

Examining the Educational Occasions and Literacy Functions of Nanyin Pipa in Fujian Province, China

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the educational and cultural literacy functions of the Nanyin Pipa, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, in Fujian Province, China. By investigating its cultural significance and historical development, the research employs methodologies from musicology and ethnomusicology. Specifically, it focuses on the role of the Nanyin Pipa in fostering cultural literacy in both historical and contemporary educational contexts. Data were collected through fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, and observations, involving two key informants and four casual informants, including nationally recognized transmitters and experts in Nanyin Pipa music. The analysis highlights the integration of the Nanyin Pipa into educational practices and its role in fostering cultural literacy. Findings suggest that the instrument plays a vital role in enhancing cultural understanding, particularly in the context of preserving intangible cultural heritage. The study concludes that incorporating traditional instruments such as the Nanyin Pipa into modern educational systems can enhance cultural literacy and support efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage.

Key words: Nanyin Pipa, Literacy, Cultural Heritage, Educational Functions, Chinese Traditional Music

INTRODUCTION

The Fujian Nanyin Pipa is a significant genre within the realm of traditional Chinese music. Distinguished by its historical roots, the Nanyin Pipa has preserved the legacy of the Qu Xiang Pipa from the late Tang Dynasty, making it a unique musical form. Rather than being considered merely a subset of contemporary Pipa music, it is more accurately identified as a distinct genre due to its retention of ancient structural features and performance techniques (Zhuang, 2001). The term “Nanyin Pipa” highlights its integral role in Nanyin music, as well as its differentiation from the modern, widely recognized Pipa. In addition to its function in Nanyin performance, the instrument serves as a crucial component of the cultural and musical heritage of Fujian Province (Xu, 2008). As a plucked string instrument, the Nanyin Pipa has been utilized across various cultural and social contexts, including folk songs, dances, and ceremonial events.

Historically, the development of the Nanyin Pipa spans several significant periods. From its initial emergence during the Tang Dynasty to its peak popularity in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the instrument has undergone continuous evolution, reflecting the cultural and artistic shifts of its time. This historical progression underscores its enduring role as a vital element of China’s intangible cultural heritage. Despite its historical significance, the educational and literacy functions

of the Nanyin Pipa remain underexplored, leaving a notable gap in the understanding of its broader cultural impact. This study seeks to investigate the historical development of the Nanyin Pipa, with a particular focus on its role in fostering literacy and its contributions to educational practices within local communities. Furthermore, this research makes a unique contribution by examining the instrument’s integration into social literacy functions, a dimension that has received little attention in the existing body of literature.

Fujian’s geographical position as a key port for overseas trade during the Tang Dynasty played a crucial role in facilitating the introduction of the pipa to the region. Historical records indicate that pipa performance was already widespread in Fujian by the Tang Dynasty (Li, 2013; Lin, H. 2007). During the Song Dynasty, the development of the pipa in Fujian entered a stage of standardization. The Nanyin Pipa inherited the traditions of the Tang Dynasty pipa while also making refinements to better align with the musical characteristics of Fujian (Liu, 2000). Nanyin Pipa performance emphasizes the purity of timbre and the fluidity of melody, contributing to the formation of a distinct performance style that sets it apart from other regional variations.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the development of the Fujian pipa entered a new phase. The flourishing of local operas such as Liyuan Opera and Gaojia Opera

provided a prominent platform for pipa performance. In the Ming Dynasty, the pipa, as the primary accompaniment instrument for these operas, saw further refinement in both its performance techniques and stylistic elements. In the Qing Dynasty, pipa performance within Fujian folk music became increasingly diverse. Folk artists continued to innovate while preserving traditional elements, expanding the instrument's performance techniques and repertoire, which led to a broader range of expressive possibilities.

At the dawn of the 20th century, as social changes and cultural exchanges intensified, the Fujian Nanyin Pipa began to incorporate modern musical elements while retaining its traditional foundations, resulting in a more enriched performance style. The performance techniques and repertoire of the Nanyin Pipa were further expanded and refined, solidifying its status as an important musical and cultural heritage, not only in Fujian but also across China (Wu, 1999).

In recent years, pipa education in Fujian has garnered increasing attention and support. Numerous music schools and institutions have introduced professional pipa courses, cultivating a new generation of exceptional pipa performers and educators. As pipa education has become more widespread, it has not only elevated the standard of pipa performance but also laid a solid foundation for the preservation and development of pipa artistry. With the acceleration of globalization, Fujian Pipa has expanded its reach internationally, actively participating in global cultural exchanges (Gao & Karin, 2024; Hang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022; Zhang & Lam, 2022). Particularly, the Fujian Nanyin Pipa has captured the admiration and acclaim of audiences worldwide due to its distinct artistic appeal. Through these international exchanges, Fujian Pipa has not only showcased its unique artistic style but also made significant contributions to the global dissemination of Chinese musical culture (Xiaonong, 2010).

By investigating the role of the Nanyin Pipa in literacy and education, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the instrument's cultural and educational significance (Can & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Lu, 2022; Jian, 2022; Yang et al., 2024). In doing so, it addresses a critical gap in the literature by exploring the educational functions and impacts of the Nanyin Pipa in contemporary contexts. The significance of examining the historical development of the Nanyin Pipa within literacy and educational frameworks is multifaceted.

First, this research contributes to the preservation and appreciation of Fujian's cultural heritage by documenting and analyzing the traditional uses of the Nanyin Pipa. As a living tradition, the Nanyin Pipa not only reflects historical practices but also remains a dynamic element of contemporary Fujian culture. Second, the study offers insights into the role of music in literacy and education, emphasizing the potential of traditional instruments to serve educational purposes in modern settings. Music, as a universal language, can enhance cognitive and emotional development, and the Nanyin Pipa, with its rich cultural connotations, holds the potential to be a valuable educational tool.

By understanding the educational functions of the Nanyin Pipa, policymakers and educators can develop more

effective programs that support cultural and linguistic diversity (Feng, 2020; Luo, 2018; Zhang, 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). The unique contribution of this study lies in its detailed examination of the Nanyin Pipa's role in educational and literacy contexts, offering a model for integrating cultural heritage into modern society.

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the historical development of the Nanyin Pipa, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, in literacy functions and educational contexts. This study aims to explore how the Nanyin Pipa has been utilized historically and continues to play a role in modern society in promoting literacy and cultural awareness among the people of Fujian. Through a combination of literature review, fieldwork, and interviews with two key informants and four casual informants, this research seeks to document the evolution of the Nanyin Pipa and its integration into educational practices (Zhang, 2022).

By examining the Nanyin Pipa's dual role as both a musical instrument and an educational tool, the study aims to bridge the gap between historical traditions and contemporary educational practices, ensuring that the cultural legacy of the Nanyin Pipa endures in the future. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on the intersection of music, culture, and education, providing valuable insights for scholars, educators, and policymakers. This comprehensive approach not only highlights the historical significance of the Nanyin Pipa but also emphasizes its potential as a valuable educational resource in modern contexts.

Research Question

- How has the historical development of the Nanyin Pipa shaped its role in literacy functions and educational occasions in Quanzhou, Fujian Province?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nanyin Pipa, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, has long been a vital component of Fujian's cultural heritage. Its historical development is intricately linked to literacy functions and educational practices within the societies of Quanzhou. This literature review examines relevant theoretical frameworks and existing research on the Nanyin Pipa, with a particular focus on its historical evolution, performance practices, and its role in literacy and education.

The Historical Development of Nanyin Pipa

The pipa, a prized traditional Chinese stringed instrument, boasts a long history and widespread distribution. In Fujian Province, the introduction and early development of the pipa are closely tied to local cultural exchanges and musical traditions. Its origins can be traced to the ancient Central Asian lute. Through commercial exchanges along the Silk Road, the pipa was introduced to China, where it gradually integrated into the Chinese musical and cultural framework. According to the Draft History of Chinese Pipa, the pipa was introduced to China during the Han Dynasty. Over

the course of several centuries, it evolved into an instrument distinctly characterized by Chinese features (Li, 2013). The Tang Dynasty marked the golden age of pipa development, during which it reached its zenith in terms of shape, playing techniques, and timbral richness. Notably, the design of its curved neck made the instrument easier to play and enriched its tonal quality.

Theories of Literacy Functions and Educational Occasions

The integration of the Nanyin Pipa into educational settings and its role in literacy functions can be analyzed through several theoretical perspectives. Structural functionalism offers a framework for understanding the role of the Nanyin Pipa within the social system of the Nanyin community, emphasizing the interdependence of societal components and how the Nanyin Pipa contributes to social cohesion and cultural continuity. Social change theory provides insight into how the Nanyin Pipa's role in education has evolved in response to broader socio-political and economic shifts. Diffusionism theory explains how the practices associated with the Nanyin Pipa have spread and been adopted both within and beyond Nanyin communities (Campbell, 2018; Duan & Choatchamrat, 2023; Zhang et al., 2020).

Significance of Nanyin Pipa in Literacy and Education

The significance of the Nanyin Pipa in literacy and education is multifaceted. In traditional Fujian society, the instrument served as a crucial tool for the oral transmission of cultural knowledge and social values. Its integration into school curricula and community education programs highlights its continued importance in fostering cultural literacy and identity among Fujian's youth. The efforts of cultural institutions and educational initiatives to preserve and promote Nanyin Pipa music underscore its educational value and role in cultural preservation (Boyu, 2019; Li & Choatchamrat, 2024; Zhang & Wu, 2023).

In conclusion, the literature review underscores the historical development of the Nanyin Pipa, its performance practices, and its vital role in literacy functions and educational contexts within Fujian societies. The theoretical frameworks of structural functionalism, social change, and diffusionism provide important insights into understanding the instrument's enduring cultural significance. This review lays the foundation for further investigation into how the Nanyin Pipa continues to influence literacy and education in contemporary Fujian society.

Research Theory

Musicology

Encompasses various theoretical subjects that examine music and its related phenomena. It includes fields such as music aesthetics, music history, music ethnology, music psychology, and music pedagogy. These disciplines explore

different aspects of music, such as its relationship with ideology, materials and characteristics, musical form and composition, and performance theory (Central Conservatory of Music Distance Education Network, 2015).

Ethnomusicology

A branch of musicology that focuses on the study of traditional music from different countries around the world. It examines how specific musical traditions are constructed, utilized, disseminated, and developed within their respective cultural contexts. By investigating the basic characteristics, survival principles, and cultural characteristics of traditional music, ethnomusicology integrates music within the natural and social cultural environments of a particular country (Wu, 1999). The researchers drew on the principles of ethnomusicology to analyze the fundamental characteristics and cultural significance of Nanyin Pipa arts.

METHOD

Scope of Research Site

The research sites were selected for their historical and cultural significance in the context of Nanyin Pipa music. The selection process involved a thorough literature review, consultations with experts, and preliminary field visits to ensure that the chosen sites accurately represented the broader cultural landscape of Fujian Province, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Data Collection Methods

This study investigates the evolution of the Nanyin Pipa, the diverse contexts in which it is performed, and its role in fostering literacy and education in Fujian. By employing a combination of literature review, fieldwork, interviews, and observations, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of the Nanyin Pipa's cultural and educational significance, as presented in Table 1.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with two key informants, recognized as national transmitters of Nanyin Pipa music, whose oral accounts provided valuable insights into the historical development of the instrument. Additionally, four casual informants, known for their contributions to the crafting, teaching, and research of the Nanyin Pipa, were interviewed to offer diverse perspectives on the instrument's cultural and educational significance.

Research Tools Data Management and Analysis

- Interview Forms were designed to capture detailed information from key and casual informants. The forms included questions tailored to elicit comprehensive responses about Nanyin Pipa music's historical and contemporary practices.
- Observation forms were used to systematically record observations made during fieldwork, ensuring that all relevant details about the performance practices and educational use of the Nanyin Pipa were documented.



Figure 1. Map of research site
 Source: <https://chinafolio.com/provinces/fujian-province/>

Table 1. Data collection methods

Method	Description
Fieldwork	- The crucial part of the research involved visits to communities in Fujian Province, including observations, interviews, and participation in local cultural events to collect primary data
Interview	- Senior expert of Nanyin Pipa - Recipient of the "Cultural Model Household" Nanyin Pipa performance
Observation	- A music enthusiast who appreciates Nanyin Pipa performances - Expresses a love for Nanyin's cultural heritage and music

Data Management and Analysis

Upon completion of the fieldwork, the collected data, including recordings, videos, photographs, and interview transcripts, were systematically categorized and managed. The data were organized according to historical and musical characteristics to facilitate subsequent analysis. The data analysis employed multiple methods as outlined below:

Field data analysis

This method was used to interpret the musical characteristics of the Nanyin Pipa, drawing on findings from field observations and interviews.

Comparative analysis

This approach was used to explore the underlying reasons for and trace the changes in Nanyin Pipa performance practices over time.

Interviews and observations analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes and patterns, providing a deeper understanding of the cultural and educational functions of the Nanyin Pipa.

RESULTS

The Nanyin Pipa, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, is intricately woven into the cultural fabric of Fujian Province. Its historical development mirrors significant socio-cultural transformations within Minnan communities. This research aims to examine the historical evolution of the Nanyin Pipa, with a particular focus on its role in literacy functions and educational contexts.

The Historical Development of the Nanyin Pipa

The Nanyin Pipa, a treasured example of traditional Chinese stringed instruments, boasts a long history and widespread distribution. In Fujian Province, the introduction and early development of the Pipa are closely intertwined with local cultural exchanges and musical traditions. Its origins can be traced to the ancient Central Asian lute. Through commercial exchanges along the Silk Road, the Pipa was introduced to

China and gradually assimilated into the Chinese musical and cultural system. According to the Draft History of Chinese Pipa, the instrument was introduced to China during the Han Dynasty. Over centuries of development, it evolved into a distinct instrument with uniquely Chinese characteristics.

In the Tang and Song Dynasties

The Tang Dynasty marked the golden age of Pipa development, during which the instrument reached its peak in terms of shape and playing techniques. The introduction of the curved neck design not only made the instrument more ergonomic to play but also enhanced its timbre, contributing to a richer sound. In the Song Dynasty, the development of the Pipa in Fujian entered a phase of standardization. The Nanyin Pipa, while inheriting the traditions of the Tang Dynasty Pipa, underwent refinements to better align with the distinct musical characteristics of Fujian. Nanyin Pipa performance emphasizes the purity of timbre and the fluidity of melody, resulting in a unique performance style.

In the Ming and Qing Dynasties

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the development of Fujian Pipa entered a new phase. The flourishing of local operas, such as Liyuan Opera and Gaojia Opera, provided an expansive platform for Pipa performance. In the Ming Dynasty, the Pipa became the primary accompaniment instrument for these operas, with its performance techniques and style undergoing significant refinement and enhancement. By the Qing Dynasty, Pipa performance within Fujian folk music became increasingly diverse and vibrant. Folk artists continued to innovate while preserving traditional elements, resulting in a broader range of performance techniques and repertoires. The simplicity, naturalness, and closeness to daily life of folk Pipa music have made it deeply beloved by the masses.

In the Early 20th Century

In the early 20th century, as social changes and cultural exchanges deepened, Fujian Nanyin Pipa began to incorporate modern musical elements while preserving traditional foundations, resulting in a richer performance style. Both performance techniques and repertoires were further expanded and refined, establishing the Nanyin Pipa as a significant musical and cultural heritage of Fujian and, by extension, the entire country (Wu, 1999). In contemporary times, Pipa education in Fujian has garnered increasing attention and support. Numerous music schools and institutions have introduced specialized Pipa courses, training many exceptional performers and educators. The popularization of Pipa education has not only elevated performance standards but has also laid a solid foundation for the preservation and further development of Pipa artistry. As globalization accelerates, Fujian Pipa has gained international recognition and actively participates in cultural exchanges. Particularly, the Fujian Nanyin Pipa has captivated global audiences with its distinctive artistic charm. Through these international exchanges, Fujian

Pipa has not only showcased its unique artistic style but also made substantial contributions to the global dissemination of Chinese musical culture.

In the Contemporary Period in Fujian Province

The Pipa art in Fujian, particularly its integration with Nanyin, represents a rich and profound cultural heritage with distinct artistic characteristics. As a treasure within the cultural fabric of Fujian and China, it holds immense significance. Nanyin, one of the oldest musical forms in China, continues to thrive in southern Fujian, particularly in Quanzhou. The fusion of Pipa and Nanyin has elevated this art form to its zenith. In Nanyin music, the Pipa plays a crucial role, providing not only melodic support but also adding unique artistic flair through its playing techniques and timbre. Through the manipulation of plucking and pressing techniques, the Pipa creates a wide array of timbres and melodies. These expressive techniques allow the Nanyin Pipa to convey a diverse range of emotions, from soft and delicate to passionate and intense, showcasing its artistic appeal.

Entering the 21st century, Fujian Pipa art has experienced significant innovation and development, demonstrating the enduring charm of traditional art in the contemporary era. The establishment of modern educational programs, such as Nanyin and Pipa performance courses at Fujian Normal University, Quanzhou Normal University, and other institutions, has provided a structured framework for the preservation and transmission of Pipa art. Furthermore, through the organization of music festivals and art exchange activities, the social influence of Pipa art has been enhanced, fostering its integration and innovation with modern and international music.

The modern innovation of Fujian Pipa art is evident in the expansion of performance techniques, the diversification of performance forms, and the richness of repertoire creation. Contemporary Pipa performers not only pursue mastery in traditional techniques but also integrate modern music theory and electroacoustic elements into their performances, thus creating a distinctive musical language. In terms of repertoire creation, performers have boldly explored the fusion of traditional Nanyin pieces with Western and global music styles, resulting in new works that reflect both contemporary relevance and an international outlook. These innovations not only enrich the expressive capacity of Pipa art but also bring it closer to the aesthetic expectations of modern audiences. This progress has opened new avenues for the inheritance and promotion of traditional art, as illustrated in Figure 2.

In conclusion, the historical development of the Nanyin Pipa illustrates a dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation. Its standardized role within Nanyin, its extensive integration into local operas, and its evolving interpretation in folk music all demonstrate the continuous growth and transformation of Fujian Pipa art. In contemporary times, while remaining rooted in tradition, Nanyin Pipa has incorporated modern musical elements, thereby fostering the innovation and advancement of Chinese Pipa art. Moreover, the expansion of Pipa education and the strengthening of



Figure 2. The instrumental component of Nanyin Pipa
Source: Shuyan Zhang (2024)

international exchanges have injected new vitality into the preservation and development of Fujian Pipa, effectively bridging traditional culture with modern civilization.

The Literary Function of the Nanyin Pipa from a Ritualistic Perspective

The Nanyin Pipa holds a pivotal role in the cultural heritage of Fujian, particularly within its folk music traditions. This instrument is integral to various musical forms, notably Nanyin, Xiang Opera, and Putian Opera. In Nanyin, often described as the “living fossil of Chinese music,” the Pipa is essential to the genre’s sound, enriching its melodic depth and cultural expression. Rooted in the Tang Dynasty, Nanyin continues to preserve a legacy of ancient music, with the Pipa contributing significantly through its unique tonal qualities and advanced playing techniques.

In Nanyin performances, the Pipa functions not only as an accompaniment but as the central expressive force of the music. Through a range of intricate techniques such as rolling fingers, glissandos, and varied plucking methods, the Pipa creates a nuanced and evocative soundscape. These techniques enable performers to vividly convey the emotions and artistic nuances inherent in the piece, offering audiences an immersive connection to the ancient traditions of Chinese music. Beyond its role in Nanyin, the Pipa is also instrumental in other prominent Fujian folk music forms, including Liyuan Opera and Gaojia Opera. Within these local operas, the Pipa serves as a primary accompaniment instrument, adding a rich, melodic layer to the performance. The interaction between the Pipa’s music and the actors’ movements fosters a seamless integration of music and drama, heightening the emotional intensity and enhancing the overall artistic experience of the opera.

The cultural significance of the Nanyin Pipa extends beyond its musical role to its representation of Fujian’s historical and cultural identity. As a traditional instrument, the Pipa’s music often embodies the local customs, values, and aesthetic sensibilities of the Fujian people. Its performance serves not only to preserve musical traditions but also to uphold and communicate the cultural heritage of the region.

The Nanyin Pipa also plays a critical role in Fujian’s traditional rituals and celebrations, where it enhances the solemnity or festive atmosphere of key events. In wedding ceremonies, the Pipa is often performed alongside other traditional instruments, such as the erhu and flute, to create a joyful, auspicious mood. The melodies of the Pipa, imbued with blessings for the newlyweds, foster a sense of happiness and communal celebration, marking the beginning of a new life.

In contrast, during funeral rites, the Pipa’s music takes on a more solemn and reflective tone. The mournful melodies express grief and remembrance for the deceased while offering comfort to the living. In this context, the Pipa serves as a conduit for emotional expression, linking the living and the deceased through its evocative sound. The Pipa is also integral to various festival celebrations, such as the Spring Festival temple fairs and Mid-Autumn Festival moon-viewing parties. During these events, the Pipa enriches the cultural atmosphere, contributing to the festive spirit and enhancing the communal experience. Often performed alongside other art forms, such as dance and opera, the Pipa helps create a vibrant, harmonious environment that celebrates the cultural heritage of Fujian.

Thus, the literacy functions of the Nanyin Pipa in Fujian’s traditional rituals and celebrations extends beyond artistic performance; it is a vehicle for the transmission of cultural and social values. Its music not only illuminates the sacredness and cultural richness of these events but also ensures the preservation and continuity of Fujian’s unique cultural identity. Through its performance, the Pipa fosters a deeper connection to the local customs and traditions, thereby safeguarding the region’s cultural legacy for future generations.

The Musical Literacy Function of the Nanyin Pipa in Ensemble Performance

In the Nanyin musical tradition of Fujian Province, the pipa occupies a central role as the primary conductor of the ensemble. Its distinctive timbre, dynamic range, and advanced playing techniques render it an indispensable force in guiding and shaping the Nanyin ensemble’s performance (Lin, S., 2022). As a traditional musical form, the cohesion and harmonic unity of the Nanyin ensemble are significantly reliant on the pipa’s commanding presence and leadership.

The pipa’s clear and penetrating timbre allows it to stand out prominently in the Nanyin ensemble, ensuring that all musicians can clearly interpret the conductor’s cues. This distinct timbral advantage enables the pipa to swiftly communicate changes in rhythm, tempo, and emotional tone, effectively guiding the ensemble towards a cohesive and harmonious performance. In the composition “Birds Returning to the Nest,” the pipa’s unique timbre successfully propelled the ensemble to a climactic point, showcasing its exceptional ability as a leading instrument in the ensemble, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The pipa’s versatile volume allows it to seamlessly transition between solo and ensemble roles, showcasing its unique timbral charm while also fostering harmonious resonance with other instruments in the ensemble. This volume

adaptability enables the pipa to reinforce the conductor's cues when needed, ensuring precise execution by the band members and maintaining overall musical cohesion.

Additionally, the pipa's diverse range of playing techniques—such as plucking, picking, and the use of plucked or pointed fingers—enhances its expressiveness and offers a variety of tools for the ensemble conductor. By employing these techniques, the pipa can effectively communicate complex directives, guiding the musicians towards accurate performance and ensuring the unity and harmony of the music.

In the context of Fujian music composition, the pipa not only embodies a rich historical heritage but also serves as a wellspring of artistic inspiration. Its deep cultural roots provide a solid foundation for musical creation in the region. Over centuries of inheritance and innovation, the pipa has developed a distinct playing style and musical character, enriching compositions with profound historical elements and cultural depth (Lin, 2022).

The pipa's distinctive timbre, broad range, and diverse playing techniques contribute significantly to its expressive power and appeal in performance, making it a vital source of inspiration for music creation in Fujian. Composers can leverage these attributes of the pipa to craft compositions that reflect the unique regional characteristics and distinctive style of Fujian music (Zhuo Shengxiang, 2018). For instance, Zhuo Shengxiang has adeptly utilized the pipa's characteristics and allure to create numerous works that embody the essence of Fujian. His piece “Zheng Chenggong·Ancestor's Instructions” is a prime example, where he skillfully adjusts the melody's tempo in response to the lyrics' meaning. In this composition, the pipa, as one of the central instruments, effectively conveys the emotional depth and regional flavor of the piece through its unique timbre and expressive techniques.

In the intersection of tradition and modernity, the Nanyin pipa not only harmonizes with traditional instruments like the dongxiao and clappers to maintain the distinctive Nanyin style, but also integrates contemporary musical elements. This fusion has led to the creation of innovative works that carry a modern sensibility, enriching the expressive forms and musical styles of Fujian music.

The Educational Occasions and Functions of Nanyin Pipa

In Fujian's communities and villages, the art of the Nanyin pipa is intricately woven into the fabric of daily life, becoming an essential element of cultural exchanges and traditional customs through various forms of performances, such as Nanyin and opera. The pipa's melodious tunes serve as a cornerstone in festivals and significant ceremonies, where its evocative sounds play a pivotal role in uniting community members. These musical expressions foster collective celebration and shared joy, thereby strengthening the social cohesion of the community and cultivating a deep sense of belonging among its residents, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Moreover, the significance and role of Nanyin Pipa art in the realm of education are profound. Nanyin Pipa has



Figure 3. The nanyin association worship and exchange meeting in Hui'an county, Fujian Province

Source: Shuyan Zhang, from fieldwork in January 2024



Figure 4. Quanzhou demonstrate school

Source: Shuyan Zhang, from fieldwork in January 2024

become a crucial component of the educational system, with its influence extending across both formal school education and community-based training programs. Through these educational avenues, Nanyin Pipa not only preserves traditional techniques but also fosters a deep appreciation for local culture among the younger generation, thereby reinforcing social bonds and cultural continuity. This educational approach not only enables younger individuals to connect with and inherit their cultural heritage but also ensures a steady pool of talent to support the sustainable development of Fujian Pipa art.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the literacy functions and educational roles of the Nanyin Pipa in Fujian Province, China, with a particular emphasis on its distinctive characteristics. The findings of this research align with the literature review, which highlighted the rich historical context and unique geographical attributes of Fujian, as well as the cultural significance of its music and artistic expressions.

Through a combination of key informant interviews, surveys, and direct observations, the research provided valuable

insights into the origins and development of Nanyin Pipa. Historical analysis revealed that the literacy functions and educational roles of Nanyin Pipa in Fujian were largely organized by both urban and rural communities, with traditional performances and rituals occurring during festive events (Clark, 1995). Additionally, the establishment of cultural centers and the promotion of mass cultural initiatives by the government played a pivotal role in the preservation and dissemination of Nanyin Pipa's cultural heritage (Katz, 2008).

The research also illuminated the evolution of Nanyin Pipa in modern and contemporary contexts. From the Tang Dynasty to the present, key developments included the formation of the Nanyin ensemble, the introduction of new mass literary and artistic activities, and the expansion of music education programs (Guodong, 1997). Furthermore, the reform and opening-up policy that began in 1979 significantly accelerated the growth of Nanyin Pipa's culture and music, with increasing recognition and international acclaim for its performances (Juan et al., 2023).

Moreover, the study highlighted the ongoing innovation and evolution of Nanyin Pipa in the contemporary era. The integration of modern elements, such as innovative stage design, lighting, and dance techniques, has breathed new life into traditional music, fostering unique and dynamic performances (Hua, 2022). Additionally, Nanyin Pipa has garnered national recognition and was included in China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, ensuring its preservation for future generations (Yan et al., 2023).

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the educational and literacy functions of Nanyin Pipa in Fujian Province. The research findings are consistent with the literature, underscoring the rich historical background, distinctive geographical characteristics, and cultural significance of Nanyin Pipa as an essential musical and artistic expression.

This research has significantly contributed to the preservation and promotion of Fujian's cultural heritage, emphasizing the ongoing innovation and advancements within the tradition of Nanyin Pipa. The findings align with the theoretical principles of musicology and ethnomusicology, offering a deeper understanding of the cultural and artistic landscape surrounding Nanyin Pipa. By exploring its historical development, educational roles, and contemporary evolution, the study enriches our comprehension of this art form's impact on local culture and its continued relevance in modern contexts.

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