



## The Drung Ethnic Group

Drung people love Drung tapestry. It is said that the rainbow in the sky is the fabric made by the god when opening the heaven gate. So the Drung tapestry is the product that they learn to make from the god. The number of the colorful stripes is the same as that of the colors of a rainbow. When they celebrate their traditional festival-Kaquewa, the Drungs have the tapestries draped over their shoulders and slaughter

bulls to offer sacrifices to the Heaven. The tapestries embody the Drungs' wisdom and nice spirit and represent their wishes for a happy life.

### The population and environment

In the mountains of northwestern Province stands one of the world wonders-the Great Oriental Canyon-in which three mountains (Mt Dandangli, Mt Gaoligong, Mt Biluoxue) tower aloft and three rivers(Nujiang River, Lancangjiang River, Drung River) join together. The Drungs, with a population about 7 426, live mainly in the Gongshan Drung and Nu Autonomous County in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture. And the Drung Township is the biggest compact community of the Drungs.

The Drungs live on the slash-and-burn farming and still keep the tradition of fishing and hunting. The Drungs believe that everything has spirit. Therefore they worship mountains, rivers, forests, and huge rocks etc.



The language of the Drungs belongs to the Jingpo Branch of

the Tibetan-Burmese Language Group of the Chinese-Tibetan Language Family. Some of them speak Tibetan and Lisu language. They do not have their own script. Although once in 1979 they formulated a Latin alphabetic writing system, it was not widely used.

### The historical development——survivals of the primitive society

The origin of the Drungs can be traced to the Sengshi tribe, which Fanchuo mentioned in his book, Man Shu(Book on Ethnic Groups), In the Yuan Dynasty, they were known as the Hao people, in the Hao people, in the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty, Qiu people or Qiuzi. In 1953, with the close care by Premier Zhou Enlai and according to the name they call themselves and the Drung River they live by, they were called Drung.

During the Tang and Song Dynasty, the places where the Drungs lived were under the jurisdiction of the Nanzhao and Dali principalities. From the Yuan, Ming to Qing Dynasties, court-appointed Naxi headmen ruled the Drungs. At the end of the 18th century, the Tibetan Chawalong chieftain governed them.

Before the year of 1956, there were still patriarchal clans. In the Drung River valley, there were 15 patriarchal clans and 54 family clans. Each clan has a leader. They helped each



other in economy and also strictly followed the rules of exogamy (no-marriage-within-the-clan). All the clans formed alliances in times of great danger threatening from the outside. A new life began for the Drung people along with the foundation of the PRC in 1949. In 1956, Gongshan Drung and Nu Autonomous County was founded which showed Drung people had been the master of their own destiny and that they are enjoying the regional autonomy as a minority.

#### **The featured housing——from caves and nests to houses on pillars**

In the documents of the Qing Dynasty, it was recorded that the Drungs “had no houses and lived in the caves” .Some of them “tied the grass together and built houses” They covered the houses with tree leaves. They had the customs of “eating raw food and living in caves and vests”. It was not until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that they began to alter their living style.

The most common style of their houses is bamboo buildings, which are built on the steep mountain slopes and along the river. One side of the house links to the slope and the other faces the river and is above the water. The building called “A thousand-foot house on the ground” is put up by dozens of pillars and two meters above ground. They are two-storied with thin bamboo strip as wall and covered by hay. The Structure is very simple. Each clan used to live together. Married sons and daughters do not separate from their parents. They just set up a new house next to the old one. The roofs and aisles of the old and the new houses are linked together. This kind of houses is called Long Bamboo Towers. In the northern forest area, there are also houses made of planks and logs.



#### **The costumes and ornaments——the face tattoo and the Drung tapestry**

The Drungs, male or female, used to wear their hair down to their eyebrows in front and down to their shoulders in behind, covering the ears. They wore two earrings or one, some carried bamboo tube. In the past, girls aged at 12 or 13 were tattooed in the face to show that they had come of age. It was said that the tattoo design of a beautiful butterfly was chosen because the souls of the deceased turned into butterflies. While these insects hovered over the gorge, the Drung girls pierced their face with indelible butterflies using bamboo needles and indigo ink. The tattoo would never fade. The tattooing practice did not fade away until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The Drungs, either old or young, men or women, like wearing cloaks made of tapestries. Xiahu's Details of the Nuqiu Borders recounts that in the late Qing Dynasty the Drung men wear a piece of cloth on their upper bodies, a shawl is shouldered on the back, a knit is tied from the left shoulder to the right armpit. The handicrafts are made of cotton and Hessian, and embroidered with five-colored threads. With soft texture and classic elegance, they can be used as cloak at daytime and quilt to keep warm at night. It is also used to carry grains and cover babies. The tapestries are the indispensable necessities and gifts to the Drungs.



### **The dietetic customs—the Dongzong starch and the hanging of animal heads**

Their foods are taken from the endless food resources, the surging Nujang River and the vast forests. Their staple food includes maize, potato, barnyard grass, highland barley and buckwheat etc. The Dongzong starch was once their staple food. The Dongzong starch is the green food from the forest. People cut down these and took the thick liquid from it and then bake it. When they hunted together, the first one who shot down the quarry would get the head of the beast as reward. After enjoying the meat, people would hang the head on the roof beam. On one hand, it expressed their appreciation to the mountain gods; on the other hand, it showed the master's bravery and wealth.

### **The unique marriage customs—the grouped marriage and the sororate**

The Drungs' marriage maintains many vestiges of the primitive system. In 1950s, there were still strange forms of marriages such as sororate, endogamy, and asymmetrical marriage. There was also a kind of marriage that was similar to "Pulaluan marriage". In Drung language, it was "Bo Ruo" in fixed marriage group; Each man from clan A could be the husband of each woman from clan B. But men from clan B could not marry any woman from clan C. So this formed a one-way marriage group.

There once existed sororate, which in Drung language is "An Ninan". i.e. in the fixed marriage group, a man from clan A could marry the eldest daughter from clan B. And her younger and youngest sister would also marry this man or his brothers at the same time or later. At present, the original convention has disappeared.

### **The flying over the canyon—the sliding cable and "the Net Bridge"**

The traditional tools of transportation over the Drung River in the past were sky-ladder and sliding cable. Sky-ladder is a log on which there are several cuts and is put up on the edge of the cliff. It is very dangerous to climb up. The sliding cable is made of bamboo strips and tied to the big trees or rocks on two sides. When people fly over the river, they face up to the sky and place their hands on the cable, then flash over the river. The Net Bridge is composed of two canes between which slings the net. The net is knitted with special kind of bamboo and the bottom of the net is laid with boards or bamboo poles. When people set foot on the bridge, it shakes from one side to another. Now people have built wooden bridge or chain bridge. The sliding cable has been the good place for those who like to venture.

### **The Festival for sacrificing to the Mountain Gods—— "Kaquewa"**

The annual holiday is called "Kaquewa", held on a lucky day elders in the villages at the end of the last Lunar month of the previous year or in the first Lunar month of the next year. People present animal models made of flour to the mountain gods to express their thanks for granting food and to pray for harvest in the coming year. The ceremony of "slaughtering bulls to offer sacrifices to the Heaven" is a grand occasion. At the occasion, a doughty young man wearing the Drung cloak will spear down a strong bull at the spot. After that, people will light bonfire and share the meat and dance called "Niu Guo Zhuang" and hold shooting activities.