Chapter 2

NATURAL, HUMAN, AND HISTORICAL LANDSCAPES

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No three days are clear, no three feet of land are level, and no one has three ounces of silver.

*Tian wu san ri qing, di wu san chi ping, ren wu san fen yin.*

天無三日晴,地無三尺平,人無三分銀

— Guizhou saying

In 1638, during the waning days of the Ming Dynasty and the twilight of his own career, the famed explorer Xu Xiake (1587–1641) embarked on a journey through the mountains, caverns, and forests of Guizhou. His travels took him through many of the regions explored in this book. He entered the province from its southeastern border with Guangxi, made his way northwestward to the provincial seat of Guiyang, and then negotiated a series of meandering paths into the little-known reaches of Guizhou’s far southwest. After three weeks of arduous travel, he reached his destination at the confluence of the North Pan (Beipan) and South Pan Rivers (Nanpan) near Guizhou’s southwestern border with Guangxi.¹

Xu considered the writing of travel diaries his most important responsibility as an explorer, and each night he penned succinct yet vivid accounts of that day’s experiences.² These journal entries represent much more than a traveler’s jottings. Xu’s adventures—and occasional misad-
ventures—encapsulate the human and geographic features that made Guizhou such a challenge for both its inhabitants and the imperial states that sought to govern it. Although some of Xu’s entries from Guizhou reflect genuine delight with the natural landscape, many more evince his frustration with the region’s stony mountain paths, foul weather, and hostile “Miao” natives.3

Frequent rains, heavy fog, and hilly terrain often led Xu to believe that nature was conspiring against him. On several occasions, heavy downpours forced him to cancel or postpone planned expeditions. When he hiked to high elevations to capture a panoramic view of the valley below, he found the scenery enveloped in clouds and mist, but when he traveled at low elevations, numerous hills and mountains blocked his view.4

Xu’s interactions with local residents did not improve his opinion of the region. The prospect of violence threatened his journey as he traveled into increasingly remote areas. On one occasion, he heeded the advice of a friendly Buddhist monk and took a long detour to avoid “Miao” bandits known to lie in wait for unsuspecting travelers.5 The indirect route provided safe passage, but Xu encountered new problems when he reached his destination, a small “Miao” settlement. The villagers refused to accept him as an overnight guest and sent him to another nearby hamlet, where the residents hid in their houses and refused to open their doors when he knocked. Xu proceeded to the next settlement, where he “forced himself into [the villagers’] midst.” After much haggling, a farmer agreed to put him up for the night, but the accommodations were rustic in the extreme. Xu found himself bedding down for the night on a pile of filthy straw amid the family’s livestock. The experience left him grumbling over the crudeness of the “Miao.”6

The following morning brought further difficulties when Xu tried to hire a porter to accompany him on the next leg of his journey. No one wanted the job, even though Xu promised to pay well. After a full day of bargaining, a “Miao” man finally agreed to make the journey for what Xu considered an exorbitant fee. Night had already fallen by this time, so they decided to set out the following morning. Xu awoke at daybreak to discover that the porter had absconded with a large sum of money—the promised wages for the journey and then some. He tried in vain to find the miscreant and then spent the next day hunting for another porter. He
resumed his journey several days behind schedule and with fewer coins in his pocket, thanks to the thieving “Miao.”

These episodes illustrate the relationship between the natural setting and human behaviors in Guizhou. The rough terrain and dank weather that occasionally foiled Xu’s plans had a much more profound impact on the daily lives of Guizhou’s inhabitants. The chilly reception he received in “Miao” hamlets stemmed from the residents’ poverty and their instinct for self-preservation. The villagers probably viewed Xu as an extra mouth to feed, a burden they could not bear. Perhaps they even feared that he might pilfer from their meager grain supply or seize their livestock. Such suspicions were not unwarranted in a land where banditry was a way of life, and people were alternately victims and perpetrators of property theft. It is not surprising that Xu himself fell prey to petty crime. Whereas Xu viewed the event as one of the many insults he endured in Guizhou, the porter probably saw an opportunity to take advantage of an unwary stranger. Perhaps the money he stole amounted to more than he might have otherwise earned in a year, or perhaps even a lifetime—enough to feed and clothe his family, repay any debts, and cover other expenditures. Such behavior made little sense to Xu Xiake, but it might have provided the best solution for satisfying the porter’s immediate and future needs.

The porter’s actions represent one small example of the livelihood choices examined in this study. The remainder of this chapter examines the ecological conditions that shaped these choices, looks at the people who made the livelihood decisions, and analyzes the political arrangements that helped sustain them. The first section provides a detailed investigation of Guizhou’s climate and topography, explaining how the scarcity of fertile land forced people to find other ways to supplement their livelihoods. The discussion then turns to the various peoples who shared this fragile ecological space, namely the Zhongjia, Lolo, Miao, and Han. The chapter concludes with an overview of Guizhou’s political history to 1659. In view of the region’s challenging terrain and ethnic diversity, the imperial governments of the Yuan (1279–1368) and Ming dynasties eschewed direct governance in favor of indirect rule through hereditary native officials. This arrangement allowed the imperial court to exercise a modicum of control over Guizhou at minimal expense. It also meant that state inter-
The mists and rains that annoyed Xu Xiake have always been a fact of life in Guizhou. Annual rainfall does range from 850–1600 mm (33–63 inches), but other provinces (Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hunan) all report significantly more. However, although Guizhou is not China’s wettest province, it is one of the cloudiest. In 2004, the provincial capital of Guiyang, situated in central Guizhou, reported just 989 hours of sunshine, making it the third-most-overcast city in China behind the Sichuan cities of Wenjiang (984 hours of sunshine) and Chongqing (974.9 hours). Guiyang and nearby Anshun are mild year-round, with winter temperatures that seldom drop below 5 degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit) and summer temperatures that rarely exceed 27 degrees Celsius (81 degrees Fahrenheit). Nanlong, situated in southwestern Guizhou, has a similar range, with slightly warmer winter averages and extreme humidity year-round.

Although these temperatures look moderate, Guizhou’s unrelenting humidity makes the colder months unpleasantly damp and the warmer months uncomfortably sticky. It also produces the recurrent mists and fog described in Xu Xiake’s diary. Xu considered these mists a mere inconvenience, but many other Chinese intellectuals of the imperial era viewed them as a serious health risk. It was widely believed that Guizhou’s atmosphere produced miasmas (zhangqi), or noxious vapors thought to cause disease. The miasmas of Nanlong were considered particularly insalubrious. In the words of one eighteenth-century official, “Hot weather is common and cold days are rare. When spring changes to summer, there are sudden, violent rainstorms, and the hills are shrouded in a miasma of suffocating vapors. People suffer from headaches, pressure in the chest, diarrhea, and other illnesses. Epidemics of malaria are not infrequent.”

Guizhou’s terrain created problems far more serious than the real or imagined health risks posed by the weather. Modern estimates indicate...
that 87 percent of the land in Guizhou is mountainous, and only 3 to 5 percent is flat.\textsuperscript{13} The region occupies the eastern edge of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, a southeastern extension of the Tibetan Plateau, which slopes southeastward from the Yunnan highlands through Guizhou and into Guangxi. This plateau is composed primarily of Devonian limestone, which, through a weathering process known as carbonation, has produced the landscapes of fancifully shaped karst mountains seen throughout southwestern China and northern Vietnam.\textsuperscript{14}

Guizhou’s combination of relative warmth, high humidity, and heavy rainfall provides the ideal conditions for karst formation. The carbon dioxide that occurs in both the soil and the atmosphere is highly soluble in water. When carbon dioxide mixes with rainwater and groundwater, it forms carbonic acid, which then forms hydrogen ions and bicarbonate ions. The hydrogen ions wear away at the calcium carbonate of the limestone. Over the millennia, as large quantities of solid rock are eaten away, caves and sinkholes form underground, and then, as the land surface collapses, the characteristic karst topography takes shape.

This landscape places severe constraints on Guizhou’s agriculture. Farming is mostly confined to the small, isolated valleys produced by the karst topography. Hillside cultivation is also carried out wherever possible, with terraces built all the way to the tops of the highest peaks. Inferior soils further limit agricultural productivity. Much of the soil in western Guizhou is either red podzolic earth, which is too eroded and leached to support good farming, or yellow podzolic earth, which is too acidic. To make matters worse, karst topography has poor drainage and absorbs water rapidly; thus, instead of draining away, the excess water from heavy rains can build up and cause devastating floods.\textsuperscript{15}

The peasants of Guizhou coaxed what foodstuffs they could from this unforgiving terrain. The best land in the valleys of Guiyang, Anshun, and Nanlong was reserved for paddy rice. Even with terracing, however, the amount of land level enough for rice cultivation was very limited. Winter wheat was also common in the valleys and on terraced hillsides. Upland areas were given over to maize, often intercropped with sweet potato, soybeans, or squash. Buckwheat, the hardiest of grains, also grew well in the harsh, mountainous areas of Guizhou’s far northwest.\textsuperscript{16} Other crops included green and yellow beans, sorghum, millet, barley, potatoes, gourds, sesame, mushrooms, and various fruits. Important commercial
crops included cotton, tea, indigo, sugar cane, tobacco, medicinal plants, lacquer, and tung oil. Because the soil lacked nutrients, fertilizers (usually in the form of night soil, animal manure, ashes from burned vegetation, or plant oils) were required to produce adequate harvests.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Population and Land Use}

The increasing population pressed hard on Guizhou’s available land.\textsuperscript{18} It is clear that the province experienced a demographic explosion between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, although precise population figures remain a matter of debate. Qing government enumerations suggest that the registered population was approximately 528,000 in the mid-sixteenth century; and that the population increased to 2.4 million by 1741, to 3 million by 1746, to 3.3 million by 1756, to 3.4 million by 1765, and then jumped to more than 5 million in 1778.\textsuperscript{19} However, as Ho Ping-ti explained in his pioneering 1957 study, Qing population registers reflected not the actual population, but rather, the fiscal population (the number of tax-payers).\textsuperscript{20} James Lee’s careful demographic studies have shown that fiscal population figures grossly underestimate the actual population. In the case of Guizhou, according to Lee, non-Han populations were usually not included in census figures, nor were the large numbers of immigrants who settled in Guizhou. After accounting for the people omitted from official registers, Lee offers much higher population figures for the province—that is, a population of approximately 1.5 million in the mid-sixteenth century, a doubling to 3 million by 1733 and a doubling again to 6 million by 1775.\textsuperscript{21} Yang Bin’s more recent study offers slightly more conservative estimates, suggesting that the population was around 2.06 million in 1661, and that it increased to 4,574,900 in 1753, and to 5,410,035 in 1840.\textsuperscript{22}

Calculating the amount of cultivated land in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Guizhou is equally problematic because land-use figures were also underreported throughout the late imperial period.\textsuperscript{23} One recent study estimates that the amount of registered land under cultivation was around 654,120 hectares (1.6 million acres) in 1685, 991,420 (2.5 million acres) hectares in 1724, and 1.4 million hectares (3.5 million acres) in 1784.\textsuperscript{24} Despite the steady increase in cultivated area, land use in Guizhou remained significantly lower than in other provinces. Neighboring
Guangxi, for example, had approximately 2.6 million hectares under cultivation in 1784 (6.4 million acres), while Jiangsu had 5.3 million (13.1 million acres) of cultivated land.\(^{25}\) Guizhou’s hilly terrain and poor soils were undoubtedly factors in this province’s low numbers—but so was the persistent problem of underreporting. In any case, the scarcity of cultivable and cultivated land gives credence to Aibida’s complaint, quoted on the first page of this book, that the entire province could not produce as much tax revenue as a single county in China Proper.

**HUMAN LANDSCAPES: GUIZHOU’S ETHNIC MOSAIC**

A variety of peoples vied for the resources of Guizhou’s ecologically precarious space.\(^ {26}\) Throughout history, the province has been an ethnic mosaic. In northwestern Guizhou, the Lolo, known today as the Yi predominated, interspersed with small settlements of Han immigrants and Miao. The southwest had a high concentration of Zhongjia (Buyi), but also had small Miao settlements in the mountains and ever-increasing numbers of Han immigrants. As the ethnic crossroads of the province, the areas around Guiyang and Anshun were home to all four groups.

Over the centuries, Chinese imperial officials attempted to classify the peoples of Guizhou into clearly delineated groups. Every local gazetteer from the sixteenth century onward included several chapters devoted to the dress, customs, and languages of non-Han populations. The eighteenth century saw the emergence of a genre of illustrated manuscripts known as Miao albums (*Miao tu*), a collection of drawings and texts that delineate and categorize the different groups in China’s southern provinces. As Laura Hostetler explains, the genre originated as an administrative document created by and for officials responsible for governing the people represented therein. The albums generally classified ethnic groups according to their geographic location, the color or appearance of their clothing, physical attributes, distinctive features of their dwellings, and other characteristics remarkable to their observers. The albums also commented on the ethnic groups’ behavioral tendencies, and the extent to which the groups had adopted Han cultural norms.\(^ {27}\)

Today, Guizhou’s non-Han populations count among the fifty-five
ethnic minorities (*shaoshu minzu*) officially recognized in the People’s Republic of China. Scholars in the fields of ethnology (*minzu xue*) and ethnohistory (*minzu shi*) have written extensively on the history and political economy of these groups. This body of work is structured around a political agenda that portrays the history of China’s non-Han groups as just one small chapter in the nation’s larger history. Pivotal events such as rebellions are not examined in light of their significance to a given ethnic group, but only as steps in that group’s inexorable progress toward “liberation” by the Chinese Communist Party. This rhetoric constrains this type of scholarship but does not necessarily compromise it. Despite its ideological overtones, research in *minzuxue* and *minzushi* does yield up some valuable historical and ethnographic data; and recent work from younger Chinese scholars also suggests a gradual movement away from the nationalist paradigm. The following sections synthesize information from these *minzu* studies with the findings of Western anthropologists and historians in order to introduce the four main ethnic groups of central and southwestern Guizhou.

*The Zhongjia (Modern Name: Buyi, Bouyei)*

The historical record from the eighteenth century finds this ethnic group at the center of every major event in the region. The alleged misdeeds of Zhongjia chieftains provided the pretext for Yongzheng-era officials to implement the *gaitu guiliu* reforms of the 1720s. Over the next few decades, when instances of social unrest occurred, Zhongjia villagers were often the instigators. At the peak of the unrest, in 1797, the masterminds behind the Nanlong Uprising and the majority of their followers were all Zhongjia. Members of the region’s other ethnic groups, namely the Han, Miao, and Yi, played much smaller roles in these events—sometimes as victims, sometimes as antagonists, sometimes as bystanders. Who were the Zhongjia, and why did they play such a pivotal role in the upheavals of the eighteenth century? The following section seeks to answer these questions, at least in part, by providing an introduction to Zhongjia language, history, and socioeconomic institutions. Although the discussion focuses primarily on the imperial era, it also touches upon ethnic policy in the People’s Republic of China.
Who Are the Zhongjia?

To begin answering the question “Who are the Zhongjia?” it will be useful to first examine some modern demographic and ethnographic data. As noted earlier, the Zhongjia have been called the Buyi since 1953. Numbering around 2.9 million, the Buyi today constitute the eleventh-largest minority nationality in the People’s Republic of China. Approximately 2.5 million Buyi live in Guizhou, mainly in the two Buyi–Miao Autonomous Prefectures of Qianxinan (Southwestern Guizhou) and Qiannan (Southern Guizhou), and in the regions of Anshun, Guiyang, and Liupanshui, while the rest are scattered throughout southeastern Yunnan and southeastern Sichuan. Small numbers of Buyi also live in northeastern Vietnam, where they constitute two officially recognized ethnic groups, the Bo Y and the Giay.29

The Buyi represent one of many Tai groups in southern China and Southeast Asia. More precisely, their language is classified as a Northern Tai language within the Kam-Tai branch of the Kadai (sometimes called Tai-Kadai) language family. Their closest kin in both ethnolinguistic and geographic terms are the Northern Zhuang, a subgroup within the much larger Zhuang nationality that is found mostly in Guangxi. The present-day Northern Zhuang correspond to an ethnic group called Nong in Qing sources.30 The Buyi and Northern Zhuang share so many cultural and linguistic similarities that it is impossible to study one group without reference to the other; indeed, for the purposes of this book, scholarship on the history, political life, religious traditions, and oral literature of the Northern Zhuang often proved as useful as similar research on the Buyi. More distant relatives of the Buyi include the Southern Zhuang of Guangxi and the Nung and Tay of Vietnam.31 The Buyi also share some cultural and linguistic features with the Dai of southern Yunnan as well as the Thai, Lao, and Shan populations of mainland Southeast Asia. Their extended ethnic family also includes the Dong (Kam), Shui, and Maonan ethnic groups dispersed throughout Guizhou, Guangxi, and Hunan, and the Li of Hainan.32

Archeological findings, linguistic data, and DNA evidence suggest that these Tai-speaking populations all descended from the Hundred Yue (Baiyue) peoples who occupied a vast area of eastern, central, and southern China as early as 2000 B.C.E. Two Baiyue civilizations in particular
have been linked to the Buyi of Guizhou and their Zhuang neighbors. The Buyi and Northern Zhuang seem to share ancestral ties to the Xi’ou people who inhabited the West River basin along Guangxi’s present-day border with Guangdong. The Southern Zhuang, along with the closely related Nung and Tay, may have descended from the Luoyue people who lived in the area extending from Guangxi’s current provincial capital of Nanning to the Red River basin of northern Vietnam. Like their contemporaries in other Yue societies, the inhabitants of Xi’ou and Luoyue relied primarily on rice farming and other agricultural activities for their livelihood.33

Contact between the Xi’ou peoples and the Han probably began during the Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.), when China’s imperial government began sending expeditionary forces into the southern realms.34 Interaction, intermarriage, and mutual acculturation between indigenous communities and various immigrant groups continued until the eighteenth or nineteenth century C.E. as successive waves of Han soldiers and civilians settled in the southwest.35 Thus, today’s Buyi population developed from more than two millennia of cultural exchanges in the Guizhou-Guangxi borderlands.36

These exchanges were multi-directional. Some Han colonists were absorbed into local populations and effectively became Zhongjia.37 At the same time, many Zhongjia internalized Chinese cultural norms and tried to “pass” as Han. As the Zhongjia gained familiarity with Chinese culture, they perceived that the Han enjoyed one particular advantage that they did not, namely the opportunity to participate in the imperial examinations. In order to enjoy the same privilege, many Zhongjia began identifying themselves as immigrants from Shandong, from Huguang (a province during the Yuan and Ming, comprising present-day Hubei and Hunan) or from Jiangnan; and they produced fictive genealogies to legitimize these claims.38 To this day, many Buyi still maintain both the genealogies and the claims to ancestral homes in eastern or central China.39 The Zhuang often assert similar claims to Han ancestry, a phenomenon that ethnologist David Holm traces to prejudices against the indigenous peoples of southern China that only began to fade after the Zhuang received official recognition as an ethnic group. “Before . . . the 1950s, discrimination against ‘southern barbarians’ was such that many villagers tried to assimilate and . . . fitted themselves up with Chinese-style genealogies that purported to prove that their remote ancestors came from northern Chinese
provinces . . . and had been sent to Guangxi in order to garrison the frontiers against the southern barbarians.”

It is worth noting, however, that some Buyi may in fact descend from so-called southern barbarians—namely the Zhuang of Guangxi who tried so hard to hide their own “barbarian” origins. A number of historical writings from the Ming and Qing periods suggest that the Zhongjia were the progeny of garrison troops sent from Guangxi to Guizhou during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period (906–960 C.E.). The *Official History of the Ming Dynasty* (*Ming shi*) described the Zhongjia as soldiers who had immigrated to Guizhou from Guangxi, an idea that Tian Wen expounded in his 1690 *A Book of Guizhou* (*Qian shu*): “From whence did the Zhongjia come? During the Five Dynasties Period, the Chu king Ma Yin sent them from Yongguan [in present-day Guangxi] to garrison [Guizhou].” The idea of Guangxi origins was reiterated in the 1751 *Qing Imperial Illustration of Tributaries,* and again in an early twentieth-century account by the British missionary Samuel Clarke. Zhou Guoyan finds an element of truth in such assertions, but cautions that the entire Buyi population cannot possibly claim descent from this small contingent of Guangxi soldiers. Although the troops’ ethnic origins have not been firmly established, Zhou finds it reasonable to assume that they were Zhuang. “According to textual research, Yongguan was in the central part of Guangxi where its capital city—Nanning—is situated. It is one of the areas inhabited mainly by Zhuang people today, and it was also a Zhuang area during the Five Dynasties, according to historical studies.”

**Changing Names: From ‘Buzhuang’ to ‘Zhongjia’ to ‘Buyi’**

If some modern-day Buyi are indeed the descendants of Zhuang immigrants to Guizhou, these ancestral ties represent just one example of the enduring historical, cultural, and linguistic linkages between the two ethnic groups. These Guangxi origins may also help explain the provenance of the old ethnonym *Zhongjia*. Both *Zhong* (as in Zhongjia) and *Zhuang* are short forms of the word *Bouxcuengh* (in Chinese: *Buzhuang*), a self-appellation used by the ancient Tai-speaking inhabitants of northern Guangxi and still heard in Zhuang-speaking communities today. *Boux* (*Bu*) means “people,” and *cuengh* (*zhuang*) means “narrow, flat-bottomed river valleys in the mountains.” Thus, *Bouxcuengh* signifies “people of the
river valleys,” an apt appellation for people who relied on agriculture for their livelihood.45

According to Zhou Guoyan, the tenth-century settlers from Guangxi probably imported the term Zhuang (variously written 撚, 獨 or 僑 in Chinese sources) to Guizhou.46 There, it acquired the variant pronunciation “Zhong,” eventually giving rise to the terms Zhongjia (仲/仲家) and Zhongmiao (仲/仲苗) found in Chinese documents from the Yuan dynasty onward.47 These ethnonyms became common currency, broadly applied by Han residents and government officials alike, and were generally accepted by the communities so named. For most Zhongjia, however, the term was more of an exonym than an autonym—that is, it was a name introduced by outsiders rather than one that people used to refer to themselves. The term Zhuang/Zhong apparently fell into disuse among local residents after that initial influx of Guangxi immigrants.48 A more common autonym was Bouyeix, meaning “native people,” a term that local residents used to distinguish themselves from the various Han groups in the area, such as “recent immigrants” (bouxhek), “people of the army” (bouxgun) or “officials” (bouxhak).49 The Bouyeix further classified themselves according to the quality and elevation of the land they farmed.50 Lowland dwellers were often called “people of the rice paddies” (bouxnaz), a name that differentiated them from “people beyond the rice paddies” (bouxnongz) and “people of the hills” (bouxloeh).51 These autonyms were relational terms that reflected the ways people thought of themselves in contradistinction to other nearby groups. As such, the names probably provided what David Holm calls “badges of self-identity,” but they did not imply any real sense of primordial or monolithic ethnic solidarity.52

The name Zhongjia remained in use until the Nationalities Identification Project was implemented during the early years of Communist rule in China. Working at the behest of central and local government authorities, researchers in Guizhou determined that the most common autonym among the so-called Zhongjia was Buyi or some variant thereof.53 Thus, the group was officially renamed Buyi in August 1953.54 The dialects spoken in northern Guangxi also bore closer resemblance to Buyi dialects in Guizhou than to the local languages of southern Guangxi. Nonetheless, local and central authorities determined in the early 1950s that the Tai-speaking populations of northern and southern Guangxi would all be
classified as Zhuang (now written 壮) despite their linkages to the Buyi and apparent lack of internal cohesion. These classifications supposedly reflected popular sentiment on both sides of the Guizhou-Guangxi border. The Guizhou Buyi did not want to be classified under the same ethnonyms as their Zhuang neighbors in Guangxi. The Zhuang, for their part, had resisted the Buyi label because the term was a local pejorative “applied by the more prosperous valley dwellers to the poor people who live[d] in the hills, and never used by any group of themselves.”

The purported opposition from both sides of the Guizhou/Buyi-Guangxi/Zhuang dispute fit neatly into the agenda of local and central authorities. Their goal all along, it seems, had been to establish two ethnic groups conveniently divided by a provincial boundary. As Katherine Kaup explains, “The division of nationalities, not surprisingly, often was determined more by where they lived than by any ‘objective’ Stalinist criteria. The division between the Zhuang and the Buyi nationality . . . was largely determined by provincial boundaries.” Kaup also notes that many of the people labeled “Buyi” in Guizhou had blood relatives among the “Zhuang” across the border in Guangxi. In some cases, immediate family members were identified as two separate nationalities if they straddled the border. This division was not altogether agreeable to members of Guizhou Nationalities Affairs Commission. Some of them reportedly told their colleagues in Yunnan that they would have preferred to see Guangxi reclassify its Zhuang population as Buyi “so that there might be a standardized understanding of ethnicity throughout the southwest. However, because the classification took place in strict accordance with provincial jurisdictions . . . this daydream never came true.”

This was not the first time central government authorities attempted to divide and control the inhabitants of the Guangxi-Guizhou borderlands. Eighteenth-century officials pursued a similar goal, but for different reasons and with very different results. As will be explained in chapter 3, the Yongzheng emperor’s representatives in southwest China tried to subdue the Zhongjia by deposing a native official and redrawing the border between Guizhou and Guangxi. For the remainder of the Qing period, this boundary only existed on paper and in the minds of imperial authorities. It had little if any bearing on the lives of Zhongjia villagers, many of whom had family in both Guizhou and Guangxi. Cultural and clan ties
remained strong within the communities straddling the two provinces, as local residents frequently crossed back and forth to visit friends and relatives, conduct business, study religion and magic, and, on occasion, participate in illegal activities or rebellions.

The decisions following the Nationalities Identification Project of the 1950s might be viewed as an attempt to replace this porous geographic frontier with an impermeable ethnic boundary, much as Qing officials of the eighteenth-century sought to impose order in the same region by creating a hard provincial boundary. The reforms of the Yongzheng period established the Hongshui River that runs along Guangxi’s northwestern frontier with Guizhou as the boundary between the two provinces. Since the 1950s, this river has also marked the theoretical divide between the Buyi and the Zhuang. David Holm suggests a different regional cartography based on dialect distribution and river systems. He identifies the You River in south-central Guangxi as the dividing line between the Northern Zhuang/Buyi and Southern Zhuang dialects.60 Given that the Northern Zhuang—that is, those living between the Hongshui and Youjiang Rivers—share more traits with the Buyi than with the Southern Zhuang, it might have made more sense to use the Youjiang as both a provincial and an ethnic boundary. In other words, the territory north of the river might have been annexed to Guizhou and its inhabitants classified as Northern Zhuang or Buyi (or as something else altogether), while the territory south of the river might have remained part of Guangxi and its inhabitants classified as Southern Zhuang or Zhuang (or again, as something else altogether).61

Of course, the matter is purely academic, for it is highly unlikely that authorities in China will consider redrawing any ethnic or provincial boundaries in the foreseeable future.62 More to the point, the ethnonyms “Buyi” and “Zhuang” have become thoroughly reified in the six decades since the Nationalities Identification Project.63 Although Buyi and Zhuang intellectuals alike readily point to similarities in their languages and cultures, they are equally quick to stress that their ethnic groups are separate and distinct.64

‘The greatest evil in all Guizhou’: Portraits from Chinese and Western Sources

Having examined the ethnic and historical origins of the Zhongjia, it now remains for us to explore the reasons behind their role in Guizhou’s tumul-
tuous eighteenth century history. To begin, it will be useful to examine some ethnographic descriptions from the late imperial period. In many cases, these portraits are less than flattering and may even strike the twenty-first-century reader as downright racist, but it is precisely this negative viewpoint that makes these descriptions so useful. The accounts provide a sampling of official and literati views on the Zhongjia—and, even more importantly, shed light on the ways in which the Zhongjia responded to their environment and to real or perceived threats from their neighbors or from government authorities.

Ethnographic accounts from the late imperial era usually characterized the Zhongjia as “the fiercest of all the Miao,” if not “the greatest evil in all Guizhou.”⁶⁵ The Zhongjia earned this reputation as a consequence of their alleged propensity for violence and deceit, vividly described in the 1673 Gazetteer of Guizhou province: “[The Zhongjia are] dangerous and wily . . . and fond of killing. When they go out they must carry a strong crossbow and a sharp knife. If an enemy [so much as stares at them], they must take revenge.”⁶⁶ In addition to their reputed penchant for brutality, the Zhongjia followed a lifestyle that Confucian scholar-officials found contemptible, as suggested in this excerpt from the 1673 Gazetteer of Xilong district: “[The Zhongjia] are completely lacking in courtesies. . . . After marriage, women return to their natal homes for a number of years. When ill, [the Zhongjia] do not consult with doctors but instead seek the advice of shamans. [They] use chicken bones for divination. . . . They lack metal tools, and salt is not part of their diet.”⁶⁷ In these accounts and many others like them, the character for 中 was usually written 中, using the “dog” character component (quan 犬). This unsubtle pejorative reflected Confucian scholar-officials’ attitudes about peoples they considered less than civilized—or even less than human. Zhong could be written 仲, using the “human” character component (ren 人), but this variant appeared with far less frequency in government communiqués, local gazetteers, and travel chronicles.⁶⁸

Attitudes toward the Zhongjia were not static, however. During the eighteenth century, some imperial officials noted fractional advances toward the Confucian ideal of civilization. For example, a 1750 handbook reports: “The Zhongjia are the most clever and cunning of all the Miao.”⁶⁹ In the past, they carried swords at their waist and crossbows under their arms. They would hide deep in the thickets or climb high into the hills [to
launch surprise attacks and raids]; these were their finest tricks. Recently, they have advanced toward culture (xianghua) and developed awe and respect for the law. Their old customs have been eradicated. . . . Most men have adopted Han clothing, and many can understand the Chinese language.\textsuperscript{70}

These comments seem to embody the values of the Confucian civilizing project undertaken during the Yongzheng and early Qianlong reigns, when local officials sought to bring non-Han peoples “toward culture” (xianghua) through education and moral suasion. To be sure, some Zhongjia villagers who lived near Han settlements did gain proficiency in Mandarin and adopted Chinese attire. After the Yongzheng-era reforms, many Zhongjia men also began to wear the queue, the distinctive braided hairstyle that signaled loyalty to the Qing.\textsuperscript{71} But these outward manifestations of acculturation did not necessarily signal a change of ethnic identification or political allegiance, let alone the “awe and respect for the law” noted in the excerpt above.\textsuperscript{72}

Accounts from the late Qing period portrayed the Zhongjia as both Sinicized and intractable. This dichotomy is particularly apparent in the 1911 account by British missionary Samuel Clarke. He observed a high degree of acculturation among the Zhongjia and, in some cases, even total assimilation. “Some of them engage in trade and settle in the Chinese cities and towns, and if they remain there, as many of them do, they bind the feet of their girls and are reckoned as Chinese.”\textsuperscript{73} His comments on Zhongjia bilingualism suggest a similar level of Sinicization: “Most of the men . . . and many of the women can speak Chinese. . . . We have heard them say, and we think the statement is true, that out of every three words they utter when speaking their own language, one is Chinese.”\textsuperscript{74} This portrait of acculturation receives further credence from Clarke’s description of Zhongjia clothing and education: “The Chungchia [Zhongjia] men can hardly be distinguished from the Chinese. . . . As most of them are agriculturists, the men dress exactly the same as Chinese farmers and village folk. . . . Many of them compete at the civil and military examinations and some of them have risen to high rank in the imperial service.”\textsuperscript{75} Despite these outward displays of Sinicization, Clarke noted that the Han still considered the Zhongjia an inferior race, a view that he evidently shared:
The Chung-chia [Zhongjia] appear to have all the defects of the Chinese and none of their better qualities. Among the Chinese are good, bad, and indifferent; among the Chung-chia some are bad and some perhaps not so bad. The Chinese generally describe the Miao as turbulent, simple, and without proper notions of propriety; while they describe the Chung-chia as crafty, lying, and dishonest. . . . The Chinese say that every Chung-chia is a thief, and from what we know of them, we should not feel justified in denying the charge. . . . The dishonest among the Chung-chia are sneak thieves who prowl around at night, and pilfer from their friends and neighbors.76

Clearly, the Zhongjia ran afoul of Confucian (and Western evangelical) sensibilities in myriad ways. With a century or two of historical hindsight and a greater understanding of the environmental conditions facing the Zhongjia, it is possible to interpret their real or imagined transgressions in a different light. Many of the behaviors depicted here—the supposed proclivity for violence, cunning, and thievery, and even the varying degrees of acculturation—exemplified different activities on a broad spectrum of livelihood choices. Thievery and pilfering were time-honored redistributive techniques employed by those who needed (or simply wanted) something their neighbors possessed. Acculturation, whether partial or complete, real or feigned, reflected a great flexibility and pragmatism in the Zhongjia approach to Chinese culture. Local residents adopted and adapted whatever served their immediate needs and rejected the rest. The Chinese language—or some local variant of it—was useful because it served as the lingua franca for commercial exchanges and the occasional encounter with imperial authorities. Chinese attire enabled Zhongjia villagers to blend in with other local residents, though apparently not enough if observers recognized them as non-Hans wearing Han clothing! The imperial education system enabled some Zhongjia to gain a modicum of literacy and at least a passing familiarity with the Confucian classics. The Zhongjia tolerated and even respected Qing laws, but never to the extent that these legal niceties impinged upon traditional livelihoods. At times, the Zhongjia manipulated Chinese culture in ways that enabled them to launch indirect attacks on Qing authority. On other occasions, most notably during the Nanlong Uprising, they rejected the
Confucian culture complex and mounted a direct assault on imperial institutions.

Zhongjia Political and Economic Institutions

During the imperial era, Zhongjia society was organized around an institution known as the tingmu system. The term tingmu referred to hereditary landowners who governed small fiefdoms along the Guizhou-Guangxi border. The residents of tingmu domains were divided into units known as jia (shields). The jia were subdivided into smaller units called ting (encampments). Each jia was composed of ten ting.77 The people living in chieftain-controlled areas were divided into eight categories. The four highest classes all participated in government and administration. The chieftains occupied the highest rank. All the land and people belonged to them, and their name was law within the areas they governed. Next in rank were the local headmen (tumu or toumu), who were both the chieftains’ assistants and enfeoffed officials. The village heads (bashi) were responsible for keeping the peace among local residents. Next in rank were the horse platoons (mapai), the soldiers who served in the chieftains’ personal armies. Equal in rank to these soldiers were ritual specialists (mogong), who maintained the local shrines and organized various ceremonies.78 Below these leaders and functionaries were the ordinary people, who were further subdivided into eight groups. The rice farmers, known as “grain-farming hundred names” (liangzhuang baixing) were the highest-ranking commoners. Below the rice farmers were servants and laborers (fuyi), who were usually immigrants from other areas. At first, these workers did not possess any land, but after a set period of service, they could obtain some fields of their own. Next in rank were the “privately-owned hundred names” (sizhuang baixing), immigrants and refugees who were effectively the chieftains’ private property. These settlers were allowed to till the chieftains’ poorest fields, but it was not a secure life, for they could be bought and sold along with the land. Their only protection was that the chieftains could not sell these cultivators separately from the land they tilled. The members of this sizhuang baixing class had no hope of upward social mobility; they could not become rice farmers or even servants. However, even lower in rank were maidservants (nüpai), who performed domestic tasks in the chieftains’ households and who could be sold or married off like slaves.79
Lands under the chieftains’ control were divided into public fields (gongtian), and private fields (sitian). Rice farmers rented parcels of the public land from the chieftains. Annual rents varied from place to place but usually ranged from 50 to 80 percent of the year’s harvest. Private lands were the personal estates of the chieftains, local headmen, and village heads. Rice farmers were required to work the private lands as well as their allotment of public land. Most landlords also required their tenants to provide set periods of labor, and to contribute food, money, or manpower for religious holidays and other celebrations. The tenants’ quality of life ranged from miserable to tolerable, depending on the quality of the land they farmed, the size of the harvests in any given year, and the disposition of their landlords. Some families supplemented their livelihoods by raising additional income from cash crops such as tobacco and indigo, or from the production and sale of textiles.

The Lolo (Nasu Yi)
The Lolo, or Yi as they are known today, are Tibeto-Burman speakers who traditionally occupied a wide area including northwestern Guizhou, southwestern Sichuan, and northeastern Yunnan. Those living in northwestern Guizhou call themselves the Nasu (also known as the Nasu Yi). Although the Nasu Yi play a relatively minor role in this book, it will be useful to take a general look at their political history and economic institutions.

The Nasu Yi were the most powerful non-Han group in Guizhou—perhaps in all of southwestern China—until the early years of the Qing dynasty. The Mu’ge kingdom of the Nasu Yi gained control over much of present-day Guizhou between about 300 and 1200 C.E. The kingdom’s strength and its long-term survival stemmed from its geographic position between China proper and the expansionist kingdoms along the southwestern periphery. The Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) imperial governments both treated the Mu’ge realm as a buffer against rival states—against Nanzhao in the Tang, and against Dali in the Song.

In 1280, the patriarch of the ruling An clan received a hereditary title from the government of the new Yuan dynasty. By the 1570s, the An family controlled a vast area that extended from the northwestern tip of Guizhou all the way to the Guiyang region, an area called Shuixi in Ming
sources. This territorial expansion radically altered the kingdom’s social and economic structure. When the An realm had been limited to the barren northwestern corner of Guizhou, the clan economy had centered on slash-and-burn agriculture. After the An rulers annexed more fertile territory to the south and east, they realized that paddy farming would yield far more revenue than slash-and-burn and they adopted Han agricultural techniques. This dramatic change to the region’s economy required a skilled labor force, and in the minds of the kingdom’s officials, there was no better source than the recent Han in-migrants to northwest Guizhou, northeast Yunnan, and southern Sichuan. These in-migrants had, to a great extent, been responsible for the introduction of Han agricultural methods to the southwestern periphery of the Ming empire. Thus, the An leaders considered it entirely logical to raid vulnerable Han settlements for captives to farm reclaimed lands. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, then, an extensive trade network stretched from northwest Guangxi to central Sichuan to supply Shuixi’s expanding economy with slaves. The slaves were a multi-ethnic group consisting of Lolo commoners, Chinese, Miao, and even Zhongjia. The An clan assigned certain tasks to specific ethnic groups. The Zhongjia, for example, were considered good farmers and were thus allocated the best land, while the Miao and Han were often assigned less fertile lands.

The Ming and Qing states steadily eroded Nasu Yi political autonomy. The An family was deposed in the 1670s, but was restored to power after twenty years. During the 1720s, the Yongzheng court terminated the An family’s hereditary title and incorporated the domain into regular administrative units.

The Miao

Although their origins and ancient history remain obscure, the current scholarly consensus is that the earliest Miao moved southwestward from central China, under pressure from Han expansion. They were usually characterized as a mountain-dwelling people, although it is not certain when or how willingly they became denizens of the uplands. The likeliest scenario is that, in the face of increasing pressure from Han immigrants, the Miao retreated into remote mountain regions of southwestern China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.
Over the centuries, the name Miao has acquired two related meanings. In its broadest sense, it is a generic term for the various non-Han groups in Guizhou and neighboring provinces. As we have seen throughout this chapter, Chinese literati and imperial officials sometimes used the term “Miao” when they were actually referring to the Zhongjia. In the narrowest sense, “Miao” denotes a broader ethnic group (minzu) that includes several subgroups in southwest China, as well as the Hmong of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Ming and Qing sources use the term Miao in the broader sense to refer more generally to the non-Han peoples of southern China. The sources often distinguished between Miao who were unassimilated barbarians (“strangers,” or sheng) and those who had adapted to Chinese civilization (“acquaintances,” or shu). The Miao who were “acquaintances” lived close to centers of Han culture and were either under direct state control or under the control of a state-appointed native official. These Miao adopted Han clothing, became conversant in Mandarin, and learned to read and write. The Miao who remained “strangers” were those who resisted assimilation, pacification, and state control. Ming and Qing sources also classified Miao populations according to the color or appearance of their clothing, their physical attributes, distinctive features of their dwellings, or other characteristics remarkable to their observers. This practice gave rise to such names as the Flowery Miao, Red Miao, Short-skirted Miao, Dog’s Ear Miao, and Pig-filth Miao.

During the Ming and Qing periods, most Miao lived in hamlets (zhai) of one hundred or so families. These settlements were usually located high in the mountains and were often enclosed with heavy wooden fences to discourage outsiders from entering. Defensibility was the main consideration in choosing a place to settle. Even if a hamlet itself was not readily defendable, the surrounding mountains provided sanctuary for villagers in the event of an attack. The Miao depended primarily on agriculture for their livelihood. As mountain-dwellers, they relied on the slash-and-burn farming of hardy dryland crops such as buckwheat, oats, corn, and potatoes, often supplemented by hunting and gathering in the forest. Like the Zhongjia, they participated in local market systems, often exchanging forest products and handicrafts for sugar, salt, and metal tools. Those living in northwestern Guizhou also raised sheep and goats for sale at local markets.

The Miao lacked the centralized political organization of the Zhongjia
or the Nasu Yi and often occupied the lowest rungs of Guizhou’s socioeconomic ladder. As noted earlier, some Miao in southwestern Guizhou became the slaves of Zhongjia chieftains. The Miao living in northwestern Guizhou were often the tenants of Nasu Yi aristocrats, or, less frequently, of Han and Muslim (Hui) settlers. Their rental obligations included crop payments, as well as labor service in forestry, agriculture, and transport. As chapter 4 will explain, the Miao often found themselves caught up in the schemes of their more resourceful neighbors, either as accomplices or as victims.

The Han

Han settlers began arriving in Guizhou during the last years of the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.E.). From the Tang through the Ming and Qing periods, wave after wave of Han immigrants entered Guizhou from Shanxi, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Hunan, Anhui, and Jiangsu. The Ming government had a policy of sending soldiers and their dependents to Guizhou to establish military colonies (tuntian). After each Ming military campaign in the southwest, the state settled more Han in Guizhou. A number of people also immigrated to Guizhou of their own volition. Each new wave of immigrants placed increasing pressure on the area’s non-Han inhabitants. The Han settlers usually claimed the most fertile lands and applied their advanced farming techniques to their fields, thus giving a welcome boost to a province’s tax base. In many areas, the Han gradually became the dominant ethnic group, and displaced native peoples were either forced into less desirable, hilly regions, or were driven to remote border areas. Those natives who remained in their home regions suffered a significant reduction in their social and economic standing. Many Han regarded their non-Han neighbors with the contempt we saw reflected in Xu Xiake’s diary.

THE HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE: GUIZHOU DURING THE MING AND EARLY QING

During the Yuan dynasty, the lands constituting present-day Guizhou were divided among the neighboring provinces of Huguang (present-day
Hunan and Hubei), Yunnan, and Sichuan. Under the administration of these provinces were six “routes” (lu) in the Guizhou region. Beneath the route-level administration, prefectures, counties, and departments were established wherever there were sufficient tax-paying populations. Where direct administration was not possible, the Yuan appointed hereditary native rulers (tusi) to administer local populations on behalf of the court.

The early Ming state oversaw a gradual administrative consolidation in the Guizhou region, culminating with the creation of Guizhou province in 1413. The process had begun in 1382, when the government established the Guizhou regional military commissioner (duzihui shi), the first official devoted exclusively to the region. The commissioner was responsible only for military matters; provincial officials in Yunnan, Sichuan, and the Ming province of Huguang remained in charge of civil administration.

In 1413, two powerful native rulers in eastern Guizhou went to war over a disputed piece of land. When the fighting threatened to engulf a wider area, the Ming court sent troops to quell the violence. Eventually, the two feuding rulers killed each other. The central government claimed their lands and established regular administrative units—eight prefectures and four districts in all. The court then established a provincial administration commissioner (buzheng shi) to coordinate the administration of these new units. This was the first Chinese government organization devoted entirely to the civil administration of the Guizhou region. In order to generate enough tax revenue for this new administrative apparatus, the Ming government soon encouraged immigrants from other provinces to settle in Guizhou.

**Native Officials in Ming Guizhou**

Although the Ming established a provincial administrative apparatus in Guizhou, it continued the Yuan practice of establishing sub-provincial administrative units only where Chinese farming and taxpaying communities were large enough to support them. In areas where non-Chinese populations predominated, the Ming state appointed native rulers to govern their own people according to local custom. When the court conferred native chieftain status upon a tribal leader, it classified him (or her, in rare instances) as either a civilian native official (tuguan) or a military native official (tusi). The civilian officials were under the direct super-
vision of the central government’s Board of Appointments (libu), while their military counterparts came under the aegis of the Board of War (bingbu). Generally speaking, the civilian officials controlled areas within defined provincial boundaries, often where small numbers of Han had settled among indigenous populations. These officials held titles analogous to those in the Chinese administration system, with titles prefixed by the word tu: native prefects (tufu), native department magistrates (tuzhou), and native county magistrates (tuxian). Their staffs often included Chinese officials who served as secretary-archivists, translators, or sheriffs, and who helped mediate relations between the chieftains and the imperial state. The military officials, on the other hand, enjoyed a greater degree of institutional and territorial autonomy from China.

Regularly appointed imperial officials were seldom posted to areas controlled by these native rulers. These domains were usually located along or just beyond China’s political borders, typically in areas without significant Han populations. Military officials were expected to command sizable armies to assist in the empire’s defense. Indigenous populations living under native rule were not subject to the standard forms of Ming and Qing taxation imposed on individuals and households. Native offices were subject to levies of goods and labor, and of soldiers when military emergencies arose. The Ming government took the collection of these levies very seriously, for, apart from their economic value, they signified the continued compliance and subservience of the native peoples.

James Lee estimates that native officials controlled at least one-half of Guizhou during the Ming. The institution did not always function effectively, however, as native officials often proved corrupt and unruly. Some native rulers failed to maintain peace and stability in the regions under their control, others threatened to rebel against the dynasty. Thus, after establishing many native offices early in the dynasty, the Ming government concluded that it needed a new governing method and opted to implement the policy known as “changing native officials to regularly appointed officials” (gaitu guiliu). The process created at least as many problems as the Ming hoped it would solve, as native populations did not always accept centrally appointed officials and were not always readily integrated into mainstream Chinese society.

By the seventeenth century, the administrative map of Guizhou resembled a patchwork quilt. Areas controlled by native officials overlapped
with regular administrative units: in effect, everyone was in charge, and no one was in charge. As John Herman notes, even after Guizhou was organized as a province, Ming officials would continue to view it not so much as a contiguous part of “China Proper” (neidi), but as an internal frontier or semi-periphery defined roughly by provincial boundaries.\(^{105}\)

_The Qing Conquest of Guizhou_

Although Qing armies captured Beijing in 1644, they did not gain control over southwestern China for another fifteen years. In the interim, Guizhou became a refuge for Ming loyalists. Following the suicide of the last Ming emperor, ministers in the secondary capital at Nanjing scrambled to piece together a resistance government. Several surviving members of the Ming royal family were thus maneuvered into leading a movement to overthrow the Qing. The restorationist government became known as the Southern Ming.

The most effective Southern Ming leader was Zhu Youlang, the Prince of Gui. In late 1646, he mounted a resistance campaign from the coastal province of Guangdong. At this time, he crowned himself emperor and assumed the reign title Yongli. Advancing Qing armies soon forced him westward into Guangxi, where he maintained a capital at the provincial seat of Guilin intermittently for three years. Qing incursions occasionally forced Yongli to flee northward to Hunan or Jiangxi, or southward, toward the border with Vietnam. With the help of skilled military leaders, he eventually succeeded in expanding the Southern Ming territories to include most of Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan. The Qing court in Beijing kept a wary eye on Yongli and launched several military campaigns against him in the late 1640s and early 1650s. Qing advances forced the Southern Ming deeper and deeper into southwest China. For a time, Yongli governed his domain from Anlong, a remote town near Guizhou’s border with Guangxi. In 1656, he fled to Yunnan, where he clung to power for another eighteen months before Qing armies deposed him.\(^{106}\)

Guizhou served as an important staging ground for Qing campaigns against Yongli and his supporters. Qing armies invaded the province in early 1658, and met in Guiyang six months later to plan a strategy for consolidating power over Yunnan. In order to traverse Guizhou, Qing commanders had to secure the cooperation of the native officials who con-
trolled the most strategic regions. Jobtei, the general in charge of southwestern Guizhou, received military assistance from the native official whose domain included key routes into Guangxi and Yunnan. Another Qing general, the infamous Wu Sangui, cooperated with the An rulers of northwestern Guizhou. Their alliance was so strong that the native official even led Wu’s troops into battle. Wu also used An territory as a base for campaigns in nearby Sichuan.

Once Guizhou was secured for the Qing, Wu Sangui led his troops into Yunnan in pursuit of the Yongli emperor. Yongli escaped into Burma and received asylum from the royal court at Ava. After lengthy negotiations between the Qing and Burmese courts, Wu Sangui received permission to cross into Burma. They arrested Yongli in Ava and escorted him back to Yunnan, where he was executed in May, 1662. As a reward for the successful capture of the last Ming pretender, Wu Sangui was granted lifetime control over Yunnan and Guizhou, although the governors-general of both provinces remained in place. Wu’s new position gave him extraordinary powers. An imperial edict of December 1659 had already authorized him to appoint and dismiss officials and to handle all military, financial, and civil affairs without the intervention of the Board of Appointments or the Board of War.

As Wu and other Qing generals moved across Guizhou, they accepted the submission of numerous native officials and usually renewed the officials’ Ming titles and the terms of alliance. Almost immediately, however, the Qing court diverged from Ming policy on the tusi. Even as commanders on the ground were extending official recognition to native officials, policy makers in Beijing were planning a radical overhaul of the Qing state’s relations with native communities. This restructuring and its effects on Guizhou’s social and economic life will be the subject of chapter 3.