

The Diversity and Shared Culture of Lusheng in Guangxi: An Interethnic Symbol in Southwest China

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ABSTRACT

The lusheng, a traditional Chinese bamboo wind instrument, is predominantly located in southwestern China, where ethnic minorities reside. In Guangxi, this instrument has assumed several shapes. For instance, Sanjiang possesses a six-pipe lusheng, Rongshui features a fifteen-pipe variant, and Longlin showcases enormous examples measuring six meters in height. Collectively, these encompass over 10 distinct varieties, with heights varying from 30 cm to 6 meters. The lusheng has historically evolved beyond its musical purpose to serve as a spiritual emblem for the Dong, Miao, Yao, and other ethnic communities. During events like the Miao New Year, Slope Meetings, and the Pan Wang Festival, its booming tones reverberate through communities, functioning as ceremonial fanfares and repositories of collective memory. The performance system demonstrates extensive dimensionality. Solo compositions such as "Golden Pheasant Dance" exhibit exceptional delicacy; unison renditions by several musicians produce profound reverberations; and the most visually striking is "lusheng caitang," where hundreds of performers encircle bronze drums in coordinated choreography. The Song Dynasty "tayao" custom is entirely preserved in the Dong ethnic "Duoye" dances of Sanjiang and the Miao "Slope Meeting" festivals of Rongshui. The lusheng contains a cultural code, with tunes that express courting, recount ethnic epics, and enable competitive "sound dueling." These bamboo pipes create a nonverbal linguistic system, enhancing the instrument's significance in three ways: as a ritual tool for spiritual contact, a living historical archive, and a medium for social engagement. In 2008, Dong Ethnic Lusheng Music was inscribed on China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List, therefore affirming its distinctive status within the nation's cultural heritage storehouse.

Keywords: Guangxi, China, Lusheng, Diversity, Shared Culture

INTRODUCTION

The lusheng belongs to the sheng category of musical instruments, together with the sheng of the Han and the gourd sheng of other people living in China. They are all free reed instruments. According to

ancient unidentified documents, the lusheng is also called lusha and originated in the Guangxi district during the Southern Song Dynasty. The lusheng is still an important wind instrument among people living in Guangxi. In the course of time and

development, the lusheng varies in the number of pipes. It becomes popular among the Miao, Tong, Yao, and Zhuang in southern China and Southeast Asian countries. Though not as well-known as the lusheng of the Miao in Guizhou, the Guangxi lusheng possesses its own diversity and uniqueness in types, ways of playing, and music repertoire.

METHOD

A. Types of Lusheng

The lusheng varies in types according to different places. In the course of time and history, the Guangxi lusheng is most popular in the east, west, and north of Guangxi. Typologically, the lusheng can be categorized into the six-foot lusheng and eight-foot lusheng as mentioned in ancient documents of the Song Dynasty. Recently, it falls into ten categories: six-feet with six tones, six-feet with seven tones, eight-feet with eight tones, six-feet with five tones, six-feet with four tones, four-feet with two tones, and some others. Now it's an indispensable traditional musical instrument of the Zhuang, Tong, Miao, and Yao in Guangxi.

1. Origin and Characteristics of the Lusheng

The lusheng has a long historical standing and was first documented in the "Gui Hai Yu Heng Zhi-Musical instruments" by Chengda Fan in the Song Dynasty, which was a masterpiece about folk customs in ancient Guangxi. It says that the lusha is a great amusement of the Yao, an instrument that looks like the xiao¹ and has eight pipes lengthways and one pipe crosswise. Hulusheng brings people great joy." The geographer Qufei Zhou in the Southern Song

Dynasty wrote about the lusheng in his "Questions on the Ling Area: " The lusheng has a similar shape as the ancient musical instrument xiao, which is made of bamboo. There are one pipe vertically and eight pipes horizontally. People blow the vertical pipe and make beautiful music." Musicians of the lusheng explain "lusha" as created by shifting of phonics to "lusheng". Moreover, the characteristics and types of lusheng correspond with those of the lusha. It is deduced from the documents that the lusheng first appeared in Guangxi and areas nearby in during the Song Dynasty. This has been an eight-feet lusheng. Besides, Kuang Lu living during the Ming Dynasty reported about a six-feet lusheng in his book "Chiya". He says that "The Tong prefer music for ritual animal sacrifices. They play huqin² and six-feet lusheng." Therefore, it is known that there were already eight-feet and six-feet lusheng in the time of the Ming Dynasty.

2. Configuration and Types of Lusheng

The configuration of lusheng is described in ancient documents long ago. Qufei Zhou of the Song Dynasty wrote about the lusha of the Yao which is made of bamboo with one pipe vertically and eight pipes horizontally similar to the configuration of the modern lusheng. The modern lusheng consists of the following parts: windchest, pipe, and acoustic resonator. The windchest is a spindle-shaped body of hollow pine or cedar wood banded with bark or bamboo spilt, that is connected with the long bamboo mouth piece. The bamboo pipe are inserted into the windchest in rows on the left and right side, which forms then a right angle

¹ An end blown flute.

² A bowed string instrument.

with the windchest. In each pipe is a copper tongue fixed at the connecting point with the windchest. The tongue cut is a triangle or a narrow trapezoid shaped with knife. A sound hole is excavated near the side of windchest and the acoustic resonator is installed on the top of the pipe and fastened with ropes. There is a great variety of types and configurations among the lusheng instruments, that are used in different occasions, districts and among different people and communities.



Figure 1. Components of the Lusheng, including the wind chamber, pipes, reeds, and resonators. (Source : by Chu Zhuo)

Over a long period of time, many different types of lusheng were produced and distributed in different districts. The Guangxi lusheng can be divided into four-feet, six-feet, and eight-feet type according to the number of pipes. There is another categorization according to the phonation: high-pitch, middle-pitch and low-pitch lusheng. The length of the pipes of the high-pitch lusheng is normally not longer than 56 centimeters, of the middle pitch lusheng approximately 100 centimeters to 170 centimeters, and of the the low-pitch lusheng longer than 170 centimeters. Detailed information follow here:

a. Four-feet Lusheng

As the name tells, it is a kind of lusheng with four pipes in a windchest, which could be divided into another three different types

according to the series of tuning. The four-feet lusheng with three pitches could only produce three different tones because one of the four pipes has no tongue. Its tuning is la do re、sol la do、sol do re. The four-feet lusheng with two pitches could only produce two tones because two of the four pipes do not have a tongue and is tuned la do. And there is a four-feet lusheng that produces only one tone for the same reason. A lusheng in middle-pitch and low-pitch range are usually performed in a lusheng band, seldom as solo instruments.

b. Six-feet Lusheng

The six-feet lusheng contains six pipes attached to the windchest and can be divided into four different types according to their tuning. The six-feet lusheng with seven pitches has in its thickest pipe two tongues and in all others only one. This type comes in two tunings: la do re mi sol (la si) and sol la do re mi (sol si). The six-feet lusheng is mostly used among the Miao in the northwest of Guangxi as ensemble and solo instrument. The six-feet lusheng with six pitches lusheng has in each pipe one tongue and its tunings comes in four variations: la do re mi sol la, sol la do re mi sol, re mi sol la do re and sol la do re fa sol. It is used in many occasions among the Zhuang, Tong, and Miao in Guangxi.



Figure 2. Six-feet Soprano Lusheng. (Source : by Chu Zhuo)



Figure 3. Six-feet Bass Lusheng.
(Source : by Chu Zhuo)

c. Eight-feet Lusheng

The length of the first pipe is around 70 centimeters with some unique characteristics., This type exists with two tunings: sol la do re mi sol la do and la do re mi sol la do re. It is particularly often used as solo performance instrument of the Tong.



Figure 4. Eight-feet Soprano Lusheng.
(Source : by Chu Zhuo)

d. Lusheng pipe

A lusheng pipe is also called “Mang pipe” or “Ground pipe” used by both the Tong and the Miao in Guangxi. The body of a lusheng pipe is made of a large section of

bamboo with the bottom sealed but other nodia between the interesections opened.; There is a long thin lusheng tube with an incorporated copper tongue at bottom and a mouthpiece on the top that isand inserted into a large bamboo from above. There are two types of lusheng pipes: a monophonic pipe and a diphonic pipe. A monophonic lusheng pipe can only produce one pitch, approximately “la” as there is a tiny lusheng tube placed inside the pipe, while a diphonic lusheng pipe can produce the pitches “La” and “Mi”. It is usually made in two ways. The first way is to insert two tiny lusheng tubes with tongues into the larger bamboo pipe from above; the other is to open all the intersections of the bamboo and insert one lusheng tube with a tonuge from each side. Lusheng pipes can be categorized into three types according to their sizes. The small size is called middle voice pipe with a length of 80 centimeters; medium size bass pipe with a length of 120 centimeters and the large size double bass pipe with a length of 180 centimeters.

The Guangxi lusheng varies in types and configurations among districts and people on different occasions with different ways of playingfrom a historical and actual viewpoint.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Performance of Lusheng Music

Many musical compositions exist for the lusheng in Guangxi. People perform solo, in groups of the same and in ensembles with different lusheng for various rural activities, of which many are performed with dancing. They are usually called lusheng music or lusheng dance music. Ancient documents

mention some of the lusheng performances. For instance, Kuang Lu in the time of the Ming dynasty wrote in his masterpiece “Chi Ya” that the Tong play a six-foot lusheng, sing songs with eyes closed, shake head and hands, which was named the Hun Dun dance³. Guangxi lusheng music developed and still changes over a long period of time. Now, it is an indispensable musical activity in celebrations of the Zhuang and the Tong in the east, west, and north of Guangxi. It has various characteristics resulting in different music styles and art forms.

1. Analysis of Current Guangxi Lusheng Repertoire

In Guangxi, the lusheng is mostly played by males while females watch or dance to the music. The Guangxi lusheng music has strong local features in various performance types and a vast number of performers. “According to the ways and types of performance, The Guangxi lusheng repertoire is practically divided into lusheng solo, lusheng unison, lusheng ensemble and lusheng and drum chant.”⁴ Each type is used in different occasions and among different people.

a. Lusheng Solo

Lusheng Solo is played by only one performer who is usually a local talent. The performance categories can be further divided into lusheng solo without dance and lusheng solo with dance. A lusheng solo without dance is found among the Miao and the Tong in Rong Shui and San Jiang, in the north of Guangxi. The Miao use the six-foot lusheng with six pitches while the Tong use the six-foot lusheng with six and the eight-foot

lusheng with eight pitches. Lusheng repertoire is commonly used in during activities of “fence visiting” and “Bride picking up” with corresponding music, or sometimes in daily entertainment. Because there is no dance and the performers can focus on playing the lusheng, the performance techniques can vary within one piece and the music sounds rather diversified and more attractive. In the other category, there is also some dancing to the music of lusheng solo. It is commonly played with a small six-foot lusheng having seven pitches among the Miao nationality in Xi Lin, Na Po and Long Lin districts in the northwest of Guangxi. This repertoire is mostly applied during local activities such as wedding celebration, funeral arrangement, godliness ceremonies and slope jumping with numerous songs. The performance is about to deliver three types of contents. The emotional dance expresses all sorts of emotions such as joy and sadness. The story telling dance is about animals imitated by the performers or tales from long time ago. And there are also acrobatic dances that show challenging movements, jumps and bends to the music.

b. Lusheng unison

Lusheng unison music is played by many performers together at the same time with a six-foot lusheng having seven pitches and with a length of about 130 centimeters used by the Miao in Long Lin, Xi Lin, and Na Po districts of Guangxi. The lusheng unison is usually played on the ‘Slope Jumping Festival’ in Miao districts around the country. It can be divided into two categories according to the group arrangement and activity characteristics. The first type is a competitive

³ Hongen Lan, “Study On Chi Ya”, P46: Hun Dun Dance means when people do the lusheng dance, they shake head and legs, playing and dancing. When it comes to the climax, people get the feeling of chaos in the head. Lu Kuang called

it “Hun Dun Dance”.

⁴ Xiuzhao Yang, Theory On Guangxi Lusheng Music, Art Exploration, 2005(6), P7

unison, which is seen during a competition among many groups. Each group is required to play the same song with the same-tuned lusheng, but different types are permitted. That team wins that plays more songs and dances under conditions of higher-difficulties. The other type is performing unison. During the 'Slope Jumping' activity, a performing group made of several or a dozen or so people plays the same song with the same type of lusheng. The performers play and dance in a circle followed by many female dancers in neat and simple costumes.

c. Lusheng ensemble

Lusheng ensemble music is played by a large number of musicians or even hundreds of performers with different types of lushengs. It is an important repertoire of lusheng performances of the Zhuang, the Tong, the Miao, and the Yao in Rong Shui and San Jiang districts in Guangxi. The most-used musical instruments are the four-feet lusheng, six-feet lusheng and the lusheng tube. The lusheng ensemble, also called "Tang", is mainly organized with middle pitched lushengs, fewer higher and lower pitch instruments, and two-part types the fewest. The ensemble is played during popular activities and daily entertainment. The performance within the village takes usually place in the lusheng lawn of the Miao and the Gulou Lawn of the Tong, which are open air places in the wild surroundings that serve activities between villages. A lusheng ensemble has three ways of performing. The first type is called "Zou Chui" which is played while walking at the same time. It is mostly played during walking on the occasion of the 'Slope Jumping' and in other activities. Popular pieces are "Walking Melody" and "Village Visiting Melody". The second type, which is also the most common

and important one, is called "Wu Chui" and is played for dancing on many occasions, among which the slope festival is the most magnificent. The third type is "Cai Tang" which is actually a solo lusheng performance. On the basis of "Wu Chui", it adds the female dancing anticlockwise around the outer circle by playing the "Cai Tang Melody".

d. Lusheng and Drums Chant

Lusheng and drums chant is a unique performance style of Guangxi that is popular in Yao lowland districts of Fu Chuang County in Guangxi. The musical instruments used are the six-feet lusheng with six pitches framed by the big long drum, the small long drum, a small gong and the bamboo flute. The organization of the ensemble differs from indoor to outdoor performance. During the performance, lusheng and bamboo flute provides the melody and the harmonic support; while the long drums and gongs provide the meter marking and rhythmic beats. The drummers also chant some meaningless syllables. The lusheng and drums chant is only used in the worship ceremony redeeming vows to the Pan God, also called "Tiao Pan God". The original sets of pieces are 12, but only 9 were passed down such as "Take Bows Four Times", "Zuo Tang Qi", and "Five Toes".

2. Other Lusheng Activities

Lusheng competition and Cai Tang are both popular activities of the Tong. Tong districts usually hold the activities during the festivals of January, February 2nd, March 3rd, and April 8th of the lunar calendar. On those days, people gather from all directions, bustling with noise and excitement.

a. Lusheng Competition

Lusheng competition is a competitive traditional activity frequently held by the Zhuang, the Tongue, the Miao, and the Yao. People get together from nearby villages to celebrate the traditional festival by competing in lusheng playing and dance. Each lusheng ensemble can choose different pieces from the lively “Ying Bing Melody”, the magnificent “Cai Tang Melody” and the “Song Ke Melody” expressing hesitation. The lusheng competition is organized in entire villages or of groups. The lusheng sound competition is judged by the standard of unification and loudness; the lusheng dance competition is judged regarding the dancing movements. The lusheng competition is a one-to-one activity, the judge stand on the slope far away and uses a flag to deliver the result of the competition.

b. Cai Tang “Opening dance”

Lusheng Cai Tang is another popular traditional activity in Tong districts of Guangxi. Every ensemble, called “Tang” gathers in a circle and dances. During the activity, each lusheng “Tang” establishes a lusheng pole at the center of the circle, attached with the team flag on the top. Around the pole there are 4-6 people playing a Mang pipe as the bass accompaniment. In the circle around it play the Tong male their lusheng decorated with rooster tail feathers; and in the outermost circle dance the best-dressed Tong girls anticlockwise, holding colorful handkerchieves, an umbrella and wear heavy silver jewelries. Their dancing movements according to the rhythm are neat and uniform. The lusheng directors lead the

performance of each team. When the of different basic tunes change such as from “Cai Tang Melody”, “Tao Hua Melody”, the dances change their movements, too. In San Jiang County, a tug-of-war called “drum tug” is added to the end of the Cai Tang activities to round up the day.

Lusheng Cai Tang is quite popular in the Rong Shui Miao autonomous county. It is also called “male play music - female dance” and is held from August to February. Among the Miao⁵, a large number of Lusheng Cai Tang activities are held annually and during the Spring Festival. People set up a lusheng pole at the center of the stage and one bass lusheng, double bass lusheng and Mang pipe are placed around it. Scores of people play small lushengs with rooster feathers at the outer circle, playing and dancing. Hundreds of girls dance to the music in the outermost circle, which makes the performance extraordinarily boisterous and joyful.



Figure 5. Lusheng Cai Tang.
(Source : by Chu Zhuo)

3. Artistic Characteristics of Guangxi Lusheng Music

Guangxi Lusheng Music shows its characteristics in the way of tuning, melody development, and musical structure.

⁵ Year of Miao, also called “Neng Niang” in Miao language, it is the most grand traditional festival. The date of the festival depends on districts. In Rongshui

county of Guangxi, the Miao nationality defines the Nov. 31st of lunar calendar the New Year, they celebrate the new year from the following day.

a. Tunings

Guangxi lusheng music bases its mode on Yu mode⁶ and Hui mode⁷, however, Yu mode pieces make up to 90 percent of the repertoire. Lusheng music is mainly played using a sixtone row, but Guangxi lusheng music shows a lot of two tone, three tone and eight tone rows besides the usual six tone row (Figure 1). The variety of tunings forms the foundation of Guangxi lusheng music.

The Tong and the Miao in Guangxi pay great attention to the choice and use of lusheng pitches. The players are aware of the function and sound attributes of lusheng through the pitches played. The focus on the pitch is one of the characteristics of Guangxi lusheng music. Therefore, the Guangxi lusheng has 10 pitches different from other lusheng traditions such as No.5, No.5-6, No.6, No.7.

b. Development of Melody

The melody of Guangxi lusheng mainly lays in the middle and lower register, especially in the unison performances of Guangxi lusheng repertoire. The percentage of middle and low pitch instruments in the ensemble is there up to or higher than 75%. The core melody of the lusheng unison music is carried out using three pitches, i.e. la, do, re, of the middle and low pitched lusheng. The melody is then elaborated from this core melody related to the basic pitches. The melody development of almost every Guangxi lusheng piece applies repetitions, slightly changed repetitions, keeping the beginning or keeping the end, expansion and parallel movements. For example, among the

Miao unison “Pieces of sending friends off” recorded by Yuzhuang Tang, the core melody is consisting of la, do, re, from which the melody is elaborated by repetitions and modifications.

相送曲

融水县
杨建伯演奏 唐裕仕记谱

Among the Tong lusheng unison “Match Melody” recorded by Guofan Chen, the tuning is la, do, re. The core melody is mainly on la and re, which correspond to their characters intonation. The four music lines are all developed by the repetition of the core melody provided in the first bar. For instance, the beginning of the piece is developed by the single repetition of the two bars:

The structure of greatly promotes the further development of the melody.

比赛曲（一）

三江县
吴南金花演奏 陈国凡记谱

The main characteristics of Guangxi lusheng music is the simple core melody and its elaboration through repetition and modification. Performers of Guangxi lusheng

⁶ Translated into Western standards, the Yu Mode begins with a major submediant or a minor tonic (羽 mode in Chinese). Example: A C D E G (A) is seen as A-Yu mode.

⁷ Hui mode (徽 mode in Chinese) is derived from the Anhui mode that is common in Hubei.

music can express abundant emotions through these methods though they could also tapply other melodic ornamentations.

c. Musical Structure

Considering the musical structure, Guangxi lusheng repertoire can be divided into single-section structure, combined-section structure, and varying structure. The single-section structure is simple and indivisible, meaning the underlying musical idea of the piece could not be divided into different parts. Listeners can not feel the piece ending until it really ends. The repertoire of the Guangxi lusheng solo and ensemble mainly belongs to the single-section structure, namely "Cai Tang Melody" in the ensemble repertoire. Combined-section structure is composed of several relatively independent parts, such as main pieces, interludes, and endings. Each section is a piece causing a conclusive feeling. The whole combined-section structure can be "introduction-main piece-interlude-main piece-interlude...ending." The "Sai Melody" and "Za Melody" of the ensemble repertoire are just the combined-section structures. Varying structures are formed between several musical sections. There exists a feeling of 'paragraph separation' within the main piece. Most of the varied paragraphs are decorative; the musical ideas and the main melody stay mostly the same. The lusheng and drum chant of the Yao in Guangxi and part of the lusheng solo music belong to the repertoire with varied structure.

d. Rhythm and Harmony

There are two kinds of rhythm in Guangxi lusheng music: average rhythm and non-average rhythm. Average rhythm causes

a strong rhythmic sensation, distinctive beats, and outstanding strong beats, which makes it suitable for dancing, where this type of rhythm mostly appears. Non-average rhythm has no obvious intensity or distinction in beats. It is rather free of fixed meter and is suitable for the introduction part of an improvised Guangxi solo and a unison ensemble, which is led by the high-pitched lusheng. From the aspect of volume and timbre, Guangxi lusheng performances indicate collectivity and competitiveness, making a powerful impact on the sound environment within the nation.

The lusheng is a kind of multi-part musical instrument in nature. The melody can develop both in the horizontal and vertical direction, while Guangxi lusheng and drum chant and the lusheng unison repertoire have distinctive features.

Lusheng and drum chants contain four elements that have to be considered: melody, multi-part structure, meter, and polyphonic progressions. The melody is played by middle- and low-pitched lushengs; the multi-part structure is created by the high-pitched lusheng; the gong and long drums provide and clearly indicate meter and main beats; and the polyphonic progressions are produced through the chant yelled by the performers. The human voice improvises both in heterophony and contrasting polyphony. That is why the texture of the music is abundant. Although Guangxi lusheng unison ensembles use mainly heterophony, they combine several different heterophony parts with an overarching melody part, thus showing a distinctive multilevel texture.

Guangxi means a lot in the origin and historical development of lusheng music. The types of performance styles and repertoire add to the many features of lusheng music.

A. Instrument-Based Shared Culture

The lusheng implies different ideas to people through the ages. It is not only a musical instrument but also an artifact carrying magical meanings. The lusheng culture integrates the historical culture of the Tong, the Miao and the Yao, their daily work and their religious life. As a musical instrument, the lusheng is one of the indispensable musical instruments in festivals and entertainment activities as it symbolizes music of the minorities within the large country China.

1. Lusheng Culture of the Miao and their Worshipping of Bamboo

"Lusheng culture is a nationwide cultural activity of the Miao nationality."⁸ This might be just a simple explanation on a more complex phenomenon. The lusheng culture is a collective activity that Miao people use as a tool to communicate emotionally and culturally. In a broader sense, lusheng culture involves a lot of aspects, penetrating the history of people as a whole, music repertoires, traditions, rituals and regional belief systems. Now, the miao lusheng seems to become a cultural symbol of the nation. Through hundreds and thousands of years, the lusheng has been passed down as one of the most significant traditional musical instruments of the Miao. Some legends and old sayings reveal the status and

appreciation of the lusheng. An old saying from the White Miao branch tells for example: "The millet will not be transplanted until the lusheng is blown. Once the lusheng is played, people can't wait doing the job". This saying refers to agricultural processes. Most of the southwest minorities worship the gourd, so does the Miao nationality. While the lusheng is developed from the gourd sheng, the lusheng is also viewed as an embodiment of the mother by Miao people. The gourd sheng means a lot more than that since it deprives from the bamboo worshipping of Miao people.

The Miao have a profound connection with bamboo. There exist a saying among Miao people that in ancient times, a strange-looking bamboo shoot grows up in the bamboo forest. After ten months, the bamboo shoot breaks out and a little baby was found in it, who was the ancestor of the Miao. Therefore, the local people regard bamboo as the symbol of the principal family and each family a piece of bamboo fragment. People belong to the same bamboo fragment share the same ancestor and are not allowed to marry each other⁹. Compared to the daily life, Miao people usually use articles made of bamboo in all kinds of sacrifice ceremonies and protocol activities such as bamboo umbrellas for the wedding and the memorial table, bamboo diagrams and horns. Besides, there are many bamboo-made musical instruments among the Miao, because the musical instrument is first used to entertain the spirit, and then people. For the Miao people, the bamboo-made lusheng

⁸ Guo zhu (Miao nationality), originating grandma, sacrificing, worshipping, entertaining the spirit and people—Lusheng of Miao Nationality and Lusheng Culture, National Art, 1990(4), P197

⁹ Yongzhang Wu, Min Tian, The Nationalities of Miao and Yao and the Yangtze River [M], Hubei Education Press, 2007 Version, P187

is able to communicate with spirits, which underpins the representation of blending the bamboo worshipping with the lusheng culture.

2. The Language System of Lusheng

The sound of the lusheng, the music recorded, the way to learn, and the ceremony and occasions are all related to the spoken language, which forms the “language” of the lusheng. Haris describes the concept of “language system” as the “talking” phenomenon of musical instruments from the aspects of lusheng words, musicality, behavior, and the traditional environment of the lusheng. Furthermore, the author deeply analyzes how lusheng performances are affected by local language, manners and customs, ceremonies, and aesthetics.

a. Lusheng Lyrics

Lusheng lyrics are made of two parts: padding syllables and song lyrics. Padding syllables are the words spelled for each lusheng piece. As long as people learn the music in words, it is not hard for them to play the lusheng. It is a “word to music” way of learning. While the song lyrics are performed, the lusheng intonations are similar to the spoken language. There are, so to say, “music to word” lyrics, which have a simple function of ideographical expression. Using lusheng lyrics is a distinctive traditional literary way of expressing emotions. This is used by the Miao with pitches of lusheng tongues replacing the Miao language intonation. Oral transmission inherits the lyrics, with the speaker acting as the master and the listener as the apprentice.

b. Musicianship

Musicianship is an underlying skill that goes beyond the primary music performance. Musicianship regarding the lusheng consists of communication skills, as it is necessary to be in the two different roles of the lusheng-speaker and lusheng-listener. Lusheng music depends on the intonation feature within a local dialect and some wider musical aesthetics in order to achieve linguistic or spiritual communication. In the less busy season, the lusheng is played to bridge the time and entertain by expressing joyfulness. Men express their love to women with lusheng music, or lusheng is played at the flower slope, where every ceremony from cutting the flower trees to burying them needs lusheng music. Also, funerals, weddings, ancestor worshipping, festivals, house-warming parties, and travelling have their corresponding lusheng music that has to be fully understood not only in musical terms.

c. Performance Environment

Besides the lusheng music itself, the performance context of lusheng language includes the customs and habits through which the musical repertoire exists. The individual environment and its overall perception reveal the cultural connotation and purpose of lusheng music. A customary environment includes the occasion of the activity, actual modalities of the activity, the status of the performer, and the performance methods. For example, the special performance context of lusheng and drum chants highlights the uniqueness of this kind of lusheng music, which is exclusively used in the sacrifice ceremonies of the Yao in Yao communities of Guidong and Fuchuang counties. All the features observed define the

function of entertaining the spirit under this circumstance.

CONCLUSION

Guangxi, as the place where the lusheng evolved over centuries, brought a diverse and multifaceted lusheng culture to light. Guangxi lusheng music has a style of its own and is self-contained, which is the essential part of music cultures in which free reed instruments are focused on. However, many aspects still await further exploration

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