

Study on Costumes of the Dulong People in Yunnan, China

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1. Introduction

The Dulong ethnic group is one of the minority ethnic groups in China. With a total population of about 5800, 80% of the Dulong people mainly live in the Dulong River Valley in the Gongshan Dulong and Nu Autonomous County in north-western Yunnan Province. The Dulong is the smallest ethnic group in China.

Under the changing environment, the characteristics of the Dulong has been gradually disappeared. There are small quantity of data about the Dulong, especially because the costumes of Dulong are very simple in their shapes unlike other ethnic groups. In particular, for the costumes of minority ethnic groups in China, the costumes of a few minority ethnic groups such as the Miao, Zhuang and Li ethnic groups have been currently acknowledged. However, there are 56 minority ethnic groups in China and 26 of them live in Yunnan Province. The costumes of minority ethnic groups reflect their histories and cultures so that we can't weigh the importance of those costumes.

This study examines the characteristics of the costumes of the Dulong that require more urgent action for preservation because the population of the Dulong is the smallest among the minority ethnic groups. Through the examination, this study aims to provide the data for the research on the costumes of minority ethnic groups.

2. Distribution and Environment of the Dulong

80% of the Dulong people mainly live in the Dulong River Valley west of Gongshan Prefecture among the total population living in the Nu Autonomous County of Gongshan Dulong, Nu Autonomous County of the Lisu, in north-western Yunnan Province. Others live in the Chayu County in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Jilou in the Weisi. Gongshan was established in 1956 as the autonomous prefecture where the Dulong people and Nu people. Although Gongshan is relatively far from the Yunnan province, it is warm and has abundant rainfall. The mountains also make good scenery and there are opulent natural resources. Gongshan is located at longitude 98° ~ 100° 30' east and at latitude 25° 36'~29° north. The average temperature is 14.8°C. The hottest month is July, which the temperature goes up to 35.7°C. The coldest month is Jan., at minimum 7.6°C. Since a variety of weather

characteristics from the southern subtropical zone to frigid temperate zone are shown in Gongshan, there are no areas with the same weather within about 20 miles. There are a variety of creatures to the extent that all of them live in one mountain.

It is difficult to identify the root of the Dulong because they have no unique characters and the population is also small. However, since the language that the Dulong uses is included in the same Sino-Tibetan Language Family that is used by the Zhuang, Bai, Bonan, Lisu, Nahsi, Hani, Jingpo, Li, Qiang and Achang, it is considered that the Dulong was included in the Di-qiang with other ethnic groups.

The Dulong society is the primitive patrilineal society and the people in the same clan can marry. All economic activities are carried out around the family.

3. Costume Characteristics of the Dulong

1) Costumes of Dulong

As the record on the Dulong, 'Yunlontongzhi' in the Yuan dynasty writes, "8 savage tribes have lived in Lijang, Mosha, Bai, Luoluo, Achang, Qiao, Tufan and Lu. They have been living as being mixed in some areas"

In this description, Qiao is the same as the word 'Qiu', the ancient name of the Dulong. Then, it is considered that the description above is about the Dulong.

'Yunnantongzhi', volume 34 published during the reign of Yongzheng emperor in the Qing dynasty writes, "The Qiu people live in Lijang. They use the leaves as clothing and have the raw meat and blood of animal. And they live on the field without a specific type of housing", which means that the Dulong made the clothes with the bark and leaves. Moreover, 'Xe-Yunnantongzhi', volume 185 recorded during the reign of Daoguang emperor describes, "The Qiu people live out of Tuesan of Lan?Changjiag. They are related to the Heching?Lijian and Xiu ethnic groups. They make the houses by weaving the plants and sometimes cover the houses with the bark. The men have their hairs loose and put on the short garment and skirt made with hemp without shoes. The women hand the rings on the ears and also put on the clothes made with hemp. Those who live in the caves make the clothes with the leaves and have the raw meat and drink the blood of animal. They still look like the primitive people.", which means that the male wear their hair down and put on the short upper garment and skirt made with hemp without shoes and the female hang down the copper earrings and wear the hemp clothes. The document also describes that the life style of Dulong was very primitive such as having meat from animal and drinking its blood.

Furthermore, it is written that "Both men and women have their hairs loose, leaving the front hairs parallel to the eyebrows and the rear hairs hung down to the shoulder as long as to cover both ears. They cut the hairs if the hairs become slightly longer than the usual length using a knife. The women make the holes on both ears and hang one or two earrings

made with bamboo or copper. They wear the tight upper garment and skirt. The men put on the upper garments and trousers. They wrap the upper and lower body with one sheet of fabric, usually made with hemp.” in 『Yungchangfuwenzhung』, which describes the costumes of the Dulong in detail.

Both the male and female of the Dulong wear the hemp clothes. They wind the rectangular fabric around their bodies. Both the male and female used the hemp clothes. There are no differences between male and female in costumes, but the method to wear is different.

Firstly, there are two kinds of methods to wear for the male. One is to put the rectangular hemp fabric on the chest under the armpit, cross it at the back, drag one end over the left shoulder and the other over the right shoulder and tie them on the chest. The second method is to put the hemp fabric on the back in the oblique direction, draw one end over the left shoulder and the other under the right armpit and tie them on the chest.

The female wear the hemp fabric obliquely to the shoulder down to the knee. They fold the rectangular fabric in half and put the folded line of the fabric under the left armpit and the open end under the right armpit. Then, they can support the babies on the left side of the fabric. They bind the string on the waist so that it looks that they wear the upper garment and skirt. They tie both ends on the front side of shoulder or fix them with the bamboo needle.

This method is included in the drapery style among the costume styles and makes the costume style relatively easy. In this style, they used the fabric as the clothes and supported the babies using it without separate swaddle.

At present, the Dulong indicates their identity by wearing the clothes made in such a style rather than wear the fabric in the method explained above.

2) Ornaments

For the ornaments, the female pierced both ears and wear the earrings with one or two rings. They also had the bracelet and bead necklace.

The male and female have the same hair style to have their hairs loose. they wear their hair down to the eyebrows in front and down to their shoulders behind. It was known that they cut their hairs if any longer.

Both male and female didn't wear shoes. However, the male wrapped their legs with putties when they go out and wear the boots made with buffalo skin in winter.

3) Tattoo

While one of costume characteristics of the Dulong is the simple clothing, the female used to tattoo their faces. According to the customs, when a girl reached the age of twelve or thirteen, she had her face tattooed. Dulongjian in 『Nuquobianxiangcing』 in the late Qing

described that “The women have their faces, ridges of noses and lips tattooed. They make their tattoo in the dark blue color by rubbing the plant extracts and soot on their tattoo. The tattoo was not removed even though they washed them.” and the Dulong women in the lower reaches of the Dulong river were “The women tattooed one ring only at the end of nose and two or three rings on the lower lips.”. The tattoo was different depending on their residences, upstream or downstream areas, even in the same Dulong. The Dulong residing in the upstream areas had tattoo on the ridge of nose, both cheeks and lips. The Dulong women in the upper reaches of the Dulong river tattooed one round on the ridge of nose and two or three lines on the lower lip. Jhanjiabin also explained that “The women have only their chin tattooed, not for all faces” in his “Dianbianbeidanweidingjienaizhixianchang”, meaning that the Dulong women had only chins tattooed, not the entire face.

How to tattoo was not significantly different between the lower reaches and upper reaches of the river. A design is drawn on the face first using the charcoal or soot under the pot and then one woman makes the patterns with the bamboo needle in one hand and pricks the face by patting the bamboo needle using the other hand. Next, the woman applies the soot mixed with the plant extract to the wound. When the scars come off several days later, permanent dark blue lines will appear on the face.

There are no accurate explanation why the Dulong women had their faces tattooed. Some people insisted because of the beauty and others explained that the Dulong made the unique marks on their women to prevent other ethnic groups from stealing the Dulong women. However, when we consider that the Dulong women in the upper and lower reaches of the river differentiated their residences each other by the degrees of tattoo, it will be more reasonable to accept that the tattoo was to discern the Dulong women rather than other reasons such as any kinds of totemism.

The custom of tattoo has been gradually disappeared. At present, the Dulong women in their 50s or 60s have tattoo. Since 1950s, it is considered that the custom of tattoo was disappeared.

4. Conclusion

The Dulong living in the Yunnan province in China is the smallest ethnic group with the population of less than 5,000. Their costumes are included in the drapery category in the costume style.

The Dulong men and women wear two pieces of fabric and one piece of fabric, respectively. The Dulong female have the right side open and so support their babies using the left side of the fabric. The material of their fabrics was hemp that they directly weaved. The Dulong people made the simplest cloth using the basic rectangular fabric. Their clothing is the important evidence containing the basic style in the costumes of mankind.

Thus, the costumes of the Dulong will be the important data to identify the original shapes and styles of costumes for other minority ethnic groups in China as well as to track the

changes of costumes in the Zhuang, Bai, Bonan, Lisu, Nahsi, Hani, Jingpo, Li, Qiang and Achang in the same lineage.

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「Yuntongzhi」
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「Xe-Yunnantongzhi」
「Yungchangfuwenzhung」
「Nuquobianixiangcing」