

THE SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION OF THE WHISTLING ART IN CHINA

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Abstract. Whistling was one of the early auditory and ideographic means of humans. As a unique cultural phenomenon, whistling had been spreading in China for a long time, and was once called ‘*xiao*’. It had even become an early religious magic and a way of keeping fit for alchemists and Taoists. This study will further elaborate that as a primitive form of musical expression, whistling has unique significance in its development process. Whistling is a casual and joyful art of music, and this pleasure comes from the pursuit of the spiritual realm triggered by whistling. On the one hand, whistling has the function of expressing personal emotions and lifting the mood; on the other hand, it can create a realm that is the unity of heaven and humanity. From an aesthetic perspective, whistling is not a simple skill, but a return to nature by humans.

Keywords: Chinese art, whistling, *xiao*, music, religious, Taoists, aesthetic, acoustics

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1. Introduction

Music is a way of expressing emotions, and can also be understood as a rhythmic language formed during the origin of human language, where certain strong emotions are accompanied by changes in labor intensity in nature. When songs are produced, humans naturally raise their voice, they find that the changes in pitch and language can sing out their heart’s emotions (Wang 2022: 129-137). From a musical perspective, the whistling art mainly refers to the sound produced by the friction between the airflow and the lips when a person blows air. Music is actually

an important reason for the emergence of whistling. The whistling art was also a unique cultural phenomenon in ancient China. During the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 AD), Xu Shen (许慎) described the ‘*xiao*’ (嘯) as a blowing sound (吹声也), in *Shuowen Jiezi* 《说文解字》. This special art form has been passed down in China for a long time. Whistling mainly comes from the sound of nature. Our ancestors lived in a world filled with sounds, and the natural world contained abundant sounds.

Ever since the humans entered the threshold of civilization, they began to destroy nature due to the influence of social conditions. The essence of whistling is that it is a return to nature after humans have taken the initiative there. Therefore, whistling was also favored by witches and alchemists, gradually becoming a supernatural magic of Taoism. Whistling has also been given a religious color. During the Warring States period (战国) (476–221 BC), witchcraft was prevalent, and ‘soul summoning’ (招魂) was a religious activity at that time. Qu Yuan (屈原) used this as a title to mourn King Huai (怀王). He wrote that *the equipment for summoning souls is ready, playing whistles quickly* (招具该备,永嘯呼些) (Zan1993: 145-148). This means that all equipment for summoning souls is ready, and the wizard whistles loudly to summon the soul of King Huai. It passed down to the Han (汉) dynasty and was absorbed by Taoism as a special method of refining *qi*. With the continuous expansion of Taoist organizations, various legends about whistling have also emerged. Currently, there are few studies on the relationship between whistling and Chinese religion. In view of this, we will make an attempt to explore the spiritual in the whistling art in China.

2. The development of the whistling art in China

From the existing historical materials, it can be inferred that whistling in China originated from the spring and autumn period (春秋时期) (770–476 BC) or earlier. As early as the ancient Indian period, the prototype of whistling appeared. In the second volume of the Chinese translation of the Buddhist scripture ‘Da Sa Zha Ni Gan Zi Shuo Jing’ 《大萨遮尼干子所说经》 recorded that:

There were thousands of people who sing, dance, blow their lips, sing, and whistle, and perform millions of various tricks and music (Zan1993:145-148).

复有无量百千诸众，或歌，或舞，吹唇、唱、嘯，作百千万种种伎乐。

It was introduced to China during the middle ages. Volume 12 of the ‘Four Part Law’ 《四分律》 states: ‘Laugh, dance, drum lips, play drum springs, or the whistling.’ (或笑，或舞，或鼓唇、弹鼓簧，或嘯). In this paper, ‘blow their lips’ and ‘drum lips’ refer to ‘blowing whistles’. In Xiao Zhi 《嘯旨》，which described a mythological story:

Lao Jun bestows the title of Queen Mother, Queen Mother bestows the title of Antarctic Immortal, Immortal Person bestows the title of Guangchengzi, Guangchengzi bestows the title of Fenghou, Xiaofu bestows the title of Wuguang, Wuguang bestows the title of Yao, Yao bestows the title of Shun, and Shun performs it as a Qin, and with Yu, it has since been abolished (Zan 1993:145-148).

老君授王母，王母授南极真人，真人授广成子，广成子授风后，风后授啸父，啸父授务光，务光授尧，尧授舜，舜演之为琴，与禹，自后乃废。

In ancient times, whistling had already been an independent art form, although its significance was not obvious, many examples can demonstrate that whistling enjoyed a relatively mature development at that time.

During the Han dynasty (202–220 BC) and the Wei (魏) (220–265 AD) and Jin (265–420 AD) dynasties, whistling developed rapidly, ‘Han Jin Spring and Autumn Annals’ 《汉晋春秋》 described a story:

Emperor Huan was fortunate in the city of Fan, and the people did not stop watching. There was an old man worked alone and did not stop farming. When Zhang Wen asked questions, the old man xiao, but did not answer (Zan 1993:145-148).

桓帝幸樊城，百姓莫不观，有一老父独耕不辍。议郎张温使问焉，父啸而不答。

In this paper, *xiao* refers to whistling. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, there were many people who were good at *xiao*, and it was a way to express individuality at that time, which was therefore favored by many civilians. During the Northern and Southern dynasties (南北朝) (420–589 AD), the development of *xiao* was relatively slow. It was in the ‘Zizhi Tongjian’ 《资治通鉴》) where *xiao* was explained:

Those who blow their lips use their teeth to make air, and their sound is like that of an eagle hawk. Fingers are used to clip their lips to blow, and then there is a sound, which was called ‘Xiao Zhi’ (the fourth year of the Qi Jianwu reign)(Xia Yanzhou1992: 97-101).

吹唇者，以齿啣唇作气吹之，其声如鹰隼，其下者以指夹唇吹之，然后有声，谓之啸指（齐建武四年）。

In this paper, ‘blowing their lips’ refers to whistling. The cultural relics and murals unearthed in Nanjing have patterns of Ruan Ji (阮籍) playing whistles during the Southern dynasties, China (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Murals from Southern dynasty tombs unearthed in China (Ruan Ji).

It was not until the Tang dynasty (唐代) that the traces of *xiao* reappeared, and people began to pay more attention to the development of *xiao*. Wang Wei (王维) of the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD) ‘traveled with his Taoist friend Pei Di on a floating boat, played the qin and composed poetry, and sang loudly all day long’ (与道友裴迪浮舟往来，弹琴赋诗，啸咏终日) (Li Bincheng 2002: 655-658). During the reign of Emperor Wuzong of Tang (唐武宗), the king turtle ‘created a study in a deep and secluded garden, between the singing and the whistling.’ (园林深僻处创书斋，吟啸其间) (Li Bincheng 2002: 655-658). These indicate that some literati at that time enjoyed *xiao*. From the Song dynasty (宋代) (960–1279 AD) to the Jin dynasty (金代) (1115–1234 AD), due to the constraints of feudal Neo Confucianism such as the ‘imperial examination and official selection’ at that time, only very few people liked whistling, and it basically disappeared. Although the development of whistling in the Yuan (元), Ming (明), and Qing (清) dynasties was difficult to compare with the Wei and Jin dynasties, it also had its own development characteristics. In Volume 21 of ‘Dongwei Subset’ 《东维子集》 and ‘Shu Xiao Tai Ji’ 《舒啸台记》, Yang Weizhen (杨维桢) recorded that:

Xie Zhongyun had a Shu Xiao Tai in the shade of Shihu, where he once had a banquet with Yang Weizhen. After drinking heavily, he composed xiao of Su Men for Yang Weizhen, and Yang Weizhen also matched it with a jade flute (Fan 1994).

谢仲允在石湖之阴有舒啸台，曾在此宴杨维桢。酒酣，为杨维桢作苏门之啸，杨维桢也以玉笛相和。

This showed that *xiao* in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368 AD) was still popular. The whistling sculptures appeared in the cultural relics of the Song dynasty unearthed in Henan, China (Figure 2).

During the Ming (1368–1644 AD) and Qing (1644–1911 AD) dynasties, there emerged a group of folk experts who were skilled in whistling. In Volume 13 of ‘ChiBei Ou Tan’ 《池北偶谈》, Wang Shizhen’s (王士禛) recorded that the late Wang YuSheng (with the character Song Sheng) (王与盛 (字崧生)) was skilled in whistling. The volume describes his *xiao* shaking the trees. In the Qing dynasty, there were also many folk experts in *xiao*, such as Wang Jing (汪京), who was a well-known expert in *xiao* at that time. In the ‘Xiao Weng Biography’ 《啸翁传》, Chen Ding (陈鼎) told us a story:

‘Xiao Weng’, the elderly person in Shezhou, Wang Jing, with the name Ziting, good at xiao at the highest age. Therefore, people called him ‘Xiao Weng’. Xiao Weng liked climbing high peaks alone on a clear night, and suddenly he xiao, echoing the sounds of mountains and valleys, and the trees shook. Birds were startled and flew, tigers and leopards were scared away, and people in the mountains were already asleep. They suddenly awoke; those who had not slept, their hearts trembled with fear, and they were all hesitant to sleep, suspecting the noise to be a landslide or earthquake. Until next day, the group was startled and wondered, but it was known that Xiao Weng did the whistling. The roar of Xiao Weng is passed down from a young age from ‘Xiao Xian’. The author of Youshan, Long Yin, lies drunk by the riverbank, chanting for a long time. Fish and shrimp all break through the waves and come towards each other. Many giant turtles and alligators greet the waves in worship (Zhang Chao1984).

啸翁者，歙州长啸老人汪京，字紫庭，善啸，而年又最高，故人皆呼为‘啸翁’也。啸翁尝于清夜独登高峰颠，豁然长啸，山鸣谷应，林木震动。禽鸟惊飞，虎豹骇走，山中人已寐者，梦陡然醒；未寐者，心悚然惧，疑为山崩地震，皆彷徨罔敢寝。达旦，群相惊问，乃知为啸翁发啸也。啸翁之啸，幼传自‘啸仙’。能作鸾鹤凤凰鸣，每一发声，则百鸟回翔，鸡鹜皆舞。又善作者龙吟，醉卧大江滨，长吟数声，鱼虾皆破浪来朝，鼃鼃多迎涛以拜。

It can thus be seen that the folk whistling art at the lower level at that time was almost magical and had great charm.

At the beginning of the 20th century in China, the development of whistling was relatively slow. In the 1930s, Zhao Yintang (赵荫棠) created ‘The Rise and Fall of Xiao Ge and the Interpretation of Sound Theory’ 《啸歌之兴替与音理的阐释》, published in the literary and historical supplement of the Central Daily

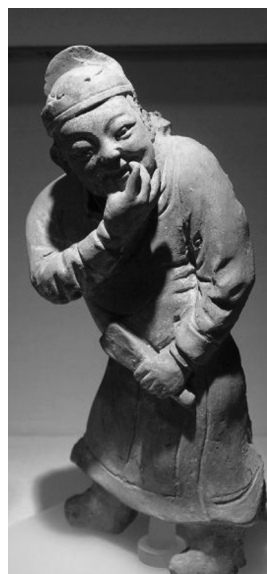


Figure 2. Whistling sculptures from the Song dynasty.

in 1937 (reprinted by the Commercial Press's 'Eternal Rhyme Source and Flow' 1957 edition). This article mainly analyzes the development of *xiao*, the principle of pronunciation, and the explanation of 'Qi Xiao Ye Ge' (其啸也歌) in the Book of Songs. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, it was not until 1982 that China issued the whistling music record of the Yali man Huck Thomas. Also in the 1980s, Zhang Dihe (章棣和) whistled 'Nightingale' at the Haidian Opera House in Beijing, accompanied by pianist Liu Shikun (刘诗昆). Subsequently, Zhang Dihe published the whistling music tapes such as 'Whistle and Band', becoming the first person in New China to bring whistling to the music stage. Since the 1990s, a large number of whistling enthusiasts has emerged in China. Various whistles not only appear in bands and other musical associations, but also in Chinese television stations, important media, and major journals, with various articles and reports on whistling research. It is precisely thanks to the promotion of this group of enthusiasts that the whistling art has achieved unprecedented development in China.

3. The musical thought of whistling and religious spirituality

3.1. Aesthetic thought of music

In the 'XiaoZhi' written by Sun Guang (孙广), who was Tang dynasty scholar, the difference between *xiao* and speech was described:

Xiao refers to a person who excites the breath in the throat but becomes turbid, which is called speech; and xiao refers to a person who excites the tongue and becomes clear, which is called xiao (Wan Zhong 1993).
 啸者，夫气激于喉中而浊，谓之言；激于舌而清，谓之啸。

It is pointed out that there were twelve techniques for *xiao*: *Wai Ji, Nei Ji, Han, Zang, San, Yue, Da Shen, Xiao Shen, Pi, Ji, Wu Tai, and Wu Shao* (外激、内激、含、藏、散、越、大沈、小沈、疋、叱、五太、五少) (Wan Zhong 1993). Sun Guang also used the twelve rhythms of sound and rhyme to correspond to the *xiao* performance technique:

The twelve rhythms resemble one year and twelve months old bells, Nei Ji was the yellow bell, Wai Ji was the corresponding bell, and Da Shen was Tai Cu, Xiao Shen was Jia Zhong, Wu Tai was Gu Xi, Wu Shao was Zhong Lu, San was Rui Bin, Yue was Lin Zhong, Pi was Yi Ze, Ji was Nan Lu, Han was Wu She, and Cang was Da Lu (Zan 1993: 145-148).
 十二法象一岁十二月，内激为黄钟，外激为应钟，大沈为太簇，小沈为夹钟，五太为姑洗，五少为仲吕，散为蕤宾，越为林钟，疋为夷则，叱为南吕，含为无射，藏为大吕。

The author described from the original text of ‘Xiao Zhi’ mentioned above. From the perspective of techniques, it was believed that *xiao* in ‘Xiao Zhi’ was a ‘dual tone’ technique, which relied on the simultaneous sound production of the throat and lips, similar to the ‘dual tone’ technique in *xiao* (when whistling, the throat produced sounds simultaneously), mainly because the sound effect produced by dual tone of *xiao* technique was similar to the sound effect produced by ‘Hoomei’ (呼麦). The frequency of the ‘whistle’ in the high pitched part was slightly lower than that of the ‘whistle’ in the high pitched part of ‘Hoomei’. In the Han dynasty, there was a change in the way *xiao* was played. The ‘Shuowen Jiezi’ recorded that *xiao* was the sound of blowing. This indicated that *xiao* in the Han dynasty was not mainly based on the coordination and resonance of the voice and lips and tongue, but mainly relied on the breath to sound through the lips. This sound production method was also the closest to our modern whistling performance.

It can also be inferred from the current music genres such as folk songs and labor horns in China that whistling is mostly produced by people in their work, which is a natural primitive sound and a way for people to alleviate labor pressure. Music can be either worded or wordless. Speaking without text, such as whistling, can be seen as a voice for people to communicate emotions, with a sense of rhythm. According to the book ‘Liu Tao Long Tao Five Tones’ 《六韬·龙韬·五音》, ‘those who hear the sound of people’s *xiao*, *Yu* (羽) tone’ (闻人啸呼之音者, 羽也). It can be inferred that in ancient times, people believed that *xiao* was the ‘Yu’ tone in the five tones. As recorded in ‘Ji Yun’ 《集韵》, ‘*Xiao*, blowing like a song’. This sentence means that a song can be played by whistling. In the Tang dynasty, Li He recorded in Kuhuang Diao *Xiao Yin* 《苦篁调啸》:

Please say that Xuan Yuan is current affairs, and Ling Lun picks twenty-four bamboos. Ling Lun picks it from Kunqiu, and Xuan Yuan ordered it to be divided into twelve parts. Ling Lun uses it to regulate the melody, and Xuan Yuan uses it to regulate the vitality. At that time, when the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven, twenty-three pipes of salt followed each other, leaving only one pipe for human blowing. Without virtue, one pipe cannot obtain this pipe, and this pipe is buried in the Yushun Temple (Lihe).

请说轩辕在时事，伶伦采竹二十四。伶伦采之自昆丘，轩辕诏遣中分作十二。伶伦以之正音律，轩辕以之调元气。当时黄帝上天时，二十三管咸相随，唯留一管人间吹。无德不能得此管，此管沉埋虞舜祠。

This poem means that ‘Yellow Bell’ (黄钟) is the foundation of all musical rhythms. One type of correct tone in Chinese is not adopted, causing *xiao* to be lost. One of the correct tones, according to personal speculation, may also be the current whistle.

The sound quality, motivation, and melody brought about by whistling can evoke memories of the past or thoughts about the present and the future of the person. This thinking may be musical or non-musical. As the poem ‘The Book of Songs: Xiaoya

Bai-hua' 《诗经·小雅·白华》 wrote: 'The *xiao* song mourns the memory of the great man'. For example, in the third volume of Liu Xiang (刘向) created 'Biographies of Women' 《列女传》, 'The Legend of Ren Zhi: Lu Qi Shi ShiNv' 《仁智传·鲁漆室女》 recorded that:

Qi Shi Maiden is also the daughter of Lu Qi Shi Yi, but she was not suitable in the past. When Mu Gong was old, the prince was young, and the woman leaned against the pillar and screamed. Others heard it, but it was a tragedy. Her neighbors and wives traveled from there, saying, Why is xiao so sad? Wanting to marry? I am seeking a spouse for my son (Lihe).

漆室女者，鲁漆室邑之女也，过时未适人。当穆公时，君老，太子幼，女倚柱而啸。旁人闻之，莫不为之惨者。其邻人妇从之游，谓曰：何啸之悲也？欲嫁耶？吾为子求偶。

From this, it can be seen that whistling was often used by women at that time to express love, emotional and marital setbacks.

Music is rich in expressiveness, and humans like to associate melodies with emotions in their daily lives. Hegel believed that:

Since the content conveyed by music is the inner life itself, that is, the inherent meaning of themes and emotions, and the sound it uses is the least conducive to creating spatial images in art, it is born and dies in emotional existence. Therefore, music directly penetrates into the inner origin of all spiritual movements through the movement of sound (Hegel 1979: 349).

From this, it can be seen that Hegel emphasized the 'invisibility' of music, at the same time we can also see the relationship between music and heart and the connection between principles. Whistling, which Hegel described as 'intangible music' has no fixed interval in its sound production, and its pronunciation changes with the emotions of the player. Therefore, the changes in the intervals expressed in the melody are unpredictable (Wang 2020: 191-186, Wang 2022: 129-137, Wang 2023: 7552).

Whistling is also similar to the original vocal art, which was also discussed in ancient times. As Yuan Shansong (袁山松), a native of Jin (晋), wrote in his book 'Answering to the Book of Huannan Commandery' 《答桓南郡书》:

Xiao has the beauty of being clear and floating, without the depth of being controlled and drawn. After all, it's not as easy to control as singing. Even when it comes to expressing one's words and expressing one's meaning, the song is profound. It is not just on the lips, but in the coolness of one's journey! In the roar of Duke Ruan and the sum of Su Men, one can feel the wonder of it. (Fan 1999: 44-50).

啸有清浮之美，而无控引之深；歌穷测根之致，用之弥觉其远。至乎吐辞送意，曲究其奥，岂唇吻之切发，一往之清冷而已哉！若夫阮公之啸，苏门之和，盖感其一奇，何为征此一至，大疑啸歌所拘邪？

It can be seen that ancient people believed that ‘roaring’ carries a kind of ‘beauty of being clear and floating’, and lacking some emotional depth; song as the musical art of a language can vividly express people’s emotions, which is beyond the reach of *xiao*. *Xiao* does not require language or instruments, people only need to move their lips to form a sound, and it is not inferior to other instruments. The casual performance of *xiao* fully reflects the beauty of nature, which is called ‘the ultimate sound of nature’. Zhang Han (张汉), a Qing dynasty (清代) scholar, wrote ‘Xiaoyu Genealogy’ 《啸余谱》. He described *xiao* as follows:

The sound of Lingjun is also in the form of Sao; the sound of Ziyun is also in the form of Fu; the sound of Shaoling is also in the form of poetry. Sao, Fu, and Shi are all located in the sky, but in the end, they are not as good as the roar of Sumen, the sound of mountains and valleys echoing in the sky to be particularly close. Therefore, it is said: ‘Silk is not as good as bamboo, and bamboo is not as good as meat.’ The sound of the man does not come from his own voice, but from the sky (Fan 1999: 44-50).

灵均之为声也，以骚；子云之为声也，以赋；少陵之为声也，以诗。骚耶、赋耶、诗耶，皆有天焉处乎其中，而终不如苏门一啸，山鸣谷应，于天为尤近。故曰：‘丝如不竹，竹不如肉。’盖深知夫声不自声，而以天为声也。

This article elaborates that whistling is the sound of nature, and it has reached the highest musical realm of ‘using the sky as the sound’. At the same time, it also reflects the pursuit of ‘the unity of heaven and humanity’ and the pursuit of harmonious and unified relationship between heaven and man in music at that time.

3.2. Religious spirituality

Whistling became a Taoist spell, dating back to the Warring States period (476–221 BC). During that period, although Taoism had not yet emerged, the whistling in Chu (楚) had a strong witchcraft color and a strong sense of immortal magic, which was an important source of the formation of Taoism. Wang Yi (王逸) stated in ‘Preface to the Nine Songs in the Chapters and Sentences of the Chu Ci’ (《楚辞章句·九歌序》): ‘*In the past, the capital of Nanying in the state of Chu, between the Yuan and Xiang, had a popular belief in ghosts and a good temple*’ (昔楚国南郢之邑，沅、湘之间，其俗信鬼而好祠). Roaring is a way for Chu people to summon the dead by believing in ghosts. The Book of Chu: Summoning Souls (《楚辞·招魂》) states: ‘When a move is made, it should be prepared, and it should be *xiao* forever’. Wang Yi (王逸) wrote:

It is also prepared. When written, it is sweet, but it cannot be fully prepared. Therefore, the Chu people shout loudly to summon the king. Those who shout loudly are yin; those who shout loudly are yang. Yang dominates the soul, and yin dominates the soul. Therefore, they must xiao to feel it (Wang Yi).

该，亦备也。言撰设甘美，靡不毕备。故长啸大呼，以招君也。夫啸者，阴也；呼者，阳也。阳主魂，阴主魄。故必啸呼以感之也。

This means that the Chu people summon the souls of the deceased through the method of shouting loudly. Ge Hong (葛洪) showed in 'Biography of Immortals' 《神仙传》, that there is a vivid and specific record of summoning the undead with a roar,

Liu Gende, a native of the Western Han dynasty, to become an immortal and attain enlightenment, and the county magistrate, Shi Qi, ordered him to summon ghosts. If he did not see them, he should be killed. Liu Gen said, Due to the long whistle, the sound was very clear. When he heard it outside the city, everyone was in awe and all the guests were afraid. In an instant, the south wall in front of the hall suddenly opened several meters, and he saw four officials in red calling out to avoid the path. Ten soldiers in red wielded swords and led a carriage straight into the hall from the broken wall. Liu Gen ordered the carriage to go to the ghost. The soldiers in red sent out the carriage and went to the black quilt, with a husband and grandmother who were bound for prison. He knew it well and prayed for the death of his parents (Fan 1994: 65-71).

西汉人刘根得道，郡太守史祈命其召鬼，若不见，即当杀戮。刘根因长啸，啸音非常，清亮，闻于城外，闻者莫不肃然，众宾客悉恐。须臾，厅前南壁忽开数丈，见四赤衣吏传呼避道，赤衣兵数十人操持刀剑，将一科车直从坏壁中入到厅前，(刘)根敕下车上鬼，赤衣兵发车上乌被，上有一老公老姥，反缚囚系。熟视之，乃(史)祈亡父母也。

It can be seen that the whistling is a magic commonly used by witches and alchemists. After being adopted by witches and alchemists, whistling gradually became a supernatural alchemy of Taoism. The Preface to Xiao Zhi states:

Xiao is refined, which can eliminate ghosting and gods, leading to immortality. If one speaks well, they can respond from a thousand miles; if one xiao well, all spirits can take responsibility (Fan 1994).

啸之清可以灭鬼神，致不死。盖出其言善，千里应之；出其啸善，万灵受职。

The alchemists and Taoists believed that the use of *xiao* can not only eliminate ghosting and gods, leading to immortality, but can also make all spirits obey and call out wind and rain. In the Book of Later Han, the Legend of Fangshu 《后汉书·方术传》, there is a record of Zhao Bing crossing the river with a whistling wind:

Zhao Bing tasted the water and sought to cross, but the boat and people did not agree. Zhao Bing began to meditate, begin to xiao, and suddenly the wind began to blow. The waves were rough, and everyone was immediately convinced (Fan 1994).

赵炳尝临水求渡，船人不和之，炳乃张盖坐其中，长啸呼风，乱流而济。于是百姓神服，从者如归。

Li Shan (李善) showed annotation from the ‘Ling Bao Jing’ 《灵宝经》 in the ‘Selected Works: XiaoFu’ 《文选·啸赋》 also records the female immortal ‘Yang Xiao’ (仰啸) praying for rain:

A severe drought in a certain country caused a fire underground, and people were scorched. A female immortal surnamed Yin, who often breathes her breath on the day and attracts the moon to take on the essence, revealed her true nature for king ‘Yangxiao’. The sky flooded to 33 meters, and then transformed into a hidden shadow and left (Li Shan).

某国大旱，地下生火，人民焦燎。一位常日咽气，引月服精的音姓女仙，显其真，为王仰啸。天降洪水，至十丈，然后化形隐影而去。

Volume 113 of Zhang Junfang (张君房) created ‘Yunji seven parts’ 《云笈七签》) of the Song dynasty (宋代) also contains the story of a Taoist using his whistle to ‘serve all spirits’ and obey orders:

Ma Xiang accompanied the Taoist throughout the world, with exquisite Taoist techniques that could cause streams flow upstream, bridges break and resume, and so on. Later in Changzhou, I met Ma Zhi, who was appointed as the governor of Changzhou... Zhi said, ‘There are a lot of rats in this city.’ The Xiang script had a talisman attached to the south wall, and he used chopsticks to strike the plate and long xiao. The rats came in groups, and when they left, they fell under the talisman. Ma Xiang also scolded the mice to leave this city, and the group of mice, all kowtowed their heads to apologize, so they formed a team and left the city gate (Fan 1994: 65-71).

道士以啸使‘万灵受职’、听从调遣的故事：马湘随道士遍游天下，道术高妙，可令溪水逆流、桥断复续等等。后游常州，遇马植出相，任常州刺史……植言：‘此城中鼠极多。’湘书一符，令人贴于南壁下，以箸击盘长啸，鼠成群而来，走就符下俯伏。马湘又叱鼠要其离开此城，群鼠皆叩头谢罪，遂作队莫知其数，出城门去。

It is precisely because Xiaoshu is so miraculous and effective that many Taoists study devoutly. Tang Wuming recorded the story of Taoist Jingcheng Xuexiao in ‘Guanqi Leisure Language’ 《灌畦暇语》：

Immortal Haichun, residing on the Skull Mountain, is skilled in the whistling techniques. Taoist Zhong Yue from Mount Tai exchanged ideas and revered his skills, but was willing to learn without knowing. One day, spring transformed into a stone, but without knowing it, he sat on a nearby stone and roared on his back. Spring's fossils echoed it, and he also made a sound, tilting the mountain and moving the stream, and falling under the clouds and mist. Knowing it was spring, he woke up and worshipped again to pray for it. Spring mourned for its sincerity, because it was taught three techniques. Anyone who did not drink or eat, but xiao, and the wind arises from emptiness (Fan 1997: 74-77).

仙人海春，居髑髅山，善啸术。太山道士钟约往来，敬其艺，愿学焉而无从。一日，春变其形为石，约不之知，乃坐旁石上，仰面啸。而春所化石应之，亦发声，倾山动涧，云雾为之下堕。约知是春，惊起再拜，以祈请焉。春哀其诚，因教以三术。凡不饮不食，乃得啸而风生于虚也。

Whistling is also a health preserving method used by alchemists and Taoists. The main goal of Taoism is to achieve immortality and cultivate immortality, thus placing great emphasis on health preservation and longevity. Taoists believe that *xiao* has a good effect on venting negative emotions such as depression, anger, stagnation, and relieving psychological tension. Moreover, *xiao* can also flow smoothly, entertain emotions and stimulate the vitality of life. Sun Guang (孙广) said in 'Xiao Zhi Su Men Zhang eleventh' 《啸旨·苏门章第十一》: '*The roar of an immortal king is not limited to cultivating the Tao and pleasing the gods...*' (仙君之啸，非止于养道怡神.....) Therefore, ancient alchemists, real people, Taoist disciples, and even poets often '*xiao*', 'chant', '*xiao* songs', and so on, which are also related to this health preserving ideology. When Ji Kang (嵇康) wrote 'The Poems of Solitude and Anger', 《幽愤诗》 he not only expressed his lifelong pursuit: '*To care for Laozhuang well, to be humble and valuable. His goal is to maintain simplicity, and to cultivate the integrity of the vegetarian diet*' (托好老庄，贱物贵身。志在守朴，养素全真), and he also expressed the melancholy and indignation of being imprisoned through long whistles, thereby maintaining a healthy and pleasant life: '*Picking the gentle mountains, emitting the towering rocks. Long whistles, enjoying one's own nature and longevity*' (采微山阿，散发岩岫。永啸长吟，颐性养寿。)(Fan 1994: 65-71).

Among the Taoist gods, there are many skilled whistlers. Legend has it that the historical figure Huang Di once asked Yu Guangchengzi and was revered as a deity by Taoism. The 'Huainanzi Lanming Xun' 《淮南子·览冥训》 is called 'the time of Xia Jie' and 'Huang Shen Xiao Yin' (夏桀之时，黄神啸吟). Han Gao You (汉高诱) wrote: '*The Yellow Emperor's divine injury caused the decline of the Tao, so he xiao and sighed deeply. Taoist disciples also revered Dayu as the god, and Dayu was also good at xiao*' (黄帝之神伤道之衰，故啸吟而长叹也。道教徒亦尊大禹为神，大禹也善啸) (Fan 1994: 65-71). In the Tang dynasty, Li Rong (李冗) stated in 'DuYiZhi' 《独异志》:

Yu injured his father and failed to achieve success. He fled to Mount Heng in the south... He roared up to the sky, and suddenly dreamed that the divine man would surrender a book with gold slips and jade characters, which was the key to controlling the water. 'Da Yu moved the gods with his xiao, and the mercy and blessings of the gods made Yu successful in controlling the water (Fan 1997: 74-77).

禹伤其父功不成，乃南逃衡山……仰天而啸，忽梦神人降金简、玉字之书，得治水之要。大禹以啸声感动天神，神的垂怜与赐予使禹治水成功。

The Queen Mother of the West is a female immortal leader in the Taoist immortal system. The 'Classic of Mountains and Seas' 《山海经·西山经》 states that *she is like a person in appearance, with a leopard tail and tiger teeth that are good at the whistling, and her hair is covered with Dai Sheng* (其状如人，豹尾虎齿而善啸，蓬发戴胜) (Fan 1999: 44-50). Volume 111 of the 'Yunji seven parts' 《云笈七签》 states that Zhao Weibo, who obtained the Tao is skilled in whistling, with a sound like the rushing wind in the forest, and a flock of birds chirping. In an instant, the four episodes of returning to the clouds will bring zero rain (得道的赵威伯善啸，声若冲风之激长林，众鸟之群鸣。须臾，归云四集，零雨其濛) (Fan 1999: 45-50); Volume 49 and Volume 68 also depict the spectacular scene of a group of immortals roaring: 'Ascending to the upper Qing dynasty, the floating scenery is seven yuan, the eternal life is in order, and the xiao is a thousand gods. Left xiao is the beginning of the immortals, and right xiao is the combination of the eight scenes. (登飞上清，浮景七元，长生顺往，啸吟千神，左啸则神仙启首，右啸则八景合真) (Fan 1997: 74-77).

4. Conclusion

It can be seen that whistling is an essential art of Taoism, which has long been intertwined with Taoism and immortals, and cannot be separated. Influenced by this deep cultural background, the high scholars in the secular world often express their hopes for immortals with the sound of whistling. Although the art of whistling is not exclusive to alchemists and Taoists, it has always been inseparable from them. During the period of the Wei and Jin dynasties, the great scholar Ruan Ji actively learned from the Taoist master Xiao Gong, enabling him to transition from a god to a human, thus adding an artistic masterpiece to the life of scholars. Whistling as a primitive form of musical expression has its own independent significance in its development process, and is also a casual and joyful musical art. The study of whistling belongs to the field of musicology, and also involves knowledge in various fields such as religion, history, folklore, philology, philosophy, aesthetics and acoustics making the research difficult. In short, whistling as an elegant music that is unparalleled in Chinese history, is worthy of our research and exploration.

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