

The Jing Ethnic Group



Single-stringed fiddle is one of the Jings' favorite folk musical instruments. There is only one 80cm-long string on it. The player holds the fiddle with his right hand and plucks the strings with a tiny piece of bamboo in his left hand, being able to produce four notes and one grace note, mild and pleasant. The tone color it produces is very pure and elegant with wide range and particular style. It is generally played to accompany responsories and perform on stage. It is symbol of the Jing's culture.

The population and environment

The Jing people have a population of 22 517, living in Dongxing, a city subordinate to Fangchenggang City in Guangxi Autonomous Region. They reside in compact communities primarily in the three islands of Shanxi, Wutou, and Wanwei of Jiangping Township; Others lived dispersedly in the hamlets in the seaboard nearby. The three islands have a name of "Three Islands of the Jings". Thanks to the project of building banks in the 1960s, the three islands were connected to the main land.

The Three Islands of the Jings are located in the Beibu Gulf, a famous fishing zone. They make a living by fishing for generations. In the past, salt making was their major bywork. They also



took some farming in some areas. Recently, treat changes have taken place in the frame of their economy. They live near the sea and on the border of China. Working to the best advantage of the location, they developed aquatics breeding in the coastal marsh and seafood processing while expanding the fishery. Trade and tourism across the border have progressed. Today, the income of the Jings has increased greatly. The Jings are among the list of the several Chinese minorities that have become rich earlier than others.

The ethnic origin

The ancestors of the Jings migrated from Haifang City Vietnam to China in the early 16th century, that is, 500 years ago. They were called the Yues the old days because they are from the Yue People, the majority ethnic group in Vietnam. In 1958, they were named the Jings. They have their own language Shoulder to shoulder with the Hans and the Zhuangs, most of them can speak Cantonese. In history, "Zinan", an ethnic script system,

has been used in the songbooks and religious books. Today, Chinese script is the current written language.

The architectural features——“Hating”

The traditional house of Jings is made of bamboo and wood. The wall of the house is made of couch grasses and thin bamboo strip. Some of them are covered with clay. There are layers of tiles and couch grasses on the roof. Stones press the couch grasses on the roof out lest the grasses will be blown off by typhoons. The flooring material inside the house is bamboo or wood. A straw mat is laid on the floor, upon which people sit or sleep or have dinners. The rooms of the ground floor are also used to keep fowls like chicken and ducks. Some low and short stone houses were built later on. Although they are firmer, the living condition inside the house is relatively dissatisfactory. Nowadays, the Jings have moved into the brick houses that usually are double-floored or three-floored. Inside the house, there are modern fittings surrounded by fine decoration. Fruit trees, sisals, and cactuses etc, are planted around the houses. They cannot only prevent the damages that typhoon may bring to the houses, but also add to the beauty of the environments. Now the living standard of Jings is much the same as that of average citizens in urban areas.

In the Three Islands of the Jings, the most characterized architecture is Hating, which is made of hard wood. There are shrines for the whole village to worship and memorial tablets with the names of the ancestors of every family. So it is somewhat a combination of shrine temple and family temple. It is also the amusement place for people to Changha (sing songs). Changha Festival, the most ceremonious one for the Jings, is held here every year.



The costumes and ornaments —— the cone-shaped straw hat and the slit long gown

The clothing of the Jings is simple yet beautiful. Men usually wear long narrow-sleeved jackets reaching down to the knees and girdles, with chests uncovered. Their trousers are long and loose. There is always a band around their waists. Women like to wear cone-shaped straw hats. They also wear earrings. Their hair is combed into pigtailed backsides and leave some “Luoshui” on both sides of their faces. The backside pigtail is coiled up on the head with black cloth. They wear tight-fitting, collarless short blouses buttoned in front plus a diamond-shaped top apron and broad fuscous trousers. On formal occasions, parties, they will dress up in a white long

gown with narrow sleeves, similar to the cheong-sam of the Han. The difference between the gown and the cheong-sam is that the gown is shorter and looser.



The dietetic customs——the fish sauce rice and the air-dried rice cake

The Jing's staple food is mainly rice and maize with coarse food like sweet potatoes and taros. They like to cook sticky rice and sweet congee of sticky rice during festivals. Fish, shrimps, crabs and snails are most frequently in their diet. They like

to mix rice with fish sauce. Fish sauce is a special local food of the Jings. It is very delicious and is popularly used in cooking. Another specialty of the Jings is air-dried rice cake, a very peculiar kind of rice cake. Its diameter is 70cm long. After steamed, the cake is covered with sesame and gets sun baked outside in the open. Then put the cake on the charcoal fire and bake it. It smells sweet and tastes crisp.

The family and the marriage——kicking sands as a way to express love

The Jings follow monogamy. Women and men are equal yet to have a very clear line to distribute the work. Generally, men go out fishing and women stay at home doing housework. Besides housework, women also need to do work such as farming, weaving nets, collecting field snails and sand worms, The fishes that men get back from the sea are to be sold by women in the market. Youngsters can make their own choices on dating. But if couples want to get married, they should gain their parents' approval before they marry. In the old days, marriage occurred only within the Jings. Now there are more and more cross-ethnic marriages.

The Jings have their own special way to express their love. In the Festival of Changha, the passionate young people will go to the beach by twos and threes. In the silvery light of the moon, they sing love songs to each other in groups. If a young man finds his princess, he will kick the snow-white sand gently onto the girl, or tear up leaves in to small pieces and sprinkle them onto the girl. If the girl accepts his love, she will do the same to the young man.

The traditional festival——“the Changha Festival”

Changha Festival is the most ceremonious traditional festival. Changha means singing. The date for the festival differs from place to place. In the islands of Wutou and Wanwei, it is held on July 10th according to the Chinese Lunar Calendar. It is believed that their ancestors were out in the sea o fish, when a sudden rainstorm occurred. Their ancestors had to go to the island of Wutou and Wanwei to shelter from the storm. July 10th is the

date when they completed the construction of the first Hating, a pavilion. So they named the day Changha Festival. In the festival, the Jings will wear their traditional dresses and gather in front of the Hating to receive gods, offer sacrifices to their ancestors and they would sing various songs.

The most popular activity in the festival is Changha. There are three main roles in Changha: Ha Ge, a male singer and Ha Mei, two female singers. Ha Ge plays a plucked musical instrument and Ha Mei beat the bamboo ferula and clapper to accompany the melody. They take turns to sing songs. They would also have a feast in the evening, when they are wingding, drinking and enjoying the songs and dances. The romantic atmosphere is in the air when young people sing songs to express their feelings.

**The ethnic arts——
“ the Single-stringed Fiddle ”
and “ Fishing Lantern Dance ”**

The Jing people like to sing antiphonal songs after they come back from fishing. There are over 30 melodies. The songs can be grouped according to the contents as ballad, songs about labor, love songs, Pan'ge songs about the customs and songs about religions. Some of them have been collected in songbooks. Bout most of them are improvisations.



Their traditional instruments include urheens, flutes, and drums etc. The single-stringed fiddle is a unique musical instrument of the ethnic group. Also known as Gourd Ladle Fiddle, the single-stringed fiddle is 0.8 m long, just like a wood oblong box. It is made of a kind of mottled bamboo. Just as its name implies, there is only one string on it. When in performance, exponential supports the fiddle with his right hand while the left hand plays the string with bamboo flakes. There are 4 notes and grace notes. The tweedle is graceful and melodious. It is usually played in the Changha as an accompanying instrument and also good for solo. The most popular melodies are “High Mountains, Flowing Streams” and “Riding on a Horse”.

The traditional dances include “Sky Lantern Dance” and “Dance with Fancy Colored Sticks”. These originally are religious dances. Now after being transformed, they have become popular folk dances. 4 to 8 girls perform “Sky Lantern Dance”. They wear white long clothes and black trousers with plates on their heads and cups in their hands. Inside the plates and the cups, there are burning candles. When the girls are dancing, the girls are dancing. the candlelight shines amidst the girls elegantly white their clothes, which adds to the grace of the dancing girls. In 1950s, it was adapted into “Fishing Lantern Dance”, which was performed in the Huairen Hall of Zhongnanhai in Beijing. One or two girls perform the dance with fancy colored sticks. T he dancers hold a stick with both

hands. The stick is wrapped with colorful paper. Usually they will sing songs before the dance. When the dance begins, dancers' skillful control of the fancy sticks will amaze you as dazzling show. The Jings' ethnic character is very obviously shown in this dance.