

# Exploration of Yunnan Minority Musical Instruments

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**Abstract**—The development of musical instruments of ethnic minorities in Yunnan has a long history. Their varieties and unique shapes make them the bright pearl in China's music and art treasure house. The lives of people of all ethnic groups are closely related to the rhythm of musical instruments. It is necessary to start with enhancing national consciousness, combining the development of natural resources, and launching local musical instruments into campus to find more ways for the inheritance and development of Yunnan ethnic minority musical instruments.

**Keywords:** *Yunnan, ethnic minority, musical instruments, inheritance*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Yunnan is in the southwestern border of China, and it is a region where ethnic minorities are widely distributed. In addition to the Han nationality, there are 25 ethnic minorities, including the Bai and Naxi nationality. The development of multi-ethnic integration has conceived Yunnan's rich cultural wonders. In the field of music and art, Yunnan's ethnic minority musical instruments are shining with a dazzling light with their various categories and unique shapes, just like the crystal pearls.

## II. BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF YUNNAN ETHNIC MINORITY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

### A. History

The development of musical instruments of Yunnan ethnic minorities and the historical development of human development are closely related. In 1975, the bronze drum excavated in the ancient tombs of Wanjiaba in Chuxiong, according to research, has a history of about 2,500 years. It is the oldest bronze drum found in China so far and the earliest bronze drum in the world. Another set of six horn chimes is an artifact from the late Spring and Autumn Period to the Western Han Dynasty. It has a history of more than 2,300 years [1]. Hulusheng, a wind instrument, has been appeared since the 7th century BC. According to records, "Nanzhao Fengsheng Yue" was listed as one of the fourteen music in the court of the Tang Dynasty. The band was about 200 people, including more than thirty types of musical instruments such as shie drums, the big and small Tartar pipes, zithers, big and small konghou (an ancient plucked stringed instruments), and five-string pipa.[2] During the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty, the Taoist and Buddhist

silk bamboo music of the Han ethnic group originated from Sichuan, and spread to Yunnan Han region, as well as the regions of Han nationality in Yunnan, the Naxi nationality in Lijiang, Yi nationality in Chuxiong, and Bai nationality in Dali. In today's Naxi ancient music performances, there are also bobo, sugudu, erhuang (like jinghu, wuqianjin) and other instruments. The music has both Han and Naxi characteristics, and people can hear "Water Dragon Chant" "Spring Is Arriving" and other music. Dongjing music was introduced into the Yi nationality area a little later. The music is equipped with instruments of flute, suona (a woodwind instrument), hulusheng, se zither (twenty-five strings), sanxian (a three-stringed plucked instrument), dulcimer, erhu (a two-stringed bowed instrument with a lower register than jinghu), ten-surface gong, bells, and inverted bells (a Buddhist percussion instrument). The performances include "Wind Through Pines", "Man Wuyan" and "San Cheng", etc., with elegant style and deep subtlety. According to historical records, Dali's Dancing Melody for Worshipping Confucius "Da Cheng Yue" included 8 singers, 48 dancers, 2 people for guiding, and more than 70 people who played a total of 26 kinds of musical instruments, being an unprecedentedly grand occasion. The "double pipe" used for the wind instrument is similar to the hichiriki in the gigaku of the Tang Dynasty, and is similar to the small double-pipe stuffy flute of the Yi folk instrument currently playing in Nanxun County, Dali [3].

Before the late Qing Dynasty and the founding of the People's Republic of China, the development of musical instruments of ethnic minorities in Yunnan was relatively lagging behind, as was the cultural development of the entire region, and suffered varying degrees of damage during the Cultural Revolution. With the deepening of reform and opening up in various fields in the 1980s, the majority of music workers devoted themselves to protecting the traditional arts of ethnic minorities, laying a certain foundation for the revival of ethnic musical instruments.

### B. Types of musical instruments

According to statistics from contemporary researchers and musicians of historical materials in Yunnan, there are about 200 kinds of musical instruments of ethnic minorities in Yunnan. Most of these musical instruments are made of natural materials, with rich varieties and eclectic shapes. Among them, the number of wind instruments is the largest, followed by percussion. The plucked and stringed

instruments are different in different regions, and many of them are variants of foreign instruments, such as the five-string pipa.

1) *Wind instruments*: Most of them are made of natural bamboo, wood, horn, rice or wheat straw, or leaves. They are generally loud and prominent, with a strong regional style. Except for a few simple instruments, they can play smooth melody. According to the differences in the structures, it contains:

- Reed wind instruments: such as bawu, cucurbit flutes, and paisheng (a reed pipe wind instrument with a keyboard) with metal reeds; hulusheng and bili with bamboo reeds; and wobo with grass reeds;
- Whistled wind instruments: such as bobo (luguan), small stuffy flute, etc.;
- Wind instruments without reed whistle: such as taiping xiao (a vertical bamboo flute), nao, dixiao, awu, conch, horn, gangdang, etc.;
- Others: such as wood leaves, finger whistles, jew's harps, etc.

2) *Plucked stringed instruments*: These instruments are mainly made of wood, containing body (pronounced box), neck, items, strings and other components. They are played with hand or paddles, being lively in melodies with strong sense of rhythm. Such as saiqin, small sanxian, big sanxian with dragon head, Yi Nationality's big sanxian, sugudu, and cattle-leg-like zither, etc.; there are also hammered string instruments like dulcimer such as buling (bamboo strings zither).

3) *String instruments*: These instruments can be used to play lyrical and beautiful melody with soft tone. such as lehu, Daks, hourse bone hu, gourd hu and so on.

4) *Percussion instruments*: There are many types and rich in colors, which can be divided into two types: fixed-accordatura and unfixed-accordatura.

- Fixed-accordatura percussion instruments: mang zither, galaxa (bendang), daodao, guangzhong, etc. ;
- Unfixed-accordatura percussion instruments: drums, such as elephant foot drums, guangbing, wood drums, bamboo drums, fish drums, flat drums, bolan drums, etc.; Gongs, mang gong, nan gong, etc.; cymbals, there are Dai cymbals, big cymbals, bowl bells, etc.; in addition, there are musical instruments with prominent regional characteristics such as bamboo tubes and golden money sticks [4].

### III. EXPLORATION ON THE INHERITANCE OF YUNNAN ETHNIC MINORITY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Since the 1980s, as a branch of traditional culture, the excavation and protection of ethnic minority musical instruments in Yunnan have continued. Nowadays, although some results have been achieved, the more serious inheritance and development work still needs the joint efforts

and explorations of people engaged in music research, music education, and music performance. In the following, the author will use his own folk music teaching practice to talk about his views on the inheritance of Yunnan ethnic minority musical instruments and make some exchanges.

#### A. *Enhancing the self-protection awareness of Chinese national culture*

In the current cultural development of ethnic minorities in Yunnan, each ethnic group has corresponding researchers on the regional culture of this ethnic group. However, the development of any ethnic group cannot be based solely on the work of a few people. Only with the willingness and determination to work can people truly inherit the national culture. Chinese people have a sense of patriotism and protection of the country, and individual family members have mutual love and affection. Similarly, as individuals of any minority group, they should have corresponding national pride and a sense of responsibility to develop their own ethnic cultural concepts. In fact, the inheritance of national culture is carried out in a lot of natural states in the field of music and culture. such as the Munaozong Song Festival, led by the rhythm of gongs and leather drums, tens of thousands of people spontaneously formed into dance teams; Crowd dancing with sanxian in the Chuxiong Yi Torch Festival; In the place where Lili's bamboo flute music knife sounds, men, women and children are holding hands and dancing around in joy; The young men of the Nu River Lihsu nationality often use the musical instrument "dabiya" to express their admiration to the girls, while the young women answer with "jew's harps", and they can understand the meaning from each other's tunes and tones. From this, it is not difficult to see that the lives of ethnic minorities are closely related to the rhythm of musical instruments. However, with the development of social economy and technology, people's transportation has become more convenient. The development of the city has attracted a large number of scholars and migrant workers in ethnic minority areas. Nearly the same template city construction, allows people in different regions to live in the same house, visit the same mall, wear the same style of clothes, and listen to the same popular music. In this context, more and more people gradually distanced themselves from their own culture. Many young people even think that it is very old-fashioned to dance their own dance and sing their own songs. There are even less young people come into contact with their national musical instruments. When the instrument is lost, there will be no spread of native instrumental music, and people's dance will gradually stop. Without the joyous melody and dance steps, this national cultural identity will be weakened. Therefore, as an individual member of each Yunnan ethnic minority group, people must start from various links. While drawing outside knowledge, they must also strive to protect and inherit their own national culture.

#### B. *Effective promotion with the development of natural resources*

Due to its diverse geographical features, Yunnan has abundant natural resources. With the development of society

and the development of science and technology, the development of tourism resources in Yunnan's ethnic minority areas has been greatly promoted, which has promoted the economic and cultural development of various ethnic groups.

The song and dance performances of ethnic minorities are an important link in the tourism and cultural industries of various ethnic groups. Many folk performances and singers have a broader display platform, which not only preserves the art of the ethnic group, increases personal income, but also allows more people understanding the music culture of their own nation. In terms of the dissemination of musical instrument knowledge, the Lijiang Dayan Naxi Ancient Music Club is more representative. Among the funny and humorous explanations of Mr. Xuan Ke, the most memorable thing is his introduction to musical instruments. One is the plucked instrument sugudu. There is also a double-reed bamboo wind instrument "bobodi" with a unique timbre, which is called "luguan" in Chinese. The timbre is really unique in the ensemble of ancient music. In addition, the most characteristic instrument of the Qiang ethnic group in Yunnan is the influence of Chinese and foreign tourists. "When I hear the music of the cucurbit flute, I will think of the scenery in Yunnan." This is the word of a friend from other province. Many friends took away the cucurbit flutes with national characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to combine the development of the rich natural resources in Yunnan, and let the world know Yunnan while looking for more breakthroughs in the inheritance and promotion of national musical instruments.

*C. Attaching importance to the teaching dissemination of local musical instruments and expanding employment channels for art teaching*

Nowadays, many colleges in Yunnan offer group lessons of Yunnan musical instruments cucurbit flute and bawu in traditional art communication. They are popular among students because of the low cost of musical instruments, easy to carry, quick entry, and soft timbre. In addition, there are many learners of cucurbit flutes and bawu in art training centers and piano shops all over the country. These two musical instruments can be said to be the pride of Yunnan ethnic minority instruments. In the teaching dissemination of this field, the launch of Qujing Huanyu Art School is very successful and worthy of people's consideration. The school mainly promotes the teaching of cucurbit flutes and bawu, and carries out corresponding music production, sales, after-sales services, etc. In addition to this school, there is a branch school and three specialty stores with nearly 1,000 students. It is famous not only in Yunnan, but also across the China. It is a model for the development of the Yunnan minority musical instrument industry, which not only enriches people's amateur cultural life, but also provides many jobs for the society. However, this is just an individual case. In the face of numerous Yunnan ethnic minority musical instruments, it is more of a concern about their development prospects, and many instruments face the embarrassment of being lost without an inheritor. More than ten years ago, the

Naxi Ancient Music Club opened a free Naxi ancient music instrument training class for local elementary and middle school students, but parents and children seemed to be more interested in expensive piano and ballet studies. The ancient music training class was only available for one semester. Therefore, as educators and disseminators of national music culture, it is a necessity and a must to discuss the development and outlet of Yunnan minority musical instruments together, and strive to enable 25 ethnic minorities in Yunnan to launch a musical instrument with their own national characteristics.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The above are some of the author's views on the development of Yunnan ethnic minority musical instruments and their inheritance. As with many traditional music arts today, there are still many obstacles to the inheritance of Yunnan minority musical instruments. They need the attention of the broad masses of the people, and they need to the continuous efforts and exploration of colleagues in music posts. Under the premise of conscientiously studying and implementing the spirit of the Party's 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, with the goal of "promoting the outstanding traditional Chinese culture", it is a must to strive to explore channels suitable for the transmission of musical instruments of ethnic minorities in Yunnan, and Conscientiously and diligently do the music teaching work and do the best for the inheritance and development of national music culture.

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