

TANG Yun



Ph.D. of Anthropology

Prof. of Ethnology and Chinese Studies

Affiliation: Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

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Biography:

Research Interests

Cultural Heritage and religion/heritagization/Museum Studies

Historical Anthropology and Mythology

Oral History, Archives and Social-Culture Transformations

Visual Anthropology and Documentary

Anthropology of disaster and upheavals

Geographic areas of interest in China

Central and Southeast Guizhou (24 months of ethnographic fieldwork)

In Dong area for master degree's research (2004-2005)

In Huaxian for the PhD's research (2005-2007)

On rituals in Tupu villages (2008-2010)

On fire disasters in Zenchong (2014-2015)

Western and Northern Sichuan (since 2008)

On a participating project for locals in E'r village (2008)

On the housename system and the Daizi Festival in rGyal rong (since 2009)

On desertification in Zoige grassland (since 2012)

On heritage and religion in Dujiangyan (since 2012)

Affiliations and Visiting Positions

Since 2018	Researcher (Professor of Ethnology), School of Ethnology and Sociology, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China
2024-2025	Visiting scholar, CECMC (Centre for Modern and Contemporary Chinese Studies), in CNRS/EHESS/Paris University (Paris, France)
2020	Visiting scholar, CCJ (China, Korea, Japan Research Institute), in EHESS (School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences), (Paris, France)
2016-2017	Academic Visitor, the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnology, Oxford University (Oxford, UK)

Education

PhD of Anthropology- June 2008

School of Ethnology and Sociology, Central Minzu University (Beijing, China)

Master's Degree of Ethnology- June 2005

School of Ethnological Studies, Southwest Minzu University (Chengdu, China)

Research themes and current projects

In the last decade, Yun TANG has chaired or participated in 4 kinds of projects:

- a. Academic research projects funded by the National Social Science Fund of China aim at theoretical inquiry, methodological reflection, literature research, and case studies. Including *Constructing Resilience in the Nomadic Tribes in Eastern Qinghai-Tibet*

Plateau (Project Leader, 2018-2024); *Local Experience and the Construction of Long-term Scientific Measures of Disaster Control in Southwest China* (Project Leader, 2010-2014) etc.

- b. Academic research and international communication projects funded by the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs of China focus on communication between domestic and overseas, theoretical research, collaboration between Sinology, and comparative study between various cultures. Including *Critical Cultural Heritage Study and Social Transformations: A Comparative Perspective* (Project Leader, 2021-2022); *Disaster Perceptions and Responses in Times of Global Upheaval* (Project leader, 2017-2018); *The Comparative Study on Buddhist Society* (Project leader, 2015-2016); *Comparative Study of Disaster and Upheavals: Perceptions and Responses* (Project leader, 2014-2015) etc.
- c. Regional development projects funded by various NGOs and institution include topics on cultural heritage conservation, documentary, oral history, community building, museums and exhibitions, children's development, aesthetics education, etc.
- d. Projects on Chinese Studies, funded by the Leverhulme Trust of UK, aiming at theoretical and methodological reflections based on case studies of Han Chinese and Non-Han Chinese in China. Including *The Local in China's Heritage: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections* (led by Harriet Evans and Michael Rowlands, Research Team Member, 2012-2018).

During the following academic year (2024/2025) Tang Yun will focus on finishing the book, *The Heritage that Keeps Leasing the Water: The Shaping of Landscape, Worship of Water Deity, and Social Transformation*. As an ethnography, this book is based on years fieldwork in Dujiangyan 都江堰 (in Dujiangyan City, Sichuan Province), which was built in the northern Chengdu Basin, takes advantage of the geography to slow down and distribute the water flowing from mountainous regions. It was listed as a WH site for its reputation of ancient China's immense advances in science and technology on irrigation. The construction of this system succeeded shortly after the Qin Dynasty (the first Dynasty in China, 221BC-207BC) took over the local authority, 'Shu' Kingdom. It stopped flood attacks in the Chengdu Basin and thrived agriculture. In the following centuries, Dujiangyan witnessed many dramatic social transformations, which brought a huge challenge to those who tried to understand the territorialities of this region and conserve the heritage site properly. By examining the various contemporary daily practices (fieldwork between 2017-2023), this research finds that two annual events are essential to our understanding of territoriality. One is the Ceremony of Releasing Water 放水节, which celebrates the achievement of Li Bin 李冰 (the governor appointed by the Qin Emperor to conduct the construction) each spring. It was invented and organized by the intellectuals and local government. There's a live show performing this ceremony each afternoon for tourists. Another is an annual ritual for the Water Deity of Erlang 二郎神, a religious ritual held by Daoist priests for the inhabitants at the birthday celebration of the Water Deity each summer. Both events were held for centuries during the constant negotiations between various actors; as a result, both events together annually performed

duality in historicity in this territory. One may reduce this duality as an exemplification of the dynamics of patrimonialization or oriental despotism, as Karl Wittfogel defined. While, Dujiangyan is always an arena where multiple actors play the games with different interests. By borrowing theories of anthropology of history, religion, and politics, this paper first projects this heritage site and the territory into a long-term history to figure out a chronicle of Dujiangyan, which is marked by the constant negotiations and conflicts between various authorities and actors; and then inquiries how this duality got its meaning and how this meaning changed along with the social transformation and how the investigation of the duality of Dujiangyan contributes to the critical heritage studies.

Honors and Awards

- 2017 Listed as “Most Influential Scholars in Humanities and Social Science in China”. China Research Center for Humanities and Social Science Assessment
- 2015 Third Place, Best Research Reports of 2015 (Report title: *Fire Cause and Fire Control in Southwest China: An Anthropological Study of Fire in Guizhou Dong Villages*). Chinese State Ethnic Affairs Commission

Selected Invited Talks

Talks in Chinese:

- 2023 蔡元培先生的美育研究与民族学思想 (Enquiry an Ethnology based on Aesthetic Education: A Review on Mr. Cai’s Academic Efforts in Early 20th Century), Northwest Minzu Studies, on-line talk, China
- 以体育养成健全之人格——体育、身体与公民 (Cultivating the Sound Personality and Humanity by Sports: Sports, Body, and Citizenship), Southwest Medical University, Luzhou, China
- 2022 “放水”的遗产——都江堰的地景塑造、水神祭祀及地方社会的演变 (The Heritage which Keeps Leasing the Water: the Shaping of Landscape, Worship of Water Deity, and the Social Transformation) , Nanjing University, Nanjing, China
- “形”“神”兼备——民族艺术学中的魅惑与理性 (Unity of Form and Spirit: the Enchantment and Ration in Ethno-Art), Central Minzu University, Beijing, China
- 2017 沙粒中的世界：青藏高原湿地草原的游牧生态机制与沙化灾害应对 (The World in Sand: The Nomadic Lifeworld and Its Response to Desertification in Alpine Wetlands and Grasslands in Tibetan Plateau), China Center, Oxford University, UK

Talks in English:

- 2020 Mapping the ‘Valley’: a Topographical Study on Longxi Valley, An Earthquake Affected Qiang People’s Habitats in Wenchuan, Northern Sichuan, EHESS, Paris, France.
- The World in Sand: The Nomadic Lifeworld and Its Response to Desertification in Alpine Wetlands and Grasslands in the Tibetan Plateau, CERI, Paris, France.
- From ‘Hierarchy’ to ‘Class’: Housename and Purification Rituals in rGyal rong (Western Sichuan, China), MSH, Paris, France.
- Releasing Water and Worshiping Water Deities: Rethinking the Locality in Dujiangyan, a World Heritage Site, CMSH, Paris, France.
- 2017 The Return of the Divine King: The Daizi Festival and the Politics of rGyalrong. Talk presented to Oriental Institute, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.
- Pacifying the Souls: Yi Migrations in Chengdu, China. Talk presented to The Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.
- The Return of the Divine King: The Daizi Festival in rGyal rong and the Politics of the Sino-Tibetan Frontier. Talk presented to Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes, CNRS, Paris, FR.
- The Anxiety of ‘Rootlessness’: Identity Politics and Neo-Heritage in Chengdu (Sichuan, China) after the Wenchuan Earthquake (2008). Talk presented to Department of Social Science, Catania University, Catania, IT.
- The Fear of Pollution: Housename and Bönpo Purification Rituals in Western Sichuan. Talk presented to The Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.
- The Anxiety of ‘Rootlessness’: Identity Politics and Neo-Heritage in Chengdu (Sichuan, China) after the Wenchuan Earthquake (2008). Talk presented to CECMC, CNRS/EHESS, Paris, FR.
- The Sand in the World: the Desertification and Its Response in Eastern Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Talk presented to China Center, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.
- 2015 The Fire and Its Control in Old Towns/Villages of Southwest China: An Anthropological Investigation of the Dong People. Talk presented to Department of Anthropology, Tulane University, New Orleans, USA.

Selected Publications

Books (5, in Chinese)

Edited Volumns (4, in Chinese)

Research reports and papers (45 in Chinese, 3 in English)

Book Chapters (8, in Chinese)

Translations (26, from English to Chinese)

Books

- 2024 *Local Experience and the Construction of Long-term Scientific Measure of Disaster Control in Southwest China*, [in Chinese], forthcoming. A monograph of a comparative ethnographic study on the perception and reaction to disaster and upheavals in Han-Chinese and Non-Han Chinese communities. It reflectively takes the traditional cultures into consideration and seeks a creative way to realize modernity in local communities.
- 2016 *The Ritual, Landscape, Narration and Perception of Disaster*, [in Chinese]. Beijing: the Ethnic Publishing House. A collection of 6 research reports on 3 topics: ritual, landscape, disaster. All studies were carried out in the last decade in southwest China, including Central and Southeast Guizhou, Western and Northern Sichuan. These reports present some attempts at theoretical reflection on ethnic relations, disaster, materiality, social memory, rituals, and ceremonies.

Research reports in English in Academic Journal

- 2024 The Social Production and Political Potency of Home: Contentions between Housing Reconstruction and Place Making among the Chinese Qiang after the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, with Qiaoyun Zhang; Guanli Zhang; Wen Huang. Available online [here](#)
- 2020 The bureaucratic & neoliberal management system applied to the academic world. Dialogue between two ethnologists on the Chinese system, with Katiana Le Mentec, *European Journal of Turkish studies*, 30, [Online here](#)
- 2014 Crossing Borders and Paradigms: the Intermediaries and the Reformation of Anthropology, with ZHANG Yuan in *Cahier d'Extrême-Asie* (23). Available online: [here](#).

Main Journal Articles (in Chinese)

- 2024 Aesthetic Education and the Shaping of New-Citizen in Early 20th Century, forthcoming.
- 2022 a. Enquiry an Ethnology based on Aesthetic Education: A Review on Academic Efforts in Early 20th Century, in *Northwest Minzu Studies*, (6: 45-56)
- b. Uniting Forms and Spirit: the Enchantment and Ration in Ethno-Art, in *National Arts*, (4: 132-140)
- 2020 “Dwelling Biotope” and the Revolutionary Resilience: the Ontological Turn in Anthropological Study on Disaster, in *Journal of Eastern China Normal University*

- 2018 The Social Resilience in the Disaster Relief: a Case Study on an Affected Qiang Village in Wenchuan 5·12 Earthquake of 2008, *Social Sciences in Yunnan* (5: 10-16)
- 2016 a. Misunderstanding James Frazer in His Memorial Lecture Series: the Regicide and its Meaning in Divine Kingship. *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities* (12: 20- 26).
- b. Rethinking the Vulnerability and Re-Categorizing the Disasters, *Qinghai Journal of Ethnology* (3: 6-10).
- 2015 a. Desertification in Alpine Wetlands and Grasslands: The Natural/Cultural Cause and Social Response to It, *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities*, 10: 7-12.
- b. Fire Cause and Control in Southwest China: An Anthropological Study of Fire in Guizhou Dong Villages, *Thinking*, 2: 31-36.
- c. The Divine Justice and the Legal Proceeding: Disputes and Cultivation in a Southwest Chinese Village. In *History and Ethnography*. Beijing: Chinese Social Science Publishing House.
- Fabricating the Glory of the “Sun King”: The Divine Kingship and the Shaping of Nation-State in The Fabrication of Louis XIV, *Journal of Ethnology*, 4: 17-21.