

Protection and Transmission of Chinese *Nanyin*

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Intangible cultural heritage is the memory of human historical culture, the root of human culture, the ‘energetic origin’ of the spirit of human culture and the footstone for the construction of modern human civilization.

Ever since China joined the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2004, it has done a lot not only on cognition but also on action to contribute to the protection and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Please allow me to expatiate these on the case of Chinese *nanyin*(南音, *southern music*).

I. The precious multi-values of *nanyin* decide the necessity of protection and transmission for Chinese *nanyin*.

Nanyin, also known as “*nanqu*” (南曲), “*nanyue*” (南乐), “*nanguan*” (南管), “*xianguan*” (弦管), is one of the oldest music genres with strong local characteristics. As major musical genre, it prevails in the south of Fujian – both in the cities and countryside of Quanzhou, Xiamen, Zhangzhou – and is also quite popular in Taiwan, Hongkong, Macao and the countries of Southeast Asia inhabited by Chinese immigrants from South Fujian. The music of *nanyin* is also found in various Fujian local operas such as *Liyuan* Opera (梨园戏), *Gaojia* Opera (高甲戏), line-leading puppet show (提线木偶戏), *Dacheng* Opera (打城戏) and the like, forming an essential part of their vocal melodies and instrumental music.

As the intangible cultural heritage, *nanyin* has such values as follows.

I.I. Academic value and historical value

Nanyin enjoys a reputation as “a living fossil of the ancient music”, as we can trace its relevance to and inheritance of Chinese ancient music in terms of their musical phenomena and features of musical form.

1. The original name of *nanyin* should be “*xianguan*” which comes from the Wei (220-265) and Jin Dynasties (265-420).

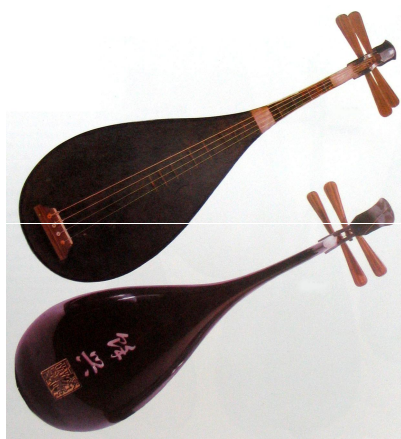
Before 1950s, *nanyin* was still called as “*xianguan*”. Up till present, in the folk of Quanzhou, there still goes a parlance of “listening frequently to the *xianguan*, even a sow could follow the beats.” Among the three literatures of Quanzhou *xianguan* published in Ming dynasty found by Prof. Piet van der Loon forty years ago, there is one literature under the title of *New Collection for the Summary of Fashionable Xianguan*. The term *xianguan* appears in many historical materials, for instance, there was music named after *xianguan* during the Wei and Jin Dynasties. Also, in the T’ang dynasty (618-907), there was a parlance of “the

words written in the morning will be played by *xianguan* in the evening”. In Quanzhou of late T’ang dynasty, there was a record of “*xianguan* and cymbals were played in amusement place”. In the *Hua Jian Ji* (Collection of the *Hua Jian* style of Poetry) of Later Shu Dynasty (934-965) during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, there were descriptions of many “*xianguan*” musical activities. In Chengdu city, there was a record of “the streets filled with songs sung & accompanied by *xianguan*”. However, circumstances change with the passage of time, the name “*xianguan*” is at present only inherited and kept in *nanyin* in Quanzhou. It is obvious that it has a long origin.

2. Some musical instruments in *nanyin* keep the designs of the ancient ones.

(1) *Pipa*

Pipa is one of the main musical instruments in Chinese music. Nowadays, the nationwide used one is the straight neck *pipa*, called “*bei pa*”(northern *pipa*). While the one used in *nanyin* is the crooked-necked and horizontally held one, called “*nan pa*” (southern *pipa*). We can find the historical relic of its design from the unearthed cultural relics. For example, the *pipa* in the picture of playing music found in No. 3 tomb of Wei and Jin Dynasties in Jiayu Guan (Jiayu Pass), Gansu province; the crooked-necked and horizontally held *pipa* with pear-shaped sound box in the fresco of Bei Wei Dynasty (386-534) found in No. 288 grotto in Mokao Grottoes in Dunhuang; the crooked-necked *pipa* found in the stone coffin tomb of Li Shou of T’ang Dynasty in Sanyuan county, Shaanxi Province; the *pipa* mounted with shells of shell-fish found in Zhengcang temple, Japan and the *pipa* in *Han Xizai Ye Yan Tu* (The Picture of Han Xizai at the Banquet) drew by Gu Hongzhong of Southern Tang Dynasty (923-936) during the Five Dynasties, etc. The leading position and the role of main instruments of *nanyin pipa* in orchestra are related with the *pipa* in *jiubu yue* (Nine Kinds of Music) in the Sui Dynasty(581-618) and *shibu yue*(Ten Kinds of Music) in the T’ang Dynasty.



pipa played in *nanyin*



performing picture of *nanyin pipa*



pipa (northern *pipa*)



performing picture of *pipa*(northern *pipa*)



pipa of Wei and Jin Dynasties found in Jiayu Guan (Jiayu Pass), Gansu province



pipa of Bei Wei Dynasty found in No. 288 grotto in Mokao Grottoes in Dunhuang



crooked-necked *pipa* found in the stone coffin tomb of Li Shou of T'ang Dynasty



pipa mounted with shells of shell-fish found in Zhengcang temple, Japan



performing picture of *pipa* in Han Xizai at the Banquet of Five Dynasties

(2) *Dongxiao*

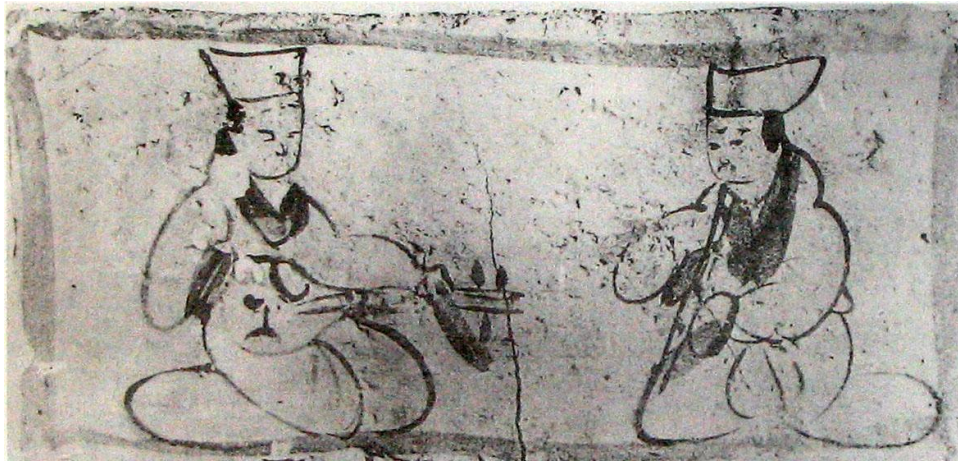
The *dongxiao* used in *nanyin* is an end-blown bamboo flute. We can only find the similar design from the unearthed cultural relics of Han and T'ang Dynasties. For example, the wind instrument in the picture of playing music engraved on bricks found in tomb of Wei and Jin Dynasties in Jiayu Guan (Jiayu Pass), Gansu province; the wind instrument in the picture of music and dance protracted in the 16th year (642 A.D) of Zhen Guan period, T'ang Dynasty found in No. 220 grotto in Mokao Grottoes in Dunhuang, etc. The design and the keynote of *nanyin dongxiao* are in some way related with those in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).



dongxiao played in nanyin



performing picture on *nanyin dongxiao*



wind instrument in the picture of playing music engraved on bricks found in tomb of Wei and Jin Dynasties in Jiayu Guan (Jiayu Pass), Gansu province



wind instrument in the picture of music and dance protracted in the 16th year (642 A.D) of Zhen Guan period, T'ang Dynasty found in No. 220 grotto in Mokao Grottoes in Dunhuang

(3) *Erxian*

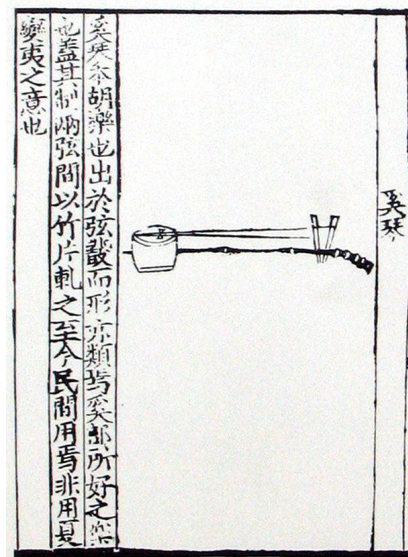
Erxian is a bowstringed instrument used in *nanyin*. This design is similar to that of *xiqin* (奚琴) described in *Book of Music* by Cheng Yang (Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127) , *Erxian* in *nanyin* differs from *xiqin* in that it's played with a “horsetail bow” rather than with “a thin bamboo piece”.



erxian played in *nanyin*



performing picture of *nanyin* *erxian*

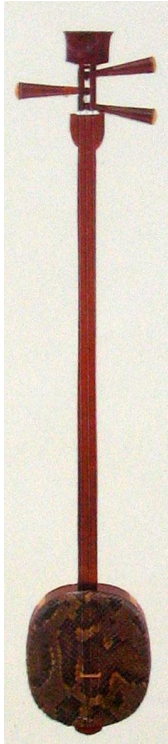


picture of *xiqin* (奚琴) described in *Book of Music* by Cheng Yang

(4) *Sanxian*

The *sanxian* used in *nanyin* is of a small kind. A comparison with Japanese Okinawa *sanshin*(三线) shows that *nanyin sanxian* and Okinawa *sanshin* have a lot in common in various aspects such as tuning method, musical notation, playing mode, singing-notation

relationship etc. Okinawa *sanshin* was introduced from Fujian in about the 16th century. With the introduction of Fujian *sanxian*, Okinawa music was greatly influenced by Chinese musical culture. All the above seems to inversely derive the conclusion that the above-mentioned features are some of the features existing in the Ming Dynasty music that have passed into *nanyin* and still exist in it today.



sanxian played in *nanyin*



sanshin in Okinawa



performing picture of Okinawa *sanshin*

(5) Clappers

The clappers in *nanyin* are made of five pieces of *litchi wood*. When playing, one holds three pieces in his left hand, 2 pieces in his right hand, sitting solemnly and clapping them with two hands. They keep the design from the ancient ones. For example, the clappers in the picture of music and dance protracted in the 16th year (642 A.D) of Zhen Guan period, T'ang Dynasty found in No. 220 grotto in Mokao Grottoes in Dunhuang; the clappers in the fresco of music and dance found in the tomb of Su Sixu in the T'ang Dynasty; the lapidarian clappers in the stone coffin bed in the tomb of Wang Jian of the Five Dynasties found in Cheng Du; the clappers in the picture of Han Xizai at the Banquet of the Five Dynasties and the clappers engraved on bricks in the tomb of Duan clan in Jin Dynasty found in Ma village, Jishan county, Shanxi province, etc..



clappers played in nanyin



clappers in the picture protracted in the 16th year (642 A.D) of Zhen Guan period, T'ang Dynasty found in No. 220 grotto in Mokao Grottoes in Dunhuang(upper left)



picture of clappers in the tomb of Su Sixu of the T'ang Dynasty



picture of clappers in the tomb of Wang Jian in the Five Dynasties found in Cheng Du



picture of clappers in the tomb of Wang Jian in the Five Dynasties found in Cheng Du



performing picture of clappers in Han Xizai at the Banquet



clappers engraved on bricks in the tomb of Duan clan in the Jin Dynasty found in Ma village, Jishan county, Shanxi province

3. The mode of playing in *nanyin* is related with *Xianghege* (相和歌, literally “*Song of Harmony*”, artificial songs, song & dance and *daqu* arranged from folk songs) in the Wei (220-265) and Jin Dynasties (265-420).

The main performing mode in *nanyin* is “*shangsiguan* (上四管)”, also named “*Dongguan* (洞管)”. The band is a set of five instruments: the singer with clappers and the other four accompanying the singer with *pipa*, *sanxian*, *erxian* and *dongxiao*. This kind of playing is related with the *Xianghege* (相和歌, *Song of Harmony*) in the Wei, Jin, South and North Dynasties. It was recorded in *The History of Music of the Jin Classics* (晋书·乐志) that “*Xianghege* was an old song in the Han Dynasty in which *sizhu* (丝竹, stringed and bamboo-winded instruments) were played in a greater harmony. And the singer was beating time.” In *nanyin*, *pipa*, *sanxian* and *erxian* belong to the category of *si* (丝, *stringed instrument*) while *dongxiao* the category of *zhu* (竹, *bamboo-winded instrument*); the singer

taps the clappers while singing, which is just as the one beating time in *Xianghege*.



performing mode of *nanyin* (*shangsiguan*)



performing mode of *nanyin* (*xiasiguan*)

4. The musical notation for *nanyin* is the inheritance of Chinese ancient musical notation.

The musical notation for *nanyin* is based on *pipa* tablature combined with the fixed names for musical notes. The most common characters used in *nanyin*'s notation are *che* (乂), *gong* (工), *liu* (六), *si* (四), *yi* (乙), their pitches being c^1, d^1, e^1, g^1, a^1 respectively, which correspond to *gong*(宫), *shang*(商), *jiao*(角), *zhi*(徵), *yu*(羽) in C *gong* (宫) mode system. The signs of *pipa* tablature and time-beating (it is called *liaopai* 撩拍 in *nanyin*) are attached to the right of the characters and are called *nanyin gongchepu* (工乂谱, traditional Chinese musical notation) or *pipa zhigupu* (琵琶指骨谱) in general. Some scholars believe that this kind of *gongchepu* records the tonal relationship of the pre-Qin period, (before 221A.D.; referring to the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period) with its unique

described on the bronze chime Bells' Inscriptions of Marquis Yi of the Zeng State.(433B.C.E., excavated in 1978)

In the melodic development of *nanyin*, there is a kind of composition method that emphasizes on major thirds and stepwise movement between neighboring notes, such as do-mi-re、re-[#]fa-mi、sol-si-la、la-[#]do-si, etc. This melodic features should have some relation with the *Puzheng* System based upon *gong*(宫) ,*shang*(商) ,*zhi*(徵) ,*yu*(羽) scale described on the Inscriptions of the bronze chime bells of Marquis Yi of the Zeng State. “*Pu* (𪛗)” is interchangeable with *Jiao*, which is a major third upwards, whereas “*zeng*” is a major third downwards. The multi-juxtaposition of major thirds in *nanyin's wukongguan* mode, not only has the same pitches, but each note also carries a similar meaning when understood in the context of the C *gong* (宫) mode system.

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is titled '曾侯乙编钟的“𪛗”类体系' (Pu system of the Marquis Yi of Zeng State's bronze chime bells). It shows a scale with notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Below the notes are labels: 宫—宫𪛗, 商—商𪛗, 角—角𪛗, 羽—羽𪛗. The second staff is titled '南音五空管多重大三度并置' (Nanyin pentatonic scale with multiple major thirds). It shows a scale with notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Below the notes are labels: 宫—宫角 (X), 商—商角 (工), 徵—徵角 (电), 羽—羽角 (乙).

relation between the *Pu* System in the Bell and Chime Inscriptions by Marquis Yi of the Zeng State and the multi-juxtaposition of major thirds in *nanyin's wukongguan*

6. The various song categories and abundant songs of *nanyin* are the result of accumulation throughout its long river of history.

Nanyin consists of three components, namely, *zhi* (指), *pu* (谱), and *qu* (曲).

Pu means suites of instrumental music that carry no texts. Each set contains 3 to 10 music pieces. The best known of which include: *Si Shi Jing* (四时景, *Four Seasons*), *Mei Hua Cao* (梅花操, *Plums*), *Zou Ma* (走马, also named as *Ba Jun Ma*, 八骏马, *Eight Galloping Horses*), *Bai Niao Gui Chao* (百鸟归巢, *Birds Returning to Their Nest*). They compose what is called “*Si*(四), *Mei*(梅), *Zou*(走), *Gui*(归)” for short. *Qu* refers to *sanqu* (散曲), also called *caoqu* (草曲), which numbers more than a thousand pieces. They are all brief and simple so that they are easy to understand and to learn. *Zhi* means “*zhitao*”(指套, *suites of fingering*), which is a kind of suites with lyrics, notation and *pipa's* fingering. *Zhi* is characterized by stringing of several pieces of the same mode, usually containing two to six sections. It is rarely sung and usually played with instruments despite its texts. These music keep folk songs, local opera

music (*Qing Yang Qiang* opera, 青阳腔 ; *Yi Yang Qiang* opera , 弋阳腔), instrumental music and sacred music that came down to Quanzhou in different generations. They absorbed ingredients from other music of China and foreign countries and syncretized them.

In short, *nanyin*, as one of the oldest music genres that has survived till now, does provide live specimen for the study of Chinese ancient music. The further study of *nanyin* will help to reasonably explain many academic questions of music history and music form in Chinese ancient music.

I.II. Aesthetic value

The unique aesthetic value enables *nanyin* to spread wide for thousands of years with strong vitality. Simple but elegant music style, beautiful and fluent melodies, slow rhythm, will let you have a harmonious and quiet emotion. Whenever reveling in the atmosphere of the songs, you might forget the trouble and trivia in the noisy world to enjoy the pleasure and relaxation physically and mentally as much as you like. Nowadays, people are easy to get impetuous and impatient because the world is changing rapidly and the pace of life goes fast. While this elegant ancient music, just like the spring rain, washes dust and dirt in the heart. The spiritual home becomes beautiful again.

I.III. Spiritual bond values

Due to the unique aesthetic value mentioned above, which is rooted in local people's social life and artistic practice and immersed in their souls, *nanyin* performance has become an important part of socio-cultural life and an important form of mass entertainment in the south of Fujian. People's common interest in *nanyin* endows it with the social, symbolical and cultural functions.

Social function means *nanyin* is a common hobby and the spiritual tie between people in *Minnan* (south of Fujian). The symbolical function is that *nanyin* has become the cultural symbol of *Minnan* area including Quanzhou, Xiamen and Zhangzhou, with Quanzhou as its center. Wherever they go, they recognize those who speak *Minnan* dialect and sing *nanyin* as people from hometown. Cultural function refers to that *nanyin* is product of *Minnan* culture and embodies its characteristics. Therefore, *nanyin* has naturally become spiritual bond linking *Minnan*-born overseas Chinese around the world with homeland and their relatives and friends. *Nanyin* has become indispensable to the people's spiritual and cultural life. There are also lots of *nanyin* societies abroad. Wherever there are people from *Minan*, there would have *nanyin* performance, no matter in Southeast Asia or in Europe and the United States. *Nanyin* runs in their families and promotes their friendship in oversea Chinese. They help each other in their causes and achieve development together. *Nanyin* has, indeed, become a spiritual tie connecting the folks from *Minan* area.

Based on the academic value, historical value, aesthetic value and spiritual bond value mentioned above, we realize more profoundly that we must do our best to protect and inherit *nanyin*, the intangible cultural heritage.

II. Economic and social transformation urged to protect and inherit Chinese *nanyin*.

II.I. Changes in production mode and lifestyle alienate *nanyin* from people's life.

Along with the development of socio-economy, the people in both urban and rural areas become active in economic development and market operation. There is little or even no leisure time for them to sing the songs, play instruments and to enjoy *nanyin* performance. They scatter everywhere to earn a living and bid farewell to the pastoral life and *nanyin*.

II.II. Diversification of cultural values caused changes in music aesthetics.

With a variety of media means and the arrival of the information era, the single cultural life of going out to watch an opera and listen to *Qu (Nanqu)* that lasted for hundreds of years is becoming colorful. Movie, television, karaoke, dance halls, bars, teashop and nightclubs almost attract all the youth that have entertainment desires. Besides, the misleading of aesthetics view has left little room for *nanyin* to develop.

II.III. Shortage of inheritors for *nanyin*

The changes of socio-economic life, people's aesthetic view and the shortage of inheritors lead to the urgency to strengthen the protection and inheritance of *nanyin*.

III. The positive interaction of “G, S, S, R” guarantees the continuability of protecting and transmitting *nanyin*.

The general policy that Chinese government and some departments concerned take to protect intangible cultural heritage is: the government takes the lead and the society takes part in; to plan in the long run and undertake step by step; to specify duties and combine all the efforts. Under the guide of this policy, the local government creates its own feature. The experience of Quanzhou is the organic integration of “G, S, S, R”. “G” is Government, the two “S” refer to society and schools (that is the field of education) respectively, and “R” stands for research organizations and researchers.

III.I. The government takes the lead with effective measures

Fujian Municipal Government and Quanzhou Municipal Government have been seeing *nanyin* as precious intangible cultural heritage and spiritual fortune of mankind. Therefore, they take many solid solutions to protect and transmit it.

1. To plan in the long run and undertake step by step

At the beginning of 2004, Quanzhou Municipal Government set up the plan of “protection and promotion of *nanyin* in Quanzhou” and specifically worked out almost all the aspects, from the group that is responsible for the carrying out of the plan to the detailed measures of implementation, personnel and budget, etc.

In addition, Quanzhou Municipal Government again, in the first half year of 2007, listed the protection of *nanyin* as one of the important items of The Plan for Building Protective Area of Cultural Ecology in *Minnan* (South of Fujian). The whole surroundings of building protective area of cultural ecology promotes the effective protection and transmission of *nanyin*.

2. To organize groups and decide on staff concerned

There are more than 10 concerned departments and more than 100 people that spend all their time or most of their time on this job.

3. To formulate the laws and regulations to guarantee the project

In 2004, Quanzhou Municipal Government issued the document of “Decision to Protect and Prosper the Art of *Nanyin* in Quanzhou”. With the guarantee of the policies, the project can be carried out. The administrative department in charge of culture (Quanzhou Cultural Bureau) has ever released documents for many times that the excellent tradition of *nanyin* should be succeeded and the traditional features should be maintained.

4. To organize performances for exchanging skills

Since the reform and opening, Quanzhou has hosted eight *nanyin* assemblies for participants at home and abroad, inviting *nanyin* enthusiasts from Southeast Asia, Hongkong, Macao, Taiwan and Xiamen, Zhangzhou, Sanming of Fujian Province to perform on the stage in order to exchange skills.

5. To raise fund for material guarantee

In the plan mentioned above, Quanzhou Municipal Government planned to expend 38,210,000 yuan (RMB) during 2004-2013 in the protection and transmission of *nanyin*.

III.II. The whole society takes part to support the project and make it have a profound basis

The citizens in Quanzhou show enthusiasm in appreciating *nanyin* and participating in *nanyin* activities. According to the three general surveys carried out in 1950s, 1980s and Oct, 2002, there are 98 *nanyin* mass organizations with about 800 members that are active in Quanzhou area. Associations of *nanyin* artists are founded one by one in every county (county-level city, district). The members in these mass organizations and associations are taking the responsibility as chief and basic members in *nanyin* activities.

III.III. The schools help to cultivate students who can transmit

The schools in Quanzhou have chiefly three types. The first type is middle schools and primary schools. From the autumn of 1990, these schools began the teaching and studying of *nanyin* in music course. Till now, *nanyin* has been taught in about 100 schools, more than 50000 students have been nurtured under the influence of *nanyin* in some degree, and singing competition of *nanyin* has been continuously carried out for 16 years. All these have established masses foundation for the protection and transmission of *nanyin*. The second type is the *nanyin* class of Fujian Art Institute in Quanzhou. This class has nurtured a group of excellent singers and players of *nanyin* who, as chief members to maintain and transmit *nanyin* skills. The last is Art Institute of Quanzhou Normal University. Since 2003, it has begun to enroll students with associate degree for bachelor's degree in *nanyin* major and mainly cultivates teachers of *nanyin*. It will also extend to set selective course of *nanyin* or appreciation course in other universities in Quanzhou.

III.IV. Academic research and the support of theory

The research groups of *nanyin* in Quanzhou are as follows: Study Society of Quanzhou Local Drama, Quanzhou *Nanyin* Center and China *Nanyin* Society. There are *nanyin* researchers in Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an, Fuzhou, Xiamen and Taipei. From 1980s, with the development of the study of *nanyin*, many collections of music scores, papers and works were published successively. These provide academic and theoretical support for the protection and transmission of *nanyin*.

In short, the positive interaction of “G, S, S, R” is the basic guarantee of promoting continual protection and transmission of China *nanyin*.