

## A STUDY ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FOLK TAOISM MUSIC IN HUNAN PROVINCE OF CHINA-TAKING THE RITUAL MUSIC OF ZHENGYI TAOISM IN NANYUE AS AN EXAMPLE

Li Gang Panya Roongruang

Bangkokthonburi university, Thailand

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### Abstract

Taoism music is an important part of Chinese traditional music. Because Taoism music is rarely influenced by war and dynasty change, it preserves the original appearance of traditional music and is called the "living fossil" of Chinese music. Zhengyi Taoism in Nanyue, Hunan Province belongs to folk Taoism, and its musical elements, on the basis of maintaining the aesthetic characteristics of Taoist music, embody rich local folk musical elements with obvious characteristics. This paper analyzes the process and music ontology of Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism ritual music, and summarizes its characteristics.

**Key words:** Nanyue Taoism, Zhengyi Taoism, Ritual Music, Music Features.

### Introduction

Taoism is China's native religion, which embodies Chinese traditional aesthetic thoughts. The formation of Taoist music has absorbed a variety of traditional cultural factors, has a diversity. As early as in the Eastern Han Dynasty before the historical trace, in the Eastern Han dynasty Taoism was formally founded. During the Jin and Yuan dynasties and the Southern Song Dynasty, Taoism music turned to folk development. The confrontation between Jin Yuan Dynasty and the Southern Song Dynasty and the shift of Chinese culture to the south all played an important role in the development of Taoism music. At this time, three sects rose in the north, namely taiyi, Dadao and Quanzhen, among which Quanzhen Taoism was the largest. From the Song and Yuan dynasties, Quanzhen Taoism became one of the most important Taoist schools. After the Yuan Dynasty, Taoism was unified into zhengyi and Quanzhen. With the confrontation between quanzhen Daoism and Zhengyi, Taoist music began to form different systems.

#### 1. Overview of Nanyue Zhengyi Daoism

Zhengyi Taoism is an important vein of Taoism in China. Different from the Quanzhen Taoism, the Zhengyi Taoism represents a group of folk taoists who are engaged in farming and religious activities. Although there were no fixed temples for the activities, the organization and management were not strictly standardized. However, due to the complexity of the activities, the local charm characteristics and the preservation of the music is difficult to reach the Quanzhen Taoism.

Nanyue Zhengyi is a Taoist group which is active in the Nanyue region of Hunan province (Hengshan, Hengdong, Hengyang and other areas in central and southern Hunan). It is a Taoist group which is organized when it is engaged in farming and religious activities. The Taoism rituals cover the magic figure and Zhaijiao activities. The music of Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism includes Jingyun (vocal music) and instrumental music, especially the instrumental music has its own characteristics. Its ritual music inherits the basic system of Taoism music, but also highlights the strong local characteristics, reflects the religious music regional and super regional fusion unique characteristics.

## 2.The ritual activities and music usage of Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism, Taking the Yang Lin God King's Peace Qing Jiao ritual as an Example

### 2.1 Overview of ritual activity background

Yang Lin God King's Peace Qing Jiao ritual held in Caishen village, Nanyue District, Hunan Province, to ensure the safety of the village. The ritual lasts three days and two nights. It is a medium-sized ritual. The ritual is held regularly every three years, and the temple is located in the Temple of The Yang Lin God King in the Village of The Lord of the Wealth, Nanyue District. Yang Lin God King is a local god, based on Yang Lin, a general of the Sui Dynasty. A total of 12 Taoists participated in the ritual. The organizer of this ritual is Taoist priest Tan Jinhe who was born in 1946, Standing director of Nanyue Taoist Association, member of Hunan Province Folk artists Association, vice president of Nanyue Folk artists Association. In 2008, he was passed down by Fu Lu in Tianshifu, Longhu Mountain, Jiangxi Province, representing the highest level of the ceremony of Zhengyi in Nanyue.

### 2.2 Ritual activity program and music usage

#### (1) Preparation before the ritual

The day before the ritual, the organizers of the Caishen Village made preparations work. Specific matters include: Set up a kitchen, prepare food materials just as rice, oil, pig,vegetables and other ingredients. Provide accommodation for visitors, etc. The Taoist priest who executes the ritual will prepare robes, joss sticks, dharma artifacts, and dharma lists, etc.

#### (2) Posting the list

Early in the morning on the first day of the ritual, the list was posted. The list, with black characters on a yellow background and a circle around it, introduces the purpose, content and basic process of the activities. The content is as follows:



Figure 1 : Posting the list

Source: Li Gang

#### (3) Invite the Taoist Priest

Inviting taoist priest is the first part of the ritual, which consists of three steps. Scheduling, borrowing, and mages. The nine Taoist priests are arranged in the order of "tablet -- gong -- small drum -- nao -- big suona -- Small suona -- small gong -- tablet". Then go in to the temple, to borrow the temple for ritual, the Taoist priest report their qualifications to the gods.

The use of music includes instrumental performance: [Han Dongshan] [Xiangzan] [Anchun tune], chanting: [Tai Chi fen gao Hou].



Figure 2 : Invite the Taoist Priest

Source: Li Gang

The melody is made up of two parts. The first passage has eight bars, a 4+4 parallel passage. Chinese e - Yu mode, gentle speed. The melody begins with a four-tone series of "mi-- SOL --do--la", with "Xiang - yu" mode color, and reflects the obvious local color. The second melody adopts four two beats, ten bars, and is accomplished in one stroke. The rhythm is quickened, the rhythm is tight, and the mood of singing is quite tight and slow, with the horn sound as the evil spirit. The instrument takes the drum as the section, together with the gong, the cymbal alternately plays.

#### (4) Qing Shui

The ritual of Qing Shui is get water from the river it's means to go to the river and invite the god of river go back to the temple. Living water must be invited in the place of running water. The order of the water procession is: the red and yellow canopies with flying dragons in the front, the red and yellow flags, the yellow prayer flags next, the musicians again, and the believers at the end. The procession started from the Temple of Wealth to the river, where the ceremony was held. The procedure is: confession -- take water -- offer table -- play music (Qu Pai shui Longmen) -- return.



Figure 3 : Qing Shui

Source: Li Gang

The use of music includes: small blow, qupai [Shui Longmen] [a flower] [an Chun tune] [anti a flower] [Han Dongshan]. Chanting [Tai Chi feng gao] [day without atmosphere toureth].

### 水龙门



Figure 4 : The use of music includes: small blow  
Source: Li Gang

Bars 1--4 is the first phrase. It is composed of two pieces of music, 2+2. It has a square and integral structure and a folding termination. The melody begins with an ascending jump of the Sol, forming a nuclear tone of Sol --do--la-- SOL. Bars 5-11 are the second phrase, which is carried out by the second-degree shift of the nuclear cavity tone of the first phrase. The basic motive of la--re--do-- LA is extended twice, forming an irregular integral structure of 7 bars, and the melody is always running at a high level. 12- 15 is the third phrase, 2+2 square integral structure, melody smooth. 16--20 is the fourth phrase, 5 bars, ending with a seventh leap. The whole song consists of four phrases, G Gong pentatonic mode. The rhythm is steady, the speed is gentle, and the nuclear tone runs through the whole tune.

#### (5) Sending letters

"Letters" are peace symbols written and stamped by Taoist priests. Content for the gods "clean up ghosts inside and outside, protect a safe", By the followers to assist the Taoist distributed to every household.

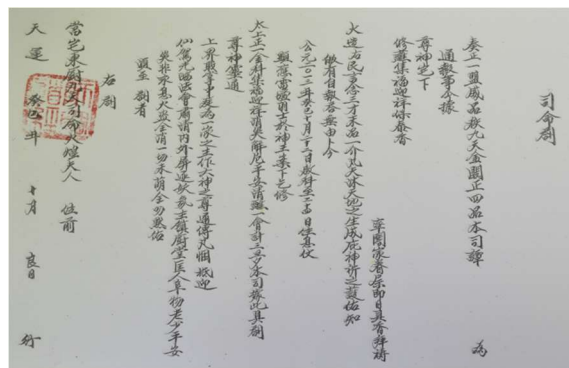


Figure 5 : Sending letters  
Source: Li Gang

#### (6) Bai Jie

The Bai Jie, which means to turn over a ghost and remove the evil. Interspersed with chanting, singing and reciting, instrumental accompaniment. Musical Instruments are flute, surnay, small drum, gong, electronic organ, cymbal.

Buxu rhyme is one of the earliest, most widely used and most representative pieces in Daoist music. According to the research of Mr. Pu Hengqiang, Bu Xu was first seen in the Ling Bao Zhai of Taoism in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, and was also used in the earliest Taoist rituals. Although the singing style and melody form of buxu rhyme vary from place to place, the tunes are mostly slow and melodious, smooth and slow. Through the analysis and comparison of musical morphology, it is found that the Nanyue is a step virtual melody line has unique style characteristics.

The use of music includes: Chanting [step virtual rhyme] [cross three realms difficult] [all things disappear here] [Sanqing] [Taishang Miluo supreme day].

### (7) Bai Zhang

The ritual of Bai Zhang after dinner, also known as Evening chanting, is intended to praise the virtues of the gods. The two taoist chanting accompanied by instrumental music.

The use of music includes: Chanting [heavenly praise] [three convert] [throne spirit golden temple].

## 天尊赞



Figure 6 : Tianzun

Source: Li Gang

On the one hand, the melody of TianZun Praise is composed of the beat form of the scattered meter, and the melody is added with grace notes, which reflects the aesthetic characteristics of soft, empty and quiet, singing one song and three sighs of Taoist music. The melody, on the other hand, revolves around the four core notes la, do, mi, sol, it obviously has the system of Xiang Yu mode and its structure. It reflects the strong local charm characteristics and the super regional characteristics of cross-pollination, mutual feeding and mutual integration between religious music and local music.

### (8) Jin Tan

Jin Tan aims to get rid of evil, clean the temple's atmosphere. One daoist chanting with instrumental accompaniment, followed by instrumental ensemble. Chanting [Huang Tu consolidation], instrumental performance [fight horn fly]. So far, the first day of ritual activities over.

### (9) Reward heaven and thanks the ground

"Reward heaven and thanks the ground" as the second day of the first part of the activities, is the Taoist priest to reward the five sides of gods. The content of the scriptures: "Soak up the creation of heaven and earth, and protect the god praying. In order to bless and eliminate the disaster, protect the life of the extension of life, auspicious, punish evil, not merit respect of small profits, hope happy accept ". chanting and instrumental music playing interspersed, the atmosphere is more active.

The use of music includes: Chanting [new Tianguan] [day song] [putianle] [Jintang month] [Tianshi celebrate life], instrumental performance [wannian huan] [flower song] [South into the palace].

### (10) Bai Zhang

The ritual of Bai Zhang before breakfast, also known as early prayer, aims to praise the virtues of the gods. The two daoist chanting accompanied by instrumental music.



The use of music includes: Chanting [heavenly praise] [three converts] [throne spirit golden temple].

### (11) To make sacrifices in the temple

After breakfast, all members and devotees go to Nanyue Temple which is the largest ancient building complex in south of China. It has a scale of 98500 square meters. Nanyue Temple is divided into nine doors and four courtyards, eight Taoist temples in the east and eight Buddhist temples in the west. It is unique in the temples of our country and the world.

The aim of this ritual is worship of the gods. The Taoist priest wears a Taoist robe and a crescent moon crown on his head. The Taoist priest played the musical instrument as he walked. Along the way, people greeted them with firecrackers and believers followed them. To the main temple hall, competent, chanting. Worshippers turn to incense and worship.



Figure 7 : The Taoist priest wears a Taoist robe and a crescent moon crown on his head

Source: Li Gang

The use of music includes: Chanting [Master Miro supreme heaven], [ master upload fruu], [instrumental performance], [Han Dongshan], [a flower], [A Chun tune].

### 太上弥罗无上天

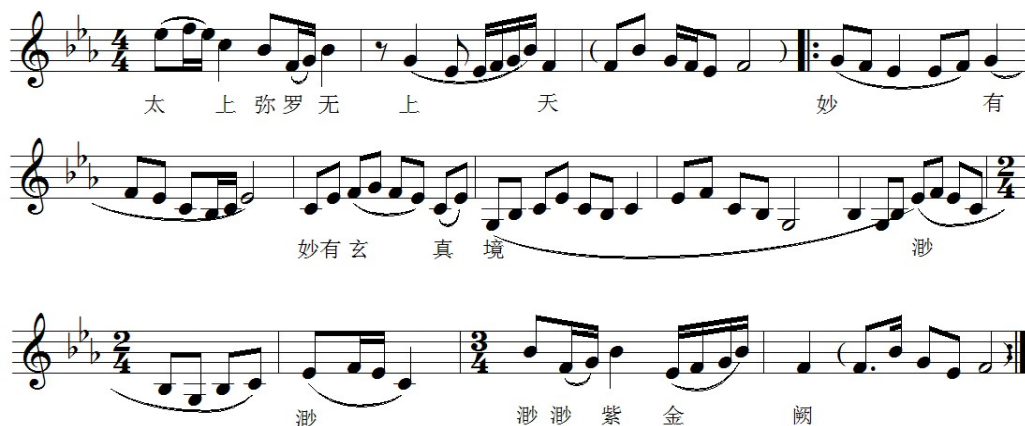


Figure 8 : A Chun tune

Source: Li Gang

The above melodies, with a range of 14 degrees (g -- f2), are rare in Taoist chanting melodies. The first two bars of the melody can be regarded as the introduction. The melody starts from the highest note, and then goes down in a wavy manner. The rhythm is strong, and the Shang is the sound to form the termination. After the fourth bars, the range is basically kept within an octave, and the melody is mainly progressive, with stable rhythm and strong melody fluidity. The melody terminates with the Shang tone. This melody sound starts from the high-tune singing of the creative cavity form is one of the major features of Nanyue Zhengyi daoism ritual music.

#### **(12) Chanting, worshiping and singing**

The use of music includes: Chanting [Jade Emperor Jingjing] [Three Officials Jingjing]

#### **(13) Burning maple incense**

Burning the maple incense is burning the "incarnation of Tai Shang Lao Jun god" maple incense, take the meaning of sending god to heaven. The basic procedure is "supplication - chanting - making vows - burning incense".

The use of music includes: Instrumental performance [flying in the sky] [gong edge drum] [send to the day]. chanting [Xuan bu Yungang on] [Tai Shang Milo supreme day] [Oriental Qingxuan God].

#### **(14) Fang Yan**

Fang Yan is a ritual activity for the living to eliminate disasters, pursue happiness, and seek liberation for the dead to cross over. This ritual is widely used in Buddhism. It is generally held in the dusk, when the evil ghosts are hungry, and they are offered food and drink through the flame discharge port to degree the evil ghosts. The basic procedure of this ritual is "opening the altar - chanting - calling - vowing - ceremony ending". So far, the second day of ritual activities end.

The use of music includes: Chanting [Oriental Qingxuan God] [sanqing] [open throat] [Guanyin words] [moon light wind qing] [Yujing million law].

#### **(15) Invitation to the patriarch**

On the third day, the first procedure is to invite the patriarch, the procedure includes "invite the patriarch - receive the blast - the statue of light".

The use of music includes: Chanting [Yuyin feng please] [burrow convert teacher] [cross three realms difficult] [all things disappear here] [Yujing wan fa]. Instrumental performance [Small door] [flower song] [Fight horn fly].

#### **(16) Bai Zhang**

Before lunch to Bai Zhang, that is, noon chanting. The taoist chanting accompanied by instrumental music.

The use of music includes: Chanting [Heavenly praise] [Five blessings] [Jintang month]

#### **(17) Ship delivery**

The boat is to send the river He Bo god, similar to the process of Qing Shui, by the Taoist priests and believers formed a procession to send the god, playing along the way, to the river. This procedure is the final step in the whole ritual. At this point, the whole ceremony is over.

The use of music includes: Chanting [Mixed Yuan diao] [Anchun Diao].

### **1. Ontology analysis and music feature of ritual music of Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism**

#### **3.1 Music genre and form**

Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism ritual music is an organic part of ritual activities, and the use of music is strictly procedural. Different ritual activities use different music. The music used in ritual activities can be divided into two categories: vocal and instrumental music. The vocal music is mostly combined with the local dialect, and improvised with the tone characteristics of the dialect, which is mostly used for long texts or texts with relatively free words. When singing, only one or two percussion instruments, such as gongs or drums, are used for accompaniment. The sound is

simple, mysterious, quiet and religious. Instrumental music has many forms, such as drum music, percussion music and ensemble. Music performance can take the form of sitting performance and walking performance according to the needs of the priest who presides over the ritual activities. The distinctive feature of Zhengyi Taoism music is its distinctive locality.

### 3.2 Mode and melody style

Generally speaking, Chinese national pentatonic music is used in Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism ritual music, with few lyrics and many melody sounds, slow rhythm, singing and sighing, which is similar to Kunqu opera, and expresses the aesthetic characteristics of emptiness, quietness and smoothness. Musical instruments generally adopt Chinese national pentatonic and hexatonic styles. Playing music is the main theme: suona, gong, cymbals and other instrumental music. Playing tends to be tight and slow, with fresh, lively, cheerful and clear style and strong life flavor. The tune is compact in line shape, without decorative sounds. The style of music is generally focused on the color of folk music, and most of the music is smooth and simple, smooth and beautiful, and the style is lively and bright. Compared with Quanzhen taoism music, folk music has stronger flavor.

### 3.3 Music emotion

Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism ritual music is not urgent in speed, not strong or weak in intensity, quiet and steady without climax, and the lyrics vaguely float in the smooth and coherent melody line, which makes the sound effect appear natural and balanced. Solemn, but lacking passion and sense of change. Rhyme singing is quite different from that of traditional Chinese operas and folk songs. Usually, it doesn't pursue articulation clearly, but emphasizes articulation. Basically, it is difficult to hear the lyrics clearly, but it makes the tone particularly natural and fluent. All these reflect the aesthetic pleasure of pursuing simplicity, peace and tranquility.

### 3.4 Aesthetic characteristics

As an important part of Chinese Taoism music, Nanyue Zhengyi Taoism ritual music embodies the Taoist aesthetic characteristics of softness and quietness. The fundamental characteristic of femininity is weakness, inaction, and everything is like flowing water, so it is interlinked with the essence of Taoism. In the aesthetic form of music, the beauty of femininity is reflected in the conflict-free nature that follows the trend. It is a kind of music movement that is inherently implicit and natural, and it is sound without illness, noise, carving, elegance and elegance.

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