

## Chapter 6

# The Camera is Working: Paiwan Aesthetics and Performances in Taiwan

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When the camera is working, how do people 'perform' in front of it? Based on my experience of making five 16mm ethnographic films among different ethnic groups in Taiwan, I have become more and more aware of the aesthetics of the people filmed and the problem of representation. For example, after each screening of my most recent film 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' (Hu Tai-li, 2001), I have had to face questions from the audience such as: 'I observed that the characters in this film often dressed up beautifully. Was this intentionally arranged by you?' or 'The characters acted so naturally, and the flautist even flirted with his old girlfriend before the camera! Did you rehearse before shooting?' All these questions concern the authenticity of the documentary. What they are actually asking is: 'Did the filmmaker distort reality according to his or her own aesthetics?'

Bill Nichols (1991) proposes four modes of representation in documentary films: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive. Each mode implies specific aesthetics and faces different ethical challenges and restrictions. We know that the filmmaker's choice of narrative style, camera angle, and the content of scenes (including costumes) can influence the overall image of the film. The filmmaker's aesthetics may not accord with the aesthetics of the people filmed. In the first three modes of representation, the audience usually believes that 'reality' is represented, but the fourth, the 'reflexive' mode of representation, challenges the concept of 'reality' for the audience. In the case of 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow', when the characters dress up in splendid attire and openly express love to each other, they have immediately attracted the viewers' attention; however, the audience might suspect that 'reality' has been re-arranged, distorted or exaggerated in accordance with the filmmaker's own aesthetic vision.

While filming, I noticed that something did happen when the Paiwan characters faced the camera, but it was related more to their own aesthetics than to the influence of the filmmaker. Christopher Pinney (1992) reveals that different cultures interpret 'visual forms' differently. He points out that owing to a lack of a hegemonic realist narrative in Indian visual traditions, Indians do not feel that the visual forms of montage and doubling found in Western surrealism are less 'real'.

In other words, montage and doubling in India entail cultural meanings different from those in Western society. Since what is perceived as 'unreal' in one society can be interpreted as 'real' in another, we should pay more attention to local narrative traditions and aesthetics to avoid misreading visual forms and 'destabilize cherished Western notions of the unity of time and place, of realist narratives, and ultimately, of the self' (ibid., p. 101).

In his 'Notes on the Non-Transparency of Local Narratives and Performances' (1992), Peter Loizos considers 'local aesthetics' and a culture's own criteria for the evaluation of performances. He notices that 'many texts, many films, are inherently "local" and probably inaccessible for many viewers' (ibid., p. 109). For example, the local aesthetics of the Tikopia songs (R. Firth and M. McClean, 1990) will remain non-transparent without proper interpretation. With regards to ethnographic film, it is the 'local aesthetics' of performances rather than the film's aesthetics that require further communication and explanation. Of course, it is equally important to examine how the 'local aesthetics' of performances affects the aesthetics of ethnographic films.

Peter I. Crawford (1992), in his analysis of 'Grass' (M. C. Cooper, 1925), observes that the 'narrativity of nomadism' influences the narrative aesthetics of this film. He also claims that 'in myths we confront narrativity in its "pure" form' (ibid., p. 122). David MacDougall (1992, 1995) realizes that the reason for his success in making 'observational' films in East Africa was because the Jie and Turkana tribal people could talk naturally in front of the camera; when he made films in Australia, it became very difficult to build similar relations between the film crew and the natives who featured in the film.

This article will discuss 'local aesthetics' and the performances of the Paiwan people of Taiwan through observations of their interaction with modern film and video technology. I will interview several Paiwan videographers, ritual specialists, as well as artists including flautists, sculptors and dancers, who performed in 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' and other documentary films and videos. I also attempt to explore the reasons underlying Paiwan aesthetics and performances.

### The Performances of 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow'

The flute is one of the commonest, best-loved and most representative traditional musical instruments of the Austronesian speaking Paiwan aborigines of southern Taiwan, and stands at the core of the Paiwan people's poetic expression. While the majority of Taiwan's population is made up of Han Chinese migrants from Mainland China, there are about 400,000 aboriginal people belonging to the Austronesian linguistic family. 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' is a documentary that attempts to reveal the emotions and aesthetics of the Paiwan people through the stories of four representative flautists. Each flautist lives in his own village and plays a different type of Paiwan flute: a twin-pipe nose flute, a twin-pipe flute, a single-pipe five-stop flute, and a single-pipe seven-stop flute.

Before discussing the Paiwan people's aesthetics and performances in 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow', I would like to point out that Steven Feld's study (1982) of the sound system among the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea has enlightened my observations of the Paiwan. He talks about Kaluli aesthetics in terms of Kaluli sound expressions, which are related to the myth of 'the boy who became a *muni* bird (fruit dove) and continued to cry' and 'the bird world for which they serve as metaphor.

Kaluli sound is revealed as an embodiment of deeply felt and aesthetically coded sentiments. The sound mode of weeping is identical to the call of the *muni* bird and is dramatically performed in the Gisalo ceremonies in Kaluli society (Schieffelin, 1976). The Gisalo performers sing sad songs to move people to tears, to make the hosts burn the dancers, and to reflect the emotions of sorrow, loss, loneliness and abandonment.

In addition to the film 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow', my recently published article 'Flutes' Thoughtful Sorrow: Preliminary Studies on Paiwan Emotions and Aesthetics' (2002) also investigates the characteristic emotions and aesthetics of the Paiwan people through the study of traditional Paiwan flutes with respect to the flutes' sound, the flautists' subjective descriptions, legends related to flutes, and sounds similar to that made by Paiwan flutes. All flautists of the four Paiwan flute systems interviewed mentioned that the sound of the flute is like weeping and leads to the strong emotion of thoughtful sorrow (*tarimuzaulmapaura*), and is regarded as being beautiful (*samiring*) by the Paiwan people. Men play the flute when courting, attending funerals, thinking of the deceased and the fate of the family. The Paiwan emotion of thoughtful sorrow, existing in and starting from the chest (*varhung*), is connected with love and is prevalent in all categories of Paiwan culture. Anything that you loved in the past could cause the emotion of thoughtful sorrow. While sorrow is considered a negative emotion in many societies, it has entered the realm of aesthetics in Paiwan culture. It is proposed that the emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow are at the core of Paiwan culture. The film 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' reveals that the emotion of thoughtful sorrow is closely related to the origin legends containing the symbols of love and beauty: the hundred-pace snake, the sun, the clay pot, and the Hodgson's hawk eagle.

For example, the typical twin-pipe nose flute (*raringdan*) is found in Piuma villages. One legend says that near an old Piuma village there lived a hundred-pace snake. It was the village's guardian spirit and the village chief's ancestor. The Piuma villagers believe that the sound of the nose flute imitates the sound that the sacred hundred-pace snake makes by blowing through its up-turned nose. It is believed that the hundred-pace snake can foretell the future, and that the sound it makes is the sound of prophecy. Around 1950, a gospel and medical group came to the Piuma village and the next year the villagers often heard the snake 'blow the nose flute' sadly. Subsequently, the home of the snake was hit by lightning, and the tree it lived under died and the grass around it withered. The villagers thought that the hundred-pace snake had died and soon afterwards they converted to Christianity.

The nose flute is regarded as a very noble instrument by the Piuma, and in the past only men from the families of chieftains were permitted to play it and to incise the design of the hundred-pace snake on it. The nose flute was not only used for courting, but also for mourning dead chieftains. The nose flute has two pipes, one with three stops and the other without any stops. Basically there is only a single melody that is played on the nose flute, but it can be played using high, medium or low tones. The nose flautist Rhemalits Tjakisuvung says in the film,

We only play the nose flute to express sorrow and longing. Its sound is sad, like the sound of weeping. It is not a song, or anything else. It is a muttered lament that conveys our grief. When we see something sad we play the nose flute. Sorrow comes from deep in our hearts. If you haven't experienced tragedy, you cannot understand sorrow. If you have never sung a dirge, or if you have never played the nose flute, how can you understand this feeling?

In order to reveal the similarity of the sound of the flutes and that of the tuneful weeping (*tsemiruaq/tsemangid*) used during funerals, I invited the nose flautist Rhemalits Tjakisuvung's wife to sing a lament for a deceased chief in the film. She wept as she sang the following dirge:

Ahheee! ... My brothers and sisters, Ahheee! ... My elders.  
 (a-i- tia kaka, a-i tia kama!)  
 Where are you now? What do you look like now?  
 (i inu mun tutsu? i tjanuanema mun tutsu?)  
 We regret your passing! We weep for you!  
 (javai saka javajavai la, qemauqaung amen la.)  
 We recall all your actions. Day and night we think of you.  
 (lemitalita men la, tua qadau tua surem.)  
 I weep here for you!  
 (e...ua na na uza tsu aken la a qemauqaung.)  
 I am remembering you!  
 (a kipaqeneqenetj la.....)  
 Ahheee!...I am in the house.  
 (a-i- i maza i qumaqan la.)  
 I am mourning the chief!  
 (qemauqaung la tua mazangizangil la.)  
 We wish to be protected!  
 (sekilivak aia ken la ....a....e...)

The female priest Laerep Pasasaev in Kulalao village told me that the Paiwan people use different words in the mourning songs (*tsemiruaq*) depending on the position of the deceased, i.e., a chief, a priest, a hero, or a commoner. First, she gave an example of a lamention for a chief (Hu, 2002, pp. 67-68):

Ahheee!...You took good care of us all your life.  
 (a-i la! su ka kipuarangan!)

Ahheee! Ahheee! You showed concern for your brothers, sisters and villagers all your life!  
 (ai la! ai la ! su ka kipurhukuzan tu tja kaka,tu tja sika ta qalan.)  
 Have you arranged for anyone to take over these functions?  
 (saka ti ima anga tsu a su pinazazekazekatj?)  
 Who is the person to succeed you?  
 (ti ima anga tsu a urhi sevarit?)  
 Who knows so well how to take care of your brothers and sisters?  
 (tu ki puarang anga!tu ki purhukuz anga! tu tja kaka!)  
 And to officiate over all the villagers and our agricultural rituals?  
 (tu tja sika ta qalan! tu qinalan!tu tja sengesengan!aia itjen.)  
 We weep for our dead chief.  
 (maia tua zua a mivaq itjen.)  
 You are our rainbow!.....  
 (nia su qulivangerhau aiau.....)

The female priest Laerep Pasasaev then provided another example of lamenting for a hunting hero:

Ahheee! Ahheee! What has happened to you now?  
 (a-i la! a-i driva parhut la! kemuda sun tutsu?)  
 Why? Why did this happen? How could you do such a thing to us?  
 (aku azua? aku pareqereq sun arhavats?)  
 How could you leave your children and grandchildren without help?  
 (saka kemuda anga a marh ka su alak.a marh ka su vuvu.)  
 How could you leave your brothers and sisters, the family and the hunting?  
 (a marh ka su kaka. a tja umaq. a tsemetsemer? aia.)  
 Ahheee! Although you sometimes failed in competition against others  
 (a-i anga! saka i ka sun a maia tu zuma.)  
 Ahheee! You always worked diligently and presented crops and animals to the chief.  
 (a-i anga la!tu su kikaja la!tu su kikavetsenger.)  
 Ahheee! The road you often walked (make us think of you and you think of us)!  
 Ahheee! The stone chair you often rested in (makes us think of you and you think of us)!  
 (a-i la su jaran! a-i la su qaqirajan!)  
 Ahheee! The hunting ground you often inspected (makes us think of you and you think of us)!  
 Ahheee! The hunting traps you often laid (makes us think of you and you think of us)!  
 (a-i la su kakaravan! a-i la su quatian!)

From the above examples, we can see that the main purpose of lamentation in Paiwan is to express the emotion of 'thoughtful sorrow' by emphasizing the strong attachment that the deceased has with the living, the significant role the dead played during his life, and things he left behind by which he is remembered. Finally, the Paiwan pray for the protection of the deceased who die a natural death and become good ghosts. Although those who pass away due to accidents become evil ghosts, their relatives still sing laments for them to express 'thoughtful sorrow'. The deep emotions of 'thoughtful sorrow' expressed towards the deceased are the same whether they die normally or because of accidents. In the magnificent Paiwan five-

year ceremony (Hu, 1984, 1999), both good and evil ghosts return to the village to receive the villagers' hospitality, although some rituals are also practiced in the five-year ceremony to prevent the possible damage brought by evil ghosts. Moreover, the emotions of 'thoughtful sorrow' are equally emphasized among Paiwan men and women. It is believed that the creator granted women better abilities for crying and singing laments, but the Paiwan people do not disparage male crying. If a man can cry and sing a dirge well, he is regarded as a person with a soft 'chest', someone who knows how to take care of others. Since men are not good at crying, they play the flute to express their emotion of 'thoughtful sorrow'. I will argue that the recognized emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow affect the way Paiwan people perform before the camera.

In 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow', the four representative flautists recall the days of their youth when flutes were still used for courting. Young men played the flutes outside the door of their girlfriends' houses at night, and the girls, moved by the sound of the flute, were filled with the emotions of love and thoughtful sorrow. The flautists also recall village origin myths in connection with the dominant symbols (the hundred-pace snake, the sun, the clay pot, and the Hodgson's hawk eagle) and talk about the traditional customs and ideas of a social order that are being crushed by the irresistible and contradictory forces of government policies and alien cultural influences.

As an ethnographic filmmaker, I am against 'directing' the people I am filming, and prefer to capture their ordinary life under natural conditions. In my previous films, I never asked the filmed persons to dress up to make scenes more beautiful. But why do the characters in 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' often appear in splendid attire? As a matter of fact, the flautists and their family do not wear splendid attire in their daily life, but on occasions of festivals and special activities, they adorn themselves with splendid costumes and decorations containing ornaments incorporating important symbols.

To tell the truth, when I saw that the people I was about to film had changed into splendid attire of their own accord, I didn't know how to react. For example, Mr. Tsujui from Kulalao village dressed up to cut the bamboo for making flutes. Although I felt that it looked very strange and unnatural, it became very difficult and impolite to persuade him not to wear the splendid costume and ornaments. As the Padain chief Tsegav reached the sacred Dawu Mountain, he put on a variety of ornaments before playing the flute and telling the legend of the sun goddess Salavan. In that situation, I didn't feel that it was unnatural for him to dress up. The scene of the nose flautist Rhemaliz who listened to his wife Luzem chanting the dirge on the passing of a tribal chief was arranged, for no chief had passed away at that time. That night the couple dressed up of their own accord before 'performing' in the traditional stone-plate house. When Luzem began to chant, they both were moved to tears. I had to admit that their 'performances' looked very natural. Besides, the flautist Kapang and his friends were more than happy to relive past visits to their mutual girlfriend. They directed and performed the scene themselves, with of course, beautiful costumes and decorations.

I also remember that the first time when we filmed the flautist Pairhang, his wife returned from the garden. She saw the camera and asked, 'I am not prepared, what should I say?' Pairhang ridiculed her, 'I do admire your courage. Even I took care to put on the vest with a specific design for shooting, and you are still wearing the rain boots!' The next time when we filmed in their house, I discovered that Pairhang's wife dressed up to chat with her husband. I could not persuade them to wear casual clothes to fulfill the 'real' and 'naturalistic' standard of documentary film.

Compared with my previous experiences of filming aboriginal people from other ethnic groups and also Han Chinese, I find that the Paiwan people pay special attention to costumes and decorations containing traditional designs. In addition, they are more accustomed to the presence of the camera and enjoy 'performing' in front of it.

Mr. Li Zhung-wang, the cinematographer of 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow', also noticed that the camera is welcomed among Paiwan. He was amazed to perceive that the filmed Paiwan characters could 'perform' so naturally and beautifully before the film crew. Why do the Paiwan people behave in this way? Are there other cases to support such an observation? What kind of local aesthetics is demonstrated in these performances?

### The Contact with Cameras

The Paiwan people's first contact with photography was during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945). Since the development of modern audiovisual technology, they have also had a close connection with video images. Since the mid-1980s, an increasing number of professional and amateur Paiwan videographers have appeared in Paiwan villages. The statement made by the Paiwan female priest Laerep Pasasaev reflects on this transition:

The old people used to say, 'Don't take pictures, otherwise our souls (*tsemas*) will be taken away and we will soon die'. Toward the end of the Japanese period, the Japanese selected males and females from the families of chieftains to make photographic records. Gradually we became fond of photos, which could preserve our appearances. In recent years, it becomes very popular to hire local videographers to record village activities such as weddings, farewells for sons heading off for military service, house-completion ceremonies and so on.

The villagers enjoy seeing themselves dancing on the screen. I myself love to see the ordered dance circle and all kinds of costumes and decorations with Paiwan symbolic designs, and to hear the pleasant sound of the hanging metal ornaments. If we see someone who has already passed away dancing and talking on the screen, we would cry and say, 'Oh, how sad and how much we think of him! He looks like he is still alive!' (a-i-mapaura itjen! Matu valualut anan!)

Just like representative Paiwan symbols and designs on sculptures and costumes, photos and films are appearances (*kinatsautsauan*) of 'thoughtful sorrow' (*pauration/kinisingeringitan*). When being filmed, we like to wear the whole set of splendid costumes and ornaments (*araarang*) consisting of the head dresses, hawk eagles' feathers, special clothes, leggings, and glass beads with Paiwan symbols and designs (*vetsik/vintsikan*). These are different from ordinary clothes and ornaments, for the rich clothes and ornaments contain representative Paiwan symbols and designs (*vetsik/vintsikan*). If the photos contain people wearing costumes with Paiwan symbols and designs (*vetsik/vintsikan*), they can be hung on the wall and can be considered as sculptures with traditional symbols and designs, which evoke emotions of thoughtful sorrow.

The above statement suggests that photos are linked with Paiwan symbols and designs, which are key to the Paiwan's aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow. This link with Paiwan society has carried through from the age of the still photo to that of video images. In the last 15 years, video recording emerged as a new career in many Paiwan villages. Quite a few local people invested money to buy near-professional video cameras and established their own studios, becoming full-time or part-time videographers. I have visited many aboriginal tribes in Taiwan, but only among the Paiwan have I found local videographers able to support themselves for long periods by making such recordings. They earn good money by recording weddings, house-completion ceremonies, farewell parties for military service and birthday parties. I interviewed several Paiwan video-recording pioneers who have been in this line of work for more than 10 years. I wanted to know: why do the Paiwan people require and love to be recorded by video cameras? Are there special concerns and observations when the Paiwan videographers film the people of their village?

Lakuang Tjuagadu from the Kulalao village of Laiyi district was a pioneer videographer who purchased his own video camera at an early date. Around 1984, a crew from a TV program filming Kulalao's five-year ceremony attracted Lakuang's attention. At that time there were already many videographers in the Han Chinese plains areas, but not in the Paiwan region. Lakuang decided to buy a Sony video camera in 1985 and started filming in neighboring Paiwan villages. He received many jobs filming wedding ceremonies and only rested 10 days a month. He even bought an editing machine to create subtitles. For each job he earned 7000 NT dollars (around 200 US dollars). Video recording soon became Lakuang's main career and house painting turned into his side job. His success encouraged more people to enter this line of work. In Laiyi district, over 10 Paiwan villagers now practice video recording professionally. The videographer Lakuang says that when he films a ceremony, he has to record the dancing very carefully, 'because the villagers like to watch themselves dressed in splendid costumes and ornaments. The Paiwan people love to be filmed this way for the memory and thoughtful sorrow of their descendants (*sipapupaurauran tua vuvu tua alak*).'

Lakuang's friend Paupu Parhigurh in Kulalao village is a primary school teacher. Influenced by Lakuang, he bought a second-hand video camera to do part-time filming after school and during holidays. His income from video-recording is

now higher than his monthly teacher's salary. He and Lakuang have similar observations: the Paiwan villagers expect to be filmed wearing formal dress from head to foot (*namapaqurid a rhinavan*), in order to be remembered by future generations. He often encountered the situation of children coming to his studio to ask for a copy of videotapes with their parents' images after their parents had passed away. Paupu says that in the beginning he tried to capture some candid scenes without people noticing, but when people saw these images, they felt unhappy for not displaying themselves at their most attractive. Nowadays, Paupu no longer records 'informal' scenes.

Ranpau Mavaliv, from a Piuma village in the Maja district, is also an experienced videographer among the Paiwan. He attended a one-year film training class at Taiwan Television in Taipei during the 1980s while working as a construction worker during the day. He then returned home and opened a photographic studio. In 1986, he bought his first video camera. Since then, he has changed video cameras five times. He has discovered that Paiwan people react to the camera differently from other people. When he filmed a Han Chinese wedding, the guests often asked him, 'Why do you film me?' In contrast, Paiwan people would face the video camera and show their most natural and beautiful expressions (*sanguanguaq*). He further explains:

The Paiwan people know how to say hello to the camera and let the videographer catch the best images. Even though some people are shy, they still love to be filmed. I seldom hear the Paiwan people say, 'Don't film me!' The villagers are willing to spend money on video-recording in order to keep the images for ever-lasting commemoration. The Paiwan villagers do not like to hire Han Chinese videographers to record their activities, because the plains people do not understand our customs and don't know what to emphasize. For example, I will film the dancing activity for two hours continuously. The reason is that when people dress in splendid costumes and ornaments, you never get tired of watching them. I would move my video camera in all directions, shooting from many angles. We know that it is more laborious if we film with the video camera held by hand rather than on the tripod, but I prefer to do hand-held shooting to make people react to it with their best expressions. I would deliberately film pure and traditional elements, and avoid shooting modern and mussy scenes.

All Paiwan videographers emphasize the fact that Paiwan people love to be filmed, especially on occasions of dancing when they dress in splendid costumes and ornaments with Paiwan symbols and designs. They also all say the main function of photos and video images is to provide an image for future memory. In the old days, only chief's families had the right to dress up in traditional Paiwan costume with all the symbols and designs, but commoners could 'buy' the right to wear such decorations from the chief. Nowadays, as economic conditions have improved, almost every Paiwan villager has a set of rich traditional clothes and ornament. But a chieftain's family can still be recognized by specific symbols and designs. The increasing need to retain images with splendid dress and decoration for their descendants has sustained quite a number of local Paiwan videographers.

Sakuliu Pavavalung is a famous Paiwan artist and cultural worker of the younger generation. He cooperated with director Daw-ming Lee in making two 16mm documentary films entitled 'Sakuliu'(1994) and 'The Last chieftain'(1999). One day I chatted with Sakuliu and asked about his experiences of participating in these two films. He offered some valuable insights:

We started filming 'Sakuliu' in 1992. The director Daw-ming Lee and cinematographer Lin Jian-siang were around for one year before shooting. Jian-siang filmed at any time in my daily life and I didn't have time to prepare. When I saw the finished film, I regretted that I didn't wear more appropriate dress. Why do the Paiwan people want to be filmed in rich dress? I think that since we human beings are not born as beautiful as the hundred-pace snake or the leopard, who have designs on their bodies, we have to dress up in splendid attire and adornments with designs to become as beautiful as the hundred-pace snake and the leopard, otherwise we feel that we are naked. If we attend a ceremony, we at least have to wear a pair of glass-bead necklaces with traditional symbols and designs. The older Paiwan people, especially the chiefs, who are usually considered the descendents of the hundred pace snake, wish to be filmed in splendid costumes and decorations with representative symbols and designs. They want to keep such images for future generations.

Sakuliu's words reinforce my impression that the Paiwan people have their own aesthetics, which are different from those of other people. Filmmakers influenced by Western concepts of observational film or direct cinema attempt to become intimate with the filmed subjects and make them forget the existence of the camera. Their aim is to film the most natural life. But for the Paiwan people, the main purpose of being filmed is to be remembered by future generations. Therefore, they want to be filmed beautifully to arouse other people's amazement and thoughtful sorrow. In order to achieve this purpose, they want to know when the camera is running and to make preparations before shooting. Recording images of daily life does not fulfill Paiwan aesthetics and expectations.

### Legends, Images and Aesthetics

It is true that the phenomenon of wearing splendid costumes and ornaments for filming is not only found among the Paiwan people, but 'dressing-up' for the Paiwan has a specific cultural significance as well. We already mentioned in this chapter that the splendid costumes and ornaments are called *araarang* by the Paiwan, and that they consist of such articles as head dress, hawk eagles' feathers, leggings and glass beads decorated with representative Paiwan symbols and designs (*vetsik/vintsikan*). The emphasis is on the symbols and designs (*vetsik/vintsikan*).

What are the representative Paiwan symbols and designs? They mainly consist of the hundred-pace snake, the ancestral head, the sun and the hawk eagle's feather rooted in Paiwan legends (Tai-li Hu, 1999b).

There are two types of legends in Paiwan: the real legends (*tjautsiker*) and the fictive legends (*mirimiringan*). The characters and events in *tjautsiker* are believed

to have existed in real life; while *mirimiringan* contains fictive characters whose names have repetitive syllables and contain a record of miraculous events. Both *tjautsiker* and *mirimiringan* are loved and are highly valued by the Paiwan people, who have passed these stories on from generation to generation (Yasuyoshi Kobayashi and Kazuko Matsuzawa, eds, 1998; Yen-he Wu, 1993; Tai-li Hu, 1998, 1999a, 1999b). In the real legend (*tjautsiker*), the hundred-pace snake is often considered the ancestor of the chief's family. Originally '*vetsik*' referred to the triangular design on the body of the hundred-pace snake. From the study of Ting-rwei Ho (1955, 1960), we know that in the past only the members of a chief's family had the right to wear tattoos, that is, to impose the designs (*vetsik*) of the hundred-pace snake and sometimes of ancestral heads on the back of the hands (for females), the arm, chest and back (for males). In other words, the chief's family identify with their ancestral hundred-pace snake by putting simplified designs of the hundred-pace snake on their bodies. The emphasis on dressing in splendid costumes and decorations is an extension of imposing the '*vetsik*' on the body. The Paiwan people, especially of chieftain families, wish to be filmed with '*vetsik*' on their clothes and head ornaments. In the real legends, the hundred-pace snake transforms into an Hodgson's hawk eagle, which has the same triangular design (*vetsik*) on the feathers of its wings. The four feathers with clearest *vetsik* on each wing of the Hodgson's hawk eagle are exclusively used as head ornaments of the chief. When members of the chief's family wear splendid clothes with *vetsik*, they are more closely identified with the gods and ancestors. When people see the *vetsik* on clothes, they immediately think of the sacred origin of the chief's family, and the emotion of thoughtful sorrow reconfirms the chief's ritual authority. The beautiful costumes and decorations with *vetsik* in Paiwan are not only considered valuable properties, they themselves are also endowed with life (*nasi*) and power (*ruqem*), and have to be taken care of through rituals.

Generally speaking, the word '*vetsik*' in Paiwan refers to tattoos and sculptures with the most popular designs of the hundred-pace snake and the ancestral head. I have previously noted (1999b, 2000) that the Paiwan people not only imitate the designs (*vetsik*) but also the 'sound' of the hundred-pace snake. Both designs and sounds catalyze the emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow (*tarimuzau/mapaura*).

As 'becoming a bird' is the core metaphor of Kaluli aesthetics described by Steven Feld, we can say that 'becoming a hundred-pace snake' is the core metaphor of Paiwan aesthetics. What interests me most is that snake experts have assured me that the hundred-pace snake in Taiwan does not make much sound. While I filmed the hundred-pace snake with the help of a zoologist, I only heard a very slight sound coming from its mouth. Given this fact, why do the Paiwan people in Piuma villages all state that the sound of the hundred-pace snake is like weeping, and the sound of the nose flute is like that of the hundred-pace snake? I am astonished to discover that the weeping sound of the ancestral hundred-pace snake might be imagined. It seems that in the thoughts and memories of the Paiwan people, the sound of the original ancestor is like weeping. When they hear a sound like

weeping in the natural environment, they would automatically regard it to be the sound of the ancestral hundred-pace snake.

Weeping usually expresses the emotion of sadness, which causes feelings of unease. While the emotions of sadness in other societies such as the Kaluli implies loss and abandonment, 'thoughtful sorrow' (*tarimuzau/mapaura*) in Paiwan is an emotion connected with love, sorrow and beauty. The Paiwan people like to keep things with '*vetsik*' connected with the origin legends to evoke the emotion of thoughtful sorrow towards beloved persons and places.

Let us recall the words of the female priest Laerep: 'Everything containing *vetsik* is for our remembrance of the ancestors' and the artist Sakuliu's comment that 'We human beings are not born as beautiful as the hundred-pace snake with designs (*vetsik*) on the body, therefore, we have to decorate ourselves with *vetsik*'. To the Paiwan, nature is not 'naked', but decorated with beautiful designs. If the camera is working, they want to be filmed as their legendary ancestors with beautiful designs and be remembered by their descendents in the emotion of thoughtful sorrow. The splendidly ornamental *vetsik* are signs and symbols that are able to induce the emotions and aesthetics of 'thoughtful sorrow'.

I discovered that in addition to real legends, the fictive legends also influence the formation of Paiwan emotions and aesthetics. The fictive legends are narrated in tones intended to amaze the listeners and move them to tears. In the fictive legends, the descriptions of beautiful women and the handsome men are audiovisually quite impressive. For example, when the male character Pulalulaluian visits the female character Tjukutjuku, the fictive legend told by a Kulalao woman Vais Tjivadrian describes it as follows:

Tjukutjuku's mother says, 'You must wear the most precious glass bead necklace and the rich dress.' Thus Tjukutjuku wears a pair of glass bead necklaces consisting of eight strings and a headdress embroidered with designs of red, green and yellow. When she stands up, the sound of the hanging metal ornaments on her costume can be heard throughout the village. The villagers thought that it was the sound of rain, but actually it was the pleasant sound from Tjukutjuku's splendid dress and ornaments. As Tjukutjuku sits in the house, the light radiating from her body reaches the outdoor platform. The moment when Pulalulaluian sees Tjukutjuku, his eyes are stung by her shining light. And when Tjukutjuku stands under the eaves, her radiantly beautiful light passes over the mountains, and even dims the light of the sun. ... Pulalulaluian and his friends enter the house. He sits by the main pillar with light radiating from his body, as though the sun had lit up the entire room.

Yasuyoshi Kobayashi (1998) collected fictive legends in central Taiwan between 1920-30. In these legends, we find many descriptions of the beautiful woman, such as:

There are always ten rays of rainbow accompanying Muakaikai. ... She puts ten rings of glass beads on her headdress, wears ten strings of glass bead necklaces and ten silver bracelets on her arms, and puts many silver and glass bead rings on her fingers. Her glassy skin and the splendid costumes with designs make her incomparably pretty and shiny.

From these fictive legends, we obtain very strong images of beautiful women and handsome men who are as bright and pretty as the sun and rainbows. As a matter of fact, in the real legends of some Paiwan villages, the sun is the creator or the ancestor of the chief's family. In Kulalao village, if the villagers see the sun surrounded by a circle of rainbows, they consider it to be the mourning costume of the sun – an omen of the death of a chief. In the real legend of the Vungarid village, a young lady, Tjuku, was insulted when her brother sneaked into her room at night to test her chastity. She then sat sadly on a swing made of glass beads, and asked her boyfriend Pulaluian to swing her into the sky. She became a rainbow containing the green, orange and yellow colors of the glass beads. Pulaluian returned home and kept on playing the flute in the mood of thoughtful sorrow. His mother got angry with him for he didn't do anything but play the flute, so she threw her son's flute into the fire. Pulaluian was so sad he became a hundred-pace snake. From these old legends, we find that rainbows, glass beads with rainbow colors and the hundred-pace snake are all important symbols of love, beauty and thoughtful sorrow.

Talking about 'beauty', the Paiwan people use the terms *nanguaq* or *burai* in speaking about general beauty, but for unusual beauty with everlasting value they use the term *samiring*. *Samiring* also contains the meaning of sorrow, loneliness, surprise and lingering. Both *samiring* and *mirimiringan* (fictive legends) have the same stem, '*miring*', which means 'everlasting'. Aesthetically, the Paiwan people believe that age is more beautiful and valuable. The old things are remembered in a mood of thoughtful sorrow (*tarimuzau/mapaura*), which is closely connected with the concept of everlasting beauty (*samiring*). Although time changes, the emotions and aesthetics of 'thoughtful sorrow' have been deeply rooted in Paiwan culture and are still an influence on contemporary performances.

Among Taiwan's indigenous societies, the Paiwan people are considered to have preserved more traditional elements than other Taiwan aboriginal peoples and they still insist on putting the designs and symbols described in the origin legends on modern costumes and decorations. Even for those who converted to Christianity and gave up their belief in the sacred hundred-pace snake, they still wear the most important symbols and designs on their costumes and decorations. In addition, when manufacturing the glass beads, the Paiwan people try to imitate ancient beads in terms of color, design and quality; while singing popular songs, Paiwan youths love to sing songs with tunes and lyrics expressing thoughtful sorrow and like to extend each sentence with a trembling and sobbing voice; and when facing the camera, Paiwan people wish to be filmed with splendid costumes and decorations containing *vetsik* for the remembrance of future generations.

## Conclusion

The study of visual systems has been one main focus of Visual Anthropology in recent years (Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy, 1997). This article explores the

Paiwan people's visual system through the observation of their interaction with the camera, and the images of representative symbols in legends. The highly recognized emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow (*tarimuzau/mapaura*) is discussed and related to the aesthetics of the Paiwan visual system.

While filming 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow', I discovered that the Paiwan characters automatically put on splendid costumes and 'performed' very naturally and beautifully in front of the camera. Compared to other ethnic groups in Taiwan, I also found that ever since the introduction of the video camera to Paiwan communities 15 years ago, the Paiwan people have become fond of video technology, and found it necessary to sustain quite a number of local videographers to film various kinds of ritual activities. It is revealing that the performances filmed by Paiwan videographers are highly influenced by the emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow, which are rooted in the legends of the sacred hundred-pace snake, the sun, the rainbow and the other significant symbols. Unlike Kaluli emotions of sadness and abandonment, Paiwan emotions and aesthetics of 'thoughtful sorrow' are connected with love and everlasting beauty, and are cherished by the Paiwan people. When the camera is working, the Paiwan people desire to dress up and perform naturally and beautifully like those ancestral symbols for the purpose of being remembered by their descendants in the mood of thoughtful sorrow. As a matter of fact, they not only react to the camera, they actually direct the camera to fulfill their cultural expectations. Modern video technology enhances, rather than undercuts, their traditional concept of everlasting beauty (*samiring*) and ways of performances.

I feel that film images are the extension of symbolic designs (*vetsik/vintsikan*) in Paiwan legends. From the real and fictive legends, we discover vivid images of representative Paiwan symbols. The triangular design (*vetsik*) on the body of the hundred-pace snake appears in different forms in all categories of Paiwan culture. Although the images and sounds of '*vetsik*' originated from the old legends, the same emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow are felt and emphasized by Paiwan videographers, the filmed Paiwan villagers and the Paiwan audience.

'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' has been screened in the theater and many other locations. It is observed that the responses of the Paiwan audience are different from those of the non-Paiwan audience. The Paiwan audience would not raise questions about the authenticity of the dressing-up scenes, just like they would not question whether the hundred-pace snake could blow with his nose to create a sound like weeping.

Some legends such as the one about the hundred-pace snake sounds very fictive to the outsiders, but they are considered real legends by the Paiwan people. In other words, they are not using the same standard as us to distinguish real legends from fictive legends. With regards to images and sounds, the Paiwan people 'see' and 'hear' things in their own visual system with unique meanings and aesthetics.

The following are some comments on the film 'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' from the Paiwan audience:

The sound of flute and appearance of the hundred-pace snake in the film made me feel something very deep and leads me to the ancient legends. ...This film looks very real for me. Especially when I see the elders talking and flirting with each other, I feel at home ... .

This film struck my emotions. We young Paiwan people should go back to the origin. I liked all the words spoken by the representative flautists. I wish to learn and be a successor to Paiwan traditional wisdom and order.

I fall in the swirl of thoughtful sorrow (*tarimuzau*). In the sound of flutes, I think of the original village, my old lover, past customs, the ancient legends, and share the same Paiwan aesthetics....

'Sounds of Love and Sorrow' was screened in the open ground of Kulalao Village. When the villagers saw Tjujui who had just died appearing on the screen, they cried and said:

A-i – We do not know what has happened to Tjujui now. Yet we can still see and hear him in the film. How sad it is! How much we think of him! (*a-i-anga tua tsutsau ki namakuta anga inatsavatsavan,saka izua anan tja patsutunan a tja rangetan a kai,mapaura itjen.*)

At that moment, I was happy that I hadn't persuaded Tsujui to take off his splendid attire with representative designs when we filmed him chopping the bamboo and playing the flute. From the responses of the Paiwan audience, I further confirmed that the Paiwan people like filmed images for the reason that they can arouse the emotions and aesthetics of thoughtful sorrow emphasized in real and fictive legends. If we try to film the Paiwan people in their daily life without their awareness of the existence of the camera, this kind of 'observational film' may only catch the surface of the reality, and fail to capture the real Paiwan emotions and aesthetics. For Paiwan people, nature is not plain and naked; instead, it is like the hundred-pace snake, the sun and the rainbow, all of which have astonishing designs and colorful colors.

This study of the Paiwan visual system has touched the basic problem of ethnographic representation. Whose aesthetics have been represented? The traditional ethnographies often neglect the local aesthetics and the meaning underlying the 'performances'. Through the analysis of film images and legends, it is easier to sense the specific aesthetics and performances of the culture and to spur the production of better ethnographies.

#### Acknowledgment

A revised version of this paper was presented at the 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the AAA at the Hyatt Regency, New Orleans, 11/20-11/24, 2002.



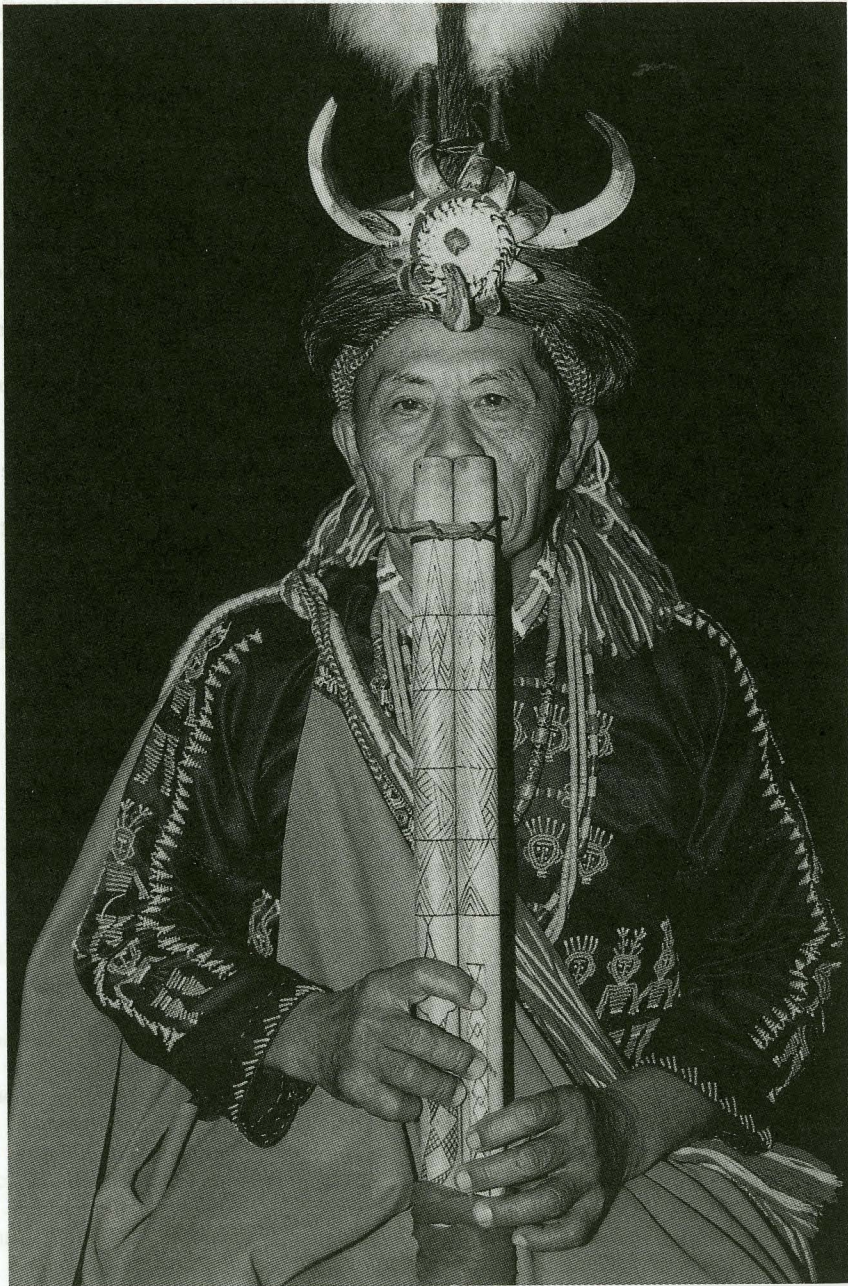
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6.1 Rhemalits Tjakisuvung is playing the nose flute to express the emotion of 'thoughtful sorrow'.



6.2 Paiwan people love to be filmed, especially on occasions of dancing when they dress in splendid costumes and ornaments with Paiwan symbols and designs.



6.3 The female chief Kalaikail Tjivulkan is filmed with the Hodgson's hawk eagle. In the real legends, the ancestral hundred-pace snake transforms into a Hodgson's hawk eagle, which has the same triangular design on the feathers of its wings.

## Chapter 7

# The Aesthetics of Politics Transforming Genres and Meanings in Melanesia

Lisette Josephides

### Introduction

This chapter traces a series of transformations through which aesthetic genres are put to the service of political ends (1). I begin with an ethnographic description of myth and song, and illustrate how meaning is acquired according to the context of use or performance. In what I call a process of transformation, these aesthetic forms give rise to cultural texts which elicit a single political meaning from a richly layered cultural form, or else subvert the meaning altogether (2). The transformations are mostly men's activities; they allow, in a backward glance, the identification of a gender difference in men's and women's intentions for their actions, and identify basic discrepancies in each sex's perceptions of the social meanings and cultural entailments of certain institutions and cultural texts. Far from creating shared cultural forms, the social interactions of Kewa men and women seem to delineate contradictory forms and persons (3). A brief look at changing gender relations in the post-colonial period corroborates this observation, suggesting that certain understandings presented by ethnographers as general cultural descriptions are largely based on male claims.

I draw my ethnographic data from the Kewa of Papua New Guinea, a patrilineal people living in the Southern Highlands and well-known in the literature for their male domination and periodic pig kills in which bigmen achieve their political reputations (see Josephides 1985). I concentrate on three 'transformational' sets of cultural forms. In the first set, myths are transformed into stories of origin, when an extensive body of metaphors provides the basis for the extraction of a specific narrow meaning. In the second set, threnodies are transformed into pig killing songs, when emotions based on personal experience emerge as universalistic claims to social reproduction. In the third set, the symmetric 'sexing' of courtship songs becomes 'asymmetric' sexing, when the songs (and marriage itself) become subordinated to agnatic male politics.

My findings have implications for the way we view Melanesian social processes. In each of the cases examined, what mediates the transformation of an