On Inheriting Kunqu Opera – Digital Teaching and Mass Popularization of Gong-Che Notation

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Abstract. To meet the needs of the inheritance and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage in the Internet era, our project team digitally processed the Kunqu Gongche Notation to build its exclusive memory website, thereby achieving the goal of teaching and popularization.

Keywords: Kunqu Gongche Notation, Teaching, Digitization, Popularization, Intangible Cultural Heritage.

1 Introduction

Kunqu is a traditional art form with a history of more than 600 years, which integrates literariness, drama, and music. Historically, the period from the mid and late Ming Dynasty to the mid-Qing Dynasty (about 1563-1760) was the peak of Kunqu. As an art representing elegance, Kunqu gained popularity all over China, especially the literati class. Its music combines the merits of northern and southern qu, while its dramatic performance inherits the traditions of Southern Opera of Song, Yuan Dynasty and poetic drama of Yuan Dynasty. It is highly symbolic, stylized, and Chinese charming.

After the Qianlong reign of the Qing Dynasty, the local folk opera, known as the "Hua Bu", gradually flourished and replaced the status of Kunqu. On May 18, 2001, Kunqu became one of "oral and intangible cultural heritage of mankind" of UNESCO, which aroused public attention again. The adoption of *Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage on 2003 and the intangible cultural heritage law of the People's Republic of China* on 2011 has promoted greater efforts for the inheritance, popularization and innovation of Kunqu Opera (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2011), (UNESCO, 2003). However, when the initial fanaticism receded, we ought to reflect on reasonable ways of recognizing Kunqu in the contemporary era.

Gongche Notation is a unique standard notation method of traditional Kunqu. It fully embodies the characteristics of "character-based" Kunqu. The authenticity of Kunqu can be fully preserved in inheritance by learning Gongche Notation. By popularizing Gongche Notation, more and more people can realize the true essence of Kunqu, which

is more conducive to the protection and dissemination of this intangible cultural heritage in the contemporary era.

At present, the teaching mode of Gongche Notation is still dominated by traditional oral instruction, and there are few textbooks with sufficient professional degree, which are all in paper version. Facing the shortage of teachers and teaching materials, the teaching of Gongche Notation should become more diversified in the present era of highly developed internet technology. In the process of inheritance, if some new techniques are properly used to maintain the intrinsic vitality of Kunqu, it can be revitalized (Jin, 2016). In this respect, there have been successful cases, such as the popular flower drum lantern, Sizhou opera and Wuhe folk song through the effective use of new media (Zhang D. , 2019). This project aims to realize the interactive teaching of Kunqu Gongche Notation using teaching website.

2   Theoretical Basis

Selective Contact Theory (Guang, 1996), (Klapper, 1960): When the audience is exposed to mass communication activities, they do not treat any media and content indiscriminately but prefer to contact media or content that is consistent or close to their existing positions, opinions, attitudes, and intentionally or unintentionally avoid the media or content that is different from their own. Our project team is using this theory to distinguish potential Kunqu fans.

In addition, the theoretical basis of our project research also includes the Explicitness of Tacit Knowledge Theory and the Cold and Hot Media Theory.

3   Digital Teaching of Gongche Notation

3.1   Collect and Organize Related Material

The digitization of Gongche Notation needs to be supported by various forms of materials, including physical objects, literature, pictures, and videos. Our project team collected relevant documents as the basis for the digitization of Gongche Notation through various channels. The data collection mainly starts from the following three aspects (Zhang L. , 2018):

3.1.1   Professionals and Specialization

First, our project team sought the opinions of professionals in the overall planning of the project and the website construction. Secondly, we made a documentary about the explanation of Gongche Notation and the Pansori through interviews with Kunqu researchers. At the same time, we retained the precious ancient Kunqu books collected by these researchers. The third stage was recording the characters, words, arias, etc. by professionals and we will use them as the resource database for the construction of the teaching website.

3.1.2　Network Resource Query

Our project team collected a large number of existing Kunqu history, Kunqu website, video materials, news reports, etc. on the network. Also, we conducted a large number of relevant journal papers in the network database.

3.1.3　Spot Investigation

In order to investigate the present situation of the inheritance and protection of Beijing Kunqu, and to observe the material of Gongche Notation, our project team learned about the actual usage and distribution of Gongche Notation in modern times by participating in the activities of Beijing opera troupes (such as Beijing Kunqu Study Institute) and visiting related museums.

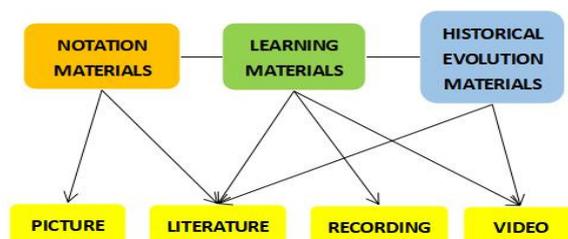Figure 1 shows the situation of data collection.

Fig. 1. Material structure diagram

3.2　Specific Implementation Process

3.2.1　Gongche Note Processing of Kunqu Gongche Notation

Our project team has designed the teaching board of Gongche Notation, through a variety of means to achieve interactive teaching of Kunqu Gongche Notation, so that the audience can learn not only pronunciation but also knowledge of relevant music theory. Two main methods were adopted: 1. The analogy between the Gongche Notation and the Simple Notation. 2. Reveal the inherent law of Gongche Notation as a symbol system.

Firstly, Figure 2 presents the Gongche notes of Gongche Notation corresponded to the signs of the simple Notation, and the horizontal version of the simple Notation converted from the vertical version of Gongche Notation for the public to learn. The disadvantage is that there are many changes in the music of Kunqu Opera, which can't be accurately expressed by pure music.

Table 1 and Figure 2 show the comparisons.

Table 1. Comparisons of Gongche notes of Gongche Notation and Simple Notation

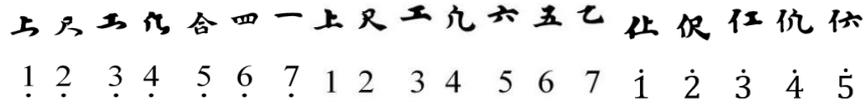| characters	合	四	一	上	尺	工	凡	六	五	乙
notes	Sol	La	Si	do	Re	Mi	fa	sol	la	si
	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Fig. 2. The Gongche notes of Gongche Notation

Secondly, Kunqu Gongche Notation is a highly efficient system of traditional symbols, which mainly reflects that the same symbols can be reused while still maintaining the clarity of meaning. It is based on the strict rules of the use of internal logos in Gongche Notation, which ensures that the same symbols will never appear in the same place when expressing different meanings. Therefore, it is necessary to synthesize the two aspects of shape and position in the judgment of the meaning of the Gongche Notation symbol which is highly systematic and rigorous.
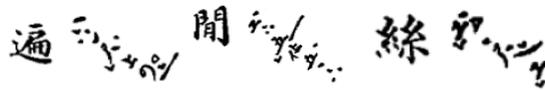
Figure 3 shows the position of the word.

Fig. 3. Word in Gongche Notation

3.2.2   The Teaching Method of Kunqu Gongche Notation

Inspired by the Chinese English Language Learning Model, our project team designed a unique Kunqu Gongche Notation learning module. Learning Kunqu Opera is a process of continuous listening, imitation, and practice. Our project team analyses and extracts the key points and processes them, forming a learning mode of Kunqu Gongche Notation, which integrates watching, listening, learning, and practicing.

With the help of digital scanning technology, our project team makes electronic processing of Kunqu Gongche Notation and designed a specific web page Gongche Notation for learning. The most prominent feature of this web page is that we add tags and recordings to every note, every Chinese character, and even every small paragraph of Kunqu Opera to achieve the effect of pronunciation by clicking.

If the users want to learn, they only need to click on a note to know the pronunciation of the sign. After listening to the pronunciation, they can follow it. They can correct

their pronunciation by playback recording so that they can learn the correct pronunciation of the note by repeated practice.

If they want to learn the pronunciation of a specific symbol, they can click on the character, and then the complete singing and diction of the sign will be played out, Users can perceive the unique charm of Kunqu opera singing, but also can learn the perfect song of a symbol. Similarly, the audience can learn how to sing a piece of Kunqu opera.

This module also facilitates the learning of Kunqu music theory. The web page adds related knowledge, which can help the audiences to learn and understand Kunqu better. At the same time, to encourage the viewers to learn, we have also added scoring functions, so that the users can follow their progress in real time.

3.3 Digital Achievements – Memory Websites

This website is divided into six parts: homepage, Kunqu Gongche Notation teaching, related videos, literature display, exciting games, and volunteer space. They present Kunqu Gongche Notation in different categories. Among them, the volunteer section provides an opportunity for those who are keen on inheriting Kunqu Opera to participate in the inheritance of Kunqu Gongche and maximize the abundant website resources. Besides, the website also includes modules about introducing us, joining us, contacting us, and so on. Figure 4 shows the architecture map of our project website.
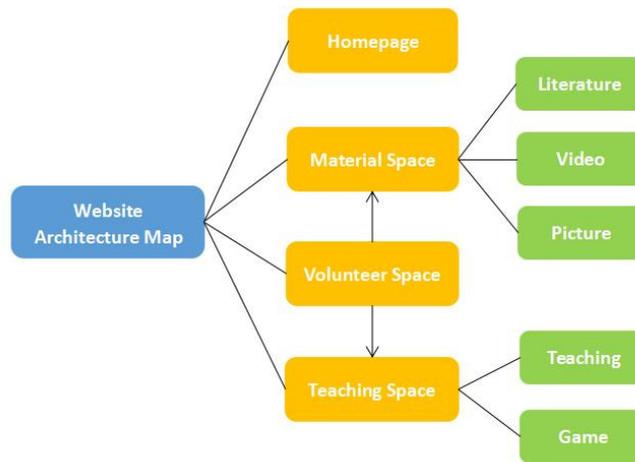

Fig. 4. Website Architecture Map

3.4 Popularization of Digital Achievements

A small exquisite HTML5 Mobile Application and a WeChat Subscription were built with a purpose to disseminate the basic knowledge of Kunqu Gongche Notation widely. They play an essential role in popularizing experience for the general audience, and play a guidance role for people with keen interest and willingness to learn, and guide them to enter the website for more in-depth learning.

The memory website is the main body of the promotion and popularization of Kunqu Gongche Notation. It disseminates the Kunqu Gongche Notation from visual and audio-visual in an all-around way, supplemented by singing along with simple Kunqu Gongche Notation, to achieve the effect of presenting the whole picture of Kunqu Gongche Notation (Sun & Peng, 2016). The website is both academic and popular. It can not only popularize Kunqu opera singing and aesthetic rules from a professional point of view, record the image data of Kunqu Gongche Notation permanently by means of media, and achieve the purpose of non-legacy protection, but also publicize the core knowledge and unique charm of Kunqu Gongche Notation through games to expand its dissemination effect.

At the same time, there are unique interview documentaries of Kunqu opera scholars on the website, which gradually reveal the history, origin, development, and evolution of Kunqu opera through the form of question and answer. It records the historical growth and Notation principles of Kunqu Kunqu Gongche Notation and also retains some Kunqu opera Masters' videos of singing Kunqu opera. It tries to popularize an omni-directional, multi-angle, and three-dimensional image of Kunqu Kunqu Gongche Notation to the audience. The video form is the most easily accepted mode of communication, with excellent communication effects.

4 Conclusions

According to the Chinese English language learning model and the setting of the module of the English learning APP, our project team digitized the Kunqu Gongche Notation, which integrates the listening, speaking and practice into one site, and transforms the Kunqu Gongche Notation learning into a familiar language learning form for Chinese people. Besides, it combines the teaching of Gongche Notation with fun games attracting more audience to participate in, and realizes the memory retention and mass popularization of Gongche Notation in the network era.

However, there are still some problems in the current digital teaching of our project: First, the vocal of each Kunqu singer have their characteristics, and cannot represent the standard of Kunqu vocal. We can solve this problem by collecting different versions of several Kunqu singers. Second, due to the limited resources of our project team, the collected recording materials include only a few of the notation words, arias, etc., and could not cover the entire Kunqu notation. We can solve this problem to some extent by relying on the volunteer space of our website.
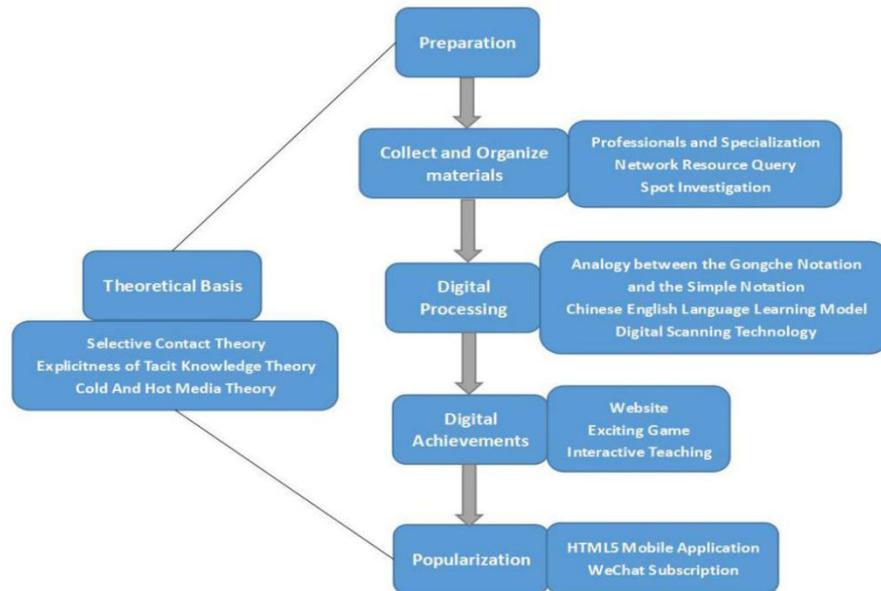
Fig. 5. Project Research Flow Chart

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