

**Uniting Chinese Ethnic Minorities with Folk-songs:
Hua'er as a National Heritage in China**

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Abstract

Hua'er, literally “flowers”, is a folk-song tradition in Northwest China named after the custom of comparing female beauty to flowers in the lyrics; it became an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2009. In this article, I discuss *hua'er* as a case study to analyse the significance of ICH recognition in China. Shared by nine different ethnic groups, *hua'er* songs are mostly about love and sex. My paper highlights the changing cultural policies related to the *hua'er* tradition; more specifically, it investigates how and why a musical tradition, once forbidden in the 1960s and 1970s, becomes a tool for political propaganda, a representative of national cultural heritage, even a symbol of united Chinese identity. Drawing upon relevant fieldwork and Chinese-language scholarship, I argue that *hua'er* is constructed as a homogeneous musical genre, where multiple ethnic minority groups can contribute to a common tradition and national heritage for specific political purpose.

Keywords: national heritage, cultural policies, *hua'er*, ethnic minority, identity, tradition

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Introduction

Singing continues to be an integral part of Chinese folk cultures. In different regions, people of various ethnic groups use folk-songs (民歌, C. *min'ge*)¹ as a medium of entertainment, storytelling, or to cathartically release emotions ranging from joy to melancholy. *Hua'er* (花儿, literally “flowers”, implying beautiful flower-like females and love) is a popular folk-song genre in Northwest China. The genre is also called “wild tune” (野曲, C. *yequ*) or “mountain tune” (山曲, C. *shanqu*),² and is designated by Chinese folklorists as belonging to the category of mountain song (山歌, C. *shan'ge*).³ The main functions of the *hua'er* singing are entertainment, flirting, and finding romantic partners. Transmitted orally with occasional instrumental accompaniment, *hua'er* is an effective blend of musical and linguistic artistry, rich in metaphors, other rhetorical devices and traditional Chinese pentatonic scales. The content of *hua'er* consists of love themes, historical stories, and comments and descriptions of social events primarily focusing on the area of “the Great Northwest”.⁴

As a tradition shared by nine different ethnic groups, *hua'er* became China's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2006 and officially entered the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009. This article examines the ways in which *hua'er* has been treated as a folk-song tradition of the Northwest and a national cultural heritage, aiming to shed light on the development of *hua'er* and the changing policies on *hua'er* in the People's Republic of China (PRC). I use *hua'er* as a case study to analyse the significance of ICH recognition in China. More specifically, I investigate how and why a musical genre, once forbidden in the 1960s and 1970s, became a tool for political propaganda, a representative of national cultural heritage, and even a symbol of Chinese identity. Drawing upon relevant fieldwork and major works published by Chinese folklore, literature, and music scholars, I argue that *hua'er* is reconstructed by the PRC government as a homogeneous musical tradition, where multiple ethnic minority groups can contribute to a common tradition and national heritage, reflecting a harmonious Chinese society.⁵

What is *Hua'er* (Flower Song)?

Hua'er is named after the custom of comparing female beauty to flowers in lyrics which usually express sexual desire. For example, in the lyrics of this well-known male solo song, “Climb the High Mountain and Gaze at the Open County” (上去个高山望平川, C. *Shangqu ge gaoshan wang pingchuan*)⁶, a peony is used to refer to a beautiful girl:

¹ The form, content, vocal techniques, and singing styles of the folk-songs vary regionally, as do the tunes to which they are sung.

² This name indicates that the genre is usually sung in the mountain wilderness.

³ Chinese folklorists use several terms based on folk usage to categorize folk-songs. *Shan'ge* are generally defined as improvised songs in free rhythm, sung loudly outdoors.

⁴ Sue Tuohy, “Imagining the Chinese Tradition: The Case of *Hua'er* Songs, Festivals, and Scholarship”, PhD diss. (Indiana University, 1988), 112.

⁵ Jung-a Chang, “From ‘Folk Culture’ to ‘Great Cultural Heritage of China’: The Aporia of the Quest for the Essence of Chinese Culture”, in *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Contemporary China: The Participation of Local Communities*, edited by Khun Eng Kuah and Zhaohui Liu, 112-136 (New York: Routledge, 2017), 122.

⁶ Du Yaxiong, “*Shaonian*, Courtship Songs from Northwest China: A Tradition Shared by Many Ethnic Groups”, *Chime* 12-13 (1998): 70-86, 74.

上去个高山望平川，	I climb the high mountain and gaze at the open country.
平川里有一朵牡丹。	There is a peony in the open country.
看上去是容易摘去是难。	Looking at it is easy, but picking it is difficult.
摘不到手里是枉然。	I cannot get it and it wastes my energy.

Here, the action of “picking” should be interpreted as dating and having sexual intercourse. The singer expresses his sadness since he cannot get the girl he loves. If the above song is an indirect expression of erotic desire and feeling, the lyrics of the following song⁷ directly references sex describing human sex organs as parts of plants:

尕球骨朵悬吊下，	The penis hangs just like a bud,
屎毛是叶叶者落下。	The pubes look like leaves.
尕妹的屎是山丹花，	Little sister’s vagina looks like a morning lily flower,
球球安上个把把。	We can use the penis to be a handle for the flower.

These lyrics reflect the most important functions of the genre of *hua’er*—courtship and flirtation. Such songs are usually sung by young unmarried men and women in the north-western region to seek for lovers or partners.⁸ *Hua’er* songs that focus on love run the gamut “from tragic loss to joy, from the explicitly sexual to the euphemistic”.⁹ In fact, “love” *hua’er* is the most performed and most popular type of the genre, and occupies the largest portion of collected *hua’er* song lyrics.¹⁰ Although *hua’er* texts are mostly associated with love, they may refer to other aspects of life, such as life’s hardship, historical events, and folk tales. *Hua’er* song texts that record the exploits of heroes from Chinese history and mythologies are few in number, but are also very popular.¹¹ The *hua’er* repertoire consists of numerous tunes (令, *C. ling*, mostly in pentatonic scale)¹², each of which may be sung with varying song texts through improvisation.

Hua’er songs are widely spread in Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region, and eastern Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region—an area of over sixty thousand square miles in Northwest China.¹³ Its vast deserts and high mountains, sparse population, and large concentration of minority nationalities are among the factors that distinguish it from China’s

⁷ Du, “*Shaonian*, Courtship Songs from Northwest China”, 72.

⁸ Chinese scholars, e.g. Zhao Zongfu, *Hua’er tonglun* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1989) and Ke Yang, *Shi yu ge de kuanghuan jie: “Hua’er” yu “hua’er hui” zhi minxu yanjiu* (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 2002), have suggested that *hua’er* events also provide an occasion for courtship outside the strictures of arranged marriage.

⁹ Feng Lide and Kevin Stuart, “Sex and the Beauty of Death: *Hua’er* (Northwest China Folksongs)”, *Anthropos* 89 (1994): 212-222, 214.

¹⁰ Since every stanza adheres to certain established patterns of rhyme and meter, many of the lyrics are samples of superb folk poetry (Feng and Stuart, “Sex and the Beauty of Death”, 220). Therefore, Chinese scholars often collect *hua’er* song texts as poems.

¹¹ Xi Huimin, *Xibei hua’er xue* (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 1989), 18.

¹² Zhao, *Hua’er tonglun*, 221-223. The pentatonic (five-tone) scale is widely used in China and features in numerous genres of Chinese music.

¹³ Historically, eastern Qinghai and Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region were both part of Gansu province, and the modern division of provinces that came after 1949 caused *hua’er* to be divided among these three provinces. Xinjiang is relatively a new home for *hua’er*, which was introduced by immigrants from Qinghai and Gansu provinces as recently as the early twentieth century.

dominant regions, the East and the South. In imperial times, most of this area constituted the periphery of Chinese mainstream culture due to its multi-ethnic diversity. However, nowadays “in terms of national defence, natural resources and territory, the region is vitally important to the Chinese nation”¹⁴, namely the PRC, and the central government has targeted it in current development plans. The folklore, music, and performing arts of the Northwest—including the genre of *hua'er*—are being brought to national and even international attention through cultural projects in the forms of festivals, performances as well as scholarly research. While the Han people comprise the majority of the population in China as a whole, the Northwest is a multi-ethnic region that is also inhabited by the Hui, Bao'an (Bonan), Sala (Salar), Tu (Monguor), Dongxiang (Sarta), Yugu (Yugur), Tibetan and Mongolian people.¹⁵ Each of these ethnic minority groups has its own distinctive culture. Despite their different cultural backgrounds, all of these non-Han ethnic groups can speak some Chinese. All groups share the *hua'er* tradition and primarily sing the songs in local Chinese dialect (though most participants are not Han and use a different language in daily speech),¹⁶ intermingling vocabulary and grammar of the Tu, Sala, Tibetan, and other minority languages.¹⁷ Thus, in many aspects both the Northwest and *hua'er* can be regarded as “contact zones.”¹⁸ People from different ethnic minority groups usually participate together in the song gatherings (*hua'er hui*) to communicate their sexual feelings, pursue their desire through singing, and perhaps subsequently to engage in sexual affairs that can lead to potential interethnic marriage.

It is the local custom that *hua'er* can be sung by any adult (male or female) at any time; but due to the sexually explicit content of many *hua'er* songs and the sensual nature of the *hua'er* singing (primarily for seeking courtship), it is restricted to the fields outside residential areas, usually on pleasant mountain meadows with beautiful scenery that are easily accessible to neighbouring residential areas. Singing *hua'er* inside a village or family home would be regarded as offensive and immoral because it could be interpreted as soliciting sexual relations.¹⁹ In addition, *hua'er* singing takes place not only in daily life situations, but also in certain mass song gatherings of people specially organized for that purpose on fixed dates and at fixed locations. Most of these *hua'er* gatherings are held around the fifth and sixth months of the Chinese lunar calendar during the agricultural off-season; they may last from one to several days, and the number of participants varies from a couple of thousand to tens of thousands. Events of *hua'er* singing have been traditionally condemned as “immoral” or “crude” by dominant religious and philosophical thoughts (namely Islam and Buddhism) in the Northwest and by the past ruling authorities,²⁰ and were restricted and even banned in the early decades of the PRC. However, in recent decades, *hua'er* has been promoted as a Chinese national “cultural heritage” through organized singing competitions, stage-performances, festivals, scholarly research, and media broadcasting sponsored by the Chinese government as a shared tradition among several nationalities in the Northwest of China.

¹⁴ Tuohy, “Imagining the Chinese Tradition”, 9.

¹⁵ The people of the Hui, Bao'an, Dongxiang, and Sala ethnic groups are traditionally Muslims, and Tibetan Buddhism is popular among the populations of the Tu, Yugu, Tibetan, and Mongolian people.

¹⁶ Certain ethnic groups (such as Dongxiang and Sala) also sing *hua'er* songs in their own languages (see Zhu et al. 1997, 62-64).

¹⁷ Feng and Stuart, “Sex and the Beauty of Death”, 213; Du, “*Shaonian*, Courtship Songs from Northwest China”, 71.

¹⁸ Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as “spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (“Arts of the Contact Zone”, *Profession* 91 (1991): 33-40, 34).

¹⁹ Xi, *Xibei hua'er xue*, 57.

²⁰ See Yang Mu, “On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 26 (1994a): 100-116, 109 for more details.

Studies on *Hua'er* in China

Publications on *hua'er* appeared in the second decade of the twentieth century.²¹ However, scholarly studies on *hua'er* are almost non-existent before 1949 (with Zhang Yaxiong's *Hua'er ji* (花儿集, Collection of *Hua'er*) of 1940 as the only exception²²). In the 1950s and 1960s, some anthologies of *hua'er* songs were published, mostly by Han Chinese academics, professional researchers or musicians. Many songs (mostly lyrics) in these anthologies are improvised texts attached with political themes reflecting various government-led movements (such as the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s). They are said to be collected through fieldwork but many do not include ethnographic details (such as collecting location, collectors, singers and dates). Like most other music publications during that period, the published *hua'er* tunes are notated in the cipher notation, which was introduced into China at the beginning of the twentieth century and has been used extensively. The quantity of the publications is not large. They all provide general introductions (especially the categorization) to the genre. This early phase of Chinese *hua'er* studies stopped because of the Cultural Revolution²³ in China.

Research publications on *hua'er* began to appear again in the early 1980s, ushering a new era (of two decades) for research in China. During this period, the quantity of publications on *hua'er* was much greater than before, and the scope was expanded. Among other reasons for this, after the Cultural Revolution, the government has, to a limited degree, fostered the "Reform and Opening" policies for many aspects of life, including academic work. Western theory and scholarship in music have been introduced into China, which has started influencing the music research there. The direct reasons for the surge of research interests are that, first, publications on music have become more numerous than before; and second, there were more people concentrating on *hua'er*, and many of them became leading scholars in the field. In a more open academic environment, many *hua'er* scholars have accepted the idea that the ultimate aim of music research is to know the people and society. So the purpose of the study of *hua'er* is to know more about people and their societies in the Northwest—a notion that serves the government's growing interest in that region. From the late 1980s, China started to publish a series of volumes of folk-songs, *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* (中国民间歌曲集成, Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs) and ballads, *Zhongguo geyao jicheng* (中国歌谣集成, Anthology of Chinese Ballads), arranged per province. The publications continued through the 1990s and even into the new millennium. *Hua'er* songs are included in all the volumes of the north-western provinces or autonomous regions. These volumes are compiled by leading scholars in the respective areas, such as folklore and music, and they categorize *hua'er* songs according to different ethnic groups or topics and usually summarize the characteristics of specific regional styles in the accompanied introductory articles in each volume. Generally

²¹ Xi, *Xibei hua'er xue*, 2.

²² Zhang Yaxiong's work was the first substantial collection of *hua'er* song texts. It contained 653 *hua'er* song texts and several essays dealing with many aspects of *hua'er* such as classification, literary and linguistics features, manners of singing, *hua'er* gatherings, associated customs and history. This was the outcome of interviews and correspondence with 365 informants over a period of twenty years. The publication is valuable not only for being the first scholarly study of *hua'er* but also because it is comprehensive and informative (Qiao Jianzhong, "Hua'er yanjiu diyi shu: Zhang Yaxiong he tade *hua'er ji*", *Yinyue yanjiu* 3 (2004): 19-28, 19; Yang, "On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China", 104). Therefore, Zhang Yaxiong is proclaimed as "the father of *hua'er* research" (Tuohy, "Imagining the Chinese Tradition", 256).

²³ The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) resulted in widespread chaos in all walks of life. During the movement, many historical and cultural sites were destroyed while traditional socio-cultural activities and their related research were banned. *Hua'er* was regarded as an inappropriate tradition for its sexual contents (see "Academic Ignorance or Political Taboo? Some Issues in China's Study of Its Folk Song Culture", *Ethnomusicology* 38.2 (1994b): 303-320).

speaking, the quality of studies published during the 1980s and 1990s is much higher than before with increasing attention paid to the ethnographic details and annotations (even map or picture illustrations), and they are no longer simple collections of *hua'er* lyrics or tunes with preliminary and superficial descriptions like most of those in the earlier period.

After entering the new millennium, *hua'er* studies have been promoted by the government with efforts to expand the popularity of *hua'er* songs to support regional economic development, and most importantly, to present the genre as a shared cultural heritage among different ethnic groups in the light of the state rhetoric to display China as a diverse yet united country. This promotion strategy was further reinforced after the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched its first proclamation of “the Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” in 2001 and after the Chinese Ministry of Culture established a system for the recognition of ICH in 2005 and founded the National ICH Protection Centre in 2006.²⁴ Backed by the state-run institutions capable of the mass dissemination of ideas and music, such as mass media, public press, and academic publishers, the number of scholarly publications on *hua'er* increased rapidly and *hua'er* was increasingly presented as a shared local tradition within the nation, as a Chinese national folk music genre, and as an important “intangible cultural heritage.” Notably, *hua'er* scholars are encouraged and supported by state-funding to produce works that follow the government rhetoric and cultural policy in promoting Chinese national cultural heritage.²⁵ For instance, the Cultural Bureau of Gansu province provided scholars funding to publish a specific ICH series of *hua'er* studies through Gansu People’s Press. With a common theme of exploring *hua'er*’s significant value as a Chinese national ICH, these publications include Guo Zhengqing’s book *Hezhou hua'er* (河州花儿, *Hua'er* in Hezhou, 2007), Wang Pei’s edited volume *Zhongguo hua'er quling quanji* (中国花儿曲令全集, *Collected Works of Hua'er Tunes in China*, 2007), Wei Quanming’s book *Zhongguo “hua'er” xue shigang* (中国花儿学史纲, *The Outline of History for Hua'er Studies in China*, 2005), and Xu Zhihe’s book *Zhongguo hua'er wenhua biannian shilue* (中国花儿文化编年史略, *A Brief Chronicle of Hua'er Culture in China*, 2006).

Because these *hua'er* scholars work primarily within government-supported institutions, they must follow the government policies or regulations and deal with a variety of restrictions, one of which is to eliminate any custom or expression—such as songs containing sexual innuendo or superstitious elements—that does not contribute to the cultural elevation of Chinese society.²⁶ A number of scholars have simply ignored and avoided talking about *hua'er* songs dealing too openly with sexual activities in their publications. Sometimes song lyrics are even changed and carefully edited before they are published.²⁷ On the other hand, Chinese *hua'er* scholars from various academic departments in universities as well as different scholarly societies and government offices at a variety of levels have made significant efforts

²⁴ In 2005, the General Office of the Chinese State Council responded to UNESCO’s ICH project by designating the Ministry of Culture to establish a system for the recognition of ICH at the county, municipal, provincial and national levels. In 2006, the Chinese ICH Protection Centre was founded within the Chinese National Academy of Arts, an institution directly under the General Office of the State Council. The Chinese ICH Protection Centre has since served as the coordinating institution for all Chinese ICH-related policies and activities, as well as for all submissions of ICH materials for inclusion on UNESCO’s list.

²⁵ Among most of the publications in 2006 and thereafter, the term of “cultural heritage” is commonly used (yet not usually defined) by *hua'er* scholars to denote a clear implementation and emphasis of the government policy on promoting *hua'er* as a Chinese national ICH.

²⁶ Sandra Eminov explored the development of Chinese folklore studies under the impact of nationalism in modern China (Sandra Eminov, “Folklore and nationalism in modern China”, *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 12 (1975): 257-277). In addition, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) discussed that folklore and folk genres adopted for nationalist purposes are often edited and remade into representation acceptable to the ruling parties and the nation state.

²⁷ Du, “*Shaonian*, Courtship Songs from Northwest China”, 84.

through their numerous researches to promote *hua'er* nationally and internationally. For example, at the 2004 Inaugural International Conference on *Hua'er* held in Lanzhou, Gansu province, over 200 scholars from all over the world presented their studies on *hua'er* or ICH related issues (such as the origin of *hua'er* tradition, Chinese ICH protection and development), providing an opportunity for display *hua'er* and its studies on an international stage.²⁸ Among those published conference papers²⁹, almost all Chinese contributors repeatedly mentioned the national cultural heritage value of *hua'er* and regarded the genre as a cultural treasure of the world. In general, Chinese scholars have played an active role in advocating government policies on *hua'er* and national ICH. Therefore, *hua'er* scholarship responds directly to the relevant cultural policy changes.

Effects of Cultural Policy Changes on *Hua'er*

“Cultural policy refers to the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life. ... [It] is embodied in systematic, regulatory guides to action that are adopted by organizations to achieve their goals.”³⁰

In short, cultural policy is clearly bureaucratic. In a study on the cultural policy in the PRC, Liu Bai denotes that, “Socialist China’s principles and policies are formulated to help fulfil the specific tasks of a certain period of historical development”.³¹ Therefore, cultural policies in the PRC are subject to change according to the needs of the country, or more specifically, the needs of the state or the government.

In China and in many other nations, the state often influences the development of arts according to its own interests and needs for building national identity or cultivating national culture/tradition/cultural heritage.

“Politicians world-wide ... use music and musicians to help them achieve certain goals ... or, at least, try to control music and musicians to avoid their potentially negative impact.”³²

State intervention is evident in the development of Chinese folk-songs, including *hua'er*, through changes of cultural policies either directly or indirectly, since “[c]ultural policy always implies the management of populations through suggested behaviour”.³³ The survival and development of folk-song traditions largely depend on the social circumstances. From the 1950s onwards, many political and historical events that have taken place in China have deeply

²⁸ The organizers of this conference also took all the conference participants to tour multiple sites of *hua'er* gatherings to gain first-hand experience with *hua'er*.

²⁹ See Chen Yuanlong et al., eds., *Zhongguo hua'er xinlun* (Lanzhou: Gansu wenhua chubanshe, 2004).

³⁰ Toby Miller and George Yudice, *Cultural Policy* (New York: Sage Publications, 2002), 1.

³¹ Liu Bai, *Cultural Policy in the People's Republic of China: Letting a Hundred Flowers Blossom* (Paris: UNESCO, 1983), 16.

³² Svanibor Pettan, “Making the Refugee Experience Different: ‘Azra’ and the Bosnians in Norway”, in *War, Exile, Everyday Life: Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Maja Povržanović and Renata Jambrešić Kirin, 245-255 (Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 1996), 252.

³³ Miller and Yudice, *Cultural Policy*, 14.

influenced folk-song culture; the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the economic reforms since the late 1970s have all made an impact on changes of cultural policies regarding *hua'er*.

For more than five decades the Chinese government has implemented a cultural policy of eliminating or changing customs and traditions that they consider contrary to communist and socialist ideology. Following the governmental guidelines, customs have been divided into “good customs” (良俗, C. *liangsu*) and “bad customs” (陋俗, C. *lousu*). Since the early 1950s every household in China has become aware of the government policy of *Yifengyisu* (移风易俗, changing prevailing customs and transforming social traditions), which implies eliminating “bad customs” or transforming them into “good” ones.³⁴ This “*Yifengyisu*” policy was carried to its extreme during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). According to Chinese communist ideology, the sexual practices associated with the *hua'er* singing³⁵ are decidedly “bad customs,” and were to be eliminated for the well-being of a socialist society. The *hua'er* gatherings and all *hua'er* singing activities were completely banned for ten years.³⁶ Some famous *hua'er* singers, such as Zhu Zhonglu (朱仲禄), Wang Shaoming (王绍明) and Su Ping (苏平), were detained for participating in *hua'er* gatherings and sent to labour camps.³⁷ In some areas the ban continued even into the late 1970s, after the Cultural Revolution was over.³⁸ How did *hua'er* obtain the state endorsement as a Chinese national ICH after suppression? Quite possibly, the multiple (economic and political) values of *hua'er* recognized by the Chinese government have contributed to its survival and development.

Hua'er as a Medium for Regional Economic Development

Since the Reforms and Opening (改革开放, C. *gaige kaifang*) carried out in the late 1970s, economic development has been a priority for the Chinese government. In the meantime, government officials have realized the potential value of *hua'er* and have pursued a moderate and (to some extent) supportive cultural policy toward *hua'er*. For example, traditional *hua'er* gatherings were allowed to take place, while the government made great efforts to guide them in an ideologically “correct” direction to “contribute to the economic development of the region and the general development of the Chinese society”.³⁹ These efforts include: sending representatives from the government to attend and monitor the *hua'er* gatherings;⁴⁰ organizing professional writers and musicians to compose new *hua'er* songs in praise of the government

³⁴ Yang, “On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China”, 112.

³⁵ The party officials generally recognized that the main purpose of the *hua'er* singing is to attract the opposite sex for courtship, and not good for the cultural elevation of Chinese society.

³⁶ Qiao Jianzhong, “Gansu, Qinghai ‘hua'er hui’ caifeng baogao”, *Zhongguo yinyuexue* 3 (1987): 48-60, 59.

³⁷ Wei Quanming, *Zhongguo “hua'er” xue shigang* (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 2005), 145.

³⁸ However, bans were later recognized to be unsuccessful. Local people (especially those of ethnic minority groups) secretly participated in singing gatherings in spite of them and according to reports (Guo Zhengqing, *Hezhou Hua'er* (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 2007)), such disobedience frequently resulted in bloody clashes between singers and armed government cadres sent in to break up the gatherings.

³⁹ Wang Pei, *Da xibei zhi hun: Zhongguo hua'er* (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2006), v.

⁴⁰ Beginning in 1949, representatives from the national government attended the *hua'er* gatherings in increasing numbers until the breakout of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP);⁴¹ and sending both professional singers and local amateur singers to perform new songs at various *hua'er* song gatherings.⁴²

Meanwhile, the government also plays an active role in coordinating concerts and competitions for *hua'er* singing. The government broadcasts *hua'er* songs and singing contests on the television and radio, and produces special commercial recordings⁴³ with traditional and contemporary repertoires for sale⁴⁴, and organizes trading companies or groups to set up stalls at various *hua'er* events sites.⁴⁵ All these efforts have been quite successful. As a result, many *hua'er* song gatherings have become more like “multi-functional” country fairs for political propaganda, commercial trading, as well as general entertainment. These organized *hua'er* performances and commercial recordings of *hua'er* songs are popular among tourists, spectators, and researchers. They also provide an important venue for producing new *hua'er* star-singers and integrating *hua'er* with merchandise opportunities, all part of marketing of *hua'er* culture.⁴⁶ The recognition of *hua'er* as a national ICH in 2006 makes the genre even more marketable to domestic audience, providing a form of ICH branding in China.

Since organized singing competitions and professional performances are often forcibly held inside residential areas for attracting broader audiences, the local people have become accustomed hearing *hua'er* inside villages and urban cities.⁴⁷ However, such events contradict the traditional practices of *hua'er*. In the context of such staged *hua'er* singing, the motivation for the singers has changed from winning lovers to winning fame and money (or material prizes). Some *hua'er* singers are now even able to sign performing contracts and support their families with paid singing.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Those songs are specifically composed to explain or teach a national policy or a political event to illiterate population. Since the 1980s, *hua'er* songs with political lyrics have been increasingly popular. For example, in 2015, I collected the following song lyrics from a live performance by a male *hua'er* singer from Gansu province:

山上有崖是鹰落了，	The hawk can rest on the mountain with cliffs,
河里有水是鱼活了；	The fish can live in the river full of water;
人民有共产党领导了，	The people now have the Communist Party to lead,
日子就过得红火火了。	We will have good lives full of prosperities.

⁴² Yang, “On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China”, 112; Guo Zhengqing, “Hua'er zhi weilai: chuantong de baohu he xiandai de fazhan”, in *Zhongguo hua'er xinlun*, edited by Chen Yuanlong et al., 60-79 (Lanzhou: Gansu wenhua chubanshe, 2004), 74.

⁴³ According to Sue Tuohy (“The Choices and Challenges of Local distinction: Regional attachments and dialect in Chinese Music”, in *Global Pop, Local Language*, edited by Harris M. Berger and Michael Thomas Carroll, 153-185 (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 176), the commercial recordings of *hua'er* songs have limited geographic distribution, and most are sold to regular *hua'er* audiences in the Northwest.

⁴⁴ Tuohy, “The Choices and Challenges of Local distinction”, 176; personal interview with Wang Hongming 汪鸿明 in 2015.

⁴⁵ Yang, “On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China”, 112.

⁴⁶ See Xue Songmei, “Lun yuanshengtai yinyue gezhong ‘hua'er’ de lüyou kaifa”, *Fazhan* 2 (2009): 122-123.

⁴⁷ Yang, “On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China”, 111; Sue Tuohy, “The Social Life of Genre: The Dynamics of Folksong in China”, *Asian Music* 30.2 (1999): 39-86, 64-5. In daily life, however, people in the region still only sing it outdoors and distant from where they live.

⁴⁸ Yang Man, “The Transformation of *Hua'er* Songs in 21st Century China”, PhD diss. (University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2016), 148.



Figure 1. A Report on *Hua'er* Festival. Image courtesy of Xie Shengcai.⁴⁹

Besides traditional *hua'er* gatherings, many multi-day “*hua'er* festivals” (花儿艺术节, C. *hua'er yishujie*) are organized jointly by the local government, local music and arts societies, educational institutions, and the provincial bureau of culture (see Figure 1) in the Northwest.⁵⁰ Those festivals are usually created and announced to the public to mark political events, such as the anniversary of the PRC’s establishment and the founding of autonomous counties in the region.⁵¹ During such festivals, *hua'er* songs are often being used as means to spread propaganda, commercial or educational messages.⁵² From newspaper announcements to the tourist brochures, the widely advertised festivals become popular tourism attractions in the north-western region and bring considerable financial profit to the local economy.⁵³ A brief translation of a Qinghai *hua'er* festival program printed in Chinese can well articulate the purpose of such event:

Following ... [the] theory of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics and the guiding principle of the CCP’s fundamental line, the purpose of this *hua'er* festival is to help achieve the healthy development of enterprises aimed at promoting ... Qinghai province. It is meant to introduce enterprises, invigorate the market, and boost the economy and culture through activities

⁴⁹ Xie Shengcai, “Hua’er zan shengshi, fangge xin nongcun”, *Zhongguo tuzu* 3 (2010): 45.

⁵⁰ Tuohy, “The Social Life of Genre”, 65.

⁵¹ Kathryn Lowry, et al., “Flower Songs from Northwestern China”, in *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature*, edited by Victor H. Mair and Mark Bender, 93-99 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 94.

⁵² Yang Man (“The Transformation of *Hua'er* Songs in 21st Century China”, 145) reports that the topics of those songs range from the family planning to how to apply for a bank card, advice on investments, and basic understanding of the national laws. *Hua'er* singers are paid by the local government or state-run cultural institutions to perform for tourists.

⁵³ Xue, “Lun yuanshengtai yinyue gezhong ‘hua’er’ de luyou kaifa”, 123.

such as cultural entertainment, cooperation between organizations, ... [and] the exchange of commodities.⁵⁴

Obviously, the priority is given to “enterprises” and “economy”. Here, the case of *hua'er* festivals demonstrates how the state’s intervention on a musical tradition and its practices is driven by a specific interest in regional economic development. *Hua'er* is re-envisioned as a cultural commodity with economic value tied up with the tourist market. The marketing value of *hua'er* exceeds the artistic value of *hua'er* in the context of such events.

Each province of the Northwest has its own strategies for the use of *hua'er* in provincial development projects. For examples, in 2004, two places in Gansu province—Min County (or Minzhou) and Linxia-Hui Autonomous Prefecture—were named “the Hometown of Chinese *Hua'er*” by the Chinese Folk Artists Association.⁵⁵ While celebrating the special occasion, the government leaders of Gansu expressed hopes to establish *hua'er* as a “cultural brand of the Northwest” (西北的文化品牌, *C. xibei de wenhua pinpai*)⁵⁶ to attract investments and tourists nationally and internationally for large-scale regional development. This highlighted “cultural brand” was later integrated into the more marketable ICH branding after the Chinese ICH recognition system was established in 2005. Apparently, promoting *hua'er* as an ICH not only helps regional officials gain successful administrative reputation, but also attracts various funding for local development and community building projects. The introduction of the Chinese ICH Law in 2011 motivates more local government leaders to compete for ownership of ICH items and inheritors, knowing that the state provides funding to carry out activities related to the preservation of ICH.⁵⁷ *Hua'er* tunes, birthplaces, and *hua'er* singers all become important marketable potentials for the regional governments to apply for funding from the Chinese central government. And similar to You Ziying’s observation⁵⁸ on an ICH project in Shanxi province, the *hua'er*-related ICH projects thus become a means to exploit the local communities and harvest profit from the state.

Some Chinese scholars describe the current status of *hua'er* culture as “blooming in the Great Northwest of China in many ways” (在中国大西北多面绽放, *C. zai zhongguo da xibei duomian zhanfang*).⁵⁹ Yet what would an age-old folk-song tradition like *hua'er* bring to the people of the Northwest in the future? This question remains to be answered as the genre may evolve into more enhanced or developed forms to fit the developing tastes and needs of the modern Chinese society.

Hua'er as a Symbol of National Unity

As a large nation, the situation of China is much like that of the United States, where cultural diversity is couched in terms of the American people, a nation historically formed by many

⁵⁴ Cited in Tuohy, “The Choices and Challenges of Local distinction”, 172.

⁵⁵ Wang Pei, *Hezhou hua'er yanjiu* (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 1992), 116; Xu Zhihe, *Zhongguo hua'er wenhua biannian shilue* (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 2006), 10. Journalist Chen Zongli (陈宗立) also reported the event on the national newspaper *Guangming Daily*, November 5th, 2008.

⁵⁶ Wang, *Da xibei zhi hun*, 120; Xu, *Zhongguo hua'er wenhua biannian shilue*, 1.

⁵⁷ Yang, “The Transformation of *Hua'er* Songs in 21st Century China”, 131-132.

⁵⁸ You Ziying, “Shifting Actors and Power Relations: Contentious Local Responses to the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Contemporary China”, in *UNESCO on the Ground: Local Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage*, edited by Michael Dylan Foster and Lisa Gilman, 113-128 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 125.

⁵⁹ Personal interviews with Zhang Junren (张君仁) and Wei Quanming (魏泉鸣) in 2015.

different ethnic groups who are encouraged, selectively, to maintain parts of their cultural traditions. “The notion of traditions is used to help explain the overall unity of the apparent diversity”.⁶⁰ Different traditions in a nation are woven together to form a culture or a cultural identity.

The Chinese political leaders often see that music has a special efficacy in promoting a sense of nationalism and unity among people as they consistently emphasize that “Chinese history and culture are remarkable for the unity between [the ethnic groups]. In this big community, the cultures of various nationalities interact and help to promote each other”.⁶¹ Through top-down governmental organized activities and performances, *hua'er* songs have been presented to a national audience. “The efforts to introduce local forms to the nation and to encourage the nation to become attached to its local manifestations are part of a large government agenda of strengthening national unity”.⁶² The *hua'er* songs are promoted in part because of their reflection of the unity, transcultural practice, and integration of different nationalities in the PRC, contributing to a shared ICH and even a shared Chinese identity.

Chinese scholars have described *hua'er* as “an encyclopaedia of the Northwest” (西北的百科全书, *C. xibei de baike quanshu*) and “the soul of the great Northwest” (大西北之魂, *C. da xibei zhi hun*) since *hua'er* embodies so many aspects of the north-western culture.⁶³ However, Sue Tuohy’s depiction of the function of *hua'er* seems to be the most accurate:

As symbols of the people of the Northwest, *hua'er* songs can communicate and strengthen their depiction as courageous and bold developers of the untapped riches of the frontier region, many nationalities working together for common goals. What they are working for—development, prosperity, stability, and modernization—are also the goals of the Chinese nation. And as symbols of the nation they can communicate the diversity and richness of the Chinese nation and further strengthen a perception of the “Chineseness” of the nation’s far off and strategic borders.⁶⁴

Since the 1980s, the local authorities in the northwest region often encourage the participations of ethnic minorities at the organized *hua'er* competitions, gatherings or festivals, with an avowed emphasis on “protecting and preserving folk arts and expressive culture of the people”.⁶⁵ Within the concept of “the people,” national minorities play a preeminent role. The Chinese government emphasizes that several nationalities sing *hua'er* songs in the political-cultural discourse about the unity of the Chinese nation. As a tradition shared by several different ethnic groups, *hua'er* exemplifies what is called “the interaction of China’s [different] nationalities in their mutual development of the Chinese national heritage”.⁶⁶ Thus, *hua'er* becomes a symbol of “cultural integration,” “nationalism,” and “unity”; through singing *hua'er* all ethnic groups identify themselves as members of a big, united Chinese family. *Hua'er*’s ICH designation at national level reconfirmed the government’s strategy of promoting Chinese identity and Chinese nation among ethnic minorities.

⁶⁰ Sue Tuohy, “Cultural Metaphors and Reasoning: Folklore Scholarship and Ideology in Contemporary China”, *Asian Folklore Studies* 50.1 (1991): 189-220, 199.

⁶¹ Liu, *Cultural Policy in the People’s Republic of China*, 15.

⁶² Tuohy, “The Choices and Challenges of Local distinction”, 154-55.

⁶³ Wang, *Da xibei zhi hun*, 2.

⁶⁴ Tuohy, “Imagining the Chinese Tradition”, 12.

⁶⁵ Tuohy, “Imagining the Chinese Tradition”, 13.

⁶⁶ Tuohy, “The Social Life of Genre”, 61.



Figure 2. A *Hua'er* Singing Competition. Image courtesy of Wang Pei.⁶⁷



Figure 3. A *Hua'er* Poster in Qinghai. Image courtesy of Liu Xiaoqiang.⁶⁸

The mass media also plays an important role in promoting *hua'er* as a symbol of national unity. State-controlled TV stations frequently broadcast *hua'er* singing competitions as well as “staged” *hua'er* performances.⁶⁹ These staged performances often feature scenes of *hua'er* singers in traditional ethnic costumes⁷⁰ taking part in the competitions together (see Figure 2). The performers dressed in multi-ethnic costumes are often portrayed singing the same *hua'er* song as a group. This staged presentation embodies symbol of harmony and unity among Chinese people. In addition, images showing people of different ethnic groups participating in

⁶⁷ Wang, *Da xibei zhi hun*, 120.

⁶⁸ Liu Xiaoqiang, “Qinghai *hua'er*”, *Yinyue tiandi* 8 (2010): 1.

⁶⁹ Personal interview with journalist Ma Yingcai (马英才) in 2015; Yang, “The Transformation of *Hua'er* Songs in 21st Century China”, 148.

⁷⁰ According to Zhang Junren (personal interview in 2015), dressing up in colorful ethnic attire is increasingly trendy among *hua'er* singers, and may not directly reflect their actual ethnic identity.

various *hua'er* events together can be found in newspapers, magazines, tourist guidebooks, propaganda posters (see Figure 3) and journals at both regional and national levels. The implication of those images is clear and meaningful: *hua'er* culture embodies the unity of Chinese civilization—the Chineseness overrides China's diversity.

In May 2006, the Ministry of Culture of the PRC recognized *hua'er* as a “National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage”.⁷¹ To apply for ICH recognition at the Chinese county, provincial, municipal and national level, one uses an application package that is slightly revised from the UNESCO template, and that follows a different set of criteria created by the General Office of State Council of China. While the criteria and goals established by UNESCO and those of the Chinese system overlap, China has also added its own agenda for the selection of its elements of ICH. In 2005, the General Office of the State Council issued a document titled “Suggestions on Strengthening the Protection Work of Our Nation's Intangible Cultural Heritage”, stating its mission for identifying Chinese ICH as: (1) pushing forward the safeguarding, protection and transmission of Chinese National ICH; (2) strengthening Chinese national identity and improving the understanding of Chinese culture over a continuous history; (3) respecting the contributions that certain communities and individuals have had on China to illustrate the diverse culture of China; (4) encouraging citizens, institutions and other social organizations actively to participate in the safeguarding of ICH; (5) following the Convention for the safeguarding of ICH, improving international understanding of China's ICH and building cultural exchanges and cooperation to contribute to the diversity of human culture worldwide.

When applying for recognition of national ICH in 2006, Gansu province was the first to submit *hua'er*'s application, and other provinces were added as joint provinces in the following years.⁷² However, for the 2009 nomination of UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Gansu province, Qinghai province and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region jointly prepared the applications and supporting documents on behalf of the Chinese Ministry of Culture.⁷³ Endorsed by state-run cultural and ICH centres from Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia, fourteen representative inheritors of different ethnic groups from those three Chinese provinces signed their names on the supporting documents. In October 2009, *hua'er* successfully became an element of world ICH for all humanity.

After UNESCO established the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, member states (including China) around the world have shown increasing interests in such international high-profile pronouncements and proclamations about specific musical genres.⁷⁴ As Yung points out, “the nation-states nominate their own choice of artistic genres as candidates; the nominations are very likely affected by internal political and cultural considerations”.⁷⁵ In many countries, nationalist ideology plays an important role when selecting national items of ICH.⁷⁶ Many of the elements designated as ICH “had some

⁷¹ Guo, *Hezhou hua'er*, 5. Guo also reports that a number of academic conferences were held to accompany the special occasion.

⁷² Yang, “The Transformation of *Hua'er* Songs in 21st Century China”, 133.

⁷³ The applications were primarily prepared by the Gansu Provincial Bureau of Culture, the Protection Centre of ICH of Gansu, and the *Hua'er* Research Association of Gansu.

⁷⁴ Bell Yung, “Historical legacy and the contemporary world: UNESCO and China's *qin* music in the twenty-first century”, in *Music and Cultural Rights*, edited by Andrew N. Weintraub and Bell Yung, 140-168 (Chicago and Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 160-161.

⁷⁵ Yung, “Historical legacy and the contemporary world”, 161.

⁷⁶ Anthony Seeger, “Lessons Learned from the ICTM (NGO) Evaluation of Nominations for the UNESCO Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, 2001-5”, in *Intangible Heritage*, edited by Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, 112-128 (New York: Routledge, 2009); Helaine Silverman, “Contested Cultural Heritage: A Selected Historiography”, in *Contested Cultural Heritage: Religion, Nationalism, Erasure, and Exclusion in a Global World*, edited by Helaine Silverman, 1-49 (New York: Springer, 2011).

form of geopolitical and/or nationalist importance to the nominating country”.⁷⁷ The ways in which UNESCO’s mission statement in China have been revised shows that China is using the identification of ICH as an opportunity for the construction and reinforcement of its national identity. What elements can be recognized as items of ICH are not simply any sort of valuable cultural practices, but rather those items of ICH that serve to strengthen the Chinese national identity and the ideology of a continuous Chinese history.

In the official nomination form submitted to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in 2009, *hua’er* was described and emphasized as “created and shared” by several ethnic groups of China, “an important artistic form of cultural exchange, emotional communication among [different Chinese] nationalities,” and the “only folk song of its kind created and performed by multi-nationalities in China.”⁷⁸ In the light of the government’s rhetoric of promoting “national cultural heritage” and presenting China as a diverse yet united nation-state, the Chineseness of *hua’er* has been reinforced for international recognition. UNESCO became an important stage for Chinese government to demonstrate the symbolism of *hua’er* while retaining China’s lead in terms of promoting its cultural heritage in the international forum and allowing China to rise significantly up the soft power ranking despite the weak indicators for its development of democratic institutions, digitalisation or education.⁷⁹

As a folk-song genre of China’s north-western region, *hua’er* has been reconstructed to symbolize ethnic unity. As *hua’er* scholar Wang Pei puts it, the factors that necessitate the preservation of *hua’er* as an art form each relate to its status as a multi-ethnic tradition, namely: (1) the need to preserve the most salutary aspects of Chinese culture, (2) the need to promote ethnic solidarity, (3) the need to engage in research on fields related to social sciences, (4) the need to foster socialist artistic compositions, and (5) the need to inspire cultural and ideological progress among all ethnicities.⁸⁰ Thus *hua’er* has become an ideal example for promoting ethnic solidarity and unity in Northwest China. In this way, publications, staged performances and festivals all contribute to a normative re-construction of *hua’er* as a significant national heritage under the new Chinese ICH law of 2011.⁸¹

From censorship and suppression to open support and promotion, the changing cultural policies on the *hua’er* tradition have demonstrated the interactive relationship between the arts and the state (with the state playing a dominant role) as well as the bureaucratic nature of cultural policies. On the one hand, *hua’er* and ICH-related cultural policies have a lot to do with the preservation of public order and with the development of a national culture that promotes national unity⁸² and international recognition. On the other hand, particularly in recent times, economic factors have also played a significant role in the policy-making regarding *hua’er*. The marketing of *hua’er* culture and the branding of a national ICH for tourism, investments, and further economic growth have been set as the priority by the regional governments in Northwest China. All these facts indicate that cultural policies are always concerned with the interests of the state.

⁷⁷ Seeger, “Lessons Learned from the ICTM (NGO) Evaluation”, 121.

⁷⁸ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00211> (accessed June 31, 2010).

⁷⁹ Hanna Schreiber, “Intangible Cultural Heritage and Soft Power – Exploring the Relationship”, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 12 (2017): 44-57, 51.

⁸⁰ Wang, *Da xibei zhi hun*, 106-10.

⁸¹ As of 2011, three rounds of recognition for national ICH have taken place. The first round was conducted in 2006 and recognized 518 items. The second was in 2008 with 510 new items and 147 expanded items. The third round, conducted in 2011, led to the recognition of 191 new items and 164 expanded items.

⁸² Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 180.

Conclusion

This article documents the development of *hua'er* and the changing policies on this musical tradition in the PRC. The ups and downs of *hua'er*—from suppression to open promotion—are influenced by various socio-political climates since the founding of the PRC in 1949, and also embodied in the development of *hua'er* studies in Northwest China. From simplistic description to systematic and comprehensive research, from merely text collecting to conducting regular and exclusive fieldwork, studies on *hua'er* made significant progress incorporating cultural policy changes operated by the state.

As Howard Becker points out, the state often influences the arts according to its own needs and interests.⁸³ The frequent use of *hua'er* songs as the vehicle for political propaganda is a good example of such influence, and it led to a large number of political (or “new”) *hua'er* songs that are published in the government funded *hua'er* song (collection or research) projects and are performed at the government sponsored cultural festivals. Moreover, the local authorities’ increasing calls for preserving and promoting the *hua'er* tradition as well as marketing the *hua'er* culture not only demonstrate the new trend in the development of the scholarship, but also the government’s primary interest in boosting regional economy and the solidarity of the people in Northwest China.

Although the 2011 Chinese ICH law is clearly on the one hand a top-down project that relates to the construction of a multicultural national identity, nonetheless *hua'er* scholars, singers, and local government officials on the other hand seen themselves as benefiting from the new cultural policies.⁸⁴ *Hua'er* scholars from local communities are able to receive regional or national funding for ICH research to conduct their studies and fieldwork; *hua'er* singers individually enjoy the recognition as ICH inheritors, and they appreciate getting paid while performing and gaining fame and status as a celebrity on stage; and government officials and agencies consider the ICH recognition as a distinctive achievement that can be used in establishing a record of administrative success and could use this ICH medium to explain or teach people regarding new political ideologies and policies. Nevertheless, *hua'er* is subject to further modification and reconstruction for specific political purposes in the future.

According to the official Chinese ideas⁸⁵, the ethnic minority cultures in China are equal components of the nation’s culture. State-sponsored promotions of ICH since 2006 have emphasized the “multi-ethnic” and “shared” nature of *hua'er* as a local tradition and cultural heritage reflecting the avowed rhetoric of the Chinese government to present China as a multi-ethnic yet united and harmonious country. As China continues to modernize in the 21st century, traditional music and practices are quickly losing their original social and cultural contexts. *Hua'er*’s ICH recognition at both national and international levels demonstrates how a transculturally practiced folk-song tradition in Northwest China was strategically reconstructed as a shared Chinese tradition that contributes to a national identity and the soft power ranking on a global stage. The Chineseness is being reconstructed not only by the Chinese state but by the concept of ICH⁸⁶ that remains controversial and interpretable.

⁸³ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 180.

⁸⁴ Yang, “The Transformation of *Hua'er* Songs in 21st Century China”, 176.

⁸⁵ Liu, *Cultural Policy in the People’s Republic of China*, 75-76.

⁸⁶ Chang, “From ‘Folk Culture’ to ‘Great Cultural Heritage of China’”, 115.

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