

Yang Yang

Meta-functional Equivalent Translation of Chinese Folk Song

Intercultural Communication of Zhuang
Ethnic Minority as an Example

 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY PRESS
浙江大学出版社

 Springer

Meta-functional Equivalent Translation of Chinese Folk Song

Yang Yang

Meta-functional Equivalent Translation of Chinese Folk Song

Intercultural Communication of Zhuang
Ethnic Minority as an Example

 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY PRESS
浙江大学出版社

 Springer

Yang Yang
Foreign Study School
Zhejiang University of Science and Technology
Hangzhou, China

Translated by

Yang Yang
Foreign Study School
Zhejiang University of Science and Technology
Hangzhou, China

Zhu Pin-xin
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

Tao Lin
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

Wu Juan-juan
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

Wei Jing
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

He Dan
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

Wang Chang-yu
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

Zhang Ming
Foreign Study School
Yulin Normal University
Yulin, China

Sponsorship: This English language edition is published under the sponsorship of Zhe Jiang University of Science and Technology, and the Department of Press and Publication Administration of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Chinese language edition: The Chinese language edition 《壮族民歌跨文化传播:中国民歌元功能对等译配(广西卷)》 was published by arrangement with Lijiang Publishing Ltd in August, 2017. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-981-16-6588-2 ISBN 978-981-16-6589-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6589-9>

Jointly published with Zhejiang University Press

The print edition is not for sale in China (Mainland). Customers from China (Mainland) please order the print book from: Zhejiang University Press.

© Zhejiang University Press 2021

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publishers, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publishers nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publishers remain neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Foreword

Translation is an indispensable part of human communication. Where there are human beings, there are interactions, communications, and translations. According to Roman Jakobson, translation can be categorized into intra-lingual translation, inter-lingual translation, and inter-semiotic translation. Intra-lingual translation means paraphrasing an expression or a text in the same language, inter-lingual translation involves transference between two different languages, and inter-semiotic translation refers to interpreting linguistic symbols with non-linguistic ones, and vice versa. Since translation is interdisciplinary, its study can be approached in different ways, such as by linguistics, philosophy, literature, literary criticism, anthropology, cognitive science, semiotics, psychology, communication, sociology, history, aesthetics, logic, ecology, etc. It is widely held that translation should achieve equivalence between the source and the translated text maximally, and represent the meaning as much as possible in another language (symbol).

As a scholar of linguistics, I prefer to study translation within Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) which is "applicable linguistics" and can be applied to solve linguistic problems. SFL is a problem-oriented theory and can be applied to solve all problems related to language, including translation study.

Actually, some books approached translation through SFL as early as the 1950s and 1960s, among which J. C. Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) is familiar to Chinese readers. Since then, many scholars have explored translation and published a number of books and articles within the framework of SFL. In this respect, I have also made some studies. First, I researched the English translation of ancient Chinese poems, and then into the translation of the *Analecets*, in which I treated the English versions as discourses, namely, translated texts. On this basis, I proposed six steps for translation studies: (1) observation → (2) interpretation → (3) description → (4) analysis → (5) explanation → (6) evaluation. In my opinion, studies on the translation or translated texts, like discourse analysis, require researchers to be able to observe and determine whether a translation is worth analyzing and studying. Many of my articles and works have been done in this mode, which has been adopted in discourse analysis (including translated

text study) by some scholars. Later on, I probed into meta-functional equivalence in translation.

In 2014, Prof. Chen Yang and I published *Meta-functional Equivalence in Translation Studies (Foreign Languages in China, 2nd issue, 2014)*, addressing translation equivalence from the perspective of SFL which has drawn some readers' attention. One of them is Yang Yang the author of this book, who was my visiting scholar from 2013 to 2014 at Sun Yat-sen University. From then on, he engaged in the English translation of Chinese classics and folk songs in line with meta-functional equivalence and published the book *Meta-functional Equivalent English Translation of Chinese Classics* (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2016). By now he has completed *Intercultural Communication of Zhuang Folk Song—Meta-functional Equivalent English Translation of Chinese Folk Song* (Guangxi Volume).

The book first probes into the origin, evolution, and artistic features of Zhuang folk songs by comprehensively applying the principles in musicology, ecological aesthetics, phonology, functional linguistics, etc., and then it studies the English translation of Zhuang folk song based on meta-functional equivalence, through which the multi- aesthetics of folk song translation have been represented. The selected songs in the last chapter display the unique regional features and ethnic characteristics of the Zhuang. For example, “the Ode to Mother” narrates a Zhuang woman’s suffering during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding, which reminds us of the hardships of a mother.

In a word, translation is an ancient human activity, and its study will never come to an end. The researchers’ attitudes, perspectives, and orientations are always affected by their values, ideologies, thinking, traditions, educational background, academic training as well as research motivations and interests. As a scholar in linguistics, I hold that translation study in the linguistic approach can help us better understand the nature and law of translation.

Guangzhou, China
March 2017

Huang Guowen
Professor, Ph.D. Supervisor
Yangtze River Scholar
School of Foreign Languages
South China Agricultural University
Doctor of the University of Edinburgh
Doctor of the University of Wales

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and respect to He Jian-shui the King Singer and Qin Xiang Zhou the director of Guangxi Folk Song Society for their instructive advice and first hand information in this books.

My deepest gratitude also goes to my supervisors: the foreword author Professor Huan Guo-wen, Professor Yang Shao-gang, Professor Xiao An-pu and National Singer Fan Yu-lun for their consistent and illuminating instruction.

My special appreciation expressing to Professor Wei Guang-xiong, Professor Zhu Ji-mei, Writer Yang Hai-tao, Editor Lu Ya-juan and Gao Yan as well as Queen Singer Wei Shu-ying and Zhuang folk singers Chen Hai-tao, Wei Shu-ping, Huang Hui, Qin Si-xie, Han Chun-mei, Wei Cai-fang, Qin Yue-shuang, Qin Bo, etc., for their special contribution to the publication of the book.

Finally, my thanks would go to my beloved parents for their music gift to me, and I am also indebted to my family, my friends and classmates for their continuous support and encouragement.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	The Melodious Zhuang Folk Songs	3
2.1	A Long History of Zhuang Folk Songs	3
2.1.1	The Sweet Zhuang Lyrics	9
2.2	The Amazing Zhuang Folk Songs in Fascinating Donglan County	19
2.2.1	The Artistic Features of Donglan Zhuang Folk Songs	20
2.2.2	Zhuang Folksongs the Daily Language for the Zhuang to Communicate with Each Other from Generation to Generation	26
2.2.3	Zhuang Folksongs the Bridge Linking the Zhuang Youth's Souls from Generation to Generation	28
2.2.4	Zhuang Folksongs the Weapon for the Zhuang Against the Oppressors from Generation to Generation	40
2.2.5	Zhuang Folksongs the Secret Recipe for the Zhuang to Stay Forever Young from Generation to Generation	44
2.2.6	Zhuang Folksongs the Pedagogy for the Old to Nurture the Young from Generation to Generation	48
3	Meta-functional Equivalence: A New View of Translation	49
3.1	Language as a Multi-dimensional Semiotic System	49
3.2	Meta-functions of Language	52
3.2.1	Ideational Meta-function	52
3.2.2	Interpersonal Meta-function	53
3.2.3	Textual Meta-function	54
3.2.4	Variation of Expression of Meaning: Grammatical Metaphor	55
3.3	Meta-function Equivalence in Translation	57
3.3.1	The Pioneer of Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Approach to Translation Studies	57
3.3.2	SFL Approach to Translation Studies Abroad	59

3.3.3	SFL Approach to Translation Studies at Home	59
3.3.4	Proposition of Meta-function Equivalence in Translation	60
4	Meta-functional Equivalent Translation of Zhuang Folk Songs	65
4.1	The Principles for Translating Zhuang Folk Songs on Meta-functional Equivalence	65
4.2	The Potential Obstacles to Translating Zhuang Folk Song on Meta-functional Equivalence	68
4.2.1	Deviation of Some Translated Words from the Melody of the Original Song Due to the Phonetic Differences Between English and Zhuang	68
4.2.2	Restrictions by Linguistical Differences	68
4.2.3	Misinterpretations from Cultural Differences	69
4.3	The Translation Strategy, Methods and Techniques Across the Potential Obstacles	71
4.3.1	The Translation Strategy Across the Potential Obstacles	71
4.3.2	The Translation Methods and Techniques Across the Potential Obstacles	72
4.4	Case Study	75
5	The Classic Zhuang Folk Songs in English	87
5.1	The Series of Lyrics	88
5.2	The Zhuang Folk Songs Among Family	113
5.3	The Zhuang Folk Songs Among Fellow Villagers	142
5.4	The Zhuang Folk Songs Among for Friendship	168
5.5	The Classic Zhuang Antiphonal Folk Songs	180
	Bibliography	203

Chapter 1

Introduction



The Zhuang ethnic group inhabiting the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, part of Yunnan and Guangdong provinces in China, love singing Zhuang folk songs which are the most fascinating among Chinese folk songs and have been playing an important role in the Zhuang community since the primeval times. To some extent, the Zhuang folk songs are the daily language for the Zhuang to communicate with each other, the bridge linking the Zhuang youths' souls, the weapon for the Zhuang against the oppressors, the secret recipe for the Zhuang to stay forever young, the pedagogy for the old to nurture the young from generation to generation. The environment where the Zhuang folk songs originated has varied with the evolution of society and the impact of popular culture in recent years. Currently, the Zhuang folk songs echo only in some remote areas; hence, it's urgent to let the world hear the enchanting melody on the brink of extinction. Thus this book probes into the origin, evolution, and artistic features of the Zhuang folk songs by comprehensively applying principles of musicology, ecological aesthetics, phonology, functional linguistics, etc., and then it approaches their English translation based on meta-functional equivalence, through which the multi-aesthetics of the folk songs can be represented.

The opening chapter of this book "the Melodious Zhuang Folk Songs" brings readers into the historical, social, and cultural background at first; and then the artistic features and functions of Zhuang folk songs are expounded. Translation of the opening chapter has been done by Yang Yang, Zhu Pinxin, Tao Lin.

Chapter 2 "Meta-functional Equivalence: A New View of Translation" explicates the origin and assumptions of "meta-functional equivalence" which combined traditional Chinese and Western translation theories as well as offset their shortcomings. To some degree, "meta-functional equivalence" paves a new way to translation study through which translation could be processed multi-dimensionally, qualitatively, and quantitatively. Translation of Chap. 2 has been carried out by Yang Yang and Wu Juan-juan.

In Chap. 3 "Meta-functional Equivalent Translation of Zhuang Folk Songs", the principle for translating Zhuang folk into English has been illustrated on the basis of meta-functional equivalence, namely, "song for song" "unity of form and spirit".

The author holds that if the rhythm, stress, and intonation of the translated songs can be made to match the melody of the source, and their experiential function, logic function, interpersonal function, textual function as well as register can be made to be equivalent to the original, then the potential misunderstanding, mistranslation, and mismatch would be avoided; consequently, transmigrating Zhuang folk songs into English would be facilitated. Using the principle, the potential barriers in English translating Zhuang folk songs can be analyzed and overcome since the translation should not only follow the principle but cross the differences in language, culture, thinking, and aesthetics between the Zhuang and the target language readers. On this basis, the strategies, methods, and techniques for translating Zhuang folk songs have been exemplified. To be specific, the strategy could follow “foreignization first, domestication next” for each has its own advantages and disadvantages; accordingly, the translation methods and techniques include transliteration, literal translation, liberal translation, substitution of resembling imagery, shift of perspective, etc. Translation of Chap. 3 has been fulfilled by Yang Yang and Wei Jing, He Dan, Wang Chang-yu, Zhang Ming.

In Chap. 4, forty classic Zhuang folk songs have been selected; each could be sung in English in line with the staff. These songs display the regional and ethnic features of the Zhuang people. For example, “the Series of Lyrics” narrates a young couples’ sweet experience from encounter, falling in love with each other, short-term parting, and lovesickness to marriage. “The Ode to Mother” describes a Zhuang woman’s suffering during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding, which reminds us of the hardships of motherhood. “A Melody for Girls” “Blowing Leaf Whistle” and “Counting Stars” all echo with the cheer and laughter of parents and children, grandparents, and grandchildren. “The Ode to Fellow Villagers” celebrates the wedding day, the New Year, and then moving to new house. “The Ode to Friendship” is usually sung drinking with friends or guests. All in all, in the Zhuang community, the Zhuang’s emotions, feeling, wisdom, cheer, and laughter almost all derive from and communicate in the antiphonal singing. Translation of Chap. 4 has been fulfilled by Yang Yang and Wei Jing, He Dan, Wang Chang-yu, Zhang Ming, Hexiaoying.

The topic of this book involves multi-domains and multi-disciplines. The theory has been effectively applied to translating Zhuang folk into English. The case studies are interesting and inspiring. Hence this book could be used as a song translation textbook for English majors in colleges or universities.

Chapter 2

The Melodious Zhuang Folk Songs



Abstract In a sense, the Zhuang folk songs are the “living fossils” of the Zhuang folk music and oral literature for they carry the Zhuang culture, civilization, and history. In the new era, the Zhuang folk songs still play an important role in the Zhuang life since they are the daily language for the Zhuang to communicate with each other, the bridge linking the Zhuang youths’ souls, the weapon for the Zhuang against the oppressors, the secret recipe for the Zhuang to stay forever young, the pedagogy for the old to nurture the young from generation to generation.

Keywords Living fossils · Zhuang Lyrics · Zhuang rondelo · Internal-terminal rhyme

2.1 A Long History of Zhuang Folk Songs

The Zhuang is an ancient ethnic minority inhabiting the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, part of Yunnan and Guangdong provinces in China. Over the past thousands of years, their ancestors have made great contributions to mankind since they’ve created rich material wealth and wonderful civilization with indomitable spirit and diligence in the barren land of South China. According to the relevant studies, the Zhuang was among the earliest rice-growing nationalities. Rice farming, dryland cultivation, and nomadic culture are three main ways of gaining food for human beings. Among them, rice supports 50% of the world’s population. And in terms of scientific discovery and invention, the Zhuang’s ancestors applied the circular cutting technique to carving the solar patterns on bronze drums over 2000 years ago, around the same time Euclid divided the circle into fifteen equal parts. Moreover, the principles of leverage, balance, symmetry, resultant force, component forces, and stress were widely applied to the “naz” a type of residential building of the ancient Zhuang people. In addition, the Zhuang’s textile, embroidery, pottery, mining, and casting technologies were also very advanced. Unfortunately, many inventions and technologies of the Zhuang ancestors, such as their medicine and manufacturing, were lost in the long river of history for they were mostly passed down orally and secretly within the family, and some were only passed on to men. Besides, some cultural heritage perished either in the midst of wars or with the passage

of time for they were not kept in the written records. Fortunately, the Zhuang love singing folk songs, and thus, some of their civilization, fine traditions, and excellent cultures have been passed down from generation to generation. Such as the song book *Scripture of Broto*, records and reflects the Zhuang ancestors' religious beliefs and their understanding the heaven and the earth, for example:

Ciuh gonq bo mix sang	古时山坡还不高
Mbwn ndix doen doxgap	天地相连在一起
Naz ndix fwj doxdaeb	田地就在云朵中
Gip ndauhndiq coq swx	星星随手拾篮里
Fwngz gaem fwj guegcaemz	想玩云彩手就抓
Yah daem sak daemj mbwn	婆婆春布杵撞天
Baeuq bag fwz daemj fwj	公公砍柴劈对云

.....

Annotation: In ancient times, the hillside was not very high, the heaven and the earth were linked together. The clouds and stars hung above the fields. If you want to play with clouds or pick a star, it seems they were within arms' reach. The grandma was washing the clothes with a wooden pestle, and the grandpa was splitting the firewood.

Some farming and living customs have also been passed down from generation to generation through the Zhuang folk songs. Such as the farming arrangement songs¹ composed on the basis of the 24 solar terms by the Zhuang ancestors, it has been spread among the Zhuang people and are still being sung. For instance:

Ndwenciengq haeuj laebcin	进入正月是立春
Loiz dajsing	雷阵阵
Coi vunz raeuz cae reih	催促人们犁田地
Laebcin gyau hawxsuij (hawxsij)	立春过后雨水至
Raeuz aeu geiq	莫忘记
Seizneix ndaem haeuxyangz	种植玉米正当时

Annotation: The first lunar month marks the beginning of spring. The rumbling thunders urge people to till the land and paddies. The spring rain would be abundant after the second solar term, so do not forget to sow the corn seeds.

Ndwengeih gingcig daengz	进入二月是惊蛰
Gyau cinfaen	春来急
Cagaenj ndaem gobiak	春分赶紧去种芋
Naengz ndi siengj dungxiak	如若不想挨饿饥
Vaiq mbon dieg	快挖地
Cog cij miz soucingz	日后才有好收成

¹ These songs were sung by King Singer He Jian Shui, and transcribed by Yang Yang and Qin Xiang Zhou the director of Guangxi Folk Song Society and Chief Editor of *March 3rd Magazine* on June 20th, 2015 in the Cultural Relics Garden in Nanning of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Annotation: The 3rd solar term the Waking of Insects, falls in February when spring is in the air. If you want to keep hunger at bay, you need to rush to plant taros during Vernal Equinox. Hurry up with digging in the field for a good harvest in the fall.

Sam nyied haauj cingmingz	三月时节是清明
Fwn ndi dingz	雨不停
Dangq guhcin doekgyaj	抓紧播秧要记清
Goekhawx roegenq fax(mbin)	谷雨燕催人起早
Rauq naz caj	田耙好
Laebhah aeu ndaem caez	立夏种完产量高

.....

Annotation: The tomb-sweeping day comes in March when the rain keeps falling for days. Always remember to plant the rice seedlings during this time. During the 6th solar term Grain rain, chirping swallows urge people to get up early. With fields harrowed and sowed by the Beginning of Summer the 7th solar term, a bumper harvest would be guaranteed.

The Zhuang folk songs cannot keep everything in history for they are only able to preserve some historical fragments of many advanced technologies and fine traditions of the Zhuang ancestors, such as medicine, lifestyle, scientific inventions, production modes, marriage system, and religious beliefs. For instance, some folk songs touch upon clothing, food, housing, transportation, marriage, funeral, festivals, gatherings, and other customs. By piecing together these historical fragments, we can still find some traces of the Zhuang predecessors.

In addition, there is an imbalance of social and cultural development within the Zhuang ethnic group due to their wide and diverse geographical distribution and the economic and cultural impact of foreign ethnic groups. According to the book *General History of the Zhuang Nationality*, the differences in social and cultural developments of the Zhuang in different regions vary within the same time period. For example, some of the Zhuang people had entered the feudal society, but some were still in the primitive society in the same period of history. In terms of production, in some places, cow plowing and labor-saving farming tools had been used and rice double-cropping had been popularized; while in some remote areas, the slash-and-burn cultivation was very common. In terms of marriage, in some places, women are married, they still live in their maiden homes until a baby is born; in some places where customs are relatively tolerant, there are no differences between a brother marrying a wife and a sister marrying a husband who lives with the wife's parent's family; in some places, matches are arranged by go-betweens according to the wishes of the parents; in some places, on the day of marriage, the groom, in the accompany of the best-man and the matchmaker, visits his parents-in-law, and takes the bride home; in some places, the groom along with the bride visits his parents-in-law the next day of marriage; in some places, the bride goes to the groom's home by sitting in red sedan chairs carried by men, and along the way, there are a team of people beating drums and blowing trumpets; in some regions, the bride holds up an umbrella and walks to groom's home accompanied by bridesmaids; in some regions, the bride sits

in the ox-led cart that is decorated in red and green and slowly driven to the groom's home. Now, it's hard to see a bride who goes to her husband's home in a sedan chair or an ox-led cart. In spite of the diverse marital customs, all the Zhuang people have been following the ancient tradition of "courtship by song". Some singing traditions are passed on from the early "crying wedding songs" in the marriage ceremony. For example, the bride sings the "Wedding Lament Song"² in the company of the fellow sisters of the village:

Ci an naj muenzhaeuj(bakdou)	彩车来到大门前
Laex soengq daeuj daengz ranz	礼物送放厅中间
Ngoenz neix cej bae mbanj	今天姐姐出嫁去
Ndaw ranz fuengz byouqbyaengq	家里房空无人眠

.....

Annotation: The decorated cars park in front of the house, and the betrothal presents are placed in the central room of the traditional Chinese house; the elder sister would leave her house to get married. Her parents would be sleepless at night.

At the wedding ceremony, when the bridesmaids accompany the bride to the groom's house, his family members and friends would sing the following song:

It ciengq lanz dou hung	一唱拦门喜连连
Civaiz sungq(soengq) bawx daeuj	彩牛彩车到门前
Bet dah naengh song gyaeuj	八位姑娘排排坐
Lumj va'ngaeux hoengzsien	莲花出水朵朵鲜

.....

Annotation: People are singing joyfully, with decorated ox-led carts in the front door. Eight girls are sitting in a row, like lotuses rising out of the water.

In addition, the festivals and funerals of the Zhuang people in different parts of China are also varied and colorful.

In a word, Zhuang folk songs record the history of its people and inherit part of their culture and civilization, which provide valuable information for us to study the history, culture, production, and lifestyle of the Zhuang people. As Karl Marx said, "Folk songs are the only historical legends and chronicles." Accordingly, in this sense, Zhuang folk songs are the living fossil of Zhuang culture and the museum of Zhuang history.

The reason why Zhuang folk songs can be passed down from generation to generation is closely related to the psychology of the Zhuang nationality since the good singers were respected and those who could not sing were often looked down upon in history. As Liu Xifan wrote in *Ling Biao Ji Man(Records of Ethnic Minorities in*

² The song was sung by Queen Singer Wei Shu Ying and Qin Xiang Zhou the director of Guangxi Folk Song Society and Chief Editor of *March 3rd Magazine*, and transcribed by Yang Yang and King Singer He Jian Shui on July 15th, 2015 in the Cultural Relics Garden in Nanning of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Guangxi) that “both men and women in Zhuang village believe that singing is the most important thing in their life. If one can not sing, one appears as foolish and stubborn as a pig and can not find the other half; as a result, one would be lonely and unhappy throughout one’s life.” Due to the tradition that good singers are respected by the whole society, many Zhuang families attach great importance to cultivating children’s skills in composing folk songs. When a baby learns to speak, his parents teach him to sing children’s folk songs; when a child grows old enough, he is taught how to guess the riddles in some songs to train his talent and test his intelligence; when he grows up, folk songs are used to impart to him the experience in production and life, and cultivate his outlooks on life, morality, ethics and the world. In addition, in order to learn from others in composing folk songs, some singers usually transcribe the classical folk songs in local characters, and then compile them into song collections, keeping them as treasures for their own learning and reference, and passing them to the next generation. In a word, being immersed in the folksong atmosphere the children are tutored orally by their family members and acquire folk songs, gain knowledge and learn the truth of life since childhood, through which the culture of Zhuang folk songs has been developing continuously.

As an important part of the Zhuang people’s spiritual life, Zhuang folk songs have penetrated into every aspect of the Zhuang people’s life, such as in praying for relief out of disaster, mourning, celebrating, communicating, and entertaining. The singing fairs of the Zhuang people are excellent occasions for the singers to show off their voices, they are organized all year round, through which the folks gather spontaneously to sing folk songs in the field. Whenever a singing fair begins, men and women from the surrounding villages would be attracted to the fair and enjoy listening to folk songs or taking part in the antiphonal singings. The length of the singing fair organized by folks themselves varies. For instance, during busy farming season, the fair lasts about half a day; while, the fair may last for several days, either because it takes place during slack farming season, or the participators are quite enjoying themselves. In some cases, if both sides of the “singing contest” refuse to throw in the towel, the singing may go around the clock; folks listening to the beautiful songs also forget to go home. The sizes of singing fairs vary, the big ones can draw as many as tens of thousands of people, and the small ones can attract at least hundreds of people. According to Pan Qixu’s statistics, there are at least 600 relatively regular singing fairs in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, some have continued for thousands of years.

All in all, ritual songs, songs expressing aspirations, and love songs all exert a subtle influence on Zhuang people’s ideas, values, moral sentiments, and aesthetic tastes. They also inspire the Zhuang people to love their own tradition more and yearn for a better life.

Meanwhile, The Zhuang folk songs keep pace with the times. They came into being with the emergence of social production and develop along with the social production progress. For example, traditional singing originated from farming and various ceremonies, it usually occurred in villages or fields, and its content is mainly about expressing one’s aspirations, conveying one’s feelings, seeking good fortune, and entertainment. In the new era, the functions of folk songs are on the wane for

the focus of the national economy has been shifted, especially after the campaign where rural lands have been contracted to households, collective labor has been reduced and surplus rural labor has also been transferred in large numbers to urban areas for work. As a result, there is a continuous decrease in the number of people left behind in rural areas, the majority of them are the elderly and women, which results in the people who engage in the traditional singing are mainly the old folks and children. In addition, popular culture and various forms of entertainment have also changed people's way of life, altering the environment of traditional folk songs. However, with increasing efforts to protect intangible culture and more funding given by the government, the Zhuang folk songs still glow with unique charm in new forms. As we all know, the Nanning International Folk Song Festival jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the Press and Publicity Department of the State Ethnic Affairs, and the Nanning Municipal People's Government is a large-scale event that involves activities concerning culture, tourism, economy, and trade. Another grand celebration the March 3rd Folk Song Festival hosted by the Wuming County Government of Guangxi has been held for more than 30 years, and its scale and influence are growing annually. In addition, the "Challenge Competition of Folk Songs" organized by Guangxi Association of Folk Literature and Arts takes place every year. The contestants are quite skilled at singing and composing folk songs. In a word, the Zhuang folk songs have been evolving from the entertaining folk arts into large-scale cultural activities led by the governments. Their contents cover not only such traditional topics as aspiration expression, emotional communication, praying for good luck, and entertainment, but also the issues in political and economic fields. Consequently, the role of Zhuang folk songs in social development has also been diversified. "Boosting the economy by holding cultural events", namely, setting up a platform for folk song performances to introduce investments into the local economy in recent years, is a typical example. For instance, in a song fair in Debao County of Guangxi, singers spoke highly of the local Gekko Gecko Wine with folk songs to publicize Debao, thus endowing a new role with Zhuang folk songs.

In a word, with the support and engagement by the government and non-governmental organizations in the folk song activities, the Zhuang folk songs have flown out of the villages, into the cities, and the other part of the world. Thus, they are frequently shown off in films, television, the Internet, tourist attractions, and hotels. For example, on October 21st, 2007, with the invitation from the Australian Passion Communication Company, the original ecological Zhuang folk song group of Guangxi went abroad to perform their music at the Sydney Opera House. In the world-famous music hall, the Pingguo Liao Ge Duo, Huang Chunyan a Zhuang singer, and the Pingguo Haliao Band sang their original ecological Zhuang folk songs. Their sweet, passionate and natural singing won standing ovation from the audience and struck a responsive chord amid them.

Moreover, in recent years, in order to preserve and take good advantage of the Zhuang folk songs, some counties and municipalities in Guangxi have fashioned them into cultural brands with ethnic characteristics to promote them onto a higher stage. Thus, they set up societies to instruct singers in singing folk songs so as to better inherit the culture of folk songs. Besides, they hold song festivals to enrich and

improve people's cultural life, enhance national unity, and attract tourists to enjoy and learn Zhuang folk songs. For, e.g., Rinchrd Allan Sparh a professor at the University of California admires the Zhuang folk song in Guangxi, so he traveled thousands of miles to Guangxi to learn from Qin Xiangzhou the "Champion of Folk Songs". Another example is Cai Peikang an American Chinese who often returns to China with his wife to attend March 3rd the Zhuang Folk Song Festival regardless of his advanced age and infirmity. He films the grand occasion, and then brings them back to the United States to share with his friends. Inspired by Cai Peikang, Huang Meishan a Canadian Chinese of Zhuang nationality also gave a Zhuang Folk Song Concert in a square in Vancouver, Canada, to spread the Zhuang folk song culture, which was extensively applauded by Canadian friends. In addition, some institutions use folk songs to foster friendly relations with establishments of foreign countries. For instance, in June 2010, a folk song singing delegation from Xinwu Primary School in Jiangnan District of Nanning City visited and established a sister-school relationship with Tong gang Primary School in Xisetana Town of Vientiane of Laos. In a word, through the Zhuang folk song, more and more friends at home and abroad get to know Guangxi and make friends with the Zhuang people. It builds not only a bridge for friendship and cultural exchanges but also a platform for economic and trade development, bringing great business opportunities for the economic development of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

To sum up, since ancient times, the Zhuang folk song has played an important role in inheriting the fine traditions of the nation. In the new era, the folk song will continue to promote communication, publicity, education, entertainment as well as the inheritance and development of excellent ethnic culture thanks to the government's wholehearted preservation of the intangible ethnic culture as well as people's re-embrace of tradition. That is, the charm of Zhuang folk songs doesn't fade away although the environment where the Zhuang folk song emerged has been transformed with the development of society, the evolution of production and life, and the impact of popular culture. In a word, the Zhuang folk song is truly the treasure of the national culture.

2.1.1 The Sweet Zhuang Lyrics

In China, many ethnic groups have the custom of expressing love and making friends with folk songs. Among them, the Zhuang folk song is particularly outstanding and most distinctive. According to some documents, as early as the Tang Dynasty, the Zhuang people communicated with friends through folk songs. For example, Chapter 18 in Liu Xifan's *Ling Biao Ji Man* states: "a good singer can obtain the honor from society... a good singer can sweeten the hearts of women and a good singer can also enjoy the most beautiful love through folk song. In some cases, youth can choose or win over his or her love and then enjoy a happy marriage." In addition, in the age when marriage was "arranged by parents or through matchmakers", the Zhuang youth dared to break through the bondage of the feudal marital system, make

friends and choose their loves with folk songs.³ Till now, the custom is still popular in Zhuang community. For instance, when you encounter a stranger on the road, especially the one who you would like to chat with, folk songs come into play. For, e.g., a guy sings:

Byaij daihloh buengz va	路见花儿枝上开
Fwngz gaem nga danh euj	心里痒痒就想摘
Byaij daihloh bungz biuj	远见姑娘独自走
Fwen danh seux(euq) song coenz	山歌随口唱出来

Annotation: Beautiful flowers blossom on the twigs; I am itching to pick one. A pretty girl is right in front of me. I cannot help singing a song.

If a boy sings like that, the girl may not blame him for being imprudent. If the girl happens to be gifted with musical talent, she may respond in the following folk song:

Ngeix daeuj aek gag du(diuq)	心里打鼓响嘭嘭
Cingq bungz duz ngwzgamj	遇到巨蟒盘路中
Ndi miz yw daeuj samj	没有三两药来撒
Lau nanz hamj gvaqbae	看来此路行不通

Annotation: My heart is pounding when I spot a python in my way; there is no way out of this if I do not spread some snake-repelling drugs.

If the boy wants to further develop his relationship with the girl, he can ask for her name and inquire into her family background by singing along:

Gvaq henz dah bungz bya	走过河边看见鱼
Siengj ca ndi miz muengx	手无鱼网多可惜
Byaij daihloh bungz nuengx	路上遇到娇妹妹
Siengj dongx ndi rox mingz	不知姓名独叹息

Annotation: Walking along the creek, it's a pity that I don't have a fishing net with me. Encountering a nice girl, it's a pity that her name is unknown.

If the girl is interested in the boy, she may reply by singing:

Raemxdah caeuq raemxreij	感谢老天眷顾多
Daengz neix ndaej doxnyangz	溪水才得汇大河
Ndi han mwngz maz gvang(beix)	阿妹如果不回应
Naeuz dasang hag daih	人说心傲理不合

³ The series of folk songs and tales in this section were collected in the get-togethers in the Cultural Relics Garden in Nanning of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region during 2012–2015. The folk songs were sung by Queen Singer Wei Shu Ying, Chen Hai Tao, Wei Shu Ping, Huang Hui, Qin Si Xie, Han Chun Mei, Wei Cai Fang, Qin Yue Shuang, etc., and transcribed by Yang Yang, King Singer He Jian Shui and Qin Xiang Zhou the director of Guangxi Folk Song Society and Chief Editor of *March 3rd Magazine*. The folk tales were told by King Singer He Jian Shui. Since the years have clouded my memory, the dates couldn't trace back to exactly.

Annotation: Thanks to God's favor, all streams flow into the sea. The girl would be considered proud and impolite if she does not introduce herself.

In short, the Zhuang youth always get to know and make friends with each other by singing folk songs.

In addition, in daily communication, we usually should pay special attention to the manner of speaking and be careful enough to approach certain topics for the first time, such as "Is the boy or girl available?" "Have you got married?", etc. Otherwise, embarrassment to both sides may be brought about out of good intentions. For example, on one occasion, we received a guest with two girls from Yunnan. When the sisters entered the door, their mother was on her mobile phone outside. The sisters' skin is slightly tanned due to the ultraviolet radiation in Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. The little girl is around seven or eight years old, it is uncertain to tell her sister's age. At this moment, a boy enthusiastically chatted with the sister to flatter her: "You are so blessed! I can't believe that you have a seven-year kid for you look so young." The sister frowned, hesitating for a while, and asked, "Do I look that old?" After a while, the mother came in and introduced her family to us, through which we knew that the little girl was in the third grade and the sister went to high school. In a word, it is usually imprudent to ask if a man or woman is married. Even though we are sure that the other party is still single, we still need to mind the manners if we would like to make friends with him or her. Otherwise, it may go against our will or backfire on us. In this situation, singing folk songs can avoid some trouble. For, e.g., one can sing:

Henz loh vamaedleih	路边那朵茉莉花
Yiengh ndei heiq youh hom	洁白芳香谁不夸
Siengj dawz baema ndaem	多想移栽我园里
Lau haemq vunz ndi hangj	又怕有主不给挖

Annotation: On the roadside, a beautiful jasmine flower is admired by each passerby. I want to transplant it to my garden, but I am not sure whether there is an owner to look after.

Many Zhuang folk songs contain metaphors or puns, through which the fishbones can be spat out of the throat. Sometimes, it would not be a big problem even if a question is a little out of line. For example, in the song above, the girl is compared as a white and fragrant jasmine flower, the girl knows very well that the handsome man actually compares her to the flower. If the woman is interested in the man, she can also sound out whether he has a girlfriend or a wife. For instance:

Nuengx cix go onrengj	妹是山脚金英花
Vunz gik miengj(yawj) gik ra	有谁愿意护理它
Mwngz naengz vat baema	就怕阿哥挖回去
Lau ciemq naz ciemq dieg	牡丹满园难再插

Annotation: I am the honeysuckle on the hillside, who would like to care for me. I'm afraid that the honeysuckle is transplanted to the garden where there is already a peony the queen of flowers.

The implicature of the girl is that she would not accept the guy if he is attached. If the girl is uninterested in a guy or she already has a boyfriend, she can also refuse him explicitly. For example, there is a handsome naughty boy who holds a bird in his hands that were caught in the mountains. Spotting a beautiful girl doing labor work not far away, he sang figuratively:

Daengngoenz hwnjdaej hoengz 太阳出来红又红,
 youh hoengz
 Roegiq daeggo mbouj miz roengz 哥的小鸟没有笼,
 Cam nuengx aeu roengz gyaeng 借妹鸟笼装哥鸟,
 roeg go
 Yawjyawj roeg go yoengz mbouj 看哥小鸟雄不雄。
 yoengz

Annotation: Although the sun is rising and shining, I don't have a birdcage for my bird. May I borrow this girl's birdcage to test whether it is strong enough.

Hearing this, the beautiful girl sang emphatically:

Dahnuengx roengz roeg dauq miz 妹我鸟笼有一个,
 aen
 Caeux cix dawzdaej gyaeng 已经用来装天鹅,
 hanqmbwn
 Danghnaeuz caiq hawj gyaeng 如果再来装哥鸟,
 roeg beix
 Lau roeg deng saex ndi miz bwn 就怕打架鸟毛落。

Annotation: I have a birdcage that houses a swan. If it is used to cage your bird, I am afraid your bird's feathers would be torn in an ugly fight.

In the courtship, the youth of the Zhuang nationality also prefer to convey their feelings through folk songs. For example, in order to establish a relationship with a girl, a man can sing like this:

Meizgveiq maeq youh maeq 玫瑰红啲玫瑰红
 Haemh loq ngeix ngaueuz ngaueuz 夜夜进入哥梦中
 Siengj mbaet ma ranz caeu 哥有真心摘一朵
 Lau oen ngaueu fwngz lwed 又怕刺勾哥手溶

Annotation: I dream of the red red rose every night, I want to pick it but I am held back by its thorns.

The girl may sing back:

Meizgveiq maeq seih maeq 玫瑰花开鲜是鲜
 Lau naeq(yawj) gvaq couh lumz 只怕看过忘一边
 Danghnaeuz beix miz sum(sim) 如果阿哥真心要
 Oen ngaueu humz ndi lwed 刺挠痒痒心更甜

Annotation: Although the rose is beautiful, it is also forgotten easily. If you really want it, its thorns are not a problem.

In a word, talented singers have always been admired since ancient times, which goes in the same way in Zhuang community. That is, if a youth wants to win the heart of his dream lover, he must learn to compose folk songs, which can best reflect his personality, talents, and wisdom. Among the various Zhuang folk songs, “riddle songs”⁴ are a common form to test the other party’s character, personality, and intelligence. For example:

Cam:	问:
Maz cienq bae cienq daeuj	什么来回转弯弯
Lumj roeglaeux diuq dan	吉利鸟儿跳下滩
Maz haet haemh yiengjcanz	什么早晚登登响
Lumj daihsan(byasang) raemj	好比砍柴声满山
faex	

Annotation: Inquire: “what are you doing when your hands move in a circle as the lucky birds alight on the beach? What makes the pounding noise from morning till evening as the sounds of cutting wood echo in the valley?”.

Dap:	答:
Fwngz gaem raeng raeng haeux	筛米来回转弯弯,
Roeglaeux diuq roengz dan	吉利鸟儿跳下滩;
Daem doiq yiengjcanzcanz	阿妹舂米登登响,
Lumj daihsan(byasang) raemj	好比砍柴声满山。
faex	

Annotation: Answer: “My hands move in a circle when sifting rice with a sieve, which is like the lucky birds alighting on the beach. The noise is made by a sister pounding rice from morning till evening, which is like the sounds of cutting wood echoing in the valley.”

Then the sister sings another riddle song:

Cam:	问:
Gijmaz bae loekloek	阿妹再问哥一样,
Dien foek deih youh fan	什么天覆地又翻;
Gijmaz bae canzcanz	什么天翻地又乱,
Dien fan deih youh luenh	秋收粮食堆如山。

Annotation: Inquire: “let me ask you one more riddle. What breaks the earth up? What brings the earth down? What leads to a bumper harvest?”.

⁴ These songs were sung by Queen Singer Wei Shu Ying, Chen Hai Tao, Wei Shu Ping, Huang Hui, Qin Si Xie, Han Chun Mei, Wei Cai Fang, Qin Yue Shuang, etc. in the get-togethers in the Cultural Relics Garden in Nanning of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region during 2012–2015, which were transcribed by Yang Yang, King Singer He Jian Shui and Qin Xiang Zhou the director of Guangxi Folk Song Society and Chief Editor of *March 3rd Magazine*.