Shiluo** was on her way to marry into the Tuoju clan of Butuo. As the wedding procession paused at MabufeiKui, a fierce wind rose, sweeping crimson clouds across the sky. The world turned to chaos, and a red snowstorm engulfed the ridge. In the storm, Shiluo mysteriously vanished. Her groom never arrived, and her family could not return. Holding torches, her wedding party searched through the storm for three days and nights, but she was never found. (LiangShanWangShi, 2025)

In hopes of retrieving Shiluo—said to have been taken by the mountain god—young women from Jiniu village dressed in vibrant garments, opened oil-paper umbrellas, linked their skirts together, and softly chanted verses as they wandered the mountainside. This, as the story goes, became the origin of the Duoluohe performance.

(4)

The tale is well-known throughout the region. Over time, travelers passing through MabufeiKui, touched by Shiluo's fate, began hanging cherished personal items—scarves, trinkets, and mementos—on the trees and cliffs in remembrance of her. Thus, **MabufeiKui** became a place of pilgrimage, a mountain of devotion, where people offer belongings to nature in exchange for peace and well-being.

(1)

I was deeply moved by the story of Mabufeikui, which inspired me to shape the character of **Shiluo**, the heroine of the legend, as the basis for my model.

To bring this vision to life, I connected with **Mo Yan**, a local costume scholar who had previously participated in the government-led short film project about the Mabufeiqui story. I was honored to have her serve as my costume advisor, and together we completed a set of test shoots.





(1)

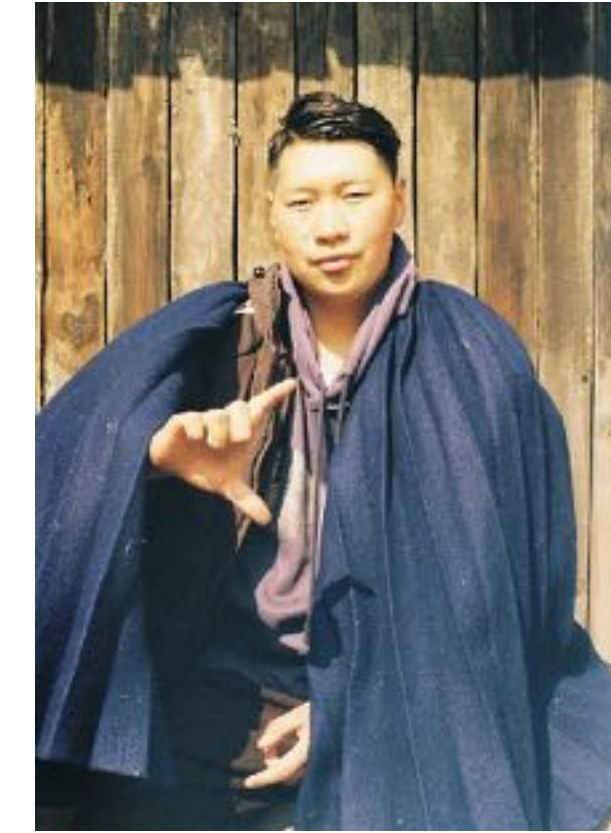
During the shooting process, we were also scouting for the shooting locations of the short film. This time, we found a group of dilapidated old houses. The texture of the film blended very well with the primitive mountainous terrain. I used 35mm Kodak Gold 200 film, and the colors were very saturated, which I'm quite satisfied with. The only thing I'm struggling with is whether to shoot in landscape or portrait orientation.

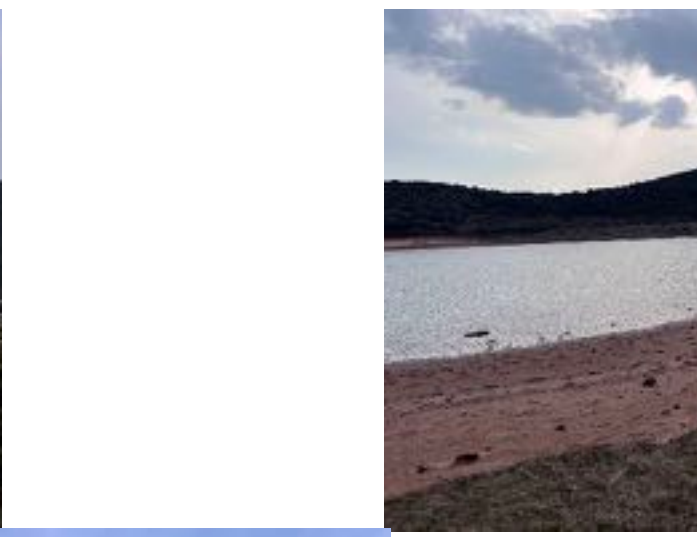
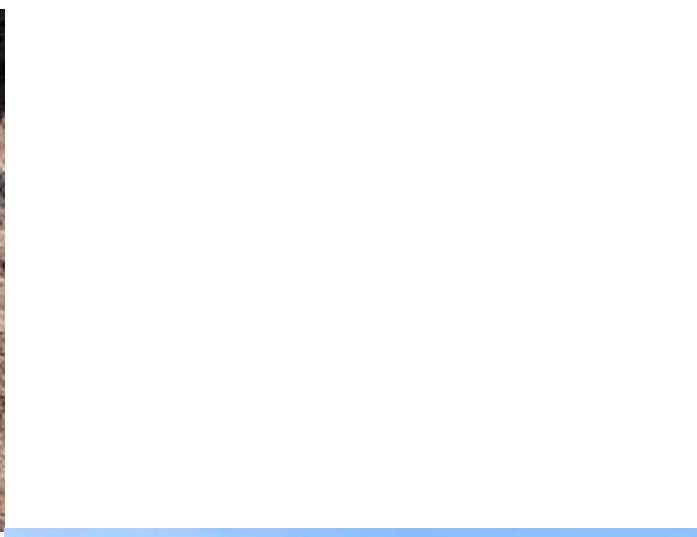
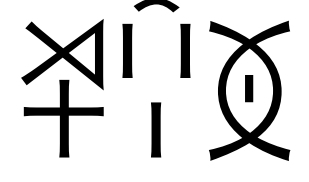
(1)

At Gukede, I encountered a local Yi culture interpreter, and I immediately began an interview with him behind his house. **He turned out to be one of the most important people for me during this filming process.** Having lived in the city for a long time, I was unfamiliar with the mountainous environment of my hometown, and during the preparation for this shoot, **he served as the team's guide and liaison producer.** His name is Ashuo Buga, and he told me that "Buga" means "east" in the Yi language because he was born facing the east. Once again, I felt the Yi people's reverence for nature, imbuing names with meaning based on natural signs.

(2)

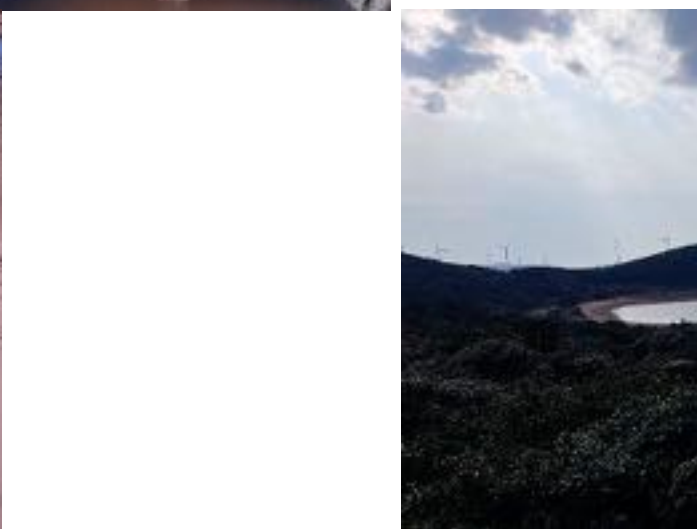
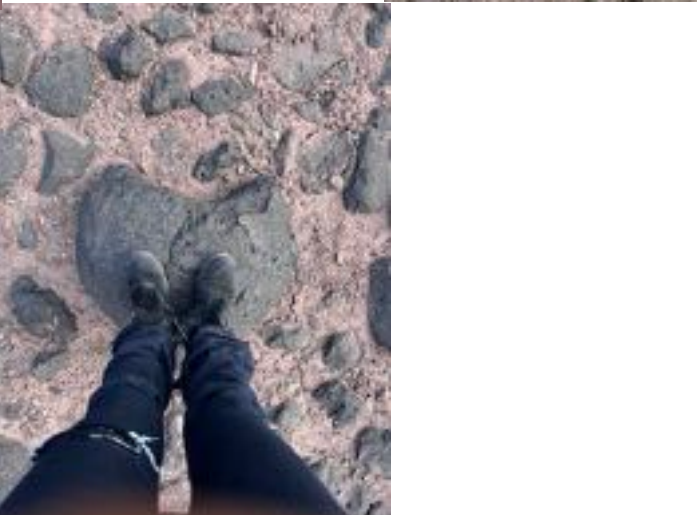
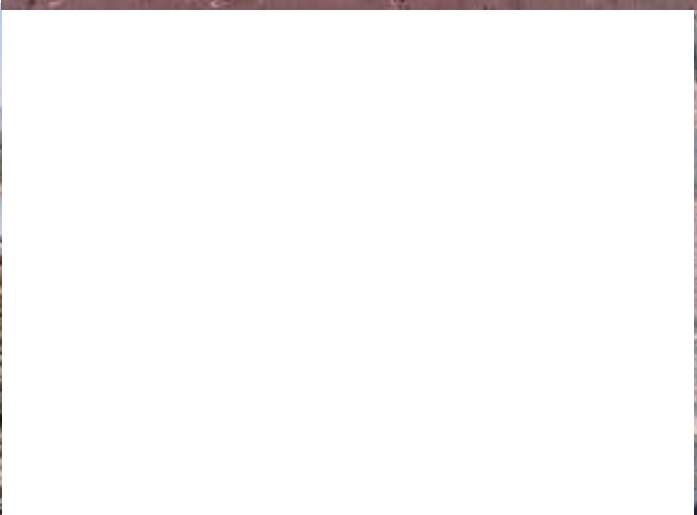
Buga is a multi-talented young man with a passion for music. He told me that in his spare time, he takes his guitar to the mountains to write songs. By now, he has composed many songs, even blending Yi script, Mandarin, and English. In addition to Yi folk songs and Yi lyrics, he can also sing and write folk and rap music, and he performed one of his original songs for me on the spot. I promised him that next time, I would bring a filming crew to shoot an MV for his new song. He also invited me to visit his hometown, a village deep in the mountains. He was thrilled that I wanted to document Yi culture, especially for foreign audiences, and he planned to take me to the most beautiful spots in Gukede for location scouting.





Gukede

Gukede is located in Zhaojue County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Its name in the Yi language means **"the place where wild geese rest."** Known for its alpine grasslands and cultural tourism, the area is also renowned for its **well-preserved Yi ecological culture.** Guided by Professor **BuGang**, we embarked on a field research journey through Gukede.



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Gukede



(1)
The best way to understand a culture is to immerse yourself in it. Gukede has preserved and passed down the Yi people's way of life and religious traditions almost intact. I spent half a month living here, until I came to know nearly every villager—until they saw my camera as naturally and warmly as they saw my eyes.



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(^_^)



(7)

This shoot was my first experiment with the Mamiya RB67 medium format (120 film). Since I shot backup frames on 35mm film for nearly every scene, the comparison clearly revealed the medium format's superior texture and granularity—a perfect match for this project.

The only drawback was the camera's intrusive presence: its bulk inevitably made subjects self-conscious during casual documentation. That said, it remains ideal for editorial productions where controlled environments offset this limitation.



(1)

After noon each day, time in Gukede seems to slow—sheep graze on the hills, farm work is mostly done, and people bask in the sun.

That afternoon, some village youths held a special 'concert' for me.

With Buga strumming his guitar, we sat beneath an ancient tree in his backyard as they sang me Yi folk songs one after another. From the well-known drinking toast melodies to A Jie Lu—a song I've known since childhood—and many other Yi poems adapted into songs. 'Spring fades to autumn—don't be afraid; winter turns to summer—don't be afraid.' The familiar refrains brought tears to my eyes, reminding me of the stories my Ama (grandmother) told me as a child—stories I, too, may one day pass down. In Yi belief, there are no temples or churches; much of our culture survives through oral tradition. That afternoon deepened my understanding of the beauty of Yi poetry."



One of the Smallest Musical Instruments in the World

The **mouth harp** is one of the world's smallest musical instruments, with origins tracing back to the **Late Neolithic period**. (TANYI, 2024)

The Significance of the Mouth Harp in Yi Culture

Among the Yi people, there is a well-known saying: "The mouth harp speaks, and the moon lute sings."

A legend tells of a young Yi woman in ancient times who was married off to a distant place and could no longer visit her parents.

One day, overwhelmed by longing, she carved a piece of bamboo into the shape of a square and pointed reed tongue. When she plucked it gently, the sound reminded her of her parents' voices. In this way, she used the mouth harp to **soothe her homesickness**.

From this came a Yi proverb:

"The mouth harp is a remedy for missing one's mother."

Even today, many elders use the mouth harp to **recall departed loved ones**, especially mothers or grandmothers—entrusting their emotions to the melodies carried by this small, ancient instrument.

A Hidden Family Metaphor in the Mouth Harp

While mouth harps vary in design, a traditional version often contains **three reed tongues**, each with symbolic names and functions.

These are known as the **father string**, **mother string**, and **child string**—representing the family structure.

- The **mother string** is the widest and longest, producing a deep tone.
- The **father string** is slightly shorter and less resonant.
- The **child string** is the narrowest and shortest, emitting the highest-pitched sound.

The tonal range is adjusted by modifying the **length and width of the reeds**, and sound quality is refined by a unique traditional process: **roasting the reed over firewood** and immediately **applying saliva** to harden and fine-tune the reed.



Yi Mouth Harp

I want to incorporate the sound of the mouth harp and this imagery into my short film. It serves as a medium for expressing Yi ethnic culture and also as a dialogue with history.



(TANYI, 2024)

bamboo mouth harp: sword-shaped

Copper mouth harp: Leaf shaped

(1)

The Yi ethnic group's **YueQin**, also known as "stringed instrument", "Qiangzi" or "Jiecai", is a traditional plucked instrument with a long history among the Yi people. It is widely spread in the Yi-inhabited areas in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou and other places (Meigu Publicity, 2023).

The Yi yueqin is not only a musical instrument, but also an important carrier of Yi culture, bearing rich historical, artistic and emotional values. In order to protect and inherit this precious intangible cultural heritage, folk artists and cultural workers in various Yi regions actively carry out activities for the inheritance and promotion of the yueqin-making and playing techniques, enabling this traditional art to be passed down from generation to generation. In addition, the Yi yueqin also symbolizes family and kinship. In some areas, the yueqin is regarded as a bond connecting the emotions of relatives, and playing the yueqin has become an important way to express yearning and blessings.

(2)

In my project, I used it as a visual element: taking the yueqin as a prop and integrating it into the scene arrangement to highlight its cultural symbol.

Music scoring: Select traditional pieces played on the Yi yueqin to enhance the ethnic atmosphere of the work.

Emotional expression: Through the performance of the yueqin, the emotional changes of the characters, such as yearning and joy, are shown.

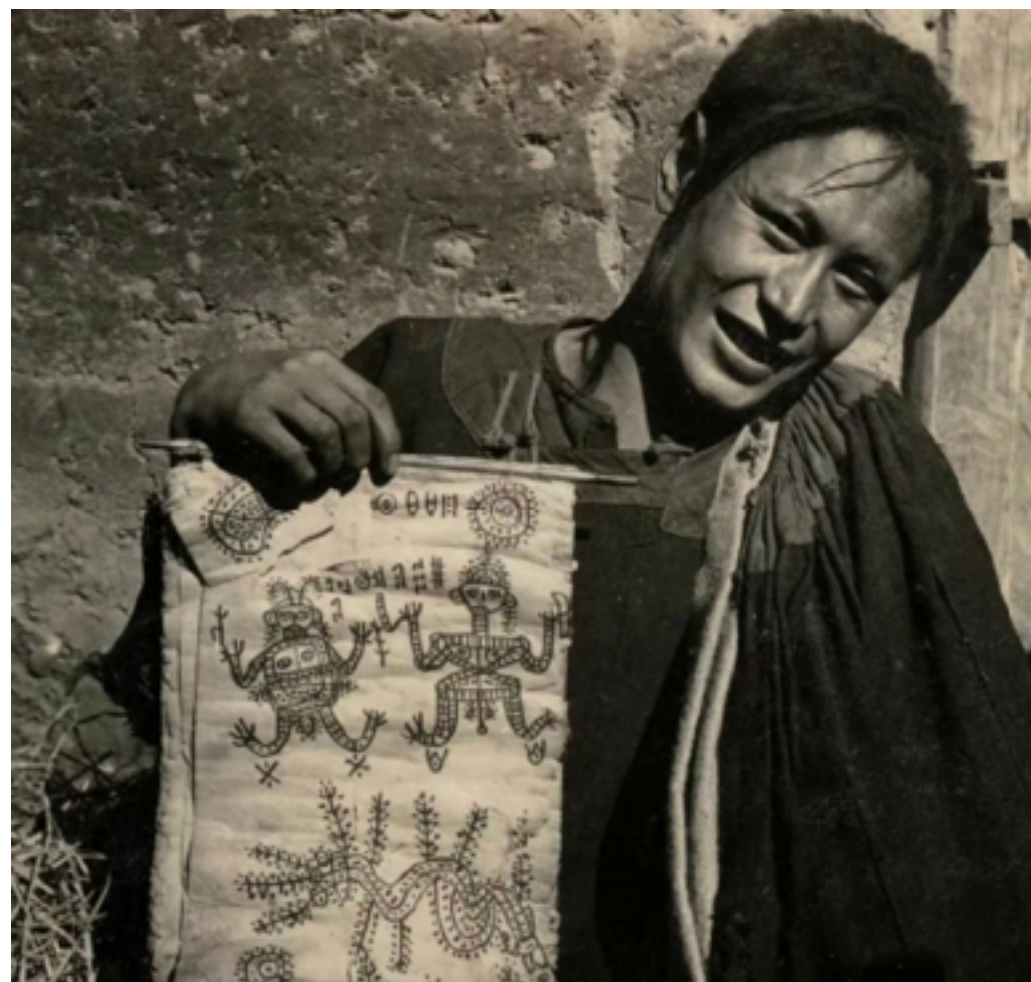
YueQin
YueQin



(Huan, 2023)



BTS



Bimo 𐄂𐄃



The paintings by Bimo 𐄂𐄃

(1)

According to the Yi epic Hnewo Teyy (The Book of Origins), the origin of Bimo priests traces back to the divine realm. **The primordial Bimo, Bimo Ashilaze (𐄂𐄃𐄄𐄅𐄆𐄇), descended from the heavens bearing sacred texts and ritual implements, establishing their role as mediators between humans and deities.**(Bamo, 2004,)

(2)

The **Bimo** (𐄂𐄃) can be understood as Yi "priest-scholars" who serve as revered spiritual leaders, performing rituals such as hymns, prayers, historical preservation, divination, and ancestral worship. The term Bi (𐄂) means "to chant scriptures," while Mo (𐄃) refers to "a wise elder."

Bimo Culture is a religious and cultural system in which Bimo ancestors, through **sacred texts** and **rituals**, conduct ceremonies blending **deity worship** and **shamanic practices**. This tradition encompasses Yi philosophy, ethics, ceremonial norms, calendar systems, art, folk medicine, and more. Bimo status is primarily **hereditary**, passed down through family lineages. However, some non-hereditary Bimo are chosen through **spiritual signs** (e.g., recurring dreams of eagles or tigers) and must undergo decades of rigorous study to master scriptures, rituals, and divination (Wu, 2023).

(3)

The core of Yi Bimo culture lies in its unique animistic cosmology, which holds that natural phenomena such as mountains, rivers, plants, animals, wind, and rain all possess spiritual vitality (known in the Yi language as "𐄂𐄃" nyit mu, meaning "spiritual energy" or "life force"). As intermediaries connecting humans, nature, and deities, the Bimo priests establish an ancient covenant system of "symbiosis between humans and nature" through rituals.

(4)

The essence of Bimo rituals lies in maintaining ecological balance through sacred acts, operating on a logic akin to a "covenant":

Humans offer sacrifices to nature: Through offerings (such as chickens, sheep, or pigs) and purified items (bitter buckwheat, salt, and liquor), they seek nature's protection. As stated in the Sacrificial Scripture: "Mgu nyit mu ho, nyit mu gu ho" ("Offer sacrifices to gain spiritual energy; spiritual energy protects all beings.")

Nature provides feedback to humans: After the ritual, the Bimo interprets "natural omens"—such as the condition of animal entrails or the direction of smoke—to predict fortune or misfortune. A successful ritual is marked by timely rain and bountiful harvests, while failure (e.g., sudden livestock deaths) necessitates further rites of purification.



The Bimo in our village that I photographed has the sheep horn left behind after he once offered sacrifices.



(1)

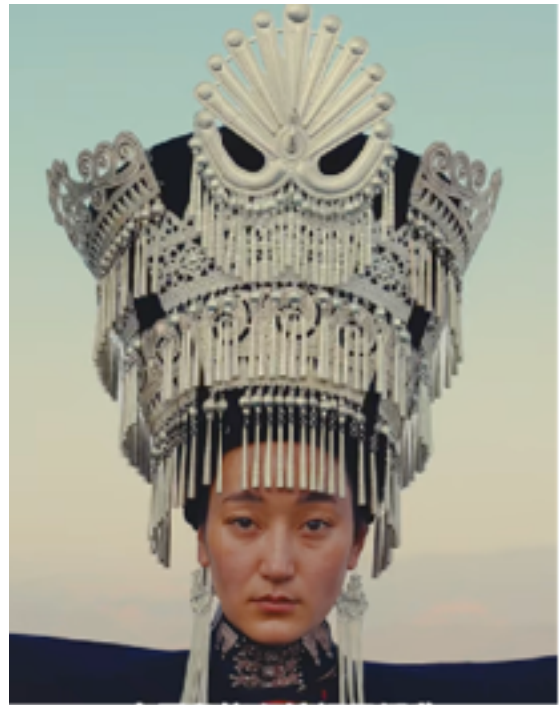
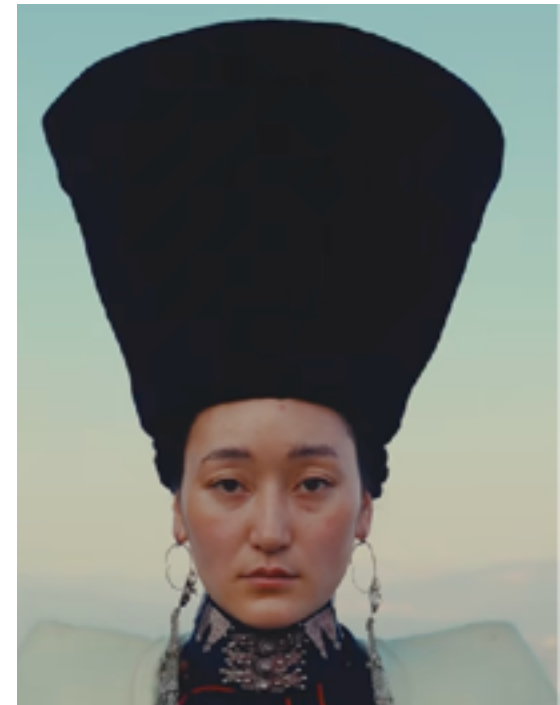


(Huan, 2025)

The headdresses of Liangshan Yi women reflect identities, social statuses, ages, and regional differences. Teen girls and married women have distinct styles: girls wear colorful, decorative headscarves, while married women adopt the "Tian Pusa" (a coiled hairstyle with a symbolic stick), marking their life-stage transition. Regional variations exist in shapes, patterns, and decorations (e.g., tile-shaped hats in some areas). During weddings, brides wear specially crafted headdresses adorned with embroidery and silverwork, often changing styles across ceremony stages to symbolize blessings for happiness and fertility, embodying ritual solemnity and cultural heritage

(2)

In the short film, I will showcase the different signature headwear of women of different age groups, and different headwear will also become the markers of the storyline of my short film.





Unmarried young women wore blue and blue cloth headscarves, which were shaped like tiles and covered the top of their heads.

Special bridal headdresses from Puge County and Bhutto County

The female headwear that has appeared in my works.



The iconic tall hats of the Adou region which I have mentioned.

In Meigu County, Liangshan Prefecture, there is a kind of red task conical hat that is both beautiful and practical. The Yi people call it "Yimalabu" (liangcang, 2024).



"འོལ" (transliterated as "Or"), also known as "འོལ" ("Hedu") in early times, is a type of lotus-leaf-shaped headdress worn by married and childbearing women among the Liangshan Yi people. It is mainly distributed in the Shengza dialect area of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. (Ameixiuxiu, 2023)



Changing Skirt Ceremony



Changing the skirt, called "Sala" in the Yi language, is commonly known as "changing the child's skirt", which means taking off the skirt worn in childhood and putting on an adult skirt. The time for changing the skirt is determined according to the development of the young girl. Generally, it is between the ages of 15 and 17, and the skirt is usually changed in an odd-numbered year. It is said that changing the skirt in an even-numbered year will bring a lot of disasters and is considered extremely inauspicious for life. Before the liberation, the custom of young Yi girls in Liangshan changing their skirts was prevalent. They regarded changing the skirt and getting married as two of the most important events in a girl's life. **Before changing the skirt, a girl combs a low braid and wears a light-colored two-piece skirt with one thick and one thin black cloth edge inlaid on the hem.** (MO, 2025)

The Yi people refer to the "skirt-changing ceremony" as a "wedding without a groom." In the past, early marriage was prevalent among the Yi, so the skirt-changing ritual and wedding were often held together. Since modern girls no longer marry before the age of 17, a "mock wedding" ceremony is now performed. During this ritual, symbolic "husbands" are chosen for the girl, such as a tree, millstone, or doorstep—objects considered significant in Yi culture—and an imaginary "wedding" is conducted.

Only after the ceremony can men join the feast. Everyone sits on the ground, enjoying tuotuo meat (large chunks of boiled meat), buckwheat bread, and drinking freely. Yi girls who have undergone the "skirt-changing ceremony" are now ready to start experiencing romance. (Wu, 2021)



Mao in her Yi Clothing

“The Day I Got Married... to a Tree”

Mao: “My ‘Skirt-Changing Ceremony’ went like this: First, I took off my plain childhood skirt and put on the long skirt worn by adult women. Then, the elder women from my mother’s family sang a special coming-of-age song for me. After that, I had to ‘marry’ something—it could be a lake, a tree, a millstone, a cow, or something else. In my case, I was married to a tree. They had me sit beneath it and wait—this was the ‘marriage to nature’ ritual. The next day, my family braided my single ponytail into two braids, tied them with red thread, and coiled them around my head to prepare for wearing a headdress. From then on, I was considered an independent person. Even later in life, if I needed to invite a Bimo for rituals, I’d have to do it separately from my family.”

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Changing Skirt Ceremony

The "marrying nature" ritual in the Yi "skirt-changing ceremony" establishes a sacred covenant between humans and nature. The ritual deeply conveys reverence for nature (seeing it as a protector and life-giver) and ecological ethics (emphasizing symbiosis over exploitation), preserving the philosophy of "humans as children of nature" through cultural metaphor—carrying both spiritual and educational significance.



Me in my Yi Clothing

From this, I again feel the Yi people’s profound reverence for nature, which I find deeply moving. As a Yi person, I’ve always known about this ceremony, but growing up in the city, I missed experiencing it myself. I’ve decided to incorporate this ritual into my short film, essentially completing it for myself. It’s not just a cultural return but also a journey of self-growth within my own heritage.

ᑭᑭᑭᑭ
Ximei Ngeovie





The company's founder, Ximei, has long been dedicated to collecting traditional Yi clothing, silverware, embroidery, and other cultural artifacts. Her personal collection exhibition Wenlu (Patterns) was once displayed at Xichang Torch Square, featuring over 100 intangible cultural heritage artifacts, including century-old Yi garments, Bimo paintings, and eagle-claw cups (Mi, 2023).



ꞗꞗꞗꞗ
*Ximei
Ngeovie*



As a promoter of traditional Yi clothing, Ximei Ngeovie has collaborated with major fashion media outlets such as Harper's Bazaar, W China, and Vogue, proudly bringing Yi ethnic attire into the global public eye as a source of pride for the Yi people.

For this film, we not only borrowed traditional Yi garments from Ms. Ximei's private collection but also worked with her to create several modern fashion looks, successfully completing a stunning photo series that bridges tradition and contemporary style.





(1)

Teacher Xime has a deep passion for creation. Although she has long dedicated herself to the field of Yi ethnic traditional costumes, she is also highly interested in fashion. We hit it off immediately and decided to collaborate on an editorial shooting project.

(2)

I then approached stylist Yi, and together we paired some brands with similar aesthetics—such as Jean Paul Gaultier, Vivian Tam, and CDG—with Yi ethnic traditional clothing to create 4 sets of harmonious looks.

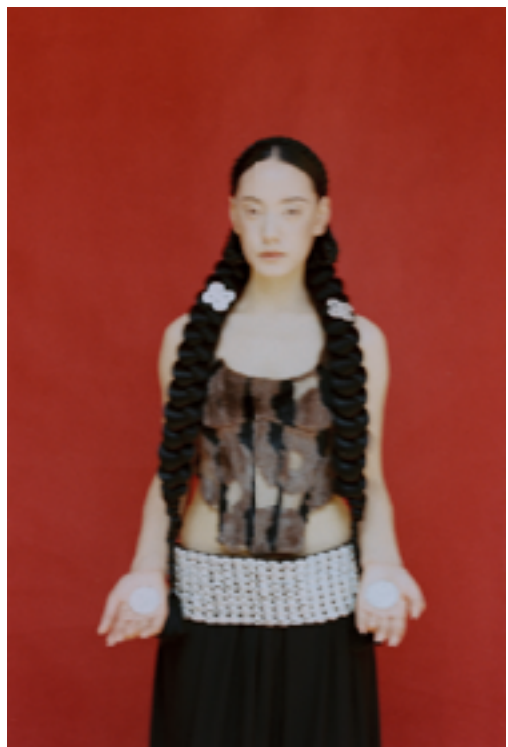
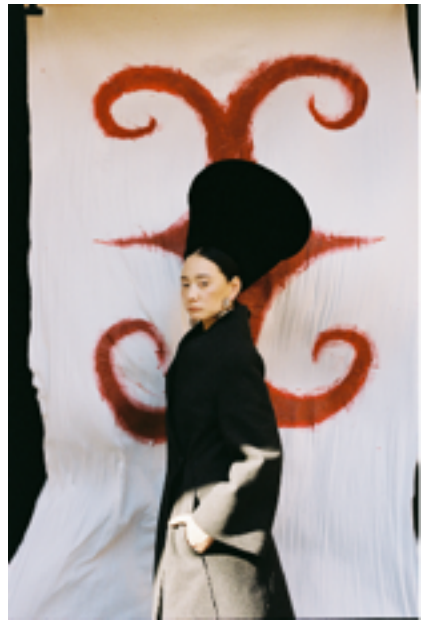
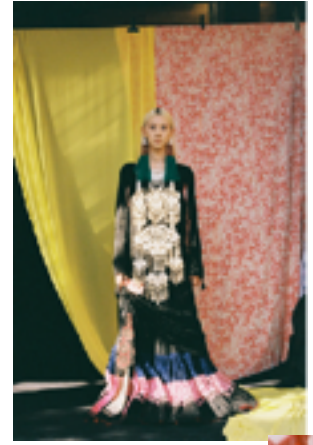
(3)

We also collaborated with painter GAGA, who painted the Yi ethnic fire-scorched patterns live as the background. For the setting, we sourced traditional Yi ethnic screens and fabrics.

(4)

The models we used were Anza, an Yi ethnic model from aartmodel agency, and ZIJIA, a Han Chinese girl.

尼美
Ximei
Ngeovie





简 报

冕宁县中心敬老院 第四十一期 2025年4月18日

爱心光影暖夕阳

4月18日，一群爱心人士走进我中心敬老院，为老人们送上暖心关怀。她们携带专业摄影器材，为每一位老人定格温暖瞬间。拍摄现场，不少老人特意穿上精美的民族服饰，志愿者们一边耐心地帮老人整理衣衫、调整坐姿，引导老人展露笑颜，一边与他们亲切聊天，现场氛围温馨有爱。



后续，爱心人士将冲洗照片并装裱成相框，作为珍贵礼物赠送给老人。这份特别的礼物，让老人们真切感受到社会的关爱与温暖。

News reports about this shooting

(11)

The Liangshan Yi ethnic region is primarily distributed along the northeastern edge of the Hengduan Mountains. These mountain ranges have nurtured unique ethnic customs and natural landscapes, forming a natural barrier for Liangshan Yi culture. Many Yi people spend their entire lives in mountainous areas with harsh living conditions, and some may never have had a single photo taken in their lives. As a photographer, I plan to return to my hometown, Mianning County, to visit elderly people living without constant care, chat with them, and take photos for each of them.

(2)

During this special shooting journey, I gained a deeper understanding of my fellow tribespeople—their names, their stories, and their way of life as Yi people. Later, I framed the printed photos and gave them as gifts. Everyone who received a photo was overjoyed. They admired each other's pictures, beaming with delight at seeing their own faces, and I felt immense happiness too!







自然崇拜	日月纹			表现对上天的崇敬
	太阳花纹			象征彝家姑娘的美丽
	波浪纹			敬畏大江大河
故事传说	索玛花纹			象征勇敢与爱情
图腾崇拜	火镰纹			对火的敬畏与崇拜
动物崇拜	羊角纹			对赖以生存的动物的感激之情
	蟹足纹			神灵崇拜
	牛眼纹			热爱游牧生活
求福祈愿	牛角纹			象征勤劳致富
特殊纹样	蕨菱纹			感恩自然馈赠，希冀衣食无忧
	窗格纹			祈求家和平安
	锅庄纹			向往幸福生活
	土司印章纹			彰显尊贵的身份

(1)

The symbolic system in Yi culture is rich and diverse, embodying the ethnic group's profound understanding of the universe, life, beliefs, and daily practices. Its core symbols can be analyzed through four dimensions: nature worship, totem beliefs, religious rituals, and practical life. The most important among them, and those used in the short film, are the **sun and moon symbols** of nature worship, representing the Yi people's reverence for nature—a foundational source of all Yi cultural traditions. These symbols are also key elements in Bimo culture, signifying the act of "**connecting heaven and earth**".

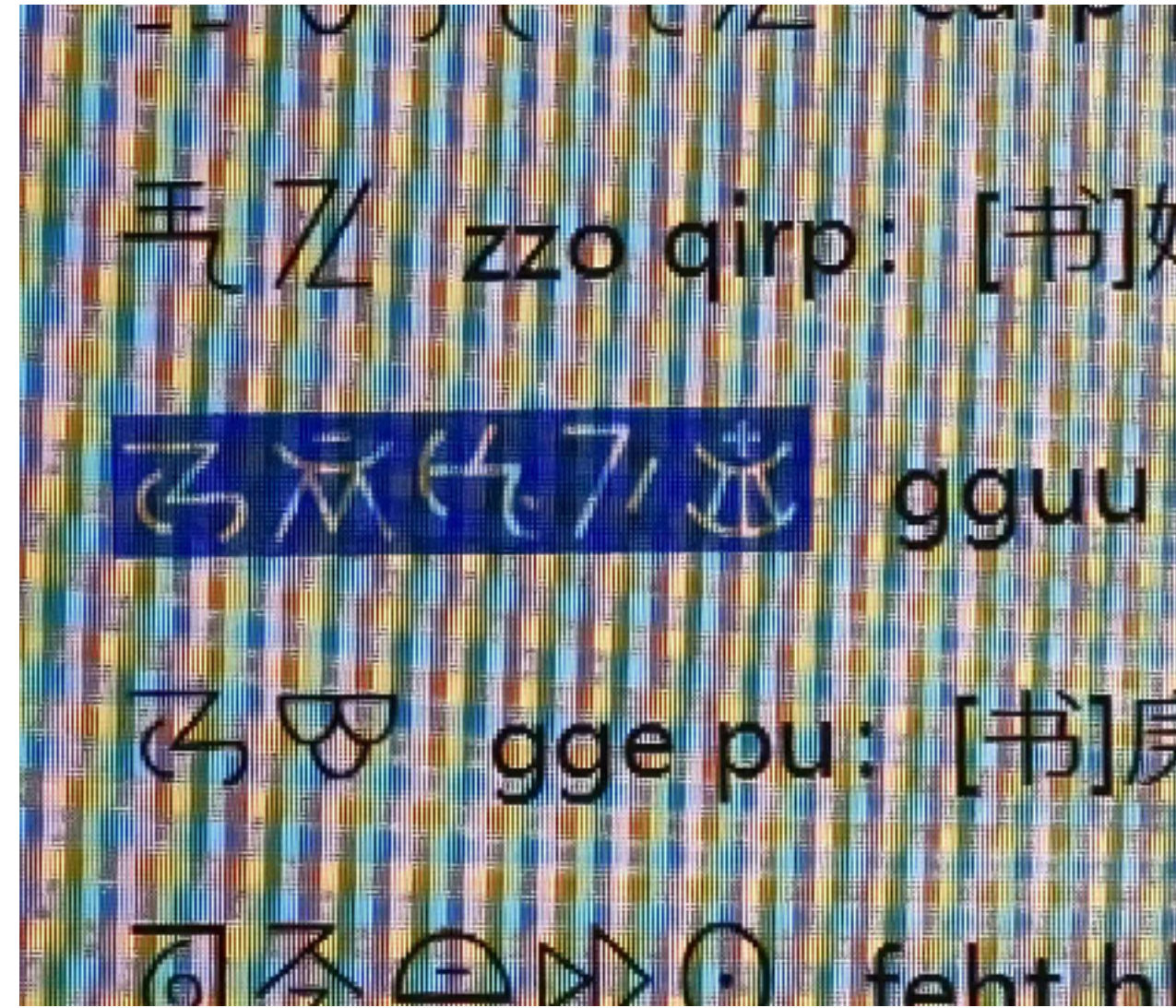
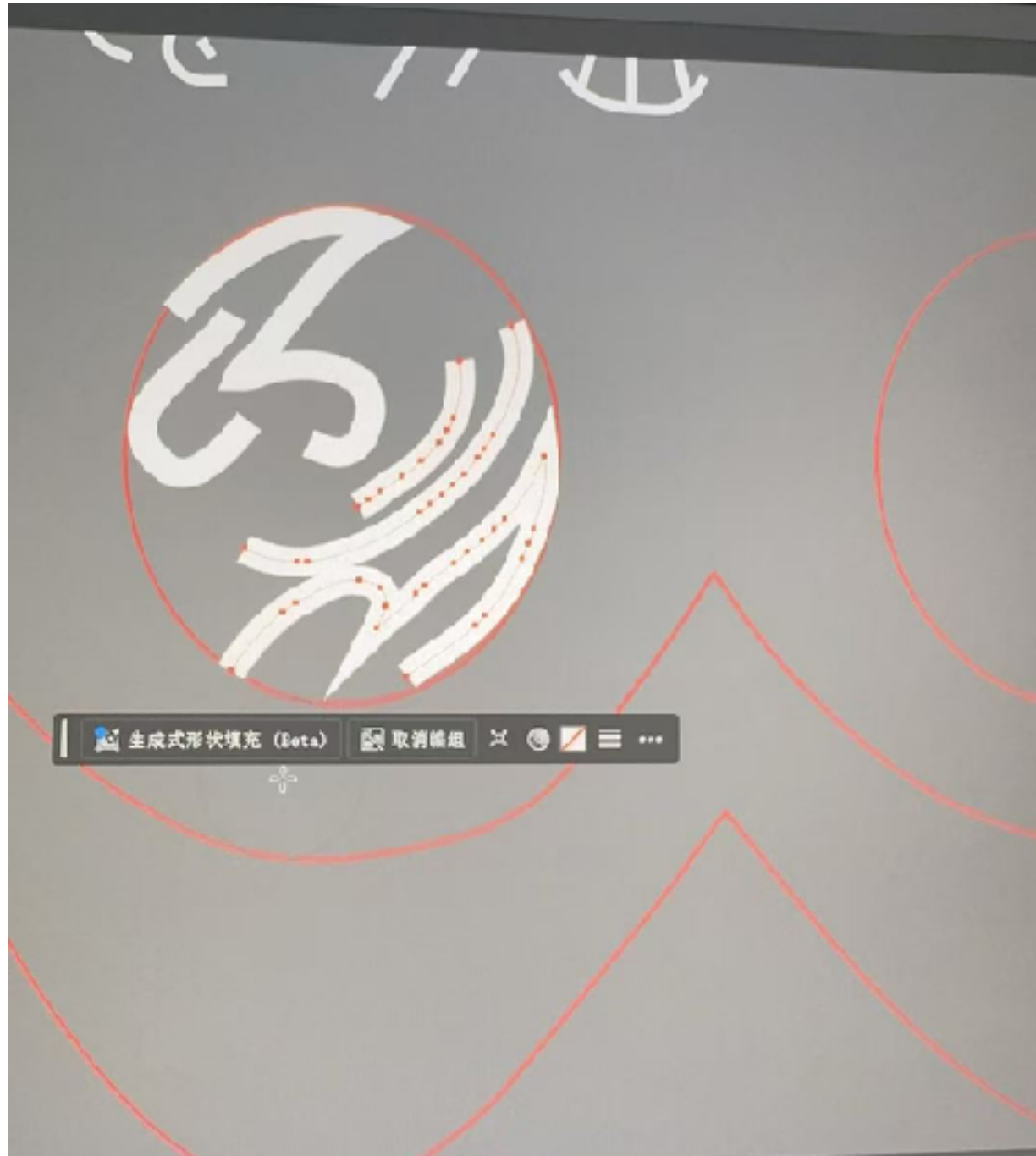
(2)

Next are the **fire patterns**, one of the most vital cultural symbols in Yi culture. Fire not only symbolizes the origin of Yi civilization but also represents ancestral blessing and family prosperity. All symbols originate from nature (sun, moon, tiger, fire) and in turn inform the understanding of nature (e.g., the tiger symbol represents cosmic order, and the fire symbol embodies life energy). Far more than mere decoration, these symbols serve as functional tools: calendrical markers (sun and moon symbols denoting solar terms), religious artifacts (Bimo symbols for communicating with the divine), and identity markers (服饰纹样, clothing patterns to distinguish ethnic subgroups).

(3)

For this reason, I have also incorporated these significant symbols into the visual design.

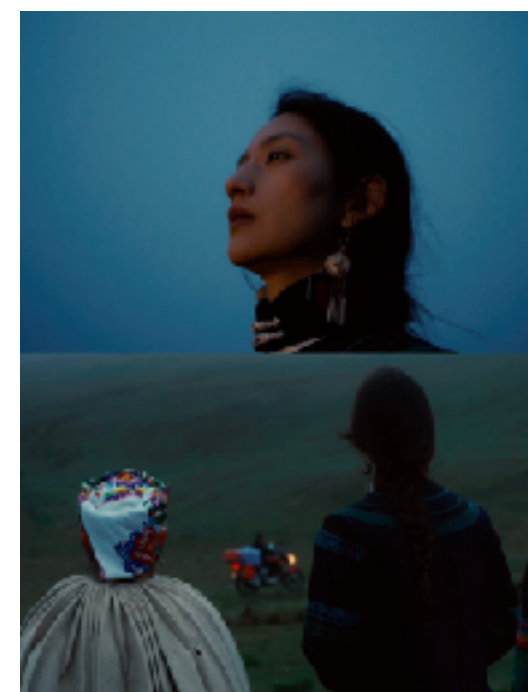
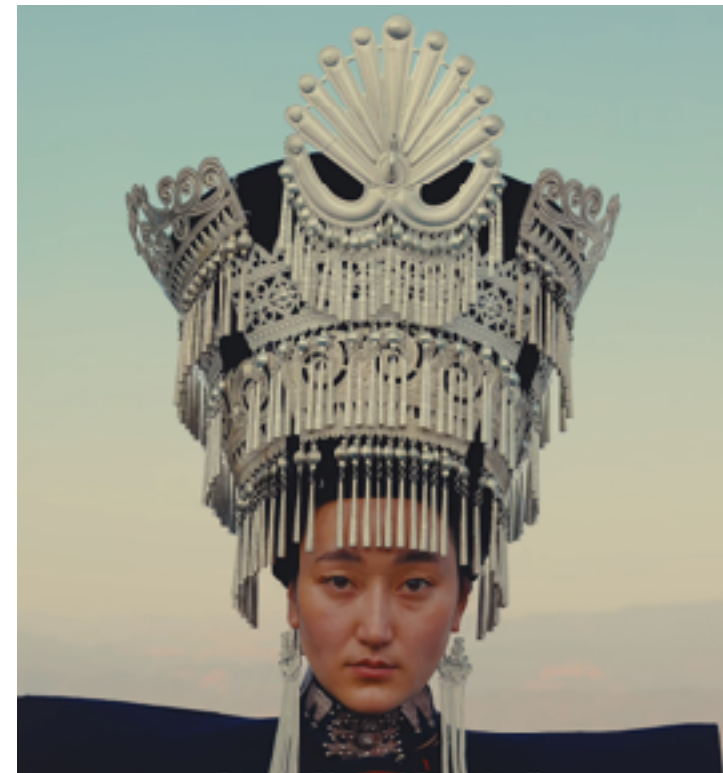
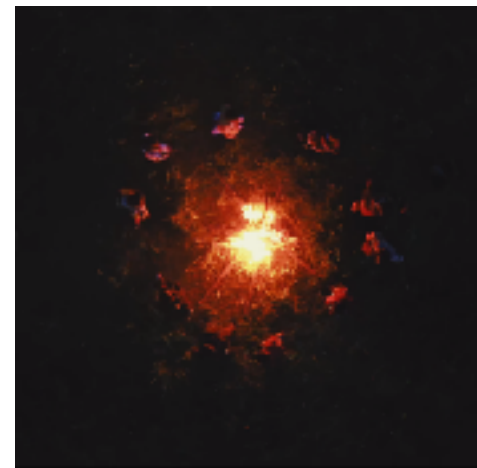




(1)

For graphic design, I have invited a long-term collaborating graphic designer, Huang Yi. I took the Sun and Moon talisman as one of the main inspirations because it is the most direct image representing the Yi ethnic group's nature worship culture. Huang Yi said that Yi script and symbols were integrated together, forming more layered and richer patterns.









(1)
As almost all the filming for the short film took place on location, the DOP, the producer, and I traversed many mountains, visited numerous alpine lakes, and traveled through various regions to find shooting locations that were culturally representative, visually appealing, and practically feasible. However, plans often change unexpectedly—not every selected scene ended up being used.

(2)
On April 14th, while shooting in Gukede, a sudden heavy snowstorm hit. This was relatively our most critical day, as we had planned to film the hearth scene, the coming-of-age skirt ceremony, and part of the Mabu Feikui storyline. But due to the severe storm, the mountain roads froze over, and vehicles risked skidding on the icy surfaces. We were unable to change locations, couldn't transport our actors to the set, and couldn't even send back the actors who were already on site. Our shooting schedule was completely disrupted.

In the end, we decided to film as much as possible on the spot. I stepped in as an actor to complete the story line involving the skirt-changing ritual and also captured a large number of empty landscape shots.



彝族拍摄

MEDIA STAGE

画板比 16:9 | 总帧数 30个

画面	参考	类别	内容	摄像机角度	运镜	摄像机状态	声音	备注	镜头焦距
		远景	故事马市里里的史洛姑娘穿着新装，骑着马出发的路上。	视平	固定 然后 展开	固定	马儿走路的轻铃声，新娘的头饰叮当声	合适的话可以补一个近景	24mm
		远景	一阵风吹过，镜头转回来的时候，马背上的史洛姑娘就不在了。	视平	固定	固定	开始呼喊史洛姑娘的名字		24mm
		中景	男生们打着火把找史洛姑娘，叫着他们的名字。	视平	跟随	稳定器	男生呼喊史洛姑娘的声音		
		远景	史洛姑娘坐在挂满歌舞的树下						
		特写	史洛姑娘虚焦拍后面的歌舞	低位仰拍	固定	固定			

画面	参考	类别	内容	摄像机角度	运镜	摄像机状态	声音	备注	镜头焦距
		全景	史洛姑娘在火把上，周围多心，骑马离开。背景点灯燃起，后为火把照耀行队。	视平	固定	稳定器	马铃声	LR21 镜头 40mm 27mm 变焦镜头 4000 变焦镜头 31 变焦镜头	30mm
		全景	同上，人物在画面中从左侧移动到右侧，镜头跟随。	视平	固定	稳定器	马铃声		35mm
		全景	镜头在画面中，镜头跟随。	视平	固定	稳定器	马铃声		35mm
		全景	镜头在画面中，镜头跟随。	视平	固定	稳定器	马铃声	可以通过加一手的拍和镜头。	40mm 27mm 变焦镜头 4000 变焦镜头 31 变焦镜头

画面	参考	类别	内容	摄像机角度	运镜	摄像机状态	声音	备注	镜头焦距
		中近景	地上写了彝族歌舞						
		中近景							
		全景							
		远景							

MEDIA STAGE

画板比 16:9 | 总帧数 30个

画面	参考	类别	内容	摄像机角度	运镜	摄像机状态	声音	备注	镜头焦距
		特写	史洛姑娘的手部	低平	固定	固定			
		中近景	几个男孩在打马灯或篝火	视平	固定	固定			
		全景	火把照耀的声音	视平	固定	固定	火把照耀的声音	40mm 27mm 变焦镜头 4000 变焦镜头 31 变焦镜头	
		特写	跳舞的火堆						
		特写	阿爸大手牵着阿妈的手	低位仰拍	固定	固定	脚步声	40mm 27mm 变焦镜头 4000 变焦镜头 31 变焦镜头	
		特写							

画面	参考	类别	内容	摄像机角度	运镜	摄像机状态	声音	备注	镜头焦距
		特写	史洛姑娘有一个巨大的头饰	视平	固定	固定		40mm 27mm 变焦镜头	
		全景	男生为跳舞	视平	固定	固定			
		全景	声音从几处传来	视平	固定	固定			
		全景	史洛姑娘在火把照耀下	视平	跟随	手持	脚步声		
		特写	手写的	低位仰拍	固定	手持	手在火上写字的声音		

MEDIA STAGE

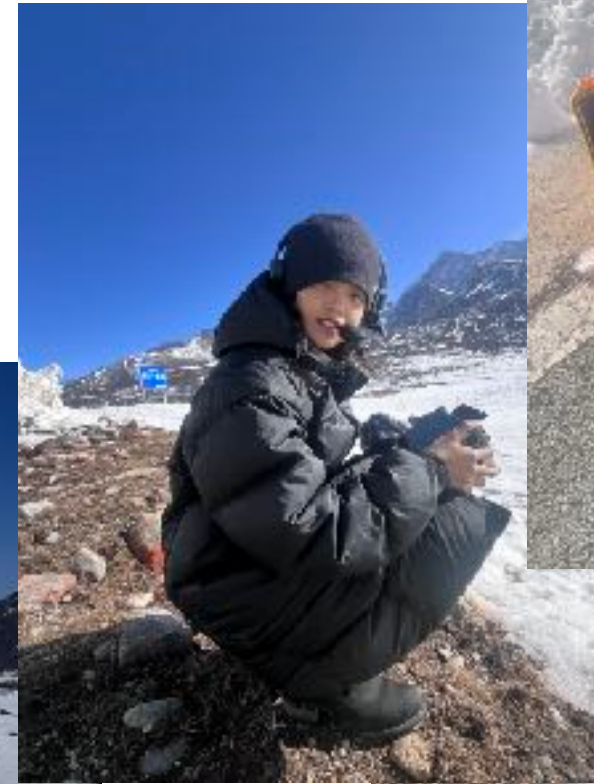
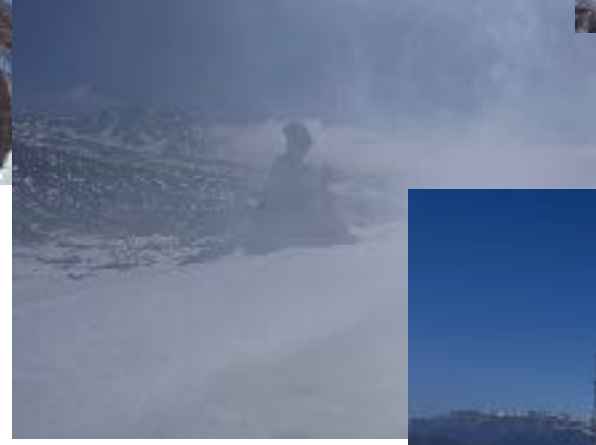
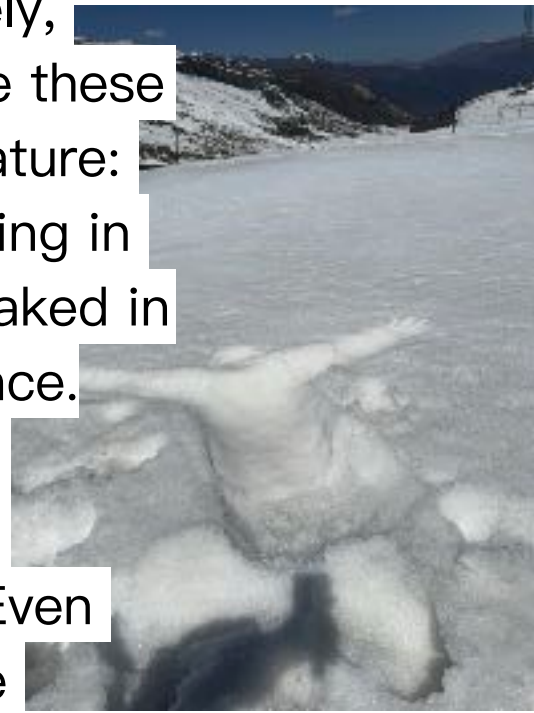


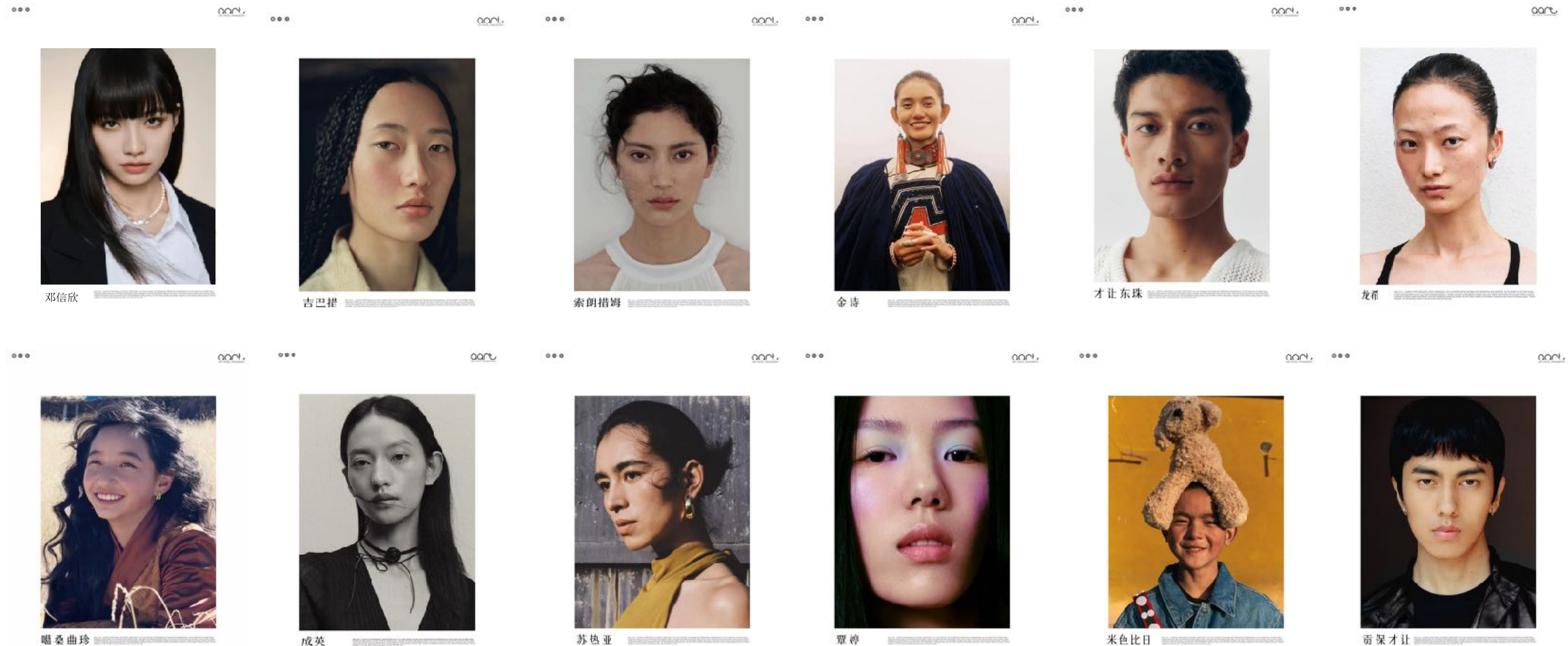
(1)

Here are the behind-the-scenes stories from Kangding. The snowfield shooting process was extremely challenging. Due to the thick snow, it was very difficult for us to walk on the snow—every step would sink deep into it, not to mention that the lighting crew and film crew needed to carry equipment. At the same time, shooting at high altitude caused some team members to experience oxygen deprivation, but fortunately, everyone had excellent physical fitness, and we overcame these difficulties well. Another tough condition was the temperature: at high altitudes, the temperature was very low, and walking in the snow left each of us with shoes and socks almost soaked in ice and snow, which greatly tested everyone's perseverance.

(2)

What touched me was the professionalism of our team. Even when working 12 hours a day, we perfectly completed the shooting plan.





(1)

Aartmodels aims to select minority faces that are rooted in traditional Eastern aesthetics while preserving the models' untamed natural features.

For this shoot, Lu Li served as both the editorial and short film casting director. He is also the founder of Aartmodel, a modeling agency dedicated to minority models. He spends much of his time wandering through the mountains and wilderness of various minority regions, sharpening his eye to discover the "hidden gems" in these remote areas.

I believe that when creating content featuring ethnic minorities—especially when combining it with fashion elements—the best approach is to use models from the same cultural background. This ensures the avoidance of cultural appropriation and misunderstandings. We should present minority culture in a complete and profound manner, from clothing to facial features.

(2)

We've established a long-term collaboration—I help shoot fashion test images for his models, and he finds the perfect talents for my productions.



"Changing Child Skirt" Storyline

I portrayed the girl undergoing the "Changing Child Skirt" ceremony both before and after reaching adulthood. Through the world of film, I aim to compensate for the missing Coming-of-Age Skirt Ceremony in my own life.

"Born by the Hearth"

Mother and Daughter Before Adulthood

"WuGeMo & Her Mom"



"Daughter of the Moon"

The role of the mother wearing a lotus-leaf hat and playing the yueqin (moon lute) is portrayed by Zhong Se, a mother herself.

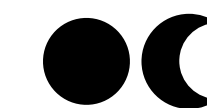
"Mabu Feikui" Storyline

The protagonist Shiluo in *Mabu Feikui* is a bride from Puge County. The actress cast is Deng Xinxinyi, an Yi girl from Puge.





(1)
For this color grading, I used the professional software DaVinci Resolve, which was one of the challenges in this project. DaVinci's color grading is more meticulous and logical, but since I haven't mastered it proficiently yet, the color tone hasn't achieved the effect I'm satisfied with. I will continue to research and re-grade the short film later.





(1)

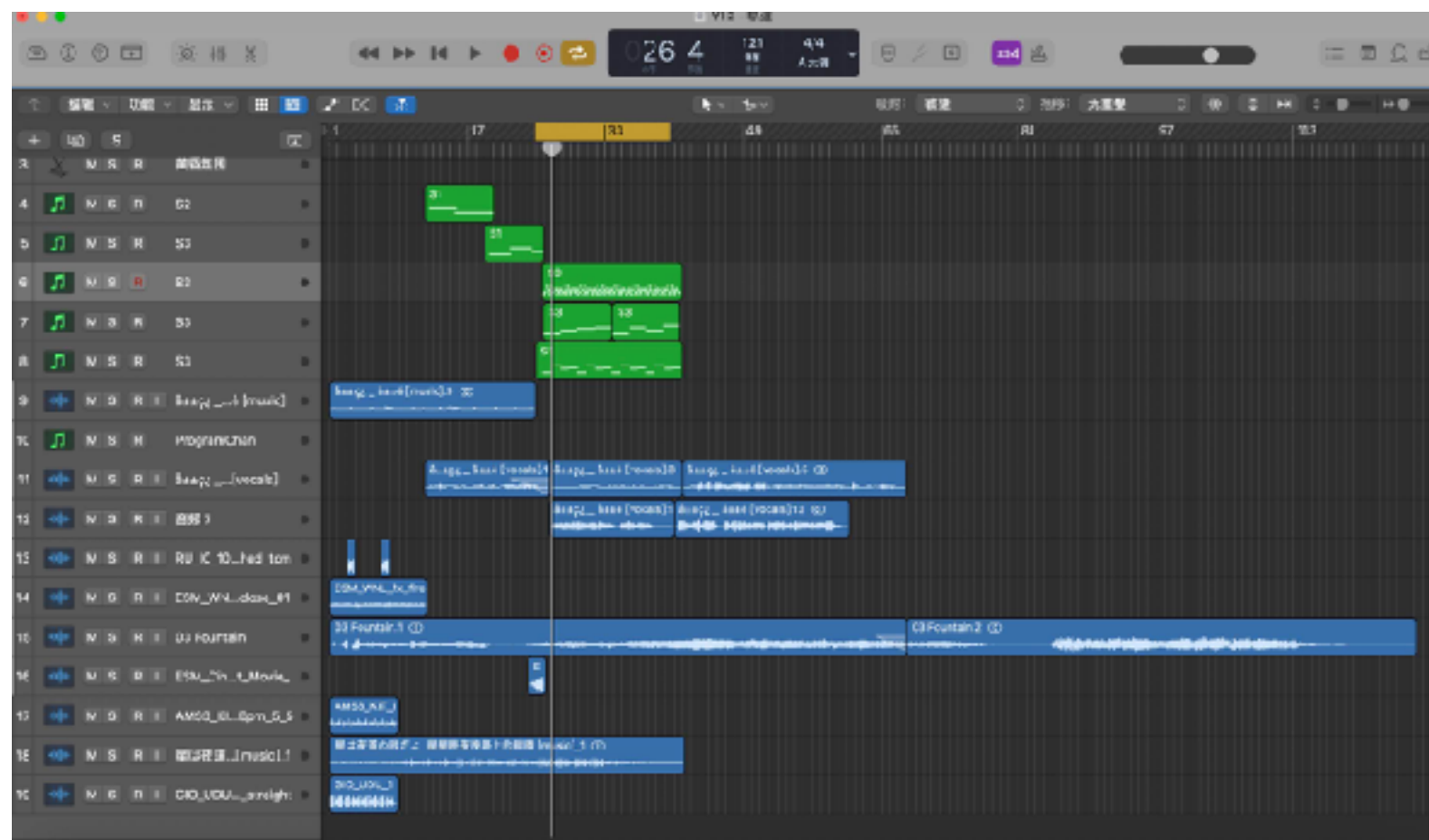
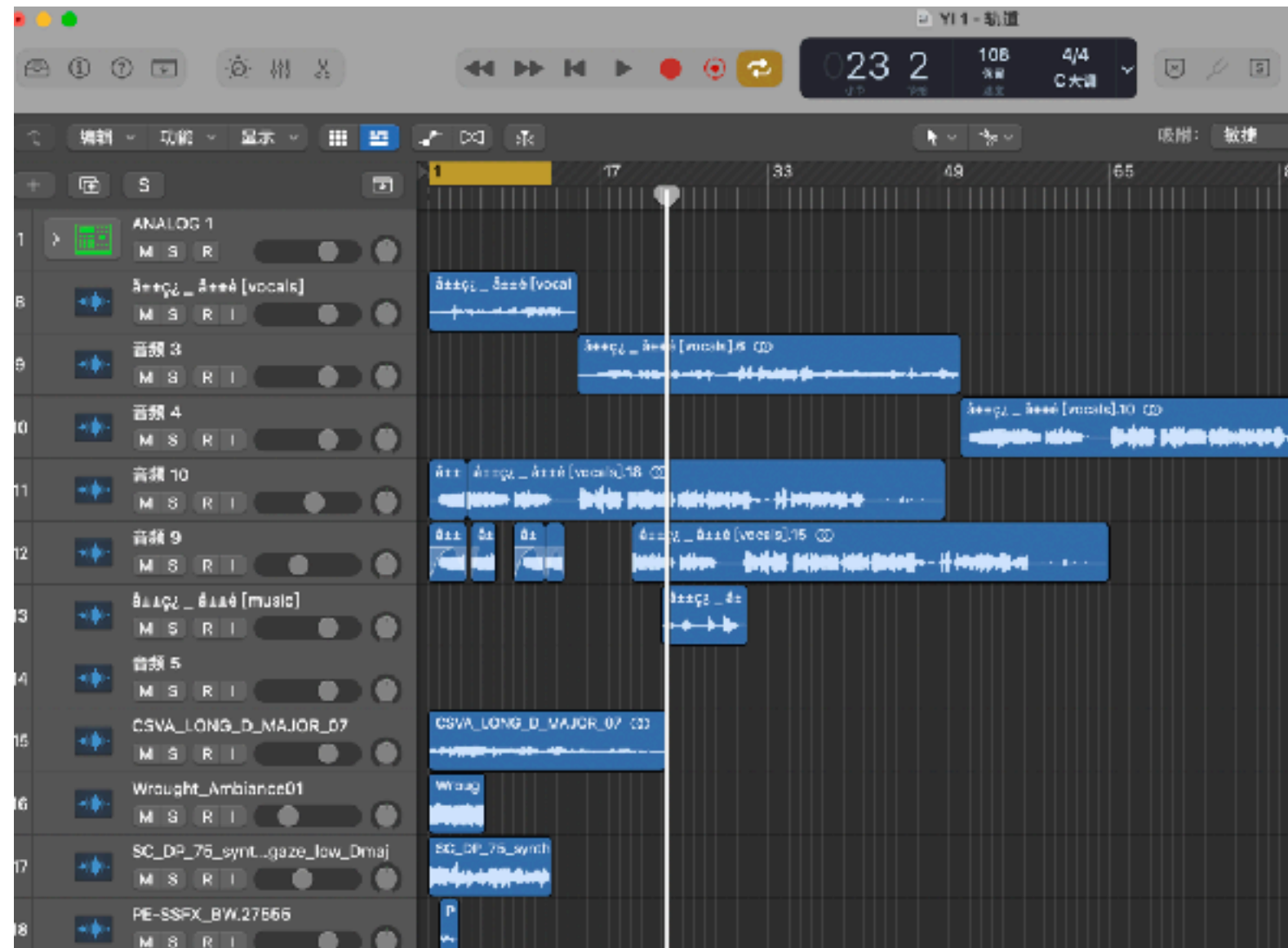
Since I have decided to challenge the new software Leonardo Da Vinci, my editing this time was also completed in Leonardo Da Vinci. The editing function of the new version of Da Vinci is similar to that of final cut pro, so I decided it would be very easy to get started with. In terms of editing, I have two reference directions: One is to explain the story plot clearly along the timeline. The second is a more abstract editing, expressing him in a more fashionable way and seeking clues visually. I completed the first version first. In the following days, I will try the editing method of the second version.

(1)

I collaborated with music producer Liangmei Duoji, who sampled traditional Yi ethnic instruments such as the mouth harp and the moon lute, echoing the storyline of the film.

After he completed the arrangement in logic pro, I put the rough cuts and the music together. We also conducted research together on Yi ethnic musicians such as Moxi Zishi and Jike Junyi.

But we reached an agreement that we didn't want to make the music too traditional, so we also added some piano melodies to drive the story's development.



RISK ASSESSMENT

Production Title: "Daughter of Moon"	
Director: Siqi Chen	Producer: LiangMeiDuoji
Production Date: 09.04.2025–13.04.2025	Production Company: /
Location: Kangding, Ganzi, Sichuan, China Xichang, Liangshan, Sichuan, China	

This short film structured around the rites of Yi womanhood, from birth by the hearth to the ceremonial skirt-changing ritual, a subversive love story resisting arranged marriage, and the symbolic journey of a girl becoming the "Daughter of the Moon."

1	Access/egress difficulties	11	Flying Ballet	21	Scaffolding
2	Alcohol/hospitality	12	Flown Scenery	22	Scenery Hazards
3	Animals	13	Food Preparation	23	Smoke & Vapour Effects
4	Audiences	14	Gas	24	Smoking
5	Biological Hazards	15	Hazardous Substance	25	Special Needs
6	Camera Operation	16	Hydraulic work paltforms	26	Stunts
7	Camera Cranes	17	Lasers/strobe lighting	27	Temperature - heat/cold
8	Children/ Young Person	18	Lifting Equipments	28	Vehicles
9	Compressed Gas	19	Location Lighting	29	Violence & Hostility
10	Confined Spaces	20	Location Vehicles	30	Visual Effects

📍 Day 1 — April 9 (Yajiageng, Kangding)

Time	Activity	Location	Team Involved	Notes
07:00 – 08:00	Crew briefing & breakfast	Hotel	All Departments	Safety notes & daily schedule rundown
08:00 – 09:30	Equipment check & location scout	Yajiageng entrance	Camera, Lighting, Director, Production	Light measurement, frame scouting
09:30 – 11:00	Hair, makeup, and styling	On-site prep area	Styling & Makeup	First look prep
11:00 – 13:00	Shooting ①: Scenic walking shots + intro frames	Ridge trail	Camera Crew, Talent, Director	Use steadycam or handheld for dynamics
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break	Local restaurant	All	Portable lunch with hot drinks
14:00 – 16:30	Shooting ②: Solo emotion shots with scenery	Cliff area	Camera Crew, Talent	Use natural light + bounce
16:30 – 18:00	Wrap, gear load, and data backup	Parking area	Camera Assist, DIT	Backup to dual drives
18:00 – 19:30	Transport to next site: Hong Haizi	In transit	Production	Confirm hotel check-in
Evening	Dinner + debrief	Hotel	Core Team	Finalize next day's plan

📍 Day 2 — April 10 (Hong Haizi, Kangding)

Time	Activity	Location	Team Involved	Notes
06:00 – 07:00	Sunrise preparation	Lakefront	Lighting, Camera	Position at least 30 mins before sunrise
07:00 – 09:00	Shooting ①: Sunrise wide shot + slow motion	Lake shore	Camera Crew, Director	Include reflections, use tripod + gimbal
09:00 – 11:00	Hair/makeup change + second look prep	Portable tent	Makeup & Styling	Warm costume for mountain conditions
11:00 – 13:00	Shooting ②: Fashion walkthrough + aerial shots	Open trail near lake	Camera, Drone Unit, Lighting	Use drone for high angle
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	On-site box lunch	All	Ensure hydration
14:00 – 16:30	Shooting ③: Close-ups & emotion performance	Rock field	Director, Talent, Camera	Direct sunlight – use diffusion panel
16:30 – 18:00	Wrap-up & travel to Liangshan (Gukede)	In transit	Production	Approx. 4–5 hr drive
Evening	Settle in Gukede + backup	Hotel / basecamp	All / DIT	Review selects if time allows

📍 Day 3 — April 11 (Gukede, Liangshan)

Time	Activity	Location	Team Involved	Notes
07:00 – 08:30	Makeup, Styling & Gear Setup	Village base	Styling, Makeup, Camera, Lighting	Traditional Yi costume styling
08:30 – 11:30	Shooting ①: Cultural portrait series	Village alley	Camera Crew, Talent, Director	Focus on texture & color contrast
11:30 – 13:00	Shooting ②: Interaction with local community	Courtyard	Director, Camera, Production	Coordinate with villagers respectfully
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch with locals	Gukede family house	All	Optional documentation
14:00 – 17:00	Shooting ③: Yi dance / choreography	Open communal square	Camera, Lighting, Talent	Use wide & telephoto coverage
17:00 – 18:30	Behind-the-scenes / environmental sounds	Village corners	BTS Crew, Sound	Atmospheric sound recording
Evening	Data transfer & creative review	Lodge	DIT, Director	Prep schedule for Day 4

📍 Day 4 — April 12 (Gukede Nature + Ritual Scene)

Time	Activity	Location	Team Involved	Notes
04:30 – 06:00	Sunrise ritual prep + early call	Forest altar site	Styling, Camera, Lighting	Ensure thermal blankets & hot drinks
06:00 – 08:00	Shooting ①: Sacred morning ceremony	Hilltop or ritual space	Director, Talent, Drone, Lighting	Smoke / incense effects optional
08:00 – 10:30	Shooting ②: Solo storytelling monologue	Forest trail	Talent, Director, Sound	Clean ambient audio
10:30 – 12:00	Return + meal break	Basecamp	All	Quick reset for second session
12:00 – 15:00	Shooting ③: Dialogue + emotion-focused scenes	Custom interior set	Lighting, Director, Sound	Isolate sound, manage reflection
15:00 – 17:30	Model interviews + video portraits	Village scenic zones	Interview Crew	For post-release promo
Evening	Wrap celebration + footage preview	Local restaurant	All	Optional group photo session

📍 Day 5 — April 13 (Wrap-Up Day in Gukede)

Time	Activity	Location	Team Involved	Notes
07:00 – 09:00	Final makeup + last look styling	Basecamp	Styling & Makeup	Highlight accessories and details
09:00 – 11:00	Final stills & editorial fashion poses	Natural textures / village walls	Photographer, Talent	Full-body, mid-shots, and detail shots
11:00 – 12:30	Equipment packing + checklist verification	Hotel / camp	Tech & Production	Confirm return logistics
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	On-site	All	Final group briefing
13:30 – 17:00	Return transport to Chengdu	En route	Production	Footage carried by team (no shipping)
Evening	Data consolidation & post-production handoff	Chengdu studio	DIT Team	Prepare for editing phase

Detailed Production Budget Report

1. Transportation & Logistics

Item	Unit Price (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Van rental (with driver) – 5 days	¥800	5	¥4,000	£440
Fuel & toll fees (Kangding, Liangshan)	¥500	1	¥500	£55
Roundtrip train tickets (Chengdu–Leshan) – 6 pax	¥200	6	¥1,200	£132
Local shuttle transport (daily)	¥200	5	¥1,000	£110
Subtotal			¥6,700	£737

2. Accommodation

Item	Unit Price (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Hotel in Kangding (3 nights × 3 rooms)	¥300	9 room-nights	¥2,700	£297
Guesthouse in Gukede (2 nights × 3 rooms)	¥250	6 room-nights	¥1,500	£165
Subtotal			¥4,200	£462

3. Equipment Rental

Item	Unit Price (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Camera body (e.g. RED/FX6)	¥800/day	5	¥4,000	£440
Lenses (2x primes + 1 zoom)	¥300/day	5	¥1,500	£165
Lighting kit (LED panels, stands)	¥400/day	5	¥2,000	£220
Stabilizer (Ronin/Steadicam)	¥200/day	5	¥1,000	£110
Subtotal			¥8,500	£935

4. Data & Post-Production Prep / 数据与后期准备

Item	Unit Price (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Portable SSDs (2TB)	¥800	2	¥1,600	£176
On-site DIT labor	¥400/day	3	¥1,200	£132
Software licenses / LUTs	¥300	1	¥300	£33
Subtotal			¥3,100	£341

5. Crew Fees / 团队人员费用

Role	Fee per Day (CNY)	Days	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Director	¥1,000	5	¥5,000	£550
Photographer / DP	¥800	5	¥4,000	£440
Lighting technician	¥600	5	¥3,000	£330
Producer / Coordinator	¥700	5	¥3,500	£385
Makeup artist	¥600	5	¥3,000	£330
Assistant (1 person)	¥400	5	¥2,000	£220
Subtotal			¥20,500	£2,255

6. Wardrobe, Styling & Makeup / 服装造型与妆发

Item	Unit Price (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Yi ethnic costumes (purchase/rental)	¥600	3	¥1,800	£198
Makeup & hairstyling products	¥500	1 set	¥500	£55
Accessories (custom props, earrings, hair pieces)	¥700	1 set	¥700	£77
Costume maintenance / cleaning	¥300	1	¥300	£33
Subtotal			¥3,300	£363

7. Talent / 演员与模特费用

Item	Fee (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Main model fee	¥1,000	2 days	¥2,000	£220
Local villagers (appearance fee or thank-you gifts)	¥300	5	¥1,500	£165
Supporting model (1 person, 2 days)	¥800	2	¥1,600	£176
Subtotal			¥5,100	£561

8. Meals & Daily Expenses / 餐饮与日常消耗

Item	Unit Price (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Meals for crew (avg ¥60 per person/day)	¥60	6 pax × 5 days	¥1,800	£198
Snacks, coffee, water, thermos bottles	¥300	1	¥300	£33
Subtotal			¥2,100	£231

9. Permits, Fees & Local Support / 拍摄许可与支持费用

Item	Fee (CNY)	Quantity	Subtotal (CNY)	GBP Equivalent
Gukede village filming permission	¥500	1	¥500	£55
Red envelopes / gifts for village hosts	¥500	3	¥1,500	£165
Local fixer / interpreter	¥400/day	3	¥1,200	£132
Subtotal			¥3,200	£352

GRAND TOTAL / 总计

Currency	Amount
CNY	¥50,000
GBP	£5,500



Self-Reflection:

Introduction: A Journey Back to the Self through the Lens

This project has been a profound investigation into the intersection of Yi culture and visual storytelling. Initially, I was unclear about my exact direction; yet as I gradually returned to Liangshan, Sichuan—the heart of my ethnic roots—I began to anchor my practice in something deeply personal. Through photography and film, I aimed to revisit and reinterpret my cultural identity, one that I am intimately familiar with yet constantly estranged from due to years of displacement. This journey was not only a visual experiment but also a return to memory, a reactivation of knowledge, and a reconstruction of visual language rooted in embodied experience.

Visual Strategies and Creative Outcomes: A Gentle Form of Intervention

This project’s final outcome unfolded in three interrelated visual formats, each addressing a different layer of Yi cultural representation.

- 1. Portraiture as Living Archive

Through fieldwork, I captured portraits of elders and community members across Yi villages. Rather than aesthetic objects, these images function as living archives—quiet visual testimonies shaped through trust and proximity, not performance. Each portrait holds the texture of oral memory.

- 2. Fashion Editorials as Cultural Translation

Collaborating with Yi designers Anyu Aga and Simé Jianwu, I produced editorial photographs that bridge traditional garments with contemporary visual language. The work reinterprets symbols—textiles, color codes, silhouettes—allowing photography to act as a respectful translator between heritage and modernity.

- 3. Short Film as Ritual Narrative

The core of my visual reflection was an experimental short film structured around the life stages of a Yi woman. It begins with “Born by the Hearth,” a poetic expression of life’s origin in fire-centered domestic space, then follows key rites of passage: the *huan tongqun* (skirt-changing ceremony) marking womanhood, a narrative of resistance based on the folklore *Mabu Feikui*, and a final scene of transformation—“Daughter of the Moon”—featuring symbols like the yueqin (moon lute) and the iconic lotus-leaf hat. Across these scenes, visual motifs such as fire, animals, sun-moon symbols and ritual gestures are woven throughout, building a layered Yi aesthetic system.

1. Research Beginnings: Asking the Question of Identity

I was born in Jiulong County, a region in the Yi-Tibetan corridor where Tibetan and Yi cultures overlap. Growing up, I was surrounded by rituals I could not understand. My grandmother’s prayer wheels never ceased spinning, while my grandfather’s bundles of sacred twigs would be scattered by mountain wind before dawn. These mysterious visual fragments haunted me like unsolved poetic riddles. They became my earliest encounters with ritual aesthetics.

Thus, the central question that shaped this project became: *How can I visually reconstruct cultural identity and ritual from an intergenerational, diasporic position?* I wanted to approach this from a Gen Z perspective—not to judge or romanticize, but to look with both critical care and imaginative openness.

In the early phase, my research focused on the shared cosmologies of Tibetan and Yi traditions, especially nature worship. However, I later realized that while I had already explored Tibetan imagery in my previous works, my understanding of Yi culture remained fragmented. Therefore, I decided to devote this project solely to the Yi context—both as an act of inquiry and of cultural reclamation.

2. Research Methodology: A Triad of Fieldwork, Archive, and Image-Making

My methodology evolved into three interwoven threads: ethnographic fieldwork, visual and textual archival research, and critical analysis of contemporary image-makers.

I conducted fieldwork in multiple counties across Liangshan, including Guokede, Puge, Butuo, Mianning, and Zhaojue. The process involved more than just capturing scenes—it required forging trust and mutual understanding. Many elders were not opposed to being photographed, but few were familiar with the act of being intentionally documented. I had to slow down and shed my role as a “photographer,” instead sitting with them as a granddaughter would, listening to stories of the mountains until the moment felt right to ask for a photo. The resulting images were not "captured"; they were "offered"—a byproduct of shared presence and narrative intimacy.

Language presented both a bridge and a boundary. While I have basic knowledge of the Yi language, many local dialects were beyond my fluency. Trust, therefore, had to be built through non-verbal gestures—passing a cigarette, sharing tea, carrying firewood. The fact that I belonged to the same ethnic lineage (from the “Nick” family line) created an immediate sense of kinship that transcended linguistic gaps. Our local guide, Bugang, was instrumental in making many of the shoot logistics possible—from recruiting local extras to orchestrating animal scenes. Through our conversations, I became acutely aware of our generational divergence: I was a cultural returnee; he was a local constantly seeking the outside world.

My collaboration with Xi Mei, a respected Yi costume archivist and fashion consultant, was another cornerstone of the project. Xi Mei possesses an extraordinary private collection of antique Yi garments and has worked with fashion publications such as *W* China, Harper’s *Bazaar*, and *Vogue*. Her meticulous knowledge of symbolic patterns, regional dress differences, and historic garment use corrected several of my misconceptions—for instance, my mistaken fusion of the Adu region's habulate (shawl) with ShenZha skirts. Through her mentorship, I was able to style the editorial images and short film scenes without misrepresenting the culture. The process of styling became, in itself, a mode of research and cultural translation.

Beyond clothing, I conducted interviews with local Bimo priests and Yi elders to learn about cosmological symbols such as the fire motif and the sun-moon glyphs. These later became recurring visual codes in my narrative. I also engaged in sound ethnography—documenting traditional Yi instruments like the *kouxian* (mouth harp) and *yueqin* (moon lute). These sonic textures were later integrated into my short film score through a collaboration with musician Liangmei Duoji.

Throughout this phase, I realized my practice was leaning toward a form of “visual ethnography”—but one that refuses to exoticize or extract. Instead, it prioritizes rhythm, bodily presence, and reciprocal storytelling. The camera became less of a witness and more of a co-creator.

3. Visual Influences: Internal Perspectives and Constructed Aesthetics

The development of my visual approach was shaped by the works of two photographers: Huanabei and Kin Coedel—both of whom engage with ethnic minority aesthetics from distinctive angles.

Huanabei, though not of Yi descent, has lived in the Yi highlands for years. His work taught me the value of the “internal gaze.” His photographs do not carry the weight of anthropological voyeurism or cultural spectacle. Instead, they speak in whispers—intimate, slow, grounded in natural light and bodily time. His commitment to presence rather than performance directly influenced the pacing of my image-making, particularly my choice to work without artificial lighting and to wait for the right light rather than impose it.

In contrast, Kin Coedel’s fashion-oriented photography of Tibetan youth gave me a framework for aesthetic construction. His images merge documentary impulse with stylistic authorship, offering cultural specificity without rigidity. I was inspired by his ability to make cultural symbols feel current and lightweight. From him, I learned that identity can be expressed playfully, not just solemnly—and that visual storytelling can oscillate between reverence and experimentation.

These references helped me find balance between internal documentation and external projection, between emotional verité and aesthetic authorship. They allowed me to move fluidly between the “archive” and the “editorial,” between the quiet field portrait and the stylized campaign shot.

4. Challenges, Embodiment, and Reflexivity

No matter how thorough the preparation, shooting on location in the Yi highlands came with its own set of unpredictable variables. One of the most significant challenges was the volatility of natural light. At such high altitudes, weather changed rapidly—often shifting from harsh noon light to complete fog in minutes. Each scene had to be scheduled with generous time buffers, but even that wasn’t always enough.

The most dramatic disruption came on April 14, when a sudden snowstorm halted our shoot in Guokede. That day was crucial—we were scheduled to film multiple scenes including the skirt-changing ritual and the fireplace narrative. The mountain roads iced over; vehicles couldn’t move; actors were stuck in transit. I made the decision to rewrite the scenes and step into the role myself. It was not merely a logistical improvisation—it became a deeply personal act of embodiment.

The skirt-changing ritual is a traditional rite of passage for Yi girls, marking their transition into womanhood. Growing up outside of the Yi region, I never underwent this ritual. As I changed into the ceremonial skirt on set, surrounded by firelight and snow, I realized I wasn’t acting—I was fulfilling a lost rite of passage. The camera captured not just a scene, but a moment of cultural repair. It was less a reenactment than a reclamation—what I call a “performative healing.”

This moment opened up deeper questions about authorship and identity. Who was this film for? Was I documenting culture for an outsider audience, or allowing the culture to speak for itself? I began to abandon pre-planned “high concept” frames and turned toward ambiguity—letting incomplete, abstract, even blurred images stand in for certainty. The final short film is not a conclusive narrative, but a porous one—open to gaps, suggestion, and continuation.

This reflexive stance also extended to my role as a "within-community creator." As a Yi individual raised outside my cultural homeland, I constantly navigated dual pressures: the expectation to “represent” and the desire to “belong.” These internal negotiations shaped every decision, from costume styling to editing structure.

5. Collaboration, Time Management and On-Site Leadership

From a production perspective, this project demanded my most comprehensive project planning to date. Field research spanned over a month, during which I conducted ongoing photography and interviews. The short film shoot, however, was executed in just four days, with a tight schedule requiring multi-location setups, role switching, and rapid adaptation.

I created detailed shot lists, lighting diagrams, contingency plans, and day-by-day scripts. But reality rarely followed plan. The ability to shift course quickly—whether due to weather, actor delays, or logistical gaps—was crucial. I learned to see creative direction not just as a vision holder, but as an adaptive on-site orchestrator.

The project was only possible due to strong team coordination. Key collaborators included Bugang (guide and fixer), Liangmei Duoji (composer and cultural advisor), photographer Zhuo, and our lighting, styling, and transportation teams. Every day, we adjusted based on real-time conditions—whether it was the decision to shoot in snowfall, or re-blocking scenes due to travel delays.

This phase taught me that photography is not only about capturing images, but also about managing emotional climates, logistical flows, and ethical responsibilities. “Cultural photography” is not a neutral act; it’s a choreography of power, trust, and improvisation. I developed stronger time management, interpersonal leadership, and adaptive strategy skills that I will carry into future large-scale projects.

6. Methodology and Critical Reflection: Toward a De-Colonised Visual Ethnography

Through the accumulation of field experiences, interviews, improvisations, and cultural negotiations, I began to formulate a methodology that is rooted in what I call *participatory witnessing*. Rather than treating culture as a fixed object to be displayed, I approached it as a living ecology in which I, too, am entangled. This awareness demanded a shift from extractive documentation to generative exchange.

Three methodological principles emerged:

- **Images as questions, not evidence:** Instead of confirming what we already “know” about Yi culture, my images aim to disrupt assumptions. They ask: what is not being seen? What is untranslatable?
- **Culture as cohabitation, not subject matter:** I avoided positioning Yi identity as a stylised motif. Instead, I treated every interaction—as trivial as passing a cigarette—as a moment of co-existence. A photo becomes a product of this shared time.
- **The camera as participant, not observer:** This became most evident in the skirt-changing ritual, where I crossed the boundary between filmmaker and subject. The act of filming myself was not self-portraiture—it was ceremonial reinsertion.

This approach aligns more closely with decolonial ethnography than with fashion documentary or standard field reportage. My goal was not to simplify Yi culture into visuals for consumption, but to allow the project to remain unfinished, ambiguous, and complex. I also allowed silences and non-events to remain in the final cut—because within silence, there is dignity.

What this reflection reinforces is that culturally-embedded projects are never “objective.” They are collaborative, emotional, ethical, and deeply relational. My critical position is one of negotiation—not resolution.

7. Future Vision: Circulation, Reciprocity and Ethical Platforms

One of the key questions that guided this project beyond production was: *Where will these images go?* Who gets to see them? Who benefits from them?

With 30K+ followers on RED and a growing community of culture-forward creatives, I am aware of my role as a mediator between indigenous visual languages and wider editorial/fashion networks. But visibility alone is not enough. My future practice is centred around *reciprocal circulation*—where image-making becomes a form of giving back, not just showcasing.

To that end, I am currently working on:

- **Returning prints to the villages** where I photographed, as archival gifts to the families involved. This is more than symbolic; it counters the one-way gaze of most fashion/editorial projects.
- **Expanding into curated exhibitions and visual essays**, where Yi culture is not just represented, but interpreted through co-authorship. I want to involve local collaborators in text writing, translation, and storytelling.
- **Building creative infrastructure with local brands** like A Niu A Ga and thinkers like Ximei Jianwu, allowing fashion photography to function as cultural preservation, not commodification.

Longer term, I aim to become a cultural strategist and visual researcher within Asia’s independent media and curatorial circuits. I believe in creating space for "non-dominant aesthetics" that are not defined by Western timelines or trends. Whether it’s through journals, exhibitions, or educational labs, I want to position my work as a bridge—between generations, between geographies, and between modes of seeing.

In the end, *the image is not a conclusion—it is a loop*. One that continues to return, revise, and re-root.

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