

Ritual Performance in Present Society of Taiwan: A Cultural Study

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Present society everywhere is considered result of history, cultural value, and experiences on their particular members. With historical perspectives, a present society may have a process of historic activity as an unending dialogue between the past and the present (Carr, 1987). Works of art are communicative reflection transmitted by artists to artists or artists to their audience period to period, by saying this, works of art can be consequently valued as cultural records of intangible activity of human habitation on earth. Works of art are developed from creativity in various methods including, but not limited to, visual, writing, and performance or performing arts.

Among the branches each created by individual methods, performing arts are created with diverse and integrative ways by artists. With and without materials, performing arts deploy body and its movements or physical activities in conveying artistic expression. Performing arts are one of the forms of art that have closest physical and psychological relation to the audiences. Performing arts can range from vocal and instrumental music, dance and theatre pantomime, sung verse and beyond. (UNESCO)

Time not only populating new generations of people into social areas, but also causes transmission of cultural assets and their transformation. When time passes, works of art can be frozen or, by cultural dynamism, be another thing from the time they were created. This may be in accordance with the idea “La mort de l’auteur”, the Death of the Author, a concept in literary criticism presented by French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes (1915-1980), because works of art can be interpreted else by the audiences or by demand of members of new generations of people. In analyzing status of traditional performance in present society in order to understand roles and values of performing arts three categories may be considered:

- A. Traditional Performing Arts as Entertainment
- B. Traditional Performing Arts as Cultural Assets
- C. Traditional Performing Arts as Ritual Practices and Offerings

It is possible to say that first two categories are solely concerned with Pure Art and its management and may be with indirect relation to cultural lives of people. While Traditional Performing Arts as Ritual Practices and Offerings directly are concerned with cultural lives of people. This is clearly because of rituals are related with individuals and socialization. Although Rituals could be understood to have root in religious beliefs, they are features of all known human society (Brown, 1991), both religious and social. In addition, traditional performing arts as ritual practices and offerings can be seen covering the functions of the first two models since performing arts have their fundamental function as entertainment and in more advance level as cultural assets.

According to Merriam-Webster, ritual can be defined as a sequence of activities involving bodily activities such as gestures, words, and objects. Ritual, performed according to set sequence, can be accomplished in a sequestered place or a particular place. (Bell, 1997). Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community. Characteristics of ritual include formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance. (Bell, 1997)

Research Objective

To examine phenomenology of ritual performance in Taiwan and the philosophical concepts behind.

Importance of the Study

“Each type of heritage has its own audience: some cater to a particular group, others appeal to a range of different types of audience” (Graham et al. 2000:22). This study hypothesizes that performing art is not only a type of entertainment, but also a social asset deployed in the maintenance traditional ways of life and identity the generation feeling proud of and willing to transmit to the coming age groups.

Therefore, ritual performance contains not only aesthetic values as the art, but it is also packed with religious and cultural values. Its contents and practices expected by a certain cultural group are then comprised of diverse functions to maintain traditional or classical idea of perfect living in the cultural arena.

The study will portray how performing art as ritual play cultural roles in lives of Taiwanese and the interrelation between communities of artists and general public as cultural symbiosis. Furthermore, the study will ensure importance of traditional performing art as cultural heritage.

Research Methodologies, Data Collection Methods, and Instruments

This study will be done through qualitative method. Applying concepts in cultural studies and anthropology of dance, Participant and non-participant observation. Concepts in History and Cultural history will be used when applicable. Taking note, photographing, voice and video recording, and interviews with specialists and scholars in Taiwanese Studies and Performance Studies will be done in data collections.

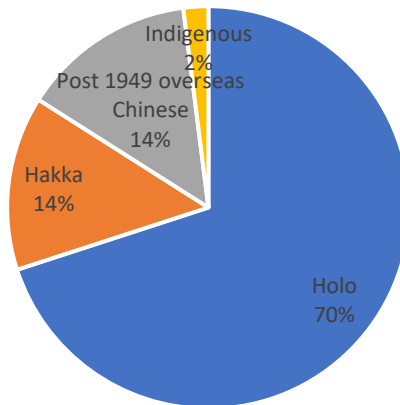
Taiwan in Context of Ritual Culture

Taiwan is an island in Pacific Ocean and has been occupied by paleolithic people and their preceding. With waves of migratory people from Maritime Southeast Asia and those who crossed the strait from mainland present China since 4000 B.C., the island is home to people diverse in language and culture. In 17th century, immigrants from mainland came to Taiwan for a main reason of the change in political governing body in mainland from Ming to Qing, the minor reason may be establishment of Dutch East India's trading office on the island that relocated workers from Mainland's Southern Fujian (福建).

These people from Fujian province, recognized by Taiwanese government as Holo people (河老), are nowadays major population (70%) in Taiwan, while Hakka (客家) is the second large group of 14%, Immigrants Arriving around 1949 (外省人) and Indigenous share population proportion of 14% and 2% respectively.

These groups of people share similar ways of life when it comes to contemporary perspective and public areas, in the relatively private sphere, for example as small social unit as family, we can recognize the differences. Language expression is one of good representative examples as each of these groups utilize own dialect or language. Since compulsory education in Taiwan has prioritized Mandarin Chinese to be taught at schools from primary levels, younger members of Holo, Hakka, and Indigenous are at least bilingual. Immigrants Arriving

Taiwan Contemporary Population



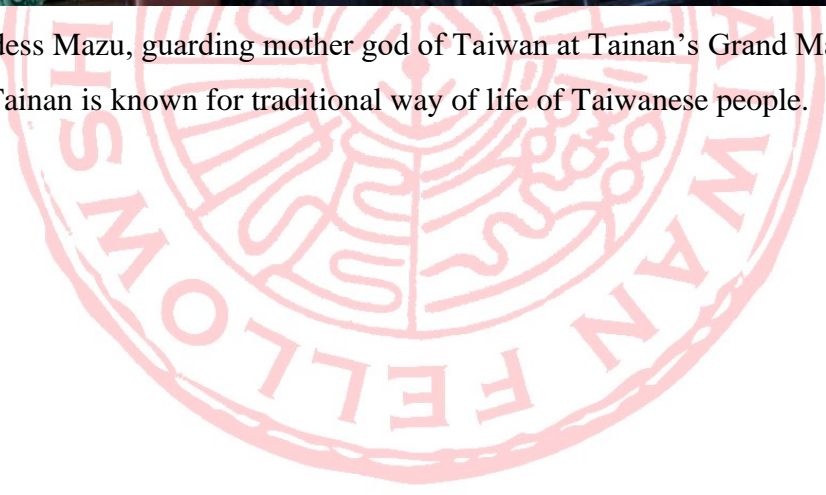
■ Holo ■ Hakka ■ Post 1949 overseas Chinese ■ Indigenous





Image of Goddess Mazu, guarding mother god of Taiwan at Tainan's Grand Mazu Temple.

Tainan is known for traditional way of life of Taiwanese people.



around 1949 are native speakers of Mandarin, the field study has found that members of this group also have listening comprehension of Taiwanese Language (台灣話/ 臺語), the language native to Holo people. Taiwanese language is a Chinese dialect originally spoken in South and Eastern China. Another term addressing this language in broader sense is Minnan Language (閩南語), literally means the language of Southern Fujian, the area where mainlander ancestors of contemporary major population in Taiwan, Holo people, were from.

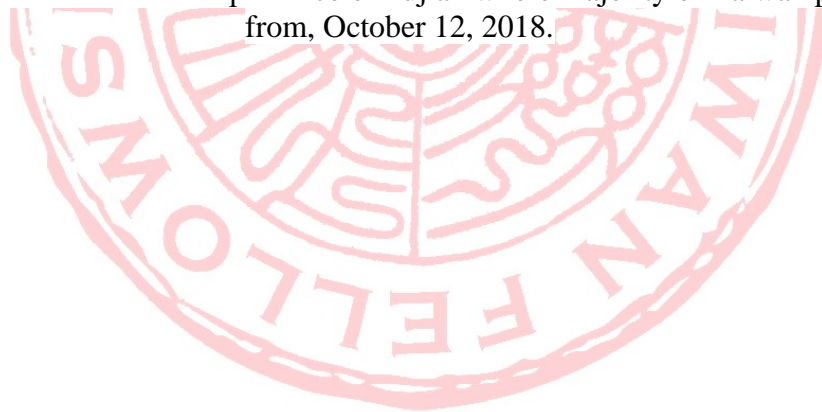
Taking demographic proportion to consideration, it is possible to assume before entering the field that most of cultural and ritual practices in Taiwan must be strongly influenced by those originally practiced in Southern Fujian. Another significant influence may be that of Kuomintang's Chinese nationalist policy, the nationalist government took office in Taiwan from 1945 and brought in another wave of heritage culture from mainland China, heritage objects from Forbidden City for instance, as well as non-traditional heritage just like a number of universities that had operated in the mainland e.g. National Chengchi University, National Chiao Tung University, were resettled. The government also promoted Mandarin Chinese as lingua franca by promoting the language in official use and making it compulsory in schools.

Nevertheless, since population in the island is Chinese related population, ritual practices in Taiwan are very close to those practiced in the mainland. Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and other East Asia indigenous beliefs are main source of these rituals. Religious arts are brought in from the mainland and are created and developed according to these beliefs and practice. Art forms dedicated to religions and beliefs include, but not limited to, visual arts, literary arts, and performing arts.

The situation in the mainland contemporary to re-establishment of Republic of China in Taiwan can be considered endangering cultural heritage. One of the event endangering cultural heritage in Beijing was on 19 August 1966, just one day after Mao Zedong and Lin Biao addressed tens of thousands of Red Guards in Tiananmen Square in calling for Destruction of the Four Olds (四舊) – old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas, and Construction of Four News. “Destruction of Four Olds and Contruction of Four News (破四舊立四新)” was not only in word as addressed by high-ranked communist party members, but



Taipei National University of the Arts' Nanguan Chinese Opera (南管) with a character wearing headdress decorated with long tails of Reeves's pheasant (白冠長尾雉), the bird indigenous to Southern China's province of Fujian where majority of Taiwan population is from, October 12, 2018.



had come to practice from something very close to life of people such as changing old-style given names to revolutionary terminology.

Acts against imperial subjects and ancient heritage were reported done to tombs of royal family for example remains of Wanli Emperor (萬曆帝) and his Empresses were denounced and burned by Red Guards. It is possible to say that some administrators in Beijing valued these cultural and imperial heritages, as a result, Prime Minister Zhou En-Lai commanded to close the gates of Palace Museum Beijing, this closure remained for 5 years. It is possible to say that without relocation in Taiwan, future of not only imperial treasure but also other forms of intangible cultural heritage would be for sure uncertain. This is since Taiwan is just a short distance from the mainland and when without guarding army of that like Kuomintang of that day, then claiming Taiwan as a territory is not too impossible for People's Liberation Army. According to this historical fact, we can assume that forms of cultural heritage in Taiwan has been in the vision of protection rather than adaptation to serve political philosophy.

The cultural importance of music in Eastern Asian and Taiwan has enrooted in Confucian philosophical concept in cosmology. Nowadays, although music is widely recognized as a form of entertainment that has strong influence in human way of life, such reception of music as entertainment is partly true. For in a religious belief culture of Confucianism music has also played another role of non-amusement, moreover, Confucian philosophy has stated the right type of music that could make society better and maintain the cosmos.

Apart from geographical arenas like heaven and earth, it is interesting that Confucian cosmology includes human beings as an entity in the cosmos. Some scholar like Tu Wei-Ming termed this as Anthropocosmic worldview, the worldview that embracing heaven, earth, and human beings (Tucker 1998). Confucius believes that it is correct human relationship that maintains political and social order (Hsü 1970), emphasized as a part of cosmos, Confucianism teaches an individual to live a moral life by practicing constant virtues (五常之禮), namely benevolence (仁), righteousness (義), rites (禮), wisdom (智), and integrity (信). For the society as a collective entity of human beings, Confucius by his own words in Analects mentioned relationship of people based on status of ruler (君), minister (臣),

father (父), and child (子) [Analects, 12:11]. Human relation and social hierarchy are considered so essential that Confucius expressed if these relations crack down he could not even process something routinely like having a meal [Analects, 12:11] (信如君不君、臣不臣、父不父、子不子、雖有粟、吾得而食諸) .

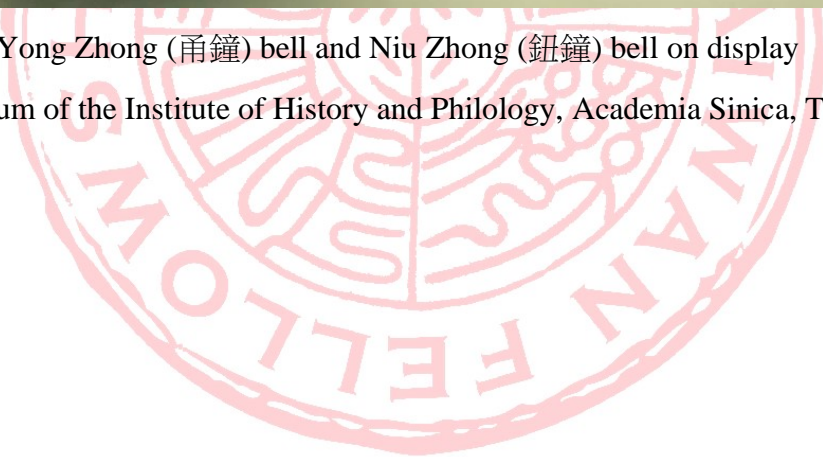
In accordance with Confucius, one of the three great Confucian thinkers Xunzi (荀子) diagnosed the main cause of disorder as once social hierarchy is broken down, hierarchical distinctions are confused and people do not follow their proper roles and compete indiscriminately to satisfy their desires (Elstein). Xunzi also suggested that the way to put limits on this competition is to clarify social distinctions, because when people know their own place, obligations, and privileges, they will not contend for goods beyond their status. Clarifying social distinction not only leads to order and stability but also greater satisfaction of everyone's desires (Elstein). These social distinctions can be clarified and enforced primarily by rites (禮) that music plays significant role in.

Huang Zhong (黃鐘), the yellow bell, seems to play significant role beyond musical sphere, since by 800 BC court ceremony of investiture, worship, and liturgies used to mark the ritual calendar and define royal authority came to rely on expensive bronze bells (Crease 2011). There was a tradition to strike bells in solving big problems, the largest bell of China in Beijing which was cast in fifteenth century and in fourteen feet in height was only struck when the emperor prayed for rain (Sachs 2012), this type to bell sound was considered *yayue* (雅樂). *Yayue*, proper music, is the type music deemed essential to self-cultivation and governance. (Ko et al. 2003) I also heard that these bells were to be tuned as restoration of order of society to mark new royal governance, further literary review is required.

According to Confucianism, types of non-proper music can be *suyue* (俗月), essentially private, heterosocial and eroticized music featuring entertainment and vernacular music that pleasure seeking men find desirable and entertaining. *Suyue* is found licentious and corruptive by moralists. And *nuyue* (女樂) that included woman musicians and their seductive music, is latter type of music was the most licentious and corruptive of all (Stevenson and Wu 2017).



Yong Zhong (甬鐘) bell and Niu Zhong (鈕鐘) bell on display
at Museum of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan





The grand hall of Taipei Confucian Temple where musical instruments for Confucian rites are kept.



One of the most interesting events in Chinese imperial history is when Ming dynasty was conquered by the Manchus in fifteenth century. The essence of this event is the encountering of Han Chinese people with foreign conquerors and rules. There is one possible question about changing or even banning Ming Confucian rites since the Manchu conquerors were alien to Confucian rituals and vice versa. But in the end, Qing conquerors somehow continued Confucian rites in their court, the possible answers to this phenomenon may be Qing conquerors found Confucian rites essential in governing the alien empire that had been familiar with the very practice for at least a thousand years. Continuation the Confucian rites and practices is a symbol of claiming legitimacy in governing with mandate of heaven (天命).

Another possible answer is that the Manchu were familiar with this very kind or similar kind of rites. Nurgaci (1559-1626), the first emperor of Qing, was familiar with rites accompanied by music before conquering Ming Dynasty, he probably adopted court music along with display of regalia (lubu) (Zhang 1991). The 1636 regulations concerning the imperial equipage listed 84 musicians playing fifteen kinds of instruments in the imperial processions, music and manner are unknown (Yung and Rawski, 1996).

After entering Beijing, Manchu conquerors called almost immediately upon the survivors of the Ming court music troupes to perform *dayue* music required for their first sacrifice to Heaven, which symbolized the beginning of their dynastic rule (Wan and Huang 1985 cited in Yung and Rawski 1996) The sacrifice was the first occasion when the Qing could reliably have performed ritual music in the Ming model, and the account preserved in the Veritable Records suggests that the Ming music was indeed played. (DQSL, juan 5, Shunzi 1/10/1, cited in Yung and Rawski 1996) Some scholar also debated that Manchu applied concepts of Confucianism before conquering Ming.

Firstly, since Chinese historical data is enormous, possibly fragmentary because it is sometimes hard to find relevant data, this work has also referred to Humboldt's concept in Imaginative History when hypothesizing some important event such as continuity of Confucianism in Taiwan from the Qing court tradition, the most recent possible ritual influence with adequate strength to affect relatively remote practice in Taiwan, noumena in the Manchu dignity in governing the Qing empire and negotiation with previous imperial culture. Since for

Humboldt, truth is an inner reality, imagination also allows the researcher to hypothesize some qualitative answers by means of intuition and logics.

In addition, Humboldt's idea concerning noumenal and phenomenal is also applied through this study, since Cosmology and State Governance lie in the noumenal realm. In studying Confucian concepts of music and idea of Cosmology and State Governance, it is possible to study the traces left in the phenomenal realm. For example, historical record of Ming's Confucian music *dayue* used in royal rites for Qing's first sacrifice to heaven which symbolized the beginning of Manchu dynastic rule which is noumena. This concept is, therefore, possible to ground the basis of practice that allows continuity until present time.

In Effective Historical concepts, this work has considered Gadamer's idea that historical research cannot be separated from the effect of the research process itself, in response to this, the Analects, Confucian canonical literature, of both English translated version and Classical Chinese version, is read through along with studies by relevant scholars. It has found that Confucian studies are conducted by scholars highly diverse in horizons and as a result we cannot deny the impact of these researchers in their historical studies of Confucianism. Although the English versions of Analects are available, it is better to read the Analects of Confucius from the Chinese characters in order to move one's horizon closer to that of Confucius and to avoid influence from the English translation as much as possible. By doing this, although reading Classical Chinese requires special skill, the studies have found some places that the translation can be, somehow, problematic in terms language boundary. For example, 子 was translated "son" while gender connotation is not mentioned in this ancient Chinese canon.

By reading Analects from both Classical and English versions, the horizon of this work is moved. Gadamer's argument about historical incompleteness that leads us to his concept in Horizon is the most important framework in his work, for one who does not have conceptual knowledge about Confucianist philosophy and practice before must consider to move the horizon. Although firstly having a horizon far away from Confucian influence, studying this new topic is a method to have one horizon expanded toward Confucianism. Gadamer in his word said that "to have a horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to



Image of Guan Yu worshipped at the main altar in Puli Confucian Temple, Nantou.

see beyond it”, and if one’s situation is “not knowing”, then he has the fundamental requirement of knowledge.

Before touching Confucian philosophy, one can only see music as mostly social production that does not have much reversed impact to the society as a whole, but researching this topic and seeing how Confucian music has been practiced for thousands of years for the sake of ritual in maintaining cosmology concerning human as a part, it is interesting to say that there is at least a branch of philosophy taking a particular type of music of having cosmological function in maintaining human society and the cosmos.

Since this study is to emphasize concepts of performing arts it cannot avoid investigating Confucian idea of governance and cosmology. Also, when studying history, it is recommended that intensive consideration must be taken to art. Scholars, like Herder, suggested that best way of understanding history is by investigating art. In regard to this, when the Ming’s *dayue* performance was required by Manchu for the first sacrifice to Heaven to mark the beginning of Qing’s rule well represents new political ruler coming into power.

Traditional Performing Arts in Taiwan

Performing arts, ranging from music, dance to theatre, are forms of art that have closest physical and psychological relation to the audience. The way they deploy human bodily elements in delivering feelings and ideas allow more contacts with lives of people from street to philosophical levels. Stories with different contents have been created and told from generation to generation through manifestation of performing arts.

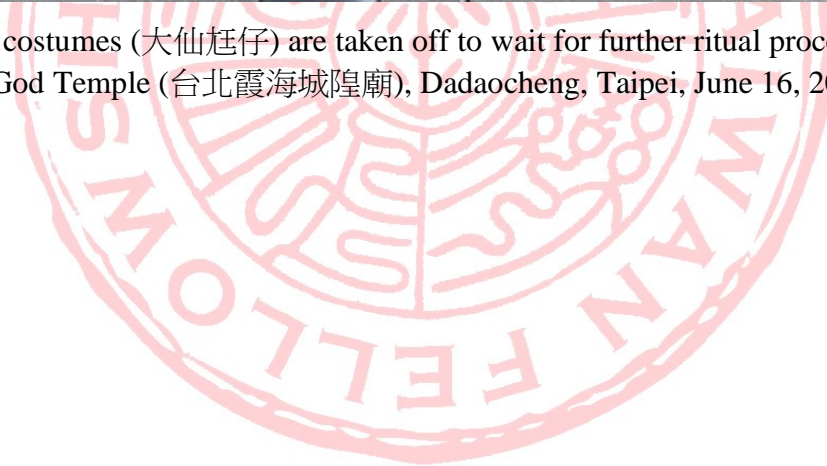
From demographic data, it is possible to say that traditional Performing arts in Taiwan are those of Chinese origin. Majority sharing 70% of national population in Taiwan is Holo people whose performing art forms not only did they share similarity and origin with the mainstream East Asian culture, but also have characteristics of at least using Taiwanese language (臺語 or 閩南話) as medium on stage. These Taiwanese performing arts are music, theatre and puppetry.



Old glove puppet theatre of delicate craftsmanship
on display at Taipei National University of the Arts



God's puppet costumes (大仙尪仔) are taken off to wait for further ritual process at Taipei City God Temple (台北霞海城隍廟), Dadaocheng, Taipei, June 16, 2018.



Taking a look of all forms of performing arts, music can be addressed as foundation in all ritual performing arts in Eastern Asia and Taiwan, when not in its pure form, it plays an important role in content delivery for other forms of performance. Traditional musical art forms that are most widespread in Taiwan can include Beiguan Music (北管) and Nanguan Music (南管). Although the terms Beiguan and Nanguan both have morphological formation by using cardinal direction terms of north (北:bei) and south (南:nan), the two musical forms are less to be in relation to cardinal direction. Nan Guan, known as Nan Yin (南音) and Nan Yue (南樂) in southeastern part of mainland China and Southeast Asia respectively, has characteristics of ancient music from Han dynasty and Tang dynasties both appearing in both musical practice and musical forms. Beiguan is another dominant form of music that also plays significant role broadly from shrines to puppet theatres, Beiguan music is unique with its strong sound significantly produced by Suona (嗩吶), double-reed clarinet, this uniqueness makes it has important function in outdoor rituals with Suona considered major a characteristic of it.

The music performance can be observed at various ritual occasions. Beiguan and Nanguan not only have been handed down from generation to generation in traditional ways, but they are also included in formal education such as in music-majored curriculums at universities.

Taipei National University of the Arts is one of the major art institutes in Taiwan that has curriculum teaching in Taiwanese traditional music and performance in School of Music's Department of Traditional Music. The way music and performance, such as opera and puppetry, are taught in the traditional music department has made clear that these performing art forms are parts of the bigger picture. Established in 1995, B.F.A. program offers 4-year curriculum allowing students to select one out of 5 majors: Qin, Pipa, Nan Guan, Bei Guan, and Music Theory. All students are required to study courses on traditional music, history and theory, Asian music, western music history, and theory-related courses. The department also offers 2 postgraduate curricula i.e. master of arts and master of fine arts, all majors taught at the department relate more or less to traditional and ritual life of people of eastern Asia.



Beiguan music in a ritual process at Taipei City God Temple
(台北霞海城隍廟), Dadaocheng, Taipei, June 16, 2018

Summary

This article aims at examining phenomenology of ritual performance in Taiwan and to observe the interrelation of ritual performance and lives of Taiwanese people in terms of artistic practice, and social practice. Taking demographic proportion to consideration, it is possible to say that cultural and ritual practices in Taiwan are strongly influenced by Confucian philosophy. The study has then examined Confucius's concept of music and its relation to ideas of cosmology and political governance of the state during Chinese imperial times with particular focus on the Qing dynasty's Confucian musical practice. It is found that rites (禮) is one of the Five Constant Virtues. Considering human is a part in Cosmology, music plays an important role in clarifying and enforcing social distinctions to maintain social order. Although Confucianism canonical literature are works of major thinkers, the Analects which records Confucius's words shows types of music of both favorable and non-favorable to him. The favorable one has the power in maintaining moral society while non-favorable does not. When Manchus invaded and conquered Ming's court they deployed Confucian ritual and authentic Confucian music was noted as really being played. Qing conquerors were alien to the Confucian rituals, and vice versa, applying Humboldt imaginative history, it is very possible that Qing conquerors intended to continue Confucian ritual in governance imperial China. Music in Confucianism has passed history not only as an artistic practice but also symbols of dynamic political changes in imperial China. This historico-cultural background is behind the scene of musical practice in Taiwan.

Music performance can be observed at various ritual occasions in Taiwan. Although the ritual ensembles, Beiguan and Nanguan, have been culturally handed down from generation to generation in traditional ways, they are contemporarily active and have been also included in formal education such as in music-majored curriculums at universities. It is possible to say that ritual performance is considered so important because of the philosophical influence from Confucianism. Since Confucianism teaches an individual to live a moral life by practicing constant virtues (五常之禮), namely benevolence (仁), righteousness (義), rites (禮), wisdom (智), and integrity (信). And in Confucian rites, music performance plays important role in maintaining Confucian Anthropocosmic worldview.

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