Buddhist Music as a Contested Site: The Transmission of Teochew Buddhist Music between China and Singapore

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Cover Page Footnote
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In the *Chaozhou City Gazetteer of Buddhism & Chaozhou Kaiyuan Monastery Gazetteer*, published in 1992, the then abbot of the Kaiyuan Monastery, Shi Huiyuan 释慧原, heavily condemned the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) monk Shi Kesheng 释可声 (dates unknown) for "starting the sin among laity in the Chaozhou region who dared to transgress [the Buddhist doctrines] and became chant leaders in a flaming mouth ritual." Why was the abbot so upset with a fellow monk back in history? What did Kesheng do, and what were the implications of him starting this “transgression”? Looking back, Kesheng’s transgression of the monastic rules turned out to be a pivotal point in the transmission and preservation of Buddhist music from Chaozhou. This article investigates the history of the international traffic of Buddhist music and uncovers the crucial roles of lay Buddhists in preserving Buddhist music in times of national chaos.

*Fanbai* (梵呗), “the speech of Brahma,” is a Buddhist ritual chanting performed in a clear, melodious, and resonant voice to praise the virtues of the Buddha. Across China, Buddhist music is played in various regions in local music styles, such as the “ten variations” (*Shifan* 十番) played by the music ensembles of Jiangsu and the refined “capital music” (*Jing yinyue* 京音乐) played in the Zhihua Temple 智化寺 in Beijing, as well as the “free-reed mouth-organ and double-reed pipe” (*shengguan* 笙管) music in Shanxi. In the southern part of China, specifically in the Teochew dialect (*Chaozhou hua* 潮州话)–speaking region, *Fanbai* has evolved into a distinctive form of Buddhist music, performed with a combination of traditional folk music, rituals, dance, and chanting by scriptural masters (*jingshi* 经师) and musicians. “Scriptural master” is a term used by members and clients of the charitable halls to designate a lay Buddhist who chants scriptures. This particular form of Buddhist music has also been practiced in Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand to which the Teochew people migrated. This article explores three questions related to Teochew Buddhist music practiced in Singapore: How was Teochew Buddhist music transmitted between China and Singapore? How did the music, chanting, and ritual propagate and evolve locally in Singapore? What are the broader implications of this cross-border transmission of Buddhist music?

Teochew Buddhist music was transmitted to Singapore by scriptural masters who left China during World War II. Teochew Buddhist music served funerary and social functions in postwar Singapore and continues to be passed down to younger generations. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), religious and cultural practices all over China faced some form of disruption or destruction. Teochew Buddhist music from China was able to remain intact because Singapore served as one of its cultural sanctuaries during this period of destruction and chaos. In other countries and regions outside of mainland China where there is a large Teochew diasporic population, such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Hong Kong,
Teochew Buddhist music (largely in the Xianghua style) has also been continuously performed in local charitable halls. Lay Buddhists played a major role in preserving and propagating religious music as a Buddhist ritual and aesthetic practice.

There were four key moments in the transmission of Teochew Buddhist music brought about by the lay Buddhists: 1) when Buddhist music was first brought into the lay Buddhist communities from the monastics in Chaozhou, China; 2) when Buddhist music was brought from China to Singapore by the lay Buddhist scriptural master, Mr. Lü Guoxiong 吕国雄; 3) when Lü’s student standardized Buddhist music and staged a concert in Singapore; 4) when Buddhist music was brought back to China by Lü’s students, after the practice was disrupted in China due to the Cultural Revolution.

The objectives of this article are twofold, and they respond to two strands of scholarly conversations in Buddhist studies. First, by examining the role of multiple generations of scriptural masters in transmitting Teochew Buddhist music, I highlight the agency of lay Buddhists, as opposed to elites or religious professionals, in facilitating on-the-ground transmission and preservation of Buddhist music. This expands our understanding of modern and contemporary Buddhism beyond scholarship that examines textual records, and the activities of religious leaders, institutions, and the elite social class.

Barend ter Haar suggests that a reliance on textual sources alone, and on sources from officials, religious leaders, and elite groups, can engender a skewed view of historical reality, sometimes leading to negative labeling and stereotype. Hence, this article takes an emic perspective, looking beyond textual records to examine music and ritual, and the activities of lay Buddhists and musicians from within. Second, by piecing together a transnational network of Buddhist music, and presenting a sonic space that encompasses China and Singapore, this article unsettles our understanding of the geographical boundary of Chinese Buddhism as confined within China. This study situates itself in broader literature by Jack Chia and others that examines Chinese Buddhism in maritime Southeast Asia, beyond a “China-centered” perspective, and highlights the role of overseas Chinese in the propagation of Buddhism in China and abroad. While Chia writes a history of monastic and institutional connectivity across the South China Sea, this article contributes to existing scholarship by writing the connectivity enabled by lay Buddhists.

My case study also reveals the intrareligious conflicts in sonic space, showing how Buddhist music has become a site of contestation among monastics, lay Buddhists, and musical professionals. Lay Buddhists struggled against formally ordained monks over the right to be chant leaders for the Chanhe style of Buddhist music, a more venerated chanting style originating in monasteries. Lay practitioners of the Chanhe style relied on canonical scriptures to lay claims over authenticity and defined their form of music as “more Buddhist” than the laity-oriented Xianghua style. During the Republican period (1912–49), lay Buddhists propagated ritual music that focused on after-life salvation, going against the trend of modernist-reformist monks who advocated for this-worldly engagement and text-based cultivation. In contemporary
times, musical professionals also sought to control the ways Buddhist music are performed for recording and television appearance. Last, my study also shows that communal exclusion through sound could occur in order to maintain exclusivity of musical knowledge.

For primary sources, I conducted six interviews between 2021 and 2023 with four scriptural masters and musicians who have learned and practiced Buddhist music in charitable halls. One of them, Ng Eng Quee 黄英贵, is in his sixties. He is a scriptural master who learned Buddhist music and ritual under the guidance of Lü Guoxiong from China. Three other informants are scriptural masters and musicians in their thirties and forties who learned Buddhist music from another of Lü’s students, Tang Jingkun 唐敬焜. From talking to two generations of practitioners, this article pieces together the intergenerational transfer and transmission of Buddhist music between China and Singapore. I also examined a 1992 temple gazetteer of the Kaiyuan Monastery in Chaozhou, as well as a 1994 commemorative publication of the Nan’an Charitable Hall. They offer valuable insights into the history and ritual within the temple and charitable hall, which are otherwise invisible to the public. Furthermore, I consulted music scores and chant lyrics, materials often used in ethnomusicology, but less so in religious studies.

Historical Background
I premise my study on the Nan’an Charitable Hall (Singapore Nam Ann Siang Theon 新加坡南安善堂), which is the only charitable hall in Singapore that practices the Chanhe style (Chanhe ban 禅和板) of Teochew Buddhist music. In the following sections, I will provide a brief historical background of the charitable hall, shantang 善堂, as well as the styles of Teochew Buddhist music.

The Roles of Shantang in China and Singapore
Shantang (literally, “charitable hall”) is a kind of Chinese religious organization that engages in charitable activities and had its origin in the Chaoshan region of China. Devotees primarily worship the Buddhist monk Song Dafeng 宋大峰 (1039–1127) of the Song Dynasty. During his lifetime, Song Dafeng was known for raising funds for the construction of a stone bridge in the village and healing sick villagers. In the early Qing Dynasty, legend has it that a villager had a dream of Song Dafeng advising them to collect and bury dead bodies, as well as providing free medicine to the sick. This started the tradition of charitable halls helping both the living and the deceased.

When the Teochew people from China migrated to Singapore, they brought with them the charitable hall culture and practices and established the first charitable hall in Singapore in 1916. Early charitable halls provided social services, including conducting rituals to appease the dead souls after wars and providing burial services for fellow emigrants. This corresponded to what Robert P. Weller and his coauthors categorize as the earlier forms of doing good in Chinese societies. In recent times, charitable halls in Singapore have evolved to meet the changing demands for social welfare. They have built day care centers for senior citizens, raised funds for educational endowments, established kidney dialysis centers, and provided bursaries and scholarships to students.
Hue Guan Thye, as of 2015 there were at least 12 charitable halls in Singapore.23 The religious element has been important in ensuring the success and continuous existence of charitable halls in a changing societal landscape.24 As religious organizations, charitable halls are characterized by syncretism, worshipping Daoist and Confucian deities as well as Bodhisattvas.25 When Singapore was under British colonial rule, early charitable halls provided a space for Teochew emigrants to congregate and continue their religious practices, thus playing an important role in strengthening the internal bonds within the Teochew community in a multicultural and multilingual society.26 Even as Singapore became modernized, there has been a continued demand for postdeath services, which the charitable halls are in a good position to provide.27 The funerary benefaction rites (zuo gongde 做功德) in charitable halls have been important in strengthening family ties and allowing living family members of the deceased to show filial piety.28 Hence, funerary rituals have served both religious and social functions.

The charitable halls exist as one type of overseas Chinese voluntary association in Southeast Asia that provides mutual support and a sense of community for Chinese emigrants. For example, there are clan associations organized by emigrants from a common native district or a common dialect group in China.29 An example of this is the association for emigrants of the Teochew dialect group, known as the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan (潮州八邑会馆).30 There are also kinship-based organizations supporting emigrants of a common surname, descent line, or ancestry.31 Other types of mutual aid networks exist based on profession and hobby, such as the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry representing the interests of the business community, and the Nam Hwa Opera, a group of amateur Teochew opera actors and musicians in Singapore.32 The charitable halls share characteristics of voluntary organizations in providing social welfare, financing education, and offering a religious space for overseas Chinese.33

The Nan’an Charitable Hall was founded in 1944 by a group of Teochew emigrants and merchants during the Japanese occupation of Singapore.34 Seeing how people were suffering from malnutrition, poor sanitation, poverty, and the trauma of war, a member of the overseas Teochew community, Lim Shusen 林树森 (fl. 1942–44), appealed to the Welfare Department of the Japanese military forces in Singapore to set up charitable halls, focusing on providing disaster relief.35 The character an 安, which means “peace” in Chinese, signifies a wish to end violence during a time of chaos and trauma.36 The Nan’an Charitable Hall was part of the Blue Cross Relief Association (Lanshi jiuji zonghui 蓝十救济总会), joining the Pujju 普救, Xiude 修德, Tongjing 同敬, and Tongfeng 同奉 Charitable Halls to provide disaster relief to war victims.37 During wartime, these charitable halls donated coffins, collected corpses from the streets, and provided funerary services to Teochew community members who passed away.38 The Japanese army welcomed the provision of such social services in the interest of rallying the support of local Buddhists for their long-term control over Singapore.39 Because of the need to conduct funerary rituals, the Nan’an Charitable Hall set up the Department of Scripture and Music
This department performed Teochew Buddhist music, specifically, the Chanhe style.

Teochew Buddhist Music: Chanhe and Xianghua Styles
Teochew Buddhist music is broadly divided into two styles: Chanhe (beat of the Chan practitioner 禅和板) and Xianghua (beat of incense and flowers 香花板). They differ in melody, meter, and texts. The Chanhe style is characterized by the percussion technique of the percussionist-cum-chant leader, who uses one hand to beat the drum and another to beat a hanging bell. It is also known as the “beat of the seven stars” (qixing ban 七星板), referring to the rhythmic pattern of seven beats of the woodblock (muyu 木鱼) that occurs when the music is about to pick up speed. The Xianghua style is characterized by the use of two sticks to beat the drum in a piece with a 4/4 time signature, or beating a drum and a small cymbal (xiaobo 小钹) in a piece with a 2/4 time signature. The Xianghua style was historically used by monks in the Chaozhou region to provide funerary services to lay people. It was so named because monks called their funerary services “rendering incense and flowers” (zuo xianghua 做香花). In other words, the incense-and-flowers music was laity-oriented, intended to cater to the funerary needs of the mass population. In contrast, the Chanhe music originated in Buddhist monasteries and was used exclusively by religious professionals for the temples’ internal Buddhist rites. Hence, in terms of text, the lyrics of the Chanhe-style music consist of Buddhist canonical texts such as the Diamond Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, while those of the Xianghua style involve a combination of Buddhist elements and Confucian morality texts. The Chanhe style was transmitted through a network of Buddhist temples in southeastern China and later entered the Kaiyuan Monastery in Chaozhou. In the Kaiyuan Temple gazetteer, Venerable Huiyuan 慧原 traces the lineage of the Chanhe style to Venerable Mi’yin 密因, who came from Guangzhou’s Huaihuang Temple 海幢寺 to revive the Kaiyuan Monastery in the Qing Dynasty during Emperor Qianlong’s reign (1736). Under Venerable Mi’yin’s leadership, the monks in the Kaiyuan Monastery started to adopt the Chanhe style of Buddhist chants in their morning and evening daily services, as well as in major bimonthly rites.

From Monastics to Lay Buddhists
The first key moment that enabled the transnational traffic of Teochew Buddhist music was when the Chanhe style first went beyond the realm of Buddhist monastics and entered the lay Buddhist communities. In 1854, during the Qing Emperor Xianfeng’s reign, four lay Buddhists in Chaozhou—Li Jinren 李谨人, Gu Lige 辜立舸, Dong Siyuan 董思园, and Wei Zhezhai 魏哲斋—took refuge under the Kaiyuan Abbot Venerable Kexing 可兴和尚 and gathered within the Kaiyuan Monastery in Chaozhou to practice group chanting. Later, they organized their own society for reciting the names of Buddhas (nianfo she 念佛社) outside the monastery, which also engaged in charitable works. This group of lay Buddhists invited the monk Kesheng 可声 (the one condemned by the later Abbot Huiyuan) from Kaiyuan Monastery to teach them the Chanhe style of Buddhist music. Kesheng taught them a variety of Buddhist chants and rituals used by the monastics, including Buddhist hymns (Zan 赞), gāthās (Ji 僧), and
repentance rituals (jingchan 经忏), as well as the Yunqi Yoga Flaming Mouth Ritual (Yunqi Yujia Yankou Zhenquan 云栖瑜伽焰口真铨). A flaming mouth ritual aims to relieve all sentient beings from suffering. Its primary focus is to feed hungry ghosts so they may receive the dharma teachings and be reincarnated into a better realm in the next life.

Kesheng’s teaching of Buddhist ritual and chanting, especially the flaming mouth ritual, which was previously exclusive to the monastic communities, made him a target of severe criticism. According to Buddhist doctrines, lay Buddhists are not allowed to play the role of chant leaders in leading a flaming mouth ritual. The role of “vajra master” (jingang shangshi 金刚上师), loosely translated as “guru” or “deacon,” is a specific leadership position in a monastery traditionally held by a formally ordained monk. This leader is responsible for initiating sutra chanting in a monastery assembly. Despite protest from the Kaiyuan monastic community, Kesheng ignored their criticism and carried on with the teaching. He was later expelled from the monastic community after a meeting in the Kaiyuan Monastery.

Although Kesheng was condemned by religious leaders on the basis of monastic rules, this movement of Buddhist music from the monastics to lay Buddhist communities proved critical in preserving the Chanhe style of Buddhist music during the Cultural Revolution. Yet, from an orthodox religious perspective, the lay Buddhists were seen as “transgressing” the religious role reserved for formally ordained monks. Buddhist music thus became a site of contestation between lay Buddhists and monastics. This article calls into question the views that prioritize the opinions of religious leaders, official monastic records, and Buddhist institutional rules, and questions the labeling of lay Buddhist practitioners as “heterodox” and “transgressive.” It places the development of Buddhist music in the larger context of lay Buddhist activities in Southeast Asia in the mid-nineteenth century, such as nonordained vegetarian women (zhaigu 斋姑) performing religious rituals and chanting indigenous Buddhist scriptures in vegetarian halls in Malaya, in place of Buddhist monastics.

The Transmission of Teochew Buddhist Music from China to Singapore

The second key moment in the international transmission of Teochew Buddhist music was brought about by lay Buddhist scriptural masters who migrated from the Chaoshan region in Guangdong, China, to Southeast Asia. This article adopts a historical approach to trace the scriptural master Lü Guoxiong’s migration from China to Singapore and his subsequent activities in documenting ritual practices, handwriting chant lyrics, and training scriptural masters overseas.

Lü was born in 1912 in Chao’an County, Guangdong Province. He was originally a scriptural master who practiced the Chanhe style of Buddhist music at the Ji’an Charitable Hall in Chaozhou, China. Lü Guoxiong also identified himself as a household Buddhist (jushi 居士). According to the handwritten manuscript passed down from Lü, he was the fifth heir of the Chanhe style of Buddhist music, learning from the fourth heir, Chen Shenghe 陈声和, who taught at the Ji’an Charitable Hall. Chen in turn learned it from the third heir, Qiu Jiaxiang 邱家祥, who practiced at the Nianxin Charitable Hall in Chaozhou. The surname
of both the first and second heirs of *Chanhe* music was Hong 洪, although their given names had been lost. The first heir would have learned from the monk Kesheng. In the mid-twentieth century, China was in the turmoil of the second Sino-Japanese War. The traumatic warfare, political chaos, and economic challenges in China were push factors that drove Lü away from his hometown in search of job opportunities in Singapore. After he arrived there in 1943, he was spotted at his workplace by local Teochew community members and identified as a scriptural master well versed in the craft of chanting Buddhist music. The Nan’an Charitable Hall thus hired him to train its members in chanting scriptures and performing funerary rites. Other than Lü, most scriptural masters hold other day jobs outside the charitable hall. None of them were formally ordained monks, but they had taken up the roles of chanting Buddhist scriptures.

Lü’s contribution to the transmission of Teochew Buddhist music from China to Singapore was twofold: first, in terms of establishing an institution, he built the foundational structure of the Department of Scripture and Music, which still exists today. Second, in terms of transferring knowledge, he documented several rituals and numerous chanting pieces that are unique to the *Chanhe* style of Teochew Buddhist music, and trained a team of skilled scriptural masters. His student recalled that Lü came to Singapore “empty-handed,” but started to handwrite from memory the Buddhist chanting lyrics and the entire proceedings of complex rituals. There was a greater sponsorship system at work to support Lü, including businessmen who financed the charitable hall and donated land, which in turn enabled Lü’s activities.

In terms of institution building, Lü established the foundational structure of the Department of Scripture and Music by organizing a musical ensemble and setting the standard for Buddhist-style altar decoration. A musical ensemble in a Teochew Buddhist ritual consists of percussionists, who are termed “the military side” (*wu*pan 武畔) and melodic instrumentalists, who are termed “the literary side” (*wen*pan 文畔). The percussion instruments include a drum (*gu* 鼓), a hanging bell (*diao*zhong 吊钟), two chimes (*ying*qin 引磬), a woodblock (*mu*yu 木鱼), a small cymbal (*chazi* 鐲仔), and a double-pitched gong (*shuang*yin 双音). The melodic instruments include a shawm (*su*ona 唢呐), a flute (*di* 笛), an end-blown flute (*xiao* 簫), a dulcimer (*yang*qin 扬琴), a plucked lute (*p*ipa 琵琶), a three-stringed plucked lute (*san*xian 三弦), a bowed fiddle with a coconut base (*yehu* 椰胡), and a two-stringed fiddle (*er*hu 二胡). The percussionists set the tempo and initiate the chanting, while the instrumentalists produce the melodies to accompany the chant. Lü coordinated an ensemble of percussionists and instrumentalists to perform the music and ritual. He taught his students from memory, without relying on any previously written music scores or percussion scripts. He also set the standard for decorating a Buddhist-style altar, which is still followed today. He adorned the altar with small folding screens that tell stories from *jataka* (the Buddha’s past lives) and hung embroidered banners of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas around the chanting hall.

In terms of knowledge transfer, Lü trained the vocal scriptural masters to perform various rituals that followed convoluted and elaborate proceedings. To participate in a ritual, the scriptural trainees (*jingsheng* 经生) needed to learn a myriad
of performative crafts: chanting scriptures in both the Teochew dialect and guanhua language, mentally visualizing Buddhist scripture–inspired scenes such as feeding the hungry ghosts in the flaming mouth ritual, performing various forms of liturgical hand gestures, and dancing in specific symbolic patterns. As mentioned above, the flaming mouth ritual is a Buddhist liturgy aimed at alleviating the suffering of the hungry ghosts, who are among the beings in the lower realms of suffering in Buddhism. They are in a state of constant starvation because when they open their mouths to eat, flame erupts from their stomach to their mouth. The flaming mouth ritual is intended to provide merit to the hungry ghosts and feed them, so that they are satiated and can also receive dharma teachings.

An example of liturgical dance movement practiced by the scriptural trainees, “the golden chapter of invitation” (qiqing jinzhang 启请金章) involves a group of five scriptural trainees dancing in crisscrossing patterns holding ritual objects such as flags while chanting, as a way to incite the divinities to visit the ritual space.

Due to the complexity of the rituals, Lü had to devote a significant amount of time and effort to recalling from memory, documenting, and teaching such elaborate proceedings. An internal ritual guideline at the Nan’an Charitable Hall offers a glimpse into how complicated a ceremonial proceeding can be. Termed the “Offering Ceremony” (jiangong fahui 建供法会), this rite is divided into 17 parts, each with its own function, symbolic meanings, and specific guidelines on mental visualization, as well as its corresponding dharani or sutras (see Table 1). The purpose of the ceremony is to preach Buddhist teaching to beings from different realms, including nonhuman beings, and liberate them from the suffering of cyclic existence. For example, step nine of the Offering Ceremony involves the Pureland Repentance Ritual. When teaching this repentance ritual, Lü guided his trainees to visualize the image of the Amitabha Buddha and trained them to chant the Sukhavativyuha Sutra. This ritual is also conducted on request as part of a funerary rite due to its widely believed liturgical power of guiding the deceased to the Amitabha pureland. An Offering Puja usually takes two days to perform and involves at least 11 scriptural masters.

While Lü was credited by his students for transmitting a form of Buddhist music that was perceived by them to be more authentic than the Xianghua style, the debates around the “Buddhist-ness” of the Chanhe versus the Xianghua style exposes the claim to authenticity asserted by the monastics and different groups of lay Buddhists. This further reveals their power struggle and negotiation of Buddhist identities. The official Kaiyuan Temple gazetteer published in 1992 states that “the Chanhe style creates a stately and calming aura that is most aligned with the Buddhist Fanbai spirit. In contrast, the excessive use of musical instruments in the Xianghua style often overshadows scriptural chanting.” Later, a publication of the Nan’an Charitable Hall shares the same sentiment, labeling the Xianghua style as “loud” and “using complicated instruments that obstruct the elegant vocal chanting.” This publication describes the Xianghua style as “passionate and lively” and the Chanhe style as “slow and steady.” However, in a real-life ritual, the fast- and slow-tempo music can be combined and used together in the same proceeding. Such generalization reveals the interest of the Chanhe-style practitioners
in constructing a narrative promoting their style as more authentically “Buddhist.” During the interview, my informant also emphasized that the Chanhe lyrics were taken directly from the Buddhist canon and are therefore “authentic” and “Buddhist,” while the Xianghua lyrics contain a mixture of Confucian morality texts and Daoist texts. However, current scholarship is revalorizing such vernacular text that contains a mix of Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian ideas, seeing them as a vernacular interpretation of Buddhist scripture that was historically popular among the nonelite mass. There was a contestation between the monastics and different groups of lay Buddhists to lay claim to “authenticity” and negotiate “Buddhist-ness.” While the religious leaders relied on Buddhist monastic rules to defend the power of ordained monks as

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sequence</th>
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| 1.       | 洗净发丢科仪  
Cleansing and Announcement Ritual                                                                       |
| 2.       | 供佛科仪  
Offering to the Buddha Ritual                                                                          |
| 3.       | 金刚般若波罗蜜经  
Diamond Sutra                                                                                       |
| 4.       | 观世音菩萨普门品  
The Lotus Sutra’s Universal Gate Chapter on Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva |
| 5.       | 北斗尊经  
Big Dipper Sutra                                                                                            |
| 6.       | 现在贤劫千佛名经  
Sutra of the Thousand Buddhas in the Present Good Kalpa                                                      |
| 7.       | 启请科仪  
Invitation Ritual                                                                                     |
| 8.       | 畲藏宝灯科仪  
Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva’s Precious Lamp Ritual                                                             |
| 9.       | 净土忏法  
Pureland Repentance Ritual                                                                             |
| 10.      | 安坛科仪  
Securing the Mandala                                                                                   |
| 11.      | 洗净科仪  
Cleansing Ritual                                                                                       |
| 12.      | 慈悲十王妙忏法  
The Ten Compassionate Kings of the Underworld Marvelous Repentance Ritual |
| 13.      | 翻释金刚经科仪  
Interpretation and Explanation of the Diamond Sutra Ritual                                                |
| 14.      | 午供千献科仪  
Noon Offering and Ten Benefactions Ritual                                                                  |
| 15.      | 畲藏菩萨本愿经  
Sutra of the Original Vows of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva                                                      |
| 16.      | 慈悲三味水忏  
Compassionate Samādhi Water Repentance Ritual                                                              |
| 17.      | 云栖莲池焰口真经  
Authentic Annotated Yunqi Yoga Flaming Mouth Ritual                                                       |

the only rightful chant leaders, the *Chanhe* practitioners similarly used Buddhist canonical text to claim their superiority over the *Xianghua*-style music. Cuilan Liu suggests that vocal music is heavily regulated by Buddhist monastic rules to demarcate and maintain the boundary between lay and ordained communities. The sonic space is also a site of contestation, power struggle, and identity negotiation between different lay Buddhist groups.

Lü’s efforts to propagate the *Chanhe* Buddhist music that supports after-life salvation deviated from the visions of modernist monks of his time. He propagated two aspects of Buddhism: its liturgical practice and the appeasement of the deceased. Buddhist reformist monks in the Republican era were known to emphasize text-based dharma learning over ritual, and this-worldly practice over other-worldly salvation. In the Republican period, many modernist Buddhist monks traveled from China to Singapore, including Taixu and Yen Pei. Reformist monks like Taixu emphasized “spirituality over ritual, and focused on the cultivation of the self.” Similarly, Yen Pei emphasized the “active propagation of the Dharma, incorporation of religious practices into everyday life, and shifting the focus on afterlife salvation to this-worldly social engagement.” As a lay Buddhist, Lü propagated traditional Buddhist music that served a funerary function, deviating from the historic trend of Buddhist modernism led by reformist monks during his time. In studies of nineteenth-century Buddhism, ritual specialists hired to perform rituals in temples and funerals have been dismissed as “less educated” and “barely understand(ing) the scriptures written in classical Chinese,” whereas modernist monks who promoted monastic education were venerated. A closer look at the experience of lay Buddhists reveals that their persistence in ritual against the visions of modernist monks has led to the *Chanhe* music being preserved across borders and generations. Buddhist music has again become a site of contestation, where intrareligious dissent between monastics and lay Buddhists materialized in the sonic space.

**The Standardization of Teochew Buddhist Music in Singapore**

The third key moment in the transnational traffic of Teochew Buddhist music and its preservation was when students of Lü standardized and formalized Buddhist music in Singapore. I focus on two key initiatives led by one of Lü’s students, Mr. Ng Eng Quee. First, Ng documented the melodies of *Chanhe* Buddhist music for the first time in Singapore. Second, he organized a performance of Buddhist music in the prestigious Victoria Concert Hall, turning Buddhist music from a sacramental ritual confined within the space of charitable halls and funeral parlors to a form of performance art to be appreciated in a modern concert hall.

**From Melodies to Music Scores**

Ng’s documentation of the melodies of Buddhist music in modern scores marked its transition from oral/aural to score-based transmission, and from a movable to a standardized mode of performance. By “oral/aural transmission,” I mean that musicians who studied with Lü could only learn by listening to the music as it was performed. As mentioned, Lü taught percussion and music to his students orally from memory, without relying on any written scores or percussion scripts. As a result, subsequent batches of scriptural trainees and musicians learned...
by immersion, observation, and master-apprentice transfer, instead of practicing from scores. By “movable,” I mean that due to the lack of scores, early musicians in the charitable halls could play the same melody at very different musical scales, depending on how the chant leaders initiated the singing. Different chant leaders can start at different pitches on different days, depending on their vocal register. This was because Chinese musical instruments have a movable do system, whereby the note do always represents the keynote of the scale, but at different absolute pitches depending on the key specified. The tuning of string instruments such as the dulcimer and fiddle can accommodate a variety of different musical scales, while still producing a similar melody.

This “movable” way of playing Teochew Buddhist music is apparently how it was really practiced back at the Kaiyuan Monastery. In 1989, Chinese musician Tian Qing went to the monastery to record Teochew temple music. He observed that the deacon would start the chant first, while the musicians tried for five to fifteen seconds on their respective instruments to search for a scale that matched the tune of the deacon. Although the musical ensemble and vocalists were very experienced in performing together, the same process of searching for the right scale happened every time they started a new piece.

In Singapore, this movable way of playing presented some real challenges to the propagation of Buddhist music. The earlier musicians in Singapore who came to the charitable hall before Lü were not familiar with the Chanhe style. They found this too challenging and therefore left the charitable hall when Lü started to teach. As a practicing amateur musician, I can attest how difficult the scale-searching process is—switching from one scale to another requires a musician to adopt a different set of fingerings and a different thought process on the instrument. Only a very skilled musician can accomplish that in a short five-to-fifteen-second period. This way of playing had excluded amateur musicians from the early Buddhist music scene.

To learn through oral/aural master-apprentice transfer demanded significant time and effort from the lay Buddhists members in their after-work hours. Unlike full-time Buddhist monastics, members in charitable halls are lay people with their own secular professions. My informants held a variety of jobs, from traditional Chinese medicine doctor, university researcher, and administrator to white-collar worker. Some of them were full-time students when they started learning. This is similar to David Mozina’s account of Daoist priests who also held secular jobs but learned religious rituals on the side. One of my informants shared that as the trainees became busier with their schoolwork or day jobs, their commitment dwindled in the Buddhist music community.

Ng contributed to the propagation and evolution of Buddhist music in Singapore by turning it into a “score-based” and “standardized” way of playing music. He recognized the difficulties presented by the traditional oral/aural way of learning. Buddhist music also requires the musicians to improvise the decorative notes according to the idiom and technique of each instrument. In the absence of scores, this made it difficult for amateur musicians to pick up the skills of musical ornamentation. In 2008, Ng documented the melodies of Buddhist music using the
western sol-fa system and the Chinese cipher notation system (see Ex. 1). He documented both the skeletal notes and his suggested decorative notes. In this way, new learners can take additional visual cues while learning the techniques and idioms of musical ornamentation in Teochew music.

Example 1: Chanhe Buddhist Music—Incense Hymn 炉香赞.\(^{104}\) The upper rows of numbers are musical notes recorded according to the Chinese cipher notation system. The lower rows of Chinese characters are chant lyrics. The red circles represent the beats of the bronze alms bowl (daqing 大磬).

Francesca Tarocco has investigated the creation of modern Buddhist songs by Chinese modernist monks Taixu and Hongyi in the 1930s.\(^ {105}\) She comments that the encounter between the “hallowed Buddhist tradition of liturgical musical performance” and the “then current Chinese vogue of making songs” in the style of Japanese school songs was rather characteristic of the “mentalities of modernity,” and was oriented toward the tastes of educated urbanites.\(^ {106}\) I argue that Ng’s adoption of the western sol-fa system and the Chinese cipher notation system to document Buddhist music was also a modernist undertaking. Ng was appealing to musicians who were more exposed to contemporary music training, and used to playing from scores instead of by means of pure master–apprentice training. In other parts of Southeast Asia, scholars such as Terry Miller have also commented on the use of notation as a means to “efficiently” teach Thai music, as compared to oral transmission.\(^ {107}\)

From Charitable Halls to a Concert Hall

The creation of scores facilitated Ng’s transplant of Buddhist music from the charitable hall to the prestigious Victoria Concert Hall. The Victoria Concert Hall is Singapore’s oldest performing arts venue, gazetted as a national monument in 1992.\(^ {108}\) In 2009, the “Hymn of the Southern Sea” (Nanhai zan 南海赞), which eulogizes the virtues of Avalokitesvara,\(^ {109}\) was performed by scriptural masters from the Nan’an Charitable Hall and musicians from the Thau Yong Amateur Musical Association陶融儒乐社, which Ng was part of.\(^ {110}\) The Thau Yong Amateur Musical Association consists of amateur musicians and actors who perform both Teochew opera潮剧 and Han opera汉剧.\(^ {111}\) To promote the concert, the Thau Yong Amateur Musical Association created a modernized brochure that interweaved secular music and Buddhist music (see Fig. 1).

The presence of scores means that Buddhist music is no longer exclusive to a small group of musicians who have
been trained by immersion in the Chanhe Buddhist music tradition. Anyone who has some form of musical training and can read Chinese cipher notation system can play at least the main melody easily. After Ng standardized the scores of Buddhist music, the scores were brought over to Thau Yong and performed by secular musicians.

This performance marked the spatial transition of Buddhist music from charitable halls and funeral parlors to a modern concert hall. Concertization of religious music is not unique to the charitable hall in Singapore. When studying the staging of pipe Buddhist music from Mount Wutai (Wutaishan Shengguan) in a concert hall, American ethnomusicologist Beth Szczepanski is critical of the commercial performance of ritual music for profit. She observes that the prevailing attitude found the use of Buddhist music and dance out of the original ritual context inappropriate. She also reports that students from the local dance academy dressed up as monks to dance, suggesting that the performance was inauthentic. From a religious perspective, the performance of Buddhist music at the Victoria Concert Hall seems, at first glance, to have also taken Buddhist music out of its ritual context. However, Szczepanski's criticism is not directly applicable to the performance of Buddhist music at the Victoria Concert Hall in Singapore. This is because the concert
involved actual scriptural masters from the charitable hall, rather than outsiders posing as ritual practitioners. Furthermore, they used religious instruments that they normally use in funerary rites, including the woodblock, chimes, gong, and cymbal. Visually, the altar, decorative banners, and painted folding screens were not brought on stage. Also missing was the multisensory experience created by the burning of incense, which was important for communicating with the divine and marking the territory of a deity. To recreate the visual experience of being in a Buddhist space, a giant image of Avalokitesvara was projected onstage. Although the audience could not get a full ritual experience, they were reminded of the Buddhist context of the music.

From a musical perspective, this concert turned liturgical music that traditionally served families of the deceased or devotees into a form of performing art to be appreciated by a larger public audience. The concert video was later posted on YouTube by a member of the Teochew community, gathering 1,082 views for the Buddhist hymn alone (as of March 2023). In the online version, Chinese captions were added to the song, enabling audiences from diverse dialect groups to appreciate the music, not just members of the Teochew subethnic group. Putting Buddhist music online also means that people who traditionally would not go into a charitable hall or funerary parlor, but would browse the internet, can now get to know about Chanhe Buddhist music. The concert was awarded state sponsorship by the National Arts Council of Singapore. The council’s Arts Fund “provides support to local artists and arts groups in bringing the arts to communities and creating shared experiences for people to connect with one another.”

The Transmission of Teochew Buddhist Music Back to China

The fourth key moment in the transnational traffic of Teochew Buddhist music and its preservation was when the Chanhe style was transmitted back to China through recordings and music exchange. Sometime in the 2000s, Ng observed that some people who learned Buddhist music in charitable halls had a hidden agenda. Before they completely mastered the skills, they took off to open commercial charitable halls that conducted funerary rituals for profit. Ng was concerned that Teochew Buddhist music in charitable halls had a hidden agenda. Before they completely mastered the skills, they took off to open commercial charitable halls that conducted funerary rituals for profit. Ng was concerned that Teochew Buddhist music would be changed or diluted by these private, for-profit ritual practitioners. He mooted the idea of recording the repertoire of Teochew Buddhist music that he learned from Lü.
In 2009, Ng devoted his personal time and money to organizing a professional music recording in China. He gathered nine Teochew musicians from the Thau Yong Amateur Musical Association, and five other scriptural masters from the Nan'an Charitable Halls. For one year, the 15-person group gathered weekly and practiced 78 pieces of Buddhist music that Lü Guoxiong had brought to Singapore in 1945, using the scores documented by Ng in 2008. In 2010, Ng bought air tickets for the 15 people, using his personal savings, and the group flew to Shantou, China, to record all the music pieces in the *Authentic Annotated Yunqi Yoga Flaming Mouth Ritual*, and the Interpretation & Explanation of the Diamond Sutra Ritual. Two established musicians from China, Li Xianlie 李先列 and Zhuang Xuemin 庄学敏, supported the project by providing artistic consultation and coordinating with the studio in China.

The transnational, reverse transmission of Teochew Buddhist music was facilitated by Ng and the younger generation of scriptural masters and musicians through musical exchange and the sharing of their recordings among many charitable halls in Chaozhou and Shantou, China. One of the remaining charitable halls in China that is still practicing the Chanhe style of Buddhist music, the Pan’an Charitable Hall 盘安善堂, was very pleased to receive the recording. In 2010, the Singaporean and Chinese musicians and scriptural masters played music together in Chaozhou. They listened to each other’s playing and bonded over Teochew food. Members of the Pan’an Charitable Hall commented that the Singapore version of Chanhe music was different from what they had been practicing, and was “very nice and pleasing.” Subsequently, the Pan’an Charitable Hall played the recording repeatedly in their ritual space, and local musicians learned from the recording. Ng also shared his scores with the musicians of the Pan’an Charitable Hall, who then used them for their rituals.

When Teochew Buddhist music in China was suppressed during the Cultural Revolution, Singapore served as one of its cultural sanctuaries. When members of the Singapore Nan’an Charitable Hall visited the Kaiyuan Monastery in Chaozhou, China in 1998, they observed that the monastics were no longer practicing Teochew Buddhist music. I am unable to triangulate this observation with the practice in the Kaiyuan Monastery today. However, the 1992 temple gazetteer confirms that nationalist, patriotic sentiments have altered the Buddhist chants. For example, the lyric in the Buddhist chant “Wishing for Longevity” (Zhu wansu i祝万岁) suggests that Buddhist monks were praying for the longevity of China and the strengthening of national sovereignty. The date of creation and the author of the song were not documented. However, given the mix of Buddhism, patriotism, and nationalistic sentiments, this song could have been created after the modernist idea of a nation emerged in the Republican period.

During the Cultural Revolution, religious and cultural practices all over China faced some form of disruption or destruction. Master Shengyan 圣严法师 (1931–2009) noted that the musical monks in the Zhihua Temple 智化寺 in Beijing were forced to return to secular life during the Cultural Revolution. When Master Shengyan visited China in 1991, the musical monks were summoned back to perform music for the Taiwanese Chan master. However, they already had
families and children after they disrobed, and had experienced dramatic changes in their religious identities. Similarly, in Mount Wutai, the Cultural Revolution caused severe damage to Buddhist music. One percussion instrument, the *yunluo* 云锣, a frame of pitched gongs which was historically considered a vital component of *shengguan* ensembles, became “rather rare due to the destruction of instrument during the Cultural Revolution.” Stephen Jones found that during the Cultural Revolution, rural and urban, amateur and professional musicians were all vulnerable to attack. Not only did the ceremonial ensembles suffer, but entertainment groups such as Chaozhou string music societies were also disbanded and their members attacked.

The transnational movement of Teochew Buddhist music to Southeast Asia facilitated by lay Buddhists ensured that the *Chanhe* lineage remained intact, a rare exception to the widespread religious destruction during the Cultural Revolution.

Even in the post–Cultural Revolution revival, Chinese musicians who made recordings of Chinese monastic music tended to shape Buddhist music according to their professional music training, thus altering the authenticity of Buddhist music in their recordings. Here again, Buddhist music became a site of contestation, as musical professionals tried to claim control over the religious sonic space. For example, when recording music in the Kaiyuan Monastery, music professor Tian Qing was frustrated by how the musical ensemble could not match the singing by vocalists in the first 15 seconds of every piece, and tried to persuade the monks and musicians to start on a fixed scale every time. Similarly, ethnomusicologist Beth Szczepanski observed that in 2006, when

This article directs scholarly attention to Buddhist music in charitable halls, an
important cultural practice in Buddhism that has not been well studied.\textsuperscript{144} It looks at a living practice that does not exist in a publicly available textual archive, and is only staged during specific occasions such as funerals and religious festivals. Existing studies of charitable halls comment on their “syncretism” based on the amalgamation of Confucian texts, worship of Buddhist monks, and Daoist-inspired spirit-writing (inviting deities to convey messages through a spirit medium).\textsuperscript{145} Other scholars such as Hue Guan Thye debate whether charitable halls are indeed “Buddhist,” on the basis that spirit-writing is not a Buddhist practice.\textsuperscript{146} From a religious perspective, if one wants to determine the “Buddhist-ness” of charitable halls, an important piece of evidence that should not be overlooked is the origin of Chanhe-style Buddhist music in the Kaiyuan Monastery. From a musical perspective, Master Shengyan critiqued that the use of Chinese folk musical instruments, and the influence of operas and court music, has reduced the “Buddhist-ness” of Fanbai.\textsuperscript{147} However, I contend that such debate about “Buddhist-ness” should not overshadow the fact that Teochew Buddhist music in charitable halls is a cultural expression and interpretation of Buddhism by the Teochew people, and was integral to their lived experience as Buddhists in China and Singapore.

This article unsettles our understanding of the geographical boundary of Chinese Buddhism as confined within China. My study situates itself in the broader literature, such as that by Kenneth Dean which studies the popular-god temple networks and the rise of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist monasteries in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{148} Dean notes that a great deal of ritual knowledge had been preserved in the Chinese temples of Southeast Asia over the course of the Cultural Revolution, when many ritual traditions, temples, and religious practices were banned in China, in some areas for over two decades if not longer. Thus, the Southeast Asian Chinese temples (along with Taiwanese temples) played a crucial role in reviving, reinventing, and in some cases transforming ritual traditions in Southeast China.\textsuperscript{149}

This was also true for the preservation of Teochew Buddhist music in a Southeast Asian charitable hall in Singapore. Earlier studies of Chinese Buddhist music focused on case studies within China and its periphery in East Asia.\textsuperscript{150} However, this study shows that Southeast Asia served as an important cultural sanctuary for Buddhist music during the Cultural Revolution, outside the geographic boundary of China.

In this study, I shine the spotlight on a group of nonelite lay Buddhists, expanding on existing scholarship that often focuses on the roles of business elites, scholars, and eminent monks in Buddhism. For example, Francesca Tarocco has written about Master Hongyi and his creation of modern Buddhist songs. Hongyi received formal music and arts education in Japan, and came from a privileged background.\textsuperscript{151} In my study, Lü and Ng did not receive formal tertiary music education. Yet through self-practice and group support, the group of nonelite lay Buddhists were able to attain a level of artistic achievement sophisticated enough to document music scores and propagate Buddhist music.

This study shows that lay Buddhists played a more vital role in preserving and propagating the cultural practices
of Buddhism than previously assumed. Past scholarship has shed light on how lay Buddhists contributed to temple reconstruction, establishing print cultures, and founding Buddhist schools for education. It will be beneficial for religious studies scholars to investigate ethnomusicological studies of religious music to better understand the roles of laity in promoting Buddhist music, an important performative aspect of Buddhist aesthetics.

I conclude by telling the not-so-happy ending of this reverse transmission of Buddhist music. After Ng recorded 78 pieces of Buddhist music in China, the sixth-generation heir of Chanhe-style music and the management committee of the Nan’an Charitable Hall were upset. Although people in China appreciated this reverse transmission, members of the Nan’an Charitable Hall did not appreciate that Ng had recorded such an extensive repertoire for circulation. As a result, he was chased out of the charitable hall after a committee meeting. This was a case of power struggle over the control of ritual and musical knowledge, and over who has the right to propagate Buddhist music (since Ng was not the official heir). History seems to repeat itself, with Ng reliving the fate of monk Kesheng who brought the Chanhe Buddhist music out of the Kaiyuan Monastery. Buddhist music became a site of contestation and exclusion. Those who threatened the exclusivity of Buddhist musical knowledge were severely punished and then excluded from their religious communities. Yet from a historical point of view, they were both important carriers of culture.

### Timeline of Important Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Key figure</th>
<th>Key activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qing Dynasty (1854)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>monk Kesheng</td>
<td>A group of laity invited the monk Kesheng from Kaiyuan Monastery to teach them the Chanhe style of Buddhist music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican period (1912)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mr. Lü Guoxiong</td>
<td>Lü was born. He later practiced under scriptural master Mr. Chen Shenghe, who was the fourth lineage heir of the monk Kesheng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican period (1944)</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Lü Guoxiong</td>
<td>The Singapore Nan’an Charitable Hall hired Lü to train its members in chanting scriptures and performing funerary rites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-WWII (2009)</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Mr. Ng Eng Quee</td>
<td>Ng staged Buddhist music and chant in the Victoria Concert Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-WWII (2010)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Ng Eng Quee, scriptural masters and musicians</td>
<td>The Singaporean musicians and scriptural masters organized a recording of Chanhe Buddhist music in China.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The flaming mouth ritual is a Buddhist liturgy aimed at alleviating the suffering of the hungry ghosts, who are one of the beings in the lower realms of suffering in Buddhism. A more detailed account is given below. See Shi Huiyuan 释慧原, Chaozhou Shi Fojiao Zhi, Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si Fojiao Zhi [Chaozhou City Gazetteer of Buddhism & Chaozhou Kaiyuan Monastery Gazetteer] 潮州市佛教志, 潮州开元寺志 (Chaozhou: Chaozhou Kaiyuan Monastery,潮州开元寺, 1992), 886.


4 Teochew潮州话 is a dialect spoken by people in the Chaoshan潮汕 region of Guangdong Province, specifically in cities such as Shantou, Jieyang, and Chaozhou.


7 Tan, “Shantang.”

8 For studies of eminent monks in modern Chinese Buddhism, see, for example, Don Pittman, Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu’s Reforms (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001). For studies of print culture in modern and contemporary Chinese Buddhism, see, for example, Philip Clart and Gregory Adam Scott, Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China, 1800–2012, Religion and Society (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015).


11 Chia, Monks in Motion, 3.


16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.


20 Lee, “Charity Enterprise, Religious Rituals and Clan Identity.”


22 Lee,“A Study of the Religious Culture of Teochew ‘Shantang’ (Hall of Charity).”

23 Kenneth Dean, “Parallel Universes: Chinese Temple Networks in Singapore, or What Is Missing in the Singapore Model?,” in Handbook of Religion and the Asian City: Aspiration and Urbanization in the

24 Tan, “Shantang.”


26 Lee, “Charity Enterprise, Religious Rituals and Clan Identity.”

27 Tan, “Shantang.”


29 Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce, Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006).


35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Hue Guan Thye 许源泰, The Buddha Lights of Lion City: The Hundred-Year Development of Buddhism in Singapore (Beijing: Chinese University of Hong Kong, Centre for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism 香港中文大學人間佛教研究中心, 2020). 204.


39 Hue Guan Thye, The Buddha Lights of Lion City, 206–08.


41 Jones, Folk Music of China, 342. Jones translates 禪和 as “Chan harmony.” However, this is inaccurate. 禪和 has its origin in the term chan he 禪和子, meaning a chan practitioner. See Shi Huiyuan 释慧原, “Chaozhou Foyue Zhi Leixing [Categories of Chaozhou Buddhist Music] 潮州佛乐之类型,” in Chaozhou Shi Fojiiao Zhi, Chaozhou Kaiyuan Si Foji kao Zhi [Chaozhou City Gazetteer of Buddhism & Chaozhou Kaiyuan Monastery Gazetteer] 潮州市佛教志, 潮州开元寺志, ed. Shi Huiyuan 释慧原 (Chaozhou 潮州: Chaozhou Kaiyuan Monastery 潮州开元寺, 1992), 119.

42 Jones, Folk Music of China, 342.

43 For an example of Xianghua style, see Qi Que 季克芹, Shicheng Chaozhou Fanbai Daquan [An Anthology of Teochew Fanbai in the Lion City] 狮城潮州梵呗大全 (Shantou, 2010), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x52_3ILAEnk.

44 Shi Huiyuan, “Chaozhou Foyue Zhi Leixing 潮州佛乐之类型 [Categories of Chaozhou Buddhist Music].” 920.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Jones, Folk Music of China, 342.


49 Ibid., 885.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.


55 Ibid.
56 Shi Huiyuan, “Chaozhou Foyue Zhi Leixing,” 885.
58 Ibid.
59 Shi Huiyuan, “Chaozhou Foyue Zhi Leixing [Categories of Chaozhou Buddhist Music] 潮州佛乐之类型”,
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
64 Ng Eng Quee 黄英贵, “Jiaotan Meiyu Chui Renjian [The Virtuous Reputation from the Classroom Remains in This World] 教坛美誉垂人’间,” in Shicheng Chaozhou Fanbai Daquan [An Anthology of Teochew Fanbai in the Lion City] 狮城潮州梵呗大全 (Shantou 汕头: Jiazuo Yishu Shi Zhuzhan, 2010), 2.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Eng Quee Ng, interview by author, Sept. 15, 2021.
68 Ibid.
69 Eugene Tay, “Siang Theon, a Ritual Home and a Home of Rituals” (Singapore: Nanyang Technological University, 2011).
70 Ng, interview by author, Sept. 15, 2021.
72 For translations of the names of the instruments, I referenced Jones, Folk Music of China.
73 For a recording of such music, see for example Eng Quee Ng et al., Incense Hymn 禪香赞, Shicheng Chaozhou Fanbai Daquan [An Anthology of Teochew Fanbai in the Lion City] 狮城潮州梵呗大全 (Shantou, 2010), https://youtu.be/irzBKndu2Ag.
74 Eng Quee Ng, interview by author, Dec. 12, 2021.
75 Guanhua 观华, also called zhengzi 正字 or Kongzi Zheng 孔子正, was the official language used by Qing Dynasty officials. It spread to the Chaozhou region and was used in zhengzi opera 正字戏 from the Haifeng 海丰 and Lufeng 陆丰 regions of Guangdong, as well as in wuijiang opera 外江戏 in the present-day Hakka 客家 region. Tay Weida Jenson (musician of Nan'an Charitable Hall), interview with author, Nov. 3, 2021. Also see Chen Bo 陈勃, “Chaojushi Shiluo 科仪 (二) 板与香花板,” in Xinjiapo Nan'an Shantang Qingzhu Song Dafeng Zushi Shengdan Ji Chengli Wushi Zhounian Jinxi Jinian Tekan [Singapore Nam Ann Siang Theon Celebration of the Birthday of the Saint Song Tai Hong and Golden Jubilee Commemorative Journal (1944–1994)] 新加坡南安善堂庆祝宋大峰祖师圣诞暨成立五十周年金禧纪念特刊 (1944–1994) (Singapore: Singapore Nam Ann Siang Theon, 1994).
77 Criddle, Chanting the Medicine Buddha Sutra, xiii.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
81 Ng, “Jiangong Fahui [Offering Puja] 建供法会,”
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
131 Shi Shengyan 释圣严, *Huo Zhai Qing Liang* [The House on Fire Gets Cooled] 火宅清凉, *Fa Gu Quan Ji* 法鼓全集 6 (Taipei: Fa Gu Wen Hua 法鼓文化, 1999), 44.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Szczepanski, *The Instrumental Music of Wutaishan’s Buddhist Monasteries*.

135 Ibid., 7.


137 Ibid.

138 Tian Qing, “Zhongguo Fojiao fashi zhong de yinyin shi wei shen haishi wei ren [Is the Music in Chinese Buddhist Puja for Gods or for People?] 中國佛教法事中的音樂是為神還是為人.”

139 Szczepanski, *The Instrumental Music of Wutaishan’s Buddhist Monasteries*, 133.

140 Ibid., 134–35.

141 Dean, “Parallel Universes,” 288.

142 Ng, interview by author, Feb. 3, 2023. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for highlighting this information.

143 Dean, “Parallel Universes,” 279.


145 Lee, “A Study of the Religious Culture of Teochew ‘Shantang’ (Hall of Charity).”


147 Shi Shengyan, *Huo Zhai Qing Liang* [The House on Fire Gets Cooled] 火宅清凉, 46.

148 Dean, “Whose Orders?”

149 Ibid., 119.


154 Hue Guan Thye, *The Buddha Lights of Lion City*.

155 Ng, interview by author, Sept. 15, 2021.

156 Ng, interview by author, Feb. 3, 2023.