Kwan Kong Temple in Taipei

Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Tsuo-Yen Huang, B.A.

Denton, Texas

May, 1996
KWAN KONG TEMPLE IN TAIPEI

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Tsuo-Yen Huang, B.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1996

The video describes a Chinese temple, Kwan Kong temple. This documentary follows the ceremony of this temple. We will watch the interaction between the worshipers and their God.

The accompanying paper reports on the production background, preproduction process, and includes discussion of the problems encountered from production through postproduction stages.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. PROPOSAL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. PREPRODUCTION, PRODUCTION AND POSTPRODUCTION OF THE VIDEO DOCUMENTARY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOURCES CONSULTED</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

PROPOSAL

The purpose of this creative thesis project is to show aspects of the ceremonial rituals of one Chinese temple. China has a long and rich cultural history. The Republic of China on Taiwan has been blessed with a string of historical coincidences which have made it the sanctuary of Chinese culture. It has collected and preserved examples of mainland China's different regional cultures. In this proposed project, I will produce a super-VHS color video documentary about a Chinese temple in Taipei. The length of the video will be approximately twelve minutes.

The initial goal of the video is to provide visual research material for people who are interested in Chinese temples. Because of the realistic character of the medium, the video can give its audience an immediate and vivid picture of the Chinese Temple. By giving an authentic portrait of the temple, the ultimate goal of this video is to increase audiences' appreciation of its magnificence.

A production report will accompany the video. The written report focuses on the production process and should serve as a useful reference for future students who are interested in using video as a creative medium.
This is a documentary about the Kwan Kong temple in Taipei. This video tries to introduce and show the ceremonies of this temple. The purpose of this observation is not only to preserve but also to further develop different regional cultures. It may help some people to better understand this Chinese culture. Being Chinese, I am very glad to show the spiritual legacy of our ancestors.

Background

It's very important for Chinese to pray in a temple. It's a kind of interaction between people and their gods. The different temples serve the different gods. When people don't know how to deal with their problems, they usually go to the temple to pray. The film will show a typical situation in a temple.

Taiwan’s temples provide some of the best remaining examples of traditional Chinese culture. The temples enshrine a wide variety of gods: Buddhist, Taoist, folk, animist. A single temple might have dozens of them, for the Chinese worship a huge pantheon of deities on the principle that it is better to be safe than sorry. Many of the temples also have fine examples of classical Chinese architecture, stone and wood carving, wall painting and embroidery.

Kwan Kong, God of Righteousness, is one of the most venerated deities in the Chinese pantheon, and his birthday is celebrated with elaborate rites in Taiwan's hundreds of
Kwan Kong temples. According to legend, Kwan Kong was born in A.D. 450. He was righteous and brave and saved his king from his enemies. At age 40, he ascended to heaven and his miracles continued. He earned the title God of Righteousness. This temple is in memory of Kwan Kong.

Treatment

My treatment is based on the ceremony of the Kwan Kong temple conducted during the filming period and my participation during the worship at this temple. Since this documentary focuses on the story of the temple, most of the film will be done while the ceremony was in progress. In order to make the film vivid and interesting, I wish to follow all sequences of the ceremony.

The video opens with a traffic jam in Taipei. It is a busy and uneasy society. Following the opening, we walk and look at some worshipers at the temple. Then we go to the entrance and walk into the Kwan Kong temple. We can see some worshipers holding incense and praying.

There is food on the wood table, including cakes, fruits, noodles, etc. Then the monk reads the rhythm of the verses and the worshipers stand to pray. We will see the image of the Kwan Kong and nuns kneeling to read some verses.

Then some people use two red shells to talk with God about their secrets. We can see the nuns using incense to
bring good luck for the prayers. There are many people gathering in this ceremony. Then we will leave this place and look at the exit. At the end, we go back to the busy street.

The video is shot in an observational style. The footage of the worshipers' activities become the main visual element of the video. We will follow the worshipers' interaction with god and see the situations they encounter.

Narration

In order to better communicate the meaning of the rituals depicted, voice-over narration will be used in this video. However, the original sound will be recorded during the filming period.
CHAPTER II

PREPRODUCTION

The preproduction period of the project covered from September 17 to October 23, 1995. A 36 day period is considered a very limited and compressed preproduction working schedule.

Fortunately, the filmmaker had just finished a video project proposal on a related subject. This saved the filmmaker time in conducting printed material research. The most important preproduction task was obtaining permission to have more complete video coverage of the subject.

Looking for the subject was the most troublesome process in the entire preparation stage. First, the filmmaker contacted Kwan Kong temple for information about its history. It was not difficult to do this. However, one of the monks was not willing to allow the shooting of the scenes at the temple. The filmmaker tried his best to persuade the monks.

Finally, the filmmaker got permission. They allowed us to shoot. In order to observe, the filmmaker stayed in Kwan Kong temple for three days to observe. The worshipers come from different places in Taiwan to pray with their families. Generally speaking, the success of this
part of the preproduction work rested on good preparation. This preproduction phase provided the opportunity to research the subject.

Production Schedule

I. Research/ Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-25 Aug.'95</td>
<td>research</td>
<td>Public Library in Taipei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-31 Aug.'95</td>
<td>research</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sep.'95</td>
<td>pre-interview</td>
<td>Kwan kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sep.'95</td>
<td>Pre-interview</td>
<td>Kwan kong temple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Preproduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-24 Sep.'95</td>
<td>Scout Location</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-14 Oct.'95</td>
<td>Scout Location</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-30 Oct.'95</td>
<td>Shoot tests</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Nov.'95</td>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-16 Nov.'95</td>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23 Nov.'95</td>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>Kwan Kong temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Nov.'95</td>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>Street in Taipei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Postproduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 Jan.'96</td>
<td>Log footage</td>
<td>UNT Denton, TX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-27 Jan.'96</td>
<td>Paper editing</td>
<td>UNT Denton, TX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 Feb.'96</td>
<td>Edit first cut</td>
<td>UNT Denton, TX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14 Feb.'96</td>
<td>Revise</td>
<td>UNT Denton, TX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-29 Feb.'96</td>
<td>Final post</td>
<td>UNT Denton, TX.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Production

The production stage of the project took place in Taipei. Most work in the production phase involved video taping activities of the principal subject. Almost all production took place between October 25 and November 30, 1995. During the production period, I spent most of the time observing the sequence of temple festivals. There are two big ceremonies every month, based on the Chinese lunar calendar. I joined and followed the worshipers from the entrance to the altar. Owing to observational documentary techniques, I tried to only observe the sequence of the festival.

My subject is not people but the ritual events associated with the temple, so I followed different peoples' movement. For this reason, sometimes I had difficulty focusing on the rituals. For example, the worshipers get incense, walk beside the incense burner and talk to Kwan Kong. It means the worshipers want the God of Righteousness.
to bless them and make their wishes come true. However, there were so many people moving, I had difficulty following the entire process of the worshiper ritual.

After I recorded one ceremony, it seemed to lack something. What did I really want to show the audience? Taiwan is a busy and hectic society, and I wanted the audience to get some hints of this from this film. I shot footage of a traffic jam at an intersection in Taipei. I followed the worshipers on the sidewalk as they bargain for food. Then they walk to Kwan Kong temple. At this time, I recorded some spontaneous scenes. I moved the camcorder to find some interesting scenes and I didn't interfere with the worshipers.

For the most part, lighting was not a problem during the shooting. All the events happened in the daytime, so the shooting conditions were good. The Sharp VL-400u camcorder contains an automatic white balance, so it can deal with different color temperatures. I used only natural lighting to shoot this video.

I tried to shoot some temple carvings, such as wooden idols, stone lions, pillars. These kinds of decorative carvings are distinctive, but after I reviewed the footage, there were some problems with contrast. I also had other contrast problems, such as shadows under the temple building and bright sunlight in the same shot, so I didn't use this footage.
Postproduction

There was a total of six hours of footage accumulated from the principle shooting phase. It took another ten hours to finish logging the footage.

For the editing plan, I selected significant footage with good sound and video quality. I made a list in order to combine the shots together. However, some of the footage with poor sound or video quality was discarded. I rearranged all of the footage again.

The first rough edit took seven hours and was twenty minutes in length. A rough edit viewing took place in late January, 1996. I was able to draw a tighter focus on the intended theme. This version was completed in early February and was sixteen minutes in length.

It was decided that it might be easier for the audiences to understand the temple activities with the addition of voice-over narration. I recorded my own voice in the audio room. When I put the voice-over into the rough cut, the events recorded were much easier to understand.

Budget

The total budget of the project was $600.00. Most of the production cost came from purchasing S-VHS videotapes. The filmmaker accumulated approximately six hours of master footage from shooting. Another five tapes were used for editing purposes. In sum, a total of twenty S-VHS videotapes
were used for the project, at cost of $300.00. Another $300.00 was spent for other miscellaneous production expenses, including transportation, batteries, tripod, rewinder, and Hi-8 videotapes.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

There were several things learned during the production process. First, I learned the importance of preproduction. If I focused on more research of the Kwan Kong temple and asked the monks and worshipers some questions about the subject, I could have gathered more information during preproduction, so that I could resolve some problems in advance.

Second, I was able to improve my skill in documentary production. During the production phase, I used the observational style to record the sequence of the ceremony in Kwan Kong temple. However, some footage couldn't be used, because I moved my camcorder too fast and didn't focus sufficiently on some subjects. Although this video was not perfect, I did my best to improve the problems during the shooting phase.

Third, I learned the importance of choosing footage. It was very important to select the segments and to organize them. The logging of footage should be clear and logical.

This was an unforgettable experience. I have learned important video production concepts and techniques from preproduction to postproduction. As a Chinese, I have the
obligation to present this part of Chinese culture to viewers. I hope that the video can help audiences to understand the ceremony of the Kwan Kong temple.
Taipei is a busy, crowded city. There is an urban temple, called Kwan Kong, in Taipei city.

Before the worshipers go to the temple, they buy some fruits or cakes from the vendors. Sometimes they buy incense. These things represent the worshipers' sincerity.

China has a long, rich cultural history. Taiwan has been blessed with a string of historical coincidences which have made it on a sanctuary of Chinese culture. It's very important for Chinese to pray in their temple. It's a kind of interaction between people and god. Taiwan's temples provide some of the best remaining examples of traditional Chinese culture. The temples enshrine a variety of gods: Buddhist, Taoist, folk and animals. A single temple might have dozens of them, for the Chinese worship a huge pantheon of deities on the principle that it is better to be safe than sorry.

The nuns read the Taoist verses every day. They usually kneel down and concentrate on the verses.

There are different kinds of foods on the table, such as cakes, fruits, and noodles. They must be fresh and clean.
from their hearts. The worshipers can stand beside the table.

In the Kwan Kong temple, some nuns give incense to the worshipers. After the worshipers get incense, they can hold some incense and stand beside the burner and do the worship.

Kwan Kong, God of Righteousness, is one of the most venerated deities in Chinese pantheon. His birthday is celebrated with elaborate rites in Taiwan's hundreds of Kwan Kong temple. According to the legend, Kwan Kong was born in AD 450. He was righteous and brave and saved his king from his enemies. At age 40, he ascended to heaven and his miracles continued. He earned the title "God of Righteousness". This temple is in memory of Kwan Kong.

Some nuns read the verses in front of Kwan Kong's image. It is a kind of service to Kwan Kong.

The monk reads the rhythm of the verses. The worshipers can follow the rhythm and do the worship. Sometimes the worshipers nod their heads with the rhythm.

Some people use two red shells to talk about their problems with Kwan Kong. If Kwan Kong answers their problems, the two red shells will fall on
the floor. On is face up and the other is face down. If the two red shells are in the same direction, the worshipers will do it again until they get the desired result.

7"24

Some pious believers kneel down on the chair and hold their hands to do the worship.

7"50

The nuns use incense to wave the worshipers back and forth. It means that the nuns will help the people purge bad luck from people's bodies. Then they may feel better in everyday lives, because Kwan Kong can protect them against evils. The worshipers usually stand in line and the nuns do this traditional rite during the worship.

9"00

There is an old woman kneel down outside the temple. She does her own worship for her family.

9"26

The worship usually lasts two hours. The pilgrims can leave the temple after the rite. They may bring their foods back home.

9"53

Sometimes at the entrance of the Kwan Kong temple, there are monks standing there with a bowl in their hand. It means that you can donate money for other good things. It's voluntary. If you want, you can donate.

10"23

Kwan Kong is one of the Toaists. There are hundreds of
Kwan Kong temples throughout Taiwan. They do the similar worship like this Kwan Kong temple.
REFERENCES CONSULTED


