

WILLIAMS COLLEGE LIBRARIES

Your unpublished thesis, submitted for a degree at Williams College and administered by the Williams College Libraries, will be made available for research use. You may, through this form, provide instructions regarding copyright, access, dissemination and reproduction of your thesis.

___ The faculty advisor to the student writing the thesis wishes to claim joint authorship in this work.

In each section, please check the ONE statement that reflects your wishes.

I. PUBLICATION AND QUOTATION: LITERARY PROPERTY RIGHTS
A student author automatically owns the copyright to his/her work, whether or not a copyright symbol and date are placed on the piece. The duration of U.S. copyright on a manuscript—and Williams theses are considered manuscripts—is the life of the author plus 70 years.

___ I/we do not choose to retain literary property rights to the thesis, and I wish to assign them immediately to Williams College.

___ I/we wish to retain literary property rights to the thesis for a period of three years, at which time the literary property rights shall be assigned to Williams College.

✓ I/we wish to retain literary property rights to the thesis for a period of \( 10 \) years, or until my death, whichever is the later, at which time the literary property rights shall be assigned to Williams College.

II. ACCESS
The Williams College Libraries are investigating the posting of theses online, as well as their retention in hardcopy.

✓ Williams College is granted permission to maintain and provide access to my thesis in hardcopy and via the Web both on and off campus.
Williams College is granted permission to maintain and provide access to my thesis in hardcopy and via the Web for on-campus use only.

The thesis is to be maintained and made available in hardcopy form only.

III. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION
Because theses are listed on FRANCIS, the Libraries receive numerous requests every year for copies of works. If a hardcopy thesis is duplicated for a researcher, a copy of the release form always accompanies the copy. Any digital version of your thesis will include the release form.

Copies of the thesis may be provided to any researcher.

Copying of the thesis is restricted for ___ years, at which time copies may be provided to any researcher.

Copying of the thesis or portions thereof, except as needed to maintain an adequate number of research copies available in the Williams College Libraries, is expressly prohibited. The electronic version of the thesis will be protected against duplication.

Signed (student author) __________________________

Signed (faculty advisor) __________________________

Thesis title: Stone Treasure Mountain: Legends and Fijianuan Carpathy Tales

Date: May 18, 2006

Accepted for the Libraries __________________________

Date accepted: 5-18-06
Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales: Folktales and Ethnic Minorities in Modern China

by
Jessica Marinaccio

Christopher Nugent, Advisor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with honors in Chinese

WILLIAMS COLLEGE
Williamstown, Massachusetts

April 11, 2006
## Contents

Acknowledgments

Forward

Analysis

Translation: *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*

- The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon
- “Pulling the Wood Scripture” and “Pressing the Wood Scripture”
- The Carpenter Academian
- The Mute Lodges a Complaint
- Two-Hundred and Seventy Liangs Three
- Carpenter Yang Goes Out
- Make Offerings to the Wood God
- Carpenter Zhang Will Not Make a Dou or a Sheng
- Finagle Fifty Liangs of White Silver
- “Indecent Scum” and “The Talent of the Very Best”
- The One Hundred Section Aqueduct
- Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor
- The Passed Down Art of Singing
- Master Yang’s Flying Angles
- The Pillar of Wood Shavings
- Yang Kuixuan
- Huang Gongye Plays the “Corn”
- “The Stone General Rebels”
- Li Shoupeng
- Genzi Builds a New House
- The Wooden Horse is Immersed with One Fen Three of Water
- The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountain Range
- Master Zhao Powerfully Ensures Tranquility at the Golden Horse Arch
- The One Eyed Dragon of Modou Mountain
- Carpenter Zhang and the Antithetical Couplet of Shiping County
- Lu Ban Invents the Boat
- Male Tenon, Female Tenon
- The Corner of the Door Turns the Central Axle of the Millstone
- The Origin of the “Palm”
- The Three Legged Horse
- If You are Going to Leave a Mistake Uncorrected, Make the Best of it and Be Off
- By One Chi Three
- Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives
- Lu Ban’s Ink Marker
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Williams College Chinese Department for their encouragement and assistance during the thesis writing process. Without their help much of the progress made on the translation and analysis would have been impossible.

Professor Christopher Nugent sacrificed much of his free time correcting both the translation and analysis sections of this thesis, provided endless support and suggestions, and was both a capable and caring advisor.

Professor Yu Li was an amazing resource in the completion of the translation, supplying definitions for impossible to find words while also showing a keen interest in the creation of a fluid English text.

Caroline Anderson gave of her time and knowledge to carefully comment on and correct the beginning drafts of the analysis. She both provided for a more technically correct and a more organized statement on the folktales presented in the translation.

Lu Yuan and members of the Spring 2005 SIT Program played a large part in the development of my thesis topic and helped me gather invaluable resource materials as well as the book the translation is based upon.

Mary Catherine Blanton, Heather Casteel, Bradford Chu, Jason Kohn, Anna Kretchmer, Andrew Lee, Keith McWhorter, Steven Myers, Ariel Peters, Aaron Pinsky, Macy Radloff, Christopher Richardson, Jonathan Wisbey, Elizabeth Woodwick, and Hayley Wynn offered constant moral support throughout the thesis writing process and also made sure that I didn’t let it overtake my life.

The Accidentals and Steven Melis provided a welcome distraction from thesis work, evinced a willingness to help in anyway they could, and showed their interest in the project at ever opportunity.

Elana Bohem, Spike Friedman, Eric Kang, Alexander Matthews, and the entire production staff of Assassins were ever sympathetic to my progress on the thesis and were willing to shoulder responsibility when I was unable due to my work.

John Atorino, Jeremy Gordon, Maia MacDonald, Adam Mishler, Sumona Roy, and Sarah Schillaci, though far away, displayed through their e-mails and phone calls their love and support and listened when even the slightest problems had me in a panic.

My brother, Christopher Marinaccio, provided amazing support when I returned home to work on my thesis over breaks. His quiet devotion and dynamic sense of humor was a great relief when I felt I wasn’t making progress.

My mother and father, Arleen and Frank Marinaccio, went out of their way to express their love and support throughout this entire process. Their endless concern and interest helped me to work with ever increasing dedication and concentration.
Forward

The following folktales are translations of a section of stories from the book *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*. This book is a compilation of tales of the Bai nationality, a minority culture which usually lives in Southwest China. While in Yunnan during the spring of 2005 with the Student International Training Program, I stayed with a homestay family in the small town of Shaxi. This family provided me with *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*, and, after reading the stories included, I asked to photocopy the book and decided to translate as many of the tales as possible. I chose to translate only those tales in the book about carpentry because carpentry and woodcarving are very important to the people of Shaxi, and their elegant skill greatly impressed me when I lived there. Although the compilation was published in 2003 through the work of the Jianchuan County Cultural Center and the County Cultural and Recreational Bureau, many of the tales have been in circulation since at least 1961. Included with the translation are two types of footnotes: some are those which I have added myself to explain translation choices or increase clarity, others are those originally provided in the book. The analysis following the tales discusses in greater detail the themes of the stories as well as the status of national minorities in China and the issues surrounding their history.
Analysis

Introduction

China’s 55 ethnic minority groups, which comprise eight percent of the Chinese population, are officially defined by the Chinese Communist government as “[a] historically constituted community of people having a common territory, a common language, a common economic life and a common psychological makeup which expresses itself in a common culture.” Included among the Chinese citizenry and fully contained within the borders of China by the time of the rise of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 CE), these ethnic minorities usually inhabit lands on the outskirts of Chinese territory, in provinces like Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Ningxia, Tibet, Yunnan, Guizhou, Qinghai, and Sichuan. Because minority groups are most often aggregated in these important border provinces, the Chinese government has been loathe to allow them independence and the proper treatment of the minority nationalities has remained an unsolved problem throughout China’s imperial, Republican, and Communist periods.

Although the Communist government has sought to assuage debate on the minority issue by showing an enhanced appreciation for minority culture, it is not certain whether the traditions and history of the ethnic minorities or their lands, mineral resources, and marketability are of greater importance to the government. In this paper I attempt to address some of the issues which define and, sometimes, ultimately confuse this debate. By directly citing the White Paper on Ethnic Minority treatment, which the Chinese government released in 1999, along with explanations of and arguments against

the Chinese government’s plans to develop minority areas for tourism,1 I will assert that while the Chinese government is seeking to encourage more congenial relations with minority groups, its attempts are either misguided or not completely beneficial to these minorities. In order to more concretely demonstrate the Chinese government’s conflicting statements and goals, I will focus on a specific example of sanctioned government “minority appreciation,” namely the release of a book of Bai nationality folklore edited by the Chinese government (specifically the Jianchuan County Cultural Center, the Country Cultural and Recreational Bureau, representatives of the Jianchuan seat of the Communist Party of China, and the County People’s Government). Through a brief study of the introduction to this collection of folklore, the warring themes of preserving minority culture and the use of minority culture for the benefits of society and the Chinese economy at large will become clear and underscore the present uncertain state of minority relations within the Chinese populace.

In a more indepth look at the primary text, I will also discuss how the Chinese government may be undermining minority culture, contradicting the claims laid forth in their 1999 White Paper. Using themes outlined by Wolfram Eberhard in the introduction to his book, *Folktales of China*, and basic principles outlined by Mao Zedong at the Yan’an talks, I will discuss the possibility that the selection of folklore in this collection was tampered with in order to serve the purposes of government propaganda.4 Although propaganda is a term with largely negative connotations in American society, “in China,

---


the common phrase for propaganda, *xuanchuan*, covers a broad range of activities," and will be used here not as a pejorative term, but in order to denote works that are made or adapted to fit a certain purpose or advertise for a set goal. Additionally, in this paper, my definition and use of the word “tampering” will largely coincide with Eberhard’s and simply mean “change,” in that many stories collected for Communist publication have been changed from their original format to more sufficiently encompass the goals of government propaganda.⁶

My discussion of propagandistic themes and bias apparent in this collection of myths may be criticized because the goals of the Communist government have changed significantly from when Mao delivered his Yan’an address and Eberhard compiled his own work. However, evidence in the folklore collection that at least some of the folktales I have translated were originally collected in 1961, coinciding with the Communist government’s move in 1958 to collect and publish thousands of folktales from the Yunnan area, suggests that many of these stories were documented during the same time as the propagandized tales Eberhard directly discusses.⁷

Finally, while reserving judgment on the actual use of this collection as propaganda, I will examine the bearing that such a specific and seemingly unimportant work (for it treats a narrow subject and has not been outfitted for mass popular consumption) has on the present and future of minority relations in China. The purpose of this paper is not to blame the Chinese government for mistakes it may have made or to vilify it. Rather, the goal is to use a specific example of recent government maneuvers in the realm of minority relations to evaluate the consequences of these actions and highlight

---


⁶ Eberhard, xxxv.

⁷ Eberhard, xxxv.
the elements that I argue confuse a still unstable situation. Thus, the interest in this paper lies not simply in the translated text itself and the propaganda it may or may not contain, but in the various conflicting portions of text (i.e. the introduction versus the body of folktales themselves) which symbolize the still unfolding minority situation and are useful in predicting what might lie ahead for China’s nationalities.

The Translated Text

In order to cultivate respect and understanding for one of China’s many ethnic minorities, the Chinese government in conjunction with the Jianchuan County Cultural Center and the County Cultural and Recreational Bureau, compiled a collection of Bai Nationality stories, *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*, in October 2003. This is the text to which I referred in the introduction and which I have partially translated as an adjunct to this analysis. The book is a collection of some ninety-eight stories of the Bai ethnic nationality and, more specifically, those Bai nationality peoples living in the Jianchuan area of northwestern Yunnan (a region which will be addressed below). Having visited the Jianchuan area myself, I decided to only translate tales from the section in the book devoted to carpentry because carpentry, a skilled trade in which the Bai people take great pride, is what most impressed me while I was in the region. The book contains four other sections, including 1) legends about Stone Treasure Mountain, a mountain famous in Yunnan for its stone grottoes, 2) legends of Bai nationality Ben Zhu religion (to be discussed in greater detail below) and mythology, 3) legends of famous persons, and 4) legends about scenery and other tales, and the folklore is separated in this fashion so as to emphasize some of the notable and unique aspects of

---

4 In order to preserve the integrity of the Chinese language I have decided to describe as mythology only that which is denoted as “神话” in the text. All else is translated as story, folktale, or legend.
Bai nationality culture.9

While edited and compiled by Zhang Wen and Chen Ruihong, assistant researchers at the Jianchuan County Cultural Center, an agency supported by the Jianchuan seat of the Communist Party of China, the County People’s Government, and the Dali Prefecture Committee of the Propaganda Department, this collection probably does not mark the first time these tales have been documented. In the afterward of this compilation, the editors cite a number of works, *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends, Bai Nationality Folktales, A Selection of Bai Nationality Folktales*, and another work entitled *A Selection of Bai Nationality Folktales*, as important resources they consulted in developing the book, suggesting that many tales have been pulled from already published works. Furthermore, at the end of every story there are details about the recorder of the tale, and, usually, reference to the oral reporter as well as the place in which the story was collected. Some tales even provide dates of collection, and, as the most common date cited is 1961, this more conclusively proves that most of these myths were gathered well before they were included in this collection. The presence of both a recorder and an oral reporter also implies that people were sent to collect and preserve the stories from Bai nationals who had been orally passing the tales down from generation to generation. Evidence in Eberhard’s book that the Chinese government sent fieldwork teams to the Yunnan area to collect folklore and Lucien Miller’s documentation of the prevalence of orally transferred folklore among minorities in Yunnan further supports this claim.10

Because it was published very recently, in 2003, and has not yet been widely distributed among the general public, there is little information available about the


10 Eberhard, xxv and Lucien Miller, *South of the Clouds: Tales From Yunnan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994) 52
collection at this time. While in China I attempted to research the book myself and found that sales were extremely limited even within Yunnan. Given that the process of collection and compilation was not detailed in the work itself, only educated speculation strengthened by details elicited from the text can be provided. However, if the claim of the introduction to *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* is to be believed, this text represents those folktales, legends, and stories which the Jianchuan County Cultural Center has deemed most indicative and descriptive of the Bai people, and it is to this ethnic nationality that we next turn our attention.\(^1\)

**The Bai Ethnic Minority**

Found in Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Hunan, people of the Bai nationality are most common in the Yunnan province\(^2\) and all of the stories collected for *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* were taken from that area. The two locations mentioned in the title, Jianchuan and Stone Treasure Mountain, are areas situated within the Yunnan Province Dali Prefecture, a locale that contains eighty percent of the Bai nationality people and is one of the thirty autonomous prefectures established by the Chinese government to provide ethnic minorities with greater sovereignty.\(^3\) More specifically, Jianchuan is a county in the western portion of Yunnan composed predominantly of small villages dependent on farming and local market trading and Stone Treasure Mountain is a sacred mountain in the Jianchuan area famous for its stone grottoes. Thought to have been carved during the Nanzhao Dynasty, (see below) the images in the grottoes display a mixture of influences including Buddhism and local religion and are popular tourist attractions today.\(^4\)

---

With a large population for a Chinese minority group, 1,858,063 people as of the 2000 census, the Bai community is a dominant ethnicity with a long history in the Yunnan region.\textsuperscript{15} While there is evidence that as early as the Neolithic Age peoples were present in the main Yunnan areas dominated by the Bai nationality today, the Bai people were first constituted within a ordered regime when the Nanzhao kingdom was established during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE).\textsuperscript{16} Later this kingdom fell from power and the Kingdom of Dali was created in the same area. It was not until the Yuan Dynasty and the rule of the Mongols that the Bai people were finally integrated into the developing country that was to become present day China.\textsuperscript{17}

During this time the Bai people developed some of the customs and traditions that make them famous and distinct today and that are prevalent in a reading of their folklore. Although some sources have claimed that the Bai “scarcely qualify as an ethnic minority”\textsuperscript{18} and that they can barely be distinguished from the Han majority of China, the Bai still maintain certain characteristics which render them distinct from other minorities as well as the majority population of China. Besides speaking a separate language belonging to the “Tibetan and Burma branch of the Mandarin-Tibetan language family,”\textsuperscript{19} the Bai espouse a religious syncretism that combines elements of Buddhism, Daoism, and their own local Ben Zhu religion.\textsuperscript{20} The Ben Zhu religion, which plays a major role in many of the folktales included in \textit{Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales}, is based on the “worship of [a] god of protection,”\textsuperscript{21} and although gods

\textsuperscript{16} “The Bais,” 250.
\textsuperscript{17} “The Bais,” 251.
\textsuperscript{18} Hattaway, 1.
\textsuperscript{21} “The Unique Folk Traditions and Customs,” 284.
of protection are also popular among all Chinese people, the Bai possess and worship their own distinct local heroes and gods.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, as suggested by the title of the folklore collection, \textit{Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales}, the Bai nationality (especially those of the Yunnan Province Dali Prefecture) specializes in carpentry and architecture. Though this is expressed in folklore and legends through the Bai people's adoption of the Chinese deity of carpentry artisans, Lu Ban, the focus on carpentry and the specialized Bai architectural design of upturned eves and houses built in the “four groups with five courtyard” style is indicative of the Bai nationality’s distinct ethnic culture.\textsuperscript{23}

Finally, the Bai people celebrate their own holidays, such as the Lunar-Calender-March Fair, the Raoshanling (Walk Around) Festival, the Torch Festival, and the Stone Treasure Mountain Song Competition, distinct from those sponsored by the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{24} Many of these festivals are absent from the legends I have translated or only briefly mentioned in the introduction to the collection written by representatives of the Jianchuan seat of the Communist Party of China and the County People’s Government and so will not be explained in great detail here. Even so, each one reflects the importance of community, agriculture, and the creative arts (whether singing, dancing, or carpentry) which are aptly represented themes in the Bai folklore chosen for this collection.

\textbf{The 1999 White Paper and the Minority Conundrum}

Yet, as distinct as the customs, costume, folklore, etc. of the Bai nationality are, it cannot be denied that the Bai and many other minority groups have been heavily sinicized

\textsuperscript{22} J. Hackin, Henri Maspero, and others, \textit{Asiatic Mythology} (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company) 283.


\textsuperscript{24} “The Unique Folk Traditions and Customs,” 288-304.
and assimilated into Chinese/Han culture. According to the 1999 White Paper of the Chinese government on the treatment of Ethnic Nationalities, the government intends to provide for the equality of all national minorities and, through the placement of ethnic minorities in government councils and leadership roles, the use of national minority languages in education, and the establishment of autonomous regions, seeks to cultivate respect for the distinct cultures of the minority groups.25 Yet, in the not too distant history of the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong came forth against the right of minorities to their own individual cultural heritage, demanding the "unity of all nationalities on the basis of the thought of Chairman Mao Zedong and on the socialist road."26 Assimilation was a key policy of the Cultural Revolution and although the Chinese government has denied any recourse to this policy today, recent tolerance of minority differences may never supersede the desire for amalgamation with the Han majority.27

In recent years the government has attempted to appease ethnic minorities, which occupy fifty to sixty percent of China’s territory and live in areas either vital to border defenses or rich in natural resources.28 In the pursuit of this goal they have both issued the aforementioned 1999 White Paper and tried to establish friendly relations with ethnic groups while downplaying minorities’ connections with countries outside of China.29 But, in the 1964 census, when 183 nationalities registered to be considered for minority status and benefits, the government only specified 54 as ethnic minorities, clumping some groups under one heading, and leaving 32 nationalities defined as "indeterminate."30 Although at present one ethnic minority group has been added to the roster of those officially recognized, the 1964 action to limit the number of minorities has not been

24 Heberer, 24.
25 Dreyer, 262.
26 Ibid, 16.
27 Dreyer, 262.
28 Paul Noll and Associates.
actively challenged and signals a desire at the governmental level to integrate ethnicities while fostering "minority unity," a move which may lead to eventual assimilation with the Han.

Further suspect is the Chinese government’s attitude toward the ethnic minorities, as statements made by the government in favor of minority equality and difference have sometimes conflicted with actions taken towards minorities in order to cure their "barbarian" or "primitive" natures. The Chinese government claimed in their White Paper that:

"[they have] adopted special policies and measures to effectively realize and guarantee the right to equality among all ethnic groups, which is prescribed by the Constitution and law, in social life and government activities. As a result, a favorable social environment has been created for ethnic groups to treat each other on an equal footing and to develop a relationship of unity, harmony, friendship and mutual assistance among them."\(^{11}\)

But East Asia specialist Peter Ferdinand has countered that “Han is basically synonymous with unity and national integrity, while non-Han is automatically associated with barbarianism and a threat to China's territorial integrity”\(^ {32}\) and has suggested, through his analysis of conflict between the Han majority and Hui minority in Hubei province, that national minorities are still defined as inferior to the Han people.

In fact the 1999 White Paper itself is not completely beneficial to the advancement of ethnic equality. Recently, the government has implemented a double tiered maneuver to both open and develop western border areas, an action which is not without substantial disadvantages to the minority peoples who often live in these impoverished regions.\(^ {33}\) In the section on economics in the Chinese government’s 1999 White Paper the agricultural production methods of the ethnic minorities in western China, including “slash-and-burn” farming, are deemed “primitive,” and attempts have

---

33 Dreyer, 263.
been made since the time of the Paper's issuance to change farming methods.34 However, June Tuefel Dreyer, in her book China's Forty Million, explains that "in certain minority areas the traditional slash-and-burn technique was shown to be a more suitable form of cultivation than so-called advanced techniques introduced by Han cadres over native opposition."35 Although economic development is important to the western regions of China, which are struggling to keep up with the quickly expanding and developing eastern coastal areas, the central government and the 1999 White Paper represent a danger to traditional minority farming and pastoral methods and treat them as backward, even attempting to change them to the detriment of the land.36

The goal of developing tourism in minority areas has had a similar effect on the traditional methods and customs of ethnic groups. "The only exposure many Chinese have had to [ethnic minorities] in the past has been in the official media's carefully-posed pictures of exotically dressed tribal people attending the annual meeting of the National People's Congress in Beijing," and today poorer areas of the West are independently and at the suggestion of the government, capitalizing on often exaggerated minority group differences to develop their lagging economies.37 Shaxi Valley, for instance, is the center of a small group of villages in Jianchuan county. The area is extremely poor and there has been a recent drive to emphasize its historical importance as a stop on the Horse and Tea Caravan trail in order to transform Shaxi into a tourism mecca.38 Part of the plan for tourism even includes "handicraft training," which will teach those of the younger generation, not schooled in the arts of the Bai nationality, how to produce wood products

35 Dreyer, 265.
37 Ward.
38 Fisher, 10-11.
with a Bai ethnic flavor for tourists. Here, the tourism and economic development promoted by the government and outside (foreign) parties, “while encouraging more villagers to participate in traditional singing and dancing, will lead to a ‘watered-down marketed version’ of a community’s real culture,” and, far from lessening attempts at assimilation, may give the government more control over minority areas. Thus, as national minorities are termed primitive and backwards, their traditional methods are changed or exploited, occurrences which raise doubts as to the government’s sincerity in aiming towards equality and cultural preservation.

**The Introduction to Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales**

The exploitation of minority culture for economic and tourist purposes exhibited in Shaxi is also readily demonstrated in the introduction to *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*. With so many minority groups in Yunnan, the work of collecting and preserving the culture of these groups is no easy task. But, it is equally apparent that preservation is not the only goal of the Chinese government, and the government is not afraid to admit that the motivation behind their work is really the establishment of Yunnan, and Jianchuan specifically, as an area in which to develop tourism, or nationality culture tourism. Ethnic minority cultures are being protected in order to fuel the budding travel industry, and tradition and culture, while contemplated and valued, are viewed in reference to potential monetary benefits.

Written by members of the Communist Party government, the opening of the collection is rife with prose that extols minority culture in flowery, high-toned language, while evincing, rather obviously, the hope that these tales can be used to the benefit of the

---

40 Julie Perng, 9.
41 Dreyer, 264.
tourism industry in Jianchuan. The tales are praised for their high moral character and educational value, but at the same time, Jianchuan is put forward as an experimental area for Western development as well as an area where the "travel industry" will have to be heavily researched and kept under close watch as it further develops.\textsuperscript{42} The authors of the introduction also frequently note the need to establish a "Great Yunnan Minority Culture Province,"\textsuperscript{43} but in a sense, Yunnan has always been a "Minority Culture Province," comprising some 25 different ethnic groups, and the government is seeking to formalize this status merely to establish a tourist destination for the benefit of the national and provincial economy.

Furthermore, while acting in the introduction to the work as the rescuer of minority cultures from "globalization and modernization,"\textsuperscript{44} the Communist government is itself causing some of the major problems that may lead to the eventual destruction of distinct minority customs. The authors of the introduction to this collection of folklore admit that they are hoping to include the Jianchuan area in China's "enlightenment" and assert the need to "[establish] a advanced culture of Socialism with Chinese characteristics."\textsuperscript{45} As mentioned above, the need to "better" minority nationalities implies a feeling of superiority to the "primitive and backwards" minority cultures, and, although the Chinese government is willing to tout Bai nationality differences for the sake of tourism development, assimilation or integration with the more superior Han majority is not out of the question. Additionally, the wish to "enlighten" the peoples in Jianchuan and its environs suggests a propagandistic role for the collected folktales as the stories are identified as part of the drive to accomplish this "enlightenment" goal. Dreyer has argued that the Chinese government since 1949 has allowed for the continued use of ethnic

\textsuperscript{42} Zhang, 6.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 6.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 7.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 8.
minority languages because propaganda translated into a minority's language is more effective in swaying ethnic groups than propaganda written solely in Mandarin.\textsuperscript{46} Although \textit{Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales} is written using the modern Chinese character system, (incidentally, while the Bai have their own spoken language, they do not have their own written language and use Chinese characters as well) the text is a collection of minority folklore, which, like texts written in minority languages, might prove more appealing to ethnic groups. It should, thus, still be carefully analyzed for evidence of opinions or views that the government may be attempting to transmit along with the stories themselves.

\textbf{The Text as Propaganda}

Wolfram Eberhard, in his book, \textit{Folktales of China}, states that “everywhere in the first phases of development, the Communists showed a great enthusiasm for folklore.”\textsuperscript{47} The Cultural Revolution did pose a problem to this great enthusiasm as “minority songs, dance, films, folk songs, operas, and the like were called ‘feudal, capitalist, revisionist, poisonous weeds’,”\textsuperscript{48} but aside from this period of time the Communist Party saw folktales as indicative of class struggle and of good moral standing, perfect for the work of revolution as well as a means through which to communicate with the masses.\textsuperscript{49} Yet, not all folklore could be ready made for use in the Communist struggle and Eberhard is quick to point out that in publishing collections of stories the government changed many folktales or selected only those which represented appropriate Communist themes.\textsuperscript{50}

Traditional folklore in this way became “merely a tool of Communist Party

\textsuperscript{46} Dreyer, 263.
\textsuperscript{47} Eberhard, xxxv.
\textsuperscript{48} Herberer, 27.
\textsuperscript{50} Eberhard, xxxv.
propaganda," as common and ancient themes within the tales, which applied to most Chinese people or were comforting to them, eased the transition from empire, to Republic, and finally to the Communist regime and tied new developments in the country to what had come before.

This use of folklore and art in general was championed throughout the Communist ranks, finding its most detailed explication in Mao Zedong's 1943 "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art." Art and literature were never to be ends in themselves and their "common purpose [was] to serve the workers and the peasants." Mao argued that art was never created simply to be art and that it could either serve (i.e. be written for the benefit of) the people or serve bourgeois and anti-Communist interests. This idea of art as a simple tool of revolution may help to explain the tone taken in the introduction to Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales. Although not as infused with specific Communist ideology as Mao's demands for "a unity of politics and art, a unity of content and form, a unity of revolutionary political content and the highest artistic form possible," the authors of the introduction see the folklore as a tool through which to develop the economy of western China, bring the peoples there to prosperity (perhaps in a very un-Communist turn of phrase) and, by doing these things, more greatly inure the nationality peoples to the Han majority and the central government.

In Mao's Yan'an talks he outlines "antinational, antiscientific, antimass, and antiparty views" as those to be avoided in the writing of Communist literature and the creation of Communist art, basic terms which Eberhard uses to identify what should be looked for when defining a collection of folktales as possible propaganda. Eberhard explains that in stories that have been changed or selected for their useful themes, there

51 Batt, xvi.
52 Mao, 67.
53 Ibid, 78.
54 Ibid, 77.
will be a lack of material that refers to the emperor, magic, and male heroes. Instead, stories will present a young female or peasant hero and describe clear cut struggles between evil landlords and unfortunate peasant masses. Many of these propagandistic themes are present in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*, yet not every story can be found to conform completely to the standards Mao and Eberhard set forth. While high officials and landlords are often presented as “bad, cruel, irrational or ridiculous” and peasants are “good, warmhearted, helpful, and clever,” this is by no means always the case and the emperor, presented in many stories, is almost always a positive figure. Additionally, women and girls are heroic figures in many of the folktales, but magic is not always discounted and is often a very important theme.

The language of the introduction to *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* suggests that the stories included in the collection may be as much propagandized texts or at least carefully selected works as they are a deliberate attempt to compile only those stories most telling of Bai nationality culture. Thus, in order to better determine whether *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* is propaganda meaningless to the Bai nationality people or a work, perhaps possessing of propagandistic characteristics, but in some way indicative of ethnic culture, the stories themselves must be analyzed in terms of the five main themes stated by Eberhard: 1) a prevalence of peasant heroes 2) a lack of stories praising the emperor 3) an abundance of evil or cruel landlords and officials 4) a preponderance of female heroes and 5) a lack of magic. An in-depth analysis will reveal that while many of the themes Eberhard has outlined are apparent in this collection of folklore, there are enough discrepancies to suggest an independent base of Bai cultural themes still existent in the text.

---

55 Eberhard, xxxv.
56 Ibid.
Peasant Heroes

In E.T.C. Werner's work on the folktales and legends of China he identifies the worship of people for great deeds as a common theme running through a majority of Chinese folklore.57 The hero of Chinese myth is "characterized by acts of military courage, idealism, devotion to a cause, nobility of spirit, hubris, revenge and patriotism. These [include] both positive and negative traits, but a unique feature of the archetypal Chinese hero is his moral valor."58 Aside from hubris and revenge these characteristics seem perfect material for Communist propaganda and in the Bai legends included in Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales almost every story describes a peasant hero who has embarked upon some great mission in order to save the people or one who has simply tricked a rich or greedy man, proving the cleverness of the common folk. However, because Werner has defined the common person elevated to hero as popular to myth throughout China and Lucien Miller has noted the peasant hero as especially prevalent in Yunnan minority mythology, this might indicate to the reader that peasant heroism, always an underlying and important theme in Chinese myth, was and is used by the Chinese government but has never been unduly stressed or selectively edited for.59

Peasant heroes, however, are not the only popular figures in Chinese folklore and their overwhelming presence in Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales is indicative of propaganda, a theory supported by the story tampering other compilation editors have encountered in relation to this theme. In Chinese legend "emperors, viceroy[s], [and] popular officials"60 are also known to perform heroic deeds and become the object of folkloric idolatry, and in both Eberhard and Werner's collections

59 Miller, 50.
60 Werner, 101.
of folktales, powerful even god-like figures are represented as heroes (although perhaps not as often as peasant heroes are depicted). But in the section of Bai folklore I have translated (and this holds true for the rest of the collection as well) few if any of the stories deal with heroes who are not peasants or do not represent the people in some way. Shujiang Li and Karl W. Luckert, in their collection of Hui Myths (an ethnic minority distinguished by their belief in Islam), have also noted a recent “secularization” of folklore in which “a hero [...] represents the common people.”61 Although their collection (not controlled by the Chinese government) is much more even in its selection than Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales, they have also dealt with stories which have been significantly influenced, reflecting themes and ideas “beyond what pious Muslims [the Hui] thought reasonable or necessary.”

Of the thirty three stories I have translated from Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales, each one involves some form of peasant heroism.62 Whether it be a carpenter who has triumphed over a dragon or an artisan who has escaped unfair treatment or his employer withholding his salary, every story describes a common person who has triumphed through adversity. I have chosen for the sake of clarity to divide these stories into two sections: those stories in which there is a clear and present danger and the hero is cognizant of his role in relieving the people from injury and those tales in which the hero’s smaller act is representative of a victory for the common people.

Many of the folktales that depict the peasant hero relieving the people from danger are those involving dragons and the supernatural (including: “The One Hundred

---

62 I have chosen for this analysis to define peasant heroism more widely as any triumph over adversity, large or small, because the tales themselves are less indicative of great feats of heroism and deal more generally with day-to-day life and the heroic moments of the everyday.
Section Aqueduct,” “The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon,” and “The One Eyed Dragon of Modou Mountain”\textsuperscript{63}, but as these tales will be discussed at great length in the section on the absence of supernatural themes in selected propaganda works, I will instead focus here on “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor.” “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor” is a clear embodiment of the upstanding and moral hero Werner describes in his collection of folktales and in which the Chinese government might see “the propaganda possibilities of folklore for Communist ideology.”\textsuperscript{64} Although the story ends with Li Siwei’s friendly encounter with the emperor who reverses all of the wrongs done by the evil officials of Jianchuan and thus might not be perfectly suited for propaganda purposes, from the standpoint of the peasant hero there is much to recommend it. Li Siwei is not only a lower class hero but also a model citizen and a “good, warmhearted, helpful, and clever” person.\textsuperscript{65} Furthermore, in defying the lesser officials of Jianchuan, he also represents a form of revolt against the Chinese government, a theme much supported by the Communists, who rose to power due to a “people’s revolution.”\textsuperscript{66}

In this story Li Siwei’s heroism is especially clear when he is juxtaposed with the evil officials of the tale. Here, the officials of Jianchuan use the people and tax them outrageously, leaving the peasants to their own devices and proving themselves deserving of the commoner’s hatred. When a drought threatens the livelihood of the peasants it is Li Siwei who attempts to irrigate and rescue the people from a terrible fate, while the officials do nothing and even steal his and the other villagers’ money. Although later the emperor and his high officials in the capital demonstrate that they are trustworthy and deserving of the reader’s respect, all the officials and high ranking men of Jianchuan are still suspect. Even the gentleman scholar, Scholar Wang, vehement in his disapproval of

\textsuperscript{63} Zhang, 69; 19; 118.
\textsuperscript{64} Eberhard, xii.
\textsuperscript{65} Eberhard, xviii.
\textsuperscript{66} Eberhard, xxxv.
the evil and dastardly officials, is subject to Li Siwei’s “[hatred of] great officials and gentlemen of high rank” until he finally reveals that he is willing to aid Li Siwei in his quest to help the oppressed peoples of Jianchuan.\(^{67}\) When viewed in comparison to the Jianchuan government, therefore, Li Siwei is the only individual ready and able to personally protect the people, performing heroic deeds in his unwillingness to see official abuse destroy his homeland.\(^{68}\)

Beyond his battles with local officials, Li Siwei further ensures his heroic status in his final attempt to redress the evils done to the peasants: seeking out the emperor. The very act of finding the emperor and pleading with him to relieve the people of their misery is a grand and sweeping gesture worthy only of the very finest of peasant heroes. Yunnan was still very much an outpost of China when this story is said to have taken place (during the Qing Dynasty) and travel from the Southwest to the Northeast of China, especially for a man without much money or standing, would have been a very difficult task. Furthermore, Li Siwei does not know what the emperor's reaction to his request might be. His wife certainly does not trust any officials and definitely not the emperor, stating that “[today], officials protect each other, you are only going in vain, asking for trouble.”\(^{69}\) Li Siwei, however, is willing to face death, a long journey, and loss of time and money for the people of his village and even places this duty above his obligation to protect his wife and children (a duty of which she eagerly reminds him).

Thus, the trials of Li Siwei, reflected also in the numerous stories of evil dragons, are ones in which the peasant hero stands up against his oppressors, takes matters into his own hands, and defies standard procedure to rescue “the people.” This story of

---

\(^{67}\) Zhang, 81.

\(^{68}\) Although it may be argued that there are several good officials, including the emperor, in this story, their role will be discussed in more depth in the section “Evil Officials and Landlords” and so are not be addressed here.

\(^{69}\) Ibid, 83.
corrupt and rich officials and poor, yet determined peasants, is perfect for a book meant to support or at least dignify Communist goals. It educates the people as to the evils of greedy and rich officials, while presenting the lowly peasant as the means of salvation. Obviously, the fact that a folktale would support a peasant hero is not direct proof that this folktale has been tampered with, but its inclusion in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* along with other stories of its ilk, suggests at least a certain selectivity in the compilation process of this book.

This collection contains many more stories of the second type of peasant hero tale in which the peasant performs an act which, while seemingly insignificant to "the people" at large, still suggests a victory for the peasant community. This better represents the dichotomy in stories often chosen for propaganda purposes in which the upper classes are "irrational, ridiculous, or cruel," and the lower classes are clever or warmhearted. There are numerous examples of this type of tale (including: "'Pulling the Wood Scripture' and 'Pressing the Wood Scripture,'" "Two-Hundred and Seventy One Liang Three," "Carpenter Yang Goes Out," "The Passed Down Art of Singing," "The Mute Lodges a Complaint," "Huang Gongye Plays the 'Corn,'" "The Stone General Rebels," etc.).

Each story follows the same basic format: a rich person hires a carpenter to carve or build something for him, abuses the carpenter in some egregious fashion, (i.e. withholding pay, denying good food, showing little respect) and the carpenter, taking his revenge, proves that he is not only smart, but also more clever than the rich person by shaming this person and garnering a reward or extra pay. In all of these stories the situations are usually one on one, but most of the tales are really allegorical battles in which the poor man represents the peasants and the rich man the upper classes. Although

70 Eberhard, xxxv.
71 Zhang, 35; 56; 57; 86; 48; 97; 100.
the stories seem to represent only simplistic tricksters legends, they are truly representative of peasant hero tales. Because every story is almost exactly the same, it is not important who the carpenter is or where the rich man happens to live, all that is important is that the immortal struggle between the rich and the poor, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, is repeatedly represented, the proletariat winning out each time.

While swathed in the garb of Bai nationality traditional customs (i.e. carpentry and architecture), these stories are highly appropriate for a collection of tales pieced together by the Chinese government. Again, this in no way proves that the stories have been tampered with. The reader need simply take care to remember that these stories may be indicative of Bai nationality culture, but may also be merely a selection of Bai nationality tales that truly conform with what the government finds fit to print for mass consumption. Peasant heroes are common in many collections of Chinese folklore wherever and by whomever they have been published. However, the lack of diversity in the tales collected for *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* suggests either that something has been deliberately left out or that the Bai people are perhaps especially keen on the theme of the peasants versus landlords and officials.

**Women Heroes**

After the appearance of peasant heroes, Eberhard lists the prevalence of female heroes as a tell-tale sign that folktales have either been tampered with or selected for appropriate content, and there is a suggestion that this theme may be more telling of propaganda than that of peasant heroes.\(^\text{72}\) As mentioned above, because peasant heroes and their rich nemeses are popular characters and represent common themes in many Chinese folktales, their presence in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* is not directly indicative of Communist propaganda. In the case of

\(^{72}\) Eberhard, xxxv.
women heroes the situation is more clear.

In his work on the popular themes of Chinese folklore, Birrell explains that although women sometimes take the role of victims and avengers in stories, the tendency is “for those [...] who bestow gifts of culture [...] to be male.” After 1100 CE men gained even more control over the preservation of folktales and “this anti-female bias led to the disappearance of many significant female mythical figures.” Eberhard explains that “before the establishment of the Communist regime [...] [folktales] usually showed women and girls in more passive roles, in conformity with the social values and customs of traditional Chinese society.” It is true that strong female characters have been represented in widely read literature throughout Chinese history, but during the early years of the Communist regime and during the War of Resistance against the Japanese folklore reflected a new and special emphasis on, “female symbols [who] carried contemporary messages: condemnation of social injustice and a call for equality of the sexes.” Thus, unlike peasant heroes, the role of women in Chinese mythology and folklore has developed over time with a more heavy reliance on equality during the Communist era, and the prevalence of strong, patriotic, women heroes in this collection of Bai tales is, perhaps, a signal of biased selection or propagandist goals.

Eight of the thirty-three stories I have translated from Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales deal almost exclusively with strong women and their heroic deeds. This points to a certain amount of selection for content in the stories included in this volume. But what might the Communist government gain from propagating folktales concerning heroines and their valiant acts? Simply put, a new take

---

73 Birrell, 49.
74 Birrell, 50.
75 Eberhard, xxxvi.
on gender roles became popular in China during the period of the May Fourth Movement. When the Communists were first attempting to gain power, and since that time as well, they adopted some of the reforms proffered in 1919 and stressed their own revolution as one created by and meant for the people.77 All of the peasants were viewed as occupying the same status and expected to work equally hard, and, as members of a new movement struggling for power, the Communists accepted all the help they could find. Thus, under Xiang Jingyu, women’s groups were formed in the early 1920s with a special emphasis on direct participation in the Communist movement and women were granted “equality at all levels” early in the Communist campaign as land-reform and marriage laws were implemented to help them.78 Both hardworking women and men were necessary during this time and gender was not as important as patriotism.79

In Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales this emphasis on women and an egalitarian view of their aptitude and diligence is obvious. Although there are many more tales concerning men and the common man’s defeat of the rich man, the eight stories dealing directly with women highlight their strength and intelligence, sometimes elevating these traits as better than those of men. As with the folktales concerning peasant heroes, the tales involving females can also be broken down into two sections: the stories in which a female character plays a minor but important role (i.e. “The One Hundred Section Aqueduct”) and the Lu Ban’s wife stories (“Lu Ban Invents the Boat,” “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives,” “The Origin of the ‘Palm,’” “The Three Legged Horse,” “Male Tenon, Female Tenon,” “The Corner of the Door Turns the Central Axle of the Millstone,” “If You Are Going to Leave a Mistake

---

77 Hung, 71.
79 Hung, 68.
In “The One Hundred Section Aqueduct,” a male carpenter, Yang, is definitely the hero of the story. However, his daughter-in-law, Lamei, who possesses a coolness under pressure as well as a level-headed attitude, plays a vital role in his ultimate success. Noteworthy in this story is Lamei’s possession of the greatest level of strength and diligence of any of the main characters. After his son is killed by the evil dragon, carpenter Yang is distraught and “seeing the things left behind by his dead son, he [thinks] of him and [can] not help shedding his tears freely.” Lamei, on the other hand, more readily overcomes the death of her husband even though she is well into her first pregnancy, and drags carpenter Yang out of his grief. She is the one who comes up with the idea to use iron in the building of the new aqueduct in order to render it unbreakable and it is also she who presents the idea of inviting her blacksmith father to complete the project.

Even more surprising, due to the passive role usually assigned to females in Chinese folklore, is the willingness of the men in the story to admit Lamei’s strength and praise her intelligence. Not only does carpenter Yang not criticize Lamei for so openly offering her opinion, but he even lauds her for it, stating that “[it] really is that the older generation does not equal the younger generation, the radish does not measure up to the vegetable root ... ...” And when carpenter Yang and blacksmith He realize that they alone may not be able to complete the tasks of construction, they allow Lamei to overcome their objections and work together with them as the “second hammer.” It is not even Lamei’s status as a woman that makes the men uncomfortable with her request to work, but more (or so they say) that she is far along in her pregnancy.

Aside from this one folktale in which the woman plays a small but heroic part

80 Zhang, 127; 136; 132; 133; 128; 129; 134.
81 Ibid, 74.
82 Ibid, 75.
83 Ibid, 76.
there is also a series of stories in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* concerning Lu Ban’s wife. Lu Ban is the Chinese divinity of carpentry artisans.  

He is “the artisan of genius who made a wooden falcon that could fly, and many other marvels, whose legend was already popular several centuries before our era.”

Lu Ban is represented by the axe, a symbol prevalent in Bai folklore, and in many of the stories in which he is the main character, his clever, resourceful wife also plays a role.  

“Lu Ban Invents the Boat” and “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives” are two representative tales of the Lu Ban’s wife series, one depicting the equality of men and women and the other, the woman’s strength to rescue a man. In “Lu Ban Invents the Boat” Lu Ban and his wife together solve the mystery of her floating shoes. Here the male and female are equally matched and both contribute to the process of creating a boat modeled off of the abovementioned shoes. Conversely, in most of the Lu Ban’s wife stories (i.e. “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives”) Lu Ban’s wife comes to her husband’s rescue and proves herself, like Lamei, to be more resourceful and cool-headed under pressure. As the divine protector of carpenters, it is surprising that Lu Ban should make such drastic mistakes in measurement as he does when constructing a Hall of Golden Chimes for the emperor in “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives.” The only way he saves his reputation is by both changing his name and listening to the advice of his wife, who seeing him upset and without a plan, merely states, “I thought this was some terrible or great matter. Don’t be afraid!” She then immediately offers him an umbrella, which she herself has invented, and allows him to realize her plan (to use the umbrella in order to elongate the central beam) himself. Not only clever, she is humble as well and, in effect,

84 Hackin and Maspero, 332.
85 Ibid.
86 Williams, 22.
87 Zhang, 125.
89 Ibid.
the savior of her husband both as a person and as the patron of carpenters.

However, as large a role as heroic women play in the folktales recorded in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*, there is still much that is discriminatory in the language and themes of the stories. This is not to completely negate the idea that these folktales may have been selected for propagandist purposes as discrimination and sexism were not definitively subsumed by the Communist takeover. Rather it is simply to suggest that Eberhard’s claim that “passive roles, in conformity with the social values and customs of traditional Chinese society” are entirely eradicated in tales selected for Communist propaganda is not accurate in this case.90

Many of the factors suggesting discrimination or a certain degree of sexism are most readily apparent in the Lu Ban’s wife stories. Perhaps most obviously, in all of the seven tales concerning Lu Ban’s wife, her proper name is never mentioned.91 While Lamei is immediately named in “The One Hundred Section Aqueduct,” Lu Ban’s wife is always referred to simply as “Lu Ban’s wife.” It seems unbefitting of a strong, heroic character to repeatedly surface in folktale after folktale without any mention of a name. Additionally, in the story “Lu Ban Invents the Boat” the title suggests that it is Lu Ban who should be solely thanked for the creation of the boat, when it is his wife who first brings the subject of her floating shoes to his attention.92 Lu Ban’s wife figures prominently in this story, but she is denied recognition in the title and all of the other stories that deal with her achievements fail to single her out in the title as well. It may be argued that many of the stories I have translated from *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* fail to cite male characters in their titles, but in addition to the fact that the conclusion of every Lu Ban’s wife story further indicates a certain lack of status

90 Eberhard, xxxvi.
91 Zhang, 125-140.
92 Ibid, 127.
accorded to her, it seems likely that her gender is, in part, responsible for her absence from the titles.

Only in the conclusions of two of the seven stories about Lu Ban’s wife is any thanks directly accorded to her. Unfortunately, in one of these stories, “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives,” the thanks she garners is not even given to her directly. The author or recorder of the story writes that “because this time it was Lu Ban’s wife’s umbrella which saved Lu Ban, later when molding images of Lu Ban, people also made him holding an umbrella in order to commemorate his wife.”93 This seems strange. Lu Ban’s wife is only commemorated in images of her husband holding an umbrella. She herself is in no way tangibly included. Commemoration of the female through the male image can in no way connote real thanks giving and some sources today even cite Lu Ban as the inventor of the paper umbrella when it was in fact his wife who made the design (or so this story claims.)94

This phenomenon is found to a lesser extent in the other story directly mentioning thanks given to Lu Ban’s wife, “The Three Legged Horse.”95 At the end of this tale the author explains that after Lu Ban’s wife created the hobby-horse, carpenters would place two three-legged horses on an alter and sacrifice them in order to commemorate Lu Ban’s wife. This sacrifice is much more direct and appropriate than that mentioned in “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives,” but it still removes Lu Ban’s wife from direct commemoration as the objects she created are more directly worshipped than she is. While Lu Ban is always invoked and prayed to by wood carvers and carpenters, Lu Ban’s wife is a more abstract figure, never directly worshipped and seemingly without identity unless connected with her husband.96

93 Zhang, 138.
95 Zhang, 133.
96 Ibid.
As in the section on peasant heroes, the role of these tales as propaganda cannot be definitively proven by the mere presence of women. Although women appear in this compilation much more often than Birrell or Eberhard propose they do in pre-Communist collections, their roles are always secondary; they are rarely presented without a man, and there is much that suggests their difference and perhaps inferior rank to the men in the stories. It is not certain whether they are bold, heroic, independent women or women who have been made bold or performed heroic deeds simply in order to help the men in their lives. The most that can be offered as clear evidence of selection for propaganda purposes is that there is a prevalence of tales about women and all of these women are of the peasant class. None of the heroic deeds described are performed by bourgeoisie or rich women and the women present in these tales could even be classified under the same heading as the male peasant heroes. Beyond this re-emphasis of the peasant hero theme, the appearance of female heroines could be used to argue for or against propagandistic intent and provides no clear answers.

**In Praise of the Emperor**

Eberhard’s claim that folklore collections influenced by Communist ideology will lack stories about the emperor or, at least, stories in praise of the emperor, is, like the female hero motif, an outgrowth of the aforementioned peasant hero theme.\(^{97}\) Whether lacking an imperial figure at all or simply portraying the emperor as a wicked man, myths selected by the Chinese government are in no way supposed to imply praise for or endorsement of the emperor. Support of rebellion as an attempt to legitimate the government of Mao Zedong, as mentioned above in the peasant hero section, directly negates the use of any stories that suggest that the emperor might be a good and beneficent leader.\(^{98}\)

\(^{97}\) Eberhard, xxxv.

\(^{98}\) Ibid.
as defined by Mao at Yan'an and Jiang Qing in her 1966 forum on art and literature in Shanghai, stories had to rely on peasant heroes and reject praise of the upper class, especially the main symbol of the upper class and bourgeois lifestyle, the emperor.\(^\text{99}\)

If in Communist propaganda the emperor is a negative or underrepresented figure, what role does he play in those collections of folklore compiled outside of China or away from Communist influence? The works of Werner, Eberhard, Miller, and Li and Luckert all include one or two emperor tales,\(^\text{100}\) and these collections, unbiased, or at least not biased in the same way the Communist government would be, hold no definite opinion of the emperor. In Miller and Werner's works he is negatively portrayed, while the one time he appears in Eberhard's he is somewhat neutrally referenced and he shows up as both a good and bad figure in Li and Luckert's book.\(^\text{101}\) Thus, even in tales selected apart from the influence of the Communist government, the emperor is not always positively portrayed and it might be expected that any regular or demonstrative selection of tales would be a mixed bag of good and bad references to him.

Surprisingly, in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* the four stories\(^\text{102}\) involving the emperor either take an overwhelmingly positive view of his position or present him in an ambiguous or neutral way.\(^\text{103}\) "Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor" and "The Carpenter Academian" are the two stories that present the emperor as a real and important character and describe him as a positive or

\(^{99}\) Mao, 81; Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 345. At the 1966 forum in Shanghai Jiang Qing defined "preliminary versions of the concept of model works" in which heroic and positive characters were supposed to be given more attention as opposed to evil characters or those considered unimportant to the Communist cause (i.e. the emperor). Although Jiang Qing's forum occurred after many of these tales were collected, it still had an impact on Communist propaganda as a whole and on those stories compiled after 1961.

\(^{100}\) Werner, 130; 132; 288; 394; Eberhard, 14; 24; 35; Miller, 191; and Li and Luckert, 135; 228; 232; 333.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.

\(^{102}\) "Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives" also mentions the emperor very briefly but has not been included here because his role is so insignificant.

\(^{103}\) Zhang, 80; 42; 111; 135.
respectable figure. In “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor,” undoubtedly the more positive of the two stories, Li Siwei and the people of his village are tormented by evil officials who take their money and make their lives miserable. Yet, undaunted by this official abuse of power, Li Siwei still believes that the emperor will help the people instead of siding with the corrupt officials. Besides Li Siwei’s wife, who feels that the emperor will definitely side with those of his own ilk as “today, officials protect each other,” everyone else in the story takes Li Siwei’s view. Even Scholar Wang, who “[detests] anything having to do with officials and gentry colluding to bully and oppress peasants,” wishes to help Li Siwei and hopes that the emperor will listen to the people’s plea. It would probably be more in keeping with Communist themes if, at this point in the story, the emperor revealed himself to be just as evil as the county officials, punishing the people for daring to bring a request before him. Luckily for Li Siwei and the common people, he not only does not criticize Li Siwei for wasting his time, but instead is extremely beneficent, granting Li Siwei’s complaint and presenting him with several gifts for his trouble. Far from evil or treacherous, this emperor and even his top official, the prime minister, are kind and warm, noble leaders.

The emperor presented in “The Carpenter Academian” differs vastly from the one seen in “Li Siwei Presents a Complaint to the Emperor” and the story may even seem, although incorrectly so, to be a negative portrayal of the imperial use of power. At the end of the story, Ma Ruwei, the main character, a disaffected carpenter who has not received an imperial post, goes on a tirade against the emperor and his officials. Stating that he “never formerly received the emperor’s graciousness” and never committed any
crimes, he scorns the officials who have finally come to give him an official post and the reader is left with a rather poor impression of the emperor and those who work for him.\textsuperscript{110} Earlier in the story, however, it is evident that it is the officials who are really corrupt, and the emperor, being rather distant from life outside of the Forbidden City, is shown to be a more positive figure. Finally learning of Ma Ruwei's talents, he quickly dispatches runners to find him, realizing what an asset he would be to the empire.\textsuperscript{111} It was never the emperor who kept Ma Ruwei out of official life in the first place, but rather the actions of those belonging to the capital underworld and the greedy officials who demanded bribes before they would give Ma Ruwei an official position.

Distinct from the tales that present the emperor in a positive light are those that include him as a rather distant but neutral character. "If You Are Going to Leave a Mistake Uncorrected, Make the Best of it and Be Off By One Chi Three" is a Lu Ban story about his time constructing a Hall of Golden Chimes for the emperor.\textsuperscript{112} After realizing that the middle beam of the structure is too short, Lu Ban is terrified until his wife provides a suggestion which will save him from embarrassment and punishment. In this story the emperor's role works in two ways. When Lu Ban realizes that a mistaken measurement has been made, he fears some great imperial punishment, like the life imprisonment or decapitation threatened in "Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives."\textsuperscript{113} In this way the emperor seems harsh and unforgiving. However, when Lu Ban's wife finally comes up with a solution and Lu Ban uses stone blocks, an unorthodox method, to support the beams, the emperor encourages this creativity, chatting with Lu Ban about the stone blocks, seemingly very happy and benign.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, 48.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 47.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 134.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 136.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, 135.
Three out of the four stories I have translated from *Stone Treasure Mountain* Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* that include the emperor as an actual character or a referenced character are basically positive or, as a whole, not negative, suggesting that this collection in no way meets the requirements of the “no tales praising the emperor” theme supported by Eberhard. Furthermore, the last tale referring to the emperor, one with a very negative twist, is not so damning of the imperial figure as to sway the balance and negate the other, more positive, tales. The emperor is not so much portrayed as suggested in “The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountains.”\(^{115}\) When A Xin is forcibly stolen away from his village and his new wife, Hai Hua, it is implied that this is completely due to the emperor's wish to collect enough artisans to create temporary dwelling and resting places for him.\(^ {116}\) The fact that A Xin has to be forcibly taken instead of asked or sent for, as is often done in the other tales, represents the emperor as an impatient man who does not place any value on the lives of his people. The rich man Yang's claim to Hai Hua that her husband will never come back alive from his time working for the emperor further suggests that the emperor is a cruel man and that those who work for him are ill-treated, probably unpaid.\(^ {117}\)

The emperor, however, is still a character largely outside the story. While it is suggested that he probably had something to do with the order to basically kidnap talented artisans, the language of the story is vague, stating that “the Qing Dynasty government seat” is actually responsible. The emperor's culpability is not certain and he is never directly mentioned as being to blame. Hardly a damming story, “The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountain Range” is only suggestive of evil and not nearly as definitive as a positive story in the vein of “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the

\(^{115}\) Ibid, 111.
\(^{116}\) Ibid, 114.
\(^{117}\) Ibid.
Emperor."

Other sections of analysis contain a great deal of contradiction and because many of the stories portray slight differences in character and theme, it is difficult to say for certain that stories about female heroes have definitely been selected for propaganda purposes or that supernatural stories are being weeded out because they do not mesh with the government’s artistic vision. In this section I can be more definite and conclude that the few stories about the emperor in this collection cannot be said to support a propagandistic intent in the selecting of tales. The content of the tales may match the other themes stated by Eberhard and Mao, but this collection is no way lacks stories in praise of the emperor. Other officials, as will be discussed below, may be depicted as evil and conniving, but the emperor is not. He is a figure of hope, not to be feared as much as his officials, and more of a relief to the common people than a terror.

**Evil Officials and Landlords**

As they directly relate to the “lack of stories praising the emperor” theme and provide a contrast to the “peasant hero” theme, evil officials and landlords are key to Communist propaganda folktales. Although Jiang Qing, the fourth wife of Chairman Mao who, in many ways, defined art during the Cultural Revolution, stated that “greater attention [...] [needs to] be paid to positive protagonists, who typically [tend] to be overshadowed by the more interesting villains or ‘middle characters’,” bourgeois villains are important to effective propaganda stories as they serve to better highlight the noble poor.  

The status of the emperor and his role in stories in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* as well as in Werner’s, Birrell’s, Miller’s, Luckert’s and Li’s, and Eberhard’s works may be ambiguous and unclear, but the role and

---

118 McDougall and Louie, 296.
119 Eberhard, xxxv.
use of officials is unquestionable. Rich people are evil. They are greedy and lazy, take pleasure in tricking the common people, and if they are rich, they only worry about keeping their money; if they possess official power, only contemplate how to use their power to get more power or money. As widespread as the “peasant hero” theme, the “evil official and landlord” theme is of equal importance and may be regarded as a reflection of Mao’s declaration that “the audience for literature and art consists of workers, peasants, soldiers, and their cadres.” If the goal of Communist propaganda from the inception of the Communist government was to critique not the masses, but the bourgeoisie, the use of tales pitting the rich directly against the poor, often in one-on-one settings, was the best way to do so.

There are some kind and beneficent officials portrayed in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends* and *Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*, most notably in “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor” and “The Mute Lodges a Complaint,” but the overwhelming trend in this collection is towards stories that degrade the greedy official or landlord, while praising the poor, noble, and clever carpenter or peasant. Here it will be useful to separate this theme into two sections in order to more fully discuss the separate roles of officials and landlords. The landlord theme was analyzed in the previous section on peasant heroes in stories usually involving a one-on-one altercation between the greedy landlord who wants to trick the carpenter out of his well earned money and the clever carpenter who seeks to save himself from such trickery. The official themes are slightly more complex, containing both tales in which the official looks down on the lowly peasant only to be proven a fool and tales in which the official seeks to gain power or money to the detriment of a group of peasants.

“Carpenter Yang Goes Out,” “Pulling the Wood Scripture” and "Pressing the

---

120 Mao, 60.
121 Mao, 80.
Wood Scripture,” “The Passed Down Art of Singing,” “Huang Gongye Plays the ‘Corn,’” “The Stone General Rebels,” etc. are all representative tales of the bad landlord genre. In these tales, as has been mentioned in the “peasant heroes” section, the greedy landlord is not willing to part with either food or money and hatches a plot to force the carpenter to work while tricking him out of his salary or other rewards. “The Passed Down Art of Singing” is a short tale in which a landlord tries to cheat an apprentice of his salary. When the master carpenter stands up for his apprentice, the landlord forces the apprentice to do the work himself to judge whether he should receive full pay. The master carpenter is, of course, much too clever for him and sings directions to the apprentice, helping him to finish the work. Again in “Huang Gongye Plays the ‘Corn,’” the greedy and foolish landlord will not provide the carpenter with proper food and is punished when the carpenter carves a disparaging picture of him and then tricks him into thinking it is actually quite flattering. Having been discussed at great length before, this genre of tales is rather straightforward and it is sufficient to know that a basic, unchanging theme runs through these stories.

“Bad official” tales such as “Finagle Fifty Liangs of White Silver,” “Carpenter Zhang and the Antithetical Couplet of Shiping County,” and “‘Indecent Scum’ and ‘The Talent of the Very Best’” are all stories in which some sort of written or literary contest (usually involving antithetical couplets) is held and when the poor carpenter presents himself to compete, the intellectuals and officials are disbelieving but are eventually proven to be fools. These stories suggest that the poor and the peasant class should not be taken at face value. Although carpenters seem only suitable for task and artisan work,

122 Zhang, 58; 35; 86; 97; 100.
123 Ibid, 86.
124 Ibid, 97.
125 Ibid, 65; 122; 67.
characters thinking it shameful not to pursue learning. Differing from the aforementioned “bad landlord” stories, these tales present a member of the upper class more pompous or uninformed than deliberately cruel, but still manage to champion the peasant class, embarrass the official, and prove that because they possess intelligence and skill peasants cannot be degraded and humiliated.

More reflective of treacherous, unfeeling officials are stories like “The Carpenter Academian,” “The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountain Range,” “The Mute Lodges a Complaint,” and “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor.” Describing the seedy underworld of corruption and graft involved in the lives of petty to great officials, these tales highlight the power that unintelligent and cruel people can have over the lives of the peasants. Three of the four, “The Carpenter Academian,” “The Mute Lodges a Complaint,” and “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor,” convey some degree of hope as bad officials are replaced by good ones or the emperor proves willing and able to redress any wrong done to the people. However, the fact that such unenlightened and uncaring people could gain powerful positions in the first place is highlighted. The degree to which money and power are truly the most important things in their lives proves their unworthiness for official position. Thus, in both types of “bad official” tales there is a sense of distance from the people and a feeling that though certain individuals may make good officials who look out for the people, these officials are exceptions to the rule. The typical official will only look out for himself and considers the people ignorant and/or only good for abuse and monetary gain.

Regarding evil officials or landlords, it is clear that, if judging by number alone, tales containing these characters are prevalent enough to suggest tampering or selectivity.
Evil and cruel characters drawn from the upper class pervade a majority of the stories and there are not enough tales portraying those who are kind and beneficent to raise doubts about the role of officials and landlords in these tales. A problem, however, lies in the prevalence of “bad official” tales found in seemingly un-doctored collections of stories. While Eberhard argues that in propagandized collections “the upper classes [...] are bad, cruel, irrational or ridiculous,”129 his work itself contains a number of tales which play into the rich landlord versus poor peasant trend. Eberhard does acknowledge that many of these tales may have been changed or edited and bear little resemblance to their original versions (i.e. Tale 61 “The Mynah Bird”), but he also includes many bad official stories that he does not note as having been tampered with by Communist sources.130 The other books of folklore I have commonly cited in this analysis, the Hui collection of Li and Luckert and the book of tales compiled by Werner, also include stories that depend on the peasant versus upper class theme (and these authors also do not cite evidence of tampering). Furthermore, Miller, in his collection of minority tales from the Yunnan province argues that “stories that reflect struggles between workers and the ruling class occupy an important position” in Yunnan folklore, demonstrating that the evil landlord and official theme is not unique to propagandist tales.131

Eberhard is correct to suggest that the bad or evil official would be a very important character to Communist tales. The prevalence of this theme in his and other editors’ books, however, suggests that the overwhelming nature of this type of story in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* might be as much a function of it being a popular theme in all Chinese tales as it is evidence of the Chinese government’s plan to engineer this book for propaganda purposes. Obviously, the case

129 Eberhard, xxxv.
130 Ibid, 231; 14; 24; 124.
131 Miller, 50.
could be made either way and the popularity of the “bad official or landlord” theme is useful to the Communist government whether it purposefully meant to emphasis it or not. It is simply important to stress that while, in this case, evidence of Communist propaganda may seem clear, there are more levels at work here and the question, as is obvious from the other sections of analysis, is not easily answered.

Absence of the Supernatural

Finally, while the four previously discussed themes seem to have much in common or, at least, some tie to the peasant hero theme, questions of the supernatural are more distinct yet still necessary in a discussion of possible propaganda. In his 1943 Yan’an Talks, Mao Zedong stated that “we must pass strict judgment on works of literature and art that contain [...] antiscientific [...] views,”132 and in Lu Ting-yi’s 1956 speech “Let Flowers of Many Kinds Blossom, Diverse Schools of Thought Contend!,” he echoes Mao’s words, explaining that what the people believe sometimes has a “taint of the superstitious” that intellectuals need to remedy.133 Although folk literature was popular in propaganda of the Japanese War of Resistance and the Communist era, propaganda experts still criticized older literature for being “full of violence and superstition.”134 Eberhard supports this evidence of Communist aversion to supernatural representation in folklore, declaring that in literature tampered with by the Chinese government or selected for appropriate themes, the supernatural will be all but absent or at least “rationalized” in some way.135

Chinese folklore, however, is full of divine intervention, spirit patrons, and magical happenings. In Chinese legends the underworld or spirit world is often very

---

132 Mao, 77.
134 Hung,193.
135 Eberhard, xvi.
important because it reflects dualism between body and soul. Those in the real world are represented in the spirit world and all of the ranks and divisions of Chinese society are found there as well.136 “People [become] gods everyday in China,”137 and, thus, Chinese gods are directly connected to mortal life and often taken from the ranks of mortals. This prevalence and popularity of the supernatural is reflected in various collections of folklore. Throughout Miller’s book “[e]verybody and everything talks--people, gods, devils, animals, trees, and rocks.”138 Birrell’s work on Chinese tales is completely devoted to the explanation of the “divine cosmos” and “mythic heroes and heroines,” and Eberhard’s work as well as the Hui myths collected by Li and Luckert include mentions of heaven, the underworld, and animals as well as humans possessing magical capabilities.139

*Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* straddles the line between the more frequent supernatural occurrences of the collections of Eberhard, Li and Luckert, and Werner, and the scientific or rational interpretations of the Communist government and Communist propaganda, but the supernatural is definitely represented in many stories. This is most noticeable in those stories that include the battles waged by peasants against evil dragons, which are attempting to destroy the lands (“The One Eyed Dragon of Modou Mountain,” “The One Hundred Section Aqueduct,” and “The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon”).140 In these tales the dragons may be meant as representations of rich or greedy officials and landlords, who strip the peasants of their fields and homes, but this is never directly suggested and Eberhard definitively states that “stories containing much mythological material [...] are largely left out” in Communist

136 Werner, 93.
137 Hackin, Maspero, and others, 262.
138 Miller, 30.
139 Birrell, 1; Eberhard, 73-86; 91-113; Li and Luckert, 161-185; 431-445; and Miller, 119; 130; 153-205; 228.
140 Zhang, 118, 70, 19.
collections despite symbolic possibilities.\textsuperscript{143} Even if the appearance of dragons was meant metaphorically, the use of the supernatural is antithetical to the Communist design.

Furthermore, aside from the appearance of dragons, the dragon folktales included in \textit{Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales} are rife with other supernatural references. In “The One Eyed Dragon of Modou Mountain,” dragons turn into men, magical potions are used to defeat the enemy, and a magical kingdom exists under a lake.\textsuperscript{142} Furthermore, as in “The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon,” wooden dragons are “awakened” by drops of their masters’ blood and set off after their evil counterparts to defend the people.\textsuperscript{143} “The One Hundred Section Aqueduct” follows suit as wooden men and horses created to collect wood supplies for their master and magical tools passed down by Lu Ban, the patron of carpenters, are depicted.\textsuperscript{144} In all of these tales the supernatural is a palpable force. These are not merely tales that include one or two supernatural elements, but stories which, through the basic theme of a rebellious dragon explore a world of magical ideas. Although few in number, these supernaturally charged stories defy the assumption that an extremely selective Chinese government combed through Bai nationality tales in order to only publish those which met certain prerequisites.

While the other stories included in \textit{Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales} contain much less in the way of magic than the three dragon stories described above, some of these stories still contain elements of magic that would undermine a Communist stress on the absence of the supernatural. One of the few Lu Ban legends to contain a supernatural reference, “Make Offerings to the Wood God” is akin to the dragon tales mentioned above in that it describes the process of turning wooden men

\textsuperscript{142} Eberhard, xxxv.
\textsuperscript{143} Zhang, 119–120.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid, 20.
carved by a skillful artisan into real people.\textsuperscript{145} Although in this story the action of "awakening" wooden people is taken in order to deliver the peasants from evil officials, the strong supernatural element is still at odds with the goals Mao outlined in his Yan’an Talks. Again, in stories like “The Pillar of Wood Shavings,”\textsuperscript{146} the supernatural element plays a part even though it creeps in only at the very end. A “great wind suddenly [picks] up the traveling man [who has helped the people to finish construction on their temple] and blows him away” and the traveling man’s proclamation that “I am a Jianchuan carpenter, you can find me anywhere!” imbues the story with a more magical theme, calling into question his identity and divinity.\textsuperscript{147}

In comparison to other compiled works of folktales, (usually collected by sources outside of China) however, the selection of stories I translated does have a marked detachment from supernatural themes common to Chinese folklore. Dragons are mentioned and Lu Ban does play a large part in many of the stories, but discussion of the pantheon of Chinese gods or the afterlife is conspicuously lacking. A suggestion of the afterlife is seen in “The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountain Range” when after death the wife of the carpenter is still thought to search for him from the sky, (a tale very much reminiscent of Eberhard’s “Faithful Even in Death”)\textsuperscript{148} but there is no indepth description of what the underworld is like or stories of human travel to the underworld as found in Eberhard’s “Husband and Wife in this Life and in the Life to Come.”\textsuperscript{149} Even the stories dealing with dragons are concerned mostly with this earth and rarely invoke deities or ancestors, showing a distinct removal from spirits in general.

Additionally, the one godlike personage who does show up consistently in the Bai

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, 62.
\textsuperscript{146} Also of note is the story “The Carpenter Academian” during which the main character’s scrolls prove flame-retardant and save an old woman and her house from destruction by fire.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 94.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid, 111; Eberhard, 30.
\textsuperscript{149} Eberhard, 31.
stories, Lu Ban, is by no means a highly supernatural figure. Although in “Make Offerings to the Wood God” he is able to “awaken” the wooden men he creates, he is as prone to “human” or non-supernatural foibles as any other character. There is a suggestion at the end of many tales and in some of the stories about common carpenters as to the place of Lu Ban as a powerful patron of artisans, but in many of his own stories he is distinctly non-magical. Besides creating a horse which can move and a horse which can fly in “The Three-Legged Horse” and “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives,” (respectively) he is portrayed as a common man who sometimes does great things and sometimes makes mistakes, counting on others to help him avert disaster.

There is even a tale included in the selection I translated that debunks superstitions and demonstrates the trickery that can be accomplished through the use of pretended magic. In “‘Pulling the Wood Scripture’ and ‘Pressing the Wood Scripture’” carpenter Yang tricks the rich man Zhao and his own apprentices into believing that he has magical powers and can lengthen and shorten wooden beams at will. When finally questioned by his apprentices as to the method through which he has learned such wonderful magic, “Master Yang [shakes] his head and [says] there [are] no such scriptures.” Master Yang has a logical explanation for the seemingly supernatural occurrences of the story and his final message to the apprentices is, “as a skilled craftsman, let your workmanship lie in being conscientious and careful, do not be careless. I will pass down four words to you: Work hard, be conscientious.” This story is at direct odds with the supernatural tales of the collection as, in this story, those who believe in magic are foolish or fail to understand that magic will not solve problems. It can
most directly be juxtaposed with "The Pillar of Woodshavings" given that in that tale all seems normal (if not a little bizarre) until the traveling man reveals himself at the end, while in this story all is imbued with a hint of the supernatural until Master Yang dismisses such ideas and praises hard work as the only way to overcome trickery.

Analyzed in accordance with Eberhard's statement that there will be a lack of the supernatural in folktales designated for propaganda purposes, the stories included in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* are inconsistent and, thus, not directly indicative of propaganda. Although some tales are heavily concerned with magic and overtly supernatural, many which should contain some magical elements are completely common and/or normal (i.e. a majority of the Lu Ban tales). As with the folktales describing women, there seems to be a discrepancy here in that each story itself is fairly cut and dry, either supernatural or not, but the greater body of work lacks a clear stance. All that can be definitively said is that while there is a lack of the supernatural in many stories and a complete absence of heaven or the spirit world in every story, the presence of a smattering of extremely supernaturally charged tales implies that they may not have been tampered with, or, at least, not with regards to magical themes.

**Conclusion**

"Most of the [...] ethnic groups inhabiting the mountainous border country of China have no written language, and so preserve their traditions orally. The party has seen in the collecting and interpretation of their folklore a golden opportunity to penetrate those alien cultures of the Autonomous Regions, embracing nearly half of China proper, and the outlying provinces."

As established by the analysis above, the claim that *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* has been egregiously tampered with by the Communist government for propagandistic purposes is questionable at best. Although Lucien Miller argues in the introduction of his book *South of the Clouds: Tales From*  

---

155 Eberhard, xxiii.
Yunnan that an “issue of central importance is the authenticity and reliability of written folktales in general, and the Yunnan minority tales in particular,” he can provide few concrete examples of questionable collections and goes so far as to assert that today “little editing” threatens minority folktale compilations. The large number of stories in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* concerning peasant heroes and evil landlords as well as heroic peasant women would suggest that the tales had at least been selected for content supportive of Communist themes. However, this view is marred by the presence of tales in praise of the emperor, supernaturally themed stories, and the duality of the role of women in stories in which they are heroes. Nothing can be known for certain without an admission or denial from both the Chinese government and the people who provided the stories themselves, and, thus, my analysis is thorough in defining themes in the folklore, yet still inconclusive.

Perhaps what is most important about *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* then, is not its questionable role as propaganda but the motives that have lead the Communist government to publish such a collection. As Eberhard's quotation at the beginning of this conclusion implies, whether for propaganda purposes or not, the Communist government has used culture and traditional folkways to gain access to ethnic groups. “The relation between the study of folklore and the rise of nationalism is beautifully illustrated in China,” and as much as the Chinese government trumpets the right of the national minorities to their own culture and the right to respect of that culture, “respect of culture” may simply be a means through which to further assimilate outlying minority regions. Paul Noll states that “ethnic dissent among some

---

156 Miller, 16; 20.
157 Ibid, xxiii.
159 Beijing International.
nationalities could easily develop as an issue in the coming years.\textsuperscript{160} Is the Chinese
government truly interested in minority culture and the protection of the Bai nationality
as they state in the introduction to \textit{Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan}
\textit{Carpentry Tales} or are they simply paying lip service to this ideal in order to further tie
possibly troublesome minority groups to the Chinese nation?\textsuperscript{161}

Even if the Chinese government would not admit that greater assimilation or
nationalism in minority areas is an underlying goal, it seems that sources outside of the
Chinese government have detected this motive in the recent actions of the government. In
a Chinese resource published in Yunnan about Bai nationality Ben Zhu religion, I found
an entire section devoted to the ways in which Bai nationality tales and Ben Zhu religious
practices have always supported a nationalistic attitude.\textsuperscript{162} Although the tales that are
included to illustrate this point deal directly with the Nanzhao Kingdom, which was never
a part of and even went to war with China, the author stresses that the Ben Zhu religion
has always been an extremely nationalistic one, pushing the people to support the
kingdom or country to which they belong.\textsuperscript{163} Seeing that the Ben Zhu gods have always
retained a local flavor and differ from city to city (even neighboring cities will have
different Ben Zhu gods) this claim seems more an attempt to find some sort of latent
patriotism in Bai nationality culture than actual fact. The section even states that although
the Bai were formerly members of the Dali and Nanzhao Kingdoms, as soon as they were
integrated into the Chinese territories, they realized that they were a part of China and
have been loyal to it ever since.\textsuperscript{164}

If the Bai nationality and all other nationalities are to be accorded respect of

\textsuperscript{160} Paul Noll and Associates.
\textsuperscript{161} Zhang, 1-19.
\textsuperscript{162} Yang Zhonglu, 杨仲景, \textit{Baizu Benzhu Wenhua} 白族本主文化(Kunming: Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1994) 148.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, 148.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid, 149.
custom and independence of tradition as the government and the introduction to *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends* and *Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* maintains, why does a claim of patriotism and loyalty need to be made? In the 1999 White Paper, the Chinese government states that in order:

"...To preserve the traditional cultures of the ethnic minorities, the state has formulated plans or organized specialists for work involving the collecting, editing, translating and publishing of their cultural heritage and the protecting of their famous historical monuments, scenic spots, rare cultural relics and other important items of the historical and cultural heritage."

This goal seems an honorable one, but if it includes attempts to change minority cultures in order to portray their attitudes towards the government in a more favorable light, it is detrimental to ethnic relations at best. In *New Perspectives on State Socialism*, Julian Chang argues that "a parallel to Soviet mobile agitation can be found in the CCP’s use and adaptation of rural tradition." Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales and, on a wider scale, the 1999 White Paper and efforts to integrate ethnic minorities may simply be recent examples of this move towards agitation to nationalism and Communism.

Yet, it is again important to emphasize how complex the present situation is. Obviously the government may now be attempting to assimilate national minorities, but the attention given to the national minorities by the Chinese government and the publishing of the 1999 White Paper explaining that they have definite rights and even deserve some advantages over the Han majority, cannot be viewed as an entirely negative development. The Paper is in some ways a step towards greater minority recognition and telling of more improvements to be made in relations between the central government and the outlying minorities. Additionally, recent national and international drives to protect ethnic nationality groups have drawn greater attention to previously ignored minority

---

166 Chang, 96.
areas. Groups such as SIL International, which has about 1,000 projects around the world working with minority cultures and languages and has taken a specific interest in Bai nationality areas, are active in China. Even more recently, in 2001, the World Monument Fund named the Shaxi Market (a historic area, famous for Bai nationality cultural relics) one of the 101 Most Endangered Sites, drawing interest to the Bai nationality. 167

Questions surrounding the status of minority rights and the effect of the 1999 White Paper on the treatment of Ethnic Minorities are relatively new, and the issue is one of "potential chaos and fragmentation." 168 The White Paper of the Chinese government claims that minority cultures are to be nurtured and that changes will only be allowed if the ethnic minority expresses a wish for change. 169 The introduction of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales attempts to adopt this tact of appreciation for minority cultures and the wish to nurture, yet it carries profit, tourism benefits, and the development of greater assimilation to the Han majority as ulterior motives. 170 Consequently, at this time, there is still no conclusive evidence with which to applaud or criticize the aims of the Chinese government.

The situation is simply confusing. It is history unfolding and it is necessarily difficult to predict what will happen or even the true impact of what is happening now. The cause of national minorities is neither completely hopeless nor entirely promising and the Communist government is not definitely a villain trying to use minority cultures in order to create greater national feeling nor an institution selflessly promoting minority rights. Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales is just a book and probably one that will not have a great influence on a vast number of people even if it is propaganda. Yet, the amount of discussion that the genre of folklore and even this one

167 Perng, 5; 39.
168 Ward.
170 Zhang, 1-19.
book itself can generate is telling of what is a controversial situation in a very large nation. Things are being done everyday which in some small way help or hinder minority groups, whether as a whole or individually. The introduction to *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* is layered, interesting, and worthy of discussion, but it could be argued that it is only one short text. If there were one book like this published concerning every nationality group, however, there would be fifty-five such texts; if there were one book like this concerning every minority area as small as Jianchuan there would be countless questionable introductory statements circulating around the country. Thus, as seemingly unimportant as one book of folklore about a small and relatively unvisited area might be, the strong, political content it contains is indicative of a broader movement and defining transformations in the realm of minority relations and government attitudes. Read on many levels it raises questions about the Chinese government’s intentions, the future of minority groups, and even the future of their entire cultures and ways of life.
Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales

Wood Carving Tales

The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon

In the past, during every festival of Pure Brightness, carpentry masters who had traveled to distant places returned home to help with spring planting. Among these carpenters was one of outstanding skill, master Yang, who could not only build a big tile-roofed house with an enclosed compound and five courtyards, but could also design a Jiaoqiangshui memorial archway. When he carved dragons or painted phoenixes, they were exactly the same as the real thing. One day he took his only son, Qi Jin, and, shouldering his bedding and carrying his wood carving tools and small, red copper gong, cooking pot, joyfully headed home. When they approached the dragon pond of the village over from Dengchuan, they felt tired from their long walk and decided to rest for a while.

In those years, the dragon pond was inhabited by a sow dragon. This dragon’s entire body was covered with black dots and her heart was fierce and brutal. She had forcibly occupied the frightening dragon pond in the gloomy forest for the sole purpose of setting herself against human beings. Every three years at dusk, on the twenty fourth day of the 17th Festival of Pure Brightness: A day around April 5th or 6th when people pay respects to the tombs of their ancestors. This is an architectural structure in which four buildings are built in a square which leaves five courtyards, one in the middle and four at the corners. Jiaoqiangshui: An architectural style. This was a type of pot often used by the military which could double as both a cooking tool and a gong. In this story it is only used for cooking. Dengchuan: A n area in western Yunnan, Dali prefecture, Eryuan county.
of the sixth month, she would spit black clouds from out of the pond, completely
obscur[ing] the sky from view. This was followed by a terrible wind and rainstorm as well
as thunder and lightening, and she would flood the land, upturning bridges and, whenever
approaching a house, destroying it and turning one hundred thousand mu\(^{176}\) of fields into
sand. She would also harness the flood waters and bring them crashing into Er Hai,\(^{177}\) stir
up waves as big as mountains, overturn boats, and swallow all the fish and soft-shelled
turtles. After shaking and stirring for a day and a night, she would turn from Er Hai, again
raise terrible winds and storm, flooding and submerging the land and houses, and finally
return to her pond. For three years during the occasion of these disasters, the injured
townspeople had no choice but to move to Cang Mountain,\(^{178}\) eat grass roots and tree
bark, and wait until the sow dragon had calmed down so they could, one by one, leave the
mountain to clear their fields and build houses. In this way several generations of people
were unable to pass their days in peace.

This dragon also had one other problem, she could not stand iron or bronze wares.
If a person did not know this taboo and took bronze or iron tools to the pond for a drink
of water, the dragon would extend her claws, pull the person into the lake and eat him. No
one dared to go to the pond to look for trouble, and, after many years and days, trees had
grown up around the lake and closed it in so tightly that not even wind could enter.

And now, to continue the story: Master Yang and his son, Qi Jin, approached the
lakeside. The weather was very hot and walking had made their mouths and tongues dry.
After resting, Qi Jin was thirsty and wished to drink, but, upon looking around, he saw
that there was no water. As soon as he spotted the dense and gloomy forest on the side of
the road, he abruptly put down his load, grabbed the small, red copper gong pot, and set

---

176 \text{mu}: A unit of area (=0.667 hectares).
177 Er Hai: A large lake between the cities of Xiaguan and Dali in northwestern Yunnan.
178 Cang Mountain: A mountain to the west of Er Hai, it is an important peak in the vicinity of Xiaguan.
off straight towards the dragon pond. Master Yang quickly discarded everything, even his
clothes bundle, and followed his son, trying to catch him, and calling to him not to ladle
water to drink. He didn’t expect that Qi Jin would turn his head for one look and then
squeeze into the forest. Master Yang indistinctly heard half a sentence: “Father, I’m
thirsty...”

Then events happened very quickly. Qi Jin kneeled down, and as soon as he
placed the copper gong pot into the water, the dragon spit out a burst of black fumes. In
the midst of the black fumes she raised up one of her claws and grabbed the pot, as well
as the boy, and dragged them into the pond. At the same time thunder exploded and a hail
storm burst forth. When Master Yang reached the pond he found only Qi Jin’s grass
sandal laying in the mud.

This occurrence was very great as this was Master Yang’s only son. They had
traveled to distant places together, passed through many long and arduous journeys, and
they had never had an accident or mishap. He never expected that he would travel to a
town three days journey from his own and in the bright light of day end up looking on
helplessly as he lost his son. The more Master Yang thought about it, the angrier he
became and he wished to jump into the pond to risk his life against the evil dragon. But,
on second thought, this would also serve no purpose. For a short while he was without
any ideas or plans, his eyes blankly stared at the one grass sandal, and, near the edge of
the lake, he began to cry. He cried until the sun was low over the western mountain, but
he still stayed nearby the lake and would not leave.

At this time, an old woman\textsuperscript{177} walking down the road noticed the discarded burden
and carpentry tools and also heard the sound of crying. Entering the forest she found

\textsuperscript{177}大媽: This word means “aunt” and is an affectionate or respectful form of address for an elderly woman. Because this connotation is difficult to translate into English, I have chosen to simply translate “大媽” as “woman” or “old woman” unless it is used in direct speech.
Master Yang, asked him what had happened, and urged him to return to the village to think up a plan. Master Yang returned to the village with her and everyone was extremely sympathetic to him and comforted him. Among the villagers there were two children, the boy was named A Bao, the girl, A Feng. They clung to Master Yang, giving him water, massaging his back, and expressing particularly warm affection. Seeing these two children, Master Yang was even more saddened. Everyone urged him to relax his mind, rest for the time being, and after that they would send people to accompany him home to Jianchuan.

Master Yang touched neither food nor water and did not sleep the entire night, looking at his son’s grass sandal again and again. The moment the sky began to brighten, he decided not to go. In order to relieve the people from evil and avenge his son, he would fight with the sow dragon and pledged that only one of them would be left standing. His skill was superb, and he was good at carving dragons and drawing phoenixes. He also knew the “Wood Carving Scriptures”\(^{185}\) and understood many incantations. He vowed to carve a wooden dragon and paint and color him, making him exactly the same as a real dragon. After that he would read the incantations, “awaken”\(^{181}\) the wooden dragon, bringing him to life, and choose a day to drop him into the dragon pond to fight with the sow dragon until that evil beast was killed.

After he had decided upon his plan he was no longer as sad, explained his idea to the people, and consulted everyone. They were half believing and half suspicious, but because they sympathized with his bitter experience, they naturally also believed in his

---

185 “Wood Carving Scriptures”: It was passed down that this was Founder Lou Ban’s classic about architecture, but actually it is orally transmitted architectural experiences. Jianchuan Bai nationality wood workers are able to build houses, carve Buddhist images, at the same time they are also able to color and paint walls, and it is said that they know many incantations and are able to bring about good luck and dispel bad. The “Wood Carving Scriptures” are transmitted one-on-one from father to son, master to apprentice, and, consequently, are slowly disappearing. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)

181 开光: refers to the dedication of a Buddhist or sacred statue. Sometimes the eyes of the statue are swabbed as a part of the ritual, and, in this case, the ceremony is used to bring the wooden dragon to life.
skill. Finally, everyone supported his handicraft work and was willing to provide him with food and drink. They were also willing to go to the top of Cang Mountain to chop down trees and let him peacefully carve the dragon so as to get revenge and destroy the evil.

Master Yang went with everyone to the top of Cang Mountain, himself selected a ten thousand year old ancient pine, chopped it down, and carried it back. He cut the branch of the pine tree into two parts, built a shed, fasted and bathed, and then started to carve the dragon. A Bao and A Feng, just as a real son and daughter would, helped him by drawing water to make food and by passing him things.

With the encouragement and help of the local people, Master Yang labored day and night carrying out his work. Whenever he took a break, he would always grab his child’s grass sandal, look at it, and bend his forefinger to count the days. He decided that he wished before noon on the twenty fourth day of the sixth month to complete his carving of the wooden dragon, and on the dusk of that day to put it into the dragon pond and fight with the sow dragon. When he arrived at the last days of his work, Master Yang labored indiscriminately, night and day, and at night the townspeople burned torches to illuminate his work.

One day, a person suddenly came to the shed. He looked like a loafer. A black cloak was draped over his shoulders and his stature was short and fat. He reached up both his hands and squatted by the fire, staring coldly at the working Master Yang, and for a very long time he did not utter a word.

"Older Brother, what do you want?" Master Yang asked the man three times.

That man still did not say a thing, he only extended one hand from under his cape, and held something in front of Master Yang.
Master Yang, surprised, shouted: “A fish!”

“Brother Master,” and with this he began to speak, “I have heard your skill is outstanding. Can I trouble you to bring this fish back to life?” After he had finished speaking, he passed the fish to Master Yang.

Master Yang took the fish and looked at it. It was a Gong fish that had been dried in the sun. He put the fish on a pile of wood shavings, clasped his hands obsequiously and said: “Older Brother, I do not possess that kind of natural ability!”

“You really can’t do that?”

“I really can’t.”

“If you can’t incant a Gong fish, can you really incant a wooden dragon?”

The stranger said these two sentences apathetically, and, not taking leave of his host, gathered together his cloak in his hand, lowered his head, and left the shed. Although Master Yang did not see his face clearly, he felt that this man was muffling a laugh as he went. He wished to follow, but he suddenly heard the sound of laughter behind him. He turned around and the dried Gong fish was unexpectedly turning and moving on the pile of wood carvings. The wood carvings also seemed as if they had become algae.

Master Yang suddenly “woke up” and grabbed an axe with which to chop the Gong fish. However, the fish was very cunning, it squeezed into the pile of wood shavings so as not to be seen. A Bao, A Feng, and the native people of the village, all came to help look for the fish, stirring up the wood carvings one small pile at a time. They stirred and stirred, all was chaos for half of the night, but finally the Gong fish could not be found.

182 Master (山神): Any carpenter who understands the wood scriptures is then able to be a foreman and is called Master. It is a metaphor for his ability to determine and control the life blood of the woods and mountains. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)

193 弓鱼: This type of fish is called a Gong fish or a “弓鱼” because when it jumps it is supposed to look like a bow, the Chinese word for bow being represented by the character “弓.”
Everyone understood whose trickery this was!

Master Yang had a plan. He sprinkled a circle of rice around the shed, called A Bao and A Feng to rotate watches, and after that there were never any other problems and no other strangers came.

Perhaps the sow dragon was only coming to ridicule her enemy for a while and, after she had finished, hurried back to the bottom of her pond to sleep a great sleep.

At noon on the twenty fourth day of the sixth month, Master Yang exhibited the wooden dragon he had finished carving in the public square. Because the sow dragon was black, Master Yang spread white paint on the wooden dragon. The entire body was like bright silver. The townspeople surrounded Master Yang, congratulated him on the happy occasion, and "awakened" the wooden dragon with him. On the corner of the dragon they hung red colored silk, and, together, the red and the white colors were especially distinct. At eleven forty-five, Master Yang bit his middle finger and dripped blood on the dragon's eyes, ears, lips, snout, and tongue, read the incantations, and silently prayed, hoping that Founder Lu Ban would bless and protect him in defeating his enemy.

As the sun was slipping low, torches were lit everywhere. The village people sang Bai nationality songs, beat gongs and drums, and dragged the wooden dragon down from the hill. Master Yang, lifting a torch aloft, and A Bao and A Feng, waiting on him at his left and right, walked in the very front. When they reached the area of the dragon pond, Master Yang told everyone to stick their torches around the pond and then he traced

---

184 Rice circle: In the past rice, salt, iron, sugar, and tea were five products thought of by laboring people as "The Five Treasures." Among these rice is the first. If anyone encounters a time when they must travel in the mountains and spend the night in the wilds they will sprinkle rice in a circle. It is said that this can ward off the attacks of evil spirits, tigers, and panthers. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)

185 五时三刻: Although "五时" technically means the period of the day from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM, "五时三刻" means "11:45 AM" and refers to the time of day when people were typically executed.
symbols with his fist in the air, read the incantations, and placed the wooden dragon into the pond from head to tail.

Once the ceremony was finished, Master Yang led the people to mount draught animals and quickly ascend the mountain because that place would become the field of battle.

Everyone still had not made it to the top of the mountain when the sound of thunder came from inside of the pond and two clouds poured into the sky, one white, one black. The white cloud first, the black behind, they swept up into the clouds midair. Along with crazy winds and storming rains, flood waters dashed to the sky, and the two dragons began to fight in the air.

Master Yang and the townspeople watched from the top of the mountain. The two dragons fought in midair. They fought from the top of the pass to bottom of the pass, from north to south. The water rose steeply, the mountains echoed. The body of the white dragon was nimble and agile, he pushed through the clouds, destroyed the fog, and crashed ahead. The black dragon’s body was clumsy, and for the time she was content to follow the wind.

The townspeople and Master Yang watched from the top of the mountain, and, disregarding the great rain that had soaked their bodies, shouted loudly and cheered for the white dragon.

The two dragons again came from the south to the north, from the bottom of the pass to to the top of the pass. After all, however, the white dragon’s body was small and his strength weak, and he slowly became unable to bear the physical effort. But he was unwilling to show signs of weakness, and he fought while retreating. The black dragon

---

186 捺拳画符: “画符” refers to the drawing of special symbols, probably Buddhist symbols, which could protect and bring luck. “捺” means “pinch, kneed, or make up” and “拳” means “fist,” but together in this context “捺拳” means “the tracing of symbols with the fist.”
spit out dark fog which enveloped the white dragon. In the midst of dark sky and black earth all that could be seen from time to time was the appearance of the white dragon’s scales and claws.

Master Yang and the townspeople watched from the top of the mountain, and in their hearts they were extremely worried. Master Yang mussed his hair, read aloud the incantations, and earnestly prayed for Lu Ban’s protection and blessing. The townspeople beat the drums and gongs and cheered for the white dragon.

Finally the white dragon turned his tail and retreated towards the top of Cang Mountain. His silver scales in pieces, he flew, sinking, towards the ground. The black dragon could relax and followed from behind. In the end, the white dragon’s entire body was beat into several pieces by the black dragon, and he fell to the top of the mountain; the mountain top was spread with a layer of white, almost as if it had snowed; dark clouds covered heaven and earth, and there was also a layer of flood water.

Although the white dragon had lost, everyone was certainly not disappointed, but very much believed in Master Yang’s skill. Master Yang used an axe to draw a line towards the north to express that as long as he was not victorious over the sow dragon, he would under no circumstances cross this boundary or return home. He wanted to go up to Cang Mountain and fell wood to carve another wood dragon and to decide the fight with the sow dragon by himself. The village people would not let him go alone. Whether in life or death they thought everyone should be together; if wood needed to be cut, then everyone would go cut wood; if a dragon needed to be carved, then, as before, the people would supply Master Yang with food and drink; he could only wait until next year, the twenty fourth day of the sixth month, to fight again with the evil dragon.

At this time, the lives of the people were even more bitter. One night’s storm had

187 打散: This word means “to scatter or break apart” and in this context implies that Master Yang kept his hair in a ponytail which he “scattered,” “broke apart,” or mussed when worried.
already washed away the grass shed on the top of the mountain and the crops that had
been raised were swept clean by the mountain torrents. The flood water in the valley and
the waters in Er Hai had formed one body and only a few treetops could be seen peaking
out from the water. The peasants were even more indignant. One day they went up to the
mountain to fell lumber and left only A Bao and A Feng to stand guard.

Master Yang still kept Qi Jin’s grass sandal near him and as he walked would look
at it. With all of his heart he hoped to dispel the evil for the people and avenge his son.

When the sky was light, Master Yang, on his way to the mountain, met a
blacksmith, Master Zhao. Master Zhao also often traveled to very far places and was an
old friend. Master Zhao asked what was going on, and, when he knew everything, he was
also ready to help Master Yang fell wood and carve the dragon. At the same time he had
advice to give as well: The first white dragon had been defeated because he didn’t have
iron armor, iron teeth, or iron claws. Master Zhao was willing to lend a hand and make
this kind of armor for the wooden dragon. At that time Master Yang finally realized what
he needed to do and that he needed to act accordingly. The only problem was, where
would that many jin\(^{188}\) of raw steel come from? Also there were not enough masters able
to help in the work.

Master Zhao said that he was willing to go to Eryuan Fengyu Mountain\(^{189}\) to find
miners, mine raw iron, and bring it to the village; he was willing to go to Deqing\(^{190}\) to find
his brother blacksmiths, who would all come to Dali to help the troubled “Bai nationality
sons and daughters;”\(^{191}\) he was also willing to go to Jianchuan and ask his wood carving

\(^{188}\) 斤: Chinese unit of weight (\(= \frac{1}{2}\) kilogram).
\(^{189}\) Fengyu Mountain: A mountain in Eryuan, a county in the western suburbs of Dali.
\(^{190}\) Deqing: A city in northwestern Yunnan (farther north than Dali) very close to Tibet.
\(^{191}\) Bai nationality Sons and Daughters: It is passed down that these are the descendants of the Bai
nationality king whose color was esteemed white, and they call each other “Bai nationality Sons and
Daughters.” Now it is the same. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and
Jianchuan Carpenter Tales)
brothers to help carve the wooden dragon. But Master Yang graciously declined his last offer of help, he needed to carve the dragon himself.

“Older brother, don’t worry!” after speaking, the blacksmith, Master Zhao, was gone towards the north in the blink of an eye. The peasants and Master Yang each went to the mountain to fell lumber.

Now to continue with the story: the two children, A Bao and A Feng, had waited until the day was clear and then had gone to the top of the mountain to collect materials with which to rebuild Master Yang’s grass shed. They were busy for the entire day. The flood waters were retreating, and the entire ground was covered with fish and shrimp, an ample amount for them both to eat. The two of them also used wood to plow, scattered some late buckwheat, and waited for everyone to come back.

One day a woman arrived and spoke with the accent of one from Jianchuan. At first A Bao and A Feng thought that she was going along the road towards Dali, but then realized that she had come to find Master Yang. The two children hastily asked her what business she had with Master Yang. She said that she was Master Yang’s sister-in-law, had heard that her brother was carving a dragon for revenge, and had specially brought a bag of dry grain and a steel axe handed down by the ancestors to help her younger brother do his work. Since her brother was not there, she wanted to leave the things she had brought, first go along the road to Dali, and then, when she was headed back, come and find Master Yang. Before she left she also gave the children two of Jianchuan’s sweet and fragrant mandarin orange pears.

The two children hid the bag of dried grain and the axe in the shed, using grass to cover them. They also did not move the pears but buried them in ashes and waited for

---

192 头也不回朝北而去: This phrase literally means “He did not even turn his head toward the north and then left” which I have, for the benefit of an English speaking audience, decided to translate more colloquially as “in the blink of an eye.”
Master Yang to return home.

After two days, the people who had gone to chop wood returned. They had found an ancient pine tree to use as material for carving the wooden dragon, cut it down, and brought it back. They had also cut many materials with which to prepare for the rebuilding of their houses. Everyone endured hardship for about a month of so. It was bitter enough to split their skin and flesh, but spirit was still very high.

When Master Yang returned to the grass shed, A Bao and A Feng quickly gave him the bag of grain, the axe, and the two mandarin orange pears, and explained what had happened.

Master Yang was very surprised, “In my family, I have no older sister-in-law!”

Again, the two children quickly described the woman’s clothes, accent, and appearance and said she also carried a Jianchuan square bottomed basket made of thin bamboo strips.

Master Yang was surprised and suspicious but not certain, and he could only shake his head. He examined the axe again, and it really was useful, the back thick and the blade thin and small. Just as he was scrutinizing the axe in detail, the handle suddenly began to move in his hand. Sometimes it moved fast, sometimes slow, but suddenly the axe handle twisted around and wound up Master Yang’s upper arm. The axe head also became a snake head. It opened its venomous mouth and spit out a poisonous tongue which went straight to attack Master Yang’s stomach.

The two children were surprised and called out. When Master Yang saw that the axe had become a “Green Bamboo Mark” snake he was not surprised or frightened. He...

193 皮开肉裂: This phrase does mean “to split the skin and flesh” as suggested in the translation, but in the story it can be interpreted on two levels. The people did work hard enough to literally “split their skin and flesh,” but they also endured enough hardships to metaphorically or psychologically experience this extreme bitterness.

194 Green Bamboo Mark Snake: This is in reference to a snake known for its ability to twist and jump upwards, which explains the way in which it attacks Master Yang.
used his left hand to pinch a seven cun\textsuperscript{195} length of the snake, and the snake stopped moving. Afterwards, Master Yang pulled the snake from his right arm and exerted all his strength in shaking it in the air. He shook the snake so that all of the joints in its body loosened and broke, and it became soft and paralyzed. In a moment it was no longer alive. Finally, he dropped the snake into the fireplace, and it burned until it made a sizzling sound.

The two children recovered from their fright and quickly went to open the hemp, grain bag. Master Yang was afraid that there might be a mishap, but there was already not enough time to stop them. However, when the bag was opened, Master Yang’s face blackened with anger. It turned out that the bag was full of broken pieces of wood which were the defeated white dragon’s scales, claws, and joints......

At that time the two mandarin orange pears also changed. They were actually two “Jack-in-the-Pulpits”\textsuperscript{196} and if they had been eaten would have induced numbing death.

This was another ruthless plot implemented by the sow dragon, who had again tried to kill Master Yang and the two children. She had sought to use the broken remains of the white dragon’s body to kill Master Yang with anger. However, Master Yang gnashed his teeth, suppressed his anger, and went to again begin carving a wooden dragon. After a short while, Master Zhao and his blacksmith brothers came and quickly began to cast raw iron and make iron armor, teeth, and claws.

At this time, A Bao helped Master Zhao and studied the craft of iron work, and A Feng helped Master Yang and studied carpentry. Soon, A Feng carved a very small wooden dragon and A Bao made many iron scales, teeth, and claws to create the small dragon’s armor. Once this small dragon was finished, it really seemed as if it was nimble

\textsuperscript{195} Cun: A unit of length (=1/30 of a meter).
\textsuperscript{196} Jack-in-the-Pulpit: Also known as Indian Turnip, this plant causes a powerful burning sensation when eaten raw and, if enough is eaten, can affect breathing functions.
and real enough to be alive. Master Yang and Master Zhao were very happy and took the dragon, displaying it in the shed. The two masters officially took these two children as apprentices and the villagers came to celebrate this happy event. Everyone drank oolong tea, ate wild cabbage, Gong fish, and eels, drank two gulps of green yeast wine, sang Bai nationality songs, and played the yueqin\textsuperscript{197} and the sanxian\textsuperscript{198}.

On the night of that day, a Buddhist monk came. He wore a woolen fabric made in Tibet over his shoulders, shook a drum shaped rattle, and led along a black dog. He had come to the shed to beg. In ancient times, all Bai nationality peoples believed in Buddhism and if they saw a Buddhist apprentice definitely gave alms or donations. The people quickly called him to come inside and sit for a while, ladling out food and drink for him. At this time Master Yang was already half drunk and, seeing that it was already late and a fine rain had begun to fall, he let the old monk stay in the shed for the night.

How could they know that in the middle of the night the old monk would take advantage of everyone’s sleep, quietly rise, take the small wooden dragon from the table, and pull it apart into several pieces? He then used the fire to light some wood carvings and set fire to the grass shed. Next the black dog set upon the sleeping Master Yang, trying to bite his neck. Thankfully, A Bao woke up, grabbed an iron hammer, and broke the top of the black dog’s head. A Feng also woke up and used an axe to cut the monk, but she was only able to cut off one finger. The monk turned into a violent wind and left.

When the peasants woke up, the monk and the black dog were nowhere to be seen. On the ground all that was left were several broken pieces of the wooden dragon and one of the toenail claws of the sow dragon. Everyone knew that the sow dragon had again tried to play an evil trick.

\textsuperscript{197}月琴: Four-stringed round guitar.
\textsuperscript{198}三线: Three-stringed plucked instrument.
patrolled day and night, but the sow dragon did not dare to come again and had probably gone to see to her wound.

At noon on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year, a wooden dragon had again been carved. His entire body was covered with armor and was brilliantly white and glistening. It really seemed as if the dragon’s body was white silver, and when it was put in the public square, it was extremely awe inspiring. The big dragon was surrounded by eight smaller dragons which A Bao and A Feng had used their skill to make together. The village peasants all came to see Master Yang “awaken” the big and small dragons.

At dusk torches were lit everywhere, the people sang songs, drums and gongs were beaten, and the nine silver dragons were brought down from Cang Mountain. Master Yang, Master Zhao, A Bao, A Feng, and the master blacksmiths walked in the front. When they reached the area of the sow dragon’s pond, they stuck torches in the ground surrounding it. Master Yang read the incantations again and then put the nine dragons into the pond.

When the ceremony was completed, Master Yang quickly led the peasants to ride draught animals and ascend the mountain. Inwardly everyone knew why: the top of the mountain was to become the battlefield.

All of the village people had not yet ascended the mountain when the sound of thunder came from the pond, a black cloud poured into the sky, and nine white clouds followed behind. Along with violent winds, rolling and surging, great waves joined with Er Hai to form one body of water. Lakes and rivers, land and sky could not be distinguished. The nine white dragons, one big, eight small, surrounded the black dragon and fought with her.
The ten dragons fought in the sky. They fought from western Cang Mountain to eastern Er Hai. The mountains and valleys called and echoed, the sea water rose sharply. The nine white dragons moved in and out of the dark cloud, and the people’s eyes were all so dazzled they became blurry.

Master Yang, Master Zhao, and the peasants watched from the top of the mountain, beating drums and gongs and shouting encouragement. Rain soaked their bodies, and thunder and lightning occurred simultaneously, shining on the bronze colored shapes of the dragons, which were godlike.

The ten dragons fought from the bottom of the pass in the south to the top of the pass in the north. One hundred and twenty li\textsuperscript{199} of the sky became the battlefield. Although the black dragon possessed great strength and her body was thick and coarse, she was entangled by the nine other dragons and gradually became exhausted. She began to struggle in the air and one black scale as big as a winnowing basket fell from the sky and silently dropped into Er Hai. The dark dragon still struggled to defy death and swung her tail, which had the thickness of a well bucket, trying to knock the small dragons into Er Hai.

Master Yang, Master Zhao, and the peasants watched as their own white dragon, already gradually succeeding, was greatly invigorated. They waved axes, planes, iron hammers, hoes, and sickles and made a show of strength towards the sky. The rain continued in torrents and the great waves echoed from the Mountain.

When the nine white dragons had chased the black dragon back from the north, the dark dragon’s head had already gradually begun to fall toward the ground. A white cloud covered the sky. The black cloud seemed as if it were merely a dull piece of felt and gradually was pushed toward the surface of the sea. The sky was cut into two halves, the

\textsuperscript{199} 里: Unit of length (=1/2 of a kilometer).

65
upper half white, the lower black, it was extremely clear. Soon the dark cloud dropped into the sea.

The rain stopped, the white cloud spread across the earth, a bright moon appeared in the sky, and the sea water was like a mirror. But one could only see Qi Jin riding the great white dragon. He led the eight small dragons and flew towards the west, gradually flying in front of the people. Master Yang and the villagers lifted their heads and called out. The nine dragons flew towards the pond. The noise of thunder sounded nine times splitting asunder the tightly enclosed forest, and the dragons entered deep into the pool.

From that time on, the sow dragon was kept impressed at the bottom of Er Hai and the dragon pond became the white dragon pond. The trees surrounding the pond had already been split apart, the sunlight came pouring in, and the pond was crystal clear so that the bottom could be seen. It was no longer a gloomy, scary forest. The next generation of people built a White Dragon Temple near the pond in order to remember Master Yang and the white dragon. In the middle of it is modeled a likeness of Master Yang with two children, A Bao and A Feng, standing on either side of him waiting to serve him. The great white dragon is coiled on the top of the inscription board, and the eight, small white dragons are coiled on the pillars. The people also did not forget Master Zhao as the side rooms of the White Dragon Temple depict him still holding a hammer.

Recorder: Ou Xiaomu
“Pulling the Wood Scripture” and “Pressing the Wood Scripture”

The carpentry skill of Jianchuan has been famous throughout the ages. According to legend, in ancient times there was a Master Yang, who was a capable and wise person. He was sincere and careful in doing things and had a very strong natural ability. Whether it was mud or wood, or lacquer or wood, he could use anything and do a good job. Among all of the carpenters, he was considered among the very best masters.

One year, Master Yang brought his apprentices Yang two and Yang three to go to Yaoan. Now, at the Yaoan government seat there was a very rich man named Zhao who was a harsh and crafty person. When having people work for him, he would often offer tricky and cunning conditions under which craftsmen of different trades suffered.

When Master Yang and his apprentices first arrived at the Yaoan government seat, they did not know of this situation and agreed to build a mill house for the rich man Zhao. After they had talked about the price for the work, the rich man Zhao wore a dry smile as he said: “Ha, Master Yang, I wish to seek some good luck, there really can be no unexpected misfortune.”

To which Master Yang replied, “Of course.”

The rich man Zhao winked and again said: “Good. But we are at first vile people and only later men of noble character. If you build the pillars and raise the beams, you will receive your money immediately. However, if there are any unexpected problems, I will not give you a single penny. At that time don’t blame me for not having explained.”

---

200 泥木, 漆木: Indicates that he focused on wood working, but also engaged in work with mud tile and lacquer. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
201 Yaoan: A city in western Yunnan to the east of Dali and the north of Niujie and Nanjian.
202 内事: Internal situation (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
Master Yang blandly said, "I give my word."

The rich man Zhao again exhorted: "Don't regret it!"

Master Yang did not even turn his head, but went to begin work.

One day, two craftsmen, Zhen Si and Li Wu, came to ask to join in the work. Master Yang saw that they were also the disciples of Lu Ban and so took them in and provided for them. Zhen Si and Li Wu actually paid great attention to their craft and seemed hard working and fond of physical labor.

According to proverb: The man who possesses high skill is also very audacious. But, this was not true of Master Yang, for although his skill was great, he was never reckless and was especially careful. Everyday when he stopped working he always put his jade tipped pipe bowl in his mouth, smoked orchid tobacco, and checked the work of the apprentices to see if there were any careless mistakes.

When there were only two days left until the pillars had to be built and the beams raised, Master Yang checked everything: the beams, the pillars, the hanging sides, the corner faces, the load bearing portions, the interior sides, the horizontal beams, the passing beams, the big interposes, and the main interposes. He looked at Zhen Si’s and Li Wu’s work. It was smooth and round, the mortise was upright, the eye at the right place, and this was especially true of the middle beam. That which had been roughly planed was finely planned, and it was outwardly straight as a line. There were no bad spots. Master Yang gave everything a cursory look, was about to leave, but turned back again to look carefully. His heart silently sounded: "This is very dangerous! This is very dangerous!"

In the blink of an eye the date propitious for building had arrived. On this day Chen Si and Li Wu were extremely dexterous, climbed up and down, kept shouting and

203 扎杖: To again exhort or explain (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
204 鲁班弟子: A common name for a carpenter is Lu Ban’s disciple (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
yelling back and forth, and after a short while the house was raised. At forty-five minutes past noon when everyone was waiting to put the middle beam into place, the rich man Zhao came dressed in silk and satins. Two members of the family came with him, one carrying the money on a black lacquer plate and the other, having used a big piece of red silk to tie up a mahua\textsuperscript{205} rooster, following behind.

When he had reached the spot of the construction, the rich man Zhao held the rooster fast and asked Master Yang to offer a sacrifice for the beam: “Master Yang, please offer sacrifice. A person who can build a mill with beams which are not long or short is really a skillful carpenter! Raise this last, middle beam well, and you can have this plate of snowflake-like silver. Please speak the auspicious words.”

Master Yang received the rooster and began to read the auspicious words:

Rooster Rooster Rooster,

What sort of rooster are you?

Rooster Rooster Rooster,

Mahua, Phoenix rooster.

On your head you wear a helmet of the best gold,

On your body multi-colored garments.

Today is the propitious day,

We use you as a foundation.

A little bit of the jade pillar,

The master laughs, “Hee, hee,”

A little bit of the middle beam

.....

\textsuperscript{205}麻花: Refers to a type of bread eaten in China which is formed by twisting two stripes of dough together. This is used to describe the rooster’s tail which is very full with feathers or in some way reminiscent of the food.
Master Yang had just finished offering sacrifice for the middle beam when the rich man Zhao gave Zhen Si and Li Wu, who were raising the frame of the house, a look. Zhen Si and Li Wu then threw down a pair of hemp ropes, and in loud voices said:

A pair of black dragons descend to the mortal world,
Descend to the mortal world and take hold of the middle beam,
Bring the middle beam towards the sky,
When it reaches the sky, see if it be short or long.

Zhen Si and Li Wu put the middle beam on the frame of the house and quickly compared it. Then they called out: “Oh no! The middle beam is not long enough, it is short by two or three cun.”

The rich man Zhao laughed in his heart, glanced upward, and said: “Master Yang, the middle beam is short two or three cun, the wages...”

“Stop!” Master Yang was composed and called Zhen Si and Li Wu to lower the middle beam. He then called the two apprentices to carry over a pair of hobby horses and raise the middle beam horizontally onto them. After that, he himself took out a five chi pole to measure. The beam was only one zhang, one chi, and seven cun, it really was short by three cun. Yang two and Yang three began to worry. The rich man Zhao glanced up to the sky and smiled secretly at Zhen Si and Li Wu who smiled back at him in a self-satisfied manner. Master Yang pretended that he did not see this, picked up his wood hammer and lightly hit the top of the beam three times and the bottom of the beam three times. In a high voice he said:

Beam of best gold, beam of best gold,
Lu Ban has made you the king of trees;

---

206 尺: A unit of length (=1/3 of a meter).
207 丈: A unit of measure (=3 1/3 meters).
Today is an auspicious day,
We choose you to be the middle beam.
The big ink stick set you at one zhang two,
Why are you short by three cun;
Yang two, Yang three come forward;
See if it is long or not.

Yang two and Yang three heard their master’s call, but almost had to be dragged forward. Master Yang ordered Yang two and Yang three to each hold an end of the middle beam and use all of their strength to pull on it. Yang two and Yang three had followed Master Yang for many years, but they had never seen their master intentionally trick or frighten other people. They felt this situation to be very new, and, adding the fact that the middle beam was short a section, they were very worried and really used all of their strength to pull on the beam. Soon afterwards, Master Yang called them to raise the middle beam onto the hobby horses, took out the five chi ruler, and oh! the middle beam really had been pulled longer. It was now one zhang, two chi, and five cun, longer by five cun.

Master Yang said: “Yang two, Yang three, you two used too much strength.”

Yang two quickly said: “Master, the carpenter fears shortness, longer is better to handle. Grab a saw, and saw it shorter.”

Master Yang laughingly said: “What sort of natural ability does using a saw signify?” And after speaking again quoted:

Beam of best gold, beam of best gold,
You are the tree king of the Mountain,
Today we approach the auspicious day,
And choose you to be the middle beam.
The big ink stick set you at one zhang two,
Why are you long by five cun?
Yang two, Yang three come forward,
If you press it, it will be not long.

Yang two and Yang three, in accordance with their master’s order, took hold of each end and used all of their energy to push towards the middle. Master Yang used his five chi ruler to measure again, and the beam was not long or short, but just right at one zhang and two chi. He measured again carefully and it was one zhang two chi, not short a fen²⁰⁸ or a li²⁰⁹ Zhen Si and Li Wu trembled with fear, their legs weakened, and they almost fell from the top of the house frame. The rich man Zhao was so stunned with terror he could not even move his eyes to take a look.

Master Yang called Zhen Si and Li Wu to raise the middle beam, and they quickly moved to action, even forgetting to recite “One, knock the dragon’s head, Gold and silver will be abundantly; Two, knock the dragon’s tail, Gold and silver will flow like water” and other such auspicious words.

With his eyes wide open, the rich man Zhao watched as the white silver he had offered for salary was taken away. His heart throbbed, it drove him crazy. Zhen Si and Li Wu did not even dare to say a word of goodbye and that same night stole away.

The story of Master Yang’s “Pulling the Wood Scripture” and “Pressing the Wood Scripture” spread around the entire Yaoan valley and shook the Yaoan government seat.

When Yang two and Yang three had studied the craftsmanship to finish their apprenticeship, they asked Master Yang: “Master, we want to leave our apprenticeship,
will you now pass the “Pulling the Wood Scripture” and the “Pressing the Wood Scripture” down to us?”

Master Yang shook his head and said that there were no such scriptures. The two disciples did not at all believe him. Then Master Yang told them the truth of the “Pulling Wood,” “Pressing Wood” matter: Originally when Master Yang was checking the work he had discovered that Zhen Si and Li Wu had intentionally sawed the middle beam short three cun. That very night, he had made a middle beam whose outward appearance was exactly the same and secretly switched the two. On the second day when they were raising the beam, Master Yang had seen the rich man Zhao and Zhen Si and Li Wu wink at each other, and he had understood that this was a trick of the rich man Zhao. Master Yang had intentionally moved his five chi pole toward the front when measuring and found the beam short three cun and then moved it towards the back and found the beam long five cun, thus tricking them.

After he had explained the matter, Master Yang said to his apprentices: “As a skilled craftsman, let your workmanship lie in being conscientious and careful, do not be careless. I will pass down four words to you: Work hard, be conscientious.”

It was only at that time that Yang two and Yang three suddenly understood. Master Yang gave Yang two the name Yang Qin, and Yang three the name Yang Shen, and then let them leave their apprenticeship.\(^{210}\)

Area of transmission: Jianchuan

Recorder: Lu Jiarui

\(^{210}\) To signify the end of an apprenticeship the Master is supposed to choose new names which will allow the apprentices to start their own work.
During the years of the Ming Dynasty, there was, in the San Tanshen village of Jianchuan, a carpentry master by the last name of Ma. He had lost his wife when he was middle aged and was left with a son named Ma Ruwei.

In those years, if there wasn’t a drought, there was a flood. The fields could not be harvested and no one was building or raising houses. Although carpenter Ma was extremely skilled, his orphan son was barely yet a man, which made the situation even worse, and he had no way of making a living in his hometown. So he found a carrying pole, on one end carried his three year old son, Ma Ruwei, and on the other carried his wood carving tools, and set off to Yi Fang to make a living.

The carpenter Ma carried his son, did his work, and eked out a living from odd jobs. Moving at times quickly, at times slowly, he passed Dali, Menghua, and Jingdong, and arrived at Yuanjiang.

Some Bai nationality people had settled down in Yuanjiang. Carpenter Ma arrived and found some relatives from the countryside and so also stayed there.

When carpenter Ma had lived in Yuanjiang for four or five years and his son, Ma Ruwei, was seven or eight, carpenter Ma began to teach him how to use the line made by the carpenter’s ink marker, plane wood planks, and follow in doing some odd jobs.

311 翰林 (Hanlin): A person able to pass the highest imperial examination in China was allowed to join the Imperial Academy and was dubbed a “Hanlin” or academian.
312 San Tanshen: A small village in the Jianchuan county area.
313 雪上加霜: Directly translated means “add frost on top of snow,” akin to our “add injury to insult,” and here translated as “make the situation even worse” to better fit the context.
314 埕方: indicates movement towards the Southwest areas of Yunnan (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
315 Menghua, Jingdong, Yuanjiang: All cities in Southwest China, south of Dali and Cang Mountain.
Ma Ruwei’s natural talent was quick and active, and he very much liked to read and study. He saw the masters’ children attending school, and he wished that his father would also send him. Although carpenter Ma deeply loved his child, even if he and his son could manage food costs they could not manage clothing costs. Where would they get the money for schooling? He could not be compelled by his child, and the best he could do was make Ma Ruwei study craftsmanship during the day, and then at night, by the fire, teach him the few, coarse characters he had learned when he was younger.

One day there was some free time. Ma Ruwei followed the masters’ children to go play at the school. The teacher saw that he was smart and clever and when asked a question would answer instantly. He asked his name and where his home was and finally learned that he was the son of Jianchuan’s carpenter Ma.

After school had recessed for the day, the teacher went to find carpenter Ma and said to him: “Master Ma, your child is very smart, please let him attend school, his future truly has promise.”

Carpenter Ma’s face was bitter and anxious when he replied: “Teacher Yang, I am not afraid of you ridiculing me. I am a poor carpenter. I can not even manage money for food and clothing, where will I find the money to provide schooling for my child? Thank you for your good intentions, but I wish to have him study carpentry and, when he grows up, engage in craftsmanship.

Teacher Yang was a man with a good heart who was willing to help other people. Thinking again of how smart Ma Ruwei was and how pitiable it was that he could not study, he said to carpenter Ma: “Master Ma, how about this? I do not want any school fees from you. Allow this child to study half of the day and do work for half of the day.
If he is willing to study, I will come at night to teach him for another two to four hours.\textsuperscript{216} It would be all too terrible if this child did not attend school.”

Carpenter Ma was so moved he did not know what to do and quickly said: “We are indebted to you, teacher Yang, for taking this trouble. All right. Tomorrow I will allow my child to go to school.” And he called Ma Ruwei to make a resounding bow\textsuperscript{217} to the teacher.

But, who knows the hard lot of poorer peoples, for when Ma Ruwei had not even reached his fifth year of study, carpenter Ma died. Ma Ruwei could do nothing but work all day long to support himself.

Teacher Yang knew that at that time Ma Ruwei needed someone to help him in his studies and did not have the heart to let him quit, giving up half-way. So he invited Ma Ruwei to be his young son-in-law\textsuperscript{218} and told him to move into his house and continue his studies.

Because Ma Ruwei saw that teacher Yang was willing to endure bitterness to help him achieve his goals, he was extremely moved and was determined to be diligent. After a few years of hard work, he had acquired a great deal\textsuperscript{219} of knowledge and practiced good techniques of calligraphy and painting.

Master Yang saw that Ma Ruwei’s knowledge had already reached a very high level, so he raised some money for costs and told Ma Ruwei that he should go take the examinations.\textsuperscript{220} Ma Ruwei tested three times in succession and, among those of the

\textsuperscript{216} “时辰” is usually taken to mean “one of the twelve hour periods of the day” or “time,” and so is translated here as “two to four hours” because if the day is split into twelve parts one “时辰” would be two hours.

\textsuperscript{217} A bow in which a person knocks his/her head against the ground so that it can be heard.

\textsuperscript{218} This phrase is used in two stories in the translated compilation and in both is understood to mean that a young man will not immediately marry into a family but will do so when the father or guardian deems it prudent.

\textsuperscript{219} Literally “a stomach full of.”

\textsuperscript{220} Examinations for entrance into government jobs at various levels (i.e. county, provincial, imperial, etc.).
county, achieved the level of scholar, among those of the province, was successful in the provincial imperial exam, and, when he got to the capital, tested into the Imperial Academy.

Although Ma Ruwei had achieved the position of Academian, he had no money with which to bribe the officials of the ministry of Civil Appointment and was not appointed to a government post. He lived in an inn and every month only drew a small government salary which made even staying alive difficult.

Ma Ruwei became ensnared in the capital. He saw the seamy side of the official circles and had no heart for an official career. He wished to go home, but had no traveling expenses, so he had no choice but to help people write out antithetical couplets, inscription boards, and character posters to put on walls. He wished to raise a little bit of money in order to return home, but Ma Ruwei was a poor Academian. Not many people treated him, and his salary was meager. After saving for several years he still could not return home.

When Ma Ruwei had been in the capital for a long time, he thought of his father-in-law and his unmarried wife. As luck would have it, teacher Yang had entrusted someone to bring a letter to Ma Ruwei. In the letter it said that teacher Yang was already infirm and senile. He was often bed-ridden, was aging and ailing like a candle guttering in the wind, and felt unhappy and ill like a young girl. He wrote that if Ma Ruwei was really having no luck finding an official position, he should quickly return and get married.

When Ma Ruwei received his father-in-law’s letter he was extremely worried. He was also anxious to return home and had no money with which to do so, even the family

---

221 秀才: Refers to a scholar who has passed the imperial examination at the county level.
222 对联: An “antithetical couplet” is a parallel couplet (in which the first and second line are diametrically opposed) usually written on red paper and hung in a Chinese house or on gate posts. Because the two lines are antithetical they each have their own meaning and can stand on their own. When joined together they retain their original meanings but contribute to the greater effect of the couplet.
at the inn would not lower their prices. He thought and he thought, and then he wrote
several pairs of antithetical couplets and several rolls of calligraphy and painting and gave
them to the madame of the inn. He said: “Grandmother, I don’t mind traveling far, I came
to the capital from Yunnan. Although I tested an Academian, I have no hope of securing
an official position. I have just received a letter from my family asking me to hurry up in
coming home, but I have no money with which to pay the inn fee. The best I can do is
give you these rolls of calligraphy and painting which I have written. If people want to
buy them, then you should sell them; if no one wants to buy them, then they will serve as
evidence, and, later, when I have money, I will compensate you and your family.”

The madame of the inn was a good-hearted person. She heard Ma Ruwei’s words
and they moved her compassionate heart. She said: “Money is not life, do not be nervous.
Because the situation is like this, you should hurry up and go home.”

Ma Ruwei left the capital. He put away his Academian uniform, and, on the road,
either sold calligraphy and painting or did carpentry work. When he returned to
Yuanjiang, he hastily married and continued to concentrate on carpentry. Although the life
of the family was poor and plain, the young couple was in love and paid filial respect to
their father. The days were easy; much better than when Ma Ruwei was a poor
Academian in the capital.

Unfortunately, afterwards teacher Yang died of illness. Ma Ruwei had attended to
and provided for him in his old age and, on the whole, he always did his utmost to express
the emotion of a son-in-law.

One or two years after Ma Ruwei had left the capital, the building next door to the
inn he had lived in caught on fire and the tongues of the flames turned towards the inn.
Those extinguishing the fire had helped the madame of the inn rescue the furniture, but in
the confusion had allowed the paintings Ma Ruwei had given the madame to drop into the fire. Curiously, when the paintings and calligraphy had dropped into the fire, the flames were completely extinguished. The fire rescuers, who felt this to be very strange, quickly asked the madame and only then knew that these were the paintings and calligraphy of Academian Ma.

The matter of Academian Ma’s paintings and calligraphy extinguishing a fire spread throughout the capital and even reached the emperor there. The emperor sat in his dragon throne and asked the military and cultural ministers: “Why didn’t an Academian scholar of this talent come to present to the emperor and be known to him early on?”

“En... That Academian Ma already left two years ago... he left to return to Yunnan.” The ministers stammeringly replied.

“Quickly send for Academian Ma to return to the capital to the emperor!”

The ministers took the imperial edict and went everywhere to find the Academian Ma. Academian Ma’s birthplace was Jianchuan, but he had grown up in Yuanjiang, and receiving teacher Yang’s extreme favor, had changed his native home to Yuanjiang. The ministers did not know this and ran to Jianchuan to find Ma Ruwei, but no matter what could not find him. Later they heard that Ma Ruwei had moved to Yuanjiang, and so they went to Yuanjiang to seek him.

When the ministers reached Yuanjiang, they found Ma Ruwei’s house, but they only saw his wife carrying a baby and doing chores. They asked: “Madame, where did the Academian Ma go?”

Ma Ruwei’s wife knew that these officials often abused their power, and set her mind to taunt them for a while. She said: “My household has no “Long necked horse,” we
don't even have a "Long necked cow."\textsuperscript{223} My husband is a carpenter, people call him carpenter Ma. Look at my little bit of family property. Do you think it is worth even several liangs of silver? Do you think that he can afford to do official work?\textsuperscript{224}

Those ministers only docilely said: “Please Madame, calm down. The emperor has issued a decree, he wants to invite the respected Academian to enter the court. Please tell us quickly, where is the respected Academian?”

Ma Ruwei’s wife said, in the same manner as before: “My house has not received the emperor's graciousness, we do not owe him grain,\textsuperscript{223} we do not have any communication with his family. If a peasant household does not work what will they eat? My husband has gone to the southern village to help people build a house.”

Having the emperor's sagely order, the ministers had to go to the southern village to seek Ma Ruwei. They found him wearing a collared jacket with buttons down the front and a vest. He was climbing up the frame of a house, putting the beams in place, and buckling a hanging side. They then called loudly: “Respected Academian, please come down, hurry home and pack your things to go to the capital.”

When Ma Ruwei heard this he thought that being a carpenter in his hometown surpassed going to be a poor Academian. Considering the state in which these ministers would contemptuously appraise each other every day, he became extremely angry. He brandished the axe he had in hand, hit the head of a beam with a banging sound, and impatiently said: “I only willing to do wood work, I am not willing to be an Academian. You should all go home!”

\textsuperscript{223} Ma Ruwei’s wife is using rhyming to ridicule the officials. In Chinese Ma Ruwei’s position is “hanlin” which rhymes with “xiangling.” Furthermore, in Chinese Ma Ruwei’s last name “Ma” means “horse.” Ma Ruwei’s wife pretends that she has heard the officials ask her if she has a “long necked horse” and decries the fact that she does not even have a “long necked cow.”

\textsuperscript{224} This sentence refers to Academian Ma’s problems getting an official position because he had no money with which to bribe the ministry of Civil Appointment.

\textsuperscript{225} Peasants/farmers have used grain as a way of paying taxes throughout Chinese history.
However, the ministers did not comply. They said that if he did not heed their call to the capital, then they would have to punish him for a crime. Ma Ruwei was enraged. “Bang, bang, bang!” He hit the end of the beam several times and angrily said: “I, Ma Ruwei, number one: never formerly received the emperor’s graciousness and thus have nothing to repay; number two: have never been behind in paying the emperor's grain, so you can not punish me for a crime; number three: have not accepted bribes from others; four: have not practiced graft or perverted the law; five: have not killed a person and seized his goods; six: have not been licentious with people’s wives; seven: have never stolen; eight: have not lent money at usurious rates; nine: have not hoarded for profiteering purposes; ten: have never assembled peoples to conspire against the state. I earn my own living, where is the crime in that?”

He scolded the ministers until they had no words with which to reply. They could only sigh and leave dejectedly.

From then on, people would say: He was the carpenter with the talent of the top graduate. They called Ma Ruwei “The carpenter Academian” and never said his name.

Area of collection: Jianchuan Zhuliu Village

Time of collection: July, 1961

Narrator: Zhen Xihong

Recorders: Li Zuanxu & Zhou Tianzong
The Mute Lodges a Complaint

According to the older generation, in a southern village there was a carpenter by the name of Li, and, when he was young, his skill was outstanding. He carved dragons that were like dragons and painted phoehixes which were as phoenixes. In the past, during the planning for construction, it was impermissible to draw an outline, and you had to depend solely on your own reckoning. But, even when Li was constructing great architecture of marital upturned eves or enclosed compounds with five courtyards, he calculated with meticulous care and flawless artistry and was not even off by a tiny bit. Not only was his skill level extremely high, but he was also good hearted and willing to help others. Consequently, out of all the carpenters working in Jianchuan, he had something of a reputation, and everyone respectfully called him Master Li. After people had called him this for a while, no one could remember his original name.

When carpenter Li was nine years old both of his parents had died. After that, he had no choice but to stop his studies in mid-progression and follow an old carpenter of the village, studying his craft. He left the town and stopped at Gengma, Jinchi, and Tengchong to do wood carving work. But, who could foresee that "when eating fried noodles he would meet with a difficult or turbulent situation"? When he was twelve years old, his master unfortunately became sick with malaria and died of this sickness in

---

226 A Bai nationality wood carving-skilled phrase meaning planning for construction. (From the text of *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*)

227 "Upturned eves." These eves are often used in the construction of Chinese pavilions and are most easily identified as the upturned corners of some Chinese pagoda roves.

228 Gengma, Jinchi, Tengchong: Gengma, Jinchi, and Tengchong are all areas in Yunnan. Tengchong is a city in western Yunnan and shares a border with Burma. Jinchi is a city in the northwest near Dali and Lijiang, and Gengma is a county in the southwest also near Burma.

229 When doing something common or normal to meet with unexpected disaster.

230 A Bai nationality wood carving-skilled phrase meaning planning for construction. (From the text of *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales*)
a distant province. At that time, the master and the apprentice were in the city of Tengchong, where a jade carver named Zhao had his house and did his work. Fortunately, Father Zhao gave general financial support and finally a funeral could be held for the master. Carpenter Li had no choice but to dwell in the house of father Zhao, dependent on him.

Father Zhao was very kind to Li and constantly asked if he was comfortable. If he couldn’t find any work, Father Zhao would give him food. After a short while, however, Zhao Cai, father Zhao’s only son, was married and the situation changed. The new couple often spread rumors and said inappropriate things, and they also frequently quarreled with their father, telling him that he should not allow a poor carpenter to stay with them. Carpenter Li understood the situation and, in order to release Father Zhao from difficulty, decided to set out on his own to do work. When the day for him to set out approached, father Zhao brought his eight year old daughter, A Xiu, to see carpenter Li off. Li walked a ways and again walked a ways, but, in reality, it was a very hard parting.

The days passed very quickly and, in a flash, it was ten years. At that time the young carpenter Li, since leaving Father Zhao, had been rushing about the four corners, acquiring a vast amount of famous teachers and becoming the famous Master Li. He constantly thought of the jade carver, Father Zhao, who had been concerned about him in his trials and tribulations. With some trouble, he saved up a small amount of money and decided to go see the old man.

When he reached the city of Tengchong, he bought first rate cigarettes, wine, sugar, and tea, “the four essential gifts,” and, in high spirits, rushed towards Father Zhao’s house. On his way he saw a dirty faced, raggedly clothed old man with disheveled pale white hair trip and fall in the middle of the street. He quickly moved forward to help
the old man and, after careful inspection, could not help but be surprised that it was Father Zhao.

Master Li asked: "Father, what has happened?"

The old man opened wide his two eyes and stared fixedly at Master Li. His lips could only emit choked sounds of speaking. A passerby indignantly said: "The mute has a bitter life, he has a mouth but he still has trouble speaking!"

Master Li impatiently asked: "How did this happen?" The onlookers took turns explaining the origin of the matter:

Five years earlier Father Zhao had entered a mountain to mine for jade. Unfortunately, he had fallen, and, subsequently, run a fever and begun speaking nonsense. His son and his daughter-in-law did not take care for him well, and, as a result, he became a disabled deaf-mute. After this event, the son and daughter-in-law sold their younger sister as a slave girl to a rich family. Moreover, they abused the old man in every possible way, making him eat left over soup and food and wear ragged clothing, and at every turn they would point at his nose and let loose a stream of savage scoldings. The neighbors took up his cause and together signed a document of complaint to the local authorities. However, Zhao Cai and his wife got wind of this and sent a bag of silver to the senior official of the county, bribing him. The senior official of the county not only did not punish this unfaithful son, but had Father Zhao summoned to the yamen's office, reprimanded, and expelled from the public hall. Then Father Zhao had wandered about destitutely to this street.

When Master Li heard of these things, he did not say a word, but carried the old man to a medicine shop and asked the old herbal medicine physician to treat the sickness.

231 咳咳: sound of vomiting or crying.
232 衙门: A government official in feudal China.
He ran around buying new clothes, a new hat, and new shoes, and gave them to Father Zhao to wear. Then he led the old man to a restaurant and bought fish, meat, wine, and rice, and they ate and drank until they were full. Soon afterwards, the two of them found an inn to stay in.

Father Zhao slept and did not awaken until the second day when the sun was high in the sky. Master Li asked the old man to return to Li’s hometown. Father Zhao grabbed a clump of soil and held it tightly in his hand, energetically pressing it to his chest. He was not willing to leave his native soil. And in this way for three whole days, no matter how Master Li would try to convince the old man, as long as he would mention leaving Tengchong, Father Zhao would shake his head and sigh. At this time, Master Li also received a letter from his partner that they had a contract for a big engineering project and that he was waiting for Li to plan and do the design for the construction. Master Li didn’t know what to do.

That day, Master Li settled the old man in the inn with his breakfast and, as soon as was possible, went out to the market to purchase some good purple sandalwood, pure earthen varnish, and dyestuffs. He exerted all of his skill, closed the door, and worked for three days to make a treasure chest. On the chest’s lid was carved a relief of two dragons stealing a pearl. Above, beneath, and to the left and right of the carving were hollowed out designs of red phoenixes looking toward the sun, white cranes flying near pine trees, magpies alighting to a plum, and peacocks opening their tales. It really can be said that it was superb craftsmanship.

Master Li also invited a group of people to help him. They played brass and wind instruments in front and made way for two strong men who, on their shoulders, carried...
the treasure chest, which was draped in red as if for a festival. In the middle of all this, Master Li helped the old man along. The instruments were played, and the people in the front made a grand show as those in the back protected the box on the way to the old man’s home. This caused a stir throughout all of Tengchong city. The people, bubbling nosily, said: The old man’s treasure chest is filled with silver, gold, jade, and other treasures. Because the old man’s son was not filial, he hid his treasures in a cave in the mountain. Today Master Li treats him so well that he has decided to invite him to be his son-in-law and live with the family and to give him the treasure box.

When they had progressed about halfway, information had already made its way to Zhao Cai and his wife. The husband and wife heard the news, and their attitude experienced a complete change from normal. They hurried to clear out a room and got completely new bedding and baggage to allow their father to stay. That night they prepared a sumptuous feast, and the old man was placed at the head of the table.235 Master Li also invited some of the neighboring and estimable old men to come and eat. When there had been three rounds of wine, Master Li took from his cloth sack a gold and sparkling key. He said: “Now the key to Father Zhao’s treasure chest is in my hands, but I am not making mistaken presumptions. Brother Zhao Cai and his wife are the real inheritors. However, for the time being I will protect it. Tomorrow I wish to go attend to my craft, and I will return after a year. At that time if brother and his wife truly repent, I will, in the front of the old man and everyone else, give the golden key immediately to them.

Zhao Cai and his wife heard this and were very happy. After Master Li left, Zhao Cai’s wife went to hold the box, it was quite heavy; Zhao Cai lowered his head to watch

235 头位: indicates the first seat or head of the table. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
in enjoyment and could not stop himself from saying: “This box alone is a treasure!” The husband’s and wife’s hearts were contented. They felt they had hope and treated the old man much better.

However, when Master Li had not even been gone three months, Zhao Cai and his wife could not stand it anymore. One evening, taking advantage of the fact that their father was not at home, Zhao Cai’s wife whispered: “I can’t even stand attending to the livelihood of the deaf old man for one more day.”

Zhao Cai said: “That is true, but the one named Li took the key, and it surely wouldn’t be good to break the box to get at the money!”

_Nee Wang_ said: “Are you still a man? I have already paid a high price to have someone make a key.”

Consequently, the couple bolted the big gate and tiptoed towards their father’s bed. They lit a torch, climbed onto the bed, and pulled the treasure box from behind their father’s pillow. It was only Zhao Cai who had a guilty conscience. He tried to insert the key for a long time, but it never went into the key hole. His wife snatched the key, opened the lock with a banging sound, and lifted the lid.

“Yi! It’s gold bricks!” Zhao Cai almost wildly yelled.

“Bah! You’re blind in your dog eyes!” His wife slapped him with her palm until he was confused: “What gold bricks? We’ve been tricked!”

Zhao Cai looked again: “Ah, it’s just gold foil pasted on lead bricks.”

His wife was very cunning and, pinching her husband, said: “We can’t tell others about this, we have to be careful of recrimination. Watch my face to know how to handle things.”

The next day _nee_ Wang called to the old men of the neighborhood. With a tearing

_236 王氏: Zhao Cai’s wife. This, for some reason, is the first mention of her name in the whole story._
and sorrowful face she said: “Just as you can not make a beggar raise a parrot, so we can not care for our old father. Since he does not believe his own son and daughter-in-law and gave the key to the treasure chest to someone outside of the family, let carpenter Li take care of him.” Zhao Cai looked at his wife’s face and forced Father Zhao out of the house.

A year later, Master Li returned to Tengchong. He understood what had happened since he had left and also heard that the original corrupt official had already left his post and a new, more pure official had come. Therefore, he wrote a complaint and led Father Zhao and several other old men to wait in the center streets of the busy downtown area. They waited for the county official to pass by in his carriage, and father Zhao, regardless of the consequences, flopped down, kneeling in front of the carriage. He put the complaint on his head and made gurgling sounds. The official asked his runner to take the complaint so he could see it. On the front was written:

The complainant is a mute man,

Do you wish to know who the complaint is against?

Please, great man, send your runner,

Follow the mute man to catch the criminal!

After this new official had arrived at his post, he had once secretly disguised himself as a common person in order to interview as to the peasants’ condition, and he early knew all of the information associated with the mute old man’s abuse and disaster and his meeting with harm not easily reversed. When he finished reading the complaint, he immediately dispatched a constable, whose job it was to catch criminals, to go to the scene and seize the offenders.

---

237 This proverb is often presented before an action or situation which the speaker finds impossible to do or solve. It is used to demonstrate that the stated situation is as impossible to handle or resolve as a beggar’s attempt to raise a pet.

238 This is the official who was bribed by Zhao Cai and his wife to punish father Zhao and put him out in the streets.
In the public hall, the old men repeatedly gave testimony, asking that Zhao Cai and his wife be punished. The county official's judgment was:

Drive the contrary son, the cunning wife out of the house,
They don't need to have a penny benefit from the family property;
Redeem the mute man's daughter,
Have Master Li as his son!

Father Zhao continually nodded his head, thanked the kindness of the official, and also redeemed his daughter, A Xiu. The next day, Father Zhao again invited people to play instruments and welcomed Master Li into the home of Zhao.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan
Oral reporter: Duan Sanmei
Recorder: Zhang Wen
In the past, there was a Jianchuan carpenter who went to do work for a rich man, and they decided the price for the work would be seven pieces of silver a day. After he had worked for twenty days, the carpenter had finished. When it was time for the carpenter to claim his money, the rich man saw that he was honest and law abiding and decided he would be easy to bully. He then said to the carpenter: “Master, altogether you did twenty days of work, every day is seven pieces...twenty days...two-hundred and seventy one liangs.” When he was finished speaking he weighed out one liang three of silver and gave it to the carpenter.

The carpenter knew that he was being taken advantage of, but, not saying a word, he took the silver. After a while he approached the rich man grinning and said: “Sir! I have worked here for twenty days, I am indebted to you for your warm entertainment, but now I wish to return home. Today I will to go to the market, buy some things, consult the calendar for a good day to leave,339 and then start my journey. You have a new set of clothes. Please let me borrow and wear them so I can have some dignity. If the young master of the house doesn’t have anything to do, I would like to take him out to the market to play. I will leave my tools in a square bottomed basket in the house and pick them up again when I return.”

The master thought: This man is usually very honest and he probably isn’t planning any sort of trick. Also his wood carving tools will be here, so he can’t flee. As for the child, letting the man take him and buy him some snacks is okay, and we can save

339 看个月分日子: This literally means “to look at the month and the day,” but is more in keeping with the idea of auspicious days: the best day to leave a place as well as the best way in which to plan one's time.
money on that meal. And so the rich man fully assented.

The carpenter put on the new clothes, led along the little master, put a flat bottomed basket with the lid closed in back of the door, and carried another flat bottomed basket out to the market. As he was leaving he said to the rich man’s maid: “Big sister, if, at night, the master tries to find me, have him go behind the door and he will.” The maid, caring not in the least, nodded her head.

The carpenter arrived at the market and took the child to a restaurant. He ordered several excellent dishes and ate until he was drunk and full. Then he said to the restaurant’s boss: “Boss, I have forgotten money. I will leave the little man of the house here as security and go home to get it right away. Then we can switch. Is that okay?”

The boss knew that the child was the rich man’s son and so he agreed. The carpenter picked up his flat bottomed basket, exited the restaurant, and quickly left.

When it was getting dark, the rich man had not seen the carpenter and his son come back. Inwardly, he was very worried and quickly dispatched people to look for the carpenter. At this time, the maid suddenly thought of what the carpenter had said when he was leaving. She said to the rich man: “Sir, when the carpentry master was leaving he said: ‘If, in the evening, the Master seeks me, go behind the door to find me.’”

The rich man heard this and quickly went behind the door to look. But there were no people in back of the door, and he only saw a poem that the carpenter had written:

Two-hundred and seventy one point three, don’t treat Jianchuan people foolishly. I took your son and traded him for fare, and I have gained a new set of clothes to wear. The rich man saw this and was so angry that he could not even speak. He quickly pulled over the carpenter’s flat bottomed basket, opened it, and took a look. Inside there were only a few pieces of cut up, sodden wood. The carpenter had already taken his tools with him. There means “solid” or “sound,” but in this case has been translated as “very” because “very worried” sounds better than “solidly worried.”
was nothing the rich man could do, and he had no choice but to resign himself to his bad luck. He took some money, went to the restaurant, and redeemed his child who had already cried himself hoarse.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan

Oral reporter: Yang Yushu

Recorder: Duan Shoutao & Zhou Tianzong
Carpenter Yang Goes Out

There was, in a northern village in Jianchuan, a carpenter named Yang Juncai. One winter, carpenter Yang brought two apprentices to Yun county\(^{241}\) to make a shrine for a family. This type of work was truly difficult: On the back of the eves they had to construct a palace-like shrine about one zhang in length and two to several chi deep. On the top of the shrine they had to make eve brackets in the corner framework,\(^{242}\) the front windows needed to be able to be opened and closed, and on the pillars of the shrine they had to carve dragons and paint phoenixes. If one was not a skilled hand, then he could not get the job. Naturally, the salary was commensurate and the two parties agreed that the work would be done in a month and one hundred liangs of silver would be paid. The head man also said: “If you finish on time there will be an added reward; if you take too much time, I will have to deduct some of the money.” After they had started the work, the two apprentices really labored industriously for their master,\(^{243}\) but, as before, Master Yang talked and laughed, drank tea and smoked tobacco. After ten days, the frame of the shrine was completed, and, after another ten days, the paintings and the carvings were also quickly to be finished. In another ten days, the one hundred liangs silver salary would soon be in their hands. Who could know that at this critical juncture a disaster was imminent?

In the early morning, when the sun had just peeked over the roves of the people of

---

\(^{241}\) Yun county: A county in Yunnan south of Dali, west of Kunming, and in the vicinity of the Xishuangbanna region.

\(^{242}\) 角架斗拱: “斗拱” refers to “eve brackets” or brackets on top of a column supporting a crossbeam and “角架” refers to a “curved corner self” or “arched corner support.” (http://www.baidu.com/s?lm=0&si=&rn =10&ie=gb 2312&ct=1048576&wd=%b6%b7%b9%b0&tn=baidu)

\(^{243}\) 挠了把汗: Means “to sweat with anxiety or fear” but here is translated as “worked industriously for” because the apprentices are sweating and nervous for fear of losing the money offered by the head man and thus are working very hard to receive their salary.
Gonglang’s houses, carpenter Yang was drinking tea. The head man’s messenger girl ran anxiously towards carpenter Yang requesting the tea canister. Carpenter Yang asked:

“Why do you want the tea canister?” The messenger girl said: “Last night, the boss’ grandson was taken sick with infantile convulsions and is running a high fever. The young mistress of the house put a gold ring in the tea canister so as to boil some gold juice which he could drink to bring the fever down. However, afterwards, she forgot to take out the ring. The boss said that Master Yang had definitely taken it. So, he told me to come and get the ring. The boss also said that the ring is a treasure handed down from generation to generation, it can stop evil!” Carpenter Yang heard this and knew that this woman was up to no good. Then he offhandedly said: “Since it is this way, you had best let me search carefully, high and low, for it.” After the messenger girl had gone, carpenter Yang said to his apprentices: “When the frog calls, he wants to drink water; when the jackal calls, he wants to eat meat.” As he said this, he grabbed a chisel and dug out the pupil of the dragon on the shrine. He said: “I will destroy your dog eye!” He also dug out the pearl kept between the dragon’s lips. Again he spoke: “I will not let you ascend to the heavens!” Soon afterwards, he packed up his carpentry tools and led the apprentices, rushing out of the “tiger’s mouth.” In one breath they had already gone three li along the road. It was not until they had left the borders of Gonglang that carpenter Yang breathed a sigh of relief and said: “Now we can relax, the jackal cannot bite us.”

After the great disaster had passed, there was a small difficulty on the journey. When they arrived in Nanjian, carpenter Yang took accounts of his small purse and there was only enough traveling money for three days. What were they to do? Carpenter

244 Gonglang: A city within Yun county.
245 青蛙叫，想喝水；豺狗叫，要吃肉: This proverb refers to the intentions of different people. The “jackal” here is obviously the headman who wants “meat” or has evil, carnivorous intentions. The meaning of the first portion offers a comparison as the better man who has only good intentions is the “frog” wanting “water.”
246 Nanjian: A town in western Yunnan, located at the southernmost extremity of Dali.
Yang knitted his brows and thought up a plan: When they had first set out, they had stayed in an inn in Nanjian and the head of the inn had exhorted fifty dollars. Now they had no choice but to go there... consequently, he called the two apprentices to clean up their rotten grass sandals. In a short time they had picked out ten to twenty pieces of grass. Carpenter Yang tied them up into a bundle and on the outside wrapped some rice straw, loose hairs, and this sort of thing. After that he spread out an old sheet of cloth, wrapping the bundle in that, and carried it over his shoulders. He ordered the two apprentices to walk straight towards the north and wait at the fork in the road. He, himself, went to the inn and told the boss that he wanted a small room and a lock. After that he put the bundle on his bed, and, when leaving, locked the door. He said to the innkeeper: "Boss, our master is sick, the younger apprentice is accompanying him, and in a time they will arrive. I have come before them to get a place, but because my coming was hurried, I did not bring money. They best I can do is borrow fifty dollars and a handbag from you so I can go out and get a little bit of food. When my master arrives, he will double the return with thanks, and there will be no error or misunderstanding." At first the innkeeper was severe, but seeing the bundle laying in the room, he believed without suspicion, and gave carpenter Yang the figure he asked for. As soon as carpenter Yang left, he quickened his pace and went to meet the two apprentices...

Later, on the day when they reached Niujie, the master and apprentices did not have one penny. They were so hungry that their stomachs gurgled and they could only

---

247 This sentence is slightly confusing, but it basically means that on the way to the city of Gonglang carpenter Yang and his apprentices stopped in an inn where they were forced to pay fifty dollars more than what they expected.


249 刮痧: "刮痧" is an ancient treatment to relieve heat built up in the body by pressing on or scraping the skin and "刮痧钱" refers to the steel money dipped in oil that was used in the process of scraping. Now it indicates penury or a lack of money.

stop in a nearby town to rest. Carpenter Yang made the apprentices enter the village in order to beg for a little food, but all of the houses were unwilling to give alms. What could be done? At that time they saw an old sow leading a pack of piglets into the village. Carpenter Yang came up with a plan. He called the apprentices to grab the lid of the gong pot and follow the sow into the village. Along the road they hit the lid “dang, dang” and, as expected, an old woman came to invite them to castrate the pigs. After they had entered the house, carpenter Yang asked the old woman for a cup of tea. When they had just finished drinking the tea, the food the old woman was preparing was ready and she invited them to eat. The master and the apprentices were unceasing in their requests, their lips said “please, please,” and they had already moved to sit around the dinner table. After they had eaten breakfast, the old woman urged the pack of pigs into the small courtyard outside her house. Carpenter Yang winked secretly at the apprentices and said: “Were the ones that died from castration yesterday bigger than these?” The apprentice said: “Almost!” The old woman’s hearing was extremely quick, and as soon as she heard this she said: “Ah! Then we should wait half a month before castrating!” “That’s good, that’s good, thank you, auntie!” Carpenter Yang, expressed his thanks again and again, and taking his leave, quickly took to the road.

When they had crossed over La Zhapo,²⁵⁰ Jianchuan valley looked as if it had been nestled in the palm of a hand. Carpenter Yang let out a long breath and said to his apprentices: “May Buddha preserve us! Today we can reach home! Over the past few days, we did a few things we shouldn’t have done. But, what choice did we have? It was the head man who made us do it. From now on we won’t behave in that way!”

Area of transmission: Jianchuan Gongbei

Recorder: Shen Baoqing

²⁵⁰ La Zhapo: A hill or mountainside between Niujie and the Jianchuan valley.
According to legend Master Lu Ban came to Jianchuan and taught his skill to the Bai nationality. In the world he saw many unfair things. Common peasants were tired with labor at the end of the day, but all they had to drink was coarse tea, to eat, bland food, and their clothes were destroyed and old. The king of the country, the high ministers, and the government officials were full with food at the end of the day, profited by other’s toil, rode roughshod over the people, and took their possessions by force. Their lives were too extravagant. Inwardly, Master Lu Ban was not happy, and he decided that he wanted to help the poor and suffering peasants vent their anger.

Lu Ban had this matter on his mind, and, following his own image, meticulously carved one hundred wooden men. When he dabbed a little bit of blood to awaken them, these wooden men would be able to completely destroy the evil people of the world and help vent the anger of the poor people.

On that day at noon, Lu Ban’s wife sent his daughter to bring her father some lunch. However, after a while the girl returned, and pouted as she said: “With so many fathers, how am I supposed to know which one is him?” Her mother said: “Stupid girl, the one that has hot air coming from his nose is your father! Go back!”

After the daughter found Lu Ban, Lu Ban thought: If one girl is able to figure out my secret, what of my natural abilities?! And in a moment of anger he destroyed all of the wooden people.

Later, when the Bai people would build houses, they were afraid that Master Lu

---

251 砍光杀净: While this can be translated as “completely destroy,” it more literally means “to cut bare and kill clean.”
Ban would become angry, and they would not be able to erect the frame of the house correctly. Therefore, on the evening of the first day they would make a sacrifice to the wood god. This custom has lasted until today.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan Shaxi

Oral reporter: Yang Jinming
Carpenter Zhang Will Not Make a Dou or a Sheng

“Carpenters won’t make Dou or Sheng.” This is a common phrase passed down among the people of Jianchuan. And there is a legend about the origin of this phrase!

According to legend, in the Shaxi valley there was a carpenter Zhang. He did his craft well and, in the countryside and the camps, was well known. Everyone who was building a house invited him to be in charge of drawing the design, and the peasants all respectfully called him Master Zhang.

One day, his neighbor, Zhang Ershen asked him to make a dou, so carpenter Zhang made one for her. The next day, his neighbor, Wang Dasao came to ask him to make a sheng. They ask for this, they ask for that, it really was a bother. At first he had thought to put off Wang’s request, but carpenter Zhang thought: Since I already made a dou for Zhang Ershen, I can’t avoid this matter of Wang Dasao. If I do, people will say I tailor my words to the person addressed. Thinking about it again, everyone is a neighbor and there will always be times when we ask each other for help. And in this way carpenter Zhang made a sheng for Wang Dasao.

After over half a month, on the evening of a market day, Zhang Ershen arrived at carpenter Zhang’s house. Knitting her brows, she said: “The dou you made for me was too small. Today I went out on the street to buy rice, and I was fooled! The weight measured was several shengs short.”

Zhang Ershen had not yet finished speaking when Wang Dasao also arrived at carpenter Zhang’s house and furiously said: “The sheng you made for me was too big.

---

252 斗升: Both are units of measure that can be used when speaking about and measuring grain. A "斗" (dou) is about ten liters and a "升" (sheng) is about one liter. These words also refer to instruments used to define a "升" and a "斗" of grain.

253 Shaxi Valley: An area in Jianchuan county to the northwest of Eryuan and Dali.
Today I went out to the street to sell rice and I lost out on several shengs.”

Carpenter Zhang had done a thankless job. It was bitter and now he was being bullied. Inwardly, he was neither happy nor calm. He rested his cheek in his left hand and thought carefully. Then he said to both women: “From now on I will not make dou or sheng. You cannot make it too big, you cannot make it too small. The people who buy are offended, the people who sell are also offended, but the many peasants who work to grow crops are most offended.”

And up to today, there are several carpenters who are not willing to make dou or sheng.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan Shaxi

Oral reporter: Zhang Changsheng

Over two reporters: Rui Hong, Yue Fu, & Rui Lin
Finagle Fifty Liangs of White Silver

According to legend, the Qianlong reign period\(^ {254}\) of the Qing Dynasty\(^ {255}\) was also a period during which the silver mining industry of western Yunnan was just unfolding. At that time, the work of the Fulong and Huilong factories within the borders of the Lijiang\(^ {256}\) government seat and the Malong factory within the borders of the Chuxiong\(^ {257}\) government seat was in full swing. One day, after the lead official, who had been sent to Lijiang by the imperial government to superintend work on the silver levy, had inspected the Fulong factory within the borders of Lanzhou, he suddenly let fly to his poetic inspiration and came up with an antithetical couplet: “Fulong factory, Huilong factory, Malong factory, three factories of furnace fires, three factories of craftsmen.” If anyone could declare the correct matching line,\(^ {258}\) he would be willing to offer fifty liangs of white silver as a reward. In over a month, no one had come up with the correct answer.

On that year’s Spring Festival,\(^ {259}\) a carpenter from Jianchuan Yangcen\(^ {260}\) passed by Lanzhou\(^ {261}\) as he was heading home to spend the holiday. When he heard about the head official’s unsettled matter of silver and the still sought after correct answer, he went to inform the official that he was willing to give the correct answer. However, he requested that the head official bring out the silver for display and asked the audience to make sure that the official could not go back on his word. The official saw that the speech of the

\(^{254}\) Qianlong reign period: Refers to an emperor of the Qing Dynasty who reigned from 1736-1796 CE.

\(^{255}\) Qing Dynasty: The last of China’s dynasties, spanning from 1644-1911 CE.

\(^{256}\) Lijiang: A city in western Yunnan north of Jianchuan and Dali and south of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

\(^{257}\) Chuxiong: A city to the southwest of Dali, Jianchuan, and Lijiang.

\(^{258}\) The correct first or second portion of the antithetical couplet.

\(^{259}\) 春节: Spring festival or Chinese New Year. The beginning of the new year in the Chinese lunar calendar and one of the most popular festivals in China.

\(^{260}\) Yangcen: A rural area in the middle northern portion of Jianchuan county near to Burma and Shaxi.

\(^{261}\) Lanzhou: During the times of the Ming and Qing Dynasties this was the name of Yunnan’s Lamping county located in the northwest of the province.
carpenter was not amazing and his appearance not outstanding, he was nothing more than an inferior and coarse village man. So he forgave the carpenter’s accusations and met his requests. However, he had to give a warning: The carpenter needed to give correct place names for his place names. If not everything was correct he would have to forfeit the fifty liangs of silver. The carpenter assented, calmly took the silver ingots, and as he was doing so sang out: “Upper village, middle village, lower village, one village of beautiful scenery, one village of people.”

The minister stopped listening. He was so in awe that he could not help inwardly protesting this hardship: Look at the fifty liangs of shining white sliver about to be carried off by this savage. This can’t be, let me bluff him. Therefore, he banged the table, rose to his feet, and howled in a stern voice: “Courageous village man, how dare you play lying games with me. I have studied cartloads of books, have toured the nine regions, and have never heard of a upper, middle, or lower Yangcen, these ridiculous place names. Put down the silver ingots and avoid my judgment that you have been criminal in practicing deceit for money.” The carpenter laughed “Hei!,” and calmly said: “Your highness, you are wrong. Great China, the heaven and the earth, one region, one land, how dare you neglect it? Upper, middle, lower, these three Yangcen are the lands governed by the dignified Jianchuan prefecture. They are the vital passage and communications center of the western traffic of Lanzhou. You spend your life in the royal court as an official appointed to that place, how can you blasphemy and disregard the great, pure territories, saying that their names are scoundrel like?” When he was finished speaking, he left, uprightly and fearlessly, holding the silver ingots in his arms.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan in the areas of Misha and Yangcen

---

262 This phrase has not been translated exactly in order to make it match the portion of the couplet offered by the minister in the beginning of the story. The meaning is basically the same.
Oral reporter: Yang Hanming

Recorder: Xiao Peng
According to legend, in the early years of the Republic of China, there was a
carpentry master in Jianchuan named Yang who went out to sell his work. In the area of
southern Yunnan he helped a peasant group commander named Wang build an ancestral
temple. On the day the hall of the ancestral temple was completed, Commander Wang
invited a group of the village’s greater and lesser scholars to be guests at his home and
write an inscription for the horizontal board that was to go above the temple.

Commander Wang fully expected that he would not have to deal with any
difficulties in finding these words. He would only have to open his mouth, and the guests
would certainly compete against each other to offer up their talent, fighting without end.
Who knew that the situation would not at all satisfy Commander Wang’s wish? After he
had finished issuing his virtuous command, all of the learned men in the audience
unexpectedly declined to answer out of modesty. This one said he had little talent and
less learning, he didn’t dare do something rashly; that one said he would only waste a long
time with pen and ink stone and feared he would make a fool of himself before
professionals. Some were really modest because they didn’t possess much book learning
and were afraid that they would expose their ignorance in front of others. Others were
just faking modesty; they were contemptuous because of their deep learning, and wished
to have other people call them out and praise them. As a result they maneuvered
grandiosely and chaotically for two or more hours, ground sticks of ink, and refilled their
water twice. The food for the banquet had long ago been taken out of the pot and was

263 Commander of a group of peasants: During the beginning and middle of the Republic of China people
would be organized into communes or, within their villages, would be overseen by someone who would
manage their work and carry out party orders.
waiting. However, the people dealing with the inscription had not yet decided.

Master Yang, who the entire time had been sitting on the side sucking on grass tobacco, could not go on watching this. He inserted the staff of the pipe bowl in his waist belt, stood up and shouted in a loud voice: “Oh my! I see all of these men are modest men of noble character. I, Yang, am not afraid to show my poor skill. What if I write something?”

On seeing this great carpenter clothed in cotton and wearing hemp sandals suddenly come out with such wild ravings, the audience was at once stupefied. Some were surprised, some regarded him as inferior, and some were half-believing and half-suspicious. In the audience there was a man who, successful in the provincial imperial examination during the Qing dynasty, wished to show off. On coming up against this unexpected event, he was not inwardly angry. He certainly did not believe that this hardworking carpenter could have any talent or learning, but when he thought about it again, if he let the carpenter spoil the situation, he, himself, could fix everything. What could be more wonderful? Consequently, he said in a loud voice: “Wonderful! Wonderful! Master Yang has offered his services, he certainly must have great skill. We give way before you and respectfully look up to your sagely brush. Master Yang, please come this way!” Saying this, he moved forward and pulled Master Yang to the side of the desk and gave him a brush pen as thick as a hoe handle. Master Yang waved his hands and said: “There is no need to use that toy.” And saying this he took off the grass sandal on his own left foot and dipped it into the ink on the ink slab. On the fresh horizontal board he painted several strokes very fast and scribbled out four large words—“Wuzhanwubiao.”

Proverb 1: This proverb refers to a robber of the Tang Dynasty who liked to surprise and kill merchants he wished to rob in the middle of the road. Thus, the proverb figuratively refers to an unexpected event that ruins one’s plans or severely impedes one’s intended actions.

Proverb 2: Because these words mean nothing in Mandarin and are really part of the Bai nationality language, I have chosen not to translate them until the end of the story when the author meant for the true meaning to be revealed.
The several words which Master Yang had written made everyone in the courtyard dumbfounded. The literary men in the audience surrounding the table fell silent. Quite a while passed before someone dared to say a few words: “Oh, that’s not simple! That’s not simple! You really can’t judge people based on their appearance, can’t measure the amount of water in the sea. I really didn’t expect that Master Yang had such a proficiency with words.” “That’s certainly true, look at how the words combine delicacy and strength and are full of blood and flesh.266 It’s really written in a forceful style.” “Not only is the calligraphy good, the meaning is also precise and penetrating, this is a sentence of The Four Books.”267 “That is not so, it’s a sentence of the Classic of Changes.”268

Immediately, the literary men of the audience all began to twittering and quarrel; some said The Four Books, some said The Five Classics,269 some said The Tradition of Zuo,270 and some said Zhuxi’s Mottoes.271

At this time the housekeeper came to Commander Wang’s side and pressed him, saying they could not warm the feast again and the food was all getting cold. Commander Wang jumped to his feet and howled in a loud voice: “Don’t fight, you good-for-nothing group! Have you not heard? Jianchuan carpenters have the talent of the very best, what “cow classics,” “horse classics,” “the tradition of the right,” the tradition of the left”? Our Master Yang has read them all. If he had not he would not be able to write such a good inscription.”

266 骨肉丰盈: Full of meaning.
268 The Classic of Changes: Manual of divination based on the eight trigrams.
270 The Tradition of Zuo: Historical work covering 722 BCE to 463 BCE believed to have been written as a commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals.
271 朱子 Zhuxi: A Song Dynasty Confucian scholar, Zhuxi helped to codify the Confucian classics and wrote commentaries on them.
Master Yang, sitting on the side, ruthlessly bit into the stem of his pipe bowl, almost laughing out loud. He looked at Commander Wang and that group of moaning and panting literary scholars, and could not help laughing to himself: “They really are wuzhanwubiao!”

What is the meaning of “wuzhanwubiao”? It is not originally from any book of this world, it is a Bai nationality phrase which means “Indecent Scum.”

Area of transmission: All over Jianchuan

Oral reporter: Yang Hangming

Recorder: Xiao Peng
The One Hundred Section Aqueduct

The "One Hundred Section Aqueduct" on the bank of Diannan’s Haiwei River is Jianchuan’s most famous ancient water irrigation project. In that great wooden aqueduct one section fastens to another section, a hundred or so sections link together, and with the support of the high frame it crosses, in the air, over the Haiwei River. From far away it seems as if a yellow dragon is winding its way through the void of mid-air with uncommon momentum. The ten thousand or more mu of good fields to the southeast of the Haiwei River count on the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct” for irrigation.

The place where water pours out on the aqueduct is called the bottle gourd opening. According to legend, a long time ago this place was forcibly occupied by a big headed, short bodied tadpole dragon. Every spring and autumn, at a precise moment, the people of the village had to put eight prosperously fat pigs into the dripping water on the ridge to provide for the dragon’s enjoyment. If this did not satisfy the dragon’s wishes, it would then make threatening gestures, cause the wind and waves to rise, completely destroy the aqueduct, and make the people’s lives extremely bitter and hard.

It came to one year when the task of providing one of the pigs went to the upper Baodian village. On that day, a carpenter Yang of the village and his son Yang Sanleng set out from the Gengma area to return home. As soon as they entered the house,

---

272 Diannan: A grouping of villages in the Dali Prefecture within the Southwest borders of Jianchuan county and in the vicinity of Eryuan (footnoted above).
273 Haiwei River: One of four important rivers which runs from Jianchuan county into Eryuan county (right next to Jianchuan county). This river is also important to the story of the Young Girl’s Festival as the main character of that tale throws herself into the Haiwei River. (http://www.qj.yn.cninfo.net/web/travel ynmz/mzjr/20060119/155956.asp)
274 Upper Baodian village: A village contained within Diannan. There are lower and middle Baodian villages as well. This explains why the duty of providing pigs for sacrifice can cycle between different villages in Diannan, Baodian is simply one village among many.
275 Gengma: Gengma is a county in southwest Yunnan near Burma.
carpenter Yang saw his wife on a flight of stairs crying so much that she was soaked in
tears. Only after asking the reason for this did he know that she was worrying over
contributing money to supply the pig.

Carpenter Yang stroked his beard and, in a loud voice, said to his wife: “If you
have silver don’t drop it into the water,²⁷⁶ if you have a fat pig, don’t feed it to the evil
dragon. If the diseased tadpole dragon lets blame fall, I will bear the burden. I have
father’s adze-axe²⁷⁷ with me, how many heads can the dragon have!?”

On the third day of the seventh month,²⁷⁸ torrential rains came down fiercely, and
the tadpole dragon took advantage of the opportunity provided by the sudden rise of the
flood, rolled up fierce, great waves, and brought them crashing down from the “bottle
gourd” opening. All that could be seen was huge, stubborn rocks rolling and reversing in
the blackened, muddy water. The sound of the great waves was as a massive, thunderous
roar, and one could see that disaster was again going to befall the “One Hundred Section
Aqueduct.” The old women of the village all joined hands and pounded their chests,
saying prayers continuously: “Five Hundred Dragon Gods,²⁷⁹ pardon us for untold
crimes. This year we were short in giving you one pig. We promise the following reward:
we will definitely choose a pig of one thousand jin weight and obediently place it into the
water and present it to your dragon palace!”

They looked at the great waves, and, quivering with fear, prayed repeatedly, but
the tadpole dragon still would not yield and would not forgive them. All that could be
heard was a great roaring sound, and then the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct” crashed

²⁷⁶ 有银子不丢水中: “Don’t drop silver into water” or “Don’t waste something of value.”
²⁷⁷ 锯斧: A woodworking or carpentry tool which resembles a hoe and is used to plane wood. (http://www.
yzb.com/bbs/dispbbs.asp?BoardID=78&ID=16522)
²⁷⁸ 七月初三: This is a date defined by the lunar calendar not the Gregorian calendar as suggested by the
use of “初三” which indicates the first days of a month in the lunar calendar. In this year’s lunar calendar
²⁷⁹ 五百龙天: In the mind of the Bai nationality people these are the highest of the divinities. (From Stone
Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
down from the sky and was dashed by the flood waters into the Haiwei River. One section after another was rushed away by the river water.

“Oh no! Oh no! The tadpole dragon destroyed our ‘One Hundred Section Aqueduct!’” Everyone quickly ran to and thronged around Master Yang’s house to speak.

“Fellow villagers don’t be worried, we can stop an army with a general, stop a breach with earth. I, Master Yang, will undoubtedly build an even more stable ‘One Hundred Section Aqueduct’ and it will be completed within ten days!” Master Yang patted his chest and promised this undertaking to everyone.

As it turns out, Master Yang had deeply taken in the imparted knowledge of Lu Ban’s “Wood Scriptures,” and, himself, possessed some godly skill. In his home he made several hundred wooden people and wooden horses. He then used some chicken’s blood to “awaken” them and prayed over and over again: “Apprentices, undergo some hardship. Go to Laojun Mountain for me and cut down and bring back about one thousand pieces of lumber.” As he said this the wooden men and the wooden horses rose up into the air and left. They were gone without a trace.

Master Yang also carved a wooden tiger, and, his mouth full of “holy water,” spit it on the tiger. Then he read the incantations, sat on the wooden tiger’s back, and clapped his hands. The tiger carried him and jumped over the wall, flying towards the sky. After a short while, Master Yang again rode the wooden tiger, landing in the courtyard. It could only be seen that in his armpit he carried three pieces of shining and sparkling treasure.

---

280 “开光”: A type of religious ceremony in which after you “开光” the wooden figure becomes active. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
281 Laojun Mountain: A mountain located on the common boundaries of Jianchuan, Lijiang, and Lamping counties.
282 八德真符水: According to legend this is a type of immortal method. If you extinguish the god’s symbolic fire (a magic drawing or sign traced by a Taoist priest) in the water, the water will gain in strength. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
Grinning, Master Yang put the treasure on the shelf and said to his son: “These three treasures are borrowed from our founder. They are called: The axe that will cut open the sky, the awl that will chisel the earth, and the saw that will push the clouds. With these three treasures, not even the thousand length water dragon will present a difficulty, let alone the “One Hundred Sections Aqueduct.”

His son was half believing and half suspicious and curiously asked what the treasures were used for. Master Yang opened his mouth and let loose a string of words: The axe that will cut open the sky cannot be blocked. It cuts wood as if it were cutting tofu; the immortal awl that will chisel the earth is skilled at mystical work, as soon as you apply it to hollow out wood or awl a hole the job will be done; the celestial saw that will destroy the clouds makes a thunderous sounds and cuts wood as if it were cutting grass.”

As son and father were talking in a warm and friendly manner, a person came from outside to make a report: In the sky, overhead the former site of the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct,” torrential rains of wood materials had suddenly come down and in a moment the hollow ground was completely filled.

Master Yang stroked his beard and smiled, nodding his head and expressing his gratification. He ordered his son to carry the three treasures, and they together ascended the construction site. He used his godly skill, gave free reign to the axe that will cut open the sky, the awl that will chisel the earth, and the saw that will destroy the clouds, and within ten days the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct” again towered on the Haiwei River.

The village people were extremely happy, and, according to Bai nationality tradition, they repeatedly sent plates of steamed buns and erkuai284 as congratulations on the happy occasion. Everyone raised their glasses in celebration and congratulated Master

---

283 Refers to Lu Ban.
284 饕块: Specialty food in Yunnan, these are flat, wide pieces of very thick noodle usually eaten with sweet or savory brown sauces.
Yang on his skill. But at that time they could only hear a loud sound like the bursting apart of heaven and earth as the tadpole dragon again began to stir up trouble. Master Yang’s son was intensely angry and upset. He leapt onto a small boat, waving the adze-axe in his hand and rushed towards the terrible dragon. All that could be seen was the terrible dragon opening wide the bloody basin of its big mouth, in one breath exerting its strength, and swallowing the son and the boat. At this time Master Yang rushed up, tightly grabbed his son’s back leg and would not let go. The terrible dragon used its tail to throw off Master Yang’s arm, hitting him so that the pain was unbearable. As soon as he let go, his son’s body, severed from his back half, had already been swallowed by the dragon.

Master Yang transformed his grief into strength. He would not close his eyes and that same day and night made five hundred wooden men, and then again went to prepare more wood materials. After passing through several days of hard labor, more than half of the wood work had already been completed. Suddenly an extremely fierce wind blew a big bag in front of Master Yang. The bag was filled with worthless things and a piece of paper. On the paper was written: “If you are able to stop up the port with these worthless things, then your skill can be considered excellent!”

Master Yang boiled with rage. He returned home and dropped down in front of the hearth, sulking. His daughter-in-law, Lamei, hastened to scoop up a shovel of fire to make tea for her father-in-law. Master Yang saw that his daughter-in-law was wearing white mourning on her head and seeing the things left behind by his dead son, he thought of him and could not help shedding his tears freely.

Lamei endured the tears saying: “Father, I have already heard the matter of the terrible dragon sending you the worthless things to make you upset. His manner of
inciting you in this way can be of help to you!”

“This really is bullying me, but you regard it as helping me, this... ...really is, oh...
...” Master Yang said in despair, putting aside his pipe bowl.

Lamei spoke sincerely to Master Yang: “Father, don’t be annoyed and sulky. Isn’t what the terrible dragon did spurring you to calmly examine past events? Suppose you were to replace the eight columns erected over the river with iron columns and also drive them deep into the heart of the river. In this way not even ten dragons, let alone one tadpole dragon, would be able to avail themselves.”

Lamei’s words sobered Master Yang up a bit. He happily patted his legs and rose, displayed a rare smile, and said: “It really is that the older generation does not equal the younger generation, the radish does not measure up to the vegetable root... ...”²⁸⁵ he spoke and spoke, and then he wanted to immediately go to the street and ask people to make iron posts.

“Father, when the fish are in shallow places there is no need to go to deep spots to catch them.²⁸⁶ Luckily my own father, blacksmith He, can help you!” Lamei said to Master Yang.

Master Yang stopped in his tracks and was dazed for a little bit. He slapped his head and ashamedly said: “That is so! I really am so old, I don’t have any use, I almost forgot my own relatives!”

Coincidentally, blacksmith He had to attend to a matter and had just arrived. He asked what was going on, struck his chest, and vehemently said: “Relative, I am the only person who can do this work of building iron stakes. I came in order to do this, and I plan, under the water, to secretly construct a ‘knife wheel’ mechanism that will transform the

²⁸⁵ The radish refers to the older generation, while the root refers to the younger generation.²⁸⁶ 鱼在浅处, 何必往深处捉: Suggests that Master Yang needn’t go searching for help but can find it within his own family.
terrible dragon’s body into slivers of meat. He will come but he will not return.”

On the second day, the two relatives built a grass shed on the side of the river and set up a stall. With flames towering, the sound of sawing wood and striking iron became one and they worked day and night without rest. When not even five days had passed, Master Yang’s woodworking portion was already nearing completion. He was only waiting on his old relative to successfully complete the iron stakes and knife wheel and then they would install the “aqueduct” by hand.

The eight iron stakes were a huge project. Blacksmith He labored, fully occupied for several days and several nights, but had only completed one half. It seemed that they had no choice but to employ more assistants. At this time, Lamei came to bring them food. After she had ladled it, she held it out with both hands in front of the two old men. But they exchanged uneasy glances, sighed continuously, and were unable to swallow.

Lamei looked at the situation and the progress made on construction and in her heart quickly understood. She opened the door and, getting straight to the point, said: “Fathers, you don’t need to worry, if there are not enough people to help, I can join in the work and hit the “second hammer.””

Blacksmith He had a reluctant and embarrassed look on his face as he said to Lamei: “I know that from small you have worked iron with me, and as far as good assistants go you are a one in a hundred. But times have changed. You see, your body is heavy...”

“Father, you can relax. My body is heavy, I am pregnant, but I am an blacksmith’s daughter. It shines through, it reveals itself even more so when I am working iron. I guarantee that nothing bad will happen!” Lamei earnestly looked at the two men

---

114

114 二锤: This is a common saying of blacksmiths which refers to someone who helps work iron. “Head hammer” refers to the master, “second hammer” refers to the apprentice. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
and hoped that they would agree to her request.

"Correct, a blacksmith's daughter. Since small you have been tempered by molten iron. We have no need to worry, let Lamei assist us in our work!" Blacksmith He saw that Master Yang had a reluctant look on his face, and he hastily urged him to agree.

Not even waiting for Master Yang to open his mouth, Lamei had already raised the second hammer. She stood in the spot of the assistant, and, coordinating with her father, began to work. Bang! Bang! The iron hammer danced in the air, the iron sparks flew. With the lead of the father and daughter, nobody drank water, nor wiped away sweat. The more they worked, the more vigorous they became, and finally they finished constructing the big iron stakes and the big knife wheel.

The two old men themselves took command. Blacksmith He propped up the stakes, and Master Yang used the hammer, one hammer counts as one hammer, two as one pair... ...the eight, big iron spikes stood high and level in the heart of the river and were as stable as Mount Taishan.288 Master Yang sat in the front directing. According to the measurements on top of the tunnel, he fastened the dou tenon into the concave eye, buckled one length to another length, and spread them from the top of the vertically and horizontally interlocking truss. After working around the clock and passing through a time of intense construction, the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct” was again impressive high in the air, passing over the river. When looking at the gurgling running water in the aqueduct, Master Yang happily stroked the sanxian and sang a song about the dragon surrendering.

Lamei lit red incense, and blacksmith He wanted to sing an auspicious song but all that could be heard was the sound of great waves again rising from above. They were as powerful as if a large mountain had been pushed into the sea. "The terrible dragon is

---

288 Mount Taishan: Still today referred to as the king of mountains.
coming again, the terrible dragon is coming again,” people were calling in loud voices.

Master Yang hurriedly called to blacksmith He, and the two quickly raised their adze-axe and iron hammer and rushed towards the river bank as if they were flying. They jumped into a small boat on the side of the shore, braved the fierce, great waves, and went to meet their enemy.

As the terrible dragon swam down, it gradually approached the knife wheel. It seemed it had a good command of the Eight trigrams$^{289}$ and could predict the future course of events, and it suddenly calmed the river waters, making no move. Master Yang purposely let loose a stream of savage invectives, luring him to come down: “Pestilent dragon who must not be allowed a peaceful death, how have you become a timid turtle?”

At this time, Lamei also rode in the small boat and hurried forward, she built on her father-in-law’s words, and in a stern voice cursed the dragon: “Today it wants to retreat and go back, I prepare to hang a rainbow on its horns, the same as women’s red pants!”

The terrible dragon was stubborn and really could not bear such harsh words. It gave a loud howl, the water of the river surged forth, and like splitting bamboo, the dragon came rushing down. Only the sound “snap!” could be heard as its tail was cut off by the knife wheel. Its back was also injured in several places, and the pain was so great that it screamed out. Fresh blood poured out and turned the river water red.

Master Yang screamed, turned his axe, and went straight towards the dragon to chop it. He cut off a large piece of the flesh right by its cheek, it weighed about somewhere over ten jin. The time of telling this is slow, but the doing of it was very quick. Blacksmith He also used his big iron hammer to strike the dragon on its horn.

$^{289}$ 八卦: A set of symbolic signs from ancient China, each trigram represents a certain matter: heaven, earth, water, fire, thunder, mountain, wind, or marsh. These trigrams are put together to form hexagrams which can be used for prediction.
hitting its tongue until it stuck out one chi in length. At this time, Lamei took the opportunity to go forth and moved an iron claw towards the dragon’s tongue, energetically grabbing about. She hit the bull’s eye and hooked deeply onto the dragon’s tongue. Borrowing the force of the water, riding the momentum as she pulled, she fully pulled the dragon’s tongue out several chi. The dragon was injured from head to tail, it was as if ten thousand arrows had pierced its heart, and it only had gasping breaths of strength left over.

Master Yang and blacksmith He exploited the victory to launch an attack. The adze and the hammer were used together to first blind the dragon, cutting out its eyes, then mash its nose and pound the crown of its head until it was smashed to smithereens. The terrible dragon’s brains splattered out in all directions, it swung a piece of its tail slightly and then it did not move again.

The banks of the Haiwei River were full of masses of people cheering and yelling encouragement. Everyone was filled with joy, played and sang, and cheerfully shouted: “Master Yang sent the dragon home!”

Everyone clustered around Master Yang, blacksmith He, and Lamei, and rushed towards the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct.” One old, white-haired man came towards Master Yang to express everyone’s thanks and represent the people in toasting him. Master Yang was so moved he could not speak. He received the cup of wine, first gave it to his relative blacksmith He, then gave it to his daughter-in-law Lamei, and then only after that did he drink deeply.

The “One Hundred Section Aqueduct” carries gurgling spring water, which flows at a great speed, never resting. It is as if it is singing a song in praise of Master Yang...
...From that time on, the women and men, young and old of Jianchuan’s eighteen stockade
villages all knew that there was a disciple of Lu Ban, carpenter Yang, who punished evil and praised good, and that in his victory over the terrible dragon he had repaired the “One Hundred Section Aqueduct,” allowing ten thousand generations of descendants to live in ease and comfort. The remains of this event are passed down from one generation to the next, ten thousand generations of descendants all pass down the praises...

Area of transmission: Jianchuan and surrounding areas

Oral Recorder: Jiong Weng

Recorder: Zhao Weicang
Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor

During the Qianlong reign period of the Qing Dynasty, in Jianchuan Xixiang, Xi Zhongbei village there was a carpenter named Li Siwei, who, in order to ward off injustice done to the people, daringly went to Beijing to lodge a complaint with the Emperor. Events unfolded in this way:

One year great minister Ji Huang’s son Ji Chengyu, went to Jianchuan to become a prefecture official. At that same time a remote king rose in rebellion, and the Emperor sent the great general Fu Heng to be in command of troops and repress the uprising. Ji Chengyu relied on the fact that his father was a great minister of the dynasty to collude with Fu Heng. They forced a levy on Jianchuan, making the people supply expeditionary forces, money, grain, men, and horses, and from this sought unfair gains. They also set up check points everywhere, plundering gold and silver. When walking on the road one had to pay the “road tax,” when drinking water one had to pay the “water tax,” when killing the New Year’s pig, one had to pay the “animal sacrifice tax.” Even when marrying off a girl, one had to pay the “marrying tax.” No matter what one did, the officials would become angry, arrest people, and put them in an iron cage. The people were frightened and boiling over with discontent.

In those years there was again a drought and in two days the seedlings that had been planted dried out and became withered grass and the corn that was raised would not

290 Xixiang, Xi Zhongbei Village: As with Diannan, Xixiang is a region within Jianchuan containing numerous villages. One of these villages is Xi Zhongbei village which is located in the northern center of Xixiang’s western portion.
291 Beijing: The capital city of China in the Northeast of the country is diagonally opposite from Jianchuan which is in the Southwest.
292 年: In this case “年” refers to slaughtering pigs in preparation for the Chinese New Year Festival. (http://www.xiaoxiaoshuonet/old/go.asp?id=6741)
develop buds. The people had nothing to eat. The carpenter Li Siwei and the people of the village discussed their views and raised capital. They passed Liuying, Zhujuanchang, and Handeng and arrived in Xizhong, dug a big ditch, and enticed the water of the Golden Dragon River to irrigate the drylands of the western village. They did not expect that a sum of money would be stolen by Ji Chengyu and the peasant workers would be incarcerated. Although Li Siwei was a carpenter, it was hard for him to control his indignation and he swore that he would go to lodge a complaint with the emperor in order to ward off the injustice done to the people. It was only that he was lacking a person who would dare to write the complaint for him.

On the street of the northern gate of the county seat there was a man who had passed the provincial level exams, Wang Xiangji. He was a scholar official who possessed knowledge and could not stand that what Ji Chengyu had done, detesting anything having to do with officials and gentry colluding to bully and oppress peasants. But the royal court had regulated that literary persons could not interfere with local political matters, and, therefore, he dared to be angry, but did not dare to speak. Later he heard that Li Siwei wanted to lodge a complaint with the emperor and he set his mind to give him a hand. But he didn’t know how Li Siwei would conduct himself and he wished to test him and see if he had the courage to force his way into the imperial court.

One day, at the scheduled time of the bazaar, Li Siwei entered the city and was going to the market. Scholar Wang had his family members invite Li Siwei to come to his home for a while.

Li Siwei most hated these great officials and gentlemen of high rank. He heard that

---

293 Liuying, Zhujuanchang, Handeng, and Xizhong: All small villages in the Xixiang area contained within Jianchuan county.
294 Golden Dragon River: This river is more famous in and important to Vietnam but it also runs through Yunnan.
295 学人: One who passed the imperial examination at the provincial level in the Ming and Qing dynasties.
Scholar Wang had invited him and waved his hand in refusal: “Scholar Wang and I have never met, we have never had any dealings, if he has something to say, tell him to come to the street and say it.”

The family members said again and again that Scholar Wang was a good person, it was only that he wanted to invite Li Siwei to come to his house to have a chat, there was no evil intent. In his heart, Li Siwei thought: If I don’t go, I will seem to Scholar Wang a spineless creature. If I am to go, I should go, or else it will seem that I am afraid that he will eat me. Then he followed the family members, walking towards the Wang mansion.

Scholar Wang was drinking tea when his family members led in a big, tall man with a purple-black face, wearing a wool felt hat on his head, a goat skin gown on his body, hemp rope grass sandals on his feet, and a bamboo joint pipe bowl stuck at his waist. He knew it was Li Siwei. In his heart he thought: This person seems to be a man of upstanding character, but I don’t know what his courage and his speaking skills are like. Therefore, I wish to test him. With a loud noise, scholar Wang smashed his tea cup on the floor and shouted loudly, confronting him: “Bold and tricky, Li Siwei, you wish to bring a false charge against your county magistrate. Today I am going to take you to the yamen’s office to judge your crime!”

Li Siwei’s facial expression did not change. He pulled out the pipe at his waste, inserted some orchard tobacco, and spoke while he was doing this: “Scholar Wang, did you ask me to come to your mansion just for this reason? Don’t forget that you are also a person of Jianchuan, Jianchuan is also the land in which you were born...”

Scholar Wang stamped his foot and in a stern voice shouted: “You wrong a just official and defy laws human and divine. Look at the crime you have committed!”

Li Siwei, laughing coldly, emitted a few words: “Ha, pure official? Scholar Wang,
you are not blind, open your eyes and look, the avaricious official is like a poisonous
snake. The common people are being tortured. Your ears are not deaf, go out to the street
and listen, the people are boiling over with discontent, there is widespread complaint
among the masses.”

Scholar Wang called to his family members to grab a length of iron chain, and he
tossed it down in front of Li Siwei’s feet, saying: “Do you know who Ji Chengyu is? His
father, Ji Huang, is a great official in the royal court. Do you wish to go to the tiger’s
mouth and, in stroking his beard, meet your death?”

Li Siwei said: “But there is reason in going to ask the monarch in order to help the
masses. I do not even fear death.”

Scholar Wang saw that Li Siwei was not to be cowed by force, and his heart
overflowed with joy. It was not until that point that he joined his hands in obeisance and
explained to Li Siwei that he was willing to write the complaint for him and that he had
just been purposely testing him. He entreated Li Siwei not to be unwilling to speak with
him.

Scholar Wang wrote the complaint for Li Siwei and also told him what he should
pay attention to when he arrived in Beijing. Li Siwei hid the complaint in his wool felt
hat, returned to his home to pack, and prepared to depart on the second day to Beijing to
make a complaint to the emperor.

Hearing that Li Siwei wanted to make a complaint to the emperor, the village
people all rushed over to see him off. They encouraged him and enjoined him to go and
return quickly. His wife, nee Zhang, would not let him go, and cried as she said: “Today,
officials protect each other, you are only going in vain, asking for trouble. Everyone can

你虎口将须想死么: Refers to Li Siwei’s plan to see the emperor. Scholar Wang is trying to
intimidate him and demonstrate that his trip to see the emperor might not help the people but might
simply lead to punishment for him.
get by, we too can get by. You are dismissing the old and the young from your mind, how will they continue to live?"

Li Siwei heard his wife speak in this sad manner and he left half of the traveling expenses he possessed. He grabbed his carpentry tools and said to his wife: "You know my temper. With men it is always promising without a second thought, and you can’t go back on your word. In order to help the common people, I must deliver this complaint to the emperor. You support the old and raise the young here at home, and in the future I will certainly thank you."

Li Siwei walked along the road and did carpentry work to make a living. It was only after more than a year that he arrived in Beijing.

Beijing is the homeland of the emperor, and one can not rashly enter the vermilion forbidden city." Li Siwei had been in the capital for over three months, and the matter of his complaint had no hope. He was, inwardly, very worried.

One day, a person of the prime minister’s mansion asked Li Siwei to renovate a house. Li Siwei’s skill was good. He carved dragons and phoenixes, and there was nothing he could not do. He planned out windows of beautiful women, elephant eyes, plum blossoms, and tortoise patterns extremely well, and the prime minister’s family was very happy.

After Li Siwei had done his work, he would often pull out the complaint and read the words out loud. He memorized it by heart and thought that on whatever day he saw the emperor he would be able to answer fluently.

One day, the prime minister was returning from the court and seeing Li Siwei chanting, he asked him what proclamation he was reading, where he came from, and for

---

298 A reference to the Forbidden City or the cordoned off area in the center of the capital where the Emperor lived. Lay people were not allowed to enter.
299 象眼: Can also be translated as “rhombus,” but because nothing else in the sentence described shapes and everything was more animal related, I chose to translate “象眼” as “elephant eye.”
what reason he had come to the capital. Li Siwei then truthfully explained. The prime minister saw that Li Siwei spared no effort in his labor, was outspoken and upright for the people, and worked for the good fortune of the peasants. This moved his heart to take pity. Furthermore, there had previously been ill-feeling between he and Ji Huang, and he wished to use this matter to discipline Ji Huang. Then he said to Li Siwei: “On the ninth day of the ninth month Double Ninth Festival, the emperor goes to the Temple of Heaven to burn incense. You can go and hide under the stone lions outside the Temple. Wait for the emperor to come, place the complaint on your head and kneel. Block the cart and cry out against injustice. I will represent you in respectfully presenting the complaint.

On the holiday of the double nines, Li Siwei went to the Temple of Heaven and saw the Qianlong Emperor coming to burn incense. He kneeled in the middle of the road, put the complaint on his head, and let out a high cry: “Pure and upright Emperor, please ward off the injustice done to the people...”

The prime minister respectfully presented the complaint to the emperor. The emperor looked at it, the words were plaintive and mournful, and his royal heart was greatly moved. He asked Li Siwei: “You have come from very far away, from Yunnan to the capital. It must have been very bitter, did you not lose heart?”

Li Siwei, knocking his head bowing to the emperor, said: “Your majesty, in order to serve the common people, I, Li Siwei, would even be willing to die. I think the emperor is an insightful and wise Son of Heaven and will definitely right a wrong done to the people.”

9月9日: The Double Ninth Festival, celebrated because the character for “nine” in Chinese is homophonous with “long time” or “longevity.” (An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911)
101 Temple of Heaven: A great temple (and now park) in Beijing where the emperor would go to perform sacrifices and other rites especially on holidays such as this one.
102 Usually when bowing to the emperor one would knock one’s head on the ground in a showing of greatest respect.
The emperor again asked: “Along the entire road, was there not one person who advised you that you could not present a complaint to the emperor?”

Li Siwei said: “The elders of my native place all comforted and encouraged me. Only my wife said: ‘Officials protect each other, you are only pointlessly going to ask for trouble, everyone can get by, we can also get by. You are dismissing the old and the young, how will we continue to survive!?’ and she cried very sadly.”

These words made the emperor chat and laugh. As soon as the prime minister saw this, he hastened to offer advice: “Emperor, Li Siwei’s faithfulness and stability are such that we can praise. Please kindly allow his complaint in order to show that the emperor cares for the people.”

The emperor saw that Li Siwei was faithful and honest and able to sacrifice his own interests for the people, and so he granted his complaint, nullifying the Jianchuan sovereign's grain and sacrifice taxes. He dismissed the father Ji Huang and his son from their posts for the people and also granted Li Siwei an imperial gift of a golden mandarin jacket and five hundred liang of white silver. Li Siwei bowed and expressed his great thanks and quickly returned to Yunnan.

Oral reporter: Wang Jie, Yang Zongdai, etc.

Recorder: Lou Jiarui, Zheng Ruihong & Zhang Wenbo

---

303 Mandarin Jacket: A garment first worn by horseback riding Manchus, a mandarin jacket is usually worn over a gown with buttons down the middle and a high, square collar.
The Passed Down Art of Singing

In Jianchuan Gongbei\textsuperscript{304} there was a carpenter Master Wang who took his apprentice to Tengchong\textsuperscript{305} to perform their craft and help a rich man do some work. They worked for several days, but the rich man was sly. He took away some of their salary and, fixing the gaze of his dog eye, said: “Master Wang, if you and your apprentice receive the same amount of money it is a little unreasonable, I have to deduct a bit.”

Master Wang waved his hand saying: “No, no. We eat from the same pot, we do the same work, what rationale is there for reducing the salary?”

The rich man said: “If you don’t want me to reduce the salary, then you must make your apprentice go upstairs and make the wooden partitions between the rooms by himself. If he partitions them well then I will not reduce the salary, if he does not do it well, then I will reduce the salary.”

“All right!” Master Wang agreed. At his side, the apprentice heard this and he could not help but be a little worried. His master smiled at him and said: “Go. We two, master and apprentice, will do some work and sing a little. Whatever you find to be difficult, just ask me in the lyrics of the song!”

“Okay!” The apprentice roused his courage, grabbed the wood carving tools, thumped up the stairs, and put out his wood materials. Bang, bang, bang, he chopped, planed, sawed, and began to labor. He worked and he sang:

If you plane a little, shavings scatter, if you plane the materials well they become a pile;

\textit{Master, I ask you what to do, what side should I do first?}

\textsuperscript{304} Gongbei: A village or township in Jianchuan county near the Eastern Mountains.

\textsuperscript{305} Tengchong: Tengchong is a city in western Yunnan and shares a border with Burma
Master Wang, at the bottom of the stairs, heard the apprentice sing, and as he worked he answered:

If the material is planed well then the heart need not fret, first glue the back of the plank to make a square;

Stand two sides of the square in three fen partitions, separate them to become several big frames.

Partition a five chi plank into three fen tenons, plane the three fen protruding waves into a square;

Only when the planks and the walls have been separated well can you build the door, the door should be two chi three wide.

After a string of beating sounds, the planks and walls were separated. The apprentice again sang:

The big river is deep, the small river shallow, I hate the greedy rich man;

The planks and the walls are separated and I want to make the door, please, master, elucidate.

The master again sang:

One small door has two polished surfaces, one of the door planks is two chi three,

The corner of the door is one cun two fen five, the door mortar three curl three.

Above nail a tenon, come below to nail a tenon, put the door bolt right in the center;

The one cun two plank which suppresses the water, plane it into toothlike shavings.

The apprentice followed his master’s words. He worked for half a day making the partitions and the door. The rich man came to examine the work and with one look he saw

---

127
that the planning was smooth and sleek, the tenon tight and without cracks. There was nothing he could say but only give the master and the apprentice the same amount of money.

Oral reporter: Yang Yushu

Recorder: Duan Shoutao & Zhou Tianzong
In the past, in Peach Spring Village there was a young man named Yang who went out to seek a teacher with whom to study carpentry. He was smart and clever and when asked questions, knew the answers right away. He was also assiduous in his study, and when he saw something done he was able to learn how to do it. The master liked him very much, and he taught Yang all of his lifelong natural abilities. After being instructed by the teacher for three years and thanking the teacher for one year, Yang had studied a great deal of carpentry skill, and had become a very famous carpenter, Master Yang.

Master Yang’s fame gradually began to spread, and he also gradually became arrogant. He would brag and claim unrealizable and groundless things. His unfounded words had no root and the more he put them forth, the more exaggerated they became. He wouldn’t pay attention to anything! He had several apprentices who would process in front of him and hasten to call people to attend upon them. Slowly he became one who always moved his mouth but never his hands, a master so lazy he was unwilling to use a carpenter’s ink marker or slender piece of bamboo for drawing.

Master Yang had practiced his skill for dozens of years outside his hometown and it was not until he was sixty that he returned. At that time the people planned to build a

---

307 飞角: A characteristic building technique for both furniture and edifices in the Ming Dynasty. “飞角” refers to curving roves or table ends. (This is my footnote, the next one referring to “飞角” is the book’s)  
308 Peach Spring Village: Could be in reference to “世外桃源” which is the Chinese version of the English “Shangri-la.” The phrase “世外桃源” comes from The Story of the Peach Spring Valley by Tao Qian which describes a utopic place undisturbed by war.  
309 谢: This refers to a period in which the apprentice would stay with and work for the master before going out to do his own work.  
310 墨斗: Tool used by a carpenter to mark straight lines. One pulls an ink thread out of a U-shaped ink bowl, puts it on the timber, stretches it tight, lifts it up and lets it go, thus marking the desired line by means of the elasticity.  
311 画签: “画” means to “paint or draw” and “签” means a “bamboo slip or a slender stick,” together they are translated as a “painting stick or a drawing stick.”
Pavilion of Kuixing,\textsuperscript{312} and when they saw that Master Yang was coming home, they knew that he was a famous carver who could build Jiaoqiangshui frame cross-eves and by consensus recommended that some of the elders ask Master Yang to do the design and planning.\textsuperscript{313}

Master Yang made a mouthful of promises and drew all sorts of exaggerated claims from different places: He would suddenly say that the flying angles of that village’s Pavilion of Kuixing\textsuperscript{314} did not look very good or suddenly say that the measurement of that village’s Pavilion of Kuixing’s cross eves was not correct. In the wink of an eye he had put forth several styles of flying angles, and puffing at his tobacco, discussed the decorative patterns of various types of cross eves. He said that for his own village he wanted to build a four sided, six faced, eight point cornered Pavilion of Kuixing with three floors. As the elders saw that he spoke methodically, they kept on nodding their heads, like chicken pecking rice.

After three months, the lumber for the Peach Spring Village’s Pavilion of Kuixing had been prepared, and the elders came to invite Master Yang to do the design. Master Yang lazily moved his hand and said: “Make the villagers cut the wood material close and even first and then I will come to draw the design.”

After another three months the lumber had all been cut evenly, and the elders came to ask Master Yang to draw the design. Master Yang again lazily moved his hand and said: “Make them build the frame of the house first and then I will come to erect the cross eves and make the flying angles.

\textsuperscript{312} 建星: In this context a god of the four stars in the bowl of the Big Dipper often prayed to by officials who want to pass examinations.

\textsuperscript{313} 掌墨: Although this literally means “holding or controlling the ink,” I have decided it would be more appropriate in this context if it were loosely translated as “design and planning.”

\textsuperscript{314} 飞角: The angles of a magnificent building or pavilion. Normally they all stick up on one end and are thus called flying angles. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
After another three months, the frame of the Peach Spring Village Pavilion of Kuixing had been erected, the enclosing walls built, and the doors and windows installed. Then they waited for Master Yang to erect the cross eves and make the flying angles. But even as they arrived at the rainy season, Master Yang had not at any point made a move to work and everyone had to hastily cover the roof.

The second year, the third year... ...straight through until Master Yang died, the Peach Spring Village Pavilion of Kuixing’s cross eves were not erected and the flying angles not built, and they were always hastily covering the roof. From then on, Peach Spring Village passed down this saying: “Master Yang’s flying angles were empty words on his lips.” Later, the people omitted the last half of this saying and used “Master Yang’s flying angles” to describe those people who said empty words and did nothing.

Recorder: Song Quan
The Pillar of Wood Shavings

In Tengchong there is a village, Dunjiao, and in Dunjiao there is a Temple for Protecting the Pearl. The middle pillar of the Temple for Protecting the Pearl is very special, it is made out of wood shavings. There is a story that follows.

According to legend, when building the Temple for Protecting the Pearl, the gentlemen of that place invited several carpenters to come. They invited some who carved flowers and invited some who painted, but they did not invite Jianchuan's carpentry masters. In the process of building the temple, a person who was not an able carpenter came to undertake the job of the head contractor. At that time, the gentlemen said: "This is a big construction project, and this bowl of food is none too delicious. If you really are certain of success, then undertake it. Otherwise, don't engage in this sort of work!"

The head contractor was very arrogant and said: "For my whole life, I have traveled in all directions and have done everything, worked on projects much bigger than this, built temples more magnificent than this, and I don't know how many I have built. Ha! If no one undertakes this Temple for Protecting the Pearl, it will never get built.

The gentlemen heard this, and as they felt it was not appropriate to say anything, they allowed him to undertake the construction.

At the time when the construction was quickly nearing its end and in the first several days when the temple was to be erected, the gentlemen in charge of building the temple notified the various surrounding villages and stockades: Greater and lesser...

---

315 Tengchong: Tengchong is a city in western Yunnan which shares a border with Burma.
316 Dunjiao: As in the case of Baodian and Diannan, Dunjiao is simply a small village within the area of Tengchong.
317 A Buddhist temple in the north end of Tengchong, the Temple for Protecting the Pearl is the oldest temple in Tengchong. (http://www.sunnychina.com/travelguide/travel_intro_4749.html)
officials, village gentlemen and commoners, on the day we erect the pillars and raise the beams, you must all come to celebrate.

The night of the first day on which the pillars were to be erected and the beams raised, a person who had left home for a long journey passed Dunjiao village. It being too late in the day, he stopped to rest in Dunjiao and stay the night. The man who had stopped by heard people of the village engaged in numerous and confused discussions and saw that they were also busy with various work. He asked them: “What sort of celebration are you having that everyone is hurrying about?”

The people of the village told him: “Tomorrow we will erect the pillars and raise the beams of the Temple for Protecting the Pearl. Those directly involved have ordered that the peasants of the surrounding towns and stockades prepare incense, candles, and gifts, and come forward to celebrate!”

As soon as the traveling person heard this, he thought: I have come at exactly the right time to see how this Temple for Protecting the Pearl was built and what sort of achievements it has attained.

Early in the morning on the next day, the people in the surrounding stockade villages all went to the Temple for Protecting the Pearl. There were people everywhere and the atmosphere was very lively.

The sun had just come out. As soon as a fire cracker sounded the people began to erect the building. The carpenters were very busy; they had to lift, pass, raise, and bring things together. Not even an hour of energy had been expended before a great pile of lumber had been raised. No one knew how it had come to pass, but when everything had finally been erected, it so happened that the most important middle pillar was missing! Without the middle pillar the building could not be erected! The craftsmen quickly told
the head contractor: “This is no good! This is no good! We don’t know what to do without that most important middle pillar!”

As soon as the headman heard this, he was extremely surprised. Immediately he was in a tearing hurry, pacing about in an agitated state. The gentlemen heard that the middle pillar was missing and that the building could not be erected and they all hurried to blame the head contractor. There were some who said that he was “trying to trick and bully the officials of the government seat, trying to take their money!” Others said they wanted to take him into the yamen’s office to report his crime! The craftsmen were chaotically forming a mob, and no one knew what to do to make things better.

Just at the time when it was so loud no one could really communicate, the traveling man stepped out from the crowd and said to the craftsmen: “Brothers! Even though there is no middle pillar to be seen, this is nothing serious! All of you, quickly grab some wood shavings, I have a plan!”

The craftsmen heard this and felt it was very strange. They all looked at the traveling man in a puzzled way. The traveling man said to the craftsmen: “Quickly, brothers! The faster, the better! We do not want to waste time!”

Time really was an urgent factor and no one else had another plan. They also did not want to offend the traveling man. They agitatedly gathered up the wood shavings and watched to see what he would do.

The traveling man also quickly ordered people to boil several bowls of rice gruel: “Prepare it! Do it quickly!”

When they had enough wood shavings and the rice gruel was cooked, the traveling man told them to mix the shavings and the rice porridge together and make it into a big, long pillar of wood shavings. They lifted it to compare and it was suitable.
They were not lacking any pillars, and the craftsmen invited the man who had stopped by to take charge of erecting the pillars and lifting the beams. The Temple for Protecting the Pearl was raised, and it was also lucky that the middle pillar was erected at exactly 11:45, neither late nor early. There was no delay at all!

The people set off fireworks to celebrate and, at the same time, looked at the pillar made of wood shavings. They all praised the traveling man: “He really had a plan, his skill is brilliant!” The craftsmen admired him and felt grateful to him, all arguing that they wanted to ask him to be their teacher. The head contractor also kneeled in front of him and was sincerely willing to become his apprentice. The craftsmen all asked the traveling man to stay and become their great master, but the traveling man helped the head contractor up and said to the craftsmen: “I can’t do that. I just passed by here, I still have other places to go to practice my craft!”

Everyone again asked him to stay, and he again said: “I can’t.” They all saw that he would not stay and so wanted to give him many gifts to thank him. But he did not want this either. The craftsmen of the place repeatedly wished to express their affection, but when they simply wanted him to receive some presents, a great wind suddenly picked up and blew the traveling man away. Everyone watched the traveling man as he was blown by the wind, and in loud voices said: “Master! Where are you from? Please leave an address! Later we can come find you.”

They only heard a tiny and clear voice come from the sky: “I am a Jianchuan carpenter, you can find me anywhere!”

As soon as everyone heard this, they all smiled happily.

Oral reporter: Wang Yongjin

Recorder: Duan Shoutao & Guo Sijiu
Yang Kuixuan

In Jianchuan there are many people who are able to perform carpentry work, and there are also many people who do it well. Yang Kuixuan is one famous carpenter among them. It could be said of Yang Kuixuan that both his ability to build houses and his ability to carve and engrave was fine. His skill-level was high and he was scrupulous, and his experience was great as well as extensive. His story is still told today.

Raise the Big Beam

There was one year that the people of Tengchong’s Yunfeng Mountain wanted to build a Yunfeng Temple. Yunfeng Mountain was extremely tall, it was at the very least ten thousand zhang in height! They wanted to build Yunfeng Temple on the highest, highest peak of Yunfeng Mountain. This peak was extremely narrow, it was like the cut of a knife. On one side was a ten thousand zhang precipice, on the other side was a ten thousand zhang deep ravine. If you extended your head and looked downward it would make your head spin as if someone was hitting and turning a gong pot. The person in charge of building the temple invited many masters to come and build. They all looked at the scene and one after another shook their heads and left without a second word. Later the person in charge came across Yang Kuixuan, who did not even need to look at the situation but as soon as he spoke agreed to build the temple.

In a short time, after the construction on the Yunfeng Temple project began, the foundation was built, the lumber was collected, and there was preparation to erect the pillars and raise the beams. Master Yang’s apprentice and the other masters doing

---

318 Yunfeng Mountain: A mountain located to the west of Tengchong city, still in Tengchong county.
319 看也不去看: Literally "looking but also not going to look," this is better interpreted as "to not even need to look at the situation."
carpentry work all discussed and decided that this was too difficult: The horizontal beam was thick and long, it was too heavy. It they wanted to raise it onto the roof, they would need at least several tens of men to come and lift. The topography was so narrow. When erecting the frame, how would they be able to lift the horizontal beam? Everyone felt that this certainly created difficulties, and they made Master Yang’s apprentice go ask. The apprentice asked Yang Kuixian: “Master! How are we going to install the big middle beam?”

Yang Kuixuan looked at him and said: “Apprentice! You all have to think of something!”

As he spoke, he walked towards the side of the horizontal beam. He looked at it and slapped his forehead, he then knew exactly what he was doing.

When the house frame had been erected, they should have raised the horizontal beam, but the carpenters had still not thought of a plan. Yang Kuixuan made the apprentice install a wood slide frame on the top of the roof, fasten a big piece of rope, and tie the rope onto the two ends of the horizontal beam. He told everyone to pull on the rope; the big rope moved, running along the wood slide frame, and the big horizontal beam rolled toward the top of the roof. Oh, as everyone exerted their strength, the beam rolled toward the sky, and using only a pipe bowl’s worth of strength, the big horizontal beam was raised to the roof!

It was not until this time that Yang Kuixuan asked: “Are you tired?”

Everyone said: “This method is really ingenious! You don’t have to expend any energy to raise the beam!”

The Water Skin Bridge

137
According to legend, the river bridge rebuilt above the Lancang River\textsuperscript{320} was also constructed by Yang Kuixuan.

As soon as Yang Kuixuan agreed to go and repair the river bridge, he and a few men destroyed the old structure in a few moments. When this road was destroyed, as the people came and went, they had no way to cross the river. It was really inconvenient. The person of that place who was in charge of things went to find Yang Kuixuan and said: “Master Yang! The bridge is destroyed, the road is ended, the people come and go, but they cannot cross the bridge. What other methods are there to let people and horses cross?”

Yang Kuixuan heard this, and he stroked his forehead, saying: “There is a way! It will just require a little bit of labor.”

“What will you do?”

“Isn’t there a lot of bamboo on the river banks? Grab the bamboo and bind it together to form bamboo rafts, link them together on the surface of the water to form a water skin\textsuperscript{321} bridge. Isn’t that excellent?”

“It is!”

They started work on the water skin bridge. But the river’s surface was several tens of zhang wide from east to west and joining together the bridge was still very difficult. Yang Kuixuan called his apprentices to take its measurements and ordered people to specially make two, long iron chains and buckle the two sides of the raft on top of the iron chains. One raft was placed after another raft and so the water skin bridge was built.

\textsuperscript{320} Lancang River: One of the four major rivers in Yunnan, the Lancang becomes the Mekong when it eventually reaches Burma. The Lancang River begins as two tributaries in Qinghai (a province north of Yunnan and Sichuan) and eventually becomes one river in the area of Chengdu, Sichuan’s capital, before running through Yunnan and Burma. (http://sports.sohu.com/2004/05/24/68/news220236894.shtml)

\textsuperscript{321} 水皮: refers to the surface of the water. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
When the water skin bridge was constructed, the people could walk and the horses could cross. It was even and stable; sturdy and neat. All of the people who crossed and walked on the bridge praised it: “Such superb skill, such a stable water skin bridge!”

Oral reporter: Wang Yongjin

Recorder: Duan Shoutao & Guo Sijiu
Huang Gongye Plays the “Corn”

In Jianchuan Gongbei there was a very famous carpenter named Liu, and everyone called him Master Liu. This Master Liu was extremely skilled. He could draw, he could carve, and it did not matter if he was carving or drawing flowers, grass, horses, or any animal, because everything he carved looked just as if it were alive. Master Liu was also good. It was not only that his skill was great, but he was also good in that, no matter how far away a person who hired him lived, no matter what they asked him to carve or draw, he always happily went, and never rejected anything. Consequently, people from far and near, east and west, all grew to like Master Liu even more.

One time a rich man asked Master Liu to come and carve doors and windows, and Master Liu tidied up his tools and went. But this rich man was extremely mean to people! While he, himself, ate sumptuous meals, what did he give Master Liu to eat? If it was not boiled sections of bean then it was fried sections of bean, and if it wasn’t that it was pickled sections of bean. This meal was bean sections, that meal was bean sections, every meal Master Liu had beans!! He was really angry and so on the doors and windows he carved line after line of bean segments. When the rich man saw this, he was very unhappy and said: “Master! Can’t you carve something else, for example: birds, animals, flowers, grass? How is it that you always carve this thing?!”

Master Liu heard this and deliberately lifted his head to look at the rich man, idly saying: “Why, sir!322 What would you have me carve? There is only this trash in my stomach!”

The rich man heard this and was so angry his face turned green. He could only

322 标记感叹号或提示。此处省略了，因为我认为没有合适的英文翻译。
turn around and go.

Then there was another time when a rich man called Huang Gongye wanted a screen painted. He had heard that Master Liu’s skill was good and so he called a person to petition Master Liu. This Huang Gongye was also a harsh fellow. Now, he did not give Master Liu bean segments to eat, but at every meal all he did give him was broad beans and maize. Master Liu thought for a while and then began to paint.

What did he paint? On the screen he painted a person who looked exactly like Huang Gongye riding on a donkey. In his left hand he held a string of broad beans and in his right hand a bundle of maize which he was about to put in his mouth and nibble on!

Master Liu finished painting the screen. As soon as Huang Gongye saw it, he asked: “Master! What did you paint?”

Master Liu smiled and said: “Sir! This painting really is an achievement. It is called ‘Huang Gongye Plays the Pan Pipe.’ Don’t you see: what is held in the left hand is called a horse whipping pole, and isn’t what is held in the right hand a pan pipe?”

Huang Gongye, who all day and night only ate, drank, sang, and made merry, simply did not recognize a horse whipping pole and did not clearly recognize broad beans and maize. He also wanted to look like someone who truly understood and repeatedly praised the work:

“The painting is good, the painting is good! This pan pipe is well painted, it is really attractive!”

Master Liu heard this, laughed, “haha,” counted his money, tidied his tools, and left.

The second day, Huang Gongye’s various relatives all came to look at the screen. When they entered the big hall, the guests all took one look and could not stop themselves
from laughing. One guest deliberately asked Huang Gongye:

“Gongye, what is painted on your screen?”

Huang Gongye complacently said: “This really is an achievement. It is called ‘Hong Gongye Plays the Pan Pipe!’ Look, in the left hand is the horse whip and in the right is there not a pan pipe?”

As soon as the audience heard this, there was an uproar, everyone laughing. When everyone had laughed for a very long while, the guest who had originally asked Huang Gongye forced himself to stop laughing and said: “Gongye! How is the right hand holding a ‘pan pipe,’ it is maize! This is not playing the pan pipe, it is ‘playing the corn’!”

Huang Gongye heard this and was immediately embarrassed. He could only blush and say: “Quickly! Put the screen away!”

From then on, the joke “Huang Gongye plays the corn” was quickly spread around and has been passed down until today.

Area of collection: Jianchuan county, Shilong village

Time of collection: July, 1961

Oral reporter: Yang Yushu

Recorder: Duan shoutao & Zhou Tianzong
"The Stone General Rebels"

In the past there was a company of Jianchuan carpenters who went out to do work and came to a rich man’s house. This rich man was very wicked. It was not until the carpentry masters commenced their work that he told them he would not agree to their eating in his home. He only agreed to let them borrow a few, assorted pots, bowls, and cups, and the carpentry masters had to make their own food. The handiwork had already been promised, and they had also already begun to labor. There was nothing the carpentry masters could do, and they had no choice but to send an apprentice to go cook the food.

One day when it was almost time to eat dinner, the rich man was in the great hall checking over the work the carpentry masters had done. Suddenly, the apprentice, completely flustered, his entire head covered in sweat, came running in. At the same time he called out:

"Masters, Masters! This is not good! This is not good! The stone general is rebelling, he’s crushed the iron, encircling wall!"

As soon as the great master heard this, he knew that the apprentice had not been careful when pounding the salt and had dropped the stone, salt pestle into the iron bowl. This had broken the bowl open. The great master was worried if, after all, the food had been cooked or not. He hasten to ask: "What about General Fan (food)?"\[\text{23}\]

"General Fan is pinned down in the city of Mu (wood) zhou!"

"What about General Tang (soup)?"

"General Tang was dropped and has accumulated in the fire!"

\[23\] In this section the Chinese characters are translated into pinyin and the actual English translations placed in parenthesis because while in English it would be very easy to understand that "General Food" was not the actual name of a general, in Chinese words with the same sound can have many different meanings which could result in a confusing situation such as this one.
At this time the great master was really worried. The food had not been cooked, the soup had been spilled, and had the fire also been exposed to the water? The fire had also been extinguished! Without any food to eat, how could they do any work? The great master looked at the other masters and quickly called: “It’s bad, it’s bad! Run quickly, run quickly!”

He spoke and simultaneously packed up the carpentry tools. Everyone lent a hand and hurriedly ran away, dragging the apprentice.

As soon as the rich man saw the carpenters become nervous and panicky in this way, he was also scared, and thought: Can it be that a bandit has struck? It definitely is! I must hurry up and run for my life! Combining three steps into two, he pulled his fat, pig body. Swaying and twisting, he followed the carpentry masters, running away.

The carpenters ran and they traversed, at least, tens of miles. Looking back, they saw that the rich man was so tired he was breathing heavily but was still running to follow them closely. They could only see his big mouth hanging open and his big eyes bulging and that he was so tired he was panting. The carpentry masters stopped, and, laughing to themselves, waited for the rich man to reach them until they said to him: “Master! Everything is peaceful and tranquil, nothing is wrong, you can slowly make your way home!”

The carpentry masters walked slowly and pensively. The rich man collected himself and looked around. Everything really was calm and peaceful, and it was not like there was any war type activity going on. He did not relax until this moment and then felt that his legs were aching and hurt. As the day was quickly darkening, he did not dare delay. He could only limp along, dragging his legs towards the direction of his home.

When the rich man reached home he saw that everything was all right. However,
the big iron pot he had lent to the carpentry masters had been broken by the stone salt pestle, the soup in the pot had leaked out, the fire had been extinguished, the half cooked food was inside of the wooden rice steamer, one portion of the salt pestle had tumbled into the fire pile, and the other portion was askew in the broken iron pot. Only then did the rich man understand he had been tricked by the carpenters! Tired and angry in this way, the rich man sat on the floor and did not get up for a very long time.

Area of collection: Jianchuan Shaxi East Tower (dongta)

Time of collection: August 1961

Oral reporter: Li Canjin & Li Cantang

Recorder: Li Zuanxu & Guo Sijiu

324 這個: This kind of rice steamer is bottomless and shaped like a wooden bucket.
Li Shoupeng

In Jianchuan Madeng\textsuperscript{325} there was a carpentry master named Li Shoupeng. When mentioning the great Master Li, it was obvious that his reputation was extremely distinguished: Within a one hundred mile circumference everyone far and wide would stick up their thumb to praise him: This is the carpenter in our Jianchuan with the greatest skill! Truthfully, great Master Li not only could construct buildings and repair great houses, he was also proficient in doing all kinds of careful work. Especially when carving, and even more so when carving to portray a likeness, his products were almost the same as their living counterparts.

One time in Madeng, there was a group leader\textsuperscript{326} named Jin who asked Master Li to come carve a checked door. Group leader Jin was a landlord and was also a group leader. He had money and influence, and his clothes and living arrangements were especially exquisite. As soon as great Master Li came, group leader Jin said to him:

"Great Master Li, for working on this checked door of mine you can have whatever salary you want, but I have one condition: You have to carve the flowers on the door by hand, you can’t use a design.\textsuperscript{327}

“All right!”

Great Master Li promised nonchalantly. He used his fingernail to draw a design on

\textsuperscript{325} Madeng: Madeng is another group of villages in Jianchuan county much like Diannan.

\textsuperscript{326} 团总: Depending on when this story took place “团总” could have several meanings. If written in the beginning of the Communist Period (as some of these stories are) it could refer to a leader of any political organization, especially youth organizations. If written during the end of the Qing Dynasty it probably refers to the head of a township or state agency. Seeing as group leader Jin is also a landlord, this story is not based in the Communist Period and thus the definition for “团总” implies leadership of a township or state agency.

\textsuperscript{327} 笔画: “笔画” literally means “strokes” or “number of strokes,” but here it is translated as “design” because brush strokes would be used in designing or in drawing a design and “design” is more conducive to the flow of the story.
the door and then hand carved it.

Although group leader Jin could be said to have money, he was very harsh to craftsmen. While he himself drank wine and ate meat, he only gave Master Li green tea and plain food, and even greasy or foul smelling meat was not to be seen. After working for several days, Master Li withdrew some of his salary and prepared to return home. Group leader Jin was covetous. He grabbed two small amounts of money, and smiled, saying to Master Li: “Master Li! Come, gamble these two plates, I guarantee you’ll win.”

“No! I want to take this amount of money and return to support my family and eke out a living doing odd jobs!” Master Li shook his head.

Group leader Jin simultaneously pulled and urged, again saying: “Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid, winning or losing depends on luck at gambling, it’s not certain how much money you may win!”

Master Li, thought: Fine, if you want to gamble, we will gamble, I don’t believe it is only you who will win! These two men gambled. Who could know that at this time Master Li would fall for group leader Jin’s trick? The first time he didn’t lose, but the second time he lost. Three plates, two plates, in several moments he lost all of the money he had withdrawn and he even owed a great sum of money!

Master Li knew he had been tricked and the more he thought about it, the angrier he became: Will all this time I have spent working really have been a waste? Ha! Watch how I will teach you a lesson.

The checked door of the hall was six leaves in total. Master Li waited until he had carved the fourth leaf and the salary was enough to repay his debt. There were two leaves left but Master Li wouldn’t do them. He said to group leader Jin: “The account has been paid, I am leaving the last two leaves, you find some else to do it, I will not do it!”
As soon as group leader Jin heard this, he thought: Outside of the sky there is still more sky, outside of the mountain there are still more mountains, among the strong there are those of even stronger skill. I don’t believe that other than Li Shoupeng there are no people who can carve this. Then he said: “Fine, you really don’t have to carve it, just put it aside!”

As soon as Master Li left, group leader Jin sent people everywhere to find masters. Who could know that as soon as the masters who were found saw that it was Master Li who had carved the leaves, they would turn around and leave, shaking their heads and saying: “This, we are not fit for this. Find other people!”

One person came and it was this way, two people came and it was this way. Tens of masters were found and it was also this way. People were pulled from the east and the west, one was pulled and another was pulled. Without being aware they sought people for many months, and still nothing had been done on the two remaining leaves of the checked door. No matter where they went they could not get any craftsmen to come.

There was nothing group leader Jin could do, he could only ask Master Li to return. Who would foresee that the messenger would ask several times but Master Li would not come? The group leader had no choice but to personally go and ask. In a low, modest, and amiable voice, group leader Jin said to Master Li: “Great Master Li, if you carve this checked door, only then will it match. It is not until now that I was suitable for scolding, but I still must trouble you to help out.”

Master Li looked at him and said: “Okay! However, I have one condition!”

“What condition?”

“For the two leaves I want fifty cash, and I will not work until I get the money first. Are you willing?”
As soon as Master Li spoke in this way, group leader Jin felt sorry to see something go to waste: “What? Fifty cash. How can you want that much?”

“Do you dislike this so? Well then you should find someone else, I still can not manage to help you!” Master Li said coldly and indifferently.

There was nothing group leader Jin could do, he could only assent: “All right! Fifty dollars is fifty dollars, consider me unfortunate!”

It was not until the business transaction involving the fifty dollars had been completed that Master Li began to carve. Group leader Jin was extremely unhappy, but there was nothing he could do.

Area of collection: Jianchuan Shaxi East Tower (dongta)

Time of collection: August, 1961

Oral reporter: Li Canjin & Li Cantang

Recorder: Li Zuanxu, Zhou Tianzong, & Guo Sijiu
Genzi Builds a New House

In the past, in the Western Mountains\textsuperscript{328} of Eryuan county\textsuperscript{329} there was a village called Yan village.\textsuperscript{330} In the village lived a good man named Genzi. He was an honest, kind, and decent person and when he saw others in difficulty, he was always willing to raise a hand and help them along. One year Genzi wanted to build a house, and he invited a carpentry master from Jianchuan to come and help him. After the carpentry master came to Genzi's house, he often saw Genzi kill pigs and butcher sheep, but all that Genzi would bring to the table to eat everyday was some parts of pig stomach and sheep intestine. The carpentry master was extremely vexed and so he would work a little and sing a little:

\begin{quote}
Everyday kill pigs and butcher sheep,
I don’t see flesh and meat, I only see entrails;
Yan village’s good fengshui is all in vain,
It produces evil men.
\end{quote}

When it was time to erect the pillars and raise the beams of the house, the dinner table was the same without sight of pig or lamb meat. The carpentry master’s anger was even greater and he thought: The proverbs say, for good intentions exchange a good liver, for evil intentions exchange a wolf’s liver. Since the master is harsh like this, there is also no harm in punishing him. Consequently, when he was raising the big beam, the carpenter secretly put a piece of “Seeing Ghost Wood” under it. According to what was said, when

\textsuperscript{328} The Western Mountains: A mountain range in western Yunnan. They can be reached from the capital of Yunnan, Kunming, which is fifteen kilometers to the east of the mountains.
\textsuperscript{329} Eryuan county: A county in the western suburbs of Dali.
\textsuperscript{330} Yan village: A village in the direct vicinity of the Western Mountains, often obscured by the rain. Also called “Yan village in the rain.”
This type of “Seeing Ghost Wood” was installed in a house, every time it came to the most deeply quiet and peaceful period of night, the roof of the house would give off sounds of whistling and creaking. It would seem as if there were people crying and calling and would scare one with its strangeness.

Three days later the house was completely finished, and the carpentry master was tidying his luggage and his tools, preparing to return home. On that morning, Genzi went to his neighbor’s house to borrow five donkeys. Two of the donkeys carried rice and three of them carried preserved and dried pig meat, lamb meat, pig heart, and pig liver. Genzi had been saving up all of these things since after the carpentry master had come to his home and said to the carpentry master: “I know that your old mother and father who are in their seventies and eighties live in your home. All of this pig and lamb meat is for you to bring to them to pay respects.”

It was not until then that the carpentry master understood that this was the reason he had only eaten intestine and not eaten meat. He was deeply moved by Genzi’s good heart and he quickly said: “I am truly sorry, I thought that you were a bad-hearted person. I helped you do this work, and you kept giving me intestines and not meat. Therefore, I placed “Seeing Ghost Wood” under the big beam, wishing to punish you. It was not until now that I realized that I have been mistakenly blaming you.” Saying this he ascended the big beam and removed the “Seeing Ghost Wood,” breaking it into pieces, and dropping it into the fireplace where it burned up.

Genzi was moved by the carpentry master’s frank manner and wanted to personally accompany him on his return home. The carpentry master agreed, and the two men walked along the road, happily singing these lyrics:

In past days we only saw pig and sheep intestines,
Who knew that today it would be the fragrance of persevered meat;

The Yan Village is really well placed
To raise good men.

Many thanks to the master whose art is strong,
To build a new house which keeps out the wind and rain;
For countless generations there will be good feeling,
Sons and grandsons will never forget.

Area of collection: Eryuan Western Mountains Songdeng Village
Area of transmission: Eryuan, Jianchuan
Time of collection: June, 1981
Oral reporter: Wang Qiqing
Recorder: Wang Lizhu & Li Cannan
The Wooden Horse is Immersed with One Fen Three of Water

It is not known in what time, but in Jianchuan there was a carpentry master who went to Heqing to practice his craft, and, in Heqing, he made friends with another master there. As the days past and the time grew longer, the amicable feelings between the two friends grew deeper and deeper. When undertaking contracted work or doing a job, they always invited each other and went together to do the work. When eating or sleeping they would also invariably look after each other. Everyone said: “The carpenters are kind-hearted and these friends are like two relatives.”

One year the county of Heqing wanted to build a bell and drum tower. They sought everywhere, looking for carpentry masters with excellent skill to come and do the design. The two friends heard of this and then made an appointment to go and see the gentlemen of Heqing, saying: “We hear that in this county you want to build a bell and drum tower, let us old friends contract this work.”

The gentlemen asked: “Who is the design master?”

The Heqing master said: “My old friend is.”

The gentlemen asked again: “Are you able to perform this work? The “lazi” money alone is one hundred liang of silver!”

The Heqing master again said: “If you don’t have a diamond drill, you can not

---

331 Heqing: A city located between Dali and Lijiang and to the west of the Western Mountains.
332 Bell and Drum Tower: A tower built to mark the center of a city and also to tell time (by means of drums and bells). (http://www.chinatravelkey.com/beijing/attractions/drumtower.htm)
333 They are asking who, of the two men, is the best at design.
334 辣子钱: At the time of contracting, calculating different types of expenses. If the “辣子钱” is one hundred liang of silver, it explains that the construction is of comparatively great magnitude. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)
undertake porcelain work. My friend is a famous, great master of Jianchuan.”

As soon as the gentlemen heard him speak this way, they gave him the contract for the bell and drum tower construction.

“Heqing wants to build a bell and drum tower, the ‘lazi’ money alone is one hundred liang silver.” This quickly spread around various counties, and carpenters from all directions went to Heqing to sign the construction contract. But when they arrived in Heqing, as soon as they asked, they heard that the bell and drum tower had already been contracted by the two friends. There were people who felt this was unfair, and they hurried to the gentlemen and tried to incite something, saying: “Building a bell and drum tower is the great work of a hundred years. The money doesn’t matter, whether it is built well or not matters. Take a glance at these two dull-looking old friends. We can’t speak of their ability to build well, but we don’t even know if they will be able to build the bell and drum tower at all. We ask you to please deliberate some more so as to avoid regret.”

The gentlemen heard this kind of speech, and their ideas underwent some changes. They said to the two friends: “Two masters, we are going to take advantage of the fact that you have not yet begun to work. Consider again. If you don’t contract this construction project, we will have time to give the contract to someone else. You don’t want to take the stage and then not be able to sing a song. We can’t agree to anything!”

As soon as the old friends heard this, they knew that someone was playing underhanded tricks, and they said: “When you speak, first consult with your teeth.”

Although there may be a lot of bragging, it will not build a house. We ask you to consider

335. 没有金刚钻，不揽瓷器活: This proverb is used to explain that without something truly special (the Jianchuan carpenter’s skill) the two men would not come to contract the work. They are, in a way, criticizing the gentlemen of Heqing for asking them if they are sure they can undertake the construction. (http://tech.sina.com.cn/t/2005-05-27/1238619886.shtml)

336. 说话先跟牙齿商量: Suggesting that the men who claimed the two friends could not build the bell and drum tower were simply lying or bragging and that the words they spoke were not even true when passing between their teeth.
One group said their skill was good, the other said their skill was fine. This made things very hard for the gentlemen who had no choice but to report to the county’s top official. The county official said: “There is a good way to deal with this. Tomorrow you call the carpenters to come, I have my own plan.”

The next day, the county yamen’s office was crowded with carpenters. The county official ascended the main hall and looked at the carpenters bickering and yelling. He hit the gavel three times, asking in a loud voice: “Whom among you has great skill?”

“My skill is the greatest!” Carpenters of various places said.

“If our skill was not great would we dare to undertake construction of the bell and drum tower!” The two old friends said.

The great hall was again filled with quarreling, it was as if there was a sheet of noise. The county official hit the gavel again three times, and shouted in a loud voice: “What are you fighting about? I have a plan!” When he had finished speaking, he glanced sideways at a messenger.

The messenger quickly came forward and said: “I make a petition to the master.” Everyone says their skill is the highest, still the judgment of base people will not surpass making them construct a three legged wooden horse. They will put the horse in the pool and let it soak over night. When we take the horses out again, we will see whose horse’s tenon mouth has been filled with the least amount of water and their skill will be the highest. The contract for the bell and drum tower will be given to them.”

The county official felt that this plan was good and called the carpenters to go back and construct wooden horses, write their names on the horses, and hand them in. The carpenters all felt that this was a fine method, and they respectively went off.

337 老爷: Also referring to the official.
The carpenters finished building their horses, wrote their names, and gave them in to the county yamen’s office. In front of the carpentry masters, the county official put all of the horses completely into the pool to soak, and he dispatched rank-in-file soldiers to keep watch over the pool.

The next day, many people were gathered at the side of the pool. There were some who had come from a hundred miles away wishing to see the case of the “wooden horses immersed with water.” The carpenters and the gentlemen all arrived simultaneously, and the county official called people to dredge the wooden horses from the pool and break them open. They used rulers to measure the amount of water in each tenon mouth. In the end it happened that the tenon mouths of the wooden horses made by the carpenters from various counties were all filled with three fen three of water; the tenon mouth of the wooden horse made by the Jianchuan carpenter was filled with only one fen three of water. The county official saw this and made his decision in a loud voice: “This case has undergone inspection in front of an audience. The Jianchuan carpenter’s horse was filled with one fen three of water, and thus his skill can be considered the very highest. The drum and bell tower is still contracted to the two old friends.”

The two friends smiled in the face of the audience’s praise, the other carpenters left without a word.

From then on, the Jianchuan carpenter’s reputation for the “wooden horse immersed with one fen three of water” spread throughout western Yunnan.

Oral reporter: Zhao Wenzhao
Recorder: Li Zuanxu, Guo Sijiu, & Zhou Tianzong
The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountain Range

Jianchuan has always had a fine reputation as “The Homeland of Carpentry.” There the carpenters are many, and the old folk craftsmen who excel at the art of carving dragons and phoenixes are even more. It is passed down that in the beginning years of the Qing Dynasty, in one of the stockade camps beneath Jianchuan’s Eastern Mountains there was a young person, A Xin, who was only a child when he had lost his father and mother. Under the influence of a folk artisan, he fell in love with the art of carving. During the day he did work for the landlord and at night he would fiddle with his carving knife and a lump of wood. When the children of poor people wish to study handicraft it is is even harder than ascending the sky!

As one day was drawing towards night, several brothers, the idle sons of high officials, pushed into A Xin’s grass house. They pointed at his still unfinished carving model and, as rascals would, laughed scornfully: “What sort of things do you think you are able to carve? Your lions are not like lions, your bears are not like bears. They actually look like pangolin or very ugly people!” “The poor boy, he was born to the beggar’s fate and he still wishes to study art? I’m afraid he has been bitten by a leech and it has made him confused!” Among them one wearing sheep and lamb skin let fly with his foot and kicked over the small wood table. The hooligans struggled with one another, recklessly made trouble, and broke things, scattering the small grass house here and there.

338 The Eastern Mountains: A portion of the Eryuan Western Mountains (called the Eastern Mountains because Jianchuan is to the west of Eryuan). Both the Eastern and Western Mountains are famous for the Bai nationality song styles originated there. (http://travel.yninfo.com/mzfq/wh/2002/2002-07/2002-07-19/1027056007_2/)
339 熊: A “熊” is a type of brown bear smaller than the normal or more common brown bear. It weighs between 150 and 170 kilograms and sometimes it can be differentiated from the common brown bear by the white stripes on its chest. (http://post.baidu.com/f?kz=66892738)
340 穿山甲: A toothless mammal living off ants and other insects in hilly areas, it has a body covered with horny scales and sharp claws for digging earth.
in disorder. A Xin grabbed a curved sickle, he wished to risk his life against these rascals, but he was restrained by the sound of the townspeople coming... ... 

This setback and attack, however, only strengthened A Xin’s conviction to strive towards the attainment of skill. Everyday when night would come he would hide in a thatched cottage. All night long he would work, sometimes he chopped and cut, sometimes he made fine carvings, and it was as if he was drunk or crazy.

In the village there was a girl named Hai Hua. She quietly went to A Xin’s grass house at night and from the crack in the window secretly watched him for a very long time. Under a small oil lamp, the beads of sweat on A Xin’s cheek flashed with light. He was, at this time, carefully carving a peacock. In a vast expanse of autumn night, the moon was brilliant, the stars pale. A Xin stretched tiredly and felt only that he was so hungry his stomach was grumbling. He lifted the lid of a pot, and wrinkling his brow, smiled bitterly. Without hesitation he held the water bucket in his arms and gulped down a stomach full of cold water. The girl outside the window saw this distinctly. She felt tears welling up and, drawing out a roasted potato that was still warm, threw it at A Xin’s back. She then turned and fled into the vast expanse of gathering darkness. A Xin gnawed at the potato and swallowed hot tears as well—he received warmth from others all too rarely. On the nights of the second and third day, the girl did the same thing. It was as if A Xin had awakened from a dream. He wanted to see, after all, who this good-hearted person was. Consequently, he secretly untied a small bell from inside the horse stables and used a thin rope to hang it beneath the window sill. That night, Hai Hua came complacently and tripped on the copper bell. When the young man heard the noise he

---

341: Although the use of the word “大” seems to suggest that the phrase should be translated as “as big as a bean,” because the author is trying to emphasize how poor A Xin is, I have translated “豆大” as “as small as a bean.”

342: 鼻子(+)酸: Literally means “the nose feels sour or tingles,” but often used in Chinese literature to refer to the feeling before one cries. Here translated as “felt tears welling up.”
jumped up and went outside, grabbing the girl’s hand. The girl smiled and chuckled, and A Xin dragged her into the house. After this had happened, a satisfied smile hung on the young man’s face. From head to toe he was bursting with unending energy. The girl, Hai Hua, was also an orphan and often brought delicious things to give A Xin, silently keeping him company as he passed sleepless nights.

At the time when the peach blossoms had opened and withered five times, A Xin’s hands had five layers of thick calluses from doing design, and all of the models which he had bitterly carved were as vibrant as if they were alive. Information spread quickly and people hundreds of miles away came to see, buzzing with excitement. The more word spread the more magical it became: Take a look! Such a beautiful peacock, as soon as you press the tail, the jadeite colored tail wing will immediately open and soon after it will dance gracefully, it’s exactly the same as a real peacock! That wooden dragon, it shakes its head and swings its tail, the eyes fully turn. The poor people raise their hands to it and it spits gold and silver from its mouth; the rich people raise their hands and from its tail drops excrement eggs. Even more fascinating is the dog which A Xin has carved. Seeing rich people clothed in silk and then poor people who could have this sort of thing, he bites the rich people until they cover their heads with both hands and run for cover. The poor people smile until they are doubled over and laugh until they cry. The common people ran out to tell others, spouting praise, they would raise their thumbs and say that A Xin was really clever.

A Xin gave an exquisite wood carved needlework kit to the girl, Hai Hua. That fall they were married. After they were married, the couple was in the throws of affection and their days were sweet. The children of the poor people constantly came to drop in on them and asked to study craftsmanship with A Xin. A Xin’s reputation was growing.
greater and greater, and the people studying carpentry in the Jianchuan valley were also increasing.

That winter the Qing Dynasty government seat launched massive construction projects to build temporary dwelling places for the emperor to stay when away from the palace and temples for high ranking officials. They seized folk craftspeople everywhere, forcing them to leave home and labor bitterly. One unit of rank-and-file soldiers rushed into A Xin’s home and locked an iron chain around his neck. Hai Hua was pushed to the floor, crying herself deaf and until she had no tears. Ill fated A Xin would not go a step without turning back, and blood leaked from his eyes. From that time on he never again returned.

After her husband had been dragged away, everyday as darkness was approaching, the girl Hai Hua would go to the entrance of the village to wait. Early on, the rich man Yang Chengshang had wicked intentions towards Hai Hua. He repeatedly dropped by to pester and swindle her, saying: “You husband has already died in outer lands, quickly take another husband!” Hai Hua splashed dirty water on the dog of a rich man to get him out of the house, and everyday she would still go to the entrance of the village to look. Once the spring, which was full of hope and the summer of ten thousand trees and fragrant onions had passed, the fall wind swept away the yellow leaves on the trees. Hai Hua held back her tears, she looked into the autumn water, but never saw the figure of her husband.

The dog of a rich man’s licentious thoughts unfulfilled, he eventually laid a murderous scheme. One deep night when the wind was high and the moon black, A Xin’s thatched cottage suddenly caught on fire. The fire took advantage of the force of the wind, the wind helped the
power of the fire, and the raging flames reflected red on the sky over the Eastern Mountains. People saw it and when it had become a great fire burning fiercely, one dazzling thread of a luminous ring jumped out from the fire into the sky. It ascended straight to the highest heavens.

Since that time, everyday after the sun dipped below the mountains, a path of the sunset’s bright golden light would always emanate from midair. It reflected the Eastern Mountains of Jianchuan with bright red, penetrating light. Old people all said: “This is the girl, Hai Hua, in the sky. She uses the fire light to illuminate the small road of her homeland, hoping that her husband will come back!”

Area of transmission: Jianchuan county

Recorder: Xu Jiayou
Master Zhao Powerfully Ensures Tranquility at the Golden Horse Arch

According to what the older generation says, Kunming’s famous, ancient architectural structures, the Golden Horse and Emerald Chicken Arches were all constructed by a Jianchuan carpenter. The designer, carpenter Zhao, was respectfully called Master Zhao by everyone. “Master” indicates someone whose skill is exceptional, who has received the lessons of the supernatural, someone who is also praised for having the talent of superb craftsmanship.

Not only were Master Zhao’s plans always well drawn, he was also able to recite poems and compose couplets. All of the verse he would come out with received everyone’s respect and praise, and even the foreman greatly admired him. When the foreman saw Master Zhao, he would give him tobacco and pour him tea, and when Master Zhao would start or stop talking, the foreman would nod his head and stoop, extremely attentive.

Stonecarver Li saw this state of affairs and was very uncomfortable. Stonecarver Li originally was an outsider, but because his skill was outstanding, he had now changed his place of origin to Kunming. He was also specifically invited to come and build the Golden Horse and Emerald Chicken Arches, and he specialized in overseeing the stone work. Inwardly he thought, the flowers of the mountain can not be compared to the grass of the city. The skill of you Jianchuan carpenters is admirable, but, after all, you are still people of the mountains and wilderness. No matter how it is said, I am a craftsperson of

343 Kunming: Yunnan’s capital. Located to the east of Jianchuan.
344 The Golden Horse and Emerald Chicken Arches were built in Kunming during the Ming Dynasty and have been famous structures in Yunnan for about four hundred years. They are two arch type structures which stand in a main square in southern Kunming. The arches face each other and are said to sometimes capture both sunlight and moonlight at the right time of day. (http://www.kunmingok.com/web/kmjx/2003-09/1064805491.html)
the city of Kunming. He wanted to purposely compete with Master Zhao to be rid of his own anger and sadness.

One morning, the foreman, Master Zhao, and stonecarver Li discussed matters together. The tea was passed around three times and the first person to get the tea was, naturally, the celebrated Master Zhao. The tobacco when passed was also no exception. The foreman only called on Master Zhao and this truly made stonecarver Li fly up in rage. He was extremely upset.

After everyone had enough tea and they were done with the tobacco, the foreman grabbed the abacus and began to fiddle with it, calculating with the other men the planned schedule of the construction. Accidentally the abacus dropped to the ground, and the beads scattered everywhere.

Master Zhao, thinking that he should call an apprentice to tidy it, did not expect that stonecarver Li would beat him to it, calling an apprentice to him and saying in a loud voice: “This abacus, I don’t know what it is made out of, but it is not solid or secure at all. Go and make an abacus out of stone immediately. Before you stop work for the day you must finish this. Otherwise, don’t even think about eating!”

The apprentice was so annoyed that his eyes flashed with fury, and he promptly said: “Master, I just hit open a rock, and unexpectedly the broken pieces of stone cut my head, I must go quickly and get a little bit of medicine.”

Master Zhao saw that blood was rising from the top of the young carpenter’s head and quickly called his own apprentice, A Shanbo, to get a herbal medicine, “hanqiyou” to stop the blood and help him smear it on the wound.

The foreman also had a good heart and said to the young stonecarver: “Quickly, quickly go to the street and shave off all of your hair. These days the weather has been

---

342 A medicine name derived from the Bai nationality language.
burning hot, you have to stop the wound from festering.”

Master Zhao said: “In the vicinity there are no barber shops, let me do it!” He grabbed an axe, rubbed it on the sharpening stone several times, and after he tried the blade, helped the young stonecarver shave his head. Swish, swish, swish... ...the axe’s edge was sharp and keen, it handled the situation, and Master Zhao neatly and quickly shaved the young stonecarver’s head bald.

At this time, stonecarver Li, who was standing at the young apprentice’s side, was so surprised he was dumbstruck. He felt nothing but the greatest admiration, hastened to make a slight bow with hands folded in front, and thanked Master Zhao. He also, with a heart full of admiration, said: “I wanted to make the apprentice build a stone abacus, and I was really being meddlesome, poking my nose into other people’s business! We still must have you build this abacus, Master Zhao, and hope that you will have no objections.” He spoke and spoke and was so moved that he wanted to kneel in worship.

Master Zhao quickly helped him up and said sincerely: “Craftspeople: we are all one family, the bones may break but the tendons will still connect. From now into the future we will still look to much help from Master Li!”

The matter of Master Zhao “using an axe to shave a head bald” was quickly passed around. In the area of the Golden Horse and Emerald Chicken construction his reputation was earthshaking. Everyone went out of their way to come pay their respects.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan county

Oral reporter: Zhao Zhongxia

Recorder: Zhang Wenduan & Hong Yunsheng

346 骨头打断连着筋: Refers to the idea that all craftsmen, even those of different trades, must all support and be there for one another just as the tendons will still connect and protect the body if a bone breaks.
The One Eyed Dragon of Modou Mountain

In the middle of Jianchuan valley there is a Modou Mountain. According to legend, at the base of the Mountain there is a sea and in the middle of the sea there is a dragon palace. In this palace lives a dragon king with one eye. Why is he missing an eye?

In ancient times, there was a carpenter Yang who lived in the village, Houying, which was next to Modou Mountain. Three days after he was married, he went out to earn money and do work and left his new wife alone in the house. His new wife’s body was slender, her face round, and her eyes big. When she spoke it was as if she was singing a song, nine out of ten people who saw her, praised her.

One night a young man with a wide forehead and a large nose squeezed into carpenter Yang’s bridal chamber and made advances on carpenter Yang’s new wife. When the new wife called out in a loud voice, the young man suddenly disappeared without a trace. The door of the bridal chamber was still closed tightly, and it really was a very strange event. Things would happen again and again in this way every night, and it made the new wife’s days uneasy; she was on tenterhooks. People conjectured that this was certainly the son of the dragon king of Modou Mountain, who had again come out to play underhanded tricks. In the village there was a good hearted elder, and he taught the new wife a method by which to reduce the dragon’s magic, suggesting that she might as well try it.

On that day the evil young man came again. The new wife put tobacco tar into the wine, wore a happy expression, spoke words that were good and comforting to hear, and

---

347 Modou Mountain: A mountain in the middle of the Jianchuan valley named Modou Mountain because it is supposed to look like a carpenter’s ink marker. (http://china.travel.sohu.com/dinfo/news/020/200542816474364.htm)

348 Houying village: A village in the Jianchuan valley right next to Modou Mountain.
took the opportunity to get the young man drunk. After a short while the true nature of the medicine began to show effect. The young man’s entire body shook like rice being sifted, and his headache was so severe that he rolled on the ground. His lips called out that he was the Modou Mountain dragon king’s third son and after he died he would undoubtedly call his father to revenge him. When he was about to escape, he wrapped the new wife’s black handkerchief which she wore on her head around his head. The next day in a thicket of grass on the side of the small dragon pond to the south of Modou Mountain there lay a big multi-colored snake, breathing its last. Tied around its head was the black handkerchief!

In the May planting season, carpenter Yang returned. As dusk was approaching, he passed Modou Mountain and ran into an old herdsman. The two men engaged in chitchat and their words were congenial. The old herdsman invited carpenter Yang to come to his house to rest and eat a little. Carpenter Yang was surprised: How do I not recognize him? Where is his home? The old herdsman said: “Look where I point!” He spoke slowly, but then things happened fast. Carpenter Yang glanced towards the direction he was pointing, and he was already standing in a massive and spacious crystal palace. Only then did carpenter Yang realize that this man was the dragon of Modou Mountain and this place his dragon palace. When they had finished eating, the dragon king led carpenter Yang to go for a walk. Outside of the palace all kinds of gorgeous and many colored coral trees and thickets were everywhere. Carpenter Yang unintentionally discovered that hanging on one of the tree branches was a chopping block shaped like a person. It looked like his new wife.

In his heart, he was deeply shocked: How did this happen? The dragon king looked at carpenter Yang’s stupefied expression, and he was suddenly suspicious. Putting
on a false smile, he asked: “Honestly tell me, where is your house? And who lives there?”

“Didn’t I tell you earlier? I am a person of Jinlong village. My grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, brothers, sisters, these ten people, all eat in my house.” Carpenter Yang hastily answered.

“Now, why are you walking a road that goes past that?”

“You are old, I am very young, I should accompany you for a while.” The dragon kind was happy. When carpenter Yang was leaving, the dragon king said to him warmly: “Emerald jade, crystal, agate, whatever you like, take it. There is no need to be polite.”

Carpenter Yang thought and said: “I do woodwork. I need a solid chopping block that will be suitable support for raising the wood when I am cutting it. Give me the chopping block hanging outside!” The dragon king showed signs of reluctance, but he could not change what he had said and had to let carpenter Yang take the chopping block.

Carpenter Yang returned home. He saw that his wife’s back was completely covered by a terrible sore which was leaking blood and running pus. The wife told him the progression of events one by one: After she had poisoned the son of the dragon king to death, she had a dream in which she felt she had been dragged into the dragon palace. After she woke up her back had grown a poisonous sore, and she was in deep pain. She didn’t know the reason, but as soon as her husband came home the sickness had gotten much better.

Carpenter Yang told his wife his own strange experience. He thought: The chopping block that originally hung in the dragon palace was a substitute for my wife. The fact that I was able to get the chopping block explains that the dragon king still does not know my identity or exact details. There is much danger!

Thinking about the Modou Mountain dragon king’s usual conduct made carpenter

---

349 Jinlong village: Although there are many Jinlong villages in the Jianchuan area, this one is refers to a Jinlong village of the Jianyang area in Jianchuan.
Yang extremely resentful. The dragon king not only connived with his several sons to do evil things, he also stirred up trouble every year and made the flood waters rise sharply. They broke through the Jinlong river embankment and transformed the flat and hollow physical features of the Houying village into a sheet of water for four weeks, destroying good land and washing away houses.

“I swear to you, dragon of Modou Mountain, with whom I cannot live in peace, I will chop your head, smash your heart, and pull out your tendons. It will be hard to relieve the hate of my heart.” Carpenter Yang was determined to be rid of the dragon of Modou Mountain.

Carpenter Yang invited several woodworking masters to come, and they labored bitterly day and night, wishing to build two dragons to fight with the dragon of Modou Mountain. They went up the mountain and chose hard grain spice bush\(^{350}\) to make the bone framework of the two dragons and also specially chose Jingdong\(^{351}\) steel to make the two dragons’ claws and teeth. On the day during which they wanted to “awaken” the dragons, carpenter Yang bit his finger and dripped rich red, hot blood on the two dragons’ seven orifices: the ears, eyes, mouths, and nostrils. He chanted the “Wood Scriptures” and, immediately, the wooden dragons became real dragons. All that could be seen was the two great dragons, and their golden armor was vigorous and shining, their eyes emitted brilliant rays of light, their teeth were open, their claws were flourishing, and their morale was high.

Carpenter Yang held back the dragons with his two hands, and in a high voice declared war: “The dragon of Modou Mountain has lost all sense of conscience; he frees

\(^{350}\) 灰蓝色: Grayblue spice bush or *lindera glauca*, this is a small deciduous tree common in China and Taiwan. ([http://permaculture.info/cgibin/eden?plant=3824][1] & [http://www.ads.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/shrubs/lindera
glauc.html][2])

\(^{351}\) Jingdong: A city in Southwest China, south of Dali and Cang Mountain.
his children to do evil, the people are plunged into an abyss of misery; every year he breaches the embankments and makes the common people suffer calamity; with loyal hearts and heroic spirits rid the people of this evil!” He ordered them with one word: “Go!” Like lightening the two dragons leapt into the dragon pond at the foot of the mountain. After a short while there was no trace of them. After another while the sound of thunderous battle was heard from the bottom of the mountain. It shook so much that the sky and the earth did as well, and there was also a heavy downpour. The dragon pond unceasingly poured forth streams of dirty, black muddy water. In the water floated pieces of blood and flesh and wooden bits of gray spice bush. After a very long time the rain gave way to clear sky and it was not until then that the wind and waves were calm.

From that time on the dragon king of Modou Mountain never appeared again, and the legendary flood dragon’s rebellion, the flooding of good fields, and the licentious advances of the dragon king’s sons towards people’s wives never happened again.

The people also discovered that all of the fish in the dragon pond of Modou Mountain only had one eye. It turned out that carpenter Yang’s two dragons had blinded one of the dragon king’s eyes, and even all of the fish soldiers and fish generals lost an eye as well.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan Eastern Mountain Range, Jinhua

Oral reporter: Yang Shufa & Yang Meiji

Recorder: Yang Jinwen

352 龙：Dragon capable of calling up storms and floods.
Carpenter Zhang and the Antithetical Couplet of Shiping County

It has been passed down that a carpenter and a lacquer craftsman from Jianchuan went to the region of southern Yunnan to engage in their craft. In a flash it had been several years, and the two men very much missed their parents so they agreed to accompany each other home.

One day they passed Shiping county.\textsuperscript{353} The weather was scorching hot and they streamed with sweat. Moving a step was difficult, and, consequently, the two cooled down and rested under the pagoda outside of the city. Unintentionally, they discovered that on one side of the tower stood a stone stele.\textsuperscript{354} The calligraphy was outstanding and the stele was fascinating. Shiping county had long been praised as the “Famous Nation of Literature,” and from the stele it could be seen that this reputation had not been spread falsely.

According to the words recorded on the stele, Shiping had formerly faced disaster and been destroyed, and the county seat was built again among the ruins. On the stele it also said that after construction on the new city had been completed, this pagoda had been specially built, in order one, to suppress disaster and two, to display remembrance.

At that time, there was a scholar of noble character and high prestige in the area who had written a verse, calling for an answering one. But no one had responded to the call. If he found a person who could come up with the second half of the couplet, they would be rewarded one hundred liang silver.

Most Jianchuan craftspeople are destitute, but no matter what, when they are young, their parents want to give them the ability to read and to recognize characters, Shiping County: A county located in the south of Yunnan, 240 kilometers away from Kunming. 碑: A stele or a stone tablet engraved with characters or images and used as a marker or monument.
thinking it shameful not to pursue learning. These two men had read *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics* and were very interested in things involving writing. Therefore, they curiously walked towards the front of the tower and inspected all four sides. They only saw that on the first floor of the tower, as expected, was a line of big, striking characters:

> Every floor of the pagoda is part of a straight steel whip seeking the sun and moon

This line was obviously the top half of a couplet. After they had examined it carefully, they still had not come up with the bottom portion.

Among the two of them, carpenter Zhang had drunk more ink, and his knowledge was a little bit greater. He could not help but feel excited about this. He said to lacquer craftsman Li: “Old friend, we might as well try our luck. If we are correct, we will be rewarded with one hundred liang silver, we two can split the money and still make up a deficit.

Lacquer craftsman Li’s temperament was obliging, and he nodded his head in agreement.

Together, the two went to a village in the vicinity and found the head of the clan, but only said that they were passing by and wished to beg for a little bit of tea to drink. The clan head was a warm hearted person, and as soon as he found Zhang was a Jianchuan carpenter, he was extremely respectful. He warmly invited the two men into his house to rest.

In their casual talking, carpenter Zhang had the intention of bringing up the topic of the couplet. The clan head said that although this event had really happened many years ago, since that time no one had come up with the second portion. Carpenter Zhang and lacquer craftsman Li indicated that they could figure out the correct lower part. As soon as the clan head heard this, he was extremely happy and made a promise on the...
spot: If they came up with a clever lower portion, they could add another one hundred liang of silver to the reward.

The clan head invited the distinguished scholars of that place to come and pass judgment. When these men saw carpenter Zhang and his friend’s crude clothing and average appearance, they did not believe that they would be able to come up with the lower portion. After they had whispered to each other, commenting, they all thought that this was definitely an impossible feat. With a despising tone they said: “If you are able to come out with an ingenious sentence, add two mules and two new outfits!”

Carpenter Zhang was polite for a bit, he raised his hand and said: “We are indebted to all of you for looking highly upon us in our show of poor skill.” He walked toward the front of the table that the clan head had set up with vigorous strides. He called lacquer craftsman Li to help him spread open six chi of Xuan paper. As soon as he wielded the big brush pen, he wrote out, in one breath, seventeen big characters:

Every battlement of the city wall is a shifting new tooth trying to bite the clear sky

All the older gentlemen made a headlong rush, pushing ahead to examine the characters. They were all stupefied. Not only was the matching of both tone and sense in carpenter Zhang’s portion of the couplet neat and careful, the words he had come out with were also not ordinary. They gulped and gasped greatly. “‘Bite the clear sky,’ that’s good. Popular but not common, out of the average comes the extraordinary!” The old gentleman could not stop thumping the table and shouting “bravo.”

Moreover, done with careful deliberation, carpenter Zhang’s calligraphy was also outstanding. He wrote neat and regular big script, his skill with the brush was robust, and

356 Xuan paper is quality paper made in Xuancheng and Jingxian in Anhui Province. This type of paper is used for Chinese calligraphy.
357 While I have used more than eleven English words, in the actual story, Zhang only writes eleven characters.
his style fluid and lucid. His writing was done at one go with spirit and resonance. Also his character style was the same as that in the top portion of the couplet. The big and the small, it was all similar, and it was all flawless. Everything was exactly the same. People were drawn to praise it as superb, and the old gentlemen all profusely commended it: “Jianchuan carpenters really have a rare talent, people of ability remain to be found!”

Later, they carved carpenter Zhang’s portion of the couplet on the pagoda and also wrote, composed, and erected a new stele which described everything of the matter of the Jianchuan carpenter skillfully picking the most correct couplet.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan county

Oral reporter: Li Wenhui

Recorder: Zhang Wen, Ruihong, & Zhangrong
Lu Ban Invents the Boat

In ancient times there were no boats in the world, and people also did not know how to go fishing in the sea.

Later, Lu Ban came to the world. He had an intelligent wife and she did needlework with extreme skill. Once she made a pair of very pretty feitou shoes and wore them everyday. One day she went to the river to wash her feet. She took off her shoes and placed them on the river's edge. Suddenly from the river's head came a great gust of wind which blew her shoes into the heart of the river, and they floated away. Lu Ban’s wife saw that the shoes were floating on top of the water and hastily jumped down the river bank to dredge them up. But she was not careful and pushed the shoes, making them sink into the water. She stood silently on the side of the river, worried. But when she was beginning to get really nervous, the feitou shoes suddenly floated to the surface again. She happily collected her shoes and sat on the riverbank silently thinking: Why did the shoes take on water but not sink? She thought for a very, very long time and could not find any logic in it.

She picked up the feitou shoes and unhappily returned home. She sat alone thinking about what was weighing on her mind. When Lu Ban saw his wife knitting her brow's, he asked: “Everyday you come home and are so happy. Why have you come home unhappily today?”

His wife said: “Today I went to the river to wash my feet, and I met with a very strange occurrence. I really can’t figure it out.”

Lu Ban hastily asked: “What strange occurrence?”

飞头: A type of shoe worn during the time of the Qin Dynasty and Qin Shihuang.
His wife said: “My feitou shoes were pushed down into the water but did not sink! What is the reason for this?”

As soon as Lu Ban heard this, he turned towards the feitou shoes and looked at them carefully, saying: “The middle of your shoes is empty. Is it that all things with hollow centers will not sink?”

His wife said: “Copy my shoes and make a extremely large wooden shoe to put in the water as a test. See if, in the end, it will sink or not.”

Lu Ban heard this and quickly made a great feitou shoe out of wood. He called his wife to go with him, and they carried the big wooden shoe, putting it into the river. The wooden shoe floated here and there in the river and they were extremely excited, jumping into the boat together. With the wooden shoe they could float everywhere on the river at will, and they thought it was really very fun. After they returned home, they made very many wooden shoes and they gave them to the people who passed their days fishing on the seaside. The fishermen sat in the wooden shoes and could go to the center of the sea in order to catch fish.

Because in Bai nationality language the word for shoe and the word for boat are homophonous, the wooden shoe was also a wooden boat. What’s more, in the past the boat was created from an imitation of Lu Ban’s wife’s feitou shoe. Consequently, today’s large and small boats are still of the same appearance as a woman’s feitou shoe.

Area of transmission: Dali, Jianchuan

Oral reporter: Li Guanwu

Recorder: Guo Sijiu, Zhou Tianzong, & Li Zuanxu
Male Tenon, Female Tenon

In the past, there were no male tenons or female tenons, and in order to build a house one faced a great deal of difficulty. One had to use nails to nail the short pieces of wood and rope to tie up the larger pieces of wood. When carpenters went to help people build their houses, the carpenters’ wives also had to go to hold the rope, and their hands were rubbed so much that it caused blisters to rise on their palms.

With Master Lu Ban and his wife it was the same, and when Master Lu Ban went to build a house, his wife had to follow him to hold the rope. Later, Lu Ban thought up the tenon and the mortise and saved a great deal of trouble. But he did not think up the male tenon and the female tenon. The tenon was straight and the mortise was also straight. You could not pull them tight, and a rope still had to be used.

One day, Master Lu Ban was busy thinking about the matter of the tenon and the mortise, thinking so much that he actually forgot to eat and when called did not hear. Master Lu’s wife pulled his hand and called him to eat, but he did not wish to eat and wished to take his hand back. Because he was thinking about things, he molded his hand into a fist. His wife pulled it, but no matter what she did, she was unable to pull away. Master Lu’s wife saw this and inspiration moved her suddenly. She smiled and said: “Don’t be foolish. Won’t doing it this way work?”

Master Lu Ban knew that his wife was smart, and hearing her speak, he quickly asked: “What did you say?”

Master Lu’s wife used her other hand to point to his fist and said: “Isn’t it

359 損: “扭” literally translates as “twist or rub with the hands” but “hold” is a more clear translation and still accurate in this context.
360 榫眼: Fits with the tenon to make a joint.
obvious?"

As soon as Lu Ban took a look, he saw the light and said continuously: “Good, good, good! Excellent, excellent, excellent!”

Together, Master Lu Ban and his wife made a tenon with a wide head and narrow middle and a mortise with a wide inside and a narrow outside. Some buckled towards the top, some buckled towards the bottom, and once they were fastened, they fastened tightly.

Later people called this tenon and mortise: male tenon and female tenon. When buckling this kind of tenon, people often could not help but continuously praise it as good and excellent.

With the male tenon and the female tenon, when building a house, carpenters’ wives never again had to follow and hold the rope.
The Corner of the Door Turns the Central Axle of the Millstone

Since the creation of the male tenon and the female tenon, when master Lu Ban went out to build a house, his wife did not need to follow him to hold the rope and so she could stay at home taking care of the chores.

At that time the millstone still had not been created and the food was very coarse. The five cereals (rice, two kinds of millet, wheat, and beans) all had to be cooked and eaten as whole kernels. Lu Ban’s wife said to him: “Husband, you can build this and you can build that, why can’t you make something that will completely crush the five cereals so I can cook good meals for you?”

Master Lu Ban remembered this matter in his heart and after a short while he carried home two pieces of round slabstone and put them in the winnowing basket. He grabbed a handful of the five cereals and put them in the middle of the slabstones. He rubbed the stones up and down, and the five cereals were then ground into powder.

With these two slabstones the food was cooked, both firewood and trouble were saved, and meals were delicious to consume. But a lot of trouble and energy had to be expended in preparation. Grinding the five cereals was not only strenuous, it was also time consuming. Lu Ban’s wife was terribly busy. It was not like before when she would boil one pot of the five cereals and simply pass time in front of the door to the kitchen, adding firewood, stoking the fire, and then sitting and resting while mending clothing.

Lu Ban’s wife bustled in and out, opened and closed the door, the entire day. Suddenly she thought of how before when the door had no hinge, opening and closing the door was extremely troublesome. Later Lu Ban had thought to make a door hinge and a

361 簾箕: An item used to winnow grain that can be made of bamboo strips, wicker, or plastic and has three rimmed edges and one open edge.
Door joint\textsuperscript{362} and opening and closing the door was much more convenient. Inwardly she scolded him: Infernal husband, infernal husband, how did you not think to also install a door hinge between the two slabs of stone and cut a hole for the joint. You have caused me much hardship!

Lu Ban’s wife was a skillful carpenter’s wife, and she could use both axes and chisels well. She thought about how to do it and, after banging and sawing for several moments she installed an axle in the upper piece of slabstone and cut a small round hole in the lower piece of slabstone. She also installed a handle. When she tried to push it several times, the top portion of the slabstone easily began to turn. Now, how was one to put in the five cereals? Lu Ban’s wife cut a hole in the top piece of the slabstone. She ground the cereals for a while. When she started it was very easy but later she could not grind anymore. Lu Ban’s wife turned over and opened the stones to have a look. It turned out that the five cereals were dropping into the joint hole and were getting lodged in the center axis of the millstone. She thought and put the central axis of the millstone onto the bottom piece of the slabstone, cutting the joint hole on the top piece of the slabstone. In this way, the grinding was much easier.

When Master Lu Ban came back, he saw that his wife was not cooking, but was chopping and cutting. He asked her: “Wife, what are you doing?”

After Lu Ban had carried home the slabstones, he had still not given the thing that ground the five cereals a name. For a period of time, Lu Ban’s wife also could not come up with a name. She wished to say that it was a slabstone for grinding the five cereals, but it was not until she had said the word “grind” that Lu Ban saw the slabstone turning quickly under her hand. He happily said: “Good, you came up with a good name:

\textsuperscript{362} “臼” is defined as a “mortar or any mortar shaped item,” but here it refers to a “door joint” or something that the hinge will fit into. This is reminiscent of a “mortar” in that a pestle fits into a mortar like a door hinge fits into a door joint.
Millstone. Correct, we will call this thing a millstone."

So “millstone” came about this way. Because it was Lu Ban’s wife who from the door hinge thought to put an axle in the middle of the two pieces of slabstone, there is the phrase “the door hinge turns the central axle for the millstone.” People call the upper and lower plates of the millstone, the upper fan and the lower fan, and this also came from the words “one door.”

脚: “扇” means “fan” or “leaf” and is also the measure word for door. In this case “（）门” means “one door” and although not translated into English, the measure word is said in Chinese and thus was taken as a part of the name for the upper and lower plates of the millstone. Here I have translated “上扇” and “下扇” as “upper and lower fans,” but they could easily be translated as “upper and lower leaves.”
The Origin of the “Palm”

When carpenters’ planed lumber, they would have to nail together two pieces of wood, which resembled palms, on top of the lumber and wedge the lumber between them. In this way the lumber was secure, and no matter how it was planed, it would not move. These two pieces of wood are called a “palm,” and in speaking of this matter, there is also a story related to Lu Ban’s wife.

From the time of Lu Ban’s ruler carpenter’s ruler, the carpenter’s ink marker, the planer, the saw, the chisel, the adze, the drill, and other such carpenter’s tools, Lu Ban would make tables, chairs, benches and such furniture and articles for daily use in his home. At that time there was still no “palm,” and when Lu Ban would plane wood he would call his wife to grasp the lumber with both hands, and, standing in front, she would use all of her strength to prop up the wood. When planing in this way, the front section of wood was very hard to plane evenly. If you used a light hand you could not plane concave and convex places, and if you used a heavy hand, as soon as you did not pay attention, the planer would butt other people.

One time, the strength Lu Ban used on the planer was too great, and the head of the planer hit his wife’s chest, its blade cutting her palm. It pushed Lu Ban’s wife to the ground. Both of her hands were drenched with blood, and Lu Ban was scared out of his wits. He dropped the planer and quickly went to pull up his wife.

Lu Ban’s wife sat on the floor and looked, dazedly, at her two hands, not getting up. Lu Ban wrung his hands and did not know what to do.

Lu Ban’s wife blankly thought for a while, and, suddenly, smiling, she stood up,

364 行: Literally means “all right” or “okay” but is here translated as “would not move” because the story refers to the lumber as being “all right” or “fine” in that it is secure and when planed will not roll about.
grabbed a saw, and sawed two pieces of wood that looked like palms. She nailed them on top of the rack for the planed wood and had Lu Ban stick the lumber between them so as to plane it. In this way there was no need for a person to hold the wood up from the front and a person couldn’t be hit.

Master Lu Ban very much admired this method of his wife’s and he called the two pieces of wood a “palm.” Later, the carpenters changed the wood “palm,” making it a strip of iron. But, until now, it is still called a “palm.”
The Three Legged Horse

When Lu Ban went out to engage in his craft, he carved a wooden horse that could move so that he could return. He carved it as if it were a real horse, its chest wide and its back round. As long as you twisted the horse's ear towards the front, the horse traveled as if it were flying, and if you twisted the horse's ear towards the back, it would stop and stand. Lu Ban rode the horse and was extremely happy. Inwardly he thought, later when I do work, I can make the horse carry lumber, and I will never again have so much trouble building racks. In the past when I used a rack, several people had to do the work together. They would bump into each other and be a hindrance, it was really inconvenient. If I let the horse carry the wood, then everyone can go to their own place to do work, and it will be much better.

When Lu Ban reached his home he told his wife his idea. His wife also thought this method was good, and the two people went to put the wood stand on the horse to test it. Oh no! It didn’t work! As soon as the horse moved, the lumber would roll off. When the horse was called to stop and not move, square wood was fine, but round wood rolled back and forth on the horse's back. Upon trying several times they could never make it work. After a while Lu Ban was enraged. He grabbed a wooden stick and broke one of the horse’s legs. The wooden horse became a three legged, maim horse and slanted towards the ground.

Lu Ban’s wife was not angry. She looked at the horse and thought about the reason for which the wood rolled. She walked in front of the horse and carefully measured with her eye. She saw that when the horse had three legs it was actually very stable, and
an idea welled up in her heart. She did not have the high skill of Lu Ban, but she grabbed three pieces of wood and sawed them into six sections. She made a pair of three legged horses and sighed in excitement\footnote{Bai nationality language for a sigh/exclamation of excitement. (From the text of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales)} for when the wood was propped on the top of the two horses, whether you chopped it or cut it, it was extremely stable. One could also nonchalantly shift the wood from its original place and, whatever point you wanted to chop, whatever side you wanted to cut, immediately upon turning the wood, it was still okay. Lu Ban’s wife happily called: “Husband, come quickly and look!”

Master Lu Ban walked out of the room and saw that his wife was only using three pieces of wood to make a pair of three legged horses. Although it was crude, it was of much better use than the horse he had carefully carved. He then said: “Good, wife, this three legged horse of yours better serves its purpose than that four legged horse of mine! Later when building houses and making sacrifices to the wood gods, I will sacrifice to your three legged horse first.”

From then on when building a house and sacrificing to the wood gods, one would make a pair of small three legged horses, place them on the sacrificial alter, and sacrifice to them first in order to commemorate Lu Ban’s wife.
If You Are Going to Leave a Mistake Uncorrected, Make the Best of it and Be Off By One Chi Three

The phrase “carpenters fear shortness” is not an illogical one. If a rope is short you can splice it, if a nail is short you can pound it longer, but if wood is short by one or two cuns, how do you add to it? When building a house and erecting the pillars and raising the beams, the word “short” is especially taboo. If the head of the beam is short, then you say that the “sky is wide.” If a pillar is short, then you say “something is owed.” In these three words, “something is owed,” there is still another story about Lu Ban’s wife.

It has been passed down that there was an emperor who wanted to build a sacred Hall of Golden Chimes. He heard that Lu Ban was a world renowned, skilled, and able craftsman, and so he sent down an imperial edict to call Lu Ban to come and take lead of the building. Master Lu Ban brought his wife to the capital city and, according to legend, he called his thirty-six great apprentices and seventy-two lesser apprentices to help. Everyone worked without a break for a great number of days. They had finished the middle pillar, the portico pillar, the capital pillar, the load bearing portions, the hanging sides, the inner sides, the big interposes, the main interposes, the corner faces, and the foundation and had set the eighth day of the eighth month as the propitious day to erect the pillars and raise the beams.

On the seventh day of the eighth month they built the frame, and Lu Ban

---

366 T%: While the English translation is more than two words, the Chinese only uses two characters and thus this translation is slightly different from the original text.

367 名皇: Name for emperor’s audience hall.

368 八月初八: Refers to the lunar calendar.

369 八月初七: Refers to the lunar calendar.
discovered that a careless younger apprentice had constructed a portico pillar that was short by three cun. The next day they would have to erect the temple, and they had no time to rebuild the pillar. For a while, Lu Ban could not think of any solution, and he was so worried he could not eat.

Master Lu Ban went to find his wife and said: “Wife, you are usually very smart and clever, can you think of a solution for this matter?”

After a while Lu Ban’s wife also could not come up with an answer, and the couple looked at each other, so worried that they were unable to sleep well the entire night.

After the fifth period of night, the drum sounded three times in the palace, and the emperor was about to come to court. Lu Ban’s wife heard the sound of the drum and pushed Lu Ban, who was at her side, saying: “I have it, I have it! If the table is not stable, you use a small stone to make it level. If the pillar is short, why can’t you use a big stone to level it? If you are going to make a mistake, why not make it one chi three? You can saw the entire row of portico pillars short one chi three and make several stone blocks of the same size to level them. This is both attractive and durable.”

Lu Ban heard this and was so happy that he quickly rolled out of bed. He called his apprentices to saw the pillars and beat the stone drums. After the sacred Hall of Golden Chimes was built, the emperor came quickly to have a look at it, and seeing that the stone drums under the tall beams were extremely attractive, he very happily asked Lu Ban: What are these stone drums called? Lu Ban nonchalantly said: “They are called ‘Portico drums’.”

Later, when building a great palace, even if the portico pillars were not short,
people still purposely sawed them short one chi three and put portico drums underneath.

This is the origin of "something is owed."

Recorder of above six stories: Lu Jiarui
Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives

In the past Lu Ban was called Zhang Ban. Why did he change his name to Lu Ban?
There is a story that explains this:

Originally, Zhang Ban’s skill was very superb. He made things and built houses both quickly and well. His reputation spread and spread, and even in the capital, the emperor knew of him, and so he dispatched a person to ask Zhang Ban to come, calling him to oversee the building of a sacred Hall of Golden Chimes.

Zhang Ban led a group of carpenters as they traveled hastily day and night, not stopping. They built for ninety-nine days and nights. In a flash the work would quickly be finished, but Zhang Ban suddenly discovered that the rafter measurements he himself had made were short a section, and, it turned out, that when he had taken them, he had made a mistake. This situation made Zhang Ban very nervous. What should he do? Construction time on the sacred Hall of Golden Chimes could not exceed the set schedule, and if it did exceed the time limit, even if the workers were not beheaded, they would have to spend a whole lifetime sitting in jail. He was so nervous he could not eat and was unable to sleep well. He thought and thought and could not think of a solution. At last, he had no choice but to mount a flying, wooden horse, give up the construction, and secretly return to Yunnan.

On the road, Zhang Ban was very upset and blamed himself for being so stupid. How could he have taken mistaken measurements? Oh! Damned! Damned! He grabbed a painting stick and again and again beat himself on the head. Unexpectedly, the moment he did not pay attention, he jabbed the painting stick into his eye, blinding his left one.
Zhang Ban felt a stab of pain and relaxed his hand. His carpenter’s ink marker and painting stick fell from the sky, but luckily they fell in Jianchuan. The carpenter’s ink marker became Modou Mountain and the people of Jianchuan collected the painting stick. Therefore, due to this event, later Jianchuan carpenters were all able to draw carpenter’s lines as well as build and renovate.

Zhang Ban returned to his home, and his wife saw that his face was covered with blood and that one of his eyes had been blinded. She was frightened into a panic and quickly asked him: “What happened to you? What’s wrong?”

Zhang Ban repeatedly sighed: “Misfortune! Misfortune!” And then he told the whole story from beginning to end.

As soon as Zhang Ban’s wife heard this, she smiled and said: “I thought this was some terrible or great matter. Don’t be afraid! Don’t be afraid! I will teach you a way to deal with this.” When she had finished speaking she grabbed an umbrella she had made herself and brought it out, showing it to Zhang Ban.

Zhang Ban looked at it and thought and thought and looked at it. Suddenly he said in a great voice: “I understand, I understand, I have a solution!” He ignored the pain in his eye and grabbed the umbrella, riding on the horse and again flying toward the capital city.

At this time the craftsmen in the capital city did not have a leader because Zhang Ban had secretly fled. The supervisors scolded and the workers squabbled; they made such a mess of things they couldn’t get anything done.

Zhang Ban came, and he said to a supervisor: “I can continue to build this palace.”

The supervisor heard this: “What? You can build it? Even Zhang Ban, with two

---

371 In this case the two items are falling from the sky because Zhang Ban is still riding the magical, flying horse.
372 The word for carpenter’s ink marker is “墨斗” and so the mountain was named Modou Mountain after the Chinese term for this carpenter’s tool.
373 “墨斗” is translated as “carpenter’s line” here because the “墨斗” of Modou Mountain refers to the “carpenter’s ink marker” used to draw a carpenter’s line.
eyes, had no way and ran. You only have one eye, and you still dare to brag in this way? Who are you?"

Zhang Ban, who did not dare say that he himself was Zhang Ban, then said: "I am Lu Ban. If I say that I can build it, I naturally have a way."

The supervisor said: "Good, you go build it then! If you exceed the time limit, you will be decapitated!"

Zhang Ban said: "Relax. We will definitely stay within the time set out."

The scared Hall of Golden Chimes was again in construction and Zhang Ban followed the principles of the umbrella’s framework. He taught the craftspeople to make a great number of “Flying Claws” and to open the “Flying Claws” in a slanting line, placing them above the rafters that were short a portion. In this way, the length of the rafters was not only just right, the design was also much more attractive than it would have been originally.

The sacred Hall of Golden Chimes was both splendid and magnificent, and all of the craftspeople admired Zhang Ban very much, raising their thumbs to praise him: "Lu Ban! You are really okay. Even Zhang Ban had no way to handle this situation, but you managed it well. You are really much more capable than Zhang Ban!"

It was not until this time that Zhang Ban smilingly said: "I am Zhang Ban!" But, from then on everyone called him Lu Ban and never again called him Zhang Ban. The story “Zhang Ban leaves, Lu Ban arrives” spread farther and farther.

Because Lu Ban was not careful and blinded one of his eyes, later when carpenters dropped a plumbline or drew an ink line they only used one eye or they would be unable to see accurately or clearly. Also, because this time it was Lu Ban’s wife’s umbrella which saved Lu Ban, later when molding images of Lu Ban, people also made him holding
an umbrella in order to commemorate his wife.

Area of transmission: Jianchuan Valley

Area of collection: Gongbei of Jianchuan’s Eastern Mountain Range

Time of collection: July, 1961

Oral reporter: Yang Yushu

Recorder: Duan Shoutao & Zhou Tianzong
Lu Ban's Ink Marker

According to legend, a very, very long time ago, carpenters and stonecarvers were not distinguished by their trades. Then Lu Ban transmitted the “Wood Carving Scriptures” to the carpenters and taught them how to use the ink marker. Later Lu Ban went to Cang Mountain, and at that time the people were just studying how to mine stone foundations. He saw that the plinth of Cang Mountain was especially good and liked it a lot. He set down in Dali to live and everyday went to mine, traveling along the same road up the mountain that the plinth miners did.

When Master Lu Ban climbed up the mountain to mine plinth, he always carried on him the ink marker which the carpenter often used, and as soon as he found good plinth, he would grab his ink marker and drag out an ink line. He would then call his apprentices to pull the line and according to his assigned measurements, he would put it on top of the plinth, using one hand to hold down the top of the line and the other to lift and place it. An ink mark would spring up on top of the plinth, and, strange as it sounds, the plinth would then split open, forming a six to seven cun deep crack along the ink line. All one had to do was insert a chisel into the stone crack and grab a hammer to tap it lightly and a complete piece of plinth would emerge. By mining plinth in this way no strength was wasted, and Lu Ban often used this ink marker to help people mine. The people all liked him very much and said that his ink marker was a “treasure chest.”

One day Lu Ban took several of his apprentices to climb the mountain and mine plinth again. It was not until they reached the top of the mountain that they discovered that the water in the ink marker had dried up, and no ink line would spring forth. Lu Ban

---

374 Cang Mountain: A mountain to the west of Er Hai, it is an important peak in the vicinity of Xiaguan.
gave the ink marker to one of his apprentices and told him to go down the mountain and fill it with a little water. Lu Ban told him repeatedly: You must fill it with clear, clean, spring water!

There was no spring water on top of the mountain, and if one wanted to ladle some out then he must go down to the foot of the mountain to find it. He also must walk a very, very long mountain road, and as the mountain was tall and the slope steep, the road was very hard to walk.

Who could know that the apprentice chosen was a lazy fellow? When he was given the ink marker he was very unhappy and complained that the master should not have given him such a bitter assignment. However, he did not dare say he would not go and had no choice but to grab the ink marker and leave.

The lazy fellow also knew of a great many ways in which to loaf on the job. He walked half of the way, rested, played for a while, filled the ink marker with urine, and then ran back. He gave the ink stick to his master and felt that he had completed his errand.

At this time something very strange happened: Lu Ban grabbed the ink marker, dragged out the ink line, and went to mark the plinth. A trace of the ink line sprang forth, but the plinth never did crack open. Due to the loafing of the lazy apprentice, from that time on the people would never again receive the help of Lu Ban’s “treasure chest.” The best they could do was hammer and chisel, bitterly pounding out the plinth.

Area of collection: The San Wenbi village of Dali county

Time of collection: July 11, 1961

Oral reporter: Zhong Shaowu

Recorder: Guo Sijiu, Li Zuanxu, & Zhou Tianzong

193
Appendix 1
Forward
by Zhang Xue and Wang Yizhi

Jianchuan’s history is longstanding, its culture splendid, the character of its peasants simple hearted and honest, its people outstanding, and its land workable. It has typically been acclaimed as “The Homeland of the Bai Nationality,” “The Famous Nation of Literature,” and “The Native Home of Carpentry,” and it is the homeland of Zhong Apeng in the movie *Five Golden Flowers.***

In China, Jianchuan is an area in which the Bai nationality population ratio is the highest, the accretion of Bai nationality culture is deep, and cultural resources are extremely rich and concentrated. Haimenkou has relics which already possess three thousand years of history. It is the birthplace of Yunnan’s bronze and an important symbol of Yunnan’s progression from a primitive to a civilized culture. The reputation of the Stone Bell Mountain stone grottoes, praised as “The Treasure of the Southern Sky,” has spread far and wide. The grottoes are the artistic treasure-house of the Nanzhao/Dali Kingdom period and were ranked by the State Council as among the most important protected cultural relics in all of China. The wood carving craftsmanship in the area is superb, and the Ministry of Culture named it the native home of wood carving craftsmanship.

---

375 *五朵金花*: A Chinese romantic comedy produced in 1959 in which the main male character, A Peng, searches for his love, a girl named “Golden Flower.”

376 Haimenkou: A region in the Dali/Erhai area in which numerous archaeological finds have produced evidence as to activity in the Jianchuan region during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. (http://www.chinatour.net/en/about%20china/minorities/bai.htm)

377 Stone Bell Mountain stone grottoes: Famous mountains twenty five kilometers southwest of Jianchuan resplendent with Buddhist and historical rock carvings. These grottoes are especially important as evidence of Buddhism and the spread of Buddhism in the area.

378 Nanzhao/Dali Kingdom: The Bai people were first constituted within a ordered regime when the Nanzhao kingdom was established during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). Later this kingdom fell from power and the Kingdom of Dali was created in the same area.
carving. The ancient Eastern Mountains\textsuperscript{379} publicly performed songs, Bai nationality songs, folk stories, "A Chali" ancient music,\textsuperscript{380} and various other folk art are as bright as numerous stars.......Jianchuan is noted, all over the world, for it's mysterious and beautiful natural views and its rich and varied cultural landscape, and has been called, by experts in and out of the country, a Bai nationality cultural treasure trove.

Throughout the long progress of history in this ancient and mysterious land, the various nationalities of Jianchuan have not only created a great tangible cultural heritage, but have also created a rich intangible cultural heritage, which includes many different types of stories, legends, proverbs, Bai nationality music, folk songs, dances, Chinese classical music, paintings, carvings, embroidery, and various other artistic and skillful displays, as well as many rites, holidays, and nationality sports activities.

The Jianchuan County Party Committee and the county government attach much importance to the protection of folk culture, and in order to carry on and advance the national minority's outstanding traditional culture, they have developed an advanced culture of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. They have launched work with outstanding results, previously editing and publishing through the Ministry of Culture \textit{The Famous Nation of Literature, Jianchuan Past Dynastic Painting and Calligraphy Selections, Travel in Jianchuan, Selections of Ancient to Modern Antithetical Couplets from Jianchuan, Treasures of the Southern Sky--Jianchuan Stone Grottoes, Jianchuan Stone Bell Mountain Stone Grottoes Literature, Bai Nationality Written Language and Literature, etc. and now have edited and published Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and}

\textsuperscript{379} The Eastern Mountains: A portion of the Eryuan Western Mountains (called the Eastern Mountains because Jianchuan is to the west of Eryuan). Both the Eastern and Western Mountains are famous for the Bai nationality song styles originated there. (http://travel.yninfo.com/mzfq/wh/2002/2002-07/2002-07-19/1027056007_2/)

\textsuperscript{380} 阿吒力 ancient songs: Type of song and dance which combines Bai nationality and Buddhist characteristics with Song and Tang dynasty tunes. Unique to the Yunnan area. (http://www.cultural yunnan.com/webpages /msg/jjc18. htm)
*Jianchuan Wood Carving Tales* through the Jianchuan County Cultural and Recreational Bureau and Cultural Center.

*Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Wood Carving Tales*’ chief editors are Zhang Wen and Chen Ruihong, assistant researchers at the Jianchuan County Cultural Center. The selected Bai nationality folklore and orally transmitted literary works were chosen on the basis of Jianchuan county’s vast and open-minded, integrated work of folk literature and according to the principles of “honest recording and cautious sorting” and standards of science, comprehension, and representation. The book is both informative and readable; both literary and scientific, and it is work hard to come by in its honesty towards the original form of the folk literature.

The folklore of the Jianchuan county Bai nationality is rich and varied, greatly relies upon the grand reputation of the Bai nationality specialty culture, and has been described as the wonderful work of Yunnan folk literature. Among these folk stories those which most receive welcome are the Stone Treasure Mountain legends and carpentry tales.

Stone Treasure Mountain legends, “Stone Bell Temple,” “Suspension Temple,” “Disemboweling Guanyin,” etc. fascinate people and vividly describe the full mysterious flavor of one of the country’s important scenic areas, Jianchuan Stone Treasure Mountain’s enchanting sights and Stone Treasure Mountain stone grottoes. The legends about singing gatherings are strong with the flavor of natural conditions and have the distinct color of the locale. These splendid and moving legends naturally add a considerable tone of mystery to the scenic spots and are rich with a culture of significance.

---

381 石香寺: Also called the “Suspension Temple” because it was constructed on the side of Stone Treasure Mountain and projects into mid-air. (http://www.china-pictorial.com/chpic/htdocs/English/content/200109/shibao.htm)
382 Stone Treasure Mountain Stone grottoes: One part of the Stone Bell Mountains, this is a famous mountain in the Dali area rich with rock carvings in caves and on the sides of the mountain.
to tourism.

The content of the wood carving tales is rich and the style unique. For example, “The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon” was previously adapted into a puppet movie. This movie, because of well developed character imagery, an intricate and moving storyline and plot, and a clear-cut good versus evil (destroy evil, spread good) theme, won second prize and special honors in the 1960 Bulgarian International Movie Festival. “The Origin of the ‘Homeland of Wood Carving’” explains how Jianchuan became known as “The Homeland of Wood Carving.” In addition, there are many stories about Lu Ban, like, “Curved Wood, Straight Carpenter,” etc., which reflect the historical exchange between the Bai nationality and the culture of the central Plains; “‘Pulling the Wood Scripture’ and ‘Pressing the Wood Scripture,’” “The Wooden Horse is Immersed with One Fen Three of Water,” etc. deeply reflect the Jianchuan carpenters’ lifestyle and extol their clever courage, continual insistence on justice, willingness to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of others, and the noble and moral character of their love for their homeland. The phenomenon of handing down such rich wood carving tales which exists on the outskirts of Yunnan in Bai nationality inhabited Jianchuan is seldom seen in other parts of the country and is definitely worth thorough exploration and research.

*Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* is the crystallization of generations of the most rich and exquisite orally transmitted folk literature and art created by the Bai nationality people. It especially possesses a distinctive characteristic: nourishment for the mind. Of the one hundred brilliant flowers in the garden of Jianchuan minority folk culture it is a dazzling mountain blossom. It is to the masses of people, especially to young people, a lively native teaching material.

---

383 *The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon*, the movie: This movie was produced in 1959 and actually uses clay figurines and claymation as opposed to the “puppets” described above.

384 Central Plains: Comprises the middle/lower regions of the Yellow River. Also the dominant region of the Han nationality.
providing education in patriotism and the nobility of moral character.

The publishing release of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales is another reality of the development of Jianchuan’s nationality culture. On this occasion, we solemnly represent the Communist Party of China Jianchuan county seat and the County People’s Government in expressing our sincere thanks to the editors, collectors, and organizers who exhausted their intellect and to the Yunnan Nationalities Publishing Company and the Dali Federation of Cultural Circles Committee for the Development of Cultural Related Corporations who, in order to publish this book, expended painstaking toil.
Rescue Cultural Heritage  Inherit Chinese Civilization

----Diligently completing the work of protecting Jianchuan’s nationality folk cultures

(Acting Preface)

By Zhang Yinming

The history of Jianchuan is longstanding and the culture splendid; it is the county of the Bai nationality people, and is typically called “The Famous Nation of Literature” and “The Homeland of the Bai nationality.” Bai nationality folklore, Bai nationality music, Benzi songs, A Chali ancient songs, rattle stick dances, wood and stone carving, and other cultural arts, etc. have been acclaimed at home and abroad, and Jianchuan has been praised as “The Treasure Trove of Bai Nationality Culture” by experts within the country and overseas.

Recently, under the upright leadership of representatives of the Communist Party of China and the County People’s Government, the County Cultural and Recreational Bureau has been unswervingly persistent in taking as their guiding principles the important ideologies of the “Three Representatives.” They have also been insistent in their progression toward cultural advancement and have tightly grasped the opportunity and good fortune provided by plans for great Western development and the Yunnan Province, Dali Prefecture establishment of a grand province and prefecture of nationality

355 本子曲: A type of Bai nationality song in which one person will sing and, at the same time, accompany him/herself on a three stringed instrument (三线).
386  Rattle Stick dance (霸王鞭舞): A special Bai nationality dance that uses a rattle stick as its major prop. Although primarily performed by women, there are also special male dances which are meant to be performed at the same time.
culture. Finally, in sincerely carrying out the strategic goals of establishing a “culturally upright, scientifically and educationally prosperous, travel-rich, and industrially strong county” promoted by the county seat and government, adopting energetic measures, and, through dependence on society’s various strengths, developing cultural enterprises, they have attained various achievements. Jianchuan has already been named a county with provincial level advanced culture and has also been listed as a county to be included in early demonstrations of “The Western Cultural Natural Resources Protection and Industrial Development of Yunnan Testing Points” program. The county report, *Treasure of the Southern Region---Jianchuan*, which the County Cultural and Recreational Bureau participated in writing, was entered into the “Chinese Capital’s Blue Book,” and the present and future forecast of Jianchuan culture and travel industry development will be incorporated into the inspection scope of the research report on the country’s current situation. “The Yunnan Experimental Program” which Jianchuan participated in, has already been ranked a primary and important program in “The ‘Fifteen’ Plans to Establish the Great Yunnan Minority Culture Province.” This program has received the National Cultural Ministry’s recognition, and the Head of the Ministry, Sun Jiazheng, unequivocally stated: “I wish the experience attained in Yunnan to be extended to the whole country.” Methods by which to complete the rescue and protection of Jianchuan’s nationality folk culture and rationally develop industries which will make use of it is also the important content of “The Yunnan Experimental Program,” and thus, we should, in every way possible and in every aspect pay close attention to it.

Throughout the long history of this ancient and mystical land, the various

---

37 This refers to China’s drive to bring the poorer areas of the West up to par with the quickly expanding and developing Eastern sea board.

38 藍皮書: “Blue Book” is often used to refer to informational reports that provide updates about situations of interest to the country. This one specifically refers to the progress of Chinese strategies for developing the West. (http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/zhuanti/194504.htm)
nationalities of Jianchuan have not only created rich material wealth, but have, at the same
time, also created magnificent spiritual wealth, like legends, Bai nationality music,
proverbs, folk songs, ancient music, paintings, cloth hangings of animals, carvings, etc.
This spiritual wealth is, firstly, the practical summation of productive practices and
activities of forebearers which have lasted over hundreds of thousands of years, but it is
also a treasure of spiritual wealth left to the people of today. All of the previous
Jianchuan county party committees and governments strongly emphasized the job of
rescuing local nationality folk art and literature, and with the Cultural and Recreational
Department overseeing and the cooperation of various other relevant ministries, The
Famous Nation of Literature; Jianchuan’s Past Dynastic Painting and Calligraphy
Selections; Travel in Jianchuan; Selections of Ancient to Modern Antithetical Couplets
from Jianchuan; Literature on Jianchuan Stone Bell Mountain Stone Grottoes; Jianchuan
Bai Nationality Written Language and Literature, etc. were edited and then formally
published. At present, our national minorities’ folk traditional cultures face the challenges
of globalization and modernization. Also the decline in existing environmental conditions
and the state of protection may make people concerned that a large amount of the orally
and behaviorally inherited folk art and literature and other non-material inheritances will
continue to disappear; with no one to carry it on, traditional artistry will be on the verge
of extinction. Protection funds are short, and as laws are only right now being established,
many precious material objects and resources will drain away. Facing this type of severe
situation, we must strengthen the protection of nationality folk culture and can brook no
delay. In order to take the protection of cultural legacies to the next level, enhance the
work of outstanding nationality cultures, and allow for its day-to-day systematization

布扎: Item that forms a large part of the Dragon Boat Festival tradition. Children will hang these strips of cloth (usually in the shapes of tigers, lions, and other animals) in front of their chests to symbolize their hopes for a good life. (http://www.csn.com.cn/tcblc/tcjsg2_1.jsp?id=589)
and standardization, the County Cultural and Recreational Bureau and the Cultural Center plan to edit and publish a series of books about Jianchuan nationality folk culture, they are: 1) *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* 2) *Jianchuan Ancient Music* 3) *Stone Treasure Mountain Bai Nationality Music* 4) *Jianchuan Folk Dances* 5) *Research on Jianchuan Play/Script Music* 6) *The Art of Jianchuan Wood Carving* 7) *Jianchuan Folk Art* 8) *Jianchuan Historical Relics* 9) *Jianchuan A Chali Scientific Music* 10) *An Outline of Jianchuan Folk Art*. According to their plan, they will begin, from 2004, to publish annually. Every year they will publish one to two books and in five to ten years will fully complete the tasks of the project.

Publishing the Jianchuan nationality folk culture book series has important realistic and deep historical significance. This is the honest and sincere decision of the provincial party committee and government to establish a grand province and prefecture of nationality culture and a key program and important process in the implementation of strategy to establish Jianchuan county as a strong county of nationality culture tourism. It is meant to leave for the next generations a rich heritage of nationality culture and allow this area to inherit China’s civilization. Establishing an advanced culture of Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a realistic need and perhaps can be described as an immortal cause of study in the great affairs of the country.

The party’s sixteenth report stated: “Support the work to protect important cultural legacies and outstanding folk arts.” By protecting and passing down China’s outstanding, traditional nationality culture, bringing into play cultural natural resources, cultural environment, nationality character, etc. the economy and society will sustain and develop important and elemental functions. This will also provide a vigorous driving force, intellectual support, and required conditions for our country’s economic and social
development. Consequently, applying energy to the excavation and advancement of nationality folk art and literature possessing of special Jianchuan regional qualities will not only have an effect on basic county level cultural establishment and contribute to the quickening pace with which poverty can be overcome and riches gained. By strengthening and increasing our own vitality, it will also make the advantages of Jianchuan county’s characteristic cultural and natural resources practical cultural and economic advantages and develop their irreplaceable function.

Recently, the Cultural Ministry and the Public Finance Ministry published *A Notice Regarding the Implementation of the Project for Protecting China’s Nationality Folk Culture*. (simply called *Notice*) The editing and publishing of one of the books from the Jianchuan county nationality folk culture series----*Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* is exactly the concrete activity which will implement the spirit of the *Notice*. Within the bounds of the entire county the *Notice* will develop investigation into the real situation of the nationality folk culture protection process, formulate plans, advance the work of experimental testing, attempt to establish a nationality folk culture ecological village, provide a basis for giving fame to artists, and will also spread knowledge of the protection of nationality folk culture, stimulate and cultivate the consciousness of protection in all of society, and create a beneficial social atmosphere.

Within the entire country there has been organization and planning to develop a large scale systematized effort to conserve, as well as to establish a conservatory system for, traditional nationality folk culture. This is the first time this has happened in the history of our country’s cultural construction. We wish to sincerely execute *The Plan to Implement the Process of Protecting China’s Nationality Folk Culture* and to insist upon
the guiding principles: “focus on protection, put rescuing first, rationally utilize, and carry on development” and “government leadership, societal participation, long term planning, and formation of a concrete effort.” Through the establishment of the “protection process” we wish to use the time from 2004 to 2020 to make Jianchuan county’s treasured, endangered, and historically valuable traditional, nationality folk culture (including: orally transmitted traditional folklore, Bai nationality music, Benzi music, and other spoken and written language, traditional piping tunes,390 dance, the artistry of wood and stone carving, etc., traditional Stone Treasure Mountain singing meetings,391 the eighth day of the second month temple fair,392 local religious festivals and folk sports etc., and any representative original source materials relating to items mentioned above, special objects, material objects and places, etc.) receive effective protection. Initially establishing a comparatively complete nationality folk culture protection institution and system will essentially bring about the scientific development, standardization, unification, and codification of Jianchuan county’s nationality folk culture protection work.

The publication of Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales is a good start toward completing the work of Jianchuan county nationality folk culture protection. We want to adopt a “seize the day” attitude and overcome all of the existing imperfections and newly faced difficulties. We wish to take one step at a time, steadily and surely continuing our diligent endeavors to build Jianchuan into a modernized, powerful county characterized by cultural development, economic

390 吹吹腔: A type of Bai nationality song developed to showcase the suona horn (a type of woodwind instrument) developed during the Ming Dynasty. It is performed especially during Spring Festival and typically related to agriculture. (http://www.daliok.com/web/bzwh/2003-10/1066396824.html)
391 歌会: The tradition of choral/singing gatherings has been passed down since the time of the Nanzhao Kingdom. On special holidays the Bai nationality people will amass for periods of three days to sing together. (http://www.zhongguook.com/public/web/lywh/mzfq/2004-03/1078949813.html)
392 二月八: The date of this local temple fair refers to the lunar calendar and not the Gregorian calendar.
prosperity, nationality unity, and social enlightenment.
By Zhang Wen

Jianchuan is located in the southwest of Yunnan province and the north of the Dali Bai Nationality Autonomous Prefecture. Its total area is 2,250 square kilometers. The entire population of the county is one hundred and sixty four thousand people, and of the total population, about 92% are of the Bai nationality. As the representative county of Bai people living in compact communities, it has the highest population ratio of Bai nationality people in the entire country.

Jianchuan’s history is long standing and its culture brilliant, and it is one of the cultural birthplaces of China’s southwestern frontier regions that developed relatively early. The Calcolithic ancient culture of Haimenkou has, to the present day, a three thousand year history, and, as the birthplace of bronze culture, it was the beginning of Yunnan’s civilization. In the lower reaches of the Haiwei River, rock models and copper related to Haimenkou are still excavated from a group of ancient graves in Shaxi’s Ao Feng Mountain, and there are still bronze swords and the like which date from the Spring and Autumn Warring States Period to the beginning of the Western Han. The history of Jianchuan’s “Horse-Tea Caravan Trail” is extremely long, and very early on it prompted economic and cultural communication between the early inhabitants of the central Plain and various countries of Southeast Asia. From ancient times Jianchuan has been Yunnan’s

393 Calcolithic Age: The copper stone age which lasted from 5000-3000 BCE.
394 Ao Feng Mountain: A mountain in the center of Shaxi Valley, an area in Jianchuan county to the northwest of Eryuan and Dali.
395 Spring-Autumn Warring States period and Han Dynasty: refer to the historical periods which encompass the years 770 BCE to 24 CE in the history of regions now included in China.
important thoroughfare of northwest traffic. In the north, by passing through Lijiang and Zhongdian, Tibet and Sichuan can be arrived at, and, in the south, by way of Dali, South and Southeast Asia can also be arrived at. Jianchuan is a point of convergence between India, Myanmar, and various other countries and China’s Han, Tibetan, and northwest national minority cultures. It is also the meeting place of Yunnan’s northwestern nationality cultures, and thousands of years of communication have left a profound accumulation of culture in Jianchuan. This has given it numerous advantages in terms of natural resources as no matter what other places or people may possess, Jianchuan will always possess more or may even possess that which other areas or people do not have.396

In the long progress of history, the people of Jianchuan have not only created a rich, tangible cultural legacy, but have also created a precious intangible cultural legacy: the arts of minority folk culture which are as brilliant as numerous stars. There are magical and exquisitely beautiful folk legends, uncountable Bai nationality songs, the unique art form: “script/play” Bai nationality music, the antique Bai nationality traditional opera: “Chuichuiqiang,” and the gorgeous and stylistically unique Bai, Yi, Lisu, and Naxi397 minority dance styles... ...Bai nationality folklore is only one brilliant, fragrant, attractive, and fresh flower in this radiant garden of art.

The Bai nationality folklore that has long circulated in Jianchuan is truly as beautiful as flowers in full bloom and as bright as a cluster of stars. In accordance with people’s day-to-day customs, local conditions and habits, moral concepts, religious

396 This section can be more literally translated as: “even if other areas do not have something Jianchuan will still have it, even if other areas have something Jianchuan will have an outstanding amount or quality of it, and even if other areas have an outstanding amount or quality of something Jianchuan will have an especially outstanding amount or quality it,” but as it was unwieldy and especially awkward, I chose a simple translation which retained the same overall meaning.
397 Yi, Lisu, and Naxi: all minority nationalities in Southwest China/Yunnan. Other than the Bai nationality, the Yi and Naxi are perhaps the most well known in all of China.
beliefs, ideals and wishes, and the appreciation of beauty and wit, this folklore has been orally and aurally handed down, causing its unique forms to be passed along. It fully embodies Bai nationality language and art, is the Bai nationality’s most ancient literature, and has a long standing history and outstanding tradition; it is also a popular literature that most possesses mass character and appeal. Now, with regard only to those resources we have in hand and those situations we understand, we will briefly analyze and introduce the Jianchuan Bai nationality folklore and various, important works.398

I, Mythology: “Brother and Sister Get Married,” “Donggua (Eastern Melon) Man and Watermelon Man,” “Rice Tree,” etc. are all creation myths; “Stone Mother,” “The Bright Stone Moon,” etc. are totem myths. These myths reflect the primitive totem worship of the Bai nationality such as the worship of large stones, plants, and animals.

There are many dragon myths which portray the Bai nationality peoples’ struggle to harness water. There is “Older Brother Dragon, Younger Brother Dragon,” “‘Peach’ Suppresses the Black Dragon,” “The Sow Dragon Rebels,” “The One Eyed Dragon of Modou Mountain,” etc.

The Bai nationality worships local gods. Every stockade village has its own local god, and almost every god has a related legend that has been passed down. Therefore the mythology about local gods is rich and varied. Some are original myths, and some myths and legends intersect. The most vastly circulated local myths are “The Big, Black Sky God,” “The King of the Red Sand Stone,” “Grandpa, the ‘King of Remedies,’” “The Bisha Pearl,” “The Local Mountain Gods Come Together,” “The Red Robe Blocks the Road,” etc.

A majority of the local religion tales represent worship of the local gods, but there

398 Many of the stories titles in this section did not come from the book itself, and, thus, are rather hard to translate. With the help of baidu.com and Professor Yu headway has been made, but many titles may contain errors.
are also a few works which ridicule the local gods. For example, “Tell The Town God” is a story which derides the town god of local religion who unexpectedly protects and blesses the success of robbers and waylayers and is eventually hacked to pieces by the masses; or “The Old Grandmother Saves Local Religion” is a story which satirizes the burning of the local god’s temple. In this story the lord of local religion, a god presented with and asked to rescue the people from their difficulties and troubles, can not even save himself, but must rely upon an old woman who does not even have the strength to tie up a chicken to rescue him.

2, Stories and Legends: The most characteristic legends are the Stone Treasure Mountain legends like “Stone Bell Temple,” “Suspension Temple,” etc. There are also fascinating legends about the figures and images in the stone grottoes: “The Guanyin with the Worried face,” “The Elephant Head God,” etc. and the Stone Treasure Mountain singing gatherings: “Ten Elder Sisters, Ten Younger Sisters,” “Stone Bell Stone.”

The legends about local scenery consist of those concerning Jianchuan’s eight scenic spots: “The Herding Flute of the Outskirts,” “The Lively Springs of Stone Treasure,” “The Magnificent Hua Mountain Peak Faces the Sun,” etc.

The legends about important figures and personages include “Kill the Prefecture Official” and “Xia Yisong and The Red Omen Waved Over the Red Stone Precipice,” which eulogize the leaders of uprisings. The legends that praise scholars of great learning and also reflect their worry for the country and people as well as their noble moral character are Yang Dongchao’s legend, “Baijian Accuses the Traitor,” Wang Zhao’s legend “Pass Echo River Gate by Night,” “The Newly Crowned Prince,” and “The City God’s

剑阳: Is actually “剑川之阳,” which, although in shortened form in this text, still refers to eight, famous scenic spots in Jianchuan (i.e. 华顶朝阳 (The Magnificent Hua Mountain Peak Faces the Sun); 东岭夕辉 (The Light of Sunset Over the Eastern Mountain Range); 崆岭古木 (The Ancient Wood of the Sang Mountain Range); 玉龙晴雪 (The Fine Snow of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain); 石宝泉 (The Lively Springs of Stone Treasure); 邻边牧笛 (The Herding Flute of the Outskirts); 海面渔灯 (The Lanterns for Catching Fish by the Seaside); 海门秋月 (The Autumn Moon of the Door to the Sea)).
Temple Board Inscribed with Praise,” Zhao Fan’s “The Old Monkey in Yunnan,” “The Upright Official Zhao Examines the Cupboard,” and “Awaiting Government Employment,” Zhao Shiming’s legend “The Yunnan Theater Fan,” and also “Duan Jiuzhang Gives Away the Gold Ink Stick” and “Yang Jointly Makes a Boat and a Stage,” etc.

As for historically based legends, there is “The Seizing of the Puppet Village Administrative Office,” “The Strange Raid of the Duties Supervisors,” and “Zhao Fengqi” which reflect how the seventh detachment of the border brigade launched an armed struggle and captured state power. “The Bei Machang and the Ge Ziqing;” “Chuicha Mountain;” “The Shuigu Building;” “Yongfeng River;” and “Shui Ziping, the Land Without Sparrows,” are legends about place names.

The especially rustic legends are “Tuckahoe” and “Local Ginsing.” The legends referring to social customs are “Madame Baijian” about the Torch Festival, “Young Woman” about the Young Women’s Festival, etc. There is also the legend about folk instruments, “The Reed Pipe,” and the legend about the stone dragon rattle stick folk dance, “Plan for Repulsing the Enemy.”

The imaginary stories are “The Empty Pearl Kettle,” “The Soft Chirping of Swallows Well,” “Ayaya,” “Chinese Mugwort and Wormwood and Nettle,” “The Two Horse Drivers,” etc. These stories often represent the antagonism and struggle between the real, the good, the beautiful and the fake, the ugly, and the evil.

---

40 Seventh detachment of the border brigade: a reference to the brigades involved in heroic actions during the Yunnan portion of the Communist drive to overthrow the Guomindang.
401 Tuckahoe: Known in Chinese as “荻苓,” this is a type of herbal medicine supposed to strength the spleen and calm the heart. (http://tcm.health-info.org/Herbology.Materia.Medica/fuling-properties.htm)
402 Torch Festival: A holiday held by the Bai people on the 26th day of the lunar calendar. During this holiday torches are lit to ensure good fortune and bless the harvest. (http://www.eastasialgroup.net/bai/en/festivals.html)
403 Young Women’s Festival: A traditional Bai nationality festival held on the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar calendar, this festival is based upon the story of a beautiful young girl who loses both of her parents and then suffers the abuse of her husband and his family unto her death. (http://www.yny.com.cn/publish/TravelBook/Print.asp?ArticleID=1798)
“The Crow and the Jing Chicken,” “The Fight Between the Tiger and the Water Buffalo,” “Don’t Fear the Tiger, Only Fear Leaks,” etc. are animal stories. Although these animal stories describe the disputes between animals, they often have very obvious morals.

Among stories about common life, the Jianchuan carpentry tales are most distinctive. The stories about Lu Ban and his wife, “The History of the Saw,” “Crooked Wood, Straight Carpenter,” “Male Tenon, Female Tenon,” “Palm,” “Wooden Horse,” etc. concretely describe how Lu Ban and his wife invented the saw, the carpenter’s ink marker, the tenon, the “palm” clamp, the wooden horse, and various other tools and praise their contributions to the artistry of carpentry. There are a few legends that add to the circulation of Lu Ban stories within the entire country, for example, “Seeing Off the Wood God,” the legend which establishes the social custom of offering sacrifices to wood gods. Some extol the perfection of Lu Ban’s skill and his adeptness at study, like “Zhang Ban Leaves, Lu Ban Arrives,” some explain the source of Jianchuan’s name “The Homeland of Wood Carving” like “The Origin of the ‘Homeland of Wood Carving,’” and some describe Lu Ban’s stand for justice in helping ill-treated apprentices, such as “The Bamboo Pen and the Small Wooden Mallet,” etc.

Many of Jianchuan’s wood carving stories deeply reflect the life of a carpenter and express his struggles with nature and society. For example, “The Chronicle of the Carved Dragon” describes the time that Jianchuan’s carpenter Yang passed by the town over from Dengchuan and his son was eaten by the troublesome sow dragon that inhabited that place. He resolves to rid the people of this menace and avenge his son and carves a wooden dragon to fight with the sow dragon. After repeated struggles, he finally

---


405 鲁班: The father or god of Jianchuan carpentry. He is central to the plot of many carpentry tales and is praised for developing the skills and tools which carpenters possess today.

211
defeats the terrible dragon and achieves victory. “Pulling the Wood Scripture’ and ‘Pressing the Wood Scripture’” displays the resourceful and courageous spirit of the carpenter Master Yang: Before putting the beams in place, Master Yang discovers that the unkind rich man Zhao has colluded with the woodworkers Zhen Si and Li Wu to purposely saw the big beam three cuns short. He devises a well thought out strategy. He first constructs another suitable beam, and, without showing his true intentions, replaces the shortened one. When he puts the beams in place he deliberately tricks the others. He says the “Pull the Wood Scripture” for a while and pulls the wood longer, reads the “Press the Wood Scripture” for a while and presses the wood shorter. Thus turning his opponent’s strategy to his advantage, he defeats the rich man Zhao. The widely known Jianchuan wood carving stories are “Two Hundred and Seventy One Liang Three, Don’t Make The People of Jianchuan into Fools,” “The Wooden Horse is Immersed with One Fen Three of Water,” “The Mute Lodges a Complaint,” “The Passed Down Art of Singing,” “The Carpenter Academian,” “Li Siwei Lodges a Complaint with the Emperor,” “The Stone General’s Rebellion,” “Carpenter Yang Goes Out,” “Carpenter Zhang Will Not Make a Dou or a Sheng,” “Finagle Fifty Liangs of Silver,” “Indecent Scum’ and The Talent of the Very Best,” etc.

The stories of quick-witted or resourceful people are “Ai Yu’s Story,” “Hit the Big White Chicken, Change Horses,” “Grandfather Zhao is Taken In,” the story of a clever woman: “The Farmer’s Wife and the Scholar,” and “The Ouyang Parrot,” a story about a parrot’s unexpected turn of events, etc.

In terms of parables there are those written in warning to people who do not pay attention when doing things, like “The Morning Belongs to the Chicken, the Evening

---

106 山神: A term referring to one of high carpentry skill whose level is about that of a master.

107 三: Although this should be read “san,” because in the actual story the character’s name is Li Wu, it is clear that a mistake was made in the introduction, the name in the story being more accurate.
Belongs to the Duck,” those admonishing the greedy that they must reap what they have sown, such as “There’s No Nanmu Wood Cord to Hang the Gourd Ladle,” those to expose and criticize persons who are perfidious, for example “Why the Palm Tree is Skinned Every Year,” and also there are the stories “Zhang Bayan and the Snake,” “The Dog Takes the Leopard to do Business,” etc. The joke stories are “Double Eye Bridge” which ridicules people who are money mad, “Steal Wine” which satirizes thieves, and also “Who Should Eat First,” “If the Husband Fixes the Husband Gains, If the Wife Fixes the Wife Gains,” “The Silly Son-in-Law,” etc.

Jianchuan Bai nationality stories have their roots in the soil of real life. They also glitter with the brilliance of idealism and are rich with a flavor of uplifting romanticism. They have these characteristics:

1, Due to rich and varied life and exquisite natural environments, Jianchuan’s folk stories are in especially riotous profusion and show the distinct imprint of natural scenery. In accordance with the stone (Stone Bell Stone), the tree (Hai Yunju tea tree), the mountain (Stone Treasure Mountain), and the water (Stone Treasure’s magical spring) of Stone Treasure Mountain legends, the rich social content of the stories, the links with legends about prominent figures, and the witty explanations of the origins of landscapes and places of historic interest (in these stories) are all strong with the flavor of natural conditions and have the distinct color of the locale. The legends of grottoes (Stone Grottoes), temples (Suspension Temple), singing meetings, Buddhas (The Flying Buddha), etc. are full of romantic color, fascinate people, and are rich with cultural connotations. These things are the natural resource of tourism.

2, Jianchuan folklore is filled with the rich flavor of life and distinctive minority

---

Flying Buddha: One of the stories in this collection is about a statue of the Buddha which was thought to have flown from one place to another, but, in reality, was secretly moved from one location to the next.
characteristics, and it also possesses a comparatively high scientific value. Jianchuan typically has a fine reputation as “The Homeland of Wood Carving,” and the natives’ skill at wood carving has become famous overseas and at home (far and wide). According to selected materials, the vast amount of carpentry tales about the lives of carpenters are rich in content and unique in style. They also vividly express the horrid phenomenon of the struggle between Jianchuan’s carpenters and nature and society, while also praising the carpenters’ courage, insistence on justice, unselfish nature, willingness to sacrifice for others, united diligence, and the noble, moral character of their love for their country.

There are also many Lu Ban stories which fully demonstrate the history of the Bai nationality’s and the central Plain Han nationality’s cultural communications. In Jianchaun, the Yunnan border region where the Bai nationality is in the majority, many rich wood carving tales have been passed down. Among the regions of the entire country, this type of cultural phenomenon is seldom seen and is definitely worth deep investigation and research. The stories provide precious material for research on nationality craft and architectural history, etc. In short, Jianchuan’s Bai nationality folk stories not only have literary value, provide rich ideas and artistic nutriment for the creation of socialistic art and literature, but also have definite significance and value to the research and development of academic fields like history, sociology, minority studies, and folk custom studies.

3. Jianchuan folklore has a certain connection with religion. Although many myths and legends are merged with religious ideology, they also strongly express personal aspirations. The religious beliefs of the Bai nationality of Jianchuan are relatively complex. There are dragons, trees, great stones, and other primitive totems, but female fertility, local gods, Buddhist and Daoist beliefs, etc., are also worshipped. Although

214
several stories about Buddhist personages and mythology about local gods are mixed up with idealist points of view, these figures are still used to express personal love and hate and praise personal wisdom and strength. For example *Disemboweling Guanyin* strongly praises the spirit of displaying open-hearted honesty and *The Old Grandmother Saves the Local God* then praises the common person’s strength.

4, Jianchuan’s folk stories have other artistic characteristics all their own. These myths are artistic works passed down over the centuries which were collectively created by the Bai nationality using the Bai nationality language. They reflect the Bai nationality’s own ideas and thoughts, and express their labor and struggle. Their language is lively, content rich, themes varied, form active, and artistic style pure and forthright. The technique of producing these stories is both heavy with realistic analysis and also rich with the ideals of romanticism. The expressions of skill are varied, and the exaggerations or inflated language of the sentences, the overlapping chapters and sections, etc. are all stylistically planned.

Jianchuan’s Bai nationality folklore is a precious treasure in the shining cultural treasure chest of China’s minority cultures. The stories in *Stone Treasure Mountain Legends and Jianchuan Carpentry Tales* were chosen from among the previously mentioned rich stories. Due to restrictions on funds, having to choose to part with some of these treasures was unavoidable. This book was published in order to protect and extend the riches of our country’s oral minority literature, strengthen the work of protecting minority folk culture, and exert what little strength we have to carry on and advance China’s outstanding minority cultural tradition and establish a advanced culture of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. This is a matter of great significance.
Bibliography

Translation Section:


Translation Footnotes:


Analysis Section:


220


