

# A Study on the Border Garrison of the Lisu Ethnic Group in the Qing Dynasty

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**Abstract:** In history, the people of all ethnic groups in Yunnan played an important role in defending the border. During the reign of Emperor Daoguang, the Lisu people were trapped in border control and relocated to stationed checkpoints along the Tengyue border. This solved the problem of difficulty in guarding areas filled with malaria, strengthened the control of the central dynasty over border areas, and played a role in consolidating border defense and deterring foreign enemies.

**Keywords:** Western border of Yunnan; Lisu ethnic group; Garrison the border

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“Along the border of Yunnan, it borders the barbarians, with Mengzi in the southern border, Tengyue in the southwestern border, and Myanmar in the southwestern border, especially the key to the Southern Wei<sup>[1]</sup>. Based on this, the central dynasties of all dynasties followed the policy of” not changing their customs in cultivating their education, and not changing their politics “, and” successively implemented the border county system<sup>[2]</sup>, frontier prefecture system, and chieftain system that were different from those in the Central Plains “in Yunnan region.”<sup>[3]</sup>. “As a geographical, political, and national defense frontier of the country, the unique national attributes of the border will instinctively stimulate the responsibility and enthusiasm of the people of all ethnic groups in the border to protect their country. The two are in a relationship of ‘sharing weal and woe’<sup>[4]</sup>..

## 1. The crisis at the western Yunnan border

Liu Bin discussed Yunnan in his book “On the Situation of Yunnan”, stating that “Yunnan regards the world not as a key point related to the Central and Four Frontiers, not as rugged as the Silkworm Cluster and Sword Pavilion, nor as rich as the fertile fields for thousands of miles. It only relies on the high and dense mountains, long roads and deep forests, and the caves and caves of various barbarians. It is either scattered in the interior or surrounded by the edges<sup>[5]</sup>.The complex terrain not only hinders the development of the social economy, but also affects the military deployment and political planning of the central dynasty in Yunnan.”In the era of cold weapons, throughout dynasties, regardless of the period of unification or division, the dangerous territory underwent expansion and contraction, but they all managed to obtain natural terrain for military defense.

In the Qing Dynasty, after the establishment of the Qing Burma vassal system, the Qing Dynasty and Myanmar entered a period of peaceful coexistence. The defense of the Qing Dynasty on the western Yunnan border changed from defending against Burma to defending against “wild people”.The author aims to present historical materials, so the term “wild people” is continued to be used in the article, The Wild Man Mountain area has emerged between the Qing Dynasty and Myanmar.During the Qing Burma War during the Qianlong period, the “wild men” who were originally located outside the Eight Passes gradually entered the territory of the chieftains in western Yunnan. During the reign of Emperor Tongzhi, a wilderness area was formed between the Qing Dynasty and Myanmar. “In the spring of the 16th year of the Jiaqing reign, wild bandits from Luobusi Village in Tengyue Nandian descended from the dam and harassed border residents along the border.”Tongzhi Hu Qirong recorded in his “Tunfang Ji” that Tengyue’s “wild people” were originally outside the Eight Passes.

## 2. Lisu ethnic group guarding the border

The Lisu ethnic group is skilled in using bows and crossbows, with arrows that are not flawless.The woman is wrapped in white linen cloth with a belt around the waist. The crossbow is skilled in using, with no flawless arrows. Every time the woman is instructed to bear a small wooden shield, a person with a diameter of three or four inches will move forward, and a crossbow will be fired from

the back, hitting the shield and the woman will not be injured, thus subduing the Western region.”The northern border of Binghai will also have it.”The “Annals of Yao’an County” also records that “according to the” Qing Dynasty Tribute Map “, the strength is also called a strong crossbow. According to legend, when Chu Zhuangqiao opened Yunnan, there was this type of crossbow, without tribes.”. Those scattered in Yao’an, Dali, and Yongchang, who live on the border between Chishi Cliff, Jinsha, and Yongbei, migrate impermanently according to trees and rock caves. A man wraps his head in linen, wears a felt shirt, wears a short knife, is skilled in using crossbows, and has no false arrows in his hair. Women wear short clothes and long skirts, with bare feet carrying bamboo baskets in and out.

## **2.1 “Lisu crossbow army”**

The main military force deployed in the southwestern border of Yunnan during the Qing Dynasty was the Green Army, which controlled the southwestern border and even various parts of the country by deploying flood control ponds. “In order to consolidate the southwestern border, the Qing Dynasty paid great attention to the deployment of green camp soldiers.”. “In order to eliminate this problem, 7300 green camp soldiers belonging to Tibiao, Yongshun Town, and Tengyue Association were concentrated in the Yongchang and Tengyue areas in southwestern Yunnan, to prevent and seize opportunities to eliminate the remnants of the Southern Ming Dynasty, forming a sub center for the distribution of green camp soldiers in Yunnan.”Secondly, after pacifying Wu Sangui, the green camp soldiers rebuilt and formed a pattern of “three standards and seven towns”.

In addition to strengthening the deployment of Green Camp soldiers in the southwestern border, Green Camp soldiers have also established close connections with the “soil training” composed of various ethnic groups in the border. Due to the severe miasma in the southwestern region, military operations must also be accompanied by soil training. Soil training can recognize mountain dangers and tolerate miasma. Soil training comes from nearby areas and is actually familiar with the barbarians. If one gains their hearts, they can serve as a leader for the official army. To maintain border defense deployment in complex geographical conditions, they can only rely on more resistant tribes. In addition, “Tengyue is located at the southwestern edge of Yunnan Province, with a road connecting Myanmar and a border connecting Yefan. Eight passes and nine passes are set up to guard against Tulian for capital control.”

## **2.2 Relocating Lisu households to guard the border**

Governor General Fan Chengxun of Yunnan and Guizhou recorded in his “Request for the Establishment of Yongbei Town” that “there were high-ranking officials from the Northern Shengtu Prefecture who were afraid of the Lisu barbarians.”Because the Lisu people made a living by farming and hunting, and were skilled in crossbow arrows, which were also coated with poison and had strong combat effectiveness, they had a strong deterrent effect on some ethnic minorities in the surrounding areas. “. “In the seventh year of the Daoguang reign, Guangyu of the Tengyue Department requested the establishment of fifteen cards at Xiangbai Ridge on the outskirts of Hexi, recruiting 370 households of the Lisu tribe to settle down, and leaving half of the silver surplus in the salt class to provide food for the salt and vegetable crops. They were limited to planting and guarding the cards. However, due to the rugged terrain, there was not enough food for the crops.

The “Draft of Qing History” also records that “when the barbarians crossed the border, they entered the mainland to plunder, and the barbarians in Baoshan and other areas called them Lisu. They made a living by cultivating mountains and hunting, which was useful. They recruited 300 households of Lisu and planted mountains to guard against the barbarians. That is to say, they used surplus classes to pay for their expenses, and the barbarians were afraid of power, gradually surrendering to them.””Yunnan Prefectural Annals” It is recorded in the book that there was a type of wild man on the extreme edge of Tengyue, known as Rumao Cave, who raided the mainland and became a border threat. However, there was another type of wild man called Lisu in areas such as Baoshan, which was under the jurisdiction of the local chieftain. He made a living by farming and hunting, and was skilled in using mulberry crossbows and poisonous arrows, which the wild people feared.

## **2.3 The Lisu ethnic group’s border defense and national identity**

The manifestation of the national identity concept of various ethnic minorities in the western border areas of Yunnan is primarily a psychological convergence towards the Central Plains culture. “In my old tea mountain, there were various savages in the area where the court ruled, who highly revered the Han human body system. When people died, it was also effective for the Han people to invite the Yin Yang family to search for dragons and point their graves. The tombs were all built with stones in the style of the Han people.”In addition, this cultural convergence mentality was also reflected in the oral history of the Southwest minority, including the Lisu and Dai ethnic groups. “The Wild Man, Han Man, and Boyi originally belonged to three brothers, with one ancestor. The Wild Man was the eldest, with strong and powerful strength, which was disliked by Grandpa and Grandpa.

As the main body in the border region, the people are the foundation of the country and the foundation of stability. The existence of the border is the existence of the people, and the people are the ultimate reason for the existence of the border. The most core part of this is still the understanding and recognition of the border and the country by the people of all ethnic groups in the border. For the people of all ethnic groups in the border areas who were born and raised here, the historical mission of guarding their homes and defending the country determines that they are the fundamental and pillar of maintaining the long-term stability of the country's border areas. In the border area of western Yunnan today, many military facilities used by the Lisu people in the process of defending the country's borders can still be found. In historical records, there are many records of the Lisu crossbow army, praising their bravery and endurance as important military forces that have guarded passes and blockhouses for generations.

## Epilogue

Yunnan is not only one of the birthplaces of human civilization, but also a melting pot for ethnic exchanges and integration. It possesses both native ethnic culture and immigrant culture that comes with immigration. In the process of ethnic communication and integration, these different cultures not only have their unique values and forms of expression, but also have fusion and variation among them. "The result of mutual contact and interaction is mutual adaptation, and the basis of adaptation is identification."

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