Liangshan Yi Language Lessons

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Explanatory Preface

We worked on these lessons in 2000 and 2001, without any clear plan for who might use them or how they might be used. Thirteen years later, we are revisiting the question.

These lessons were never polished up for publication, and the latter chapters in particular could use a fair amount of work. But given the scarcity of materials in English to help beginning students of the Nuosu language, it seemed worthwhile to tidy up the formatting a bit, to make sure all legacy encoding was converted to standard Unicode encoding, and then to make the lessons available in electronic form without any undue delay.

It is our wish that these lessons will help to build bridges.

Chapter 1

1. Introduction to the Nuosu

There are various names for the Nuosu people. Their name for themselves in their own language is usually romanized as either Nuosu or Nosu, and is pronounced [nɔ˥su˥]. In China their ethnicity is officially classified as 彝族 *Yizu* , which is pronounced [i˩tsu˩] in Putonghua and [ʑi˩tsʰu˩] or [ʑi˩tɕʰo˩] in Sichuanese. This is the name they normally use for themselves if speaking Chinese. If it is necessary when speaking Chinese to distinguish the Nuosu from other groups of people that are also classified as Yizu, it is common to say 凉山彝族 *Liangshan Yizu* or 四川彝族 *Sichuan Yizu*. Some people further distinguish one Nuosu subgroup from another Nuosu subgroup by using various geographical labels or dialect labels.

The language spoken by the Nuosu is quite different from many of the other languages spoken by people groups officially classified as Yizu. For example, there is a group of people in Western Yunnan called Lalo or Lalopa. These people are classified as Yizu on their identity cards, but their language is different enough from the Nuosu language that they would need to use Chinese to communicate with Nuosu people.

There are dialect differences among the Nuosu too, though these dialect differences are not nearly so great. The official standardization of the traditional writing system is based on a pronunciation used in Xide County. The pronunciation taught in the following chapters will be the same one which the standardized writing system assumes.

The traditional writing system continues to be used in some villages, and the official standardization of that writing system has been taught in some schools. It is a syllabary rather than an alphabet. In other words, each distinct syllable has its own symbol, rather than each consonant and vowel having distinct symbols.

2. The Nuosu Romanization

Since the Nuosu syllabary has too many symbols to learn in the first few days of study, a roman alphabet pronunciation guide is quite helpful. The main pronunciation guide used throughout these lessons is called *Yiyu Pinyin*, which is largely based upon the *Hanyu Pinyin* romanization used for Chinese. Yiyu

Pinyin is used as the pronunciation guide in every Nuosu dictionary currently available, and is also quite useful as a way to input the language on a computer keyboard. Therefore, we will try to help you learn this romanization in the first three chapters, as you are getting used to the consonants, vowels, and tones of Nuosu.

For the benefit of those who are more accustomed to the kinds of phonetic transcriptions used by linguists, we will be including a phonetic transcription with each vocabulary list, and will also be using phonetic transcriptions in the explanations in the first three chapters. The phonetic symbols used will mostly be from the phonetic alphabet of the International Phonetic Association (IPA), except in cases where Chinese linguists consistently use symbols not included in the IPA's standard.

3. Nuosu Syllables

The syllable in Nuosu is quite simple. Typically, it consists of one consonant and one vowel. Some syllables consist of only a vowel. There are also certain syllables which consist of only a consonant, though the latter kind are analyzed by Chinese linguists as consisting of a consonant followed by a vowel, and the Yiyu Pinyin system writes such syllables as a consonant followed by a vowel. Each syllable is pronounced with one of four tones. The tones are indicated in Yiyu Pinyin by regular roman alphabet letters at the end of a syllable. In the following chapters, we will indicate breaks between the syllables of a word using a dash.

4. Vowels

The standard variety of Nuosu has 10 distinctive vowels, some of which might be pronounced a bit differently after different consonants. We will discuss each of the vowels in turn.

There is a vowel written *a* in Yiyu Pinyin, which is quite similar to the vowel in the Mandarin word 大 *da* , though it is pronounced with more tenseness in the throat than the Chinese vowel. For those of you familiar with phonetics, this vowel is an open unrounded vowel. In our phonetic transcription we will follow the precedent of various Chinese linguists by writing it as [a]. Note that some western linguists might have chosen to transcribe this vowel as [ɑ], and some Chinese linguists might have chosen to transcribe it as [ᴀ]. Some linguists use an underline to mark tenseness: [a̠], [ᴀ̠], or [ɑ̠].

There is a vowel transcribed *e* in Yiyu Pinyin, which is very similar to the vowel in the Mandarin word 可 *ke* . It is a near-close, near-back unrounded vowel. In our phonetic transcription, we will use the symbol [ɤ], though some linguists might have prefered to use [ɯ], [ə], or [ɘ] for this vowel.

There is a vowel transcribed *o* in Yiyu Pinyin, which is somewhere in between the vowels in the Mandarin words 不 *bu* and 坡 *po* . It is a close-mid, back rounded vowel. In our phonetic transcription, we will write it as [o].

There is a vowel written *uo* in Yiyu Pinyin, which is similar to the vowel in the Mandarin word 多 *duo*, only a bit more open than the Mandarin vowel, and with some tenseness in the throat. This is an open-mid back rounded vowel. We will write it as [ɔ] in the phonetic transcription. A few linguists, however, prefer to transcribe this sound as [o̞] or [ɔ̝].

There is a vowel written *i* in Yiyu Pinyin. It is similar to the vowel in the Chinese word 你 *ni* . We will write it as [i] in our phonetic transcription, following the majority precedent. A small number of linguists prefer to write it as [ɪ], since they use [i] for another vowel.

There is a vowel written *ie* in Yiyu Pinyin. It is somewhat similar to the vowel in the Chinese word 谢 *xie* , and is perhaps more similar to the vowel in the English word *yet*, though it has more tenseness in the throat than either the Chinese or English vowel. For those familiar with phonetics, it is a mid front unrounded vowel, which sometimes has a bit of an onglide. We will transcribe this vowel as [e], although some linguists prefer [ɛ], [ɛ], [e̞] or [ɪ] for this vowel.

There is a vowel written *y* in Yiyu Pinyin. In most contexts it is like the vowel in the Mandarin word 四 *si*. After certain consonants (those that are most similar to the Mandarin consonants *sh*, *ch*, *zh*, and *r*) it is pronounced like the vowel in the Mandarin word 是 *shi*. After certain other consonants (those that are most similar to the Mandarin consonants *x*, *q*, and *j*) it is pronounced more like the consonant in the middle of the English word measure . We will follow the precedent of most Chinese linguists by transcribing this vowel as either [ɿ] or [ʅ], depending on which consonant precedes it. Some Chinese linguists prefer to transcribe this vowel as [ɹ̩] all the time, and a few prefer to transcribe it as [i]. There are also a few who prefer to transcribe it as [ɻ̩], [ʐ̩], or [i],

depending on the preceding consonant. Some western linguists prefer to transcribe this vowel as [ɨ]. Chinese linguists analyze certain syllables as having this vowel, even though they sound like they only have a consonant. There will be more discussion of this when we get to the consonants in the next chapter, but one example would be the syllable that we'll write *my* in Yiyu Pinyin, which is typically written [mɿ] or [m(ɿ)] in phonetic transcription, but which to many people's ears sounds just like [m] by itself.

Another vowel is written *yr* in Yiyu Pinyin. This vowel is just like the vowel written *y*, only there is a very audible tenseness in the throat. Using phonetic symbols, this vowel is transcribed the same as *y*, only with an underline to indicate the tenseness in the throat: [ɿ̱] or [ɻ̩̱].

There is a vowel written *u* in Yiyu Pinyin. This vowel is somewhat different from anything in Mandarin or English, though it is probably closest to the vowel in Mandarin 福 *fu*, or to the English consonants v and w. Its distinguishing feature is that the lips are quite close together. It is pronounced somewhat differently, depending on what consonant precedes it. It usually sounds more v-like after those consonants that are most similar to Mandarin *g*, *k*, sh, ch, and zh, and it sounds more w-like after most other consonants. We will use the phonetic transcription [u] for this vowel regardless of what consonant it follows. Chinese linguists analyze certain syllables, which sound like they have no vowel, as actually having the vowel u, for example the syllable which we will write as *mu* or [m(u)], which actually sounds like an m with a bit of w-flavor. We'll talk about this in more detail in the next chapter when we get to the consonants. That is also where we will discuss some other odd things that u does when it follows certain consonants.

Finally there is a vowel that is written *ur* in Yiyu Pinyin. This vowel is just like the vowel written *u*, except that there is a very audible tenseness in the throat. We will transcribe it as [u̱], with the underline indicating tenseness.

5. Exercises
Listen to and mimic your teacher saying the following syllables (Nuosu s is like English and Mandarin s).

Pinyin	Phonetics
sa	[sa]

se	[sɤ]
so	[so]
suo	[sɔ]
si	[si]
sie	[se]
sy	[sʅ]
syr	[sʅ̱]
su	[su]
sur	[su̱]

For another exercise, have your teacher randomly say one of the above syllables, and try to point to the one he is saying. Keep doing this as long as your teacher's patience holds out, or until you start to do pretty well at this exercise. Once you are pointing to the right syllable almost all the time, have your teacher continue to say these syllables in random order, while you try to write them down in Yiyu Pinyin. Have your teacher tell you after each attempt whether you wrote it correctly or not, and tell you what it should have been if you didn't get the right answer.

Chapter 2

1. Consonants

Nuosu has a large number consonants. Depending on how you count them, there may be as many as 44 of them. The usual way of counting them results in a figure of 43 consonants. These consonants can be grouped together into various natural classes, based on either their place of articulation or their manner of articulation. The former refers to the part of the mouth where the greatest constriction of the airstream occurs, and the latter refers to such things as whether that constriction in the mouth is total, or not total but tight enough to cause friction, or too lax to even cause friction, and whether the airstream is allowed to go out the nasal passage.

Nuosu has the same places of articulation as Mandarin Chinese. There are bilabial consonants, such as p, b, and m, labio-dental consonants such as f, alveolar consonants, such as t, d, s, and n, retroflex consonants, such as sh and ch, palatalized consonants such as j, q, and x, and velar consonants such as g, k, and ng.

Nuosu has more manners of articulation than Mandarin Chinese. Mandarin has a contrast between aspirated and unaspirated stops (p vs b). Nuosu has this contrast too, but also has voiced stops (produced with the same vibration in vocal cords that would normally accompany a vowel, in Yiyu Pinyin indicated with a doubled consonant, e.g. bb), and prenasalized stops (produced with a nasal sound at the beginning, e.g. nd) Mandarin Chinese has voiced sonorants (e.g. m, n and l), but Nuosu has both voiced and voiceless sonorants (the voiceless ones are spelled with a preceding h, e.g. hm, hn, hl). Mandarin has voiceless fricatives (e.g. f) but Nuosu also has voiced fricatives (e.g. v).

The following chart shows all the consonants, with both their Yiyu Pinyin spelling and their phonetic transcription.

b [p]		d [t]			g [k]	
p [pʰ]		t [tʰ]			k [kʰ]	
bb [b]		dd [d]			gg [g]	
nb [ᵐb]		nd [ⁿd]			g [ⁿg]	
		z [ts]	zh [tʂ]	j [tɕ]		
		c [tsʰ]	ch [tʂʰ]	q [tɕʰ]		
		zz [dz]	rr [dʐ]	jj [dʑ]		
		nz [ⁿdz]	nr [ⁿdʐ]	nj [ⁿdʑ]		
m [m]		n [n]		ny [ɲ]	ng [ŋ]	
hm [m̥]		hn [n̥]				
		l [l]				
		hl [l̥]				
	f [f]	s [s]	sh [ʂ]	x [ɕ]	h [x]	hx [h]
	v [v]	ss [z]	r [ʐ]	y [ʑ]	w [ɣ]	

The Yiyu Pinyin system was largely based on Hanyu Pinyin. So for the most part, those consonants which are spelled like something in Hanyu Pinyin are the same as or very similar to corresponding sounds in Mandarin. The exception would be w, which sounds nothing like a w in either Mandarin or English. Instead, it is a voiced velar fricative. In other words, it has the place of articulation of a k-sound (the back of the tongue approaching the roof of the mouth), and the manner of articulation of a v-sound (air is allowed to escape through the mouth, only with friction, and the vocal cords are vibrating). If you happen to have grown up speaking Spanish, it may help you to know that it is like the g-sound in Spanish words like "lago" and "tortuga". If you didn't grow up speaking Spanish, and if you haven't taken a phonetics course recently, it is likely that you will need your teacher to coach you on this sound.

Notice that throughout the Yiyu Pinyin spelling system, doubled consonant letters indicate voiced sounds. This may sometimes result in spellings that

don't seem very natural to the English speaker. For example, the sound that is identical to the English z-sound is spelled not with a z, but rather with a double s (ss). The z was not used for this sound, since the goal was to make this system as similar as possible to Hanyu Pinyin, where the letter z is already used to spell another sound.

Another potential point of confusion is with the spellings ng and mg. The former is used to spell a velar nasal sound in Hanyu Pinyin (the final sound in 同 tong) so it the inventors of Yiyu Pinyin spelling decided to use the spelling ng for the same sound in Nuosu. But Nuosu also has a prenasalized g-sound (a g-sound with an ng-sound at the beginning of it, like in English finger). They could have decided to spell this sound ngg, but they had an aversion to using more than two consonant letters at the beginning of any syllable. So they decided to spell it mg. But please note that it is not pronounced that way. It is pronounced like an ng-sound followed by a g-sound, just like the ng in jungle, finger, or single.

Another odd spelling is rr. This is used for the voiced counterpart to zh. They wanted to use zh for the sound that was like the Chinese sound, in order to keep the spelling as much like Hanyu Pinyin as possible. But that left them with a dilemma. Their usual approach to spelling voiced sounds was to double the letter used to spell the corresponding voiceless sound. But they couldn't very well double zh, since they wanted no consonant to be spelled with more than two letters, and four was out of the question. So they decided to double the letter r instead.

There are some other odd spellings that you will probably have to just memorize (e.g. nb, nz, nj, hx). But keeping the spelling straight is not really the hardest part. The hardest part is learning the pronunciation of the consonants, and hearing the difference between some of the more similar sounding ones. Don't let Nuosu consonants discourage you too much. Every language has something that is particularly difficult to learn. In Chinese it happens to be the writing system that is most difficult, and in Nuosu it happens to be the consonants that are most difficult.

If you've never learned to pronounce voiceless sonorants like hm, hn, and hl, try the following: Get ready to pronounce an m-sound, and while your lips are together, blow some air gently out your nose. Or get ready to pronounce an n-

sound, or an l-sound, and then blow some air out. After trying this, listen to your teacher pronounce these consonants, and try mimicking.

Certain consonants interact with certain vowels in interesting ways. When the consonants d, t, dd, and nd precede either u or ur, the tendency is for the lips to vibrate or trill. This is probably a side effect of both u and ur being pronounced with the lips quite close together. The same thing can happen when b, p, bb, or nb precede u or ur, though the lips tend not to vibrate as much in that case. Have your teacher pronounce ddu and ddur for you, and be amazed. Don't worry, if your lips don't trill, people will not think it so strange, as long as other aspects of your pronunciation sound fairly normal to them.

The vowels *y, yr, u,* and *ur* all "get swallowed" after the consonants *m, hm, l,* and *hl.* In other words, syllables like *mur, my, hmu, lu,* and *lyr* are all pronounced as if there were no vowel, only a consonant. However, the "swallowed" vowel does influence the pronunciation of the consonant. For example, *lu* is pronounced with the lips rounded and close together, just like the vowel *u,* and *lyr* is pronounced with audible tenseness in the throat, just like the vowel *yr.* This will take time for you to get used to. Whenever you run into these kinds of syllables, ask your teacher to coach you until you learn to say them correctly. Learning to consistently hear the difference between *my* and *mu* is likely to take even longer than learning to pronounce the difference. But don't worry, in some dialects of Nuosu, there is no difference between the two. You should certainly try learn to pronounce and hear the difference between the tense throat and lax throat versions of these syllables (e.g. *lu* vs. *lur*), since every dialect of Nuosu makes that distinction.

2. Exercises
Listen to your teacher go through the consonant chart several times, pronouncing each one. Of course, your teacher will probably want to pronounce each consonant with a vowel after it, since otherwise certain consonants can be hard to pronounce or hard to hear. As you listen, focus on the consonants, not the vowels. After several times through the chart, try doing the same thing yourself, having your teacher coach you. After doing it once, listen to your teacher again.

It might be helpful at this point for you and your teacher to make an audio recording. Your part is to make the script. Make a list of syllables that you

think you would like to hear over and over. Suppose you have a hard time hearing the difference between *da* and *dda* (who doesn't have trouble with that?). You might want to have a sequence like *da, dda, da, dda, da, dda* in the script. Or suppose you have trouble with the "swallowed" vowels. In that case you might want to have a sequence like *my, mu, myr, mur, hmy, hmu, ly, lu, lyr, lur* in the script. Or maybe you want your teacher to read through the whole consonant chart.

Chapter 3

1. The Four Tones

The standard variety of Nuosu has four tones, high [˦], mid-high [˧], mid [˧], and low [˩]. In Yiyu Pinyin, the high tone is written with a *t* at the end of the syllable. The mid-high tone is written with an *x* at the end of the syllable. The low tone is written with a *p* at the end of the syllable. The mid tone is written with no consonant letter at the end of the syllable, because the mid tone is the most common tone. In case it helps you remember, the letter *t* is a taller letter than any of the vowel letters, hence its use to mark the high tone. Similarly, the letter *p* goes down below the line, hence its use to mark the low tone.

As in Chinese, the actual pitch of a particular tone will vary according to the overall pitch of the speaker's voice, the speaker's mood, how long it has been since the speaker has taken a breath, and other factors, but the basic principle is that the high and mid-high tones are higher than the mid-range of the overall pitch pattern in a sentence, and the low tone is lower than that midrange. It is somewhat deceptive to think of tones in a tone language as notes on a scale, but if it helps you, you could think of the low tone as "do", the mid tone as "mi", the mid-high tone as "fa", and the high tone as "so", with the pitch of "mi" in a range that feels neither high nor low to you.

2. Tone changes

There are certain situations where a low tone syllable might change to a mid-high tone syllable, and other situations where a mid tone syllable might change to a mid-high tone syllable. At this point, don't worry about it. We'll run into specific examples later.

3. Tone and the spelling of vowels

Most vowels can occur with any of the four tones. The exceptions are *y* and *u* ([ɹ̩] and [u]). These two vowels never occur in the high tone, though their tense throat counterparts *yr* and *ur* ([ɻ̩] and [u̠]) do. For this reason there is a spelling convention in Yiyu Pinyin that the *r* is not written before the *t* that marks high tone. Thus, we write *syt* and *sut* for [sɹ̩˦] and [su̠˦], rather than *syrt* and *surt*, even though the latter would be a more consistent spelling.

Although the vowels *uo, ie, ur,* and *yr* can occur in any tone, they occur only rarely in the low tone. Furthermore, the spellings *urp* and *yrp* are never used in

Pinyin. Instead, the *r* is left out. Although the spelling *up* could mean either [u↓] or [u̠↓], it usually means the former, since the latter is quite rare. Words like *gupzyr* [ku̠↓tsɹ̠˧] "rescue, save" are the exception rather than the rule. Similarly for the spelling *yp*.

The fact that the spellings *yrt, urt, yrp,* and *urp* are not used might lead one to guess that the spellings *yrx* and *urx* are not used either. However, these two spellings are used.

4. Exercises

Try to read the following. Have your teacher coach you. Listen carefully to how your teacher says them.

at-mop	[a˥mo↓]	hxiex-ma	[he˧ma˧]
ax-mo	[a˥mo˧]	hxie-mat	[he˧ma˥]
ap-mop	[a↓mo↓]	hxiet-ma	[he˥ma˧]
ap-mo	[a↓mo˧]	ax-bbo	[a˥bo˧]
cyx-ma	[tsʰɹ̩˥ma˧]	ap-bbo	[a↓bo˧]
cyp-ma	[tsʰɹ̩↓ma˧]	ap-bbop	[a↓bo↓]

Chapter 4

1. Vocabulary

𖽃	nga	[ŋa˧]	I, me
𖼝	ne	[nɤ˧]	you (singular)
𖼋	cy	[tsʰ̩˧]	he, him, she, her
𖼀	va	[va˧]	chicken
𖽱	vot	[vo˥]	pig
𖾵	she	[ʂɤ˧]	meat
𖼀𖾵	va-she	[va˧ʂɤ˧]	chicken (the meat)
𖽱𖾵	vot-she	[vo˥ʂɤ˧]	pork
𖼾	zza	[dza˧]	cooked rice, food
𖿀	jjo	[dʑo˧]	have
⊖	zze	[dzɤ˧]	eat
𖽞	vy	[v̩˧]	buy

2. Model Sentences

𖽃𖽱𖽞。   I buy pig(s).
nga vot vy

𖼋𖼀𖽞。   He/she buys chicken(s).
cy va vy

𖼝𖼾⊖。   You eat rice.
ne zzax zze

𖼋𖼀𖿀。   He/she has chicken(s).
cy va jjo

𖽃𖽱𖾵⊖。   I eat pork.
nga vot-she zze

𖼋𖼀𖾵⊖。   He/she eats chicken.
cy va-she zze

𖽃𖼾𖿀。   I have cooked rice.
nga zza jjo

3. Grammar

In English, most nouns have a singular and plural form, e.g. pig vs. pigs and chicken vs. chickens. Only a few nouns in English don't make this distinction, e.g. sheep.

In Nuosu, nouns do not make a distinction between singular and plural. So, the word ꃴ (va) might mean either "chicken" or "chickens", depending on the context in which the word is used.

Different languages put their words together in different orders. In English, the basic order is Subject Verb Object, or SVO for short. This means that, given the verb "eat", the one who does the eating comes first, then the verb "eat", then finally the thing eaten, e.g. "I eat rice". Or given the verb "buy", the one who buys something comes first, then the verb "buy", then the thing that they are buying, e.g. "They buy pork".

In Nuosu, the basic word order is Subject Object Verb, or SOV for short. This means that instead of saying "I eat rice", one would say "I rice eat".

In Nuosu a direct object never follows its verb. Thus, you would never say "eat chicken", "buy pork", or "have pigs". Instead, Nuosu people say "chicken eat", "pork buy", and "pigs have".

subject	direct object	verb	
ꉢ nga	ꃮ vot	ꃴ vy	I buy pig(s).
ꀋ cy	ꃴ va	ꃴ vy	He/she buys chicken(s).
ꆀ ne	ꊈ zzax	ꎠ zze	You eat cooked rice.
ꉢ nga	ꃮꎵ vot-she	ꎠ zze	I eat pork.
ꀋ cy	ꃴꎵ va-she	ꎠ zze	He/she eats chicken meat.
ꉢ nga	ꊈ zza	ꐛ jjo	I have rice.

You may have noticed that in the third sentence above, the tone for the direct object is the mid-high tone, whereas this word is listed in the vocabulary section with the mid tone. In Nuosu there are various situations where tones change. This happens in the expression ꊈꎠ zzax zze "eat cooked rice", and in

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many other situations, which will be dealt with in later chapters. For now, simply note that tone changes in Nuosu depend on the particular words involved, and it is impossible to state any tone change rules quite as consistent as the rule for two third tones in Chinese.

The expression ꋡꊈ zzax zze is the most common way of simply saying "eat", and doesn't necessarily mean that the meal includes cooked rice. For example, one could be eating potatoes and soup, and ꋡꊈ would still be a normal way to describe the situation. It is similar to the Chinese expression 吃饭, which also could mean either "eat cooked rice", but more often has a less specific meaning, "eat food".

4. Exercises
Try writing the sentences "I eat meat", "She eats cooked rice", and "You have pigs", and "I buy pork".

Try reading the sentences you have written. Have your teacher or another Nuosu friend listen to you and correct you. Try reading the model sentences with the pinyin covered up. Again, have your teacher or another Nuosu friend listen to you and correct you. It is important both that you get comfortable with being corrected, and that you let your teacher know you want to be corrected. Now is the time when you will be forming pronunciation habits that might be hard to break later.

As a final exercise, have your teacher or another Nuosu friend read the model sentences to you in random order, and try to say what each sentence means.

Chapter 5

1. Vocabulary

𝕏̂	xix	[ɕi˦]	what
𝔉	kat	[kʰa˥]	where
𝔉 𝕐	kat-go	[kʰa˥ko˦]	where
⧫	hmi	[m̥i˦]	be named
⧫	bbo	[bo˦]	go
𝕚	la	[la˦]	come
⧓	da	[ta˦]	from
⼃	ap	[a˨]	not
⼿ 𝕏	vot-zza	[vo˥dza˦]	pig-feed
	Mu-gat	[m(u)˦ka˥]	(a man's name)
	Mu-gox	[m(u)˦ko˥]	(a woman's name)
	Vut-ga	[vu˥ka˦]	(a woman's name)
	At-gop	[a˥ko˨]	(a woman's name)
	Op-rro	[o˨dʐo˦]	Xichang
	Ko-mip	[kʰo˦mi˨]	Kunming
	Chep-du	[tʂʰɤ˨tu˦]	Chengdu

2. Model Sentences

⼃𝕏̂⧫? Ne xix hmi?	What is your name?
⼿ Mu-gat ⧫。 Nga Mu-gat hmi.	My name is Mu-gat.
⧓𝕏̂⧫? Cy xix hmi?	What is her name?
⧓ At-gop ⧫。 Cy At-gop hmi.	Her name is At-gop.
⼿𝕏̂⧫? Nga xix hmi?	What is my name?
⼃ Mu-gox ⧫。 Ne Mu-gox hmi.	Your name is Mu-gox.

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ᚷᚾᛀ?
Cy xix vy?

What is he/she buying?

ᚷᛁᛅᛀ。
Cy va-she vy.

He/she is buying chicken.

ᛒᛌᛆᚼ?
Ne kat-go bbo?

Where are you going?

ᚿ Ko-mip ᚼ。
Nga Ko-mip bbo.

I am going to Kunming.

ᛒᛌᛆᚷᛚ。
Ne kat-go da la?

Where are you coming from?

ᚿ Chep-du ᚷᛚ。
Nga Chep-du da la.

I am coming from Chengdu.

ᚷ Vut-ga ᚼᛘ?
Cy Vut-ga hmix-hmi?

Is she named Vut-ga?

ᚷ Vut-ga ᛏᛘ。
Cy Vut-ga ap-hmi.

She is not named Vut-ga.

ᚷ Chep-du ᚼᚼ?
Cy Chep-du bbox-bbo?

Is he/she going to Chengdu?

ᚷ Chep-du ᛏᚼ。
Cy Chep-du ap-bbo.

He/she is not going to Chengdu.

ᛒᛃᛆᛀᛀ。
Ne vot-she vyx-vy.

Are you buying pork?

ᚿᛃᛆᛏᛀ。
Nga vot-she ap-vy.

I am not buying pork.

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ꑌꀨꈐ�item?
Ne va jjox-jjo?

Cy she zzex-zze?

Does he/she eat meat?

Cy vot-zza jjox-jjo.

Does he/she have pig feed?

Do you have chickens?

3. Grammar

In this lesson we have two different kinds of questions. One kind of question is sometimes called a "content question". Content questions always contain a question word. English question words include "who", "what", "when", "where", and "why". In this lesson we have three question words, ꇂ, ꄶ, and ꄶ ꒉ. The first means "what", and the second and third both mean "where". In English, the question words are normally at the beginning of the sentence. However, in Nuosu, as in Chinese, the position of a question word depends on it's grammatical role. For example, if a question word is being used as a subject, it will be in the same position where a subject would normally be. But if a question word is being used as a direct object, it will go where direct objects normally go.

The word ꈀ is sometimes used as a noun meaning "name", but in this lesson it is being used as a verb, meaning "be named". Thus, the first model sentence ꑌ ꇂꈀ could be literally translated "You are named what?". The word ꇂ is positioned right before the verb, because an answer to the question, e.g. ꃆ Mu-gat ꈀ, would put the name Mu-gat right before the verb.

Similarly, in the question ꑌꄶꈀ the question word ꄶ goes right before the verb, because an answer to the question, e.g. ꀒ Op-rro ꈀ, would put the destination Op-rro right before the verb.

Thus, in Nuosu there is the same word order for both content questions and statements, even though in English, the question word is normally at the beginning of the sentence.

subject	object or place	verb	
ꆅ ne	ꑟ xix	� hmi	What is your name? (Q)
ꉬ nga	Mu-gat	� hmi	My name is Mu-gat. (A)
ꋀ cy	ꑟ xix	� vy	What is she buying? (Q)
ꋀ cy	ꀮꎷ va-she	� vy	She is buying chicken meat. (A)
ꆅ ne	ꀊꇬ kat-go	ꌠ bbo	Where are you going? (Q)
ꉬ nga	Op-rro	ꌠ bbo	I am going to Xichang. (A)

In English, there are words like "to", "from", "in", "on", etc that often indicate the position or direction of one thing in relation to another. They are called "prepositions" in English, because they go before a noun or pronoun. Nuosu has some similar words, which are more accurately called "postpositions", because in Nuosu these words come after a noun or pronoun. The word ꑟ is one such word. Although it means "from", you would never say "from Xichang" or "from Kunming" in Nuosu. Instead, you would say, "Xichang from", or "Kunming from".

subject	place	"from"	verb	
ꋀ cy	Op-rro	ꑟ da	ꆿ la	He is coming from Xichang.
ꆅ ne	ꀊꇬ kat-go	ꑟ da	ꆿ la	Where are you coming from?
ꉬ nga	Chep-du	ꑟ da	ꆿ la	I am coming from Chengdu.

The second kind of question is often called a "yes-no question", because in English, the natural answer for such a question is usually "yes" or "no".

In Nuosu, yes-no questions are made by reduplication of the verb. For verbs consisting of one mid tone syllable such as we have learned so far, this means that the syllable is repeated, and the tone of the first repetition changes to the mid-high tone. Thus, the yes-no question form of ꐰ jjo is ꐰꐰ jjox-jjo. Likewise, � vy changes to �Ꚃ vyx-vy, and ꌠ bbo changes to ꌠꌠ bbox-bbo. The word order is the same for a yes-no question and a statement.

Nuosu doesn't have any exact equivalent to the English words "yes" and "no", so yes-no questions are answered with a sentence or short phrase that uses the

same verb that was reduplicated in the question.

subject	direct object	verb	
ꆎ ne	ꃨꎭ vot-she	ꃺꃺ vyx-vy	Are you buying pork? (Q)
ꉢ nga	ꃨꎭ vot-she	ꃺ vy	I am buying pork. (A)
ꋊ cy	ꊒ zza	ꐗꐗ jjox-jjo	Does she have cooked rice? (Q)
ꋊ cy	ꊒ zza	ꃺ vy	She has cooked rice. (A)

In order to make a statement negative in English, we normally put the word "not" right after the first verb in the verb phrase, for example we change "will go" to "will not go".

The rules for negative statements are simple in Nuosu as long as the verb is only one syllable long. We simply add ꀋ ap before a verb of one syllable to make it negative. So, if ꐗ jjo means "have", ꀋꐗ ap-jjo means "doesn't have". We will leave the rules for verbs of more than one syllable until later.

subject	object or place	verb	
ꋊ cy	ꃶ va	ꃺ vy	She is buying chickens
ꋊ cy	ꃶ va	ꀋꃺ ap-vy	She is not buying chickens
ꆎ ne	Op-rro	ꀉ bbo	You are going to Xichang.
ꆎ ne	Op-rro	ꀋꀉ ap-bbo	You are not going to Xichang.

4. Exercises
Try writing the sentences "What are you buying?", "Do you have pigs?", "I don't have pigs", and "My name is Vut-sa".

Which of the following sentences are incorrect? Why? Cross them out, and don't learn them.

ꋊꋊꃰꃺꑌ？
ꉢꃶꀋꐗ。
ꃰꃺꆎꀉ？
ꋊꆎꃺ？
ꆎꃨꋊꃺꃺ？
ꉢꃺꃨꋊ。

ㄨㄩㄨ⦿⦿？
ㄅㄨㄒ。
ㄨㄒㄨ。
ㄣㄈㄨㄌ？
ㄅㄨ Chep-du ㄌ。
ㄅㄍㄩㄒ。
ㄅ Mu-gat �。
ㄨㄝㄚ？
ㄨㄩㄨㄒㄍㄒ？

Chapter 6

1. Vocabulary

ⵁⵅ	co-xix	[tsʰo˧ɕi˧]	surname
ⵁ	li	[li˧]	(no English equivalent)
ⵜ	nge	[ŋɤ˧]	be
ⵅⵗ	kax-ddi	[kʰa˧di˧]	who
ⵁ	it	[i˥]	sleep, dwell, live
ⵏ	su	[su˧]	(no English equivalent)
θ	ma	[ma˧]	a, an
ⵁθ	cox ma	[tsʰo˥ma˧]	a person
ⵟθ	vot ma	[vo˥ma˧]	a pig
ⵁθ	vax ma	[va˧ma˧]	a chicken
ⵅθ	cyx-ma	[tsʰ̩˥ma˧]	this
	cy-yiet	[tsʰ̩˧ʐa˥]	this kind
ⵁⵅθ	co cyx-ma	[tsʰo˧tsʰ̩˥ma˧]	this person
θⵏ	max-su	[ma˥su˧]	the
ⵁθⵏ	va max-su	[va˧ma˥su˧]	the chicken
	Mat-hxie	[ma˥he˧]	(a surname)
ⵁθ	La-ma	[la˧ma˧]	(a surname)
	Qo-mox	[tɕʰo˧mo˥]	(a surname)
	Sha-mat	[ʂa˧ma˥]	(a surname)

2. Model Sentences

ⵏⵁⵅⵅⵜ?
Ne co-xix xix nge?

What is your surname?

ⵟⵁⵅ Mat-hxie ⵜ。
Nga co-xix Mat-hxie nge.

My surname is Mat-hxie.

ⵟⵁⵅ Mat-hxie。
Nga co-xix Mat-hxie.

My surname is Mat-hxie.

ⵏⵁⵅⵁⵅⵜ?
Ne co-xix li xix nge?

What is your surname?

ⵟⵁⵅⵁ La-ma ⵜ。
Nga co-xix li La-ma nge.

My surname is La-ma.

ꊂꀐꍝꆏ?
Cy kax-ddi nge?

Who is he?

ꊂꇐ Qo-mox Mu-gox ꆏ。
Cyx li Qo-mox Mu-gox nge.

Hi is Qo-mox Mu-gox.

ꊂꇐꀐꍝꆏ?
Cyx li kax-ddi nge?

Who is she?

ꊂ Sha-mat Vut-ga ꆏ。
Cy Sha-mat Vut-ga nge.

She is Sha-mat Vut-ga

ꆎꇐꀐꍝꆏ?
Nex li kax-ddi nge?

Who are you?

ꉠꇐꇉꃀ Mu-gat ꆏ。
Ngax li La-ma Mu-gat nge.

I am La-ma Mu-gat.

ꊂꃀꇐꑸꆏ?
Cyx-ma li xix nge?

What is this?

ꊂꃀꇐꃮꃀꆏ。
Cyx-ma li vot ma nge.

This is a pig.

Cy-yiet ꇐꑸꆏ?
Cy-yiet li xix nge?

What is it?
(literally "What is this kind?")

Cy-yiet ꇐꃬꆏ。
Cy-yiet li va nge.

It is a chicken.
(literally "This kind is chicken.")

ꋲꊂꃀꇐꋲꑸꑸꆏ?
co cyx-ma li co-xix xix nge?

What is this person's surname?

ꋲꊂꃀꃬꀐꀐ?
Co cyx-ma va jjox-jjo?

Does this person have any chickens?

ᚷᚱᚦᚲ。
Cy vax ma jjo.

He has a chicken.

ᚱᚦᚴᚲᚴ?
Va max-su kat bbo?

Where is the chicken going?

ᚴᚥᚲᚲ?
Ne vot jjox-jjo?

Do you have pigs?

ᚾᚥᚦᚲ。
Nga vot ma jjo.

I have a pig.

ᚥᚦᚴᚷᚦ?
Vot max-su xix zze?

What is the pig eating?

ᚴᚲᚴᚦᚴ?
Ne kat it su nge?

Where are you from?

ᚾ Mit-guop ᚴᚦ。
Nga Mi-guop it su.

I am from America.

ᚴᚲᚴ?
ne kat it?

Where are you living?

ᚾ Kot-mip ᚴ。
Nga Kot-mip it.

I'm living in Kunming.

ᚷ Chep-du ᚴᚦ。
Cy Chep-du it su.

She is from Chengdu.

ᚷᚲ Op-rro ᚴᚦᚴ。
Cyx li Op-rro it su nge.

He is from Xichang.

3. Grammar
In this lesson we are learning how to form a noun phrase. Some examples of noun phrases in English would be "a chicken", "the pig", "that person", and "these chickens". These particular examples are made up of a determiner (a, the, this, that, these, those, etc.) and a noun. In English, the determiner always

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precedes the noun. In Nuosu, determiners always follow the noun. For example, in Nuosu one would say "pig this" or "chicken that".

Noun	Determiner	
ꃮ vot	ꍦꂷ cyx-ma	this pig
ꊿ cox	ꂷ ma	a person
ꃮ vot	ꂷ ma	a pig
ꃮ vot	ꂷꌠ max-su	the pig
ꑭ va	ꍦꂷ cyx-ma	this chicken
ꑭ va	ꂷꌠ max-su	the chicken

Notice that all the determiners we have studied so far include the syllable ꂷ (ma). This is actually a measure word, like the Chinese word 个. This particular measure word is used with all the nouns we have learned so far, but soon we will learn nouns for which you would use other measure words besides ꂷ.

Notice that the tone of a mid tone, one-syllable noun changes to mid-high tone when it is followed by a mid tone, one-syllable measure word. For example, you would say ꑮꂷ (vax ma) "a chicken", and you would not say ꑭꂷ (va ma). Similarly, you would say ꊾꂷ (cox ma) "a person", rather than ꊿꂷ (co ma). ꃮꂷ (vot ma) "a pig" doesn't have this tone change, because it only happens when both the noun and the measure word are originally mid tone syllables.

When a measure word is combined with ꌠ (-su), its meaning changes from that of an indefinite article (like English "a", "an", or "some") to that of a definite article (English "the"). Notice that the tone of ꂷ changes to the mid-high tone (ma → max). This also happens with other mid-tone measure words, as we will see in the next lesson.

When a measure word is combined with ꌦ (cy-), the meaning changes from that of an indefinite article to that of a demonstrative (like English "this" or "these"). In this case, ꌦ comes first, and its tone normally changes to the mid-high tone (cy- → cyx-).

Noun	Prefix	Measure Word	Suffix	
vot		ma		a pig
vot		max	-su	the pig
vot	cyx-	ma		this pig

In this lesson we have a new kind of sentence pattern. In English, sentences like "This is a pig" or "My surname is Johnson" are called "equative sentences". Not all English sentences with the verb "to be" are equative sentences, since some of them in describe location (e.g. "It is on the table") and some sentences in English use "to be" in some other ways (e.g. "He is ready", "She is reading a book", etc.). Generally speaking, if you're not sure whether a sentence with "to be" is an equative sentence, you can check whether the word(s) following "to be" is/are a pronoun or a noun (phrase). If that is not the case, then it is not an equative sentence. Grammarians call the pronoun or noun (phrase) following the verb "to be" a "predicate nominal". The verb in an equative sentence is called an "equative verb".

In Nuosu, the equative verb ꋓ (nge) follows the predicate nominal. So, instead of saying "It is a chicken", you would say "It a chicken is", and instead of saying "My surname is Smith" you would say "My surname Smith is".

Often, the word ꀀ (li) follows the subject of an equative sentence . This word cannot be translated into English, but you can gradually get used to the various ways it is used, just as a Chinese speaker has to gradually get used to the English word "the", which has no real equivalent in Chinese. Grammarians often call such difficult-to-translate little words "particles". Notice that the tone of a mid tone, one-syllable subject changes to mid-high tone before the word ꀀ. Thus you would say ꍆꀀ (cyx li), not ꍅꀀ (cy li), you would say ꉌꀀ (ngax li) rather than ꉎꀀ (nga li), and ꆀꀀ (nex li) instead of ꆁꀀ (ne li). Later you will learn some other words that have a similar effect on the tone of the preceding word.

Both the word ꀀ (li) and the equative verb ꋓ (nge) are sometimes left out of an equative sentence. But the verb is not optional if the equative sentence is negative, in which case you say ꀘꋓ (ap-nge). The verb is also not optional if the equative sentence is a question, in which case you would say ꋖꋓ (ngex-nge).

The following chart illustrates many of the possibilities with equative sentences.

Subject	Particle	Predicate Nominal	Equative Verb	
ꊭꂷ cyx-ma	ꆧ li	ꃺꂷ vot ma	ꈌ nge	This is a pig.
ꊭꂷ cyx-ma	ꆧ li	ꃺꂷ vot ma		This is a pig.
ꊭꂷ cyx-ma		ꃺꂷ vot ma	ꈌ nge	This is a pig.
ꊭꂷ cyx-ma		ꃺꂷ vot ma	ꀋꈌ ap-nge	This isn't a pig.
ꊭꂷ cyx-ma	ꆧ li	ꃺꂷ vot ma	ꀋꈌ ap-nge	This isn't a pig.
ꊭꂷ cyx-ma		ꃺꂷ vot ma	ꈍꈌ ngex-nge	Is this a pig?

The word ꌠ (su) is another of those little words that are often called "particles". It sometimes has the function of turning a sentence into something that behaves grammatically like a noun. Grammarians might call it a "nominalizer", based on this function. The closest thing in English is the word "that" in a sentence like "I knew that he was here", in which "that" turns "he was here" into something noun-like, so that it can function as a direct object. ꌠ (su) differs from the English word "that" in its location, since it always follows rather than precedes the sentence it makes noun-like. So in Nuosu, you would say "he was here that" rather than "that he was here".

The word ꌠ (su) is sometimes used in sentences where the corresponding English sentence would not use the word "that". It is very frequently used in asking people where they are from, and in answering the question. It adds to the sentence a flavor of permanence, which would not be there if the sentence did not have the word ꌠ. Thus, ꆈꄕꈌꌠꈌ is more like "Where do you normally live?" or "Where is your home?" and ꆈꄕꈌ is more like "Where are you staying at the moment?".

One often sees the word ꌠ (su) followed by the equative verb ꈌ (nge). This is possible because the word ꌠ makes the preceding sentence noun-like, so that it can be the predicate nominal in an equative sentence with the equative verb ꈌ. In a sentence like ꆈꄕꒉꈌꌠꈌ (ne kat-go it su nge) "Where do you live?", the verb ꈌ (nge) is optional, but the question sounds more polite if this verb is not left out. However, it is fine to leave out this verb when answering the question, e.g. ꉘ Op-rro ꈌꌠ (nga Op-rro it su) is just as acceptable as saying ꉘ Op-rro ꈌ ꌠꈌ (Nga Op-rro it su nge) "I live in Xichang".

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This is the most complex grammatical structure we have encountered so far. Don't worry too much about it. At this point it is best to just memorize some of the sentences with this structure, and practice building other sentences with the same structure by simply replacing the place names with other place names. In later chapters we will encounter other kinds of sentences that should make it easier to understand what the word ꌠ (su) is doing grammatically.

3. Exercises

Try writing the sentence "I am a person" in as many ways as are correct in Nuosu. Then try writing the sentence "I am not a chicken", also in as many different ways as are correct in Nuosu. Find out from your teacher whether you came up with all the possibilities, or whether you wrote some incorrect sentences.

Read through all the model sentences in this chapter, and then try to say "What is this chicken eating?" and "Where is the pig coming from?". Have your teacher listen to you, and help you if you need help.

Chapter 7

1. Vocabulary

⿰	gge	[gɤ˦]	some
⿰⿰	ggex-su	[gɤ˦su˦]	the (plural)
⿰⿰	cyx-gge	[tsʰʅ˦gɤ˦]	these
⿰⿰	a-zzyx-gge	[a˦dzʅ˦gɤ˦]	those
⿰⿰	a-zzyx-ma	[a˦dzʅ˦ma˦]	that
⿰	ji	[tɕi˦]	a
⿰⿰	jix-su	[tɕi˦su˦]	the
⿰⿰	cyx-ji	[tsʰʅ˦tɕi˦]	this
⿰⿰	a-zzyx-ji	[a˦dzʅ˦tɕi˦]	that
⿰	hxe	[hɤ˦]	fish
⿰⿰	hxex ji	[hɤ˦tɕi˦]	a fish
⿰	le	[lɤ˦]	ox
⿰⿰	lex ji	[lɤ˦tɕi˦]	an ox
⿰⿰	xix-ji	[ɕi˦tɕi˦]	which
⿰⿰	xix-ma	[ɕi˦ma˦]	which
⿰	bip	[pi˪]	pen
⿰⿰	bip ji	[pi˪tɕi˦]	a pen

2. Model Sentences

⿰⿰⿰⿰⿰？
Co ggex-su kat bbo?

Where are the people going?

⿰⿰⿰⿰？
Cyx-gge xix nge?

What are these?

⿰⿰⿰⿰⿰？
A-zzyx-gge xix nge?

What are those?

⿰⿰⿰⿰。
Nga hxex ji vy.

I'll buy a fish.

⿰⿰⿰⿰⿰？
Ne hxe xix ji vy?

Which fish will you buy?

ꆧꇰꋊꐧ。
Nga hxe cyx-ji vy.

I'll buy this fish.

ꋭꇗꐦꐰ。
Cy lex ji jjo.

He has an ox.

ꀝꋊꐧꈝꅉꀝꉬ?
Bip cyx-ji kax-ddi bip nge?

Whose pen is this pen?

ꋊꐧꆿꂷ Mu-gat ꀝꉬ。
Cyx-ji La-ma Mu-gat bip nge.

This is La-ma Mu-gat's pen.

ꆬꃀꁨꂷꈬ?
Ne va xix-ma vy?

Which chicken will you buy?

ꆧꃀꀊꋪꂷꈬ。
Nga va a-zzyx-ma vy.

I'll buy that chicken.

ꇗꐦꌦꈌꐯꆪ?
Le jix-su kat-go da la?

Where is the ox coming from?

3. Grammar

In Nuosu there are many different measure words. In previous lessons we learned only one measure word, ꂷ (ma). This measure word is very common, because it is used with most kinds of animals and birds, with many kinds of inanimate objects (especially round ones), and with people. Often it corresponds to the Chinese measure word 个. Another measure word is ꐧ (ji), which is used for cattle, fish, snakes, pens, fingers, ropes, hairs, sticks, and almost any long, thin object. It is also sometimes used when talking about people the speaker doesn't like. It often corresponds to the Chinese measure word 条.

The measure word ꈬ (gge) is something like 些 in Chinese. It can be used with any noun, provided the number is plural. But in the singular, you must choose a measure word appropriate to the particular noun. Since the nouns themselves don't change for singular or plural, the use of ꈬ (gge) is often the best way to indicate that you mean more than one.

You should make a habit of learning the appropriate measure words every time you learn new nouns.

Any measure word can be combined with certain other syllables to form definite articles and demonstratives. The patterns are always the same as the pattern for θ (ma). The definite article is formed as follows:

Noun	Measure Word	Suffix	
ᵗ⁺ vot	θ̂ max	⌠ -su	the pig
ᶜ le	Ⅳ̂ jix	⌠ -su	the ox
ᵗ⁺ vot	⦀ ggex	⌠ -su	the pigs
ᶜ le	⦀ ggex	⌠ -su	the oxen

Demonstratives are formed according to the following pattern:

Noun	Prefix	Measure Word	
ᵗ⁺ vot	X̂ cyx	θ ma	this pig
ᵗ⁺ vot	⫟⫯ a-zzyx	θ ma	that pig
ᶜ le	X̂ cyx	Ⅳ ji	this ox
ᶜ le	⫟⫯ a-zzyx	Ⅳ ji	that ox
ᵗ⁺ vot	X̂ cyx	⦀ gge	these pigs
ᵗ⁺ vot	⫟⫯ a-zzyx	⦀ gge	those pigs
ᶜ le	X̂ cyx	⦀ gge	these oxen
ᶜ le	⫟⫯ a-zzyx	⦀ gge	those oxen

Note that most measure words can be translated with the English singular indefinite article ("a" or "an") when they occur without any prefix or suffix. An exception is ⦀ (gge), which must be translated "some" because plurality is inherent in its meaning.

As in English and Chinese, the owner (or the "possessor") precedes the thing owned (or the "possessed".)

Possessor	Possessed	
X̂Ⅳ kax-ddi	ᶜ le	whose ox
Qo-mox Mu-gox	ᶜ le	Qo-mox Mu-gox's ox

The singular personal pronouns have possessive forms (special forms used whenever they are the possessor), which we will learn in another lesson.

In addition, there is a way to say "mine", "yours", "ours", etc, where the possessed noun does not have to be explicitly mentioned. We will also save that for another lesson.

4. Exercises
Read all the model sentences out loud and have your teacher or a Nuosu friend coach you on your pronunciation.

Have your teacher or a Nuosu friend read the model sentences out loud in random order, and you try to say what each one means.

Try to say the following: "the pen", "that fish", "this chicken", "the fish", "a pig", "that person", "this pen", "the pen", "this person", and "a fish", without looking at your book. Have your teacher or a Nuosu friend coach you.

The word for "pine" is ꄮ (te), and the measure word for nouns refering to plants is ꁱ (bbo). How do you suppose you would say "a pine", "the pine", "this pine", "that pine", "these pines" and "those pines"?

There is a measure word ꑵ (yiet) meaning "a kind of" or "a variety of", similar to the Chinese word 样. This measure word, like ꈬ (gge), can be used with any noun. If ꃮꑱꑵ (va xi-yiet) means "what kind of chicken" and ꃮ�startꑵ (va cy-yiet) means "this kind of chicken", how do you suppose you might say "that kind of fish"? How do you think you might say "a kind of pig"?

You will be taught the words ꄮ, ꁱ, and ꑵ in a later chapter, so there is no need to memorize them right now.

Chapter 8

1. Vocabulary

字符	拼音	IPA	释义
ⵎ⵿‡	kep-nyix-	[kʰɤˈↄɲiˈ]	how many, how much
♪	cyp-	[tsʰ̩↓]	one
⊓	nyip-	[n̠i↓]	two
⊟	suo-	[sↄˈ]	three
ⴄ	ly-	[l(ɻ)ˈ]	four
廿	nge-	[ŋɤˈ]	five
ⵎ	fut-	[fu̱ˈ]	six
Ψ	shyp-	[ʂ̩↓]	seven
ⵣⵣ	hxit-	[hiˈ]	eight
ⵝⵝ	ggu-	[guˈ]	nine
十	ci-	[tsʰiˈ]	ten

字符	拼音	IPA	释义
♪θ	cyp-ma	[tsʰ̩↓maˈ]	one
⊓θ	nyip-ma	[n̠i↓maˈ]	two
⊟θ	suo-ma	[sↄˈmaˈ]	three
ⴄθ	ly-ma	[l(ɻ)ˈmaˈ]	four
廿θ	nge-ma	[ŋɤˈmaˈ]	five
ⵎθ	fut-ma	[fu̱ˈmaˈ]	six
Ψθ	shyp-ma	[ʂ̩↓maˈ]	seven
ⵣⵣθ	hxit-ma	[hiˈmaˈ]	eight
ⵝⵝθ	ggu-ma	[guˈmaˈ]	nine
十θ	ci-ma	[tsʰiˈmaˈ]	ten

字符	拼音	IPA	释义
♪ⵎ	cyp-ji	[tsʰ̩↓tɕiˈ]	one
⊓ⵎ	nyip-ji	[n̠i↓tɕiˈ]	two
⊟ⵎ	suo-ji	[sↄˈtɕiˈ]	three
ⴄⵎ	ly-ji	[l(ɻ)ˈtɕiˈ]	four
廿ⵎ	nge-ji	[ŋɤˈtɕiˈ]	five
ⵎⵎ	fut-ji	[fu̱ˈtɕiˈ]	six
Ψⵎ	shyp-ji	[ʂ̩↓tɕiˈ]	seven
ⵣⵣⵎ	hxit-ji	[hiˈtɕiˈ]	eight
ⵝⵝⵎ	ggu-ji	[guˈtɕiˈ]	nine
十ⵎ	ci-ji	[tsʰiˈtɕiˈ]	ten

2. Model Sentences

Ψ⊟θ   three pigs

vot suo-ma

ᚺᚼᚠ　　　　　　　　　　　　　　six chickens
va fut-ma

ᚦᚼᚠ　　　　　　　　　　　　　　one person
co cyp-ma

ᚦᚾᚠᚽ　　　　　　　　　　　　　the two people
co nyip-ma-su

ᚷᚾᚿ　　　　　　　　　　　　　　four fish
hxe ly-ji

ᚮᚷᚻᚿ　　　　　　　　　　　　　these five fish
le cyx-nge-ji

ᚺᚾᚼᚼᚠ　　　　　　　　　　　　these seven chickens
va a-zzyx-shyp-ma

ᚾᚷᚾᚼᚿᚼ?　　　　　　　　　　How many fish will you buy?
Ne hxe kep-nyix-ji vy?

ᚾᚷᚾᚿᚼ。　　　　　　　　　　I'll buy eight fish.
Nga hxe hxit-ji vy.

ᚾᚺᚾᚼᚠᚼ?　　　　　　　　　　How many pigs do you have?
Ne vot kep-nyix-ma jjo?

ᚾᚺᚾᚠᚼ。　　　　　　　　　　I have nine pigs.
Nga vot ggu-ma jjo.

3. Grammar

In Nuosu, just as in Chinese, numbers are used in combination with measure words. If you were simply counting from one to ten, you might in that case use some numbers without measure words. But if you want to say "five magpies", you need to combine the number "five" with the measure word appropriate to magpies. The number always goes right before the measure word. Since measure words go after the noun, the resulting order is Noun＋Number＋M.W.

Noun	Number	Measure Word	
ꉮ hxe	ꉂ nge-	ꐪ ji	five fish
ꃰ va	ꏂ hxit-	ꂷ ma	eight chickens
ꇘ le	ꈬ ggu-	ꐪ ji	nine oxen

If you want to make the above structure definite, i.e. you want to say "the five fish" instead of just "five fish", you add ꌠ (-su) after the measure word. Or if you want to add a demonstrative ("these", "those"), you put it before the number.

Noun	Prefix	Number	Measure Word	Suffix	
ꉮ hxe		ꉂ nge-	ꐪ ji	ꌠ -su	the five fish
ꉮ hxe	ꋅ cyx-	ꉂ nge-	ꐪ ji		these five fish
ꉮ hxe	ꀊꍈ a-zzyx-	ꉂ nge-	ꐪ ji		those five fish
ꊂ vot		ꌕ suo-	ꂷ ma	ꌠ -su	the three pigs
ꊂ vot	ꋅ cyx-	ꌕ suo-	ꂷ ma		these three pigs
ꊂ vot	ꀊꍈ a-zzyx-	ꌕ suo-	ꂷ ma		those three pigs

When you are asking how many of something, ꈌꑴ (kep-nyix) is the word to use. It goes after the noun, and right before the measure word, in the same position where a number would go if you knew the number.

Noun	Question Word	Measure Word	
ꃰ va	ꈌꑴ kep-nyix	ꂷ ma	how many chickens?
ꇘ le	ꈌꑴ kep-nyix	ꐪ ji	how many oxen?

At this point we should comment on the use of the measure word ꂷ (ma) with nouns referring to people. It is the normal measure word to use if you are talking about one or two people, but with the numbers three, four, five, nine, and ten, the normal measure word is ꐾ (yuo). With the numbers six or eight, the tone of the measure word changes to the low tone ꐿ (yuop), and with the number seven the tone of the measure word changes to the high tone ꐽ (yuot). Don't worry, these kinds of exceptions to the rule are not very common in Nuosu, at least not so common as they are in English! The following chart will hopefully make things a bit clearer. Note that this would be the pattern with any other noun that referred to a kind of person, i.e. words meaning "man",

"woman", "child", "mother", "father", "grandfather", "grandmother", "son", "daughter", "carpenter", "emperor", etc, could all be substituted for ᨛ (co) "person" in the following chart:

Noun	Number	Measure Word	
ᨛ co	⌠ cyp	θ ma	one person
ᨛ co	⌐ nyip	θ ma	two people
ᨛ co	suo	yuo	three people
ᨛ co	ly	yuo	four people
ᨛ co	nge	yuo	five people
ᨛ co	fut	yuop	six people
ᨛ co	shyp	yuot	seven people
ᨛ co	hxit	yuop	eight people
ᨛ co	ggu	yuo	nine people
ᨛ co	ci	yuo	ten people

4. Exercises

Translate the following into English:

ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ?
ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ?
ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ。
ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ。
ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ?
ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ。
ᨛᨛᨛᨛᨛ。

Chapter 9

1. Vocabulary

千又	cix-zy	[tsʰi˦tsʅ˦]	eleven
十龕	ci-nyix	[tsʰi˦n̠i˦]	twelve
千彐	cix-suo	[tsʰi˦sɔ˦]	thirteen
千ʗ	cix-ly	[tsʰi˦l(ɻ)˦]	fourteen
千屮	cix-nge	[tsʰi˦ŋɤ˦]	fifteen
十亻	ci-fut	[tsʰi˦fu̠˥]	sixteen
十ξ	ci-shyx	[tsʰi˦ʂʅ˦]	seventeen
十ZZ	ci-hxit	[tsʰi˦hi˥]	eighteen
千双	cix-ggu	[tsʰi˦gu˦]	nineteen
⼕⽶	nyip-zi	[n̠i˩tsi˦]	twenty
⼕⽶又	nyip-zi-cyx	[n̠i˩tsi˦tsʰʅ˦]	twenty-one
⼕⽶龕	nyip-zi-nyix	[n̠i˩tsi˦n̠i˦]	twenty-two
⼕⽶彐	nyip-zix-suo	[n̠i˩tsi˦sɔ˦]	twenty-three
⼕⽶ʗ	nyip-zix-ly	[n̠i˩tsi˦l(ɻ)˦]	twenty-four
⼕⽶屮	nyip-zix-nge	[n̠i˩tsi˦ŋɤ˦]	twenty-five
⼕⽶亻	nyip-zi-fut	[n̠i˩tsi˦fu̠˥]	twenty-six
⼕⽶ξ	nyip-zi-shyx	[n̠i˩tsi˦ʂʅ˦]	twenty-seven
⼕⽶ZZ	nyip-zi-hxit	[n̠i˩tsi˦hi˥]	twenty-eight
⼕⽶双	nyip-zi-ggu	[n̠i˩tsi˦gu˦]	twenty-nine
彐十	suo-ci	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦]	thirty
彐十又	suo-ci-cyx	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦tsʰʅ˥]	thirty-one
彐十龕	suo-ci-nyix	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦n̠i˦]	thirty-two
彐千彐	suo-cix-suo	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦sɔ˦]	thirty-three
彐千ʗ	suo-cix-ly	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦l(ɻ)˦]	thirty-four
彐千屮	suo-cix-nge	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦ŋɤ˦]	thirty-five
彐十亻	suo-ci-fut	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦fu̠˥]	thirty-six
彐十ξ	suo-ci-shyx	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦ʂʅ˥]	thirty-seven
彐十ZZ	suo-ci-hxit	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦hi˥]	thirty-eight
彐千双	suo-cix-ggu	[sɔ˦tsʰi˦gu˦]	thirty-nine
ʗ十	ly-ci	[l(ɻ)˦tsʰi˦]	fourty
屮十	nge-ci	[ŋɤ˦tsʰi˦]	fifty
亻十	fut-ci	[fu̠˥tsʰi˦]	sixty
ᵧ十	shyp-ci	[ʂʅ˩tsʰi˦]	seventy
ZZ十	hxit-ci	[hi˥tsʰi˦]	eighty
双十	ggu-ci	[gu˦tsʰi˦]	ninety

ꊿ	hxa	[ha˧]	hundred
ꑋꊿ	cyp-hxa	[tsʰ˨˩ha˧]	one hundred
ꑌꊿ	nyip-hxa	[ȵi˨ha˧]	two hundred
ꅐ	dur	[tu̠˧]	thousand
ꑋꅐ	cyp-dur	[tsʰ˨˩tu̠˧]	one thousand
ꑌꅐ	nyip-dur	[ȵi˨tu̠˧]	two thousand
ꃴ	vat	[va˥]	ten thousand
ꑋꃴ	cyp-vat	[tsʰ˨˩va˥]	ten thousand
ꑌꃴ	nyip-vat	[ȵi˨va˥]	twenty thousand
ꂱꃀ	rre-mop	[dʐɤ˧mo˨]	money

2. Examples of usage

ꑴꅐꋭꃴ
yo cix-zy-ma

eleven sheep

ꄉꑴꈜꇬꃴꈌ?
Ne yo kep-nyix-ma jjo?

How many sheep do you have?

ꉆꑴꑌꅐꈎꃴꈌ。
Nga yo suo-ci-shyx-ma jjo

I have thirty-six sheep.

ꋊꉆꈜꇬꃴꒉ?
Cy va kep-nyix-ma vy?

How many chickens is he buying?

ꋊꉆꑌꊈꇬꃴꒉ。
Cy va nyip-zi-ma vy.

He is buying twenty-two chickens.

ꂱꃀꈜꑌꃴ?
Rre-mop kep-nyip-vat?

How much money?

ꂱꃀꑋꃴ
rre-mop cyp-vat

1.00 RMB

ꂱꃀꑌꃴ
rre-mop nyip-vat

2.00 RMB

ꂱꃀꑌꅐ
rre-mop nyip-dur

0.20 RMB

3. About Numbers and Tones

There are two difficult aspects of the number system. One is that there are some tone changes to get used to. The other difficult part is that there are some exceptional numbers that must simply be memorized.

The basic pattern for numbers between 10 and 100 is quite similar to the Chinese pattern:

三 (three)	十 (ten)	六 (six)	thirty-six
〣 (three)	𠂇 (ten)	〥 (six)	thirty-six

There are two kinds of tone changes affecting the numbers. In the first kind, a low tone changes to a mid-high tone when it follows a mid-tone. This affects the low-tone numbers one (ꑌ cyp), two (ꆏ nyip), and seven (ꏃ shyp) when they come at the end of numbers between 11 and 98. For example:

What we expected	What it actually is
〣 𠂇 ꑌ suo-ci-cyp	〣 𠂇 ꊿ suo-ci-cyx
𠃉 𠂇 ꆏ nge-ci-nyip	𠃉 𠂇 ꆏ nge-ci-nyix
ꇁ 𠂇 ꏃ ly-ci-shyp	ꇁ 𠂇 ꏧ ly-ci-shyx
ꏃ 𠂇 ꆏ shyp-ci-nyip	ꏃ 𠂇 ꆏ shyp-ci-nyix

In the other kind of tone change, the number ten (𠂇 ci) changes to a mid-high tone when it precedes another mid-tone number like three (〣 suo), four (ꇁ ly), five (𠃉 nge), or nine (ꈬ ggu).

What we expected	What it is
𠂇 ꇁ ci-ly	𠂇 ꇁ cix-ly
〣 𠂇 〣 suo-ci-suo	〣 𠂇 〣 suo-cix-suo
ꇁ 𠂇 ꈬ ly-ci-ggu	ꇁ 𠂇 ꈬ ly-cix-ggu
ꏃ 𠂇 𠃉 shyp-ci-nge	ꏃ 𠂇 𠃉 shyp-ci-nge

Note that both of these kinds of tone change are not uncommon with words other than numbers as well, though it is necessary for the student to learn little by little which words they apply to, since they do not apply absolutely

every time a low tone follows a mid tone, or absolutely every time there is a sequence of two mid tones. But even if there are plenty of exceptions to these tone change patterns, being aware that these patterns are common can help you.

The exceptional numbers are eleven and the numbers twenty through twenty-nine.

Eleven is exceptional in the first consonant of the second syllable, and also in its tones.

What we expected	What it is
ꓕꓥ ci-cyp	ꓕꭗ cix-zy

The numbers twenty through twenty-nine are exceptional in the first consonant of their second syllable, in the same way as eleven.

You'll just need to memorize the exceptions. You might find it helpful to also memorize the other numbers up to a hundred, since there are a lot of numbers with tone changes, and trying to apply those tone change rules in your head may slow down your purchase of a dozen eggs considerably.

4. Inflation and Talking about Money
There was very serious inflation in the 1940's, and this had an interesting effect on the way money is talked about. A kuai (Chinese dollar) is literally referred to as ten-thousand (θ va) and a jiao (Chinese dime) is literally referred to as a thousand (ꓡ dur).

So, if someone says ꓕꓡꭗθ (nge-ci-shyx-vat) it's possible they mean 57,000. But it's much more likely they mean 57 RMB, since in daily life there are very few occasions for talking about 57,000 of anything, and far more occasions for talking about quantities of money.

Unless you plan to teach math, it might be simpler for you to think of θ (vat) and ꓡ (dur) as words with more than one meaning, one of which is a number, and the other an amount of money. That way you won't have to multiply or divide by 10,000 every time you buy eggs.

5. Exercises

Record your teacher counting from one two a hundred. Listen to the recording several times before your next lesson.

Read each of the following out loud, and write down what they mean. If possible have your teacher or another native speaker listen and coach you.

꒒ꄷꉆ suo-ci-hxit
ꇖꄷꎹ ly-ci-shyx
꒒ꊝ nyip-ci
ꉻꄷꐰ fut-ci-nyix
ꄼꋍ cix-zy
ꉠꄷꃀ nge-ci-vat
꒒ꊰꎭꄷꃀ nyip-hxa shyp-ci-vat
꒒ꄸ suo-dur
ꉆꄷ꒒ hxit-ci-suo
ꄼꋍꃀ cix-zy-vat
꒒ꋜ꒒ nyip-zix-suo
꒒ꋜꉠꃀ nyip-zix-nge-vat

Try to role-play the purchase of a chicken or other market transactions.

Read through the following chart of numbers from one to a hundred. If possible, have your teacher or a friend correct your pronunciation. Once you get confident, record yourself so you can compare your pronunciation with your teacher's.

cyp	nyip	suo	ly	nge	fut	shyp	hxit	ggu	ci
cix-zy	ci-nyix	cix-suo	cix-ly	cix-nge	ci-fut	ci-shyx	ci-hxit	cix-ggu	nyip-zi
nyip-zi-cyx	nyip-zi-nyix	nyip-zix-suo	nyip-zix-ly	nyip-zix-nge	nyip-zi-fut	nyip-zi-shyx	nyip-zi-hxit	nyip-zix-ggu	suo-ci
suo-ci-cyx	suo-ci-nyix	suo-cix-suo	suo-cix-ly	suo-cix-nge	suo-ci-fut	suo-ci-shyx	suo-ci-hxit	suo-cix-ggu	ly-ci
ly-ci-cyx	ly-ci-nyix	ly-cix-suo	ly-cix-ly	ly-cix-nge	ly-ci-fut	ly-ci-shyx	ly-ci-hxit	ly-cix-ggu	nge-ci
nge-ci-cyx	nge-ci-nyix	nge-cix-suo	nge-cix-ly	nge-cix-nge	nge-ci-fut	nge-ci-shyx	nge-ci-hxit	nge-cix-ggu	fut-ci
fut-ci-cyx	fut-ci-nyix	fut-cix-suo	fut-cix-ly	fut-cix-nge	fut-ci-fut	fut-ci-shyx	fut-ci-hxit	fut-cix-ggu	shyp-ci
shyp-ci-cyx	shyp-ci-nyix	shyp-cix-suo	shyp-cix-ly	shyp-cix-nge	shyp-ci-fut	shyp-ci-shyx	shyp-ci-hxit	shyp-cix-ggu	hxit-ci
hxit-ci-cyx	hxit-ci-nyix	hxit-cix-suo	hxit-cix-ly	hxit-cix-nge	hxit-ci-fut	hxit-ci-shyx	hxit-ci-hxit	hxit-cix-ggu	ggu-ci
ggu-ci-cyx	ggu-ci-nyix	ggu-cix-suo	ggu-cix-ly	ggu-cix-nge	ggu-ci-fut	ggu-ci-shyx	ggu-ci-hxit	ggu-cix-ggu	cyp-hxa

Try to write the Yi script for all the numbers in this chart. If the IPA phonetic symbols are helpful to you, try writing the phonetic transcription for all these numbers.

Chapter 10

1. Vocabulary

𝕏	cop-wox	[tsʰo↓ɣo˧]	they, them
𝕏	cop	[tsʰo↓]	their, they, them
𝕏	cop-vi	[tsʰo↓vi˧]	theirs
↓	cyp	[tsʰ̩↓]	his, her
↓	cyp-vi	[tsʰ̩↓vi˧]	his, hers
𝕏	nop-wox	[no↓ɣo˧]	you (plural)
𝕏	nop	[no↓]	your, you (plural)
𝕏	nop-vi	[no↓vi˧]	yours (plural)
𝕏	nit	[ni˥]	your (singular)
𝕏	nit-vi	[ni˥vi˧]	yours (singular)
𝕏	ngop-wox	[ŋo↓ɣo˧]	we, us
𝕏	ngop	[ŋo↓]	our, we, us
𝕏	ngop-vi	[ŋo↓vi˧]	ours
𝕏	ngat	[ŋa˥]	my
𝕏	ngat-vi	[ŋa˥vi˧]	mine
𝕏	-vi	[vi˧]	(no exact English equivalent)
𝕏	syt	[s̩˥]	thing (abstract, like Chinese 事)
𝕏	mu	[m(u)˧]	do, make
𝕏	hxep	[hɤ↓]	look at
𝕏	ke	[kʰɤ˧]	dog
𝕏	yo	[ʐo˧]	sheep
𝕏	qop-bop	[tɕʰo↓po↓]	friend
𝕏	vup	[vu↓]	sell
𝕏	xit-ddop	[ɕi˥do↓]	Xide (place name)

2. Examples of usage

𝕏? Whose are these sheep?
Yo cyx-gge kax-ddi vi nge?

𝕏。 These sheep are ours.
Yo cyx-gge ngop-vi nge.

𝕏? Is it your dog?
Ke nit-vi ngex-nge?

ᙠᚹᛉᚻ。
Ngat-vi ap-nge.

It isn't mine.

ᚿᚼᚸᚄ？
No-wox kat bbo?

Where are you (plural) going?

ᖟᚼᛞᚄᚄ。
Ngop-wox Xit-ddop bbo.

We're going to Xide.

ᚻᚼᛁᚱᛈᚄᚽ？
Cop-wox Op-rro xix mu bbo?

What are they going to Xichang to do?

ᚻᚼᛁᚱᚺᚳᛝᚄ。
Cop-wox Op-rro qop-bop hxep bbo.

They're going to Xichang to see friends.

ᛉᛇᚶᛁᚱᚼ？
Nit yo cyx-gge vup-vup?

Are you selling these sheep?

ᛇᚶᚹᛉᚻᛉᚻ，ᚻᚹᛉᚻ。
Yo cyx-gge ngat-vi ap-nge, cop-vi nge.

These sheep aren't mine, they're theirs.

ᚶᖟᚺᛝᚻ。
Cy ngop qop-bop nge.

He is our friend.

ᖟᚼᛁᛋᚺᛝᚻ。
Ngop-wox li cyp qop-bop nge.

We are his friends.

ᚻᚼᚳᛝᚄ？
Cop-wox xix mu bbo?

What are they going off to do?

ᚻᚼᛞᛉᚱᚄ。
Cop-wox Xit-ddop vot vup bbo.

They are going to Xide to sell pigs.

ᛉᛝᛉᚱᚄ？
Vot kep-nyix-ma vup bbo?

How many pigs are they going off to sell?

ᛉᛈᛉᚱᚄ。
Vot shyp-ma vup bbo.

They are going off to sell seven pigs.

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ⅉ⊖Ξ✕⊖✕Ƴ?
Nit qop-bop cyx-ma xix vy?

What is this friend of yours buying?

✕Є Ƴ。
Cy yo vy.

He's buying sheep.

✕Є✕⤳ Ⅺ Ƴ?
Cy yo kax-ddi vi vy?

Whose sheep is he buying?

✕Є⥯Ⅺ Ƴ⥾?
Cy yo nop-vi vyx-vy?

Is he buying your sheep?

3. Grammar

Possession is indicated in two different ways: One way is by putting the possessor before the possessed thing. There is no special marking of the possessor in this case, unless the possessor is a pronoun. In this case you need to pay attention to using the correct form of the pronoun.

⥁Є	ngat yo	my sheep
ⅉЄ	nit yo	your sheep
⅃Є	cyp yo	his sheep
⥋Є	ngop yo	our sheep
⥏Є	nop yo	your sheep
⊖Є	cop yo	their sheep
✕⤳Є	kax-ddi yo	whose sheep
⊦⥰Є	Mu-gat yo	Mu-gat's sheep

The other way of indicating possession is by using the marker Ⅺ (-vi) after the possessor. This is the only way to indicate possession if the possessed thing is not explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, if the possessed thing is explicitly mentioned, it comes before the possessor marked with Ⅺ.

ᏋᏇᏆ	yo ngat-vi	my sheep (= ᏇᏋ ngat yo)
ᏇᏆ	ngat-vi	mine
ᏋᏫᏆ	yo cop-vi	their sheep (= ᏫᏋ cop yo)
ᏫᏆ	cop-vi	theirs
ᏔᏉᏆ	kax-ddi-vi	whose
ᏂᏕᏆ	Mu-gat-vi	Mu-gat's
ᏋᏆ	cyp-vi	his/hers
ᏋᏍᏆ	yo nit-vi	your sheep (= ᏍᏋ nit yo)

Though Ꮻ (cop), ᏋᏉ (nop), and Ꮘ (ngop) are typically used as possessive pronouns, they are also sometimes used interchangeably with the non-possessive forms ᏫᏊ (cop-wox), ᏋᏉᏊ (nop-wox), and ᏈᏊ (ngop-wox).

4. A Note on Pronunciation
The pronouns Ꮻ (cop), ᏋᏉ (nop), and Ꮘ (ngop) are pronounced with a rising tone by many people, perhaps because they originated as contractions of the pronouns ᏫᏊ (cop-wox), ᏋᏉᏊ (nop-wox), and ᏈᏊ (ngop-wox). The IPA for these words would be as follows:

Ꮘ [ŋoˀ] or [ŋo˩]
ᏋᏉ [noˀ] or [no˩]
Ꮻ [tsʰoˀ] or [tsʰo˩]

5. Exercises
Try saying the following:
"That dog is mine."
"This dog is theirs."
"Those sheep are Mu-gat's."
"Whose is this pig?"
"How many dogs are you selling?"
"Is this sheep Mu-gox's?"
"Mu-gox's dog is eating pork."

Read the following sentences and decide what they mean.

ᏔᏂᏉᏇᏆ。
Cyx-ma li ngat-vi.

A-zzyx-ma li nit-vi.

Ke max-su cyp-vi ap-nge.

Yo ggex-su kax-ddi vi nge?

Vot cyx-ma li ngat vot.

Cy cyp va vup bbo.

Nga nit va vy.

Hxe cyx-ji kax-ddi vi?

Ngat ke hxe ji jjo.

Hxe jix-su kax-ddi vi nge?

Ne xix mu bbo?

Nga zzax zze bbo.

Chapter 11

1. Vocabulary

뀨	tit	[tʰi˥]	here
뀨ᵞ	tit-go	[tʰi˥ko˧]	here
궤ᵼ	a-ddit	[a˧di˥]	there
궤ᵼᵞ	a-ddit-go	[a˧di˥ko˧]	there
뀨켕	kep-te	[kʰɤ˩tʰɤ˧]	when
덩ᵑ	ip-nyip	[i˩n̠i˩]	today
	ap-ndi-hxix	[a˩ndi˧hi˧]	yesterday
	sho-mo-cyp-nyip	[ʂo˧mo˧tsʰ˩n̠i˩]	the day before yesterday
	mup-shy-dex	[m(u)˩ʂ̩˧tɤ˥]	tomorrow
	ca-pot-nyip	[tsʰa˧pʰo˥n̠i˩]	the day after tomorrow
뀨	ddip	[di˩]	is called
ᵞ	ddix	[di˥]	is called
	mu-ti	[m(u)˧tʰi˥]	morning
	ip-si-mu-ti	[i˩si˧m(u)˧tʰi˥]	this morning
	mat-hlop	[ma˥l̥o˩]	afternoon
	ket-mop	[kʰɤ˥mo˩]	evening
뀨	jip	[tɕi˩]	jin (unit of weight, ½kg)
뀨	nyi	[n̠i˥]	sit
ᵞ뀨	gox-nyi	[ko˥n̠i˥]	sit
	viet-gga	[ve˥ga˧]	clothing
ᵞ	bbyp	[b̩˩]	give, pay
뀨뀨X	kep-mu vup	[kʰɤ˩m(u)˧ vu˩]	how much money
	na-hxex-dde	[na˧hɤ˥dɤ˥]	clinic, hospital

2. Examples of usage

뀨뀨켕뀨뀨뀨?
Ne kep-te la su nge?

When did you come?

뀨ᵞ뀨뀨뀨뀨。
Nga ap-ndi-hxix la su.

I came yesterday.

X뀨켕뀨뀨뀨?
Cy kep-te Chep-du bbo?

When did he go to Chengdu?

X뀨뀨뀨뀨뀨。
Cy sho-mo-cyp-nyip Chep-du bbo.

He went to Chengdu the day before yesterday.

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ᚋᚖᚅᚋᚎᚋᚖ?
Nit vot-she kep-mu vup?

How much is your pork selling for?

ᚖᚖᚅᚍᚋᚉᚋᚔ。
Nga vot-she cyp-jip nge-vat.

My pork is selling for 5 kuai per jin.

ᚋᚉᚅᚍᚋᚖᚋᚖ?
Cop yox-she cyp-jip kep-nyix nge?

How much is their mutton?

ᚋᚉᚅᚍᚋᚖᚋᚔ。
Cop yox-she cyp-jip ci-nyix-vat.

Their mutton is 12 RMB per jin.

ᚋᚖᚍᚋᚖᚋᚖᚋ?
Nit viet-gga cyx-ggu kep-nyix bbyp?

How much did you give for this clothing of yours?

ᚖᚖᚍᚋᚖᚋᚋᚖᚖ。
Ngat viet-gga cyx-ggu nyip-zi-shyx-vat bbyp.

I payed 27 RMB for this clothing of mine.

ᚋᚖᚋᚖ?
Cy-yiet xix ddip?

What is this called?

ᚋᚖ "ᚖ" ᚖ。
Cy-yiet "bip" ddix.

This is called a "pen".

ᚖᚋᚖᚋ, ᚖᚖᚖᚋ。
Nga tit-go nyi, ne a-ddit-go nyi.

I'll sit here, you sit there.

ᚖᚋᚖᚋᚖᚖ?
Nop tit-go xix mu la?

What did you guys come here to do?

ᚖᚋᚖᚋᚖᚖ。
Ngop tit-go yo vy la.

We came here to buy sheep.

ᚖᚖᚖᚋᚖᚖᚖᚖᚖ。
Ngop ip-si-mu-ti na-hxex-dde bbo.

We went to the clinic this morning.

ꂼꀕꀧꈜꀜꄻꑠꒉꀨ? What are you going to Xichang to
Ne ca-pot-nyip Op-rro xix mu bbo? do the day after tomorrow?

ꉙꀕꀧꈜꀜꄻꑭꋒꒃꀨ。 I'm going to Xichang to buy clothes
Nga ca-pot-nyip Op-rro the day after tomorrow.
viet-gga vy bbo.

3. Grammar

For certain meanings, the correct word to use depends on the context. For example, when saying "here" one would normally say the longer word ꊰꒉ (tit-go). But in combination with certain other kinds of words one might need to leave off the second syllable and just say ꊰ (tit). E.g. if one is saying something like "here in Xichang" or "here in Chengdu" one would leave off the ꒉ (go): ꊰ ꄻꈜ (tit Op-rro) "here in Xichang", ꊰꑳꄗ (tit Chep-du) "here in Chengdu". You also leave off the second syllable of "here" if saying "underneath here" or "above here". E.g. to say "above here" you say ꊰꉻ (tit hxat), not ꊰꒉꉻ (tit-go hxat).

The same pattern shows up with the word "there". Normally you would say ꀊꄜꒉ (a-ddit-go), but to say "there in Kunming" you would say ꀊꄜꊰꈥ (a-ddit Kot-mip), and to say "underneath there", you would say ꀊꄜꐲ (a-ddit jjyp).

There are certain verbs like ꑭ (nyi) "sit", ꆒ (la) "come", ꀵ (it) "lie down", and ꉚ (hxit) "stand" which normally have the syllable ꒉ (go) or ꒊ (gox) before them when no location for the action is explicitly mentioned. The tone of this syllable is determined by what verb it precedes; if it precedes a mid-tone verb, it is mid-high tone: ꒊ (gox). Otherwise it is mid tone: ꒉ (go).

ꂼꒊꑭ	Ne gox-nyi.	You sit.
ꂼꊰꒉꑭ	Ne tit-go nyi.	You sit here.
ꂼꀊꄜꒉꑭ	Ne a-ddit-go nyi.	You sit there.

The word for "is called" or "say" is pronounced either with a low tone: ꄂ (ddip) or a mid-high tone: ꄃ (ddix). It is pronounced with the low tone in the questions such as ꋍꑴꑠꄂ (cy-yiet xix ddip) "What is this called?" and ꀊꋩꑴꑠꄂ (a-zzy-yiet xix ddip) "What is that called?". But in most contexts, it is pronounced with a mid-high tone: ꋍꑴ "ꀘ" ꄃ (cy-yiet bip ddip) "This is called a 'pen'."

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4. Exercises

Try to say the following:

"Mu-gat is sitting there."

"What did you come here to Kunming to do?"

"How much did you pay for that sheep?"

"How much is mutton selling for?"

"When did you come here to Xichang?"

"I came to Xichang yesterday."

"When did you go to Xide?"

"I went to Xide the day before yesterday."

Suppose you see a horse and don't know what a horse is called in Nuosu. Try to ask your teacher what it is called, and try to learn the word. You can use a picture of a horse or a toy horse for this purpose, if no real horse is standing nearby. Repeat this exercise with other things that you can point to and ask about, until you are confident asking the question, and when hearing the answer can distinguish between the new word and the rest of the sentence. Don't worry if you don't remember all the new words you learn in this way, since at this point the purpose is to learn how to ask what something is called, and how to understand the answer.

Chapter 12

1. Vocabulary

‡	nyi	[n̠i˧]	also
由ㄔ	jjix-do	[dʑi˦to˦]	tired
为	he	[xɤ˦]	good
Ɏ	jjy	[dʑ̩˦]	very
⊛	mit	[mi˥]	hungry
ㄢㄋ	ip-mop	[i˧mo˩]	stomach
Ж	qi	[tɕʰi˦]	want
ㄩ	syt	[s̩˥]	thirsty
习	ndo	[ndo˦]	drink
甘ㄥ	it-ggop	[i˥go˩]	water
순ㄨ	ie-qyt	[e˦tɕʰ̩˥]	water
⑤ㅐ	mge-fu	[ŋgɤ˦fu˦]	buckwheat cake
Ŧ	tit	[tʰi˥]	but
ㅈ♢	cuop-luo	[tsʰɔ˩lɔ˩]	a bit/little/slightly
ㅊㅐㅆ	kax-sha-sha	[kʰa˦ʂa˦ʂa˦]	thank you
⦵	ox	[o˦]	particle similar to Chinese 了

2. Dialogue

ㅐ⅗: ㅆㅐ╳ㅐㄕ! ㄕㄋㅄ炬ㅄ羊?
Sha-mat Vut-qie ap! Ne ip-nyip kat-go bbo?
Sha-mat Vut-qie! Where are you going?

╳ㅐ: 宇ㄋㅄ⦵ⓧ羊，ㄕㅗ炬羊?
Nga ip-nyip Op-rro bbo, nex li kat bbo?
I am going to Xichang today, where are you going?

ㅐ⅗: 宇‡⦵ⓧ羊。
Ngax nyi Op-rro bbo.
I am going to Xichang too..

╳ㅐ: ㄕⓧ⦵Ж ㅐ羊?
Ne Op-rro xix mu bbo?
What are you going to Xichang to do?

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ꀉꃀ: ꀋꑍꄩꃀꊨꀻ。
Nga Op-rro va vup bbo.
I am going to Xichang to sell chickens.

ꆅꃀꑴꎆꄀꄡ?
Nit va kep-nyix-ma nge?
How many chickens do you have?

ꀉꃀ: ꂷꃀꆚꑽꄀ。
Ngat va nyip-zi-ma
I have twenty chickens (Literally, my chickens are twenty).

ꆏꑭ: ꆅꃀꑙꎆꒉꑙꎆ，ꆗꒉꆗꆙ。ꑊꐙꊈꄜ?
Nit va ax-nyi-jjy-ax-nyi, he-jjy-he gge. Ne jjix-do-do?
You have a lot of chickens, really good ones. Are you tired?

ꀉꃀ: ꀋꐙꑘꐙ，ꄕ，ꑱꏦꄩꆩꑻ。
Nga jjix-ap-do, tit, cuop-luop it-ggop syt.
I'm not tired, but I am thirsty.

ꆏꑭ: ꀉꄩꆩꏜ。ꑊꐙꑵꄩꆩꑍꆍ。ꀉꇩꄀꎆꏜ，ꑊꌠꐎꆿꄜ?
Nga it-ggop jjo, Ne tit-go it-ggop ndo la. Nga mge-fu nyi jjo, ne ip-mop mit-mit?
I have water. Come drink some water here. I also have buckwheat bread, are you hungry?

ꀉꃀ: ꀉꌠꐎꑵꆿ，ꇩꄩꀮꑵꑽ。
Nga ip-mop ap-mit, mge-fu zze ap-qi.
I'm not hungry, I don't want to eat buckwheat bread.

ꆏꑭ: ꄩꆍꐙꒉ。
It-ggop tit-go.
Here is the water.

ꀉꃀ: ꇂꃀꄜꑍ!
Kax-sha-sha ox!
Thanks!

ᨢᨯ: ᨆᨪᨮᨪ! (ᨆᨪᨪᨥᨮᨢ!)

Kax-sha-ap-sha! (Kax-sha-shax si-ap-ssop!)

Don't mention it. (alternate expression for the same thing)

3. Grammar

The word ᨰ (nyi) is used very much like the Chinese word 也, and is used in situations where in English we would say "also" or "too", and also in situations where in English we would use the "both... and..." construction. Here are some examples:

ᨲᨰᨱᨳᨮ。	Ngax nyi it-ggop jjo.	I have water too. (In addition to someone else having it)
ᨲᨱᨳᨰᨮ。	Nga it-ggop nyi jjo.	I have water too. (In addition having something else)
ᨲᨰᨱᨳᨮ，ᨆᨰᨱᨳᨮ。	Ngax nyi it-ggop jjo, cyx nyi it-ggop jjo.	I have water, and so does he.
ᨲᨱᨳᨰᨮ，ᨳᨱᨰᨮ。	Nga it-ggop nyi jjo, mge-fu nyi jjo.	I have water, and I have buckwheat cakes too.

Notice from the examples above how the meaning depends on whether the word ᨰ (nyi) follows the subject or the object. If it follows a subject, the meaning is that there is an additional subject for the verb, whether implied or explicit. If ᨰ (nyi) follows the object, the meaning is that there is an additional object for the verb, whether implied or explicit.

The closest thing to the English word "very" is ᨿ (jjy), which goes between two repetitions of the adjective (or sometimes between two repetitions of a verb), as in the following examples:

ᨆ	he	good
ᨆᨿᨆ	he-jjy-he	very good
ᨰᨪ	jjix-do	tired
ᨰᨪᨿᨰᨪ	jjix-do-jjy-jjix-do	very tired
ᨲᨰ	ax-nyi	many
ᨲᨰᨿᨲᨰ	ax-nyi-jjy-ax-nyi	very many
ᨱ	mit	hungry
ᨱᨿᨱ	mit-jjy-mit	very hungry
ᨳ	nge	be

ㅓ⊻ㅓ	nge-jjy-nge	really be, very much be
以	qi	want to
以⊻以	qi-jjy-qi	really want to

For a lesser degree than that expressed by ⊻ (jjy) (e.g. if you want a meaning something like English "somewhat" or "a bit"), use the word 朳𝄐 (cuop-luo), which goes before the word it modifies. It can also modify verbs.

朳𝄐卌ヰ	cuop-luo jjix-do	somewhat tired
朳𝄐ꝺ丰	cuop-luo ax-nyi	a bit many
朳𝄐⊕	cuop-luo mit	kind of hungry
朳𝄐囘	cuop-luo ndo	have a little drink

The word 以 (qi) is used for "want", but is only used as a helping verb (e.g. like English "want to eat", never without another verb. For expressions like "want water", another verb would be used: 从 (ka).

ꝶ枾Ө以	vot-she zze qi	want to eat pork
ꝶ枾从	vot-she ka	want pork
日ꓕ囘以	it-ggop ndo qi	want to drink water
日ꓕ从	it-ggop ka	want water

To make a verb or adjective negative, put 𝄼 (ap) before the last syllable of the verb or adjective. Since most verbs and adjectives have only one syllable, it would be easy to imagine that the 𝄼 (ap) simply goes before the verb or adjective. However, we now have a couple of two and three syllable words to negate. Consider the following chart:

ㅓ 𝄼ㅓ	nge ap-nge	be not be
卌 𝄼卌	jjo ap-jjo	have not have
从冊ꞈ 从冊𝄼冊	kax-sha-sha kax-sha-ap-sha	thank not thank
卌ヰ 卌𝄼ヰ	jjix-do jjix-ap-do	tired not tired

4. Exercises

Try to say the following:

"Mu-gat wants to eat buckwheat cake."

"I'm a bit thirsty."

"I'm also a bit hungry."

"Mu-gox is hungry too."

"I have both pigs and sheep".

"Both Mu-gat and I have pigs."

"Yesterday I really wanted to eat mutton."

"I'm both hungry and thirsty".

Try to figure out what the following mean. You're likely to need help from your teacher with some of the sentences.

Cy-yiet li xix ddip?

Cy-yiet li ie-qyt nyi ddix, it-ggop nyi ddix.

Nga a-ndi-hxix Xit-ddop va nyip-ma vy bbo.

Ne ip-si-mu-ti xix mu?

Nga ip-si-mu-ti jjix-do-jjy-jjix-do,
        xix nyi ap-mu.

Cy ca-pot-nyip kat bbo?

Ne tit kot-mip xix mu la?

Cyp yo ax-nyi-jjy-ax-nyi.

Nga cuop-luo ie-qyt syt.

Ne it-ggop ndo qi-qi?

Nga it-ggop ndo ap-qi.

Ngax nyi jjix-ap-do, cyx nyi jjix-ap-do.

Chapter 13

1. Vocabulary

ꇊꀋ	ngap-nyit	[ŋa˩ɲi˥]	the two of us
ꋽꀋ	cyp-nyit	[tsʰ̩˩ɲi˥]	those two, the two of them
ꆀꀋ	nep-nyit	[nɤ˩ɲi˥]	you two, the two of you
ꐰ	jjo	[dʑo˧]	have, there is, there are
ꆤ	kit	[kʰi˥]	carry (water)
ꑟꃅ	xix-mu	[ɕi˧m(u)˧]	why
ꂱꌒ	iep-sat	[e˩sa˥]	later
ꌟ	syp	[s̩˩]	understand
ꆈꌠ	Nuo-su	[nɔ˧su˧]	Nuosu, Yi
ꉝ	hxop	[ho˩]	language
�义	hxie-mgat	[he˧ŋga˥]	Han
ꑥ	hxix-die	[he˧te˧]	the outside world, other countries
ꀋꄂ	ax-di	[a˧ti˧]	only
ꈧꃅ	kep-mu	[kʰɤ˩m(u)˧]	how
ꋄꏦ	zyt-jie	[ts̩˥tɕe˧]	self
ꀋꂾꌠ	ap-myt-sip	[a˩m(ɻ)˥si˩]	a little while ago
ꄉꁧ	ddep-bbo yy[dɤ˩bo˧ʐ̩˧]	go relieve oneself
ꉌ	hxip	[hi˩]	speak, say
ꌒ	sat	[sa˥]	finish
ꄮꑟ	tat-xi	[tʰa˥ɕi˧]	should

2. Dialogues

ꉌꋬꌦꈌꐒꄻ，ꄩꆏꉌꋬꊰꑟꐰ？
Ngop-wox co fut-yuop nge, ip-nyip ngop-wox syt xix jjo?
There are six of us, what things do we have to do today?

ꉌꋬꊰꌒꐞꐰ，ꃪꎭꃪꎭꃤ，ꄷꈉꆤ，ꎭꃅ。
Ngop-wox syt suo-jjit jjo, vot-she va-she vy, it-ggop kit, zza mu.
We have three things to do: buying pork and chicken, carrying water, and fixing a meal.

ꄩꆏꑟꃅꊰꀋꑌꃅꐰꌠꄻ？
Ip-nyip xix-mu syt ax-nyi-mu jjo su nge?
Why do we have so many things to do today?

ꀀꌷ: ꉜꌋꉘꁮꆈꂷꇬꀕꆈ。ꉘꌋꉘꁮꆈꊋꇬꆈꉄꊨꏸꂹ，ꉀꆈꁸꊨꏸ，ꋄꎴꉘꁮꉐꂶꐂꏸ。
Iep-sat hxix-die qop-bop gge tit la. Hxix-die qop-bop cyx-gge Nuo-su-hxop ap
syp, Hxie-mgat-hxop nyi ap-syp, cop-wox hxix-die-hxop ax-di syp.
Later some foreign friends are coming here. These foreign friends don't know
the Nuosu language, and they don't know Chinese either; they only know a
foreign language.

ꀀꊪ: ꉬꇐꄏꆈꌵꆈꇬꂷ?
Ngop-wox kep-mu syt cyx-gge mu?
How will we do these things?

ꀀꌷ: ꆍꆈꄉꉬꆈꃅꀼꀾ，ꄿꆈꃼꃩꈜꀾ，ꉬꆈꋧꂷ。
Nep-nyit vot-she va-she vy bbo, cyp-nyit it-ggop kit bbo, ngap-nyit zza mu.
You two go buy pork and chicken, the two of them will go get water, and the
two of us will fix the meal.

ꀀꌷ: ꃴꏿꇑꀾꀘ?
Vut-qie kat bbo ox?
Where did Vut-qie go?

ꀀꊪ: ꊭꀋꃅꌤꄏꇬꐰ，ꀄꀄ! ꊭꁍꄎꆏꀘ!
Cy ap-myt-sip tit-go jjo, o-op! Cy a-ddit la ox!
He was here just a moment ago... oh! He's coming over there!

ꀀꌷ: ꃴꏿꀋ! ꆀꊭꈓꎴꉌꄳ，ꆀꀋꃅꌤꇑꀾꌡꇬ?
Vut-qie ap! Nit zyt-jie cuop-luo hxip, ne ap-myt-sip kat bbo su nge?
Vut-qie! Why don't you tell us where you went just now?

ꃴꏿ: ꉬꀋꃅꌤꄭꀾꄸꌡꇬ。
Nga ap-myt-sip ddep-bbo yy su nge.
I just went to the bathroom.

ꀀꌷ: ꉬꇐꄏꊪꃅꊭꈓꃰꈀꌠꄏꌺꑟ。
Ngop-wox kax-ddi nyi syt zyt-jie vi ggex-su mu sat tat-xi.
Each of us must finish his own tasks.

3. Grammar

The word ꐰ (jjo) means "have", and like the Chinese word 有 it is often used to

express the same meaning that English expresses with "there is/are/was/were". It is often used when someone or something is being mentioned for the first time in a conversation. In this usage, the object of 𐊗 (jjo) is indefinite, and the sentence often also has a location word in it, like 𐊗𐊌 (tit-go) "here", 𐊍𐊕𐊌 (a-ddit-go) "there", 𐊒𐊗 (Op-rro) "Xichang", and may also contain certain adverbs expressing quantity, e.g. 𐊍 𐊗𐊍 (ax-nyi-mu) "much/many/plentifully", 𐊐𐊗𐊍 (kep-nyix-mu) "how much/how many/in what quantity".

Location	Object	Adverb	Verb	
	𐊖𐊌 vot ma		𐊗 jjo	There is a pig.
𐊗𐊌 tit-go	𐊖𐊌 vot ma		𐊗 jjo	There is a pig here.
	𐊖 vot	𐊍𐊗𐊍 ax-nyi-mu	𐊗 jjo	There are many pigs.
𐊗𐊌 tit-go	𐊖 vot	𐊍𐊗𐊍 ax-nyi-mu	𐊗 jjo	There are many pigs here.
𐊗𐊌 tit-go	𐊖 vot	𐊐𐊗𐊍 kep-nyix-mu	𐊗 jjo	How many pigs are there here?

The word 𐊗𐊍 (xix-mu) means "why", and is an adverb. Adverbs, including this one, always precede the verb or verb phrase. Adverbs often immediately precede the verb or verb phrase, but they may also come before other modifiers, such as a location word or a time word, depending on the emphasis of the sentence. In the chart below, emphasis is indicated with italics.

Subject	Modifier	Modifier	Verb Phrase	
𐊎 ne	𐊍𐊖𐊕 a-ndi-hxix	𐊗𐊍 xix-mu	𐊍𐊖 nry ndo	Why did you *drink wine* yesterday?
𐊎 ne	𐊗𐊍 xix-mu	𐊍𐊖𐊕 a-ndi-hxix	𐊍𐊖 nry ndo	Why did you drink wine *yesterday*?

So the point of the first question above is to question the choice of beverage, and the point of the second is to question of the choice of the occasion for drinking that beverage.

The word 𐊐𐊍 (kep-mu) "how" is also an adverb, and like other adverbs it precedes the verb (phrase), and sometimes precedes other modifiers.

By now you may have noticed that adverbs tend to end in 𐊍 (mu). You can turn various adjectives (or adjective phrases) into adverbs by adding this syllable on the end.

Adjective		Adverb	
ꆺꆈ iex-ssa	slow	ꆺꆈꂰ iex-ssa-mu	slowly
ꑋꐇꑋ nji-jjy-nji	very quick	ꑋꐇꑋꂰ nji-jjy-nji-mu	very quickly
ꈌꑞ kep-nxix	how many	ꈌꑞꂰ kep-nxix-mu	how plentifully
ꀋꑋ ax-nyi	much/many	ꀋꑋꂰ ax-nyi-mu	plentifully

The expression ꄏꁧꒀ (ddep-bbo yy) is a way of implying that you are going to relieve oneself. This phrase can be used whether you are going to an actual toilet or simply to a bush or tree. To describe what you need to do more explicitly would not be polite. It is adequate to simply say that you are going outside, and leave it for others to infer your reason for going.

The verb ꌦ (sa) "finish" often follows another verb, though in that case it might sometimes be more convenient to translate it "all". The meaning in a particular sentence depends on whether the subject or the object comes first in the sentence. (So far, we've always seen subjects coming before objects, but actually the order is flexible). This is hard for English speakers to get used to, so it would be worthwhile to memorize some sentences and their meanings in order to internalize the pattern. The meaning of the word ꌦ (sat) is connected with whichever comes first, the subject or the object.

ꑍꊈ ngop-wox	ꂯꃚ mge-fu	ꁨ zze	ꌦ sat	We all eat buckwheat cakes.
ꂯꃚ mge-fu	ꑍꊈ ngop-wox	ꁨ zze	ꌦ sat	We eat all the buckwheat cakes.
ꊐꊈ cop-wox	ꃚ nry	ꆽ ndo	ꌦ sat	They all drink wine.
ꃚ nry	ꊐꊈ cop-wox	ꆽ ndo	ꌦ sat	They drink all the wine.
ꌺꇖꌠ syt ggex-su		ꃚ mu	ꌦ sat	Do all the things.

The verb ꄔꉚ (tat-xi) "should", like ꉚ (qi) "want to", is always used together with another verb, and always follows the other verb. It has the negative form ꄔꀋꉚ (tat-ap-xi) "shouldn't".

ꑊꑌ ngap-nyit	ꋤꁨ zzax-zze		The two of us eat.
ꑊꑌ ngap-nyit	ꋤꁨ zzax-zze	ꄔꉚ tat-xi	The two of us should eat.
ꑊꑌ ngap-nyit	ꋤꁨ zzax-zze	ꄔꀋꉚ tat-ap-xi	The two of us shouldn't eat

The word 𓃻 (ox) is similar to the Chinese word 了 (le) in usage. Like the Chinese word, it often indicates a change in the situation, and also sometimes indicates a completed action or event. It is also used in certain set expressions, e.g. in the expression 𐊼𐊼𐊼𓃻 (Kax-sha-sha ox!) "thank you".

4. Exercises

Look at some photos or drawings containing things for which you have already learned the noun (e.g. photos of pigs, sheep, chickens, people, etc). Depending on what is in the picture, try to say appropriate things like "There are three pigs there", "There are lots of sheep there", etc.

The word for tea is 𐊼𐊼 (lat-yy). Ask your teacher whether he wants to drink tea. If he says he wants to drink tea, ask him why he wants to drink tea. If he says he doesn't want to drink tea, ask him why he doesn't want to drink tea.

Try to ask your teacher why there are lots of people in Chengdu (hint: you can put the word "why" before another adverb).

Try to say, "Those people all drink tea." Then try to say, "Those people drank all the tea." (hint: Both sentences can use the same words, but in a different order.)

Try to translate the following into English:

Cyp-nyit ip-nyi mge-fu ax-nyi-mu zze ox.
Mge-fu cyp-nyit zze sat ox.
Kax-ddi nyi vot-she zze qi.
Ngap-nyit it-ggop ndo qi.
Nep-nyit it-ggop kit tat-xi.
Cop-wox vot-she zze tat-ap-xi.
Hxiex-die co a-zzyx-gge vot-she zze sat.
Vot-she hxiex-die co a-zzyx-gge zze sat ox.
Co a-ddit-go ax-nyi-mu jjo.
Co tit-go kep-nyix-mu jjo?
Co ly-yuo jjo.
Nep-nyit va kep-nyix-mu jjo?
Ne xix-mu a-ddit-go bbo?
Ne xix-mu zzax-ap-zze?

Mge-fu ne xix-mu zze sat ox?
Cop-wox xix-mu ddep-bbo yy sat ox?

Chapter 14

1. Vocabulary

ꉐꌧ	hxep-sa	[hɤ˩sa˧]	nice to look at
ꀎ	pu	[pʰu˧]	price
ꉐꈬ	hxep-go	[hɤ˩ko˧]	think think, suppose that
ꆹꇐ	liex-guo	[le˧kɔ˧]	expensive
ꇤꀋꏾ	ggap-ap-jjyx	[ɡa˩a˩dʐ̩˧]	cheap
ꅉꐚ	dde-jji	[dɤ˧dʑi˧]	know
ꅉꅉꃆ	dde-dde-mu	[dɤ˧dɤ˧m(u)˧]	often
ꀉꄀ	ax-di	[a˧ti˧]	only
ꄊ	ddap	[da˩]	or
ꀉꀠ	ax-pa	[a˧pʰa˧]	other
ꃆꐯ	Mu-jy	[m(u)˧tɕ̩˧]	a name
ꀊꑘ	At-nyop	[a˧ɲo˩]	a name
ꃰꈨ	Vut-gop	[vu̠˥ko˩]	a name

2. Dialogues

ꃰꈨ: ꆹꄊꇤꏀꈬꉐꌧꏾꉐꌧ, ꇗꈬꄊꃤꌠꉬ?

Nit viet-gga cyx-ggu hxep-sa-jjy-hxep-sa, kat-go da vy su nge?

This outfit of yours looks really nice, where did you buy it?

ꀊꑘ: ꀋꄂꉜꉻ꒰ꇗꌠꃤꌠ.

Ap-ndi-hxix Op-rro da vy su.

Yesterday in Xichang.

ꃰꈨ: ꒓ꂿꈐꀻꑟ?

Rre-mop kep-nyix bbyp?

How much money did you give for it?

ꀊꑘ: ꆀꋒꏢ꒰ꀻꑟ, ꆀꉐꈬꀎꆹꇐꇐ?

Nyip-zi-shyx vat bbyp, ne hxep-go pu liex-guo-guo?

Twenty-seven RMB, do you think the price is expensive?

ꃰꈨ: ꉘꉐꈬꀎꆹꀋꇐ. ꋊꆀꋧꀋꋡ.

Nga hxep-go pu lie-ap-guo. Cyp-nyip-zzix-ap-zzi.

I think the price isn't expensive. It's every-day.

ꌳꆪ: ꀂꄀꈨꃼꇮꀋꆀꃅꐪꐜ?

A-ddit-go viet-gga ax-nyi mu jjox-jjo?

Is there a lot of clothing there?

ꌳꆫ: ꀋꆀꐛꀋꆀꃅꐪ。ꄡ，ꍯꇰꆹ�跟，ꍯꇰꆹꀋ跟。

Ax-nyi-jjy-ax-nyi mu jjo. Tit, cyp-gge li he, cyp-gge li ap-he.

There's a whole lot. But, some of it is good, and some of it is not good.

ꌳꆫ: ꆠꃼꈨꊐꊛꆹꇤꄉꃤꌠꉬ?

Nit viet-gga cyx-ggu li kat-da vy su nge?

Where did you buy this outfit of yours?

ꌳꆪ: ꑸꄚꄉꃤꌠ。

Xit-ddop da vy su.

I bought it in Xide.

ꌳꆫ: ꀴꆻꇬ�popꈬꇮꐧꐒ?

Pu liex-guo ddap ggap-ap-jjyx?

Was it expensive or cheap?

ꌳꆪ: ꀴꈬꇮꐒ。

Pu ggap-ap-jjyx.

It was cheap.

ꌳꆫ: ꑟꉬꑛꆀ，ꉌꀋꍯꈨꃤꁧ。

Xip nge yix-ne, ngax nyi cyp-ggu vy bbo.

In that case, I'll go buy one too.

ꌳꆫ: ꃅꏤꊪꁬꅺꆀꑵꆿ，ꆮꄂꐛꐚ?

Mu-jy ca-pot-nyip Kot-mip la, ne dde-jjix-jji?

Mujy is coming to Kunming 2 days from now, did you know?

ꌳꆪ: ꇰꄂꀋꐚ。ꊛꄡꈨꑟꃅꆿꌠꉬ?

Nga dde-ap-jji. Cy tit-go xix-mu la su nge?

I didn't know. Why is he coming here?

ᘻᖬ: ᶍᘪᗡᥱᗝᥰᕀᘝ。
Cy tit-go qop-bop hxep la.
He is coming here to see friends.

ᖻᗝ: ᶍᘕᛞᚼᶠᗡᥱᗝᥱᘝᶞᘝ?
Cy dde-dde-mu tit-go qop-bop hxep lax-la?
Does he come here often to see friends?

ᘻᖬ: ᶍᘕᛞᚼᖟᘝ。
Cy dde-dde-mu ap-la.
He doesn't come often.

ᖻᗝ: ᶍᘬᖟᘝᕂᘬᚼᚆᘝ?
Cy ax-di la ddap ax-pa nyi la?
Is he coming by himself or is somebody else also coming?

ᘻᖬ: ᶍᘬᖟᘝ。
Cy ax-di la.
He's coming by himself.

3. Grammar

The word ᕂ (ddap) is used like Chinese 还是 háishì, to ask a question that presents two alternatives.

The word ᘬᚼ (ax-pa) is often used before nouns, like the English words "another" and "other". But as with the English word "another," the noun can be left out.

ᘬᚼ	ax-pa	another, others
ᘬᚼᗛ	ax-pa co	another person, other people
ᘬᚼᗛᚙᘞ	ax-pa co cyp-ma	another person
ᘬᚼᚙᘞ	ax-pa cyp-ma	another

The word ᘬᖟ (ax-di) "only" is grammatically similar to the words ᕂ, ᖟ, and ᘬ, in that it follows the word that is in focus. It most often follows a noun phrase.

ꉠ ꀂ ꄀ ꌧ ꒉ。 Nga ax-di vot jjo.	Only I have pigs.
ꉠ ꌧ ꀂ ꄀ ꒉ。 Nga vot ax-di jjo.	I only have pigs.
ꃀ ꇤ ꀂ ꄀ ꈝ ꄬ ꋤ。 Mu-gat ax-di mge-fu zze.	Only Mu-gat eats buckwheat bread.
ꃀ ꇤ ꈝ ꄬ ꀂ ꄀ ꋤ。 Mu-gat mge-fu ax-di zze.	Mu-gat eats buckwheat bread only.

4. Exercises

Translate the following into Nuosu:

"My pig only eats buckwheat bread."

"Only Mu-gat has chickens, Mu-gox doesn't have chickens."

"Does he have wine or does he only have water?"

"Only my dog eats pork, my chicken doesn't eat pork."

"I think you have a lot of money."

Decide whether any of the following are badly formed sentences. Then translate all the well formed sentences into English:

Cy tit Chep-du Vut-gop hxep la ox.

Ngop-wox dde-dde-mu mge-fu zze.

Ne xix-mu it-ggop ax-di ndo, nry ap-ndo?

Nga nry ndo tat-ap-xi, it-ggop ax-di ndo tat-xi.

Mu-gox ax-di Xit-ddop bbo ddap ax-pa co nyi bbo?

Ax-pa co nyip-ma bbo.

Nit-vi ax-di hxep-sa, ngat-vi hxep-ap-sa.

Nga va-she ax-di vy qi, vot-she vy ap-qi.

Chapter 15

1. Vocabulary

ꊈ	zhet	[tʂɤ˥]	ok
ꑭꇬ	xyx-ne	[ɕʅ˥nɤ˦]	to rest
ꃆꇬ	ix-go	[i˦ko˦]	home
ꐯꎠ	jie-shat	[tɕe˦ʂa˥]	outdoor market
ꄸꇬ	te-go	[tʰɤ˦ko˦]	time, when
ꀧ	bur	[pu̠˦]	return
ꀧꆿ	bur-la	[pu̠˦la˦]	come back
ꎭꇗ	shu-kax	[ʂu˦kʰa˦]	suppose mistakenly
ꀋꅋꄒ	ap-ddi-ddix	[a˩di˦di˦]	if
ꑴꇬ	yix-ne	[ʑi˦nɤ˦]	if
ꃀ	mo	[mo˦]	plan to, intend to, will
ꃀꅋ	mo-ddix	[mo˦di˦]	plan to, intend to, will
ꑴꌦ	yip-sy	[ʑi˩sʅ˦]	still, as before
ꀋꑘꃅ	ap-nryr-mu	[a˩ndʐ̩˦m(u)˦]	definitely, must
ꈌꃃ	ket-mop	[kʰɤ˥mo˩]	evening
ꌠ	su	[su˦]	(particle)
ꃅꈌ	mu-ket	[m(u)˦kʰɤ˥]	night
ꐚ	jox	[tɕo˦]	to, towards
ꄔꂷ	ddop-ma	[do˩ma˦]	word, sentence, things said
ꑴꇱ	yip-luop	[ʑi˩lɔ˩]	(particle)
ꄅꉼ	diep-huo	[te˩xɔ˦]	telephone (from 电话)
ꅐ	ndup	[ndu˩]	hit, make (a phone call)
ꀨ	bbyx	[bʅ˦]	to give
ꑭꃅ	xip-mu	[ɕi˩m(u)˦]	so
ꐒꈎ	jjy-gex	[dʐ̩˦kɤ˦]	together
ꑴꀉ	yie-a	[ʑe˦a˦]	let's go (together)
ꆿꄂ	lat-ti	[la˥tʰi˦]	(name)

2. Dialogues

A: ꆿꄂ ꃆꇬ ꐚꐚ?
Lat-ti ix-go jjox-jjo?
Is Lat-ti at home?

B: ꉾꄯꐚꑂꒃꄜ。
Lat-ti ix-go ap-jjo.
Lat-ti isn't home.

A: ꉠꆹ꒰ꀋꑱꐚ꒰ꆪꏜꀎꑌ，꒰ꀋꑱꄷꁧ?
Ngax li cy ip-nyip ix-go da xyx-ne shu-kax, cy ip-nyip kat bbo?
I thought he would be resting at home today; where did he go today?

B: ꒰ꀋꑱꀎꐽꁧꀑ。
Cy ip-nyip jie-shat bbo ox.
He went to the market today.

A: ꒰ꈝꄮꁱꆿꌠꆆꅉꐪꐎ?
Cy kep-te bur-la su ne dde-jjix-jji?
Do you know when he is coming back?

B: ꒰ꀕꌧꃀꈌꄮꁧꆿꄮ。
Cy iep-sat mu-ket te-go bur-la.
Maybe he will come back late, at night.

A: ꒰ꆿꄮꄮꁧ，ꆆꊈꐨꅍꃀꈎꑥꈎꊪꊪ?
Cy bur-la te-go, ne cyp jox ddop-ma go hxip go-zhet-zhet?
When he comes back, could you say something to him?

B: ꊪꑱꇊ! ꅍꃀꑥꑥ?
Zhet yip-luop! Ddop-ma xix hxip?
Sure! What should I say?

A: ꉠꃆꎭꄏꀑꁧꃀꄸ，꒰ꑌꀑꁧꃀ꒰ꐚ，ꀕꌧꈌꃀꄿꉼꅇꉠꁱꄸ。
Nga mup-shy-dex Op-rro bbo mo-ddix, cyx nyi Op-rro bbo qi yix-ne, iep-sat ket-mop diep-huo ndup nga bbyx ddix.
In the morning I'm planning to go to Xichang; if he wants to go to Xichang too, he might give me a phone call later this evening.

B: ꊪ! ꉠꒃꅺꈎꊈꐨꑥꃀ。ꆆ꒰ꊴꊪꀑ?
Zhet! Nga ap-nryr-mu cyp jox hxip mo. Ne zzax-zze-zze ox?
Sure, I'll certainly tell him. Have you eaten?

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A: ꆎꎭꋠꀋꋠꑴꌦ, ꆏꄂ?
Nga zza-ap-zze yip-sy, nex li?
I haven't eaten yet, how about you?

B: ꉻꀋꎭꋠꀋꋠꑴꌦ。
Ngax nyi zza-ap-zze yip-sy.
I haven't eaten yet either.

A: ꑭꃪꑴꆏ, ꉷꑕꒉꐯꎭꀋꋏ�。
Xip-mu yix-ne, ngap-nyit jjy-gex zzax-zze bbo mo.
Well then, let's go eat together.

B: ꍔ! ꇙꄖ!
Zhet! Yie-a!
Sure! Let's go!

3. Grammar
The structure ꀋꄃꄔ…ꑵꆏ (ap-ddi-ddix…yix-ne) means "if", and is similar to the Chinese structure 如果…的话 (rúguǒ…de huà) in that something goes before the conditional clause (ꀋꄃꄔ ap-ddi-ddix), and something goes after the conditional clause (ꑵꆏ yix-ne). It is also possible to mark a conditional clause with ꑵꆏ (yix-ne) only, leaving out ap-ddi-ddix.

We have seen the particle ꌠ (su) before. It can go at the end of a clause, making that clause grammatically like a noun. Grammarians call this a "nominalized" clause. The function of ꌠ (su) is thus similar to function of "that" in the English sentence "I knew [that he was coming]", although its position is at the opposite end of the nominalized clause.

The word ꐲ (jox) is pronounced ꐳ (jop) if it comes after a high tone word such as ꉘ (ngat) or ꆀ (nit). The form of a pronoun preceding this word is the possessive form. Thus one says ꉘꐳ (ngat jop), ꆀꐳ (nit jop), or ꋒꐲ (cyp jox), not ꆎꐲ (nga jox), ꆏꐲ (ne jox), or ꋓꐲ (cy jox). As we have already seen, for nouns and for some pronouns there is no distinct possessive form, in which case this rule is irrelevant: ꃶꇰꐳ (mu-gat jop), ꇬꐲ (go jox), ꆅꆂꐳ (nep-nyit jop).

The recipient of the gift or beneficiary of the action is the object of the verb ꐪ

(bbyx) "give". The thing given is the object of a different verb. That verb is often, but not always, ‡ (ddie). The verb phrase containing ‡ (ddie) comes first, and the verb phrase containing ꙇ̃ (bbyx) comes second. As with a fair number of other verbs, ꙇ̃ (bbyx) is pronounced in a mid-high tone most of the time, but after a high tone syllable it is pronounced in a low tone ꙇ̄ (bbyp).

The particle ꙇ̄ꙇ̄ (yip-luop) goes at the end of a sentence, and expresses something that could perhaps be described as a tone of mild certainty.

There are several words that might be translated "go" in English. We have already seen many examples of ꙇ̄ (bbo), which is the most general word for going. The word ꙇꙇ (yie-a) has a very specific usage. It is used when saying "let's go".

Though we have not encountered them yet, two other common words translated "go" are ꙇ (li) and ꙇ (yy). The verb ꙇ (li) is only used when talking about an uphill movement, and the verb ꙇ (yy) is only used when talking about a downhill movement. If you really don't know whether the movement in question is uphill, downhill, or neither, it is safer for you to stick with ꙇ̄ (bbo). But the Nuosu people have plenty of occasions to use both ꙇ (li) and ꙇ (yy), since they live in a mountainous area, and the difference between up and down is often highly relevant. In case it helps you keep track of the two verbs, note that ꙇ (yy) can also mean "water", and remember that streams and rivers always flow downhill.

4. Exercises
Multiple choice:
In the sentence ꙇꙇꙇꙇꙇꙇꙇ (Mu-gox va ma ddie Mu-gat bbyp)
a) Mu-gox is giving Mu-gat to a chicken.
b) Mu-gat is giving a chicken to Mu-gox.
c) A chicken is giving Mu-gat to Mu-gox.
d) Mu-gox is giving a chicken to Mu-gat.

From the sentence ꙇꙇꙇꙇꙇꙇ (Vut-qie ix-go li qi) we can deduce that
a) Vut-qie lives somewhere lower than the place where he is.
b) Vut-qie really hopes someone else will go too.
c) Vut-qie lives somewhere higher than the place where he is.
d) Vut-qie lives a long way from where he is.

From the sentence ꂱꍠꆹꂷꈌꐛꑟꇮ："ꑟꉪꄉ"ꍙ (Mux-jy li Mu-gat jop hxip go "Ne kat yy" ddix) we can safely assume that:
a) Mux-jy is on his way to somewhere higher than where he is.
b) Mu-gat seems to be going in a generally downhill direction.
c) Mux-jy guesses that Mu-gat lives at a very high elevation.
d) Mux-jy and Mu-gat have been going somewhere together.

From the sentence ꉘꑟꅍꐲꋥꇗ (Nga ne dde-jji shu-kax) we can infer that:
a) The addressee has been keeping secrets from the speaker.
b) The addressee supposed that the speaker knew.
c) The addressee did not know what the speaker earlier thought he knew.
d) The addressee knows exactly what the speaker is thinking.

The sentence ꃮꈪꈭꃪꎭꋠꐚꌐ (Vot ggex-su va-she zze qi sat) is best translated:
a) All the pigs want to eat chicken.
b) All the chickens want to eat pork.
c) The chickens want to eat all of the pigs.
d) The pigs want to eat all of the chicken.

The sentence ꋼꁥꆹꄉꇮꋼꄻꉼꆪꉘꀊꁨꄱꑭ (Cy bur-la tep-go cy diep-huo ndup nga bbyx tat-xi) is best translated:
a) When he comes back he should phone me.
b) When he comes back he must hit the telephone.
c) When he comes back I had better phone him.
d) He should phone me and let me know when he will come back.

Review all the chapters by reading the examples and dialogues out loud, and letting your teacher listen and coach you on your pronunciation.

Then, ask your teacher to read sentences from various chapters to you, and you try to tell your teacher what they mean.

Your teacher could also ask you questions using vocabulary from any of the chapters. Try to give some kind of answer to any questions you understand. If there are questions you don't understand, you can ask your teacher to record those sentences, and later when you listen to the recording, see if you can figure out what the questions must mean.

Once your pronunciation is understandable and your listening comprehension

is pretty good with the vocabulary you have already learned, it is time to think about what else you would like to learn. Write down your ideas, and share them with your teacher.

As you move on to learning other things in the weeks and months to come, don't forget to record new words and sentences, and to listen to the recordings in your spare time.

And of course, don't forget to regularly spend plenty of time just being with people in a variety of situations of daily life. That is how you will get used to what people say in these situations and how they say it. And what is most important in learning any spoken language is not how much time you spend in the books, but rather how much time you spend with people, just getting used to how they talk. If the people you are with say a lot of things you don't understand, that's okay. This is not a process of studying, where you have to know everything to be ready to pass a test, but a process of gradually growing accustomed to how people actually talk, so that you will eventually find it natural to say things more or less the way they would have said them, and to do so without a lot of thought. That is what it means to become fluent.