

Leizhou Ballad's Lingerin Dream

by Maoxin Wu,
translated by Jiang Huang

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Translator's Preface

The journey of *Leizhou Ballad's Lingering Dream* from its original language into another is, for me, far more than a linguistic transfer—it is a spiritual homecoming and a dialogue between civilizations. As the translator, sharing with the author Wu Maoxin the native soil of the Leizhou Peninsula, I carry within me the same cultural codes: the salty sea breeze, the melodies of Leizhou Ballad echoing across the fields, and the stone dogs standing in silent vigil for centuries at village entrances. It is both a profound honor and a significant responsibility to introduce a work so deeply rooted in the soul of our homeland to a wider global readership.

Wu Maoxin's writing is imbued with the weight of history and the warmth of local sentiment. The Tianxi Village he depicts is a microcosm of the Leizhou Peninsula and a witness to the upheavals of Chinese rural society amidst the tides of time. The destinies of the characters—the emotional entanglements and life choices of Hong Xiukun, Zhang Zhisheng, and Li Qiantai spanning decades—are intricately woven into the grand historical backdrop of Land Reform and the Anti-Rightist Movement. The author goes beyond mere personal saga; with meticulous detail, he sketches the unique folklore of Leizhou: the call-and-response of Leizhou Ballad that binds hearts, the children's game of "pipop guns," the solemn yet whimsical worship of stone dogs, and the deep-seated traditional ethics permeating rituals and social interactions. Together, these elements form a three-dimensional, vivid, and breathing "Leizhou."

My task as a translator has centered on "transformation" rather than "substitution." The goal is to faithfully render the spirit of the original while converting this intensely local narrative into a "universal language" accessible and resonant for international readers. This meant not only accurately conveying the plot and emotions but also finding apt echoes in another linguistic system for the rhythm of Leizhou Ballad, the wit of the dialect, and the metaphors of folklore. For instance, I strove to preserve the rustic beauty and sharp wisdom of the numerous Leizhou ballads, allowing them to regain life within the rhythms and rhymes of English. Regarding the "stone dog"—a core cultural symbol—I avoided reducing it to a mere exotic totem. Instead, through the accumulation of contextual details, I aimed to naturally reveal its multifaceted significance in folk belief, artistic expression, and social life, making its distinctions between "Civil" and "Military" aspects, and its functions of "warding off evil" and "attracting fortune," comprehensible to the reader.

The deep structure of this novel resembles a polyphonic symphony. On the surface lies the main narrative of love and fate, beneath which flows contemplation on historical scars, interrogation of unjust destiny, and ultimately, faith in human resilience and goodness. Zhang Zhisheng's relentless pursuit of stone dog culture forms a remarkable parallel to his decades-long devotion to Hong Xiukun—both are acts of rediscovering neglected value and silently repairing lost time. The character of Teacher Zhou Bingzhong serves as a beacon of cultural transmission and conscience, his light undimmed even in the darkest hours. The final revelation of truth, absolving a thirty-year injustice, concludes with a Leizhou ballad that is both absurd and deeply meaningful. This is not merely the story's end but the author's profound and powerful literary interpretation of history and life.

*Leizhou Ballad's
Lingering Dream*

In an era of sweeping globalization, local knowledge is more precious than ever. The translation and publication of Leizhou Ballad's Lingering Dream aims to bring the unique voice of the Leizhou Peninsula—a "living fossil of Chinese regional culture"—into the chorus of world literature. While it tells a story rooted in Leizhou, the themes of love, loyalty, suffering, redemption, and cultural heritage are universal. I believe that through the eyes of Zhang Zhisheng, Hong Xiukun, and others, international readers can not only glimpse a specific, miniature world of a Chinese village but also touch the complex emotional fabric and deep cultural confidence of the Chinese people navigating modernization.

My gratitude extends to author Wu Maoxin for entrusting me with his work, and to all who assisted in this publication. May this "Leizhou Ballad's Lingering Dream," carrying the scent of the earth and the sound of the sea from the Leizhou Peninsula, reach distant shores and resonate across civilizations.

*Huang Jiang (pseudonym: Stone Dog)
March 31, 2026, Stockholm, Sweden*

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Author Biography

Wu Maoxin, male, born in 1944, is a native of Leizhou, Guangdong. Despite a turbulent childhood, he persevered through adversity with diligence and self-reliance. Over his career, he has served as a primary school teacher, a theatrical playwright, and a cultural center official.

Since the 1980s, Wu has achieved significant success in drama and literature, gradually becoming a representative writer of Zhanjiang City and Guangdong Province. He is a member of the China Writers Association and has served as the chief editor of prestigious magazines such as Zhanjiang Literature, Nanguo, Yuehai Wind, and Resonance.

His works are frequently published in national and provincial periodicals and have won numerous awards, including the Second Prize for New Works by the Guangdong Writers Association, the National Outstanding Award for Rural-Themed Literature, and the inaugural "Huadi Masterpiece Award" by Yangcheng Evening News.

His writings are featured in major anthologies such as Selected Works of the 50th Anniversary of Guangdong Writers Association, Selected Works of the 25th Anniversary of Reform and Opening-up in Guangzhou, and Selected Gems of the 50th Anniversary of Huadi. The History of Contemporary Lingnan Prose also dedicates a standalone chapter to evaluating his creative achievements. His

historical play, *Chen Bin Releases Prisoners*, won the Second Prize for Outstanding Script in Guangdong in 1980 (with the First Prize vacant) and was recorded in the *Chronicles of Chinese Opera* (Guangdong Volume).

To date, he has published 18 volumes across fiction, prose, poetry, plays, and literary criticism, including: *The Call of the Soul*, *Harvest in the Ripening Season*, *Warm Current*, *The Rainbow*, *Silence is Not Golden*, *Traces of Time*, *Leizhou Ballad's Lingering Dream*, *Course on Leizhou Dialect*, and *The Incorruptible Official Chen Bin*.

Translator Biography

Huang Jiang, a Sweden-based Chinese writer, poet, translator, and sociologist, was born in Leizhou, Guangdong, in 1976. As a literary traveler with a global perspective, he has set foot in over a hundred countries, excelling at capturing the collisions and resonances between diverse civilizations.

His representative work, *60 Degrees North Latitude* (180,000 words), offers a profound exploration of the intersection between the vigorous maritime culture of Southern China and the stoic rationality of Northern Europe, manifesting an expansive spiritual horizon. His latest 500,000-word epic, *The Annals of Stone Dogs*, delves deep into the familial memories of the Leizhou Peninsula, using a resilient narrative to scribe the dignity and ancestral roots of the Chinese people.

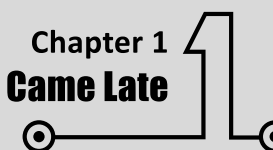
In his translated work, *Leizhou Ballad's Lingering Dream*, Huang Jiang accurately captures the heavy historical gravity and vibrant regional essence of the original text. He skillfully transforms the individual destinies set against grand historical backdrops—such as Land Reform and the Anti-Rightist Movement—along with Leizhou's unique folklore and arts, into a compelling universal language. His work stands as a significant contribution to the international dissemination of Chinese regional literature.

Literary Inquiries: swedenman8888@gmail.com

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Chapter 1 A Dream That Came Late



Section 1.

On the morning of her wedding to Zhang Zhisheng, Hong Xiukun wakes from an erotic dream. In the dream, she and Zhisheng embrace passionately, but her thoughts drift back to their childhood and to Li Qiantai, the other man in her life.

Section 2.

Flashback to childhood: Third Uncle, Qiantai's father, comes to Tianxi Village as a seasonal harvester, bringing Qiantai with him. Xiukun is drawn to Qiantai. The three children become friends. Qiantai impresses the village children by improving their pipop guns.

Section 3.

As they enter adolescence, Zhisheng pursues Xiukun openly, but her heart leans toward Qiantai. Zhisheng offers her perfume in exchange for a hug; Xiukun angrily rejects him. Her feelings for Qiantai deepen.

Section 1

Tap. Tap-tap.

A gentle knocking sounded at the door.

He's here.

A small drum of anticipation began to beat instantly in Xiukun's chest. Even though tonight was to be their wedding night, she had known he wouldn't wait until then—if he possessed that kind of patience, would he still be Zhang Zhisheng?

She, Hong Xiukun, was someone who had walked in and out of the very gates of the underworld. Her heart, once still as a deep well, now rippled with movement. If he could remain calm, that would be the real surprise.

No sooner had the door bolt been drawn back than Zhisheng slipped inside like a gust of wind.

Xiukun opened her arms and pulled him into an embrace from behind, resting her head lightly on his shoulder. He felt the firm press of her chest against his back like two torches, searing him, igniting a blaze that surged through his whole body. He turned her in his arms, holding her tight, pressing his cheek to hers, his knees locking around her legs. She was fully aware of his potency; passion rose from her feet like molten lava. This magma, long buried and

pressurized deep underground, could be contained no longer—ready to burst, to erupt, to melt them both.

She could feel him trembling, clearly as stirred as she was. Yet his attention never left her face. Slowly, his hands parted her hair to either side, and he gazed into her eyes with deep feeling.

Those eyes had witnessed countless seasons of wind, rain, and dust, yet they remained like two tranquil pools—deep and clear, free of the slightest speck of impurity, like twin glinting pearls. They held his focus utterly, leaving no room for distraction. Unconsciously, he tilted his face and gently pressed it against hers once more, losing himself in the comfort of her tenderness.

Xiukun's passion still burned, but the initial wildness had ebbed. She understood she was his goddess, and she should let him enjoy to the fullest, let him take whatever he needed. Quietly, she leaned against his chest, accepting his caress.

Once more, Zhisheng moved his hands to gently stroke her face. He continued to gaze—this was a set of features and contours no painter, however gifted, could capture: clear and soft, enchanting yet utterly pure. True, this delicate frame could not wholly resist the harsh erosion of time. On her once-fresh, dewy cheeks, faint fine lines were beginning to show, which filled him with regret, even pain. The only comfort was that the marks of age on her face had not brought ruin or decay, but rather added a touch of mature allure. Unconsciously, he bent his head, opened his mouth, and pressed his lips to Xiukun's.

Xiukun's passion flared at once. "Sheng! Sheng!" she called softly, parting her lips to meet his. Their four warm, supple lips met, pressing and pulling, devouring one another.

This was what Xiukun had waited for through countless days and nights. Back in her springtime, when first love began to stir, she was like the unripe guava in the yard—bees and butterflies, impatient for ripeness, would swarm and sting, bump and bite, leaving their marks. Those frivolous men, with one excuse or another, would draw near, then use seemingly proper gestures to touch her, trying to take advantage. It made her seethe with anger, yet she could find no clear reason to lash out.

In those days, her body was changing. Her small, slowly swelling breasts would often feel taut, especially during her monthly flow, when the sensation grew stronger. The two little buds would itch unbearably, and she longed for someone close to touch them, to rub them, to knead them. But back then, she was a proud princess—she could never lower her guard. Zhisheng was always finding ways to please her, yet the closer he came, the more she recoiled. To be honest, if it hadn't been for Qiantai, she would never have kept him at such a distance. Thinking of this, Xiukun felt a deep pang of guilt—she owed Zhisheng far too much. She wanted to make it all up to him, to let him kiss his fill, love his fill, to give herself to him completely!

What she hated was how the scene kept shifting. One moment she was in Zhisheng's arms, and the next, the shadow of Li Qiantai—long erased from her mind—suddenly reappeared. Ah... it was something from a very, very distant past. As children, she, Li

Qiantai, and Zhang Zhisheng were always together, getting into mischief. Of the two boys, she had preferred Qiantai. The adults in the village all called Qiantai's father "Old San," while the children called him "Third Uncle." Though he was from another village, everyone knew him well. Every year, in the tenth lunar month when the late-season rice was harvested, he would join the threshing crowds that came to the village.

Third Uncle was the most sought-after hired hand in the area. It was said he cared little for wages and would work with all his might, so every household vied to employ him. He was a regular at Xiukun's home, and whenever he came, he went straight to his old employer. Apart from his heqiang—a pointed carrying pole some called a "sharp yoke"—he owned nothing else. At that time, straw was precious. Most villagers lived in thatched cottages, and straw was needed for roofing. Moreover, for miles around, the land was flat rice fields, with no forests or grassy slopes for firewood, so straw was also used for fuel. Unlike other places where people harvested and threshed the rice in the field, leaving the straw behind to dry, here the cut rice was spread out in the field to dry, then bundled and carried home. After threshing the grain, the straw was tied up and stacked as hay for later use. The sharp yoke, tapered at both ends, was specially designed for carrying bundles of rice.

One year, when Third Uncle came to Tianxi Village for the October harvest, he had a child with him. He said to Xiukun's father, "The boy's mother is gone, so I have to bring him along. He'll share my floor mat—no need for an extra bed. We'll eat from the same portion—no need for the employer to give more. I won't be a