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Worship Music Localization: A Case Study of the Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong
敬拜音樂的本土化實踐
——香港基督教復興教會的個案研究

FANG BO
方博

Abstract

In the musical scholarship of the past, Christian music was studied mainly in terms of genre, repertory, and its practitioners. This article proposes an ethnographic study of the "contemporary praise-and-worship music" in Hong Kong by analyzing the music of the Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong, one of the most influential Pentecostal churches in Hong Kong and Mainland China, in its social and cultural context. This study illuminates the significant function of worship music in connecting modern Christian churches of Hong Kong to their local environment. The social functions of this kind of music are also explored, adding to a theoretical understanding that is significant to ethnomusicology and theology.

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Keywords: The Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong (RCCHK), Pentecostal-Charismatic, praise and worship, localization

本文聚焦於一間在香港以及中國大陸都有深遠影響的基督教靈恩派教會——香港基督教復興教會的敬拜音樂。本文首先撰寫一部復興教會及其敬拜音樂的民族誌，並探討復興教會敬拜讚美音樂在香港社會環境下的本土化實踐。當中展現了敬拜音樂在聯結當代香港基督教會和其本土環境的突出作用。另外，本文探詢敬拜音樂的社會功能，對於民族音樂學在該領域研究中具有新的理論認知的意義。

關鍵詞：香港基督教復興教會，五旬節派，敬拜讚美，本土化

The Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong (香港基督教復興教會; hereafter, RCCHK) is one of the most influential Pentecostal churches in Hong Kong and Mainland China. This article aims at elaborating on the founding, growth, and current worshipping practice of the RCCHK.

The founder of the Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong, Pastor Dennis Balcombe 包德寧, came from the United States of America. He received the calling to do missionary work in China and started this church in 1969. Over the past half century, the RCCHK has grown bigger and stronger. As a Pentecostal church, it has a vital status in both Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese Christian communities. It has a mature worship team, with systematically trained singers, instrumentalists, songwriters, and music instructors.

THE HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF HONG KONG

a. The Founding of the RCCHK

The RCCHK was founded in 1969. By the time Pastor Balcombe was ready to fulfil his calling to serve China and Chinese Christian churches, the People's Republic of China was in the throes of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and foreign missionaries were not allowed to enter

the Mainland to engage in anything related to religion. Thus, Balcombe decided to go to Hong Kong and bide his time.

For Balcombe, Hong Kong was a totally new environment and he faced many challenges at first in adapting. In particular, learning Cantonese was paramount to him given that his mission was to preach to non-Christians about God and the Holy Spirit. Within only a few months, however, Balcombe had learned to speak Cantonese from Janey Chen, a Chinese language teacher at New Asia College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. After three months, he had read through the Gospel of John in Chinese and decided to start a church.[1]

He rented a very small room in an office building in Kowloon City when he arrived in Hong Kong. The money was supported by Shiloh Church, with which he was involved for many years while he was in the army as well as after he moved to Hong Kong and did the mission.[2] The room could only fit around fifty seats, but this was enough for Balcombe at the beginning. During that time, he taught the Bible in English at a middle school. At the first service, eight of his students came and converted to Christianity after his preaching, and a pattern was established by which more and more young people would come to his church from then on.

b. The Development and Core Tenets of the RCCHK

In the first couple of years, it was very difficult financially for Pastor Balcombe and his wife Kathy, whom he married in 1971, to survive in Hong Kong, let alone to grow the church. Except for basic living expenses, the Balcombes spent everything they had on the church. An important opportunity for further expanding the church came in 1975 when Balcombe was invited to become chaplain of Hong Kong Christian College.[3] With Balcombe's focus on student ministry, the church grew very quickly and soon there was a need to move to a larger space. In the next few years, the church moved many times: from Kowloon City to several other areas in Kowloon (Mody Road, Nathan Road, Prince Edward

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[1] Dennis Balcombe, *One Journey One Nation: Autobiography of Dennis Balcombe Missionary to China* (Chambersburg: eGen Co. LLC, 2011).

[2] Shiloh Church, which is now considered the mother church of the RCCHK, is a small Pentecostal church in Oakland, California. This church was not rich at that time, but the pastor believed that Balcombe's calling came indeed from God, and so they sponsored him for several years.

[3] Hong Kong Christian College was actually a school for primary and secondary aged students. Balcombe, *One Journey One Nation*, 143.

Road), until it became established at its current location in the 1990s on Kwai Yi Road in Kwai Fong District.

As the church grew with each move, Balcombe began to rely on his wife and other clergies to help with the church's ministries, and an administration was thereby eventually established. Today, the church has a comprehensive administration team with less than twenty members, involving pastors and elders who not only take charge of preaching and running the church, but also visit the disabled, the elderly, and the sick and take care of various local communities. Other staff members make posters and pamphlets for monthly activities as well as for occasional larger-scale events. There is also someone who manages the services' regulations and helps with the communion's preparation. A few others are responsible for running the newspaper, controlling video cameras, taking photographs, and making documentaries.

Someone also manages the church's official website, where the themes of Sunday sermons and prayer meetings, information about upcoming church events, and encouraging Gospel messages and theological phrases for teaching and shepherding are frequently posted. The latest preaching and worship services as well as recordings of church sermons and meetings are also uploaded onto the website not only for the convenience of congregants unable to attend, but also in the hopes of attracting non-Christians and non-members of the church.

The core values of the RCCHK are posted on its website.[4] There are eight fundamental tenets as follows:

1. Worship as a way to seek the Presence of God
2. Serve in the Power of the Holy Spirit
3. Imitate the Holiness of Christ
4. Bible teaching as the foundation of equipping
5. Outreaching Evangelism that touches the community
6. Mission for China. China for Mission
7. Strong families filled with God's love
8. Cell group as basic unit for shepherding

All of these eight core principles are based on Pentecostal ecclesiology, although they are also, of course, adapted to the contexts of Hong

[4] "Core values of Revival Christian Church," the website of the RCCHK, accessed October 10, 2012, http://kf.rcchk.org/core-value.html.

Kong society and the mission for China. They are moreover the fundamental ministries of the church and constitute daily scheduled activities in the church plans. For example, item one, worship, is a section that happens at any church-related event. It can start before a prayer, after a sermon, or even in between preaching, when the officiating pastor feels that his preaching can bring the presence of God and the Holy Spirit. Item five, outreaching evangelism, also takes a core position in the church's daily services. Pastors and other clergies put local community service in their schedules of outreaching social activities, especially events involving disadvantaged groups, orphanages, and seniors' homes in slum areas. It could be said that the principles of the RCCHK are not only concepts its members believe in, but also things they try to practice in their real lives.

WORSHIP MUSIC OF THE RCCHK

a. A Brief History of Worship Music in the RCCHK

As noted previously, the RCCHK is a Pentecostal church that uses praise-and-worship music in its worship. In an interview, Elder Matthew Leung informed me that, in the past, English praise-and-worship songs used to be dominant in the RCCHK's worship services. This was because Pastor Balcombe used to sing praise-and-worship songs when he was in his Pentecostal churches in the US, so he continued to use English praise and worship when he first came to Hong Kong and introduced this repertory to local worshippers. In these early years, it was Pastor Balcombe's wife who took on the job of leading praise and worship in each worship service.[5] At that time, some of the local Truth Baptist Churches and Alliance Churches had begun to translate traditional English hymns into Cantonese, some of which became incorporated into the RCCHK worship. It was not until the 1980s that congregants started writing their

[5] Kathy Balcombe had learned piano for many years, but she could only play classical music before she came to Hong Kong with her husband. Since she was also a member of Shiloh Church and knew some praise-and-worship songs, Pastor Balcombe asked her to play the worship accompaniment for him when he needed to sing in between his preaching. He also asked her to teach other congregants how to sing these praise-and-worship songs. Thus, she was appointed as the first worship team leader of the RCCHK, only later becoming another pastor of this church.

own songs in both Cantonese and Mandarin for the purposes of reflecting their own Hong Kong Christian identities and serving Mainland Chinese Christian churches and congregants. In opening up its worship to Chinese songs written by local worshippers and congregants, both clergies and congregants are more motivated to participate in worship.

During the development of this worship music in the RCCHK and other churches over the last three decades, the process has reflected some characteristics of the general development of popular music in Hong Kong; or, put more precisely, changes in the local popular music scene had some influence on Christian church music that is currently in use in Hong Kong and among related churches on the Mainland. Advocating for a greater consciousness of the role Cantonese pop has played in Hong Kong culture, Ho Wai-chung argues that,

> The localization of Hong Kong popular music involves a struggle for Canto pop to build a sense of its own authenticity in order to supersede English pop and Mandarin pop…Canto pop needs to be heard as both *deriving from and contributing to* [emphasis in the original] the cultures that listen to it.[6]

It is in such a dialogical context that we must understand the changes taking place in the RCCHK's worship music over the decades.

After Mandarin pop from Taiwan and Anglo-American pop from the West had saturated the Hong Kong market, Hong Kong audiences in the 1970s developed a greater demand for their own popular music in Cantonese, and Cantonese pop has ever since set the scene for Hong Kong youth. Elder Leung and his colleagues, as members of this generation growing up on local popular music, have been strong advocates for the use of the Cantonese pop style in the RCCHK's worship. They were all huge fans of Hong Kong local rock music at that time, as well as of the music of famous rock stars and bands from the US and UK, such as The Beatles, Rod Steward, and The Rolling Stones. I was told by my interviewees that a great many of them learned instruments by themselves or from some musician friends, formed their own bands, and played music in public spaces, singing every hit song that was performed by famous rock stars at that time. Their era was that of rock, both in English and Cantonese; that they should use it as a means for personal and spiritual expression even today is only natural.

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[6] Ho Wai-chung, "Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music," *Popular Music* 22, no. 2 (2003): 146.

Yet it is not only in its adoption of the Cantonese pop style in its "repertory" of worship that the RCCHK remains outstanding. When Pastor Balcombe first came to Hong Kong in the 1960s, praise-and-worship music—with its pop band style of playing and some rock singing aesthetics—was not widely accepted even among Pentecostal churches in the West. In Hong Kong, English and Cantonese hymns sung by church choirs were better received at that time. Thus, in addition to evangelizing in churches using messages inspired by the Holy Spirit, the RCCHK's attempts at using modern praise-and-worship music was also pioneering for Hong Kong. Although it is a common practice today, it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that more and more local Pentecostal churches tried to introduce praise-and-worship music into their services. Today, most of the over 100 Pentecostal churches in the territory have their own praise-and-worship team. That said, worship team members of the RCCHK have estimated that less than half have written or recorded their original worship songs and albums. Many of these music teams in other congregations have chosen, rather, to rely on the repertory of Cantonese worship songs from the last century and/or to use influential Mandarin worship songs from popular bands like Stream of Praise or Joshua Band, which perform in Chinese.[7]

b. Introduction to the RCCHK Worship Team

Before providing an overview of typical musical practices of the RCCHK's worship music team in the following two sections, I will first introduce the essential figure of the group, Matthew Leung, whom I quoted earlier and who serves as an excellent example of the type of individuals involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic (hereafter Pentecostal) praise and worship, not only in Hong Kong but elsewhere. Leung is a pastor of the RCCHK who used to be a pop musician and leader of the worship group and later rose to become an elder of the church. In an interview in February 2013, he told me much about his life and his own experience of worshipping. He also shared with me his feelings and views about music, which I find to be indicative of the RCCHK's worship team. Therefore, I focus mainly on his story in this section before branching out to discuss briefly the worship team at large.

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[7] Stream of Praise and Joshua Band are two of the most influential praise-and-worship bands from the United States of America and Taiwan. Both of them have recorded tens of worship song albums, and both are popular in Pentecostal churches and among Charismatic Chinese Christian communities around the world.

"When I was a kid," Leung explained, "I was deeply influenced by one of my elder brothers, and loved music, especially foreign bands. When I was 13, my brother gave me a guitar for my birthday. I learned to play from one of my brother's classmates, and after several times I could play with him and their band; I took over of the bass part."[8]

He went on to reveal to me that he did not study well in school and got expelled from school for fighting. Later he became a cleaner at a teahouse and kept playing in the band, but felt emptiness in his heart. When he was 19, he became a Christian, began to build his own relationship with Jesus Christ over the coming years, and fell in love with worshipping at the RCCHK. He was appointed to take charge of the worship group in 1993 and became an elder of the church later on. Before these advancements, he was well known for worshipping by playing with his band, and he used to hold many worship music concerts as well as secular pop music concerts outside the church. When he and the band sang in a stadium or on the streets, ordinary people always sang with them. His fans usually focused on the Cantonese lyrics and the popular music melodies, since they did not know exactly what the contents of the songs were about initially. Leung used this kind of performance[9] as missionary work, and attracted many young people to the churches, especially the RCCHK, and become at least Christian, if not Pentecostal.

Besides Matthew Leung, several other members of the RCCHK worship group, including more than ten worshippers, are professional or semi-professional musicians. A Bi, the drummer of the group, for instance, is also a drum teacher in some local musical institutions. June, the pianist of the group, is a piano teacher. Otherwise, the team members come from varied musical backgrounds. Some learned to play their instruments from renowned instrumentalists in Hong Kong, while some others learned in the church or are self-taught. From a technical standpoint, however, most are more than fluent in their playing, and, on the whole, we can say that they are actually skillful, as they coordinate smoothly with each other during rehearsals and services.

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[8] Interview with Elder Leung, February 20, 2013. Translated into English by the author.

[9] Here I use the word "performance" because the event under discussion is not entirely a sacred worship, but more of a popular music concert directed at a non-Christian audience.

c. The RCCHK Worship Rehearsals and Services

Like many Evangelical churches in Hong Kong, local Pentecostal congregations have to rehearse before formal worship services take place. The praise and worship that takes place every Sunday at the RCCHK, for example, normally lasts for around half an hour. In preparation for this, church staff members must take on certain duties and perform specific checks involving such matters as video recording, sound panel controlling, and power-point broadcasting (see Figure 1) in order to make sure that everything runs smoothly when worship begins. The RCCHK worship team maintains a strict standard for their worship service. Normally every week, they have a scheduled rehearsal with members practicing for around two hours on their playing, singing, and coordinating with other worshippers and staff.

Before rehearsal takes place, the team leader provides everyone concerned with a list of worship songs. The list, which follows a theme in keeping with the preaching or prayer from the teaching pastor for that week, comes to the leader from prayer about the service. Not all members of the worship team are full-time worshippers of the RCCHK, and most actually have their own jobs outside of church, so each week they will arrange different groups of worshippers to serve according to their working schedules, with one person taking the lead, usually a singer since that role makes it easier to direct the rehearsal.



Figure 1: Rehearsing with multi-media equipment (March 14, 2013; Fang Bo)



Figure 2: Prayer before rehearsal (March 3, 2013; Fang Bo)

The one taking the lead also takes charge of both the rehearsal and the service for the week. Before practicing or formal playing in the service, the whole team will have a short discussion together, sitting around the stage and starting with prayer (see Figure 2). Enacting the first two core tenets of the church, members pray to serve in the power of the Holy Spirit and to seek the presence of God during the worshipping. A worshipper can express anything he or she feels about the songs and their own spiritual experiences related to the music, often eliciting responses from other team members. This facilitates not only the process of learning to sing and play the songs, but also of understanding their spiritual meanings. Hence, they are serious about rehearsing and service processes because they believe that the better prepared and skilled each singer and instrumentalist is, the easier it will be to sing or play, and also to understand the worship songs and their deeper meanings.

Normally, the worship singing of about thirty minutes consists of four worship songs, but this can vary according to the circumstances of each meeting and sermon. Most praise-and-worship songs are brief and easy to sing and play. Since the songs are short, worshippers repeat the verses and choruses many times. This serves some practical musical purposes in addition to matching Pentecostal theological rationale of improvisational singing as prayer.

Before the group plays, the leader of the service would make decisions about how many times he/she would like to repeat phrases, but the actual number of iterations and which words or phrases will trigger them are dependent on the presence of the Holy Spirit, as it is believed that the leader only follows his/her heart. Because it is the Holy Spirit who determines the exact details of how a song will unfold, it can be quite a challenge for the other worshippers in the team to follow the variations to the song that will suddenly and spontaneously yet inevitably come about; thus the need for careful rehearsal and preparation. At such times, the leader will use some hand gestures to inform others about how many times he wants to sing a phrase (see Figure 3), or he/she will sing or speak out the first word ahead of time so that the other worshippers can follow.



Figure 3: Leader's hand gestures during rehearsal (March 14, 2013; Fang Bo)

d. Worship Albums of the RCCHK

As this section primarily aimed at introducing the RCCHK by way of its most essential and outstanding figures, tenets, and practices, I have chosen to concentrate here on one of the most recent endeavors undertaken by the church and its worship music team—the recording and releasing of praise-and-worship albums, which has been done in partial fulfillment of the mission to reach out to followers and non-believers alike and make a positive impact on their lives. Less than half of the Pentecostal worship

teams in Hong Kong have attempted to record their own original music.[10] Thus, while the RCCHK's group does make use of preexisting English and Chinese songs circulating within the wider world of Pentecostal ministries, it has also been creating its own music since early on and has now released their own Chinese recordings aimed not only at the local community, but also those on the Mainland.

The RCCHK worship team released their first album of praise-and-worship songs, entitled *Abundant Life* (進入豐盛) in 2008. Samuel Lau, the current senior pastor of the church and Pastor Balcombe's son-in-law, took charge of the whole planning and production process of the album. As he wrote in the album's liner notes:

> Hymns could deliver different gospel messages, which God wanted to share with his people in different ages. The early church, the renewed [biblical] truth in Martin Luther's reformation, the revivals in various ages, the *Anthology of Canaan of China* and the like all used hymns to respond to and deliver the gospel messages of their ages. Therefore, it is hoped that these worship songs, which are all inspired from God's touch, could share his messages for this moment and let God's people know his wills and step into abundant lives.[11]

The songs on this album include "Endless Love" (無盡的愛), "When I Call Your Name" (每當我呼求你的名), "Abundant Life" (進入豐盛), "Jehovah, Our Lord" (耶和華，我們的上帝), "Thanksgiving" (感謝), "My Chinese Heart" (綿綿中國心), and "Waiting for You" (等候你), among others. These songs were written by different RCCHK worshippers, including Pastor Samuel Lau, his wife Pastor Sharon Lau (Balcombe's daughter), Pastor Matthew Leung, and Ms. Huo Hong (the conductor of the choir). As the RCCHK worship team consists of professional and semi-professional musicians and singers, they were able to sing and play all the music on the album by themselves, and they even rented a studio

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[10] According to my personal conversation with a number of experienced worship leaders in a summer worship service jointly organized by the Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong and other Pentecostal churches.

[11] The original Chinese version of the album's liner notes:

> 要知道神在不同的時代向祂的子民有不同的訊息，詩歌是讓這訊息能廣泛傳遞的工具。早期的教會、馬丁路德改革所更新的真理、以至不同時期的復興及中國教會的迦南詩選……等，都是藉詩歌回應及傳遞神「此時、此刻」(rhema) 的訊息。因此，希望神藉著祂所感動我們的詩歌，分享祂在「此時、此刻」的訊息；叫神的百姓明瞭祂的心意，從而「進入豐盛」。
>
> The RCCHK, *Jin ru fengsheng* 進入豐盛 [*Abundant Life*] (Hong Kong: The RCCHK, 2008); translated into English by Fang Bo with revision by the editor.

and hired a Taiwanese record production company to enhance the musical quality. Thus, unlike similar releases by some other local worship teams in Hong Kong, *Abundant Life* maintains a fairly high standard in terms of musical level and recording quality.

A second album, called *Heart Sacrifice* (心祭), was released in 2013, with this written introduction:

> We are sacrificing ourselves to God; this is the truth of worship. The heart is alive; it is our life. Sacrifice is giving up; it is surrendering [to God]. True worship can make people feel safe, receive blessings, be released from sadness, and be healed from pain. But worship is more than that. True worship is surrendering to God, and sacrificing for other people. Worship is not for entertainment, but keeping on giving.[12]

As the title and introduction demonstrate, this album is not only about the congregants praising God and enjoying his presence in their daily lives, but sacrificing to God as well as for others, including those who are not Christians and need to be saved by God. Songs on the album such as "Forty" (四十), "River of Healing" (醫治的江河), and "Respond to the Mission" (回應使命) specifically refer to the mission of the RCCHK, its forty-year history of evangelism in China and Hong Kong. In addition, songs by other worshippers were included in the album, reinforcing the belief that everyone has their own commitment to Christ as well as the tenet that all are welcomed to worship God from heart.

WORSHIP MUSIC LOCALIZATION

Praise-and-worship music is now a worldwide Christian worship style popular among not only Pentecostal churches but also many churches of other denominations. Using a pop band to sing songs is no longer considered by most members of these churches to be an exclusively secular pursuit. It has become more and more acceptable as a form of worship service especially among the younger generations of churchgoers who grew up loving popular styles as both worship music and as secular music. As I explained in the previous section, the RCCHK has a worship

[12] The RCCHK, *Xin zhai* 心祭 [Heart Sacrifice] (Hong Kong: The RCCHK, 2013); translated into English by Fang Bo.

team comprising worshippers who grew up with a Hong Kong popular music style that was developed in the 1960s and 1970s. They learned popular forms on their own and wrote popular tunes for sacred lyrics as worship songs, leading to a unique musical form now commonplace in Hong Kong Pentecostal churches. Before this trend of writing worship songs in Cantonese emerged among members of the RCCHK and other churches, Hong Kong congregations also used English hymns and/or songs and hymns with the lyrics translated into Cantonese. The reception of the worship songs in popular style and the change in language reflect the historical and social conditions of Christianity in Hong Kong.

In this article, I discuss the localization of worship music by analyzing specific worship songs from the RCCHK's albums in terms of their musical style and lyrical contents and also compare the performance of such music in their worship service in the church with its performance in social service outside the church. In doing so, I aim to explain the close connection between worship service/songwriting and the local context from which these songs come. My analyses suggest that the idea of "localization," particularly within the realm of praise and worship, may have different meanings and processes than suggested in previous academic studies, especially those dealing with Christian music in Chinese contexts.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY AND CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP MUSIC

According to anthropologist Joel Robbins, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity can be generally defined as a cluster of Christian denominations originating in the early part of the twentieth century, particularly in the US, that trace their theological understanding of faith to Biblical writings about the Pentecost, namely to the New Testament Book of Acts which recounts that on the day of Pentecost Jesus' followers "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).[13] Katherine Attanasi more specifically explains that, "Pentecostals and charismatics have a highly personalized faith. Congregations emphasize spiritual renewal through the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues,

[13] Joel Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 117–43.

prophesying, and divine healing."[14] In the past hundred years, there have been many hundreds of millions of adherents to Pentecostal churches worldwide, and even today the movement retains an explosive annual growth rate around the world.

Deliberating on the impact that the rapid worldwide spread of the Pentecostal phenomenon has had on various cultures and populations, Robbins has attempted to reconcile opposing claims of homogenization versus indigenization, arguing that it has done both and observing that:

> P/c's [Pentecostal/Charismatic's] success as a globalizing movement is attested to not only by its rapid growth, but also by the range of social contexts to which it has spread. Appearing throughout the world in urban and rural areas, among emerging middle classes and, most spectacularly, among the poor, it has been deeply engaged by many populations that otherwise remain only peripherally or tenuously involved with other global cultural forms. As such, P/C represents a paradigm case of a global cultural flow that starts historically in the West and expands to cover the globe.[15]

Hence, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in different areas of the world share the same faith values, which are, in essence, rooted in Western ontologies and worldviews. However, they also hold on tightly to their own individual and idiosyncratic characteristics, suggesting that a deep-seated notion of localization is common of Pentecostalism in many contexts.

Indeed, as Robbins further articulates, "P/C churches are often local from the start, having been created by evangelists with local roots."[16] Thus, Robbins points out that local Pentecostal churches and believers do not need to be educated in how to preach or run a particular church, but only need immediate spiritual inspirations. Meanwhile, Pentecostal churches with indigenizing trends are also deeply rooted in their local social and political contexts, which can provide them with a better understanding of what their congregants really need and what they hope to achieve from the church ministries. Music ministries, for instance, are required to keep their indigenous/local music language from different ethnic or regional Pentecostal church ministries all over the world.

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[14] Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong, ed., *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2–3.

[15] Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," 118.

[16] Ibid., 130.

Today, most of the Pentecostal churches around the world use praise and worship in their services. As a predominantly contemporary popularized worship music form, praise and worship shares many of the same attitudes towards the theology of worship as Pentecostal, especially with respect to such aims as the renewal of faith, active relationships between believers and God, and also the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit within prayer and worship. Musically, the style emerged in the 1960s and was first defined as "contemporary Christian music," with such descriptions as:

> When the Jesus Movement swept America in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new type of Christian music began to emerge. Using song forms and instrumentation of the popular culture from which these young musicians came, this new "Jesus Music" at first focused on testifying to personal salvation experience. The songs reflected the gratitude of the writers for being saved from their former lifestyles and circumstances. As these artists matured in their faith and moved into Christian concert ministries and recording contracts, the genre of Contemporary Christian Music was born.[17]

The musical characteristics of praise and worship can be easily understood as contemporary Christian worship music with its predilection for popularized forms and performance modes over traditional choral singing with organ accompaniment. As Redman explains,

> Worship is truly the work of the people; the whole congregation is active and involved in the whole service, including the preaching. A typical [praise-and-worship] service begins with twenty to thirty minutes or more of congregational singing, led by a worship leader, a band with a small ensemble of singers, and often a choir as well, modeled on the gospel choir in African-American churches. Leaders encourage a wide range of physical expression through clapping, raising hands, swaying, and even dancing. Some worshipers even bring their own tambourines.[18]

The descriptions of praise and worship cited above examine this musico-religious phenomenon in terms of two of its main occasions for enactment: practice and rehearsal, which may be diverse in different

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[17] Robert Woods and Brian Walrath, *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 14.

[18] Robert R. Redman, Jr., "Welcome to the Worship Awakening," *Theology Today* (2001): 376.

regional and cultural contexts. As I have mentioned in the previous section, the RCCHK also has a worship team that is based on a similar blending of Western and local traditions of Christian worship service and musical devotion, in this case, Hong Kong Chinese. The worship team and church clergies also go into the local communities, or some public occasions to serve people out of the church. By doing so, it consolidates the localization of the church, and constructs more communicative platforms for local citizens and the church.

How quickly praise and worship spreads and becomes entrenched in a community depends on how quickly and easily it can relate to the various contexts of each local church. The songs can be sung without any vocal training. Congregants can also write their own songs from their personal experiences and according to their own spiritual lives, which can better reflect idiocentric needs for Jesus, and thus have more direct impact on feeding other presumably known or easily knowable, fellow congregants. Aside from such musico-religious reasons, there have been also many global Christian movements since the 1960s and 1970s that have fed into the explosive spread of new Evangelical and neo-Pentecostal movements reaching into many places across the world. Praise-and-worship music, as the very best expression of Pentecostal, however, has been one of the most essential features brought into countless churches and other sacred meeting places since this time.

LOCALIZED WORSHIP MUSIC WRITING IN THE RCCHK

The RCCHK followed the Pentecostal practice of using praise and worship in its worshipping, even though it was an important pioneer of the trend. At first, the RCCHK did not have a worship team in the church: only a few people gathered at the meetings to sing English worship songs that were brought there from the US by Pastor Balcombe and his wife Kathy. In fact, this was also the situation of worship music in most Christian (in general, all denominations) churches in Hong Kong before the 1970s. Because Hong Kong was a British colony, most Pentecostal congregations used well-known, traditional English hymns in their worship, ones that had been in use for a very long time.

During late 1970s and the whole of the 1980s, however, many Protestant Christian churches in the territory began to use Cantonese in their worship services, much as Catholic congregations would have done

following the Vatican II (1962–1965) allowances for the mass to be conducted in the vernacular. This period of time, therefore, can be regarded as the fastest era of growth in local Hong Kong Christian music. It can also be divided into two main linguistic modes, which reflect a transition in the nature and function of worship songs.

The first is the translation of English hymns, which were in great use in Anglophone Christian churches, into Cantonese. It could be easily understood that people from local Hong Kong communities desired to use their own language to sing the hymns and worship songs in their meetings. This linguistic shift can be considered as one relevant form of musical localization; termed language localization, it can be simply defined as "the process of adapting a product that has been previously translated into different languages to a specific country or region."[19] Cantonese, as the dialect of the majority of Hong Kong people, has been more broadly used as the basis for the articulation of a strong sense of Hong Kong identity, especially since the 1970s and more profoundly since the handover to China in 1997.

Although there is still some debate around this, it appears that Cantonese popular music is the musical form that most efficiently represents Hong Kong identity in the local culture. As some scholars of Cantonese popular music describe, Canto pop, "specifically" is "a means to establish or enhance a Hong Kong Chinese cultural identity."[20] From both cultural and political perspectives, Cantonese is considered to be the voice of Hong Kong. In this point of view, Anglophone hymns translated into the Cantonese language bridge some of the cultural gaps inherent in the spreading of Pentecostalism to Hong Kong for local Christians, even though such music may not always be aesthetically very pleasing or even easy to sing due to the unnatural grafting of the new Cantonese texts onto the original melodies.

I believe that musical localization of this kind (i.e., language-centered) is of the most common, particularly when globalized popular music is involved, and I consider it, more precisely, to be a glocalization that is experienced by many people around the world. However, when studying "music localization," I have not found it useful to limit my focus too narrowly on lyrics or even musical style. The ways in which music can be adapted and appreciated by glocal audiences are manifold and so I argue that it is essential to consider music localization within its

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[19] "Language Localization," accessed December 7, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_localisation.

[20] Bryce T. McIntyre, Christine Wai-sum Cheng, and Zhang Weiyu, "Cantopop: The Voice of Hong Kong," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 12, no. 2 (2002): 219.

social context. Some of those manifold ways in which musical localization occurs is the focus of the rest of this section and is more concretely explored by way of how the RCCHK worshippers write their own songs to serve the church's congregants.

The second linguistic mode used in praise-and-worship music in Hong Kong, including the RCCHK, is that of writing worship songs directly in Cantonese. This has proven to be more convincing to local people because they have been and remain a more genuinely local Christian music creation. Writing songs in Cantonese means that they are not being translated from someone else's work or experience. Neither preexisting biblical texts nor Western or Chinese tunes are used, ensuring that the songwriting process is creative and idiocentric. The RCCHK worship team members, who often shared their feelings with me, believe that writing their own worship songs in Cantonese enables a more creative composing process and is also more inspiring to local congregants.

Through both lyrics and melodies, songs can very well record cultural memories of a people within a specific regional scope. On this subject, Kay Kaufman Shelemay observes that,

> Music proves to be a particularly powerful mechanism for catalyzing affinity communities, in which straightforward aesthetic and personal preferences may, but do not necessarily, intersect with other powerful diacritica such as ethnic identity, age cohort, or gender identity.[21]

Expanding on Shelemay, I would like to point out that music, while forging cultural memory, can also directly intersect with people's individual emotional reflections on almost any topic. This could explain why elderly people might clearly remember songs they sang in their youth, but forget many other non-musical details of their past. Praise-and-worship songs, especially those that are linguistically and musically idiomatic, easily and effectively express Pentecostal-Charismatic emotional experiences.

The RCCHK thus has its own repertory of Cantonese worship songs that were written by its own clergies and worshippers in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these songs have been memorized and remain deeply internalized by the older congregants till today. In an interview, Elder Leung told me about one Sunday service in which the worship group he led sang three older Cantonese worship songs. After they finished the

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[21] Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (2011): 373.

whole meeting, some of the older congregants, excited, came to him and declared that, "This is real worship!" Clearly, older members of the church who have been attending church meetings since the 1970s and 1980s, identify very strongly with Cantonese worship songs, which they adore both in terms of their faith and their cultural memories.

Starting in the late 1980s, and especially in the 1990s, the RCCHK worshippers wrote Mandarin worship songs in order to serve Mainland Chinese Christian churches and congregants. Pastor Balcombe's daughter Sharon Law, Elder Leung, and a few other worshippers and congregants all wrote original Mandarin songs with lyrics based on the theological foundations of their church and derived directly from God talking to them in private prayer. The melodies likewise are said to have come from inspired prayer and waiting for God in the presence of Holy Spirit.[22] In 2012, the RCCHK published its own worship song collections (consisting both Mandarin and Cantonese worship songs) and recorded two albums of songs from them. Most of the songs come from worshippers of this church. Using three songs written by Elder Leung that are featured in these albums and recordings, in the following pages the localization process of worship songwriting will be analyzed after a brief introduction of each song.

As Leung explained to me, the song "Thanksgiving" (感謝) recounts the story of one of his friends who used to be involved with drugs, but later converted to Christianity and is now a preacher. The Kwai Fong district of Hong Kong used to have serious drug dealing problems in the 1980s and 1990s, and this brother[23] was not only part of this scene, but also used drugs and had other personal troubles. One day by chance, he met a pastor, who preached to him and took him to the RCCHK. This brother changed considerably after this encounter, and continuous confession made it possible for him to give up his habits, enter a seminary school to learn Christian theology, and preach to others with similar experiences. Leung wrote the song "Thanksgiving" (see Figure 4) for the wedding of this brother with the lyrics:

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[22] The writing of praise-and-worship songs differs from traditional hymn writing, which is mostly based on the serious structure of biblical lyrics and technically written melodies according to the lyrics. Praise-and-worship songs mostly come from spiritual inspiration and worshippers' own spiritual experiences. In the writing process, prayer and waiting for God in the presence of the Holy Spirit are believed to be the best way to achieve the desired inspiration for lyrics from God's words and for melodies from their own lives and conceptualization.

[23] Here I refer to him as "brother," because I was not given permission to use his real name.

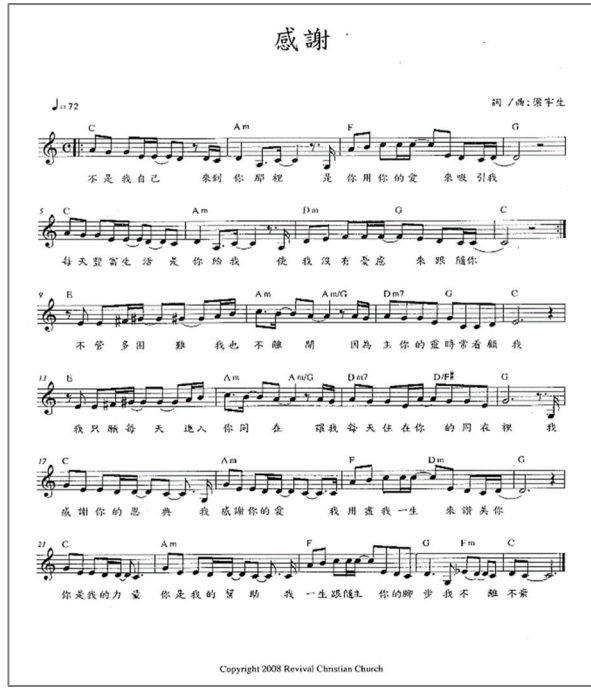


Figure 4: "Thanksgiving" (Music and Lyrics by Matthew Leung)

It is not me who came to You [Jesus].
It is your love that attracted me.
You gave me an abundant life,
Made me carefree and follow you.
No matter how hard it is,
I will not go away,
Because it is your spirit that always takes care of me.
I want to enter your presence and live with you.
Thanks for your giving and your love,
I will spend all my life to praise you.[24]

The song "River of Healing" (醫治的江河) (see Figures 5 and 6), meanwhile, was written by Leung when some RCCHK congregants got sick and had to go to the hospital. As I mentioned in the previous section, one of RCCHK's ministries is to take care of and preach to sick, disabled, and subaltern community members to help them with the difficulties of their daily lives. Pastors, elders, and other ministers take turns visiting hospitals and nursing homes not only to tend to the physically

[24] Translated into English by Fang Bo.

sick, but also the weak in heart. In line with fulfilling this tenet of the church, Leung wrote "River of Healing," with lyrics based on chapter 47 of the Book of Ezekiel, in order to make his ill brethren feel God's healing and have the Holy Spirit be with them:
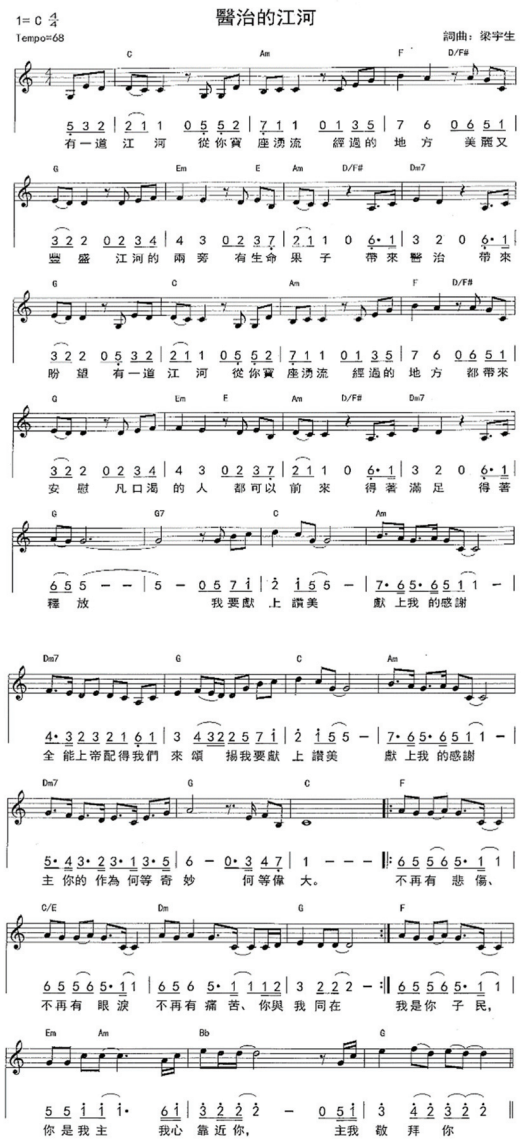


Figure 5 and 6: "River of Healing" (Music and Lyrics by Matthew Leung)

Lyrics:

There is a river running from your throne.
There are fruits of life, which can heal people and bring them hope.
No more sadness, tears and pain, because you [Jesus] are here with me.

Another significant song is "A Chinese Heart" (see Figure 7), which Leung was assigned to write for the thirtieth anniversary of the church's founding in 1999.

Since the RCCHK has been serving Mainland Chinese Christian churches as one of its main purposes, ministers in the church focus deeply on Chinese issues. With a population of well over one billion and only limited access to Christianity, China remains one of the most important countries for Christian evangelism.
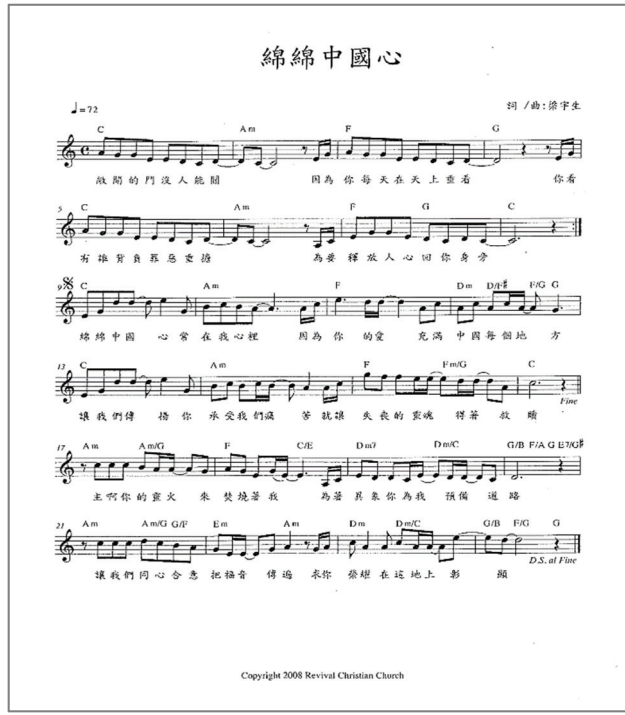


Figure 7: "A Chinese Heart" (Music and Lyrics by Matthew Leung)
(Figure 4–7 reproduced by permission)

As the lyrics suggest:

> No one can close the [heaven's] opened door,
> Because you are always watching us from above.
> You are looking at the one who is carrying heavy burden of sin,
> In order to release pressure in their hearts and bring them back to you.
> A Chinese heart is in my body,
> Because your love is fulfilled everywhere in China.
> Let us praise the sacrifice you made for us,
> And make the homeless spirits achieve salvation.
> Lord, please use your spiritual fire to burn me,
> And set the road for us from our visions.
> Let us evangelize with one accord,
> And reveal your glory on the Earth.[25]

Although all composed by the same worshipper (Elder Leung), the three songs come from three very different perspectives. The first one, "Thanksgiving," was written to reflect one person's change in his spiritual life and came from one congregant's faithful witnessing. The second, "River of Healing," was an attempt to help those from subaltern backgrounds physically and spiritually experience God's glory and ability to heal; it was used for community service and caring. The last song, "A Chinese Heart," serves the RCCHK's Chinese mission and was clearly written for the church itself, and more broadly for all Chinese Christian communities. From personal spiritual life, to many different congregants, and even to a whole nation, the RCCHK's worship songs follow a theology perspective that views God as a caretaker of both the universe and individuals.

It can be seen that one kind of praise-and-worship songwriting, which these three songs represent, is based on biblical contents and inspirations taken from the music writer's own prayers. Most RCCHK songwriters are quite familiar with the scriptures in the Bible and can easily fit scripture into music. At the same time, most are also worshippers of the church who have highly developed musical skills and are adept at singing, playing instruments, and writing music. So, when God gives them the inspiration for certain songs, they can quickly complete a draft and make it formal and melodic. Besides their musical and theological foundations, most also have experience with serving other congregants or the underprivileged, so that they also write music for the purposes of social service as well.

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[25] Translated into English by Fang Bo.

Leung, who used to be a pop musician and only later became a Christian worship leader and elder at the RCCHK, feels he needs to take care of the community and feed congregants' spiritual needs. Yet, he is just one specific example of the kinds of music writers providing contemporary praise and worship at the RCCHK. Local issues, as these examples demonstrate, occupy a very important position in the RCCHK's ministry today. Writing music for people, or, in other words, writing music from their needs, and sharing it with people who have similar experiences directly helps to locate the church in its immediate socio-cultural context, enabling better connection with local congregants and people from the same communities around the church.

THE LOCALIZED SERVICE OF A GLOBALIZED PHENOMENON

During the development of their worship music—from worship songs in English to translations into Cantonese, and from original Cantonese praise and worship to later Mandarin songs—the process has reflected some characteristics of the general development of popular music in Hong Kong. Or, it should be said more precisely, that the development of Hong Kong local popular music has had some influences on Christian church music, particularly that of the Pentecostal-Charismatics.

Hong Kong, which has had close relations with the West and is now experiencing a complex post-colonial situation, underwent considerable cultural transition during the last several decades of the twentieth century. Popular music in Hong Kong also went through various historically remarkable periods. Participating extensively in globalized popular culture, Hong Kong people enjoyed Western popular music since it was brought to the territory in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is interesting that the linguistic and melodic changes in the RCCHK's worship music would parallel the transition and localization process manifest in Hong Kong's broader popular music scene. Both musical spheres moved from English-language songs, to Cantonese-language translations, and then went on to concentrate primarily on original Cantonese songs and occasionally also some songs in Mandarin. In this process, Hong Kong popular music, as well as original Cantonese worship songs, share a deep resonance with local people of all generations.

As I explained in the last section, Elder Leung used to hold some evangelistic concerts at football stadiums in Hong Kong in his youth in the 1980s and 1990s. At that time, rock music was very popular in Hong Kong. He and some of his musician friends used their band and the pop-rock style of Cantonese popular song to present Cantonese worship songs in their concert programs. Worshippers from different churches and denominations came and supported their concerts, as did some non-Christian music fans and pop musicians. As Leung has said,

> Young people in the stadium always sang with us, and they were really excited at our performances. Although most of them did not care about the worship songs' contents, they liked this style of worship, and were willing to come to churches and convert to Christianity.[26]

Sometimes, Leung and his band also went to public places where there would be a large number of people around, such as parks and the Cultural Centre Piazza at Tsim Sha Tsui, to offer public worship services. Their main goals were to worship God, evangelize to non-Christians, and share their popularized expression of faith through their musical style with the whole of society. Such aims allowed for this kind of globalized popular (worship) music, with its strong focus on the local social and cultural context, to be quickly adopted.

It is not only the RCCHK that is searching for this kind of localized church service and worship practice. Many other Pentecostal as well as Evangelical churches in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world are also attempting to fit into the local society better and to find more direct ways of serving their local communities. In the three years I have been doing field research in Hong Kong I had observed many such scenes: from western worshippers in Mong Kok or outside the Jordan MTR station singing with guitars in the street to theology student groups walking around the campus of The Chinese University of Hong Kong singing worship songs together. The following contents are the information of one of the street worship activities that the RCCHK had attended:

Theme:	Street Worship
Date / Time:	April 21, 2013, Sunday, 16:00–20:00
Location:	Hong Kong Cultural Piazza, Tsim Sha Tsui (TST), Hong Kong

[26] Interview with Elder Leung, February 20, 2013; translated into English by the author.

RCCHK worship Leader: Elder Matthew Leung
RCCHK Youth worship leader: Kady Joy Lau (Pastor Lau's daughter)
Service Procedure:

15:30	Arrival at TST, testing A/V and multi-media equipment
15:45	Tuning
16:00	Worship starts (on the stage)[27]
18:00	Street worship starts (around TST, on the waterfront promenade)
18:30	Public prayer (on the stage) and calling for conversion/commitment.
20:00	Worship ends



Figure 8: Street Worship Service at TST, Hong Kong (April 21, 2013; Fang Bo)

Evidently, many Pentecostal (including also a small number of the Evangelical) individuals and worship bands are trying to use street performance to better connect with the local society, relying on the popularized music style and localized musical language and lyrical content to attract audiences' eyes, ears, and hearts. Such preferences seem to aim for public places with large crowds.

[27] There are four adults' worship teams and two youth worship teams from the Pentecostal churches union that have attended the event on April 21, 2013.

This pattern of street worship was not started from Hong Kong, but was well used and developed in Hong Kong churches and Protestant Christian organizations and individuals. The diversity of music style they sing and play shows the musical aesthetics and worship traditions from each, and that also reflects the social diversity of Hong Kong, the hierarchy of the populations in different areas, and that the governmental policies on religious out-reach activities are relatively supportive. All these elements have been taken seriously by the RCCHK worshippers, and have made the scene of street worship and public/community service possible. To some extent, they have localized its program rundown design and repertory's arrangement: for instance, arranging the interaction between the worshippers and the audiences off the stage at the connection between one worship song and another, praying for (and/or with) the individuals at the improvisational part of the worship song, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve super-natural healing of the ones who are mentally ill or are in poor health conditions. As I have mentioned, some songs were just about the healing of physical and mental illness, and that could be the right choice to be used in this situation.

Another issue worth mentioning here is the function of CDs of the RCCHK. The idea of producing CDs does not come from financial consideration, but local and global service. For the RCCHK pastors, worship is part of the congregant's life. It is an attitude, rather than ritualized singing. Thus, they produced CDs for the congregants so that they could listen to the music in their daily lives and worship God in anytime and anywhere. Besides that, the RCCHK pastors also use CDs to serve people at places where they cannot set the whole band and sing and play for them. CDs could replace the worshippers in that occasion, bringing emotional melodies and rhythms to the audiences, so that they could experience the feeling of worshipping God and benefit from it.

CONCLUSION

The Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong, a Pentecostal church in Hong Kong with a history of nearly half a century, has gone through the joys of its founding, the challenges of its early pioneering years, the complexity of its development, and the trials of its ongoing transformations. This ethnographic study of the RCCHK has concentrated on specific

parts of its unique history, practices, and social and regional impact, placing particular emphasis on its worship team and music.

The globalization of Pentecostalism and new Evangelicalism brought praise and worship to different churches all around the world almost fifty years ago. Localized praise-and-worship ministry in Hong Kong reflects the attitude of local Christians: They prefer to use their own worship songs in service and ministry outside church contexts in order to better serve indigenous congregants and those who are physically and spiritually in need.

The RCCHK provides a chance for researchers to study the contemporary Christian music phenomenon of praise and worship within the complexity of local, urban, social and cultural contexts. The strong pull of Pentecostal denominational identity as well as Hong Kong localized Christian church identity has resulted in the use of both English and Cantonese worship songs in the RCCHK's services and ministries. Meanwhile, its vision of serving Mainland Chinese Christian churches requires the RCCHK's missionaries to use Mandarin worship songs as well in order to access the greater Chinese Christian communities more easily.

Kirsteen Kim maintains that,

> Setting the changes in mission in the context of global changes is not intended to suggest that the church always follows global developments. On the contrary, the Christian church, representing about a third of the world's population, is a major global player, innovator and agent of change. The church has a global agenda, and Christian mission is an important means by which this is pursued.[28]

Although I agree that Christian churches have considerable impact on the global culture, I argue that Pentecostal churches, such as the RCCHK, also have many successful experiences of integrating into local society, as the localization of church ministries, such as worship music described in this paper, has illustrated.

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[28] Kirsteen Kim, "Mission's Changing Landscape: Global Flows and Christian Movements," *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 2 (2011): 266.