《愛戀排灣笛》Sounds of Love and Sorrow

導演：胡台麗，出品年：2000，片長：86分鐘，格式：16mm，彩色，語言：華語、排灣語，拍攝地：台灣，出品者：中央研究院民族學研究所。

Teri Silvio 司黛蕊
Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica

I still remember the surprise and delight I felt the first time I saw Hu Taili's *Sounds of Love and Sorrow*, her film about the making and playing of bamboo flutes among Taiwan's Indigenous Paiwan community. The film was unlike any ethnographic documentary I had seen before, and certainly unlike any representation of Taiwanese Indigenous people I had encountered.

Sounds of Love and Sorrow was groundbreaking in many ways at once. At the turn of the century when the film first came out, Taiwanese Indigenous music tended to be placed within two very different narratives. First, there were traditional ethnographic documentary films and videos, including some of Hu Taili's previous films, as well as those made for public television. The narratives in these documentaries focused on traditional social structure, ritual and religion, social transformation, and political activism. The Indigenous music in these films was presented as "traditional," as elements of ritual (as in Hu's *Songs of Pasta'ay* 1989), or as a medium for the transmission of tribal legends (as in Hu's *Voices of Orchid Island* 1993). This music was recorded in part because it was in danger of being forgotten forever, and it was most often sung or played by elders.

At the same time, in contrast to documentary representations of traditional Indigenous music, the Taiwanese music industry was experiencing an explosion of new Indigenous talent. A-Mei was at the top of the pop charts, Pur-Dur and Samingad won Golden Bell awards in 1998 and 1999, and many other young singer-songwriters were playing to packed houses in indie venues. They sang in both Chinese and their mother tongues, both new interpretations of folk songs and their own original ballads, and they attracted loyal fans far beyond their own communities, not only in Taiwan but internationally. These young Indigenous artists were praised widely for their innovative blending of local and global genres and their expression of a wide range of moods.

Sounds of Love and Sorrow disrupted this dichotomy between traditional, ritual, communal music sung by elders and emotionally expressive music produced by individual young artists. It did so by presenting a genre of music which was a disappearing tradition, yet at the same time innovative and expressive of the individual player's emotions. The film thus added emotional texture to ethnographic descriptions of social structure and religious belief and challenged the impression that musical innovation and individual emotional expression belonged only to the young. While twentieth-century ethnographic representations focused on social and political structures, and new Indigenous recording artists expressed feeling, *Sounds of Love and Sorrow* brought them together to capture a *structure of feeling*.

Sounds of Love and Sorrow is divided into four sections, each of which focuses on one flute player/ maker. Each man comes from a different Paiwan community and each specializes in a different type of flute. The film contextualizes the meaning of the flute within the lives of both the individual men and the Paiwan community as a whole.

In many ethnographic documentaries, Indigenous elders are presented as talking heads, reciting histories and myths and describing the significance of the rituals they are trying to maintain, and we do see a bit of that in the beginning section of *Sounds of Love and Sorrow*. The emotional lives of older people are rarely the focus of documentaries, but here, much of the film consists of elderly men and women describing the feelings expressed and aroused by flute music. These include romantic love, grief, and contemplativeness. Hu shows us how this combination of emotions is created not only through the qualities of the music itself, but also by the cultural associations between the sound of the flute and the hundred-pace snake, which the Paiwan see as their ancestral spirit, as well as by the varied situations in which it is played (funerals, courting, whenever the player feels sadness or nostalgia), and by a kinship system in which marriages were arranged by parents.

Hu's way of conveying this structure of feeling and how it comes together is itself innovative. As Kerim Friedman has pointed out, *Sounds of Love and Sorrow* is unique among Hu Taili's films in that Hu herself does not appear in it; we do not even hear the sound of her voice. Rather, in this film, Hu attempts to "give voice" to the Paiwan elders themselves, showcasing their concerns and aesthetic sensibilities while editing with a general audience in mind. Hu eschews the usual aim of documentary film to capture the "real" and spontaneous, instead working with the film's subjects in the mode of Jean Rouch, allowing them to be visually memorialized as they wished, in their most beautiful traditional clothing, and setting up improvised conversations between the flute players and their old friends, wives, and former girlfriends (Hu 2005, Friedman 2023).

Paiwan flute music often expresses grief or longing alone, but it sometimes expresses a combination of romantic desire and sorrow. This combination comes through most clearly in the fourth section of the film, in which Kapang Tariu of Kulalao Village recalls how he courted different women with his flute playing, and the women recall the way that flute music made them feel. Another way that *Sounds of Love and Sorrow* is pathbreaking is that, in its focus on this romantic/sorrowful structure of feeling, it opens up the possibility for a kind of cross-cultural comparison very different from those suggested by previous Taiwanese ethnographic films. Many documentaries on Taiwanese Indigenous cultures, including Hu's, do not make explicit comparisons but invite international and academic audiences to see the similarities between the situations of the Paiwan and other Indigenous communities in Taiwan and those of Indigenous people around the world. Forced assimilation and loss of language and religion, exploitative tourism, environmental degradation, poverty – these are shared problems of settler-colonial societies. Music that combines romance and grief in a single aesthetic locates the Paiwan on a different map. Rather than the more usual social and political comparisons with Canada's First Nations or Australian Indigenous cultures, *Sounds of Love and Sorrow* allows us to see what the Paiwan people have in common with other people who find something uniquely pleasurable in the expression of sorrow and desire, in the sad/sexy aesthetic. At first listen, Paiwan flute music may not sound anything like American blues or jazz, but when we have seen the role it plays in the emotional lives of elderly Paiwan men and women, comparisons to those genres – or to, for instance, the *khau-tiau-a* (crying song) once loved by the Paiwan elders' Hoklo-speaking contemporaries in Taiwan, or Japanese enka, or Portuguese fado, etc. – make sense.

My cousin, Phil Schaap, DJ and jazz historian, used to sigh and say of his students, "These kids, they think they invented sex."[1] By which he meant they thought they had invented the expression of longing in music. And so he was obliged, year after year, to introduce each new generation to Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, et. al.. Hu Taili's *Sounds of Love and Sorrow* provides us with a similar lesson, showing us that, despite all the social transformations -- in kinship and economic systems, in religious beliefs and practices, in the rising and subsiding of Indigenous rights movements -- contemporary Indigenous artists may have more in common with their grandparents than we can see (and hear) on the surface. Blues and jazz are indeed popular genres among Taiwanese Indigenous singers and

1 Actually, Phil was my mother's cousin, my second cousin once removed. And he always said this in a more "not for radio" way.

musicians in the twenty-first century and are usually framed as global influences on local aesthetics. But we might also see their adaptations of these genres as a creative continuation of the structure of feeling of traditional Paiwan flute music (and similar Indigenous genres) by a new generation, even if they eschew the bamboo flute itself.

References

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