

Ethnicity and Kin Terms Among Two Kinds of Yi

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There are, according to the 1982 census, over 5,400,000 Yi people in China (Chen Shilin et.al. 1985:1). The story says that the term Yi (彝) was coined by Mao Zedong in the 1950s as a designation for a category of people formerly referred to by a large number of names, the most common of which were the generic Luoluo (倮倮) or the even broader term Yi (夷), which means simply "barbarians." The Chairman, both ideologically correct as a Communist and grateful for the help some of these people had rendered to the Communist Party at the time of the Long March, replaced this old, pejorative Yi with a homophonous term bearing a better meaning – a tripod or fine cooking pot¹. When the people of China were classified into 55 *minzu* in the late 1950s, this newer, nicer Yi was applied to a large number of diverse people living primarily in the provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou, and in small numbers in Guangxi (Guojia Minwei 1981:297).

The Yi, like certain other southwestern *minzu* such as the Miao and Yao, are widely diverse in their language and in their customs and habits. There are large numbers of Yi in Yunnan, for example, who speak only the Han language; other Yi speak one of a series of six related Tibeto-Burman dialect groups, mutually unintelligible and indeed more different from each other than are the various Han dialects such as Mandarin, Min, and Cantonese (Chen Shilin et. al. 1985:172). Various groups of Yi have several tens of different names for themselves (Hsieh 1982:6). In parts of Yunnan, the rural areas of entire counties are inhabited almost exclusively by Yi people; in other areas, such as Yanbian county in Panzhihua city, Yi inhabit the highlands and Han the lowlands. Yi grow rice in some places; in others they grow buckwheat and potatoes. According to the five-stages of history scheme of orthodox Chinese communism, most of the Yi of Yunnan and Guizhou lived at the feudal stage before the democratic reforms of 1956, but the Yi of Liangshan, according to this scheme, were still at the slave-system stage



Lipuo wedding

Under the direction of the local Daoist priest, the bride and groom burn incense together at an altar outside the groom's house, immediately before entering. (Stevan Harrell)



Nuosu wedding

The bride's wedding party, consisting of herself and her male relatives, warms itself by a welcoming fire lit by the groom's relatives. The groom takes no part in the wedding. (Stevan Harrell)

(Liangshan 1985:53). Dress and jewelry also vary widely.

Nevertheless, all the Yi, by definition, form a single **minzu**, a fact that points up the difference between this Chinese term and any Western category. According to the Chinese formulation, which is derived from a scheme worked out in the Soviet Union in Stalin's time, a **minzu** is a social group with a common territory, a common language, a common economic base and a common psychological makeup expressed in a common culture (Li Shaoming 1986:38-39). The term is usually rendered into English as "nationality" in official Chinese publications, but it is clearly something different from what English speakers usually think of as a nationality, a people with a nation-state of its own. "Ethnic Group" is perhaps a bit closer, but most Western definitions of "ethnic group" require a group so designated to have some sort of "group feeling" or "ethnic self-identification". (see Keyes 1976, Bentley 1987) something not necessary in, and in fact not always present in, the Chinese **minzu**.

But even if we define **minzu** as a group with Stalin's four kinds of characteristics in common, there are still problems, because groups such as the Yi, the Miao, and the Hui in fact do not share these characteristics. There are many cases in which a group has tried repeatedly to get itself recognized by the government as a **minzu**, claiming that it does not share the four kinds of characteristics with other members of the group to which it has been assigned. But almost all of these have been unsuccessful, and have remained for official purposes a part of a **minzu** with whom the group's own members do not identify. For example, the Xifan of southwestern Sichuan and the Baima of northwestern Sichuan are both members of the Tibetan **minzu**, but feel themselves that they have little in common with the Tibetans. Since the original classification in 1956, only one group, the Jinuo of southern Yunnan, has successfully gained independent status in 1979 (Du Yuting 1985:1).

So what ultimately makes a group a **minzu** is that the government, more precisely the Minzu Commission (國家民族事務委員會 officially translated as the State Commission on Nationalities), says it is one. The Government originally classified **minzu** ostensibly according to the four kinds of characteristics, but in fact must have considered other factors such as self-identity and ease of administration, and felt free to ignore self-identity as well if either administrative convenience or the four kinds of characteristics got in the way. That, of course, was in the beginning; in the thirty years since the early classification the **minzu** as categories have taken on a life of their own. Whatever their original basis, they have become real entities in national and regional politics, and self-identification has sometimes developed where it did not exist before. Sani in east central Yunnan and Nuosu in Liangshan both know that

they are Yi, and they use the term Yi for themselves when they are speaking the Han language, which large numbers of them can. So it is simplistic to oppose government-designated **minzu** with self-designated ethnic groups; self-identification changes, and government categories, by virtue of their official status, sometimes become as socially real as the folk categories they often lumped together back in the 1950s.

It is thus difficult to say what it means to be Yi. One speaks, or at least one's ancestors spoke, one of the "Loloish" group of Tibetan-Burman languages (Bradley 1979); aside from this one is a Yi if one has been classified as such. What it definitely does not mean, at least in practice, is that one shares all kinds of common characteristics with the other members of the Yi **minzu**. In fact, even within the three-county area of Panzhihua City (攀枝花市) at the southern tip of Sichuan, there are various kinds of Yi people who differ in ecology, language, dress, marriage customs, religious practices and, perhaps most important, their relations with the surrounding Han majority. The extent to which they possess a sense of group unity is also problematical. In this paper, I use the kinship terminology systems of two groups of Yi in Panzhihua City to illustrate a simple but important point: that in using only the four kinds of criteria to define **minzu**, the Chinese state has defined groups that in fact do not meet its own criteria. The groups discussed in the paper differ greatly in all the dimensions of the Stalinist definition; relations with the Han majority constitute one of the most important factors in shaping the divergent cultural practices of various Yi peoples. If there is going to be any unifying factor in Yi identity, it must be the factor of ethnic self-identification, deriving from a combination of putative common descent and perceived group interest. Even this is problematical in the case of the Yi, but that is the subject of another paper.

The Yi of Panzhihua City

Panzhihua City, centered around a large iron, steel, vanadium, and titanium mining and metallurgical complex built since 1965, consists in its entirety of two counties and a district. Renhe District (仁和區), which surrounds the city proper and stretches to its south, was carved out of Yongren and Huaping counties in Yunnan, and Huili and Yanbian counties in Sichuan. Yanbian and Miyi (米易) counties, which lie to the north of Renhe District, originally belonged to Liangshan Yi Autonomous **Zhou** in Sichuan.

There are at least five kinds of Yi who are native to the Panzhihua area.² In Miyi county live two groups who originally migrated from Guizhou; they call themselves White Yi (白彝) and Red Yi (紅彝) in

the Han language. They have a strong sense of ethnic identity, but little left of the cultural characteristics that would define them as Yi; in the case of the Red Yi, the most salient of these are an ancestral altar of pine branches and the practice of double cross-cousin marriage. In other ways, Red Yi are indistinguishable from Han. I know little else about the Red and White Yi of Miyi, having spent only one day interviewing them.

As a member of a joint research team investigating family organization among the Yi and Han of Panzhihua, however, I had considerably more contact with three other kinds of Yi in Panzhihua: the Nuosu, or Liangshan Yi, of Yanbian County; the Lipuo, who also call themselves in the Han language White Yi, in Pingdi and neighboring townships, Renhe district; and the Shuitian of Futian and Pingjiang townships, Renhe district. Our team was under the joint sponsorship of Sichuan University, the Panzhihua City Office of Artifact Management (文物管理處), and the University of Washington: six of us spent two weeks in the Lipuo community of Yishala in Pingdi, one week in the Shuitian community of Zhuangshang in Pingjiang, and one week in the Nuosu township of Gaoping. These three kinds of Yi are all very different from each other; the only characteristics they now have in common are their official classification as members of the Yi *minzu* and the fact that they know they are not Han. The Shuitian do not even agree that they are Yi; they think of the Yi as mountain barbarians and have no wish to be associated with them; they are both puzzled and bitter that they have not won recognition as a separate *minzu*.

The Shuitian, in fact, used to speak a Yi language, but now only a few older people still remember even basic vocabulary, and we could find no informants who knew kinship terms beyond those for primary relations. This certainly has a lot to do with their own relationship to the Han: the Shuitian assimilated culturally in self-defense against the pressure of Han landlords and successive Han-dominated governments. Their system of kinship terminology, like their dress, their religion, and their language, is now identical with that of the Han; only the sense of self-identity and the official classification as members of a non-Han minority distinguish them from their Han neighbors.

Of more interest here are the ethnic relations and kinship terminologies of the Nuosu and Lipuo. Both groups speak Yi languages today, and adult members of both groups are able to give full sets of kinship terms; they use these terms daily and with ease. But the kinship terminology systems of the two groups are very different from each other, reflecting their different histories and their different relationships with neighboring Han people. How and why the two systems differ is the

topic of this paper.

The Nuosu and Their Place in Yanbian

Nuosu, meaning black, is the self-designation of the largest subgroup of Yi, the speakers of the northern dialect, who live in the Greater and Lesser Liangshan area of Sichuan, and number about 2,000,000 people. Panzhihua City is one of the southernmost areas of Nuosu population. The 25,000 or so Nuosu (population statistics are arrayed by *minzu*, so we know only that there were 64,000 Yi at the time of the 1982 census, and have to estimate how many of these are Nuosu) are concentrated mostly in Yanbian County, where they are the largest minority and inhabitants of the area; most of them came at various times in the 19th. and 20th. centuries, when they were driven out of their earlier homes in Liangshan and settled in the highlands of Yanbian.

The ethnic division between Nuosu and Han in Yanbian county fits easily into the standard Stalinist model – the two groups are distinguished in territory, language, economy, and culture. Nuosu identity is thus defined in terms of separation from or contrast to Han society and culture. Territorially, the highlands of Yanbian are inhabited almost exclusively by Nuosu; the only major exceptions are the Lisu township of Aimen and the Miao township of Hongbao, though there are a few Dai, Lisu, and Naxi scattered through Nuosu areas, as well as a very small number of Han families almost everywhere. The lowlands, on the other hand, are overwhelmingly Han, though again a scattering of people of other groups can be found in any village in Panzhihua. Gaoping, where we conducted our work with the Nuosu, is situated at the crest of the range of hills that divides Yanbian from Renhe. Above 1,800 meters is Gaoping, and the population is Nuosu; below 1,800 meters are other townships whose population is Han.

Similarly, the Nuosu are distinguishable in language – they and almost nobody else speak Nuosu (or the northern dialect of Yi); while most Nuosu know Han as a second language, almost no Han speak Nuosu.

The Nuosu economy is not as separate from the Han economy as it used to be before 1956, but it is noteworthy that there are as far as I know no markets in Nuosu areas anywhere in Yanbian; there is certainly none in Gaoping, though there is a supply and marketing cooperative and one little store run by a resident Han family. Nuosu do go to market, but it is distant and inconvenient, and they have little cash income, so they go infrequently.

Finally, cultural separation is manifest in a number of ways. As one drives from the lowlands up into Nuosu country, one sees the house-style change abruptly. Han houses have the pigpen attached to the main

house, and are built entirely of mud walls. Nuosu houses may be built of mud, but the pigpens will be separate and built of wood; old-style Nuosu houses are themselves built of wooden planks. Dress changes as well. Rural Han men and women inevitably wear cotton pants and several layers of cotton or synthetic shirts; older people wrap their heads in black turbans. Nuosu men sometimes wear Han dress, but are more inclined than the Han to wear the turbans, and many wear the wide-cuffs that give the ethnic designation **da kujiao** to certain groups of Nuosu. But it is in the dress of the women that the distinction is most obvious. Nuosu women, unless they cannot afford it, wear on all occasions an elaborate costume of a long skirt, sewn together out of cloth of many bright colors and with tiny pleats, a jacket with elaborate appliqués, a silver collar, and distinctive headgear: a four-cornered vertical black headdress with a red string tied around it for the unmarried and younger married women, and a brightly colored towel wrapped in a cylindrical shape for the older women.

Aside from these highly visible ethnic markers, there are many other features that distinguish Nuosu from Han culturally, and there were even more in the past. Particularly important are the caste and clan systems of traditional society. The caste system divided society into aristocrats (Black Yi, in the Han language) and commoners (White Yi), and also contained slaves, usually of Han origin (Sichuan 1985:19-80). The castes were endogamous with varying degrees of strictness, but neither a Black nor a White Yi will to this day marry a Han, and a Black Yi will not marry a White Yi, on pain of ostracism from the family and patriclan. Caste-endogamous cross-cousin marriage was the ideal form.

The patriclan was the other most important unit of traditional Nuosu society. Black Yi clans in particular were highly solidary groups, reciprocally ranked and entering into political and marriage alliances. In Gaoping today, where the Nuosu immigrated but recently, the clan system has lost its force, but people still know their clans and their ancestry, and younger members of aristocratic clans can recite twenty or more generations of genealogy. Even White Yi usually know the name of their clan and the details of their ancestry for seven or eight generations.

Nuosu society, then, was shaped by both internal and external features. The internal features were the caste and clan systems, and the external features were the clear cultural separation and distinction from Han culture and society. Both internal and external features are reflected clearly in the Nuosu kinship terminology described below.

The Lipuo and Their Place in Pingdi

Along the old highway that runs south from Panzhihua City all the

way to Kunming, there are a number of communities of Yi people, who call themselves Lipuo in their own language, which they call Libie. Lipuo people are speakers of the Central Dialect of Yi, which covers a large area of central Yunnan, including much of Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, and stretches to the southernmost parts of Panzhihua City (Chen Shilin et. al. 1985:211). In Renhe district, Lipuo people predominate in the townships of Pingdi, Ala, and Dalongtan; they also live in smaller numbers in neighboring townships. The majority of the Yi in Renhe district are probably Lipuo, with only a few Nuosu living in remote mountain villages and probably two or three thousand Shuitian in Futian and Pingjiang.

The Lipuo have a very different relationship to Han society than do their Nuosu relatives. Whereas Nuosu culture in Yanbian is defined in terms of contrast to and separation from Han culture, and thus fits in well with the Stalinist conceptions of ethnicity, the relationship of Lipuo to Han is characterized by continual Lipuo absorption of Han people and Han culture. At the local level, Lipuo cannot be distinguished from Han by territory, language, economy, or culture, but only by inquiry; since the Lipuo have absorbed Han culture but not Han identity.

The origins of the Pingdi Lipuo are not entirely clear, but much light is shed on the question by the people's own legends that their ancestors came from Nanjing or Jiangxi or Huguang, all areas in central and eastern China. Now there are today no Yi of any sort in any of these areas, and the distribution of Tibeto-Burman languages makes it seem very unlikely that there ever were. According to local accounts, the ancestors of today's Lipuo came as soldiers at various times from the early Ming to the early Qing dynasty. Historical records confirm that these dynasties did send military expeditions to the area that is now Yongren; we can speculate that today's Lipuo are descendants of intermarriages between Han troops from eastern and central China and local women, or alternatively, that they are the descendants of a local society partly transformed culturally by the in-marriage of some Han men, mostly soldiers. It thus seems quite probable that the absorption of Han people and culture into local society began as early as the end of the Ming, and perhaps earlier. That process has continued to produce the hybrid culture of today's Lipuo, which can be seen in all four kinds of characteristics of the Stalinist definition of *minzu*.

First, the Han and Lipuo are intermixed territorially in Pingdi. The population of the township in 1987 was 12,336 people of whom 62% were Yi and 38% Han. But this is not a case of ecological separation between two ethnic groups (Barth 1956). Each of the eight administrative villages in Pingdi contains a mixture of the two *minzu*, with the

proportion of Yi varying from 37% in Matou to 91% in Yishala. And they live intermixed, not in separate neighborhoods. In Yishala, there are almost no households whose membership is entirely Han; almost all Han are married into predominantly Yi households, and the few "Han households" generally have some members who are Yi. This is made possible, of course, by intermarriage, which has long been a possibility, and may well have a continuous history from the time of earliest Han settlement in the area. Children of mixed marriages are generally classified as Yi.

Second, language does not completely distinguish Lipuo from Han. Libie (central Yi) is the language of everyday discourse in Yishala, and is the first language learned by all Yi children there. Han who marry into the community learn the language quickly if they do not already speak it; even members of predominantly Han households usually speak passable Libie. But all members of the community, with only a handful of exceptions, are fluent in the local Han dialect, which children learn as soon as they are of school age. Han language is used in school, for certain political meetings, and on formal ritual occasions such as weddings and funerals. It has been the written language of the Lipuo people at least since 1654, the date of the earliest document we found in Yishala, and is the only language, spoken or written, used in the Yishala school after the first grade.

Third, there is no economic distinction between Yi and Han in Pingdi, with the possible exception that merchant families in Pingdi town might tend to be Han. But I am not sure about this, and there are no more than a few tens of merchant families there anyway. In Yishala, all families are farmers and members of production cooperatives (formerly called production teams). It is my impression that Han families may be slightly poorer, on the average, but I have not yet computed income, and the difference is not great; indeed it is difficult to distinguish a Yi from a Han family, given the amount of intermarriage.

Finally, there are no visible cultural differences between Lipuo and Han in Pingdi. All wear the same ordinary Chinese peasant clothes—pants and shirts; older women of both *minzu* wrap their heads in plain black turbans. Houses are identical, built of mud walls with tile roofs, arranged around courtyards. There are often decorative panels on the wall at the rear of the house, the site of the main guest room, which usually includes the altars to Heaven and Country, to the Stove God, to the Ancestors, and to the Lord of the Earth. This or a similar altar is typical of Han folk religion everywhere in rural China, and most of the yearly rituals also follow the local Han pattern. The Lipuo do celebrate

the major Yi holiday of the torch festival on the 24th. of the sixth lunar month, but so, locally, do the Han. And the weddings and funerals, both of which we observed while living in Yishala, not only follow Han patterns but are conducted in the Han language.

Despite these territorial, linguistic, economic, and cultural mixings however, Lipuo people in Pingdi have a strong sense of ethnic identity. Many customs which in fact are local customs observed by Han as well as Yi are identified by the local people as being Yi customs. And even when speaking the Han language, in which they are perfectly fluent, Lipuo people frequently talk about **women Yizu**, we Yi people. The task of this paper is to show how the kinship terminology of the Lipuo reflects their particular relationship with the Han, and how it is different from the Nuosu/Han relationship. To do so, it will be necessary to compare in detail the two kinship terminology systems.

Nuosu Kinship Terminology

Nuosu kinship terminology is laid out in detail in the chart below. The terms were collected from Mr. Lama Nyite ([0444]), or Ma Fuming (馬富明), a 26 year-old Nuosu peasant residing in You'ai Cooperative, Tuanjie Village, Gaoping Township. The session was a public one, and several other local people participated informally providing something of a check on the accuracy of the terms. The orthography is the standard romanization for Northern Yi (Nuosu) used in linguistic and pedagogical works in the P.R.C. There are no syllable-final consonants in Nuosu; the t, x, and p tacked on to the end of certain syllables indicate tone (Chen Shilin 1985:14).³

The Nuosu kinship terminology system, it is evident from the chart, shows several characteristics consonant with a system of bilateral cross-cousin marriage between patrilines:

1. In the generation above ego, relatives that would be the same person if cross-cousin marriage were rigorously followed are in fact called by the same term. That is, in double-cross cousin marriage, or sister exchange, one's father's brother has married one's mother's sister, and

Patvu = FB = MZH

Monyi = FBW = MZ

In the same system, one's mother's brother has married one's father's sister, and we have

Onyi = MB = FZH

Axbo = MBW = FZ

2. In ego's own generation, parallel cousins, who are children of **Patvu** and **Monyi**, that is of FB and MZ, are not possible marriage partners, so for the male ego, they are equated with own siblings:

Vyvtvu = OB = OMZS = OFBS (O or Y at the beginning of the definition of a kin term refers to alter's being older or younger than ego)

Ixyi = YB = YMZS = YFBS

Hnimo = Z = MZD = FBD

While the children of **Onyi** and **Axbo**, that is of MB and FZ, are possible marriage partners for ego or his sister, and are thus called by different names:

Assat = MBD = FZD and

Onyisse = MBS = FZS (**Onyisse** means, literally, **onyi's** son).

In short, parallel cousins, who are not marriageable, are equated with own siblings, while cross cousins, who are marriageable, are called by a different term. This is the familiar "Iroquoian" system of cousin terminology.

3. There are some equations made, though not all the possible ones, between ego's cousins spouses and the siblings of ego they are permitted to marry. For example:

Vyvtvu = OB = OMBDH (older than ego)

Ixyi = YB = YMBDH (younger than ego)

Nyimo = Z = MBSW

4. There are some equations made, though again not all the possible ones, between one's affines and the consanguines that would fill those affinal positions if cross-cousin marriage were rigorously followed. For example:

Ixyi = YB = YWZH

Nyimo = Z = WBW

Axbo = FZ = MBH = HM

5. There are only single terms for each sex in the generations more than one removed from ego's own. This may well reflect the fact that, in a system with bilateral cross-cousin marriages, there develops more than one route, or geneapath. (see Aktins 1976:4) through which ego can trace relationship to a particular alter. So

Axpu = FF = MF = FFB = MFB = FFZH = MFZH = FMB = MMB
= FMZH = MMZH = HFF = WFF etc.

Amat = FM = MM = FFZ = MFZ = FFBW = MFBW = FMZ = MMZ
= FMBW = MMBW = HFM = WFM etc.

Axvu = FFF = MFF = FMF = MMF = FFFB etc.

Omat = FFM = MFM = FMM = MMM = MMMZ etc.

Ly = SS = DS = BSS = BDS = ZSS = ZDS

Lymat = SD = DD = BSD = BDD = ZSD = ZDD

In addition to all these features, which are characteristic of kin terminology systems in societies with cross-cousin marriage, there are two other, very general characteristics of the Nuosu system that ought to be pointed out. First, the system is a fairly narrowly closed one, that is, there are a limited number of terms, and as one proceeds outward from ego in any direction, the chances are likely that the term for a relative found at a fairly remote place on the genepath will be a term also used for a relative closer to ego. For example, a relative in the second ascending generation, however distant collaterally, will always be called **axpu** if male and **amat** if female. Similarly, sibling terms and same-generation affinal terms tend to repeat each other, making the system somewhat reminiscent of Australian systems, in which all members of one's own generation are either siblings or cross-cousins, with opposite sex cross-cousins eligible for marriage. Such systems, like the Nuosu system, have relatively narrow closure, or a relatively small number of terms. One might call these inclusive systems, in the sense that they tend to include many relatives in a single category. In Levi-Strauss's terminology, the Nuosu kinship terminology represents an elementary structure (Levi-Strauss 1967:xxiii); in the old-fashioned language of Morgan, it is more classificatory than descriptive.

Second, the Nuosu terminology system shares almost nothing with the Han system, either at the level of particular features or at the level of general principles. The particular features of the Han system include distinction between agnatic and all other cousins, distinction between siblings and all cousins, distinction between the elder and younger brothers of a direct agnatic ascendant, distinction between all ten kinds of lineals and collaterals in the first ascending generation, and a rigorous distinction between consanguines and affines at all levels. At the level of general principles, the Han system is more descriptive or more generative, in the sense that it incorporates more distant relatives not by including them in categories defined with respect to closer ones, but by creating new terms on the basis of certain principles. Its degree of closure is thus very wide; perhaps infinite; in this and in the fact that it does not represent any kind of prescriptive marriage system, it represents what Levi-Strauss would call a complex structure (*ibid.*).

It seems fair to say, then, that the Nuosu terminology has nothing to do with the Han terminology: it has no shared or borrowed vocabulary or principles of classification. Observation of the kin terminology system thus reinforces the idea expressed earlier, that Nuosu society defines itself in terms of separation from, and contrast to, the surrounding Han society and culture.

Lipuo Kinship Terminology

The kinship terminology of the Lipuo is set out in the following charts. A full set of terms were collected from Mr. Ma Maozeng, a 39-year old Hupuo of Yishala. The orthography is a modification of the standard Yi romanization constructed to accommodate the *æ* vowel and nasalized vowels, none of which occurs in Nuosu. Since I am not a trained field linguist, the accuracy of the phonetic transcription should be questioned.

It is clear from the chart that the Lipuo system in fact works on almost entirely different principles from the Nuosu system. The two do share some vocabulary, a reflection of the fact that both Nuosu and Libie are Yi languages. For example we can find the following cognates:

<u>Libie Term</u>	<u>Nuosu Term</u>
Amuo (M)	Axmo (M)
Uoyie (YB, YFBS, YFZS, YMBS, YMZS)	Ixyi (YB)
Sso (S)	Sse (S)
Yisimuo (W)	Shimo (W)
Abex (FF)	Apu (FF, FFB, MMB, etc.)
Nexmuo (YZ)	Hnimo (Z)
Litpuot (SS, DS)	Ly (SS, DS, etc.)
Litmo (SD, DD)	Lymat (SD, DD, etc.)

When we go beyond vocabulary to the structure of the system, however, we find few similarities. Taking each of the domains of kin terminology structure examined above in the Nuosu case, and looking at the corresponding domain in Libie, we can easily point out the differences.

1. In the first ascending generation, Libie distinguishes every kind of "aunt" and "uncle" from every other kind, and distinguishes father and mother from all the "aunts" and "uncles":

MZ = imuo; FBW = atmuo

MZH = idie; FOB = atpuo; FYB = uoyie

MB = jiujiut; FZH = laguxdie

MBW = jiuimuo; FZ = laguxmo

The initial terms are clearly Han borrowings; Han terms are borrowed precisely in those places where Han makes a distinction but Nuosu does not. Obviously Libie is not in any way derived from Nuosu, but they come from a common linguistic stock, and it is quite possible that there was no way of making these particular distinctions with Yi-derived words, so that Han terms were the most convenient borrowings.⁴

2. In Ego's own generation, all cousins are called by the same terms as ego's own siblings:

adax = OB = OFBS = OFZS = OMZS = OFZS

muoluo = OBW = OFBSW = OFZSW = OMBSW = OMZSW
(**adaz** older than ego)

nexmuo = YB = YFBS = YFZS = YMBS = YMZS

ajie = OZ = OFBD = OFZD = OMBD = OMZD

ndamex = OZH = OFBDH = OFZDH = OMBDH = OMZDH
(**ajie** older than ego)

nexmuo = Z = FBD = FZD = MBD = MZD (younger than ego)

There is no classification, as there is in Nuosu, into marriageable and unmarried cross and parallel cousins; all cousins are equated. This is quite different from the Han system also, in which agnatic cousins are distinguished from all non-agnatic cousins, so that MBD = MZD = FZD, for example. But it is noteworthy at the same time that where the Libie system does make a distinction that does not exist in Nuosu, that is between elder and younger sisters of a male ego, Libie borrows the Han term for older sister while using a Yi term for younger sister.

The failure to distinguish between siblings and any kind of cousins may have something to do with the *de facto* bilateralization of the agnatic lineage system in Lipuo society: lineage membership is often traced through daughters, uxori-local marriage is exceedingly common (probably 30 percent or so, though the quantitative data have not been analyzed yet), and generational names, given to sons only in most Han communities, are given to all sons and daughters by the Lipuo lineages in Yishala.

3. Whereas in Nuosu siblings are equated with cousins' spouses (see above), in Libie siblings' spouses are equated with cousins' spouses:

Muoluo = MBSW = BW, whereas in Nuosu, MBSW = Z

Ndamex = MBDH = ZH, whereas in Nuosu, MBDH = B.

Once again, this illustrates the principle of Lipuo society that all cousins are potential lineage members, and thus potential siblings, whereas in Nuosu cross-cousins are potential spouses, and only parallel cousins are potential siblings.

4. A male Lipuo calls his affines of the same generation by the same terms his wife uses for them:

ajie = OZ = WOZ

adax = B = WB (older than W)

ndamex = ZH = WZH (WZ older than W), whereas in Nuosu, WZH = B

muoluo = BW = WBW (WB older than W), whereas in Nuosu, WBW = Z

This illustrates the principle that in Lipuo society, there is no

expectation of exchange marriage: it is an unusual case (though not forbidden) when two brothers marry two sisters or when brother and sister marry brother and sister, which is a prestigious form of marriage in Nuosu society, particularly among the nobility.

5. In Libie terms, the second ascending generation is separated according to the same sorts of principles used in the first ascending generations; there are separate terms for FF, FM, MF, MM and all their respective older and younger siblings and their spouses. I will spare the reader a recitation of the list of these terms, but it seems quite possible that some of them, such as **ako** for MF and **anae** for FM are borrowed Han terms; if so this once again illustrates the principle that where there is no Yi distinction,⁵ Libie borrows terms necessary to make a distinction from the Han language. The distinction itself seems to reflect both the lack of preference for cousin marriage and the patrilineage structure prevalent in Lipuo society.

6. Finally, Libie resembles Han in that it makes a large number of distinctions between categories in terms of relative age of ego and alter, or in the case of non-primary relatives, the relative age of linking relative and alter. So, for example

OZ = **ajie**; YZ = **nexmuo** (younger than ego)

FOB = **atpuo**; FYB = **uoyie**

MFOZ = **anaeadaemuo**; MFYZ **anaeaciumuo** (MFZ younger than MF) etc.

In sum then, we can see two general characteristics of the Libie system that are radically different from, even opposite to, the Nuosu system. First, the Libie system, unlike the Nuosu system, is generative rather than inclusive: terms such as those for grandparents' siblings spouses are formulated by compounding semantic elements, such as **-adaemuo** and **-adiumuo** for relatives older or younger than the linking relative, respectively. When I was eliciting these terms from Mr. Na, he had to think of some of them -he was generating the terms in his mind (many of which were probably not used very often), using semantic elements known to him. This generative (or descriptive, in Morgan's original terms?) property of the system is closely related to its system of rather wide closure. Other terms not even indicated on the simplified chart allow the system to encompass such relatives as children's siblings' spouses, and of course any relative of one's spouse can be called by the term the spouse uses. The Libie system may not be infinite, but it is much less tightly closed than the Nuosu system; one very simple manifestation of this is that it contains a lot more terms.

The second important general characteristic that distinguishes the Lipuo from the Nuosu system is its closeness to the Han system, both in

the syntagmatic sense of having borrowed many terms from the Han vocabulary, and in the paradigmatic sense of being organized according to similar principles at both the level of specific structures [see (1) through (f) above], and at the level of generativity and wide closure. And this series of similarities between the Lipuo and Han systems is a reflection of the type of relationship between Lipuo and Han communities. They interact economically and politically, they intermarry, they practice the same religions, and much of their family and kinship systems are identical. The Libie kin terminology is, in a sense, a way of using Yi language to describe the kin relationships of a Han-like society and a society that has a lot to do with Han society. Nuosu kinship terms, on the other hand, reflect a society whose internal structure is radically different from Han society and whose identity is defined in contrast to, and by separation from the surrounding society of the Han.

Wherein, then, lies the unity of the Yi? If there are several groups of Yi in such a small area as Panzhihua, each exhibiting a distinctive culture, it certainly does not lie in the four kinds of commonalities upon which the original classification of **minzu** was supposedly based. The Nuosu and Libie languages are related, it is true, but so are the Lisu, Hani, Naxi, and perhaps Bai tongues as well. And there is almost nothing culturally, economically, or territorially in common otherwise. If any unity exists, it must be in perceived common descent or common interests. I have my doubts that these existed in 1956 when the original classification was made; but in the past 32 years they seem to have begun to develop. Several Lipuo told me that there were two kinds of Yi: White Yi, the Lipuo themselves, and Black Yi, the Nuosu. One Lipuo man speculated that they might in fact have a common ancestry many hundreds of years past. Children are now taught in school that they along with a few million other people belong to the Yi **minzu**; this must have some effect on consciousness. And common interests exist, in a sense, as soon as **minzu** is defined and gets the perquisites of minorityhood such as books about itself and, most importantly, representation in governmental bodies. The Chinese state has as much created as recognized many of the ethnic groups it governs.

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NOTES

¹ I have not been able to find a written reference to this story, but I have been told it by several Chinese colleagues.

² I discuss many facets of the nature of ethnicity among the Nuosu, Lipuo, and Shuitian Yi in a longer forthcoming paper (Harrell n.d.). The present paper is concerned with only one aspect of Yi identity – the use of different kinds of kinship terminologies.

³ Lin (1945) presents an account of Nuosu kinship terminology based on data collected near Leibo; the system he analyzes is very similar, though not identical, to the system I collected in Yanbian.

⁴ Bradley's (1979) reconstruction of proto-Loloish vocabulary lists separate terms for older and younger sister, and these are backed up by terms in living languages. Unfortunately, however, he does not specify whether the terms are male-speaking or female-speaking, or whether there is a difference. In Nuosu, a female distinguishes between older and younger sisters, but lumps all under one term; a male does the opposite.

⁵ Bradley's (1979) reconstructions list single proto-Loloish terms for grandfather and for grandmother, not distinguishing between father's parents and mother's parents. He does not list terms for grandparents' siblings.