

# Yunnan and I Glow in Shared Splendor

On June 10, marking the inaugural International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations, foreign residents in Yunnan shared their personal journeys. Through the lens of inter-civilizational dialogue, they recounted how they have contributed to and been enriched by the province, highlighting a shared experience of “radiating beauty together.” This issue delves into their lives and work in Yunnan, showcasing how different civilizations foster mutual respect, learning, and inspiration within the region.

## Antoine Herblot (France): A French Teacher Becomes a Cultural Tourism Aficionado

For Antoine Herblot, a French expat, Yunnan has become both a “second home” and the realization of his career aspirations. Over more than a decade, this “wind chaser” from northern Provence has seamlessly transitioned from a French teacher to a cultural tourism aficionado, skillfully blending French romance with the rich, diverse cultures of Southwest China.

Driven by his childhood promise, “Where the wind blows, I go,” Antoine journeyed from the hills of France to the snow-capped

mountains of Yunnan. After first arriving in China in 2006, he first applied teaching positions in Shandong, then got settled in Dali, and finally established deep roots in Lijiang. There, he now heads the International Business Development Office for Star Cultural Travel. Since making Yunnan his home, he has meticulously organized over a hundred French tour groups, allowing them to gain an in-depth experience of Yunnan and Sichuan, always aiming “to introduce tourists to the

true culture, wisdom, and flavors of China.”

“In Yunnan, life is just two words – a dream,” recalled Antoine Herblot. His love for local flavors shines through his fondness for Lijiang ham, Dali milk fan cheese, and ancient tree tea from Xishuangbanna. Moving forward, he aims to lead his team in uncovering untouched, secret corners of the region, aspiring to unveil Southwest China to the world through a distinct French romantic lens.

## Sithong Leny (Laos): Building a Bridge with Words

On a summer day, the Manlie Crossborder Book Club in Mengla County, situated near the China-Laos border, hosted a special “Reading Fair” that attracted many young people from both China and Laos.

Maneechang Inthakan, a Lao student, passionately recited Lin Huiyin’s poem “You Are the April of this World,” confessing: “The rhythm and imagery of Chinese poetry fascinate me.” This young woman from Bokeo Province, Laos, forged deep friendships with Chinese

teachers and students during her studies in Mengla.

Sithong Leny, a young Laotian attending the event for the first time, was deeply moved by the lyrics of the song “Sunshine Always Comes After the Rain.” He remarked, “It turns out words contain such powerful strength.” Hailing from Long County, Luang Namtha Province, Laos, he plans to dedicate himself to future China-Laos cooperation, aspiring to “build a bridge with words to bring the youth

of both countries closer.” During the event, Chinese and Laotian youth jointly sang “Let Me Understand Your Language,” a popular song in Xishuangbanna. The cheerful melody of the Lao folk song “Xiang Khuang Girl” also prompted everyone to dance.

The Manlie Villagers Group, serving as a window for cross-border exchanges between China and Laos, has organized over 30 “Reading Fair” events, serving more than 2,000 Chinese and Lao readers.

## Jason Pym (UK): Writing a “Love Letter” to Yunnan

When British illustrator and writer Jason Pym first set foot in Dali in 2005, he immediately recognized it as home. He vividly recalled the “warm sunshine, ancient streets,” adding, “we suddenly didn’t want to leave.” Influenced from childhood by his father’s profound interest in China, Pym pursued a degree in Chinese at the University of Leeds and ultimately discovered the ideal blend of art and life in Yunnan.

In 2007, Jason Pym settled in Dali, where he began to chronicle the region’s famed “wind, flowers,

snow, and moon”—a descriptor for its scenic beauty and romantic lifestyle—as well as its poetic way of life, through his illustrations and writings. His book, Dali Waizhuan: Yige Yingguoren de Dali Suxieben (Dali Unofficial History: A British Person’s Dali Sketchbook), adeptly transformed Dali’s diverse elements—from flora and fauna to myths, legends, and local customs—into a compelling cross-cultural artistic language. Pym said, “Art is interconnected; I hope more people can feel my love for this place through my works.” Following his move to Kunming in 2019, he published his latest work, Hanzi Bowuguan (The

Chinese Character Museum), utilizing animation and games to elucidate the origins and evolution of Chinese characters, classical poetry, and idioms for children.

Jason Pym also established the Wenwu Summer Camp, which immerses children in nature-based learning through hiking, rock climbing, wilderness survival training, and exploration of Bai ethnic culture. This initiative helps the younger generation discover Yunnan’s unique charm. Pym expressed, “I hope to pass on my love for Yunnan to more people around the world.”

## Jaruwan Udomsab (Thailand): Facilitating Sino-Thai Cultural Exchange

In 2013, Thai student Jaruwan Udomsab’s fascinating journey with the China-South Asia Expo (CSA Expo) began when she performed a traditional Thai dance at its inaugural session in Kunming, Yunnan. “Stepping into the Thai pavilion, I smelt the familiar aromas of incense and saw stupa decorations, feeling as if I had returned home,” she recalled. This experience led her to discover that the CSA Expo is not merely a trade platform, but also “a bridge for civilizational dialogue.”

This year, from mid to late June, Kunming will host the ninth CSA Expo. Over the years, Jaruwan Udomsab has witnessed the expo’s ongoing transformation. “In the past, it showcased distinctive products;

now, it offers comprehensive solutions,” she observed. What impressed her most was an AI robot at last year’s exhibition that could play chess with people, demonstrating technology’s emerging potential to reshape humanistic care.

“Civilizational dialogue is the story of specific people, technology, and land,” Jaruwan Udomsab summarized. She captures this essence through her camera, highlighting encounters such as Chiang Mai coffee meeting Baoshan small-grain coffee, and Thai dance steps encountering Yunnan’s red earth. Her photos portray the poetic encounter of the Mekong River’s shimmering waves and the twilight glow of Dianchi Lake, vividly interpreting the true meaning of civilizational dialogue: “each respecting its own culture, appreciating the cultures of others, and fostering the prosperity of human civilization.”