

Music Transition of Mujiangzi Band

Zhang Feifei¹, Su Yimiao²

Abstract

This article mainly analyzes the music works of the Mujiangzi Band during different periods of its development through oral history interviews. It provides a detailed analysis of the band's works, styles, use of instruments, and incorporation of ethnic musical elements in different periods and styles. By observing the significant events in the music transformation of the Mujiangzi Band and exploring the stories behind their songs, we aim to understand how this band's music continuously evolves and changes under various influences. This article focuses on studying the music styles of the band's works in different periods, treating the band's development and transition as a cultural phenomenon, and using their development process to understand the concept of transition.

It also explores the band's musical identity and personal identity.

Keywords: Mujiangzi Band, music transition, music style, ethnic musical elements, identity

Introduction

Yunnan Province in China is home to the largest number of ethnic minorities. It has abundant ethnic music resources, with 25 ethnic groups and Han Chinese, and the preservation of classic folk melodies, unique musical instruments, and folk customs. With the development of the times and society, authentic ethnic music has not been widely spread among the general public in terms of aesthetics. However, some young people who love ethnic music have successfully integrated and promoted these rich ethnic music resources through innovative methods, leading to a revival and dissemination of classic Yunnan ethnic music. This research starts from the music development of the Mujiangzi Band in Yunnan Province, aiming to study the band's development from its establishment, formation, transformation, and various opportunities. The research analyzes the background and style of the band's music works to examine the changes in their music development during different periods. Through the identities of the band members and adopting both internal and external perspectives,

¹ Department of Fine Arts, International College, Krirk University, Bangkok, Thailand, 3339837537@qq.com

² Department of Fine Arts, International College, Krirk University, Bangkok, Thailand

this study explores the identity recognition and regional identity brought about by the music changes of the band.

The music style of the Mujiangzi Band has gone through diverse genres, including Western rock style, ethnic music elements, and pop music fusion. From the albums of the Mujiangzi Band, the main style of their works is a fusion of Yi ethnic music elements from Yunnan Province. Most of their songs carry the cultural genes of the Yi ethnic group. When participating in national talent shows, the Mujiangzi Band incorporates ethnic music elements from different regions of China and the world into their compositions. This article will explore the works of the Mujiangzi Band in different periods and styles.

I. Mujiangzi Band Emerging from Campus

(I) Members Introduction

The members of the Mujiangzi Band are all born in the 1990s and studied at different departments and majors in the Music College of Yunnan Arts Institute in Yunnan Province from 2009 to 2013. Chen Yangu, the lead vocalist and band leader, is from Xiangtang Yi ethnic group in Lincang County, Yunnan Province. He studied in the Modern Popular Department with a major in guitar. In the band, he is mainly responsible for composing and writing lyrics. Liu Zirong, on the other hand, studied in the Modern Popular Department with a major in percussion. He specializes in various drums and percussion instruments like marimba. Liu Sicheng, Li An, and Zhang Peng are all students majoring in modern popular singing. Li An is of the Lahu ethnic group, and both of his parents are local dance troupe performers. Influenced by his upbringing, Li An can play various ethnic minority instruments. Liu Sicheng is skilled in piano playing, while Zhang Peng excels in guitar playing. The members of the band are from different ethnic groups.

(II) New classical rock on campus

The Mujiangzi band in campus era is influenced by their profession, and the band members all enjoy and are good at rock-style music. When the band was first formed, there were only three members: Chen Yangu, Zhang Peng, and another student majoring in singing. When interviewed, Captain Chen Yangu mentioned, "The band's initial style was a fusion of classical music and rock, which is called 'new classical' style." From the beginning, the band had a belief that they would only perform their own original works. During their campus years, the Mujiangzi band created songs such as "Mozart," "Hero," "Atalama," "Yellow Earth Slope," "Touch," and "Medal." The lyrics and composition were all done by Chen Yangu alone, and the works incorporated a lot of Western instruments, such as electric guitar, drums, and electronic music. The songs "Mozart," "Hero," "Atalama,"

and "Yellow Earth Slope" were already completed by Chen Yangu in his freshman year in 2009.

The Mujiangzi band's works during their campus years were of the new classical rock genre.

Title of work	Genre of work	Music style	Instrumentation used	
Mozart	Original song	Rock	Electronic drums	
Touch	Original song	Funk and reggae	Electric drums	guitar,
Hero	Original song	Punk rock	Electronic drums	music,
Atalama	Original song	Metal rock	Electric drums	guitar,
Yellow Earth Slope	Original song	Swing, rap	Electric traditional instruments,	guitar, drums
Medal	Original instrumental composition	Metal rock	Electric drums	guitar,

Table source: Compiled by this research

II. The growth of Mujiangzi Band in the competition

(I) Local young singer TV awards defeat

In 2011, the Yunnan Provincial Youth Singer TV Awards was held for various social art groups such as universities, art groups, and professional singers in Yunnan Province. The preliminary round was selected by each participating unit. Yunnan Arts Institute actively organized undergraduate and graduate students, as well as young teachers, to participate in the selection of the representative team for this competition. Mujiangzi Band, as an undergraduate student at the school, cherished this opportunity to participate in the selection. In order to win in the highly competitive selection of teachers and students, Mujiangzi Band decided to use their professional knowledge and the fusion of music elements from their hometown to create several participating works. In the end, Mujiangzi Band stood out among many candidates with their excellent professional skills and performance works. For this competition, the band adapted and created 11 songs.

The works of the Mukioko Band during the transitional period of style transformation.

Title of work	Ethnic music elements	Use of Chinese and Western instruments	Music style
Three-legged song	Lahu ethnic group	Electronic music	Reggae and folk song adaptations

Hani Valley		Hani ethnic group	Electronic music	Indigenous folk songs and electronic music
Torch Festival		Yi ethnic group	Electronic music, folk music	Ethnic and electronic music
Mountain crossing tune		Yi ethnic group	Electronic music and folk songs	Electronic rock
Yi ethnic group wine song		Yi ethnic group	Large 3-stringed instrument, guitar, drums	Funk, jazz, ethnic style
Ashuse Ama's Love		Yi ethnic group	Guqin, electronic music	Metal rock and folk songs
Ayouse		Yi ethnic group	Electronic music	Funk rock
Green vegetable seedlings		Yi ethnic group	String instrument, guitar, drums	Reggae and folk songs
Cloud Terraces	Sea	Yi ethnic group	Guitar	Folk music
Golden Peacock		Dai ethnic group	Hulusi (a traditional Chinese wind instrument)	Folk and rock music

Table source: Compiled by this research

Unlike their early works, the incorporation of ethnic music into the band's repertoire has made their style more diverse, and the use of instruments has blended Western instruments with ethnic ones. However, in the finals, the skilled contestants from various teams showcased their own specialties in vocal ability and performance. Due to the relatively short time for composition and lack of sufficient rehearsal, the new work by Mujiangzi Band fell short in the semifinals and did not advance to the finals.

(II) From local TV stations to CCTV

The initial defeat in the competition did not make Mujiangzi Band give up. The band persisted in rehearsing at least five times a week. Soon after adjusting their mindset, the band participated in several music competitions in Beijing and gained recognition from several record companies. They were recommended to participate in a new folk song talent show called "Love for Life, Songs on Earth" launched by China Guangxi TV. This competition recruited participants from all over the country, starting from the auditions to the final total of four and a half months. During this competition, Mujiangzi Band performed songs such as "Ashuse Ama's Love," "Green vegetable seedlings," "Rice Wine," "Night has fallen," and "Spirit of Wa ethnic." These works with ethnic minority elements are well-known to the public. After months

of polishing, the members of the band became more cohesive in the interpretation of their works. Each individual took responsibility for their singing and instrument playing with remarkable skill. With their healthy, sunny, and optimistic image, they continuously achieved better results on this stage, overcoming one obstacle after another. A refreshing performance style left a deep impression on the national audience regarding Yunnan's ethnic music. Mu Jiangzi adheres to originality, drawing musical inspiration from Yunnan's ethnic music and bringing a wave of Yunnan's popular ethnic style to the national stage. Renowned musician Gao Xiaosong greatly supports their music, believing that their music has the potential to reach the international market, and their work has reached the standard for recording albums. Appraisal guests, famous singers Gong Linna and Li Jian, were moved by their original works and their love for their hometown, giving them full recognition.

After the broadcast of the program "Love for Life, Songs on Earth," the Mu Jiangzi band quickly gained influence nationwide. Television stations from their hometown and some highly-rated programs continuously invited the Mu Jiangzi band to perform. At the end of 2012, another important program, "I Want to Perform at the Spring Festival Gala" from CCTV, also extended an invitation to the Mu Jiangzi band. This program is the closest one to the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, and the competition was a PK evaluation between the first prize winners of singing competition programs from major TV stations nationwide, creating a new record for nationwide viewership that year.

From Guangxi TV's program "Love for Life, Songs on Earth" to CCTV's program "I Want to Perform at the Spring Festival Gala," the Mu Jiangzi band faced significant challenges in two major competitions. First, there were differences in the required duration of the performances. The participation time allowed for Guangxi's "Love for Life, Songs on Earth" was within three minutes, allowing the band to fully express the story content intended and the complete structure of the song. In contrast, the performance time for CCTV's program "I Want to Perform at the Spring Festival Gala" needed to be controlled within two minutes, restricting the band to choosing only the main and chorus parts of their songs. Second, the lyrics had to be revised due to the TV program's censorship requirements. Furthermore, the band's competition works were adaptations that combined ethnic and pop music. The allocated rehearsal time set by the program group was limited, and the high-intensity demands of the competition were more challenging than school exams. However, Mu Jiangzi successfully resolved these difficulties one by one. The Yunnan Arts Institute, where the members of Mu Jiangzi attended, is the highest art institution in Yunnan Province, which is home to 25 ethnic minorities.

The Yunnan Arts Institute leverages its geographical advantage to integrate ethnic music and culture into higher education. One of the school's teaching characteristics is the promotion of Yunnan's ethnic music culture. The curriculum and teaching materials incorporate local ethnic cultures and music, providing a solid foundation for the members of the Mu Jiangzi band. Additionally, the band members' ethnic minority identities, combined with their exposure to traditional ethnic tunes during their childhood, effectively blend with the school's education, enabling the band to create excellent music works in a short period.

During the two competitions, the Mu Jiangzi band's competition works were as follows:

Original works during the national competition period of Mu Jiangzi:
[Not provided]

Contest entries	Genre of work	Music style	Instrument usage
Enchanted land	Adaptation of African folk songs	Light folk ballad	African drums, guitar, shaker
Drinking song	Adaptation of Yi ethnic folk songs	Light blues	Large three-stringed instrument, guitar, African drums, shaker
Finding oneself	Covering popular songs	Folk and rock music	Guitar, small three-stringed instrument, African drums
Night has fallen	Adaptation of Guangxi folk songs	Folk music	Dual guitars, African drums, wind chimes
Love me, don't leave	Original and ethnic style	Light rock	Thumb piano, sheng, rattle, guitar, African drums
Half of the moon has risen	Adaptation of folk songs	Folk music	African drums, guitar
Three-legged song	Lahu ethnic folk song	Folk music	Guitar, 3-stringed, tabla
Dowry	Adaptation of Yi ethnic folk songs	Folk music	Marimba, dual guitars

Horseman	Adaptation of Yi ethnic folk songs	Original and popular style	Bells, small three-stringed instrument, guitar, vertical flute
Green vegetable seedlings	Adaptation of Yi ethnic folk songs	Folk music	Large three-stringed instrument, African drums, guitar, shaker
Spirit of Wa ethnic	Wa ethnic folk song	Original style	Wa ethnic big drum, cow horn

Source: Compiled by the author of this study

III. Leaving the competition and starting anew

(I) Emphasizing fieldwork and immersing in folk culture

After stepping off the stage, the Mujiangzi Band was propelled onto a concert with an audience of 40,000 in Southeast Asia, as well as the Hong Kong Youth Music Festival Concert. When the band was just starting to become familiar to the public, they chose to slow down their performances and reorganize their work. The band began to explore and collect folk music. During an interview with the band's lead vocalist, Chen Yangu, he said, "After going out and seeing the world, I realized that my hometown, where I grew up, has a rich musical culture. This music gives us endless creative energy. We used to long for big cities, but when we left, we discovered that our hometown has mountains and rivers." Their hometown has given them so much valuable musical culture, so they wanted to do something for their hometown. Therefore, three years before the album was released, the band members contacted the governments in Yunnan and Daliangshan to embark on a one-year field research and creative process with the strong support of the government. Eventually, they created works with different musical styles and influences.

(II) Release of the eponymous album "Mujiangzi" by the band

After three years of silence to focus on music, the Mujiangzi band released their self-titled album "Mujiangzi" in 2016. Due to their band leader Chen Yangu's early exposure to Western pop and classical music, combined with his Yi ethnic background (Xiangtang Yi), the folk tunes of his hometown left a profound imprint in his blood before he left to pursue education at the age of 12. Wanting to introduce more people to the culture of his hometown, Chen Yangu attempted to integrate the familiar folk tunes into different genres of Western pop music. After hundreds of experiments, the band finally decided to incorporate traditional Chinese instruments with electronic sounds in order to appeal to both trained and untrained audiences and listeners.

The album extensively features elements of ethnic music from various regions in Yunnan Province, with a focus on Yi ethnic music elements (such as Shilin Sani Yi, Dali Yi, and Honghe Huayao Yi). It includes nursery rhymes, folk songs, and wedding songs. The album cover is inspired by the renowned Chuxiong Yi ethnic dragon-headed moon lute. A prominent Yunnan illustrator hand-drew the cover, which was then digitally colored on a computer, with the color scheme based on the moon lute's appearance. The side of the moon lute features the five members of the Mujiangzi band, making this album a reflection of their years of study and professional growth.

The background of each song on the album is as follows:

“Intro” is the first track on the album, incorporating the classic folk song “The small river flows water” from Midi, Yunnan. According to band member Chen Yangu, “Through field research, we discovered that the popular version of “The small river flows water” is actually a combination of the local Yi ethnic tune from Midi during the ‘educated youth’ movement. This instrumental piece combines rock blues style with the three-stringed instrument of the Yi ethnic group, immediately showcasing the fusion of ethnic and pop music throughout the album.”

“Horizon” adopts the tune of a ceremonial dance called “Jumping Vegetables” from Nanjian, Yunnan, celebrating the Yi ethnic people's harvest. The Yi language, Asu, is incorporated into the song, blending with the New Age style. The instrumental part features the moon lute, also known as the four-stringed instrument, from the Dali region of Yunnan. Actually, this Nanjian jumping vegetable tune and rhythm is not only sung and danced during Yi ethnic festivals, but also widely popularized and developed by the people in the current square dance culture. This adaptation easily allows the audience to dance along with the rhythm.

“Sai-Luo-Sai” adopts the British pop style in the song creation, and incorporates the Huayao Yi ethnic's threshing tune from the Red River Shiping area of Yunnan Province. The cheerful melody easily resonates with the audience. This song is the most popular among Yunnan's rock music festival every year. In 2019, when the Mujiangzi band toured colleges and universities, this song often became a chorus for the audience and was loved by college students.

“Horseman” adopts the caravan tune from Xiangtang Yi ethnic on the Silk Road of Lincang, Yunnan, and incorporates the Reggae style, using the Yi ethnic's three-stringed instrument. It uses the tea-horse ancient road culture of Yunnan and the caravan stories of the past as the background for the creation. It immediately takes us back to that historical and cultural period.

The chorus melody of “Flower Waist Girl” is adapted from the Haicai tune of Shiping, Yunnan, and incorporates the Funk style from the

West Coast of the United States, and uses modern Chinese and English languages. The melody of the song is catchy and easily accepted by the audience.

"Half-night Little Chicken Crows" is a nursery rhyme that the lead singer Chen Yangu often sang during his childhood in Nan San, Xiangtang, Lincang, Yunnan. This song's style is Folk, and according to Chen Yangu, many Burmese overseas Chinese can sing it. Some compatriots from Taoyuan City, Taiwan, return to Nansan every year to play music and sing this song. This song represents the longing for hometown by overseas travelers, and the love for hometown forever. This song is deeply loved by everyone because it is a nursery rhyme that many people in Lincang area knew since childhood, so it is relatively easy to obtain acceptance and audience recognition.

Although "Dowry" is a traditional tune heard by the band leader in his childhood, it is not a Yi ethnic music element but a Miao ethnic music. Because the arranger Chen Yangu grew up in Nansan Town, Lincang City, Yunnan Province, an area with multiple ethnic groups such as Deang, Dai, Miao, Yi, and Wa, the crying bridal songs of different ethnic groups are a regional common recognition in their customs. When the band leader saw a sister from the Miao village crying with her family hugging each other during her wedding in childhood, he did not understand the meaning of the crying bridal song. It wasn't until he grew up that he realized that this was also a local cultural recognition of customs. This song is adapted from the local Miao ethnic group's performance of the lusheng (a more than one meter long reed pipe) instrumental music during weddings, and incorporates elements of Gospel music. The quiet sections in the album also subtly retain the inner monologue of a girl's mixed feelings when getting married.

"Traveling" was written by the band members on their way back to Yunnan after collecting folk music in the Sanjiang Dong ethnic village, and the song was completed in a guesthouse at the foot of Cangshan Mountain. The inspiration for the chorus was adapted from the singing style of Dian Opera and incorporates elements of Country music, as well as the Chinese ancient music instrument guzheng and the Dai ethnic group's hulusi. It is a modern pop song that combines elements of traditional Chinese music, and was created by several young men from different ethnic groups in the band who recorded their most authentic feelings during their fieldwork.

Mujiangzi's new album works

Album Mujiangzi	Genre of work	Music style	Instrument usage
The small river flows water.- Prologue	Original instrumental composition	Rock blues	Yi ethnic three- stringed instrument, guitar, drums
Horizon	Original song	New age	String instrument, guitar, drums
Sai-Luo-Sai	Original song	British rock	Electric guitar, string instrument, drums
Horseman	Adaptation of Yi ethnic folk songs	Reggae	Small three-stringed instrument, guitar, drums
Huayao girl	Original song	Funk	String instrument, guitar, drums
Half-night Little Chicken Crows	Yi ethnic folk nursery rhymes	Folk music	Guitar
Dowry	Miao ethnic song adaptation	Church music	Miao ethnic reed pipe
Traveling	Original song	Country music	Guzheng, hulusi

Table source: Compiled by this research

In the works adapted by the Mujiangzi Band during the competition, almost all of them were sung in minority languages. However, in this new album, the majority of the songs are in modern Chinese. In terms of style, this album showcases a more diverse Western influence, incorporating various genres such as blues, reggae, funk, and country

music. Through interviews with the lead singer, the author felt the band members' love for their hometown's ethnic music. In the process of song creation, Chen Yangu, as an insider, analyzed and applied their own ethnic hometown music culture to find a sense of cultural belonging.

With the release of the new album, the Mujiangzi Band embarked on a nationwide tour. In the following years, they released several singles, including the following works:

Song Name:	Genre of work	Music style	Instrument usage
Fantastic	Original work	70s retro funk disco	Electronic synthesizers
On Our Own Path	Original work	Peking opera, hard rock	Keyboard, guitar, drums, bass
Lighthouse	Original work	Post-rock	Keyboard, guitar, drums, bass
Our Story	Original work	R&B blues rhythm	Classical guitar, bass, keyboard, rhythm guitar, drums
Beautiful Inn	Original work	Folk music	Guitar
Fake cigarettes, fake alcohol, fake friends	Adapted Yunnan folk song	Lab rock	Guitar, drums, keyboard, bass
Let Go of That Girl	Original work	Funky dance music	Guitar, bass, drums, keyboard

Source: Compiled by the author of this study

Background of "Fantastic": The entire song, from recording, arrangement, mixing, to the final master, was created using retro techniques from the 1970s. The lyrics have a sci-fi theme, imagining being randomly transported to a past era through a time machine and opening a window protected from light-speed collisions, only to find oneself in the year 1979. Instantly transported back to the disco era, there is a sense of simplicity and purity among people, living in the

present. Unlike modern gatherings that focus on materialistic appearances, everything material is just a projection and illusion. The imagination is that in this universe, one is alone, standing at a higher latitude perspective, using a time projector to watch one's own life. This is a work full of imagination.

Background of "My Own Path": The traditional Chinese opera element of gongs is used in the instrumentation. The sound of General Guan Yu laughing heartily from within the opera is also incorporated into the interlude. The lyrics are from the perspective of the clown character in the traditional Chinese opera, with "sheng (male lead), dan (female lead), jing (painted face), mo (comic) and chou (clown)" as the main roles. The lyrics represent the real-life situation of a group of people who are not good at explaining and expressing their opinions, and are not understood by society, family, and friends. In this fast-paced era, such individuals are often labeled as outcasts. This song was featured as an insert song in the film "Rock Shadow" from Northwest China.

Background of "Lighthouse": The musical style of this song is "Post Rock," an experimental genre, i.e. Lab music. Music artists often spend several days adjusting equipment to achieve the desired sound for an electric guitar. The Muzhangzi Band also experimented with some new equipment. Finally, they selected a guitar delay effects device called "Delay," which repeats and extends a played note. This delay effect is present throughout the entire composition. Combined with electronic effects from synthesizers, a rough framework was established. Initially, this piece did not have vocals, but later, considering the audience's preferences, vocals and lyrics were added. The sound of ocean waves in the work was recorded in Chengjiang, Yunnan. To wait for the wind to calm down and for tourists to disperse, the members of the Muzhangzi Band waited until evening to record the sound of waves presented in the composition. Although there are a few people whistling while swimming in the song, the effect was so good that it was kept. During a research trip to the fishing village in Ningbo, Zhejiang, the visual scene at the port had a significant impact on their creative ideas. The composition uses a minor key to reflect a state of inner loneliness. When the fisherman returns home under the half-moon and sees the flickering lighthouse guiding the way, thoughts of his family fill his heart with hope and joy. No matter how big the storm is, we must safely return home and reunite with our family. In Chinese culture, the family is one's true harbor, where one can dock their fishing boat that has weathered countless storms and hit numerous reefs.

Background of "Our Story": Lead singer Chen Yangu is busy with music production work, doesn't enjoy gatherings, and isn't good at maintaining friendships. He even dislikes playing electronic games and leisure activities like mahjong. One day, he suddenly realized that he

hadn't watched television for 10 years, and his impression of the film and television industry was still stuck in his elementary school memories. After turning on the TV, he specifically watched some TV dramas featuring actors born in the 2000s and discovered many topics and perspectives that could be explored. Taking love as the theme, he contemplated the differences in the current generation's view of love compared to the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Chen Yangu expressed that sometimes when writing lyrics, he needs to imagine himself as a character in the drama. After empathizing, he would also shed tears and moisten his own soul. Although he isn't good at writing about love, he still attempted to create a song through this accidental experience. He also wants to make the musical style of the Mujiangzi band more diverse through works of different themes.

Background of "Beautiful Inn": Family, friendship, and love are like the moon, sometimes waxing and waning. Today's people don't see the moon of ancient times, but the moon has once shone on ancient people. Whether departed or still alive, they forever exist in the same space. Time is abstract, created by humans. This song was created when Chen Yangu's childhood friend, who had been with him for many years and with whom he used to share everything, suddenly passed away. The friend's departure made him no longer enjoy opening up his heart, so he put those stories left in the moonlight into the song. Like a bottle of wine covered in dust for many years, a drop of which evokes half a lifetime of emotions, everything is conveyed without words. According to his state of mind at the time, the overall visual is that he built a paradise-like inn deep in his heart. The inn is located on a mountain in the outskirts, undisturbed throughout the year, and only visited by travelers passing by. Regardless of day or night, they consider this place as their home. The perspective of the protagonist is that of an innkeeper who is not good at conversation but cares about the travelers. They gather around the bonfire in the inn's garden, without any fervor of a crowd. On snowy winter nights, they boil several cups of warm wine and silently watch the heart of the fire, feeling each other's presence. Although the inn is not big, there is never a vacant room. The innkeeper watches people come and go, listens to the joys and sorrows of travelers from different cities, in autumn, winter, spring, and summer. Sighing that time has taken away everything. Pedestrians hurry by, regular customers are rare. The only companion he has is this old wooden inn that has turned yellow over time. Once filled with laughter and joy, it is now visited by rare guests with gray hair. And there is a man-made freshwater sea in front of the door, surrounded by the fragrance of the soil, lingering around his inn. There is a loyal yellow dog in front of the door, already peacefully asleep. When he wakes up tomorrow, he won't know if it's reality or a

dream. The only things left in the picture are the eerie sound of the wind and the inn that has never been completed.

"Fake Cigarettes, Fake Alcohol, Fake Friends" Background: Chen Yangu and Zhang Peng (the band's guitarist) met during an art pre-examination training class for the college entrance examination in 2007, and thus formed a bond. On the first day they met, Zhang Peng said to Chen Yangu, "You're from Lincang area, all alone out here. Come to my house for dinner tonight." Chen Yangu followed Zhang Peng to his house for dinner. Zhang Peng's mother made chicken soup, and his father cooked wild mushrooms. It was after that meal that they became close friends who could talk about anything. At that time, the drummer Liu Zirong was working as the music director at a Live house, recruiting musicians and singers. Chen Yangu and Zhang Peng went to apply and were lucky enough to be successful. Later, when they got into university, the three of them happened to be in the same class. The three of them were the original members of the Mujiangzi band, and they are still the current members of the band. During a certain year's Dragon Boat Festival, Zhang Peng's parents invited Chen Yangu to celebrate at their home. At that time, this song was still in its early stages. After dinner, Chen Yangu, Zhang Peng, and their parents stood on the balcony and looked at the moon, saying, "What are we doing ethnic music for? Just to enjoy it ourselves? We have so many folk songs from our hometown here, why are we so fixated on going to the big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou? Why don't we stay in our hometown and adapt some of the local folk songs instead?" Coincidentally, at that time, the band's manager cheated the band out of their money and ran away. So, they decided to write a song about this situation. The final arrangement of the song broke with traditional conventions in terms of professional theory, because no one in China had put multiple styles into one song before. In the music industry, it is not easy for a song with multiple genres to circulate. But the band didn't want to have any regrets, so they created it according to their vision.

"Let Go of That Girl" Background: This song's arrangement heavily incorporates elements of dance music and funk, and the prelude and harmony both use a technique called modulation. Chen Yangu was influenced by the dialogue in Stephen Chow's movie "Kung Fu". It had a deep impact on him. The bullies in the film are a representation of a certain group, and the children who are victims are also a representation. Returning to work and life, family, there is a common phenomenon of people being held hostage by those who claim moral superiority. More and more people are being negated by secular influences. Even love, which should be about two people supporting each other, will have some people trying to control the other person. This song is actually hoping to find like-minded people to explore and

communicate together. So, the second album will have a sudden change in style, involving topics like "the ultimate meaning and goal of human existence."

IV. Some reflections on the evolution of the band's music

(I) Popularity of the works

Although Muzhangzi Band is a band that emerged from professional institutions, they value ethnic music elements and are good at integrating their professional expertise with folk music. Fan Yanping (2022) proposed that the fusion of ethnic music elements and pop music enriches the musical content of the band's works and satisfies the aesthetic needs of the public. Cao Liping (2014) also pointed out in her article that the reference to ethnic music elements adds value to pop music, highlighting the band's unique style and charm. The popularity of their works is one of the factors that reflect the value of the band. In the competitions they participated in, almost all the adapted works they performed were sung in the languages of ethnic minorities, while in their albums, they mostly used modern Chinese, which is beneficial for both the understanding of the general public and the popularity of the works. Therefore, creating songs that are easy for the people to understand and sing along to is essential for the band's works to be spread and developed.

(II) Acceptance of the works

From the several major competitions that Muzhangzi Band participated in, the fusion of ethnic instruments, ethnic tunes, and original singing styles with pop music, as mentioned by Liu Xingyun (2015) in his article, played a positive role in the promotion of the programs and also spread China's excellent traditional culture. In the band's albums, various music styles such as blues, reggae, funk, and country music are more diverse and westernized.

However, the works also incorporate familiar elements of Yi ethnic minority folk songs, instrumental melodies, rhythms, and other music elements. This musical creation practice of Muzhangzi Band allows them to keep up with the trend of fashionable music while also allowing the general public to feel the band members' love for their hometown's ethnic music, and to find a sense of cultural belonging in the creation of the songs. In an article by Wei Linlin (2017), it is pointed out that this cultural phenomenon is also a carrier of local cultural identity, as well as social and cultural significance. Music with ethnic elements like this also creates a stronger sense of resonance among the general public in terms of identification. In an era of diversified development, the public is more inclusive and understanding of the development of things. Nowadays, Muzhangzi Band's performance venues have changed from being limited to bars in the past to regular guests at major music festivals and folk music events. They also engage

in workshops and exchange learning with the new generation of university students on campuses. The rapid development of multimedia and the popularity of platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou have made them well-known to the public through different performance channels, and the public can accept and enjoy their music.

Conclusion:

The Mujiangzi Band's development is closely related to their growth and transformation. They started as a pure rock band during their school days, then transitioned to a fusion of Yunnan ethnic music and pop after participating in several competitions, and eventually returned to rock music. As a member of the Yi ethnic group, Chen Yangu creates songs that incorporate Yi elements. As an insider and cultural holder, he creates fusion works that blend ethnic and pop music, which also represents his cultural identity. By observing and learning music outside of their own culture, the Mujiangzi Band demonstrates their recognition and appreciation for their hometown's ethnic music from an outsider's perspective. The band members of Mujiangzi have professional backgrounds in Western pop singing, playing, and composing. They are able to preserve their hometown's traditional ethnic music while incorporating Western composition techniques and performance styles, which also reflects their recognition and embodiment of different cultures.

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