A Study of the Juying Club Nanguan Musical Composition Digital Archives

Ruili Lin
Dept. of Commercial Design
Chienkuo Technology University
Changhua, Taiwan
e-mail: linrl2002@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. Through the guidance of musical compositions, the traditional nanguan instrument arts are all people’s meticulous works with unsophisticated phonology and gracefulness. These traditional arts of music can never be replaced with advanced computer technology. However, through 2D scanning and computer animation, experts’ masterpieces from the past can be preserved. This is very helpful for traditional nanguan musical composition arts. In this project, through field survey, data were collected, related people were interviewed with records, and videos, animations, and webpage were created. The main content of the digital archives are from the hand-written copies of musical compositions which have been collected by the Lugang Lungshan Temple Juying Club over the years. Also the photos from previous performances were obtained as references, along with the video data of the most representative performances of the years and new releases, history of the Juying Club, and knowledge regarding nanguan. Also, the animations or introduction videos were implemented in the website to promote the preservation of the traditional nanguan musical composition culture, which has been disappearing gradually.

Keywords: Nanguan musical composition, Digital archive, 2D scan, Juying club.

1. Introduction. Nanguan music can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. It was played in palace. During the Sung Dynasty, it was spread to the folks. During the Ching Dynasty, it was brought to Taiwan from the southern part of Fujian Province by the Han people. It is deemed as a type of small, skillful, light, and elegant classical music. A singer has to hold a clapper with other band members holding other classical musical instruments, performing while singing, and playing music instruments, with cadences and changing pitches. Songs are sung with Heluo standard pronunciation, describing stories wide-spread among people. Instrumental ensembles are classic and elegant. Composers and writers of many songs which had been composed hundreds or thousands of years ago are unknown. These songs describe common people’s lives. One may not understand Nanguan music when first listening to it. However, Nanguan musical compositions are very attractive. Slowly one may explore deeper charm of Nanguan music after immersing into it. Nanguan music is graceful, restrained, fresh, beautiful, and classic. The songs are like southern Fujian songs with ancient styles. Where there are Chinese people, there is Nanguan music.

In 1986, the Juying Club won the “Heritage Award” for traditional music & narrative song groups. With the support from the Center for Traditional Arts, the Heritage Workshop
was held. Many groups in central Taiwan were invited to participate. The vitality of Nanguan music was passed on and new blood was added. The Juying Club can be traced back to about 190 years ago, when there was a Nanguan club called “Xiao Yao Yan” in Lugang. It was located in the Kinmen Hall by the alley on the right side of the Lungshan Temple. The only available information is that the last teacher there was Mr. Dai Su from Quanzhou. About 150 years ago, the downfall of the “Xiao Yao Yan” began. There were less and less members. By that time, the Lugang local gentleman invited Mr. Cheng-Gong Wang to teach Nanguan music there. With the participation of other friends from the music circle, the Juying Club was then established, while the “Xiao Yao Yan” disappeared henceforth. About 150~135 years ago, the Juying Club was opened by Mian Shi from Quanzhou with around 40~50 members. There was no permanent address for the club. The members just went to the home of one of them to play music. After that, the club was run by Cheng-Gong Wang from Quanzhou and Yang Shi from Lugang, who were also responsible for the teaching.

Over 100 years ago, people could still go between Lugang and Mainland China freely. There was a forest of masts. The commerce back then was very active, leading to the well development of folk arts. This period of time was the period of great prosperity for the Juying Club. During the twice-a-year fiestas, there were usually 70~80 people invited to the banquets with 6~7 tables. Members of the Juying Club were common people, like Lu Shi who owned a restaurant, De-Qi Lin who traded pressed oil, and Kun-Shan Wang from the delivery store. It was not as strict as “Ya Song Sheng”, which was why it is long lasting. After Taiwan was restored, due to the environment, people had to move. The members of the club were busy making a living. There was once a recession. However, in the recent years, because of the guidance from the enthusiastic people in the club, a lot of young people have joined, devoting themselves to learning and studying. With their knowledge of modern technologies regarding music, the achievements of the club have been impressive. The club was re-opened in 1996, the resurgence period of the club [6].

2. Literature Review. This section illustrates the tones, contents of musical compositions, and the types of musical instruments for Nanguan music.

2.1 Nanguan. Nanguan was from the word “Xianguan”. It is also called Nanyue, Wuyin, and Lanjunyue. In Mainland China, it is called “Fujian Nanyin”. In Taiwan, it is generally known as “Nanguan”. Once it was popular in southern part of Fujian where people spoke Southern Min dialect. The locals called it “Nanyin”. In fact, it is traditional southern ancient music. The phonology is classical, simple, gentle, and restrained. The composition styles are strict. The musical instruments are played following the ancient rules. And the forms of performances include: instrumental performance, vocal performance, and drama.

“Nanguan” is a type of folk music which is popular in the Southern part of Fujian with a long history. It was created and had been developed in Quanzhou. It can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. By the end the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Ching Dynasty, it was spread to Taiwan from Fujian Quanzhou through Amoy. The central areas of its development were Lugang and Tainan. The forms of Nanguan musical compositions include fingers (zhi), tunes (qu), and scores (pu). “Fingers” are from fingerstalls used when playing musical instruments. There are lyrics with fingers but they are not sung. “Tunes”
are sung without background music. They consist of qu-pai and ci-pai. “Scores” are compositions of program music. They consist of several chapters.

2.2 Contents of musical composition. Nanguan musical compositions can be categorized according to their contents into: (1) musical composition rhythms, which are also called divertimentos. They are played using the fingering for pipa. Currently there are 48 divertimentos with lyrics and scores. They are usually performed with musical instruments only. They are more like introductory music in music performances; (2) independent vocal songs. Currently there are over 2000 songs. Most of their lyrics are from Southern Fujian dramas or verses about women’s resentment. They are mainly sung with the Southern Fujian tones. They should be played in accordance with the procedure of “qi qu”, “luo yun”, “guo zhi”, and “shou sha”. They are cores of string and wind performances; and (3) instrumental scores. They are used for instrumental performances without lyrics. Currently there are 13 main divertimentos and 3 extra divertimentos, with the most popular ones being si (four seasons), mei (plum blossom), zou (riding on horseback), and gui (a hundred birds returning to their nests). They are often played by ends of performances or during fiestas for ancestors.

2.3 Types of musical instruments. The musical instruments used for Nanguan include: pipa, two-string fiddle, three-string fiddle, and vertical bamboo flute. These four instruments are called the upper four wind instruments. When these four instruments are played with the lower four wind instruments (xiang zhan, liao zhong, si kuai, and jiao jiao), clapper, and yu ai, it is called the 10-sound instrumental ensemble, which is often used in the beginning of a performance to get people’s attention.

During a Nanguan performance, there is always a hanging golden palace lamp with, a zhi qui bing, and a yellow cool umbrella. It is said that they were given by the emperor Kangxi. Nanguan masters are called yu-qian-qing-ke. Nanguan is completely different from Beiguan with large gongs and large drums. Nanguan music flows very gently with classic and elegant lyrics and scores and beautiful tunes. It is the living fossil of Chinese music. However, with the changes of the society, Nanguan music has been disappearing. And senior musicians are getting older. It is worried that Nanguan music may become extinct.

Nanguan music was popular in Lugang among scholars, gentlemen, and rich merchants. Lugang was a place of important for the development of Nanguan music. During the Qing Dynasty, “Yazheng Club”, “Juying Club”, “Yasung Sheng”, and “Eyun Club” had been established. During the Japanese colonial period, Nanguan music was Japanese people’s favorite because of its elegant tunes and nobility. Therefore it was not seriously influenced by politics and could still develop well. Thus, during that period, “Chongzheng Sheng” and “Daya Club” had been established [6].

3. Research methods and analyses. Methods such as document analysis, on-site interviews, and digital technologies were adopted by this study.

3.1 Document analysis. In the recent years, due to the changes of the society, Nanguan music with over 200 years of history has begun to fall. Currently, only “Yazheng Club”, “Juying Club”, and “Eyun Club” are still operating. And the Juying Club has been devoting itself to the promotion and continuation of the Nanguan arts and culture. It is the liveliest Nanguan club in the Lugang area with scheduled practices. Therefore, the theoretical base
of this study is the document analysis of the information regarding the scores owned by the Juying Club.

According to the estimation by Mr. Kun-Shan Wang, the “Juying Club” was created during the Daugung Reign in the Qing Dynasty. It was around 1840, that is about 170 years ago. The location of the club, which was founded by Chou-She Shi from Jinjiang, was on the Wufu Street (now Zhongshan Road) in Lugang Town. Then Jin Shi inherited the club. These two people are owners and masters of the club. Then the master from Quanzhou Mr. Cheng-Gong Wang, who originally was a member of the “Xiaoyao Xuan”, joined the “Juying Club”. He and Lugang master Mr. Yang Shi took charge of the club together and taught other old friends from the Xiaoyao Xuan. Many Nanguan music supporters had joined the club.

3.2 Field interviews. This study adopted face-to-face field interviews to obtain more information regarding the Juying Club and Nanguan music. The data were stored as records. And the events which had occurred during the important periods were further discussed. Moreover, the data regarding the awards the club had won were summarized and analyzed as an important reference for the construction of the digital archive website of this study.

3.3 Digital technology. Data are not easily preserved in written format. Papers may get moist or be eroded. It would a shame to lose these data. And sometimes natural and man-made calamities may destroy these data, creating a huge damage to the heritages of the culture and art industries of this country. Thus, this study believed that the creations of Nanguan musical compositions and materials regarding performances, activities, and other important events should be preserved using high technology to create digital archives on a website with works from different periods of time, records of activities, performances, or concerts, and audio guidance. This website would be an important basis for passing on traditional arts and cultures in the related industries [3].

4. Digital archives. This study aimed to build a website using computer technologies and image processing technologies to preserve Nanguan musical compositions and information regarding important events, so that the important heritages of the cultures and arts of our country can be passed on and even promoted.

4.1 Nanguan music scores. Many music scores had been composed a long time ago and kept in the form of hand-written copies, which can hardly stand years of severe tests from wind and sun. Luckily, with the help of many people, About 50 hand-written copies had been retrieved, along with almost 1000 photos. The owner of the Juying Club accepted the help from this study to create digital archives, make plans for future arrangements of these valuable contents, and preserve and promote Nanguan culture and arts through interactive web pages and computer systems, for the continuous education of the beauty of human arts (figure 1–3) [5, 7].
4.2 Designing and building the web pages. In this study, the Nanguan music scores were stored in the forms of 2D scanned pictures and photos. On the website, they are presented through interactive e-books so that visitors can appreciate them and learn more about them (figure 4). The background music is a song or an instrumental tune. This way, the beauty of Nanguan music can touch people’s heart, in order to achieve the goal of promoting and passing on the heritages in the traditional culture and art industries [4].

In the aspect of website construction and content design of the Nanguan music digital archive website created by this study, the interactive interface was adopted, and events were processed using computer 2D/3D technologies and presented in the forms of e-books [1]. Secondly, the digital platform of the e-learning network was built according to the contents. It is hoped that the distance between visitors and Nanguan arts and cultures can be shortened. There are online teaching for scores and analyses of score compositions, offering visitors more personal experiences and attracting more people who are interested to participate through the digital learning platform, further promoting the beauty of the Nanguan art and culture industries [2].
5. Discussions and suggestions. The digital archive technologies to create records for the traditional culture and art industries and pass on their heritages have been long used in the world for knowledge economy preservation and human communication. This study designed the digital archive web pages for the valuable materials of Nanguan music, so that visitors can, through the interactive learning interface and the process of listening to the music, learn more about the beauty of Nanguan music and the meaning of the compositions. It is expected that through the high technologies of the internet which improve convenience and efficiency, arts and technologies can be integrated, leading to the new future of holistic human education.

In sum, this study has a great influence on the preservation and continuance of the Nanguan music works of cultures and arts in Taiwan. Essentially, the achievement is innovative and unique. Practically, the achievement is creative and novel. For the purpose of preservation and maintenance of the traditional culture and art industries of Nanguan music in Taiwan, this study adopted high interactive technology to build digital archives and the learning network, in hopes of carrying out the goals of holistic human education and preservation and continuance of the beautiful human arts.

REFERENCES