

Cultural Heritage in Historical Perspective

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Rediscovering Cultural Heritage: Pui Ching Middle School Band in Pre-war Canton and Its Historical Instruments in Present-Day Chinese Musicology

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Abstract. Wind bands constitute pivotal cultural artifacts in the development of Western music in Asian countries. From the time of the late Qing dynasty, the government positioned military bands as cornerstones for modernization, with Canton emerging as a critical center for the evolution of music for military bands in China. The wind band of Canton's Pui Ching Middle School stood among the most influential school bands, yet academic inquiry into wind and military bands remains conspicuously absent from the modern Chinese musicological discourse. This article employs qualitative methodologies, in order to analyze historical publications to reevaluate the social significance of Pui Ching wind bands in the pre-war era. The band provided numerous significant musical performances of Western music for Cantonese society, participated in community events, functioned as a cultural diplomatic entity, and trained numerous wind performers on wind instruments, who subsequently exerted a great influence on the Lingnan region during the postwar period. The research introduces newly discovered instruments from the pre-war period from the school, offering fresh perspectives on the band's significance throughout the modern musical development in China. Additionally, the study examines the present-day challenges in the task of preserving historical instruments while endeavoring to reconstruct the cultural significance of these artifacts.

Keywords: wind bands, Pui Ching Middle School, historical wind instruments, Chinese musicology

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**Возвращаясь к культурному наследию:
оркестр средней школы Пуй Цин в довоенном Кантоне
и его исторические инструменты
в современном китайском музыковедении**

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Аннотация. Духовые оркестры являются ключевыми культурными артефактами в развитии западной музыки в Азии. Начиная с конца династии Цин, правительство позиционировало военные оркестры как краеугольные камни модернизации, и Кантон стал важнейшим центром развития военной музыки Китая. Духовой оркестр средней школы Пуй Цин в Кантоне принадлежит к числу наиболее авторитетных школьных оркестров, однако академическое исследование духовых и военных оркестров по-прежнему отсутствует в современном китайском музыковедческом дискурсе. В данном исследовании используются качественные методологии и анализ исторических публикаций для переоценки общественного значения духового оркестра Пуй Цин довоенного периода. Коллектив дал многочисленные концерты западной музыки, важные для кантонского общества, участвовал в общественных мероприятиях, выполнял функции культурной дипломатии и подготовил множество музыкантов, играющих на духовых инструментах, которые оказали влияние на послевоенный регион Линнань. Исследование знакомит с недавно обнаруженными довоенными инструментами из этой школы, что позволяет по-новому взглянуть на значение рассматриваемого оркестра в современном музыкальном развитии Китая. Кроме того, в статье поднимаются современные проблемы сохранения исторических инструментов и предпринимается попытка реконструировать культурное значение этих артефактов.

Ключевые слова: духовые оркестры, средняя школа Пуй Цин, исторические духовые инструменты, китайское музыковедение

Introduction

The introduction of Western music to China can be traced to the late Ming Dynasty, with Macau — a Portuguese colony in the Lingnan region (嶺南地區), an area encompassing Guangzhou (廣州), Hong Kong, Macau, and other parts of southern China — serving as the initial point of entry through ecclesiastical institutions. According to Dai, Western musical ensembles first proliferated in Macau in the guise of military bands. [1] Subsequently,

as the Western imperial powers expanded their presence in China, these military musical formations accompanied their colonial expansion. Military bands, characterized by their sonorous, dynamic, and masculine qualities, proved to be particularly effective as “a musical weapon and the thunderous proof of Western military and religious superiority.” The development of indigenous wind bands was significantly influenced by these military band paradigms and evolved from them. [2]

The supervision of local musicians by military bandmasters from abroad exemplifies the colonial dynamic, although this relationship manifested itself as a multifaceted process. The indigenous participants selectively appropriated elements from this cultural encounter, often diverging from the colonizers' original intentions. Moreover, locally established ensembles developed their own distinctive compositional works that transcended the prescribed official repertoire. Nevertheless, the ubiquitous presence of military, police, and missionary bands performing hymns and marches throughout the imperially controlled territories functioned as an enduring manifestation of imperial ideology. [3] Consequently, military bands represented one of the earliest traditions of Western musical performance introduced to the Chinese cultural sphere, while simultaneously embodying a symbiosis of Chinese and Western cultures.

Nonetheless, research of wind bands has traditionally been relatively scarce in modern Chinese music history, and detailed explorations of the development of the history of modern Chinese music from the perspective of military bands are basically nonexistent in the academic field. [4] This article attempts to fill this research gap by establishing a new narrative of modern Chinese music history, particularly emphasizing the significance of the pre-war military and school bands in Canton (廣州). The development of Western music in Canton also brought revolutionary changes to the history of modern Chinese music. Therefore, this article will utilize the publications of Pui Ching's (培正) research works, as well as personal conversations with him, and analysis of antique instruments to demonstrate how pre-war bands provided musical performances in Canton while also becoming tools for cultural diplomacy, and how they trained many outstanding wind musicians in the Lingnan region after the war.

This article will also discuss a collection of previously unstudied pre-war instruments bearing the calendar of the Republic of China and markings from the "Canton Pui Ching Private Middle School," thereby elucidating how certain social and historical developments before and after the war influenced the development of wind music in Canton, as well as the challenges of preserving antique instruments in New China.

In order to provide better clarity for the readers, the author uses the older methods of romanization when discussing the events that occurred during the era of the Republic of China (1911–1949), including the names of geographical places and personal names. The latter are transliterated using Cantonese pronunciation, since the musicians discussed here were natives of the Lingnan region. In his discussion of the events after 1949, the author employs the current *Hanyu Pinyin* (漢語拼音) form of transliteration. Chinese characters are also provided alongside the respective romanized words, making it easier for readers to reference the names of people and places mentioned in the text.

Wind Bands as a Means for Modernization

The early 20th century witnessed China within a multifaceted geopolitical matrix characterized by pronounced technological asymmetry relative to the Western hegemonic powers and the omnipresent specter of foreign imperialism — conditions that engendered conditions of profound ontological insecurity among Chinese intellectual vanguards and socio-political reformers. These historical contingencies precipitated a highly selective and strategic appropriation of the epistemologies of the Enlightenment, systematically reconfigured within distinctively Chinese philosophical frameworks and national exigencies. In a notable contradistinction to the European Enlightenment paradigms that

extolled individual autonomy and rational inquiry as the chief teleological imperatives, Chinese intellectuals fundamentally reinterpreted the ideals of the Enlightenment as instrumental mechanisms for national revitalization and resistance against extraterritorial encroachment. This foundational reconceptualization elucidates the distinctively collectivist orientation of the Chinese Enlightenment discourse, which repositioned intellectual transformation not as an elite philosophical endeavor but as a comprehensive social movement necessitating universal civic mobilization. [5]

The late Qing dynasty witnessed an accelerated engagement with the Western epistemological systems — articulated through the pragmatic conceptual framework of “Western learning for practical application” (西學為用) — within which Western musical forms and performance practices functioned as significant vectors of transcultural exchange and appropriation. Military bands, with their potent symbolic resonance as emblems of projection of national power and disciplinary efficacy, assumed particular significance within this paradigm of modernization, serving dual functions of martial motivation and civic identification. Following the 1911 Revolution and subsequent establishment of the Republic of China, the nation entered a period characterized by an intensified institutionally motivated commitment to scientific modernization and military strengthening as the two complementary pillars of national rejuvenation. This ideological reorientation catalyzed the systematic proliferation of military music traditions that had been tentatively established during the reform initiatives of the late Qing dynasty.

The Republican era consequently witnessed the methodical institutionalization of military bands across multiple organizational strata — from military units to municipal governments and provincial administrations — as integral

components of the initiative of broader scientific modernization. Within this sociopolitical milieu, educational institutions throughout the nation established military-style wind bands that operated under quasi-military protocols, including mandatory wearing of standardized uniforms, prescribed repertoires of military music, and ceremonial functions at institutional and state occasions such as National Day commemorations and diplomatic receptions. These educational bands transcended their initial purely aesthetic or pedagogical functions, in order to become potent vehicles for disseminating and reinforcing emergent conceptions of the Chinese cultural identity during a period of profound national transformation. [6]

The Republic of China's intensified emphasis on technological advancement was further galvanized by the intellectual ferment of the May Fourth Movement, resulting in the state promotion of doctrine of “saving the country by means of science” (科學救國), which emphasized a concurrent development of both fundamental and social scientific paradigms. [7] Within this ideological framework, school bands were strategically deployed as vehicles for promoting scientific praxis and methodological rigor. [8] Within the educational infrastructure of the Republic of China, school bands were primarily institutionally affiliated with Scout movements and uniformed student organizations. Both governmental authorities and educational administrators conceptualized these bands as serving bifurcated educational and paramilitary training objectives, rather than purely artistic or aesthetic pursuits. Their primary sociopolitical function was the cultivation of responsible, morally disciplined citizens consciously aligned with nationalist objectives.

Exemplifying this institutional approach, the Lingnan University Affiliated Middle School (嶺南大學附屬中學) in Canton

operated its wind band under the direct supervision of military student service units. The band members were required to adhere to standardized uniform protocols during performances, perform the Chinese national anthem and patriotic compositions approved by the state authorities, and participate in officially sanctioned ceremonial parades. [9] The directors of the bands typically maintained formalized connections with both military musical bands and the governing bodies of the Kuomintang (KMT). It was explicitly anticipated that graduates would function as cultural agents disseminating musical knowledge, Chinese cultural values, the nationalist ideology, and policy directives of the KMT among Chinese student bodies overseas. [10]

During this transformative period, Chinese wind bands participated extensively in diverse sociocultural events — ceremonial commemorations, matrimonial celebrations, funereal rites, philanthropic fundraising performances, athletic competitions, National Day festivities, and official governmental tributes — effectively communicating and reinforcing the Chinese nationalist sentiment by means of coordinated musical performance practices.

Musicology in Archival Studies

Archives can be conceptualized as repositories of “invisible” information that underpin other cultural materials, or alternatively as concrete spaces wherein various life narratives are manifested and encountered. Moreover, archives themselves may constitute primary creative artifacts meriting scholarly investigation, rather than functioning solely as ancillary documentation. [11]

This study employs qualitative methodologies, primarily utilizing historical documental analysis of publications produced by the Pui Ching Middle School during

both the pre-war and the post-war periods. As Yu indicates, archives previously had been regarded merely as instruments for historical investigation. [12] However, this perspective has become outdated, since the late 20th century. Historical archives at the present time have extended beyond their previous roles of being official repositories that predominantly document elite privilege, while simultaneously neglecting marginalized communities, women, and disenfranchised individuals.

Traditionally, the narratives of modern Chinese music history have focused on the establishment of symphony orchestras and conservatories in metropolitan centers such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Harbin. Consequently, the musical history of Canton — particularly regarding military bands and school bands — has been essentially rendered invisible. [6] Publications from the Pui Ching Middle School have effectively supplemented this marginalized musical historiography, not only articulating Pui Ching’s musical traditions from the pre-war era, but also emphasizing the significance of military bands in the development of Western music in China, while simultaneously reinforcing Canton’s importance in the evolution of modern Chinese musical history.

Archival objects have existed both as physical entities and symbolic representations. Whereas objects are defined as tangible things that engage our senses, they simultaneously function as distinct perceptions outside ourselves. Archives demonstrate this duality where documents serve as both autonomous material items and referential symbols, allowing their meaning to persist even when their physical presence becomes absent. [13]

This theoretical foundation impels the author to consider the study of musical instruments themselves as a methodological approach. A collection of wind instruments from the pre-war period chronicles the illustrious

developmental period of Canton's wind bands, constituting invaluable artifacts worthy of documentation. Ethnomusicologist Merriam poses several pertinent questions regarding the study of musical instruments: "For fieldworkers, the study of musical instruments raises social questions. Is there a concept present of special treatment of musical instruments in society? Are some instruments revered by musicians? Do certain instruments symbolize certain alternative types of cultural or social activities? Are some specific instruments essentially the bearers of messages of general importance to society? Are the sounds or shapes of particular instruments associated with specific emotions, states of being, rituals, or calls to action?" [14, p. 45]

The significance of this instrumental collection parallels Buckley's analysis, in the postcolonial archives, wherein the rules regarding training, expertise, and foresight are reversed. The hopes of finding everything neatly arranged are dashed when one encounters "complete chaos, with many of the documents missing or stored in unclassified heaps on some shelves or on the floor." [15, p. 255] This chaos takes on a life of its own, transferring valuable documents out of the archive and into the market, where they are sold as "wrapping paper for vegetables and other products." [Ibid.]

Although Canton did not experience colonial governance, China's overall political instability — from the late Qing dynasty through the Second World War, the subsequent Chinese Civil War, regime changes, and ultimately the Cultural Revolution — created comparable conditions of archival disruption. One illustrative example involves the substantial loss of assets of the Pui Ching School, including certain quantities of musical instruments. [16] The author posits that this phenomenon represents a widespread issue throughout Canton and all of China. This article aims to reevaluate this well-documented instrumental

collection, emphasize its historical significance, and reassess the position of the Pui Ching Middle School and the city of Canton within the developmental narrative of modern Chinese music history.

The Contributions of the Pui Ching Middle School Band

Most wind bands in Canton essentially originated from the 25th Provisional Army Division military band (廣東暫編陸軍第二十五鎮軍樂隊), established in 1905. During the 32nd year of Emperor Guangxu (光緒)'s reign, the Qing dynasty government invited Japanese military conductor Master Sergeant Ōuchi Gen'eki (大内玄益) to train this military band. Master Sergeant Ōuchi, introduced Japanese training methodologies to Canton's wind bands. During his three-year tenure in Canton, the musician established a system that achieved high standards of performance of wind band music within the time of only two years. According to a report from 1916, the band was comprised of ninety-four members, making it a substantial ensemble with exceptional standards compared to other military bands throughout China. Later, during the Republic of China era, it was renamed "The 1st Army Division of Canton Military Band" (廣東陸軍第一師軍樂隊) and was recognized as one of the premier military bands in the Republic of China. [17, p. 67]

The formation of the Pui Ching Middle School Band was closely connected to the Military Band of the 1st Army Division of Canton. In 1920, Principal Wong Kai-ming (黃啟明) raised funds in the United States, leading to the establishment of the Canton Pui Ching Middle School Band that same year. The first instructors of this ensemble were Si Chung-wong (施宗煌) and Tseng Chiu-lam (曾昭霖) from the 1st Army Division of Canton Military Band. Notably, Tsang was also a member of the Lingnan University

Affiliated Middle School Band, suggesting that while serving as Pui Ching's conductor, he simultaneously maintained his membership in the Lingnan University Affiliated Middle School Band, taught first-grade English at the Lingnan Affiliated Middle School, and remained a member of the 1st Army Division of Canton Military Band.

Subsequent instructors included Law Wak-kin (羅懷堅) and Wu Pak-shing (伍佰勝) from the Lingnan University Affiliated Middle School Band. In 1928, Sinn Sing-hoi (冼星海), better known as Xian Xinghai, also served as an instructor. Later, the patriotic musician Ho Ah-dong (何安東) became an instructor in the Pui Ching Middle School Band. The backgrounds of these instructors demonstrate the excellent relationship between Lingnan and Pui Ching, with the latter conductors consistently having affiliations with Lingnan. The Pui Ching Middle School Band was recognized as one of the preeminent ensembles in Canton during that period.

Bands as Forms of Entertainment and Political Tools

As it maintained its position of one of the most important bands of its era, the significance of the Pui Ching Middle School Band can be understood through historical records. The band regularly performed on the Canton radio stations — this was quite noteworthy at a time when television had not yet existed and radio ownership was limited — making the ensemble recognized throughout Canton. [16] Additionally, it frequently participated in various performances. Former band member David Wong¹ (黃汝光) recalled that the Pui Ching band was highly prestigious; they

inevitably played music at every gathering of Pui Ching and Pooi To schools (培道中學). Between 1925 and 1927, a time when student parades were especially common in Canton, the band invariably led these processions. [18]

They consistently became the most attention-drawing group during ceremonial occasions. Every National Day features performances by the band. Each year on March 29th, the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt Memorial Day (黃花崗起義紀念日), teachers and students would depart from the school and walk to the Yellow Flower Mound Mausoleum, with the brass band leading the procession. Furthermore, the band would frequently perform on weekend evenings in Tung Shan Park (東山公園) (in what is now across from Dongshan Department Store (東山百貨大樓) near the Shuqian Road Elementary School (署前路小學)), bringing color and vibrancy to the lives of Tung Shan residents. [19]

Simultaneously, the Pui Ching Middle School Band participated in various political activities. Following the March First Movement of 1919, when the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea was established as a self-proclaimed government-in-exile, the Pui Ching Middle School Band performed at its fourth anniversary commemoration. The event attracted not only many Koreans but also numerous people from other countries. The band's performance received tremendous support from attendees, and the visitors from Korea even invited the Pui Ching Middle School Band to join automobile parades in Canton — an international recognition of the band's significance. [20]

Even more politically significant were their activities during the war. After Canton fell to

¹ The name Huang Ruguang is written in Hanyu Pinyin (漢語拼音). David Wong is originally from Canton, and later lived in Hong Kong. Like many Hong Kongers, he adopted an English name and called himself David. The romanization used here is based on the Cantonese pronunciation (David Wong Yu-kwong).

the Japanese in 1937, the school relocated to Macau. During the Christmas and New Year period of 1938, they collaborated with several other schools that had relocated from Canton to Macau to organize a holiday fair. They also participated in a concert organized in order to raise funds for Chinese refugees, which the Governor of Macau attended. [21] On February 24, 1939, about 70 members of the school band and harmonica band traveled from Macau to Hong Kong to participate in a fundraising concert held on February 25 at the Chinese YMCA hall. All the proceeds were donated to the Fundraising Association to address the needs of wartime Chinese refugees. [Ibid.] Later, a school orchestra formed by members of the Macau Pui Ching Middle School Band visited Hong Kong again in 1941, collaborating with the South China Women's Temperance Union to hold a classical music concert, with all the proceeds donated to the refugees from China's war zones. [22] Thereby, we can observe that the Canton Pui Ching Middle School Band not only provided free entertainment to the public during peaceful times, but also took on the roles of cultural ambassadors during turbulent periods, actively promoting patriotic political activities for the sake of national salvation.

Training Musical Talent for the Lingnan Region

The Canton Pui Ching Middle School Band trained a significant number of talented musicians for the Lingnan region. These individuals later played a revolutionary role in the development of Western music in post-war Hong Kong, including participating as professional musicians and serving as band directors who brought up a new generation of performers on wind instruments.

On July 2, 1959, the Pui Ching Alumni Band was established to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Pui Ching Middle School. All the band

members were graduates from the Canton Pui Ching Middle School. From this band roster, many former students of this school went on to develop their careers in Hong Kong and Macau. Moreover, a portion of these alumni pursued careers in music.

The first notable alumnus is Law Kwong-hung (羅廣洪), a graduate of Canton Pui Ching Middle School who served as both a member and coach of the Canton Pui Ching Middle School Band and the Lingnan University Affiliated Middle School Band. He founded the Canton Chinese Music Association (中華音樂會) and was active in Canton's pre-war musical scene. Renowned throughout Canton as a trumpet player from Canton, he also served as a coach for the Canton Municipal Government Band (廣東市政府樂隊). At that time, not every city under the Nationalist government had the opportunity of establishing its own municipal band; only the largest cities had this privilege. His appointment with the Municipal Government Band proved that his musical abilities were recognized by the Nationalist government. [6]

After the war, Law moved to Hong Kong, where he primarily worked as a band director at various secondary schools, including the Hong Kong Pui Ching Middle School Band, the New Method College (新法書院), and the Pui Ying Middle School (培英中學). Law was an extremely important figure at the early stage of the development of music for wind bands in Hong Kong. In 1967, he established the YWCA Youth Band (香港女青年會管樂團), one of Hong Kong's most significant community bands, which symbolized the beginning of the development of symphonic wind bands in Hong Kong. This band later became the predecessor to the Hong Kong Symphony Band (香港交響管樂團), founded in 1982. His legacy continues to influence Hong Kong's wind music scene today, since many of Hong Kong's post-war teachers were his students. [Ibid.]

Another graduate, Fung Kee-shui (馮奇瑞), also attended the Canton Pui Ching Middle School and was a member of its school band. He studied music at a collegiate level, which made him one of the few wind teachers with professional music training in the 1940s. Because of his outstanding performance skills, he worked as a professional performer and played in various orchestras in Canton during his residence on the mainland. His musical talent extended beyond the sphere of instrumental performance — he was also an excellent conductor who led the string orchestra of Kweilin (桂林). He held the official title of bandmaster of the 8th Army Band of the Republic of China's 11th Army Group (中華民國十一兵團第八軍軍樂隊). After China's liberation at the end of the war, he became the coach of the Canton Provincial Military Band (廣東省軍樂隊), which was established in 1937 as a Class B military band — a relatively prestigious band supported by the provincial government. The band relocated to Kukong² (曲江) in Seochew (韶關), northern Canton, in 1938 with the support of the provincial government. [10]

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Fung moved to Hong Kong, where he continued his performing career. He was a member of the South China Orchestra (華南管弦樂團) and the Sino-British Orchestra (中英樂團) (presently renamed as Hong Kong Philharmonic), the two most accomplished symphony orchestras in Hong Kong at that time. His presence provided a reliable sense of musicianship to these orchestras, especially in a social environment where wind instruments were scarce. Additionally, he joined the Hong

Kong Defense Force Band (later renamed as the Royal Hong Kong Regiment), which to some extent confirmed that his musical abilities were recognized by the Hong Kong government.

Fung also worked as a band director in Hong Kong, teaching at the Tai Tung Middle School (大同中學), the Munsang Middle School (民生書院), the Tak Ming Middle School (德明中學), and the Concordia Lutheran School (路德會協同中學), and serving as conductor of the Hong Kong Pui Ching Middle School Brass Band. He led different schools in their efforts to win a number of silver band championships as part of the Hong Kong Interschool Music Festival, including the Tai Tung Middle School, the Tak Ming Middle School, the Concordia Lutheran School, and the Pui Ching Middle School. Essentially, from the 1950s to the early 1960s, most schools with performing bands were active under his leadership. Many graduates from these school bands later became teachers who cultivated talent in the sphere of Hong Kong's wind music in the 1970s, gradually professionalizing the performance of wind music in Hong Kong, starting from the 1980s onward.

Unlike Law Kwong-hung and Fung Kee-shui, Chang Wing-sou (張永壽) was a member of both the Pui Ching and the Lingnan bands and also developed his career in post-war Hong Kong. Although his primary occupation was that of a pharmacist, he was a brilliant master of both Western and Chinese music. He performed with the South China Orchestra and was a regular member of the Sino-British Orchestra, continuing as a bassoonist until the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra professionalized itself in 1974. His training at Pui Ching established

² "Kukong" is a term used during the Republic of China era, before 1949, similar to how Peking was called, before it became Beijing. Since we are talking about Kukong in 1938, and not Qujiang after 1949, the old spelling is used for all terms referring to the pre-1949 period.

his standards of music performance. A music review in the South China Morning Post from January 29, 1955, highly praised Chang Wing-sou's performance skills:

"I was most interested in the bassoon parts played by Wing-Sou Chang. His confident yet controlled handling of the music greatly contributed to maintaining the appropriate balance and beauty throughout the composition." [23, p. 4]

His musical accomplishments extended beyond performing Western music. He was also a renowned promoter of Chinese music and attempted to symphonize Chinese music. After the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra professionalized itself in 1977, he served as an honorary advisor. He was frequently invited to judge the Chinese music section of the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival.

These individuals represent only a portion of the Canton Pui Ching Middle School Band alumni who contributed to teaching and performing in post-war Hong Kong's music scene. Their importance stems from the fact that Western music was still underdeveloped in the Lingnan region at that time. Musicians trained by the Pui Ching band filled the void of talents during that era, enabling a rapid development of wind music in the Lingnan region during the post-war period.

The Historical Significance of the Pui Ching Middle School's Antique Instruments

Merriam asserts that instruments may be considered as items of wealth; they may be owned by individuals; this ownership on their part may be acknowledged individually, but ignored in terms of the practical purposes. [14] The distribution of instruments in any geographical cultural entity has considerable importance in studies of cultural diffusion and in the reconstruction of the history of culture, and it is sometimes possible to suggest or to

confirm certain movements within particular populations through the study of instruments.

Even when musical instruments lose their functionality, being exhibited in museums, it cannot be denied that they are played by people essentially in order to produce sounds, they are manufactured by people, and their relationship with the aspect of humanity cannot be separated. Each instrument possesses its own history, background, and social-cultural context. Enabling the public to experience and understand this presents an important issue in the task of exhibiting historical instruments. [24]

The collection of historical instruments in Canton discovered in 2024 has provided the opportunity to reexamine the history of the development of wind instruments in the Lingnan region, presenting a neglected part of modern music history to the public, once again. These instruments represent one of the most complete collections, with most of their historical narratives preserved intact in Chinese music history. Besides witnessing the pre-war glory of wind band development in the Lingnan region of China, they also present challenges for the preservation of historical instruments in contemporary China.

The discovery and research of this collection of instruments present the accomplishments of a teacher at a school in Guangzhou around the year 2000. When the school had in its possession the collection of historical instruments scheduled for disposal, while handling these instruments, he discovered the inscriptions of dates from the Republic of China era printed on the instrument cases. Moreover, many instruments were engraved with the words "The Canton Private Pui Ching Middle School" (廣州市私立培正中學) in Chinese (see Il. 1). He believed these instruments to be very valuable, but he had no knowledge of their history. He expressed his confidence that someone who would prove to be knowledgeable about these instruments

would eventually appear on the scene. It was not until 2023 that this teacher informed the author of this article about these instruments (Anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2023). In 2024, the author visited the school again and conducted an on-site examination of these instruments with Taiwanese repair technician Yang Bing-hua (楊秉驊). After analyzing a number of relevant documents, we were able to provide these instruments with a new historical context and new value.



Il.1. C.G. Conn Trombone Engraved with the Chinese Name of the Canton Private Pui Ching Middle School.
Source: Author (June 11, 2024)

This collection of instruments illustrates to a perfect degree the concise narrative of the development of the history of wind bands in Canton's wind band history from the Nationalist Government period to that

following the founding of contemporary China. The Canton Pui Ching Middle School has had only three recorded instances of instrument purchases: the first one in 1919, the second in 1934, and the third in 1947. [25] After the Canton Pui Ching Middle School band first acquired the instruments it purchased from the United States, the first time they were used in a performance was in November 1921 when Wong, the principal of the school, returned to Canton from America. The band members lined up into a procession and walked from Tung Shan to the Sai Ho (西濠) Ferry Terminal, playing marches along the way with powerful tones. The instruments at that time were all silver-colored, while the instruments of other Canton bands were gold-colored, demonstrating that Pui Ching's instruments were distinctive. [26]

Most of the instruments shown in Il. 2 were acquired in 1947 by the funds raised by Principal Fung Tong (馮棠) during his fundraising trip to visit a number of alumni in the United States. This bears witness to two facts: First, resources were scarce in post-war China. A school in need of comprehensive rebuilding desperately needed to reconstruct its facilities, but due to insufficient funding, it sought support from Chinese alumni living abroad. This also reflects how Chinese emigres residing in other countries demonstrated concern for China's affairs from the pre-war period until around 1960.

After analyzing the documentation and verifying the serial numbers of the instruments, it was confirmed that many instruments in Il. 2 originated from C.G. Conn's 1947 collection. Fung indeed purchased a set of new instruments in the United States and brought them back to Canton to rebuild the wind band. In November 1947, he returned to Canton from the United States after raising over \$100,000 USD from Chinese Americans. This money was used to order educational equipment, instruments, books, and other materials, which were imported tax-free with government approval. Among



Il 2. The Author and Taiwanese Repair Technician Yang Bing-hua
with the Collection of Historical Instruments.
Source: The Author (June 11, 2024)

these items was a complete set of wind band instruments. The 1947 Pui Ching Wind Band possessed 28 instruments, including oboes, clarinets, flutes, piccolos, saxophones, trumpets, trombones, French horns, English horns, and bassoons. This collection later expanded to 45 instruments. At that time, even professional groups in Canton did not possess instruments of this scale, which caused considerable envy in Canton's artistic community. [16]

According to alumnus Mok Kuen-ying's (莫權英) recollection, when he was studying in Chicago in the fall of 1946, Fung passed through Chicago in 1947, while engaging in fundraising activities in other countries for the Pui Ching Middle School. The principal showed him the orders for the new instruments, and he remembered feeling extremely envious that his schoolmates would be provided with new instruments to play. [27] From the reports of that year and from recollections of alumni

members, it becomes clear that the Pui Ching Middle School's ownership of a set of American instruments presented a significant event in Canton, demonstrating Pui Ching's leadership position in the development of wind bands and of Western music in the city.

When the collection of instruments was discovered, most of them were part of C.G. Conn's 1947 collection, and one or two saxophones were actually made in France. Initially, the author of this article had assumed that Fung's order in America included French instruments, but the documents discovered later addressed this question: in 1934, Ho Ah-dong requested that the school purchase additional instruments because there were not enough, and after the school directory approved, a new collection of instruments was ordered from France. [19] The Alto Saxophone shown in Il. 3 is a high-quality instrument from that period, made by Cabart à Paris. This discovery exceeded

the author's knowledge about this collection of instruments. From the author's research, it was discovered that during the war, the Canton Pui Ching Middle School relocated to Macau and brought their instruments with them, which enabled the Macau Pui Ching Middle School to establish their band and their orchestra during the war. [27] However, it turned out to be an unexpected discovery for the author that some French-made instruments from the 1934 collection remained in Canton. This made him reconsider, whether it might be possible to find American-made instruments from the 1920 collection in Macau, where the political situation was more stable. This could be a direction for future research, which would help us understand better the history of the development of wind bands in Canton during the 1920s.



Il. 3. 1934 Cabart à Paris Alto Saxophone from France.
Source: The Author (June 11, 2024)

The Challenges of Preserving Historical Instruments

As Klaus indicates, in the field of organological sources — iconography, written texts, and music — there can be little doubt that the surviving instruments themselves

are the most significant “documents” leading to the understanding of their history. [28] The collection of historical instruments also bears witness to the political turmoil that was in effect after the emergence of contemporary China. After the establishment of present-day China, these instruments were reportedly borrowed and distributed to other schools. This is understandable in itself, since the newly established country was undergoing major changes, and resources were being redistributed. For example, even Ho Ah-dong, the conductor of both the Pui Ching and the Lingnan Middle School wind bands and a patriotic musician from Canton, was transferred to the 19th Army Corps in Harbin to instruct military bands. Therefore, it may have been possible that instruments were distributed to different schools and locations. [29]

This collection of instruments witnessed the largest political movement in the establishment of present-day China — the Cultural Revolution. According to local Guangzhou teachers, who shared their experiences with the author of this article, instruments were objects that were targeted for destruction during the Cultural Revolution. At that time, some alumni hid these instruments inside the walls of the Tung Shan Baptist Church (東山浸信會堂), presumably because they considered them to be valuable school assets and precious procurements from America that were extremely valuable objects. Without this effort of their preservation, the instruments would certainly have been eliminated (see Il. 4). This is how they survived throughout the entire duration of Cultural Revolution. The author of this article was later informed that these instruments were later used at a certain school in Guangzhou for about 20 more years until around 2000, when they were finally put away from use, but continued to be preserved by dedicated teachers (Anonymous, personal communication, June 11, 2024).



Il. 4. Performance at the Tung Shan Baptist Church in Canton on December 24, 1949:³
Source: The Hong Kong Pui Ching Alumni Association⁴

This historical narrative was likely quite common in New China at that time. The author also heard from Taiwanese band director Daniel Hsieh (謝慕揚), who worked in music education in Fuzhou (福州), China, that church bands in Chinchew (泉州) experienced similar occurrences. Fortunately, their instruments were concealed in a well-hidden spot in the church and were preserved until after the Cultural Revolution (Daniel Hsieh, personal communication, February 19, 2025). These historical instruments provide the public with a more comprehensive historical perspective. During the Cultural Revolution, most items

from the West were destroyed, and many instruments with historical significance were lost. Therefore, the discovery of instruments from the Republican era, or late Qing Dynasty with their complete histories intact represents an extraordinarily rare cultural discovery.

This historical significance lies in the fact that China experienced both the Second World War and the subsequent Cultural Revolution. Many valuable documents and musical instruments were lost due to these two major historical events. Therefore, when we understand the complete story of these instruments, the author of this article believes this represents

³ The sousaphone and trombone in the picture are the same instruments shown in Ils. 1 and 2.

⁴ Pui Ching Memories: The Glorious Years of the Canton Pui Ching's Brass Band. *Pui Ching Newsletter*. 2017, no. 183, p. 134.

a significant historical development. It also provides a more complete understanding of the historical development from the Republican era to present-day China, and its impact on local wind band development.

However, the limitations of this article also reveal the challenges of instrument preservation in contemporary China. Because the ownership of historical instruments among various schools has not been completely clarified, the author has not been able to fully explain the relationships between them in this article. As the alumni from the schools mentioned, after 1950, the collection of instruments was borrowed by a certain department of the new government, which may have been related to the social system at that time. After the Pui Ching Middle School changed campuses, its archives and school property were also transferred. [16] To avoid awkward situations regarding identity, the author of the article has withheld information about the interviewees musicians he interviewed, schools, and churches, as the interviewees still work there, and the church in Quanzhou (泉州) still operates. This also prevents the full historical account from being shared completely with the public.

Since the school has limited knowledge about the collection of instruments, currently, most of them are stored in the school's warehouse, while only a small portion of them is displayed in their school history museum without any protection. The instruments can even be directly touched by visitors, which is a highly undesirable method of handling them. This seriously impacts the state of the instruments' preservation. However, after examining their quality, Yang noted that these instruments were comparable to the ones that had been "sleeping" for decades, but their condition was still very good. With just some repairs, these instruments could once again be used for performances (Yang Bing-hua, personal communication, June 11, 2024).

For future research directions, the author proposes the restoration of these historical instruments to facilitate a scholarly lecture-concert examining the development of wind music in the Lingnan region during the Republican era. By utilizing these recovered artifacts as an analytical framework and employing practice-led research methodologies, we could evaluate the educational efficacy and social impact of such academic performances in enhancing public comprehension of the historical significance of Lingnan wind music and its contributions to modern Chinese musical historiography. Instruments that are confined to permanent static display lose both their sonic capabilities and performative functions, diminishing their full contextual meaning and cultural value, even though each instrument undeniably represents a specific historical narrative, a sociocultural framework, and an anthropological context. Approaching instruments as research subjects — through organological classification, exhibition contextualization of historical and cultural dimensions, and providing interactive engagement opportunities for visitors — significantly enriches the museological experience. [24] Following public educational programming, these instruments should be transferred to appropriate museological institutions for permanent conservation, thereby ensuring perpetual public access to tangible artifacts that document their pivotal role in modern Chinese musical development. This comprehensive approach would substantially advance both scholarly discourse and public appreciation regarding the historical importance of traditions of wind instruments from Lingnan.

Conclusion

This study contributes substantively to rebalancing Chinese musicological discourse through a critical reconsideration of Canton's pivotal role in modern Chinese music historiography and by recuperating the traditions

of wind bands, systematically marginalized within conventional historiographical paradigms that endow privileges to conservatory-based symphonic developments. Through methodical reclamation of these overlooked narratives and material artifacts, this research facilitates a more nuanced epistemological framework for understanding the complex processes of indigenization through which Western musical practices were assimilated, transformed, and institutionalized via local educational apparatuses, ultimately becoming constitutive elements of modern Chinese cultural identity.

The evidence presented herein demonstrates how scholastic wind bands functioned the well beyond narrowly defined musical parameters to serve as multivalent vehicles for cultural diplomacy, national identity construction, and civic engagement within complex sociopolitical contexts. The biographical trajectories of the Pui Ching alumni who made significant contributions to post-war musical infrastructure of Lingnan illustrate how educational institutions functioned as crucial transmission mechanisms for musical knowledge and performative practices across geopolitical boundaries and through periods of substantial historical disruption.

The collection of historical musical instruments at the Pui Ching Middle School in pre-war Canton represents a significant contribution to understanding the developmental trajectory of Western music in modern China. These artifacts transcend the mere organological specimens to constitute comprehensive cultural repositories that illuminate broader historical narratives concerning modernization initiatives, pedagogical methodologies, political circumstances, and transcultural exchanges during China's Republican era. Having survived multiple periods of political upheavals, particularly the Cultural Revolution, these instruments constitute exceptionally rare material documentation, the preservation

of which carries substantial scholarly significance. As Lu observes regarding the research of historical music performance, reconstructing period ensemble instrumentation and performance practices while simulating contemporaneous attire and settings creates historically significant atmospheres that facilitate temporal transposition for audiences. [30]

Consequently, this study proposes future research employing practice-led methodologies to activate further these instruments' pedagogical and historical potentialities. Through meticulous efforts of conservation, historically informed performance practices, and collaborative educational programming, these instruments may transition from their roles as static museological artifacts to being dynamic pedagogical tools manifesting a living cultural heritage. Such approaches align with contemporary museological paradigms, emphasizing experiential learning and multisensory engagement while maintaining a fidelity to the instruments' historical integrity and material vulnerability. This approach addresses Lu's salient observation regarding museum-housed instruments — that while organizing related live performances is of significant educational value, the differentiation between museum concerts and conventional concert hall performances meant to highlight a collection's distinctive characteristics remains a critical consideration for contemporary museological practice. [Ibid.]

While this article contributes to understanding the significance of the wind bands of Canton in modern Chinese music history, as a study dealing with archives, it must acknowledge certain limitations. Historians inevitably employ personal interpretive frameworks and academic positions when analyzing archival materials. [12] This interpretive process involves complex epistemological responsibilities: although archival materials provide basic historical

sources, historians effectively reconstruct and shape historical narratives through their theoretical orientations, methodological frameworks, and analytical tendencies. The same archival materials may yield dramatically different interpretations within different disciplinary contexts or methodological approaches. Therefore, historical researchers bear a special ethical responsibility to articulate explicitly how their perspectives interact with

the fragmented, discontinuous nature of archival evidence, potentially reconstructing the latter to some degree. [Ibid.] However, it must also be acknowledged that these fragmented archival materials represent precisely those primary documents in modern Chinese educational history that have not been previously discussed, challenging in full measure the existing narratives and establishing new historical perspectives of modern Chinese music history.

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