

The Evolutionary Exploration and Development of Chinese Music in the Chinese Community in the Philippines

Kun He^{1,2*}

¹ School of Music, Philippine Women's University, Manila, Philippines

² School of Art, Guangxi University of Foreign Languages, Nanning, China

Email Address

Haccoonhekun@gmail.com (Kun He)

*Correspondence: Haccoonhekun@gmail.com

Received: 19 January 2024; **Accepted:** 27 March 2024; **Published:** 30 April 2024

Abstract:

This essay provides an insightful analysis of the evolution of Chinese music in the Filipino Chinese community, it offers a unique perspective on its historical roots and contemporary adaptation in the Philippines among the Filipino Chinese reflecting and shaping their cultural identity. The study values the adaptation and innovation significance of Chinese music in helping Filipino cultural development, Discovering its impact on the protection of Chinese-Filipino heritage. It also brought to the surface the complex interactions between Chinese and Filipino traditions, It points to the significance of the Chinese music's iconic role in shaping identity and strengthening inter-generational ties. This study opens up a broader perspective on the global diffusion and regional assimilation of Chinese musical culture, provides valuable resources for cultural policy making. The results of these studies have had a wider impact and repercussions locally and internationally by improving the understanding of multiethnic socio-cultural development.

Keywords:

Chinese-Filipino Music Evolution, Cultural Identity in Music, Intercultural Adaptation

1. Introduction

The evolution of Chinese music in the Chinese community in the Philippines presents a rich picture of cultural cross-fertilization and adaptation. Throughout its history, this musical genre has undergone various socio-cultural dynamics that have profoundly influenced the cultural landscape of the Philippines. [1] Previous studies have explored various aspects of this phenomenon, but still lack a comprehensive understanding of its evolutionary trajectory as well as a perspective on the younger generation.

Despite the far-reaching impact of Chinese music in the Chinese Filipino context, there is still a gap in the literature on the process of adaptation and contemporary manifestations of Chinese music, especially in terms of the younger generation's

contribution to its preservation. This gap is particularly evident because of the lack of detailed research on how elements of Chinese music are preserved, transformed, and integrated into Chinese Filipino identity.

To address these gaps, this study utilized a comprehensive online research methodology. By scrutinizing a wide range of digital resources such as scholarly articles, websites, and videos, this study aims to construct a detailed picture of the evolution of Chinese music in the Chinese Filipino community. The online nature of this study allowed for the integration of diverse and contemporary perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The study aims to shed light on the complexities of cultural preservation and innovation, and to explore how music serves as a medium for identity expression and cultural integration. By delving into contemporary discourses of Chinese Filipino music culture and the online realm in which the literature resides, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of music in shaping and reflecting the unique sociocultural aspects of the Chinese Filipino community.

2. Literature Review

This collection of research offers a detailed look into how Chinese music and culture have influenced the Philippines, covering aspects like history, education, religion, and global dynamics. Josh Stenberg examines Chinese opera in the Philippines, noting its importance and resilience in the Chinese-Filipino community despite past suppression. [2] Manningning C. Miclat investigates how Filipino art has been shaped by Chinese elements, from ancient trade relations to modern expressions. [3] Zhao Zhenxiang, Li Xiao, and Hou Peishui discuss the role of Chinese-language media in fostering music education, illustrating the Filipino community's dedication to preserving their cultural heritage. Shen Hongfang provides an overview of the evolving views on the political and social integration of Chinese Filipinos. Sun Bo looks into the diverse musical scene in the Philippines, with a focus on folk music. Su Qiao and Chen Changwen track the progression of Chinese Filipino music from its traditional roots to contemporary forms. [4] Arsenio Nicolas examines the intricate relationship between religious practices and Chinese temple music in Manila. [5] Shunwei Liu and Jia Li analyze the Philippine popular music landscape, highlighting the effects of corporate influence since the 1980s. [6] Juro Kim Feliz contemplates Asian identities in modern Filipino music, pointing out the complex interplay of traditional, colonial, and postcolonial elements. [7] Xinyu Bai's research on transnational Chinese music in Manila's Binondo area stresses the significance of traditional music in understanding the Chinese community's cultural evolution. [8] The journal "China and Asia" offers a comprehensive historical view of the Chinese in the Philippines. Lee Watkins explores the experiences of Filipino immigrant musicians in Hong Kong, addressing themes of minstrelsy and colonialism. Lastly, [9] Sau-Ping Cloris Lim's essay on Nanyin music highlights its importance in representing the Minnan national identity among the Fujian diaspora. These studies collectively paint a vivid picture of the deep and evolving influence of Chinese music and culture on the Philippines. [10]

3. Historical Overview of Chinese Immigration in the Philippines

The migration of Chinese people to the Philippines has its roots in ancient times, beginning with early settlers from China's southern coastal regions. These early

migrants, primarily from southern Fujian's Minnan region, merged with local populations, significantly influencing the present-day Malay demographic. The Ming and Qing dynasties saw substantial waves of immigration, driven by trade and economic opportunities. [11] However, this period also marked the beginning of the Spanish Empire in the Asia-Pacific during the mid-sixteenth century, under the leadership of Spaniard Miguel de Legazpi. He colonized the Philippines, establishing Manila as an extension of Spain's American colony of New Spain. This era was characterized by the persecution of Chinese immigrants, leading to increased intermarriages with Filipinos and the formation of mixed-race communities.

The Manila Galleon Trade, which lasted for 250 years, played a pivotal role in sustaining the trans-Pacific relationship between Acapulco, Mexico, and Manila. This trade involved exchanging American silver for Chinese silk, porcelain, and other luxury goods. A significant community of twenty to thirty thousand Hokkien-speaking migrants from South Fujian became central to this trade. Confined to ethnic neighborhoods outside Manila's city walls, they were crucial in transporting luxury goods from China for the galleons, while also providing everyday consumer items, food, and services to the Spanish population in Manila. This community represented the first large and permanent overseas Chinese settlement in Southeast Asia/Nanyang, marking the start of the global Chinese diasporic movement that continues to span the Americas, Europe, and Africa. According to Weightman (1985), the American colonial period witnessed social and political advancements for Chinese immigrants from Guangdong Province. This era also saw varied allegiances within the Chinese community towards different regimes across the Taiwan Strait, as discussed by Sun Nataliia (2023). During the phase of assimilation and adaptation, in light of political changes and the severing of ties with the Republic of China, many Chinese immigrants chose to become Filipino citizens. Post-1987, the Chinese community has been instrumental in the democratic and economic reform of the Philippines. This period also observed a surge in immigration from mainland China, enriching Philippine society, economy, and culture with complex and diverse influences, as observed by Montillo-Burton (1996).

The introduction of Chinese performances to the Philippines by early settlers is speculated, but the details of these early performances are scant. The earliest documented direct interaction between the Philippines and China was in 982, with traders from "Mait" (likely present-day Bay on Lake Laguna's shores or Mindoro's "Mait") bringing goods to Guangzhou and Quanzhou. This historical interaction hints at the early spread of Chinese performing arts in the Philippines, although the specific details and broader cultural implications remain a topic for historical research, as noted by Situ Shangji and Kielian-Gilbert (2020).

Impact of Chinese Migration on Philippine Music and Other Cultural Aspects The influx of Chinese immigrants has significantly influenced various facets of Philippine culture, including music, language, and cuisine. This impact is evident in the introduction of traditional Chinese music like Nanyin, promotion of Chinese education, and incorporation of Chinese culinary techniques, showcasing a vivid picture of multiculturalism.

3.1. Impact on Cultures

Nanyin: As one of China's oldest musical genres, Nanyin, originating from the Tang Dynasty in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, merges elements from Central Plains

classical music, northern and southern operas, and folk music. Recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Nanyin features instruments like the pipa, three-stringed lute, two-stringed lute, and dongxiao, and employs the gongscale notation system, rooted in ancient Chinese music scripts. With a repertoire exceeding 2,000 pieces, Nanyin encompasses pre-Tang music, Tang Dynasty dazhongs, and compositions from the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, as well as opera music. Performed in the Quanzhou dialect, it preserves ancient Central Plains Chinese phonetics and is characterized by its melodious tunes, slow tempo, and an elegant style, exuding subtlety and deep emotion, as highlighted by Jin-Han Song (2023).

Nanyin, very important in Minnan culture, has been kept alive by scholars for many years. They make lots of pieces showing life and spirit of nation. Nanyin's influence is big in places like Quanzhou, Xiamen, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. It's more than music, it's culture and spirit. In Filipino Chinese community, groups like “Changhe Langjun Society”, “Jinlan Langjun Society”, “The national style Lang Jun Society”, and “South Le Chongde club” and other associations keep Nanyin alive. They make Philippines important place for Nanyin outside China, mixing Chinese culture with local Filipino culture through music.

Food and language: in Philippines also changed by Chinese. For example, pancit, looks like fried noodles, is very popular. Chinese bring soy sauce, tofu, and noodles to Filipino cooking. Also, Chinese way of cooking like stir-frying and steaming is now in Filipino food. This mix of Chinese and Filipino in food makes new dishes that taste very good. It has vegetables, shrimp, and meat, with lemon on top. Many words in Tagalog come from Minnan because most Chinese Filipinos come from Fujian. for example:

“Toyo” (soy sauce) is derived from the Minnan “tāu-iū”.

“Syopaw” (meat bun) comes from “siu bao”.

“Pansit” (fried noodles) originates from the Southern Min “convenient Foods”.

“Susi” (key) is taken from the Southern Min term for a lock key.

“Kuya” (brother) and “ate” (sister) are derived from the Southern Min words for brother and sister, respectively.

“Bakyâ” (wooden clogs) comes from the Minnan term for wooden clogs.

The term “bihon” (rice noodles) has its roots in the Southern Chinese word for rice noodles. These examples illustrate the deep impact of Minnan culture on Filipino daily life and language, highlighting the profound influence of Minnan on Tagalog.

3.2. Impact on Architecture and Art Forms:

In Philippines, architecture and art got much influence from Chinese culture. Tian and Xiao (2022) write about it. Philippines, where most people are Catholic, has many churches with Chinese style things in them. One big example is the Church of the Immaculate Conception of St. Augustine in Manila's King City. This oldest stone church in Philippines and Far East has two stone lions at entrance, showing Chinese culture (Dyomin, Ivashko, & Liang, n.d.; Dyomin, Ivashko, & Shuan Li, 2017). These churches are part of Baroque churches in Philippines, UNESCO say it's very important for culture. They show mix of Chinese and Western design. Tian and Xiao (2022) say Chinese culture also changed architecture and art in Philippines. Many

churches in Philippines, which is mostly Catholic, have Chinese things in them. Like the Church of the Immaculate Conception of St. Augustine in Manila has stone lions, which is from Chinese culture. These churches are part of UNESCO and show how Chinese and Western styles can mix together. Many temples in Philippines are for Chinese religions like Buddhism and Taoism. Chinese festivals like New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival are celebrated in Philippines. Chinese schools in Philippines teach Mandarin, calligraphy, and dance, helping to share Chinese culture with Filipinos.

3.3. Impact on Festival

China has big effect on Philippine culture in many ways. Chinese beliefs like Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism are seen in many temples and religious places. Also, Chinese festivals like New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival are celebrated big in Philippines. This lets people in Philippines learn about Chinese culture. A big cultural thing is Chinese schools made by Chinese immigrants. They teach Mandarin, calligraphy, and dance, and help spread Chinese language and culture in Philippines. These schools help people in Philippines and China understand each other better. Declaring the Chinese New Year a special non-working holiday in the Philippines was an important step in acknowledging cultural diversity and unity. This decision by President Benigno S. Aquino III was a gesture of solidarity between Chinese-Filipinos and Filipinos, recognizing the deep impact of Chinese cultural elements in the Philippines. The festivities included several traditions, like savoring Chinese cuisine, seeking advice from Feng Shui experts, and exploring Chinese horoscopes. This demonstrated how Filipino society has embraced and integrated Chinese customs.

History and Social Contributions of Chinese Filipinos: Chinese Filipinos have helped a lot in making Philippines grow, especially in business. They bring new technology, money, and stuff for making things. They help agriculture, crafts, and modern industries grow. Their work makes Philippines do better in trade and earn more money from other countries (Qi & Hui, 2019; Nguyen Thi Cam Nhung et al., 2018).

3.4. Impact on Culture and Education

Chinese Filipinos help a lot in making society in Philippines nice and helping cultures mix. They run 126 Chinese schools, teaching over 100,000 students (Shieh, n.d.). They also do many cultural and art things. These schools are very important for teaching about Chinese music and culture. They teach young Chinese Filipinos about traditional Chinese music and instruments like guzheng, erhu, or pipa. This helps them connect with their Chinese roots and keep their culture alive. Some important schools are: Philippine Cultural College in Manila, Caloocan, and Quezon City. It's the oldest Chinese Filipino school in Philippines and does a lot to teach Chinese language and music.

4. The Development of Chinese Music in the Modern Philippines

The Modern Historical Evolution of Chinese Music in the Philippines

1949-1978: Traditional Music's Continuity in Spread. In this time, Chinese from overseas in Philippines spread traditional music like Fujian Nan Yin, opera, Cantonese opera, Teochew opera, Teochew music, and Hakka music. These music

types got very popular among Filipino Chinese and even respected by Filipino people (Bai, 2022). [5]

1979-1999: Artistic Exchanges and Growth. This time was important for culture talking between China and Philippines, after they made their relationship normal and signed culture agreements. Chinese government and cultural departments helped Chinese artists go to Philippines, showing more kinds of music like guqin, guzheng, chorus, and folk music. This helped people in both countries learn about each other's music.

Post-2000: Diverse Music Spreading Everywhere. With globalization and new technology, Chinese music in Philippines changed a lot. Now, it included classical, folk, pop, rock, electronic music, and more. This spread used new ways like Internet, film, TV, and social media, so more Filipino people liked it (Abinales, n.d.; Zheng, n.d.; Hong, 2020).

B. People who made a difference in music industry Nowadays, many Chinese in Philippines did great things in culture. One big person is Chinese businessman Li Fengwu. He started DYNA Records in 1959. Fengwu made it a big music label in Philippines, taking 60% of local music market and working with big global music companies. He got known as the "Godfather of Philippine Music" and led many important music groups.

Jose Mari Chan, famous in Philippines as the "King of Filipino Christmas Carols". His songs like "Christmas in Our Hearts" and "A Perfect Christmas" are loved a lot in Philippines every Christmas. Chan sings in many styles, in Filipino, English, and Chinese.

Ricky Pan, known for Filipino jazz, changed from rock band to jazz. He likes American artists like Frank Sinatra and made famous songs like "You and I."

Kim Chiu, a pop singer with Chinese roots, also added to this music type. Her songs like "Mr. Right Prince Charming" and covers of famous Chinese songs got lots of fans on YouTube.

Tandingan KZ, a Filipino singer, won "Singer 2018" in China with "Rolling in the Deep." She sang Chinese songs too, showing respect for Chinese culture. Her work helped music exchange between China and Philippines, making Filipino music popular in China and vice versa.

Yeng Constantino, a famous Filipino pop singer, made the Tagalog song "Ikaw" in 2014. This love song got very popular in Philippines and was sung in many languages, including Mandarin, English, Japanese, and Korean.

Constantino showed her skill by singing "Ikaw" (Dependence) in Chinese on China's "Singer 2018." She sang in Mandarin well, showing deep feeling in the song. This showed her love for Chinese music and culture. Her singing got lots of praise in China and made her more famous there. This kind of music sharing helped bring her music and charm to more Chinese people.

Artists like Kim Chiu, Yeng Constantino, and Tan Tingan have done a lot to bring Chinese music and culture into Philippines. They show the beauty of Filipino music to Chinese people and Chinese music to Filipinos. Their music is like a bridge between the two countries, helping people understand each other's culture and feelings. They also inspire other musicians in Philippines to make and sing Chinese songs. This helps grow Chinese music in Philippines and shows how music can bring cultures together.

C. Digital Growth After the pandemic, social media and short videos are becoming very important for spreading Chinese music among Chinese people in Philippines. These platforms let people quickly see and enjoy new Chinese songs. Also, because short videos are popular, musicians are making shorter and more exciting songs. This change makes Chinese music more known in Filipino-Chinese community and encourages new styles of music.

In today's world, music goes beyond borders. Social media helps China and Philippines share music and culture more deeply. This connection will make musicians from both countries more famous around the world. It will also bring more different music styles to the Chinese community.

5. Conclusions

A. Summary of Main Findings This study about Chinese music in Filipino Chinese community shows how music and culture mix and change. Looking at its history, education, and different styles, we see how Chinese music has been kept alive and changed, showing the complex identity of Filipino Chinese people. This music story is about more than just music; it's about culture, identity, and history in a place with many cultures. As Filipino Chinese community grows, its music will also change and keep being an important part of Chinese and Filipino cultures. Future research could look at how young people are changing this music tradition.

B. What This Means for Understanding Culture in Chinese Community in Philippines Studying Chinese music's change in Filipino Chinese community shows important things about culture. It tells us that we need ways to keep old and new music together, so everyone feels included and culture keeps going. Technology is very important for teaching music and keeping different kinds of music alive. The mix of Chinese and Filipino music shows how connected our cultures are. Cultural events are important for making music more popular and for keeping culture alive. These findings show that it's important to welcome different cultures, use new technology, and keep culture alive in music in the Filipino Chinese community.

C. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on what we learn about how Chinese music changed in the Chinese Filipino community, future studies can look at these ideas:

Studying Music Choices in Different Ages: It's important to see what music different generations in the community like. This study should look at why people of different ages like different music to understand how culture changes and is passed down.

How Technology Changes Music Sharing: We need to see how technology helps spread Chinese music in the community. Future research should look at how online platforms help people learn, share, and keep music traditions, and what good and bad things come from this.

Comparative Study of Different Chinese Communities in Philippines: Look at how Chinese music is different in various Filipino Chinese communities. This study should find what is similar and what is different in how music changed, thinking about the place, culture, and history. This will give a full picture of how music has different effects and ways of showing up.

Exploring Mix of Chinese and Filipino Music: Look into how Chinese and Filipino music mix together. This should include looking at different kinds of music, songs, and new ways of making music to understand how this mix adds to the culture.

Studying How Cultural Events Change Community: Look at how cultural events and festivals affect the community more widely. This research should see how these events bring people together, make them proud of their culture, and shape their identity. It should go beyond just music to see the full effect on the community.

Long Study on Keeping Culture Alive: Start a long study to watch how Chinese music helps keep culture alive over time. This study should see how well music works for this, what problems come up, and how to solve them to keep music important and affecting the community.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Galang, J.A. China and Asia: A journal in historical studies: Special issue on the Chinese in Philippine history. *China and Asia*, 2023, 4(2), 183-185, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/2589465X-04020001>.
- [2] Stenberg, J. Xiqu in the Philippines: From Church Suppression to MegaMall Shows. *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 2020, 16(1), 1-25, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/17932548-12341413>.
- [3] Miclat, M.C. Tradition, misconception, and contribution: Chinese influences in Philippine culture. *Humanities Diliman: A Philippine Journal of Humanities*, 2020, 1(2).
- [4] Chen, J. Performing Chineseness Overseas. *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 2022, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/17932548-12341457>.
- [5] Nicolas, A. Chinese music in the Philippines: History and contemporary practices. In *The Folk Performing Arts in ASEAN* (pp. 371-387). The Folk Performing Arts in ASEAN. 2016.
- [6] Shunwei, L.; Jia, L. Establishment of Philippine popular music industry. *Multicultural Education*, 2022, 8(6), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6618973>.
- [7] Feliz, J. K. (n.d.). Examining the Asian Imaginary in Philippine Contemporary Music. Available online: https://www.academia.edu/37157545/Examining_the_Asian_Imaginary_in_Philippine_Contemporary_Music (accessed on 2 January 2024).
- [8] Bai, X. Transnational Chinese music in the Philippines: Chinese traditional music in Binondo, Manila. *Frontiers in Art Research*, 2022, 4(5), 15-19, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25236/FAR.2022.040504>.

- [9] Watkins, L. Minstrelsy and mimesis in the South China Sea: Filipino migrant musicians, Chinese hosts, and the disciplining of relations in Hong Kong. *Asian Music*, 2009, 40(2), 72-99, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/amu.0.0034>.
- [10] Lim, S.P.C. Nanyin musical culture in southern Fujian, China: Adaptation and continuity. Doctoral dissertation, SOAS University of London, 2014, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiaa.ijels.v.11n.4p.141>.
- [11] Hu-deHart, E. Spanish Manila. In Hong Kong University Press, 2019, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5790/HONGKONG/9789888455775.003.0003>.



© 2024 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)