

Linguistic and poetic features of Yue poems in 17th century Guiping

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This is a linguistic investigation on materials from a recently-discovered edition of *粵風續九 Jyut Fung Zuk Gau* ("Odes of Yue, Sequel to Nine Songs", JFZ9 hereafter), a trilingual collection of Han, Zhuang and Mien poems from 17th century Guiping in central Guangxi, published in 1662. JFZ9 is an earlier edition to the better-known and circulated edition under the title of *粵風 Jyut Fung* ("Odes of Yue"), published in 1778 under a different author's name (Wang, 2011). It is in dispute over the attribution of the Han variety used in these poems in either version. With the new material JFZ9, this paper analyses one particular Han poem *塘上 Tong Soeng* ("On the pond") from JFZ9 and provides more linguistic hints about (1) Goulou Yue (勾漏粵語) is the most possible language used in the poem and proves the presence of Yue in the region as early as the mid-17th century; (2) the Yue is influenced by the surrounding Zhuang language. The rhyme scheme of the poem is not that of typical Han poetry but reflects the practice of the tradition of Zhuang poetry.

The paper discusses the linguistic and poetic features of *Tong Soeng*. Here are the major observations:

1. The poem uses a combination of waist-foot rhyme (腰腳韻) and foot rhyme (腳韻). The former is a widespread practice in Kra-Dai poetry, while the latter is typically used in Han poetry.
2. Among four Chinese varieties spoken in the region (Goulou Yue, Guiping Cantonese (白話), Guiping Hakka and Southwestern Mandarin), phonetic and lexical features of the Goulou Yue fit the waist-foot rhyme scheme the most.
3. Some poems related to *Tong Soeng* used identical imagery and place names, e.g. 蛛絲 ("spider silk") and 三江口 ("three rivers mouth"), which indicates that the poems might be collected near the prefectural capital of Guiping.

These observations provide more context on the cultural contact in the 17th century. Historical records show that there was a native chiefdom (土司州) in the vicinity of Guiping from 1467 to 1620, populated by Zhuang and ruled by a Zhuang chieftain (Liu, 2002). Only around the 1730s did mass migration of Hakka and Cantonese arrived in this area after the chiefdom was abolished (Tang, 2007; Huang, 2006). The Zhuang-influenced features in JFZ9 suggest that the Zhuang language was more widely-spoken in the area than today when the poems were collected, which exerted considerable influence on the local Yue poetry.

Through this analysis on the earliest linguistic record of the Guiping area, it is hoped that the paper will shed light on the historical linguistic landscape that helps us better understand language contact in the Lingnan area.