

The sounds archives of the Music Research Institute--a perspective on the study of material culture.

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1. Background of thesis

Sounds archives as a "material culture", is not only "objects" kept in the archives, but also a bridge through which we can explore the relationship of people, the relationship between people and history behind the files. As a result, the archive itself has got the significance of "historical sites".

Besides the files recorded by Western scholars in the early 20th century (deposited in some sound archives such as Vienna or Berlin or Washington Smithsonian, as well as some recording companies such as RCA Victory, EMI, Odeon), in fact the present audio sound of Chinese traditional and folk music, planned and operated by the local Chinese scholars, began in the 1950s by the scholars from the research department of Central Conservatory of Music, later renamed as National Institute, now named as the Music Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts (abbreviated to the Music Research Institute herein). Until 1997, the 7000 hours archives of traditional and folk music recordings recorded by the different ways from different region and different ethnic groups of China, was awarded as "the Memory of the World Register" designation which was the first batch of sounds archives awarded by UNESCO.

(Figure 1, certificate of "the Memory of the World Register")

Figure 1 :



For various reasons, the preservation of these sound archives as a material carrier is in a state of deterioration, it should be transcribed urgently through the storage technology by computer for emergency treatment. (Figure 2, the endangered recordings)

Figure 2 :



In 2004, the "Digitization of Recordings of Traditional Chinese Music" project declared by the Music Research Institute got a support by UNESCO. I had the pleasure to be a leading participant of the project, sampled 120 tapes from 7000 hours, and selected 36 pieces of music from it to make a representative sample CD "the traditional Chinese music treasure" of 67 minutes.¹ We reviewed the ways of sound

See <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URLID=22363&URL DO=DO TOP-IC&URL SECTION=201.html>

recording, the usage and storage of those recordings. We found the mainland scholars' concept of recording collection, can reflect a tendency of Chinese mainland ethnomusicology in the second half of 20th century. (Figure 3, the website put out by UNESCO of the project: UNESCO Supports Digitization of Recordings of Traditional Chinese Music)

Figure 3 :



2. From a perspective of the effect of the sound archives

The sound archives in the Music Research Institute were cataloged in 1993, approximately of 28,600 pieces, totally of 12 categories, including Chinese folk songs, story-telling, Chinese opera, colligate music forms, religious music, dance music, ethnic instrumental music, modern songs, Chinese works playing by western instruments, opera and dance drama, and other acoustics related to music. Those archives played an important role in the history of Chinese music, including that:

- (1) a phonic music records through the extensive coverage of various styles of Chinese traditional folk music were set up;
- (2) a substantial support to studies of Chinese traditional music and music history is provided; (such as the work "An Conspectus of National Music" written by Chinese scholars which was organized by the Music Research Institute during mid-1960s, has combined with a tape of the sound archives.)
- (3) the distribution of folk music was promoted; (such as the *erhu* well-known song "Er Quan Ying Yue" was recorded by the founder Liu Yin-Yang in 1950, and broadcasted at the same time, then spread far and got wide reputation at home and abroad)
- (4) The main period of recording (the second half of 20th century) was just at the early transformation of Chinese society, almost every genre can be recorded a magnum opus of a famous master, therefore, as the historical treasures, it can tell its own tale of the representation and value in the music history.

3. From a perspective of the preservation of the sound archives

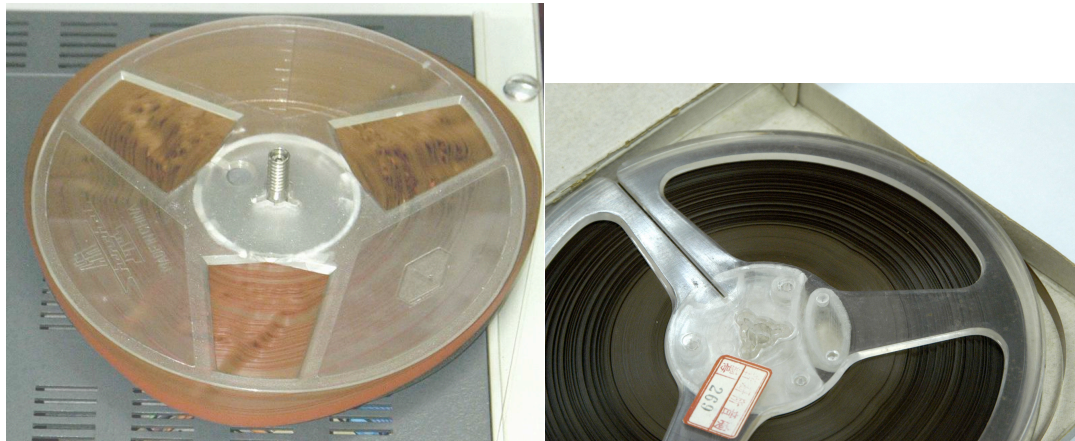
However, although these collections have great functions for the construction of Chinese music, but from the perspective of archive preservation, the preservation is not very satisfied.

This article does not involve damage caused by ages, temperature and climate conditions, such as the deformation of tapes caused by the vinegar **syndrome**, and so on. This article will discuss the wear and tear of archives by factitious reasons, then lead to an academic tendencies.

- (1) There exist a large number of deformation and damage caused by the use of non-standard disk folders; the irregular operation of **wind**、rewind led to the deformation of tape tension. These irregular operation are base on both two possibilities, firstly the operators are musicologists who have never get a technical

professional training; secondly, although the operator is professional and technical personnel, but they do not have the idea and technology skills of archives (Figure 4, non-standard disk folders and damages caused by irregular operation of rewind)

Figure 4 :



(2) loss of physical signal caused by the default of meta-data in the preservation. Since many of the original recordings don't have intact meta-data, such as the speed of recordings, equipment models, tape number, track format, and don't have the description of the contents and the catalog of the data object. This has resulted in the negative impact of physical signals loss during the process of sound archives preservation and transcription.

Example 1: This is an original recording, no equipment model and track record, which could easily make the errors of copy and transcription during later work. This is the piece of wind and percussion "*Mantingfang*"(满庭芳), it was an original stereo sound recording with four-track, which reflected that Chinese mainland has began to use stereo sound recording in early 1960s, which was synchronized with the international usage of stereo sound recording. But during the copy for storage in 1964, the sound was transcribed for the 2-track mono recording. In 2004, we found the reverse envelope when we done the playback, so we have the chance to remedy the situation. (sound example 1, and Figure 5-6, the spectrum demonstrating)

Figure 5 : 4-track

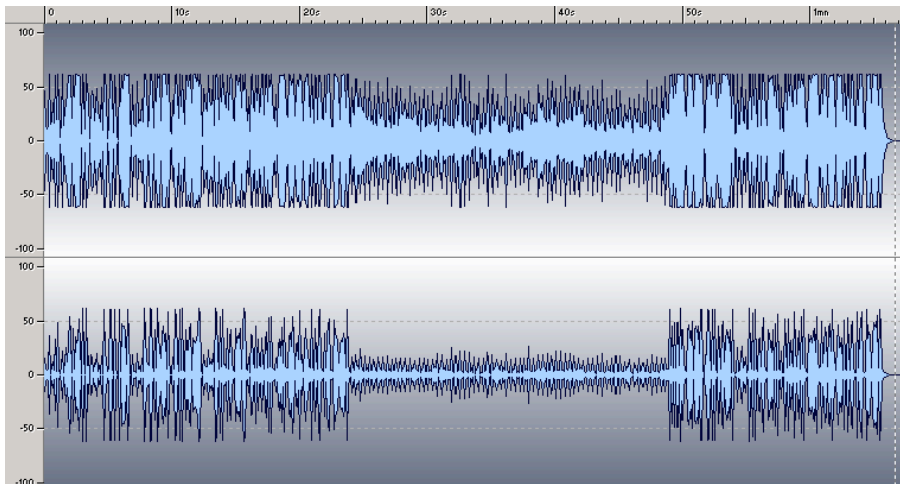
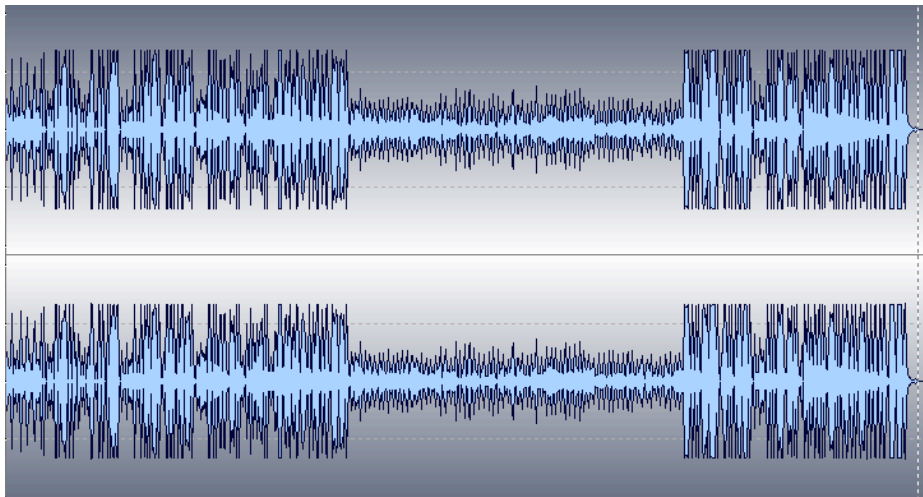


Figure 6 : 2-track



Example 2: This is a recording of "*Baisha Xiyue*" of Naxi Ethnic group, recorded in 1962. According to the original 9.5 rpm playback speed, it is obviously different with the contemporary music style (faster than the contemporary folk artists performing in the region), at beginning, we thought it was a testament to cultural change, but after the detailed analysis for the characteristics and audio frequency of variety folk music, we found that the speed was wrong. But when we adjust the speed to 5.4 rpm, the sounds would be normal. The two recordings have a gap of 650 cents on tunes. This may relate to the environment such as recording voltage at that time, but it is regrettable that this situation can not be reflected in the original document. The mistake was continued in the subsequent DAT transfer of audio files in the 1990s. If

the wrong speed is not found in our work in 2004, this mistake and its sound would become an unable-correct legacy of "historical evidence" in the future. (sound example 2 and figure 7, the original file of *Baisha Xiyue*)

figure 7 :

地区	族别、民族	歌目	歌词
丽江、纳西族、白沙细乐		美丽的白云	
		"德"	
		合奏	
		三思渠	
		美丽的白云	
		一封书	
		三思渠	
		美丽的白云	
丽江、纳西族、白沙细乐		八卦	
		十供养	
		吉祥	
		到春来	
		山坡羊	
丽江、纳西族、白沙细乐		梅唱	a me da

All of these man-made spoilages appear in the record preservation, formed a great contrast with the effect of those recordings in Chinese music construction. Now these sound archives only can be attached importance by scholars in repertoire, but not as a material culture , scholars should pay more attention to those archives' significance as "historical sites". In other words, these recordings only exist as a auxillary resources of music researching, composition and teaching ,rather than a stand-alone historic audio files to be preserved. So such circumstances reflect a tendency of repertour from its recording to use of the recording.

4. The effects of " repertoire " tendency to recording

If we are to be traced back to the perspective of recording method and documents editing method, we can also found this " repertoire " tendency.

(1) Almost all of the sound recordings in the Music Research Institute are based on a " repertoire " unit. Every recording used the way of announcer for a genre, name, and performer in order of each pieces. As a result, the sound archive itself hardly reflects the whole situation including recorded sound, recorded object and the context of sound occurred (such as how is the performing induced? Or How is the people to " perform " requested by recorder? And thus maybe the performer would change their own way of playing?)

(2) In the record of sound archives, the record of "pieces" was emphasized, and the context of "pieces" was ignored therefore. It is obvious to see differences between the " tables of sound recording register " made by Music Research Institute and the text file of the Phonogtammarchiv, Austrian(PhA). The latter files related to recording the context of the humanities, and collected the circumstances of recording, which were ignored by former. (figure 8-9 / , Comparison between MRI and PhA)

Figure8 : MRI's

1.	2.
☐音☐号 :☐音牌号 ;	地区、族别、☐种 ;
☐度 ;	表演形式 ;
☐音 (复制) 者 ;	曲目 ; 作者 ;
☐音 (复制) 日期 ;	表演者 (演唱、演奏、伴奏、指
☐音地点 ;	☐)
机型 ;	分、秒、速度 ;
☐音☐面/分号	☐注
☐目来源 ;	

figure9 : PhA's

1. 被采录者背景资料：

姓名；别名；性别；种族；年：；；
出生地；在居住地；
曾居住地（从哪儿到哪儿）；
何去何地旅行；
父母居住地；
父的家；
母的家；
体名（、合唱等）；
宗教信仰；
受教育程度；
掌握的其它言；

2. 采录内容：

音日期；音地点；体裁（歌或音）；
音内容的言或方言；
来源（原始音有者）；
种类（音、民俗、器具等）；
人声与器的体裁（声、双声部）；
噪音或呼喊等；
音型号和筒、机型；
音者；音者；
3. 采者背景：
地考察者姓名；目主持人；
；度；可否公开；
方法（依音者要求，或原貌）；
管理者；母的技状况；复制档案者；
注；出版状；
体；

(3) The default of necessary information data mentioned above results in the incomplete metadata. (Such as in a folk song of the Dong ethnic group, there is no record of the era, recording state and sources, only the record of place——in Guizhou is presented. Until the project in 2004, we finally found its recorder and recording time through a lot of efforts such as documents lookup and interviews. (Figure 10) Such kind of default are common, that is, the records of "pieces" are only noticed , but recording environment and background information are ignored. Therefore as reasons as mentioned above, the recording participants and method of recoding for the famous *erhu* music "*Er Quan Ying Yue*" have been still a mystery in the modern history of Chinese music.

figure10：原始音文档的（左原始文档，右所建所40周年大事所）

中央音樂學院民族音樂研究所錄音登記表

資料號碼 89 種類 錄音日期 19 年 月 日 機速 直接錄音 轉錄

錄音地點 錄音者 編目負責人

編號	分類號	樂種	曲名	分秒	演唱(奏)者
12	89.1	苗族山歌	李元庆	2:32	李元庆
13	2	"	李元庆	0:12	李元庆
14	3	苗族山歌	李元庆	1:23	李元庆
15	4	"	李元庆	2:28	李元庆
16	5	"	李元庆	1	李元庆
17	6	"	李元庆	1:20	李元庆
18	7	"	李元庆	1:12	李元庆
19	8	苗族山歌	李元庆	1:25	李元庆
20	9	"	李元庆	1:18	李元庆

【4月】

李元庆参加文化部召开的“1957—1967十年科学研究规划会议”。

【本年春】

赵宽仁赴贵州省赫章县、威宁彝族回族苗族自治县、普定县、望谟县、镇远县、剑河县、从江县、榕江县等地采访侗族民间音乐及侗戏。

【4月25日~7月7日】

我所和湖南省文化局联合组成湖南音乐采访队，对湖南全省的民间音乐作普遍调

(4) In addition, the separation of archives' number in the Music Research Institute with the same number in fieldwork notes and picture number also inevitably affect the standards of records management. Let us to take the "Directory of Chinese music acoustics" published by the Music Research Institute as an example, the index reflects the "repertoire" genre, the targets is for the circulation of Audio Library and appreciatory browser, noone can see a history of the field recording and the developed tendency of the subjects, and impact on the true value of the file as a historical and cultural heritage.

In order to overcome those problems mentioned above, during the establishment of a scheme in the implementation of "Digitization of Recordings of Traditional Chinese Music" project in 2004. we have taken the improvation and preservation of meta-data of historic sounds archives as a key framework.

5. "Textual fieldwork"

The "repertoire" tendency is coincided with the concept of "textual fieldwork" and "collection". To collect and collate Chinese traditional and folk music has been a big task done by Chinese musians and musicologists in the 20th century. Its main purpose is very clear that "long and deep tradition and its new development" should be understood completely in order to build a new system of the national music of

China,. The text-based documents of "the five major integration of Chinese folk music" are the paradigm. Recording is the phonic text of such operations. As a result, the " repertoire "tendency emphatically provides information of pieces in sound material, in particular, providing information of composition, enjoying, teaching and research, but not the memory of history.

In addition, this kind of text fieldwork, a gesture of "I used" is hidden although herein the "I" can be scholar representing a state or country. The scholars do not concern those mutual relations between the recorders and music culture. Under the influence of such a recording method, besides of the default of metadata in documents as mentioned above, more importantly, the sounds archives as well as the text file of related operations have not been sent back to the local people. For example, the first sound archive recorded by the Music Research Institute was made in 1956 to survey the music of Hunan province. However, these results of survey, including pictures, sound recordings, written records as well as the later published "Music of Hunan census report" in 1960, have never been sent a copy file back to Hunan province and any folk artists. In 2006, one of my students had a special trip to Hunan to carry out a re-visit of the survey, the result is: there is no stub of relevant information about the large-scale survey of music activities, and any files for any folk artists who has given his "treasure" to us have never been set up.

At that time, scholars exerted the power of recording instead of state, local folk artists dedicated their treasures to the state. All of these are aimed at setting up a new national music system of China.