

Harmony with the Land

Explorations in Graphic Narratives

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Supervisor - Justin Novak

Harmony with the Land - Explorations in Graphic Narratives

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Abstract

Harmony with the land is a series of explorations of graphic narratives based on my lived experience and received knowledge relating to my homeland of Yunnan. The narrations are rooted deeply within the memory, culture and sensation that inhabit my engagements with flora and fauna of Yunnan, as well as my experience with people that are deeply connected to this land.

As I trace my memories with the land throughout the years, deeper and further, divergences begin to emerge. I find intricate connections between my experience and the experience of other people. Through reading and studying ethnic materials such as literature and poetry, observing and participating in activities and events, I find similarities based on our interactions with familiar objects that come from the land. Whether it is a pine tree in the woods, a mushroom under the leaves or a bush of berries.

The idea of placing my lived experience with the land in the context of people who are also closely connected to the land is intriguing. Among the ethnic materials I studied, there is an epic poem about the arduous historical migration of Hani People of Yunnan. The poem tells the stories of resilience, humility and responsiveness of the Hani people throughout the migration. I relate myself to the land that Hani people travelled through about 1,000 years ago, as the places, animals, plants, people in the poem have also been essential to my lived experience. I base my explorations of graphic narratives on the interactions and inspirations of personal memory and the knowledge from the Hani migration poem.

My studio work, as well as this writing, is an oscillating process between my lived experience and received knowledge; it is a space where intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogues happen, all of which are based on the land and things that have come from the land. Through these explorations of storytelling, I hope to convey the harmonious, earth-centered relationship of people and the land to my audience, to investigate the potential application of such storytelling experience, and also to reconnect myself to the memory that shaped my view of the world.

Keywords: Traditional Knowledge, Species, Graphic Narrative, Hani People, Oral History

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Acknowledgement

The two years of time into the Master of Design program is one of the most memorable experiences of my life.

I own my gratitude to the lands I have set foot on, to the people that have shared with me their experience and knowledge, to part of my memories that have stayed vivid and true.

I own my gratitude to my supervisor Justin Novak for walking me through the stages of ideation and execution for my studio project, and also the stages of the thesis writing.

I want to thank my parents for their selfless support for my education. Without their support both materially and psychologically, I would not be able to complete my study here.

I want to thank all the faculty and staff who, in and out of my curriculum structure, offered advices on studio practice, thesis writing, campus life, facility and other aspects.

I want to thank the MDes 2019 cohort. Together we are a community with individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Note to Reader of Writing Style

This thesis has components of oral literature, graphic narratives, dialogues and pieces of memory.

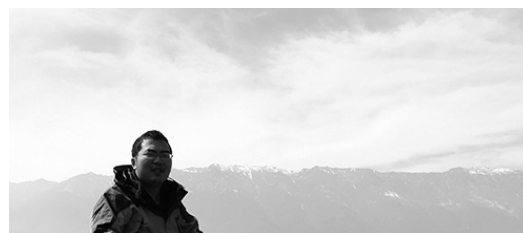
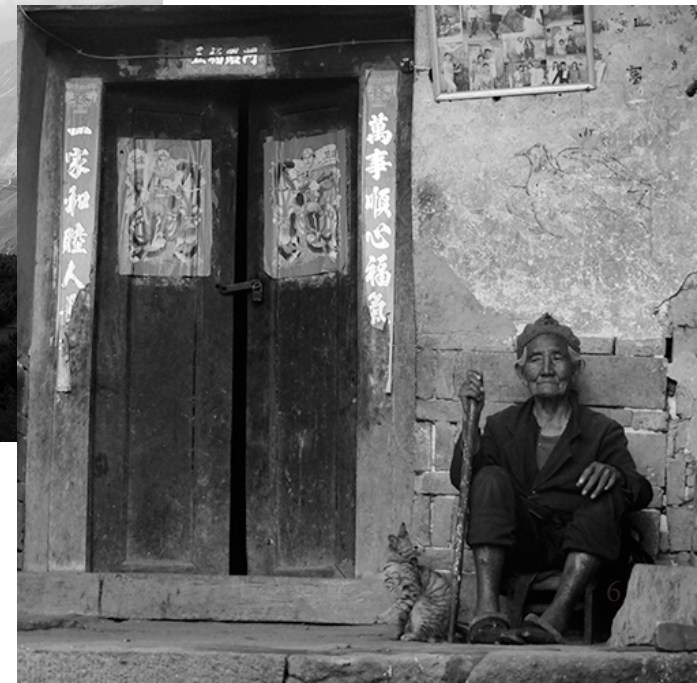
The writing of this paper is an oscillating process between my lived experience and received knowledge. My lived experience means the interactions I have with the flora and fauna of my hometown; The received knowledge means the traditional ecological knowledge I learned from a poem of the Hani ethnic group of China.

Through this thesis I explore the possibility of transmitting traditional ecological knowledge of my hometown to other people in a local and earthy way, to avoid representing such knowledge using a colonial structure. I respect the ambiguity from the oral literature of the Hani peoples: I respect the ambiguity of my fragmented memory. There are linear and non-linear narratives in this thesis, as well as graphic works with abstract styles. Readers should not expect the strong argumentation of a formal thesis paper. At many points you need to feel more than think. I choose an alternative format for my paper, as the traditional knowledge of my hometown is not to be confined in the rigid frame of academia.

I am telling the stories of the land through my exploration, and it's about the visual poetics inspired by the species and people of my hometown; It's about the value of humility and responsiveness; It's about how you feel.

* All the illustrations, paintings and photos in this document are original works of Song Tang.

Introduction



Myself

Song Tang is an illustrator and graphic designer from Yunnan province of China, he also has research experience of applied art and design. With a bachelor's degree of Visual Communication design from Yunnan Institute of Fine Art and a master's degree in Cultural anthropology from Yunnan University, Song has experience in design and visual art on one hand, and academic training of visual culture and anthropology on the other. Song's educational experiences and professional practices are deeply connected to the ethnic cultures of Yunnan (applied arts, poetry, traditional literature). He has done research and field works of ethnic groups and heritages. His aesthetics are largely inspired by local cultures, and some of his works are in the context of conservation of traditional literature and local crafts. The ecological knowledge in traditional literature is his recent point of interest.



The Province of Yunnan

The “land” in the context of this thesis mainly refers to the province of Yunnan, which is located in the southwest frontier area of China. The land now called Yunnan province is a land of history, and its civilization began to emerge as early as 200 B.C. Throughout history, many sovereigns had emerged on this land. The land of Yunnan is a place of cultural integration, owing to its unique geological location. There are multiple cultural and religious influences, including but not limited to: Theravada (Buddhism) from southeast Asia, Mahayana (Buddhism) from Tibet, Islam from northwest China, Taoist from central China, Christianity from Western countries and animistic ethnic beliefs from ethnic groups. The geological features of this land are diverse, from north to south, the elevation descends from nearly 7,000 meters to 70 meters above sea level. The terrain is generally mountainous with features such as snow peaks, mountain ranges, hills, plateaus and val-

leys. With diverse typology come various types of nature resource such as minerals, timbers and forest products. Wholesome ecosystems and rich species exist on this land, and the province is widely known for its diverse flora and fauna.

“There are 153 species of wild plants under national protection in Yunnan, accounting for 41.6% of the country; among the vertebrates distributed in Yunnan, there are 242 species of wild animals protected by the state, accounting for 57.1% of the country.”

- Lee Dezhu, Chinese Academy of Sciences



The Hani People

The Hani peoples are among the ethnic groups living in the south of the province, while also living in adjacent countries such as Vietnam and Myanmar. The Hani peoples in China have a bigger population than most other ethnic groups - 1.6 million. (chinahani.com, 2010) They have been living in this part of the province as early as the 8th century. The major livelihood of the Hani people is husbandry and hand-craft. The traditional Hani belief consists of ancestral worship and animistic belief. The Hani people do not have a written language but they do have oral traditions that differ from village to village.

The people from my childhood were of various ethnic groups. I have had neighbors and school mates that were from Hani ethnicity. They were some of the most humble and hospitable people I have ever lived with. One thing that I still remember fondly is how they loved music. One of my Hani neighbors was really into a kind of string instrument called “Sanxian”, he would play the instrument and we all ended up dancing. My Hani schoolmates were also the vocal type that did quite well in music class. The weekly market in the county was a major event, and people gathered together to trade and socialize. This was the time when the Hani peddlers put on their traditional garments, especially ladies and grandmas. I can still recall all the vibrant colors from the fabric they wore and how they stood out from the street crowd.

*“Ancient ancestors, hunting alone could not sustain their living,
gathering alone is not enough too.”
So, guided by the Maiden of the Crops,
They learned hole-digging from the mice,
Learned how to plow from boars in the woods,
and learned how to cultivate from the buffalos that enjoyed
rolling in the mud.*

- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”



The Poem

... 从前哈尼爱找平坝，
平坝给哈尼带来悲伤；
哈尼再不去找坝子了，
要找厚实的老林高高的山场；
山高林密的凹塘，
是哈尼亲亲的爹娘.....

*... Hani used to seek for plains,
But plains brought sorrows to Hani;
Hani no longer desire plains,
We want thick old forest in high mountains,
The lands among the mountains and the woods,
They are our dear mother and father.*

- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”

The legacy and historical materials of the Hani peoples reflect their centuries of harmonious relationship with the land. I have adopted some of their literature to guide my narrative explorations, as my lived experience has many intersections with the places, people, culture and species in the material. Among them are the epic poem “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”.

“Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”, if translated into English, would be “the arduous migration of the Hani People”. The poem depicts the historical migration of the Hani ethnicity dating back as early as 1,300 years ago. The narrative of the poem is chronological, and although there are no exact dates provided for any key points in the storytelling, anthropologists were able to deduce a vague time range for some of the key events in the poem. Some places mentioned in “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”

have real-life references while others do not provide enough evidence to research. The Simplified Chinese version of the poem was published in 1982 by the Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House, transcribed from the knowledge holders that lived in Hani villages of Yunnan by a group of anthropologists and field researchers. “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” is passed down from generation to generation by oral tradition. Due to the uncertainties of oral literature, throughout the years, the poem has developed into different versions by the knowledge holders of different villages, and there are divergences in the meaning of words, the characters and places. The published version of this poem by the Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House is by far the most comprehensive and complete, as the researchers have done a great deal of field work by visiting Hani knowledge holders and performers in different parts of the province.

“Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” consists of seven major chapters, and the narrative goes chronologically and geographically in the sequence of the migration, from the place of origin that is the southern part of Tibet to the final destinations in southeast Asia and China, with a total of six major way points that were recorded in the poem. The narrative is half-realistic and half mythical, the events are almost supernatural. One of the most notable threads in the narrative is the relationship between the Hani peoples and the species of the lands during the migration.



This Project

The project I am undertaking at Emily Carr University is a series of exploratory graphic narratives based on my lived experience and received knowledge of the flora and fauna of my hometown, Yunnan province of China. Through depicting native species and traditional ecological wisdom in a poetic way, I wish to convey the harmonious relationship of co-existence and mutuality to a diverse audience. I hope my storytelling explorations will bring to the audience a contemplation on their own relationship with the land.

The project is also an exploration of graphic narrative strategies that could be used to preserve traditional knowledge from literature and oral history. Creating the possibility of alternative ways to transmit the knowledge to people than the conventional, colonial ways (Latin names for species, data and Infographics, scientific illustration, etc). The traditional knowledge from this project comes from the poetry of the Hani peoples of Yunnan and also my lived experience. My explorations seek to convey the knowledge while retaining its local characteristics (places, idioms, dialects, etc)

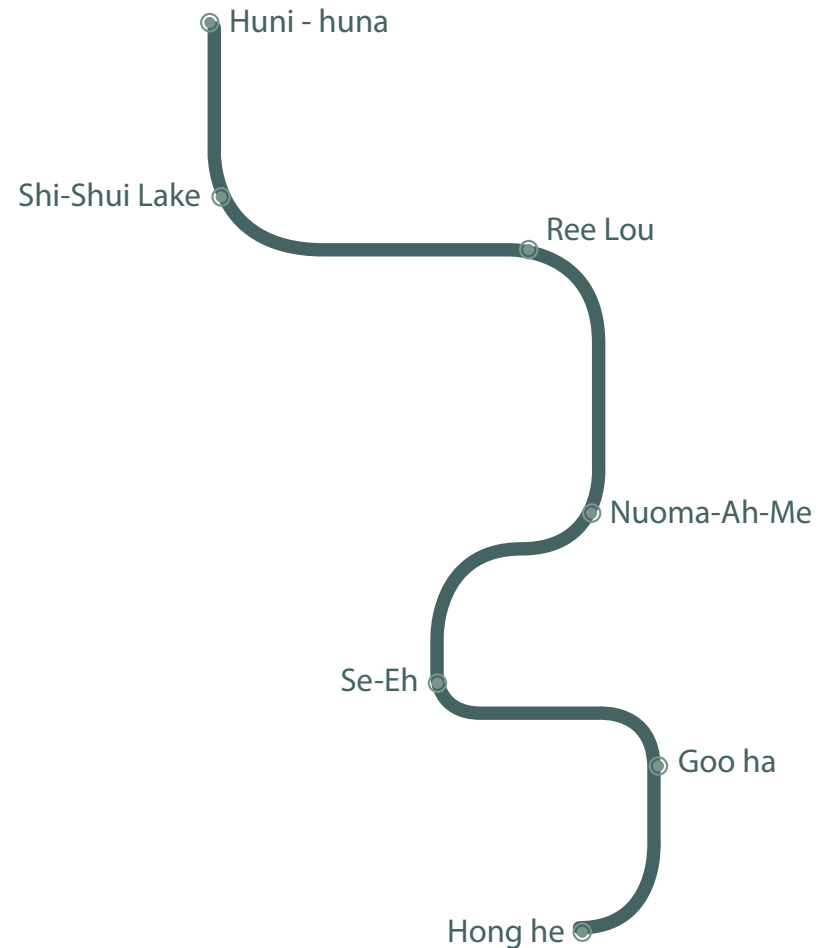
“Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” guides me through my narrative explorations. The poem has plentiful content of traditional ecological knowledge regarding the flora and fauna from Hani people’s traditional territories. The species, places and ethnic groups in the poem happen to be an important part of my lived experience as well, so my exploration is based on the knowledge from the poem and my own memory. It is an oscillating process between Hani people’s interactions with species and my own experience with the species.

with the poem as guide, specific questions to consider...

- how do the graphic narratives correspond with the narrative structure of the poem?
- the poem is lengthy, how do you select the content that guide your narrative explorations, what is your criteria of selection?
- how do you place your lived experience with the traditional knowledge reflected in th poem?

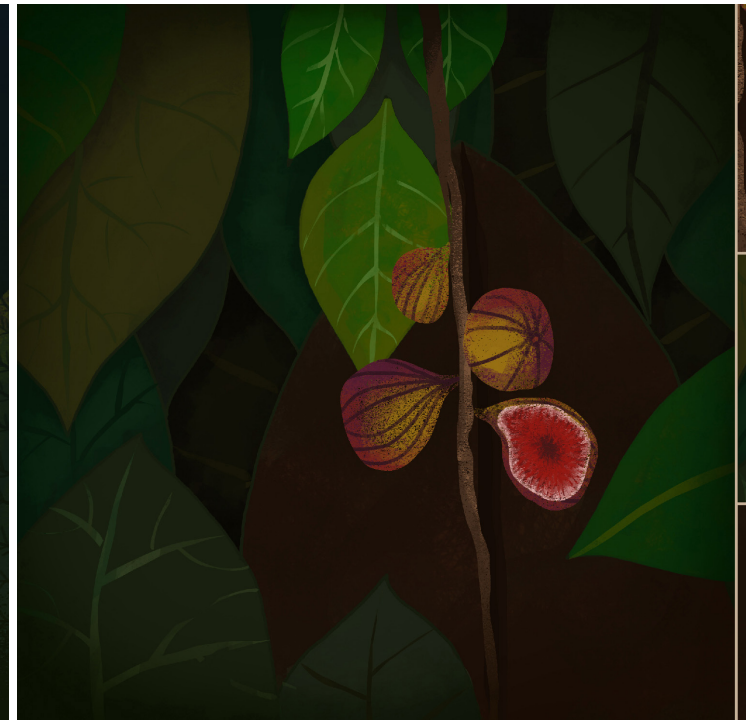
Stylistic Explorations in Summer

I began to look for the places mentioned in this poem with their actual spots on the map, some of them are the places I grew up. The migration all-together seemed to be a linear process, but side stories happened at every major stop of the journey. They are rich and dramatic, they are suitable materials for narrative explorations.



I spent time in the summer reading “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”. During my reading and researching of the places, characters and species in the poem, I found out that the flora and fauna mentioned, many of them I have experience and personal stories. I illustrated some of them to trace back my memories with the land. For me they belong to the shady forest and meadows I visited so many times, as well as to the mysterious stories in the poem.

- . Bamboo
- . Fern
- . Ficus



The end of poem brought me to the final destination of the Hani migration - Honghe county. This is where the Hani people and some other ethnic groups called home till this day. I also left there part of my childhood memory.

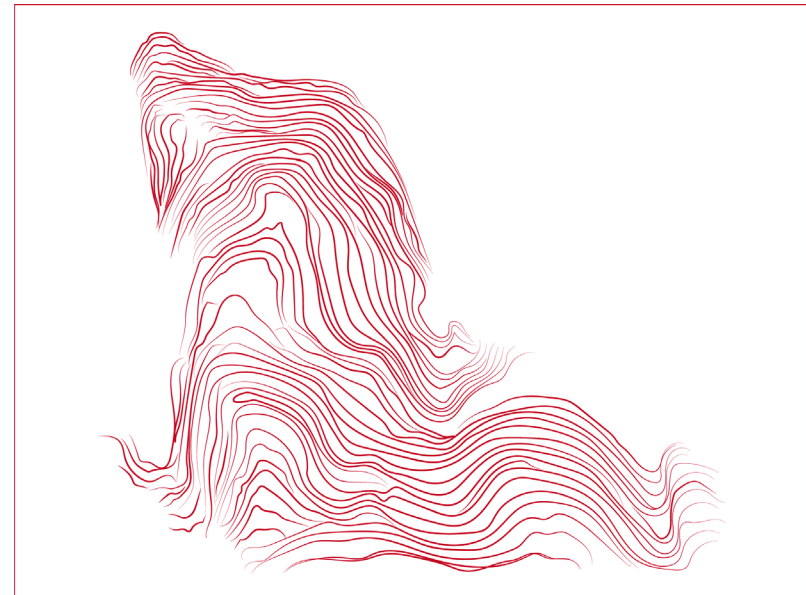


By studying the poem, I gained new insights of the relations of the Hani people and their living environment, such as how they choose their traditional land in favorable geological locations, and how the terrace paddy field works as an ecosystem that sustains itself through the circulation of water.



I was also fascinated by the endless terrace paddy fields with their beautiful curves. When viewed from above, they look like a topographic elevation map, but in this case it is not the machines, it's hundreds of years of people's responsiveness to the mountains that produced these lines, they are the curves of hardship and resilience.

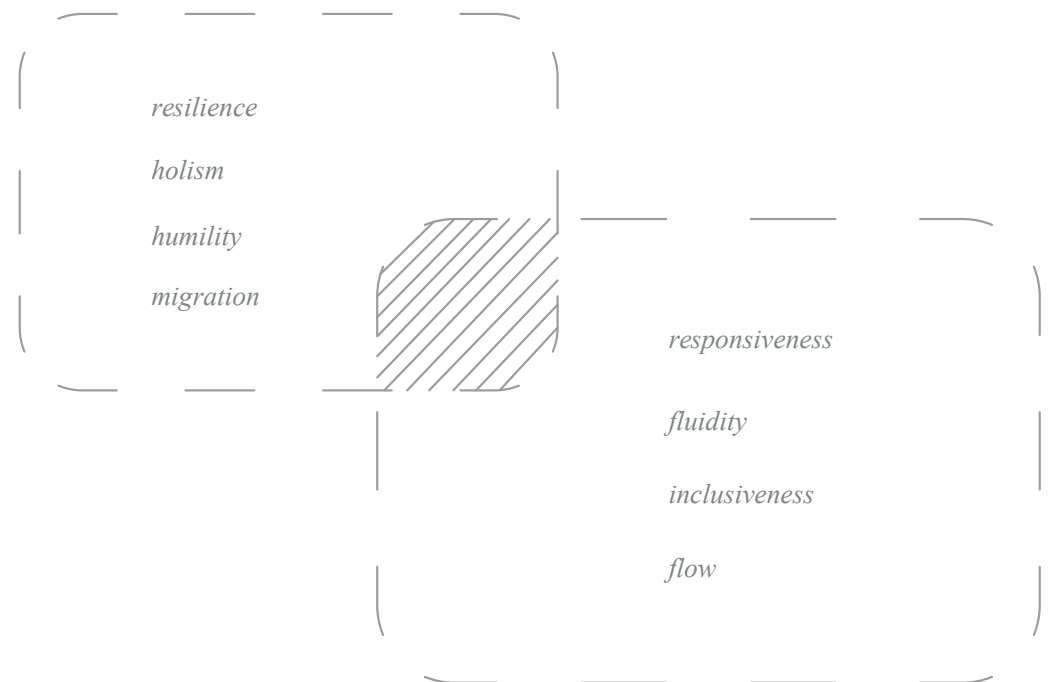
The force of the mountains is massive, and people would not go against them.



It seems to me, there is a connection between the curves of the paddy fields and the resilient characteristics of the Hani people, which is flowing throughout the poem.

I explored the idea of combining curves of the fields with some major events in the poem. The events consist of plague, wildfire, wars and reconciliation. This exploration is my attempt to visualize the inner struggles of the Hani people during the migration, with visual motifs from their traditional land - Honghe terrace paddy fields.

association in characters?



starve

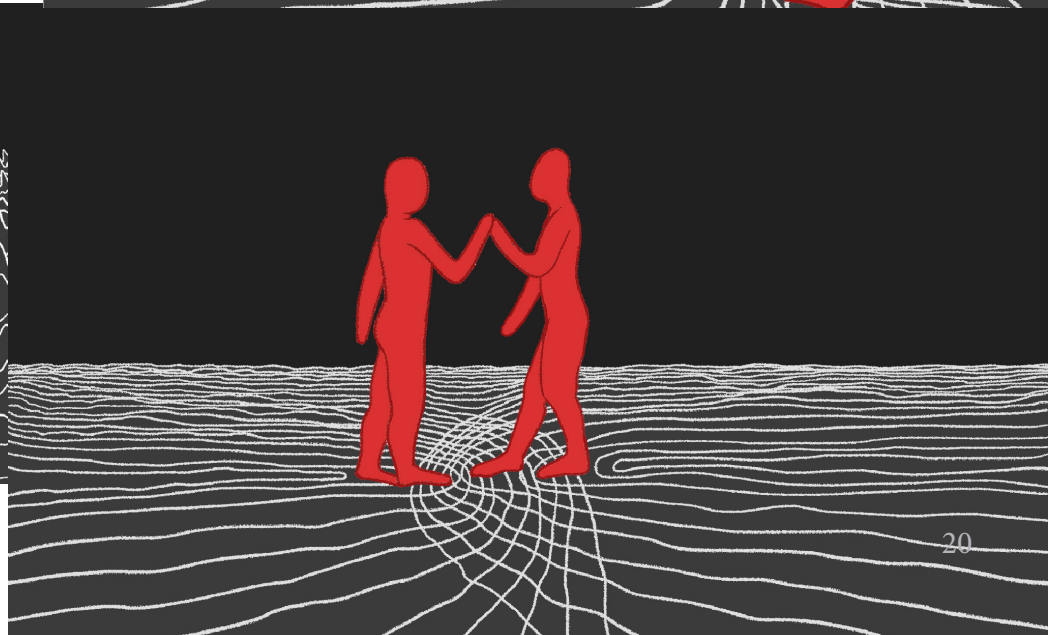
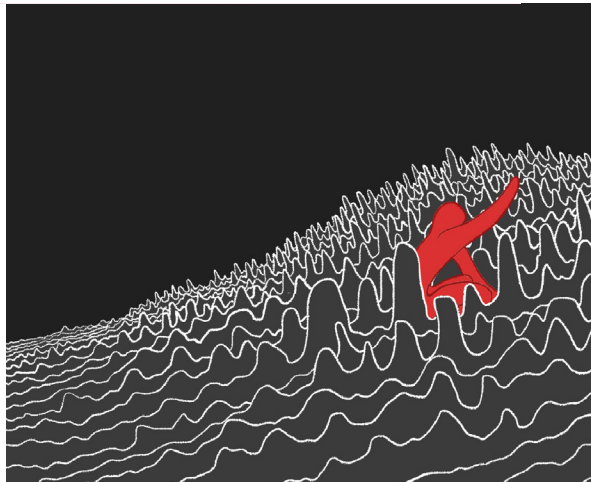
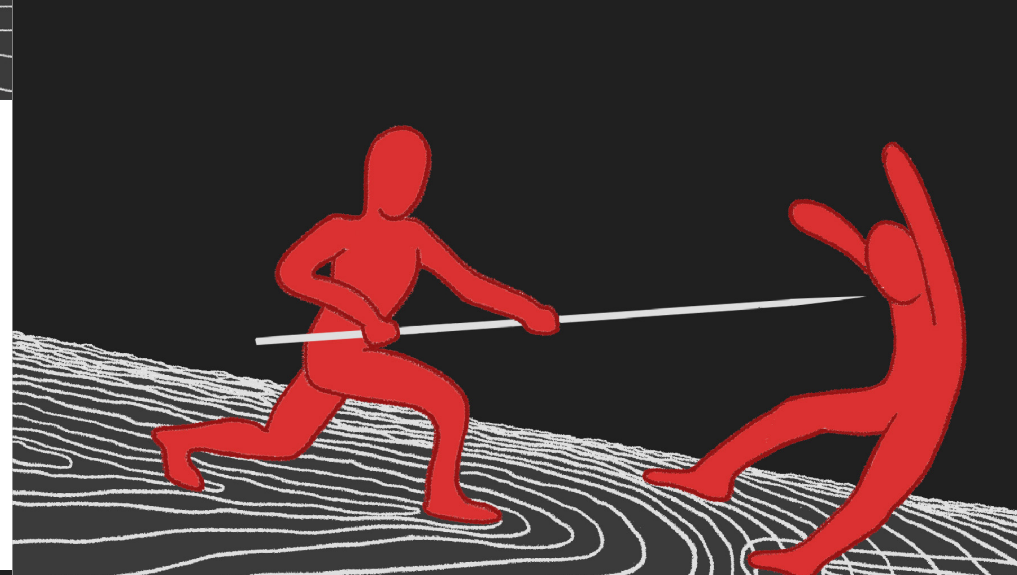
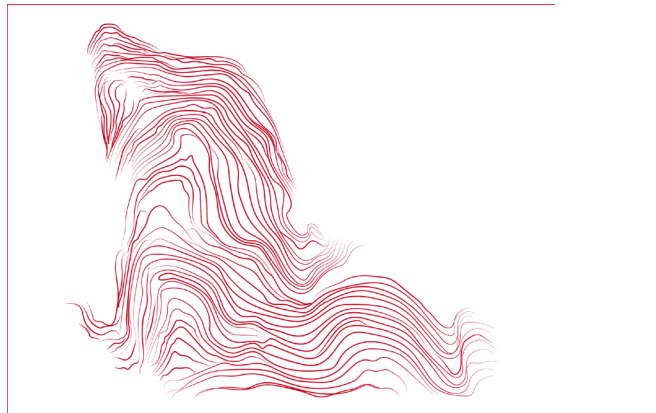
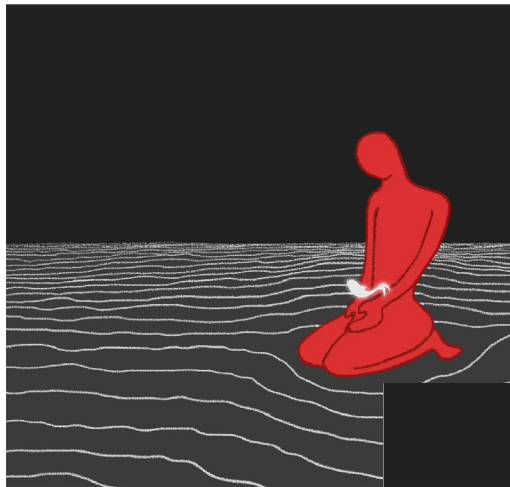
plague

war

fire

reconcile

...



years ago, into the night (a preface)

The jeep slowly travelling down the meandering road in the valley, the road seems narrower as the day gets darker, on one side of the road is a river, on the other side is a mountain. We do not see much traffic coming our way, nor do we see many people walking. Sitting at the co-driver seat of the jeep, I mindlessly listening to the pop songs on the radio and watching the fog-engulfing mountains far away, it is a day without the sun, the mountain ranges in the distance all look greyish green, occasionally there are little huts popping out of the corner of the road, they all covered with grass on the roofs and people seem gone. The air in the jeep is cozy, smells a bit like chips, I chat with the people in the back seat that haven't fallen asleep, we are talking about music in the radio. Outside, the day is darker and the fog begin to rise.

It is almost six in the afternoon, we are still travelling on the same valley road. The valley is getting narrower, we have the same river on our left, the mountains are close by on both side of the road, gradually, I do not see the mountains, I can only see cliffs if looking out of the window. The river on the left seems calm. At times, you see headlights in the distance, a car or two would pass us by.

We need to rest for a while before continuing on our journey. My uncle finds a beach full of pebbles to the left of the road, he gently pulls the jeep into the beach by the river. We turned off the music as he turned off the engine, suddenly there is silence inside the vehicle. we rolled down the window on our sides to let in some fresh air, the cool, breezy afternoon air begin to drive out the warm smell of chips inside, the cozy,

lazy atmosphere inside the vehicle is disrupted, we suddenly feel connected to the world outside the jeep, after hours of travelling. It is so quiet all around, the river is murmuring by our side, occasionally, I hear the faint engine sound of cars passing by, and everything is quiet again. We are alone by the riverside, we are resting in the middle of nowhere.

I get off the jeep, walking to the side of the river. The day is getting dark, and it's even darker in the valley. I watched the river flowing calmly, looking up, the mountains are all bathing in fog, the fog goes way up to the overcast sky. At some point, it begins to drizzle, the moist air is filled with tiny water drops, they are touching my skin, chilling and refreshing.

"Nothing is going on here" I talk to my cousin.

The daylight is slipping away, the valley is getting quieter. It seems that everything is at still. The silence fills every corner of the valley and we almost become part of it. It is somewhat isolating and I feel uneasy, I suddenly have the urge to disrupt this moment, like throwing a rock into a pond covered with duckweed.

"Wo-wo-wo--" I cried out.

"Woooo--" my cousin does it too, so are my uncle and sister. We cry, we sing, we curse, we let these things out of us the way we want.

I cried out as loud as I can, then I stop.

My echo disappears quickly, I lost them in the treetops that is soaked in the evening fog. The silence returns to the valley, more powerful than ever, I can almost hear the sound of the drizzle, or is it?

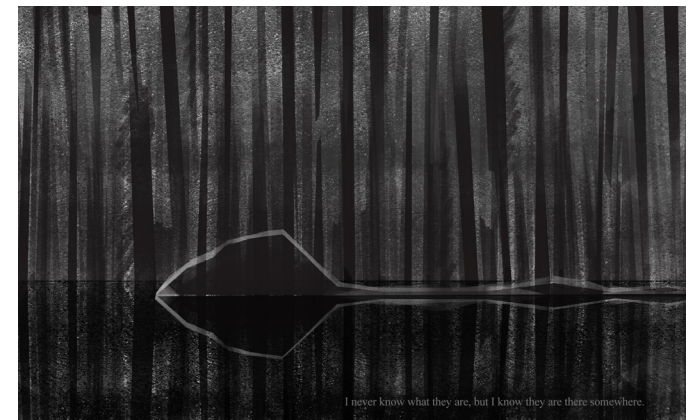
I fix my eyes on the forest across the river, they are darkish green, the crowns are reflecting the pale light of the day. They are still, the branches are still, the leaves are still, only the fog is moving.

Suddenly, I hear something.

It seems come from the woods. I hear it again, it is from the trees across the river, it must be a bird or something, I think to myself.

I hear the calling again and again, I know it is there, somewhere in the dark of the woods, somewhere in the fog, but I don't know exactly where, and what it is. After a while, I hear the sounds coming from other part of the woods, they are more distant, buried in fog. I don't know if they are communicating, I don't know if they communicate, I only know that deep in these woods there are something else besides silence.

The daylight is almost gone, the forests are soaked in a dark bluish grey, night fog is obscuring the trees. I keep hearing the sounds coming from different parts of the woods, I never know what they are, but I know they are there somewhere.



Years ago,
by a fireplace in a mushroom house



瞧啊，今晚的月光这样明亮，蘑菇房里的人们像过六月
年一样欢腾。
我们正合唱一唱，先祖怎样出世，
我们正合讲一讲，先祖走过什么路程，
每支歌都是先祖传下来的，
是先祖借我的舌头把它传给后代子孙！

*Behold, tonight the moon shines bright, people in this house are
as merry as if it is festival time.
It is the right time that we tell our stories of creation,
It is the right time that we trace the roads our ancestors once
travelled,
Each and every song is the heritage of our ancestors,
Me, as the knowledge holder, will pass down the stories to our
off springs.*

- "Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po" Preface

Chapter 1

The Mountains of Huni-Huna

在那远古的年代，天边有个叫虎尼虎那的地方，
红红的石头像天火燃烧，黑黑的石头像黑夜笼罩，
奇怪的巨石成千上万，垒成了神奇巍峨的高山。

Long, long time ago, there is a place called "Huni-huna" far, far away.

Red, red stones like fire burning towards the sky.

Dark, dark stones like night engulfing the world.

Countless strange stones piling up.

Formed a mysterious and majestic mountain.

- "Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po" Chapter 1



Huni - huna

Introduction

The first chapter of the poem describes the origin of the Hani peoples, it begins by describing the rugged landscape called Huni-huna (Land of red and black stones), a place of gigantic mountain ranges, a place where the first people are created. Hani scholar Shee-Jun-Chiao, who is specialized in the research of the sociology of the Hani society, worked with anthropologists to deduce the possible geological location of “Huni-huna”. (Shee, 1984) The place in the poem is possibly on the Tibetan plateau today, around where the mountain range Bayan Har is located.

The poem has described the mountains of Huni-huna as formidable, with red and black stones, desolate and mysterious. The mountains are the first things that are created on the earth, by the gods of heaven and earth. Gradually, there are rivers, follows by the creation of species like tigers, deer, boars and birds.



One thing that is intriguing is the mentioning of sisal and banana plants in this chapter of the poem.

麂子在剑麻丛里啃草，刺猪在芭蕉林里游荡。

Muntjacs are grazing in the sisals, porcupines are wandering among the banana plants.

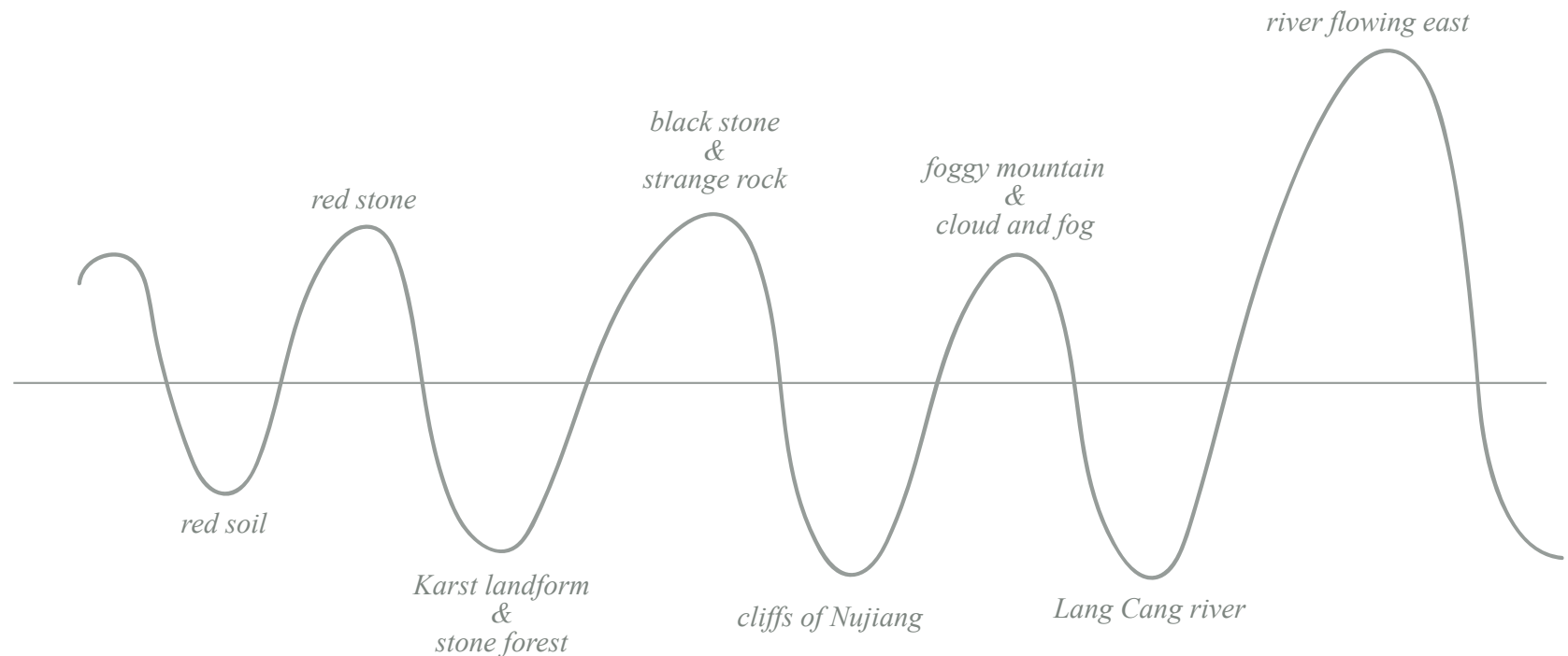
The climate of Tibetan plateau is too harsh for these two tropical species to exist. So why are they in the poem? It could be the divergence that emerged during the generational passing on of the poem, or it could simply be the personal touch of the knowledge holder. For me, it is a sign that this place called “Huni-huna” is semi-mythological as the way points mentioned in the later parts of the poem.

Narrative Exploration

The poem begins by describing the mysterious place of Hani origin - “Huni Huna” in a dark and exaggerated manner, the narratives about colors and shapes provide me with a very rugged and bold visual impression, The narrative of this part is filled with strong visual motifs about shapes and colors, I’ve adopted them into my visual depiction:

- 1, the black stones and the red stones.
- 2, majestic mountains with fog and cloud engulfing the tops.
- 3, the rivers that runs alongside the mountains.

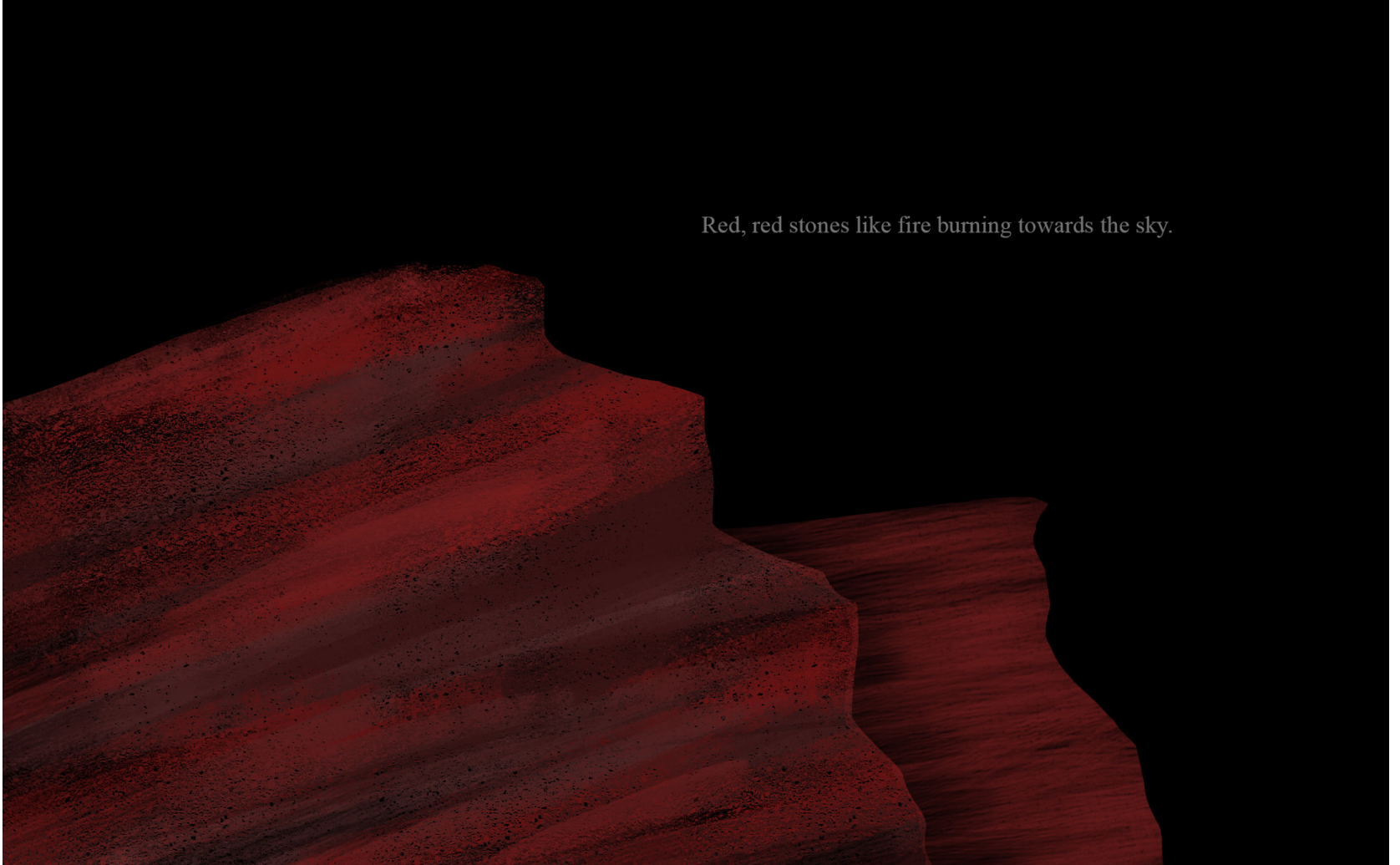
My instinct with a world that is lost in history is like black and white photography, stripped of redundant information such as colors. The poem gives me the information of black and red colors in stones, the colors form such a strong contrast. The impression of black and red colors from nature, from my memory, belongs to the soil and the rocks of Yunnan. The red soil is the most iconic type of soil in my province, and the black stones are those forest of stones that eroded by water, they are typical Karst landforms. In my depiction, I adopted the natural features of my memory to the mysterious place called Huni Huna.

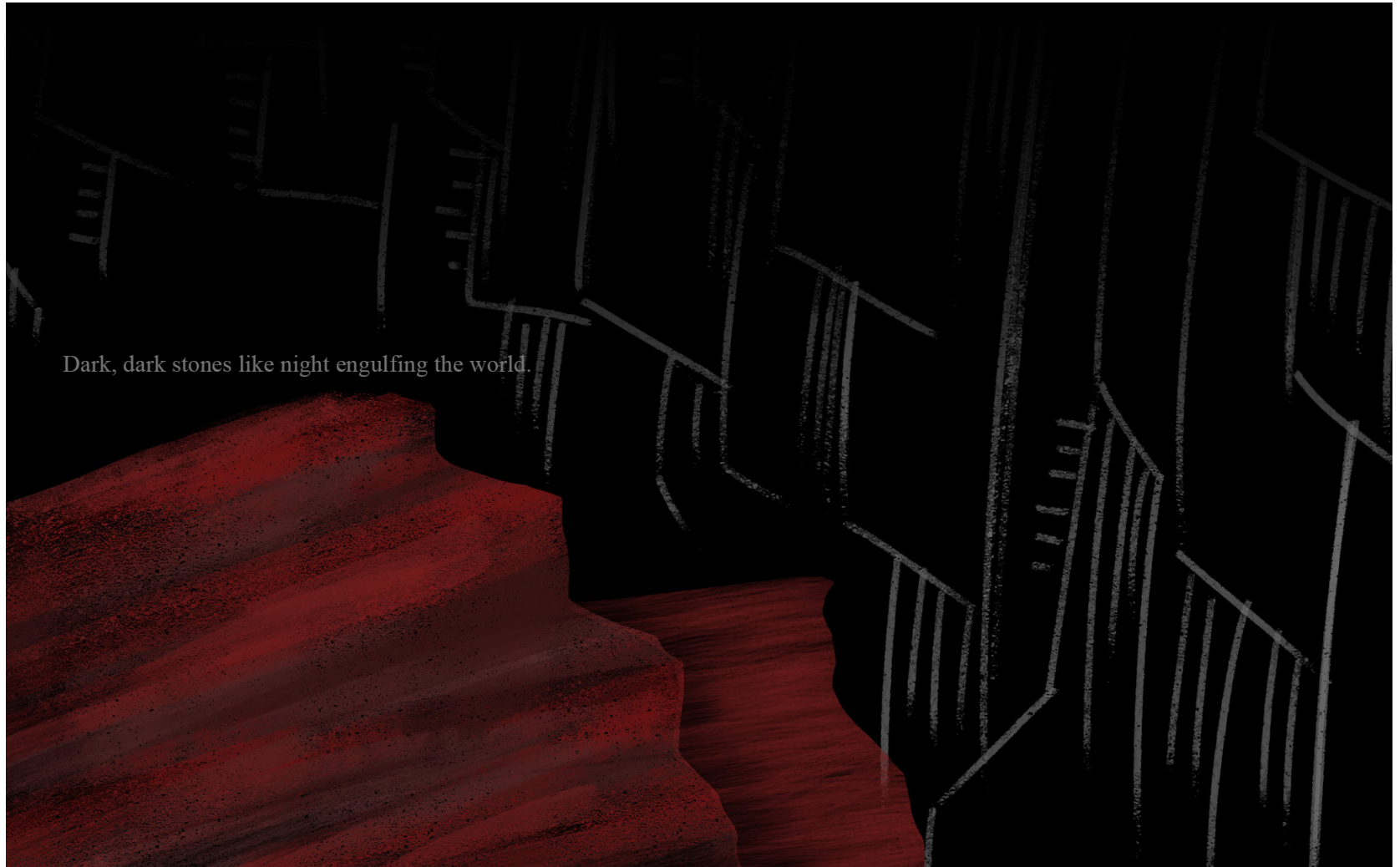




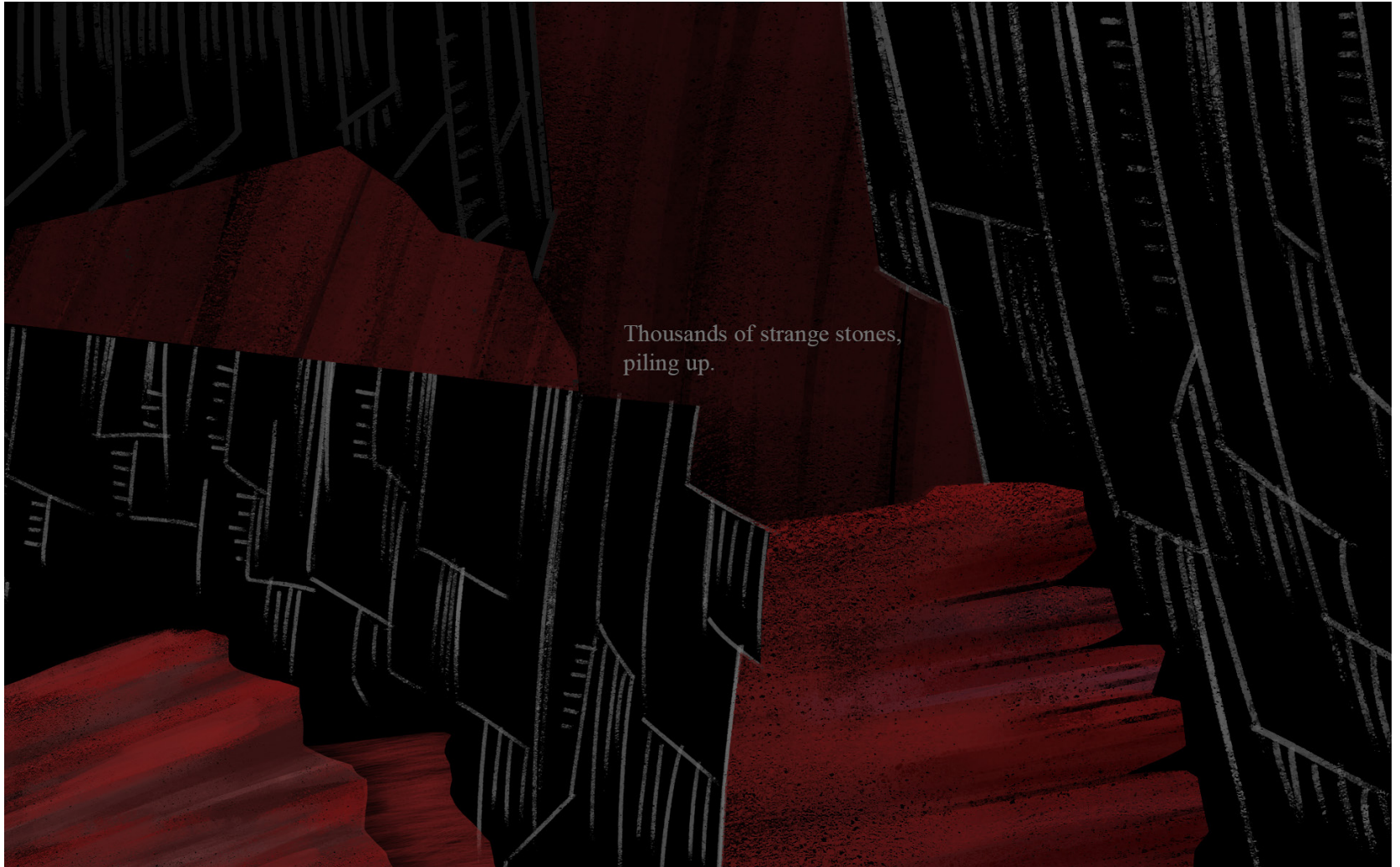
Long, long time ago, there is a place called “Huni Huna” far, far away.

Red, red stones like fire burning towards the sky.



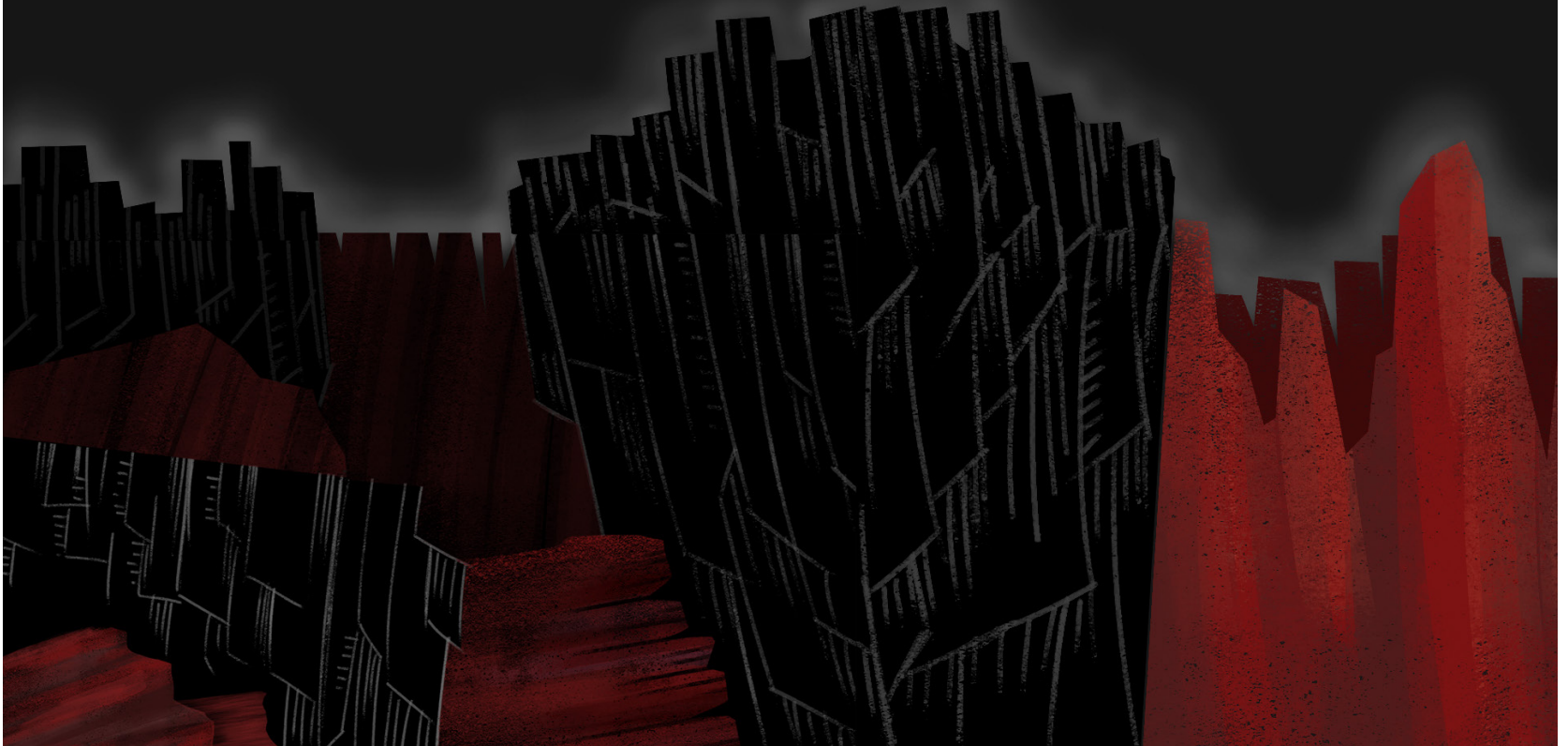


Dark, dark stones like night engulfing the world.



Thousands of strange stones,
piling up.

Formed a mysterious and majestic mountain.

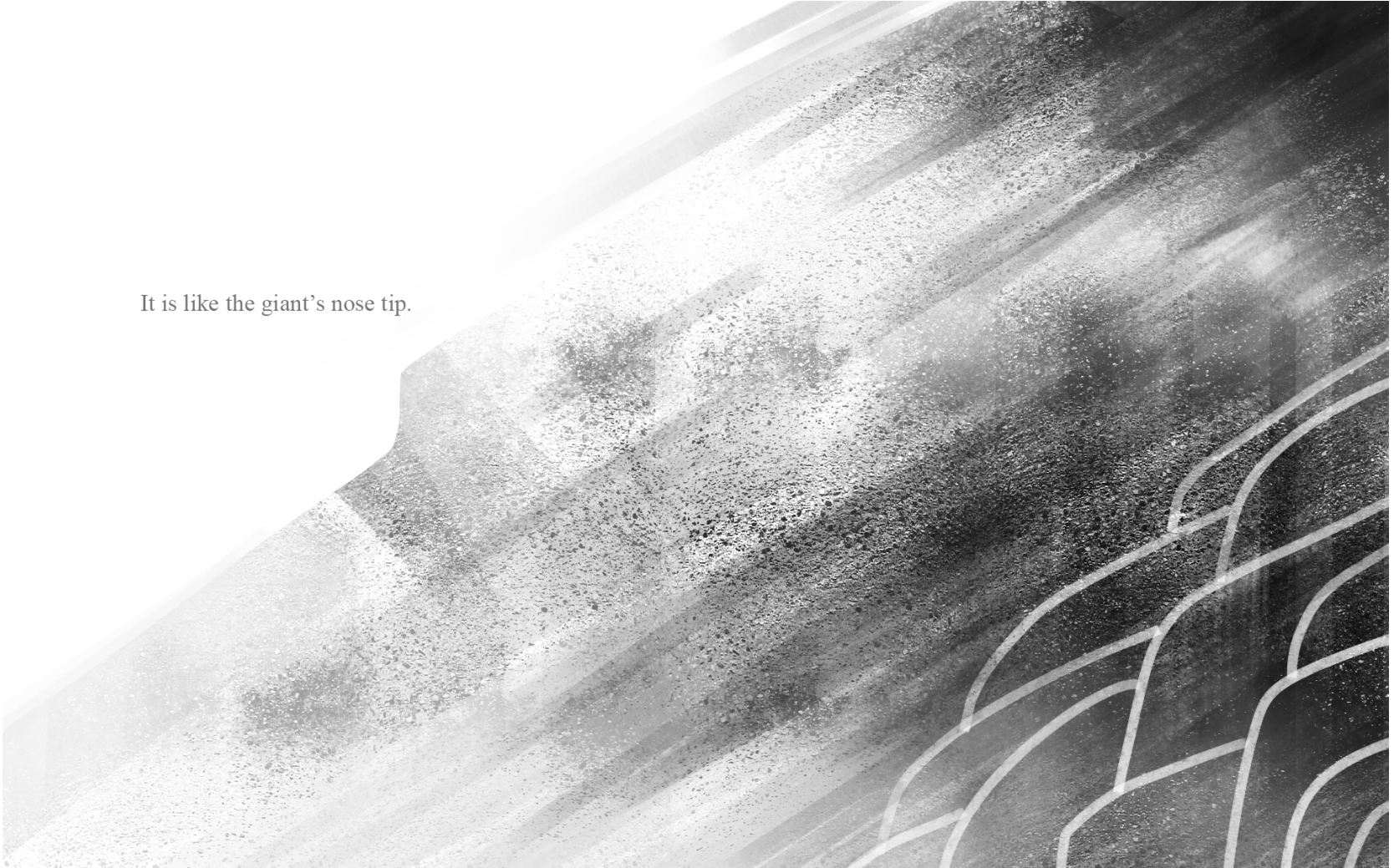


“Huni Huna” is both mysterious and desolate.



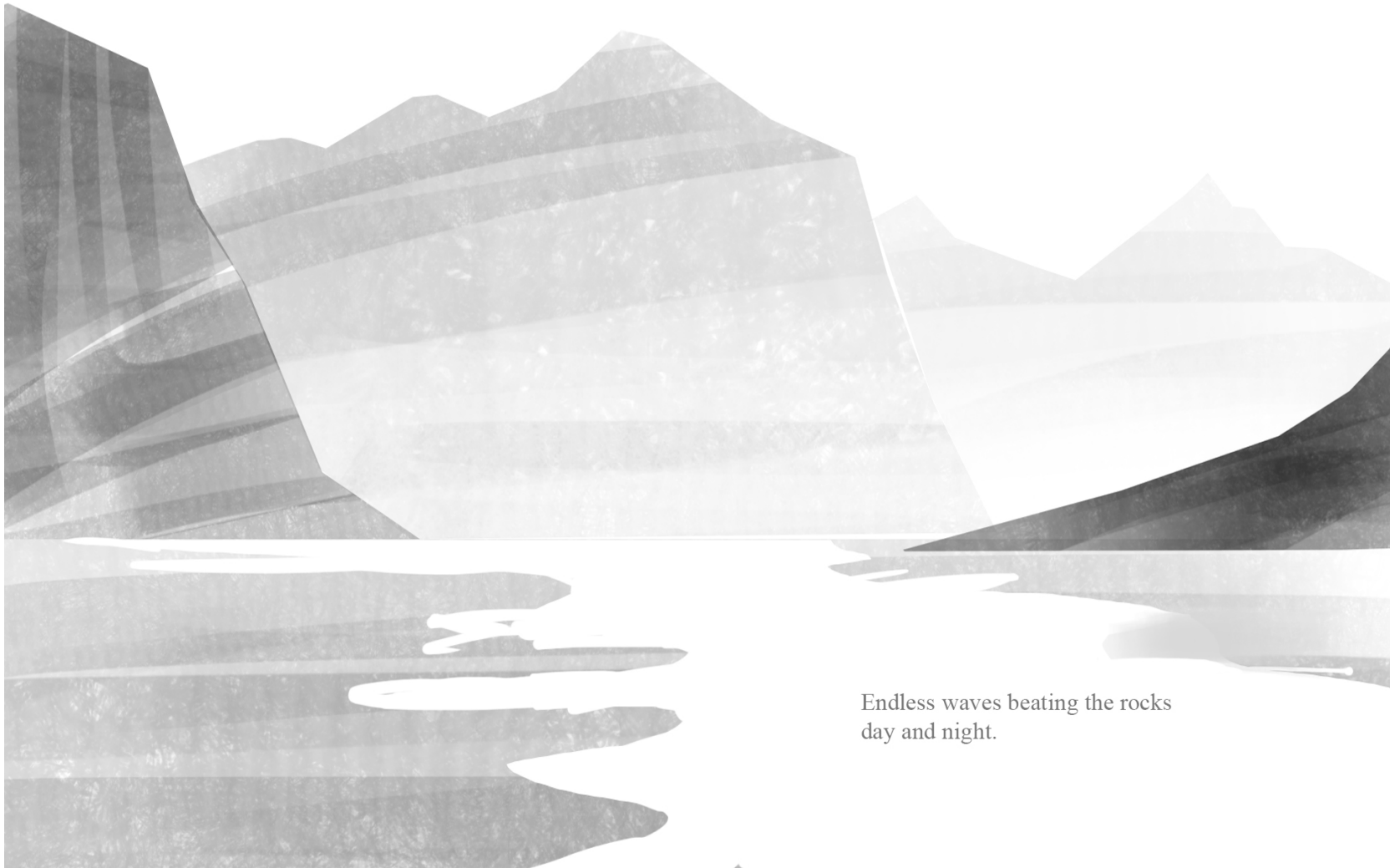


It is like the giant's nose tip.





The mountain is accompanied by two rivers.



Endless waves beating the rocks
day and night.



It seems that,
the mountain also has tears of sadness.



Two rivers flowing to the east,
day and night.

姨妈：红土很黏，一下雨水都透不下去，不透气又没什么肥力，只能种一点包谷，鸡枞就长在包谷地里。

我：一下雨一脚的红泥巴，稀告告的。

Aunt: Red soil is sticky, water can't seep through it very well when it rains, nor does air. It is not the fertile type either, people usually grow corns on it. You can always find Jizong in these red soil corn fields.

鸡枞
Ji Zong
Chicken fir
(albuminosa fungus)

Me: When it rains I get all these red soil on my shoes, xi gao gao de.

Very Muddy

Chapter 2 Shi-Shui Lake

七十七双眼睛四方看，七十七只手指指点点，
大湖边山岭连着山岭，密林里野兽见人不慌。
七十七双耳朵一齐听，七十七双脚走遍山冈，
大湖静得像睡着的小娃，山林把大风拦在远方。

*Seventy-seven pairs of eyes looking around, seventy-seven
hands pointing around,
By the lake, mountain after mountain, the beasts in the woods
do not panic when they see people.
Seventy-seven pairs of ears listening around, seventy-seven
pairs of feet walking the ground,
The lake is quiet like a sleeping baby, the forests shield the lake
from gale.*

- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” Chapter 2

Introduction

According to the end of the first chapter, the Hani ancestors departed Huni-Huna because of the declination of food resources. The people travelled down south to the Shi-Shui lake, which is located at the area around the boundary of Tibet and Sichuan. The lake was located in the heart of the mountains, surrounding by mountain ranges from all sides, so the wind could not disrupt the tranquility of the water.

The Hani people were described as hunter-gatherers at this stage, and they begin to develop the idea of sustainable food resource in this part of the poem. For instance, the hunters killed the mother boar and brought its litters back to the settlements; A female ancestor called Che-Nu came up with the idea of collecting the seeds of wild plants and sow them into fertile soil, thus the Hani began the practice of taming and cultivation. The stories reflect the emerging practice of sustainable agriculture among the Hani people.

The later part of the chapter takes a down turn for the fate of the Hani People. The hunters set fire to the woods in order to besiege the preys, the fire spread out of control and destroyed a large portion of the forests surrounding the lake. As a result, the water of the lake deteriorated and reduced. The Hani could not sustain their agriculture, they eventually had to set off to find another habitable land.

烧过七天七夜, 天地变了模样。
老林是什虽的阿妈, 大湖睡在老林下方,
这下大风吼着来了, 黄沙遮没了太阳,
大湖露出了湖底, 哈尼惹下了祸殃。

The fire that lasted seven days and nights, changed the landscape.

The old forest was the mother of Shisui lake, the lake was sleeping at the foot of the woods.

Now the gale comes roaring, sand is obscuring the sun.

The water is leaving the lake, Hani peoples have caused a disaster.

- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” Chapter 2

The end of the story reflects the consequence of excess human interference to the land - an ecological disaster. In the poem, the Hani people acknowledged the consequence as due to their irresponsible actions of hunting, the acknowledgement contributed to the humility in their relationship with the land.

Narrative Exploration

In this chapter, the stories reflect a growing consciousness of Hani people regarding the environment and resources on their land. There are activities regarding the sustainable development of food resources such as taming and cultivating, there is also the consequence of irresponsible behavior towards the land. The narrative of this chapter is more dramatic than the last chapter, more species are involved, multiple events are happening in the environment surrounding the lake. I wanted to test out a non-linear way of telling the stories. The lake is the center of the Hani land in this chapter, it is also the center to all activities. I started with the depiction of the general environment surrounding the lake. This is supposed to be the main thread of the visual narrative, so I put the image of the lake in the center of composition.

The key activities in this chapter such as hunting, taming and cultivating were happening in the context of the lake and forest, they were happening at various spots around the lake, concurrently or not. I decided to use a non-linear method to do the visual narrative.

The general composition looks like all the motifs are put together randomly, but they are in the same context. There are details I adopted in order to maintain some visual integrity of the narrative, for example, the tone of the illustrations in grey scale with human characters in red; The depictions of vegetation in most panels with the same style.

lake as centerpiece

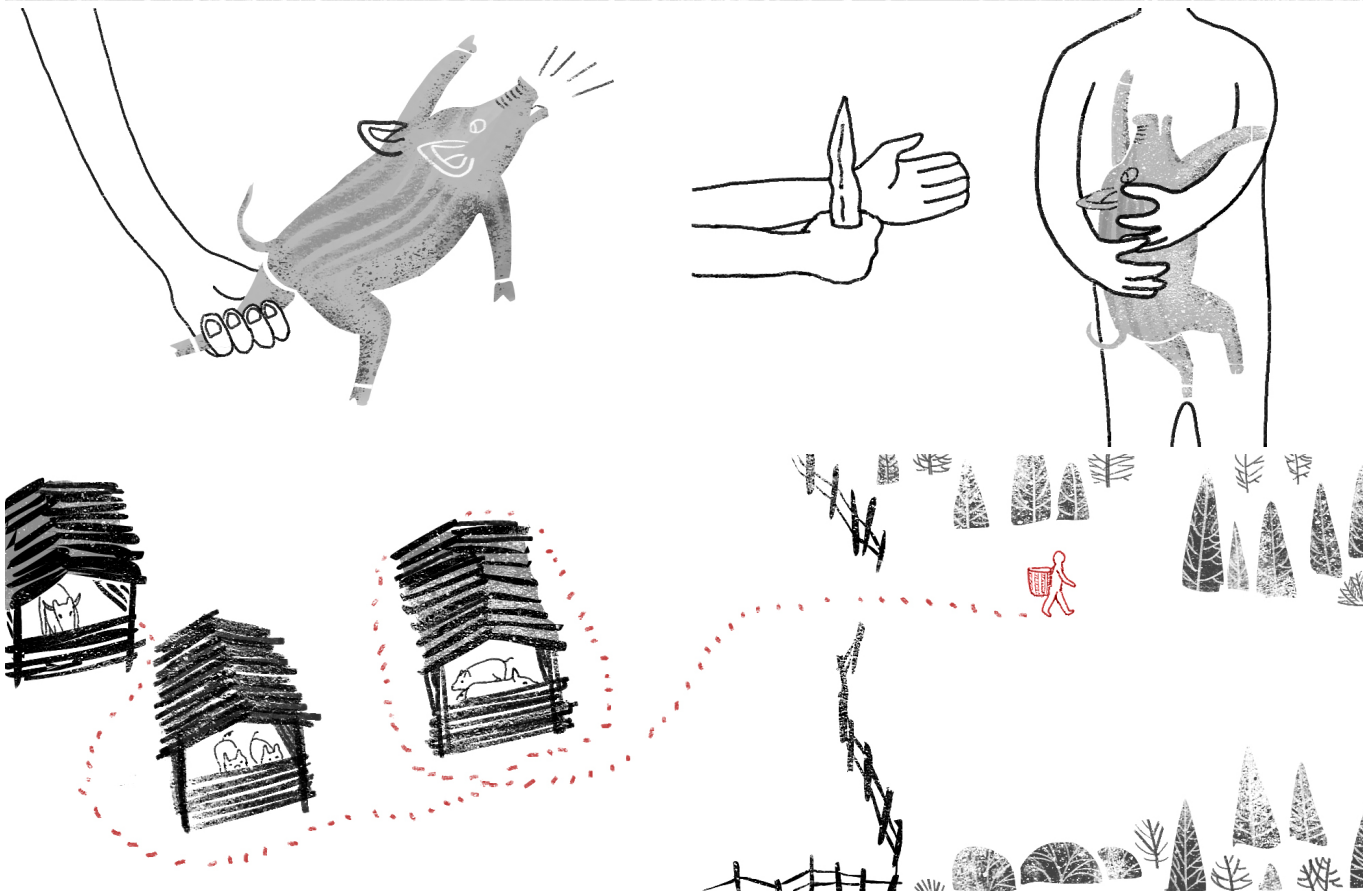
lake as context

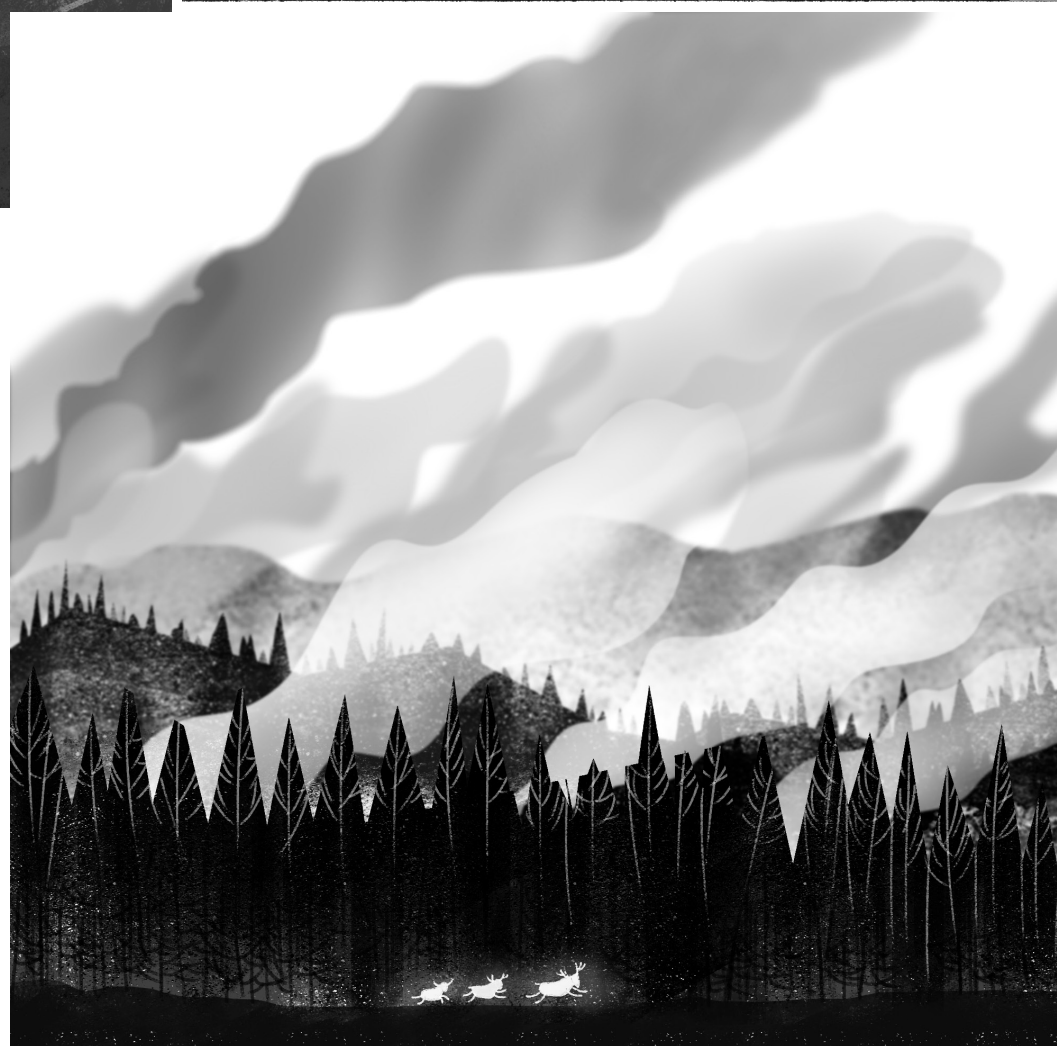




drama

visual integrity





around
the
lake
things
are
happening

舅舅：再不走，山毛驴儿来把你叼起跑啦！

Uncle: If you don't follow along, Shan Mao Lver will come to fetch you!

山 毛 驴
mountain furry mule
(big dogs that stroll the countryside, usually friendly)

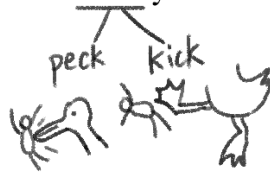
外婆：我们后面养着两只大县鸡，我带你去看，这个鸡的尾巴最漂亮了。

Grandma: I'm raising two big Xian Ji at the back of my house. Let me show them to you, they have gorgeous tails.

县 鸡
County chicken
(castrated rooster)

外婆：不要克逗鸭子，小心它zhua你。

Grandma: Don't tease the duck, it will Zhua you.



Chapter 3

Ree Lou



Ree Lou

“哈尼人啊，我的儿孙！
我们再不用到处飘游，再不用摘野果充饥肠！
快牵起我的手，去看马尾一样耷下的谷穗，去看芦苇秆
一样壮的荞麦。
哈尼的儿孙们，能吃苦才得甜。”

*“my fellow Hani, my sons and grandsons!
our days of wandering around are over, we are no longer depen-
dent on gathering wild fruit!
please hold my hands, let us go see the grains hanging like horse-
tails;
let us go see the buckwheat as strong as reed.
my fellow sons and grandsons, sweet will come after bitter
work.”*

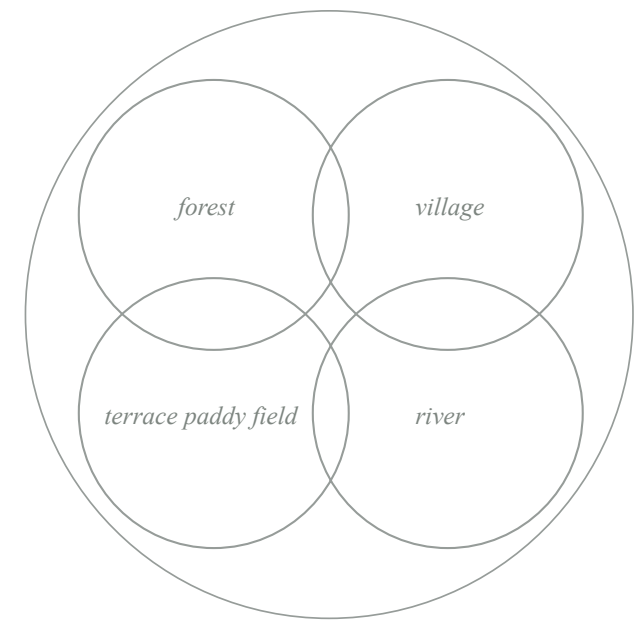
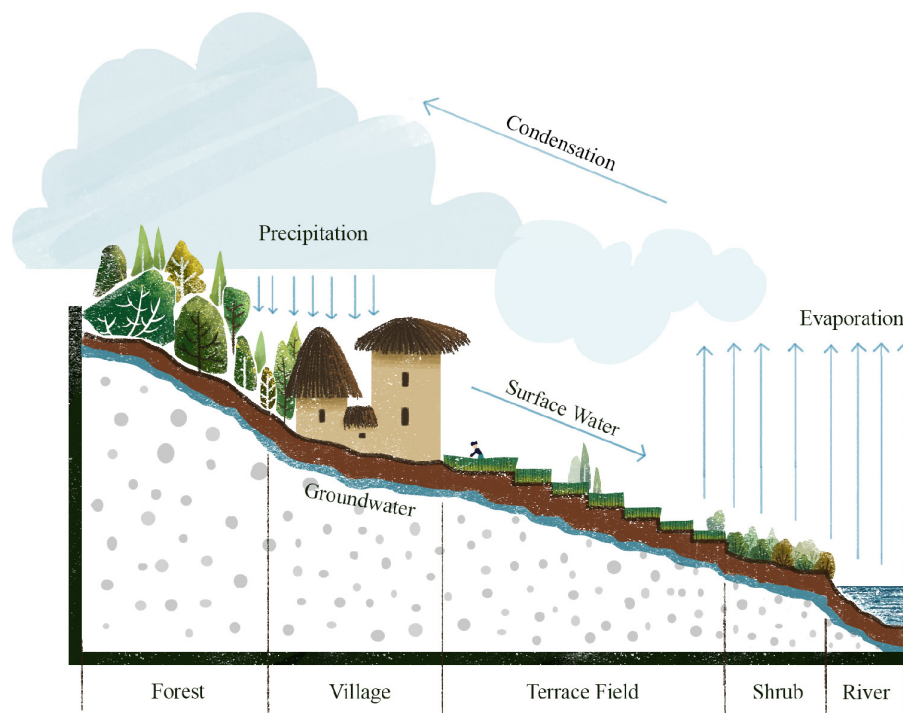
- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” Chapter 3

Introduction

In this chapter, the Hani people departed Shi Shui lake area and entered a land called Ree Luo (Land of pouring rain). According to the migration map, the land is probably located in the area of West Sichuan Plateau. It is the transitional area between Tibet and Sichuan, a typical “stair down” in topography with an obvious descent of elevation. From this point, the Hani people continued south till they reached southeast Asia.

In the poem, the land of Ree-Lou is a meadow situated on the side of a mountain. Hani people discovered suitable ways of building villages and cultivating fields on the hillside. They began to cultivate terrace paddy fields in big quantities, this form of agriculture became the iconic form of production among Hani people, and is still widely adopted till this day.

The terrace paddy field of Hani people is a system of water circulation, a fully developed example of such system integrated forest, paddy fields, village and river.



Narrative Exploration

The traditional ecological knowledge in the terrace paddy field systems is a very important part in the agricultural practice of the Hani people. Traditionally, Hani people would schedule their daily and yearly events based on the activities in the field.

The Hani people schedule their agricultural activities based on the behaviors of the species. By observing the seasonal behaviors of animal and plant species, they deduced a rough time table to plow, sow or reap in the paddy fields. It is an indigenous calendar. I decided to base my visual narrative on the species activities in the paddy field system.

From another traditional Hani poem - “Husbandry in Four Seasons” I found detailed descriptions of species activities in four seasons of agricultural production, the poem covered the behaviors of the species and the phenomenon of the climates, during ten months of productions in the paddy fields. The interrelations of the species are intriguing, all the mentioned species are in the same context, as in the ecological system of the terrace paddy fields. I sorted out the species according to the habitats in the ecosystem - paddy fields, forest and village.

河坝里先发芽的是什么树?

河坝里先发芽的是杨柳树。

高山上先冒头的是什么草?

高山上先冒头的是蕨蕨草。

寨边樱桃开花，

沟边索可玛依（索可玛依：七里香花。）飘香，

山顶妥底玛依（妥底玛依：红杜鹃花。）怒放，

河坝攀枝花染红树梢。

what trees sprout first in the river valley?

willow trees sprout first in the river valley.

what grass germinate first on the mountain top?

ferns germinate first on the mountain top.

cherry flowers bloom near the village,

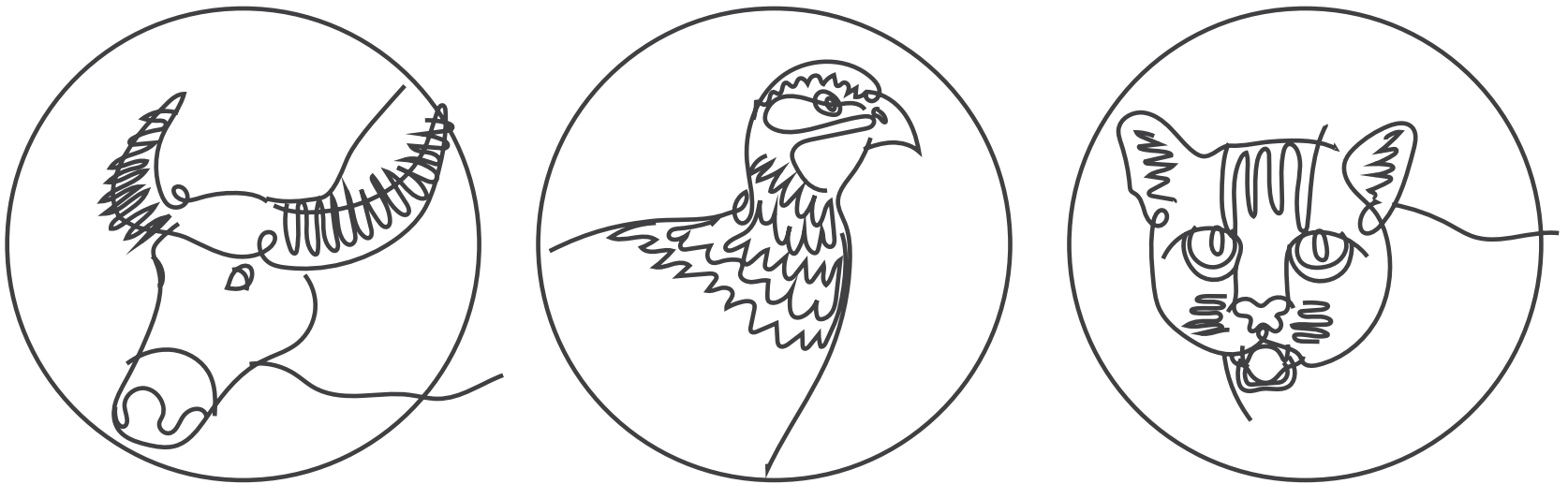
by the brook, Soke-Mayi (orange jasmines) sending its fragrance,

on the mountain top, Todi-Mayi (red rhododendrons) blooming like fire,

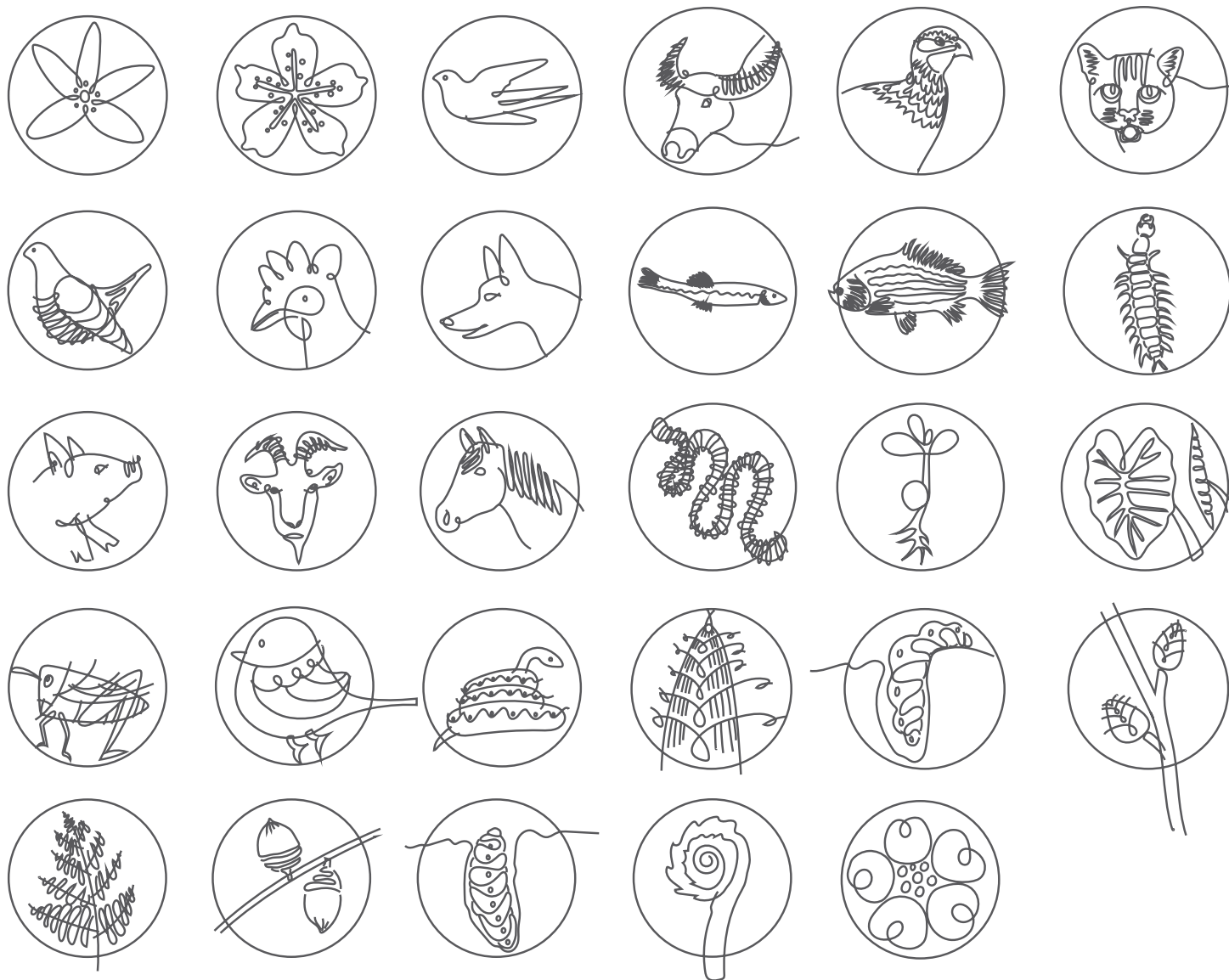
in the river valley, bombax flowers colouring the tree crowns red.

- “Husbandry in Four Seasons”

So the species of the paddy field system, is what I based my exploration on.

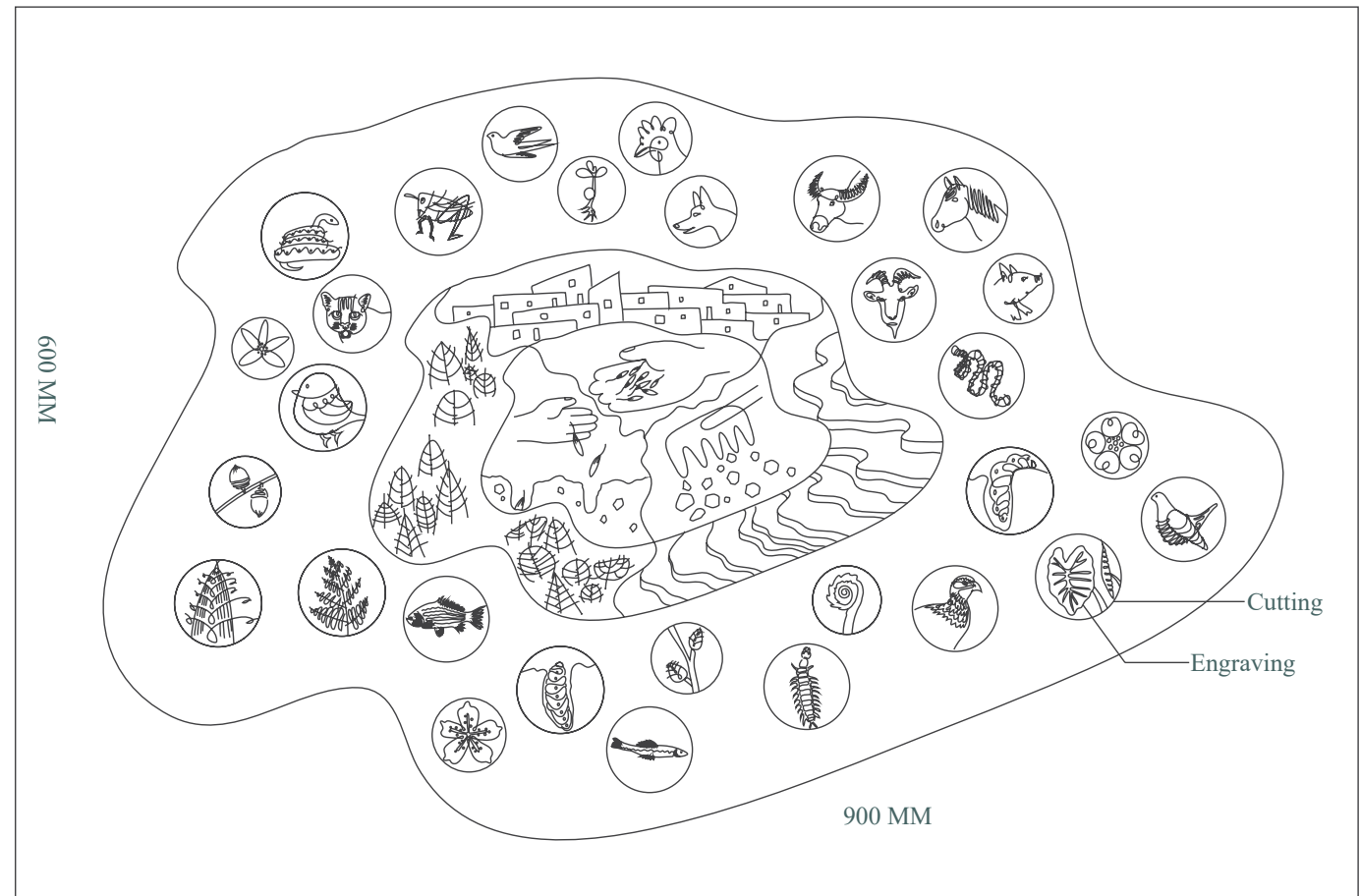


The interactions of the species are intriguing, many of them are related in one way or another, as in the ecology of the terrace paddy fields.



As a playful attempt to enrich the experience of the narrative, I wanted to adopt material practice as an aid. Inspired by the style of the second narrative exploration, I thought about transform the species into separated but connected pieces. The most durable and natural materials I am familiar with is the wood, after inquiring with faculty members, I decided the laser cutting shop on campus is a cost-effective way of cutting curvy shapes and engraving delicate patterns.

I wanted people to interact with the pieces while learning the knowledge of the land, so it is important that the material be light and easy to manage. Plywood turned out to be a decent choice, so I did the pattern design of all the species and put them to the cutting machine.



interrelation of things
prototype

prototype





correspond with the poem

playful reading



外婆：小瓦雀喜欢在墙洞里做窝

Grandma: Xiao Wa Que like to make their nests in the holes on the wall.

小瓦雀
little tile bird
(a kind of sparrow)

?: 麻栗果生吃涩口，我们采下来之后先把它晒干，再炒一炒。

?: The fruits of the Mali are bitter if ate raw, so we dry them under the sun first before we scramble them, that will get rid of the bitterness.

麻栗
dotted nut
(fruit of Sawtooth Oak)

舅妈：龙爪菜上面长毛，吃之前用热水烫一烫能把毛去掉一些，还能去掉苦味。

Aunt: There are furs on the Long Zhua Cai, wash them in hot water before cooking, that will get rid of some of the furs and bitterness.

龙爪菜
dragon claw weed
(fern sprout)



Nuoma-Ah-Me

Chapter 4 Nuoma-Ah-Me

神赐的诺马好地上, 哈尼又把蘑菇房兴建。
惹罗的蘑菇房盖到诺马, 先祖又把新的式样增添。
两层的房子又多建一层, 矮矮的耳房站在旁边,
房顶修成平平的晒台。
老人爱去烤太阳,
小娃爱去摔大跤,
女人爱去做针线。

*in the land of Nuoma bestowed by gods, Hani once again built
their houses.*

*From Ree-Lou to Nuoma, the ancestors updated the style of
their homes.*

*One more floor is added to the two-story houses, with addition-
al rooms on both sides,*

and the roofs are flat platforms to dry the crops.

Seniors liked to go there in sunny days,

Kids liked to practice wrestling there,

women liked to do their embroidery there.

- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” Chapter 4

Introduction

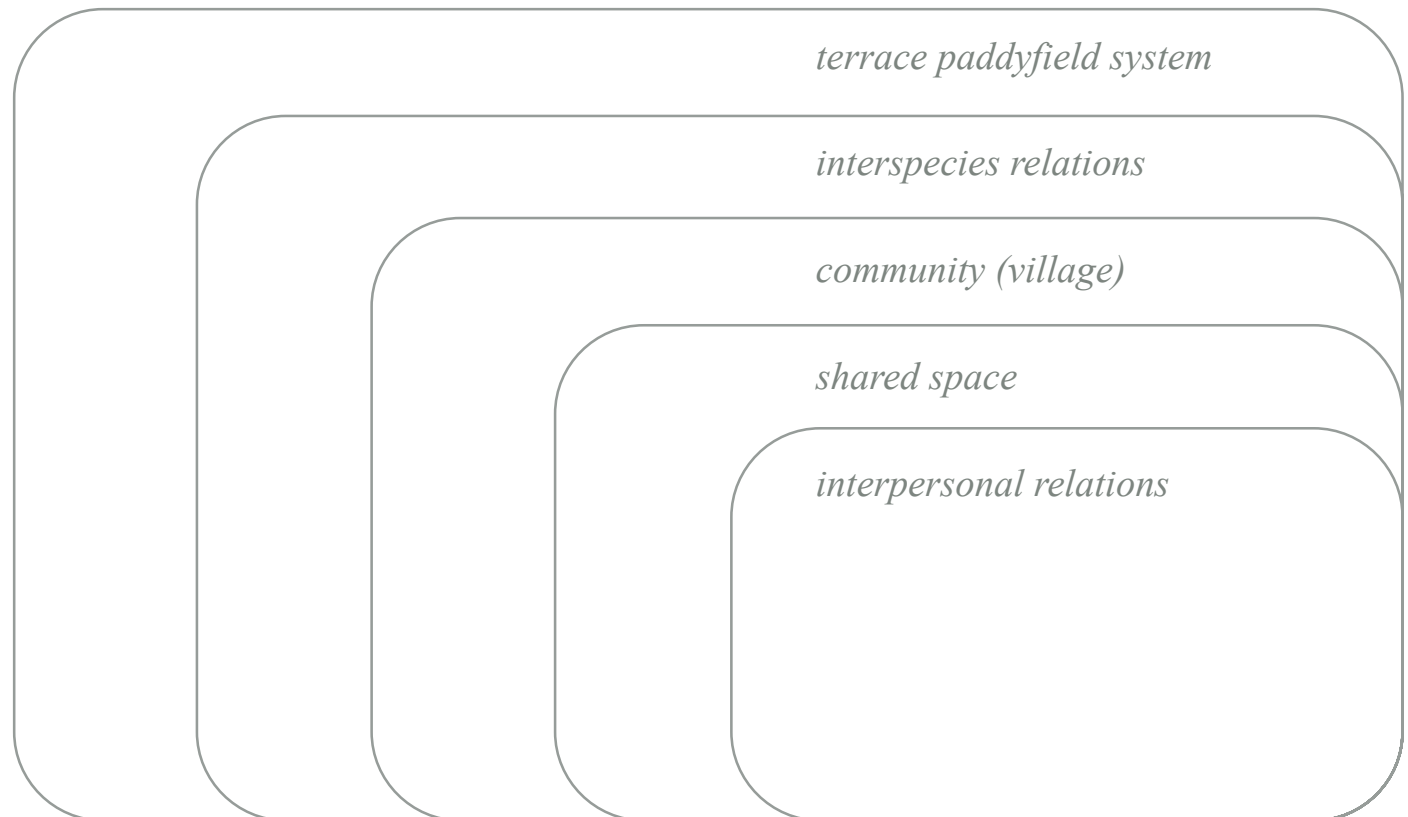
Hani continued to settle in Ree Lou until a major plague struck the place, causing major loss of life and damage to the agricultural system. The people had no choice but leaving Ree Lou to find another suitable home. They travelled down south into the valleys of south Sichuan, and found a fertile land between two rivers which they called “Nuoma-Ah-Me”.

Hani people thrived in the land of Nuoma-Ah-Me, their population grew steadily and new villages were built. In this relatively steady period of migration, the Hani people had the opportunities to refine their agricultural systems and homes. An iconic style of architecture started to emerge during this period of time - The Tu Zhang house (house made of rammed clay adobes). A Tu Zhang house is made from materials entirely from the land - bricks from a mixture of clay and straws, and timbers were used as pillars and beams. A typical Hani village consisted of tens or hundreds of Tu Zhang houses, they offered descent durability and cover from the elements.

Hani peoples at this stage typically build their villages on the slope of hills, in order to leave the fertile plains at foothills for cultivation. A The villages on the hill slope utilized the receding terrain. As altitude develops, the architectures took the form that resembles the terrace paddy fields.

<http://image.naic.org.cn/uploadfile/2018/0102/1514862290940255.jpg>

A village full of Tu Zhang houses is a tight knit community. Because of the grading terrains which the households are located, there is barely enough room to build a yard or a garden. To resolve the space issue, a Tu Zhang house typically has a flat rooftop that served as a place for daily activities. In the village, the households are so closely built together that a lot of communal spaces are created through the connection of the rooftops.

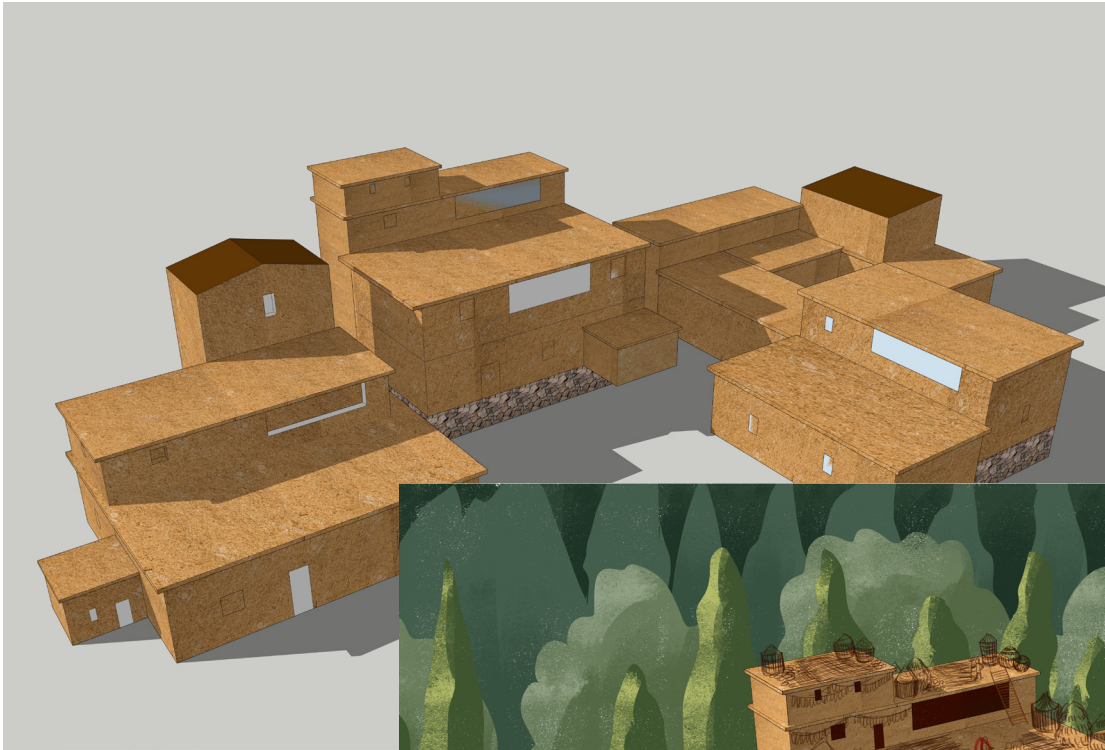


Narrative Exploration

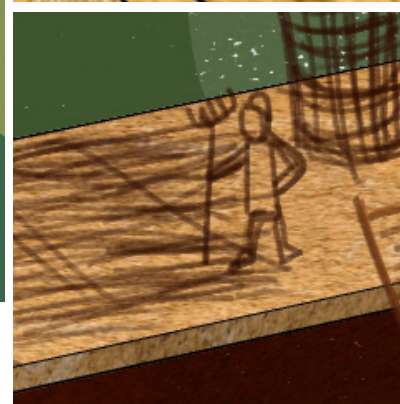
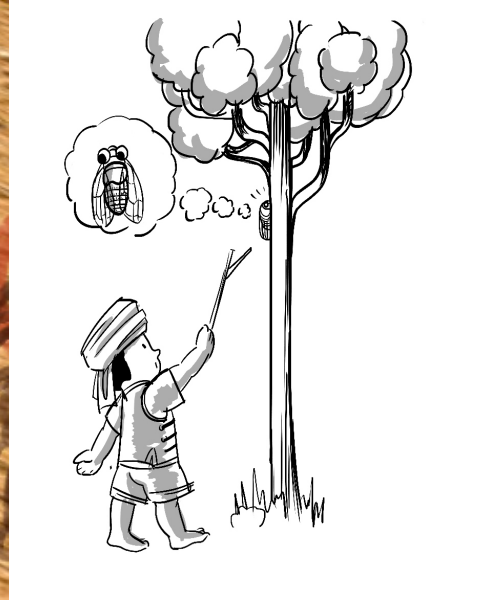
The village full of Tu Zhang houses is a major inspiration for my narrative exploration. The layout of the community symbolizes the ecology between each member of the village. The harmony with the land in this sense is not limited to the relations between human and other species but also included interpersonal relations between the members. The forming of collective spaces, the sharing of collective values, the mutual trust is reflected through the daily activities of Hani people that happened on the rooftops.

I created a miniature version of the village through 3-D modeling, the models are then integrated into a 2D digital illustration. In the poem there are descriptions of people's activities on the rooftop platforms, I recreated some of the activities.

The narratives happened in a day of the autumn season, people are doing their daily routines on the platforms of the houses, the kids are chasing each other, women are doing embroidery works, men are putting the grains to dry, seniors are enjoying the sunshine. I tried to put the emphasis on people's connections in a family or a neighborhood context. Viewing from above, all the activities are happening simultaneously, each character is accompanied by a short comic strip - a close-up of what they are doing. There is no sequence as which comic strip for the reader to begin with, there are multiple entry points to begin the narrative.

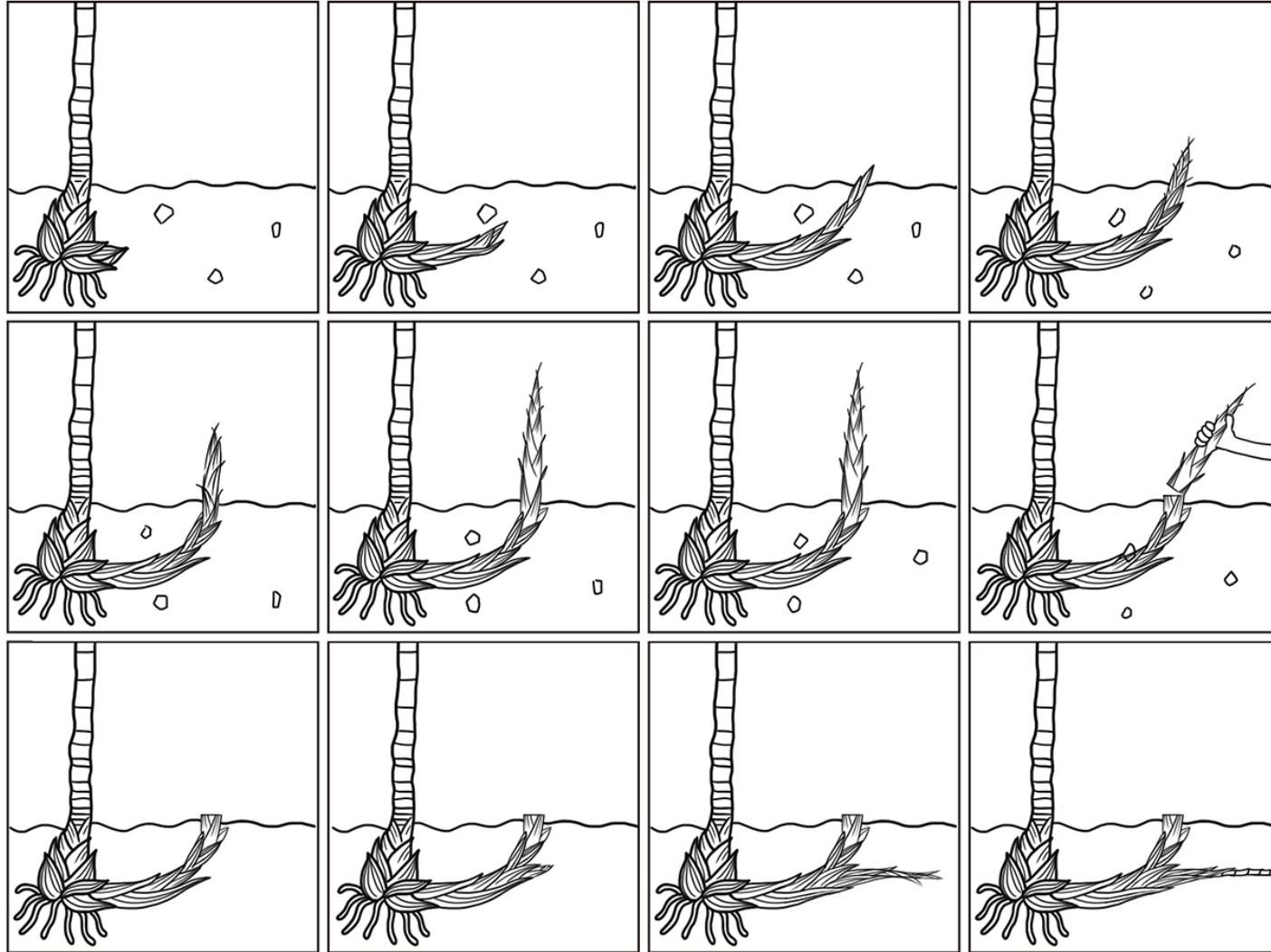


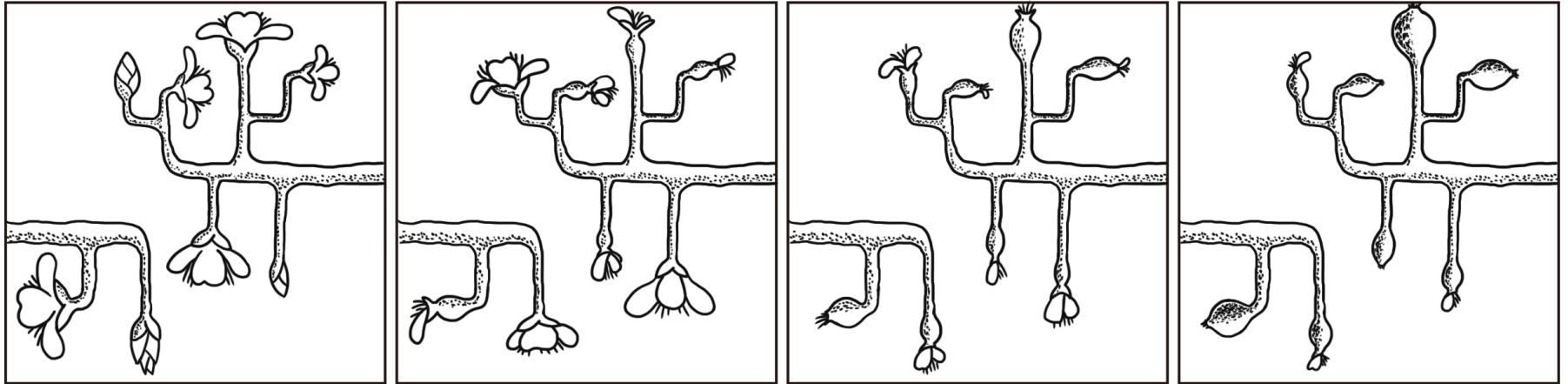


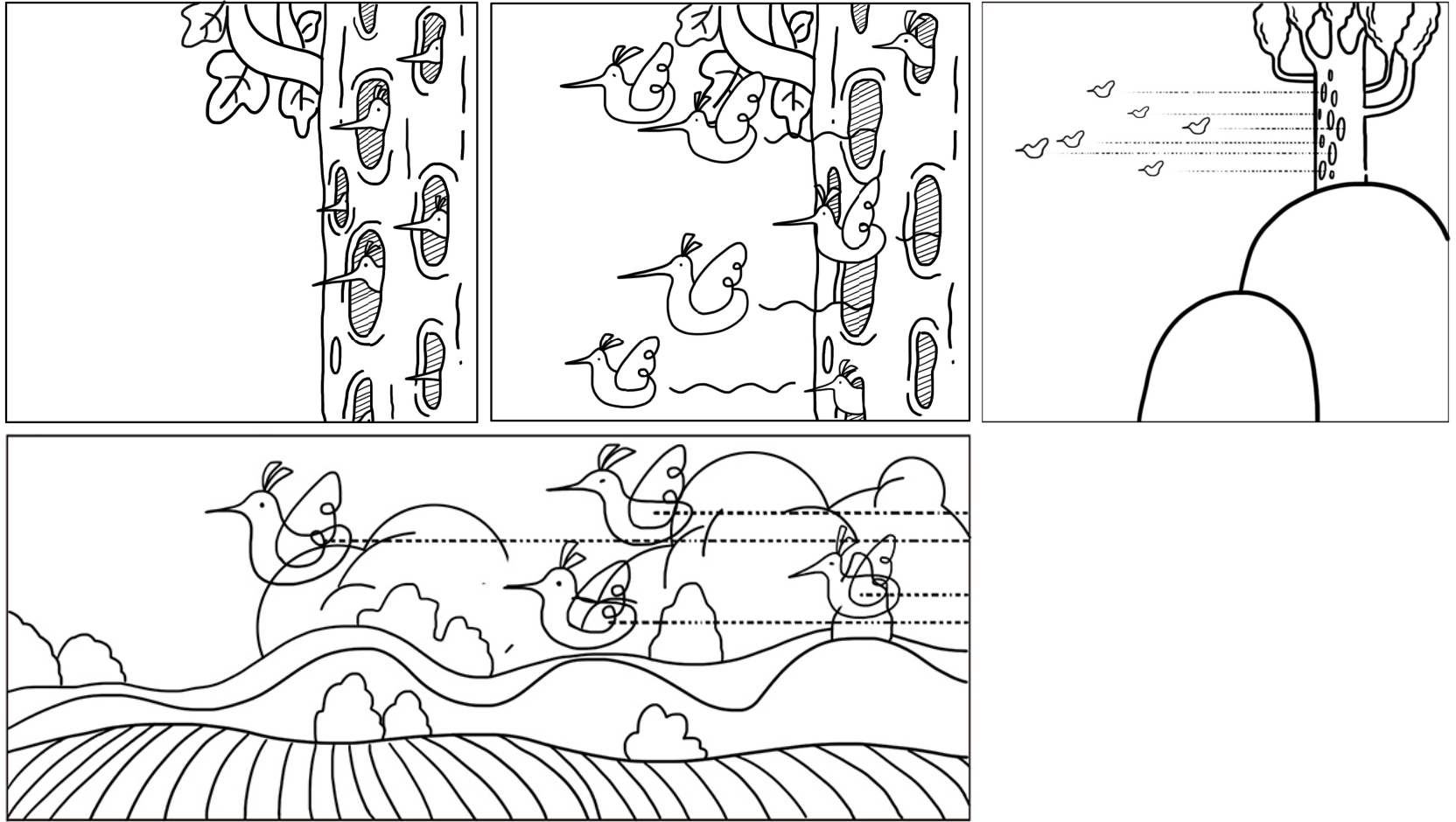


layout of architecture

people's movement
people's relations







高高的房子新落成，
谷雀就来祝贺寨人，
扇动着棕片般的翅膀，
来把勤劳的主人叫唤；
花花的喜鹊也来搭伴，
领着小儿搬来旁边。

*shortly after the houses were finished,
the sparrows came to congratulate the people in the village,
flapping their brown coloured wings,
and calling their industrious masters;
the colourful magpies were also coming together,
lived next to the houses with their children.*

- "Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po" Chapter 4

我：为什么土基房的墙壁总是黑了黑漆漆的？

Me: Why do the walls of a Tuzhang House always seem scorched?

舅舅：新房子盖好之后都要在墙角支一堆火，为的是把泥巴墙里的水分烤干，房子就更结实。

Uncle: For a newly built house, they put fire pits at the foot of the walls, in order to dry the moist clay bricks. The walls become more steady after that.



Chapter 5

Se-Eh

难怪今日哈尼的在处，
三月的街子都有一个，
先祖赶过的色厄街子，
是哈尼三月街子的亲娘。

*In the lands of Hani everywhere,
the Market of March is preserved,
the street market of Se-Eh,
is the mother of the Hani market.*

- “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” Chapter 5

Se-Eh



Introduction

The Hani people departed Nuoma-Ah-Me because of warfare. They continued their migration down south until they reached the land of Se-Eh, a land by a great lake which is adjacent to the city of Dali today. In the land of Se-Eh, they coexisted with the local ethnic group called “Ha-Eh”.

The most notable activity for both the Hani and Ha-Eh peoples in the poem, was the Street Market of March. The lively marketplace happens in spring every year, where people from nearby villages got together in the village of Ha-Eh to trade local specialities. The merchants filled the streets and they were of great variety. The Hani people hence kept this tradition of spring market for their own tradition.

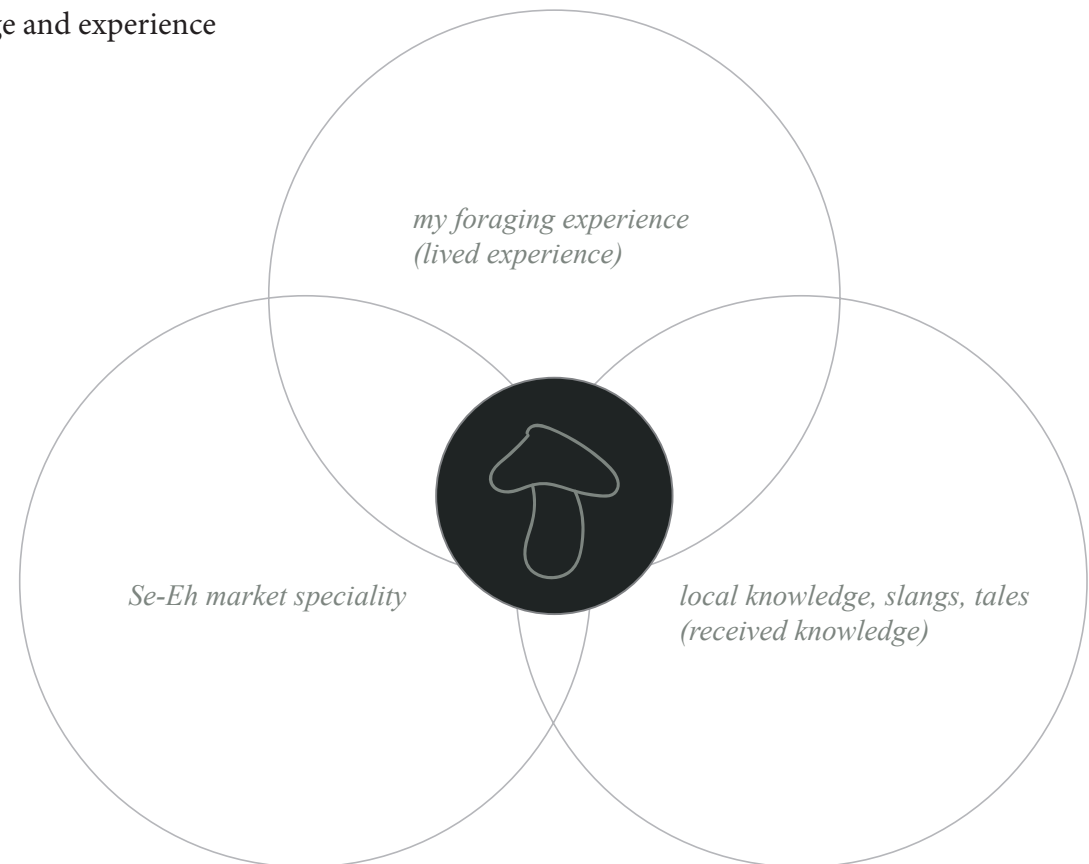
The street market of Se-Eh is preserved till this day in the city of Dali. It is famous throughout the province, for its history, local specialities and festival events.

The street market in Dali is part of my childhood memory, I can still recall all the chaos of the crowded market place - the yelling, the haggling, music from cheap speakers and odors from food, spices and herbal medicine. Many of the merchandise were things from the land - local species of plants, animals or fungus that served mostly food or medical purpose. These species came with names which were bestowed by the locals, these names reflected the traditional knowledge that related to the species. From experiences of seeing, touching, smelling, tasting and hearing, the local people named these species based on their characteristics.

Narrative Exploration

The Market of March is a market of raw food materials and traditional medicine gathered from the land . Among the popular food materials were the wild mushrooms. Fresh or dried, they are delicacies and natural healing materials. The forest of Yunnan is home to various types of fungus, there is rich traditional knowledge regarding these species . As a local kid, I had the pleasure of receiving such knowledge, from both seniors of my community and my own practice. The knowledge is cultural, biological and mythical. The practice of mushroom foraging and treating connected me to other species of the woods, as well as the knowledge and experience of the seniors.

Here I have three types of fungus that are native to the region of Dali, and were also important in my foraging experience. From my stories and experience around those species , I wanted to depict the traditional knowledge that happens within.



> **Telephora**

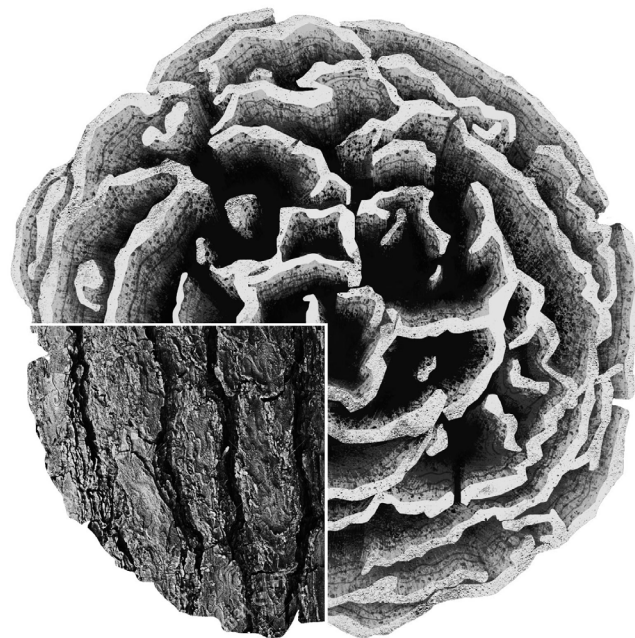
> **Boletus**

> **Albuminosa**

telephora +







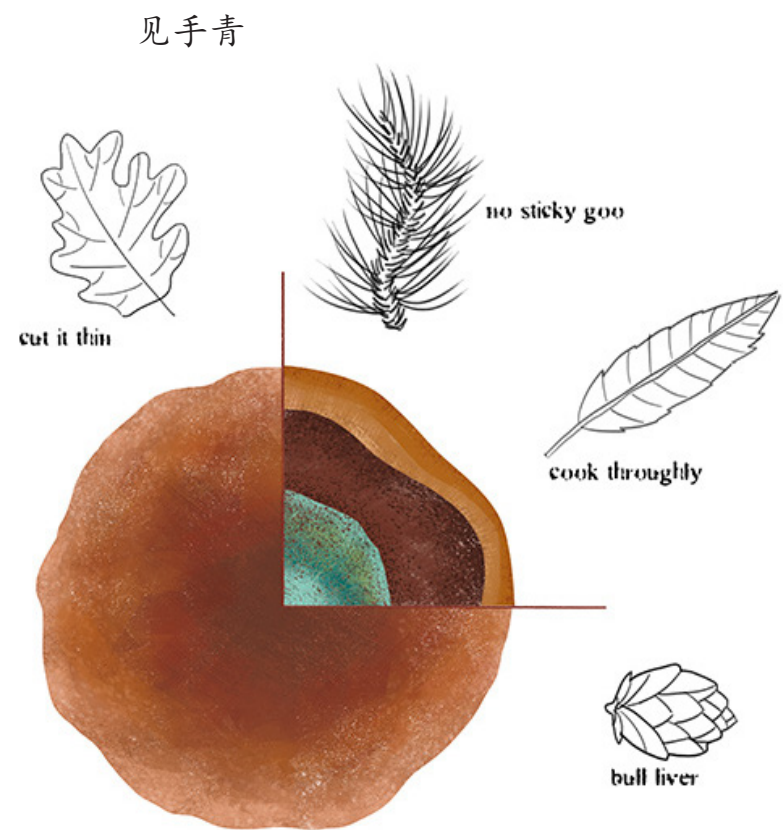
I found Ganbajun in pine forest



tear
them
small

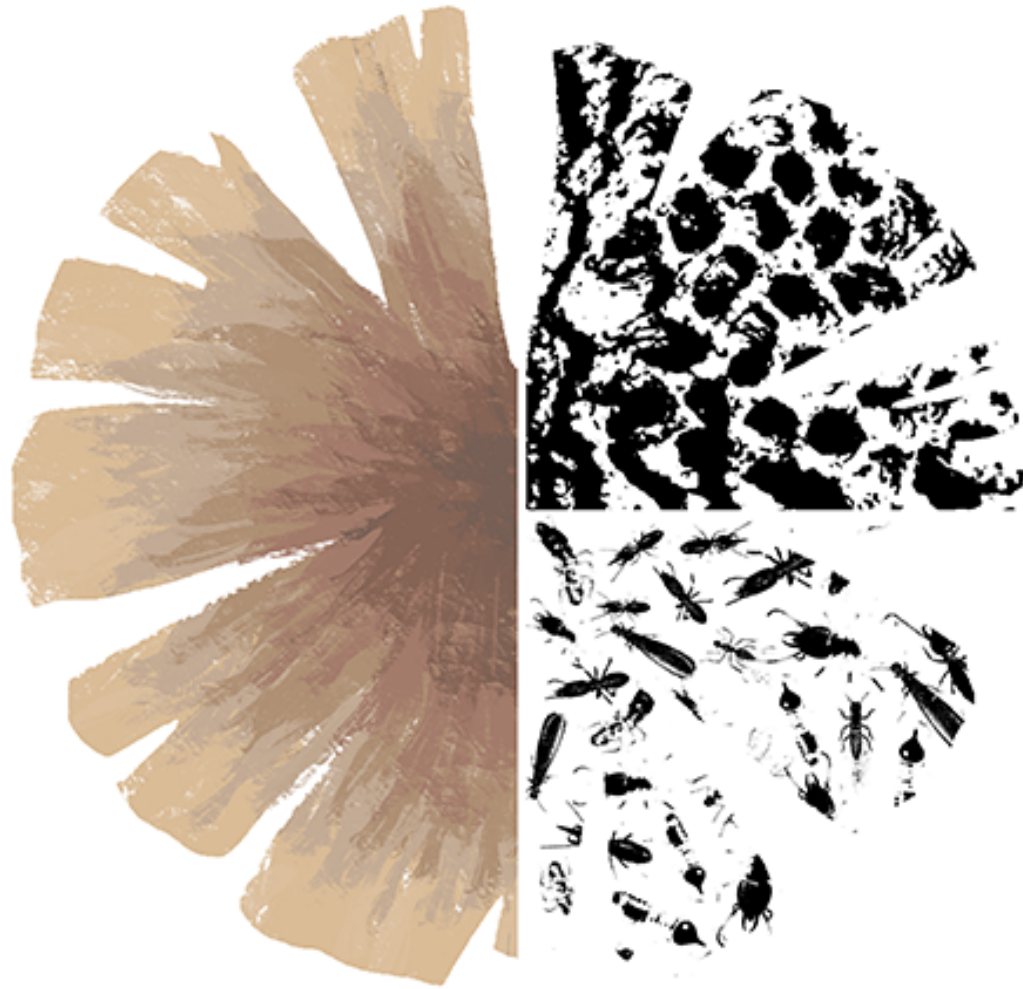


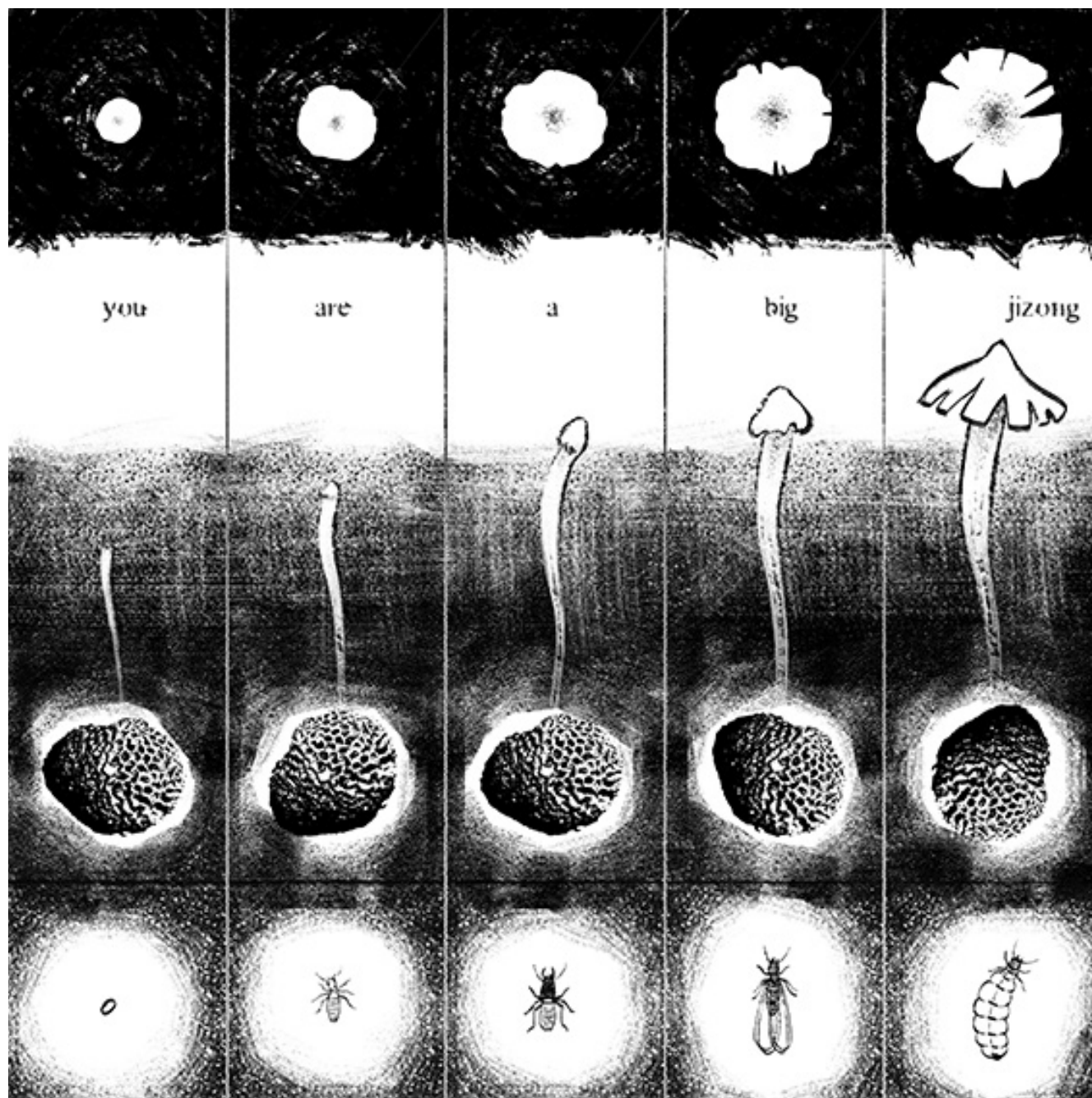
杂菌



黄
姐
头

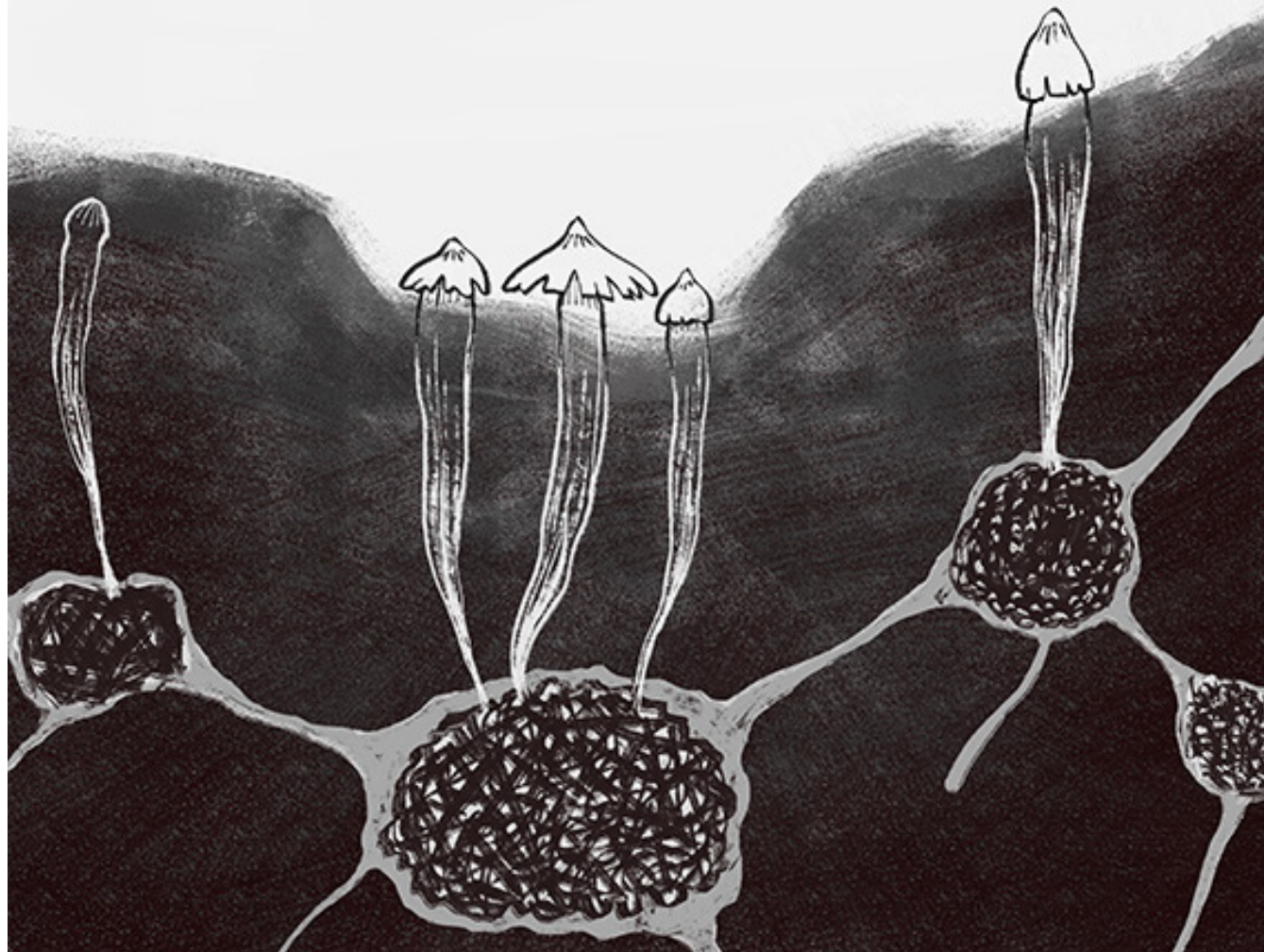
jizong can run





be silent.

do not startle princess jizong



刷猪菌
shua zhu jun
brush pig fungus
(ramaria)

黄妞头
huang niu tou
yellow girlie head
(boletus)

火青头
huo qing tou
fire green head
(russula)

猪拱菌
zhu gong jun
pig hump fungus
(truffle)

喇叭菌
la ba jun
trumpet fungus
(craterellus)

鸡油菌
ji you jun
chicken fat fungus
(cantharellus)

麻脚羊肝
ma jiao yang gan
dotted foot goat liver
(morchella)

马尿菌
ma sui jun
horse piss fungus
(macrolepiota)

兔馒头
tu man tou
bunny steamed bread
(puffball)

铜绿菌
tong lu jun
copper green fungus
(gymnopilus)

臭刺猫
chou ci mao
smelly prickly cat
(?)

奶浆菌
nai jiang jun
milk dew fungus
(milkcap)

Finale Chapter
In The Dense Forest by the Honghe River

Hong he



从前哈尼爱找平坝，
平坝给哈尼带来悲伤。
哈尼再不找坝子了，
要找厚厚的老林高高的山场。
山高林密的凹塘，
是哈尼亲亲的爹娘。


*Hani used to seek for plains,
plains brought sorrow to Hani.
Hani no longer desire plains,
we want thick old forest in the mountains.
lands among the mountains and the trees,
are our dear mother and father.*

- "Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po" Chapter 6


Introduction

The Hani peoples departed Se-Eh to avoid potential conflict with Ha-Eh - another major ethnic group. They continued down south until they reached the southern part of what is now Yunnan Province.

They got lost in the tropical rainforest by the Honghe river. Tes-Si, the female leader of the Hani peoples, was offering guidance by a silver pheasant (a tropical bird). The bird used its feathers to mark a trail, Tes-si and the rest of Hani peoples followed the bird. They went through many mountains and discovered a lush tropical valley to the south of Honghe river. With plenty of old forest, clear running water and species of animals, the Hani peoples called it home till this day.

The illustration is a dark, moody scene of a forest. In the foreground, there are dark, textured brushstrokes representing the ground or dense foliage. A small, bright red light source, possibly a fire or a lantern, is visible on the ground in the lower-left quadrant. In the background, there are large, dark, rounded shapes representing trees or bushes, with some lighter green and blue tones suggesting a misty or ethereal atmosphere. The overall style is painterly and atmospheric.

权威的威似领着哈尼，
the honorable Tes-Si lead the Hanis,



走遍了江外所有大山，
travelled all the mountains
to the south of the river,

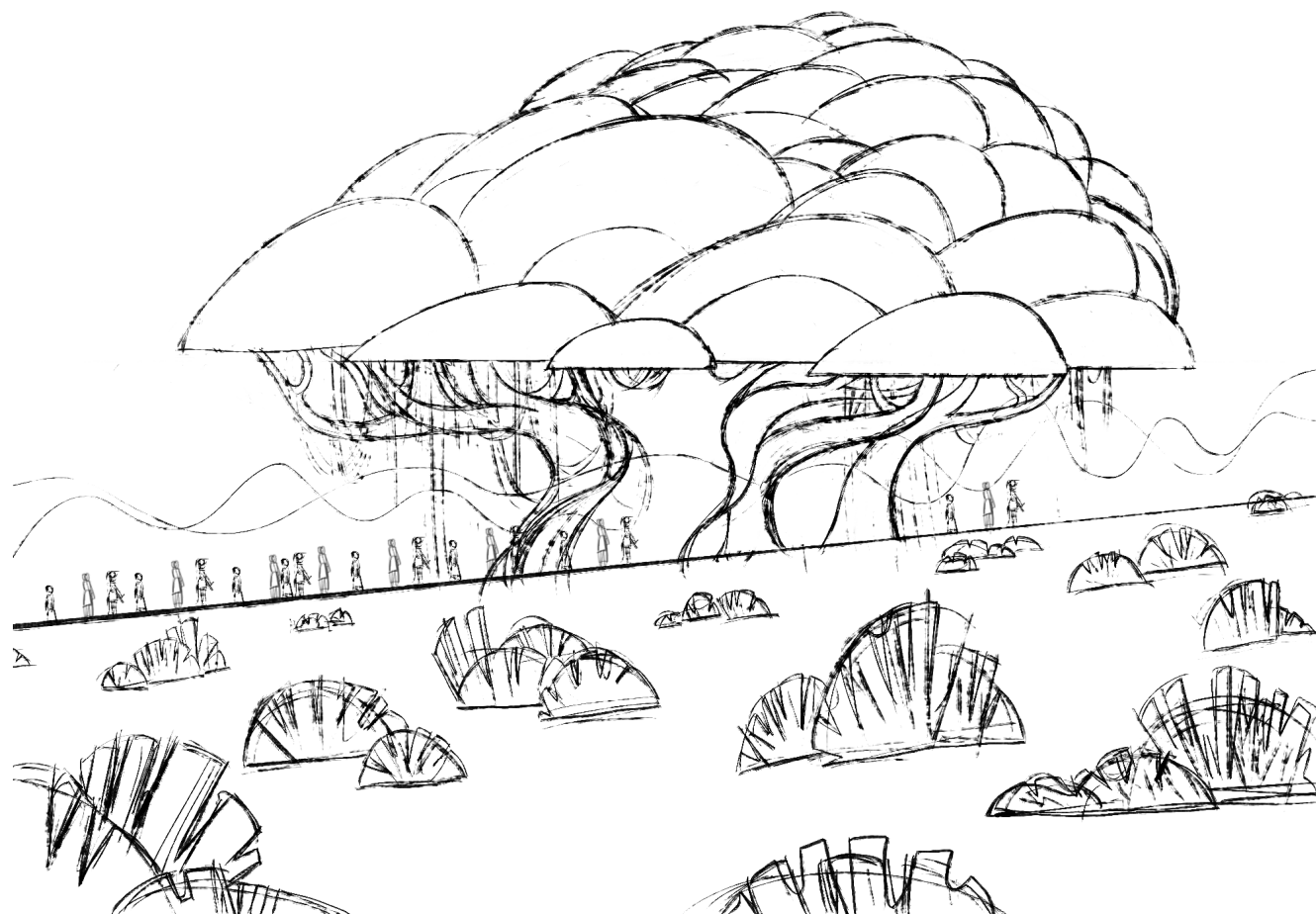


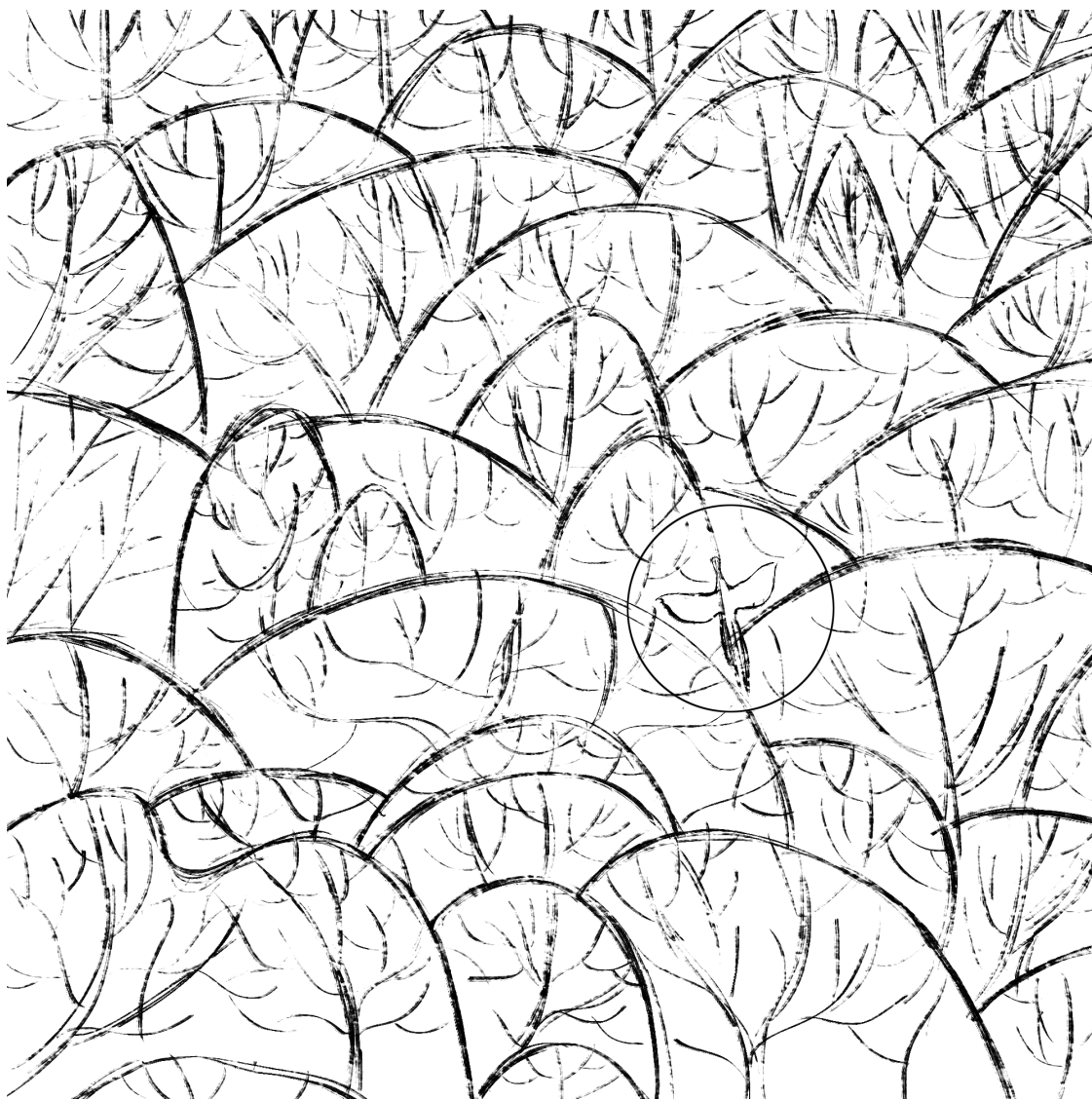
处处都有好在的歌处，
there were suitable sites everywhere,



威奴要找最好的地方。
*Tes-Si was Look for the best place
to call home.*

*one day, the migrating people stop at a hillside,
to take a rest in the woods.*



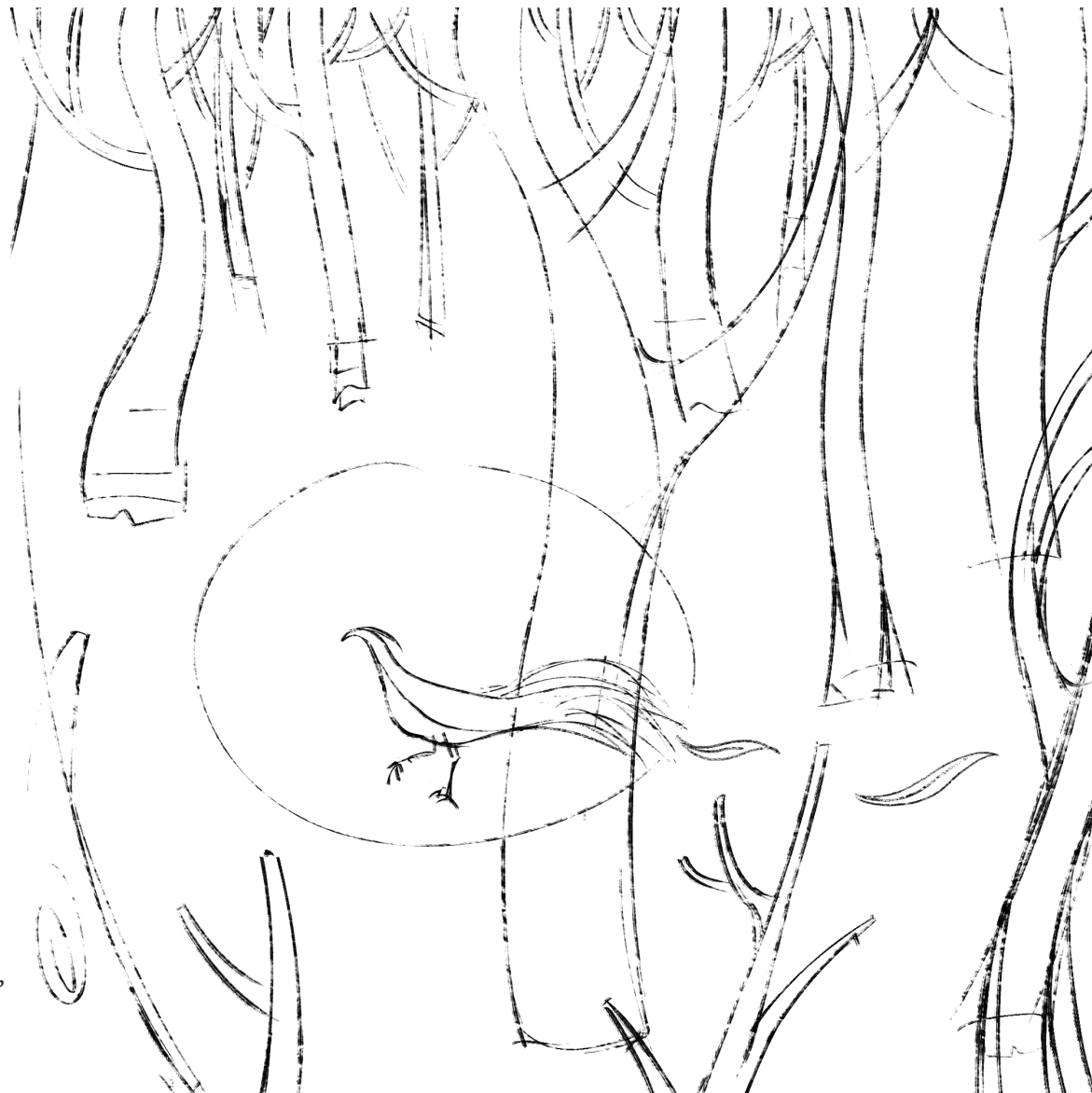


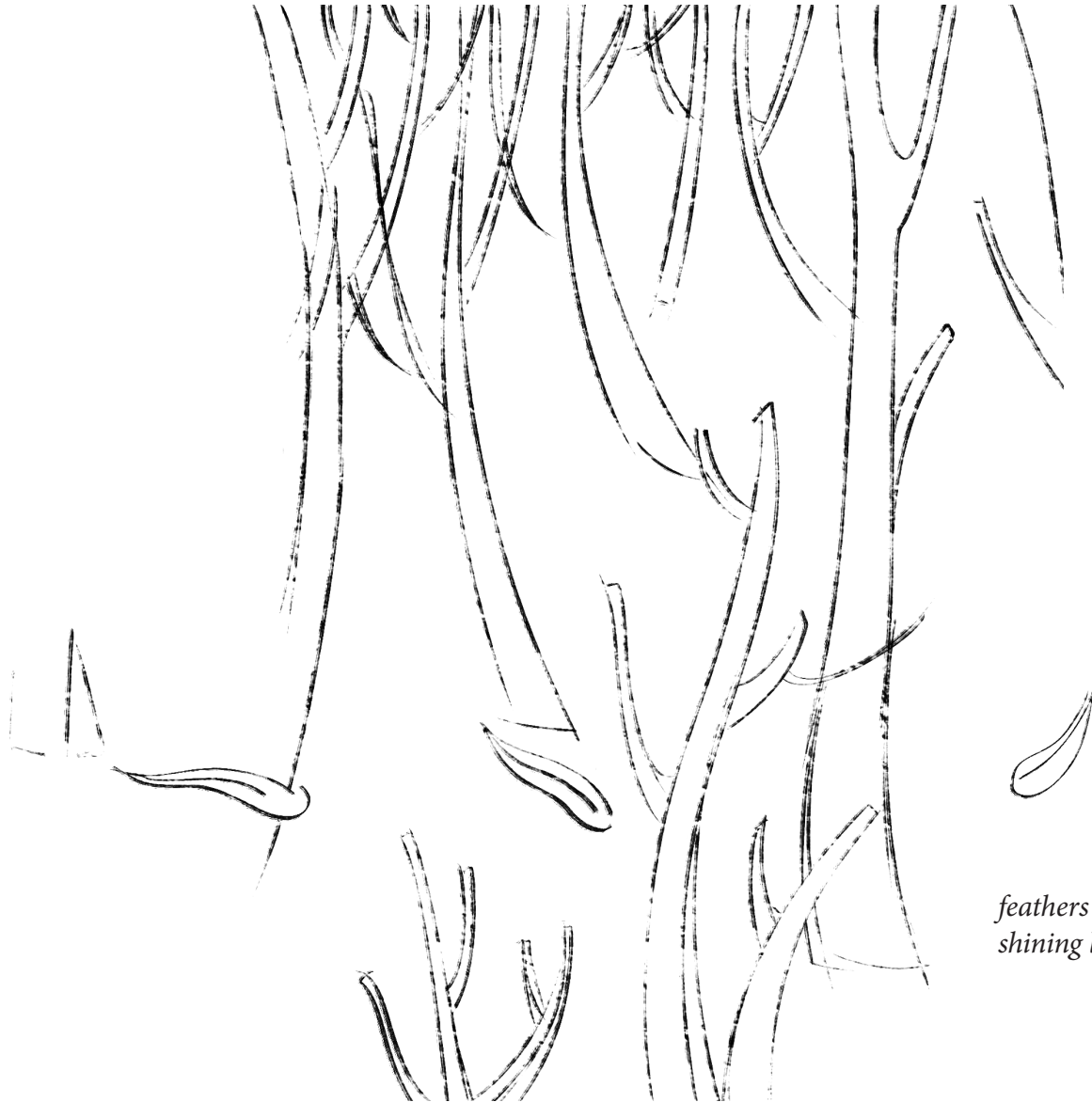
*a silver pheasant descends from the
trees,
walking gently towards the people.*

*the silver pheasant walks to Tes-Si,
shaking its feathery wings.
a feather as soft as the cloud,
lands in the palm of Tes-Si.*



*the silver pheasant rise its thin, red feet,
with every step, it shakes its wings.*



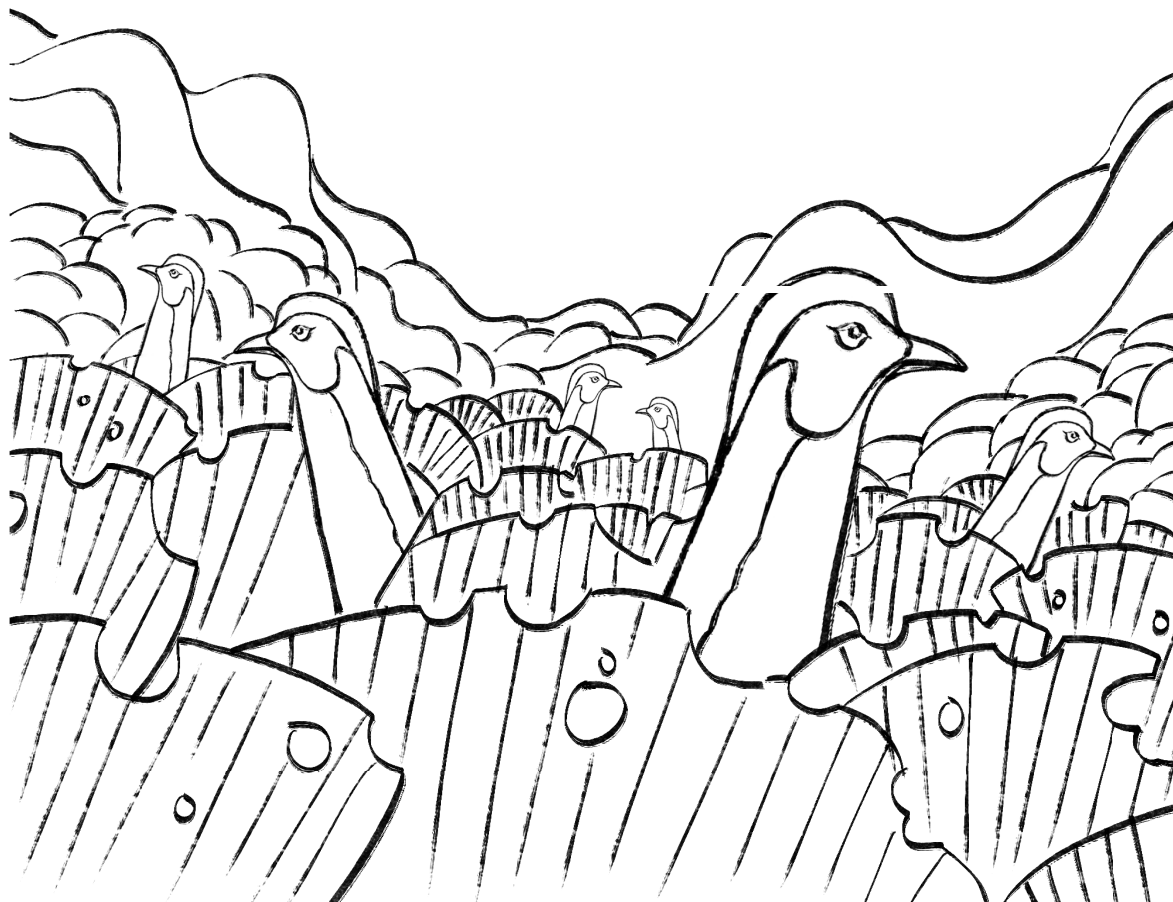


*feathers that are bright and white,
shining like silver.*



*a trail that shines like the silver is forming,
in the dense forests of the mountains.*

*Tes-Si follows the silver pheasant,
through the tall grass,*



*and past the high cliffs,
she discovers an enchanting land.*



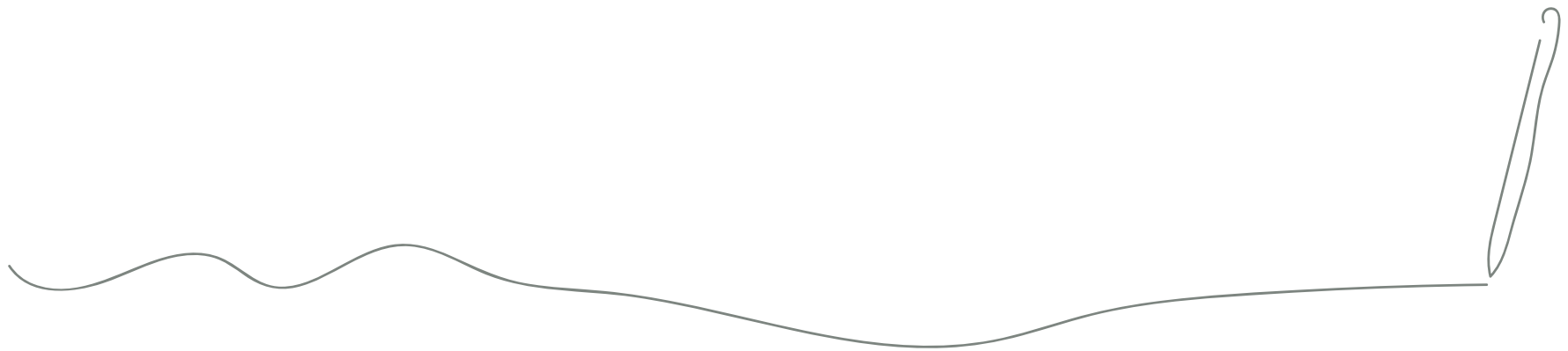
一寨的亲人啊，
碗里的米酒已经喝完，
变暗的火塘不能再向，
明天还有要紧的活计要干，
各人应当回到自己的蘑菇房.....

*my dear villagers,
we've emptied the last bowl of rice wine,
we've added the last wood to the fire pit,
tomorrow we still have important work to do,
everyone should return to their home now..*

- "Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po" Chapter 6



we've come to the end of the poem, as well as the end of migration,
but the stories of Hani peoples are much more than this. For me,
the stories with the land are plenty and I've got a lot to explore.



Future Prospective

I am thinking of the ways of distribution for my stories, such as self-publishing platforms or crowdfunding platforms. The works could be digital or print-based. Whatever mediums my stories employ, there will always be consideration of the relations between containers and content.

I will continue my explorations of graphic narratives by adopting the oscillating process to my future works. There are plenty of traditional literature (folklore, mythologies, songs, etc) from my hometown, featuring the places, species and things I'm familiar with. The narratives will be open and inviting, prompting the readers to put their own experience of traditional knowledge into the oscillating process.

Conclusion

The traditional ecological knowledge of Hani peoples come from their interactions with the species of the land. Such knowledge is passing down by oral traditions. This can also be said for some other ethnic groups in Yunnan province. The oral tradition is ambiguous in nature. For one story, each knowledge holder may have their own interpretations. Some cultural concepts in “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” have lost their meanings in the contemporary world, some are difficult to be translated into English. The ecological knowledge from my lived experience are from the seniors of my family, through our conversations and their teachings, and similar to the knowledge of the Hani peoples, there are a lot of concepts that are hard to be translated into English, or even Mandarin Chinese. The traditional knowledge from “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” and my lived experience are not to be fitted into a colonial container, they are more based on experience than reasoning. My exploration is an oscillating process between the memories of the Hani peoples and mine, the spontaneity and intuition I had for the narrative explorations are the fruits of this oscillating process, and the abstract styles of my graphic works with the ambiguities in the Hani poem and my fragmented memory. My narrative exploration is an attempt to create poetic ways of transmitting traditional ecological knowledge, breaking free from the colonial ways of knowledge displaying (museum, encyclopedia, etc) which based on didacticism and reasoning.

I am pleased to be able to tell the stories of the species and their connections with people, and I am honored to have “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po” of the Hani peoples to guide my explorations. Through reading the poem and tracing my lived experience, I realized that the harmony with the land depends

on every entity of the land, and the intricate relations between things, animate or inanimate, perceivable or not, could have the key role in the storytelling.

For the graduate show, my opportunity will be to present the narrative explorations to a broad audience, it will be part of my explorations to see how participants respond to the stories. The curatorial design of the graduate show will be open and inviting, encouraging the participants to bring their own stories to the narrative, so they can have their own oscillating process with “Hani Ah Pe Chun Po Po”.

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