

## The Review of Ode to Marriage

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**Abstract:** Ode to Marriage is, as a text of Lisu oral narrative literature, one of books on Lisu cultural heritage that carries the Lisu literary values and conveys the wisdom of Lisu people. Accordingly, the review of it, to some extent, gives aids to summarize the previous research and indicates the orientation of further study. This thesis aims to sort out two categories the former research has concluded, and then presents cautiously the suggestions for further study on Ode to Marriage.

### 1. Introduction

*Ode to Marriage* [1], recollected and translated by He Yongxiang, is one of oral literature belonging to Lisu ethnic group, which presents the wisdom of Lisu. It is also one of books on Lisu cultural heritage published in 2014 in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture. The title of book is transliterated from Lisu language, which means marriage and settlement. Traditionally, it is sung by man and woman mostly in wedding for expressing blessing to new couple and handing down the traditional marriage concepts to the younger generation. In most cases, *Ode to Marriage* is translated to *The Tune of Escaping Marriage* in Chinese based on the content mainly concerning ran-away from the arranged marriage, settlement, independence, inherit and so on.

The publishing of *Ode to Marriage* plays a valuable and profound significance to Lisu oral literature. The text, firstly, matters in academic research. It is recollected and translated based on the varied versions sung by elderly folk singers in You Ye style of singing in different Lisu villages. Its content covers originality created by Lisu people and it is spread only in Nujiang region. Secondly, *Ode to Marriage* carries the completeness of long narrative poem compared with the former versions. It consists 13 chapters including 113 sections, which present Lisu people's attitudes towards love, express the mode of thinking and take their ways of act in marriage into account. Faced with the change of times and society, traditional oral literature resources are confronted with the danger of flowing away with the social currents. Under that circumstance, it is urgently necessary for the research on Ode to Marriage exhibits its unique importance nowadays to sustain ethnic flavor. However, the research on that long narrative poem is still necessary to be widened and deepened. The thesis aims to sort out two categories the former research has concluded, and then presents cautiously the suggestions for further study on Ode to Marriage.

### 2. The textual analysis

The research for that aspect mainly consists of metrical traits, rhetoric traits and narrative patterns. Mu Yuzhang [2] summarized briefly the metrical and rhetoric traits in his writings. He pointed out the metrical traits include two respective. The narrative poem contains 7 syllables in each line, 4, 6 or 8 lines combined with to be a section. Each section is depicted mainly in 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> lines, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> are served as a foil to the respectively former line. The main line is the first line of couplet, which present the concrete content; the second one is echoed with the first by applying the similar content but not just repeating. The other is about the rhyming. Some of them are narrated with rhyming echoing between 2 lines. In that way, in the poem, lines are connected compactly according to the meaning, the mode of antithesis and the pronunciation. The concise words, exquisite language and rich musical melodies construct the enrichment of artistic conception, which presents changeable, complex and various rhythms concord with the poem itself. On the

other hand, Mu also proposed that the narrative poem is embodied mainly with indirect metaphors. They are associated with the times, living environments, hobbies and aesthetic insights, which form the logical and systematic principles that can be remembered and spread easily. Liu Jian Da [3] summarized the traits embodied in poem. Apart from some mentioned by Mu Yuzhang, he creatively proposed that the structure of poem following a strict pattern in part of speech of words, meaning of words, sentence patterns. ZuoShanhua [4,5] interpreted the arts of narration adopted by Lisu people in *Ode to Marriage* from the perspective of the concept of poetic narration. She concluded her findings from four respects. The linear timing narration is one of narrative traits in long poem, which is narrated with the process followed by meeting, promise-making, preparation, escaping, new life and return to home. That linear narration gets stories more fluent and easily acceptable. Furthermore, the narrative space from living breaks through the solo timing narrative mode, which makes the change of time present in the change of space to create the images in living space vividly. The hero and heroine in *Ode to Marriage* escape from their hometown to several other places for making a new life. That several times of relocation make the developments of plots and even the climax of story. Moreover, the hero and heroine, as both the first and second narrators and the roles in story, who make the communication between roles real in poem to promote the plots. In that case, they express their feelings to the top of their bent. There is no doubt that the audience are touched by their sincere emotions. Fourthly, the vivid portray of the heroine in poem makes a witty, diligent, optimistic and brave woman prominent. She, in poem, doesn't act as a weak and submissive woman but one who resists against the unreasonable social system to pursue their own happiness with her strong will.

### 3. The contextual analysis

The proof, in general, is with regard to Lisu history, society and cultures. GuiYu [6] mentioned *Ode to Marriage* in his doctoral thesis to certify the marriage values adopted traditionally by Lisu people in Nujiang region. He proposed that the long poem presents the ideal marriage values that Lisu women pursue for the combination between marriage and true love. Also, it reflects their courage, positive attitudes of taking things as they come in their life. For Lisu women, the relationship between couple matters most in their marriage life. They take romantic love as the basis of traditional marriage values pursuing for their own happiness. Meanwhile, the hope for changing women's living condition through marriage is embodied in poem. Most of men, at that time, prefer to attract women by giving them a promising future. In addition, Lisu women, in patriarchal society, present their determination for fighting against the traditional arranged marriage by escaping from home to find their own marriage life. In the process of struggling for their own marriage, Lisu women make aware of their self-consciousness to some extent. On the other hand, the marriage values adopted by Lisu women is not similar with what other ethnic groups do. It is not influenced by the women's responsibility and obligation set in marriage according to Confucianism. That is the result from the living environments Lisu people dwell in. It is far from Han cultures, where the primary vitality still exists although several hundred are past. Therefore, Lisu people have strong and unyielding personality which is present in their brave and passionate aspiration for true love and happy marriage. Li Yanfang [7] concluded briefly in her writing that the tune of marriage of Lisu people manifests their labor work, daily life, family and marriage. They are performing as the ethnic traditions, social functions and humanities. The content of *Ode to Marriage* reflects several aspects of Lisu people's life. Firstly, it presents the hunter-gatherer lifestyle in previous time with detailed descriptions and beautiful language in free verse. Secondly, it forms Lisu people's wisdom of marriage that is passed down to younger generation to tell them the importance of maintaining a happy marriage. Thirdly, it exhibits the whole process of marriage, which includes love-promise, matchmaker, betrothal and wedding. Li Wenbin [8] took *Ode to Marriage* as the proof of national solidarity among different ethnic groups. He mentioned that after the lovers in poem escaped from the arranged marriage, they are busy running about for finding a better place to start new life. When they decided to dwell in, they need to build their own house for inhabitation. Then they seek for help from friends of different ethnic, and at last, they have done

with joint forces. That is meant to be a promising future in a harmonious family with unity and mutual aid. Song Jianfeng [9,10], compared with Pumi ethnic group who live mixed with Lisu, suggests putting the poem into the nature domain, natural context and aesthetic perspective for comprehend the living philosophy, the choice of values and the pursuit of aesthetics more thoroughly.

#### 4. Conclusion

The previous research has taken the text as the focus to interpret the long poem from the perspective of language, narration, history, culture and natural writing. Researchers have put the text into different contexts to seek for innovative interpretation the literary values and even for representing Lisu people's lifestyles on that time for better understanding their history and cultures. These studies have summarized briefly the metrical patterns and narration structure, interpreted the profound meaning in natural context, historical context and social function. That lay preliminary foundation for the research of Lisu literature. However, the previous research falls into the dilemma of research methods that are lacking in the integration of multi-disciplines. That leads to be lack of systematics and comprehensiveness. On the other hand, the point of view adopted in previous research are far from creativity and novelty. Subsequently, the further study, based on the previous research, could focus on more concrete aspects with the theories from ethology, sociology, religion, folklore and psychology. That can be conducted with the historical written materials and the data from field study for corroborating the findings from the text. The further study, certainly, is more than that mentioned above and the values of *Ode to Marriage* would be enhanced accordingly.

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