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## DIVERSIFICATION OF THE FLOWER RITUAL AMONG THE ZHUANG PEOPLE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since the Shang dynasty (1600 B.C. – 1046 B.C.), The Zhuang people's ancestors, such as Xi'ou 西甌 and Luoyue 駱越 lived on the Yun-Gui Plateau and in the valleys of the West River, areas which the Chinese state had tried to defeat and civilize. The Chinese state expanded its territory in the south and southwest through military and "civilizing" projects. The civilizing project (Harrell 1995) is not the only plot of Chinese history; violence (Herman 2007) is also a major theme.

The Zhuang have a long history of rising against the Chinese hegemony, for example in the year 219 B.C., the Xi'ou people defeated the Qin troops' attacks and the fighting lasted for five years and in the year 33 AD the Li 俚 people stood against the Emperor Guangwu of the East Han dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Much later, Nong Zhigao's 儂智高 rebellion in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD forced the Song court to pacify this area. During the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties, the Cen 岑 family from present-day northern Vietnam arose in prominence and power and the Chinese court granted them a native chieftain (Ch.<sup>2</sup> *tusi* 土司) title. The native chieftain families often intermarried to each other, and from time to time, especially during the Ming dynasty, the Chinese courts were needed to pacify the brutal fights among the potential successors (Barlow 1989). After the Qianlong reign (1736-95), all the native sub-prefectures (Ch. *zhou* 州) and villages (Ch. *zai* 寨) of Zhen'an Native Prefecture (Ch. Zhen'an *tufu* 鎮安土府), located in the southwest part of modern Guangxi, were under the direct control of the Chinese state.

As the Chinese state expanded, some ethnic groups decided to be subject of the Chinese state and accepted Chinese education, but others chose to escape and avoided receiving any Chinese edification. Scott (2009:13-14) refers to the area inhabited by groups escaping to "Zomia", which describes "the great mountain realm on marches of mainland Southeast Asia, China, India and Bangladesh". In south and southwest China, the Miao and the Yao are two ethnic groups who tried to escape. In contrast, the Zhuang ancestors, especially the class of native chieftains, strategically decided to remain close to the Chinese state and culture. Nong Zhigao was badly defeated in the Kunlun Pass (Ch. Kunlun *guan* 崑崙關) in Guangxi and was, according to some sources, beheaded by the Dali king in the 1050s. After this, no native chieftain stood against the Chinese central courts any more. The Ming court also instituted a new policy further requesting the native chieftains to send their successors, mainly men, to study in the schools in the capitals Jingtian fu (Nanjing) and Beijing (Ch. *guozijian* 國子監). At the same time, some native chieftains established Confucian schools in native sub-prefectures or native counties (Ch. *xian* 縣). Finally, several native chieftains began inscribing genealogies into the cliffs or in steles using Chinese characters (Taniguchi & Bai Yaotian 1998).

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<sup>1</sup> Both Xi'ou and Li peoples in South China are identified as the Zhuang's ancestors.

<sup>2</sup> "Ch." stands for the Chinese *pinyin* transcription system.

This might be taken as evidence of a successful civilizing project undertaken by the Chinese state and a process in which the Zhuang people gradually comprehended Chinese language and culture and accepted its Confucian values. However, my analyses of ritual texts and performances in contemporary Zhuang society illustrate that the Zhuang have not accepted Chinese culture and values without question but instead used it as resources to keep Zhuang culture different from Chinese culture and as a means to interact with the Chinese state. They could not escape the administration of the Chinese state in daily life but the heavenly flower gardens in ritual provide the Zhuang with a place to escape from the state spiritually.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this article, I focus on three kinds of Zhuang ritual specialists in a specific area of the Yun-Gui Plateau, the De-Jing Plateau, including present-day Debao, Jingxi and Napo counties. People in this area were under the control of the Zhen'an Prefecture in the past and speak the same dialect. They share the concept of children as flowers and set up flower goddess tablets on their family altars. Female shamans (Zh.<sup>3</sup> *Mehmoed*; NT *määmot*) sing what kind of gifts wife-givers deliver to wife-takers when they visit the heavenly flower gardens in their spirit journeys. Male vernacular ritual practitioners (Zh. *Bousmo*; NT *puumoo*) chant a Zhuang script text regarding children's well-being in the Iang (Zh.) dialect. The text is about building flower bridges and making offerings to the flower goddess. Daoist priests (Zh. *Bousdaoh*; NT *puudao*) use Chinese texts and read in Southwest Mandarin on the same topics as *puumoo*'s texts. In other words, building flower bridges and making offerings to the flower goddess have both Zhuang and Chinese versions.

The four sections of this article illustrate the history of Zhuang-Han interaction through the variety of ritual texts and performances in both oral and literate forms and in Zhuang and Chinese languages and show the agency of the Zhuang people. The first section is a brief history of the interaction of the Zhuang people and the Chinese state. The second is an introduction to the three kinds of Zhuang ritual specialists in the De-Jing Plateau along with a description of the concepts of flower, the flower goddess and a series of rituals concerning children's well-being. The third section analyzes ritual texts transcribed from an oral performance and written texts used in ritual contexts. This demonstrates that in local Zhuang society, varied performances and texts can achieve the same ritual effect. The concluding section is a discussion on the meaning of the diversity in rituals among the Zhuang people in the context of continuous and intensive interaction with the Chinese state.

### BRIEF HISTORY OF ZHUANG-HAN INTERACTION IN THE DE-JING AREA

Debao, Jingxi and Napo counties or the De-Jing Plateau are located on the periphery of the Yun-Gui Plateau, along the Sino-Vietnamese borders. People in the region share the Karst geography, Iang dialect and Tai culture. The people in the three counties speak

<sup>3</sup> "Zh." in this article originally stood for the Debao and Jingxi Romanization system developed by Liao Hanbo (2010). Nevertheless, the Zhuang Romanization in this text was changed by the editor of TAI CULTURE for the purpose of understandability for other Tai groups and non-Tai readers. Zhuang can also be read and understood in this NEW TAI way of transcription. The first 3 examples are left in both.

Iang dialect, also known as “Central Tai dialect” (Li Fang-kui 1977) and mainly live near rivers in valley. With the exception of people in Napo county seat, where the population has spoken Southwest Mandarin since the 1950s as a common language, Iang dialect is more commonly used in most towns in this area. After the introduction of the American food plants such as corn and sweet potato to this area, which happened during the early Qing dynasty, some groups of Tai-speaking people immigrated to narrow valleys in which irrigation is inaccessible (Ho 1955). They settled down and got used to consuming corn instead of rice. The most recent wave of Chinese immigrants to the De-Jing Plateau, also during the Qing dynasty, could only settle down in more remote and mountainous areas. Today they remain in the minority and bear the local moniker: High Mountain Han Chinese (Ch. *gaoshanhan* 高山漢).

Not until the Qing dynasty did the Chinese state control the plateau, prior to which is a history of different local chieftains defeating and replacing one another and managing the valleys in the plateau on different scales. Prior to direct management, the Chinese state utilized two systems of ‘control’ in this area, the *jimi*<sup>4</sup> system and the *tusi* system. In northern Song dynasty, the area had been the base of Nong Zhigao’s rebellions. After Nong Zhigao was defeated, the Song court managed this area more carefully but never completely.

From the Southern Song to the Yuan dynasties, the influence of the Cen family, from Qiyuan 七源 Prefecture in present-day northern Vietnam, rose rapidly. In the third year of the Jingdin 景定 reign of the Southern Song period (1262), Cen Congyi 岑從毅 replaced the Nong family in Guihua 歸化 Prefecture (in present-day Napo) as the local power holders. In the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Zhiyuan 至元 reign of the Yuan dynasty (1288), Cen Congyi was promoted to Commander (Ch. *zongguan* 總管) of the Zhen’an 鎮安 Route<sup>5</sup> (Ch. *lu* 路) managing nine prefectures officially but in practice only Zhen’an 鎮安 Prefecture, in present day Napo (Bai Yaotain 2006:142-144). By the end of the Yuan dynasty, the native Chief Manager of Zhen’an Route was Cen Tianbao 岑天保. He occupied Dongzhou 凍州 in present day Debao, which had been managed by the Huang family during the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties. He moved its capital from Zhen’an (Napo) to Dongzhou. In addition, he occupied Ande Prefecture (Ch. Ande zhou 安德州 in present day Ande Township, Jingxi) and Guishun Prefecture (Ch. Guishun zhou 歸順州 in the middle and south of present day Jingxi and Xialie townships, Daxin) (ibid:150-152).

During the Ming dynasty, the native Cen Tianbao’s descendants managed this area and fought each other. One example was when Cen Yongsou 岑永壽, Cen Tianbao’s grandson, assigned Cen Yuanqi 岑元氣, the second son of his concubine, to succeed his position as a native prefect (Ch. *Tuzhizhou* 土知州). This decision upset Cen Zude 岑祖德, the first son of his concubine. As a result, Cen Zude asked Nong Shibing 農氏兵 in Guangnan 廣南, in present day Yunnan, to kill Cen Yuanqi and his son. The Ming court became involved in the case and Cen Zude escaped to Zhen’an Valley (Taniguchi &

<sup>4</sup> The empire-wide *jimi* policy began in the Tang dynasty. The term *jimi* can be found in Sima Qian’s *Shiji*, wherein *ji* means “horse halter” and *mi* refers to the rope to tie a cow. In the Lingnan region, the policy was largely applied in western Guangxi where people were less sinicized. The influence of the policy was limited, and powerful tribal leaders still succeeded in developing their power and causing harm to the Chinese state.

<sup>5</sup> The Route was, in effect, an all-purpose civil administration branch of the central government. It supervised 100,000 residents (Hucker 1996:322, 531).

Bao Yaotian 1998:300). Another case was that Lady Wa's 瓦氏夫人 father, Cen Zhang 岑璋, helped the Ming court kill his son-in-law, Cen Meng 岑猛 of Tianzhou 田州. In return, Cen Meng's son, Cen Xian 岑獻, with the assistance of his father-in-law, Lu Su 盧蘇, the *tumu* of Tianzhou, dug tombs of Cen Zhenbao's 岑珍寶 parents in Zhen'an (Jingxi Xianzhi 2000:13). One last example was that in 1627, the native chieftain, Cen Jixiang 岑吉祥 of Zhen'an and Mo Jingkuan 莫敬寬 in Cao Bang, Annam, in present day northern Vietnam, attacked the capital of Guishun sub-prefecture and killed the native chieftain, Cen Dalun in Ma'ai 馬隘 (present-day Ma'ai township, Debao) (ibid.).

Barlow (1989) points out that wars among native chieftains in the Ming dynasty very frequently resulted from conflicts in the rules of succession between Han Chinese and Zhuang people. The Ming court adopted the Chinese rule. It very clearly distinguished the son of the first wife from the sons of concubines and patrilineal succession was the ideal and only legitimate means of successive rule. In contrast, the Zhuang people regard both maternal and paternal relatives as important. Barlow does not discuss this issue in further detail but it is a key point. In the following sections of this article I will show the significant role of maternal parents in ritual contexts to further explore this issue.

Meanwhile, the state's civilizing project had been carried out while fighting occurred. First, the Ming emperor required native chieftain's successors be sent to the capital to receive Chinese education; otherwise, they were not eligible to inherit the position. In addition, the central court asked every native chieftain to provide genealogical diagrams as a means to confirm the status of the successor. As a result, the native chieftain families began to compile Chinese genealogies. Second, the Chinese emperors ordered the establishment of Confucian Schools in regions governed by native chieftains. At the time, some native chieftains began aggressively building Confucian Schools in their domains. Cen Ying 岑瑛 in Si'en Native Prefecture (Ch. Si'en *tufu* 思恩土府 in present-day northern Wuming county, Guangxi) was the first native chieftain to request to establish such school (Zhang Jianghua 2005a:11). An official school in the De-Jing Plateau was established in 1668 in Zhen'an Prefecture (ibid:21). The Ming and Qing governments encouraged native chieftains to participate in the imperial examination. This was a way they could obtain prestige and maintain their status; consequently, native chieftains prohibited the local ordinary people or *tuming* 土民 from receiving Chinese education and competing with them. Native chieftains forbade their subjects from attending examinations, however, the restriction did not remain effective. Several kinds of Chinese texts such as genealogies, ritual texts, legal documents and tomb inscriptions, have been found dating back to middle Qing dynasty. This implies that there must have been some men mastering Chinese literacy in local society no later than the mid-Qing. Both Daoist priests and local officials were able to read and write Chinese to carry out their job. Eventually in the late Qing, the local ordinary people, mainly men, were given the opportunity to study Chinese.

Over the hundreds of years of civilizing projects and military action, the native chieftains were eventually replaced by officials assigned by the Chinese court. The policy of replacing native chieftains is called *gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流. Zhen'an Prefecture was the last native prefecture in Guangxi in which the court carried out this policy. It was in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng reign (1729). Guishun sub-prefecture underwent *gaitu*

*guiliu* in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng reign (1731) and the Xiaozhen'an 小鎮安 and Hurun Village (Ch. Hurun *zai* 湖潤寨) were under direct control of the court no later than Qianlong's reign (1736-1795) (Taniguchi & Bai Yaotian 1998:670). From this point on, the central court administered the peripheral area in terms of economics and local governance. From a statecraft perspective, we see the aboriginals of the De-Jing Plateau, in the past, passively became subjects of the Chinese state and thus subjects of the PRC government in the present. However, if we observe the social life and ritual practice of this population, we find that the Zhuang have faced and interacted with the main stream culture without giving up local values. In the next section, I describe how three kinds of Zhuang ritual specialists, the concept of children as flowers and a series of rituals concerning children well-being displays the local values.

### GARDENS, BRIDGES AND GODDESS IN FLOWER-RITUALS ZHUANG RITUAL SPECIALISTS

There are three kinds of ritual specialists active in the De-Jing Plateau: Daoist priests, male vernacular ritual practitioners and female shamans. The three Zhuang terms tell the sex of the ritual specialists. The prefix “puu” of *puudao* and *puumoo* refers to male and “mää” in *määmot* refers to a female person. Most shamans in the De-Jing Plateau are women but some of them are men. I have only ever heard of one woman who intended to be a Daoist priest.<sup>6</sup>

The ritual performances among the three ritual specialists vary greatly. *Puudao* use Chinese texts and perform rituals in Southwest Mandarin. *Puumoo* use Zhuang texts and chant them in Iang. In contrast to the two male ritual specialists, *määmot* do not use any texts but rely on assistance of their deceased ritual masters (Zh. *paa*) and spirit soldiers with horses. They perform their rituals sung in local dialect, Iang. If the spirits they communicate with speak other languages, they also speak those languages in ritual. In the present, there are fewer and fewer male vernacular ritual practitioners but Daoist priests and shamans are very popular and active in the De-Jing Plateau. Most Daoist priests can carry out the rituals that were done by male vernacular ritual practitioners in the past because, with their knowledge of Chinese, Daoist priests can also master the square Zhuang scripts very quickly.

Each ritual specialist has his or her specialty. In Xu Xiaoming's collection of Daoist texts, many of them are used to save the dead from hell (Xu Xiaoming 2004). In contrast to the focus of Daoist texts on dealing with the dead, the collection of male vernacular ritual specialists' Zhuang texts shows that they carry out rituals for the living. Finally, *määmot* are mediums between the living and their ancestors, gods and goddesses, and can communicate with the spirits of people who died an unnatural or violent death, such as a car accident or suicide. In addition, shamans are able to deliver a fermented wine to ancestors, deceased ritual masters, and village gods and goddesses.

The three kinds of ritual specialists conduct minor rituals independently but cooperate with each other in major rituals. In general, rites of life passage are minor rituals; people

<sup>6</sup> Personal communication from Xu Xiaoming on August 2, 2010. *Puudao* Xu Zhongbo in Bujing 布鏡 Village, Xinjia 新甲, Jingxi, told me that a lady from Tiandong came to ask to learn to be a Daoist priest. Xu refused her because he thought it inconsistent with other male members of his Daoist group if he took her as an apprentice.

normally invite a single ritual specialist except for funerals. People invite any of the three kinds of ritual specialist to conduct rites regarding childbirth and child growth. I participated in a funeral conducted by Daoist priests and female shamans for the death of a Daoist priest's wife. I also heard of another funeral that was conducted by three kinds of ritual specialists. People explained to me that different ritual specialists respond to different spirits and satisfy their specific audience with different languages. The offering ritual (Ch. *jiao* 醮) in a village temple is a major ritual and, ideally, needs all three kinds of ritual specialists if the budget and situation permits (Wilkerson 2007). The ritual of entering a new temple and setting up a tablet of a god or goddess also requires either two or three kinds of ritual specialists.

Ritual specialists are born into ancestral master's families; therefore, they enjoy prestige in local Zhuang society. Additionally, all three kinds of ritual specialists have many fictive children in their society. In other words, their networks are much more extensive than that of ordinary people. My own investigations in the De-Jing Plateau, and reflected in the experience of other researchers in Zhuang areas, demonstrate that Daoist priests often are also teachers or officers in government (eg. Xu Xiaoming 2004:3, Zhang Jianghua 2005b:4). Teachers and officers are a group of people who have skills in reading and writing Chinese. This ability is also crucial to the practice of Daoist rituals. In contrast, shamans do not read and write Chinese, they communicate with unseen spirits in ritual and require audiences to respond to the spirits. However, their rituals always attract more community audiences than the other two (dominantly male) ritual specialists do. In shaman's rituals, they are the center of the community.

## FLOWER-RITUALS

In southern China, many ethnic groups believe that children are flowers in heavenly flower gardens. Chinese scholars have named the areas in which people practice rituals related to this concept as "the flower cultural sphere" (Ch. *huawenhua quan* 花文化圈) (Guo Wei 2000:170-196). I call the practices "flower-rituals" (Kao Ya-ning 2009). This term refers to a series of rituals based on the concept of children, both born and unborn, being flowers in heavenly flower gardens protected by flower goddesses. Zhuang people believe that children's souls come from these heavenly flower gardens – silver or red flowers symbolize girls and golden or white flowers symbolize boys. The rituals regarding childbirth and child growth are carried out at different stages of life by ritual specialists.

The further examination of "the flower cultural sphere" in the context of ritual performance will improve our understanding of the interaction among the ethnic groups in southern China. Since the idea of "the flower cultural sphere" had been proposed, investigations have only offered a preliminary comparison by utilizing limited materials. I suggest that exploration of how different ethnic groups in southern China practice rituals related to the concept will help us to clarify the differences and comprehend interactions among the ethnic groups. Because of the limitation of studies and fragmentary materials about the concept among other groups, in this section, I review previous studies related to flower-rituals in Zhuang areas. In this article, I propose a comparative study on a single group in a specific area in preparation for further comparison among different groups.

A series of rituals regarding childbirth and child growth are carried out at different stages of life in order to secure a child's well-being (Gao Yaning 2002, 2005, Xu Xiaoming 2010, Guo Lixin 2008, Pan Yanqing 2004, Pan Shaoyuan 2000, Holm 1994).

According to my investigation, until the late 1990s, women in some remote villages in the De-Jing Plateau still carried out delayed transfer marriage. This means that after the wedding ceremony, the bride does not immediately move in and settle down in the groom's parents' house. She is only allowed to move to her husband's place after she is pregnant. Although the practice of delayed transfer marriage is not commonly practiced at present, the rite of Making a Flower Bridge (Zh. *haetgiuz*), which insures the success of childbirth, is broadly conducted in this area. In the fifth or seventh month of pregnancy, the woman's natal family prepares and delivers an incense burner of the flower goddess to the husband's family altar for the rite. The flower bridge connects the heavenly flower gardens to a house, and links a woman's natal family to her husband's. The flower-souls travel from the flower gardens across the bridge to the mother's womb. After childbirth, a series of flower-rituals are carried out by a ritual specialist to ensure the well-being of the child. The most general rite is a Setting Flowers rite, carried out when the child is three or five years old, to ensure the child grows healthily.

Other flower-rituals are carried out to ensure that young people are successful in finding a spouse and having children. When a young man or woman reaches marrying age, his or her parents may carry out a Blooming Flowers (Zh. *kayva*) rite to ensure that he or she can find a spouse smoothly. If a married couple is infertile, the family normally conducts a Requesting Flowers (Zh. *gyauzva*) rite to ask spirits to offer them a child. The spirits might be ancestors, the earth god, the dragon king, Guanyin, the flower goddess, or ancestral masters (Zh. *zojslay*). If a child is born after the Requesting Flowers (Zh. *gyauzva*) rite has been performed the family has to carry out another ritual - Returning Flowers for Redemption of Vows (Zh. *boizva* NT. *pooi waa*) rite.

Flower-rituals are also carried out in other Zhuang areas in Guangxi. In Daxin County, Daoist priests carry out the Making a Bridge and Receiving a Flower (Ch. *Jinghuajiaqiao* 迎花架橋) rite on the wedding day or before the child's first birthday. The bride's parents prepare and carry two paper flowers and other required materials for making a bridge to the groom's house. Daoist priests will bury a bamboo bridge in front of the front gate of the groom's house and set up the incense burner of the flower goddess on the groom's family altar (Xu Xiaoming 2010). Budai (Phuutai) people in Longzhou County invite Buddhist priests (Ch. *fogong* 佛公) to conduct the Making a Bridge rite for a pregnant woman in her husband's house. After the rite, the woman can settle in her husband's house and will be lead to the place of his ancestors after death (Pan Yanqing 2004). In Shanglin county, the Zhuang people carry out the rites of Requesting for Flowers (Ch. *giuhua* 求花), Settling the Flowers (Ch. *anhua* 安花) and the Redemption of Vows to Rowang (Ch. *huan* Powang 還婆王) (Holm 1994). In the rite of Redemption of Vows to Powang, the ritual practitioners have to perform the dance of Powang (Holm 1994). In Longji of Longsheng County, when women are in their seventh or eighth month of pregnancy, the ritual practitioners (Ch. *shigong* 師公) make a bridge in front of the house which the child will belong to, either the child's father's or mother's household. The rite is also called Making a Flower Bridge. On the third day after childbirth or later, ritual practitioners conduct another ritual called



Setting a Flower Tube (Ch. *anhuatong* 安花筒) in the room where the child sleeps in order to help him or her to overcome obstacles (Ch. *guo guan* 過關) and expel all bad luck (Guo Lixin 2008). In Liuzhou, ritual practitioners perform a Leaving Flower Gardens (Ch. *chuhuayuan* 出花園) rite for a new couple during the wedding in order to lead the couple to pass obstacles, to resolve all bad karma made before marriage, and to pray for early childbirth. If a woman always miscarries, ritual practitioners conduct a Planting Flowers in Seven Wells and Five Directions rite (Ch. *qijingwufangzhonghua* 七井五方種花) to assure a successful birth (Pan Shaoyuan 2000).

Every woman has a spirit to protect her children known as *yahva* NT. *jaa waa* or “flower goddess”. This goddess has a tablet and incense burner set up on the family altar. *jaa* refers to ‘grandmother’ and *waa* is the Chinese loan word of *hua* 花 meaning ‘flower’. In the De-Jing Plateau, every family altar is located in the middle of the house and tablets of the gods, goddess and ancestors are written in Chinese. The tablet of the spirit protecting children is written in Chinese as 花王聖母之神位 and stands on the right-hand-side of the altar with its incense burner. Flower paper-cuttings are stuck on the wall beside the altar where flower bridges are also hung. The flower goddess has no specific statue on the family altar but when conducting household rituals for her, a skirt of paper-cuttings is always prepared. In general, ritual practitioners in Guangxi understand the goddess protecting children as a trinity image including the goddesses of the Upper, Middle and Lower Towers or *shangluo* 上樓, *zhongluo* 中樓 and *xialuo* 下樓 (Holm 1994:887). In Shanglin, the ritual practitioner’s mask of the goddess of childbirth and children, or Powang 婆王, is an old lady’s image and her tablet is written in Chinese characters as *Shanggong hunyuan jingping taibo Powang* 上宮混元金平太白婆王 (ibid:886). In Wuming, people identify the flower goddess’s name is Huang Qiong 黃瓊 from the Later Tang period (ibid:888). In Liuzhou, the ritual practitioner’s Powang is Wu Zetian 武則天, the empress of the Tang dynasty and her full name is *Nantang liuguo jiuzhou quanzun shengmu wansui powang* 南唐六國九洲全尊聖母萬歲婆王 (Pan Shaoyuan 2000). In Longji, ritual practitioners invite pairs of gods and goddesses to attend the Setting up a Flower Tube rite, including the paired spirits of “expediting childbirth and childhood”, and the paired spirits of “setting given name and last name”, etc. (Guo Lixin 2008:185, n.30). Among four ritual paintings collected from male vernacular ritual specialists (Ch. *mogong* 麼公) is one from Baise, Guangxi. In this painting, the flower goddess, surrounded by a group of women, sits in the third line among the four lines of gods (Liang Xingyun 2004).

The flower goddess not only has her own tablet in each household, but also in the temple. Local gazetteers record that the present day Zhuang areas such as Yishan 宜山, Shanglin 上林, Sanjiang 三江, Laibin 來賓, Wuxuan 武宣 in Guangxi all have temples dedicated to the flower goddess (Xu Xiaoming 2004:68-69). In Shangying 上映 market town, Tiandeng 天等, a temple of the flower goddess was constructed inside a cavern and people make offerings to the goddess on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month (ibid:67-68). In Jingxi County, the temple of the flower goddess was first constructed outside the East Gate of the sub-prefecture town during the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820) of the Qing dynasty. It was built by local elites and the prefect (Ch. *zhizhou* 知州). Li Xianqiao 李憲喬 wrote an article which was inscribed in a stele to commemorate the construction of the temple of the flower goddess (*Guishun zhilizhou zhi* 1968 [1848]). The article illustrates how a Han official legitimized the local belief in



the unknown non-Han goddess. Li Xianqiao could not find any literature on the flower goddess so he took a story of the Song Emperor, Taizu, and his favorite Lady Flower 花蕊夫人 as an example. The emperor had constructed a temple to commemorate the lady's late husband, because the lady tricked him by saying that the tablet in her room was the tablet of Zhang Xian 張仙, a god who sends children. Li took this example to imply that even the emperor was fooled by the lady; it was understandable he was fooled by his people in Guishun and this peripheral area deserved a temple of the flower goddess.

## RITUAL TEXTS AND PERFORMANCES

In a review of the literature on flower-rituals in Zhuang areas, it is obvious that all different ritual specialists carry out flower-rituals in one way or another. However, we do not know of the connection between ritual texts and ritual performances and the ritual practice, and between the ritual practices and daily life. Nor are we familiar with the differences among the rituals carried out by different ritual specialists. In this section, I will describe the three kinds of texts used by ritual specialists in the context of ritual performances and discuss the connections between the texts and the performances.

The three kinds of ritual specialists in the De-Jing Plateau are able to carry out flower-rituals, but their rituals have different emphases and varied performances. Both *määmot* and *puudao*'s rituals involve flower gardens in heaven but only the *määmot*'s chanting on thirty-six heavenly flower gardens demonstrate and emphasis on kin relations. Also in contrast, the *puudao*'s five flower gardens are related to the Daoist cosmology. Both *puumoo* and *puudao* are able to build a flower bridge, but they perform the rituals differently. The *puumoo* carries out a journey to visit the flower goddess in order to fix a bridge by reading Zhuang texts in the local dialect. In contrast, the *puudao* invites the flower goddess and numerous other gods and goddesses to build a bridge through reading Chinese texts.

### *määmot*'S FLOWER GARDENS

A Returning Flower for Redemption for Vows and Blooming a Flower (Ch. *huanhua kaihua* 還花開花) rite was carried out for the Huang family in 1999 in Guishu 貴水 Village, Jingxi, by *määmot* Mother Bei, in order to cure a pain the household head, Father Ge, was experiencing in his hand.<sup>7</sup> Mother Bei judged that Father Ge had not carried out any ritual to appreciate the spirit that had delivered him to the world. The neglect upset the village god and caused his hand problem to worsen. In addition, his first son was already of marriage age. Thus, the ritual that was carried also prayed that the son's search for an appropriate spouse would go smoothly.

The ritual continued over about six hours and involved a long spirit journey as the *määmot* travelled, not by foot but through song, before entering the heavenly flower gardens in the sky. Although entering the heavenly flower gardens was the main purpose, the *määmot* had to follow a standard route. The heavenly flower gardens are

<sup>7</sup> I recorded this ritual and Ms. Zheng Shuzhen, who was a secretary of the office of ethnic languages, transcribed and translated the ritual. The complete text is in Appendix 7 of my book (Gao Yaning 2002). The line numbers in this article refer to those in the appendix of my book.

located in the later part of the standard spirit journey. In general, once the *määmot* reaches the heavenly flower gardens there are thirty-six that she visits.

This text demonstrates several characteristics of oral performance. There are 145 lines, and most of them are five or seven syllables per line. First, the chanting related to entering the heavenly flower gardens has beautiful parallelism. Second, the rhyming pattern is an end-waist rhyming pattern (Ch. *jiaoyaoyun* 腳腰韻) (Huang Yongsha 1987) and this pattern has been frequently used in oral performance among Tai-speaking people. Third, the last or last few syllables are particles. Fourth, there are numerous repetitive words and phrases for memory purpose. Finally, and the most important characteristic is the framework of the thirty-six heavenly flower gardens, is a formulae to help *määmot* to recall and organize lyrics.

The parallelism is often composed of Zhuang and Han terms and the usage of Chinese loan words or phrases demonstrates the long history of interaction between Zhuang and Han has an influence in oral performance. The parallelism utilized among Austronesian peoples and identified as ancestor's speech in Southeast Asia is well discussed by James Fox (1988). Fox (1989) examines parallelism in Rotinese ritual speech, which is the way Rotinese ancestors speak. He further finds that after Rotinese came into contact with the colonials, they started to use loan words in their ritual performances. The religious songs of Zhuang shamans also use many Zhuang and Han terms as a pair. One case is two terms for the flower gardens: one is *suen va* and another is *suen nok*. *Va* of the previous term is a Chinese loan term *hua* 花 and *nok* of the later word is Zhuang term<sup>[ed.]</sup>. *Suan* is a Zhuang term referring to all kinds of gardens. In addition, the names of spirits of guarding the flower gardens are terms of Zhuang-Han combination. They are *gywnq guq*, *muq vangz*, *muq nlyangz*, *meh noux*. Take *muq vangz* as example, *muq* is Zhuang kinship terms used to for the parents' elder brother's wife and parents' elder female siblings; *vangz* is a Chinese term, *huang* 皇. Several terms are related to prayers for children such as *giz laenz* (Ch. *gilin* 麒麟) and *gvang ying* (Ch. *guanyin* 觀音). In Chinese culture, the *gizlaenz* is a mystic animal that sends children, and *guanyin* is a goddess who sends and protects children. Zhuang and Han terms are always used for making paired sentences. Take lines 71 and 72 as an example.

[ZHUANG is the official romanization; NT is TAI CULTURE system]

	<i>khau</i>	<i>lau</i>	<i>täu</i>	<i>kii</i>	<i>siin</i>	[NT]
	kaeuj	laeuj	daeuj	gij	cien	[Zhuang]
	<b>Rice (T)</b>	<b>wine (T)</b>	<b>arrive</b>	<b>several</b>	<b>thousand</b>	
71	Offer several thousands of rice and wine					
	<i>ngön</i> (T)	<i>chen</i>	<i>täu</i>	<i>kii</i>	<i>faan</i>	[NT]
	ngaenz	zenz	daeuj	gij	fanh	[Zhuang]
	<b>Silver</b>	<b>money</b>	<b>arrive</b>	<b>several</b>	<b>ten thousand</b>	
72	Offer ten thousands money					

Two offerings, rice (*kaeuj*) and wine (*laeuj*) in first line are Zhuang terms but money (*ngaenz zenz*) in the second line is a Chinese loan word. The loan word has been used in daily life for a long time.

[ed.] *mook* in Shan; *dook* in Lao

Some couplets are made up of Zhuang and Chinese loan terms but kinship terms for maternal parents and collective terms for maternal relatives remain in Zhuang terms. The lines 35 to 38 display these terms.

- |    |  |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|------------------|
|    | <i>paang</i><br>baengh<br><b>side</b>                                    | <i>lang</i><br>laeng<br><b>back</b>  | <i>taap</i><br>tap<br><b>carry</b> | <i>kwa</i><br>gvaq<br><b>cross</b> | <i>naa</i><br>naz<br><b>paddy field</b> | [NT]<br>[Zhuang] |
| 35 | Mother's patrilineal relatives are carrying gifts crossing paddy fields. |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|    |  |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|    | <i>taai</i><br>daiq<br><b>MM</b>   | <i>taa</i><br>daq<br><b>MF</b>       | <i>naa</i><br>na<br><b>carry</b>   | <i>kwa</i><br>gvaq<br><b>cross</b> | <i>tong</i><br>dongh<br><b>valley</b>   | [NT]<br>[Zhuang] |
| 36 | Mother's parents are carrying gifts crossing valleys.                    |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|    |  |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|    | <i>paang</i><br>baengh<br><b>side</b>                                    | <i>lang</i><br>laeng<br><b>back</b>  | <i>le</i><br>lej<br><b>PRT.</b>    | <i>ook</i><br>ok<br><b>go out</b>  | <i>kai</i><br>gaeq<br><b>chicken</b>    | [NT]<br>[Zhuang] |
| 37 | Mother's patrilineal relatives offer chicken.                            |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|    |  |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |
|    | <i>paang</i><br>baengh<br><b>side</b>                                    | <i>lai</i><br>laeq<br><b>unknown</b> | <i>le</i><br>lej<br><b>PRT.</b>    | <i>ook</i><br>ok<br><b>go out</b>  | <i>phaang</i><br>paeng<br><b>cloth</b>  | [NT]<br>[Zhuang] |
| 38 | Mother's patrilineal relatives offer cloth.                              |                                      |                                    |                                    |   |                  |

The four lines describe vividly that different categories of relatives have prepared and are carrying different items to walk cross paddy fields and valleys to participate in the ritual.

The chanting of the thirty-six heavenly flower gardens is pragmatic and claims the value of children's maternal relatives in contributing to the children's well-being. The chanting told what Mother Bei had seen, what kind of gift children's maternal relatives had carried, the amount of the gifts and what the deceased ritual masters, and *määmot* had done to fix the bridge. Father Ge's mother's younger brother's wife and four boys' maternal grandmother did carry gifts to attend the ritual. Only after the gifts had been prepared and such offerings had been delivered could the ritual achieve its effect through speech; a flower bridge was constructed and maintained, flower gardens were fixed, the obstacles had been sent off and the children, or flowers, had been delivered.

## MALE RITUAL PRACTITIONER'S FLOWER BRIDGE

I collected one ritual text written by Yang Zhenyi 楊真意 in square Zhuang scripts in 2010 in Nonggong Village, Ludong Township, Jingxi, Guangxi. The text is written in ink brush from up to down in *xuan* 宣 paper and bonded on its right side. Yang Zhenyi's text was re-compiled in the year of Yichou 己丑 (2009) after his original copy was damaged. I recorded a ritual named "Overcoming Obstacles and Fixing a Bridge" (Ch. *jiéguan buqiao* 解關補橋) carried out by Yang Zhengyi and during the ritual he read three sections of his own text. In this section, I will focus on discussing the text and the ritual, and analyze the concept of a flower bridge.

The text Yang Zhenyi used in the Fixing Children's Bridge Rite includes several items (Ch. *ke* 科) for carrying out different rites of passage of the Zhuang people. The item of

the Children's Bridge is used for a woman in her fifth or seventh month of pregnancy and is conducted to construct a bridge for children passing from the other world into this world. For those children who are over three years old, ritual specialists will read the item of Giving Thanks to the Flower Goddess in order to appreciate the flower goddess for her protection. The item of Horses Meeting in a Bridge is used to reconcile the relationship between a couple who fight in order to prevent divorce or death. The item of Old People's Bridge is used for people over the age of 49 and helps them to leave this world smoothly to another world. The item of Separating Siblings' Bridge is used in the situation that one of siblings has passed away and ritual specialists need to build a new bridge for the remaining siblings.

Yang Zhengyi carried out the rite of Overcoming Obstacles and Fixing a Bridge for a two-month-old girl and her twelve-year-old brother in Yang family in Pingjiang Village. The children's maternal grandmother and grandmother's sister-in-law carried gifts to attend the ritual. In local kinship classification, both the old ladies are the children's *daiq* (Zh. maternal grandmother). The gifts included golden and silver paper for making a paper-cutting bridge and glutinous rice for fixing the bridge. Because the girl is more than ten years younger than her brother, the bridge that was made for him was built more than ten years earlier and needed to be repaired. In addition, the ritual was thought also to overcome obstacles the siblings run into depending on which eight characters (Ch. *bazi* 八字) the siblings have. The eight characters are based on the time, the day, the month and the year of birth. It was a three hour ritual and Yang Zhengyi used three texts: two in Chinese characters and one in Zhuang script. Yang Zhenyi used the Chinese texts and read them in southwest Mandarin for carrying out the section on Overcoming Obstacles. When he conducted the part of the ritual that was for fixing the bridge and making offerings to the flower goddess, he began to use the Zhuang text and read it in local dialect, *iang*.

The procedure of the ritual shows the high amount of hybridity between Zhuang and Chinese in the Zhuang ritual context. At the beginning of the ritual, the ritual practitioner used secret magic (Ch. *mifa* 祕法) with his mind in order to invite gods, goddesses and ancestors. In the section of singing the item of Overcoming Obstacles, he used Southwest Mandarin and he also burned a document written in Chinese to report the purpose of the ritual to gods and goddesses. The section for inviting gods and goddesses includes the flower goddess and other varied goddesses who protect children. The children's father was the ritual assistant in this ritual. The ritual practitioner guided him to complete several procedures including purifying the ritual space, pouring wine, burning incense sticks, making offerings, untying knots (Ch. *jiejie* 解結) and sending off *maolang* (Ch. 茅郎).<sup>8</sup>

In the middle section of the ritual, Yang Zhenyi started to report the aim of today's ritual in local dialect. Then he read the item of Children's Bridge from his text for about nine minutes. After that, he reported to the spirits of the head of the bridge, the end of the bridge, and to ancestors of the Yang family and the children's maternal relatives about what kind of offerings had been prepared. He asked the children's father to take the paper-cutting bridge from a table below the family altar and, with a block of wood (Ch. *lingmu* 令木) presenting his power, drew talisman magic (Ch. *fufa* 符法) at the head and at the foot of the bridge. After that, the children's father placed the bridge next

<sup>8</sup> A *maolang* is an orphan spirit who carries back luck. The "sending off" of *maolang* means sending them to Yangzhou 楊州, a rich place where they will chose to stay.

to the tablet of the flower goddess on the right side of the family altar. The following section of the ritual was to make offerings to the flower goddess. To begin, Yang Zhenyi used secret magic in his mind and then he read the item of Making Offerings to the Flower Goddess in local dialect. After that the children's father poured wine into the cup for the goddess. At the same time, the ritual practitioners started to report the different offering items including a pair of red paper-cutting clothes, paper-cutting buffalos, goats, and roosters, paper-cutting bracelets and bricks. Meanwhile the children's father burned all the paper-cuttings. After completing burning the items, Yang Zhenyi used secret magic in his mind in order to send the flower goddess back home. The last part of the ritual performed in Zhuang dialect is offering sacrifices. The concluding part of the entire ritual is to sending all gods and goddesses back their places using Southwest Mandarin.

The item of Children's Bridge (CB) regards several themes: sickness, offerings, fixing a bridge, prayers. This item emphasizes that offerings are used to fix a bridge. At the beginning, the ritual specialist reports to the gods and goddesses that the ritual is carried out for a sick person and the household prepares all kinds of offerings. Next is the inviting of the flower goddess to look at the bridge more carefully and ask the ritual masters to fix the bridge. The offerings prepared for building a children's bridge including cloth, money and sacrifices. The cloth is a must for building a bridge. After the offering items have been reported, prayers are given for the children's good look, good luck, health, wisdom and long life.

The item of Making Offerings to the Flower Goddess (MOFG) describes a ritual practitioner's journey to the flower goddess. It starts by inviting ritual masters and spirit generals and soldiers, and then consists of reporting all kinds of offerings, traveling from a household through the world of human beings to the heaven of spirits in which they fix a bridge, and finally prayers for healthy flowers and children's well-being. The journey of the vernacular ritual practitioner is described in the text very vividly and comprehensively. At the beginning, he invites the holy mother (Ch. *shengmu* 聖母), ritual masters, spirit generals and soldiers. Then he leaves a house by stepping down the ladder, and then he crosses the village spirits, passes the spring and the fields where people are herding cattle, buffalos, chicken and ducks. The ritual practitioner then travels to the place of Longwa 龍花 and Xifu 西府. There, three kinds of plants grow. People are preordained by fate to meet with these plants and become infertile if their souls come into contact with them. As the journey continues, the vernacular ritual practitioner arrives at the spirits of mountain, water and rock. Before he reaches the sky, he passes the ancestors' graves. In the sky, the moon goddess asks for clothes. He eventually travels to a bridge. In this place, spirits may trick the practitioner and give an unproductive plant and a poor quality flower which blooms in the end of the blooming season. The duty of the ritual practitioner is to fix the bridge with steel pillars and to insure the bridge is flat and stable. In addition, he has to overcome obstacles of three *xing* and six *hai* (Ch. *sanxingliuhai* 三刑六害), two dogs, and poor quality flowers. Finally, he prays to the flower goddess to deliver good quality flowers. He reports the items that have been offered including a chicken, a duck, beef, mutton, ear rings, bracelets, clothes, bricks, tiles and delicious dishes such as Dongpo (Ch. 東坡) and meat balls.

In the two items, the few sentences that contain kinship terms use the Zhuang terms, not Chinese loan words. One is the children's patrilineal relatives (Zh. *Baenghna* NT *pang naa*) and matrilineal relatives (Zh. *Baenghlaeng* NT *pang lang*) (CB: 47). They make offerings and hope that the relatives of each side will be happy. The other term is for maternal grandparents (Zh. *daiqdaq*). They have to receive children's souls (CB: 50).

### Short Excursion about Zhuang Script

Both ritual performance and ritual texts illustrate a high level of Zhuang and Han hybridity. From the framework of ritual performance, we see that Chinese ritual and language are used at the beginning and at the end while Zhuang script and language are used in the middle. From the creation of the ritual text, we also see the combination of Zhuang and Han scripts. First, the Zhuang scripts are based on Chinese characters. For example, the script [那 + 田] that means "paddy field", whose Zhuang pronunciation is *naa*, has the top Chinese particle 那 (*na* is a pronoun) representing Zhuang pronunciation and the bottom Chinese particle 田 (*tian* means field) representing the word's meaning. The method of creating the Zhuang script is much more complex than the example I just showed. The key point is that Zhuang people did not use Chinese characters passively but used their creativity. Second, various terms contain one Zhuang script and one Chinese character. In general, the Chinese characters are Chinese loan words. In page 11-1, line 99, the script [米 + 叩]花 is pronounced as *khau*, whereas *khau* is Zhuang script meaning rice and 花 (*hua*) is a Chinese character meaning flower. The term refers to rice flower. Thirdly, several terms or scripts refer to the same thing. There are three different writings referring to the flower goddess. The first term 聖母 is completely comprised of Chinese words, the second [女 + 下 + 花] is half Zhuang and half Chinese, and the last [女 + 下 + 艸 + 泉] is completely coined in Zhuang script. The different expressions are used to create a script couplet, combining a Chinese character with a Zhuang character. The following is from p.19 of Yang Zhenyi's text:

<i>rau</i>	<i>khün</i>	<i>paak</i>	<i>jaa</i>	<i>waa</i>	[NT]	<i>rau</i>	<i>khün</i>	<i>khaa</i>	<i>jaa</i>	<i>dook</i>
	ascent	mouth	grandma	flower			ascent	foot	grandma	flower
<i>I ascent to the door of the flower goddess</i>						<i>I ascent to the road of the flower goddess</i>				

The Zhuang text does not emphasize a connection between the offerings and children's maternal kin and does not describe any heavenly flower gardens but instead a journey to the flower goddess. In ritual practice, children's maternal grandmother and grandmother's sister-in-law did carry offerings in order to fix the bridge. The item of the Children's Bridge only makes one reference that children's maternal grandparents are to receive children's souls. In contrast, in a *määmot*'s ritual singing, they join the *määmot*'s spirit journey and carry those offerings for building a bridge across valleys. In the item of Making Offerings to the Flower Goddess, we see a spirit journey. The journey is very vivid and takes place in proper geographic succession but the journey is not completed because it is only one way. In the *määmot*'s journey, a *määmot*, her spirit soldiers and horses and ritual participants have to return from the sky but the text just shows the way to ascend to the flower goddess without a description of the descent back to the earth.

## DAOIST VERSION OF BUILDING A BRIDGE

*Puudao* Xu Zhengao's 許真高 Chinese text used for flower-rituals illustrates that the Chinese version of building a bridge links neither Zhuang nor Chinese kinship with delivering offerings and excludes any journey to the flower goddess. *Puudao* Xu uses this text for rituals carried out when women are in the fifth or seventh month of pregnancy. Its cover has two Chinese characters 架橋 (*jiqiao*) meaning "building a bridge" and the first page has its table of contents and the transcriber's name, Zhongbo 許忠柏, plus his Daoist name, Zhengao 真高. There are sixty-six pages in total and they are written in both traditional and simplified Chinese. Most of them are seven characters a line and four lines a verse. The rhyming pattern is that the last characters of each line of the four, excluding the third line, are rhymes. It is a general rhyming pattern for Chinese poetry.

All sections in the text are used to resolve or prevent pregnant women's infertility. The opening section is to invite gods and goddesses. We found that there are many Buddhas named in the text. *Puudao* Xu explained that he practices Buddhist Daoism (Ch. *Shidao* 釋道). It may be confusing that Buddhism and Daoism could be mixed in this way, but *puudao* Xu said that their ritual texts were passed down from a Buddhist monk, Tang Sanzang 唐三藏, the monk who travelled to the West to obtain Buddhist texts during the Tang dynasty. The invitation list of gods and goddesses includes gods of rivers, mountains, the dragon king, the earth god, Avalokiteśvara, etc. Because the text is regarding building a bridge, a list of gods and goddesses which protect childbirth and child growth take up five pages. The second section is on Resolving the Blood Basin (Ch. *jiexiepeng* 解血盆). This section must be carried for pregnant women who might have the risk of miscarriage. The third section is to send off *Maoren*<sup>9</sup> (Ch. 茅人), represented with a white paper-cutting in a human being's shape. He will carry all bad luck with him. Before the section of untying knots (Ch. *jiejie* 解結) is the offering of wine. *Puudao* Xu said that in the ritual he carries out for infertile women, he must read the entire section of untying knots. Each knot has its specific name such as three hills and five graves (Ch. *sanqiuwumu* 三坵五墓), lonely gods and lonely starts (Ch. *gushenguasu* 孤神寡宿), three *xing* six *hai* (Ch. *sanxingliuhai* 三刑六害), Celestial Dog (Ch. *xianchitiantou* 咸池天狗), blood damage and blood lack (Ch. *xiehaixiehu* 血害血湖), etc. He invites the Liujia (Ch. 六甲) gods to break the Liujia Hell and to avoid miscarriage. Liujia is a Chinese term but the concept of miscarriage is located in a Zhuang place, Taemgyang. The dead mothers and their babies inhabit Taemgyang. They are known as "ghosts in the middle of the lake" and are thought to be responsible for the miscarriages of living women (Gao Yaning 2010). The last section, entitled "Building a Bridge and Begging for Flowers", includes carrying flowers across a bridge, little children sending flowers five times, and varied flowers blooming in each month for ten months. After completing the above procedures, the text describes offering wine and three kinds of sacrifices and enclosing a flower in a bamboo container. The last few pages of this text include a talisman and magic for ensuring the health of a baby, and finally a sample of an official document for reporting the purpose of the ritual.

I did not attend any ritual conducted by *puudao* Xu based on this text but recent research by Xu Xiaoming (2010) demonstrates that Daoist priests do not read Chinese

<sup>9</sup> *Maoren* is another expression of *maolang*. For *maolang* see footnote 7.



texts through the entire Building a Bridge Rite and maternal grandparents play a significant role in the ritual. According to Xu, the Receiving Flowers or Building a Bridge and Setting up Flowers are carried out during a wedding ceremony or before the child's first birthday. There are three main sections in such a ritual: resolving obstacles (Ch. *jieguan* 解關), building a bridge, and receiving flowers (Ch. *yinghua* 迎花). In the first and the last sections, the Daoist priests read Chinese text in Southwest Mandarin. In the middle section, Daoist priests read the item of receiving flowers and building a bridge (Ch. *yinghuaqiaqiaoshi* 迎花架橋釋) in Southwest Mandarin but switch to local Zhuang dialect in order to collect a couple's souls. The bride's parents in the wedding ceremony, or the maternal grandparents of a less than one-year-old child, have to prepare key materials for the ritual and are involved in the ritual performance. They prepare two paper flowers, one gold and one silver, and a bamboo bridge to attend the ritual in either the groom's or their grandchild's house. The Daoist priests bury the bamboo bridge in front of the front gate of the house. The bride's relatives, or the child's maternal relatives, cannot enter the house until the couple's or parents' souls have been collected. In section three, the groom's parents or child's paternal grandparents receive the gold flower and the silver flower from the bride's parents or maternal grandparents. Eventually, the two flowers are set up on the family altar of the child.

In sum, the Daoist version of building a bridge does not mention any kinship in Zhuang or in Chinese but includes a longer list of Chinese gods and goddesses. However, children's maternal grandparents are required to carry the materials to build a bridge. The ritual does not involve any journey but only the recitation of the Chinese texts and the sending of official documents to gods and goddess.

## DISCUSSION

The ritual texts and performances of flower-rituals in De-Jing area demonstrate that ritual specialists use multiple languages and writing systems depending on to whom they speak. In the flower-ritual performance, Zhuang people have at least three options; Chinese texts, Zhuang texts and oral performance. The flower-rituals are diverse because they have been interacting with both the external Chinese state and internal Zhuang spirit world and have different audiences. The major audience and participants of *määmot*'s oral performance of the flower-rituals in Zhuang dialect are children's maternal relatives. *Puumoo*'s Zhuang texts recited in Zhuang dialect do not deal with maternal relatives but record a mix of Zhuang and Chinese gods and goddesses, describing a journey to the flower goddess and making offerings to build a bridge. *Puudao* read Chinese texts and write documents in the flower-rituals addressed to Chinese gods and goddesses in the celestial state.

One of the features of the hill people in "Zomia" is non-literacy. People avoid written texts in order to keep the state away (Scott 2009). In contrast, the Zhuang people do not share this feature. The Zhuang ancestors or indigenous Tai people who received Chinese education borrowed Chinese script to create Zhuang script that could transcribe their local dialects. The practice demonstrates their active creation and transformation. Zhuang script is used in rituals and for singing folksongs. Zhuang script is based on Chinese scripts but the Zhuang text should be recited in local dialect. A Chinese literate

person can understand each particles of Zhuang script but cannot pronounce it and does not know its actual meaning.

The text transcribed from *määmot* Bei's oral ritual emphasizes the significance of maternal relatives while written texts decrease or ignore their role in the flower-rituals. The *määmot*'s ritual singing gives the audience a picture that maternal relatives are carrying gifts and walking pass fields to build a bridge. The Zhuang text mentions only once that maternal relatives receive flowers. In contrast, none of the maternal relative's roles is referenced in the Chinese text.

The written ritual texts do not mention the responsibility of the children's maternal grandparents' role, but in all three ritual specialists' flower-rituals, they have to prepare offering material to attend the rituals. In *määmot* Bei's ritual, the children's maternal grandmother and the household head's mother's wife attended. In *puumoo* Yang's ritual, the girl's maternal grandmother and her mother's sister-in-law contributed material and gifts. In the *puudao*'s ritual in Tuhu village, the bride's parents carried paper flowers to the groom's house.

The brief history of the Zhuang in the De-Jing area demonstrates that the highland Tai-speaking people could not entirely keep the Chinese state at a distance in the middle Qing dynasty, but the *määmot*'s flower gardens can remain a space to keep the state away in the present. In the early Qing dynasty, all native chieftains in De-Jing area were replaced by officials assigned by the Chinese court. It was supposed that Chinese values would impact Zhuang values in a negative way. However, as we have seen in the Zhuang flower-rituals, *määmot* insist on using Zhuang kinship terms for maternal relatives in their singing and sing their actions to contribute to the children's well-being. In the flower-rituals of the other two kinds of ritual specialists, the maternal relatives' responsibility is not present in the text but in practice. In short, the *määmot*'s flower gardens remain a significant space for the Zhuang people to maintain and display the local values as distinct from mainstream culture.

The preservation of the maternal relatives in Zhuang terms reflects the history of Zhuang-Han interaction. Wilkerson (1999) analyzes kinship terms used in land deeds. The written texts record many paternal kinship terms in Chinese but kinship terms of maternal relatives seldom appear in such documents. He suspects that this first happened when Chinese officials replaced indigenous chieftains and land had been re-organized. In Han Chinese society, only men can inherit land. The Chinese state applied this rule in Zhuang society leading to the adoption of Chinese kinship terms for males. It is not the same for female kinship terms. Therefore, kinship terms used for maternal relatives remain in Zhuang language.

From the analysis of the three texts and performances, we can see that Chinese texts and performances are used to send away bad luck to an external world, while Zhuang text and performance are used to receive positive things. Chinese texts and related rituals focus on overcoming obstacles but Zhuang texts and performance in Zhuang emphasize receiving flowers and collecting the living's souls. Daoist Chinese texts have the most comprehensive names of obstacles; Zhuang texts have both Zhuang and Chinese names of obstacles; and *määmot* only use a collective Chinese loan term "guan" in their singing. Daoist priests recite Chinese text in Southwest Mandarin in sending off bad luck but chant in Zhuang dialect when collecting souls and flowers.

On occasion the Daoist priests carry out flower-rituals and the language switch in ritual performance demonstrates that the Daoist priests practice Zhuang values. Daoist rituals have been embedded into the rite of passage in Zhuang society. Daoist priests carry out the Constructing a Bridge Rite when a woman is in her fifth or seventh month of pregnancy. It is to set up a tablet for the flower goddess on the woman's husband's family altar. It is implied that only when tablet has been set up, the woman starts to belong to her husband's family. Before the ritual, she travels back and forth between her natal family and husband's family.

Zhuang people do not escape from the Chinese state in their daily life and do not "eat" any scripts as many hill people did, but the *määmot*'s oral performance maintains a Zhuang spirit world. In the *määmot*'s heavenly gardens, the Chinese state does exist and the Zhuang values are preserved and emphasized.

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Women of the Kamyang group in Assam (India)

They still share quite some cultural traits with the Tai peoples of China.

Nevertheless, they are in the process of losing their Tai language.

Photo and comments: OR