

Transnational Chinese Music in the Philippines: Chinese Traditional Music in Binondo Manila

Xinyu Bai

Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shanghai, 200031, China

Abstract: Transnational music refers to cross-border relationships and migration of music beyond state boundaries. The transmission of Chinese music in a transnational context has been of recent interest in the field of music research. However, there has been very little research studies done on Chinese music in the Philippines despite the long history of economic and cultural exchanges between the two nations. Binondo is an economic area in Manila, Philippines that is inhabited mostly by Chinese people. It provides a most auspicious locale in the study of musical transnationalism because of the long history of Chinese presence and is considered as the oldest China town in the world. This paper analyses the sources and types of the music and presents the basic appearance and inheritance authenticity of traditional music in the Binondo. With the transmission of Chinese traditional music overseas, its study and investigation is of great significance to the study of the evolution and development of Chinese music in Manila. At the same time, as an important part of Manila's Chinese community music, the study of Chinese traditional music is helpful for people's understanding of Chinese music culture in Binondo.

Keywords: Binondo, Chinese traditional music, Transmission and diffusion

Chinese culture is extensive and profound. In its long history, with the migration of people, the spread of Chinese culture has never stopped. From the ancient times to the royal visit and worship, down to the people's exchange and trade, to today's economic globalization and cultural diversity, the excellent traditional Chinese culture has a profound impact on the culture of other countries. The research on the spread of Chinese traditional music culture to overseas countries is also very rich, according to Zheng Su's book "Claiming Diaspora – Music, transnationalism and Cultural Politics in Asian/Chinese America"; [1] In Wu Wei's article "A Comparative Study On the Cross-cultural Transmission of Indonesian Gamelan and Chinese Traditional Music in Canada", he studied the spread of Chinese traditional music in Canada in the capacity of Canadian Chinese immigrants at the same time by comparing the history and current situation of Indonesian Gamelan music in Canada.[2]

1. Fujian immigrant in Binondo

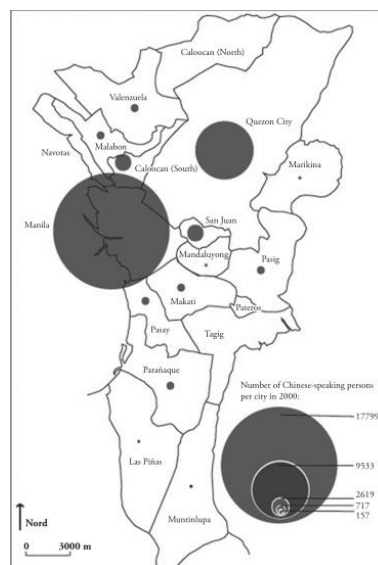


Figure 1: Number of Chinese-speaking Persons per City in 2000

Fujian, with its special geographical location and relying on the sea, is an important meeting place for both the export of traditional music and the import of western music. The people who came from Fujian have emigrated overseas for nearly a thousand years. After 1840, the number of people going abroad in Fujian increased rapidly, forming a migration climax. 95% of them were concentrated in Southeast Asia. Music went with the people, and the migration of personnel also led to the spread of music. [3] The music transmission in Fujian has become an important historical fact. With the immigration, Fujian music spread overseas, especially in Southeast Asia, and had a profound impact on the music culture of the host country.

The region with the greatest and deepest influence on the Philippines by Fujian immigrant culture is the Binondo area. Binondo is a Chinese enclave located in the heart of Manila and is referred to as the Chinatown in the Philippines. The name comes from the Tagalog "binondoc," which means mountainous landform because of the original mountainous terrain. It is an island bound by estuaries and a mix of fresh water from Pasig River and salt water from Manila Bay. Founded by Spanish colonists in 1594, the area was originally built for Chinese in Manila for the purpose of conversion to Catholicism. It is the oldest Chinese town in the world. The area is located by the Pasig River across Intramuros, the old citadel of the Spanish colony. More than 90% of the Chinese who came to Manila was from Fujian province and some came from Guangdong and other coastal provinces. They settled in Binondo to do business. As a result, the region is mostly inhabited by the Chinese and Filipino Chinese, who speak Tagalog, English, Hokkien (South Fujian Dialect) and some Mandarin [4]. During the early Spanish period, the Chinese did not live in this area, but in a smaller area outside of Intramuros. The area called Parian was designated as the residence of Chinese. In order to better control them, likewise, convert them to Catholicism. Binondo became an important area of business and commerce in the nineteenth century. It was populated by the Chinese and controlled the area economically. Chinese migration was a major factor in the area.

The traditional Chinese culture brought by early Chinese immigrants took root here. At the same time, Binondo has also become a soil for the survival of "enclave immigrant culture". The elderly people have more nostalgia for their hometown and keep the original tradition. The researcher has visited Binondo many times and found that many traditional Chinese cultures still exist up to now. Seen in the Chinese characters of the shop sect, the Minnan language that everyone uses for communication, and the decoration atmosphere of traditional festivals, people will have an illusion of being in China, this greatly satisfies the "mother culture" demand of overseas Chinese living in foreign countries. As the carrier of culture, more than 80% of the Chinese living in the Philippines comes from Minnan area (southern Fujian) [5], and the people living in Binondo area occupy the higher proportion. The survival of the Chinese community in the Binondo was not smooth sailing. Under the dual pressure of economy and culture, Filipino Chinese began to grasp Chinese traditional culture and realize the importance of unity and political status. Only by maintaining a Chinese society can they survive in peace and stability. Whether in terms of political policy boycott, economic blockade, or Chinese education, the Chinese in the Binondo made their own efforts to protect Chinese culture and maintain national identity.

2. History of Chinese traditional music in Binondo

Music as an important part of culture, in the long river of history, with the political instability and the multiple impact of culture, is also difficult to preserve. Although the Philippines is not the Southeast Asian country with the largest number of Chinese, it is also rich in Chinese traditional music resources. As the Chinese enclave and Chinatown of the Philippines, Binondo is also the most representative of its traditional music resources in the Philippines.

As early as the middle of the 19th century, China's music culture, especially the various traditional music arts in Fujian and Guangdong, had been brought into the four countries of the South Asia by a large number of Chinese immigrants, including the Philippines. These music arts became an important part of the spiritual life of the South Asian Chinese. In Wang Jingyi's article "The spread of Chinese music in the four Southeast Asian countries before the middle of the 19th century", he talks about the Igorot people in the Philippines. The music of the Igorot people has no music score and no notes. Their songs are like the folk songs and ballads in South China. In particular, young men and women of the Igorot descent also like to use antithetical songs when expressing their love for each other. This custom is also very popular in southern China. [6] John Taylor also pointed out that the singing tone of the Gaddang people in the Philippines is very similar to that of Chinese songs. [7]

In the spread of music culture, Chinese traditional musical instruments also play a very important part. Chinese immigrants to Binondo still maintain a series of traditions in China. Music accompanies

traditional festivals, religious ancestor worship or weddings and funerals. As a result, musical instruments related to Chinese music were introduced into Binondo, such as Nanyin pipa, Chiba, Erhu, Sanxian, clapper, etc. used in Nanyin art, wooden fish, gongs, drums, bells, Qing used in ritual music, cymbals used in weddings and funerals, Suona, Zhongruan, and Flutes used in operas such as Liyuan opera and Chaoju opera. The gongs culture of the Igorot mentioned by Mr. Liu Tianzhi in his book "the Igorot of the Philippines" is also very similar to that of China. [8] This proves that traditional musical instruments spread to the Philippines as early as the 19th century with the spread of music art.

3. The sources of Chinese traditional music in Binondo

There are three main sources of Chinese traditional music in Binondo. The first and most important is the Chinese mainland. It is also the largest component of Chinese music in Philippines. From the beginning, Chinese came to the Philippines as laborers and handicraftsmen. They brought their hometown music. After their hard work, they used local accent to express their yearning for their hometown and their relatives. However, due to their low cultural and economic level, the early Chinese traditional music only existed as a personal preference, mainly composed of simple folk music. With the increase of Chinese immigrants, most of them began to do business in the Philippines. With this, Chinese traditional music cultural activities also increased, and the scale gradually increased. Due to the improvement of Chinese economic status and culture in the later period, Chinese traditional music also developed. Both the traditional music education in schools and the organization of music activities in the community became an important tool for Chinese to connect their feelings and express their thoughts. It has become an indispensable part of the spiritual life of Chinese people. Whether the Chinese music brought by immigrants from the early stage or the exchange and performance of traditional music entertainers and theatrical troupes, the official music exchange between countries, or the invitation learning of the folk associations, they have inherited the characteristics of traditional Chinese music in the Chinese mainland and become the most important source of music in China's music in the Philippines.

The second largest source comes from Taiwan. Taiwan Province is one of the Chinese provinces closest to the Philippines in geographical location. The traditional Chinese music introduced to Binondo from Taiwan is mainly Minnan music, primarily the Gezai Opera. The Gezai Opera originated from Taiwan and introduced from Xiamen to mainland China. According to the article "Old Artists in the Dangerous Building" written by Shi Shuqing, a well-known contemporary female writer in Taiwan, visiting Wang Dingsan, an old artist of Desheng society in Taiwan's Gezi Opera Troupe, it can be found that at around 1930, about 560 people (including seven or eight female members) from Taiwan's "Desheng society" traveled across the sea to perform in the Philippines, Singapore and other places, and the touching "Qizi Tunes" attracted the local overseas Chinese. It is said that "the overseas Chinese were crazy about them. They kill chickens and sheep, and those who have big fish and meat invite them, which makes the artists who have always been used to poor food in the Opera Troupe enjoy a great deal of food." [9] From 1945 to 1970, this stage is called the golden stage of Gezai Opera. At this time, the main force of the Philippine Chinese opera commercial performance market was the Gezi Opera Troupe from Taiwan (including the Gezi Opera Troupe in the joint group).

There is also some traditional Chinese music from Hong Kong or other Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore that are closer to the Philippines and have closer geographical relations and exchanges. For example, the Baoquan Temple of Taoism also has a spirit division in Hong Kong. There are often cultural exchanges between the two. At the same time, the Nanyin society in the Philippines organized staff to go out to study and develop a friendly relationship with Xiangling music society in Singapore and Nanyin society in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries. During the second world Nanyin conference held by the Guofeng Langjun society, Nanyin societies from many countries came to attend. They shared a common hometown, shared common beliefs, and had great cultural similarities. Therefore, they had a lot of communication with overseas Chinese. Their music culture also supports, promotes, and influences each other. The Chinese traditional music culture resources existing in the Philippines are still very rich. This also lays the foundation for the formation of unique Filipino-Chinese music culture.

4. Types of Traditional music in Binondo

After the traditional music was introduced into Binondo, it changed from simple folk music tunes to rooting and sprouting later. This formed the unique Chinese traditional music in Philippines which existed in different forms in the process of its formation. There are two types of traditional music in

Binondo. The first category is Nanyin art, opera, folk songs, and other secular music, such as Liyuan opera, puppet opera related to Nanyin art, the oral Chinese folk songs Guofan song and Hakka folk song; the second type is the religious ritual music used by Buddhism, Taoism for weddings and funerals, such as the Buddhist music of Xinyuan temple and the Taoist ritual music of Baoquan Temple.

The first type is the traditional music cultural activities based on the religious worship of gods and ancestors. Worshipping gods and ancestors and religious beliefs have always been the most important activities of Minnan people. Whether in their hometown or in Binondo, they still keep this habit. They hold activities of worshipping gods and ancestors on lunar festivals or on the birthdays of gods in order to pray for safeness and thank God. In this kind of activities, the traditional music has become an important part of the ceremony. It is because of such cultural activities that the traditional music has endured. It includes religious ritual music. As mentioned above, the famous Buddhist temple Xinyuan temple and Taoist temple Baoquan temple in the Philippines hold scientific ceremony on specific festivals. At the same time, the activities of offering sacrifices to gods and ancestors also promote local opera significantly, puppet opera, Gaojia opera and other troupes will be invited to perform at the time of offering sacrifices to gods and ancestors.

The second category is the music activities organized by various associations. Community is an important form of organization in the Philippines, which plays a very important role in the protection and inheritance of Chinese traditional music. From the beginning, when Chinese immigrants were forbidden to gather with political intentions, they were connected with each other according to geographical, spiritual, linguistic, professional, and cultural ties. They formed large and small Chinese community organizations. Each had its own functions, such as the Village Association, Clan association, Nanyin society, chamber of Commerce, etc. for example, although the Changhe Nanyin Langjun society established in the early stage is nominally a music group, some scholars believe that it is actually an early Chinese social secret organization.[10] The main body of music activities organized by various mass organizations is generally divided into two categories. One is that they belong to music organizations or have subordinate music departments, such as Changhe Langjun society, Guofeng Langjun society, and Shen Hu Village Association, The other is that other organizations often invite professional music organizations to perform when holding activities, thus the development of traditional music has been promoted and developed to a certain extent.

The third category is traditional music based on Chinese schools or Confucius Institutes in universities. The older generation of Chinese attach great importance to the Chinese cultural education of their children. Although Chinese cultural education has not been smooth in the whole history of Chinese immigrants, especially after the Philippine Chinese schools were fully naturalized in the Philippines. However, at the same time, the Chinese people started the revival of Chinese education by establishing educational society, revising teaching materials and courses, setting up scholarships and actively supported the cause of Chinese education and promoted the reform of Chinese education. Among them, traditional music, as an important part of culture, is the most significant aspect of traditional music culture learning in Chinese schools.



Figure 2: Philippine Cultural College Chinese Orchestra in 1970

For example, the Philippine Cultural College Chinese Orchestra, an early Chinese Folk Orchestra in

Manila, has existed for about 60 years and has held many large-scale performances. In addition to the folk music troupe of Philippine Cultural College, there are many ethnic orchestras or interest classes in Chinese schools. They inherit and protect traditional music in this way. In the Confucius Institute, there are also elective courses of Chinese traditional instrumental music, such as Gu Zheng course of Confucius Institute of Athens Yao University.



Figure 3: Gu Zheng course of Confucius Institute of Athens Yao University

Based on many fieldworks in Binondo area, it was found that part of Chinese traditional music, as a "foreign culture", has changed due to the economic, political and cultural constraints of the host country. However, at the same time, some of them have been preserved in the "Enclave immigrant culture" due to the geographical relationship.

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