

SESSION 16 (Paper)

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Music Acting as a Bridge between Ethnic Groups: An Activist Research on the Creation Project of “Crossing Ridges— Appreciating the Bunun Music Story”

The Bunun is a Taiwan indigenous group residing extensively in various parts of the Central Mountain Range since ancient times. The Bunun people have been practicing a unique way of polyphonic singing; their genre called pasibutbut became the first Taiwanese indigenous music known to the global academic circles thanks to the IFMC conference in 1952.

Carrying this historical significance, pasibutbut was inscribed as the first “National and Important” Intangible Cultural Heritage item, while the Bunun Culture Association, composed mainly of Bunun people from the Ming-Te tribe in Hsin-I Village of Nantou County, was nominated as its transmitting group in 2010. For the Bunun Culture Association, the national inscription brought them honor and responsibility on one hand, but also added invisible weight on the other hand. Furthermore, a controversial issue about the violation of taboos was raised by a cross-domain performance at the awarding ceremony of 2017 Golden Melody Awards in Taiwan.

As an ethnomusicologist engaged in the safeguarding and preserving Bunun traditional music, I conducted activist research, observing and evaluating the composing and performing activities. The notions applied in this activist research include “music as performance,” “music improvisation,” and “participatory performance and representational performance”. The results will be examined in my presentation.

Bio

Yuh-Fen Tseng earned her Ph.D. in musicology from the Taipei National University of the Arts and a Master of Arts degree, with specialization in piano performance, from New York University. She is currently a professor in the Music Department at National Chiayi University in Taiwan and serves as Chair of the ICTMD Study Group on Indigenous Music and Dance.

With a deep understanding of the rapid disappearance of Indigenous cultural heritages, she has devoted her career to the preservation and transmission of Taiwanese indigenous music and dance and published widely on the topic. One of her musical theatre productions, *Crossing Ridges – Appreciating the Music Story of Bunun* (2019, 2020), was honored with the 2022 Best Video-Audio Publication Award at the 33rd Golden Melody Awards, organized by Taiwan's Ministry of Culture.