

# Research on the Communication of Bimo Chant in Ancestor Worship Ceremony of Yi People

Yan Chu<sup>1, 2, a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Communication University of China, Beijing 100000, China

<sup>2</sup>. Yunnan Normal University, Kunming 650000, China

<sup>a</sup>48577340@163.com

**Abstract.** As the embodiment of Yi culture, Bimo plays an irreplaceable role in ancestor worship ceremony. At each stage of the ceremony, Bimo recites the sutras, using a different chant. This paper takes the seven-day ancestor worship ceremony of The Pude family held in Daxiyi Village, Fawo Township, Wuding County, Chuxiong, Yunnan as the research object, and summarizes Bimo chant tune throughout it, and analyzes it from the perspective of transmission.

**Keywords:** Ancestor Worship Ceremony; Bimo; Bimo Chant; Communication.

## 1. Introduction

Yi people's ancestor worship ceremony is the largest, grandest and most varied ceremony among the primitive religious sacrificial activities. Bimo is the core of the ancestor worship. "Bi is the host of religious sacrifices, eliminator of ghosts means reading sutras or reciting sutras, and Mo means mother, teacher and wise man." [1] The ritual is performed by multiple Bimos. The chief Bimo are responsible for the formal recitation of the scriptures and the preside over the important links. The rest of the Bimos are responsible for exorcism, blessing and making the ancestral cylinder.

## 2. Organization of the Text

### 2.1 The Process of Ancestor Worship

**Table 1.** Used by the ancestors of Bimo scriptures and chant

Religious Scripture		Bimo Chant	Remark
1	The Scripture of Genealogical	The Chant used in Genealogical Scripture	About the origin of ancestry, and the history of the clan and each time the situation of ancestor worship.
2	The Scripture of sacrifice (i)	The Chant used in The Meal Offering Scripture	Sacrificial meals for the spirits of the ancestors.
3	The Scripture of sacrifice(i)	The Chant used in Sacrifice Scripture(i)	The same as the chant in funeral. it means sacrificial animals for the spirits of the ancestors.
4	The Scripture of Meal Offering	The Chant used in The Meal Offering Scripture	The same as the chant in funeral. Sacrificial meals for the spirits of the ancestors.
5	The Scripture of Moving Ancestral Spirit Tags	Natural chant	Let the ancestral spirits move.
6	The Scripture of Cleaning	Natural chant	A ritual of cleansing for those who touch the ancestral tablets.
7	The Scripture of Leisure	Natural chant	Let the ancestral spirits rest halfway.
8	Exorcism of Scripture (i)	The Chant used in Exorcism(i)	Bimo exorcism, to be all things to all people at the gate of the ancestor worship of ancestor worship field clean geely.

9	The Scripture of Cleanse ancestral soul	The Chant used in The Scripture of Cleanse ancestral soul	Clean the ancestor spirit tags, for the ancestors to wash the soul pathogens and filth, admission by offering.
10	The Scripture of Fair	Natural chant	In order to ensure the clan members all alike, are equal, fair distribution.
11	Worship The Scriptures of The Mountain God	The Chant used in The Scriptures of The Mountain God	Pray to the mountain gods to bless this ancestor worship ceremony.
12	The Scripture of Opening Ancestral Cave	The Chant used in The Scripture of Opening Ancestral Cave	To take out the ancestral cylinder and appease the spirits of the ancestors.
13	The Scripture of Dropping the Trigrams and Blessing	The Chant used in The Scripture of Dropping the Trigrams and Blessing	Divination to determine the direction of the holy water.
14	The Scripture of Taking Holy Water	The Chant used in The Scripture of Taking Holy Water	About the origin of holy water, and get back to the ancestral souls.
15	The Scripture of Summoning the Blessed Soul	The Chant used in Summoning the Blessed Soul	In order to invite The Blessing of God to the ancestral site.
16	Exorcism of Scripture (ii)	The Chant used in Exorcism (ii)	The same as the chant in funeral. To dispel thunder, fire disaster, rats, snakes and other evil spirits.
17	The Scripture of The Ghost Turning to God	The Chant used in The Scripture of The Ghost Turning to God	Ensure that the ancestral spirit is transformed from ghost to God.
18	Recounting Ancestral Scripture	The Chant used in Recounting Ancestral Scripture	The same as the chant in funeral. To Telling the history of the ancestors, and each ancestor worship.
19	The Scripture of medicine Offering	The Chant used in The Scripture of medicine Offering	In order to relieve the ancestors of diseases, so that the ancestors of the soul without pain.
20	The scripture of The Blessed	The Chant used in the scripture of The Blessed	The same as the chant in funeral. Pray for the blessings of the ancestors.
21	The Scripture of transgression	The Chant used in The Scripture of transgression	About the scene after ancestors become gods, opening up the channel of ancestors' souls ascending to heaven.
22	The Scripture of Ancestor Worship Cylinder	The Chant used in The Scripture of Ancestor Worship Cylinder	Sacrifice the ancestral cylinder.
23	The Scripture of Closing Ancestral Cave	The Chant used in The Scripture of Closing Ancestral Cave	To obtain all previous ancestors' acceptance and to attend a ceremony to appease the soul of ancestors.
24	The Scripture of Necromancy	The Chant used in The Scripture of necromancy	To gathering together the ancestor soul into the site of ancestor worship.
25	The Scripture of Giving blessing	Natural chant	To ask the spirits of the ancestors to bless the descendants.
26	The Scripture of The Circle	The Chant used in The Scripture of The Circle	To exorcise evil spirits from the earth.
27	The Scripture of sacrifice (iii)	The Chant used in Sacrifice Scripture (ii)	To the clan in the past dynasties ancestral spirit of God sacrifice.

There are three stages in the ceremony: the first stage is mainly for the divination of whether to hold the ancestor worship ceremony. The second stage is mainly to worship the ancestral spirit tablet, which means that the ancestors of the family are invited to participate in the ancestral worship activity. The ancestor's spirit tablet is "invited" to the site for sacrifice, and the ancestor's soul is crossed over and the ancestor's protection is prayed for in the third stage. Bimo recites the corresponding sutras in

every stage. The Bimo chant here includes "near language - far music"[2] and the chant of "near music-far language"[2] with a certain rhythm and melody as follows:

## 2.2 The Dissemination Characteristics of Bimo Chant

### 2.2.1 Professional Communicators

Bimo is intellectual in the Yi society and respected by Yi people. Bimo must master the knowledge and skills of funeral rites, ancestor worship, sacrificial offerings, divination, calendar, blessing, exorcism, and so on. New Bimo candidates are nurtured and trained to become real Bimo.

### 2.2.2 Systematic Forms of Communication

First, dedicated chant. A scripture corresponds to its special chant, which is generally not used in other scriptures. Even in the same scriptures, different content should be matched with exclusive chant. Take sacrificing as an example, there are three cases. One is to offer sacrifices in daily life. When offering sacrifices at home, Bimo recites The Scripture of sacrifice, using The Meal Offering chant. In the second and the third stage of the sacrificial rites, although the same sutra of sacrificial rites is used, the content of Bimo's chant is different from that of the first stage, the procedures of sacrificial rites are different, and the sutra of sacrificial rites used are also different. And the sacrificial sutra (ii) is used in the supreme sacrifice held on the last day.

Second, one chant a variety of usage. A chant can be used for different scriptures and different ceremonies. The Chant used in The Meal Offering Scripture can be used in both the Scripture of sacrifice and The Scripture of Meal Offering, and simultaneously applies to the ancestor worship ceremony and the funeral ceremony. This is a form of borrowing. Due to the decline of ancestor worship ceremonies, Bimo who could master this kind of tone died one after another, and today Bimo cannot master all the chants used in ancestor worship, so they have to borrow chants from the daily ritual into the ceremony.

Third, the chant has certain flexibility. A part of scriptures has no fixed by Bimo chant, but with their naturally chant. According to the content, Bimo is like reciting a poem emotionally. This kind of natural chant is completely controlled by Bimo and has certain flexibility.

### 2.2.3 One Single Communication Medium

Strictly speaking, Bimo chan can only be performed in the scene of ancestor worship, and can only be transmitted through Bimo.

### 2.2.4 Specific Communication Purpose

Bimo chant runs through every link of ancestor worship ceremony to ensure the holding of the ceremony and assist clan members to complete ancestor worship.

## 2.3 Transmission Function of Bimo Chant

Rothenbuhler pointed out that "ritual is a powerful and effective form of communication, and all rituals have the nature of transmission." [3] In the ancestor worship ceremony, Bomo chant is a form of communication.

### 2.3.1 Communicate between Man and God, Soul, Ghost

In the primitive religious concept of Yi, there is a god in all things. Yi believed that the mountains were the path to the gods and the pillars that supported the heavens. Therefore, whenever land is involved, the mountain god must be offered first. Yi believed that the soul is immortal and that people have three souls. Out of the reverence for the soul of the ancestors, Bimo and his chant act as a bridge to communicate with the soul of the ancestors, express their reverence for the ancestors, and pray to bless the future generations with good luck and peace. Meanwhile, Yi people believe that ghosts can be divided into good and evil. In the ceremony, there are many exorcism ceremonies, and Bimo and his chant communicate with ghosts and get rid of evil.

### 2.3.2 Promote the Process

Without Bimo and Bimo chant, the ceremony will not be able to proceed. Bimo chant has the function of indicating and marking to distinguish the contents of Scripture and sacrificial rites. Therefore, Bimo chant chamber achieves the function of promoting the completion of each procedure.

### 2.3.3 Unite Family Members and Strengthen Identity

Durkheim argued that, ritual is the means by which social groups periodically reconsolidate themselves.[4] Bimo chant spread the concept of Yi family, ancestor worship, animism, soul immortality and other primitive religious beliefs through sound and sound. In this way, the whole clan is integrated in the special time and space, and the members of the clan are connected, which strengthens the sense of belonging of all the clan descendants with the family relationship as the link, and promotes the identity among the clan members.

### 2.3.4 Promote the Communication of Bimo Culture

Because the inheritance of Bimo chant relies on oral transmission, with the development of The Times, many of the chant has been lost today. By chanting, Bimo can communicate with each other to learn their mastery of the Bimo chant, and then promote the development of Bimo culture.

## 3. Summary

It can be said that as a medium, Bimo chant transmits the traditional concepts, knowledge and culture of Yi people.

Today, there are some changes. Bimo chant appear in various cultural performances. And with the change of media technology, Yi ancestor worship ceremony has also become the content of media production. Therefore, we should also include new contexts in future studies.

## References

- [1] Juyuan Zhu. Highlights of Yi Culture Studies. Yunnan Nationalities Publishing house, December 2007, p124.
- [2] Jufang Lu. The Polyphonic Form of Nimzabi Ritual Music of Mabian Yi People. Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music. (2016) No.04, p.75-90.
- [3] E. W. Rothenbuhler. Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, Ins, 1998: Preface: p. 53.
- [4] Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religion. England: Oxford University Press,2008.