

# The Confucian Culture of Rituals and Filial Piety Translated in Tujia Ethnic Ballads: The Case of “My Buddy” and “An Itching Throat for Singing”

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## To cite this article:

Guo Jing, Xu Jingcheng. The Confucian Culture of Rituals and Filial Piety Translated in Tujia Ethnic Ballads: The Case of “My Buddy” and “An Itching Throat for Singing”. *International Journal of Literature and Arts*. Special Issue: *Translation and Interpretation of 28 Chinese Tujia Minority Ballads*. Vol. 9, No. 6, 2021, pp. 336-343. doi: 10.11648/j.ijla.20210906.22

**Received:** October 10, 2021; **Accepted:** November 11, 2021; **Published:** November 23, 2021

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**Abstract:** Ethnic ballads or folk songs as the treasure of a nation are rich in history, beliefs and humanistic spirit and play a significant role in cultural inheriting. Transmitted orally through generations, Enshi Tujia ethnic ballads with unique characteristics and styles reflect the local customs, preserve the local history and enrich cultural diversity. Since the Tujia culture is a mountainous agriculture, it is not difficult to understand why the Tujia people love singing and it is significant to explore how their ways of life are guided by Confucianism. This paper aims at interpreting the Confucian culture of rituals and filial piety behind two Tujia ballads which vividly represent the spirit and belief of the Tujia people. In the practice of translating those two ballads, the culture-loaded words are specially tended as the key factors in bettering readers' appreciation of the original texts and further understanding of the Tujia culture. The translation strategies of domestication and foreignization are thus discussed alongside detailed interpretation of the underlying cultural connotation. As this essay concludes, these two folk songs show that the Tujia culture is greatly influenced by Confucianism which is, in particular, the ritual and filial piety culture. The Confucianism is manifested in the two ballads in terms of inquiring for shoe patterns, implication of handicrafts, the manner to respond to the parents and parental decision-making on marriage. Lastly, domestication and foreignization are considered as good translation strategies adopted to deal with Confucian culture-loaded words after meticulous investigation into the original and target cultures.

**Keywords:** Enshi Tujia Ethnic Ballads, Culture-loaded Words, Domestication and Foreignization, Confucianism

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnic ballads or folk songs as a representative of human civilization and an important part of intangible cultural heritage and a common memory of a nation's history, act as a link and bridge connecting the past, the present and the future. Besides, they as a nonphysical treasure of a nation contain unique ideas, humanistic spirit and moral norms and also constitute a rich resource to promote cultural prosperity. In China, numerous ethnic ballads and music have been listed as intangible cultural

heritages and become an important part of Chinese music and art thesauruses. Local music, as a cultural legacy, shows local customs, preserves regional history, enriches cultural diversity and entertains local residents. As Wu Jingjing states, ethnic ballads are the traditional songs of a nation, crystallizing the collective wisdom of its people [1]. Thus, folk songs and the underlying culture are worth scrutinizing.

### 1.1. The Functions of Ballads

First, the significance of ballads lies in their uniqueness

with the impossibility for duplicating. Folk songs display intense and distinctive local features along with exclusive styles. Hence, enclosed by special cultural factors, ballads can only be sung, preserved or created, but not to be duplicated. For instance, the original ballads of the Yellow River Basin in western China are symbolized by high-pitched and low-pitched tones with deep-rooted emotions that are not found in other ethnic groups in the world, and are rare in the central plains and the south of China [2]. Second, folk songs document history, myths and legends and stories. This is especially true among ethnic minorities whose writing history is not very long, so that folk songs act as a national epic [3]. Any kind of culture is the product of history, and meanwhile a manifestation of history [4]. Since ballads conserve the traces of historical events, they are widely regarded as living fossils of national antiquity. In addition, marks of different eras can be seen in ethnic ballads which made folk songs a memoir. For those reasons, as the representation of local cultures, folk songs have an identifiable historical significance. Third, ballads are educational in revealing local people's thoughts, feelings, values, and outlook on life. Folk music to an appreciable extent plays some roles in education (moral and cultural), cultural preservation and entertainment [5]. In some underdeveloped areas, ballads take a central position in communicating right and acceptable values and establishing a correct outlook on life for the young. This is evident in the quoted lines of the folk songs of Shaanxi in the book *Voice from the Northwest* [6]:

Sing to My Girl

Aiiiiiiiiiii, My girl—

My girl, go, go alone, and go the way of your own.

Go, go ahead and never turn back again.

Every road leads to the heaven,

—Ninety-nine hundreds in all.

As the lines show, the girl is encouraged to go her own way, not to vacillate or repent. Employing an artistic language and a graceful rhythmic pattern, some ballads offer the deep insight into life as self-manifest in the lines above.

Last, geographical environment where folk songs are generated has an unignorable influence on the character and lifestyle of the local people, which as we shall see is evident in the two local Enshi (“恩施”) Tujia (“土家”) ballads. In fact, natural ecology and humanistic tradition have set a sad and optimistic tone for the culture of northern Shaanxi, and also provided a rich connotation of music and culture for folk songs in northern Shaanxi [6]. In China, ballads in the north are more straightforward and uninhibited in tone, such as Qinqiang (“秦腔”) Opera in northern Shaanxi, while those in the south are soft and gentle, such as Huangmei (“黄梅”) Opera. This distinction is in line with the unique personalities of the people in those two regions: northerners are more direct and extroverted while southerners are indirect and introverted.

### 1.2. Current Situation of Ballads

Ballads, a kind of distinctive artistic treasure, are

confronted with a survival predicament. There are three possible main reasons as follows. First, as China's traditional agricultural society is transforming into an industrialized society and the way of production and life style are changing, the content expressed in folk songs no longer conforms to the taste of the public. Second, ballads are strongly invaded by modern media. Given that popular music has a wider influence, folk songs are not favored anymore but considered as outdated and tasteless by the young. Third, dialects in ethnic ballads are no longer used or understood by the younger generation. Any culture must be disseminated before being handed down to others, to the world and to future generations [7]. Thus, translation and interpretation of folk songs are of great significance in preserving the culture underlying. After all, this oral literature with the culture it represents, once disappeared, will never be retrieved. [8]

### 1.3. Characteristics of Enshi Tujia Ballads

Enshi is located in the Wuling (“武陵”) Mountains, where the Tujia people dwell. It is a natural phenomenon that in high mountains, dwellers communicate by shouting, and immediate response, or otherwise they have to walk a long way to communicate in person. Consequently, a “high-pitch folk song” is popular with shouting as its feature. Enshi Tujia ethnic ballads express emotions in high pitch which is therefore known as “shouting folk songs” while narrating stories in flat pitch which is called “singing folk songs”. The lyrics are mostly composed of two, four or five sentences. They are solo, duet and chorus in form and concise and informative in language. The special colloquialism, dialects and slang in their folk songs are succinct and clear. Those unique regional characteristics of Enshi ballads are expressed through such means as beautiful vocative expressions and male-female duets singing. Singing is a way for the Tujia people to communicate. Just like in the ballad titled “An Itching Throat for Singing”, the couple are chanting even before bedtime. Almost every one of the Tujia people can sing, and loves singing: singing as a way of interaction is an inseparable element of their life.

## 2. Literature Review

It is precisely because the Tujia folk culture is deeply influenced by Confucianism that many Tujia folk lyrics display the richness of Confucian culture. A combination of domestication and foreignization strategies are adopted in the translation of those two ballads. As usually known, these two kinds of translation strategies are proposed by Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. It is widely misunderstood that domestication-driven translation and foreignization-based translation are two totally incompatible methods. As Venuti makes it clear, however, domestication-driven translation and foreignization-based translation are in a certain degree overlapped in conceptual connotation and there is no absolute distinction [8]. Likewise, I argue in favor of this point of view. Another key thing to remember is that the cultural connotation

of the culture-loaded words should be well attended by choosing proper translation strategies.

### 2.1. Style of the Tujia Ethnic Ballads

Before initiating the translation process, it is imperative to figure out the stylistic feature of the two Tujia ballads. As folk songs mainly reflect people’s daily life, colloquialism is easily observed in the source language. Accordingly, the scale of formality should be chosen properly in translation practice. Furthermore, in the translation of folk songs, concise language and short words are preferred since long words are usually formal and academic, not amiable for singing. For example, in Line 18 of the folk song named “My Buddy”, the colloquial expression “mom and dad” is used instead of the formal term “parents”.

### 2.2. Narrative Angle: from the Third Person to the First Person

In translation of the ballad “My Buddy”, in the first place, the third person is harnessed which gives people an impression that the story is narrated by someone else. By contrast, when the first person is used, it is more like a girl narrating her own story which shortens the distance between the narrator and readers and offers a more vivid picture of the scene.

### 2.3. Strategies for Translating Culture- Loaded Words

Culture-loaded words are technical terms, phrases, and idioms that mark something specific to a culture, or reflect the unique lifestyle that a particular nation has accumulated over the course of a long history [9]. As for the difficulties posed by the culture-loaded words, Wu Xingyi defines that culture-loaded words refer to the phenomenon that some words in the original language have a national color and a cultural personality which cannot find their counterparts in the target language [10]. Venuti believes that domestication is to bring the author to the target language culture and foreignization is to take readers to a foreign context [11]. Friedrich Schleiermacher argues that there are only two methods of translation: “either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves readers towards him; or he leaves readers in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards them” [12]. In other words, domestication-driven translation encourages using the language accepted by target-language readers so that what the author wants to convey is identifiable and accessible. Foreignization-based translation keeps the originality of the source-language text to the greatest extent in which accordingly the language characteristics and cultural customs of the source text can be faithfully saved. Domestication and foreignization as two translation strategies are both significant, and it is hardly possible to adopt only one of them in the translation. As I firmly believe, choosing between those two strategies requires profound understanding of both original and target cultures. For that reason, in the translation of those two Tujia folk songs, both cultures behind them are

investigated before proper strategies are decided. Most of the Confucian culture-loaded words in those two ballads are translated using the strategy of domestication.

The first folk song “My Buddy” is a love story. In it, “Huo Ji” (“伙计”) is a key vocative expression. In Mandarin, literally, it usually means a friend. However, in the language of the Tujia people, besides the meaning of “a friend”, it can also refer to “boyfriend” or “lover” under certain circumstances. My initial consideration was to use the foreignization strategy to transliterate it. Then I gave it a second thought. Since, in folk songs, most vocative expressions do not always have the actual meaning, they exist just for a better rhythmic purpose. However, “Huo Ji” here in the lyric situation means “a friend”. To express this meaning faithfully rather than the meaning associated with “boyfriend” or “lover”, I choose term “buddy” for it generally means a boon company echoing the general identity of the addressee that the original text wants to convey.

In the second ballad “An Itching Throat for Singing”, whose original Chinese title is bù chàng shān gē hóu lóng suǒ 不唱山歌喉咙梭, literally, the title clearly expresses the Tujia singing custom that when people do not sing they will feel uncomfortable in the throat. The term “Suo (梭)” in Chinese is actually a culture-loaded word with no equivalence in English. It is a noun which originally refers to the weaving tool used to draw the weft in a loom, shaped like a date stone. When “Suo” is used in the expression “Chuan Suo (“穿梭”) which means going back and forth through something, the character “Suo” gets the meaning of moving fast and frequently. “Suo” can also be used as a quantifier representing the times that the tool “Suo” weaved [13]. In the folk song under discussion, the term “Suo” has a similar meaning with the “Suo” in the expression “Chuan Suo”, but here it means moving like a worm in the throat, making the throat itching. The figurative meaning is that one has a painful feeling if he or she cannot sing. The song uses this figurative expression to show people’s eagerness to sing. During the process of translation, three words are considered to translate “Suo”. “Aching” is firstly considered since “aching for/to” means to have an extremely strong desire to do something [14]. However, “ache” in most cases is used to describe a real pain. Then, when the adjective “thirsty” goes with “for”, it has the similar meaning of having a strong desire for something [14]. However, “thirsty” is rarely used together with “throat” in English. At last, the word “itching” is considered for it is both grammatically correct and faithful to the original feeling that the source text wants to communicate. In English, it is used more often as a medical condition. The expression “be itching to/for” has the meaning of wanting very much to do something soon [14]. As people who sing a lot would virtually feel itching in the throat if they do not sing for whiles, “itching” is thus chosen. In the translation of the title, the rendition uses the method of reversed and muted translation. The Chinese version literally means “no singing causes an itchy throat” which is changed into a more suitable expression “an itching throat for singing”.

In the folk song “My Buddy”, the original version is 急忙 (jí máng) 转身回到绣房门 (zhuǎnshēnhuī dào xiù fāng mén) which is translated into “I turned quickly back into the door”. “Xiu Fang” (“绣房”) is the boudoir, a young woman’s bedroom [15]. “Xiu Fang” in Chinese literally means a place to make embroideries, but it actually refers to a room where an unmarried girl dwells. “Men do crop growing work and women engage in spinning and weaving” is a typical lifestyle of agricultural civilization. In the old days, Tujia women were all adept at doing stitching, though it may not be true nowadays. Embroidery is no longer popular possibly due to the social transformation from agricultural society to industrialized society. Young girls are not required or taught to do needlework anymore. The mass industrialized production of clothes exempts them from the hard labor of sewing. “Xiu Fang” is translated into “the door” instead of “the boudoir” for two reasons: one is associated with end rhyme, and the other with register.

### 3. Translations of the Two Tujia Ballads

In this section, two Tujia ethnic ballads are translated employing domestication and foreignization as two translation strategies.

#### 3.1. My Buddy

Enshi Tujia Folk Song 1: My Buddy  
 General Instructor: Chen Kaiju<sup>1</sup>  
 Translation Supervisor: Xu Jingcheng<sup>2</sup>  
 Translator: Guo Jing<sup>3</sup>  
 Singers: Mou Bingjin<sup>4</sup>, Chen Ligao<sup>5</sup>  
 Revisers: Mou Bingjin, Chen Ligao

Table 1. My Buddy.

Chinese Version	English Translation
伙计歌 伙计歌	My Buddy
听我开言唱伙计伙计 听我开言唱伙计伙计	Here I am singing, buddy, buddy.
唱个姐探郎伙计伙计 唱个姐探郎伙计伙计	My dear, I'm to meet, buddy, buddy.
小郎得病躺在象牙床 小郎得病躺在象牙床	In an ivory bed, you're sick and sleeping.
收拾打扮去瞧郎伙计 收拾打扮去瞧郎伙计	Dressed up, I'm eager to meet, buddy.

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4 The inheritor of Mou's ballads in Liangwu, Lichuan, Hubei province, China.

5 Widely regarded by the locals as the king of Tujia ethnic ballads in Lichuan, Hubei province, China.

Chinese Version	English Translation
伙计伙计 伙计伙计	Buddy, buddy.
刚刚走出门伙计伙计 刚刚走出门伙计伙计	When I leave from th' door, buddy, buddy.
爹妈喊一声伙计伙计 爹妈喊一声伙计伙计	Mom 'n dad called at door, buddy, buddy.
急忙转身回到绣房门 急忙转身回到绣房门	I turned quickly back into the door, and cried all night in the door.
一直哭到大天明 一直哭到大天明	Buddy, buddy.
伙计伙计 伙计伙计	Buddy, buddy.
小妹妹生得乖伙计伙计 小妹妹生得乖伙计伙计	As a girl, I'm well-taught, buddy, buddy.
想出个办法来伙计伙计 想出个办法来伙计伙计	A way is figured out, buddy, buddy.
隔壁屋里大嫂在做鞋 隔壁屋里大嫂在做鞋	Shoe-making, the neighbour is asked about.
剪个鞋样带回来伙计 剪个鞋样带回来伙计	A shoe pattern has been taught, buddy.
伙计伙计 伙计伙计	Buddy, buddy.
鞋样剪得好伙计伙计 鞋样剪得好伙计伙计	This shoe style's well done, buddy, buddy.
鞋袜做好了伙计伙计 鞋袜做好了伙计伙计	Shoes and socks are done, buddy, buddy.
莫准那个爹妈知道了 莫准那个爹妈知道了	Please never let my dad and mom know.
不知情哥要不要伙计 不知情哥要不要伙计	Take it or not, let me know. Buddy.
伙计伙计 伙计伙计	Buddy, buddy.

#### 3.2. An Itching Throat for Singing

Enshi Tujia Folk Song 2:  
 General Instructor: Chen Kaiju  
 Translation Supervisor: Xu Jingcheng  
 Translator: Guo Jing  
 Singer: Mou Bingjin

Table 2. An Itching Throat for Singing.

Reviser: Mou Bingjin Chinese Version	English Translation
不唱山歌喉咙梭 不唱山歌喉咙梭	An Itching Throat for Singing.
三天两头不唱歌 三天两头不唱歌	Every now 'n then one doesn't sing:
喉咙好像虫在梭 喉咙好像虫在梭	Thirsty throat like worms wriggling.
抬起石头喊号子 抬起石头喊号子	Some chanting in stone lifting,
打起锣鼓唱上坡 打起锣鼓唱上坡	Others drumming while mourning.
逢年过节连更唱 逢年过节连更唱	At festas, all day they sing.
两口子床前也盘 两口子床前也盘	Bef. bedtime, couples're chanting.

### 4. The Confucian Culture Behind the Two Tujia Ballads

The Tujia ethnic culture has a long history and preserves its distinct characteristics. Despite this, in the process of interpreting and translating of those two Tujia ballads, the Confucian culture, especially the one of rituals and filial piety,

is frequently tracible in many culture-loaded words.

#### 4.1. Confucian Rituals Reflected in Tujia Folk Songs

China is known as “an ancient civilization and a country of etiquette”. The concept of “Li” (“礼”, “ritual”, a foreignized translation for the word) occupies an important position in Chinese culture. “Li” has developed a lot of meanings in the Chinese history of thousands of years, and now it mainly refers to a ritual for everyone to perform in the social life due to customs and habits [15] Here are some of the customs and culture of Enshi enumerated which may give us some hints about the ritual culture in the life of the Tujia people. (1) Girl’s Festival, known as “Tujia Valentine’s Day”, is a festival formed spontaneously by the youth of the Tujia ethnic group in Enshi in the process of pursuing free marriage against the feudal way of arranged marriage. Its main feature is to sing in antiphonal style to choose a mate. (2) Festival in the Middle of the Month, known as “Ghost Festival” or “Dead Festival”, falls on the lunar calendar of July 12. Its main activity is to worship ancestors and pay homage to the deceased relatives through burning banknote-like paper. In the middle of the month, the whole family must reunite and the married daughters should go back home. (3) “Zhu Mi” (“祝米”): when a child is born in a Tujia family, a warm celebration for the birth of the baby will be held, which is commonly known as “Zhu Mi”. The time is set on the day of washings, or when the baby is one month old. The baby’s grandmother normally has the privilege of being received as a distinguished guest on this day, despite social status. (4) “Ku Jia” (“哭嫁”): Tujia daughters cry before getting married, which was originally a form of rebellion against the feudal ethics of arranged marriage that hindered the pursuit of free marriage. Later, gradually, the culture of using cry to express joy was formed [16]. “Ku Jia” has its important social value which attracts many people’s attention [17]. The customs as aforementioned are typical examples for the Tujia people to perform rituals. Every of those festivals has a distinct instruction towards the permission and taboos as well as the sequence of completing the ritual. Ghost Festival display respects towards ancestors which is in reality a sacrifice culture. Ku Jia is a custom to convey gratitude for parenting, indicating that the girl cannot support the parents anymore which is heartrending. So, it is evident that those two festivals are influenced by the Confucian culture of filial piety.

##### 4.1.1. Rituals in Tujia People’s Devotion to Singing

In the folk song “An Itching Throat for Singing”, the lyrics are all about singing. In line 6, 两口子床前也盘 liǎngkǒu zǐ chuángqián yě pán which is translated into “Bef. Bedtime, couples’re chanting”. The Chinese word “盘” (“Pan”) is a very special word since no dictionary meanings match with what the song tries to convey. In Tujia language it means singing a duet, so in the rendition “chanting” is used. “Pan” songs are mainly divided into sacrificial ceremony songs, wedding ceremony songs and funeral ceremony songs [18]. As for the sentence “At festas, all day they sing”, the Tujia people’s deep love for

singing is manifested. In this folk song, the lines “Some chanting in stone lifting, / others drumming while mourning” shows that people sing at funerals to abide by certain rites. Besides, in this sentence, there is a “Shang Po” (“上坡”) which in literal translation means climbing the hill. Originally, the translator translated the verse into “beating gongs and drums and singing while climbing”, and later it was found that the implication of “Shang Po” (climbing the hill) in the Tujia language is different from the meaning in Mandarin. In Tujia language it means mourning at the funeral. As a result, the domestication strategy is adopted to specify the meaning of this word in the folk song.

##### 4.1.2. Confucian Rituals of Gifts in Tujia Ethnic Ballads

“Li” (“rituals”) also means giving and receiving gifts<sup>6</sup>. In the folk song “My Buddy”, the term “ivory bed” appeared in the third line which is translated literally. Ivory bed (as shown in figure 1) is the bed that has ivory carving as the decoration or refers to the exquisite top-grade bed with a curtain which is used mainly by newly married couples or women in rich families. Ivory bed is quite like the canopy bed, with vertical columns in each four corners to support the upper rectangular tester which is called “Cheng Chen” (“承尘”) with the meaning of preventing the dust falling onto the bed<sup>7</sup>. The Chinese ivory bed has walls at back, left and right sides. A panel is set at the top of the front side of the bed. In many cases, the ivories bed we see are embedded with the ivories at conspicuous places as decorations.



Figure 1. An Ivory Bed.[19]

The ivory bed recorded in *Zizhi Tongjian (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government)*<sup>8</sup> refers to the ivory bed when Lord Mengchang<sup>9</sup> visited Chu State on behalf of Qi State

6 For more details about this term, please see Lü, S. X., and Ding, S. S., ed. (2005). *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (5th edition). Beijing: The Commercial Press, p. 1535.

7 For more details about this term, please see “象牙床”(“ivory bed”), Baike <<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%B1%A1%E7%89%99%E5%BA%8A/9874729>> [accessed September 18, 2021].

8 The English name of *Zizhi Tongjian* is chosen according the Encyclopedia Britannica, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zizhi-tongjian>> [accessed October 5, 2021].

9 Lord Mengchang was an aristocrat of the State of Qi during the Warring States Period of China. He is well known for the size of his entourage. According to the *Records of the Grand Historian*, he had up to three thousand people in his retinue. Lord Mengchang eventually became the Chancellor of Qi and of Wei. He was also

[20]. Lord Mengchang asked Deng Tuzhi to escort the ivory bed back home. Deng Tuzhi was unwilling to go. He said to one of Lord Mengchang's retainers named Gongsun Shu: "The ivory bed is worth a lot of money. I cannot afford it if there is a slight damage. If you can help me to escape from this task, I am willing to give you my treasured patrimonial sword." Gongsun Shu agreed and then said to Lord Mengchang: "Every country invites you to be the prime minister because you can support the weak and the poor. Now you have accepted the gift of ivory bed since you arrived in Chu, and then what gifts should other countries you are going to visit give you?" Thus, from this story, we can spot how luxurious and precious the ivory bed was at that time. The ivory bed is first known as a pricey gift in history. As a matter of fact, for the Tujia people in the old times, ivory beds are properties of Tusi ("土司")<sup>10</sup> or of some extraordinarily affluent families. Since the background information of ivory bed in this folk song is untraceable, we could only infer that the boy loved by the girl is definitely not a descendant of Tusi (the chieftain). Because the marriages of Tusi family are arranged in accordance with certain rites, free marriage is never a choice for their offspring. Moreover, the ivory bed mentioned in the song nowadays is not made of ivory or even has no ivory as decoration at all. It just refers to the high-end bed with four posters and an upper rectangular tester. So, we perceive that possibly the boy mentioned in this folk song is rich enough to have a modern version of ivory bed. To conclude, the ritual culture is presented in the song that people are classified according to the social status and should all conform to the regulations of enjoying the right things with the right social status.

#### 4.1.3. Marriage Rituals in Line with Confucian Culture in Tujia Folk Songs

In the ballad "My Buddy", shoe pattern is mentioned twice. Before shoes (as shown in figure 2) were manufactured, shoe making was usually a task undertaken by women at home, though there were also craftsmen who specialized in shoe making. The shoe is mainly composed of two parts, namely the sole and the upper. The shoe patterns mentioned in the folk songs are mainly the upper part. If the shoe pattern is made well, the shoes will be very comfortable to wear. Good shoe patterns are retained by experienced shoemakers or exchanged among acquaintances. Shoemaking is one of the forms of sewing as aforementioned. Thus, the disappearance of the shoe pattern in the daily life is due to the same reason, that is, industrialization. Manufacturing of goods freed women from making shoes or by and large many other handicrafts. For this reason, women were given a possibility to enjoy a different life. Consequently, the whole life style and people's perception were unavoidably changed. Nevertheless, the folk song under discussion now records the

old days' life style which is part of the marriage rituals in Tujia culture.

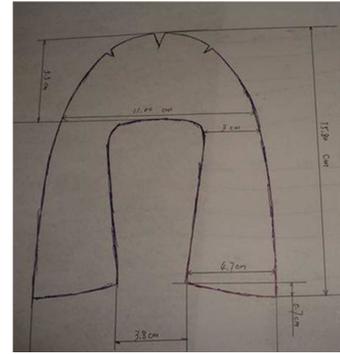


Figure 2. A Shoe Pattern. [21]

Since shoemaking generally requires knowing the size of the wearer's feet. To make the most suitable shoes, the wearer's feet should be measured. Yet, the girl in the folk song only copies a good shoe model from her neighbor. Apparently, it is impossible for her to know the size of the boy, and likewise she would never ask or even measure. In that case, it is very likely the shoes are not well fitted. Nevertheless, what's important here is not the fitness or the size but the symbolic meaning of the shoes. To put it another way, in Chinese Confucian culture, making shoes for a young man has a special ritual connotation of expressing affection. Similarly, in ancient China, there is also a custom of giving self-made purse or handkerchief to express implicitly or explicitly the fondness of the man. For instance, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Lin Daiyu was very angry because Jia Baoyu gave away the sachet, she made [22]. Later, when this misunderstanding was corrected Lin Daiyu found that Jia Baoyu treasured the sachet so much that he carried it closely to his body. The implication of sending hand-made textiles is an unspoken secret between the two. As for the Tujia people, marriage-related issues should follow the prescribed procedures strictly which are known rites in Confucian culture. Usually, young people find their favorite candidates through singing duets, after which the girl will make a pair of shoes or socks for the man she has chosen. If the man is also in favor of this girl, he will accept the gifts, and then ask a matchmaker bringing trotters, some other gifts to the girl's home asking the parents if they would like to marry their daughter. To conclude, shoe patterns as a home-produced goods record the changing lifestyles of the Tujia people as well as their marriage rituals. The Confucian ritual culture of arranged marriages according to the prescribed procedure is uncovered in the song.

#### 4.2. Filial Piety Culture Showed in Tujia Ethnic Ballads

In the ballad "My Buddy", the two lines "Mom 'n dad called at the door, I turned quickly back into the door" and "shoes and socks are done, please never let my dad and mom know", construct an image of a girl who obeys her parents. In the Confucian culture, filial piety is explained as not disobeying [23]. As Mr. Fei Xiaotong notes that filial piety simply means

one of the Four Lords of the Warring States. For more details, please see "Introduction to Lord Mengchang, <https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/1113185351804753699.html> [accessed August 15, 2021].

<sup>10</sup> Tusi means the chieftain.

sons and daughters should try to please parents to help them to achieve a peaceful mind [24]. Filial piety is the duty of children, and the specific practice of filial piety needs to be achieved through rituals. Under the requirements of family etiquette, filial piety is not only about taking care of parents in life, but also includes spiritual respect and obedience to parents as well as inheriting and developing the ambitions of fathers. Even, sometimes filial piety means the reproduction of the population for the family. From this song we can effortlessly find that the girl obeys her parents since once summoned she turns back to her parents immediately. Besides, making shoes and socks for the boy without telling her parents implies that only when the girl is answered by the boy, can she tell her parents about the affection. If she is rejected, parents are spared from knowing. For marriage issues, parents or grandparents make the decision. Usually, the father makes the final decision. That is to say, the ethnic culture of Tujia people has accepted the Confucian culture of filial piety. As for why the girl cries from night to day in her room, it is quite confusing for the translator in the first place. Apparently, the girl can enjoy a free marriage since she has prepared a pair of shoes and a pair of socks which if the boy accepts, they could see each other's parents and get married soon. Then, it is realized that the reason for the girl to cry is possibly due to her concern for the love-sick boy. Since she cannot go to see him freely or publicly according to the rituals in the Confucian culture, she has no idea about his condition and shows extreme worry.

## 5. Conclusion

Ethnic ballads as precious assets of mankind are unique in the style and language. On the one hand, they display local people's values, outlooks, thoughts and feelings, and on the other hand show a strong capacity of recording local history in addition to educating younger generations. Fascinatingly, geographical environment where folk songs are created have a significant effect on the character and lifestyle of local people which then are manifested in local ethnic ballads. In this way, ballads provide us an opportunity to perceive local customs and cultures. Given that folk songs are vanishing with the culture by which they are enclosed, one powerful way to preserve this priceless cultural legacy is through translation and interpretation.

This paper provides the translations of the two Tujia ballads mainly assisted by the strategy of domestication. It is discovered that the culture-loaded words and expressions in those two folk songs contain rich Confucian culture, especially that of rituals and filial piety. Thus, it is realized that this Tujia ethnic culture with its uniqueness is not slightly influenced by the Confucian culture. Despite the fact that the Tujia people live in mountains, their lives depend on agriculture the same as people in most parts of China. The origin and development of Confucian culture is based on the Chinese agriculture civilization [25]. That is to say, the Tujia ethnic culture is combined with Confucianism (here the culture of rituals and filial piety in particular) which stems from the mountainous agricultural culture. Last, it is important

to point out that this paper has translated and investigated only two of the Tujia ethnic ballads leaving hundreds of thousands of other excellent relevant works to be reviewed. The inscrutable culture behind those Tujia ethnic ballads is intricate and sophisticated and it is impossible to discuss all aspects in a single article. Thus, more thorough research can be conducted and more minute Tujia culture is expecting to be deciphered.

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