

# Wishes, Happiness and Harmony: The Case of Two Tujia Ethnic Ballads “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride” and “Ha Ge Za”

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**Abstract:** Tujia is one of the most essential ethnic minorities in China, where the ethnic ballads or folk songs are popular and renowned as the results of human civilization and wisdom, presenting a true portrayal of regional charms and national characters. This essay concentrates on two Tujia folk songs in Enshi, Hubei province, namely “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride” and “Ha Ge Za”, by analyzing how the Tujia people reflect their living environments and good vistas and ideals in ethnic ballads and interpreting the cultural connotations behind lyrics. Furthermore, it also examines the translation strategies adopted in decoding the minority ballads under the indigenous Chinese translation theory of “Three Beauties Principle”, and from cultural and historical perspectives, especially the Ten-Sister culture in Tujia’s wedding customs, landscape and historical development. This essay will conclude that the Tujia people are cognitively and physically oriented toward the harmony between humans and nature, in which case, they usually combine life wishes and natural scenery in lyrics, showing their optimism, respect for nature and expectation for future. As it believes, the Tujia ethnic ballads and the translations are conducive to the better and further understanding and dissemination of the Tujia culture.

**Keywords:** Tujia Ethnic Ballads, Cultural Interpretation and Diffusion, Translation Strategy, Xu Yuanchong’s “Three Beauties Principle”

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture

The full name of Enshi is Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture<sup>1</sup>, whose main ethnic minorities are Tujia and Miao<sup>2</sup>. Located in the southwest of Hubei province, Enshi is simultaneously a contiguous area with Chongqing and Hunan province. Geographical conditions determine labor

production and also affect people’s living patterns to a certain extent [1]. Historically, with rugged terrain and overlapping mountains, Enshi was mainly coated by mountainous agricultural economy. During the period of the Chieftain System<sup>3</sup> for more than four hundred years<sup>4</sup>, Enshi formed a situation of “the men do not leave the mountain, and the Hans do not enter the cave”, which engendered many unique

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1 Founded on August, 19 in 1983, Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture is the only autonomous prefecture of ethnic minorities in Hubei province, and its municipal center is based in Enshi.

2 Besides Tujia and Miao, there are other 27 ethnic groups in Enshi, such as Dong, Han, Hui, Mongolian, Yi, Naxi and Zhuang.

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3 The Chieftain System (土司制度) is a centralized system for minority ethnic group in ancient China. The ruler introduced the chieftain system in Enshi in order to “use minority ethnic people to subjugate their own races”. The chief was in effect the “local emperor”, whose position was passed down from generation to generation to maintain exclusive ruling privileges. They controlled the rights of military, political, economic, cultural, legal and criminal punishment.

4 In Enshi, the Chieftain System started in 1283A.D. and ended in 1735 A.D.

regional folk cultures. After the restoration<sup>5</sup>, although the cultural exchange between Enshi and outside areas became increasingly close, Enshi people still retained distinctive Tujia customs in their production and living practices. Under this circumstance, the Tujia people, industrious, intelligent and creative, were still optimistic despite the extremely difficult living conditions, and created many cultural relics with unique national characteristics in their work and life. Enshi Tujia folk songs, formed by the intersection of literature and music, are not only a mirror of the daily production and life of the Tujia people, but also the most representative form of Tujia art and music. They are rich and comprehensive in content, containing sincere emotions in unique style and concise language. As such, this paper selects two typical Tujia ethnic ballads as a case study in an attempt to translate, interpret and present the charms of the Tujia folk culture.

### 1.2. Enshi Tujia Ethnic Ballads

Enshi Tujia ethnic ballads play a very important role in the field of folk culture in China. As a result from the long-term production and daily life of the Tujia people, they are an artistic form gradually generated to express emotion and praise life. The melody of Tujia folk songs is beautiful and diverse. The sound of them, when sung, is loud, heroic, graceful and melodious. The lyrics are usually simple, easy to understand but full of emotions. Some are funny and vivid, and some are full of life philosophy. The representative Enshi Tujia ethnic ballads include “Dragon Boat Tune” and “Fourth Sister Huang”.

In Enshi, most Tujia people live in mountainous areas. The local climate and natural conditions determine their enthusiastic characters and the everlasting pursuit of beautiful things in nature. They convey their love and pursuit through the emotional songs with various singing style and expression skills. Traditional Tujia folk songs are not only a significant ceremony of festival celebration, but also an important part of religious etiquette [2]. Tujia folk songs in general are the portrayal of Tujia people’s life experience in the historical development, representing the long and brilliant Tujia culture, folk customs, agricultural production and local life conditions. The perfect combination of life and music is creatively reflected by the lyric content of Tujia ethnic ballads, and it meanwhile greatly demonstrates the far-reaching musical influence of them [3], which is a fundamental driving force to promote the long-term survival and development of Tujia folk songs. The first folk song to be discussed in this paper revolves around Tujia traditional wedding custom. In particular, the Ten-Sister culture is vividly presented in the lyrics. The second song depicts the Tujia people’s love and appreciations for their hometown, living environment and history.

## 2. Literature Review

Rooted in China, Tujia folk songs are endowed with distinct Chinese minority characteristics. In this section, related studies on Tujia ethnic ballads and on their translations will be

reviewed in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Enshi folk songs and to present better translations and interpretations.

### 2.1. Related Studies on Tujia Ethnic Ballads

In the past two decades, most researches have focused on Tujia ethnic ballads or folk songs from musical and artistic perspectives, such as their writing, dissemination, music styles, and artistic features. Additionally, some studies concentrate on cultural perspectives, such as dialects and the function of lining words in Tujia folk songs. These studies, almost published in the form of journal articles, masters’ and doctoral dissertations, exert significant impacts on Chinese literature and arts. To deepen the influences of Tujia ethnic ballads in the world, however, there exists a research gap at present: although most of the existing scholarship analyze specific and professional aspects of Tujia folk songs, English translations of the national lyrics and detailed discussions of translation strategies used are scarcely touched upon, which occasion numerous understanding and communication barriers for foreigners. Some prevalent reviews are discussed in what follows.

Mao Chengdong interprets the relation between Tujia folk songs’ writing and their dissemination based on an Enshi folk song named “Tujia Sister in Qingjiang Gallery” [4]. In his opinion, whether a song can widely spread or not depends on three points: firstly, whether the creation of a song conforms to audience’s aesthetic habits; secondly, whether audience can agree with the aesthetic psychology of the creator; finally, whether the communication media is smooth and whether more audiences have access to the works. That is to say, it is closely related to the number of people who appreciate or sing and the range of diffusion and influence. However, with the rapid development of social economy, means of entertainment are richer and more colorful, and the survival and development space of the Tujia folk songs has to a certain extent been compressed. Worse still, Tujia ethnic ballads are confronted with the issue of shortage of inheritors [5]. In order to better inherit the Tujia music, it is necessary to strengthen the cultivation of the inheritors and incorporate the significance of inheriting the Tujia music culture into the syllabus of music classes at all levels of education. Only with sufficient protection and effective dissemination can the beauty of Tujia folk songs be widely known.

As is well-known, the most impressive charms of Enshi ethnic ballads pivot around musical styles and artistic features. The formation of the unique style is one of the marks of the Tujia artistic achievement. Due to the long distance and inconvenience among mountains, the Enshi Tujia people living in this special geographical environment have gradually formed their own unique musical style and singing characteristics with different identities as the foundation and source of new Enshi folk songs [6]. On this occasion, the artistic features of Tujia ethnic ballads are distinctive with an important prosodic feature being rhyme. In section 3, the translation of two Tujia ballads will show the details and charms of rhymes. Also, Enshi folk songs have strong musical

<sup>5</sup> It refers to the bureaucratization of native officers, resulting from the termination of the Chieftain System.

features in melodic patterns, the change of rhythm, beat and scale, and the diversification of musical form etc. [2].

In addition to musical perspectives, Tujia folk songs are studied from cultural prisms. According to the lyrics, it is known that the Enshi people usually sing Tujia ballads in local dialects, and with a large number of lining words<sup>6</sup>. [7]. Xu Hong examines Tujia folk songs' lining words and their functions [8]. In her view, from traditional folk art to modern popular literature, lining words not only retain the early characteristics of Tujia ballads, but also inherit the Tujia culture in an innovative way.

To sum up, relevant studies on Tujia folk songs are conductive and instructive to the better understanding, protection and promotion of the Tujia culture. Tujia folk songs are charming and distinctive both from the perspectives of music and culture, and have a profound significance for Chinese folk music and culture. However, after searching for materials about Tujia ethnic ballads, it is found that most relevant research and their findings are almost conducted and circulated only within China, in which case, almost all studies are written in Chinese, lacking foreign versions and leading to barriers of international communication. Therefore, it is imperative and critical to increase and deepen the introduction and interpretation of Tujia folk songs at home and particularly abroad.

## 2.2. *Related Studies on the Translation of Tujia Ethnic Ballads*

The indigenous Chinese translation theory of “Three Beauties Principle” proposed by Mr. Xu Yuancong<sup>7</sup>, including the beauty of meaning, of sound, and of form, can be used to guide the translation of folk song lyrics. In fact, Xu's principle was originally employed to illuminate the translation of poems, but as I argue, it is also suitable for the translation of Tujia folk songs. The first principle of “beauty of meaning” implies the loyalty to original textual contents, that is, conveying authentic meanings of ballads. As Xu stresses, “the beauty of meaning exists in the deep structure, stressing the preservation of the original poetic taste and the transmission of the original poetic mood”. Among the three beauties, the beauty of meaning occupies the first place, which determines the success of translation [9]. The second principle “the beauty of sound” requires harmonious pronunciations to realize smooth rhymes, in which case, the beauty of language cannot do without rhythmic beauty, because the rhyme of music language is an essential part of aesthetic effects for ballads. The third one, “the beauty of form” refers to the beauty in poetic form, including conciseness, tidiness, length of sentences, and antithesis [9]. Similarly, in terms of folk songs,

the beauty of form can make the translation more readable and reasonable.

Therefore, when translating the lyrics of folk songs, translators should make full use of linguistic advantages to realize the three beauties. Relevant methods such as adding words, subtracting words, disassembling words, combining words and changing words can be used [10]. Two Tujia ballads in this paper are decoded under Xu's principle, striving to present decent translations.

Besides the “Three Beauties Principle”, concerning the translation of Tujia folk songs, Chinese scholar Ou Qiuyun also has comprehensive research [11-13]. Chronologically, she initially studied the practice on the folk song and its lyric translation from Chinese to English, and introduced an effective approach of applying cultural facsimile in intercultural communication. In her view, cultural facsimile is faithfully made in the form of cultural image, dialectical feature and cultural context [11]. Later, Ou directed her research towards the translation and dissemination of folk songs, pointing out that translation plays an important role in the process of ballads' dissemination [12]. By her understanding, translators need to consider the underlying reasons of what and how to translate in order to have positive influences on those eager to know more about Chinese culture. One year later, she further examined the translation of Hubei folk songs and their cultural transmission. In order to broaden the acceptability of foreign translation of folk culture, Ou took the translation of local folk song lyrics in Hubei province as an example to explore its influence on intercultural transmission [13]. As far as she is concerned, in the process of cultural output, successful translations are more likely to effectively reach cultural communication and promote cultural exchange. Only readable and acceptable translation can help people to dismantle cultural barriers and strengthen mutual understanding and integration between different cultures. Besides the important role of translation, the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication is also influenced by other factors. It is necessary to combine translation with measures to overcome the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, so as to make Chinese culture go abroad smoothly. Ou's studies are insightful for the translation of Hubei folk songs under intercultural communication, but devoid of the discussion of detailed translation methods and strategies.

By and large, it is currently the fact that Tujia folk songs see their influence and reputation almost limited within China and run short of the international dissemination. To deepen the impacts of Enshi Tujia ballads in the world, scholars ought to attach importance to the translation and interpretations of Tujia folk songs. In the process of translation, firstly translators are expected to have a deep understanding of target-language lyrics, including their dialects, implications and lining words. Furthermore, it is crucial to comply with relevant translation guidelines, presenting the beauty of the original lyrics and avoiding ambiguity and distortion. The final goal is to awaken and deepen readers' appreciation of the charms of the Tujia folk culture.

6 Lining words of Tujia folk songs have distinct national characteristics, which can be used as auxiliary words (meaninglessness), onomatopoeic words or exclamation.

7 Xu Yuancong (1921–2021) was a professor of Peking University and a famous translator. In 2010, Xu was awarded the “Chinese Translation Culture Lifetime Achievement Award”. On August 2, 2014, Xu was awarded the “Northern Lights” Outstanding Literary Translation Award, one of the highest awards in the international translation circle. Xu is the first Asian translator to receive this award.

### 3. Translations of the Two Tujia Ethnic Ballads

In this section, two Enshi Tujia folk songs will be translated under “Three Beauties Principle”. The first song is entitled “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride” and the second one “Ha Ge Za” as shown below bilingually.

#### 3.1. Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride

General Instructor: Chen Kaiju<sup>8</sup>  
 Translation Supervisor: Xu Jingcheng<sup>9</sup>  
 Translator: Cheng Yali<sup>10</sup>  
 Singers: Mou Bingjin<sup>11</sup>, Chen Ligao<sup>12</sup>  
 Revisers: Mou Bingjin, Chen Ligao

Table 1. Chinese and English Lyrics of “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride”.

zhōngwénbǎnběn 中文版本	English Translation
shí zī mèi péi xīn rén 十姊妹陪新人	Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride
1. shí liú kāi huā yā yè yè ér cuì 石榴开花(呀)叶叶儿翠	1. Pomegranates bloom (ya) with leaves green
2. suǒ nǎo dòng xiǎoshēngshēngbàn péi shí zī yǒu mèi 唢呐洞箫声声伴陪十姊妹(哟)妹	2. Ten sisters stayed (yoo) with trumpets ‘n flutes ring
3. shí zī shí mèi yǒu tuán zhuǎn yā zuò 十姊妹(呀)团转(呀)坐	3. Ten sisters (ya) sit in circle (ya)
4. tīng wǒ nà ge chàng gē sāi kāi tái yā gē 听我(那个)唱个(嗵)开台(哟)歌	4. Listen (oh there), I sing preludes solo (yoo)
5. chá yè ér qīng 茶叶儿青	5. Tea leaves are green
6. liǔ yè ér qīng 柳叶儿青	6. Willow leaves are green
7. chá qīng nà ge liǔ qīng sāi yè yè ér yǒu 茶青(那个)柳青(嗵)叶叶儿(哟)青	7. Tea leaves (there) ‘n willow leaves (sei), both are green (yo)
8. shí o zī mèi mèi sāi péi xīn la rén 十(啊)姊妹妹(嗵)陪新(啦)人	8. Ten (ah) sisters (sei) stay with the bride (la)
9. bìng dì huā kāi yā nà shā yī zhī huā 并蒂花开(呀)那啥一枝花	9. Blooms on th’ same stalk (ah so) with pride
10. tóng xīn de zài yā yā yā yā 同心(的)在(呀呀呀呀)	10. Heart to heart inside (ya-ye-yoo)
11. yuān yāng nà ge xì shuǐ ma 鸳鸯(那个)戏水(嘛)	11. Love-birds (oh there) play in pair (ma)
12. bìng dì huā kāi yā yā 并蒂花开(呀呀)	12. Blooms on th’ same stalk are fair
13. duì duì lái ài hēi ài 对对来(哎嘿哎)	13. Pairs come oh my dear (Hey)
14. bǐ yǐ shuāng fēi 比翼双飞	14. Fly wing to wing
15. ma nà shā yī zhī huā (嘛)那啥一枝花	15. (ah so) A shining bloom

8 Professor in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), Institute of Advanced Hermeneutic Studies, University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Dean of Institute of Hermeneutics, GDUFS, China. Research areas: Intercultural Studies, Philosophy of Culture

9 Part-time researcher of Institute of Hermeneutics and Lecturer in Faculty of English Language and Culture, GDUFS, China; PhD in English Literature, Bangor University, UK. Research Interest: Ecocriticism, Anthropocene, Daoism, Welsh Writing in English, British Literature, Chinese Literature and Culture, and Translation Studies

10 Postgraduate in School of English for International Business, GDUFS, China. Research areas: Linguistics, Intercultural Studies, and International Business

11 One of the inheritors of Mou’s ballads in Liangwu, Lichuan, Hubei province, China

12 Widely known by the locals as the “vocal king” of Tujia folk song in Lichuan, Hubei province, China

lóngfēng de pèi yā yā yā yā yā 16. 龙凤(的)配(呀呀呀呀)	16. The bride matches the bridegroom (ya-ye-yoo)
dānfēng nà ge zhāoyáng ma 17. 丹凤(那个)朝阳(嘛)	17. Phoenix (oh there) with sun (ma)
bìng dì huā kāi yā yā 18. 并蒂花儿开(呀呀)	18. Flowers bloom all in fun (ya)
zhī yā zhī yā hē yā zhī 19. (枝)呀枝(呀)呀(枝)	19. (oh twig, oh twig, aha twig)
liǔ zhī hé zhī 20. 柳枝荷枝	20. Willows ‘n lotus twigs
jīn jī rào míng dēng a 21. 金鸡绕明灯(啊)	21. Crowning of cock around the light (ah)
míng yā dēng rào lóu zhào qiān jīn 22. 明(呀)灯绕楼照千金	22. Light (ya-ya) highlights the bride bright
shū qǐ liǎng fēn tóu fā jiǔ zǐ 23. 梳起两分头发髻子	23. The bride wore her hair in two buns
zhuànguānyuánshū qǐ lián yù dài 24. 状元梳起连玉带	24. The bridegroom combed with jade belts
yā yā ér bù jīn jiē yā a 25. (呀呀儿)步金阶(呀啊)	25. (ya-yoo) They go upstairs (ya-ah)
jiào wǒ yuán tái ma 26. 叫我圆台(嘛)	26. Ask me to conclude
huā er yī zhī huā 27. (花儿)一枝花	27. (Flower, oh flower)
wǒ jiù yuán liē 28. 我就圆(咧)	28. So I conclude (lei)
fū qī ēn ài ma 29. 夫妻恩爱(嘛)	29. Couples’ love won’t die
30. (花儿)一枝花	30. (Flower, oh flower)
dào bǎi nián liē 31. 到百年(咧)	31. until the sea goes dry (lei)
jú huā fā le yá 32. (菊花)发了芽	32. (Chrysanthemums) sprout
qī yuè èr shàng shì kāi duǒ lián huā 33. 七月藕上是开朵莲花	33. In July lotus flowers come out
wú yuè duānyángzhèng kāi shí liú huā 34. 五月端阳正开石榴花	34. In May pomegranates come out
shí liú huā 35. 石榴花	35. Pomegranate
shí liú huā 36. 石榴花	36. Pomegranate
èr yuè lán huā 37. 二月兰花	37. Feb. orchid flower
huā kāi chóng chóng 38. 花开重重	38. Carpet of flowers
huā kāi chóng chóng xǐ 39. 花开重重喜	39. Flowers come out on end
yā yā yā yā yā yā 40. (哟哟哟哟哟)	40. (yoo- yee-yoo-yee-yoo)
huā kāi chóng chóng xǐ 41. 花开重重喜	41. Good events won’t end
yā yā yā yā yā yā 42. (哟哟哟哟哟)	42. (yoo- yee-yoo-yee-yoo)

#### 3.2. Ha Ge Za

General Instructor: Chen Kaiju  
 Translation Supervisor: Xu Jingcheng  
 Translator: Cheng Yali  
 Singer: Mou Bingjin  
 Reviser: Mou Bingjin

Table 2. Chinese and English Lyrics of “Ha Ge Za”.

zhōngwénbǎnběn 中文版本	English Translation
hā gé zā 哈格砸	Ha Ge Za <sup>13</sup>
1. hā gé zā ò huò ò hā gé zā (哈格砸 哦霍哦 哈格砸!)	1. (Ha ge za, oh-hoo-oh, ha ge za!)
2. hā gé zā ò huò ò hā gé zā (哈格砸, 哦霍哦 哈格砸! )	2. (Ha ge za, oh-hoo-oh, ha ge za!)
3. hǎo yī zuòxióng qǐ de shān hā gé zā 好一座雄起的山, 哈格砸!	3. How mighty the mountain is! Ha ge za!

13 Ha Ge Za is an exclamation in Tujia local dialect.

zhōngwénbǎnběn 中文版本	English Translation
4. 好一个闹热的湾, 哈格啦!	4. How lively the ravine is! Ha ge za!
5. 好一股清甜的泉, 哈格啦!	5. How lovely the spring is! Ha ge za!
6. 好一坡五彩的伞, 哈格啦!	6. How sightly the umbrella is! Ha ge za!
7. 好一座雄起的山, 哈格啦!	7. How mighty the mountain is! Ha ge za!
8. 好一个闹热的湾, 哈格啦!	8. How lively the ravine is! Ha ge za!
9. 好一股清甜的泉, 哈格啦!	9. How lovely the spring is! Ha ge za!
10. 好一坡五彩的伞, 哈格啦!	10. How sightly the umbrella is! Ha ge za!
11. 地是(呀)开阔的地	11. The land (ah), my open land
12. 天是自由的天	12. The free sky without end
13. 荒山野岭(呐)把身安	13. In desolate hills (na) we lived
14. 哥儿活得像神仙(呐)	14. Led a happy life like gods (na)
15. 皇帝老儿他管得宽	15. Emperor interfered too much
16. 管得老子想发颠(呐)	16. I would be insane as such (na)
17. 今儿个岔起(嘛)要一天, 哈格啦!	17. Take a break to have fun (ma) today, Ha ge za!
18. 哥儿死了也心甘(呐)	18. Content to death in this way (na)
19. (啲呀嘿, 哈格啦!)*四次	19. (Yi-ya-hei, ha ge za!)* four times
20. (嚯嚯!)	20. (Hoo-hoo)
21. 好一群漂亮的姐儿, 哈格啦!	21. How fair a group of ladies are! Ha ge za!
22. 好一帮豪爽的汉, 哈格啦!	22. How forthright a band of men are! Ha ge za!
23. 好一排透气的蓬, 哈格啦!	23. How cool a row of awnings are! Ha ge za!
24. 好一堆暖心的炭, 哈格啦!	24. How warm a bank of coal is! Ha ge za!
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42. 管得老子想发颠(呐)	42. I would be insane as such (na)
43. 今儿个岔起(嘛)要一天, 哈格啦!	43. Take a break to have fun (ma) today, Ha ge za!
44. 哥儿死了也心甘(呐)	44. Content to death in this way (na)

According to the “Three Beauties Principle”, the translator first guarantees songs’ true meanings by choosing accurate words to convey the original lyrics. For example, “状元” in “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride” is translated into “bridegroom” rather than “number one scholar” or “zhuangyuan”<sup>14</sup>, because the person is neither relevant to “exam” nor “study” but refers to the counterpart of bride. The term “姐儿” in “Ha Ge Za” is translated into “ladies” instead of “sisters”, because this lyric praises Tujia women, stressing females in general. What’s more, the word “sisters” simultaneously has religious meanings, referring to “nuns” in western culture, especially for the Christian world. Thus, using “ladies” in place of “sisters” is more suitable and can avoid ambiguities. Also, lining words like “ah”, “na”, “oh there”, “lei” are enclosed in brackets to keep authentic. Second, the translator pays attention to the beauty of sound, especially presenting the consistence of ending rhymes. For instance, in the song “Ten Sister Stay with the Bride”, there are two lines such as “Love-birds (oh there) play in pair (ma)” and “Blooms on th’ same stalk are fair”, where the words “there”, “pair” and “fair” share the same rhyme [eə (r)]. In the lines of “The land (ah), my open land” and “The free sky without end” in the song “Ha Ge Za”, the words “land” [lænd] and “end” [end] are nearly rhymed. These consistent ending rhymes render lyrics more favorable and acceptable. Third, the translator, cognitive of the beauty of form, attempts to regulate the parallelism between the numbers of Chinese characters and English syllables. The “Three Beauties Principle” plays an important guiding role in the translation of folk songs. Balances among the beauties of meaning, sound and form can make lyric translations more harmonious.

## 4. Interpretations of the Two Tujia Ethnic Ballads

### 4.1. Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride

“Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride” is a folk song about Tujia wedding crying customs. To further interpret this song, relevant Tujia wedding customs and cognition are needed. Thus, the section 4.1 will interpret Tujia wedding crying customs, the meanings of the lyrics and the best wishes implied in lyrics.

#### 4.1.1. Tujia Wedding Crying Customs

Various ethnic groups in Enshi have formed multi-level rituals in the marriage system, which are very complex and

14 It refers to the top one scorer of the imperial examination in ancient China.

solemn.<sup>15</sup> Traditionally, one of the most popular customs in the Tujia wedding is the custom of crying. Compared with crying marriages in Bai and Miao ethnic communities, most customs in Tujia are similar. For example, all crying customs are practiced by women, such as the mother, sisters, other female relatives of the bride and the bride herself. However, there are still some differences that can be observed. For instance, the Tujia brides start to cry 2~4 weeks before the wedding, while the brides in Bai and Miao begin to cry respectively 4 days and 7 days before the wedding. Crying for marriage originated from the bride's sincere and reluctant emotions, including her gratitude for parents and reluctance of leaving home<sup>16</sup>. As time went by, the emotional outpouring (crying) became an essential and specific part of the wedding ceremony. In Tujia, crying for marriage bears two kinds of substantial emotions: one is associated with the grief of the Tujia girl when leaving home as an adult, and the other is with the carnival celebration triggered as part of the process of celebrating customs [14]. Bride-weeping usually begins a few weeks or a month before the wedding. At this time, the bride begins to cry at home, accompanied by her unmarried sisters and other female relatives [15]. Traditionally, staying with the bride is a unique form in the custom of crying [16]. As such, other young and unmarried sisters are invited to sing, cry and stay with the bride before her wedding.

The folk song "Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride" describes the gathering of ten sisters on the eve of the wedding. At first, the bride begins to cry when the first dish is served. Then other sisters take turns to cry at the intervals of serving a dish. In the end, the cook starts to remove dishes one by one at the end of the dinner. When the food are all removed, red candles will be lit in the hall, where the dowries are laid out. Auspicious and festive, the room is full of color and smoke. Two vermeil tables are placed in the middle of the room, on which are sugar-fruit cakes and snacks placed such as sunflowers, chestnuts, walnuts and peanuts. With tears and happiness, the bride and her sisters sit around the table, singing all night.

Folk songs concerning staying or crying with the bride, namely "Ten-Sister songs", are the collective creations of the Tujia women in certain social and historical environment. In the lyrics, there exist bloody and tearful complaints against the arranged marriages by parents and matchmakers in the past and merciless flagellation of the decadent social value that parents favor boys over girls. In turn, they also sing for the kindness of their parents and the reluctant feelings of parting from relatives and friends [16].

In a word, the Ten-Sister song is one of indispensable parts in the Tujia wedding crying culture that women sing for their true feelings, sadness or happiness.

#### 4.1.2. Lyrics: *Oeness Between Heaven and Humans*

Different form Ten-Sister songs which sing for sadness, the song "Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride" expresses best wishes and happiness for the bride. Moreover, the singers ably express their love and passions for nature in this song and highlight the humanity-nature harmony. They pursue the Daoist thoughts of Laozi, which encourage the balance and integration between nature and human. The ceremony of staying with the bride begins with the prelude<sup>17</sup> and ends with the epilogue<sup>18</sup> [17]. According to the lyrics, there are 42 lines (including lining words) in this song, which can be divided into two parts. The former part is the prelude (Lines 1-25) and the latter one is the epilogue (Lines 26-42). In the prelude and epilogue, the singers perfectly integrate personal feelings/wishes with the fabulous scenery, which signals the theory that man is an integral part of nature. Examples 1 and 2 as shown below are cited from the prelude, and Example 3 from the epilogue.

Example 1 (Lines 1 and 2):

石榴开花 (呀) 叶叶儿翠

Pomegranates bloom (ya) with leaves green

唢呐洞箫声声伴陪十姊 (哟) 妹

Ten sisters stayed (yoo) with trumpets 'n flutes ring

In this part, we can see a harmonious and beautiful picture: the pomegranate flowers bloom and their leaves are pretty green. A group of young girls in their best attire are staying with the bride, with the suona (trumpet) and the flute playing constantly and joyfully along the way. The Tujia people regard the pomegranate as a mascot for it has a large number of seeds, symbolizing fertility and fortune. In addition, green leaves of flowers imply youth and vitality, which means the bride is in her prime time gorgeous and glamorous. Similarly, tea leaves and willow leaves mentioned later in the lyrics have the same effects.

Example 2 (Lines 21 and 22):

金鸡绕明灯 (啊)

Crowing of cock around the light (ah)

明 (呀) 灯绕楼照十金

Light (ya-ya) highlights the bride bright

Perhaps these two lines contain the most complicated meanings in the whole song. In fact, they depict a warm and beautiful situation. The ten sisters sing to each other until dawn while the room is still bright with the lamp light on. At this time, the rooster crows loudly. The light becomes brighter and brighter, making the bride even more charming. In this part, the rooster's crow signifies the beginning of a new day (the wedding day). The loud sound breaks the dark night, with the rising sun and its bright light. The light shines on the bride, highlighting her beauty and charms, which signals her new life full of sunshine and happiness.

Example 3 (Lines 38 to 41):

15 Source: Anonymity, "Tujia Wedding Customs in Enshi, Hubei", <<https://m.rili.com.cn/jiehunxisu/43978.html>> [accessed on August 4th, 2021]

16 In ancient times, getting married meant leaving from parents and not being able to see each other for a long time due to inconvenient transportation, which made the bride sad and reluctant. Luckily, the transportation of the Enshi Tujia area has been facilitated and improved greatly during the past two decades, which reduces the time and enhances the means of communication and connection of the local people.

17 The prelude refers to "开台歌" in Chinese, which means the beginning of the ceremony.

18 The epilogue here refers to "圆台歌" in Chinese. When sung, it signals the coming end of the ceremony.

huā kāi chóng chóng  
花卉重重

Carpet of flowers

huā kāi chóng chóng xǐ  
花卉重重喜

Flowers coming out on end

(哟哟哟哟哟)

(yoo- yee-yoo-yee-yoo)

huā kāi chóng chóng xǐ  
花卉重重喜

Good events won't end

There are many flowers being mentioned in the song, such as pomegranate flowers, lotus and Chrysanthemums. These lively plants are sprouting or blooming in their best seasons. When in bloom, they symbolize wealth and happiness.<sup>19</sup> Chinese people in general are fond of good-looking flowers with a long flowering period and bright colors, which they believe can bring a sense of wealth and happiness. However, each flower differs in the period of blooming. Therefore, in the song “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride”, orchids in February, pomegranate flowers in May, lotus flowers in July, chrysanthemums (September to November) are sung for best wishes that flowers bloom all the year round. Traditionally speaking, that flowers are in full bloom in all seasons betokens that there are happy and good things all the year round.

In brief, the song “Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride” is full of sincere blessing for the bride. Although the bride and her sisters cry together in the ceremony, it is further implied that they sing for a bright future and their beautiful dreams. Therefore, it is easy to learn from the song that the Tujia people have good qualities rooted in their blood, namely the positive attitude towards life and the constant pursuit of hope and harmony between nature and humans. By singing folk songs, the Tujia people inherit their qualities and values from generation to generation.

## 4.2. Ha Ge Za

“Ha Ge Za” is an interjection in Enshi dialect. Employing this exclamation as the title indicates that the song itself has a strong Tujia characteristic.

### 4.2.1. The Title: Powerful and Vigorous

The main rhetorical function of interjection is to express strong admiration, surprise, and other thoughts and feelings, appearing in the strong lyric part of the work in order to enhance the language appeal, and trigger the resonance of readers or listeners [18]. “Ha ge za” refers to an idiomatic colloquialism widely used among the Enshi Tujia people, which is similar to “Wow” in English. It can be used to express feelings of surprise or admiration with strong intonation. For example, when a kid gets full marks in a math test, parents would say “Ha ge za!” for praising his or her excellency; or a person would say “Ha ge za!” when he/she suddenly and amazingly finds a water source after trekking through the desert for a long time. The Enshi people are actively passionate for life. When expressing their feelings, such as

admiration and love for life, they always say “Ha ge za”, which reflects their purity and optimism towards life. Besides the title, “Ha ge za” appears twenty-eight times throughout the song. In the lyrics, “Ha ge za” expresses Tujia people’s praise for their natural and living environment, their love and hope for a good life and gratitude for the local historical development respectively. “Ha ge za”, when used in the new era, implies youth and vigor and vitality to pursue freedom and love.

### 4.2.2. Tujia People: Full of Passion for Life

There are three parts in this song. The first part is about the natural environment where Tujia people live; the second one contains Tujia people’s love and satisfaction for life and the last one is a brief description about Tujia historical changes. The lyrics are listed bilingually and analyzed as follows.

The first part revolves around Tujia natural environment:

hǎo yí zuò xióng qǐ de shān, hā gē zā!  
好一座雄起的山，哈格啦！

How mighty the mountain is! Ha ge za!

hǎo yí gè náo rè de wān, hā gē zā!  
好一个闹热的湾，哈格啦！

How lively the ravine is! Ha ge za!

hǎo yí gǔ qīng tián de yuán, hā gē zā!  
好一股清甜的泉，哈格啦！

How lovely the spring is! Ha ge za!

hǎo yí bō wǔ cǎi de sǎn, hā gē zā!  
好一坡五彩的伞，哈格啦！

How sightly the umbrella is! Ha ge za!

dì fù (ā) kāi kǎo de dì  
地是(呀)开垦的地

The land (ah), my open land

tiān shì zì yóu de tiān  
天是自由的天

The free sky without end

hǎo yí pái tòu qì de péng, hā gē zā!  
好一排透气的篷，哈格啦！

How cool a row of awnings are! Ha ge za!

hǎo yí duī nuǎ xīn de tàn, hā gē zā!  
好一堆暖心的炭，哈格啦！

How warm a bank of coal is! Ha ge za!

The mighty mountains, lively ravines and sweet spring imply that the environment is comfortable and livable and the local people lead a positive and prosperous life. Using colorful umbrellas to prevent the sun and rain signifies the climatic condition in Enshi<sup>20</sup>. The lands are open and spacious, and the sky is blue covering the endless mountains. “Awning” here refers to a covering used on a small boat to shelter from the sun, wind and rain, useful and ventilated. It is an essential tool of life for the Tujia people who live riverside. In winter, they keep warm by burning coals. How fabulous the environment and living conditions are for the Enshi Tujia people! Without beautiful mountains and rivers, there would be no life or food for them to survive. “Ha ge za” in this part contains their life experience in the local environment, filled with praise and vitality.

The second part expresses Tujia people’s contentment and love for life:

hǎo yí qún piào liàng de jiě ér, hā gē zā!  
好一群漂亮的姐儿，哈格啦！

How fair a group of ladies are! Ha ge za!

19 Source: Planting House Jasmine (screen name), “The Meaning and Symbol of Being in Full Flowers”, <<https://www.zw3e.com/6/58542.html>> [accessed on August 5th, 2021].

20 Enshi is subtropical humid in climate. Winter sees no severe cold and summer no intense heat. It is very comfortable and livable.

好一帮豪爽的汉，哈格啦！

How forthright a band of men are! Ha ge za!

Apparently, in this part, Tujia youngsters are praised. Ladies are beautiful and gorgeous; men are handsome and powerful, which embodies the Tujia people's views of love and aesthetics. Whether men see glamorous ladies, or ladies meet charming men, they would say "Ha ge za" to express their admiration and love. In short, young people's desires and pursuit for love are shown in these two lines. In China, there is an old saying that "All shall be well, Jack shall have Jill", which means the beloved will finally get married. Tujia ladies and gentlemen deserve their happiness. In this song, Tujia people's freedom of love is vividly conveyed.

The third part is a brief historical depiction of Tujia changes:

荒山野岭（呐）把身安

In desolate hills (na) we lived

哥儿活得像神仙（呐）

Led a happy life like gods (na)

皇帝老儿他管得宽

Emperor interfered too much

管得老子想发颠（呐）

I would be insane as such (na)

今儿个岔起（嘛）耍一天，哈格啦！

Take a break to have fun (ma) today, Ha ge za!

哥儿死了也心甘（呐）

Content to death in this way (na)

The first two lines "In desolate hills (na) we lived. Led a happy life like gods (na)." of this part indicate the historical fact that Enshi ancestors moved from the Central Plains region to the Wuling mountains area because of wars. They settled down in the desolate mountains, went through untold hardship and sufferings, overcame various difficulties and finally created a happy life. Evidently, compared with the chaotic Central Plains, the Tujia people prefer their life in the peaceful Wuling mountains. Next two lines "Emperor interfered too much. I would be insane as such (na)" originate from the historical fact of abolishing the Chieftain System. As the review in the section two, more than four hundred years ago, the bureaucratization of native officers was founded in Enshi, which means that the local chief in Tujia would be appointed by the central authorities rather than chosen by Tujia generations. Moreover, the appointed chief would be changeable again and again. In this case, the Tujia people who felt unfair revolted and fought for their previous rights and freedom. Within the lyrics, a series of historical events were potentially portrayed. In the last two lines "Take a break to have fun (ma) today, Ha ge za! Content to death in this way (na)", the composer depicts a cozy life of the Tujia people, suggesting that with the social development and progress, the Tujia people have been leading a better life than ever before.

To sum up, both "Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride" and "Ha Ge Za" are typical as Enshi ethnic ballads expressing the local people's positive and optimistic attitude toward life, singing for best wishes, happiness and harmony. Also, their cultural

connotations behind the lyrics are meaningful and profound. One of them is that the sense of oneness between heaven and humans, or the dictum that man is an integral part of nature is innately inherited. It is because of the Tujia people's pursuit for harmony among humans, nature and life that they compose unique Tujia folk songs which in return make the Tujia culture increasingly splendid and prosperous.

## 5. Conclusion

As analyzed above, Enshi ethnic ballads or folk songs are indispensable carriers of the Tujia culture, in which Tujia's history, life experience, people's values of love and aesthetic could be vividly conveyed. This paper translates the lyrics of two Tujia folk songs "Ten Sisters Stay with the Bride" and "Ha Ge Za" under the "Three Beauties Principle", finding that the Tujia people are adept at directly expressing wishes, emotions and feeling in the ballads. Furthermore, the interpretations of these two songs from cultural and historical perspectives show that the Tujia ethnics are oriented towards the harmony between humans and nature, which is inherited from generation to generation by singing Tujia ballads. This essay has striven to facilitate the better understanding of Tujia folk songs and local culture. However, in terms of strategies of translating folk ballads, there is room for improvement. Therefore, further analysis of strategies for interpreting Tujia ethnic ballads, especially critiques of existing translation methods are worth conducting. With more decent translation strategies under intercultural awareness and cognition, apart from the "Three Beauties Principle", can Tujia folk songs be interpreted better and be more likely to disseminate abroad.

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