

ACOUSTICS2008/1477
History and acoustics of the Asian free-reed mouth organs

James Cottingham
Coe College, 1220 First Avenue NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402, USA

Mouth-blown instruments employing a free reed coupled to a pipe resonator have long been known and used throughout East and Southeast Asia. Details of the origin and development of these instruments are not known, but are closely connected with the history and prehistory of a multitude of ethnic groups. Free reed instruments have been employed in a variety of ways, from simple signaling devices to use in the court music of Japan and China. The pipe resonators vary from the buffalo horn to bamboo pipes of nearly cylindrical cross section. The instruments exemplify a pipe-resonator coupling significantly different from that of the standard wind instruments of European origin. In some cases the reed is at or near one end of an open or closed pipe resonator, but in other examples the reed is mounted in the side of the resonator away from the ends. A summary of recent experimental investigations of these instruments will be presented, along with musical examples.