

CHAPTER 5 THE SOCIAL FUNCTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE NOSE FLUTES

According to Mei-Ling Xu and Lu-Fen Yan¹, the curved nose flute with the hundred pace snake design is the distinguishing feature of the Paiwan nobility. Besides, serving as symbol of power, the nose flute is thought to be an emotional expression of the Paiwan.

Below is the list of expressions associated with the Paiwan nose flute.

5.1. Expressing the Sound of Hundred-Pace Snakes

In the film *Sounds of Love and Sorrow*, one of performers, Zhong-Xin Jiang, explained that the Paiwan nose flute is used to imitate the sound of the hundred-pace snake, which, according to the Paiwan legend, is their ancestor. When the sky darkens or when a storm is coming, the cry of the hundred-pace snake warns the Paiwan of the coming danger. The Paiwan believe that the sound of the hundred pace snake is similar to the sound made by the nose flute. Also when the hundred-pace snakes raise their heads it acts as an indicator of danger. Thus, Paiwanese ancestors created nose flutes that imitated the sounds of hundred-pace snakes in order to warn people of danger. The nose-flute players pressed the holes of the nose flute when they were performing, and the sounds were sharp and long, which were very similar to the sounds of hundred-pace snakes. This is also an instrument that honors the hundred-pace snake.

¹ Mei-Ling Xu and Lu-Fen Ya, *Taiwan's Music*, 2006, p 25.

Chun-Fa Tung explained² that when hundred-pace snakes were in danger, their sound would change a lot. He tried to play the sounds of hundred-pace snakes with the researcher's several nose flutes. One of double-pipe nose flutes could play a sound similar to the sound of hundred-pace snakes, but it should have been lower down the scale. Because the range of materials and the makers' technique used in construction, the sounds of nose flutes are frequently totally different. As Xiu-Yu Yang mentioned³, after completing the nose flutes, makers have to adjust the sounds of nose flute by calling upon their personal experience. Sauniaw explained⁴ that the sound of nose flutes is lonesome. Her teacher, Jin-Cheng Shih Yu, told her that he preferred long and wide nose flute, which sounded lower. He also mentioned that players played the nose flute by combining their feelings with the sound of the nose flutes.

² Comments on January 17th of 2008.

³ Interviewing on August 27th of 2007.

⁴ Sauniaw, 2000. p 36.

5.2. Expression of Love

In the film of '*Sounds of Love and Sorrow*', one of performers, Zhong-Xin Jiang, says that when he was young, he played the nose flute on his way to his girl friend's house. When he was near her house, the sound of nose flute was long and delicate. The nose flute was thought to be an expression of his love. The girl friend was moved by the music.

According to Zhong-Xin Jiang, when he was a teenager he and his friend, Xin-De Fu, courted a young lady, by playing the nose flute. But Xin-De Fu felt that he could not play the nose flute well and decided to learn another instrument instead.⁵ When Zhong-Xin Jiang was 18 years old, he and other young boys went to the young ladies' houses. When he courted the ladies, only he could play the nose flute. He could even walk and play the nose flute at the same time, because he was young and had enough breath to play the nose flute. No matter where he went to visit young ladies, everyone could hear where he was. He could not trick people as to his location because of the flute. Sometimes when he courted young ladies, he did not play the nose flute intentionally because he was afraid that people would know where he was. However, while courting ladies, he played the flute all night long in Pinghe village because nobody could play this instrument. Some ladies would occasionally hide his nose flute, though he did not understand why they did this. The researcher is inclined to think that some of the ladies would hide the flute because they did not want him to play the flute in courting other women. They were jealous.

For the Paiwan and the Rukai, playing the nose flute was the beginning of courting ladies for engagement. Ladies would judge who was playing the nose flute after listening the music. Some of ladies' parents were satisfied with sound of and

⁵ Tai-Li Hu, Shan-Hua Qian and Chao-Cai Lai, 2001, p 95, p 97.

what players playing the nose flute and then invited players to come inside the houses to chat. Sometimes this would lead to a discussion of engagement.⁶ From this, we can see the importance of playing the nose flute.

The young boys of the Li tribe in Hainan have a similar way of using the nose flute to court young girls. These boys gather together and go to girls' houses. The boys are able to play the nose flute. The music encourages the boys and girls to have a good time. They play the nose flute, chat, laugh and enjoy the evening. The young boys' do this in order to gain the chance to court their favorite young ladies.

Though far apart these two tribes use the nose flute in similar ways.

In the researcher's opinion, this was a good way for young boys to express their feelings. Zheng-Xin Jiang said⁷ that in the past there were no disputes among young boys if one boy knew that his friend was pursuing a certain young lady and other boys would not court the same lady. This seems to have been a good way to maintain social stability by avoiding conflict over partners.

The research admired this and hoped that in modern society a similar practice will immerge. In this way, no lovers will kill their partners. In ancient times, the Paiwan people used their wisdom to play the nose flute in order to chase the young ladies and show their affection.

⁶ Tsui-Feng Shih, 2005. p 231, 232.

⁷ Interviewing on January 23rd of 2006.

5.3. Expression of joy during Weddings

Wei-Ye Zheng in the film *Sounds of Love and Sorrow* says that nose flute players usually played the nose flute during weddings. Before Zhi-Sheng Kou's wedding, when the research met him on January 27th of 2007, the researcher asked if he would be playing the nose flute during his wedding. He answered that he has not decided yet, as he has been very busy. He also said it would depend on his guests. The researcher got to know Zhi-Sheng Kou through Jiunn-Yih Chang and Xin-Zhi Tung. Later Shui-Neng Xie told the researcher that Zhi-Sheng Kou played the nose flute during his wedding and played it quite well.

According to Rong-Zhang Guo, people could not play the nose flute on their wedding day,⁸ but in some weddings like the one of Zhi-Sheng's Kou, nose flute music was played. This is because the tunes used for weddings and funerals were the same.⁹ The researcher found this strange because of the different emotions associated with the two events. The researcher asked several nose-flute players why this was the case, but none of them were able to explain the reasons behind this phenomenon clearly.

Wen-Li Dong remarked¹⁰ that when working for his wedding company, he lends his nose flute to married couples so they could take pictures with it. The nose flute continues to symbolize the love of the male partner even in modern times. Wen-Li Dong combined traditional weddings and modern weddings for new couples.

Xiu-Ji Li remarked that on the wedding day, the player performed the nose flute, frequently making ladies feel and begin crying.

Chao-Cai Lai remarked that in his church, during weddings he would invite the

⁸ Tai-Li Hu, Shan-Hua Qian, and Chao-Cai Lai, 2001, p 21.

⁹ Interviewing Chao-Cai Lai on December 1st of 2007.

¹⁰ Interviewing on November 13th of 2007.

old nose-flute players to play the nose flute in order to celebrate the wedding. Because he is a pastor and officiates the ceremony, he does not play the nose flute during the wedding.

These examples illustrate that in modern times, the nose flute continues to play an important role in Paiwan weddings. It is good to see that this use of the nose flute is helping to keep its traditional role alive among the wedding guests in wedding ceremony.

5.4. Expression of Sorrow and Memory

Kun-Zhong Xu explained in the film *'Sounds of Love and Sorrow'* that when someone died, the performer played the nose flute during the relative's funeral. This act is said to express the sorrow and loss when people feel at the death of the dead person. Yet, Zhong-Xin Jiang explained ¹¹ that if the chief was dead, people could not plant for ten days. Furthermore, when the chiefs passed away, nose-flute players would play their instruments. The reason behind this is the nose flutes role as the traditional instrument of the nobility.¹²

Nose flute players are said to have played the nose flute in order to comfort people. The sounds of nose flutes also represented the crying of people. A long time ago, if a commoner passed away, nose-flute players could not play the nose flute for them as noblemen forbade this. On January 23rd of 2006, Jun Jiang explained that when he missed his grandfather, Zhong-Xin Jiang, he played the nose flute and listened to CDs, which featured he and his grandfather playing. He was 10 year old then. At the time, he had represented his grandfather at a performance for the Sydney Olympic games in 2000. Though he was afraid, the thought of his grandfather emboldened him to play the nose flute well and gave him the confidence to face the audience.

On August 26th of 2007, Ya-Ge Yang told me that when Zhong-Xin Jiang passed away he had missed his grandfather very much. Because of this reason, he had continued learning to play the nose flute in memory of his grandfather. He also tried to memorize the music his grandfather played. He listened to the CDs that his grandfather had recorded. Since he could not play all of them, he learned from his

¹¹ Tai-Li Hu, Shan-Hua Qian, and Chao-Cai La , 2001, p 101.

¹² Tai-Li Hu and Xiu-Ling Nang, 1995, p 101.

cousin, Jun Jiang, too. After he had learned to play the nose flute, he played the nose flute whenever he missed his grandfather.

He said that the nose flute music saddened him because his grandfather no longer lived. On August 26th, Zheng-Xin Jiang recounted that his father, Zhong-Xin Jiang, was forced by Zheng-Xin Jiang's grandparents to marry Zheng-Xin Jiang's mother. But, his father was in love with another woman. Since she was the first child in her family, and Zhong-Xin Jiang was also the first born, they could not get married according to the custom of the Paiwan. They were forced to separate from each other. When Zhong-Xin Jiang came to hear that she was sick, he played the nose flute for her. After she died, he played sad nose-flute music in memory of her. Zheng-Xin Jiang's wife saw that her husband missed his former girl friend instead of her. She was able to understand the feelings and forgave her husband.

Wen-Li Dong said on November 13th of 2007 that whenever he missed his grandfather, Jin-Cheng ShihYu, he played the nose flute.

Ya-Ge Yang said that when he missed his grandfather, Zhong-Xin Jiang, he also played the nose flute.

Therefore, according to Zhong-Xin Jiang, Jun Jiang, Wen-Li Dong and Ya-Ge Yang, playing the nose flute is expression of missing someone.

5.5. Expression of Friendship and Bravery

Friendship

Wei-Ye Zheng and Zhong-Xin Jiang¹³ explained that when noblemen gathered together, they would sing songs and when they were tired, a nobleman might take the nose flute and play it¹⁴. Nose flutes and music are thus a form of entertainment that serves as a social activity among the Paiwan.

For a long time, life in the mountains did not offer a vast range of entertainments. The nose flute offered an excellent reason for people to gather together in aboriginal society. Young boys and girls could gather at the girls' houses. From the perspective of parents, this was no doubt an advantageous situation and one that was wise to encourage. Rong-Zhang Guo explained¹⁵ that young boys often went the '*tsakal*' to play the nose flute, where young people gathered together.

Bravery

Sauniaw remarked¹⁶ that most of nose-flute players were men-noblemen and powerful oldest men. Also, the men who were called brave men could play the nose flute any time.

Before long, when men hunt the head of people and when they returned their village and were arriving there, they sang victorious songs. The men who hunt head of enemies sang songs first and other teammates accompanied later. When men arrived their home with their songs, they added how many heads they hunt and what

¹³ Tai-Li Hu, Shan-Hua Qian and Chao-Cai Lai, 2001. p 25.

¹⁴ Tai-Li Hu, Shan-Hua Qian and Chao-Cai Lai, 2001. p 23, p 25.

¹⁵ Tai-Li Hu, Shan-Hua Qian and Chao-Cai Lai, 2001. p 21.

¹⁶ Sauniaw, 2000,p58.

the sex was. People who were in their village heard the songs which were sung by the victorious men and immediately welcomed the brave men home. At this time, they competed who hunt the heads most-who was the best and who was the worst. Who hunting the heads most would be the bravest man and through playing nose flute, men made sure to show their bravery in order to enhance the level of their class in this village. In addition, the most important thing was to be praised by other people. This showed that the nose flute was played by the brave men.

The other saying was that nose flute 'was special used' by the powerful men-'special used' in the Paiwan language was *Timeti*.