UC Riverside
UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Diaspora and Belonging in Panama: Cultural Performance and National Identity for Panamanians of Chinese Descent

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/32p9t8vt

Author
Blake, Corey Michael

Publication Date
2019

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Diaspora and Belonging in Panama:
Cultural Performance and National Identity for Panamanians of Chinese Descent

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Corey Michael Blake

December 2019

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Jonathan Ritter, Chairperson
Dr. Deborah Wong
Dr. Lok C.D. Siu
Dr. Helen Rees
Dr. Liz Przybylski

Copyright by
Corey Michael Blake
2019

The Dissertation of Corey Michael Blake is approved:

____

____

____

____

____

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgments

The completion of this project is only possible through the support, guidance, and research opportunities provided by communities of colleagues, friends, family, and organizations both in the United States and in Panama. Here, I would like to give credit for the boundless generosity that made this manuscript a possibility. First, I owe a great debt of gratitude to friends and colleagues in Panama, none of whom I would have met without the kindness and openness of Felipe Chong, who initially invited me to my first APROCHIPA event: Beto Carrillo and family, Chia Chan, Aura Lee, Carmen Wong, and Liliana Wong. Thank you for allowing me to tag along with you for various community events throughout the country and for making me feel welcome and part of the team. I am especially grateful for Felipe's friendship, despite my persistent questioning and interviewing, and although I only barely survived our hiking trip through Los Chorros, I deeply appreciated being welcomed along.

I would also like to extend a huge thanks to Berta Alicia Chen for providing me with literature and insight about the community, Ana Chung for being so welcoming and insightful for various aspects of this research, Jose Chang and Miguel Loo for allowing me to experience the talents of your Lion Dance groups in Panama City and for granting me permission to use your photos, Mario Chung for providing me with deep insight into the musical life and local identity of Panamanians of Chinese descent, and Daniella Espinosa for being my first interview and supportive of my research from my first steps in Panama. I would further like to thank Juan Tam, who has been an ardent supporter, advisor, and mentor to me since well before this project began. None of this would have

been possible for me without your initial support back in 2015. To Brenda Lau, I am eternally grateful to you for you allowing me to access and be a part of some of your family's private karaoke sessions and for the knowledge I was able to gain in these moments. Thank you for being willing to discuss your music with me and for providing validation for my research.

I am particularly grateful to my dissertation committee: Jonathan Ritter, Deborah Wong, Liz Przybylski. Lok Siu, and Helen Rees. Thank you for providing me with a high standard of research excellence of which to aspire and for being willing to dedicate your time and guidance to me in order to make this project successful. Each of your respective research areas and expertise proves to be a crucial element for my own research and I am grateful that you are willing to be a part of my academic journey.

The staff at the Fulbright Institute of International Education, thank you for granting me the freedom and independence to conduct this research through financial support. Additionally, thank you to the U.S. Embassy in Panama staff who supported me through logistical aspects of international research and through a genuine interest and engagement with my study: former-Ambassador to Panama John D. Feeley, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Roxanne Cabral, Sarah Ferguson, Dalys DeGracia, and Francisco "Paco" Perez. To my fellow Fulbrighter Tova Katzman, I am so grateful for your friendship, emotional support, and the many moments we were able to share, discuss, and theorize each other's research while also alleviating some of the homesickness from long-term international research.

Thank you to the UCR Center for Ideas and Society for the financial support for this research through the Humanities Graduate Research Grant. Additional thanks go out to all of my faculty, colleagues, and friends at UCR who provided endless motivation, support, and guidance in the preliminary phases of this research: Paula Propst, Claudine Avalos, Jessica Gutierrez Masini, Elizabeth Stela, Yuki Proulx, Cuauhtémoc Dante Lauren, Christine Gailey, Hyejin Nah, and Xóchitl Chávez.

Thank you to my family both in Panama and in the United States. To Jackeline Lascano, Jesús Aguilar, and *mi primito* Jesús Aguilar Lascano, thank you for providing me more than just a shelter, but a *home* during my time in Panama. The family moments have been etched into my heart forever and I look forward to the memories we will continue to make in the future. To my parents, brother, grandparents, nieces/nephews, and cousins, thank you for a lifetime of love and encouragement and for always supporting my dreams. Without this, I would not be where I am today.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to my friends both near and far who supported me with encouragement, love, positivity, and care packages: Shana Vernon, Lynn Atkins, Kathleen Dooley, and C. Paige Porter.

Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé William Shannon O'Bryan for providing me the strength and motivation to complete this dissertation through your endless love, support, and accountability throughout the duration of both my fieldwork and the writing process.

This dissertation is dedicated to

William Robert Blake, Jr. (1937 – 2018)

Dina Marisol Lascano (1982 – 2018)

Carrie Marie Blake (1988 – 2018)

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Diaspora to Belonging:
Cultural Performance and National Identity for Panamanians of Chinese Descent

by

Corey Michael Blake

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, December 2019
Dr. Jonathan Ritter, Chairperson

The first Chinese migrants arrived in modern-day Panama aboard the clipper *Sea Witch* in April of 1854. In their first steps on what was then known as New Granada, they arrived as laborers to work on the Panama Railroad, a project commissioned by the United States to help transport wealth accumulated from the California Gold Rush that was taking place at the time. Since their arrival, waves of migrations have occurred over the past century and a half. With each wave of migration, people bring with them their own customs and ideals, of which music and dance are of great importance. This research makes evident the importance of Chinese presence in Panamanian culture and society. As one of the largest Chinese diasporas within Latin America, the case of Chinese Panamanians provides a compelling case study for understanding the sociopolitical consequences of being ethnically Asian within a Latin American context.

In this dissertation, I argue that cultural performances through music and dance construct, maintain, and express unique bicultural, transnational, and often shifting identities to assert belonging through difference as Panamanians of Chinese descent continue to redefine and negotiate notions of Panamanian nationhood. Central throughout this project, cultural performance through music, dance, religious worship, and sporting events becomes an important tool for validating and asserting a Panamanian national identity in light of a long history of marginalization. By incorporating Chinese art forms into the most meaningful personal and nationalistic moments of their lives, Chineseness no longer becomes a symbol of what is *not* Panamanian, but instead becomes a representation of what Panamanian *can be*. In doing so, this community deconstructs the barriers of national identity that have historically marginalized them in very openly hostile ways. A result of ten months of ethnographic fieldwork in Panama City, Panama between September 2017 and July 2018, this dissertation explores issues of diaspora, belonging, and nationhood for Chinese Panamanians and Panamanians of Chinese descent and the complexities inherent in performative expressions of identity in situating national belonging, validation, and recognition of such identities in the Panamanian national imaginary.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements....................iv

Abstract....................viii

List of Illustrations....................xii

Note on Audio and Video Examples....................xiv

List of Video Examples....................xv

Chapter 1 – Introduction....................1
Theory and Literature....................5
Mestizaje....................5
Panamanian Musical Identity....................9
Identity....................13
Asian Diaspora....................19
Nationalism....................27
Asian Performance in Latin America....................29
Performance Theory....................33
Positionality....................35
Methodology....................40
Chapter Overview....................46

Chapter 2 – Establishing a Diaspora Community: Chinese Migration & International Politics in 19th and 20th Century Panama....................49
Chinese Migration to Panama....................52
The Push: Socioeconomic Issues in Mid-19th Century China....................52
The Pull: Perceived Economic Opportunities Abroad....................53
Migration to Panama in the 19th Century....................55
U.S. Presence in Panama....................58
Republic of China Diplomacy in Panama....................63
From Taiwanese Diplomacy to PRC....................66
Current Migration Issues....................68
Chinese Migration....................69
Venezuelan Migration....................71
Migration of Chinese Venezuelans....................73
Chinese Migration and Music Practice....................75

Chapter 3 – Plucking the Greens: Lion Dance and the Performance of Panamanian Chineseness....................81
History of Lion Dance....................83
Lion Dance in Diasporic Communities....................85

Lion Dance in Panama..87
Lion Dance at Festivals and Holidays...95
Lion Dance at Life Events...105
Conclusion..109

Chapter 4 – *Punto de Convergencia*: Venezuelan Migration, the Chinese Christian Church of Panama, and the Performance of Religious Identity..................................111
Evangelicalism and Chinese Christian Churches in Panama.................................117
Negotiating Identity in Panama's Chinese Christian Church..................................124
Conclusion..127

Chapter 5 – Karaoke, Chinese Nationalism, and the Emergence of Chinese Panamanian Pop Celebrities...130
Karaoke Performance and Chinese Nationalism..135
Chinese Karaoke, Stardom, and Afro-Panamanian Solidarity...............................139
Conclusion..145

Chapter 6 – *Panameño de Herencia China*: The Cultural Performance of National Identity..147
Performance of Nationalism...149
Panamanian Nationalism..150
Nationalism and Panamanians of Chinese Descent..154
Panamanian Chineseness and Performance in Panama.............................155
Dragon Boat Racing as Cultural Performance...158
Nationalism and the Creation of Music: *Música Típica* and *Música Canalera*...168
Public Performances and Chinese Festivals..173
Conclusion..176

Chapter 7 – New Directions: Popular Music, Identity Shifts, and Questions of the Future..178
Why the Identity Shift?..182
Closing Thoughts...186

Bibliography...189

Appendix A – Open Letter to President Juan Carlos Varela...209

Appendix B – Spiritual Survey and Investigation...211

Appendix C – "Incidente de Cumbia" by Demetrio Korsi...212

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1 – Introduction
Figure 1.1. Entrance to Centro Comercial El Dorado....2
Figure 1.2. Chinese umbrella dancers performing on stage....3
Figure 1.3. Political map of Panama....10
Figure 1.4. Afro-Panamanian group Los Costeños....12

Chapter 2 – Establishing a Diaspora Community: Chinese Migration & International Politics in 19th and 20th Century Panama
Figure 2.1. Felipe as MC during the 2018 *Festival de Cometas y Panderos*....49
Figure 2.2. Model construct of the clipper *Sea Witch*....50
Figure 2.3. Map of the original Panama Canal Railway in 1855....56
Figure 2.4. News clipping from the New York Times....62
Figure 2.5. Instituto Sun Yat Sen....65
Figure 2.6. Friendship Park....65
Figure 2.7. *Almacen la Cultura China*....78

Chapter 3 – Plucking the Greens: Lion Dance and the Performance of Panamanian Chineseness
Figure 3.1. Lion dancers in Chorrera with Jose Chang....81
Figure 3.2. *Grupo de Leones Chinos Loo*....89
Figure 3.3. Crab made of local produce....93
Figure 3.4. Sociedad Fa Yen Lion Dance group in Tocumen Airport....94
Figure 3.5. Lunar New Year Lion Dance in El Dorado Mall....101
Figure 3.6. Lunar New Year Lion Dance in Atlapa Convention Center....103
Figure 3.7. *Quinceañera* with Southern Chinese Lion....106
Figure 3.8. Leones Chinos Miguel Loo performing at wedding....108
Figure 3.9. Leones Chinos Miguel Loo performing at baptism....108

Chapter 4 – *Punto de Convergencia*: Venezuelan Migration, the Chinese Christian Church of Panama, and the Performance of Religious Identity
Figure 4.1. Ana Chung....111
Figure 4.1. Cantonese-language worship hall....114
Figure 4.2. Spanish-language worship hall....114
Figure 4.3. Spanish-language worshippers singing “Regocijad”....125

Chapter 5 – Karaoke, Chinese Nationalism, and the Emergence of Chinese Panamanian Pop Celebrities
Figure 5.1. Brenda Lau performing....130
Figure 5.2. Brenda Lau wearing multicolor *pollera*....142

Chapter 6 – *Panameño de Herencia China*: The Cultural Performance of National Identity

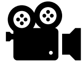
Figure 6.1. Daniella and Nicolás with their *erhu* instruments..............................147
Figure 6.2. Various Panamanian *Polleras* at the 2017 *Desfiles Patrias*................150
Figure 6.3. Panama Canal Zone, former U.S. territory...152
Figure 6.4. CCCHP school band and fan dancers..159
Figure 6.5. Dragon Boat racing team APRO Champions.....................................160
Figure 6.6. *Zongzi*, also known as *tamales chinos* in Panama.............................163
Figure 6.7. Dragon Boat race in the Amador Causeway.......................................167
Figure 6.8. Mario Chung's harp modeled after the Centennial Bridge................172
Figure 6.9. APROCHIPA and volunteers at the 2018 Festival de Cometas........177

Chapter 7 – New Directions: Popular Music, Identity Shifts, and Questions of the Future

Figure 7.1. Mario Chung performing on the accordion..178

Note on Audiovisual Examples

All video examples included in this dissertation are labeled in sequential order corresponding to chapter number (i.e. Video 3.1., etc.) and are preceded by the following icon:



The title of each video corresponds to the title of the video in the accompanying playlist. To access the playlist of audiovisual examples, please copy the following web address and paste it into your browser:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTCu1EhSeUh77UcYirr_2owMJm2YN0WBD

List of Video Examples

Chapter 3 – Plucking the Greens: Lion Dance and the Performance of Panamanian Chineseness

Video 3.1. Baile de León en Chorrera..93
Video 3.2. Inauguration of Air China in Panama (1 of 3)....................................95
Video 3.3. Inauguration of Air China in Panama (2 of 3)....................................95
Video 3.4. Inauguration of Air China in Panama (2 of 3)....................................95
Video 3.5. Lion Dance in El Dorado Mall...101
Video 3.6. Lion Dance in Atlapa CC Panama..103
Video 3.7. Panama Carnavales 2018 Lion Dance Group.....................................104
Video 3.8. Baile de León at a *Quinceañera*..106

Chapter 4 – *Punto de Convergencia*: Venezuelan Migration, the Chinese Christian Church of Panama, and the Performance of Religious Identity

Video 4.1. The Heralders perform "求主助我數算"..122

Chapter 5 – Karaoke, Chinese Nationalism, and the Emergence of Chinese Panamanian Pop Celebrities

Video 5.1. Chinese Opera Karaoke..137
Video 5.2. Sword Dance - Chinese Karaoke...137

Chapter 1

Introduction

On February 16, 2018, I stepped off of the bus at the station in front of the Centro Comercial El Dorado, a large mall located in the *nuevo barrio chino*, Panama City's new Chinatown (figure 1.1). The bus was crowded, as it normally is around this time in the afternoon, and the refreshment I felt from the breeze after stepping off lasted only a moment before the humidity enveloped my body and filled my lungs; it was a warm feeling similar to stepping into a sauna after an intense workout. I eagerly focused on crossing the street and getting into the mall, where I knew the air conditioning would provide lasting relief from the onslaught of heat from the afternoon sun. Just outside the main entrance, a mobile food vendor was set up, where half of his vehicle was dedicated to preparing and frying fresh *patacones*, fried green plantains that are smashed into big round discs and then fried a second time. Not too far from this vendor, another was set up, featuring hotboxes filled with an assortment of *dim sum* choices, including the pork, shrimp, and vegetable-filled dumpling *siu mai* found everywhere throughout Panama City. Knowing how long it takes to travel anywhere by bus, I had already eaten, and so I continued forward into the mall.

Figure 1.1. Entrance to Centro Comercial El Dorado. Photo by Servmor Realty. https://servmorrealty.com/property/panama-panama-panama-betania-el-dorado-7818-comercial-space-at-the-dorado-mall/?lang=en

As I approached, I could hear the rhythmic percussion of drums in the distance. Not wanting to miss out on the activities, I hurried in. The mall was crowded as people from throughout the area were present to experience the Lunar New Festivities that the mall hosted each year. The sound of the percussion was coming from a lion dance group, who had just emerged from one of the many shops and was preparing to enter another. As they performed in each of these stores, the lion would receive a red envelope from the employees and shop owners, at which point the lion would continue on and the workers would return to their work. As I followed the lion dance group in wonderment of all of the skills required to perform, I noticed that amidst all of the red and gold colors of the New Year celebrations were smatterings of blue and white, in the form of Panamanian flags throughout the storefronts as well as on the official FIFA jerseys of many of those

present to celebrate Panama’s first time qualifying for the World Cup soccer championship (figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Chinese umbrella dancers performing on stage with the flag of Panama incorporated into the background. February 16, 2018. Photo by author.

At first glance, the presence of so many distinct cultural productions appeared to represent two separate national events occurring within the confines of one shared space. The more I looked, however, the more I recognized that there was no clear distinction between these cultural manifestations for the people participating in them. In this moment, the celebrations became a signifier of a Panamanian identity, unique in its connection to a Chinese ethnic heritage. By celebrating their Chineseness, they were not negating their Panamanian-ness, but instead providing nuanced expression of it in a way that celebrated a cultural heritage that is regularly excluded in discussions of what makes someone authentically Panamanian. In such presentations, the complexity of identity manifests while questions emerge about what cultural markers are valid for expressing Panamanian-ness. This dissertation examines the cultural performance of Panamanian

identity for those of Chinese descent and the complexities inherent in those modes of expression in situating national belonging and the validation and recognition of such identities in the national imaginary of what constitutes Panamanian-ness.

The first Chinese migrants arrived in modern-day Panama aboard the clipper *Sea Witch* in April of 1854. In their first steps on what was then known as New Granada, they arrived as cheap laborers to work on the Panama Railroad, a project commissioned by the United States to help transport wealth from the California Gold Rush across the Central American isthmus. Since their arrival, waves of migrations have occurred over the past century and a half, including those from the southern Cantonese regions of Mainland China, including Fujian and Guangdong, who arrived to help construct the Panama Canal, those from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1960s and 70s, and then another large wave of Mainland Chinese in the late 1980s and 90s (Chen 2016:32). With each wave of migration, Chinese people brought with them their own national and regional customs and ideals, including music and dance.

The confluence of each style of Chinese performative expression in Panama further complicates the notion of Chineseness. Members of the community must negotiate whether contemporary popular music like Cantopop, traditional Chinese arts, both—or neither—represent desirable aspects of a Chinese identity within Panama. Family migration dates, age, and length of time in Panama each play a significant role in how different groups of Chinese-descent Panamanians express their Chineseness. This transnational engagement with the multiple Chinas present in Central America is

exemplified in the multiple organizations dedicated to representing Chinese ethnicity within the country in relation to Panamanian politics and international affairs.

This dissertation argues for the importance of the Chinese presence in Panamanian culture and society. As one of the largest Chinese diasporas within Latin America, 5% of Panama's 3.8 million people, the case of Chinese Panamanians provides a compelling case study for understanding the sociopolitical consequences of being ethnically Asian within a Latin American context (Central Intelligence Agency 2018). I argue that cultural performances through music and dance construct, maintain, and express unique bicultural, transnational, and often shifting identities to assert belonging through difference as Panamanians of Chinese descent continue to redefine and negotiate what it means to be Panamanian. By incorporating Chinese art forms into the most meaningful personal and nationalistic moments of their lives, Chineseness no longer becomes a symbol of what is *not* Panamanian, but instead becomes a representation of what Panamanian *can be*. In doing so, this community deconstructs the barriers of national identity that have historically marginalized them, often in openly hostile ways.

Theory and Literature

Mestizaje

Within Central America and Latin America more broadly, *mestizaje* signifies a paradigm for a national embracement of cultural and racial mixing (García Cancini 1995). As theorized by José Vasconcelos, *mestizaje* seeks to incorporate the "genius and the blood of all peoples" in the attempt to create a race "more capable of true brotherhood

and of a truly universal vision" (Vasconcelos 1997[1925]:20). While seemingly inclusive of all communities of people, Vasconcelos presents a racialized hybridity that privileges whiteness. In fact, Vasconcelos seeks to limit certain populations, such as the Chinese, who he claims "multiply like mice" and would undermine ethnic equality (Vasconcelos 1997:19). As Walter Mignolo argues, *mestizaje* "was always a mirage, since the mixture of blood never accompanied a mixture of cosmologies" and excluded claims of Indigenous and African origins (2005:136). Sociologist Christina Sue explains further that race in throughout Latin America can be considered one of two distinct types: "those with a black/white continuum and/or distinction [and] those with an Indian/mestizo distinction" (2009:1063). Under her dichotomy, Panama would fall under the category of Afro-Latin America, since in these types of countries, phenotype is more often emphasized in nationalist discourse on race. Further, anthropologist Lok Siu notes the exclusion of citizens of "Chinese and English-speaking blacks" in national imaginaries as constructed through laws (2005:15). Scholars Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizacklea posit that *mestizo* represents a "fictive ethnicity," one "given legal power and enshrined in the constitution and the bureaucratic procedures of the state" (2000:31-32). Despite such ethnonationalist constructions, Indigenous, African diasporic, and Asian diasporic populations continue to carve out spaces of difference that emphasize their own group identities while simultaneously asserting their sense of national identity.

Much variation exists in the way that *mestizaje* manifests in each nation. In Panama, nationalist discourse about *mestizaje* focuses primarily on the mixture of white, Amerindian, and black racial and ethnic persons. As noted by scholar Sonja S. Watson,

mestizaje in Panama served as a slightly more inclusive ideology to replace *hispanidad,* which privileged whiteness and left out all persons of African descent, yet was threatened by the presence of the Protestant, English-speaking West Indians who migrated to Panama as part of the labor force during the constructions of both the Panama Railroad and the Panama Canal. She notes that these migrants "were not willing to assimilate, that is, to speak Spanish and intermarry" (Watson 2014:11). Additionally, Watson argues that Spanish-speaking Afro-Panamanians have historically attempted to distinguish themselves from the darker, West Indian Panamanians through terminology such as *negro colonial,* implying a presence in the region since colonial times, whereas *negro antillano* emphasizes more recent migrations and their refusal to assimilate to the culture, religion, and language of nationalist discourse. In music literature, musicologist Sean Bellaviti reveals the way Panamanian folklorist Narciso Garay's 1930 anthology of folk traditions and songs focuses almost exclusively on musical genres associated with *hispanidad*, thus excluding music associated with the African diaspora (Bellaviti 2013:35).

Even amid these nationalist ideologies, Panama continues to claim that racial inequalities and injustices do not exist due to its "long history of miscegenation and harmonious relations," as noted by anthropologist Carla Guerrón-Montero (2006b:210). As argued by Sue, such racial distinctions are similar to those found in countries such as Brazil and Cuba (Sue 2009:1063). Further, Guerrón-Montero (2006b) notes how many Panamanians argue that any instances of racism that happen are a result of the Canal Zone and United States imperialism. Ariana A. Curtis (2012) shares Watson's arguments,

discussing how many of her African diasporic collaborators attempted to make it clear that they were not of Antillean descent. Discourses such as this reinforce dominant ideologies about race and nation while completely ignoring the real social hierarchies present in the country.

Little scholarship exists regarding Asian diasporic cultural performance in Central America; however, based on my own ethnographic fieldwork combined with anthropological scholarship, in this dissertation I will demonstrate how music plays an important role in challenging national *mestizaje* rhetoric. In her ethnography about Chinese diasporic citizenship in Panama, anthropologist Lok Siu mentions music in two contexts. In one case, Siu explains how karaoke has become a means for Chinese youth to "express their cultural pride and to affirm their difference" (2005:81). In another instance, Siu reflects on a young man who has claimed his own Chinese Panamanian identity through purchasing and engaging with "the latest Taiwanese and Hong Kong music CDs" (Siu 2005:97). Through these musical and performative acts, Panamanians of Chinese descent redefine what it means to be Panamanian, asserting the value of their Chinese cultural practices in negotiating their bicultural identities, which directly challenge who is included in the *mestizo* nation.

Through cultural performance, historically marginalized communities challenge and transform the national imaginaries present in the previous discussion. Music becomes especially important for creating spaces of difference that break away from dominant ideology. In performing and listening to indigenous, African diasporic, or Asian diasporic music, marginalized communities seeks to redefine nationhood in a more inclusive way.

Choices of instruments, music genres, and performance venues become tools for reinforcing and reaffirming diasporic identities. For some Asian diasporic communities, such modes of assertion take the form of karaoke performances or engaging with music produced in Hong Kong (Siu 2005). Additionally, members of the community may engage with nationalist Panamanian genres or Afro-Panamanian music and dance practices to assert their belonging in Panama.

Panamanian Musical Identity

Panamanian national music practices include aspects from the various communities historically present in the region since the beginning of its colonization (figure 1.3). For indigenous communities in Panama, such as the Kuna, the Embera-Wounaan, and the Ngöbe-Buglé, anthropologist James Howe (2009) claims that the ideology of *mestizaje* does not greatly impact them, due to their limited autonomy and relative isolation from Panamanian society more broadly. Instead, he notes that racial issues embedded in Panamanian national ideology "were concerned more with Afro-Panamanian populations, especially Antillean origin, than with the Kuna or other Indians" (2009:268). In fact, ethnographic research demonstrates the ways African diasporic groups in Panama both challenge and reinforce assumptions about *mestizaje* (Curtis 2012; Drolet 1980; Smith 1976, 1985; Zien 1999).

Figure 1.3. Political map of Panama. Photo courtesy of mapsoforld.com.

African diasporic music in Panama includes many instruments with African origins, such as the Chocó drum, the *tambor*, and other membranophone percussion instruments, which contrast more hispanized folkloric instruments like flutes, *güiros*, and other stringed instruments (List 1983; Smith 1985). Ronald R. Smith writes about the importance of drumming in African diasporic communities; within Panama, he demonstrates the importance of such practices, asserting that "many important aspects of expressive culture within the Republic [of Panama] owe their life's blood and substance to Afro-Panamanian heritage" (Smith 1985:170). Of significance, the national dance of Panama, *El Tamborito*, features strong rhythmic and percussive elements that signify its African historical elements. Similarly, Bellaviti's (2013) research includes analyses of *música típica popular*, a Panamanian genre of music that has also become a national symbol for the country and features strong Afro-Panamanian influences. The contradiction in this scenario, of course, is that while African diasporic expressive culture

is embedded within Panamanian performative nationalism, Afro-Panamanian people themselves still remain politically and socially on the margins of the *mestizo* nation.

Many of the most prominent music genres in Panama become especially apparent during the annual Carnival celebrations. Like most Carnival events throughout the world, *carnavales* in Panama take place during the weekend prior to and up through the early morning of Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of a period of fasting and repentance associated with Lent in Catholic and certain Protestant traditions. Although Panama's carnaval celebrations are not quite as large as those in other tourist destinations (such as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), they do feature some unique characteristics that can only be found in Panama. The celebration officially begins on Friday evening after the end of the work day, and lasts until early Wednesday morning, when partiers finally return home to rest. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are considered public holidays and most people do not work these days. Events known as *culecos* take place on Saturday morning, during which celebrants on huge tanker trucks (*mojaderos*) ensure that everyone on the premises gets drenched from their large fire truck-like hoses. Parades or *desfiles* are another prominent activity, featuring music and dance groups from throughout Panama's provinces, including Afro-Panamanian percussion ensembles with dancers (see figure 1.4), many of whom wear regional styles of the national dress, the *pollera* skirt.

Figure 1.4. Afro-Panamanian group Los Costeños during the 2018 Carnaval parade, featuring a variety of drums and *tambor*. February 13, 2018. Photo by author.

During my time in Panama, I encountered three specific types of music frequently: most often *música típica popular*, then salsa, especially anything by Ruben Blades, and followed by *reggae en español,* a Spanish-language version reggae that merges Jamaican dancehall music local musical styles and language. Interested in some of the popular music genres in Panama, I asked my Panamanian cousin early in my fieldwork about it. Other than salsa music, she explained that the brother-sister duo Samy and Sandra Sandoval were the most popular Panamanian musicians and, sure enough, over the course of my ten months in Panama, there was not a single party or *parkin* (a slang term for a small gathering amongst friends) that did not feature a few of the Sandovals' main *música típica* hits. Of the three genres mentioned above, both the local *música típica* and *reggae en español* originated in Panama and are thus intimately tied to Panamanian national cultural identity, despite *reggae en español*'s roots as music performed by Afro-Panamanians descended from Jamaican and Trinidadian laborers employed to build the Panama Canal (Scruggs 2012:136). Performers such as El General,

often credited as the first *reggaeton* musician, eventually helped to popularize the genre throughout the Caribbean. Through the efforts of Ruben Bladés, particularly during his term as Minister of Tourism of Panama from 2004 to 2009 under the presidency of Martín Torrijos, salsa music also expresses ideologies about national identity in the Panama.

Identity

This project approaches identity through a critical lens that examines its use in past ethnomusicological research in order to contribute to its validity as a research tool, particularly for reinforcing normative, majoritarian group identity as well as both diasporic communities and communities of people, more broadly, who live on the margins of a given society. Importantly, this research focuses on the socioeconomic historical and ongoing processes that mark Chinese and, more broadly, Asian diasporic peoples as "Other," rather than simply as Panamanians of Asian descent. How are these communities both marked by the society they live in and how do these same communities mark themselves in contrast to dominant ideologies? What strategies do diasporic Chinese in Panama employ as they navigate their marked existence? Most importantly for this project, how does music contribute to such strategies?

In attempts to understand the role of identity in social theory, sociologists and anthropologists provide a much-needed analysis of the way identity is situated through its dynamism and the way it changes in different social contexts. Sociologist Craig Calhoun (1994) critiques sociological theory that regards identity as fixed. He argues that

identities “can and to some extent, indeed, always do change” (Calhoun 1994:27). Further, Calhoun argues that resistance to imposed or fixed identities has shifted focus from identity politics to the politics of difference (Calhoun 1994:21). Calhoun’s politics of difference, however, cannot be considered outside of the discourse of which they were constructed. Identities form in specific historical contexts and involve questions of “becoming rather than being” (Hall and du Gay 1996:4). Specifically, sociologist Stuart Hall argues that identities are constructed within “the play of power and exclusion” (Hall and du Gay 1996: 5). Identity thus becomes situated in hegemonic discourses, used as both a form of resistance to dominant ideologies and as a reinforcement of them. “Emancipatory politics,” as Anthony Giddens argues, must focus on the “divisions between human beings” in order to be successful (1994:211). Likewise, in examining this unique case, such emancipatory politics prove essential for understanding identity for Panamanians of Chinese descent, who have been marked as “Other” within dominant ideologies about race and ethnicity within the nation. Additionally, similar to many countries throughout Latin America, anyone with any type of Asian phenotypical features in Panama is referred to as *chino*; emancipatory politics becomes a means for distinguishing themselves from other existing Asian communities in the country.

Beyond its emancipatory qualities, identity as a framework for understanding the Chinese diasporic experience demonstrates how such categorizations come to exist. In utilizing the social identity theory of social theorist Henri Tajfel, psychologists Aida Hurtado, Patricia Gurin, and Timothy Peng (1994) posit that identity as a frame for understanding ethnic communities, which they define as descendants of former

immigrants, emphasizes “the effects on social categorization, social comparison…[which] serve as mediators of cultural adaptations” (1994:130). Further, they explain their use of Tajfel’s social identities as

> aspects of an individual’s self-concept that derive from one’s knowledge of being part of categories and groups, together with the value and emotional significance attached to those memberships. (Hurtado et al. 1981:131)

In understanding social identity, group formation, and the strategic uses of sameness and difference in the Chinese community, I argue that the concept of identity is crucial for situating the experience of ethnic Chinese Panamanians as distinct from those of Chinese diasporic communities living in other areas throughout and beyond Latin America. In my research of this ethnic community in Panama, I ground my discussion of identity in the literature of Hurtado, Gurin, Peng, and Tajfel. This framework for approaching identity proves essential for understanding the categorizations and groups that arise in the local community, as evidenced by the creation of social organizations and the resulting cultural productions.

Within this framework for understanding the strategic use of identity within the context of Panama emerges a politics of recognition. Philosopher Charles Taylor argues the importance of recognition for marginalized peoples, declaring that it “is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (1994:26). Taylor explains that misrecognition results in a continuous onslaught of harm to those impacted by such rhetoric, often resulting in “low self-esteem” and “crippling self-hatred” (Taylor 1994:26). Comparing modern usage of “dignity” to the historical notion of “honor,”

Taylor notes that these characterizations of the few only exist as a result of other people not embodying them. Therefore, the lack of equal dignity given to certain members of a community strips them of their sense of authenticity within broader society. Taylor explains:

> With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity (1994:38).

Most importantly, Taylor's examination of the politics of recognition demonstrates the problems with multicultural approach to recognition. In a world that maintains a long history of migration, simply including multicultural forms within existing paradigms of Western values fails to recognize differences in values, customs, and beliefs by different communities. Charles Taylor's careful analysis of multiculturalism and the politics of recognition provides a crucial foundation for this dissertation; through various styles of cultural performance, Panamanians of Chinese descent give recognition and validation for their multicultural identities within the context of Panama.

Notably, music emerges as a powerful tool for demonstrating the complexity of distinct communities through its ability to construct, resist, or reinforce spaces of identification while providing opportunity for recognition. Similar to Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng, ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes situates social identity through the experience of ethnic communities, positing that music is especially important in that it "provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate

them" (Stokes 1994:5). Through the analysis of ethnic difference and cultural production through music, I suggest that identity in diasporic communities is deeply entrenched in issues of difference, as demonstrated through the very existence of ethnic groups. Sociologist Joane Nagel (1994) argues that identity and culture make up the dynamic category of ethnicity through constantly changing ideas about individual identity and group organization. Nagel further explains that ethnicity "is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designation" (1994:154). As people move through the world, ethnic identifications and performances of these identities shift situationally to reflect the audience in the particular moment.

Contemporary research on the politics of recognition reveals the flaws in the assumption that identity-making is always agentive, revelations into which ethnomusicology provides particular insight (Diamond 2007; Douglas 2013; Hesmondhalgh 2011). In such scholarship, the "self" becomes decentered to focus instead on the subjectivity inherent in people's lived experiences, rather than a fixed idea of identity. Artist and anthropologist Anne Douglas demonstrates that performances can cause alterations of supposedly fixed identities. She explains that "art imitates life, which imitates art, but the feedback loop is never exact. Something new happens" (2013:2). Through the process of performance – in her case, improvisatory performance – identities shift, resulting in altered performances and so forth in an ever-changing, never-ending loop. Approaching a similar conclusion through a very different lens, media and communications scholar David Hesmondhagh argues that despite the dominant

conception of music as a “positive resource for active self-making,” music is not “independent of negative social and historical processes” (2011:3). His research demonstrates that music’s strong connection to emotions and the idea of personal authenticity result in the need for excessive consumption habits and status competition. Importantly, the aforementioned scholars’ analyses show the way identity is continuously shaped by performance, the local market, and personal conceptions of authenticity and self-realization in a way that removes some of the agency associated with self-identity.

In Panama, various self-identifications exist for Panamanians of Chinese descent, which are incorporated situationally and expressed differently in varying contexts. The oldest and most predominant term for the community is Chinese Panamanian, or *chino panameño*. Historically, many organizations have embraced this phrase, connoting a tie to China as nation and thus signifying a person’s transnational identity through these international ties. In doing so, the diaspora has maintained its unity through a connection to a faraway homeland, imagined or otherwise, while also taking advantage of its use as a tool for political, social, and economic advancement. In the past few years, however, a movement in Panama critiquing the use of “Chinese Panamanian” as an identity marker has begun to gain traction. For many Panamanians of Chinese descent, Panama is the homeland, whereas China is a symbol from which to continuously draw inspiration for their ethnic identities rather than a place of eventual return.

As part of an attempt to assert a Panamanian national identity in contrast to the marginalization and exclusions present in *mestizaje* ideology of the past centuries, the

emerging movement advocates for representation as *panameños con herencia china*,[1] or "Panamanians of Chinese descent," which places a Panamanian nationality at the forefront while also acknowledging the Chinese cultural experience within the nation they consider home. Another attempt to break away from "Chinese Panamanian" has been to simply to refer to themselves and compatriots of Chinese descent as *paisanos*, or countrymen. While this removes any mention of Chineseness in the identity label, its purpose is to make explicit the assertion for belonging for Panamanians with Chinese heritage in Panama. Although many of these identifications shift in various situational contexts, I will refer to my interlocutors throughout this project by the identity marker that each preferentially uses in our interactions. Additionally, throughout this project, I frame "community" as inclusive of all of the citizens of Panama with any Chinese ethnic heritage and who are intimately tied to the sociocultural experiences of Chineseness within Panama City, Panama.

Asian Diaspora

In addition to scholarship from Latin American studies, my research draws heavily from the fields of Transpacific and Asian American studies. Each of these fields provide context for the continuous engagements of international sociopolitical affairs that deeply impact Chinese Panamanians (Ang 2001; Cooper 2013; Parreñas and Siu 2007). Transpacific and Asian American studies chronicle the ongoing migration histories of

[1] Variations on this identification exist, including *panameños de origen china* and *panameños con herencia china*, each of which place Panama at the forefront.

Asian communities between Asian countries and North and South America (Nguyen and Hoskins 2014; Hu-DeHart 2007; Ko 2016; Ma and Cartier 2003). These critical theories explicate reasons for migrations, ways of adapting to their host countries, and issues of marginalization and senses of belonging. Considering that Panamanians of Chinese origin represent a complex, international community, by applying anthropological and sociological theory to these events, my research approaches the ethnic Chinese Panamanian experience through an interdisciplinary and international mode of inquiry.

Conceptualizing terms such as "diaspora" and "transnational" prove crucial for investigating an ethnic Chinese Panamanian cultural production. Rhacel Parreñas and Lok Siu define diaspora as the "ongoing and contested process of subject formation embedded in a set of cultural and social relations that are sustained simultaneously with the 'homeland' (real or imagined), place of residence, and compatriots or coethnics dispersed elsewhere" (2007:1). The concept of diaspora represents notions of displacement, alienation and maintenance of affiliation, and collective consciousness and connectivity. Like diaspora, transnationalism engages with multilocality, is involved in global cultural traffics, and challenges and subverts national territories and interests. Ethnomusicologist Su Zheng notes that transnationalism incorporates the "*translational* [emphasis original] nature of present-day diasporic expressive cultural practices" (2010:12). Thus transnationalism, as Zheng argues, becomes a "mode of cultural production, performance, and consumption…manifested in hybridity…[and] syncretism" (Zheng 2010:12).

The transnational in such identities moves beyond a rootedness in the host country to explore what Aihwa Ong (1999) calls "flexible citizenship." Particularly relevant for Chinese diasporic communities, this theory holds that the construction of national identity is "shaped within the mutually reinforcing dynamics of discipline and escape" (1999:19). Framing her ideas within the construct of capitalism, Ong argues that transnational mobility has resulted in Chinese diasporic subjects strategically positioning themselves in different countries where the accumulation of cultural capital and social acceptance differ in each context; flexible citizenship results in "flexible practices, strategies, and disciplines associated with transnational capitalism" (Ong 1999:18-19). Through migrations in times of crisis, diasporic Chinese are able to find safety while simultaneously accruing cultural capital through the acquisition of new languages, educations, and more expansive knowledge about the places they inhabit.

These flexible practices and strategies differ in each context, as diasporic subjects continuously negotiate and reaffirm their identities through social performative practices. As cultural studies scholar Lily Cho states, Chinese restaurants serve as a form of mediation between older and newer diasporas, which "open[s] up a way of understanding the heterogeneity of diasporic communities" while still addressing the historical situations of the community (2010:10). Janet Hoskins and Viet Thanh Nguyen argue that any studies of the transnational or transpacific must be "conscious about how diasporic populations cannot be considered in isolation, but…in relation to other diasporas and domestic minorities" (2014:15). Lily Cho further emphasizes that diasporas must be "understood as a *condition of subjectivity*" rather than as an object of analysis and only

emerge in relation to power (2007:14-15). Within these conditions of subjectivity, diasporas are additionally marked by loss, a distinction from transnationalism who she argues are marked by migration and the idea of return (Cho 2007:19). For many Panamanians of Chinese descent, although migration is often possible, there is little desire for an eventual return. Meanwhile, increasing support and recognition from the government, a result of the growth and community presence of Chinese Panamanian organizations, has begun to redefine power relations in their favor, often at the expense of other, more recent migrant communities. This support and recognition exist as part of a broader embrace of multiculturalism at the state level throughout many countries in Latin America in the past decades, including new constitutions and laws recognizing cultural rights and the "pluricultural identity" of the nation state itself (Aguilar Rivera 2014).

Any discussion of Chineseness in diaspora runs the risk of essentializing "Chinese" into a monolithic category. How transnational identity will manifest differs with each individual and within each community. Cultural studies scholar Ien Ang (2000) questions whether "one can say no to Chineseness." She argues that "Chineseness…operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated" (2000:282). Further, Ang continues by noting the importance of situating the construction of Chineseness as unique to different locales. Especially important, Ang criticizes the concept of Chineseness as it relates to consanguinity, or shared kinship and heredity. By viewing Chineseness through such a critical lens, Ang demonstrates the ways in which it often becomes a political tool that fails to always work in the subjects' best interests.

Many discussions about Asian diaspora and transnationality often overlook Latin America as part of the Asia-Pacific region. Scholar Evelyn Hu-DeHart (2007) notes that Asians have long been present in Latin America, including Chinese presence in Mexico as early as the seventeenth century. Importantly, Hu-DeHart posits that "labor migrations…were initially tied in with the developments in Latin America as part of a larger world economy" (2007:29). Indeed, much of the Asian presence in Latin America is a direct result of the abolition of slavery and the desire for cheap labor. Asian migrants' contributions to development in Latin America have been largely ignored due to the "social and cultural environment that was frequently hostile to their presence," as Hu-DeHart notes (2007:29). Much research has examined the Japanese and Chinese ethnic communities in Brazil, Peru, Mexico, and, to some extent, Cuba (Hu-DeHart 1980; Olsen 2004; Watt 1951). Latin American scholar Chisu Teresa Ko highlights the Asian diasporic presence in Argentina, arguing that its absence from discourse results from Argentina's dominant national narrative, which "obliterated racial differences to promote the idea of a homogenous whiteness" (2016:271). By engaging with this existing literature, my research addresses the historical erasure of Asian diasporas in Panama, who likewise arrived as part of the larger world economy that Hu-DeHart demonstrates.

Discourses that relate nationality to issues of race, ethnicity, and gender result in a form of ethnonationalism, a frame of mind that produces "'authentic' and 'inauthentic,' 'legal' and 'illegal' subjects," as noted by Chicana feminist Norma Alarcón (2003:360). In producing these types of subjects, the state regulates who does and does not belong, granting certain groups of people privilege while continuously marginalizing others. Such

ethnonationalism presents itself in Panamanian national rhetoric, as exemplified in Panamanian singer Karen Peralta's (RENDER Producción Publicitaria 2016) music video for "Yo Soy Panamá," which was released in response to the Panama Papers' adverse effects on tourism, of which the country is economically dependent.[2] In the music video, Peralta argues that Panama is so much more than the Panama Papers through a nativist demonstration of the various people who live in the country and the beautiful landscapes present throughout. The video features indigenous children as well as light-skinned *mestizos* as representative of the Panamanian population.

In this representation, Afro-Panamanians and Asian Panamanians are completely erased from the national discourse, emphasizing an ethnonationalist rhetoric about their lack of belonging. Anthropologist Lok Siu notes how feminist scholars such as Nira Yuval-Davis and Rhacel Parreñas discuss the notion of belonging as stressing the "process of forming affinities, affiliations, and solidarities in community formation" (2005:10). By focusing on Panamanians of mixed indigenous and white descent, Peralta reinforces harmful *hispanidad* notions about what it means to be Panamanian. Further, the erasure within this depiction of Panama as a primarily *mestizo* nation calls attention to the triangulation present in the country.

Scholars in the past two decades have written extensively on the triadic relationship between Black, Asian, and White society within the United States and the West, more broadly (Kim 1999; Shih 2008; Xu and Lee 2013). In her seminal work on

[2] In 2015, 11.5 million documents were leaked, linking foreign politician to offshore accounts in Panama used for tax evasion and fraud, among other illegal activities. Leaders involved in these illegal activities include people formerly known for their anti-corruption platforms, including Chinese President Xi Jinping (Obermayer et al. 2016).

triangulation, political scientist and Asian American studies scholar Claire Jean Kim explains that the marginalization of Asian Americans in the United States has not occurred "within a vacuum, isolated from other groups" (1999:106). She argues that, instead, Asian Americans "have been racialized relative to and through interaction with Whites and Blacks" leading to their marginalization within the dimensions of "racial valorization" and "civic ostracism" (Kim 1999:106). As a result, Asian Americans have become the image of the "model minority" while still continuing to be relegated to the status of foreigner.

Much in the same way that scholars have attempted to move past the black/white color line to provide more nuanced understandings of racialization, this project highlights the polyadic relationships taking place within Panama between indigenous communities, Afro-Panamanians, Chinese Panamanians, and *mestizo* Panamanians. Just like Asian Americans in the United States, Chinese Panamanians are consistently considered model minorities while being denied access to a Panamanian national identity, whereas Afro-Panamanians are celebrated for their contributions to Panamanian culture and identity while being marked through poverty and associated with violence in predominantly Black areas. Meanwhile, *mestizo* Panamanians and neighborhoods enjoy the privilege of national belonging and civic veneration. Consequentially, this research attempts to examine the idea of the Chinese Panamanian "diaspora" through a critical lens, which continues to be used as both a strategy for asserting belonging through difference by some and as a marker of the perpetual foreigner by others.

In his discussion of global discourse, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2003) writes about three distinct types of cultural formations: immigrant communities, diasporas, and cosmopolitan centers. For immigrant communities, assimilation often becomes the long-term result of such cultural formations, assuming no racist or classist barriers exist to hinder this process. With respect to diaspora, Turino states, "diasporic cultural formations tend towards longevity and recognition of social continuities across space and time," with a particular emphasis on the importance of senses of history and a distant homeland in these communities (2003:60). To distinguish diaspora from cosmopolitanism, Turino posits that "cosmopolitans do not perceive themselves as belonging to a specific cultural formation" and lack "an original homeland as a key symbol, if not an actual ground for the formation" (2003:61-62). Another fundamental aspect of cosmopolitan cultural formations, according to Turino, is that they "are more thoroughly local, in that they and their ancestors often grow up and live in their heritage home" (2003:63). Here, Turino emphasizes that cosmopolitanism has more to do with class than with place. By claiming such firm distinctions between diaspora and cosmopolitanism, Turino seemingly underestimates the ability of diaspora communities to more fully integrate into the class discourse of cosmopolitan cultural formations and still maintain connections to their ethnic heritage, which, in turn, is tied to a place of familial origin. In a sense, Panamanians of Chinese descent can be thought of as diasporic cosmopolitans.

What happens then, when a community of people with a distinct ethnic identity have little desire to migrate, or "return," consider their homeland to be where they are in

this moment, and feel little loss of a distant home due to the large and active ethnic community in their place of residence? What do we call something that is not fully diasporic, and yet not entirely cosmopolitan? How might we look at cultural performance, not as a memory of a distant home, but as a celebration of the here and now, of a new identity that is deeply Panamanian but at the same time ethnically Chinese? Through these musical and performative acts, Panamanians of Chinese descent redefine Panamanian-ness, asserting the value of their Chinese cultural practices in negotiating their cultural identities, which directly challenges who is included in *mestizo* nationhood and where the line is drawn between diaspora and cosmopolitanism.

Nationalism

Ethnomusicological research includes a long history of disciplinary efforts examining music's role in ideologies about nationhood, nationality, and national identity (Askew 2002; Sanga 2008; Turino 2001; Wade 2000). In addition to his scholarship regarding community formations, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino writes about nationalism and the variety of ways it has been explored in academic writings. He defines nationalism as "a political movement or ideology that bases the idea of legitimate sovereignty on a coterminous relationship between a 'nation' and a state" (2000:13). Particularly useful for this project, he distinguishes nationalism from "national sentiment," which he argues represents "the more general feelings of belonging to a nation, and which other writers like Anderson and Appadurai refer to as *patriotism*" (Turino 2000:13). Further, he maintains that "[t]he use of art and other cultural practices

to develop or maintain national sentiment for political purposes is termed *cultural nationalism*" (Turino 2000:14).

As demonstrated by different ethnomusicologists, performance strategically becomes either a means of collapsing culture into the nation or disarticulating the nation from culture. For example, ethnomusicologist Imani Sanga's (2008) research on Tanzanian nationalism reveals the way Tanzanians have incorporated new musical practices to fit within existing traditions in order to maintain a Tanzanian national identity. Furthering Turino's analysis, Sanga considers nationalism

> to be a three-layered social space: physical, mental, and lived space. The first layer of national space is the physical location, a certain circumscribed area on the face of the earth. One can travel physically to various places we identify as Tanzania and cross the borders of these spaces. The second layer, mental space, includes songs, dances, drumming, sculpture, masks, paintings, literary works (poems, drama or novels), names, and other forms of representation through which ideas about places like Tanzania or national identities are constructed. The third layer of national space, what Lefebvre calls "lived space," includes real experiences of individuals being identified or identifying themselves as Tanzanians. Emotionally, it involves the feelings that this identity arouses in a person carrying the identity (2000: 55).

By using this same approach for thinking about performance in Panama, the use of Chinese practices within the first layer of space, the physical location, becomes a tool for bringing the third space, the lived experience, of Panamanians of Chinese descent into the second space, the association of said practices to the national imaginary, of the nation on a broader level. Throughout this project, and especially in chapter six, I use "nationalism" to refer primarily to the idea of "national sentiment," where musicians and dancers of Chinese descent within Panama use their art forms to develop feelings of belonging to the nation and redefine cultural nationalism in more inclusive ways. Further, I occasionally

use the term “ethnonationalism” to refer to the idea, most notably held by the People’s Republic of China, that a person’s ethnicity represents a crucial element in defining one’s national identity. For the PRC, people around the world of Chinese descent represent the nation and operate as strategic points of access for spreading and celebrating Chinese culture and values (Han 2019).

Asian Performance in Latin America

Scholarship about music performance by Asian diasporic communities in other Latin American contexts proves especially important for framing identity for Latin Americans of Asian descent. Ethnomusicologist Rolando Antonio Pérez Fernández (2014) writes about the history of Chinese music and dance performance in Cuba. He presents performative strategies used by Chinese Cubans for celebrating their ethnic and national identities, while also demonstrating the way Chinese culture has become incorporated into Cuban musical expression. The two explicitly Chinese examples he explores are Chinese theater used for Cantonese opera, which he attributes to their migration from the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, and the lion dance, which arrived in the early to middle part of the twentieth century. By the 1980s, lion dances began to take on Cuban musical and stylist qualities, including “elements of conga steps,” which they then “combine...with the lion dance’s seven stars” (Pérez Fernández 2014:68). Similarly, this hybridization of traditions extends to musical instruments such as the *corneta china*, “a sort of oboe or shawm…derived from the Han Chinese *suona*,” which made its way into the Afro-Cuban community (Pérez Fernández 2014:62).

Through the performance of these hybrid traditions, Pérez Fernández argues, Chinese Cubans can celebrate and assert both their Chinese ethnic identity and Cuban national identity.

Scholars have also written extensively about Japanese music making in Brazil (Hosokawa 1998, 2000; Lorenz 2007, 2011; Olsen 1980, 2004). In his research into Japanese karaoke performance in Liberdade, São Paulo, Shuhei Hosokawa argues that karaoke singing “assists in the construction of identity” through the music, such as melody and rhythm, as well as social factors, such as “language and form of socialization” (1998:136). Through performance, Japanese Brazilians create what Hosokawa calls “ethnic boundaries” within a multi-ethnic country. Such boundaries allow young Japanese Brazilians, who may not speak or understand Japanese to express and engage with their own ethnic identities. Hosokawa remarks that the meaning is less important to these young singers than the actual sound of Japanese, which acts as a “family language rather than a functional one” (1998:147). In contrast, ethnomusicologist Shanna Lorenz’s (2011) research reveals the strategies used by some Japanese Brazilians to engage with their bicultural identities. In discussing the Japanese Brazilian band Zhen Brasil’s engagement with Brazil’s national music, the samba, Lorenz argues that the group “explode[s] commonly held myths about Japanese racial and cultural heritage, Japanese Brazilians, Brazilian national identity, and the relationship between the three” (2011:157). Much like the case studies I provide in chapter five, engagement with different national musics and performance practices both assert national belonging and inscribe new meanings about nationhood into the music.

Throughout the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century, younger generations of Panamanians of Chinese descent have made great strides in shaping their own identities in important ways. These shifts in identity reflect what folklorist Juwen Zhang refers to as the "third culture," or the "dynamic processes that identity demonstrates its multiplicity, diversity, temporality, and creolity" within diasporic groups (2015:450). The idea of the "third culture" emerges from cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the "third space." Arguing the importance of "cultural difference" over "cultural diversity," Bhabha highlights the necessity for understanding cultural performance as a reference to a specific time and place and argues that "there is no way the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content" (1994:36). As a result of this "ambivalence of interpretation," Bhabha proposes the idea of a "third space," which represents the passage of the production of meaning through "both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious" (1994:36). In the interpretation of any given performance, context inherently ties the language and meaning to the actions occurring and emphasizes the necessity for an understanding that does not reduce it to the level of "cultural diversity," where performances are experienced as a "representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity" (Bhabha 1994:34).

Zhang emphasizes the complexity of diasporic groups, which are often lumped under the guise of "ethnic identity," but are actually very diverse in cultural heritages and practices. Through the "third culture," diasporic communities reveal "diversity within unity" (Zhang 2015). While a collective Chinese identity is often marked as "ethnic," cultural contributions to society become implicitly excluded and marked as "other." Thus, the "third culture" comes to represent the hybridization of Chineseness, however defined person to person, and the cultural values of the society in which they live. In his discussion of the Asian American "third culture," Zhang argues that it "has demonstrated its own uniqueness in maintaining its own cultural vitality and validity while harmonizing with those around them" (2015:468). The "third culture" allows individuals of Chinese descent to negotiate their cultural identities within a unique framework that is simultaneously both and neither.

Through the development of the "third culture," Asian-descended peoples express their new identities with particular markers specific to their community. These include music and dance styles, vernacular speech, beliefs, fashion, or any other types of cultural performance. Due to the uniqueness of "third cultures," Zhang calls for better names for such groups, as opposed to the historic "Asian American." Some examples he calls to attention are names created and adopted by the communities they emerge from, such as "Amerasian," "AZN," or "Amasian" (470). In Panama, similar issues have arisen as Panamanians of Chinese descent seek to separate themselves from the Othering of predominantly and historically used *chino panameño*. Instead, they seek to demonstrate their own "third culture" by claiming their Panamanian identity and their Chinese cultural

heritage through the proclamation that they are *panameños con herencia china*, or more simply *paisanos*. In subsequent chapters, I discuss how cultural performance practices such as lion dance, karaoke, and dragon boat racing demonstrate the various ways in which Panamanians of Chinese descent engage with their complex identities in very unique ways. Through these performances, they celebrate their Panamanian nationality through the performance of Chinese arts, asserting that the latter does not negate the former.

Performance Theory

Throughout this dissertation, discussions focus primarily on cultural performance, the performance of identities (cultural and national), and cultural production. As performance studies scholar Diana Taylor explains, "[p]erformances operate as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated actions" (2016:25). Through ritual, public, and/or private performances, people make visible their beliefs and understandings about themselves and the world around them. Such performances are not limited to the theatrical but can include the mundane acts of everyday life, from cooking to driving the kids to school. Connecting her argument to Judith Butler's discussion on gender performativity, Taylor iterates that our entire way of acting and being are brought into existence through "discursive form[s] of initiation" (2016:32).

Japanese Brazilian scholar Zelideth María Rivas is also critical of the use of diaspora and cosmopolitanism as useful terms for such communities, instead stressing the

importance of performance theories, which "highlight the stage as the site through which identity becomes imaginative…performers must believe the act, gestures, and identity that they present in order for fans to consume their performance" (Rivas 2015:714-715). Rivas especially highlights the ways in which such performance studies reveal the way a performer is "absorbed, consumed, and erased at the same time that he is Othered, exoticized, and validated" (2015:716). These performances, she posits, become a form of "boutique multiculturalism," or the "superficial or cosmetic relationship to the object of its affection" for their audiences (2015:711). Despite the dominant culture's inability to fully understand the realities and meanings inherent in such performances, those who perform continue to do so in strategic ways.

Most importantly, Diana Taylor reminds us that performative acts can "recontextualize, resignify, react, challenge, parody, perform, and reperform differently," in ways that make performance more than just an aesthetic act, but also a form of political intervention (2016). In another publication, Taylor maintains the importance of understanding the politics of performance, noting that "the physical mechanics of staging can also keep alive an organizational infrastructure, a practice or know-how, an episteme, and a politics that goes beyond the explicit topic" (2006:68). My research applies Diana Taylor's scholarship on performance to the cultural production of Panamanian Chineseness and the ways that Panamanians of Chinese descent use performative practice in the form of sporting, music, and dance as acts of political intervention in an attempt to give new meanings to the identifier Panamanian and as acts of resistance that continue a history of marginalization of people of Chinese descent. Further, in spite of the boutique

multiculturalism that often recognizes the value of performance while ignoring the underlying struggle for recognition, Panamanians of Chinese descent continue to realize their individual and group identities and values through both private and public performance.

Positionality

"Why this topic? How did you decide that this is what you wanted to focus your research on?" In the beginning years of my research, these questions plagued my thoughts; *Why is this topic so important for me? What is it about identity studies that leaves me wanting – no –* needing *to learn more? And why this specific community in this specific country?* Well, the second half of the last question was easy to answer. Since my first days as an ethnomusicology student began, I knew Panama was where I wanted to do my research. After all, this was half of my ethnic heritage, and one that I spent most of my life attempting to claim and validate. The question of the importance in researching identity took a bit more self-reflection. As I came to realize, my life-long experience of navigating through changing identities and the role of music in helping me understand them resulted in my research centering on issues of identity expression through music. So then, for the main question, *why research cultural performance for Panamanians of Chinese descent*? In order to understand this final question, I must begin with my own positionality and the ways that my own lived experiences have informed and impacted the choices I made in both the field and in my own academic trajectory.

For the 50th anniversary of the Society for Ethnomusicology, ethnomusicologist Travis A. Jackson (2006) wrote a compelling article where he discusses his experiences of being a black man within an organization that has historically consisted of straight, white men. In the article, Jackson discusses his positionality as a racial minority while also under the purview of male privilege. Although the intention of this piece of work is to laud SEM's inclusionary efforts over the past few decades, this article is especially notable for its discussion of the author's position. Travis Jackson continuously positions himself throughout this article, specifically relating to how his entrance in ethnomusicology was perceived by others. He states of his early 1990s experience, "Indeed, as a member of a group that had too often been subjected to exoticizing scrutiny, I was reluctant to step outside, as it were, and turn a similar gaze on African Americans or any other group" (281). Here, Jackson makes it clear that his ethnomusicological beginnings were founded on a fear of being Otherized, something he witnessed in many of the ethnographies of the time. In this situation, Jackson's blackness becomes especially important for understanding the struggles of non-white academics of the time period, a point critical to his primary argument. Later, Jackson not only addresses being black, but also of his position as a male within the male-dominated sphere of academia. Reflecting on his first experience of feeling out of place as a black academic, he later goes on to dismiss his earlier critiques of the field when he began to understand "[his] own privileged position and having a number of positive experiences" (284).

Jackson concludes the article with a positive reinforcement of the Society's progress in promoting a diversity of voices, but also in its ability to "put us in a better

position to attract those who do not see a place for themselves among us" (285). By making ourselves known to our readers, other potential ethnomusicologists can also feel comfortable to make themselves known. The most important part of this paper is the urgency with which scholars need to address their own positionalities in their research, even if it is not the focus of their topic. According to ethnomusicologist Carol Babiracki (2006), we must "strive for…a keener awareness and acknowledgement of the objectives and audiences of our writing" (181). For me personally, this means acknowledging myself as a queer, half-Panamanian, half-white, light-skinned male. In doing so, I both recognize my limitations and accessibility in my research as well as the privileges that come with being a man in academia and within a world that still puts so much value on maleness.

As a queer scholar doing research in very heteronormative spaces, I often felt a need to reconcile my own experiences with the opportunities presented during my fieldwork. In chapter four, one such opportunity came when I was invited to attend a Chinese Christian Church retreat. As excited as I was for this chance to explore a new facet of my research, part of me was incredibly anxious about the experience. I grew up in a very Christian household. When I was little, my mother used to host Bible study in our living room with me, my brother, some of my cousins, and some of the neighborhood kids. We would have fun, while learning different Bible stories and lessons. Eventually, as we got older, my parents split up and life became a little more chaotic. Sometime in middle school, I found welcome and comfort with a friend of mine attending Westhaven Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia. For the next six or so years, I became very active

in the youth group, eventually becoming a primary member of the youth choir, and I would regularly sing solos during the main service. During this time, I started struggling as I attempted to negotiate my faith with my sexuality, something which was not easy as part of a Southern Baptist church. In fact, these were probably some of the darkest and most difficult times of my life. It was not until I went to college, however, that I came to terms with my sexual identity, where I really began to love myself. As I found out some years later, the pastors of that church had given specific instructions to the youth minister, while I was in the youth choir, that I should not be allowed to sing in church, as they had browsed through my MySpace page at the time and had suspicions about my sexuality. Such betrayal and constant condemnation from the church that I had called home for so many years left a scar, resulting in a lasting anxiety for me in any new religious congregational context. Thus, entering this new, evangelical church environment, in a country where LGBTQ+ identities are still a long way from being validated, was particularly stressful.

On a personal level, the significance of this research comes from its ability in helping me understand my own lived experience as a biracial, 2nd-generation migrant, even as I continue to learn about the identities and cultural performances of the community with whom I work. As ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk asserts in her reflexive ethnography, "we get to know other people by making *ourselves* known to *them*, and through them to know ourselves again, in a continuous cycle" (2008:187). During my research, I made consistent efforts to make myself known to my collaborators, ensuring transparency about my intentions and reiterating the value of their lived

experiences. By making myself available as a free photographer to the different organizations and performing groups in Panama City, I made it clear that they maintained agency of the knowledge they imparted and that I was there to work with them in their endeavors and to learn from whatever they chose to offer. In doing so, many of the people who assisted me along the way became more than just collaborators; they became friends whom I could trust, and in return, they opened up to me.

Ethnographic research methodologies have been critiqued in both feminist and indigenous scholarship as reinforcing colonialist and imperialistic power dynamics between researchers and research communities. Considering my own positionality in the field with regards to research in Panama, the United States has played a particularly destructive role in the state formation of Panama and the racist exclusionary laws it adopted thereafter. As a result, my research incorporates methodologies that specifically address these histories in a way that focuses on decolonizing research. Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in critiquing feminist approaches of the past, which fail to "deliver emancipation for oppressed groups," argues that many indigenous experiences cannot be "understood or analysed by outsiders or people who have not experienced, and have not been born into, this way of life" (2012:168-170). In attempting research into such communities, the ethnographer is responsible for addressing such insufficiencies of experience through sharing the stories and voices of those who do, rather than attempting to speak for them through an analysis that erases their own stories.

As an ethnomusicologist researching ethnic Chinese communities in Panama, my responsibility as an outsider ethnographer involves collaboration with my community in

order to allow them to share their own complex, intersectional experiences and the ways in which their sense of national belonging is impacted by ideologies about race and nationhood. By including this prologue and making myself vulnerable by addressing my own lived experiences, the experiences of the researcher and the interpretation of resulting data presented throughout this dissertation can be examined through a critical lens to reveal the deeper conversations that occur between researcher and their respective communities. It is within these conversations where Kisliuk claims the real learning happens (2008:193). By engaging with my own baggage that I bring to the field, I echo Kisliuk's contention that "If I provide enough relevant information about my experience within my ethnography, the reader can decide whether to trust my insight and how best to use it" (2008:193). In doing so, the possibilities for further research become clear.

Methodology

As an ethnographic project focused on the Panamanian Chinese descent population, the majority of my research took place during the ten months I resided in Panama City in 2017-18. While there, I utilized my background and training in ethnography and participant observation to engage with the community. A core methodology in ethnomusicology and anthropology, ethnographic participant observation allowed me to interact and deeply connect with the local community, granting me a deeper insight into the lived experiences of Panamanians of Chinese descent. Bruce Jackson (1987) emphasizes the role of rapport in ethnographic research as an integral part of participant observation. In order to build rapport, interviews and communication with

interlocutors must continue over time, or else the ethnographer risks becoming a stranger, which limits the ability to get more detailed information relevant to the research (1987:70). Following Jackson, a key component of my participant observation involved the building and fostering of relationships in the field, maintaining connections to interlocutors at the various stages of the project, and uncovering more insight into the lived experiences of members within the community. Such rapport became especially important as I attempted to research the private expressions of identity that are not often revealed in public demonstrations, as in my presence at private karaoke performances for the friends and family of those involved.

Research for this project occurred over the course of ten months from September 2017 through July 2018, in addition to a follow-up research visit in September 2018. During this time, I lived in Ciudad de Panamá, the capital city of Panama, where I attended all major Chinese Panamanian events that I could access. These included: two Dragon Boat Festivals, one in October of 2017 and one in June of 2019; the 2017 and 2018 Moon Festival Celebrations at the Centro Cultural Chino Panameño (CCCHP); the 2018 Lunar New Year celebrations that took place in both the Centro Comercial El Dorado and Atlapa Convention Center, respectively; five months of private, weekly karaoke gatherings between October 2017 and March 2018; three different kite festivals organized by APROCHIPA (Association of Chinese Panamanian Professionals); three major lion dance performances, including one at a *quinceañera*, one at the opening of a new business in Costa Verde (located east of the city), and one that took place at both Tocumen airport and a hotel in celebration of Panama's new relationship with Air China;

and the annual Día de la Etnia China (Chinese Ethnicity Day) celebration on March 30, 2018 at the CCCHP.

Within these ten months, I conducted ten formal interviews, five of which I was able to record, and each of which were between 30 and 45 minutes long. The interviewees included a former student of the Instituto Sun Yat Sen of the CCCHP, active participants in local Chinese Panamanian community organizations, a participant in the dragon boat racing events, an editor for one of the major Chinese Panamanian periodicals, an accordionist and musician of Panamanian folk musics, leaders and participants of two major Panamanian lion dance groups, and Brenda Lau, a popular musician in Panama with familial and experiential ties to the group of karaoke performers I sang with for five months.

At each of the aforementioned events that I attended, I also conducted a series of informal interviews with various attendees. Although these conversations were shorter than the formal interviews, they allowed me a chance to understand local perceptions and interpretations through their own reflections about the experience. All of the interviews and short conversations that I engaged in over the course of my time in Panama shaped my approach to the analyses present in the subsequent chapters, as I will demonstrate. By focusing on key participants and active contributors to each of these events in formal interviews and then supplementing those interviews through casual conversations with other attendees, I seek to present a more complete understanding of the sociomusical importance of such practices in the context of Panama.

One of the major challenges I encountered when I entered the field was how to begin establishing a network of peers and interlocutors with whom to build a rapport. For this research, I received extensive early support and guidance from Chinese Panamanian scholar Juan Tam. A past Latin American representative for the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas, he currently serves as secretary for both the Consejo Nacional de la Etnia China (National Chinese Ethnic Council), an official entity of the government of Panama, and the Asociación China de Panamá. His deep connections to members of the Chinese community at both the local and national levels offered me access to a breadth of people and institutions pertinent to this research. Although I did not officially meet him in person until months into my research, he frequently sent me invitations and links to events in the community through WhatsApp, a popular messaging smartphone application used extensively in Panama. Additionally, his expert advice and mentorship after finally meeting guided my fieldwork during the rest of my time in Panama. This relationship proved especially important for establishing contacts in the lion dance performance community, which forms the basis for chapter three and my critiques of situating the community through the diasporic lens.

The second and third major developments in my ability to do participant observation were made possible through social media, specifically through Instagram. Singer, songwriter, and Panamanian of Chinese descent Brenda Lau has featured prominently in much of my research about the Chinese presence in Panama and popular music performance. Brenda Lau is most known in Panama as the winner of the 2010 national singing contest *Viva la Música*. In an interview, Lau explains that her singing

career began in these karaoke spaces in which she grew up participating (Lau 2012). Prior to entering the field, I contacted Brenda through Instagram who, at the time, was a student at the Berklee School of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Although she was not present in Panama during my time there, we talked frequently and she connected me with her family, specifically her mother and her aunt, whom I will refer to as M.L. and Tia, respectively, who form part of the aforementioned private karaoke group that meets biweekly at Restaurante Sunly, one of the prominent Cantonese restaurants in the El Dorado Chinatown of Panama City, which I will discuss more thoroughly in chapter five. In addition to what I learned about karaoke in this performance space, I also encountered many of these women in various moments at events throughout the rest of the year. Through these connections, my presence at many of the Chinese events in the city became less awkward as a lonely participant, and many times they introduced me to other members of the community.

Although the first few major events that I attended in Panama were useful in providing me with context for my experience, very little interviewing took place in these early scenarios. As a new person in the community speaking broken Spanish, I used this time to focus primarily on observation. After becoming gradually more eager to start expanding my network of contacts in the field, I reached out on Instagram to Panamanian of Chinese descent chef, food blogger, Top Chef Panama contestant, and dragon boat racing participant Felipe Chong, affectionately referred to as “Chef Pipe” (Chong n.d.). We agreed to meet at Palacio Lung Fung, one of the best-known dim sum restaurants in Panama, where we had our first interview. Over the course of my time in Panama, Felipe

became an interlocutor, friend, and mentor in understanding and getting involved in the many activities and events as they occurred in Panama. Most importantly, Felipe connected me to APROCHIPA, an organization that does a lot of volunteer work in the community while also hosting some major events. After seeing him post about their Christmas party on Instagram, he provided me with the details and helped me to attend. Although my attendance was initially met with skepticism by organization leadership, I was eventually fully welcomed as an "honorary member" of APROCHIPA. It was in this event that my web of networking expanded exponentially, first with the meeting of scholar Berta Alicia Chen P., whose work I incorporate throughout this project, and then, through her, other notable members of the community, including Ana Chung, editor of the Chinese Panamanian periodical Revista ChungSir. During my remaining time in Panama I volunteered with APROCHIPA, using my limited skills and professional camera as their photographer for any events they hosted or in which they participated throughout the city and nearby provinces.

When not volunteering directly with APROCHIPA, I collected much of my data by attending Chinese festivals in Panama as they occurred throughout the year. Through the enactment of festivals that originated in China, Panamanians of Chinese descent directly engage with their ethnic heritage. The use of specific music, food, and activities allows the community to not only recreate tradition and experience not native to Panama's borders but to also create localized versions of them. During these public demonstrations and festivals, such as the Dragon Boat Festival, I interviewed various participants and attendees, primarily through casual conversation, specifically attempting

to find out what these festivals mean to them and how these events relate to their identities as Chinese Panamanian, Panamanian of Chinese descent, or as *paisanos*. At these events, I conducted extensive interviews and recorded activities that took place. My interview strategy followed that of James Spradley and what he calls "descriptive questions" and "structural questions," which allow the interviewee to describe certain events in their own words (1979:60). By asking open-ended questions, one can encourage the interviewee to freely discuss their sociomusical experiences in ways that are most meaningful to them, rather than being guided in such a way that the responses only serve to verify what the researcher is attempting to argue.

Chapter Overview

The individual chapters of this dissertation focus on specific themes that I encountered in my research, each of which contribute to an understanding of local identity as it relates to various styles of cultural performance. Chapter two includes a discussion of the history of Chinese presence in Panama and sets the stage for the following chapters in regard to the way history has shaped modern conceptions about identity. An examination of both the history of Chinese migration to Panama and the influence of international hegemonic powers that have shaped and continue to shape the nation provides context for understanding identity, belonging, and conceptions about diaspora for Panamanians of Chinese descent. This chapter is especially important for providing a contextual understanding of the multiple histories in Panama for long-established migrant families and more recent ones.

One of the most prominent forms of cultural performance for Panamanians of Chinese descent that I experienced throughout Panama City was the Southern Chinese lion dance. In chapter three, I demonstrate the role of lion dance in constructing Panamanian Chineseness that highlights both a Panamanian nationality and a Chinese ethnic heritage. Through this form of ritualized cultural performance, important life moments are marked as distinctly Panamanian of Chinese descent.

Chapter four examines religion, music, and migration, particularly as it pertains to Chinese Venezuelan migration to Panama and the role of the evangelical Chinese Christian Churches in Panama as sites of refuge. Importantly, this chapter situates Panamanians of Chinese descent in relation to other diasporic Chinese communities in Panama and Latin America more broadly, highlighting identity and ethnic categorizations of distinct groups of members in the community.

In chapter five, I focus on karaoke performance and the emergence of Panamanian celebrities of Chinese descent. Through my experiences participating in a Chinese karaoke performance group in Panama, this chapter incorporates ethnographic analysis into discussions about Chineseness, Panamanian-ness, and the construction national identity. Identity throughout Chinese Panama is not homogenous, and this chapter highlights the conflicting ideals about identity, cultural performance, and Panamanian belonging.

Chapter six focuses on issues of nationalism, national identity, and the cultural performance of Chineseness and Panamanian Chineseness within a Panamanian context. This chapter highlights not only the various ways in which Panamanian Chineseness is

constructed within Panama, but also the ways in which people in Panama continue to resist assimilation and assertion of a Panamanian identity.

Finally, chapter six concludes this dissertation with a discussion of the emerging possibilities for the cultural performance of Panamanian Chineseness. In this chapter, I return to the question of identity. Why has this shift in identity from Chinese Panamanian to Panamanian of Chinese descent emerged as so important in the context of the 21st century and how will this shift impact the community moving forward?

Through the history and sociocultural context provided in the following chapters, supplemented by analyses of ethnographic data and important case studies, this dissertation theorizes issues of diaspora, belonging, and nationhood for Chinese Panamanians and Panamanians of Chinese descent. Central to this project, cultural performance through music, dance, religious worship, and sporting events becomes an important tool for validating and asserting a Panamanian national identity in light of a long history of marginalization. For many, it is no longer enough to simply be considered a "*chino*" in Panama; with strategic use of performance, members of the community lay claim to their identities as Panamanian first and foremost, which is then followed by acknowledgement of their ethnic Chinese heritage(s).

Chapter 2

Establishing a Diaspora Community: Chinese Migration & International Politics in 19th and 20th Century Panama

Felipe Chen

On Tuesday, November 28, 2017, I messaged Felipe on Instagram and explained that I was in Panama doing research relating to some of the activities about which I saw him posting (figure 2.1). At this point, I knew that he was a chef, but I did not know that he was previous contestant on Panama's version of Top Chef. Without any hesitation, Felipe invited me to meet him for dim sum at the most well-known Chinese restaurant – Restaurante Lung Fung – the following Monday. During that interview, we discussed everything from Chinese food in Panama to dragon boat racing. From this moment on, Felipe became one of my biggest supporters, eventually inviting me to be a part of the APROCHIPA holiday party prior to my involvement with the organization. Felipe's father moved to Panama in the 1980s in search of a better life; his father was originally from a family of rice and soybean farmers in the Guangzhou province. For his family, cooking, including the creation of tofu, was an important part of home life. When his dream of becoming an airplane pilot was averted due to his colorblindness, Felipe turned to cooking. During my time in Panama, it was always exciting to see and taste the food creations that Felipe made as he integrated his family's Chinese culinary background into his Panamanian cultural life.

Figure 2.1. Felipe as MC during the 2018 *Festival de Cometas y Panderos*. February 25, 2018. Photo by author.

Figure 2.2. Model construct of the clipper *Sea Witch* on display in the Panama Canal Museum. October 19, 2017. Photo by author.

On March 30, 1854, the first documented ship with Chinese migrants arrived on Panama's shore. The high-speed clipper, named the *Sea Witch* (figure 2.2), contained 705 Chinese contracted workers brought over to help in the construction of the Panama Canal railroad (Chen 2016: 49). This moment began a history in Panama marked with trauma and struggle that continued into the twentieth century and through today. Why did these people leave their homes and families in China to face the harsh work conditions of Panama? Why did they stay? How do these complex histories shape and inform Panama's community of people of Chinese descent today? An examination of the historical circumstances that led up to this point is crucial for understanding the complexity of identity for those of Chinese descent in Panama today. Such circumstances include the history of migrations, international impacts, political struggles for the

recognition of their belongingness, and the continuing struggles for the recognition of their Chinese performative culture as an equally valid representation of their bicultural Panamanian identities.

In this chapter, I situate the familial migration and continuing histories of Panamanians of Chinese descent through a discussion of the push and pull factors of migration, the ways in which music is inherently tied to these experiences, and the long history of struggle that results in the very socially active community today. Importantly, I draw from existing scholarship by Chinese Panamanians and Panamanians of Chinese descent, depending on how they choose to identify, to reflect the histories that this community has already documented in such detail. Although little has written about music and the history of musical practices in Panama's ethnic Chinese community, I will discuss what can be known from my own research, including oral histories recounted during my ethnographic fieldwork, research in Panama's newspaper archives, and comparisons with better-documented musical histories of other diasporic groups that emerged around the same time period as the one in Panama. With the importance of international and diplomatic relations impacting Panama as a whole, a major shift will take place in this chapter as I frame much of these histories within the context of the United States, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), whose established relationships with Panama have and continue to play a major role in the life experiences for those of Chinese descent.

Chinese Migration to Panama

The Push: Socioeconomic Issues in Mid-19th Century China

War, increasing demographic pressures due to over-population, and political conflicts marked life in nineteenth century China, resulting in a subsequent mass emigration as people sought new opportunities abroad. Historian Lynn Pan explains that overcrowding in China was a result of a long period of peace, beginning in the early part of the century, which led the population to soar from 150 million to 410 million by 1850 (Pan 1991:43). As cities and towns became over-crowded, food became scarce and people started to look for other opportunities for sustenance. The time of peace officially ended with the Taiping Rebellion, a civil war that erupted between the ruling Qing Dynasty and an attempted overthrow by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, an oppositional state in southern China from 1851 to 1864 (Pan 1991:44). Although the rebellion was officially suppressed by 1866, its size and longevity reflect the increased tensions in China and the pressures felt by the people in their time of economic hardship.

Soon after, the Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860), two conflicts imposed by the United Kingdom in order to force trade relations with China, ended with Hong Kong being transferred to British control, as well as increased British presence along the ports of southern China (Pan 1991:43-44). After China's defeat by the U.K. in the First Opium War in 1842, tensions rose in the country when villages became excessively poor while the government continued to raise taxes, which Pan posits were managed by greedy officials. The result, Pan notes, was "destitution, popular demoralization, corruption, apathy, and the breakdown of public order and personal morality" (1991:43). Pan further

elaborates that the handover of Hong Kong in 1842 was soon followed by the mass migration of poor Chinese out of their overcrowded villages to the region's ports; they then made deals with British companies that offered to pay for their transit in exchange for a certain number of years of labor in their destination countries to repay the costs of their passage. In return, these companies earned a certain amount of money for each Chinese laborer they could coerce into joining their ship. The contracts were frequently written in English, meaning many of the indentured servants did not fully understand the terms to which they were agreeing (Pan 1991:46-47).

The Pull: Perceived Economic Opportunities Abroad

Pan's contention that "[m]ass emigration from China, like mass emigration anywhere, required the juncture of bad times at home with good times abroad" appears contrary to the reality of life for these migrants (1991:53). For the hopeful sojourners, however, the promise of gold, fortune, and life opportunities resulted in people flooding to the labor contracts offered by British shippers. After years of suffering from poverty, the idea of riches and a secure future for their families overshadowed any doubts about the fears of unknown lands. Additionally, unlike in the past, when any Chinese citizen who left the country would be considered a traitor to their nation and not be allowed to return, British desire for Chinese laborers led them to demand that China, as part of the terms of their loss in the Opium Wars, allow its citizens to freely join in foreign pursuits without fear of punishment (Pan 1991:51). With this in mind, destitute Chinese men

believed they would be able to return to their wives and families once they accrued enough wealth abroad.

Unknown to the Chinese migrants, the conditions of their labor were harsh and, in many instances, resulted in a lifetime of servitude, well beyond the terms of their contracts. Such indentured servitude arose soon after the abolition of slavery in much of the Americas as an attempt by colonial forces to replenish their labor force with cheap alternatives. With access to many of the southern ports of China, the British used China's economic crisis and increasing poverty to lure poor Chinese men from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi to work for them abroad with promises of finding fortunes that they could then bring home to their families. Pan explains that this system of "coolie trafficking," also known as the "yellow trade," included indentured laborers and what were known as "free emigrants," or people who decided to participate in a "credit ticket system" (1991:45). Pan makes clear that although the implication of the free emigrant implied that they were not indentured servants, the line between the two systems was not clear. Within this human trafficking system, countless abuses took place, beginning with the journeys, in which many passengers were chained up, beaten, or abandoned to die if the ship caught fire for any reason (Pan 1991:49). Once they arrived in their ports of entry, they were often treated in manners similar to the African slaves they were meant to replace. Since many of them owed money for the expenses of their journey, the low pay often made their terms of labor a life-long burden (Chen 2014:11). Even those who were able to return after their eight to ten years of labor often signed new contracts, becoming a new type of "slave system" (Schott 1967:177).

Migration to Panama in the 19th Century

Chinese Panamanian historian Berta Alicia Chen P. (2016) writes that the initial Chinese migrants arrived in Panama as a result of a United States-led project to construct a railroad across the span of the country in order to help them transport gold mined in California to the east coast of the U.S. at the height of the California Gold Rush (1848-1855). Given Panama's narrow width and location, it was the perfect place to build a railroad allowing shippers to sail south from California, send gold across the isthmus, and then transport it back up the Caribbean and Atlantic coast (figure 2.3). This route became the preferable option, as it was considered safer than traveling across the U.S. continent and quicker than sailing down around South America's Cape Horn (McGuinness 2008:17-18). Further, through the construction of the railroad, gold could be transported across the isthmus without the use of mules through the dangerous rainforests and harsh climates (Cohen 1971:310).

In 1846, the government of Colombia, then in control of the isthmus of Panama, agreed to allow U.S. contractors William Aspinwall, John L. Stephens, and Henry Chauncey to undertake this project (McGuinness 2008:31). The railroad construction project began with workers from the U.S., Colombia, and the Caribbean, but due to the high number of deaths by disease and work accidents, many of these workers were replaced by cheaper laborers from China, Ireland, South Asia, and Jamaica (Cohen 1971:311). By the time the railroad was completed in 1855, a little over 1,000 Chinese were registered to live and work in Panama (Chen 2016:60). Although some workers

stayed to live in Panama, many continued on to other places, including Peru, Cuba, and the United States, which had much larger Chinese populations at the time (Chen 2016:65).

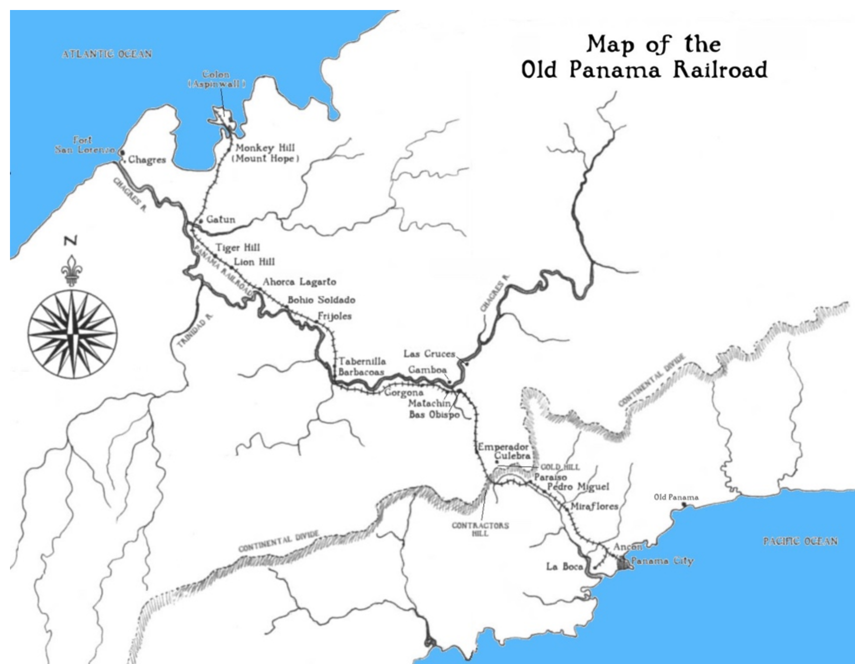


Figure 2.3. Map of the original Panama Canal Railway in 1855. Photo courtesy of the Panama Railroad organization. http://www.panamarailroad.org/maps.html

After a 25-year decline in Chinese migration to Panama, a second wave began in 1880 when the Panama Canal project was undertaken by the French government. The French canal project was headed by Ferdinand de Lesseps, who was known for his work on the Suez Canal, and officially began its construction on January 1, 1880 (Chen 2016:69). Lesseps' idea to build a canal at sea-level, in a similar manner to the Suez Canal, proved to be a major challenge, due to the intense rainy season and the massive number of worker deaths from malaria, yellow fever, and other diseases. In an attempt to replenish their work force, the French government secretly hired a Swiss contractor named Henri Etienne for a mission to recruit a labor force of Chinese workers. Since both

China and Great Britain had banned the use of Chinese coolies by this time because of the notorious past abuses, Etienne had to tread lightly to prevent from being discovered in his mission (Chen 2016:72). After visiting many of the ports along the southern coast of China, as well as in Vietnam and the United States, Etienne reached Hong Kong in 1887 and propositioned the British imperial court there, but was quickly denied, citing the human atrocities of the past century in such major construction projects (Chen 2016:72-73). As an attempt to circumvent these rejections, Etienne and the French government utilized the port of Haiphong in the northern part of their Vietnamese colony to recruit workers from China's southern regions of Guangdong. As a result, around 3,000 Chinese workers were brought to Panama after a brief transfer via San Francisco, California (Chen 2016:75). The French project eventually failed due to the high number of deaths and eventual bankruptcy, halting migration for a number of years. When the U.S. took control over the Panama Canal project in 1903, Chinese migration lessened further, as the racist attitudes in the U.S. transferred over to migration policies in Panama.

The next major wave of migration began in 1976, as a result of the People's Republic of China's relaxation of emigration laws (Chen 2016:132). This led to multiple waves of migration continuing into the twenty-first century. Chen's analysis of the data demonstrates that, as of the 2010 census, 14,158 foreign residents were of Chinese origin, with only 248 of them from Taiwan (Chen 2016:153). Unlike in previous years, however, the 2010 census omits categories of race and nationality, with the exception of a box to demarcate *afrodescendiente*, people of African descent. Chen argues, based on her data analysis, that the population of people with any Chinese origin could be between 6% and

35% of Panama's overall population of around 3.8 million people. The wide percentage range is attributed to the difficulty in examining numbers relating to identity, as many factors can skew the data, including the "degree of miscegenation and the fact that some consider themselves Chinese, others do not have Asiatic features, but they carry Chinese surnames, even if they have Chinese surnames they do not speak the language and do not practice Chinese customs" (Chen 2016:153; my translation).

Importantly, due to a long history of migration from the southern regions of China throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the most frequently encountered languages amongst Panamanian families in Panama are *Punti* (an endonym of Cantonese used interchangeably in Panama, also known as *Yue*) and *Hakka*, two of many member languages of the Chinese macrolanguage (Pérez Fernández 2014:64). As part of a long history of integration and forced assimilation into Panamanian society, many Panamanians recounted to me stories of their own Chinese grandparent or great grandparent; most of the people who recounted such stories to me participate in very few, if any, Chinese community events prevalent throughout Panama.

US Presence in Panama

The United States' presence in Panama constitutes a long and complicated history of neocolonialism that has significantly impacted the social and political life of the country. U.S. interest in Panama began in the mid-nineteenth century when the U.S. entered into a treaty with the government of New Granada (modern day Panama, Colombia, and some surrounding areas) to secure Colombian control over the isthmus of

Panama in exchange for transit rights across a potential canal (Mellander 1971:9). This was important for Colombia, which had been actively suppressing independence movements in the region for several decades.[3] After France's failure to construct a canal through Panama as planned, the United States seized the opportunity to take over the project. Previously, U.S. interest focused on the possibility of a canal through Nicaragua, which historian Lawrence A. Clayton argues "offered cheaper transportation, a healthier climate, and sometimes even abundant provisions" (1987:325). However, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty between the U.S. and England prevented the U.S. from gaining exclusive control or rights to the canal. Additionally, the nationalist Zelaya government in Nicaragua at the turn of the century also played a role in shifting U.S. interests from Nicaragua to Panama, since, under the immense "pressure of the competing Yankee capitalists," Zelaya avoided coming to any formal agreements (Clayton 1987:338). Meanwhile, Clayton emphasizes that "many in the U.S. were pushing for a Government-sponsored canal," which Zelaya believed would not be in Nicaragua's best interests (1987:340).

An opportunity for U.S. control of an interoceanic canal presented itself on November 3, 1903, when Panama officially declared independence from Colombia, whose ongoing civil wars had left Panama neglected. Prior to the declaration of independence, Panama organized a deal with the U.S. that in exchange for their support

[3] After declaring independence from Spain in 1821, Panama joined the Republic of Gran Colombia due to fear of Spanish retaliation to the rebellion. Due to political tensions, Panama attempted separation from Colombia three times between the years 1830 and 1840. The tenuous unification lasted until through the end of the century (Meditz, Hanratty, and Library of Congress 1989).

in the Panamanian fight for independence, Panama granted the U.S. "access, in perpetuity, to all territories she considered essential to the canal's construction, maintenance, operation, sanitation and defense…[and] full authority to maintain public order" (Mellander 1971:40). This was officially signed into action as part of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty on November 18, 1903. Although some scholars argue that Panamanian independence was engineered by the U.S. for the purpose of canal control (Diaz Espino 2001; Sanders and West 2003), other scholars note Panamanian agency in fulfilling their desire for independence, which had long been established prior to the declarations (Reynolds 2008; Theodossopoulos 2010). Nonetheless, such independence would not have been possible without U.S. intervention, and the U.S. certainly took full advantage of the growing dissatisfaction with the Colombian government on the part of the Panamanian people by encouraging and supporting the independence movement at the turn of the twentieth century (Theodossopoulos 2010:54).

The United States then shaped Panama's new political system, establishing close ties to the Conservatives Party. Historian Robert C. Harding notes that any challenges to the Conservative Party were "met by U.S. military force" (2006:38). Additionally, the United States, as protector of Panama prior to the Hull-Alfaro Treaty's enactment in 1939, retained the right to seize Panamanian land without consent. U.S. neocolonialism in the country continued throughout the twentieth century, until the canal was returned to Panama on December 31, 1999 in fulfillment of the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaty. Even beyond the Canal Zone territory, the United States established and maintained hegemonic control of the country, demonstrated through the 1989 invasion of Panama, codenamed

"Operation Just Cause." This invasion led to the deposition of then-President Manuel Noriega, who had long been supported by the U.S., replaced by U.S.-supported Guillermo Endara. Likewise, through the U.S.'s strong military and cultural presence in the country, Panama inherited much of the racial and ethnic discourse of the United States.

Despite the use of Chinese labor for the construction of both the railroad and the Panama Canal, Panama adopted many of the anti-Chinese laws previously established by the United States upon its ascent to nationhood. These laws were fueled by the prominence of the concept of the "yellow peril" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what Chinese studies scholar Leung Wing-Fai (2014) asserts "blends Western anxieties about sex, racist fears of the alien other, and the Spenglerian belief that the West will become outnumbered and enslaved by the East." As anthropologist Lok Siu argues, Panama's adoption of U.S. exclusion laws was predictable, since "substantial public pressure against Chinese immigration and commercial competition had been mounting" (2005:39). Specifically, many Panamanians began fearing Chinese immigration since, by 1903, the majority of the retail and grocery trades were already controlled by Chinese families in Panama. Out of these fears arose laws that limited the economic strength of Chinese-owned businesses. By 1928, multiple laws had already been passed requiring Chinese residents to pay a head tax and creating extra steps required for gaining Panamanian citizenship; failure to undergo this citizenship process created risk of deportation (figure 2.4) (*New York Times* 1913; Lasso de Paulis 2007:70).

MAY EXPEL PANAMA CHINESE

Those Who Refuse to Pay a Head Tax to be Deported To-morrow.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

PANAMA, Nov. 11.—Foreign Secretary Lefevre to-day informed Secretary Wicker of the American Legation, who has charge of Chinese affairs in Panama, that all Chinese must pay the heavy head tax imposed by the new registration law or be expelled within seventy-two hours.

A crisis is imminent, because all Panama is dependent upon the Chinese for provisions, they owning over 600 retail stores. The Panama City Government is taking a firm stand against the Chinese as opposing all the business interests of the country.

The New York Times

Figure 2.4. News clipping from the New York Times on November 11, 1913. (The New York Times 1913)

Due to immense U.S. presence and ideological influence, racist narratives resulted in a detrimental impact on both Chinese and African descended peoples, with a particular prejudice against English-speaking *afrodescendientes* throughout the twentieth century. During the 1940s, then-President Arnulfo Arias enacted a new constitution that, as Lok Siu explains, "redefined Panamanian nationhood in terms of *mestizaje* and Hispanic culture, while disenfranchising Chinese and non-Hispanic blacks" (2005:40). Although the constitution did not last beyond the decade, its legacy continued in the national memory and was reflected in the way people viewed what it meant to be Panamanian. When the United States officially withdrew their control over the Panama Canal on December 31, 1999, the newly-sovereign Panama immediately sought out new commercial relations with the People's Republic of China, a major decision considering the country's long-established diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Despite a long history of

discrimination, Panamanians of Chinese descent have been able to use these new relations to engage with their identities in new ways.

Republic of China Diplomacy in Panama

Upon their separation from Colombia in 1903, Panama sought international diplomatic relations with numerous countries. Panama sent its first consul to China in 1909, toward the end of the Qing dynasty; the newly established Republic of China returned the favor in 1912 by also sending a consul. By 1922, China had established a diplomatic legation in Panama City, and in 1933, Panama sent its first ambassador to China (Chen 2016:199). In 1949, the Chinese Communist Revolution resulted in the separation of mainland China and the island of Taiwan into two separate entities, a communist People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland and a capitalist authoritarian Republic of China on Taiwan and its surrounding islands. As a democratic nation under the hegemonic control of the United States, Panama decided to maintain its diplomatic relation with the Republic of China (ROC) instead of the PRC, and by 1955, the ROC had established an ambassador in Panama City, followed by an honorary consulate in Panama's city of Colón in 1958. This honorary consulate became an official general consulate in 1970 in order to serve the second largest community of Chinese Panamanians in the country (Chen 2016:199).

With many countries recognizing PRC's claim to sovereignty over Taiwan, the Republic of China invested in many major projects throughout Panama in the twentieth century as a way to ensure a much-needed ally. One of the major projects included the

funding and construction of the Instituto Sun Yat Sen, an important building in the Chinatown of El Dorado that operates as both a Chinese Panamanian Cultural Center and a primary and secondary school for youth in the local community (figure 2.5). The school teaches Mandarin classes for the surrounding community, while the Cultural Center sponsors and hosts many of the Chinese celebrations that occur throughout the year. Located on the opposite side of the road is the *Parque de la Amistad* (Friendship Park), a symbol of the diplomatic relations between Panama and the ROC, which includes beautiful fountains, a meditation area, and statue tributes to some of the major leaders in the history of their diplomacy (figure 2.6). Lok Siu mentions that the center is often "called 'the heart of the Chinese Panamanian community'" (2005:21). Outside the Chinese Panamanian community, ROC has additionally provided funding and donations for projects that include a maternity section for the Hospital Santo Tomás, restoration and new equipment for the National Oncology Institute, and other health-related infrastructures (Chen 2016:200). Additionally, they have provided scholarships for study in Taiwan's educational institutions.

In the past few decades, mounting international pressure has resulted in an increased competition between the PRC and ROC for diplomatic relations in Panama. According to Siu, the PRC "began pressuring countries like Panama to switch diplomatic relations (from Taiwan to the PRC) in order to continue economic interactions with Hong Kong" (2005:165). At the same time, since Mainland China's recovery of Hong Kong from British rule in 1997 and Panama's recovery of the Panama Canal from the United States in 1999, Panama has developed a strong economic relationship with Mainland

Figure 2.5. Instituto Sun Yat Sen. July 24, 2014. Photo by author.

Figure 2.6. Friendship Park, located across the street from the Instituto Sun Yat Sen. September 21, 2018. Photo by author.

China, which continues to assert a One China Policy, encompassing Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong under its reign. With the withdrawal of the U.S. from Panamanian soil, the possibility for newer, deeper economic relations with the PRC emerged. The international competition for Panama's diplomacy came to end in 2017.

From Taiwanese Diplomacy to PRC

On June 13, 2017, Panama officially shifted diplomatic relations from Taiwan to the PRC, breaking off all ties with the ROC in favor of the PRC's One China Policy. Immediately after this decision, the Taiwanese government responded by withdrawing all of their staff and ambassador as well as any planned projects from the country. Although the majority of Panamanian citizens that I spoke with during my time in Panama supported this decision, many of them saw the abruptness with which it happened a failure on the part of President Juan Carlos Varela to act with reason and consult his people. Nevertheless, the Chinese Panamanian organizations and members from the respective communities fully supported this decision to switch diplomatic recognition. In an open letter to the President, multiple organizations publicly announced their support for this decision, while also providing suggestions for how the President might best take advantage of this powerful new ally for the wellbeing of Panamanian society (Appendix A). During one of my first weeks in the field, a massive celebration took place to celebrate the newly appointed ambassador, Wei Qiang, and the construction of a new embassy building in the country. The high-security, formal celebration included a lion dance performance to symbolize good fortune in the new relations. This performance also

served the purpose of acknowledging Chinese Panamanian cultural performance, as I will elaborate on further in chapter five.

Although the President's rushed decision was met with criticism, most Panamanians appear excited about the progress that the PRC can bring to Panamanian infrastructure, including the promise of a high-speed train that would span the length of western half of the country and connect the rural provinces to the major cities of David in Chiriquí and Panama City. For those of Chinese descent, the political move is also a symbol of recognition for their identities, as the majority of the community is descended from ancestors who came from the mainland. By establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC, opportunities have arisen for Panamanians of Chinese descent to engage with their family histories through travel, including easier access to tourism to China and the new supply of scholarships for people to live and study there. This access also allows musicians the ability to learn new practices in an international context. In fact, one interlocutor of mine expressed to me in multiple interviews her excitement to learn music in China and further her *erhu* playing skills abroad. Not long after graduating from the Instituto Sun Yat Sen, she was able to take advantage of one of the PRC embassy's scholarships for this multi-year endeavor. With all of these new possibilities for national development and international travel, Panamanians of Chinese descent feel more connected to their family histories than ever before, despite the fact that their national allegiance is Panama.

Current Migration Issues

Migration in Panama continues to be a topic of significance, and debates persist regarding which migrants are openly welcome and which require further vetting. Topics include the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and its refugees as well as the expansion of Chinese businesses and a new wave of migrants to Panama. Venezuelan migration to Panama has greatly impacted the experience of Panamanians of Chinese descent, not only through the exaggeration of the "model minority" rhetoric, but also through the ways in which Panamanians of Chinese descent are situated in a unique position when compared to their Chinese Venezuelan neighbors, who themselves face unique forms of discrimination and oppression relative to their situation. Through a careful examination of current Chinese, Venezuelan, and Chinese Venezuelan migration issues, I underscore the strategies employed by Panamanians of Chinese descent as they continue to assert themselves as Panamanians, rather than as the Chinese Other.

Chinese Migration

In the wake of 2017 decision by then-President Juan Carlos Varela to establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China to honor the One China Policy (OCP), an increase in migration to Panama from China has taken place in the form of new businesses and investors. As part of the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Varela's cooperation has opened the door for the construction of major infrastructure projects throughout Panama, including the promise of a railroad connecting Panama City to the country's third largest urban area in David, Chiriquí, located in the western part of

the country near Costa Rica. One major project already in process by PRC investors is the construction of a cruise-ship port in Panama and a bridge over the canal by the Chinese state-run corporation China Harbour Engineering Company, amongst many others (*South China Morning Post* 2017b). Through such investments, the PRC hopes to expand its BRI to beyond Eurasia to include Latin America, with Panama and its canal being an essential part of their strategy. One of the biggest impacts of the BRI and the new relations has been the Panamanian government lifting the previously tough visa restrictions on Chinese tourists (*South China Morning* Post 2017a).

Although little data exists yet about migration numbers since Varela's deal with the PRC, Panama's census data estimates current population numbers of "foreign residents" with origins from the PRC and Taiwan, thus providing insight into the possibility of increased migration from these places. Chen's analysis of the data shows that within the last 50 years migration has continued to Panama, primarily from the rural areas of the southern region of Guangdong, where the first Chinese migrants came from, as well as some migration from Taiwan, which she describes as being mostly by merchants and investors (2016:154-155). By the end of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, Chen explains, many of the migrants that have come from cities in China have been educated under the communist political regime and are much more aggressive in the way they manage their businesses (2016:155). Importantly, she notes that these later migrants maintain fewer ties to the established Chinese-descended community in Panama. Such discussions about the division between older migrant communities and more recent ones occur frequently and continue to shape the way

people identify, whether as Panamanian of Chinese descent, as Chinese Panamanian, or as Chinese. Despite the complexities of identity formation taking place between Chinese and Chinese-descended peoples, many Panamanians continue to conflate them into the category of *chinos* without regard for their personal histories and experiences.

I discussed earlier the history of discrimination against people of Asian descent in Panama throughout the twentieth century; although discrimination is still very present throughout the country, most of my interactions with people have unintentionally conveyed such discrimination through the idea of the “model minority,” which continues to place Chineseness outside of the realm of Panamanian-ness. In one notable encounter while taking an Uber in the city, the driver, after showing interest in my research, explained to me, “the Chinese are such hard workers, not like today’s Panamanian youth, who are so lazy.” This interaction synthesized a majority of the “explanations” about Chinese work ethic versus Panamanian work ethic that I encountered in my time in Panama. Chinese and Chinese-descended people, who are noticeably marked as not Panamanian, become the model for the work ethic people want to see in the youth of their community. Further, even as many of these people celebrate the Chinese worker in Panama, harmful racist rhetoric continues to be bandied around in the form of jokes about Chinese restaurants, despite the fact the Cantonese dim sum, or *desayuno chino*, has become an integral part of Panama’s gastronomy, and the overwhelming abundance of Chinese restaurants throughout the city marks the cuisine as an important part of the local diet.

Venezuelan Migration

Since 2010, Venezuela has been the midst of a severe socioeconomic and political crisis, characterized by extreme hyperinflation, elevated hunger rates, disease, and crime, much of which is a result of people no longer being able to afford even the most basic of necessities, such as food and medicine (Larmer 2018). The crisis began around 2013 with the election of socialist-autocrat Nicolas Maduro to presidency, a man hand-picked by former President Hugo Chavez to succeed him in the country's leadership. According to Brook Larmer (2018), the Venezuelan economy shrank by 35% between 2013 and 2017, caused by years of mismanagement of its numerous oil fields and hyperinflation as the government continued printing money that did not exist and lowering the value of currency in the nation. In a 2016 interview with Public Radio International's Daniel Ofman, Latin American scholar David Smilde explains that one of the major factors of the crisis is the decline in oil prices. He goes on to recount how people currently stand in lines for hours just to buy food from grocery stores, which frequently run out of products before customers can get what they need. Further, people have begun selling black-market goods in order to turn a profit and the meet some of the needs of Venezuela's most impoverished communities. These *bachaqueros*, as they have come to be known, are considered traitors to the nation by those in power (Smilde 2016).

As a result of the ongoing crisis in Venezuela, emigration has been massive, particularly to neighboring countries such as Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia. According to the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR, since 2015, over 1.6 million of Venezuela's around 31.7 million people have already fled the country to escape these harsh conditions

(Valencia 2018). In Panama, the number of Venezuelan migrants in the country is estimated to be around 80,000, inciting nationalist groups to call for tighter restrictions out of fear of increased crime and diminishing job availability (Fieser and Bristow 2018). Tensions in Panama continue to rise between many Panamanian citizens and Venezuelan migrants, as reflected in the response to Panamanian singer Mr. Saik's 2017 song "La Chama" – a slang term for Venezuelans – about a Venezuelan migrant woman who went from wealth and fame in her home country to "making bread" in Panama, alluding to prostitution, which garnered him death threats from migrants in Panama (Fieser and Bristow 2018).

For those migrants able to flee Venezuela in search of stability and safety in Panama, challenges of extreme discrimination and xenophobia stand in the way of their wellbeing. In similar interactions as the ones above regarding Chinese in Panama, as well as any time migration is brought up, many of my interlocutors expressed frustration with migrants from Venezuela, whom they characterize as rude, dirty, unwilling to assimilate to local customs, and – much like the way they characterize Panamanian youth – lazy. In fact, tensions have become so prevalent that the Panamanian government has actively made it more difficult for Venezuelans to enter the country legally by enforcing a $60 visa requirement (Ramsey 2017). Once they enter the country, violence against Venezuelan migrants occurs frequently, to the extent that some migrants pretend to have the accent of Panama's more rural areas in order to protect themselves from the widespread harassment (Lozada 2017). In fact, reporter Oriana Milu Lozada (2017) emphasizes such horrors by sharing a newspaper clipping about a local bar that was

offering a 50% discount for any Panamanians who punched a Venezuelan. Thus, many Venezuelans who chose to live in Panama rather than suffer the economic crisis in Venezuela continue to live in constant fear and hiding. During many of my bus trips throughout the city, Venezuelan migrants often would get on, share their torment with all the passengers on board, and then walk the length of the bus asking for any change they could spare or attempting to sell candy and snacks. Many times, these petitions were accompanied by a communal Christian prayer to further persuade passengers to support them.

Migration of Chinese Venezuelans

Amidst the massive migration from Venezuela, Chinese Venezuelans also seek refuge from the trauma by fleeing the once prosperous nation. Prior to the economic crisis, an estimated 400,000 people of ethnic Chinese descent were living in Venezuela (He 2017). By 2017, over 50,000 people with roots in Enping, Jiangmen in the southern Guangdong province of China, including some naturalized Venezuelan citizens, fled back to China in the hopes of waiting for the suffering to end. Since many Chinese migrants in Latin America have been especially successful in the retail, grocery, and restaurant trades throughout their history in the region, the lack of food resources and subsequent looting and rioting throughout Venezuela have had an especially detrimental impact on Chinese-owned businesses (He 2017). For many Chinese Venezuelans, however, a lack of language ability and generations of separation from their most recent ancestors from China have prevented them from being able to flee across the Pacific. Instead, like many

of their Venezuelan compatriots, they have fled to the surrounding countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and integrated into the local communities of Latin Americans of Chinese descent. Panama has become one such refuge, and the extensive and well-established community of Panamanians of Chinese descent has provided a haven for migrants excluded throughout the rest of Panama.

An intersectional approach of identity highlights the unique forms of discrimination that Chinese Venezuelans face, shaping their marginalized existence in Panama, both as Asian-descended peoples and as Venezuelans. The obscurity of their bicultural identities results in unpredictability in their daily interactions with Panamanians around them, who may express strong feelings of xenophobia against Chinese-descended people, Venezuelan refugees, or both. When asked about the ways in which Chinese Venezuelans experience discrimination in Panama, Ana Chung, an editor for the Chinese Panamanian periodical *Revista ChungSir*, recounted that many *chinozolanos*, as they call themselves to distinguish themselves from Panama's existing Chinese-descended community, are first and foremost discriminated against for being Chinese and then later revealed to be Venezuelan, further shaping the negativity of these interactions. In a WhatsApp conversation in December of 2018, she states, "*percibo más que los venezolanos chinos son discriminados por ser chinos, que por ser venezolanos. Luego, es que la gente se da cuenta que son venezolanos*" (I notice more that Chinese Venezuelans are discriminated against because they are Chinese than because they are Venezuelan. Then, people realize that they are Venezuelans) (Personal communication, my translation, December 11, 2018). Even when Chinese Venezuelans are not recognized

by their distinctive Venezuelan linguistic mannerisms, they still face a multitude of slights and microaggressions that continuously reinforce a lack of belonging by both Panamanian and Venezuelan citizens living in Panama. With limited options for finding community, Chinese Venezuelans turn to Chinese Christian churches, whose members also share this history of discrimination within the country they call home.

Chinese Migration and Musical Practices

The history of Chinese music and cultural performance in Panama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is largely absent from Panamanian documentation. Despite this absence, correlations can be drawn between Chinese migrants to Panama in the mid-1800s with those who went to the United States. The migrants who arrived from southern China to build the Panama Railroad migrated from the same locations and during the same time period as those who migrated to San Francisco, California, as a labor force for the United States' first transcontinental railroad. Since many of the labor and migration experiences were similar, the well-documented oral music traditions of Chinese sojourners in the U.S. would likely have been present in Panama as well. Though my research revealed no mention of such practices, I employ ethnomusicologist Richard Cullen Rath's (2003) strategy of "recovering the sounded worlds" of the past through an analysis of the sociocultural circumstances that provide evidence for oral music's probable performance in Panama.

During the nineteenth century, narrative songs consisting of rhymed texts known as *muk'yu* (wooden fish songs) existed as part of the soundscape of many of the migrants

from the rural areas of Guangdong to North and South America (Zheng 1992:165). Since many of them expected to someday return home and since they were allowed to bring very little with them on their journeys, migrants would not have been able to carry any musical instruments with them. As a result, singing became the primary tool for sociocultural musical expression. According to ethnomusicologist Su Zheng, *muk'yu* songs included "stories drawn from national or local history, myths, legends, and folk tales," with the length of text varying to such an extent that some performances could take anywhere from a few hours to a few days to perform in full (1992:166-167). In 1987, Asian American studies scholar Marlon K. Hom organized, translated, annotated, and subsequently published an anthology of Chinese folk rhymes and literature developed in the Chinatowns of San Francisco in the early part of the twentieth century. Such materials would have formed the basis for *muk'yu* performances in the nineteenth century. Through his publication and the included annotations, Hom (1987) reveals the importance of such stories for highlighting the migration experiences of Chinese during this time, including both the hopes and dreams of sojourners as well as their struggles.

Prominent themes present in *muk'yu* story texts include estranged family members, nostalgia, addictions to opium, feelings of being stranded, and migrant sorrow, with each story representing a particular scenario (Blake 2015:38-40). Considering the harsh conditions faced by migrant laborers in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, longing and worry for families would have been echoed in the experiences of those in Panama. In this excerpt from Hom's collection, the migrant struggle becomes especially clear:

> *I have walked to the very ends of the earth,*
> *A dusty, windy journey.*
> *I've toiled and I'm worn out, all for a miserable lot.*
> *Nothing is ideal when I am down and out.*
> *I think about it day and night –*
> *Who can save a fish out of water?*
> *From far away, I worry for my parents, my wife, my boy:*
> *Do they still have enough firewood, rice, salt, and cooking oil?* (Hom 1987:99)

The narrator in the story emphasizes his worry for his family, whom he left in order to pursue a better life through the accumulation of wealth for his labor. Instead, the harsh conditions have left him feeling destitute and detached from his home. He feels a complete lack of belonging as he inquires, "who can save a fish out of water?"

For many Chinese families living in Panama during these early years, assimilation became a tool for survival amidst a hostile environment. Even as migrants made every effort to blend into Panamanian society, festivals and national celebrations, both Chinese and Panamanian, remained very important for expressing their cultural identities. Chen reports an 1886 article that recounts a Chinese New Year celebration accompanied by a large banquet, fireworks, and dragon dances (2005:112-113). Likewise, Chinese Panamanian historian Juan Tam (2005b) notes that between 1940 and 1950, Chinese businesses in Colón transformed into small theaters in the evenings. He explains:

> Between 1940 and 1950, they worked in the day, in their businesses and at night they transformed themselves into actors with splendid and decorative clothes, completing them with makeup, their respective headdresses and shoes, which were accompanied by the melodic notes of originally Chinese musical instruments. The resonant ringing of gongs, the rumble of the timbales, together with the rapid sound of the drums marked the dramatic entrance of the actors to the stage (Tam 2005b:132).

At the same time in Panama City, a few members of the community would share their knowledge of Chinese opera through small performances at local festivals.

In an interview with local politician and active lion dance group member participant Jose Chang about music prior to 1960s, he explains that most engagement with music came from recordings and black and white Chinese films. Supporting Chang's presumption about music experience prior to the 1960s, the *Almacen la Cultura China* [*sic*] (Chinese Cultural Center), a small store located just outside the Centro Comercial El Dorado that sells a variety of Chinese print and audiovisual media, includes rows of shelves that feature old CDs, casettes, VHS tapes, and other recordings of old Chinese films and music performances (figure 2.7). I first visited the Cultural Center in July of 2014, at which point the store owner lamented that due to digital downloads and streaming in the internet age, "*ahora el negocio [está] casi muerto*" (now, business is almost dead) (Blake 2015: 88).

Figure 2.7. *Almacen la Cultura China* [*sic*] (Chinese Cultural Center). August 14, 2014. Photo by author.

Upon my revisit in the fall of 2019, many of the old recordings remained in the store; however, options for merchandise had expanded to include a wider variety of

goods imported from China, along with a much more extensive book collection featuring literature in Chinese and Spanish. Recognizing me from five years prior as "that young man researching Chinese music in Panama," she immediately began advertising to me all of the store's new merchandise. When prompted about literature by local Panamanians of Chinese descent (I was looking for physical copies of important books by Juan Tam), she made it clear that she would place an order for them immediately and to come check back in within a few months. Instead, I purchased another book she recommended to me (the only book she had in English), which was a book about Chinese culture in general. The urgency with which the shop owner tried to sell me things came as no surprise, since during my time in Panama, merchants frequently would begin pressuring me to buy things the moment they realized I was a U.S. American.

Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, new music technologies and conceptions about national identity emerged, drastically impacting the soundscapes of the Panamanian community of Chinese descent. By the 1970s and 1980s, any existing staged Chinese opera performances were replaced by the karaoke machine, allowing amateur singers and performers to participate in these musical performances of identity. Soon after, as an emerging social awareness of issues of exclusion in the national identity of Panama came to the forefront, Panamanians of Chinese descent began to make names for themselves by asserting their Panamanian identity through the composition and performance of Panama's national genre *música típica*. Tam notes one musician in particular, a Zhongshan, Chinese-born architect named Julio Mou Sue, who rose to prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s for his Panamanian-style compositions and

his collaborations with musician Juancín Henríquez (Tam 2005b:133). In the face of a history of discrimination and marginalization of Asian bodies throughout Panama's existence as a nation, such musical assertions of identity reinscribe what it means to be Panamanian, contrasting the nation's focus on *mestizaje* as national identity with the notions of the "yellow peril" imprinted through the United States' neocolonial hegemony.

In the next chapter, I examine another of the most prominent forms of Chinese Panamanian cultural performances, the southern Chinese lion dance. Much as *música típica* performers redefine nationhood through Panamanian genres, which I discuss in more detail in chapter five, lion dance performers redefine Panamanian nationhood through Chinese dance. As I will show, lion dance in the twenty-first century has become one of the most important aspects of ritual, performative life within Panama's Chinese-descended community.

Chapter 3

Plucking the Greens:
Lion dance and the Performance of Panamanian Chineseness

Jose Chang

I first met Jose while attending the lion dance performance in Chorrera on April 2, 2018 (figure 3.1). After the hour-long drive from Panama City, Jose introduced himself to me after I stepped out of the white van. Eventually, we were able to speak about his involvement in lion dance and the Sociedad Fay Yen organization. Jose's knowledge and wisdom about lion dance practice in Panama helped me to understand much of what I witnessed over the course of my research in Panama. Jose actively works towards the betterment of his country through his engagement with Chinese culture and the broader community. Most recently, Jose has become involved in local politics by running for a position as Representative for his neighborhood of Bethania.

Figure 3.1. Lion dancers in Chorrera with Jose Chang (center left). April 2, 2018. Photo by author.

Over the course of my time in Panama, lion dances manifested in many different settings, including celebrations like the Spring Festival, also referred to as the Chinese New Year, the Autumn Moon Festival, and important life events such as baptisms and *quinceañeras*. For both performers and event organizers, the importance of the lion dance

stems from its history in China, specifically its ties to the southern regions of China where the majority of the Panamanians with Chinese heritage descend from, and its use as a symbol of good fortune and prosperity. By also incorporating these performances into Panamanian celebrations, particularly during the November *Fiestas Patrias* independence festivals and Carnival, the lion dance becomes, for many, a form of resistance against the *hispanidad/mestizo* ideology for a Panamanian national identity. Discussing lion dance and broader Panamanian society, Jose Chang explains,

> We still feel as if they still have bad feelings toward us, even though we have 164 years here [in the isthmus of Panama]. And that's something that I am trying to persuade, to convince older Chinese that have been here and lived here for a long time and make them feel like, "hey, you are a Panamanian too!" You have to show them. You know, we have Panamanian friends, but as a society, they don't see us as Panamanian and that's something that we are trying to change through lion dance. And that's why you see Panamanian guys dancing. As long as you like the dance and appreciate the [Chinese] culture, go ahead and dance (personal communication, April 2, 2018).

Instead, Chinese cultural heritage becomes a celebration of Panamanian-ness, particularly the aspects of Panamanian culture that are rooted in its history of migration, not just from Europe and Africa, but also from Asia.

Through an examination of the historical trajectory of the lion dance, beginning with its origins in East Asia and continuing through its contemporary use in Panama, this chapter situates lion dance cultural performance as part of a set of deeply embedded meanings for both practitioners in China and in Chinese descended communities throughout the world. Further, the communities of individuals who perform lion dance translate and reinscribe new meanings to these performances, which become a symbol of ethnic and national pride in their respective countries of citizenship. In Panama, this

mode of cultural performance is further tied to a Panamanian identity through its association with Kung Fu martial arts and Panama's increasingly popular sporting and fitness culture amongst youth and young adults in the middle and upper class, as I will discuss further in chapter five. As a result of the lion dance's importance as a marker of identity, the lion dance has become a defining characteristic of the ritual soundscape of Chinese-descended Panama, included in the majority of community and social events throughout the Panama City.

History of Lion Dance

Present in communities throughout the world, the lion dance originated in East Asia, with variations of the dance found throughout northern and southern China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, among others. According to scholar Heleanor B. Feltham (2009), lion iconography reached China via the Silk Road from Europe between the 6th century BC and 1st century AD (97). Such iconography became an important inspiration for sculptors and artists to create lions for use as guardians for tombs, palaces, and temples for the nobility. By the 8th century AD, the lion and its associated dances had spread throughout East Asia, as far as Japan, where it had become incorporated into Japanese courtly life (Feltham 2009:98). Eventually, it became embedded in rural Chinese life, as villages began sculpting and displaying their own lions as a form of protection "against natural calamities and [to] ensure seasonal rain and bountiful harvests" (Feltham 2009:99). Subsequently, the lion dance came to be associated with particular ritual seasonal events and significant regional differences emerged.

Like many of the communities of people of Chinese descent throughout the world, the Southern Chinese lion dance predominates in Panama. Describing the Southern lion dance, Feltham notes that

> Southern lions are decidedly louder, more acrobatic and dynamic than their northern counterparts. Southern lions more frequently perform solo, have far more spectacular moves, and have an elaborately painted head of papier maché and bamboo, weighing as much as 20 kilos, attached with red ribbon to a brightly coloured long piece of material that represents the body. The two dancers may also wear matching leggings, but body and legs are always separate, allowing frequent and necessary changeover dancers. The degree of exertion necessary to perform a good lion dance, particularly a competitive, acrobatic one, is considerable, and a good lion dancer, by definition also a good martial artist, could achieve a high degree of public recognition, especially if he moved from village to urban levels of competition (Feltham 2009:99).

To guide the dancers, musicians playing the gongs, cymbals and drum synchronize the lions' steps through rhythmic variations and patterns known to the dancers. These particular instruments have historically served the purpose of frightening away evil spirits due to their loud and penetrating sound. Often, the performances include the pursuit of the *qing*, or goal, where they must destroy a head of lettuce, or "pluck the greens," in order to get the red envelope embedded inside or beneath. Chinese scholar Joey Yap notes that this tradition of "plucking the greens" was a coded message during the Qing dynasty, due to the similarity of the words in Mandarin for "depose the Qing" and "pluck the greens," or *cai qing* (with different meanings based on the accentuation)*,* as revolutionaries sought to resist the rulers of the time (Yap 2016:31). The envelope, another symbol of good fortune, is given as thanks to the lion for their job as protector and frequently contains cash gifts for the lion dance group (Yap 2016:126). Feltham also talks about this "hidden agenda" in lion dance performances in the late nineteenth

century, but notes that in the United States today, the green is more often used to represent “greenbacks” and the hope for good fortune associated with money (Feltham 2009:102). Likewise, similar comparisons and connotations persist in Panama, as U.S. dollars remain as Panama’s currency.

In conjunction with the massive migrations out of China during the end of the Qing dynasty mentioned in chapter two, many migrants took the lion dance tradition with them to various parts of Southeast Asia and the Americas, eventually developing their own regional aesthetics and variations on the practice. Such performance practices reflect the local values of the people performing them. For example, Vietnamese lions are referred to as unicorns and, like the Chinese dragon, symbolize peace and prosperity. The Japanese lion, known as Shishimai, repels evil and protects crops. In the Himalayas and Tibet, the lion is a snow lion, known for its strength, power, courage, and joy (Yap 2016:70-72). In each of these regions of Asia, as well as the many not mentioned, the lion costume and dances take on specific characteristics associated with the performance traditions of the region, whether tied to religious and ritual life or merely for entertainment and its association with good fortune for important events. Even today, lion dance performances take on new meanings and unique characteristics in the communities that perform them throughout the world.

Lion dance in Diasporic Communities

Extending beyond the broader Asia context, diasporic Chinese communities throughout the world incorporate the lion dance into their ritual lives. In fact, Feltham

(2009) stresses that lion dance is one of the most explicit markers of Chinese cultural identity amongst overseas communities. Anthropologist Mu Li discusses the ways in which lion dance does or does not change in new contexts and the ways such changes correlate to anti-Chinese sentiment. In countries where assimilation has been required of its Chinese-descended citizens or where Chinese bans have existed, lion dances tend to retain an "intact transmission of performance," symbolizing strong attachments to the Chinese homeland (Li 2017:291). In other communities, innovations and variations in the performances take on vernacular meanings and may be motivated by different, personal values amongst the performers. Li explains how for some 2nd-, 3rd-, and later-generation dancers, the value of lion dance comes from its sport or martial arts qualities (Li 2017:292). The historical accuracy of the performance becomes less important in diasporic communities as new generations attach new meanings to it. The reflexivity of lion dance, as it represents a "foreign invention" through "local creation," allows the transmission of what Li calls "a complex system of multivocal definitions of 'Chineseness'" (Li 2017:314). Much like in Mu Li's research in Newfoundland, lion dance in Panama has become a site for the cultural performance of their own "third culture." Enabled by the multivocality of the third culture, incorporations of lion dance into community life frequently become a tool for asserting identity and celebrating cultural heritage. Specifically, they become a physical manifestation of their complex identities as Panamanians of Chinese descent.

Lion Dance in Panama

Panamanians of Chinese descent regularly incorporate lion dance into the ritual and celebratory aspects of everyday life. Since the majority of the community descends from migrants from China's southern, Cantonese-speaking regions, the Southern style of lion dance prevails throughout Panama City. Despite Panama's international diplomatic relations with Taiwan, many migrants during the 1950s and 60s came from the mainland. I contend that lion dance's introduction in Panama in the 1950s and 60s emerged as a result of the People's Republic of China's efforts during this time period to promote Chinese culture around the world, even in countries where their own troupes failed to perform. Upon their establishment on October 1, 1949, the PRC immediately initiated an international performing arts delegation. Anthropologist Emily Wilcox explains that, prior to the Cultural Revolution in 1966, between the years of 1955 and 1968, the PRC officially sanctioned performing arts delegations in over 166 countries, including the Latin American countries of Colombia, Venezuela, and Cuba in 1960 (Wilcox 2019:83-84). The inclusion of acrobatics and innovative choreographies generated interest in Chinese dances abroad, particularly in diasporic communities. During our interview I asked Jose, "why lion dance, specifically? Why not other dance forms or vocal or instrumental musical genres?" He replied, "*porque el león muestra alegría y excitación. Es un poco más natural...y más sentimental*" (because the lion exhibits joy and excitement. It's a little more natural...and more sentimental) (personal communication, my translation, April 2, 2018). Considering the systemic marginalization of Chinese Panamanians throughout the twentieth century, the lion dance's incorporation into

Panamanian life provided a space for them to express their identities in an especially uplifting way.

In the 10th anniversary edition of the *Revista ChungSir*, a local periodical in Panama that publishes content in both Spanish and Chinese, Ana Chung recounts the history of the first appearance of lion dance in Panama, which she states occurred in 1966. She explains,

> In 1966, a Chinese lion appeared in Panama for the first time. It belonged to the Kwan Tai Kung Temple in the old Chinatown. Mr. Victor Yau 邱紹甲先生 and some friends of the Fa Yen Society used it on very special occasions; later, several of them, with a passionate heart to maintain this dance that distinguishes our Chinese culture, formed and structured the dance team, and a voting system to rotate the leadership; and they wanted to promote this beautiful tradition in the new generations (Chung 2017:17; my translation).

The lion dance team came to be known as the *Danza del León de la Juventud Fa Yen*, or the Fa Yen Youth Lion Dance. The efforts of Mr. Victor Yau were successful; many different lion dance groups can be found throughout Panama City today, as well as in some of the more distant provinces of the country. The spreading of lion dance in Panama occurred as a direct result of the combination of the presence of Panamanians of Chinese descent throughout the country and an administrative decision by the third president of the Sociedad Fa Yen, Chung Kim Siu, with the support of coach Chung Sek Tai and martial arts director Chan Yat San (Chung 2017:18). The administrative decision was to take their lion dance groups around the country to the different provinces for different festivals and major events and promote this cultural tradition.

Multiple performance groups exist in Panama today, many linked to long-time Chinese Panamanian organizations. Two lion dance groups in particular gave me the

opportunity to join them and learn from their performances: Grupo de Leones de la Sociedad Fa Yen (GLSFY) and the Grupo de Leones Chinos Loo (GLCL). The first group that I contacted was led by a man named Miguel. After talking with him briefly, I realized that it was his group who performed during the Asociación de Profesionales Chino-Panameña (APROCHIPA) Kite Festival the previous month. His group is based in Chorrera on the western side of the Panama Canal. Miguel is an active member of APROCHIPA, the organization I volunteered with as photographer for their major events. He invited me to a performance of theirs taking place during a *quinceañera*, a coming-of-age event for young women throughout Latin America, which I will discuss later. Miguel's group was founded as an independent performance team and includes family members as well as local friends in Chorrera, some of whom have no Chinese descent. Their group is frequently hired for events in the community, such as the aforementioned *quinceañera*, and festivals, which I describe further below (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. *Grupo de Leones Chinos Loo* at APROCHIPA's 2018 Kite Festival. February 25, 2018. Photo by author.

Motivations for the team members vary, but for the majority of the young people involved, the martial arts, and the physicality of the dance style make it an especially enjoyable tradition. Prior to the performance, the dancers, musicians, Miguel Loo, and I sat in one of the empty ballrooms far enough away from the *quinceañera* celebrations for the surprise to not be ruined. While we waited, the hosts of the party brought each of us a plate of food from the catered buffet and they eagerly shared the story of their group with me. Based in the eastern side outside of Panama City, the group was formed by Miguel Loo after growing up in Chorrera with a love of Chinese lions, a result of the efforts of the Sociedad Fa Yen, described above. Members initially included close friends and family, but now include his son and a few of his son's friends. For some of the members, they actively continue a newer family tradition that celebrates Chineseness, while the performers with no Chinese background enjoyed the martial arts aspects of the lion dance after initially joining due to their close friendship with other members.

The second group I worked with was based in the city and a part of the Sociedad Fa Yen de Panama, discussed above, a Chinese Panamanian organization that was founded in 1917. The dancers themselves were young men (and one woman) in their late teens and early 20s; two of the dancers had no known family history of Chinese descent. The performance I witnessed on this day was in celebration of the opening of a new business in the Costa Verde neighborhood of Chorrera, an art and framing store known as Hou Sen Arte y Regalos. I initially met Jose Chang, one of the members of the performance group, through Juan Tam, mentioned in chapter one, after he provided me with a list of people to contact regarding lion dance.

After some discussion back and forth, he told me the time and place to meet. When I arrived, I had no idea where I was supposed to go, and since Jose was not there, I decided to ask around the store I was sent to about a lion dance group. Eventually, after getting a few confused responses, I was eventually pointed in the direction of a large, white van in the parking lot, where the group had already loaded up and were about to leave. Just as they were pulling out, I flagged them down and explained who I was. The driver made a call to Jose and the van door was opened to allow me to enter. Inside the van were a few Chinese Panamanian elders who mostly ignored me while they conversed in Cantonese and then four younger folks who plied me with questions about my research, thus providing me with an opportunity to ask them questions about their performances. Since the van had no seats, we sat in a rough circle on metal fold-up chairs, thus making it easier to communicate with each other. It took about 45 minutes to get to the performance venue, during which time the young performers explained to me how they began participating in lion dance. Many of the stories shared by dancers echoed those of the performers from the GLCL above; they performed as part of a family tradition rooted in celebration of Chinese ethnicity or they performed for the physicality after being recruited by friends in the Chinese Panamanian community. Importantly, they emphasized that lion dance performance was so much more than just a Chinese art form, but a major contribution to Panama's multicultural history. According to my conversations with group members, the lion dance group itself, which was formed in the 1960s, still included many of the founding members who were present and active participants in the musical aspects of the performance.

When we arrived, we all participated in unloading the lion and the instruments from the van. When everything was ready to begin, the elders took their place as instrumentalists, while the younger performers prepared themselves inside the lion. Unlike any performance I had seen previously, this dance began with the setting off of firecrackers and featured a "crab," which consisted of oranges for eyes, plantains as its legs, and a blue bucket which covered the head of lettuce and served as the body of the crab (figure 3.3). As I was recording the video, I was standing relatively near where the firecrackers were being prepared when I noticed everyone running back a bit and plugging their ears. Not thinking much of it, I was immediately struck by the sound of the explosions all around me as the firecrackers went off. When the firecrackers finished, the music and dance immediately began (video 3.1). During this performance, both of the two lions had to take turns ripping apart the crab in order to get access to and shred the head of lettuce that was underneath. This particular tradition in the lion dance repertoire was a new one for me, but as I came to find out, traditions such as these are meant to test the Kung Fu and storytelling abilities of the performers through the act of battling with the crab in order to pluck the greens from underneath and are a common element in lion dances throughout the world.

Figure 3.3. Crab made of local produce. April 2, 2018. Photo by author.

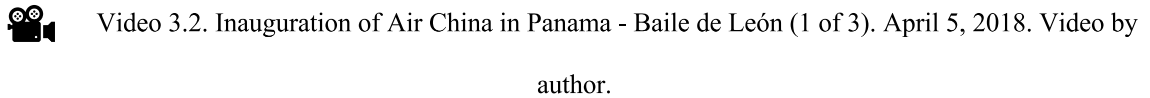
Video 3.1. Baile de León en Chorrera. April 2, 2018. Video by author.

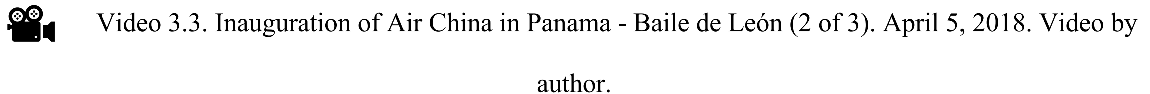
Honoring the tradition of blessing new beginnings with good fortune and prosperity, many businesses owned by Panamanians of Chinese descent hire a lion dance team for their grand opening events. In fact, GLSFY regularly performs for organizations throughout El Dorado, hired by local businesses in the community in the hopes that such a performance will bring them success in the years to come. The above experience was the first time I encountered the firecrackers and the first time I witnessed the elaborate storytelling of the crab. Perhaps because this particular performance took place an hour outside of the city or because the business being opened was by one of the members of the Sociedad Fa Yen, but this elaborate performance was a rare occurrence. Typically, lion dance in Panama features the Kung Fu-style footwork and the highlight is when the

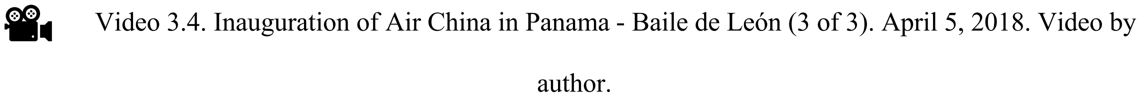
lion jumps onto its hind legs, where the dancer in the front half of the lion has to jump up onto the shoulders of the dancer playing the back half of the lion.

The same week, I was invited to join the Sociedad Fa Yen lion dance team for a performance at Tocumen airport in Panama City. This ceremony was in honor of the first flight for Air China to Panama, a result of the new diplomatic ties with the PRC. Three relatively short performances took place, twice in the airport and once during the official ceremony that followed at a hotel in the city. These events became incredibly crowded, as important political figures were present, including Panamanian president Juan Carlos Varela, Chinese Ambassador to Panama Wei Qiang, and the president of Air China Song Zhiyong. These performances, brief as they were, did not feature the elaborate dancing that took place in Chorrera, but instead demonstrated a more functional purpose: honoring a new beginning and providing good luck for the future of Air China in Panama as well as the new international relations, all through the performance of a lion dance (figure 3.4; see videos 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).

Figure 3.4. Sociedad Fa Yen lion dance group in Tocumen Airport. April 5, 2018. Photo by author.


Video 3.2. Inauguration of Air China in Panama - Baile de León (1 of 3). April 5, 2018. Video by author.


Video 3.3. Inauguration of Air China in Panama - Baile de León (2 of 3). April 5, 2018. Video by author.


Video 3.4. Inauguration of Air China in Panama - Baile de León (3 of 3). April 5, 2018. Video by author.

By opening the possibilities of performance to those people not of Chinese descent, these groups actively redefine the genre while simultaneously shaping outside perceptions of it, despite resistance from some older members of the community. Speaking on these conflicts, Jose mentions that the group is frequently met with backlash due to a non-Chinese Afro-Panamanian performer in the group. He explains, "a lot of people in the old school, they don't like Panamanians dancing this, more if you are a black guy, a Panamanian with black skin. 'What's this guy doing? He doesn't know much about Chinese culture' and things like that" (personal communication, April 2, 2018). Despite this history of racist rhetoric, Panamanians of Chinese descent continue to engage with lion dance as an assertion of the validity of their identities, while also making it more inclusive for those Panamanians not of Chinese descent to engage with this local iteration of Chinese culture.

Lion Dance at Festivals and Holidays

The major Chinese seasonal celebrations that take place in Panama throughout the year include the Lunar New Year (Chinese New Year), the Duanwu Festival (Dragon Boat Festival), and the Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival). Various organizations

throughout the city and, more recently, the embassy of the People's Republic of China will sponsor events, festivals, and other major activities honoring these holidays. Based on the source providing the funding for particular events, the cultural production of Chineseness and identity emerges in contrasting ways. Events sponsored by the PRC embassy typically include music and commentary reflecting the greatness of China and an emphasis on returning. In contrast, local events feature folkloric Chinese music and dance that does not explicitly celebrate China as a nation; instead, their performances focus on the celebration of Chinese culture. Likewise, lion dance performances in these celebrations also reflect the contrasting priorities of PRC sponsored events and those sponsored by the local community.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is a celebration that takes place each year on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar. In Panama, as in many diasporic communities, Moon Festival celebrations feature community events that include traditional Chinese dance and music performances, the making of lanterns, and the eating of mooncakes, a round pastry with fillings such as lotus seed paste or sweet bean paste, among others. Scholar Elizabeth Bedford situates the Moon Festival celebration within Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," arguing that such festivals and celebrations "not only connect Chinese people in a way that distinguishes them from other ethnicities but reflects the complex values of the broad culture in which they operate" (Bedford 2009:18-19). She explains that the festival becomes a chance for Chinese-descended peoples to "consolidate their identity" and express their difference while maintaining continuity and connection to other Chinese communities both in their current home and

in those internationally (Bedford 2009:21). Despite enacting traditions passed down over the centuries, the particular character of the performances is "unique to the time, place, and people" (2009:30). Likewise, the lion dance as a mode of cultural production also becomes a cultural performance that is unique to the people who perform it.

During one of the various 2018 Moon Festival celebrations that took place in the auditorium of Panama's Chinese Panamanian school, Instituto Sun Yat Sen, the PRC embassy sponsored a series of performances by a Guangzhou, Chinese-based organization known as the Guangzhou Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese. As my mentor and active leader in the community reflected, many people were disappointed with the embassy's choice, as the members of the organization spoke Mandarin, rather than the Cantonese that Chinese Panamanians and Panamanians of Chinese descent more commonly speak. In fact, the entire show was presented in Mandarin, despite the fact that Guangzhou is a Cantonese-speaking region and that many of the students in the auditorium spoke only Spanish or Cantonese. Of notable importance, the performance lacked the presence of lion dancers, emphasizing how out of touch the PRC embassy is regarding the local community. Instead, the organization's performance featured Chinese ballet dance, singers, and a musician playing various Chinese flutes, while also throwing in a few folkloric Panamanian dances as a demonstration of the relationship between the two nations. By not including a southern lion dance performance, the PRC embassy failed to acknowledge Panama's importance of such a dance for celebrating the complex identity of Panamanians of Chinese descent. Considering that these performances were likely given by non-southern Chinese performers, since they did not speak Cantonese, a

southern-style lion dance outfit may not have been something that the performance group even owned or had experience performing.

The lion dance's presence at the locally-sponsored 2018 Moon Festival events reflects its importance as a marker of celebration, good fortune, and cultural identity for those present. The Chung San Jr association, an organization[4] of Chinese Panamanians descended from the Zhong Shan (Chung San) region of Guangdong in southern China, organized their annual Moon Festival celebration at the Hotel El Panamá on September 22, 2018. This event, much larger than it was the previous year, took place in the pool area of the hotel and featured beautiful Chinese decorations, including red and gold lanterns and tablecloths. After passing through the hotel to the celebration area, the space was divided by the pool into two sections. One half was covered by a wooden overhang, where the buffet table was set up for everyone who paid. To one side of the covered section, tables were set up for a variety of vendors, including jewelry, books, and other items crafted by local artisans. On the other side of the pool included a series of fold out tables surrounding a large stage for the upcoming presentations and performances. Called the Moon Cake BBQ Fest, Chung San Jr has hosted this celebration since 2014 and each year features a variety of different presentations and activities enacting cultural performance through Chinese and Panamanian cultural lenses. Performances included a harpist, who played both traditional Chinese and popular Spanish songs dressed in a golden silk *changshan* shirt, a *tai chi* demonstration, a Moon Festival legend reenactment, a singer of Chinese descent performing as Cowboy Elvis, and the

[4] A full list of Chinese and Chinese Panamanian organizations can be found in Chen 2016:142-151.

organization's lion dance team to start off the entire celebration. As required of tradition, the lion dance group circled the entirety of the celebration space, around the pool, before finally coming onto the stage to be fed the red envelope, or *hong pao*, by Chung San Jr. organizational leaders.

For the first time in the history of Panama City, a Chinese Night Market took place over the course of the 2018 Moon Festival weekend in the community area one of the local, private housing communities in one of the northern neighborhoods of the city. This event, organized by *Revista ChungSir*, featured local Asian vendors, including Vietnamese, Japanese, and Indonesian cuisines in addition to Chinese food and décor. The two-day market was modeled after the late-night markets that take place throughout different cities in China. On the first night of the event, the GLML lion dance group participated in the opening ceremonies. Unlike the typical gold and red lions prominent throughout Panama, this dance included a red lion and a new blue lion, which they had only acquired recently. Since this was the first Night Market event to happen in Panama, the lion dance performance ensured its success both in that weekend and for future Night Markets to come.

In a *Revista ChungSir* article by Chinese Panamanian Tony Mock, he declares that the Moon Festival is the most important celebration for Chinese Panamanian communities around the world, followed only by the Lunar New Year, often referred to as the *año nuevo chino* (Chinese New Year) (Mock 2016:18). Throughout the city, new year celebrations occurred the entire weekend and through late hours of the night. From most points in the city, fireworks could be seen and heard as Panamanians of Chinese

descent celebrated this major holiday. Importantly, lion dance performances took place at all of the celebrations organized by associations in Panama City. Of the many celebrations taking place throughout, I was able to attend two of the major ones. One took place in El Dorado Mall in the Chinatown of Panama City and was organized by the Sociedad Fa Yen. The other major Lunar New Year celebration was organized by the PRC embassy in collaboration with one of the major Chinese Panamanian entrepreneurial organizations and took place in the Atlapa Convention center on the other side of town. Both of these events occurred throughout Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend and included lots of local food and artisan vendors from the community.

Grupo Artístico Hua Xing de Panama sponsors a Chinese New Year event each year in the El Dorado mall and surrounding areas of Panama City's primary Chinatown. Each year, the celebration features Chinese music and dance performances from community groups, many of whom are associated with the organization in some way. This year, much like in years past, the event included a lion dance group by the Sociedad Fa Yen, who began in the main stage area of the mall and then proceeded to visit most of the shops, before finally continuing outside to stop by other businesses in the surrounding area (figure 3.5; see video 3.5). At many of these shops, owners and employees provided the lion with the customary *hong pao*, honoring the lion's presence and supporting the dance group. The single yellow lion, accompanied by a trail of excited onlookers and its musicians, periodically encountered heads of lettuce or other obstacles to overcome in order to get the red envelope. Such a tradition is not uncommon in diasporic Chinese communities during the Spring Festival, yet the layers of meaning tied to the context of

its performance and the people who perform in it are rooted in Panama's local understandings of the performance, as evidenced by the many participants and onlookers of the demonstration, many of whom claim some descendance from China, whether a grandparent or great grandparent.

Figure 3.5. Lunar New Year lion dance in El Dorado Mall. February 16, 2018. Photo by author.

Video 3.5. Lion dance in El Dorado Mall. February 16, 2018. Video by author.

Whereas the Spring Festival celebration that took place in El Dorado featured local performers and organizations, a much larger event occurred in the Atlapa Convention Center, only a few miles away. This event, organized by the Fundación General de Empresarios Chinos en Panamá (General Foundation of Chinese

Entrepreneurs in Panama), the Asociación China Guangdong Panama (ACGP), and with funding by the PRC embassy, boasted professional performers and dancers brought over from Beijing, a stark contrast to the local performers in El Dorado. Despite the variety of singers, Chinese ballet dancers, magicians, and other performers from the PRC, the lion dance group was made up of about 20 Panamanian children of Chinese descent. A part of the ACGP, the youngest of these performers held the large banners, while the older performers danced the part of the lion, interchanging performers periodically during the presentation (figure 3.6; see video 3.6). A few of the others performed on the instruments, doubling the quantity of cymbals in order to meet the sound requirements for such a large auditorium. The performers used a gold and red lion with black fur and a silver horn, representing the *Zhang Fei* Cantonese lion, which represents the youngest of the three brothers (Yap 2016:66). Importantly, the presence of a younger, locally-based lion dance group over that of a professional group brought over from the PRC demonstrates the importance of its use as a symbol of identity for Panamanians celebrating their Chinese cultural heritage. By hiring local lion dance performance groups, the community reaffirms its identity through this type of cultural performance while also celebrating and providing a performance opportunity for performers in the Panamanian community of Chinese descent, evidenced by it being the only performance during the event not from Beijing.

Figure 3.6. Lunar New Year lion dance in Atlapa Convention Center. February 17, 2018. Photo by author.

Video 3.6. Lion dance in Atlapa CC Panama. February 17, 2018. Video by author.

One of the largest annual celebrations that takes place in Panama, Carnival, further demonstrates the importance of lion dance in Panama. Carnival, the four days of nonstop celebration that precedes the Catholic Lenten season, includes dancing and partying in the streets, *culecos* and *mojaderos*, where large tanks of water controlled by event organizers spray down and cool off all the attendees, and a big parade on the last day before Ash Wednesday. The parade includes beautifully ornate floats and dancers adorned with large headdresses and other traditional Carnival outfits. Many of Panama's various organizations will participate in the parades with their own music and dance groups to celebrate the festivities.

Notably, the parade always includes a few Chinese Panamanian organizations, with Chinese folkloric dancers. Chinese Panamanian scholar Juan Tam observes that the lion dance's presence in Carnival parades dates to 1962, noting that "for many, Panama's Carnival would not be complete if it did not have the participation of the Chinese community" (2005:141; my translation). During the Carnival celebration I attended in February 2018, two floats incorporated lion dance into their presentations; the Sociedad Fa Yen and the Asociación China de Panamá (video 3.7). The latter also included stilt walkers that proudly waved both the Panamanian and PRC national flags, where each walker was dressed to resemble a folkloric representation of the people of their respective flag. Despite a seemingly foreign presence in a Latin American major festival, Tam's contention reinforces the belief that the lion dance is an essential part of the local celebration, again reflecting its importance as part of Panamanian cultural identity.

Video 3.7. Panama Carnavales 2018 lion dance Group. Video by author.

Lion Dance at Life Events

Major life cycle moments frequently operate as sites for ritual performance, where specific types of music and dance provide a marker of passage or acceptance into a segment of society. Such life cycle moments include baptisms, coming of age celebrations, weddings, or retirements. During these types of events, cultural performance takes on deeper meanings by reinforcing important beliefs, values, or identities for the person about to enter a new stage in their life to their surrounding community. Chicano and Latino studies scholar Karen Mary Davalos posits that the *quinceañera* "is a site of negotiation in which people and cultural practices are not coherent, whole, or distinct," calling attention to individuals' own understandings "of ethnic identity, gender roles, sexuality, faith, and culture" (Davalos 1996:121-123). The cultural performances that occur at such events always include symbolic gestures and activities based in history and ideas about family and local traditions.

On March 9, 2018, I was invited to a lion dance performance by one of the many dance groups in the city. Trying to promote their group and knowing that I had volunteered my amateur photography services for APROCHIPA's annual Kite Festival, they asked me to be their photographer for the evening and in exchange I could attend this private event and talk with members of the team about the work they do. I was to stay with them for the event and videotape their performance. When I got there, I found out that the event was for a *quinceañera* celebration for a young woman with Chinese heritage; the celebration is a rite of passage for young women throughout Latin America that marks their 15th birthday and their entrance into womanhood. The event took place in

a ballroom in one of the many hotels in the city. Per custom, especially in affluent families, the parents spared no expense when it came to the location, the decorations, the catering, the performers, and, of course, the *quinceañera*'s gown. As the surprise performers, the lion dance group waited in a separate, empty ballroom stacked high with chairs. Here, the group stretched and practiced some of their moves, including high lifts and specific steps. When it was time to begin, the drummers went to the stage to begin playing, where they signaled the lion's entrance. In full character, the lion made its way to the ballroom while I followed closely behind with the camera. The lion was met with excitement by the guests in attendance as it made its way to the lower dance stage area, accompanied by the young *quinceañera*. While she stood nearby, poised like royalty, the lion made its way through the various aspects of the performance, before eventually being fed the *hong pao* and departing the ballroom once more (figure 3.7; see video 3.8).

Figure 3.7. *Quinceañera* with Southern Chinese Lion. March 9, 2018. Photo by author.

Video 3.8. Baile de León at a *Quinceañera*. March 9, 2018. Video by author.

By incorporating the lion dance into one of the most important life events for a young woman, Panamanian women of Chinese descent emphasize their multiple ethnic identities, which, in turn, are woven into their gender and religious identities. The lion dance is not typically seen in *quinceañera* celebrations throughout Latin America. Thus, its presence at this one completes the young woman and her family's demonstration of their own ideals about the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and faith. Li notes that the lion dance serves as "a base for negotiating and (re)constructing identities of individuals of Chinese descent" (Li 2017:291). By combining two important cultural performances of identity, the *quinceañera*'s festivities assert and redefine her and her family's social identity, not as a Chinese Panamanian, but as Panamanians of Chinese descent. The entire celebration affirms her Panamanian-ness while the performance of the lion dance emphasizes her ethnic heritage, resulting in the cultural performance of Chinese-descent Panamanian-ness.

Such affirmations of identity not only present themselves in *quinceañera* celebrations but also other important life events, such as weddings and a recent lion dance performance that took place at a baby's baptism (figures 3.8 and 3.9). In Panama and throughout Latin America, most children are expected to be baptized in the church while still in infancy. Much like the *quinceañera* discussed above, baptisms that involve the lion dance combine multiple cultural performances. Whereas the young woman marks her entrance into womanhood through an emphasis on her Panamanian and Chinese identities, the parents of young children emphasize the family's religious identity, which is tied to Panamanian nationalism, by also including aspects of their Chineseness. The

Figure 3.8. Leones Chinos Miguel Loo performing at wedding. Photo by Miguel Loo; used with permission.

Figure 3.9. Leones Chinos Miguel Loo performing at baptism. Photo by Miguel Loo; used with permission.

context in which such Chineseness is performed highlights the child's position within Panamanian society and marks its membership into the community of Panamanians of Chinese descent. These phenomena simultaneously emphasize the deconstruction of a diasporic identity within Panama, celebrating their Chinese heritage as part of their Panamanian nationality.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights many of the ways in which the history of lion dance continues to shape and inform the many manifestations of it within Panama's community of Chinese descent peoples. These performances present a particularly unique form of cultural production, where small changes or adaptations reflect its local aspects. For example, during the lion dance performance for the new business in Chorrera, the use of plantains rather than bananas for the legs of the crab reflects not only the availability of plantains in Panama, but also the importance of plantains in Panamanian cuisine. The dancers, of which a few had no known Chinese heritage, reflect the seamlessness of incorporating lion dance into the Panamanian lived experience for both practitioners and those who experience it from the outside. For the Panamanians of Chinese descent who see these aspects of the performance, the validation of their identities is significant.

The lion dance performances mentioned above represent only a small fraction of the lion dances that take place in Panama City and the rest of the country throughout the year, both during and outside of Chinese holidays. Based on what I encountered during my fieldwork, I would estimate that anywhere from 30 to 50 dances occur in any given

year, with the majority taking place during the Lunar New Year celebrations and the Mid-Autumn Festival. Anyone unfamiliar with the tradition, including many Panamanians experiencing lion dance, often refer to it as a foreign presentation, one that is specifically Chinese, not Panamanian. Despite these acts of otherization, intentional or otherwise, these lion dance performances are integral to Chinese Panamanian spaces and the representation of what it means to be Panamanian with Chinese heritage. For those with the economic privilege to be able to afford them, these performances mark private celebrations and events through their ties with Chinese heritage and their incorporation into Panamanian national and nationalist traditions. For example, to celebrate Panama's first ever success in making the World Cup soccer tournament, the Chinese Panamanian School created a choreographed music video that featured lion dances, a Dragon Dance, and *música típica* dances, thus demonstrating the importance of both cultural performances for celebrating their Panamanian-ness.

Whereas nationalism in Panama has historically been a barrier for those of Chinese descent from experiencing a sense of belonging within the nation, reframing Chinese cultural practices within such nationalism has allowed for an emerging sense of recognition and appreciation within broader Panamanian society. As I will explain further in the subsequent chapter, the framing of cultural performances as representative of Panama and its diversity, with the lion dance acting as a primary form of expression, allows Panamanians of Chinese descent to take nationalist pride in their Panamanian-ness while also enabling them to celebrate that national identity through their sense of ethnic Chineseness.

Chapter 4

***Punto de Convergencia*: Venezuelan Migration, the Chinese Christian Church of Panama, and the Performance of Religious Identity**

Ana Chung

On February 15, 2018 I traveled to the area in Panama known as Tumba Muerto to make a payment for my entry in the Revista Chung Sir annual Chinese New Year 5K. When I made it to their office on the 17th floor of the building, I met Ana Chung, one of the editors and co-founders of the Chinese Panamanian periodical Revista ChungSir (figure 4.1). From the first moment we met, Ana immediately welcomed me, even sitting down to chat with me about my research and then offering me part of her lunch as she and the other office employees sat down for their break. It was the first time I ever ate chicken feet, but definitely not the last! Ana's entrepreneurial family comes from the Heshan area of the southern province of Guangdong, China and after having spent her life in Panama, she eventually attended the University of Panama to study Graphic Design. Along with her husband, Chung Wai Chun, Ana volunteers much of her free time working with the Evangelical Chinese Church of Panama as a music teacher and youth coordinator. The foundation of Revista ChungSir emerged as a desire of her and her husband to help migrants from China learn about and adjust to life in Panama; the articles are printed in both Spanish and Chinese characters. Her guidance and support during my time in Panama were invaluable and her insight into issues of faith and identity have shaped much of my understanding of the Protestant Evangelical Chinese Church within Panama.

Figure 4.1. Ana Chung (front-right). Photo courtesy of http://www.holachina.lat/2012/08/02/editora-de-la-revista-panamena-chung-sir-queremos-ser-el-mejor-medio/

On March 30th, 2018, I attended a Holy Week Seminary Retreat conference performance and sermon hosted by and for the congregations of the Chinese Christian Churches throughout Panama. When I walked into the building where the conference took place, I was immediately greeted by people working at sales tables, where they were selling Christian-themed bibles, pictures, and memorabilia. As attendees bustled about, chatting with new and old friends and loved ones, I could hear a mixture of different languages being spoken, primarily Spanish amongst the youth and Cantonese amongst the elders. Not long after, I encountered Ana Chung, contributor and editor for Revista ChungSir, who initially invited me to the event. She proceeded to give me a tour around the site, explaining that the event, which takes place each year during the Christian Holy Week and reaches its diverse membership through its division into a Spanish-language section and a Cantonese-language section; to the right of the entrance was the Cantonese language service and to the left was the Spanish language service. Since she was preoccupied with many of the retreat's activities, she introduced me to a young man, KF, who she tasked with sticking with me throughout the experience to answer any questions and to help me understand the events as they took place.

The week-long retreat took place in Panama City's Hotel El Panamá and included members from churches of various parts of the country, including Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí, Chitré and Coclé. Each of these sections proselytized through the communal singing of worship songs, testimonials by church members, group prayer, and invitations for redemption by formerly non-Christian attendees. Beginning with the Cantonese-language section on the right, KF took me over to where the session was taking place, a

large convention center-style auditorium with rows of folding chairs spread in a u-formation facing the stage. Since I have no ability to speak Cantonese, KF spent this time translating to me from Cantonese to Spanish everything that was said. The band, a Los Angeles, California-based group known as 角聲使團, or the Heralders, was already set up on stage (figure 4.2). The service began with a welcome message for the congregation, leading into the worship band's performance. As I have experienced in many evangelical-style services, the congregation is expected to sing with the band, with the lyrics displayed on a screen at either side of the stage. Partway through this service, which was entirely in Cantonese, KF took me over to the Spanish-language side, so I could experience that as well. Unlike the Cantonese area, the Spanish-language area took place in a much smaller room and was accompanied by a local praise band, rather than an international one (figure 4.3). Lyrics to worship music were projected onto the wall. Despite these differences, the strategies employed by the worship leaders felt the same, as the music gradually pulled attendees into the head space of Christian evangelical worship.

Figure 4.2. Cantonese-language worship hall. March 30, 2018. Photo by author.

Figure 4.3. Spanish-language worship hall. March 30, 2018. Photo by author.

In an attempt to capture as much of both experiences as possible, I periodically went back and forth between the concurrent services. As the events went on, similar dynamic shifts occurred at both. The tone of the music gradually changed from one of celebration to one of solemn veneration. This shift in tone was further reflected through the emotions of the participants. As hands were lifted in the air in worship and the music slowed, various participants began to share their testimonies, stories of hardship and suffering that led them to the church. Little of this sharing experience was particularly new to me, having grown up and been exposed to many evangelical spaces; however, when KF later started sharing his own story with me, I realized that although the evangelical strategies for proselytization were commonplace, these particular issues and struggles were unique to a community of people of Chinese descent. For many of the members in the audience, additional struggles of migration led them into these unified spaces. KF recounted to me his hardships in Venezuela, which led him to flee from his country of birth only to encounter further discrimination in Panama, not just as a person of Chinese descent, but as a migrant.

For Venezuelans of Chinese descent, such discrimination becomes compounded with existing discrimination and marginalization of citizens of Chinese descent in Panama. Despite the socioeconomic hardships that accompany the difficulties of migration, many migrants have found solace and refuge through the Chinese Christian Church of Panama, a union of evangelical Christian churches throughout the country that offer services in Cantonese and Spanish and support a primarily Chinese and Chinese-descendant congregation. Not only do these churches offer solace in times of chaos, they

help ethnic Chinese migrants find community and belonging amidst the heated debates about immigration and rampant xenophobia happening throughout the country. As Ana phrased it, the churches become a *punto de convergencia*, a point of convergence, for migrants seeking support in a new social environment and are often one of the first places new migrants go to for help. As ethnomusicologist Connie Oi-Yang Wong argues, Protestant Christianity within Chinese cultural contexts is more than a "dynamic entity not only present in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and major locales of the Chinese diaspora, but also facilitating spiritual and cultural connections among these communities" (Wong 2006: 208). Importantly, music plays a critical role in these services, demonstrating the significance of a shared ethnic and linguistic history for migrants of Chinese descent to find comfort amidst loss and tragedy.

Even as the Chinese Christian Church incorporates these Venezuelan migrants of Chinese descent into their congregations, marked third cultural differences continue to distinguish them from their Panamanian counterparts. Such differences are manifested through their regional use of Spanish language, the significance of specific culinary traditions, and personal connection to local music practices. Other distinctions manifest as a result of the history of strategies employed by these groups in order to situate themselves in the countries they consider home. In examining the role of Panama's Chinese Christian Church in issues of migration and local identity for Panamanians of Chinese descent, this chapter highlights the complexity of ethnic and national identity in Panama while further demonstrating a departure from the diaspora as defined by Parreñas and Siu (2007), discussed in chapter four, which places importance on a set of social

relations maintained with compatriots and coethnics dispersed elsewhere. Instead, I argue that although coethnics share similarities in historical practices associated with Chineseness, and Chineseness itself is indeed a unifying theme in these Chinese Christian Church spaces, the actual production of Chinese Venezuelan and Chinese Panamanian cultures result in very different understandings of identity and national belonging.

Evangelicalism and Chinese Christian Churches in Panama

Prior to the 1960s and 70s, Catholic Christianity maintained dominance throughout much of Latin America (Hughes and das Dores Campos Machado 2016; Stoll 1990). However, various scholars have detailed the rise in missionization and conversion of Latin Americans to Protestantism throughout the twentieth century. With major changes in political powers from authoritarian to democratic states in countries such as Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, among others, the "religious economy" expanded to include other forms of Christian and non-Christian worship, resulting in religious pluralism (Hughes and das Dores Campos Machado 2016; Parker 2016; Stark and Smith 2012). Sociologists Rodney Stark and Buster G. Smith demonstrate in their analysis of religion in Latin America that by the year 1996 "missionaries outnumbered priests two to one in Panama and Guatemala" (2012:39). In addition to the shift in these regional political spheres, religious historians Jennifer Scheper Hughes and Maria das Dores Campos Machado attribute such high numbers of conversion to Protestantism in Latin America to a shift toward individual agency in determining one's economic status, what they refer to as an "'American'-style [of Protestantism]...[that] emphasized individual accumulation of

wealth, promising financial and material well-being in exchange for fidelity to conservative interpretations of the Christian gospel" (Hughes and das Dores Campos Machado 2016:8). Indeed, the endeavors of Protestant missionaries in both Panama City and in the nation's rural provinces explains the prominence of evangelicalism in such distant Chinese communities.

The first evangelical protestant Chinese Christian Churches in Panama opened in the 1960s, part of a movement that came to be known as the Misión Cristiana China de Panamá y Colón by May of 1972 (Chen 2016:170). In Panama, the founding of the Chinese Christian Church occurred when four women started a bible study group, in which a sermon was given in Spanish and then translated into Cantonese by a woman in the congregation named Alicia Lay. Eventually, protestant missionaries from the Chicago Chinese Christian Mission arrived to help establish a church and a local mission. At the first Holy Week retreat that took place in 1997, the first two Chinese Christian churches set a goal to achieve 2,000 members by the year 2000, a goal achieved in part via the many different congregations that emerged around the city and eventually throughout the country (History of Panama Christian Academy 2018). Sociologist Xuefeng Zhang stresses the importance of such conference retreats for conversion and emphasizes the lengths people go to and distances traveled in order to attend these events (Zhang 2006:156-157). In addition to their role in distributing evangelical materials such as books and audio recordings, such retreats frequently result in large numbers of conversions by attendees who accompany their friends and families on these long trips.

A strong evangelical presence exists in many Chinese communities throughout the Americas. Scholars Vegard Skirbekk, Stuart Basten, Éric Caron Malenfant, and Marcin Stonawski (2012), examining the religious composition in Canada, note that many migrants from China, particularly the southern regions and Hong Kong were more likely to adopt Christianity, followed closely by Buddhism, whether as a strategy for assimilation or as part of a Western education. Fenggang Yang notes how most people cling to their traditional religions to find meanings during times of crisis, but because of the "turbulent process of modernization in China" in the early twentieth century and the continuous attacks on Confucianism throughout the following decades, many Chinese migrants lacked religious cultural traditions, and thus had few internal barriers to prevent them from seeking new beliefs (Yang 1998:250-251). For many Chinese migrants, conservative evangelical Christianity offered the absoluteness and certainty that was lost in times of "pre-migration traumas and post-migration uncertainties" (Yang 1998:252). As Yang posits, only conservative Christianity could offer the social group belonging and moral education that traditional Chinese religion and liberal Christian denominations failed to instill. Further, evangelical Christianity was compatible with Confucian moral values, specifically the emphasis on family and ascetic ethics, allowing Chinese immigrants to "retain Confucian moral values without falling into a stigmatized syncretism" (Yang 1998:253). The use of worship music and communal singing functions as an important strategy for emphasizing these family and ascetic values.

In addition to values that link conservative Christianity with Confucian mores, the conference sites provide a sense of pan-Chineseness and social cohesion through the

ritual performance of evangelicalism, with a particular emphasis on the eschaton, the end of times imperative in much of evangelical theology. In his work on the proselytization of Chinese communities, evangelical Chinese Christian scholar and missionary Jonathan Chao highlights this emphasis by claiming "[s]o long as Christ delays his coming, we have the opportunity to carry out the missionary mandate as well as the cultural mandate to the glory of God" (Chao 2000: 104). Examining evangelical Christian conference sites, ethnomusicologist Monique Ingalls recounts how many attendees at these types of retreats go primarily "to 'meet God' and to allow God to change their lives through the multifaceted, multi-day conference experience" (Ingalls 2011:256). As the only major conference for Chinese Christian Churches in Panama, the gathering in Panama City gives church members a chance to seek redemption, reinvigoration of their faith, and the chance to meet God through the connection of others with similar experiences. Discussing the importance of such conference worship for creating "a space where their social ideals and religious beliefs were conjoined and mutually reinforcing," Ingalls cites Suzel Reily's research about Brazilian Catholic pilgrimage, which argues that such ritual spaces represent encounters "with the moral order of the sacred" (2002:17; as cited in Ingalls 2011:263). Through such eschatological discourse, evangelical conferences create a bridge between heaven and earth, giving participants a feeling of direct linkage to God as they use the space to prepare themselves for the end of times and their placement in the Kingdom of Heaven.

One of the core tenets of evangelical musical ontology is that any musical style can be used to carry the Christian message, resulting in choices that specifically engage

with the experiences and values of those present while also seeking to "achieve certain goals . . . [which] are informed by overarching ethical concerns," as expressed by ethnomusicologist Timothy Rommen (2007:35–36; as cited by Ingalls 2011:265). For Chinese Christian Churches, this tenet is particularly important, in that the styles of music performance can be tailored to meet the needs of the congregation. Many of the worship songs performed in the Cantonese-language section of the retreat were similar in tone and style to the Chinese Cantopop ballads I experienced during the karaoke performances I will discuss in chapter five. Since many of those present for this service were either migrants themselves or a generation or a two removed from Chinese migration, the musical adaptation of evangelical Christian worship into Cantopop styles would resonate more deeply for those who listened to it during their youth in China or growing up in a culturally Chinese home in Panama or Venezuela. Further, as most of the Chinese migrants in Panama and Venezuela come from China's southern regions and Hong Kong, the music reflected the push for evangelical Chinese Christian Cantopop music that has taken place in Hong Kong beginning in the 1980s (Wing-Ki Ho 2013).

During the Holy Week conference I attended, the Heralders performed Cantonese-language contemporary worship music, what Christian worship scholars Kate Bowler and Wen Reagan characterize as an embrace of "the industrial apparatus and performative practices of the modern music industry, leveraging the commercial ecology of the industry (artists, producers, distributors, marketers) to provide a captivating musical experience for their congregants" (Bowler and Reagan 2014:187). Music plays an important role in these Chinese Christian churches; genres include hymnody, small

orchestras, and praise bands, all of which emphasize the communal singing experience of the services. The conference I attended alongside church members from throughout Panama included both the music from the Heralders as well as a local youth-led praise band. Although the languages in which these bands performed differed, the emotional and discursive trajectory of the experiences mirrored one another. By having a captive audience engaged through these contemporary worship practices, the musicians can shift the celebratory tone of the service to one of solemnity, as described above, and subsequently convert the experience into a sacred space, enabling the feeling of direct connection to God and eliciting expressions about "God's presence" in the worship hall.

The Heralders successfully made this emotional transition through their performance of "求主助我數算 (Ask the Lord to Number Our Days)," written by 盧永亨 (Lu Yongheng). Much like Ingalls' (2011) emphasis on the eschatological meanings present in the evangelical conference worship experience, this song, whose lyrics are derived from Psalm 90 of the Christian Bible, speaks about the brevity of life on earth and the desire to find eternal life beyond one's existence. With the words on the screen so everyone could see, this song was performed without much audience participation, but led into an invitation to the front of the stage of attendees who "felt God's presence" and wished to convert to Christianity in that moment or have their faith renewed (video 4.1). Through the use of music genres most familiar to the congregation, attendees felt a sense of community in their Chineseness.

Video 4.1. The Heralders perform 求主助我數算 (Ask the Lord to Number Our Days). Video by author.

Simultaneously, the same sense of group solidarity was being achieved in the Spanish-language worship hall next door, not through a Panamanian *música típica* style, but through the use of a rock-style praise band singing original music, which included a drummer, a keyboardist, an electric guitar, and bass guitar. Through these stylistic choices, the music reflected the youth culture present in this setting and the value placed on international, Western popular music over the genres and languages of their parents and ancestors for asserting their bicultural and multinational identities. Ingalls argues that music's role in the conference experience is to instill "beliefs and values" and a "set of social ideals that influence how evangelicals understand themselves as a community" (2011:258). Despite these differences in the musical reflections of identity, the information conveyed is the same: only through an eschatological understanding of the world and repentance can one reach everlasting life in heaven.

Within the context of evangelical Chinese Christian Churches in Panama, I take this argument further and argue that these beliefs, values, and social ideals instilled by the music are intrinsically tied to the way they understand themselves as evangelical Christians of Chinese descent. Such an approach highlights the importance of Chineseness in such multicultural identities for the cultural production of evangelicalism, which allows Chinese Venezuelans to incorporate seamlessly into these congregations. Toward the beginning of the Spanish-language worship service, the leaders passed around a survey containing questions relating to participant experiences in the community, with a focus on the Chinese community in Panama (Appendix B). Although the survey focused primarily on local proselytization within their own communities, it led

into a discussion by the preacher about the importance of faith for handling life's struggles, which included those of facing discrimination in Panama for being of Chinese descent. Following this, the worship leaders led the congregation into singing an original hymn, titled *Regocijad* (figure 4.4):

Regocijad, Regocijad cántale al Señor	Rejoice, Rejoice Sing to the Lord
Solo confía en Jesús y paz encontrarás	Just trust Jesus and peace you will find
Siempre orad y esperad	Always pray and wait
que el tiempo es de Señor	that the time is of Lord
Y los afanes diarios quitad	And take away your daily worries
Solo confía en Él.	Just trust Him.

In any other context, this song could be interpreted as an ordinary worship song celebrating Christ and a Christian identity; however, within the confines of a worship space designed for Panamanians of Chinese descent and immediately following a discussion of Chinese identity, this song takes on a particularly meaningful message for those in the room. Through this music performance, attendees express both their evangelical religious identities while also highlighting their ethnic Chinese ones in this shared space.

Negotiating Identity in Panama's Chinese Christian Church

During the worship service, everyone in attendance sang in unison and with conviction. In this moment, individuality and unique backgrounds did not matter, supporting scholar Nicholas Ng's proposal that "the singing of sacred songs helps unify the group as one, in which social status, age, gender and other differences are forgotten in the music" (Ng 2009: 114). Communications scholar Casey Man Kong Lum further

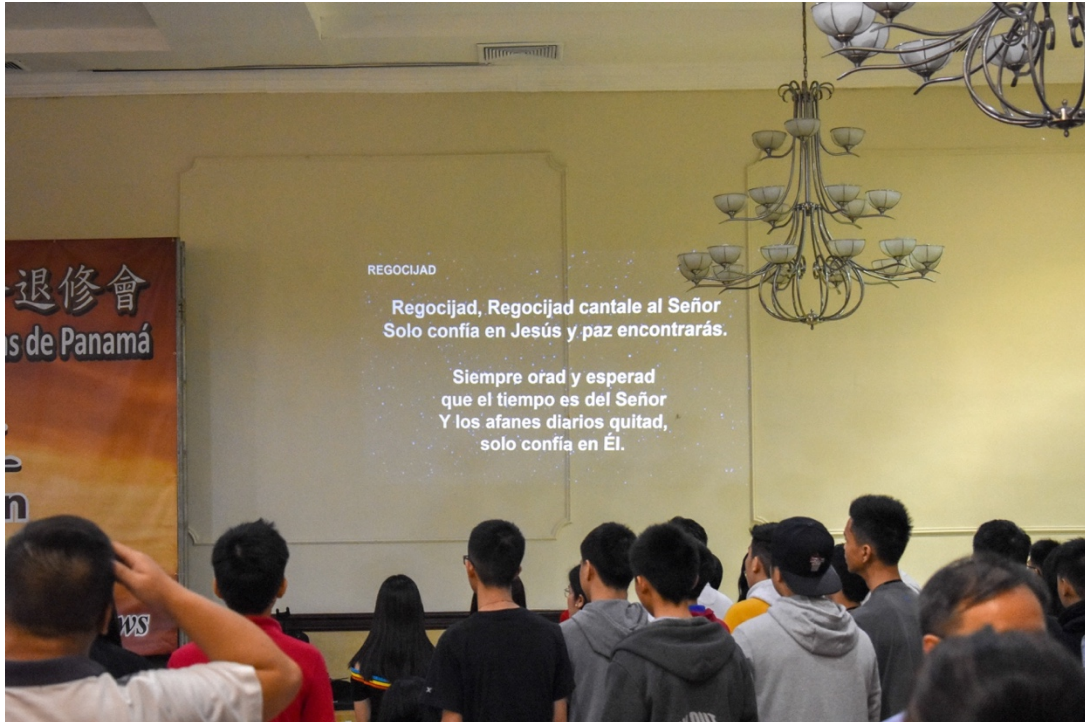


Figure 4.4. Spanish-language worshippers singing “Regocijad” at the Chinese Christian Church Holy Week Retreat. March 30, 2018. Photo by author.

suggests that such creations of likemindedness amongst communities with a shared sense of identity helps “form their common frame of reference to construct and comprehend their social and cultural reality” (Lum 1996:21). Although referring to the likemindness in communities of karaoke performers, the evangelical Chinese Christian Church provides similar opportunities for members to establish a community of people with shared social and cultural experiences, expressed through communal singing that triumphs over individual identities and experiences, including nationalistic pride and migration histories. Despite such troubled histories in Panama and Venezuela, the singing of sacred music “is a powerful and evocative way to assert a sense of Chinese-ness in community groups,” as Ng argues (2009:114). For Panamanians of Chinese descent, who

seek to similarly “maintain and preserve all three disparate identities” as Panamanian or Venezuelan, Chinese-descended, and Protestant Christian, the communal singing of worship music in Cantonese and Spanish languages provides an important intersection of identity (Ng 2009:112).

Yet, even as this style of worship and community singing transcends individual understandings of identity, these experiences also allow participants to assert their disparate identities in unique ways. This assertion of identity became particularly clear in the Spanish-language section of the conference, which included an age range from young teenager to middle age adults. Much like the Chinese Australians in Ng’s research, the use of Spanish language during this worship opportunities allows visitors to relate to what is taking place though language. These visitors include those newer members from the Venezuelan refugee community, but also friends and compatriots with little or no Chinese ancestry. The music of this multicultural environment highlights the multiple identities of those within the community, Chineseness through discourse about proselytizing within one’s own Chinese community, and Panamanian through the use of Spanish language preaching, instrument choices typical of Panama’s local church praise bands, and musical hymns and worship songs commonly found throughout the country’s churches.

Due to these churches’ emphasis on Chinese Christian evangelicalism, Venezuelan migrants of Chinese descent frequently seek out these sites upon arrival in Panama. As KF explained to me, many migrants come with very few contacts in Panama, lacking the networking opportunities and familial ties that many of the more recent

Chinese migrants utilize when migrating to a new country. With few options for seeking community and welcome, the Chinese Christian Church becomes a refuge, both from the traumatic events occurring in Venezuela and from the rampant discrimination on their bicultural identities as Chinese Venezuelans. In stark contrast to the rest of Panama, where they are forced to do their best to assimilate despite small sociocultural and linguistic differences, the church places primary emphasis on their Christianity and their determination to obey its (conservative) tenets. The differences between the Panamanian and the Venezuelan aspects of their identity are overtaken by mutual understandings and expressions of what they see as their Chineseness. Importantly, evangelical community singing, and the songs chosen in these ritual moments, deeply emphasize such sameness, providing a space for the expression of identity safe from the discrimination of the outside world.

Conclusion

Chineseness in Panama manifests in many different ways, intrinsically tied to family migration histories, local knowledge, and existing forms of discrimination in the country. For members of the Chinese Christian Churches in Panama, these spaces offer a chance for them to "perform music that fulfils essential social, emotional and spiritual functions," thus tying them to these specific manifestations of a Chinese identity (Ng 2009:138). By offering services in both Spanish and Cantonese languages, the conference becomes an assertion of identity within a shared ethnic community, whether that identity is Chinese Panamanian, with a focus on nationalistic ties to the idea of China as nation, or

Panamanian of Chinese descent, where the locus of identity focuses on one's Panamanian-ness that is highlighted through a hybrid understanding of local Panamanian culture and values, Chinese heritage, and the way these have interwoven and resulted in a unique hybrid culture within Panama. At the same time, Chinese Venezuelans are able to engage with their Chineseness, despite the marked differences between their ideas about Venezuelan identity and the Panamanian identities of their peers. By engaging with and worshipping alongside with what they are *not* – in this case, not Venezuelan – Panamanians of Chinese descent are able to reinforce and reassert their Panamanian identities as they distinguish them in relation to their Venezuelan coethnics.

The Chinese Christian Church in Panama highlights the multiplicity and diversity of the Chinese descended community in Panama. Although many Panamanians fail to distinguish between identities and background amongst this community, nuanced assertions continue to validate the lived experiences of its members. In the context of Christian religion, local performance practice asserts a Panamanian or Venezuelan identity that also takes pride in expressions of Chineseness, however defined person to person. Much like the lion dance in Panama has come to represent something important for many Panamanians of Chinese descent through its incorporation of Chinese dance styles within a Panamanian context, the Chinese Christian Church becomes a tool for the religious hybridization of values, language, and practices that incorporates Chineseness and evangelical Western religion. In this hybridity emerges new forms of cultural production, new performance practices, and new ways of negotiating complex, multicultural identities.

An important aspect in local perceptions of performance is the valorization of national identity, which in this project is the celebration of Chineseness within the framework of extreme Panamanian national pride. The creation of new practices provides a space of marginal inclusion for Chinese Venezuelans migrating to Panama as refugees; they experience belonging through their Chineseness while still maintaining the distinctiveness of their Venezuelan nationalities. Meanwhile, Panamanians of Chinese descent continue to shape their own national identities while, at the same time, they redefine Panamanian nationhood through an active engagement with Christian worship music, which is woven into their sense of ethnic identity. The following chapter foregrounds what is considered Panamanian to both those in the Chinese diasporic community and those in broader Panamanian society. An exploration of such perceptions of national identity and performance for Panamanians of Chinese descent expands the possibilities for Panamanian nationalism beyond how it is most commonly viewed and toward what it *can be*, which includes further potential for the incorporation or the pluralistic expansion of religious identities.

Chapter 5

Karaoke, Chinese Nationalism, and the Emergence of Chinese Panamanian Pop Celebrities

Brenda Lau

Although Brenda is best known for her success in the Viva La Música competition in Panama, my experiences talking with and learning from her have revealed a highly intelligent, brilliantly artistic, and deeply passionate human being (figure 5.1). Throughout every step of this research, Brenda has openly supported me and provided me wisdom and access to a variety of opportunities that may not have come otherwise, particularly access to her family's karaoke performances. As of 2019, Brenda lives in Boston, Massachusetts, where she is pursuing a degree studying composition at Berklee College of Music. She continues to write profoundly deep music that blends aspects of her life experiences through literature and compositional techniques.

Figure 5.1. Brenda Lau (center-right) performing with Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Photo obtained from Brenda Lau; used with permission.

In Chinese diasporas throughout Latin America, conceptions about national identity, diaspora, and belonging vary between people within communities. Although in previous chapters I have predominantly focused on those Panamanians of Chinese

descent who reject Chinese nationalism through ties to the nation-state, this chapter situates many who do not share such sentiments. Reflective of Parreñas and Siu's position that "nationalism is at the heart of diasporic displacement," the lack of feelings of belonging amongst more recent and first-generation migrants leads them to find national pride in a country that differs from where they currently live (Parreñas and Siu 2007:11). This includes people who have strong national attachments to China alone – inclusive of the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan – as well as those who feel a sense of national pride in being both Chinese and Panamanian without privileging one national identity above the other.

Not all people in Panama of Chinese descent adhere only to a Panamanian national identity. For those citizens who are migrants or children of migrants, karaoke performance often includes popular songs, love ballads, and Cantonese opera, as well as overtly political Chinese songs, which celebrate Chineseness as tied to the PRC nation. During my fieldwork, such performances were especially prominent in private spaces amongst families with more recent migration histories. In these private spaces outside of the public view, performers can freely express pride in the Chinese aspects of their bicultural identities. It became a performative space of Chinese nationalism, a stark contrast to the Panamanian nationalism that exists everywhere else throughout Panama City. Although little appeared to be known about the history of karaoke in Panama, Brenda Lau, who is now an adult, recalls karaoke performance being an important aspect of her musical life throughout her childhood in the late 1980s and 90s. Much was

revealed in these performances, including family histories, migration stories, and the importance placed on the maintenance of tradition, imagined or otherwise.

The origins of karaoke continue to be a subject of scholarly debate. English and gender studies scholar Karen Tongson explains that the conflicting stories around its invention in the 1970s stem from two claimants, “either by Daisuke Inoue, a former Kobe lounge musician currently based in Osaka, Japan, or by Roberto Del Rosario, a Filipino piano manufacturer who developed a sing-along machine using “minus one” technology (originally on cassette tapes)” (Tongson 2015:88). Tongson argues that Inoue was the obvious inventor of the karaoke machine, but he failed to patent his technology and so Del Rosario profited from its success (2015:89). In fact, the karaoke machine became such a global hit that many diasporic Chinese communities around the world have incorporated it into their forms of cultural production. Communications scholar Casey M.K. Lum’s ethnographic research reveals the ways that “many Chinese Americans from diverse social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds engage in a great variety of karaoke activities: self-entertainment, social gatherings, performance, or festive vents, and so forth” (Lum 1996:10). Conceptualizing karaoke as a cultural practice, Lum argues that Chinese American karaoke participants act as agents in the localization of performance to construct their own “personal and social webs of significance” (1996:17).

During my time in Panama in the months leading up to the Chinese New Year, I attended a weekly gathering of 1st and 2nd generation women of Chinese descent, who met to perform karaoke at Sunly, one of the local Cantonese restaurants in El Dorado. During my first visit on October 11, 2017, I could not help but be anxious as I

approached the restaurant. I stood in the entrance looking for the aunt of Brenda Lau, whom I was supposed to meet to bring me into the space, and whom I will refer to as Tía Eva. I waited for Tía Eva for what felt like an eternity (it had only been a few minutes) before she made her appearance and introduced herself to me. I followed her through a back hallway in the restaurant into a small room (roughly 25-person occupancy) with a TV monitor set up, a karaoke machine beside it, a round table where they had set up urns of hot water and hot green tea, and chairs surrounding the room. The language of the machine was completely in Chinese characters, as were the titles of many of the songs, except those in Spanish or English.

Gradually, more and more women began to arrive, totaling about ten in all, including everyone who came and left during the five-hour period. In fact, I very much noticed that I was the only man in the room, the only one in the room not of any Chinese descent, and the only one in the room who did not speak the Cantonese language. Perhaps it was a gesture of welcoming to the event or it was a sign to all of the other participants in the room that I was there to be a part of the group and not just an observer, but before anyone else began to sing, I was told to go choose a song to start. Immediately shocked and a bit panicked, I searched through the English artists to find the first song that I might be feel comfortable singing. I chose a pop song and nervously sang the lyrics as they scrolled across the screen. The attendees seemed satisfied enough and they began to choose songs for themselves to sing.

Most Wednesdays, the group of karaoke performers would begin to meet around ten o'clock in the morning, those who worked during the day would come and go as their

schedules permitted. Around noon, a member of the restaurant waitstaff would come into the private room to inform everyone that lunch was ready. At this point, everyone present would make their way to a private dining room, where a large, round table was set up with a turntable in the center and place settings that included teacups, a napkin, chopsticks, and a small bowl of white rice. Once everyone was seated, the servers would bring out large, family-sized plates full of Cantonese dishes, which everyone would take turns plating for themselves as the turntable rotated to each person. After lunch, everyone made their way back to the karaoke room to continue taking turns singing and dancing until around five o'clock.

The range of songs (and even a few dances) performed throughout the event was wide (but always in Mandarin or Cantonese), including romantic ballads, Mandopop/Cantopop songs, and Cantonese opera. Favorites included "Man Man Qian Lu" by Cantopop singer Paula Tsui, "花桥流水 (Huaqiao Water)" by Mandopop singers 纳兰珠儿 and 高安 (Nalan Zhuer & Gao An), "Jie Shi Ni Na Tian" by Teresa Teng, and "Xiang Si Feng Yu Zhong" by Karen Tong and Jacky Cheung. Some of the favorite songs were performed multiple times and by multiple people, including Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On," which they subsequently requested I perform as a duet (with one singing in Cantonese and I singing in English) and also as a solo by myself in English. Many of the videos of Chinese language songs featured landscapes and sites of major cities throughout China, but most of them featured the live performances of the

original singers of the songs. At times, I seemed to forget that this was karaoke at all, as the karaoke singers' words lined up so perfectly with those of the singers in the video.

Karaoke Performance and Chinese Nationalism

As Lok Siu notes, no matter what language is performed, the act of singing karaoke and the participation in these performances becomes the signifier of Chineseness, regardless of national affiliation; "it is the medium through which their diverse backgrounds and multiple identifications are enunciated" (Siu 2007:132). In contrast to the long-time established community of Chinese Panamanian's "reserved and cautious comportment," these new cultural productions of Chineseness reflect the changing values and constructions of identity brought by more recent migration to Panama in the latter half of the twentieth century. Importantly, karaoke song choices made reflect group histories, national sentiment, and the trauma that continues to exist in the living memories of those participants. The choices made and karaoke performance's role in the production of a local Chinese Panamanian identity reflects ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong and Mai Elliot's contention that "karaoke is whatever its performers make it, and not vice versa; it is a template for performative possibility" (Wong and Elliot 1994:164). In this way, this group of women use the karaoke medium to express their national identity in a private space away from the highly nationalistic Panamanian outside.

One example of this Chinese nationalism includes the frequent performance of "我的中國心 Wo De Zhongguo Xin" ("My Chinese Heart"), a Mandarin Chinese patriotic song that was originally performed in 1984 at the China Central Television

(CCTV) Spring Festival Gala in the mainland (Gonzalez 2017:182). The lyrics of the song take the point of view of an overseas Chinese, remarking that despite not having been to the old country in many years, nothing can convert their Chinese heart. Important, very prominent landmarks become symbols of nostalgia, as the singer recounts the weight of the memory of places such as the Great Yangtze, the Great Wall, Yellow Mountain, and Yellow River. The final lyrics of the song assert that even being born in a foreign land cannot change one's Chinese heart. With its obvious references to the emotionally-driven national sentiments of diasporic Chinese, despite the reality that most individual Chinese Panamanians may have never visited all of these landmarks, its regular performance during the karaoke sessions provides significance into the strong ties that people maintain between their country of residence and their home country. Importantly, lyrics such as "流在心里的血 澎湃着中华的声音 liú zài xīnlǐ de xuè péngpàizhe zhōnghuá de shēngyīn (the blood flowing in my heart echoes China)" reflects a pride beyond the familiar, generic idea of the "China" landscape associated with home; it reflects a pride in China as a nation, which is a stark distinction from Panamanians of Chinese descent who reject such patriotic claims as part of their identities. The performance of these songs in these private spaces highlights the experiences of the participants, while providing insight into their complex identities as Chinese Panamanians.

In fact, karaoke performances rarely involved singing without some other form of performativity. During one of the weekly karaoke gatherings on Wednesday, November 1, 2017, M.L. entered the room carrying a small black bag. While other women steadily

made their entrances, she proceeded to open the bag and assemble the contents. Inside the bag contained a few long, metallic-looking objects which she proceeded to pull out one by one. As she put the pieces together, I realized that it was a collapsible sword. Although it was not made of steel, it looked like a real sword; the hilt featured a long, bright red tassel that hung from the end. As women began choosing and then performing Chinese opera songs of their choice, M.L. flowed smoothly through a series of careful and well-practiced movements (videos 5.1 and 5.2). During her performance, the sword was carefully extended out and whirled about in very methodical ways in her right hand. Meanwhile, her left hand consistently maintained a position in which she extended her index and middle fingers, while the pinky and ring finger formed a small circle with the thumb. After a while, having noticed my intrigue, M.L. handed me the sword and carefully directed me into the proper standing position. Although a few people laughed while I clumsily attempted to balance, M.L. remained patient until I was in a proper position with my left-hand fingers in the correct pose. I then asked her about this dance and she explained to me that she began learning in her school as a young child growing up in Guangzhou, the capital city of the southern Chinese province of Guangdong.

Video 5.1. Chinese Opera Karaoke, November 1, 2017. Video by author.

Video 5.2. Sword Dance - Chinese Karaoke, November 1, 2017. Video by author.

The martial arts dance, known as *jianwu*, originated as a military training exercise, but eventually began to be incorporated into various styles of Chinese opera as a classical dance (Scott et al. 1998). Like this dance and many of the group dances that

took place in the private karaoke space, these performances recalled memories for the participants of their lives as youth in China, their education, and cultural traditions that they were expected to learn. Brenda's mother was the only person present who performed the sword dance; many of the other karaoke participants often sang or danced particular songs and styles, introducing their own lived experiences into this safe space. As the outsider, I was often able to experience some of the excitement as the women would strive to teach me particular dance steps or, in this case, how to properly hold the sword in a pose. Since this was their space, my presence allowed them to share their cultural heritage in a way that would normally not be possible outside of the confines of the restaurant.

Karaoke provides an opportunity for Chinese Panamanians to connect to their shared and individual histories through performance that includes singing and dancing. It allows them to explore aspects of nationalism that otherwise is not or cannot be fully expressed outside of the performance space. Most importantly, it grants them the space to explore their Chinese Panamanian identities with a community of individuals that may share similar childhoods, similar migration stories, similar hardships in the midst of a new country of residence, and similar trauma as new dimensions of identity are shaped through these events. As evidenced by subsequent generations, such traumatic experiences are passed on, resulting in new, public expressions of bicultural identity. Having learned from the experiences of previous generations, younger descendants of migrants begin to assert their identities in new, unique ways, departing from their parents forms of performance, while not abandoning them altogether. These new performances

incorporate the old, reinvigorating them with new meaning derived from new experiences, and assert belonging within the nation they call home.

Chinese Karaoke, Stardom, and Afro-Panamanian Solidarity

In chapter one, I briefly introduced Brenda Lau, the Panamanian singer of Chinese descent who won the 2010 national singing contest *Viva la Música!* She began her career singing Chinese karaoke with her family in Panama's Chinatown of El Dorado, a personal history that is reflected in her singing of popular music covers in Spanish, English, Cantonese, and Mandarin languages. Growing up in Panama, she frequently performed in such languages, often performing covers of popular songs in one language or another. Born in 1983, Brenda remembers karaoke as a part of her musical formation throughout her entire life, but expresses her determination to pursue music regardless, "*en realidad si no fuese el karaoke también elegiría continuar y desarrollar mi música* (in reality, if it were not karaoke I would have chosen to continue and develop my music)" (personal communication, July 27, 2019). Brenda's engagement with popular Chinese and Panamanian musics throughout her life results in musical compositions that incorporate all aspects of her multicultural life experiences.

In addition to cover songs, Brenda composes original music, with her most famous song being "Chimbombó," what she calls a "*fusion de ritmo afro-antillano con melodía pentatonica de china* (fusion of Afro-Antillean rhythm with Chinese pentatonic melody)" (personal communication, July 27, 2019). The song uses lyrics from Afro-Panamanian poet Demetrio Korsi's well-known work "Incidente de Cumbia" (Appendix

C). Brenda Lau's narrativized performance of Demetrio Korsi's poem expresses a solidarity with Afro-Panamanians and their histories of stigmatization within Panamanian society. Although the lyrics reference the genre, "Chimbombó" is not explicitly composed in the cumbia style; however, its transcultural appropriation of Afro-Panamanian literature about cumbia, dancers of cumbia, and Afro-Panamanian styles of performance demonstrate just a few of the modes of resistance to dominant culture.

Like hip hop in the United States, cumbia has been subject to exploitation by many different countries throughout Latin America, not as tool for empowerment by other marginalized communities, but due to its marketable aspects. As a genre, it has been adapted and varied to fit consumers well beyond the borders of its creation in Colombia and Panama. By making reference to the genre, Lau ascribes a new meaning to her performance, one of resistance to mainstream adaptations of the genre. Notably, the performers are dressed in seemingly traditional clothing, representing both the Demetrio Korsi narrative, but also its roots in the African diasporic community. As a Chinese Panamanian performing this narrative, she further connects her own marginalized histories and experiences as part of the Asian diaspora to those of the African diaspora, thus asserting her own agency as part of the struggle of finding belonging in the nation. Further, the use of the multicolored *pollera* in her performance represents her identity as Chinese Panamanian woman, which includes additional struggles beyond those present in a masculinist narrative. As demonstrated through her performance and the narrative resulting in the death of the woman that accompanies her music video, imperialist resistance happens at the expense of women.

The significance of "Chimbombó" comes from the way Brenda Lau embodies her identity in her performance. According to Ruth Hellier, such a singing voice "provokes and activates memory and perception, enabling an encounter (conscious or unconscious) with self and others" (2013:3). Specifically, the song represents intersections of identities that play out in such embodiment. Kimberle Crenshaw notes these intersections as the "various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of…experiences" (Crenshaw 1991:1244). In Brenda Lau's situation, her identity as a Chinese Panamanian woman reflects multiple marginalizations that very much parallel the experiences of black women in Panama. By performing a traditionally Afro-Panamanian genre with lyrics based on a poem written by an Afro-Panamanian author, Brenda Lau is demonstrating solidarity with the Afro-Panamanian community, while performing a song celebrating blackness as manifest through the performers and the dancing. Furthering this idea, the music video features Afro-Panamanian dancers and musicians, all alongside a narrative of a black Panamanian attempting to escape from the police and their dogs, which are growling and frothing at the mouth (Lau 2015). Meanwhile, the video periodically cuts back to her singing on a rooftop overlooking the Panama City skyline while wearing a Panamanian *pollera* made up of many different colors, as opposed to the traditional white dresses that feature red or blue floral designs (figure 5.2). This solidarity also comes through musically in Lau's use of the Panamanian *saloma*, also known as the *grito panameño* (Panamanian shout) during the song's climax as she sings on the rooftop. Brenda Lau's musical adaptation of the poem *Incidente de Cumbia* demonstrates the complexity of an ethnic Chinese identity in Panama, an identity

seeped in a history of marginalization and rejection by national discourses about who belongs and who does not.

Figure 5.2. Brenda Lau wearing multicolor *pollera* in “Chimbombó” music video.

Other musicians also engage with their Panamanian Chineseness through multiple music genres and performative styles. Importantly, music from marginalized communities continues to be used in new and innovative ways by other communities who have experienced sociopolitical disadvantage, as seen in the way some Panamanians of Chinese descent incorporate Black diasporic musical culture into their music making in order to negotiate their own marginalized identities. Scholarship discussing this phenomenon often focuses on the way meaning is inscribed onto this existing performative practice. For example, hip hop’s presence in indigenous communities around the world demonstrates the ways people use such music to “redeem themselves from a condition of disadvantage and stigmatization,” as demonstrated in indigenous studies scholar Chiara Minestrelli’s discussion of hip hop in the Australian indigenous

community (2017:11). In these instances, musical appropriation is not seen as an attempt to mimic Black cultural expression, but to utilize it in a way that empowers communities to express their own cultural values. As scholar George Stavrias argues, hip hop becomes a means for people "to help negotiate…Aboriginality, to discuss…concerns and local politics, embodying 'conscious' hip hop's spirit of artistic and performative self-expression that is educational and ultimately enjoyable" (Stavrias 2005:488).

Chinese Panamanian reggaetón and trap artist Shyno Gatillo's music explores his experience of growing up Chinese descent in Panama, living in poverty, and acts as a form of resistance to dominant narratives about national identity in Panama. In this instance, Black music genres become a tool for resistance against oppression. In 2019, Shyno produced a song trilogy in collaboration with Panamanian filmmaker Alberto Sandino. Throughout the trilogy, which includes songs "Dios Perdóname," "Padre Nuestro," and "Ave María," he makes references to particular people, events, and places in Panama, while also referencing his own Asian identity and background through the lens of religion. In "Padre Nuestro," he exclaims "Vengo de la tierra del Cholo Duran, pero con la cara de Jackie Chan (I am from the land of Cholo Duran, but I have the face of Jackie Chan)" (SHYNO 2019). Cholo Duran was a famous Panamanian boxer up until 2001; Shyno's reference to him makes clear the strength of his Panamanian national identity, despite his Chinese features, what he calls "the face of Jackie Chan." In this trilogy and through his use of hip hop more broadly, he condemns Panamanians born into wealth while he has had to scrape by through the selling of drugs and his music making.

The cultural representations of the Afro-Panamanian experience in the music of popular Panamanian of Chinese descent musicians, such as singer Brenda Lau and Shyno Gatillo are indicative of the claim to cultural appropriation by other marginalized communities. Communications studies scholar Richard A. Rogers defines cultural appropriation as the "'making one's own' of another culture's elements" that are shaped by the "degree and scope of voluntariness (individually or culturally), the symmetry or asymmetry of power relations, the appropriation's role in domination and/or resistance, the nature of the cultural boundaries involved, and other factors" (Rogers 2006: 476). Breaking down cultural appropriation into four categories, Rogers argues that cultures with "roughly equal levels of power" do not take part in cultural appropriation as a form of dominance or exploitation, but rather that this serves as a form of cultural exchange (2006:477). Even further, "transculturation" is the use of cultural elements of one marginalized community by another cultural group as a means of resistance. Although he fails to outright state its use in forms of resistance, Rogers discusses indigenous groups' use of African American hip hop as an example of transculturation, a genre that is already "structured in multiple cultural traditions and matrices of power" (2006:491). In circumstances such as these, the transcultural appropriation of music becomes a tool for redefining cultural expressions that have been and continue to be exploited by the dominant culture.

Conclusion

The history of Brenda's family in Panama began with her father moving there from Macau when he was fourteen years old to study while working in a restaurant his uncle owned. Years later, her mother was sent with her aunt by her grandmother when she was twenty-seven years old in the hopes that she would not marry her then-boyfriend in Guangzhou. Eventually, Brenda's parents met and married in Panama. Within Brenda Lau's network of friends and family exist different ideas about national identity and belonging. Similar to Brenda's parents, many Chinese migrants living in Panama consider themselves Panamanian only insofar as they have Panamanian citizenship; for many, moving to Panama was not a choice they made for themselves. By performing karaoke with a community of like-minded friends and family, migrant women like Brenda's mother and aunt continuously perform and reconnect with their Chinese national identity through songs and dances that reflect experiences living and growing up in Southern China. These performative communities allow them space to freely express their own conceptions about Chineseness through music, food, and community.

The people who grow up in such environments, however, bring these experiences into their own conceptions about national identity and belonging within Panama. I asked Brenda how she sees herself with regards to her ethnicity and nationality; she responded that she is "*un poco mas inclinada a panameña que china, ya que no sé escribir en Chino y cómo he vivido la gran parte de mi vida en latinoamerica...y mi cultura también, pero me encanta la comida china* (a little more inclined to Panamanian than Chinese, since I don't know how to write in Chinese and how I have lived most of my life in Latin

America...and my culture too, but I love Chinese food)" (personal communication, July 26, 2019). Like many children and grandchildren of Chinese migrants that I spoke with in Panama, Brenda explains that she does not see her Chineseness and Panamanian-ness as separate, referring to the integration of Chinese food into Panamanian gastronomy: "*Mira que los panameños ya van todos los domingos a desayunar con los chinos. En realidad, nos hemos contaminado tanto con ambas culturas...y los chinos por ejemplo le encanta la comida panameña. Mira mi papá, él hace los mejores saus que he probado en mi vida* (Look at Panamanians, they go every Sunday to have breakfast with Chinese. Actually, we have become so contaminated with both cultures...and the Chinese, for example, love Panamanian food. Look at my dad, he makes the best Saus I've ever tasted)" (personal communication, July 25, 2019).[5] Likewise, the music of performers like Brenda Lau and Shyno Gatillo incorporates elements from their own vastly different upbringings, tying their ethnic Chinese experiences to their Panamanian national identity.

[5] Saus is a dish generally made from boiled pigs' feet, vinegar, lime juice, cucumber, onion, and habanero pepper. In Panama, it is frequently considered to be a quintessential part of Panamanian gastronomy, despite its origins from West Indian migrants. In Jamaica, this dish is known as souse.

Chapter 6

Panameño de Herencia China: The Cultural Performance of National Identity

Daniella

On October 7, 2017 I attended the annual Moon Festival celebration at the Centro Cultural Chino Panameño where I met Daniella. She had just returned from the stage where she and her friend Nicolás performed a song called "Carrera de los Caballos" on their erhus *(figure 6.1). Since there were a lot of activities taking place, we were only able to chat briefly. After the festival, while we both sat outside waiting for our respective rides, Daniella and I had a casual conversation where she told me about her interest in Chinese music and performance, much of which she attributes to her growing up in a multicultural home that included elements of her Chinese heritage and her Latin American heritage. She explained that her great grandparents came from Guangzhou. It was in this conversation that she passed along contact information about musician Mario Chung and her desire to build on her own musical knowledge, which currently includes the* erhu, *the guitar, and the ukelele. As of 2019, she currently lives in China where she studies music with the support a full scholarship.*

Figure 6.1. Daniella (right) and Nicolás (left) with their *erhu* instruments for the 2017 Moon Fest. October 7, 2017. Photo by author.

Previous chapters have addressed different forms of cultural performance, including lion dance and evangelical Christian singing. Such cultural performances result in the manifestation of a hybridization of Chinese and Panamanian values, beliefs, and practices into ones that are unique to the local community where they are experienced. Within these cultural performances also exist ideas about nationalism, national identity, and individual interpretations about their importance for either a sense of Panamanian nationalism or a celebration of Chinese heritage. In opposition to national rhetoric about who is Panamanian and who exists on the margins, Panamanians of Chinese descent renegotiate the terms of their identities by inscribing new meanings and stylistic variations onto existing Panamanian cultural practices steeped in nationalism. In doing so, these community members expand the possibility for the performance of their multicultural identities within spaces that historically excluded them.

In this chapter, I focus primarily on nationalism and the cultural performance of identity through two practices that, at first glance, appear diametrically opposed; Panamian *música típica* and dragon boat racing. Each of these genres, in the broad sense of the term, reflects the complexity of identity construction within the community and highlights the importance of performance for asserting national belonging. To understand performance and nationalism for Panamanians of Chinese descent, this chapter begins with a discussion of Panamanian nationalism as it is expressed in the country. I then gradually expand the discussion to include expressive forms that appear Chinese but, instead, reflect Panamanian nationalism, before I continue with an analysis of music practices that appear overtly Panamanian, but include celebrations of Chinese ethnicity.

Finally, this chapter explores festival performance and the ways Chinese Panamanian-ness is performed on a public stage.

Performance of Nationalism

As discussed in chapter one, much nationalist discourse throughout Latin America involves ideas about racial mixing that includes those of Spanish descent, indigenous descent, and may or may not include African descent. By arguing for a *mestizo* understanding of national identity, such discourse relies on language steeped in a long history of exclusion that privileges the Western, Spanish aspects of this mixture, often overshadowing, if not outright erasing, contributions from anyone that does not fit within the paradigm. The performances of this type of nationalism often fail to include dialogue or discussion about the indigenous or African roots of many of these traditions, instead focusing on its distinction from similar traditions in other countries throughout the region. Since, as political scientist Juliet Hooker argues, “one of the basic tenets of nationalism is that all members of the nation share a common identity that differentiates them from outsiders,” the cultural performance such nationalism also seeks to differentiate performance practices from “outsiders” (Hooker 2010:248). For example, the prominence of the *pollera* as a national dress throughout Latin America—similar in appearance with minor changes in detail from one country or region to the next—demonstrates such ideas about the cultural performance of nationalism and efforts to be distinguished from others (figure 6.2). In many discussions I had with interlocutors and friends, a discussion of the *pollera* often elicited strong sentiments about which nation

has the most beautiful style; the majority of these sentiments were tied to a nationalist sense of pride in their own particular countries of origin.

Figure 6.2. Various Panamanian *polleras* at the 2017 *Desfiles Patrias*. Novermber 4, 2017. Photo by author.

Panamanian Nationalism

The construction of a Panamanian national identity continues to be a topic of scholarly discussion and is often raised in reference to cultural manifestations such as music, dance, and food. In her M.A. thesis, communications studies scholar Joan V. Flores-Villalobos's (2012) posits that Panama's national identity heavily draws from notions of "development," emphasizing Panama's desire to escape from the third world through the expansion of the Panama Canal and its subsequent financial prosperity. Within such notions of development, race often becomes intertwined with ideas about progress and regression, where blackness—specifically, Afro-Antillean blackness—

comes to represent backwardness. Flores-Villalobos explains that for the national elites, the presence of these members of Panamanian society "disrupt[s] the idea of a harmonious mestizo nation and recall[s] the conflicting moment of national creation in 1903," since through their use of the English-language and emphasis on their Blackness in folkloric practices, they fail to participate in nationalistic endeavors to emphasize Panama's Hispanic roots (Flores-Villalobos 2012:9). Further, folkloric music and dance associated with these communities becomes part of the nation's imaginary past, existing outside of modernity and the modern nation. The Canal, on the other hand, represents modernity, development, and the progress towards economic prosperity.

The Panama Canal lies at the center of such notions of developmental progress as part of a Panamanian national identity. As Flores-Villalobos notes, the Torrijos-Carter treaties signed in 1977 and the promise of Panamanian autonomy reinvigorated investment in a national identity through the reclamation of the Canal Zone territory and the creation of the National Institute of Culture (Flores-Villalobos 2012:7). Considering the role of the Panama Canal in the country's independence, its subsequent control by U.S. imperialism, which resulted in a loss of sovereignty by Panama over its own lands, and its importance for the nation's continued economic development, the Canal represents the most significant aspects of Panamanian history, good and bad. In regaining sovereignty over the Canal Zone, a long-time site of contention between U.S. and Panamanian residents, Panamanians could finally feel in control of their own future. Additionally, such autonomy allowed progress in the development and maintenance of a national identity, something that they have continuously had to rationalize and assert,

beginning with their independence from Spain in 1821, soon followed Colombian and, later, United States hegemony. The Canal Zone, considered a “border zone” by historian Michael E. Donoghue and inclusive of all the associated violence and trauma, operates as both a cosmopolitan center, home to variety of people with unique cultural backgrounds and performative practices, and a site of development, as Panamanians reclaim these old Zonian territories and redefine the spaces in opposition to the troubled past (Donaghue 2014; see figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3. Panama Canal Zone, former U.S. territory.

One important method of redefining these spaces is through the cultural performance of a Panamanian national identity in these historically U.S.-centric spaces. Through performative activities, including music, dance, and sporting activities associated with the canal, the former Canal Zone has become integrated into the Panamanian nation, despite the overt presence of U.S. architecture and former military housing complexes. Discussing performativity with regards to Panamanians and the

Canal Zone, performance studies scholar Katherine A. Zien proposes that commemorative performances, such as the Flag-Sowing, where each year on November 3 Panamanians "symbolically plant hundreds of Panamanian flags in the former U.S. military base Fort Clayton," making visible and tangible sovereign enclosures that historically excluded Panamanians from these U.S.-controlled spaces (Zien 2017:185). By reperforming these events, the performers position spectators within "the former Zone, now demarcated as 'national space'" (Zien 2017:185).

Musical performance continues to reinforce the importance of the Canal as part of a Panamanian national identity. Reflecting this, Afrodisíaco, an Afro-Panamanian popular folkloric music group, released their debut album in 2018, which included a song titled "Agua del Canal" (Water of the Canal). A well-known group in Panama, they gained prominence after winning the Gaviota de Plata award at the 2016 Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar (Viña del Mar International Song Festival) in Chile, the most important music festival and competition in Latin America, akin to the Eurovision song contest in Europe. This was a feat no other Panamanian group had ever achieved (Arias 2017). "Agua del Canal" pays homage to the racial identities that make up the Panamanian nationality through the metaphor of the canal, singing of how the "dark water and the clear water come together each day" (Afrodisíaco 2018). In this way, *afroantillano* Panamanians perform their belonging within an area that was historically one of exclusion. Likewise, many of the performances discussed up to this point also perform belonging within national spaces in Panama. Whether such performances

reinforce belonging for Chinese Panamanians or Panamanians of Chinese descent, they reveal the endlessness and complexity of national identity within the country they live.

Nationalism and Panamanians of Chinese Descent

Asian bodies continue to be excluded from discussions of Panamanian nationalism altogether, as they are marked the Chinese "Other," regardless of their family's history in the nation and regardless of whether they are of Chinese descent or elsewhere. These demarcations continue a history of marginalization that place people on the fringes of Panamanian society without regard for individual and familial histories that vary based on when and where they or their families migrated from, which may or may not include China. Located most prominently around the Canal's major cities, such as Panama City and Colon, the presence of citizens of Chinese descent in the country's most culturally diverse areas seems contradictory to the national rhetoric that continues place them as outsiders, in contrast to the other historical groups that migrated to the region. Whereas Afro-Antillean cultural expressions and products like *saos* (vinegar-soaked pig's feet), sorrel drink made from red hibiscus flowers, and the Congo song and dance have been explicitly claimed as "Panamanian," Chinese cultural products, such as *siu mai* (a Chinese dumpling commonly found in *dim sum*), and performative expressions like the previously-discussed lion dance, are still marked as not Panamanian, even though all of these are equally experienced throughout Panama City. In an interview with Chinese Panamanian Chef Felipe Chong, he explains that

> *El dim sum no ha sido modificado en sabor, tecnicas, ni servicos, pero ha sido bien abrazado de los panameños....y los panameños comen tanto de eso como un*

> *parte de su día a día* (Dim sum has not been changed in its flavor, preparation, nor service, but it has been embraced by Panamanians...and Panamanians eat so much of it as part of their day to day)" (personal communication, December 4, 2017, my translation).

As Panamanians of Chinese descent work against these national definitions of a Panamanian identity, musical and performative practices have begun to emerge that reflect the biculturality of their identities and inscribe Chineseness onto the national imaginary of Panamanian nationality.

Panamanian Chineseness and Performance in Panama

Panamanian Chineseness continues to be explored through various types of performance, and the ways in which people choose to express these complex identities reflect the individual preferences, ideals, and lived experiences of those performing. The first event I attended while in the field was the Moon Fest 2017 event on October 7, 2017, hosted at the CCCHP by the ChungSan, Jr. organization. Inside of the auditorium, where the event took place, a table was set up near the entrance for attendees to purchase meal tickets from the food area set up outside in the covered basketball court to raise money for one of the rowing teams. Food included fried rice, chow mein, a fried wonton a piece of roasted chicken, and a cut slice of a moon cake. Additionally, *torrejitas de bacalao*, an Afro-Panamanian fried cod patty, were being sold separately. Across from the entrance, another table featured material for constructing red Chinese lanterns. Beyond that, rows of ping pong tables were set up for the competition that took place during the event. At the far end of the auditorium, rows of chairs were set up facing the stage where the performances for the evening were to take place, including fan and

ribbon dances, karaoke, elaborate kung fu demonstrations, and an *erhu* duet. After the performances, I introduced myself to one of the *erhu* performers, a graduating student from the school named Daniella. As a mixed-raced Panamanian of Chinese descent, she was excited to hear about my research and agreed to an interview with me, which became my first formal interview in the field. During the interview, she discussed her love of Chinese instrumental music and the influence of her family in her appreciation of her Chinese heritage, which led to her desire to formally study the Chinese *erhu*. Panamanian scholars Roberpiere C.A. Villar (2002) and Ramón A. Mon (1999) emphasize the importance of festival celebrations in the ritual lives of ethnic Chinese in Panama, elaborating on many of the annual events that take place throughout the year, including the Autumn Moon Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Lunar New Year. Further, Mon (1999) explains that Chinese culture is always a big part of the annual Carnival celebrations, featured in parade floats as they celebrate alongside their fellow Panamanians.

Although these examples are the most obvious and most nationally visible markers of identity for the community, local Chinese and Panamanian festivals are not the only places cultural performance takes place. Through the development of social media and music streaming technology, international forces continue to shape musical experiences in Panama, even for those who do not actively perform themselves. Musicologist Christopher Small (1998) argues for the idea of "musicking." He states that "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance

(what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small 1998:9). In earlier research examining the acoustic territories and soundscapes of the El Dorado shopping center in Panama City's Chinatown, I posited that the music played in each of the stores reflected individual notions of identity while also catering to their target clientele (Blake 2015).

Importantly, this previous research demonstrated the various ways music recordings can express differing definitions of Chineseness. Although many of the stores played a combination of songs in Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin languages, the styles echoed their own experiences as Chinese Panamanians or Panamanians of Chinese descent through the music genres with which they felt deep connections. In the case of later generations of Panamanians of Chinese descent, access to local and international popular music styles both in public and at home play a major role in the various genres that they may eventually choose to participate in themselves. Many of the artists discussed in this project actively engage in multiple forms of musicking, such as singer Brenda Lau who performs covers of music in both Spanish and Chinese languages. The versatility of her performances reflects her upbringing in a karaoke setting in Panama City, where she regularly heard Chinese popular songs performed, and where she was also able to perform Spanish popular songs that she grew up with in Panama.

Dragon Boat Racing as Cultural Performance

THUMP! thump! THUMP! thump! THUMP! thump! The sound of the drums beat faster and faster as the boat's drummer carefully increased the pace of the paddlers racing toward the finish line. The echo from the multiple drums reflected the heartbeats of all of the participants in anxious excitement as they cheered on their respective teams. After what felt like an eternity, although it was barely more than minute, a horn signaled that the race had ended, while the announcer shouted out the winners.

On Saturday, June 9th and Sunday, June 10th of 2018, the Centro Cultural Chino Panameño hosted its 4th annual Dragon Boat Festival, which took place in the Amador Causeway, a 6km-long stretch of road that extends into the Pacific Ocean at the point where the Panama Canal meets the sea. While this was the 4th year of this event, in 2018 it also bore special significance, honoring the one-year anniversary of Panama's new diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Like the majority of the major events that I attended in Panama, the PRC Ambassador to Panama, Wei Qiang, was in attendance. Much like the dragon boat event I attended in October 2017 in Gamboa, which was one of my first fieldwork experiences, the races featured different meter distance racing events for each day, as well as a series of folkloric performances by the students of the Instituto Sun Yat Sen. These performances included Panamanian national dances from the various provinces, Chinese kung-fu fan dances, a lion dance performance, and other Chinese-style ballet performances, including umbrella and ribbon dances (figure 6.4). These performances highlighted many of the ways in which Panamanians with Chinese heritage express their identities through both Chinese and Panamanian folkloric performances.

Figure 6.4. CCCHP school band and fan dancers getting ready to perform at the 2018 Dragon Boat Festival. June 9, 2018. Photo by author.

Thanks to the friends and contacts I made through APROCHIPA throughout the previous year, I was able to get more access to some of the symbolic events that took place during the weekend. In particular, I got to witness up-close the painting of the eyes of the dragon heads on each boat (figure 6.5). As part of the long tradition, the eyes are painted red as a way of "bringing life" to the dragon. Historically, there have been many traditional rites associated with dragon boat racing, as I will describe later; however, the painting of the eyes seemed to be the most important one for the festival in Panama. Despite its organization by the Chinese Panamanian Cultural Center, the majority of dragon boat racers and teams were made up of participants without any Chinese heritage. One of the major themes present throughout the festival was the importance for these events to bring together both Chinese descended and non-Chinese Panamanians in such an ancient sporting event. Aside from the obvious musical performances that took place on the main stage, here I examine the dragon boat races themselves as performative acts,

important as a reflection of the merging of Chinese ancient tradition with the sporting culture so prominent in Panama.

Figure 6.5. Dragon boat racing team APRO Champions preparing to paint the eyes of the dragon. June 9, 2018. Photo by author.

In my initial experience with dragon boat racing, I knew very little about its history other than its modern use as a sporting event. My first time at one of Panama's major Dragon Boat Festivals, which took place at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort along the Canal route in October 2017, I attended with the hope of getting a preview of the major Chinese holiday that takes place in the spring. Notably, I was more focused on the music and dance performances that took place alongside the event than the sporting performance that was taking place in front of my eyes. In fact, I hardly knew anything at this point about the important connection between dragon boat racing in Panama and the existing history of competitive rowing that has been present in the country since the 1950s (Townsend 2006). Here, I am not proposing that dragon boat racing in Panama

owes its existence to Cayuco racing, but instead that the existing rowing culture in the country made dragon boats more accessible for members of the community with a Chinese cultural background. Each of these practices are intrinsically tied to the Panama Canal, a reflection of the importance of the canal in constructions of a national identity. I'll begin with brief histories of the two practices and finish with further discussion of the connections between the two.

The story of dragon boat racing goes back over a thousand years, and there are many different beliefs about its origin. One common origin story explains the creation of dragon boats as an attempt to save the ancient Chinese poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 BC) from drowning in a river. Since the boats were designed for speed, it was believed that people began racing when they sped out in these boats to save the life of the poet after he attempted to drown himself in the Yangtze River. In the absence of his body, villagers were believed to have dropped balls of sticky rice into the river to distract the fish from consuming his body, and thus was born the tradition of eating *zongzi* during the dragon boat (Duanwu) Festival, which takes place on the 5th day of the 5th month of the Chinese lunar calendar. Contrary to the myth of Qu Yuan and others, East Asian Studies scholar Andrew Chittick (2011) argues that dragon boats originated as a competitive military spectacle in the central Yangzi region of China during the end of the Tang and early in the Song dynasties of China, and that the current stories were eventually superimposed on this historical event. Chittick argues against looking at dragon boat racing and the accompanying festival as merely a religious spectacle. Instead, "they are just as well understood as a type of competitive sport, originally rooted in military

training, which eventually developed a broad range of social and cultural functions, including but not limited to religious ones" (Chittick 2011:2). Specifically, Chittick explains that the boats were particularly useful for military efforts in the region due to the "wider culture of naval warfare in the Yangzi valley" (2011:2-3). In this sense, competitions were more an event of military training and recruitment than solely for entertainment purposes. Chittick explains further,

> By the late Tang, the races are known to have been widely held in southern river towns on festival days. The most favored date was Duanwu 端午, the midsummer festival on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, which was well-established by the Han dynasty as a time for warding off evil spirits. The races were conceptualized as another way to accomplish this, not so much by the usual preventative practices (such as hanging up medicinal herbs or tying on talismanic armbands), but by actively frightening and threatening evil spirit armies with a show of force. (Chittick 2011:7)

Eventually, the sport became synonymous with the existing double five holiday, its festivities and religious significance, and the myths surrounding Qu Yuan.

The first dragon boat competition and festival in Panama took place at Playa Veracruz on July 12, 2015. Berta Alicia Chen recounts that the event honored the legacy of Qu Yuan and featured the *zongzi* (figure 6.6), which in Panama are known as *tamales chinos* (Chen 2016:179). Each team consisted of 15 members and competed in distances of 200 meters, with several elimination rounds. Although beginning with races only occurring during the *Duanwu* Festival, more races were established, including the one I attended in October, and the sport's popularity has continued to grow. In fact, at the event in October 2017, 14 different teams, each with 12 members, participated in the various competitions. Many of the teams have their own Instagram pages and followings, where they show off their intense training and team bonding. As a fairly young tradition

happening within Panama, how does such a specific Chinese cultural practice gain so much traction in such a short amount of time? Three years hardly seems enough time to have gained the popularity, public support, and high levels of participation that dragon boat racing in Panama has already garnered. Here, I argue that its prominence is intrinsically tied to Panama's already present competitive rowing culture, known as Cayuco racing.

Figure 6.6. *Zongzi*, also known as *tamales chinos* in Panama. October 15, 2017. Photo by author.

I first encountered Cayuco racing while on one of my periodic visits to the U.S. Embassy in Panama. As I was talking about my research to one of the embassy employees, specifically regarding the dragon boat racing, he mentioned to me that the U.S. Embassy had their own Cayuco racing team and that I should let him know if I would be interested in participating in it. Not thinking much more about it, I left the embassy that day not knowing that I would eventually be digging more into this sporting event. Importantly, it came up again when Fulbright colleague and friend Tova mentioned her work and participation with some of the leaders of one of the major

Cayuco organizations in Panama. From my discussions with her, I briefly learned about the history of Cayuco in Panama and its importance in creating a type of rowing culture for young *yeyecitos*, a word similar to the English “yuppie,” which connotes the idea of young, upwardly-mobile middle class youth and young adults.

According to the history compiled by Frank C. Townsend (2006), the first Cayuco race was held in 1954, beginning a tradition that would continue into the 21st century. As Townsend explains, the Cayuco boats were “adapted” from indigenous water vessels known as *cayucas* and *piraguas*. The purpose of the original boats was to help indigenous communities traverse the many island locations throughout Panama’s coastal areas. The official rules surrounding eligible boats and participation in racing events are strict. Derived from these native vessels, current cayuco racing legislation (through the Club de Remos de Balboa) requires that all vessels be from locally sourced Panamanian wood and meet the minimum length requirements. The first Cayuco race came about as an attempt to create a challenge for the members of the Boy Scouts of America in Panama, particularly for the group of “explorer scouts” learning the intricacies of scouting. According to Townsend, “Capitalizing upon Panama’s unique geography the concept of an ocean-to-ocean race using native Cayucos was born” (Townsend 2006:1). Consisting of 4 rowers per cayuco, each team spent multiple days (usually the course of a long weekend), racing from the Panama City side of the canal to the Colon side, a distance of 4.8 miles on day one, 18.75 miles on day two, and 12.75 miles on day three, with stopping points for rest at the end of each day. As of 2018, there are many different teams

that compete in the various races that take place in Veracruz, Gamboa, Amador, Cinta Costera, and other locations (Townsend 2006).

The location of these boating sites reveals the importance of the Canal in Panama's national identity. As a major locus for cultural mixing, its historically important role in Panama's national sovereignty, and as an obvious fissure that dissects the country into two halves, the Canal allows Panamanians of many different ethnic backgrounds to express their sense of nationality through competitive sporting events along the Canal Zone's various locations. As Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, Robert McKee Irwin, and Juan Poblete declare in the opening statement of their edited collection, "Sports and nationalism are two forms of imagining and actively constructing the connections that justify and explain our belonging to a community" (2015:1). Participation in the competitive boat racing within and along the Panama Canal thus becomes a marker of nationality, where Panamanian identity is performed through community engagement with such an important site. As opposed to other nationalistic sporting events in Panama, such as baseball and association football (soccer), competitive rowing celebrates a Panamanian nationalism through the symbolism inherent in the Canal, rather than overt displays of Panamanian material culture (national flags, colors, and outfits). The meanings inherent in the symbolism are then supplemented by music and dance performances that reflect such imaginaries. Further, Fernández, Irwin, and Poblete recognize that such spaces, despite being "key modern terrains for the habitualization of nationalism," are often enmeshed with "international and intranational contestation and even exclusion" (2015:1). For both cayuco racing and dragon boat

racing in Panama, where the cost of participation makes it inaccessible for disadvantaged members of the community, exclusions manifest in the form of class, which, in turn, is tied to race. Since many Chinese Panamanian families are middle class, due to a history of success in the retail industry, they maintain access to both of these types of sporting cultures.

Through the incorporation of an old Chinese cultural form into an existing Panamanian nationalistic sport culture, Panamanians of Chinese descent assert their bicultural identities and national belonging, while also addressing the exclusions present in existing rowing culture. Reflecting the importance of the Canal, Felipe Chong, who also participates on APROCHIPA's dragon boat team APRO Champions, explained in our interview that sports in Panama is a *cultura aquatico* (aquatic culture). He explicated further that there is a long history of boat racing in Panama, including various forms of paddle boats, noting that dragon boat racing started in Panama as part of an effort to build on this existing practice (personal communication, December 4, 2017). Whereas in cayuco racing, many of the teams, which are considerably smaller, are made up of independent groups of friends and colleagues, the teams that participate in dragon boat racing are often part of a local organization or a group from one of the schools in the surrounding area. Since the boats are owned by the Centro Cultural Chino Panameño, participants do not have to worry about the cost of constructing, maintaining, or storing them, nor do they need to concern themselves with the specifications for their construction in meeting expected regulations (figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7. Dragon boat race in the Amador Causeway. June 9, 2018. Photo by author.

Yet, even as distinctions are made between the two practices, with cayuco being a remnant of U.S. neocolonial presence and dragon boats a cultural representation of Panama's Chinese descended community, both are explicitly Panamanian in their execution. They both celebrate Panamanian nationalism, they both incorporate such nationalism through the use of the Canal, and they both perform specific messages about Panamanian national identity – cayuco performs *mestizaje* while dragon boat is more inclusive of Asian-descent identities. When I asked Felipe about the motivations people have to participate, he explains that, for many, the competitive nature of it in combination with the possibility for international traveling to place motivates many, but for those of Chinese descent, he stresses that motivations include that fact that it "*es un deportivo que tiene aspectos culturales por la herencia que tiene chino* (is a sport with cultural aspects due to its Chinese heritage)" (personal communication, December 4, 2017, my translation). Emphasizing the Panamanian nationalistic messages by those of Chinese

descent, the music and dance performed at Dragon Boat Festivals by the local Chinese Panamanian school performs their biculturality through Panamanian and Chinese folkloric presentations.

Nationalism and the Creation of Music: Música Típica and Música Canalera

Expressions of a bicultural identity also manifest through the music and performance of *música típica popular*, also known as *pindín*, a Panamanian popular folkloric music genre. Pindín is a distinctly Panamanian popular folkloric music genre deeply embedded in nationalist discourse. As Sean Bellaviti demonstrates, such popular folk genres reflect Panama's "vision of [its] national cultural identity: progressive, modern and cosmopolitan on one hand, and vernacular and Hispanic on the other" (Bellaviti 2013:47-48). Within this nationalistic genre, Panamanians of Chinese descent further this cosmopolitanism through the incorporation of their own narratives and celebration of Panamanian identity. One such example of this is María Elena and Mario Chung's song "Wanton Cocho," which gives a brief introduction to Chinese presence in Panama and results in the mixture of Panama's national soup, *sancocho*, with the Chinese wonton. As described in the song, it is a very delicious soup with the goodness of wonton and the broth of *sancocho*:

1854, 30 Marzo llegó un barco con gente de China,
Que a Panamá atracó con hombres del todo el mundo
Construyeron del tren la vía de Panamá a Colon, Fue una larga travesía
Había que tene' energía para termina esa vía, Nadie aguantaba ese tren, se morían de fatiga,
Al Chino le daban opio sino se mataría

En el almuerzo pedía sancocho, era lo único que había
A falta de gallina, había un chino que exclamó, le pondremos un Wanton y el Wanton Cocho nacío

Wanton Cocho, Una sopa bien sabrosa con lo bueno del Wanton y el caldo del Sancocho

On March 30th, 1854, a boat arrived with people from China,
Who came to Panama with men from all over the world
They built the train from Panama to Colon, it was a long journey
You had to have energy to finish that path, Nobody could stand that train, they died of fatigue,
To the Chinese they gave opium but they would die from it
At lunch they ordered *sancocho*, it was the only thing there was
In the absence of chicken, there was a Chinese who exclaimed, we will put a Wanton in and thus the Wanton Cocho was born
Wanton Cocho, A very tasty soup with the good of the Wanton and the *Sancocho* broth

The musicians' identities reflected through the metaphor of wanton cocho demonstrate the persistence of Panamanian nationalism and ethnic heritage through a hybrid soup as well as its use of the pindín music genre. In an interview with pindín accordionist and singer Mario Chung, he explains that his Chineseness is tied to his experiences growing up in a home that practiced their ethnic heritage through Hakka language, tea ceremonies, and celebration of Chinese holidays. Describing his dream of opening a tea house, he recounts,

> And also, you learn so much with that because there is something called the "tea ceremony," which is called *kung fu cha*, or Kung Fu tea. Kung Fu is not the martial arts, but it is related, you know. It has something to do with how you prepare the tea, how you serve it, how many minutes you have to let it boil, and how to serve…and also the most important thing is the significance of the tea ceremony. In the tea ceremony you invite people to drink tea. You go to *yám cha*…it's like Dim Sum. In Panama, commercially you go to Chinese breakfast, called dim sum, with the small plates. But, in the colloquial way, when a Chinese

> person invites another Chinese person, they say "let's go drink tea." They don't say, "let's go eat Chinese breakfast." They literally say, "let's go drink tea." And to drink tea is a time where there is a recreational time, a time for peace, a time for conversation. You can be anywhere in the day, daytime or evening. You come and you get along with people. It's a place to show respect for someone. If you were here, I'd hand you your tea cup and I would serve you tea. It's a way to show you my respect to you (personal Communication, December 13, 2017).

Despite this, however, he asserts that he is not Chinese, noting that he would never be allowed dual citizenship by the Chinese government and could never hold a Chinese passport. His nationalist ties are to Panama, the country in which he was born and raised.

In this conversation, Mario stressed his identity as a Panamanian of Chinese descent. Despite the fact that he is descended from Chinese migrants to Panama, he declares, "I am not the story of my ancestors!" Through such a declaration and, more performatively, through the music he creates, he rejects the notion that his ethnic heritage should define his sense of national belonging. When he began playing the accordion, he was met with backlash and consternation from other *música típica* musicians about a *chino* playing Panamanian folk music,

> Yeah...in 2009, I began playing the accordion. I have about 8 years with it. Because I saw in the television in the culture. And people are like…they feel very proud to be Panamanian when playing the accordion and this and that…and like I imagined, there should be a good idea to feel proud of being Panamanian…and I began to imagine myself playing the accordion and everybody was like "wow." And I began to laugh because "you are Chinese!" I began to talk to myself, "You are Chinese…I mean, you are not Chinese but your face and everything…people don't see you as a Panamanian in Panama." And I say, "what the heck! If I am Panamanian I am going to play that"…and I was very ashamed at first and then I..I don't care. I'm going to play anyway… and actually, up to today people still [shocked by] me…in the celebrations, "that's a Chinese, not a Panamanian." So, I'm trying to, like, fight racism with that because Panamanians, they don't have a defined race. We are a mix of everything in Panama and it has helped me get along with many people. (Personal communication, December 13, 2017)

His very presence within the pindín music scene affirms his Panamanian identity; the music he creates reflects his ethnic heritage.

As a musician and scholar, Mario Chung expresses his frustrations about associations of Chineseness to being only limited to the Chinese nation:

> It's because we [are] awful in our community and I am fighting. You say "Chinese Panamanian" and I am fighting to abandon this term, because you understand what is Chinese Panamanian. First thing, I am telling the people, "You are Panamanian of Chinese descent." Now it is more understandable. Because China does not accept a double nationality. For example, Spanish people and Jewish people, you can be the son of, and you can be automatically…you have the right to be a citizen of Spain…and Italy too! Especially if you are a Jew too, if you are Jewish. But in China it is not allowed. So, we live like a false nationalism because our parents want us to feel that we are Chinese and because they want us to maintain our traditions, to be with our own community, our race. But I know that when I go to China, I know I'm not Chinese. I have to take a visa, I don't understand many things there, I was not educated there. So, there are many issues with that…so, I'm trying to change that…to fight racism with music. I have discovered in my community…ironically, in my community we promote racism. We are the ones that promote it because we segregate ourselves from the rest of the society. I am a musician and when I speak I would like for everyone to be in harmony. I can't say I am a foreigner. I'm Panamanian, I have to choose very carefully what I say. I say, "I am Panamanian…of Chinese descent." My ancestors were Chinese, were Chinese migrants. (Personal communication, December 13, 2017)

Yet, by claiming national ties to more than one nation, diasporic citizens claim a binational identity that allows them to feel belongingness from one, despite having to continue asserting their belonging to another—the nation of residence—and its associated conceptions about who represents the national identity.

In recent years, Mario Chung has begun work on a major musical project to create a new genre of music in Panama, one that is tied to its national identity and inclusive of the many Chinese identities within it. Continuing the notion of the Panama Canal as a symbol of national identity, Chung designed and built a harp-like instrument

modeled after the Puente Centenario (Centennial Bridge), which opened in 2004 as a crossing for the Canal to mark Panama's centennial (figure 6.8). The number of harp strings represents an exact count of the number of cables holding up the bridge. Since the instrument itself does not feature an acoustic soundboard, the strings are connected to electronic amplifier. In his demonstrations of the project, the instrument is almost always accompanied by a Chinese *guzheng* zither, positioned specifically beside the harp as to resemble a boat passing beneath the bridge and through the canal. As part of his vision, the resulting style of music is called *música canalera* (canal music) and is meant to reflect a Panamanians identity inclusive of the diverse ethnic population throughout the country as represented through the boats that pass through the Canal each day.

Figure 6.8. Mario Chung's harp modeled after the Centennial Bridge. June 17, 2018. Photo by author.

During my time in Panama, this project was still a work-in-progress, although he continues to work on the construction of the instrument and regularly displays it at public

events. In addition to his use of local popular folk music and the still in-progress development of *música canalera*, he also incorporates popular music into his repertoire. In 2013, he became a local celebrity for his parody of the international song "Gangnam Style," by South Korean musician Psy. Titled "Pindin Style," the song incorporates *música típica* while shifting the lyrics to focus on the celebration of Panama's local music.

Public Performances and Chinese Festivals

The majority of events hosted by local Chinese Panamanian organizations that I attended occured with funding and support provided by the embassy of the PRC, in conjunction with local support they received through ticket-sales, raffles, or other fundraising efforts. Previously, I discussed the prevalence of Chinese festivals that occur throughout the year, including celebrations for the Chinese New Year, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival. In addition to these major celebrations, other events and festivals occur frequently throughout the city which tie Chinese ethnic heritage to Panamanian nationalism for Panamanians of Chinese descent, while also providing a space for Chinese Panamanians to engage with their Chinese nationalism. Some of these events that I attended include the Festival de Cometas y Panderos (Kite Festival), the Día de la Etnía China (Chinese Ethnicity Day), and, as of the fall of 2018, the China Night Market, which invites local Asian food and crafts vendors from throughout Panama City to participate in a weekend-long, Chinese-style, open air market. Due to the ambassadorial support provided through the embassy, the PRC government

nearly always makes its presence felt. During my research, PRC Ambassador to Panama Wei Qiang gave a speech at the majority of events I attended.

In one of my meetings with officials at the U.S. embassy in Panama during one of my check-ins as part of my Fulbright U.S. student research grant, Wei Qiang's consistent presence came up in discussion. Prior to this meeting, I had not considered it too deeply, other than attempts at the new ambassador to build a relationship with the community. During the discussion, however, a few of the analysts remarked that Wei Qiang's attendances at these events were "soft power moves," what Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Fujia Lu explain "stresses the ability to achieve outcomes through attraction or a positive image rather than coercion or payments," a definition attributed to Joseph Nye that they remark is generally accepted (Blanchard and Lu 2012:567). Blanchard and Lu argue that such power moves are part of the PRC's desire to "create an external environment conducive to its development, facilitate its peaceful rise, and promote its comprehensive national power and domestic stability" (2012:581). In Panama, with its long history of U.S. presence, such moves intend to undermine continuing U.S. influence in the nation, while attempting to change the popular image of the PRC through massive public works and the sponsorship of local events that celebrate Chinese cultural traditions, in addition to adding a Confucius Institute as part of the University of Panama. These diplomatic moves are not unique to Panama, however, and continue a global trend of the exertion of the PRC's soft power.

PRC sponsorship of local festivals and event allows for the community to throw much larger and more elaborate spectacles than would otherwise be possible. During the

2018 Chinese New Year event, the PRC-sponsored festival took place in the Atlapa Convention center and featured an MC, Chinese ballet, acrobats, singers, and dancers who were brought over to Panama for these performances. The performances that took place were on a professional level, and many of the aforementioned performance styles were not something that would otherwise be encountered within Panama. Meanwhile, on the other side of town, a local celebration took place in the main hall of the mall in El Dorado. This much smaller event included locally-based singers and dancers, most of them members of the Grupo Artístico Hua Xing de Panama (Panama Hua Xing Artistic Group), which is primarily made up of adult women. Many of the attendees of this event were either members of some of the sponsoring organizations, their families, or mall-going passersby. What makes these two celebrations especially distinctive is the presence of "diasporic dignitaries" present at the Atlapa festival, a term used by anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Xochitl Chávez (2013) to signify external state officials who maintain contact with diasporic communities for their own political self-interests. By bringing in performers from the PRC, the Chinese government is able to present very specific, controlled, and positive images about China as a nation, and, in turn, begin shaping local perceptions of China as way to garner public support for pro-China government policies. Despite many of their soft power moves, the PRC's sponsorship of local events has not always been successful. As I mentioned in chapter three, during one of the state-sponsored events for the 2018 Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, the PRC sponsored a celebration performance at the Instituto Sun-Yat Sen, the local Chinese Panamanian

school, which was heavily criticized by the local community for its failure to recognize the primarily Cantonese language spoken in Panama, rather than Mandarin.

Conclusion

So how do such power moves initiated by the PRC embassy impact a community of people undergoing an important shift in self and group identity? It would be an understatement to say that the general community is supportive of Wei Qiang and the PRC embassy in the country. In fact, the majority of people I spoke with expressed excitement over both Wei Qiang's involvement in the local community and the PRC promises of future infrastructural development. In my various interviews with interlocutors Daniella, Felipe, and Mario, all highlighted the promises made by China and expressed excitement over the possibilities for major construction projects both within the city and extending toward the provinces. It is important to recognize that such support for PRC initiatives in Panama is not directly tied to a Chinese nationalism. For many Panamanians of Chinese descent, these actions that support their community projects and goals become a tool for asserting a stronger presence of their Chineseness within the country they consider home. Chinese diasporic dignitaries who bring over artistic performers, renowned Chinese chefs, and other performative acts are used as a source for which people of Chinese descent in Panama can continuously draw for inspiration in their struggle for local recognition and validation. The additional funding also provides organizations opportunities to generate spaces that represent the values of the local community as they continue to reshape Panama's nationalist narratives.

The importance of public festivals and large performances comes from their ability to reshape national narratives of belonging and national identity in the country. For example, dragon boat racing participants regularly commented about the participation of Panamanians from all backgrounds, regardless of whether or not they are of Chinese descent. Hundreds of people attend APROCHIPA's Kite Festival each year, not counting the smaller, regional events that the organization hosts in various provinces of the nation, often in partnership with other groups, such as Secretaria Nacional de Discapacidad (SENADIS), an organization that provides assistance and support for differently abled Panamanians. During these events, local volunteers with varying levels of connection to the Chinese Panamanian community help to make them successful (figure 6.9). By incorporating these activities outside of the bounds of traditional Chinese celebrations, Panamanians of Chinese descent weave their Chinese heritage and culture into Panamanian society, which, in turn, asserts their national identity as Panamanians.

Figure 6.9. APROCHIPA and volunteers at the 2018 Festival de Cometas y Panderos. February 25, 2018. Photo by author.

Chapter 7

New Directions:
Popular Music, Identity Shifts, and Questions of the Future

Mario Chung

The first time I met Mario Chung was on August 9 during the 2014 annual meeting of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas which took place in Panama City, Panama (figure 7.1). As one of the only ethnomusicologists at this conference that I was aware of, I was particularly excited when one of the performances included a Panamanian música típica *performance featuring a musician of Chinese descent. There Mario was on the accordion, playing and singing front and center. During this time, we did not get the chance to have more than brief conversation; however, when I arrived in Panama in September 2017, I quickly reconnected with him. His expertise and organic knowledge about Panamanian* música típica *and the community of Panamanians of Chinese descent has shaped and continues to shape the foundation of much of this research. He began learning to play the accordion as a way to engage with his sense of Panamanian identity, while also learning to play other instruments, including the Chinese* guzheng. *In addition to his musical knowledge, Mario is a wonderful storyteller. During our talks, he recounted numerous histories, customs, and legends, such as the story of* jin chan, *tea drinking ceremonies, and the accordion's history beyond its German associations, which Mario explains actually goes back further as a derivation of the Chinese* sheng*, a multi-bamboo instrument that you blow air in and suck air out in order to make sound.*

Figure 7.1. Mario Chung performing on the accordion during the 2014 International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas annual conference in Panama City, Panama. August 9, 2014. Photo by author.

Since the beginning of the century and the reclamation of its territories and canal income, Panama has undergone massive changes in national identity as it attempts to reconcile 97 years of U.S. presence limiting its sovereignty. The weight of U.S presence was felt especially strongly in Colón and Panama City, due to their locations along the Panama Canal route. Outside these major cities, everyday life in Panama operated similarly to that in many other countries in the region. Amidst national dialogues about what it means to be Panamanian, many local members of the Chinese Panamanian community also actively shape these discussions through cultural performance and the new interpretations of old practices rooted in their own understandings of tradition.

Importantly, such discussions of belonging and identity challenge notions of diaspora and the idea of a distant "home." Anthropologist Tina K. Ramnarine's (2007) work highlights the struggles of situating diasporic communities away from categorizations that fail to address the lived realities of the people living in them. Like Ramnarine, my research also

> attempts to shift academic diaspora discourses away from the boundaries of marginal/minority spaces, away from the emphasis on certain kinds of migration as reducible to a movement away from home, and away from descriptions of some diasporic populations (some but not all) living in a "host land" irrespective of settlement through generations. Away from, in short, always feeling "out of place," a "stranger in one's home" (Ramnarine 2007:9).

Through examinations of the various interpretations of Chineseness in Panama and the wide variety of cultural productions in the community, the idea of home becomes clear and firmly rooted in Panama. These performances assert a sense of belonging and diminish feelings of being a "stranger in one's home."

Each of the case studies discussed in the previous chapters emphasize current understandings of belonging in the nation, the strategies employed in negotiating a Panamanian identity, and, importantly, the ways in which cultural performance unites members of the community, regardless of whether they consider themselves Chinese Panamanian or Panamanian of Chinese descent. In addition to having to continuously assert their Panamanian-ness, many people often experience their sense of Chineseness challenged. Siu contends that hierarchies exist in the community with regard to language skill, stating that certain people are deemed more authentically "Chinese" due to their ability to speak Chinese than those who cannot and thus are "more legitimate as participants" in matters of official transnational business (Siu 2005:79). Despite these questions of identity authenticity from their peers both within and outside the ethnic Chinese spaces, community activities including religious worship, dragon boat racing, and the lion dance, among others, reaffirm and validate their bicultural identities. Additionally, as noted in chapter three, younger groups of performers of Chinese descent are rejecting the exclusionary rhetoric of previous generations in favor of inclusive spaces that do not privilege Chinese identities in the celebration of ethnic heritage.

Rather than such identities being marked as the diasporic "Other," local organizations carve out performative spaces that acknowledge the complexity and multifaceted nature of being Panamanian of Chinese descent, while maintaining openness to those in Panama without any Chinese descent. Asociación de Profesionales Chino-Panameña (APROCHIPA) makes this openness clear; in their organization description they explain that they are a "Nonprofit Association that promotes the unity and

preservation of Chinese traditions through diverse activities" ("Aprochipa" n.d.). The largest event APROCHIPA organizes is also the most diverse in regard to the target audience and the general attendance: the annual Kite Festival. Paying homage to the history of the kite and its invention in China, this festival celebrates Chinese cultural heritage in an event that is fun for families, but also accessible to the entirety of Panamanian society. Whereas many of the events for the Spring Festival featured dialogues and conversation in Mandarin or Cantonese, this event was exclusively in Spanish. Importantly, this adherence to Spanish language ensured that all Panamanians present (of Chinese heritage or otherwise) could understand and feel included in the activities, thus emphasizing the importance of a broader definition of community.

In the introduction chapter to this dissertation, I posed a series of questions about whether or not communities of people can shift away from the diasporic and, if so, what do you call it when it is not quite cosmopolitan either? To finally answer this question, I return to the work of Tina K. Ramnarine, whose research amongst the Caribbean diaspora in Britain also faces the challenge of gray areas between diaspora and cosmopolitanism. Ramnarine actively disrupts the notion of home, seeking to move beyond this idea of a homeland, near or far, and proposes an "alternative premise: that diaspora can be the space in which people establish 'home'" (Ramnarine 2007:10). By rethinking what is considered "home" in such communities, the focus can then shift from hard categories rooted in otherness towards the future possibilities in cultural performance and the expression of various local identities.

Why the Identity Shift?

Throughout this research, I have striven to honor the communities I worked with in Panama by highlighting the importance of reframing identity as Panamanians of Chinese descent for many of these members. In doing so, I make clear the necessity for respecting and upholding the choices marginalized peoples make in their own identities within the communities with whom we in the humanities learn. As a result, I intentionally left some final questions worth examining in this final chapter. Specifically, why is this shift in identity from Chinese Panamanian to Panamanian of Chinese descent so important for so many people in Panama? Other than simply asserting a national identity and sense of national belonging, what is gained from this shift politically, socially, or economically? Why now, in the beginning decades of the twenty first century and after the U.S. handover of the Panama Canal back to Panama?

In a discussion with Panamanian of Chinese descent, musician, and scholar Mario Chung about such concerns, he states, "Everything someone says has an impact on the listener. When you say *chino panameño*, the first thing you state or affirm is that you are Chinese. You just can't say something that you cannot prove" (Personal communication, December 13, 2017). Mario's statement echoes the lifelong frustration that he and many other Panamanians of Chinese descent face in claiming their Panamanian national identity in opposition to people who continue to address them as Chinese first. Another active local community member, Jose Chang, explains that he has never really understood himself as Chinese first and Panamanian second, so the idea of Panamanian

of Chinese descent better echoed his own self-conception of identity rather than Chinese Panamanian. He states,

> Actually, I do not know. I personally grew up saying Panamanian. I never say Chinese Panamanian. It's more when I go to neighborhoods like Curundú and San Miguelito, there are people who correct other Panamanians when they say that I am Chinese. "He is a Panamanian from a Chinese family" (personal communication, my translation, December 13, 2017).

Like Mario, Jose emphasizes the power that words have over a person. The first part of the language used emphasizes the most important part of one's identity, while what follows provides a framing for the lived experience.

As a result of historic, nationalist ideologies about what it means to be Panamanian, Panamanians of Chinese descent have been denied a sense of belonging. Yet rather than assimilating into Panamanian national ideology that privileges specific cultural forms while placing those of Chinese descent on the margins, members in the community have sought to transform the community into one that is inclusive of both Chinese and Panamanian performative and discursive practices. Linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein argues the importance of analyzing the ideological aspects, stating that the "ideological aspect of analysis is central and key to understanding how people experience the cultural continuities and interruptions in the particular case" (Silverstein 1998:420). Additionally, anthropologist Kathryn A. Woolard argues that ideological interpretations of such uses of language mediate the formations of "social groups, identities, or relations" (Woolard 1998:18). In this way, asserting an identity as Panamanian of Chinese descent demonstrates an important interruption of a long history

of identification from hegemonic powers, shifting the narrative into one of self-determination.

Such a reframing of national identity in the aftermath of traumatic events is not uncommon in diaspora communities. Scholarship about identity for Japanese Americans during and after World War II and the trauma of internment discusses the importance of claiming and reframing a U.S. American national identity as a strategy for protecting themselves from the hostile government that forced them from their homes and destroyed their livelihoods simply for being of Japanese descent (Tsuda 2016; Kuramitsu 1995; Kurashige 2002). Due to U.S. neocolonial presence in Panama, Japanese Panamanians also lost their homes and businesses during World War II when they were sent to various internment camps in the Canal Zone and on Taboga Island off the coast of Panama City (Robinson and Minne 2018). For Panamanians of Chinese descent, after a century of marginalization, exclusion, and the stripping away citizenship in the middle of the twentieth century, the reframing of identity becomes a form of security in a world that is witnessing a resurgence in volume of xenophobic and racist nationalist rhetoric. Although the circumstances are vastly different, the traumatic events of the past live on in the memories of those who witnessed them as well as in the subsequent generations who have grown up in the aftermath.

The growing shift in identity from Chinese Panamanian to Panamanian of Chinese descent does not emerge without some resistance. In the aforementioned discussion, Jose explains that "there are *chinitos* who are very nationalist saying that I am Chinese Panamanian, with Chinese first and then Panamanian" (personal communication,

April 2, 2018). The ways in which people in the community choose to identify often emerges as a result of family history in the nation. In many of my discussions with people in the community, national allegiance to China appears most profoundly in those families with more recent migration histories. For those families with relatives and living ancestors who migrated from China, the memories and stories of a distant "homeland" remain constant. As Lok Siu posits, "[d]ifferences in immigration cohort, class, nationality, racial mixture, and gender all result in divergent experiences and conceptions of what it means to be Chinese in the diaspora" (Siu 2005:197). For the families descended from migrants in the early part of the twentieth century, the trauma of the 1940s shapes their identity with the urgency necessary for claiming and asserting a Panamanian national identity, thus moving outside of the historical bounds of what constitutes a "diaspora." Meanwhile, more recent migrant group retain notions about China as a distant home while still shaping the production of meaning within the community as a whole, echoing Siu's emphasis on "the generative and transformative nature of migration and…the role of place in the production of identity" (2005:198).

I agree with Lok Siu's position that "serial migration has been and will continue to be an important aspect of diasporic Chinese life" (2005:198). In fact, during my own time in Panama, the more recent migrant impact on contemporary forms of cultural production for Panamanians of Chinese descent became clear through the increase in performative practices such as the lion dance and dragon boat racing, neither of which existed in Panama in the first half of the twentieth century, and karaoke, which was not developed until the 1970s. If, like Siu, we also understand these practices as key elements

in cultural syncretism, what might these practices look like in twenty or thirty years? Some current examples of such syncretism can be seen in the sporting cultural performance of dragon boat racing discussed in chapter five, the incorporation of lion dance in Panamanian life events discussed in chapter three, or the blending of religious tradition explored in chapter four. Most importantly, how will identity continue to shift for Panamanians of Chinese descent as Panama continues its economic development enabled by the reclamation of the canal? Further, how will the PRC's soft power moves impact a community of people in the midst of shaping their own personal and national identities? As Lily Cho argues, the "soft power" attempts to disseminate Chinese language and culture abroad results in encounters of "the limits and possibilities of advancing through the arts our understanding of the context of human rights" (Cho 2014:244). What limitations might these international powers impose on the community and what are the possibilities that might emerge from it?

Closing Thoughts

As the PRC continues to exert soft power in Panama, specifically targeting the community of Chinese-descended peoples, through diasporic delegates, the funding of specific Chinese cultural forms, and ambassadorial involvement in every facet of events hosted by local organizations, the cultural performance of identity will continue to shift. A careful analysis and deep understanding of these local transformations will be important in future research in order to continue to shape our understandings the ways in which international powers can impact identity and performance through either influence,

manipulation, or by appealing to ongoing and long-existing questions of belonging in the community. Complicating matters, international studies scholar Enze Han remarks that when the PRC becomes involved "there is a renewed debate on how diaspora communities should integrate with host communities under the context of multiculturalism…but there are also instances where homeland states purportedly monitor and support the ethnonationalist expressions of their diasporas" (Han 2019:580). If Panamanians of Chinese descent are to maintain their self-conception as "Panamanian first," what aspects of PRC ethnonationalism will be incorporated and will members of the community revert to considering themselves diasporic? Further, in light of these recent diplomatic relations between the PRC and Panama, might there exist a socioeconomic benefit in claiming Chineseness over Panamanian-ness?

Cultural performance plays a particularly important role in identity expression for those of Chinese descent, in Panama and throughout the world. Such cultural performances acknowledge, reproduce, and show respect for Chinese traditions and beliefs while grounding the performers in aspects of their own cultural heritage. Despite where a person's ancestors may have come from and how much "Chinese blood" a person may have, a person's identity is contingent on their own lived experience, not solely the ideals of a society that deems someone's worth based on their outward appearance. Music, performativity, and lived experience are intrinsically bound up together. Diasporic performance practices may or may not be a carbon copy of how they would be produced in China, but if the performers are Panamanians of Chinese origin, we can also think about this music as "Panamanian music of Chinese origin." Then, we can

begin to reframe the way we think about performance in diasporic contexts that shifts the focus of music and identity away from transnational “homes” to instead focus on the context of the local, lived experience.

Bibliography

Afrodisíaco. 2018. *Agua Del Canal*. CD. Viene de Panamá (Sin Raíz No Hay País). Fundación Afrodisíaco.

Aguilar Rivera, José Antonio. 2014. "Multiculturalism and Constitutionalism in Latin America." *Notre Dame Journal of International and Comparative Law* 4 (1): 19–44.

Akrofi, Eric, Maria Smit, and Stig-Magnus Thorsén. 2007. *Music and Identity: Transformation and Negotiation*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

Alarcón, Norma. 2003. "Anzaldúa's Frontera: Inscribing Gynetics." In *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*, edited by Gabriela F. Arredondo, 354-369. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ang, Ien. 2001. *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*. London: Routledge.

Anthias, Floya. 1998. "Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?" *Sociology* 32 (3): 557–80.

Appelbaum, Nancy P. 2005. "Post-Revisionist Scholarship on Race." *Latin American Research Review* 40 (3): 206–17.

"Aprochipa." n.d. Accessed March 14, 2019. http://aprochipa.org/.

Arias, Raúl Altamar. 2017. "Afrodisíaco Excita Con Su Álbum Debut." Blog. *Altamar Escribe* (blog). November 13, 2017. http://www.altamarescribe.com/blog/afrodisiaco-excita-con-su-album-debut.

Askew, Kelly M. 2002. *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Babiracki, Carol M. 2008. "What's the Difference? Reflections on Gender and Research in Village India." In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, 2nd ed., 167–82. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barz, Gregory, and Timothy J. Cooley, eds. 2008. *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bedford, Elizabeth. 2009. "Moon Cakes and the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival: A Matter of Habitus." In *Asian Material Culture*, edited by Marianne Hulsbosch, Elizabeth Bedford, and Martha Chaiklin, 16–33. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bellaviti, Sean. 2013. "Negotiating Musical Style in Panama: Nationalism, Professionalism, and the Invention of Música Típica Popular." PhD dissertation, University of Toronto.

Bentin, Sebastián Calderón. 2009. "Isthmian Performances: Panama's Festival Internacional De Artes Escénicas." *TDR* 53 (3): 156–61.

Berger, Harris M., and Giovanna P. Del Negro. 2004. *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Biddle, Ian, and Vanessa Knights, eds. 2007. *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location: Between the Global and the Local*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Blake, Corey Michael. 2015. "Sounding Identity: Soundscapes, Music, and Technoculture in the Chinese Diaspora of Panama." MM thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Blanchard, Jean-Marc F., and Fujia Lu. n.d. "Thinking Hard About Soft Power: A Review and Critique of the Literature on China and Soft Power." *Asian Perspective* 36 (4): 565–89.

Bowler, Kate, and Wen Reagan. 2014. "Bigger, Better, Louder: The Prosperity Gospel's Impact on Contemporary Christian Worship." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 24 (2): 186–230.

Calhoun, Craig. 1994. *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Cao, Nanlai. 2005. "The Church as a Surrogate Family for Working Class Immigrant Chinese Youth: An Ethnography of Segmented Assimilation." *Sociology of Religion* 66 (2): 183–200.

Castellano, Andrés. 2017. "International Promotion: Strengthening Tourism in Panama." *Panamá Today*, January 18, 2017. http://www.panamatoday.com/life-style/international-promotion-strengthening-tourism-panama-3273.

Central Intelligence Agency. 2018. “The World Factbook: Panama.” Central Intelligence Agency. February 1, 2018. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pm.html.

Cepeda, Maria Elena. 2003. “The Colombian Connection: Popular Music, Transnational Identity, and the Political Moment.” PhD dissertation, University of Michigan.

Chanady, Amaryll. 2003. “Identity, Politics and Mestizaje.” In *Contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies*, edited by Stephen Hart and Richard Young, 192–202. London: Arnold.

Chao, Jonathan. 2000. “Christianization of Chinese Culture: An Evangelical Approach.” *Transformation* 17 (3): 98–104.

Chávez, Xochitl C. 2013. “Migrating Performative Traditions: La Guelaguetza Festival in Oaxacalifornia.” PhD dissertation, Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, Santa Cruz.

Chen P., Berta Alicia. 2010. *Cómo, Cuándo y Por Qué Llegaron Los Chinos a Panamá*. Panamá, Rep. de Panamá: Management Development Corporation.

———. 2014. *Presencia China En Las Contrucciones Del Ferrocarril y Del Canal de Panamá (1852-1914)*. Panamá, Rep. de Panamá: Management Development Corporation.

———. 2016. *Como, Cuándo y Por Qué Llegaron Los Chinos a Panamá*. 3rd ed. Panamá, Rep. de Panamá: Management Development Corporation.

———. Unpublished manuscript. 2018. *Relaciones Entre Panamá y China (Siglos XIX, XX y XXI)*. Panamá, Rep. de Panamá: Management Development Corporation.

Chenoweth, Vita. 1964. *The Marimbas of Guatemala*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

“Chinatown Panama or Barrio Chino de Panama.” n.d. *Paisanito: Comunidad China En Panama* (blog). Accessed June 4, 2016. http://paisanito.com/chinatown-panama/.

Chittick, Andrew. 2010. “Competitive Spectacle during China’s Northern and Southern Dynasties: With Particular Emphasis on ‘Dragon.’” *Asia Major* 23 (1): 65–85.

———. 2011. “The Song Navy and the Invention of Dragon Boat Racing.” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 41: 1–28.

Cho, Lily. 2007. "The Turn to Diaspora." *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 17: 11–30.

———. 2014. "Confucius Institutes, Human RIghts, and Global Asia." In , edited by Susan J. Henders and Lily Cho, 243–48. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Chong, Felipe "Pipe." n.d. "Arroz con Sal por Chef Pipe - Blogs - Telemetro Panamá." Accessed March 1, 2019. http://www.telemetro.com/blogs/arrozconsal/.

Chow, Rey, ed. 2000. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Chung, Ana. 2017. "La Danza del León: Símbolo de buena suerte y nuevos comienzos." *Revista ChungSir* 56: 16-22.

Clayton, Lawrence A. 1987. "The Nicaragua Canal in the Nineteenth Century: Prelude to American Empire in The Caribbean." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 19 (2): 323–52.

Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cohen, Lucy M. 1971. "The Chinese of the Panama Railroad: Preliminary Notes on the Migrants of 1854 Who 'Failed.'" *Ethnohistory* 18 (4): 309–20.

Connery, Christopher L. 1994. "Pacific Rim Discourse: The U.S. Global Imaginary in the Late Cold War Years." *Boundary 2* 21 (1): 30–56.

Cooper, John F. 2013. *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–99.

Curtis, Ariana A. 2012. "'Becoming More and More Panamanian': Contemporary Constructions of West Indian Identity in Urban Panama." PhD dissertation, American University.

Davalos, Karen Mary. 1996. "'La Quinceañera': Making Gender and Ethnic Identities." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 16 (2): 101–27.

Diamond, Beverley. 2007. "The Music of Modern Indigineity: From Identity to Alliance Studies." *European Meetings in Ethnomusicology* 12 (January): 169–90.

Diaz Espino, Ovidio. 2001. *How Wall Street Created a Nation: J.P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Panama Canal*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

Donoghue, Michael E. 2014. *Borderlands on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Douglas, Anne. 2013. "Altering a Fixed Identity: Thinking through Improvisation." *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 8 (2). https://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/2122/2834.

Drolet, Patricia Lund. 1980. "The Congo Ritual of Northeastern Panama: An Afro-American Expressive Structure of Cultural Adaptation." PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Feinberg, Richard. 2011. "China, Latin America, and the United States: Congruent Interests or Tectonic Turbulence." *Latin American Research Review* 46 (2): 215–24.

Feldman, Heidi Carolyn. 2005. "The Black Pacific: Cuban and Brazilian Echoes in the Afro-Peruvian Revival." *Ethnomusicology* 49 (2): 206–31.

Feltham, Heleanor B. 2009. "Everybody Was Kung-Fu Fighting: The Lion Dance and Chinese National Identity in the 19th and 20th Centuries." In *Asian Material Culture*, edited by Marianne Hulsbosch, Elizabeth Bedford, and Martha Chaiklin, 90–120. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Fenton, Steve. 2011. "The Sociology of Ethnicity and National Identity." *Ethnicities* 11 (1): 12–17.

Fernández L'Hoeste, Héctor, Robert McKee Irwin, and Juan Poblete, eds. 2015. *Sports and Nationalism in Latin/o America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fieser, Ezra, and Matthew Bristow. 2018. "Venezuelans, Go Home: Xenophobia Haunts Refugees." *Blooberg*, March 5, 2018. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-03-05/venezuelans-go-home-xenophobia-spreads-as-refugees-flee-crisis.

Flores-Villalobos, Joan. 2012. "Race, Development, and National Identity in Panama." MA Thesis, Austin, TX: University of Texas, Austin.

Gallagher, Kevin, and Roberto Porzecanski. 2008. "China Matters: China's Economic Impact in Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 43 (1): 185–200.

Garay, Narciso. 1930. *Tradiciones y Cantares de Panamá, Ensayo Folklórico*. Brussels: Presses de l'Expansion Belge.

García Cancini, Nestor. 1995. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2015. "Settler Colonialism as Structre: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation." *American Sociological Association* 1 (1): 52–72.

Gonzalez, Fredy. 2017. *Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Gudmundson, Lowell, and Justin Wolfe, eds. 2010. *Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Guerrón-Montero, Carla. 2006a. "Can't Beat Me Own Drum in Me Own Native Land: Calypso Music and Tourism in the Panamanian Atlantic Coast." *Anthropological Quarterly* 79 (4): 633–65.

———. 2006b. "Racial Democracy and Nationalism in Panama." *Ethnology* 45 (3): 209–28.

Guillen, R. 2017. "An Ancient Tradition at the Dragon Boat Festival." *The Visitor Panama*, May 19, 2017. https://www.thevisitorpanama.com/2017/05/ancient-tradition-dragon-boat-festival/.

Hall, Stuart. 2003. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, 233–46. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Hall, Stuart, and Paul du Gay. 1996. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hamera, Judith. 2011. *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Han, Enze. 2019. "Bifurcated Homeland and Diaspora Politics in China and Taiwan towards the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45 (4): 577–94.

Harding, Robert C. 2006. *The History of Panama*. The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

He, Huifeng. 2017. "As Venezuela Implodes, so Do the Dreams of Thousands of Fleeing Chinese." *South China Morning Post*, August 30, 2017. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/economy/article/2102922/venezuela-implodes-so-do-dreams-thousands-fleeing-chinese.

Hellier, Ruth, ed. 2013. *Women Singers in Global Contexts: Music, Bibliography, Identity*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2011. "Towards a Critical Understanding of Music, Emotion, and Self-Identity." In *Production and Consumption of Music*, edited by Alan Bradshaw and Avi Shankar, 99–113. London: Routledge.

Hom, Marlon K. 1987. *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

"History of Panama Christian Academy." n.d. Panama Christian Academy. Accessed December 7, 2018. http://www.pca.edu.pa/information.

Hooker, Juliet. 2010. "Race and the Space of Citizenship: The Mosquito Coast and the Place of Blackness and Indigeneity in Nicaragua." In *Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place*, edited by Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe, 246–77. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hosokawa, Shuhei. 2000. "Singing Contests in the Ethnic Enclosure of the Post-War Japanese-Brazilian Community." *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9 (1): 95–118.

Hosokawa, Shuhei, and Mitsui Tori, eds. 1998. *Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing*. New York: Routledge.

Howe, James. 2009. *Chiefs, Scribes, & Ethnographies: Kuna Culture from Inside and Out*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Hu-DeHart, Evelyn. 1980. “Immigrants to Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932.” *Journal of Arizona History* 31: 49–86.

———. 2007. “Latin America in Asia-Pacific Perspective.” In *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions*, edited by Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok C.D. Siu, 29–62. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———. 2009. “Multiculturalism in Latin American Studies: Locating the ‘Asian’ Immigrant; or, Where Are the Chinos and Turcos?” *Latin American Research Review* 44 (2): 235–42.

Hughes, Jennifer Scheper, and Maria das Dores Campos Machado. 2016. “Spirits, Bodies, and Structures: Religion, Politics, and Social Inequality in Latin America.” *Latin American Perspectives* 43 (3): 4–14.

Hurtado, Aida, Patricia Gurin, and Timothy Peng. 1994. “Social Identities -- A Framework for Studying the Adaptations of Immigrants and Ethnics: The Adaptations of Mexicans in the United States.” *Social Problems* 41 (1): 129–51.

“Información: Cayucos.” n.d. Club de Remos de Balboa. Accessed February 8, 2018. http://cayucorace.org/informacion/.

Ingalls, Monique. 2011. “Singing Heaven Down to Earth: Spiritual Journeys, Eschatological Sounds, and Community Formation in Evangelical Conference Worship.” *Ethnomusicology* 55 (2): 255–79.

Jackson, Bruce. 1987. *Fieldwork*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Jackson, Travis A. 2006. “Rearticulating Ethnomusicology: Privilege, Ambivalence, and Twelve Years in SEM.” *Ethnomusicology* 50 (2): 280–86.

Jairazbhoy, Nazir Ali, and Sue Carole DeVale, eds. 1985. *Selected Reports Vol VI: Asian Music in North America*. Los Angeles: Program in Ethnomusicology, Dept. of Music, University of California, Los Angeles.

Kenny, Michael. 2004. *The Politics of Identity: Liberal Political Theory and the Dilemmas of Difference*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Kim, Claire Jean. 1999. “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans.” *Politics and Society* 27 (1): 105–38.

Kisliuk, Michelle. 2008. “(Un)Doing Fieldwork.” In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, edited by Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, 2nd ed., 183–205. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ko, Chisu Teresa. 2016. "Toward Asian Argentine Studies." *Latin American Research Review* 51 (4): 271–89.

Koskoff, Ellen. 2014. *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Kuramitsu, Kristine C. 1995. "Internment and Identity in Japanese American Art." *American Quarterly* 47 (4): 619–58.

Kurashige, Lon. 2002. *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Larmer, Brook. 2018. "What 52,000 Percent Inflation Can Do to a Country." *New York Times*, November 1, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/01/magazine/venezuela-inflation-economics.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fmagazine&action=click&contentCollection=magazine®ion=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=sectionfront.

Lasso De Paulis, Marixa. 2007. "Race and Ethnicity in the Formation of Panamanian National Identity: Panamanian Discrimination Against Chinese and West Indians in the Thirties." *Revista Panameña de Politica*, no. 4: 61–92.

Lau, Brenda. 2012. *The Overseas Zhongshanese Documentary (Panama, 劉毅珊 - Brenda Lau)*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-08h_nJuD8&.

Lau, Brenda. 2015. *CHIMBOMBÓ – BRENDA LAU (VIDEO OFICIAL)*. Youtube Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgNsMxxolA0.

Lau, Frederick. 2001. "Performing Identity: Musical Expression of Thai-Chinese in Contemporary Bangkok." *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 16 (1): 37–69.

Lee Liu, Juan. 2016. "Felipe Chong Sabe de Tofu." Blog. Juan Lee. October 26, 2016. https://juanleelui.com/2016/10/26/felipe-chong-sabe-de-tofu/.

LeoGrande, William M. 2005. "North-South Visions of Central America." *Latin American Research Review* 40 (3): 403–16.

Li, Mu. 2017. "Performing Chineseness: The Lion Dance in Newfoundland." *Asian Ethnology* 76 (2): 2017.

List, George. 1983. *Music and Poetry in a Colombian Village*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Lorenz, Shanna. 2007. "Japanese in the Samba: Japanese Brazilian Musical Citizenship, Racial Consciousness, and Transnational Migration." PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh.

———. 2011. "Zhen Brasil's Japanese Brazilian Groove." In *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship*, edited by Idelber Avelar and Christopher Dunn, 155–71. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Louie, Andrea. 2000. "Re-Territorializing Transnationalism: Chinese Americans and the Chinese Motherland." *American Ethnologist* 27 (3): 645–69.

Lozada, Oriana Milu. 2017. "Un Canal de Odio Para Los Venezolanos En Panamá." *El Estimulo*, September 28, 2017. http://elestimulo.com/climax/un-canal-de-odio-para-los-venezolanos-en-panama/.

Lum, Casey Man Kong. 1996. *In Search of a Voice: Karaoke and the Construction of Identity in Chinese America*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Ma, Lawrence J. C., and Carolyn Cartier, eds. 2003. *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Martinez-Echazabal, Lourdes. 1998. "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959." *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (3): 21–42.

Masterson, Araceli. 2005. "China En Panama: La Identidad de Movediza de Los Huaqiao." *Revista Cultural Lotería*, no. 459: 73–86.

McGuinness, Aims. 2008. *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Meditz, Sandra W., Dennis Michael Hanratty, and Library of Congress. 1989. *Panama: A Country Study*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress : For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O. https://www.loc.gov/item/88600486/.

Mellander, Gustavo A. 1971. *The United States in Panamanian Politics: The Intriguing Formative Years*. Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers & Publishers.

Minestrelli, Chiara. 2017. *Australian Indigenous Hip Hop: The Politics of Culture, Identity, and Spirituality*. London and New York: Routledge.

Mock, Tony. 2016. “Festival de la Luna en El Dorado: Los Festejos.” *Revista ChungSir* 54: 18-19.

Mon P., Ramón A. 1999. “Procesos de integración de la comunidad china a la Nación Panamá.” In *Este País, un Canal: Encuentro de Culturas*, edited by Ileana Gólcher, 77–93. Panamá: CEASPA, Naciones Unidas.

———. 2002. “Emigración, Cultura y Conflicto: Estudio Sobre los Mecanismos de Adaptación de Adolescentes Chino-Panameños.” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas* 4 (1): 59–72.

———. 2005. “Mecanismo de Adaptación Psicológica y Procesos de Integración de Los Inmigrantes Chinos.” *Revista Cultural Lotería* 459: 56–62.

———. 2013. “The Chinese of Panama Also Have a Story to Tell.” *Revista Harvard Review of Latin America* 12 (3). https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/chinese-panamá-also-have-story-tell….

Nagel, Joane. 1994. “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture.” *Social Problems* 41 (1): 152–76.

New York Times. 1913. “May Expel Panama Chinese; Those Who Refuse to Pay a Head Tax to Be Deported To-Morrow,” November 11, 1913. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1913/11/12/100577617.pdf.

Ng, Nicholas. 2009. “Domesticating the Foreign: Singing Salvation through Translation in TheAustralian Catholic Chinese Community.” In *Sounds in Translation: Intersections of Music, Technology and Society*, edited by Amy Chan and Alistair Noble, 111–43. Canberra, Australia: ANU Press.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh, and Janet Hoskins, eds. 2014. *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Ng’Weno, Bettina. 2013. “Beyond Citizenship as We Know It: Race and Ethnicity in Afro-Colombian Struggles for Citizenship Equality.” In *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America*, edited by Kwame Dixon and John Burdick, 156–75. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Obermayer, Bastian, Gerard Ryle, Marina Walker Guevara, Michael Hudson, Jake Bernstein, Will Fitzgibbon, Mar Cabra, et al. 2016. “Giant Leak of Offshore Financial Records Exposes Global Array of Crime and Corruption.” *ICIJ* (blog). April 3, 2016. https://www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers/20160403-panama-papers-global-overview/.

Ofman, Daniel. 2016. "Hugo Chávez's Legacy Looms over Venezuela's Economic Crisis." *PRI*, July 6, 2016. https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-07-06/hugo-chavezs-legacy-looms-over-venezuela-s-economic-crisis.

Olsen, Dale A. 1980. "Japanese Music in Peru." *Asian Music* 11 (2): 41–52.

Olsen, Dale A. 2004. *The Chrysanthemum and the Song: Music, Memory and Identity in the South American Japanese Diaspora*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.

Ortiz, Jaime. 2012. "Déjà VU: Latin America and Its New Trade Dependency...This Time with China." *Latin American Research Review* 47 (3): 175–90.

Pan, Lynn. 1991. *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: The Story of the Overseas Chinese*. London: Mandarin Paperbacks.

Parker, Cristián. 2016. "Religious Pluralism and New Political Identities in Latin America." Translated by Margot Olavarría. *Latin American Perspectives* 43 (3): 15–30.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar, and Lok C.D. Siu, eds. 2007. *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Pérez Fernández, Rolando Antonio. 2014. "The Chinese Community and the Corneta China: Two Divergent Paths in Cuba." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 46: 62–88.

Ramnarine, Tina K. 2007a. *Beautiful Cosmos: Performance and Belonging in the Caribbean Diaspora*. London: Pluto Press.

———. 2007b. "Musical Performance in the Diaspora: Introduction." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 16 (1): 1–17.

Ramsey, Geoff. 2017. "Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Exodus." *Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights* (blog). November 19, 2017. https://venezuelablog.org/regional-responses-venezuelan-exodus/.

Rath, Richard Cullen. 2003. *How Early America Sounded*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Reed, Susan A. 1998. "The Politics and Poetics of Dance." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27: 503–32.

Reily, Suzel Ana. 2002. *Voices of the Magi: Enchanted Journeys in Southeast Brazil*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

RENDER Producción Publicitaria. 2016. "KAREN PERALTA YO SOY PANAMA." Youtube. October 12, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzIc9XVk3Kc.

Reynolds, Rodney J. 2008. "Unimagined Community: A Pragmatics of Nation and Social Unity in the Republic of Panama." PhD thesis: University College London.

Rice, Timothy. 2007. "Reflections on Music and Identity in Ethnomusicology." *Muzikologija* 7: 17–38.

Ritter, Jonathan. 2011. "Chocolate, Coconut, and Honey: Race, Music, and the Politics of Hybridity in the Ecuadorian Black Pacific." *Popular Music and Society* 34 (5): 571–92.

Rivas, Zelideth María. 2011. "Negotiating Mixed Race: Projection, Nostalgia, and the Rejection of Japanese-Brazilian Biracial Children." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 14 (3): 361–88.

———. 2015a. "Mistura for the Fans: Performing Mixed-Race Japanese Brazilianness in Japan." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (6): 710–28.

———. 2015b. "Songs from the Land of Eternal Summer: Beyond Duality in Japanese Brazilian Publication and Colonia Man'yôshû." *Comparative Literature Studies* 52 (4): 787–817.

Robinson, Greg, and Maxime Minne. 2018. "The Unknown History of Japanese Internment in Panama." *Discover Nikkei: Japanese Migrants and Their Descendants*, April. http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2018/4/26/japanese-internment-panama/.

Robinson, St. John. 2010. "The Chinese of Central America: Diverse Beginnings, Common Achievements." In *The Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean*, edited by Walton Look Lai and Tan Chee-Beng, 103–27. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Rogers, Richard A. 2006. "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation." *Communication Theory* 16: 474–503.

Safran, William. 1991. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1 (1): 83–99.

Sanders, Todd, and Harry G. West. 2003. "Power Revealed and Concealed in the New World Order." In *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the*

New World Order, edited by Todd Sanders and Harry G. West, 1–37. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sanga, Imani. 2008. "Music and Nationalism in Tanzania: Dynamics of National Space in Muziki Wa Injili in Dar Es Salaam." *Ethnomusicology* 52 (1): 52–84.

Savage, Roger W. H., ed. 2015. *Paul Ricoeur in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason: Poetics, Praxis, and Critique*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Schott, Joseph L. 1967. *Rails Across of Panama: The Story of the Building of the Panama Railroad*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Scott, A. C., Xu Suyin, Sophia Delza, Lu Wenjian, Ou Jian-ping, and Zhu Liren. 1998. "China." In *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195173697.001.0001/acref-9780195173697-e-0371.

Scruggs, T. M. 2012. "Central America, Colombia, and Venezuela." In *Musics of Latin America*, edited by Robin Moore and Walter Aaron Clark, 124–74. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Sheffer, Gabriel. 1986. *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*. London: Croom Helm.

Shih, Shu-Mei. 2008. "Comparative Racialization: An Introduction." *PMLA* 123 (5): 1347–62.

SHYNO. 2019. "Shyno - Padre Nuestro [Official Video] - YouTube." YouTube Video. Accessed August 21, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPB14ozGBT4.

Silverstein, Michael. 1998. "Contemporary Transformations of Local Linguistic Communities." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27: 401–26.

Siu, Andrea. 2005. "Obra de Teatro: Presencia China En Panama, Primer Acto." *Revista Cultural Lotería*, no. 459: 63–72.

Siu, Lok C. D. 2005. *Memories of a Future Home: Diasporic Citizenship of Chinese in Panama*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Skirbekk, Vegard, Stuart Basten, Eric Caron Malenfant, and Marcin Stonawski. 2012. "The Religious Composition of the Chinese Diaspora, Focusing on Canada." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51 (1): 173–83.

Slobin, Mark. 1992. "Micromusics of the West: A Comparative Approach." *Ethnomusicology* 36 (1): 1–87.

Small, Christopher. 1998. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Smith, Carol A. 2005. "Las Contradicciones Del Mestizaje En Centroamérica." In *Memorias Del Mestizaje: Cultural Política En Centroamérica de 1920 Al Presente*, edited by Darío A. Euraque, Jeffrey L. Gould, and Charles R. Hale, 579–617. Guatemala, Guatemala C.A.: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

Smith, Ronald Richard. 1976. "The Society of Los Congos of Panama: An Ethnomusicological Study of the Music and Dance-Theater of an Afro-Panamanian Group." PhD dissertation, Indiana University.

———. 1982. "Latin American Ethnomusicology: A Discussion of Central America and Northern South America." *Latin American Music Review* 3 (1): 1–16.

———. 1985. "They Sing with the Voice of the Drum: Afro-Panamanian Musical Traditions." In *More Than Drumming: Essays on African and Afro-Latin American Music*, edited by Irene Jackson-Brown, 163–98. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

South China Morning Post. 2017a. "Panama Lifts Visa Limits for Chinese Visitors," October 18, 2017. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2115876/panama-lifts-visa-limits-chinese-visitors.

———. 2017b. "Chinese Firm Begins Panama Port Project after Diplomatic Ties Restored," October 19, 2017. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2116082/chinese-firm-begins-panama-port-project-after.

Spickard, Paul R. 1997. "What Must I Be? Asian Americans and the Question of Multiethnic Identities." *Amerasian Journal* 23 (1): 43–60.

Spradley, James. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Stark, Rodney, and Buster G. Smith. 2012. "Pluralism and the Churching of Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 54 (2): 35–50.

Stavrias, George. 2005. "Droppin' Conscious Beats and Flows: Aboriginal Hip Hop and Youth Identity." *Australian Aboriginal Studies Journal* 2005 (2): 44–54.

Sterling, Sara, and Ching Lin Pang. 2013. "Managing Multi-Mobility and Multi-Layered Identity in China: How Ethnic Chinese-Venezuelan Returnees Cope with Chinese Language, Culture and Identity." *Asian Ethnicity* 14 (4): 511–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2012.726141.

Stoeltje, Beverly J. 1993. "Power and the Ritual Genres: American Rodeo." *Western Folklore* 52 (2/4): 135–56.

Stokes, Martin, ed. 1994. *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. Oxford: Berg.

Stoll, David. 1990. *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Stutzman, Ronald. 1981. "El Mestizaje: An All-Inclusive Ideology of Exclusion." In *Cultural Transformations and Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador*, edited by Norman E. Whitten, Jr., 45–94. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Sue, Christina. 2009. "An Assessment of the Latin Americanization Thesis." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32 (6): 1058–70.

Tajfel, Henri. 1981. *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Tam, Juan. 2005a. "Huellas Chinas En Panamá." *Revista Cultural Lotería* 459: 7–45.

———. 2005b. *Huellas Chinas en Panamá: 150 años de presencia*. Panamá: Juan Tam.

———. 2005c. "Las Reglas Fúnebres Chinas." *Revista Cultural Lotería* 459: 46–55.

Taylor, Charles. 1994. "The Politics of Recognition." In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann, 25–74. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Taylor, Diana. 1991. "Transculturating Transculturation." *Performing Arts Journal* 13 (2): 90–104.

———. 2002. "'You Are Here': The DNA of Performance." *TDR* 46 (1): 149–69.

———. 2004. "Scenes of Cognition: Performance and Conquest." *Theatre Journal* 56 (3): 353–72.

———. 2006a. "Performance and/as History." *TDR (1988-)* 50 (1): 67–86.

———. 2006b. “Trauma and Performance: Lessons from Latin America.” *PMLA* 121 (5): 1674–77.

———. 2007. “Remapping Genre through Performance: From ‘American’ to ‘Hemispheric’ Studies.” *PMLA* 122 (5): 1416–30.

———. 2016. *Performance*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375128.

Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2010. “With or Without Gringos: When Panamanians Talk about the United States and Its Citizens.” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 54 (1): 52–70.

Tok, Sow Keat. 2013. *Managing China’s Sovereignty in Hong Kong and Taiwan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tongson, Karen. 2015. “Empty Orchestra: The Karaoke Standard and Pop Celebrity.” *Public Culture* 27 (1(75)): 85–108.

Townsend, Frank C. 2006. “Ocean to Ocean Cayuco Race: The Early Years 1954 to 1962 – A Collection.” Unpublished Manuscript. http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00098900/00001/1x?search=cayuco+%3drace.

Trent, Domingo. 2017. “100 Años de Sociedad de Beneficencia Fa Yen / Sr Tony Jiang.” YouTube Video. *El Espectador de Panamá* (blog). January 24, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_t7DtLEIro.

Tseng, Timothy. 2004. “Protestantism in Twentieth-Century Chinese America: The Impact of Transnationalism Onthe Chinese Diaspora.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 13: 121–48.

Tsuda, Takeyuki. 2016. *Japanese American Ethnicity*. New York: New York University Press.

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. London: Zed Books.

Turino, Thomas. 2000. *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turino, Thomas. 2003. “Are We Global Yet? Globalist Discourse, Cultural Formations and the Study of Zimbabwean Popular Music.” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 12 (2): 51–79.

Turino, Thomas, and James Lea, eds. 2004. *Identity and the Arts in Diasporic Communities*. Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press.

Valencia, Alexandra. 2018. "Venezuela's Neighbors Seek Aid to Grapple with Migration Crisis." *Reuters*, September 4, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-migration-summit/venezuelas-neighbors-seek-aid-to-grapple-with-migration-crisis-idUSKCN1LK2SK.

Vasconcelos, José. 1997. *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*. Translated by Didier T. Jaén. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Vásquez, Manuel A., and Philip J. Williams. 2005. "The Power of Religious Identities in the Americas." *Latin American Perspectives* 32 (1): 5–26.

Villar, Roberpiere C.A. 2002. *Nuestra Herencia Oculta: Desarrollo de La Cultura China En Panamá En El Siglo XIX*. Panamá: s.n.

Wade, Peter. 2000. *Music, Race, and Nation: Música Tropical in Colombia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wade, Peter. 2005. "Rethinking 'Mestizaje': Ideology and Lived Experience." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2): 239–57.

Warden, Nolan. 2016. "Ethnomusicology's 'Identity' Problem: The History and Definitions of a Troubled Term in Music Research." *El Oído Pensante* 4 (2): 1–21.

Watson, Sonja Stephenson. 2014. *The Politics of Race in Panama: Afro-Hispanic and West Indian Literary Discourse of Contention*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.

Watt, Stewart. 1951. *Chinese Bondage in Peru: A History of the Chinese Coolie in Peru, 1849-1874*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Westwood, Sallie, and Annie Phizacklea. 2000. *Transnationalism and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Routledge.

Wilcox, Emily. 2019. *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Wilson, Rob, and Arif Dirlik. 1994. "Introduction: Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production." *Boundary 2* 21 (1): 1–14.

Wing-Fai, Leung. 2014. "Perceptions of the East – Yellow Peril: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear." *Irish Times*, August 16, 2014.

https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/perceptions-of-the-east-yellow-peril-an-archive-of-anti-asian-fear-1.1895696.

Wing-Ki Ho, Vicky. 2013. “Thirty Years of Contemporary Christian Music in Hong Kong: Interactions and Crossover Acts between a Religious Music Scene and the Pop Music Scene.” *Journal of Creative Communications* 8 (1): 65–75.

Wong, Connie Oi-Yan. 2006. “Singing the Gospel Chinese Style: ‘Praise and Worship’ Music in the Asian Pacific.” PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

Wong, Deborah. 2004. *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. New York: Routledge.

Wong, Deborah, and Mai Elliot. 1994. “‘I Want the Microphone’: Mass Mediation and Agency in Asian-American Popular Music.” *TDR (1988-)* 38 (3): 152–67.

Woolard, Kathryn A. 1998. “Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry.” In *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, edited by Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity, 3–47. London: Oxford University Press.

Xu, Jennifer, and Jennifer C. Lee. 2013. “The Marginalized ‘Model’ Minority: An Empirical Examination of the Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans.” *Social Forces* 91 (4): 1363–97.

Yang, Fenggang. 1998. “Chinese Conversion to Evangelical Christianity: The Importance of Social and Cultural Contexts.” *Sociology of Religion* 59 (3): 237–57.

Yap, Joey. 2016. *The Art of Lion Dance*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Joey Yap Research Group Sdn. Bhd.

Zhang, Juwen. 2015. “Chinese American Culture in the Making: Perspectives and Reflections on Diasporic Folklore and Identity.” *Journal of American Folklore* 128 (510): 449–75.

Zhang, Xuefeng. 2006. “How Religious Organizations Influence Chinese Conversion to Evangelical Protestantism Inthe United States.” *Sociology of Religion* 67 (2): 149–59.

Zheng, Su. 1992. “From Toison to New York: Muk’yu Songs in Folk Tradition.” *CHINOPERL: Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature* 16 (1): 165–205.

———. 2010. *Claiming Diaspora: Music, Transnationalism, and Cultural Politics in Asian/Chinese America*. London and New York: Oxford University Press.

Zien, Katherine A. 2017. *Sovereign Acts: Performing Race, Space, and Belonging in Panama and the Canal Zone*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Appendix A – Open Letter to President Juan Carlos Varela

Panamá, 23 de junio de 2017

Excelentísimo Señor
Ing. Juan Carlos Varela
Presidente de la República
Ciudad
E. S. D.

Honorable Señor Presidente Varela:

El Consejo Nacional de la Etnia China, la Asociacion China de Panama y la comunidad china apoyan el anuncio del Señor Presidente de establecer relaciones diplomáticas con la República Popular China el pasado 12 de junio, sumándose a los 174 países que han reconocido la Resolución 2758 de 1971 de la Asamblea General de Naciones Unidas.

El reconocimiento a los que llegaron para la construcción del Ferrocarril Transístmico en 1854, la ruta férrea que dio paso a la ruta acuática orgullo de Panamá y del mundo; y la participación de la comunidad china panameña en el desarrollo cultural, económico, social y político de la nación es motivo de orgullo y de homenaje a nuestro ancestros.

Este esfuerzo por establecer relaciones con China debe ser reconocido por el Gobierno con un reconocimiento o condecoración a los miembros del Consejo de la Etnia China, que lo recibirá a nombre de toda la comunidad china.

Confucio enseñó que la virtud de la humanidad se base en la benevolencia, la lealtad, el respecto y la reciprocidad; que son imprescindible en las relaciones humanas, entre gobernador y súbdito, entre padre e hijo, entre marido y mujer, entre hermano mayor y hermano menor, y entre amigos.

Para cimentar la amistad con China, hay que conocer su realidad, su idiosincrasia, su historia, su territorio, sus costumbres, su gente, para construir en base al respecto mutuo y bien común, confianza mutua y una amistad duradera. Como tambien rectificar los hechos anteriores donde los chinos han sido discriminados desde su llegada a Panama.

Durante las elecciones de 2014 se propuso mejorar la seguridad publica, suministro de agua, recoleccion de desechos, transporte, educacion, lucha anti corrupcion, entre otros. Pero sentimos que hay temas sensibles que deben tratarse con mucho cuidado como la política migratoria, al evitar la llegada de individuos que afecten la seguridad pública y colectiva, y lograr un mejor control aquellos que se dedican a la trata de personas.

En la lucha contra la delincuencia, se debe verificar la documentacion de las empresas y ciudadanos chinos que soliciten su entrada al pais, para cumplir con las leyes de inversion, turismo y migracion, de forma que se incentive Panamá como centro de distribución al llegar a los mercados mundiales, facilitando que productos chinos lleguen a todos para su consumo a un menor costo.

La población nacional e internacional residente en Panamá, que se incrementa día a día, al establecerse organismos mundiales y regionales se benefician, al igual que las naves que transitan por el Canal de Panamá.

En proyectos de índole social, recomendamos que mediante garantía con los ingresos nacionales, y los proyectos del gobierno chino en su política de préstamos preferenciales, se escoja uno o dos proyectos de urgencia nacional para que el gobierno chino provea ayuda, y sea un proyecto insignia de la cooperación chino panameña, como vuelos directos a China, y la modificacion de leyes laborales, aplicado a las zonas libres del pais.

Otros temas serian salud pública, agua potable, saneamiento, reciclaje, uso de objetos que cuiden el ambiente, ahorren energía, alimentos y medicamentos de todo tipo, se le den prioridad y que no se produzcan en territorio nacional, se permita su importación de preferencia.

Crear un Fondo Chino Panameño, que se establecería con aportaciones de una variedad de instituciones chinas que se establezcan en Panamá y contribuyan a su fortalecimiento financieramente, dado que China impulsa "la franja y la ruta" en el comercio mundial, con la nueva ruta de la seda y la nueva ruta acuática. Junto a ello se debe buscar el apoyo y la cooperación de China, para incluirse a Panamá como miembro del Banco Asiático de Inversión en Infraestructura (AIIB - Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) y del Foro de Cooperación Económica Asia-Pacífico (APEC - Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation).

El Consejo Nacional de la Etnia China que usted nombró con el Decreto Ejecutivo No. 87 de 12 de mayo de 2015, en nuestra opinión, juega un papel muy importante, útil y efectivo, sirviendo como un enlace entre el gobierno nacional y la comunidad china-panameña, además de servir en la divulgación de la cultura china y lograr un mayor y mejor acercamiento y entendimiento Asia y China. Por ello, solicitamos que debe tomarse en cuenta, proveyendo un mayor apoyo en su gestión, con un presupuesto de funcionamiento u oficinas para que pueda desempeñar su labor de manera efectiva y eficiente, al igual que otras entidades estatales.

De usted atentamente,

Art Tik Fung
Asociacion China de Panama

Juan Tam
Secretario, Consejo Nacional de la Etnia China

Sergio Lay Martinez
Miembro de CONECHI

Roberto Ching
Miembro de CONECHI

Peter Chan
Miembro de CONECHI

Willy Wen
Miembro de CONECHI

Felipe Lam
Asoc Chung San

Eloy Chong
Asoc China Panama Oeste

Appendix B – Spiritual Survey and Investigation

Retiro Espiritual de Semana Santa 2018
Encuesta e Investigación Espiritual: Una Vida con Misión

La Misión de Cristo

1. **¿Dentro de la comunidad china, no creyente, que crees que ellos piensan sobre la identidad de Jesucristo?**
   A.________ Saben que es un líder reconocido de la iglesia cristiana, como otras religiones Lo tienen, pero desconocen identidad real.
   B.________ Piensan que fue un buen maestro, pero no es un dios.
   C.________ Piensan que Jesús es un mentiroso, y no es quien dice que es.
   D.________ Piensan que Jesús estaba loco por creerse un dios.
   E.________ No tienen idea, y nos les interesa saber. Todas la religiones son falsas.
   F ________ No se.

2. **¿Cuál crees que fue la misión de Jesucristo cuando vino al mundo?**
   A.________ Vino a ser un maestro y enseñar buenas practicas a la humanidad. Buen Activista.
   B.________ Vino a crear una nueva religión y ganar popularidad y seguidores
   C.________ Vino a mostrar la Gloria de Dios, instaurar Su Reino, y morir por la humanidad para traer salvación eterna.
   D.________ Vino a liberar el pueblo Judío del imperio Romano, y ser el nuevo Rey.
   E.________ La misión de Cristo no es muy clara, o no lo se.

3. **¿A quien llamo Jesucristo a servir en Su iglesia?**
   A.________ Solamente los Pastores
   B.________ Solamente los Pastores y los lideres (ancianos, diáconos, etc.)
   C.________ Cualquier puede ayudar sin importar su Fe.
   D.________ Todos los que han entregado su vida al Señor y reflejado en su bautizo.
   E.________ No es muy claro a quien Jesús llama, o no lo se.

La Iglesia de Cristo

4. **¿Cuál es la actitud y percepción de la comunidad china, no creyente, hacia las iglesias china en Panamá?**
   A.________ No asisten por diversas razones, pero tienen un respeto a los líderes y sus actividades.
   B.________ Saben un poco de las iglesias, pero no tienen certeza de sus enseñanzas.
   C.________ Saben un poco de las iglesias, pero no tienen confianza de sus líderes y sus miembros.
   D.________ Lo ven como cualquier otra religión, occidental, y es contrario a su propia religión.
   E.________ No tienen idea u opinión de la iglesia, o no les interesa.
   F. ________ No se.

5. **¿Cuál crees que es la razón principal porque muchos no vienen o participan en las iglesias chinas?**
   A.________ No están convencidos es la verdad y las enseñanzas que predican de Jesucristo.
   B.________ Les interesa, pero por cuestión del trabajo no tienen tiempo.
   C.________ Les interesa un poco, pero por otras razones personales o que dirían su familia u amistades.
   D.________ Han tenido malas experiencias con la iglesia o sus miembros.
   E.________ No tienen suficiente interés espiritual
   F. ________ No se.

6. **¿Por qué crees que muchos que SI asisten a la iglesia, No sirven activamente?**
   A.________ No creen que es parte de su responsabilidad dentro de la iglesia, sino de otros.
   B.________ No creen que estén capacitados para servir.
   C.________ Piensan que es demasiada carga, y sacrificio y quieren evitar conflictos con otras personas
   D.________ Piensan que están muy ocupados con otras prioridades de la vida, y no tienen tiempo.
   E.________ No tienen interés o razón de servir.
   F. ________ No Se.

Appendix C – "Incidente de Cumbia" by Demetrio Korsi

"Cumbia Incident" - Translated by Claudine Avalos

Con queja de indio y grito de chombo,
dentro de la cantina de Pancha Manchá,
trazumando ambiente de timba y kilombo,
se oye que la cumbia resonando está...

Baile que legara la abuela africana
con cadena chata y pelo cuscú;
fuerte y bochinchosa danza interiorana
que bailó cual nadie Juana Calambú.

Pancha Manchá tiene la cumbia caliente,
la de Chepigana y la del Chocó,
y cuando borracha se alegra la gente,
llora el tamborero, llora Chimbombó...

Chimbombó es el negro que Meme embrujara,
Chimbombó es el negro de gran corazón;
le raya una vieja cicatriz la cara;
tiene mala juma y alma de león.

Y el tambor trepida! Y la cumbia alegra!
Meme baila... El negro, como un animal,
llora los desprecios que le hace la negra,
y es que quiere a un gringo la zamba fatal!

Como un clavo dicen que saca otro clavo,
aporrea el cuero que su mano hinchó;
mientras más borracho su golpe es más bravo;
¡juma toca cumbia, dice Chimbombó!...

Vengador, celoso, se alza de un respingo
cuando Meme acaba la cumbia, y se va
-cogida del brazo de su amante gringo-
rumbo al dormitorio de Pancha Manchá.

Del puñal armado los persigue, y ambos
mueren del acero del gran Chimbombó,
y la turbamulta de negros y zambos
siente que, a la Raza, Chimbombó vengó...

Húyese hacia el Cauca el negro bravío
y otra vez la cumbia trepidando está,
pero se dijera que no tiene el brío
de la vieja cumbia de Pancha Manchá...

Es que falta Meme, la ardiente mulata,
y es que falta el negro que al Cauca se huyó;
siempre habrá clientela y siempre habrá plata,
¡pero nunca otro hombre como Chimbombó!

Chimbombó (Song)

Chimbombo, sácame a bailar
Chimbombo, llévame a gozar
Chimbombo, solo recuerdo tu rostro

Chimbombo, quiero su amistad
Chimbombo, tiene un gran corazón
Y si llora yo le presto mi hombro.

Bailemos la Cumbia Chepigana de Pancha Manchá
Bailemos la Cumbia Chepigana de Pancha Manchá.

With an Indian complaint and a cry of chombo
inside the cantina of Pancha Manchá,
exuding an atmosphere of timba and kilombo,
you hear that the cumbia resonating is ...

Dance that the African grandmother would bequeath
with a flat chain and curly hair;
Strong and rambunctious dance of the interior
that danced like nobody, Juana Calambú.

Pancha Manchá has the hot cumbia,
Of Chepigana and of Chocó,
and when drunk people rejoice,
the drummer cries, cries Chimbombó ...

Chimbombó is the black (man) that Meme would bewitch,
Chimbombó is the black (man) of great heart;
He scratches an old scar on his face;
He has a bad hangover and a lion's soul.

And the drum resounds! And cumbia livens!
Meme dances ... The black (man), like an animal,
cries the carelessness inflicted by the black (woman),
and it is that (she) wants a gringo the wretched zamba!

Like a nail, they say, pulls out another nail,
he pounds the leather that his hand swelled;
The more drunk (he gets), the angrier his blows (are);
The hangover plays cumbia, says Chimbombó! ...

Avenger, jealous, he jumps up with a leap
when Meme finishes the cumbia, and leaves -
grabbed the arm of his gringo lover -
heading for the bedroom of Pancha Manchá.

Armed with the dagger he pursues them, and both die from
the steel of the great Chimbombó,
and the turmoil of blacks and zambos
feels that, the Raza, Chimbombó avenged ...

Flee towards the Cauca the spirited black (man)
and again the cumbia is resounding,
but it would be said that it does not have the spice
of the old cumbia of Pancha Manchá ...

It is that Meme is missing, the ardent mulata,
and it is that the black (man) is missing that to Cauca fled;
There will always be clientele and there will always be
money,
but never another man like Chimbombó!