

**ARCHIVING CHINESE MUSIC MATERIALS AT THE
CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**

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Over the past few decades, the Music Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong has acquired a large number of sound recordings, including several thousand 78rpm discs, a growing number of video recordings, and a significant collection of books, all housed in the Chinese Music Archive (hereafter CMA). A team comprising Chinese music faculty, research assistants, student helpers and occasional visiting experts have been engaged in the task of continuously organizing and making these materials available for teaching and research by faculty and students and, at least ideally, by scholars and music lovers elsewhere in Hong Kong and beyond.

Some of the challenges surrounding the CMA are familiar ones related to personnel, funding, space, classification, formats (card catalogue or computer-based) for cataloguing of the archives' holdings and policies for access and copying of the holdings. Other problems are more specific to the nature of Chinese music yet have many parallels with other archives featuring extensive holdings of non-Western music. These types of problems include:

1. Indigenous classifications of musical genres, musical instruments, etc.
2. Different languages and dialects used within a country.
3. Written languages using ideographs or non-Roman scripts.
4. Transnational ethnic groups, instruments and musical

genres which may be called by different names in different countries and/or languages.

This paper is a case study of a particular archives based in Hong Kong and primarily devoted to Chinese music but it is intended to contribute to the larger goal of learning how archives and archivists elsewhere, particularly those in Asia, are dealing with comparable challenges.

Something that distinguishes the CMA from most ethnomusicology archives is that the vast majority of our holdings are not field recordings but commercial recordings. While the CMA collection is surpassed in quantity by those of several research institutes and conservatories in China, its collection of Chinese theatrical music from the coastal regions of the southeast (especially Cantonese opera and Chaozhou opera) is probably unparalleled and many of the other commercial recordings, including those from China, are extremely rare. In addition, the CMA's holdings are somewhat more open to researchers than those in China.

Background of the Chinese Music Archive

The Chinese Music Archive (sometimes referred to as Archives) was established by Dale Craig in 1972. Until 1992, the CMA was supervised by a series of directors drawn from the Chinese Music faculty. Since that time it has been managed by the Chinese Music Archive Management Committee, with responsibilities shared among the four Chinese music faculty members Sau Y. Chan, Tsao Pen-Yeh, J. Lawrence Witzleben and Yu Siu-Wah. Departmental clerical support has varied from time to time but in 1999 we were fortunate to have one of the department's full-time clerical staff members, René Leung, who has a good background in music and excellent Chinese and English computer skills, assigned exclusively to acquisitions, cataloguing and other matters related to the CMA and the audio library. Student help has sometimes been available through university and college student work funds although this is rather limited (only 42 hours for the period from November 1999 to June 2000). Graduate assistants, some of whom are really well-known experts in Chinese

music, are also assigned to help in the CMA as part of their duties.

Over the years, more specialized help has occasionally been available through various sources of funding. In 1978–79, Josephine Chu Kam-Ling (who holds a Master's degree in Library Science) spent one year in the CMA. During that time, she was able to establish the book cataloguing system which is still in use and to catalogue all the book holdings in the Archive at that time. In 1991, Qiao Jianzhong, Professor and Director, Archives of the Music Research Division of the Central Arts Institute, Beijing, spent six weeks examining the materials and providing suggestions for improvement. In 1993, Sonia Ng, writer and translator, with a PhD in Chinese Literature, spent three months at the CMA. She installed and tested a database system for cataloguing and, in conjunction with Dr J. Lawrence Witzleben, revised the cataloguing system for sound recordings. Also in 1993, Chan Hing-Yan, a PhD candidate in Music, now Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong, spent two months helping to re-catalogue sound recording. In February 1994, Dr Anthony Seeger, ethnomusicologist and Curator of the Folkways collection at the Smithsonian Institution, spent one week making an assessment of the CMA management, preservation and cataloguing procedures and presented reports to the Music Department, Arts Faculty Dean, and Vice Chancellor of the University. In May 1994, Tsui Ying-Fai, currently a PhD candidate in Ethnomusicology at the University of Pittsburgh, began a one-year term as Research Assistant at the CMA, and continued to voluntarily assist in planning the online catalogue and CD preservation of archival recordings since that time.

In 1999, through a donation to promote teaching and research in Chinese music, Tsui Ying-Fai began an additional two-year position as Research Assistant, during which we hope to complete the transfer of 78rpm recordings and reel-to-reel tapes to compact discs, get the online catalogue functioning, and of course, continue to seek support and funding for a permanent full-time archivist or at least sources from within or outside the university for a continued temporary position.

Chinese Music and the Library of Congress System

As many of those working with collections of non-Western music must be aware, the Library of Congress System for cataloguing music materials is only marginally useful especially when one deals with extensive holdings of musical genres which are not even on the map in the LC system e. g. Chinese opera gets a single catalogue number (ML 1751 C4) while Chinese scholars distinguish hundreds of different types of which several dozen are represented in the CMA holdings.

In general we have followed the large categories of Chinese music which are commonly used by Chinese scholars: folk song, instrumental music, narrative song and theatrical music. A fifth category, song and dance, is essentially a historical category. We have added another category—religious music—and have also put the music of all the minority peoples into an entirely different category. This category is divided by ethnic groups rather than instrumental and vocal music with further subcategories as a subject for further refinement if the collection grows or if we have qualified staff or students who are familiar with indigenous categories. Thus, the overall headings are I and V for instrumental and vocal music respectively of the Han Chinese, M for minorities, R for religious, W for world music (i.e. other than Chinese or Western).

The musics of Chinese minority peoples open up several additional problems. The first is political: if we include all the ethnic groups which are within the present political boundaries of China—a decision which will certainly upset the many people who view some of these as ‘occupied territories’—how are we to deal with transnational ethnic groups such as the Mongolians or Kazakhs? Are those recordings made in China to go in the CMA and those made in Kazakhstan, in the ‘World Music’ collection? At present, the answer is yes. To a scholar of music culture areas, isn’t this separation ridiculous? Here too the answer is yes but alternative solutions are easier said than done.

More practically, how are we to handle, for example, the names of musical instruments? Comprehensive dictionaries of musical instruments of China’s minority peoples exist with the terms transliterated

into Chinese. To transliterate them back into Chinese romanization may imply an ethnocentrism which was not (necessarily) intended in the original but for the archivist, where does one go to find the correct international romanization for Kazakh terms or to choose among the varied spellings which may confront them? For example, sitar and tabla becomes a 'sa-ta-er qin' and 'ta-bu-la gu', hybrid combinations of a transliteration combined with the Chinese terms 'qin' for 'stringed instrument' and 'gu' for drum. These examples are easily fixed but it is highly unlikely that present or future faculty and/or archivists will be able to figure out equivalent terms for every non-Chinese country, language or ethnic group.

Language, Dialect, Ideographic Scripts and Romanizations

The Chinese University of Hong Kong is in a rather special position in this regard in that it exists in an officially bilingual society where the primary indigenous language is a dialect (Cantonese) rather than the national language (*puntoghua*, also called *guoyu* or Mandarin). In addition, Hong Kong uses the older, more complex form of Chinese characters rather than the simplified characters which have become standard in mainland China.

English language titles for Chinese pieces are in principle not a serious problem. However, even a cursory examination of recordings with English translations of titles reveals that while the general sense of the vast majority of titles is clear, the actual words chosen vary considerably. For example, the popular title 'Gao Shan Liu Shui' may be translated as 'High Mountain and Flowing Stream' or 'Tall Mountain and Flowing Waters' along with many other possible variants. Especially with the development of an online catalogue, the holdings should be accessible by those who do not read Chinese but inclusion of all the variants is obviously a daunting and ongoing task.

There is a general consensus that romanization should follow the *pinyin* system, the official system used in the PRC which has been used in most journalistic and scholarly circles in the US and has recently been adopted by the Library of Congress. For example, the long zither is called *zheng* and the pear-shaped lute *pipa* in *pinyin* whereas they were spelled *cheng* and *p'í-p'a* in the Wade-Giles romanization system.

A further question arises: Whether to list Chinese terms syllable-by-syllable or to group them into words. In most cases the latter method is quite clear but multiple readings are also possible and for this reason we have decided to proceed using separated, individual syllables for titles ('Gao Shan Liu Shui,' not 'Gaoshan Liushui,' for 'High Mountain and Flowing Stream') despite the cumbersome and aesthetically questionable results.

In terms of Chinese ideographs, computerized access represents a great simplification of the problem of how to 'alphabetize' Chinese language information. In Hong Kong, there is no universally accepted system of romanization for Cantonese, and libraries and the original CMA card catalogue used a 'four corner' system which combines the type of stroke used first when writing a Chinese character and the number of total strokes used. Accuracy in both of these is by no means easily achieved and the CMA's card catalogue has always been full of errors, making access difficult even to those who know the system. Few Chinese readers from the PRC, Taiwan or overseas are able to use this system, making the catalogue less than universally useful. However, since few Hong Kong students are fluent with *pinyin* romanization, even if a total switchover could be achieved, few local users would find it to be an improvement. Fortunately, online input and reading of Chinese characters essentially bypasses this problem. Different methods of 'inputting' Chinese characters all result in the same set of symbols read by a computer, making the problem of alphabetization somewhat redundant.

Designing and Implementing an Online Catalogue of the CMA's Holdings

Like most archives and libraries, the CMA has used a card catalogue (index cards in drawers) to list the holdings, with separate listings by title, genre and call number. At various times, cards have been written by hand, typed or printed by computer. Since the early 1990s, because of successive revisions to the cataloguing system, a steady increase in incoming items and a lack of trained staff, new acquisitions have been given only a single title card rather than individual cards for each item on a recording with multiple cross-listings.

However, this step backward has been accompanied by a growing awareness that the card catalogue should be replaced by a computer-based system. After much deliberation, we decided to use a system based on the world wide web. Our original computer expert, Partick Tse, volunteered his services and continued to try to help us develop the catalogue even after taking a job in the US but this arrangement soon proved to be unworkable. After extensive discussions, the University Computer Services Centre agreed to provide technical support for the online catalogue, but only if we switched from a Macintosh-based system to a PC-based one. Under the supervision of Tsui Ying-Fai, and with support for hardware from the University and technical help from the computer centre, a trial version of the catalogue is now running. It may be searched at: www.pc28176.csc.cuhk.edu.hk/musolc/query.asp. The eventual catalogue will include all the holdings of the Chinese Music Archive, along with those of the adjacent Audio Library, which has an extensive collection of Western music recordings and a growing collection of non-Chinese non-Western recordings which are placed under the heading 'World Music'. Catalogue searches will be divided into Chinese, Western and World Music categories. The Archive website can be accessed at: www.cuhk.edu.hk/mus/cma.html.