

## **Review: *In Support of Macao's Musical culture: 70 years of Macao PSP Music Band***

**Sio-keong Hong, *In Support of Macao's Musical culture: 70 years of Macao PSP Music Band*, Macao: iMacauMusic, 2021. 239 pp. £12.00. ISBN: 9789998180215.** (洪少強，《澳門音樂文化的重要支持者：澳門治安警察銀樂隊 70 年》，澳門：集樂澳門，2021 年。)

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In 2021, Sio-keong Hong (洪少強) published a book titled *In Support of Macao's Musical Culture: 70 Years of Macao PSP Music Band*. The PSP Music Band refers to the police band of the Public Security Police Force of Macao, which will be referred to as the Macao Police Band in the following article. This book was published by iMacauMusic, which has now been renamed the Macau Urban Music Research Association. They are dedicated to collecting and preserving relevant documentary materials on various forms of Macao's urban music culture history and current status. In his book, Mr. Hong documents the establishment of the Macao Police Band in 1951, its growth, and its role in promoting Macao's musical culture. The Macao Police Band holds a significant place in Macao's music history, and the book not only covers over 70 years of the band's history but also redefines its position within Macao.<sup>1</sup>

This book is the first dedicated to the Macao Police Band, offering a unique perspective on the development of Macao's music scene from the standpoint of the band. The beginning pages of the book consist of the preface, followed by four chapters. The first chapter covers the band's history and its early years of establishment, the second chapter focuses on the band's reorganization period (1980-93), the third chapter delves into the band's localization efforts (1993-2023), and the fourth chapter explores the band's contributions to various music groups in Macao, individual members' skills, and an assessment of the band's current status. The final chapter serves as a

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<sup>1</sup> In this book review, the author will use "Macao" because it is the official name. Only some unofficial organizations use "Macau," in which case the author will use "Macau."

conclusion or includes supplementary materials such as photographs, interview transcripts, and musical scores (Hong 5-8).

In the preface, Professor Ding-Cheng Dai (戴定澄), a renowned expert in Macao's music history, highlights four reasons why Mr. Hong is the author of this book. Firstly, Mr. Hong's extensive tenure with the Macao Police Band, including his role as one of the conductors, provides him with first-hand experience and a deep emotional connection to the band. Secondly, Mr. Hong has been actively involved in conserving Macao's music culture, participating in interviews, filming, music transcription, and other preservation efforts, showcasing his profound understanding of field research. Thirdly, Mr. Hong has previously published related works, demonstrating his scholarly research abilities and publishing experience in the realm of music. Lastly, as a musician born in Macao, his personal involvement in recording, analyzing, and writing is what brings this book to life (Hong 10).

As a retired officer of the Public Security Police Force of Macao, Mr. Hong rose to the rank of Chefe Músico, equivalent to a Senior Inspector. Prior to his retirement, he held positions in conducting and managing the band, and had already authored several books on the development of music in Macao. In his book, he emphasizes the advice and insights of Professor Dai, as well as the academic guidance and support he has received over the years. He also expresses gratitude to his former colleagues in the Macao Police Band, friends from the Macau Band Directors Association, and supporters in the music industry. It is clear that only through his network and position within the Macao Police Band could he have accomplished this work. Without his experience in the Macao Police Band, it would have been impossible to gather such a wealth of valuable information.

One of the key aspects of this book is Mr. Hong's dialogues with former members and conductors of the Macao Police Band, which provided valuable insights and information. Mr. Hong hopes to engage friends interested in the development of Macao's music scene to offer their opinions, allowing for a renewed understanding of the role played by the police band in Macao's music culture. A significant part of the book involves addressing historical issues, such as the relationships between the church, church schools, military bands starting pre-war, and later the police band. It also explores how the police band influenced the development of Western music appreciation among the people of Macao and their efforts in training a new generation of

musicians. From a broader historical perspective, the book offers a unique angle on how church schools and the Macao Police Band influenced the development of wind bands in the surrounding regions in the post-war decade. For instance, a photograph from August 8, 1948, featuring the Band of Instituto Salesiano, includes student names, many of whom later became members of the first generation of the Macao Police Band (Hong 35) and some even joined the Hong Kong Police Band established in 1950 (Lin 73). Furthermore, the book highlights that when the band of Kowloon Motor Bus Band in Hong Kong was established in 1956, it recruited several musicians from the former Macao Police Band (Hong 225). Furthermore, several former members of the Macao Police Band moved to Hong Kong and became prominent band instructors in the post-war decades (Lin 116). These historical discoveries not only enrich the understanding of Macao and Hong Kong's music history but also provide valuable insights into the interconnectedness of musical developments in the region.

Wind band studies in the field of musicology is relatively overlooked, and there is not much research on the history of wind bands in Macao. The first study came from Brazilian conductor Neto Oswaldo Da Veiga Jardim, who wrote a master's thesis at the University of Hong Kong in 2002 titled *The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands in Shaping the Musical Life of Macau, ca.1820 to 1935*. Later, based on his thesis, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao published *Watching the Band Go By—Religious Faith and Military Defence in the Musical Life of Colonial Macau, 1818-1935* in 2018. In 2017, the Macau Band Directors Association also published an oral history book on the wind music of Macao.

Jardim's research primarily delved into how pre-war Portuguese military bands and churches influenced the evolution of the wind band in Macao, reflecting the perspective of Western colonizers introducing Western music to Macao. In contrast, the Macau Band Directors Association shared oral historical accounts without a specific theme. The exploration of military band history in academic spheres is relatively limited, yet the progression of military bands plays a vital role in local Western music development. Hence, Mr. Hong's book stands as one of the few works concerning the history of military bands in the Chinese region. The research in this book examines the development of wind music in Macao from a fresh angle, methodically addressing the impact of police bands on Macao's musical progress in various

aspects. The book's content fills a previously unexplored historical narrative, offering a new pathway for studying Macao's music history and underscoring the importance of wind music in the musical evolution of Macao. This holds significant academic value as it contributes to establishing literature on the history of wind music in Macao, an area that has not been extensively discussed.

Although the book was written in 2021 and now has a four-year history, it still significantly impacts research on the history of music in Macao. The research findings are timeless, with select content even referenced in the author's academic volume focusing on *The Forgotten History of Wind Bands in Hong Kong* (2024). Mr. Hong's book provides a solid foundation for understanding Western music in Macao, especially the history and development of wind music. For scholars intending to research Macao and neighboring countries in the future, the perspective and information presented in this book are invaluable.

While this book makes significant academic contributions, it also has some limitations. It is not an academic publication but rather a historical reference book. The book lacks a theoretical framework and does not aim to build upon a body of critical literature, thus resulting in a lack of in-depth analysis. Due to its non-academic nature, the book lacks the rigor typically found in scholarly works concerning research methods and references. The main research methods utilized in the book include oral history, textual analysis, and participant observation.

In oral history, the author interviews former members of the band to obtain first-hand information. In some cases where former members have passed away, information is gathered through interviews with their family members, resulting in limited data, including oral history stories and photographs. However, the book does not detail the limitations encountered when dealing with these oral histories. For example, when interviewing the first-generation members of the Macao Police Band from 1951, only a few members are still alive, and they are elderly. Mr. Hong acknowledges in the book that the interviews took place a long time ago, so there may be discrepancies in some details. Additionally, at the time of writing the book, there was a pandemic, which prevented some former members from being interviewed. This was only discovered later during discussions with Mr. Hong,

suggesting that some interview perspectives may not fully reflect the historical context at the time.

In textual analysis, the primary method used is to analyze old newspapers, old photographs, and old music scores to reconstruct the history of the Macao Police Band. Many of the old newspapers, photographs, and music scores in the book are from personal collections of Mr. Hong or the interviewees, and many of the stories are related to them personally. Participant observation, the last method employed, involves Mr. Hong narrating historical stories from his own perspective. With these research methods, there is a possibility of subjective bias towards the Macao Police Band, as the entire book is written from the perspective of the band's historical development and contributions, lacking negative or alternative viewpoints regarding the Macao Police Band. Therefore, readers of this material, while gaining insights into the development of Macao's wind music, may need to supplement their understanding with some knowledge of music history in Macao or neighboring regions.

Furthermore, the book lacks the typical academic requirements for references. There are no endnotes or references provided, and many pieces of information do not have cited sources. However, in the handling of images, Mr. Hong has documented 198 images and provided descriptions for them. The only drawback is that the appendix images, including music scores, lack clear indications of their contents, making it less apparent how the music scores tie into the stories behind the band. Therefore, the author emphasizes that this book is a historical reference book rather than an academic publication.

This book may not have garnered significant attention in music history and police history for three main reasons. Firstly, as it is not traditionally published by university presses or scholarly publishers, many Chinese music history scholars and researchers in police history may have overlooked it. Secondly, within mainstream music history research, the attention given to military band history is relatively low, and since the history of police bands is a branch of military band history, this book may not have resonated within the field of studying modern Chinese music history. Thirdly, the original Chinese text could potentially hinder some international readers from fully engaging with the book's content.

This book is indeed a significant contribution, especially for researchers interested in modern Chinese music history, Lingnan wind band history, Macao music history, and Macao police history. It provides researchers with a fresh perspective on the profound impact of the Macao Police Band on the development of music in Macao, laying a solid foundation for future studies on Macao's music development. In addition, the book is particularly valuable for individuals researching the evolution of Macao's music history. Furthermore, writing in the book is not difficult to grasp, so even those without a police background can easily absorb the content. The inclusion of valuable photographs and interviews in the book will greatly assist in reevaluating the history of Macao and even the entire Lingnan wind band development in the future. In the preface by José Amável Pereira Pinto de Sá, the former head of the Macao Police Band, he praises the book by stating, “[b]esides being a valuable tool for music scholars, it extensively captures the 70th Anniversary of the Macao PSP Band and commends its contributions to the enhancement of Macao's musical culture” (qtd. in Hong 23). If this book were to be translated into English in the future, it would benefit scholars worldwide in understanding the music development in Macao.

## Works Cited

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