

# A Multimodal Approach to Zhuang-English Translation of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures

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**Abstract**—The Baeu Rodo scriptures are texts sung by boumo, a Zhuang ritual priest at rites. They reflect the primitive belief of the ancient forebears of the Zhuang group in China. As a scriptural heritage of the Zhuang minority nationality, the scriptures have become a significant cultural carrier in the English world through translations. Based on the published English translations, this paper analyzes the combined use of verbal and visual modes in translating the Baeu Rodo scriptures into English. David Holm's *Recalling Lost Souls* is under examination as a case study. Theories of multimodal discourse analysis and intersemiotic translation give guidance for examination and discussion. First, the authors bring under examination how verbal and visual modes interacted to produce *Recalling Lost Souls*, an example of multimodal translation; then they move on to discuss how the translator managed to realize the representational, interactive, and compositional meanings in a multimodal whole. It is concluded that linguistic and non-linguistic modes can work together to produce a multimodal translation, a workable approach to Z-E translation of the Baeu Rodo scriptures leading to higher readability of their translated works in the English world.

**Index Terms**—multimodal approach, Zhuang-English translation, Baeu Rodo scriptures

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term “Baeu Rodo Scriptures” is used to refer to any scriptures that are recited or sung, depending on the context, by “boumo” (an indigenous ritual specialist, also called a Zhuang vernacular priest) for the important life-circle ceremonies of betrothal, marriage, birth, and death, or for cases of dealing with quarrels, summoning lost souls, and driving away devils. The scriptures center around an ancient figure called Baeu Rodo in the Zhuang (one of the fifty-six ethnic groups in China, second largest in population) areas. They recorded and praised the great achievements of Baeu Rodo, who was considered to be the ancestor of the Zhuang people. It is said that he was an all-knowing creator, starting all things under the sky, making rules for the world, and giving advice to people to solve all kinds of problems in reality. They deal with a wide variety of subjects with profound thoughts, full of the original ecological culture of the Zhuang group (Jiang, 2008, pp. 97-100).

The scriptures started to draw the attention of scholars from the circle of translation at the very beginning of the 21st century. A foreign scholar, David Holm, published his first selected translation of the Baeu Rodo scriptures in 2003, and some more works later. A Chinese translator, Han Jiaquan, headed his team to produce a Zhuang-Han-English version in 2012, a condensed one. These books have sparked a heated discussion of the translation studies of the Baeu Rodo scriptures. Topics cover translation principles and strategies at lexical and syntactical levels, perspectives of ethnographic translation, and eco-translatology. However, very few studies have been conducted about the analyses of the visual elements in the translation of Baeu Rodo scriptures.

It is a fact that the Baeu Rodo scriptures have been passed down from generation to generation through the Zhuang religious practitioners who are traditional owners of the Baeu Rodo texts. Such scriptures are recited by boumo at rites. The scriptures are used in the context of a ritual ceremony, in which boumo and audiences communicate naturally. It is a multimodal communication where many elements such as participants, actions, dances, and others contribute to meaning-making. The concept of intersemiotic translation proposed by Jakobson (1959) and the theories of multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; O'Toole, 1994; Painter et al., 2013) bring new light to the translation studies of the Baeu Rodo scriptures. In this paper, the authors are to examine how linguistic and non-linguistic modes are combined to produce a translation as a multimodal whole for higher readability.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Source Texts of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures

*The Baeu Rodo Scriptures* was included in the first national intangible cultural heritage list in China in 2006. Zhang, an expert on Zhuang culture and a high official in the government office of Guangxi, argued that *the Baeu Rodo Scriptures* are the “creation epic” of the Zhuang ethnic group and the “religious literature” of Zhuang folk ballads (1991,

p. 35). Originally, the Baeu Rodo scriptures were kept in the hands of boumo, scattered in villages of the Zhuang region.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the discovery of ritual manuscripts written in the Zhuang character script in the highlands of northwest Guangxi by Zhuang scholars working in isolated areas. These manuscripts appeared to be dedicated to the worship of BaeuRodo. Folklore historians had long documented legends and songs about his exploits and inventions. Those songs had been passed down orally for a very long time and were known as “old songs”. The discovery of a written tradition with all the hallmarks of ancient antiquity was novel and fascinating. The texts were written in largely five-syllable verse, which had long since given way to seven-syllable forms in some of the manuscripts, some of which were centuries old. The academics in Guangxi chose to edit the Baeu Rodo scriptures as one of the first and most important projects for Guangxi when the Central Government in Beijing announced in 1984 that it would invest in a large-scale program to edit and publish important pre-modern documents in the languages of China’s minority peoples.

With the joint efforts of officials and scholars, many manuscripts had been collected for publication. Therefore, some works were produced, among which the most influential ones are: *The Baeu Rodo Scriptures: An Annotated Translation* (Zhang, 1991), containing 22 manuscripts from Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in the south of China; *The Zhuang Scriptures: An Annotated Translation* (He, 2004), which consists of 3 kinds of manuscripts from Yunnan province in the southwest of China; *Annotated Facsimile Edition of the Baeu Rodo Zhuang Boumo Scriptures* (8 volumes) (Zhang, 2004), in which 29 kinds of manuscripts from Guangxi were collected and translated into Chinese; *A New Annotated Facsimile Edition of the Baeu Rodo Zhuang Boumo Scriptures* (3 volumes) (Huang, 2016), which collected and translated 13 manuscripts provided by the Nongs in a remote village in a county named Tianyang in Guangxi. These works are of great significance for scholars in the circles of linguistics, translation, and others. The publication of these works has sparked waves of deeper research and more studies of the Baeu Rodo scriptures from different perspectives.

#### B. Translation Studies of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures

In recent years, ethnic classics have drawn much interest from scholars, experts, and translators thanks to China’s policies for nationalities. Numerous classics of minority ethnic groups have been translated and introduced to overseas readers. It was at the start of the 21st century that the English translation works of the Baeu Rodo scriptures were produced, thus drawing more and more attention from scholars in and out of China. David Holm, an American scholar, chose some texts of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures and translated them into English based on his fieldwork and meticulous way of cultural interpretation. His English versions of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures are: *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors: a Zhuang Cosmological Text from Southwest China* (2003); *Recalling Lost Souls: The Baeu Rodo Scriptures, Tai Cosmogonic Texts from Guangxi in Southern China* (2004) (henceforth *Recalling Lost Souls*); *Hanvueng: The Goose King and the Ancestral King* (2015). Han Jiaquan, a Chinese scholar, had his translated book *The Epic of Baeu Rodo* (2012) published. Han’s version is a condensed one, presenting the readers with the most important content of the Baeu Rodo scriptures in a single version, while Holm’s works are selected ones according to different subject matters.

Since the publication of David Holm’s and Han Jiaquan’s translations, more systematic approaches from many perspectives have begun to mark out an academic investigation in the translation studies of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures. Data from CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) show that a large number of research articles about how to translate the Baeu Rodo Scriptures into English have been published. The first one appeared in 2004, and the number of relevant articles has increased year by year since 2011. The publication reached its peak in 2017, 2019, and 2020. Much focus has been on translation principles by Lu (2010, pp. 23-26), translation strategies by Huang et al. (2008, pp. 169-173), Lu (2011, pp. 111-115) and Lu (2019, pp. 25-32), dealing with actual translation activities in terms of culture and others in lexical and syntactic levels. Many attempts have been made to improve the readability of the English translation of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures from perspectives of cultural translation, thick translation, and ethnographic translation. Only two scholars have mentioned about the translation of Baeu Rodo Scriptures in a multimodal approach (Huang, 2019, pp. 49-53; Chen & Huang, 2019, pp. 96-102, 119). There is still a great deal of room for translation studies of Baeu Rodo Scriptures in the framework of multimodality.

### III. TRANSLATING THE BAEU RODO SCRIPTURES: A MULTIMODAL WAY

The Internet and the integration of multimedia have significantly altered peoples’ lifestyles, particularly in terms of communication. Writing, visuals, gestures, and music are all forms of communication that take place simultaneously in the modern world, creating multimodal communicative situations. Translating, as intercultural communication, should consider multimodal resources. The process of turning Baeu Rodo scriptures into English may involve shifting meanings from one mode to another, transposing a Zhuang text to an English multimodal entirety in chronological, social, and cultural context.

#### A. Multimodal Translation

Around ten years ago, the concept of “multimodality” first appeared in translation studies. Theo van Leeuwen defined multimodality as the fusion of various semiotic modes, such as language and music, in a communicative artifact or event (2005, p. 281). From a multimodal approach, Jewitt claimed that language was only ever one mode nested

within a multimodal ensemble of modes (2009, p. 15). Roman Jakobson's (1959) concept of "intersemiotic translation" serves as the foundation for the consideration of how linguistic and non-linguistic modes interact. Intersemiotic translation would occur if a written text were translated into a different mode, such as music, film, or painting (Munday, 2010, p. 5). Like many other kinds of human communication, translation takes place in not only linguistic mode but also other modes such as images, sounds, colors, voices, and music. According to Kress, meaning is transferred during the translating process. It is "moved across", or "transported", from one modal ensemble to another (2010, p. 124).

Today, translation is seen as a communication act encompassing mode, media, and culture rather than a language shift action. A multimodal text, where verbal cues and visual cues work together to transfer meaning, is created when written words and non-linguistic signs interplay. To write this paper, both Zhuang and English versions of Baeu Rodo Scriptures were used for reference. Among them, the translated version of *Recalling Lost Souls* by David Holm was chosen as a case study. The reason why this book was selected from those was the fact that it has much more illustrations than any other among the published works so the authors could achieve the expected purpose of this research. As a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic modes, *Recalling Lost Souls* can be analyzed in a multimodal framework.

### B. The Use of Language

As a tool of communication, language no doubt plays a vital role in the Z-E translation of the Baeu Rodo scriptures. In *Recalling Lost Souls*, David Holm took full advantage of various forms of language to express meaning. In addition to the translation texts themselves, the core part of the book, the translator provides readers with an abundance of relevant information, including a list of illustrations, a preface, a note on Transcription and Transliteration, abbreviations, and a companion CD. Furthermore, a long introduction of 50 pages is presented, covering the Zhuang, the locality, the religious life of the Northern Zhuang, two important figures Baeu Rodo and Mo Loekgyap, the boumo and their rituals, poetics, and versification in the scriptures, the language of the scriptures, the Old Zhuang Script, their discovery and decipherment, the conventions used in *Recalling Lost Souls*.

Notes take up much space in the book. They are original notes, ethnographic notes, and textual notes. The original notes and ethnographic notes are presented after each scripture's English translation. The original notes, which were written by the Chinese experts in charge of each text, are taken from *The Baeu Rodo Scriptures: an Annotated Translation* (1991), a Chinese edition of the Baeu Rodo Scriptures. Released in 1991 in Nanning, the provincial capital of Guangxi, it is an extensive collection of scriptures including 27 texts and more than 1,230 pages, with interlinear glosses and transcriptions, textual and anthropological annotations, and images of the original manuscript pages. The original notes contain a lot of materials that are essential to comprehend the texts. However, the translator found that those notes are sometimes inaccurate, and he had to add more to them frequently for the benefit of global reading. Thus, he has included a lot of information about the religious and cultural backdrop in his collection of ethnographic notes. The textual notes, which may be found on the companion CD, go into additional detail about certain textual and philological concerns. Additionally, readers will find that a discussion of dubious readings and other issues is important for a fuller understanding of the texts. Notes will clarify, define, instruct, or support the core text, as well as any background information or the pertinent viewpoints and attitudes of the translator.

Apart from pure language, typographic alteration also contributes greatly to constituting meanings. In most cases, verbal signs appear in regular forms. In general, they work as verbal signifiers through lexico-grammar and syntax. However, such elements as paper size, margins, type size and typefaces, alignment, paragraph indentation, and spacing are of significance. For instance, words in bold, italic, or capital may be employed to depict the author's intention to emphasize something. In *Recalling Lost Souls*, David Holm made good use of typographic transformation of font and page layout for some purposes. The typographic alterations can aid to serve as a kind of supplementary or extratextual information. Any writing in the non-regular form will help linguistic signs look more visually apparent.

### C. The Use of Illustration

Five crucial variables go into translation and transmission: who, what, to whom, through what channel, and with what effect. "With what effect" serves as the focal point and goal of all translation endeavors (Hu & Wu, p. 34). For English translations of the Baeu Rodo scriptures, the target readers are mostly English natives to whom Zhuang culture might be unfamiliar or even alien because they live in totally different physical surroundings with unlike historical settings, writing systems, and thinking ways. One of the challenges facing a translator is how to make his/her translated texts understood by English speakers. Characterized by the thinking mode, philosophy, living habits, and social rules of the Zhuang people, the Baeu Rodo scriptures are rich in numerous culture-loaded terms which are a headache for translators. Sometimes, language alone fails to describe some terms because they are too abstract to get across to potential readers. In such cases, non-linguistic modes will do the job. Illustrations are of striking features in *Recalling Lost Souls*. Along with linguistic submodes, 3 maps, 3 figures, and 49 photographic plates are presented. The number of distributions is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN *RECALLING LOST SOULS*

Contents	Number of illustration		
	map	figure	plate
Introduction	3		15
Text 1 Ritual of Prayer before the Domestic Altar			18
Text 2 Scripture on the Creation of Heaven and Earth			16
Text 3 Recitation on the Search for Water			
Text 4 Recitation on the Creation of Fire		1	
Text 5 Scripture on the Redemption of the Rice Spirit			
Text 6 Recitation for the Redemption of the Souls of Water Buffalo, Oxen, and Horses			
Text 7 Scripture on the Redemption of the Souls of Swine			
Text 8 Recitation for the Redemption of the Souls of Ducks and Chickens			
Text 9 Recitation for the Redemption of the Souls of Fish		2	
Text 10 Scripture Reciting the Creation of Houses, Gardens and Fish-nets			
Text 11 Scripture Reciting the Creation of Native Chieftains and Emperors			
Text 12 Scripture Reciting the Creation of Books and Writing			
Total	3	3	49

(a). *Three Maps*

All three maps are shown in the Introduction part, giving readers cultural information about the locality of the Zhuang in which the manuscripts of the Baeu Rodo scriptures were found, and the major Zhuang dialect areas in Guangxi and Yunnan provinces. Map 1 is “Western Guangxi”. It depicts that the western two-thirds of Guangxi province, also known as the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, is home to the Zhuang people. Zhuang can also be found in eastern Yunnan and western Guangdong, and closely related Bouyei live in Guizhou’s southwest. Map 2 is “The Yandong-Yufeng Area: Showing provenance of ritual manuscripts”. From Map 2, readers know that the Baeu Rodo manuscripts under discussion were found in a remote area in the northwest of Guangxi, halfway between the Youjiang and Hongshui rivers, in the southern part of Bama county, the northern part of Tianyang county, and the eastern portion of Baise City. Map 3 is “Major Dialects of Zhuang and Bouyei”. This map indicates that Chinese linguists have identified twelve major Zhuang dialect areas in Guangxi and Yunnan, of which seven are northern dialects, on the basis of linguistic studies done in Guangxi since the early 1950s. The Introduction part is devoted to an account of the geography and history of the Zhuang locality and the three maps co-construct meanings. For a direct-viewing understanding, please see the visual materials in Figure 1.

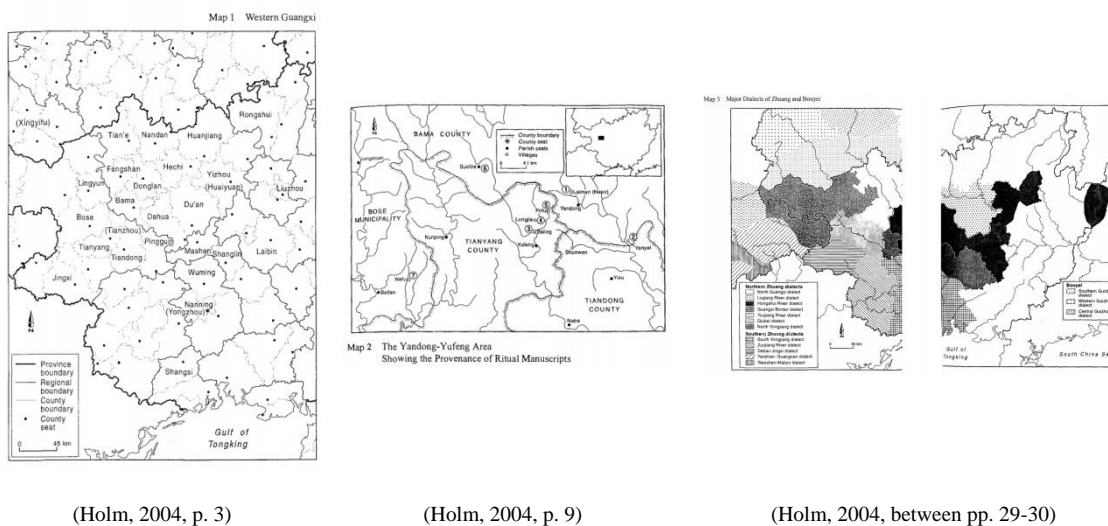


Figure 1. Maps of Locality and Dialects

(b). *Three Figures*

There are three figures in Text 4 and Text 9, one in the former and two in the latter, showing readers Zhuang’s social customs, fishing activities, and fish species. Some culture-related visuals are given (see Figure 2): (1) the “Great Chicken” divination (a manual for divination by chicken bones); (2) the fish-bed (liengz) ( a rectangular panel of woven bamboo or reeds) and fish-trap (reih) (a bamboo weir woven of reeds or bamboo splints, and placed below a spot where

the water level drops substantially, in order to catch fish coming downstream); (3) freshwater fishes of Guangxi. The “Great Chicken” divination reflects the primitive religion of the ancient Zhuang. It is one of the ancient divination methods practiced by using chicken bones for good or ill luck. The fish-bed and fish-trap were used for catching fish in autumn and winter during dry seasons in a stream. They were specially constructed for stream fishing. The terms “fish-bed” and “fish-trap” repeatedly appeared in the text of *Recitation for Use in the Redemption of Souls of Fish*. With illustrations of “fish-bed” and “fish-trap”, the traditional fishing style of the Zhuang people is clearly presented. Different species of fish are mentioned in the scripture text, some even in local names. The translator illustrated four different species so that readers may have a clear picture in mind that what those fishes look like.

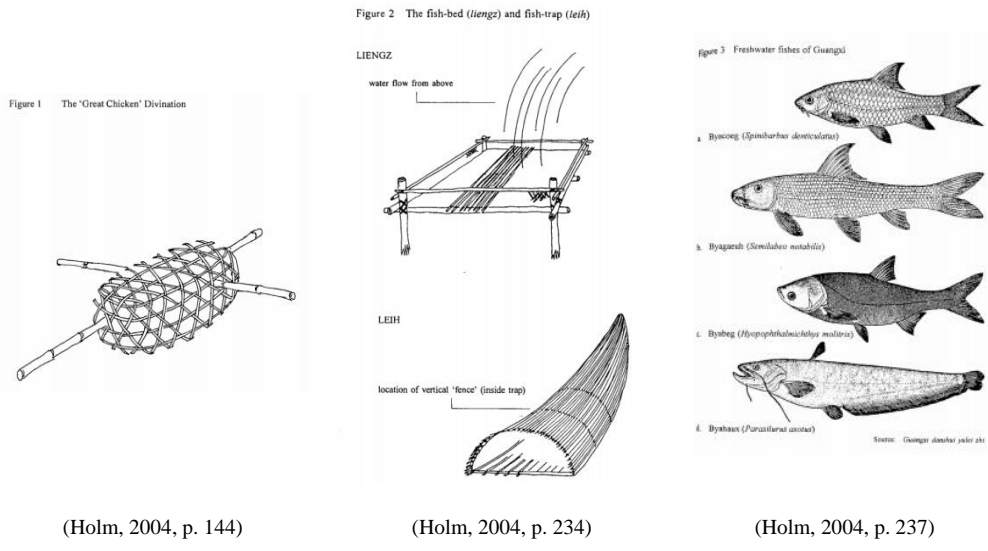


Figure 2. Some Culture-Related Visuals of the Zhuang

(c). *Forty-Nine Photographic Plates*

Forty-nine photographic plates go in three different parts: fifteen plates in the Introduction part, eighteen in Text 1, and sixteen in Text 2. All of them are photos taken by the translator when he had visits to Zhuang villages where the Baeu Rodo manuscripts had been collected. They are concerned with the geographical, historical, cultural, and religious knowledge of the Zhuang group.

In the part of Introduction, fifteen photographic plates portray local people, physical settings, and human activities in the area along the border between Tianyang and Bama counties in the northwest of Guangxi in China. The pictures include (1) the natural environment: the outskirts of Bama county town with wet-fields and gardens, the road junction at Yandong in Bama county showing local transport, a village with fenced gardens, and the traditional farmhouse made of rammed earth (*terre-pise*) of Yufeng, Tianyang county; (2) local people: sellers of local produce, sellers of bean-thread noodles, an old lady selling chickens, sellers of horses in the market village; (3) human activities: girls washing vegetables in the river, a man with harrow and long-handled shovel, boat on the river bank, and a scene of making rice noodles. All these photographic plates work as visual modes for presentation and communication. Because of the space limitations, only four plates are chosen as examples for demonstration (see Figure 3).

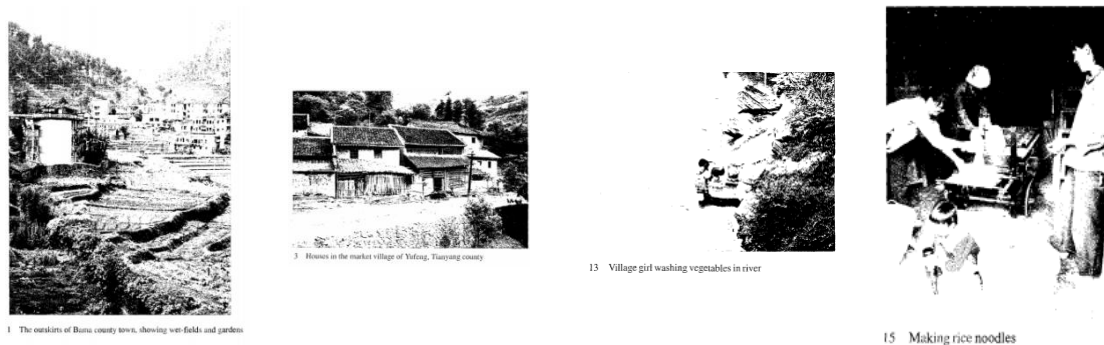


Figure 3. Plates of Living Surroundings and Human Activities (Holm, 2004, inserted between pp. viii-ix)

In Text 1, *Ritual of Prayer before the Domestic Altar*, there are 18 photographic plates. The text is an introductory scripture recited by boumo at the beginning of a ritual. Its function is to serve as an invitation to the relevant gods.

Therefore, a long list of gods in Zhuang culture becomes a headache for the translator to turn into English, because most of those Zhuang gods are unfamiliar to non-Zhuang readers. To make things worse, the scriptures are in verse with only a few words in a line, which is of poetry form, a most difficult task in translation. Of course, annotations are a good choice. However, sometimes even a full page of words fails to give clear information about what is being talked about. For better comprehension, the translator resorted to illustrations. Exactly, 18 photographic plates are presented to convey the intended meanings. Together with the translation text, vivid pictures of a ritual of the Redemption of the Soul of Rice are shown. The ongoing ritual, a real-life communication, involved such elements as participants, events, and actions. In addition to boumo troupe, on-lookers, and ritual singing and dancing, many culture-related items can be seen here; offerings-shed, offerings-table, scrolls of relevant gods or deities, soul-pennant, audience-board (see Figure 4).



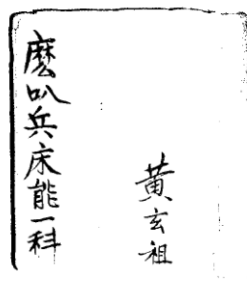
Figure 4. A Ritual of the Redemption of the Soul of Rice (Holm, 2004, inserted between pp. 68-69)

This is a ritual procession to redeem the souls of rice, which is a reflection of the primitive religion of the ancient forbears of the Zhuang people. The ritual is conducted by a boumo troupe to gain release from disaster when the harvest appears to be insufficient. The text of the scripture recited by the boumo explains the history of the development of grains and demonstrates how to cultivate them. The ritual procedures go in the following steps: The Taoist troupe, with the officiating priest in red → Setting out the lanterns for the Redemption of Souls ritual→The officiating priest sings, holding the soul-pennant→The priest sings, accompanied by gongs and cymbals→Setting out rice seedlings for the Redemption of the Soul of Rice→The priests go round the array of rice seedlings, slowly at first→Then running→And finally, leaping→The officiating priest calls the souls to return, holding a rice seedling.

In Text 2, *Scripture on the Creation of Heaven and Earth*, a scripture narrating the formation of the world, sixteen photographic plates unroll before readers’ eyes showing: (1) officiating boumo’s wearings: robes (back view) and bonnet (back); (2) covers of manuscripts of the Baeu Rodo scriptures from different villages or hamlets and corresponding inner pages. Boumo and scriptures play key roles in a ritual. In the northern part of Guangxi, as religious practitioners, a boumo performs a wide variety of rituals of exorcisms, sacrifices, and healing for the benefit of the living, including people, domestic animals, and crops. The rituals range from supplementation of fate for the aged, to healing livestock, and to helping sick children “go through the Passes”. The photographic plates provide information about participants and pages of scriptures. Interactive meanings are made here with close or distant views. In-image and off-image participants communicate through visual modes. Here three plates are picked for demonstration as in Figure 5.



Boumo's robe and bonnet



37 Cover of manuscript from Longjia hamlet, Tianyang (MS 4)



40 Manuscript from Laiman village, Bama (MS 1, Text 2, lines 1-28)

Figure 5. Boumo's Wearings and Manuscripts (from Holm, 2004, following p. 100)

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In the book *Recalling Lost Souls*, the translation texts were organized according to mythic themes, starting with the creation of heaven and earth and continuing in mythos-chronological order through the creation of humankind, the creation of water, the creation of fire, the creation of buffaloes, oxen, pigs, hens, and ducks, down to the invention of writing and the calendar, and the creation of emperors and local chieftains. For an international readership, the translator uses both verbal and non-verbal signs effectively, as indicated by Weissbrod and Kohn (2019, p. 16) that reading the same text with different images or none at all could result in a completely different reading experience. When facing a ritual text, a Zhuang reader will naturally think of a vivid picture: a ritual, offering tables, chanting boumo with scripture texts unfolding before them, host family members, on-lookers, invisible deities, accompanying dances, sounds of gongs and cymbals, the interaction between people on the spot and the like. It is obvious that a ritual manuscript itself speaks aloud and it is of multimodal nature for a Zhuang native. For this reason, a multimodal translation is necessary when the Baeu Rodo scriptures are rendered into English.

As shown in the previous section, David Holm combines linguistic and non-linguistic modes in his English translation for non-Zhuang readers. He takes full advantage of language -- long introduction, original notes, ethnographic notes, and typographical transformation if necessary, together with non-language -- maps, figures, and photographic plates in his translated work, *Recalling Lost Souls*, in which all forms involve meaning-making. The inter-twinning of words and illustrations makes it easier for readers to understand the meanings of the translation as a multimodal whole. Therefore, this book can be considered an example of a multimodal translation of the Baeu Rodo scriptures. It is worth discussing how meanings are realized through a combination of writing and visual modes to produce a translation, thus sparking more suggestions to produce a more readable multimodal translation in a multimodal framework.

The theories of metafunctions and visual grammar bring light to the discussion of the multimodal translation in question. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) propose a “grammar of visual design” and provide a descriptive framework to describe the semiotic resources of images and to analyze how these metafunctions are realized visually based on the three “metafunctions” of Halliday's (1985) theory of Systemic Functional Grammar. Their paradigm consists of three main components: compositional arrangements, interactive resources, and representational resources. The terms “representational”, “interactive”, and “compositional” relate to the corresponding ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions by Halliday as in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HALLIDAY'S METAFUNCTIONS AND KRESS AND VAN LEEUWEN'S VISUAL DESIGN

metafunction	→	visual design
ideational	→	representational
interpersonal	→	interactive
textual	→	compositional

As stated by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 41), the visual, like all semiotic modes, must fulfill many representational and communicational needs to be a complete system of communication. For this, Kress and van Leeuwen have taken the theoretical concept of “metafunction” from Michael Halliday's work in which he proposes the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions as the three main categories. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that these metafunctions are not exclusive to speech or writing but rather apply to all semiotic forms. Any semiotic mode must be capable of capturing features of the world as it is perceived by people. It must be able to project the relationships between a sign's producer and receiver or reproducer. Additionally, it must possess the ability to create texts, which are collections of signs that are coherent both internally within itself and outwardly with the context in which they were created.

It is obvious that in the book *Recalling Lost Souls* the translator actively works with the representational, interactive, and compositional resources of words and images, as well as the various ways they might be put together. Both words and images have narrative and conceptual functions. The illustrations dealt with in the previous section are part of a "multimodally" planned text, a semiotic interplay in which each mode, the verbal and the visual, is given a clear and equal function to work. Those visuals are not only there to support a verbal text or serve as artful adornment. In most cases, an image conveys meaning far more clearly than a huge pile of words. The translator of *Recalling Lost Souls* shows a skillful weaving of words and images to produce a readable translated work in a multimodal way.

There is no doubt that those maps (showing locality and dialect) in Figure 1 have a connection to and are somewhat dependent upon verbal language in order to convey their meaning. The conveyed message is completed by the addition of new and distinct meanings in the given maps. That is to say, the combination of verbal and non-verbal modes leads to higher clarity of the intended meaning in that the same meanings are expressed differently—in a more specific and explicit manner. The landscape components (fields, clusters of trees, buildings, rivers, etc.) depicted in Figure 2 only make sense when viewed in the context of their overall surroundings and the development of that ecosystem. Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide information on the local surroundings, living habits, and human activities of the Zhuang, constituting part of the meaning of the translated text.

Figure 3 gives a vivid description of a ritual event of recalling the lost souls of rice. The participants in it have the roles not of "actor" and "goal" but of "carrier" and "attribute". These pictures are not about something which participants are doing to other participants, but about the way participants come together to make up a larger whole. The main representational principle at the ritual is action or event, while the fundamental organizing principle, or logic, is a sequence in time. The process goes through verb-represented activities (sing, go, run, leap). The activities and events are placed in chronological order, mirroring the order in which they occurred in reality. The pictures in Figure 4 help readers to know more about the practitioner of a ritual and his scriptures, providing information on culture, context, and situation, which are part of the constitution of meaning.

The implementation of the three metafunctions in the Baeu Rodo scriptures is fulfilled by visual meaning and verbal language. Among all the published translations of the Baeu Rodo scriptures, the book *Recalling Lost Souls* is a bit different from the others because a large number of illustrations are used in the book. Of course, there are also some visuals in the other works, but far fewer. To some extent, *Recalling Lost Souls* is a multimodal complimentary use of words and illustrations that consists of a number of visual meaning potentials and their matching visual realizations, which can serve as an example to show how to translate the Baeu Rodo scriptures into English in a multimodal approach. It is the illustrations used in the book that make the translation work different from those in which only language is used or few non-linguistic modes get involved. The convergence of words and illustrations to produce a multimodal translation in translating *Recalling Lost Souls* can be summarized in the following framework (see Figure 6).

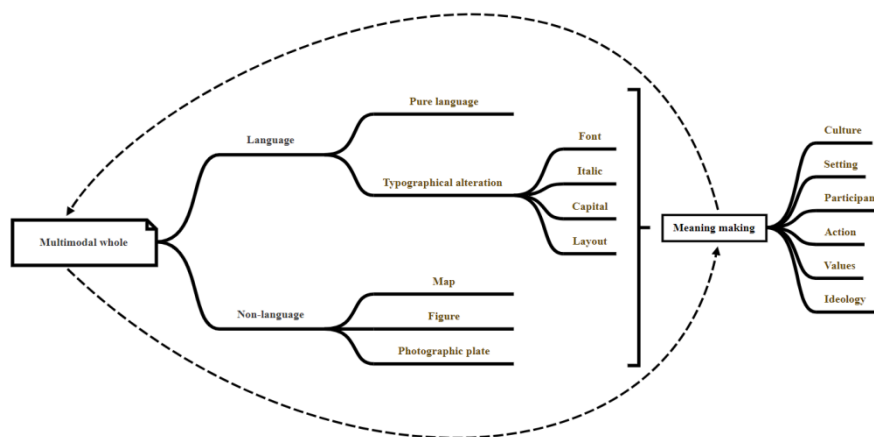


Figure 6. The Convergence of Language and Non-Language in Translating *Recalling Lost Souls*

## V. CONCLUSION

The Zhuang Baeu Rodo scriptures are among the scriptural heritage of minority nationalities in China. The ritual texts are of considerable importance for the study of the mythology and ritual of the Zhuang people. Publications of their Chinese and English editions are of signal contribution to scholarship on the Zhuang. Before the appearance of the written scriptures, folktales about Baeu Rodo's amazing achievements had been transmitted orally from generation to generation among the Zhuang for hundreds of years. After the invention of writing, the owners of the scriptures began to have them recorded, thus producing manuscripts. Many scriptures had an existence of centuries-old, demonstrating a

written tradition of venerable antiquity. Even scholarly Chinese editions give long lists of glosses and notes. In translating into English, a translator's work involves far more than a simple translation of a source text, its glosses, and notes. A closer investigation is needed, fieldwork gets involved, and illustrations are also included. Therefore, verbal and non-verbal modes are employed to produce a multimodal translation.

The book *Recalling Lost Souls* is a combined use of different meaning-making resources. Both linguistic and non-linguistic modes are involved in producing a more readable translation. Submodes of maps, figures, photographic plates, and fonts interact in communicative events. The case of *Recalling Lost Souls* is among the first attempts to adopt a multimodal approach to the Zhuang-English translation of the Baeu Rodo scriptures. The presentational, interactive, and compositional meanings are realized through actions, eye contact and involvement of participants, organization of lines of words, and elements of visuals. Perspectives, close and distant views work together to express foreground or background information, contributing to meaning constitution. With the development of technology, a multimodal translation can appear both on-screen and off-screen. More modes can be employed to translate the Baeu Rodo scriptures into English as a more workable approach to turning Zhuang classics into English. As to how to have a more effective multimodal Z-E translation of the Baeu Rodo scriptures, more scholars with expertise are expected to join in the force of minority classics translation.

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