ABSTRACT

Fujian Nanyin is an ancient music of the Southern part of Fujian province in China. In Singapore, it has been an important traditional folk music in the society of Hokkiens from Southern Fujian since the late nineteenth Century. However, there is a lack of corresponding studies of it and its amateur music societies. Hence, this thesis aims to explore the historical development, repertoire and the various aspects of Fujian Nanyin in Singapore, from the early twentieth century till now.

Due to the lack of written materials, the study was carried out through a series of interviews with music performers, committee members and honorary chairpersons of the two amateur Fujian Nanyin societies in Singapore. Information regarding Fujian Nanyin was also obtained from books published in China, Taiwan, the Philippines and other countries, and from the publications of the amateur societies and Clan associations. Another source of information was the recordings of interviews conducted by the Oral History Department of the National Archives on Singapore’s Dialect Groups.

Firstly, this thesis begins by looking at Fujian Nanyin from its historical perspectives, discussing the evolution of the folk music and the development of the various amateur Fujian Nanyin organisations. Then, it focuses on the instruments used, performance practices and its repertoire. Finally, it highlights the relationships between the religious aspects of Fujian Nanyin in Singapore.

The study shows that in the early years of this century, Fujian Nanyin in Singapore was a self-entertainment for the Chinese immigrants during their leisure time. However, since the 1945, it has slowly become an international
event, linking Fujian Nanyin Societies in Singapore with those in Southeast Asian countries, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and others. It is also well-known in some foreign countries. Fujian Nanyin has special features in its performance context, showing the significant characteristics of an ancient art. Besides, in Singapore, Fujian Nanyin is closely linked to the religions of its people.