

Introduction

My name is Yi Na. I am a young woman from a rural Tibetan agro-pastoral community, and am one of approximately 2,000 Tibetans who speak the Lavrung language. My family's income comes from growing and selling crops. Even though I have been admitted to the University of Oregon to study linguistics, there is no way for my family to support my education abroad. Being from a poor family I understand how poverty can limit one's education; I will therefore make the most of this precious opportunity.

Personal Statement

As a young girl, I clearly remember standing in the doorway of my family's home, seeing our sheep scattered on the mountaintops, and wondering how I could collect them. Luckily, I was clever enough to devise a simple method to do this. I stealthily climbed above the sheep and then jumped out screaming from behind a bush. The startled sheep then ran straight home, all by themselves. I also created a shortcut for bringing the yaks home. Observing how the yaks ran to my mother whenever she scattered salt, I picked up handfuls of snow and scattered it, luring the yaks home. Born into an agro-pastoralist family, I experienced the difficult lives of both a nomad and a farmer since my father was taken from us by a car accident before I could even toddle. When I was three, I could help my mother do such housework as churning milk into butter, kindling the fire, preparing tea, and herding sheep. These experiences equipped me with good problem solving abilities.

At the age five, I was betrothed to a neighboring family's son, since I was the oldest child in the family. Here was one problem I could not solve. Fortunately, the national policy of Nine Years Compulsory Schooling changed my life. I had to attend school, otherwise we would have been charged 5,000 RMB – an unimaginable amount of money for my impoverished family. I studied harder than my classmates, since I knew that my chance of attending school was almost taken away. I was always the best student in my class and therefore was designated the study model, meaning I had to help struggling students with their studies. I therefore developed leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal skills early in my childhood.

With the qualifications and recognition I had gained, I was promoted to the English Training Program (ETP) at Qinghai Normal University, where I was taught the importance of one's identity and culture. In particular, I developed an interest in the interface between management and the success of sustainable development. Meanwhile, I had the chance to manage and implement several projects. From 2009 to 2011, I worked on my book *Warming Your Hands With Moonlight*, about village oral traditions, funded by the World Oral Literature Project at the University of Cambridge, to preserve local endangered oral culture. From the grant application to the final report, I managed the entire project: field research plans; collecting, sorting and analyzing raw data; scheduling drafts and meetings with editors; and so on. I also managed several community service projects, including a second-hand clothing project. Through these projects, I realized the importance of my community and started to think of solving bigger problems than I once did when herding

sheep.

Today, my community faces many challenges and needs my help. Villagers are impoverished, and our unique local language and culture are endangered. The young generations prefer to leave for the outside world since there is a lack of career prospects in the region. The loss of our language and community poverty are related, because villagers currently spend much time outside the village earning money, speaking other languages and learning new habits. I therefore hope to undertake a BA degree and acquire skills and knowledge to document my language. In the future, in addition to documenting my language, I also hope to found a local community organization. This organization will focus on sustainable livelihoods that can be pursued in villages, such as handicrafts, so that communities can maintain local traditions and language.

Resume

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HOME ADDRESS: Siyewu Village, Puxi Township, Rangtang County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, P.R. China.

EDUCATION

2011—2012 **Access Academy Program Certificate.** Asian University for Women, Bangladesh. An overall GPA of 3.4 for three terms with the subjects: Pre-calculus, English Grammar, Composition, Geography and World History, Reading and Writing, Computers, and P.E.

2007—2009 **Zhongzhuan Diploma.** English Training Program Preparatory Class, Qinghai Normal University. Two years of Integrated English Classes, Content English courses, Math, Tibetan, and Chinese.

2005—2007 **Junior High School Diploma.** Rangtang Middle School, Sichuan Province.

CULTURAL DOCUMENTATION

July—September 2012 **Project Manager.** *Revitalization of the Lavrung Language.* Funded by The Firebird Foundation. Collected folk songs, working songs, folktales, village histories, Tibetan circle dances, and photos of tools; made an hour-long documentary film in the local language – Lavrung – for local consumption.

2009—2012 **Researcher and Author.** World Literature Project, University of Cambridge. Conducted five months of fieldwork documenting endangered oral traditions in Siyewu Village. Wrote monograph (*Warming Your Hands With Moonlight*, published January 2012) in English and the International Phonetic Alphabet, describing oral traditions in the previously undocumented Lavrung language.

2008—2009 **Recorder.** Plateau Cultural Heritage Protection Group. Xining. Trained in recorder use, recorded traditional songs and stories in Siyewu Village for cultural

preservation, and made CDs for local use.

May—July 2007 **Trainee**. Studied case studies in sustainable developmental and research methodology, and conducted field work and wrote proposals for two months with Shem Women's Group and sustainable development specialist Ms. Shamotar (Brandeis University).

WORK EXPERIENCE

January—June 2011 **Chinese Teaching Assistant**. Asian University for Women, four hours per week.

September 2008 **English and Tibetan Volunteer Tutor**. Siyuewu Village. Taught twenty-one students for fifteen days; planned, managed, and presented sixty-four English classes.

January—February 2008 **English Teacher**. Zhongbao Middle School, Huangzhong County, Qinghai Province. Planned, prepared, organized, and presented classes to 42 students for 80 total hours over 20 days.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND EXPERIENCES :

2011—2012 **Volunteer**. Center for Leadership Assistance and Promotion (CLAP), programs attended: Junior Chamber International Youth Festival at University of Chittagong, Gender Glitch : Promoting Civil Liberties for Transgender People and Empowerment through Legal Awareness: Creating Active Citizen.

2010—2011 **Participant**. Women's Health Training, organized by Shem Women's Group at Kojima Base Training Centre in 2008 and Health Training on women's childbirth health and safety from Professor Sienna Craig (Dartmouth College), four hours per day for two weeks.

2010—2011 **Trainee**. Trained by Professor Mano Mora from Hong Kong University in ethnomusicology fieldwork, five hours per day for two weeks.

2010—2011 **Manager**. Second-hand clothes project that benefited 437 impoverished Tibetans in Puxi Township, Rangtang County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province.

OTHER SKILLS

Languages:

English—proficient reading, writing, speaking

Chinese—fluent speaking, writing, and reading

Lavrung—mother tongue, fluent speaking (unwritten language)

A mdo Tibetan—good speaking, reading, and writing

Referees:

Diana Davis

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Dr. Gerald Roche

Associate Professor, Qinghai Normal University

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Contents and Conclusion of Yina's Book – *Warming Your Hands With Moonlight: Lavrung Tibetan Oral Traditions and Culture*

Full text available at:

<http://plateaiculture.org/writing/warming-your-hands-moonlight-lavrung-tibetan-oral-traditions-and-culture>

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In this book I introduced Lavrung, a previously little-studied language, and the local culture of Lavrung Tibetans. I focused on oral traditions, particularly figurative speech – proverbs, metaphors, and euphemisms – that I collected from villagers in Siyuewu Village, Puxi Township, Rangtang County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China.

I first provided a general context to local oral traditions by describing Siyuewu Village's location, ethnolinguistic context, territorial divisions, population, name, history, subsistence, and housing. I also gave background on local religion and home remedies, and provided accounts of *ji* loss. Finally, I described local customs and attitudes related to love and

marriage. I also provided maps showing the distribution of Lavrung-speaking communities and showing the distribution of hamlets in the village, in addition to a diagram showing the layout of a typical hamlet. The maps and information in this section provide the necessary context to understand the oral traditions presented in other portions of this book. Much of what is described in this chapter is now seriously threatened, particularly the Lavrung language.

In the second part, I introduced and provided examples of local oral stories: Helping Others Will Bring You What You Want; Do lo's Life; The Leveret, the Sparrow, and the Pig; The Flea and the Louse; The Bone in Meat; The Jar Buyer; Blo ring and zæn t̥si; Dividing Housework; The Helpless Nomad; The Hunter and His Wife; Do Lo Divides a *Mdzo*; Do lo the Hunter; and A Wild Boar Attacks. Locally, such stories are considered entertainment rather than moralizing educational devices. People enjoy hearing and telling such stories that are related to their daily life. Humorous stories are most popular. Villagers often make up their own humorous stories about events that happened to other villagers, and those who are the subject of such stories may never get angry at their creators, because all villagers engage in this sort of creativity. Few elders tell stories to their grandchildren because children now find such stories boring compared to TV. Almost no villagers under the age of thirty tell stories because they think story telling is a waste of time.

In the third part, I introduced further examples of oral traditions from Siyuewu Village: fourteen *k^hε d̥ə* 'riddles' in Lavrung, a brief introduction of *sngags* 'secret chants', and three Lavrung work songs. *Sngags* are no longer used to cure sicknesses, as their use is considered backward and superstitious. Work songs continue to be sung during plowing time.

In the fourth part of the book, I provided transcriptions and both literal and figurative translations of twenty-six Lavrung proverbs, twenty Sichuan Chinese proverbs, and fifty-five Amdo Tibetan proverbs. This section also provided euphemisms and metaphors related to death, menstruation, sexual intercourse, defecating and urinating, advice and reprimands, and animal comparatives. This section also provided examples of figurative speech within villagers' oral narratives. Villagers typically use figurative speech in daily life, but do not value it or consider it an important part of their culture, consequently, although figurative speech is in common usage, it may disappear in the future because of locals' attitudes.

I chose figurative speech as the focus of my book for two reasons. First, when I began investigating figurative speech, a villager refused my request for an interview using a metaphor to explain that he did not know any metaphors. I was deeply impressed by the irony of this situation. Secondly, I was motivated to document figurative speech because my mother language, Lavrung, has been insufficiently documented and I therefore felt a responsibility to write about it.

The final section of the book presented photographs from my village. I took these photos, which are mostly of my consultants, in the winter of 2009, because people have more free time in winter. People were delighted and relaxed when I took their photos and they immediately asked me to see their picture. I used quotes from my subjects as captions so that readers could get a sense of how my subjects think and feel. I wanted readers to imagine that they were looking at living people rather than just pictures.

I have not documented these materials in sophisticated English, but the materials themselves are immensely rich and complex.

Perhaps, the person who is now finishing this book is someone from my community,

reading this many years after it was written or perhaps even many years after my death. I am sure many things have changed since this was written. I hope this book has been a useful resource for you to study our community's past, and a unique culture that has now perhaps been lost. I hope this book inspires you to do something similar.