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## Manufacturing Naxi's original ecological culture in contemporary China

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For over a decade, original ecological (*yuanshengtai*原生态) has contested ethnic (*minzu*) as an influential framework in representing minority folk culture in Chinese official and popular media. This article explores the ideological implications of such a shift in the context of state-minority relationships. By examining Han elites' invention of the neologism and Naxi elites' adaptations, I argue that YST transforms local ethnic categories into a transethnic, translocal, and transnational concept, and therefore allows both the nation state and the minority groups to promote their own versions of ethnic identities. Compared to the antagonistic model between state domination and minority resistance, YST reflects a shift from minority political self-determination to cultural self-representation in the drastically changing global environments.

**Keywords:** original ecological culture (*yuanshengtai*); Naxi; ethnic identity; self-representation; cosmopolitanism

Much of the existing scholarship on state-minority relations in contemporary China focuses on the 'restive' groups of the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Mongolians, and frames them in various dichotomies of dominance and resistance.<sup>1</sup> Some recent research, nevertheless, has shown state tolerance of minority self-representations where such activities do not imply support for political separatism. As Barry Sautman has pointed out, such an attitude represents state's efforts to "depoliticize" minorities by treating them as cultural groups whose members have individual, but not collective, rights'.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, empowered by the recent global trend of ethnic nationalism and more encouraging local policies, minorities have actively launched campaigns to invent, promote, and manufacture their own images of ethnic identities different from the stereotyped and politicized portraits in the pre-reform era. This article examines a major shift in minority folk culture representations from ethnic (*minjian* 民间, *minzu* 民族) to original ecology (*yuanshengtai* 原生态, YST)<sup>3</sup> since the last decade. YST allows us to complicate a binary view of state domination and minority resistance, and reflects a new trend that shifts the focus from minority political self-determination to cultural self-representation in the drastically changing global environments. Using the Naxi 纳西 case from the more 'silent' and integrated minority regions in the South, I try to show the contingent nature and complex impacts of minority cultural self-representation, revealing its appeals and limitations.

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### Origins and discussions

In 2006, the National Youth Singing Competition (*quanguo qingnian geshou dianshi dajiangsai* 全国青年歌手电视大奖赛), China's most prestigious and watched singing competition, first launched YST as a new and mandatory genre for all competing teams.<sup>4</sup> It introduced YST into its competition as the fourth category, in addition to *bel canto* (*meisheng* 美声), ethnic (*minzu* 民族), and popular (*tongsu* 通俗),<sup>5</sup> and its final winners were a sister–brother duo of Yi minority from Yunnan. Although not reserved for minorities as a rule, the over 20 winners in the top three categories of YST style since then have all been ethnic minorities, with only one exception from rural Shanxi. Since 2006, YST performances have become standard in local and national galas for holidays and special celebrations.<sup>6</sup> Other CCTV stations and local stations now frequently invite YST singers who never had the opportunities to perform on regional or national stages. Local music schools have admitted increasing numbers of minority singers into their programmes and some have developed special training curriculum for YST singing. The music industry has also produced numerous songs and CDs that are specifically labelled YST, seen as a successful branding strategy. Within less than a decade, YST has developed into a dominant discourse in framing and representing folk, minority culture in official and popular media.

Existing English-language scholarship on YST remains limited. Quoting Qiao Jianzhong 乔建中, former director of the Music Research Institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts (*zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan* 中国艺术研究院), ethnomusicologist Helen Rees explains that although it has no exact counterpart in English, the neologism was inspired by Western awareness of environmental and ecological issues.<sup>7</sup> Examining ethnic folk music performed on China Central Television (CCTV) from 2008 to 2010, Lauren Gorfinkel explains that YST style 'stresses the need to preserve the folk musics of minority nationalities'.<sup>8</sup> Most scholars agree that conventional ethnic songs, which also draw heavily from folk and regional elements, are usually produced by professionally trained musicians who write the lyrics in Mandarin and remake folk songs into new compositions based on Han and Western aesthetics. In contrast, YST style refers to folk songs sung by untrained folk singers who use improvisation and are accompanied by local traditional acoustic instruments.<sup>9</sup> In Qiao's words, it should be 'sung by a culture-bearer in local dialect, unmodernized style, and as far as possible in a traditional context, rather than being rewritten in standard Mandarin with piano accompaniment for stage performance'.<sup>10</sup>

The musicological distinction is useful, yet it does not fully explain why YST has quickly gained official recognition and social currency in the socio-political context of contemporary China. While sharing affinities with equally ambiguous and slippery Western-originated concepts such as world music, ethnic dance, and folk culture, YST comes out of China's distinctive background and is foremost related to China's changing policies regarding ethnic minorities since the late 1970s. Chinese 'folk' songs are traditionally labelled ethnic songs (*minge* 民歌) in the PRC, whether based on Han or minority folk music, and all are sung in a trained and mixed version of Chinese and Western styles by Han and minority performers alike.<sup>11</sup> Such a model is consistent with the key principle of China's ethnic policy that portrays China as a unified multinational country. During the PRC's first three decades, political integration and class alliance were deemed the primary concern, while local nationalism was condemned as a separatist force and nationality was largely downplayed.<sup>12</sup> The massive Ethnic Classification Movement (*minzu shibie* 民族识别) from the 1950s recognized 55 minority groups in

China and established a linear and hierarchical framework based on the Soviet model of improvement and modernization.<sup>13</sup> In such a system, minority culture was often denigrated as unmodern and backwards compared with the perceived modern and civilized Han culture, determined by their respective stages of socio-economic development. Although 'the mass' were highly positioned in the Maoist system compared with cultural elites and artists, the value of folk culture depended on its political function and needed improvements by the party cadres. Therefore, several newly created ethnic songs in the early PRC period contained explicit political messages and directly served the socialist agendas.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, other traditional folk songs from the minority regions were often neglected or derided as backwards or unworthy.<sup>15</sup> Since the late 1970s, rediscovering ethnic characteristics (*minzu tese* 民族特色) has increasingly become a trend in both official media and popular culture. Although still concerned about local nationalism as a potential threat, post-Mao leaders have adopted the new strategy of promoting ethnic and regional diversity in the service of maintaining national unity, partly to adapt to local realities.<sup>16</sup> The recent global trend of ethnic nationalism has led to some reported 'awakened' or 'strengthened' ethnic consciousness and increasing productions of ethnic cultures in China. Meanwhile, local governments in collaboration with commercial enterprises continue to promote ethnic tourism as a profitable and convenient source of revenue, especially within less-developed regions. In such new contexts, minority culture departs from the old 'primitive' image and demands different language and frameworks of expression and YST reflects such changes.

Like the English word ecological (*shengtai*) that deals with living organisms' relations and interactions with their physical surroundings, YST culture supposedly refers to folk, ethnic, and authentic cultures, minority or Han, which are rooted in local and original environments. Using this analogy, the new concept emphasizes its internally balanced ecosystem with little external intervention and is closely associated with tradition. As one Chinese scholar has pointed out, in the same way that 'YST food' is used to describe healthy green food unpolluted by the industrial world, 'YST culture' is applied to music, songs, dances, and performances that are not 'polluted' by modern civilization.<sup>17</sup> There is some irony that the Chinese neologism on cultural authenticity is built on a Western, scientific, and modern concept. But it approaches minority culture in a different framework than the simple Darwinian or modernization models of the past. Compared to the old category of ethnic culture, YST is more flexible and versatile: it can be both traditional and adaptive to the environment, original yet not primitive, and simultaneously local and global.

It is natural to suspect that YST culture provides a discursive tool for minority self-expression and resistance to cultural assimilation and political domination. However, the realities are more complicated. Although YST is not an official policy imposed from above, the state has played a crucial role in its narrative formation and dissemination. While commercial projects promoting YST have to be approved by various governmental offices, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (*guangdian zongju* 广电总局) directly monitors and regulates all national and local station's programmes such as the National Youth Singing Competition. In 2005 Guangxi Zhuang Nationality Autonomous Regional government passed legislation to protect ethnic folk traditional culture (广西壮族自治区民族民间传统文化保护条例), including a bylaw that targets 'ethnic concentrated areas that are representative and reflect YST ethnic folk traditional culture'.<sup>18</sup> The proposed means of protection include creating multiple YST festivals, designating cultural transmitters of YST culture, and using popular media such as

newspaper, radio, television, and the internet to introduce YST music and singing competitions.<sup>19</sup>

There is evidence to believe that the state has promoted the YST model through popular media. Since 2011, Sichuan Satellite TV station has hosted a popular annual singing show called Heavenly Voice: China's Tibetan Song Contest (*Tianlaizhiyin: zhongguo zanggehui* 天籁之音中国藏歌会). Contesters included Tibetan, Han, and other ethnic groups, and most sang Tibetan-themed songs combining popular and Tibetan ways of singing. Unlike the Red Song Idol (*honggehui* 红歌会) of Jiangxi Satellite TV Station, created to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Long March in 2006 and limited to socialist and Maoist songs, Tibetan Idol advertises and highlights YST Tibetan songs as its selling point. For most of the time, China as a political entity seems to stay in the shadow and the contest is usually referred to as Tibetan Idol. Nevertheless, it is important to note that competing songs are defined as YST Tibetan songs, and the performance is judged by Han elite standards and popular tastes. By highlighting YST Tibetan instead of Chinese Tibetan, the organizer appeals to Tibetans singers and audiences who are more interested in promoting Tibetan culture. For example, an established Tibetan female singer commented that she attended the competition because 'it was different; it was Tibetans' own stage'.<sup>20</sup>

Attracting minority musicians' participation is certainly important, but influencing the audience and the overall artistic trend can be more influential. By promoting fresh YST songs that differ from the more political, static, and homogenous style of ethnic songs, the state appeals to the changing sensibilities of the younger generation, both Han and minorities, who might otherwise be drawn to the more politically oriented music. Previous research has shown that young Uyghurs in the early 2000s had already preferred the romantic, depoliticized, and commercialized music to the rebellious rock music of the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> By emphasizing YST themes of nature, harmony, and happiness, the state can potentially trivialize, marginalize, and sideline the more antagonistic messages implicit or explicit in the rising ethnic nationalism among minorities. Overall, YST songs appear beautiful, modern, and cosmopolitan, while remaining depoliticized.<sup>22</sup> Recognizing the shifting power relationships between the state and minorities, the state has changed its strategy in regulating minority representations, by co-opting the existing diverse voices into an apolitical genre of YST.

What are the implications of YST to minority identity constructions? Will YST increase minority self-representation and their general prosperity, or lead to the decline and extinction of ethnic culture due to possible or inevitable simplification, transformation, and mass production? This following of the article explores these issues by examining Han and Naxi elites' interpretations and productions of YST culture.

### **Enriching *yuanshengtai*: impression Lijiang and Han elites' daydreams**

Although the National Youth Singing Competition first established YST's official status, Chinese media generally traces the origins and popularization of the term YST to the 2004 outdoor extravaganza 'Impression Liu Sanjie (*Yinxiang Liu Sanjie* 印象刘三姐)' in Guangxi province directed by the internationally renowned Han film-maker Zhang Yimou 张艺谋 together with his 'iron triangle team' Wang Chaoge 王潮歌 and Fan Yue 樊跃.<sup>23</sup> 'Impression Lijiang of the Snow Mountains (*Yinxiang Lijiang* 印象丽江)', the second of the Impression Series, is a large-scale live outdoor spectacle about Lijiang cultures, especially Naxi, one of the 55 state-designated minority nationalities. Comprising a total population of about 300,000, Naxi constitutes the majority population

of the Lijiang basin in Yunan province, the most ethnically diverse region in China. As a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site since 1997, Lijiang has become one of the fastest developed tourist regions in China, while Naxi culture has gained increasing publicity and recognition inside and outside the country as a distinctive culture.<sup>24</sup>

The newly built outdoor theatre is located at an elevation of 3100 meters, with the impressive peaks of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (*yulong xueshan* 玉龙雪山), an important religious and cultural site for Naxi, as its background. It is not difficult to imagine an audience awed by the spectacular choreography combined with the astonishing natural landscape setting. The show includes six main phases. The first and second sessions enact 'authentic' peasant life, manifested by Naxi horse cavalcades and drunken happy men who are singing and dancing. The third phase, titled 'Heaven and Earth' (*tianshang renjian* 天上人间), tells a romantic story of a couple's love suicide based on Naxi legends that such lovers will afterwards live in the eternal paradise of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. The last part is a sacred ritual about the creation of new life performed by Dongba 东巴, indigenous priests or shamans, and includes thundering drums, chanting, and dancing.

What distinguishes Impression Lijiang from traditional minority shows is its almost exclusive use of a large number of non-professional local peasants as performers. After several months of intensive training, Impression Lijiang uses about 500 performers from 10 minority groups and 16 villages in the show. Co-director Fan explains that, 'Only locals can perfectly blend local culture and sights as reflected in our shows'.<sup>25</sup> Overall, the hiring decision is a result of the directors' goal 'to discover YST'. In a discussion with his co-directors, Zhang Yimou repeatedly stresses the critical importance of YST to the success of the show: 'what you have said are all intellectual! All cultural! All distanced! We need raw performance! Primitive! Outdoor!'<sup>26</sup> In these directors' minds, there is an explicit or almost automatic link between YST and authenticity. Therefore, minority performers from rural areas with no professional training certainly provide a more authentic performance. With the YST goal in mind, Fan states 'We do not want to change anything else, even their accent, as long as they can deliver their lines clearly.'<sup>27</sup> Yet such a seemingly non-interventionist approach is directly contradicted in the show's preparation. In one recorded scene included as an extra feature in the official DVD, Wang Chaoge painstakingly corrects a leading minority actor on his accent for the words, while Fan personally demonstrates to the actors how to move their bodies.<sup>28</sup> He stresses, 'Never be impolite to others. Do your own things. You must not push other people.' 'Don't wave hands [to the audience].'<sup>29</sup> Despite the consistent emphasis on original, primitive, non-intellectual, and non-cultural performances, the entire show is thoroughly choreographed and carefully directed by renowned artists, and is also supported by huge investments and careful marketing strategies. YST minority performers are taught how to talk, act, and perform based on the directors' scripts. Using peasant performers without formal training, the show provides a dash of realism to the audiences seeking authentic experiences as well as entertainment. Impression Lijiang is essentially an elite-created 'primitive' art, sophistication masquerading as simplicity and naivety to fabricate cultural authenticity.

The repackaging of minority performance as YST directly contributes to its commercial success, and the Impression Series has existed as a cultural industry from the very beginning. As a franchised brand, the Impression Series already includes seven different outdoor shows, each with an over 14 million US dollar budget, and it continues to grow.<sup>30</sup> Impression Lijiang is now owned by a joint-stock Lijiang Tourism Company, which also owns cable car, hotel, and restaurant chains. Local governments have enthusiastically embraced the new model of YST culture, as the Impression Series has proven to be a huge

success in bringing both revenues and fame to previously less-developed regions. In 2009, 1.4 million people visited Impression Lijiang, each spending around 200 RMB (\$29) on a ticket.<sup>31</sup> Even with an average cost of 100 million RMB (\$14.65 million) for each show, the spectacle has easily paid off. The show has also boosted other tourist industries including hotels, restaurants, real estate sales, transportation, and souvenirs. It is said that many local governments are waiting in line to invite the production team to create new versions of the Impression Series, in the hope of boosting their own local tourist industries, and Impression Melaka in Malaysia is forthcoming. Franchised and attracting sizable local, national, and global investments, the Impression case exemplifies the speed and extent of ethnic cultures' commodification in contemporary China.

Invited by the Qingdao Beer Company to make a TV advertisement for the debut of their new high-end beer, called 'Qingdao Original Ecological' (*Qingdao yuansheng* 青岛原生), Bai minority dancer Yang Liping 杨丽萍 from Yunnan and Zhang Yimou reportedly celebrated their cooperation in 2005.<sup>32</sup> Yang is credited as another originator of the YST culture genre. Her 2004 production, the song and dance show 'Dynamic Yunnan' (*Yunnan yingxiang* 云南映像), also included hundreds of local minority performers from the region. It is still performed daily in Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan, and in traveling shows in other parts of China. The values of YST culture, in the collected efforts of Zhang's directorship and Yang's folk dance, are transferred to the values of an actual commodity: the authentic, purifying and exhilarating drink of Qingdao *yuansheng* beer. Now with a direct and literal connection between YST culture and YST industry, the invented YST culture based on peculiar minority characters is easily appropriated into mass-produced products.

Compared to its prevalent commodification in a global capital market, what is less implicit yet equally influential is the ideological shift represented by YST and its multi-valent implications. Foremost YST retains traditional Han portraits of minorities and the dominant relationship. In an exclusive interview with *Global Times* (*huanqiu shibao* 环球时报), the production team emphasizes the positive socio-economic impact of the show on the local population, arguing that it is helping impoverished minority peasants who otherwise would float around China's urban centres seeking jobs. Fan states, 'It is more than simply providing them with jobs, it also gives them respect and confidence.'<sup>33</sup> Perhaps because of the directors' feeling that the message is not explicit enough, the performers are asked to loudly proclaim to the audience towards the end of the show, 'We are minorities, we are actors, we are peasants, we are stars!'<sup>34</sup> In general, Naxi and other minorities in the show appear as warriors, farmers, happy drunks, talented singers and dancers, prolific lovers, and pious believers. They represent what the directors imagine as the YST culture, exotic locales containing a kind of native simplicity unpolluted by the modern civilization of the Han Chinese. As such, the Naxi 'occupy a romanticised space that is ethnic, rural, gendered and located in a simpler, happier past'.<sup>35</sup>

As seen in the case of Impression Lijiang, Han directors view themselves as providing employment to otherwise poor minority peasants and helping save their cultures from decline and extinction. I call such a paternalist elitist view in minority representations 'Enriching YST', where minorities are expected to depend on Han elites for socio-economic improvements and cultural enhancements through the sale of labour and culture. In the system, minorities exist in total dependency on the Han: they need to be taught and regulated on how to talk and act properly with no transgressions in order to best represent their own Naxiness. As exemplified by Impression Lijiang, Han domination in minority representations largely continues the trend since the 1980s that some scholars have called internal Orientalism.<sup>36</sup> Since minorities in the show always appear as

intrinsically rural, childlike, and feminine, their cultures are museumized and simplified into the Other as opposed to the modern civilization of the Han.

Despite its inherent Han domination, the show also reflects some changing values and trends: the traditional hierarchical relationship now wrapped in the new package of YST culture. The old 'modern Han versus primitive minorities' binary is retained. Nevertheless, this primitiveness is now attributed with new sensibility and socio-economic values of authenticity. The new YST paradigm legitimizes tourist consumptions of exotic locals, especially minorities. More importantly, it creates a new type of aesthetic that trains tourists' eyes and ears to appreciate the reinvented minority cultural products considered backwards and inferior in previous decades. Just as YST food is seen as greener, healthier, and therefore more expensive than industrial mass-produced food, YST culture is presented as more original and authentic, and therefore more valuable and more global. It elevates previous popular consumption of minority culture, which largely exists as marginal, lower, and minor, to a new aesthetic and ideological level. While the existing repertoire of ethnic songs has become increasingly homogeneous, static, and unpopular, the newly manufactured YST brand seems original, dynamic, and diverse.

The new model of cultural preservation replaces the old narrative of cultural assimilation while retaining its hierarchical structure. In the Han elites' creation, the re-conceptualized Naxi culture as simultaneously local and universal is perfectly in line with the political agenda of building a national unity and an authentic Chinese identity. YST claims to help preserve the intangible cultures that are on the edge of decline and extinction, therefore promoting both local and national pride.<sup>37</sup> In co-director Wang's words, their show 'directly points to the theme of "preservation of the intangible culture" mission identified by the Chinese government and UNESCO in recent years'.<sup>38</sup> In the name of cultural preservation, local culture is successfully appropriated into a new project of cultural entrepreneurship and nation building. As such, YST culture becomes a means to boost China's cultural nationalism, and more importantly to reconstruct authentic Chineseness in the face of pressure from neighbouring countries and global powers.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the show highlights 'the explicit theme of harmony between humans and nature'.<sup>40</sup> The harmonious theme implicitly points to the dominant state ideology of building a harmonious society' since the last decade. Here the harmonies between men and nature, between minority performers and the Han audience, and between China and the world all become intertwined. Audiences at the end of the show are invited by performers to raise their hands and bow down to pray together to the heavens. The participatory ritual enables audiences to embody Naxi culture and become the pure and happy Naxi, at least momentarily. In the directors' words, Impression Lijiang is 'a daydream for all the people under the sunshine and the snow mountain'.<sup>41</sup> As millions of Han and minority audiences consume the show, they now imagine belonging to the same harmonious community that consists of 56 nationalities, notwithstanding all their differences in region, culture, and income. Surrounded by sentimental singing, dancing, and shouting, sensational costumes, and group praying to the extraordinary snow mountain, it becomes only 'natural' to feel that everyone is Chinese, all brothers and sisters belonging to the unified 'family-state'.

### **Popular YST: Naxi elites' new ethnic songs**

Except for the inaccurate Mandarin pronunciations and occasional 'misbehaviours' of waving hands to the audiences and pushing and talking back to people, minority performers in Impression Lijiang appear as grateful students and proud employees.<sup>42</sup> One of the



few locals who openly criticized the enterprise was Xuan Ke 宣科, leader of the Dayan Naxi Ancient Music Association (Dayan Naxi guyuehui 大研纳西古乐会) and a principal spokesperson of the so-called Naxi Ancient Music (*Naxi guyue* 纳西古乐).<sup>43</sup> Xuan Ke condemned Impression Lijiang for ‘destroying nature’s YST views’, and as a profit-driven commercial enterprise imposed from the outside. He insisted that local shows by people like him, ‘as a real Lijiang local’, were ‘more sincere and authentic’.<sup>44</sup>

The Naxi Ancient Music Association first gained fame in the 1990s through foreign tourists and its own international tours, and then became the most well-known performing troupe from Lijiang. Much of its commercial success can be attributed to its leader Xuan Ke, a self-taught visionary who took advantage of the new commercial opportunities for ethnic culture in national and global markets. Born into a Naxi-Tibetan family, he received an early English education in a missionary school, and later served 10 years in prison until the end of the Cultural Revolution. Afterwards, he cofounded the association and popularized the so-called Naxi Ancient Music, serving as both the chairman and CEO of the Lijiang Xuan Ke Naxi Ancient Music Incorporation. Xuan Ke also authored two books and self-identified as an ethno-musicologist and scholar.<sup>45</sup> Seen from the prominent display of photos and calligraphies of numerous domestic and international notables who have watched and commented on the show, including the former president Jiang Zemin, Xuan Ke has achieved an astonishing fame and capitalized on the celebrity effect. In recent years, nevertheless, Xuan Ke has been involved in various controversial debates and legal disputes, mostly with scholars. For example, in 2004 Xuan Ke launched a lawsuit against Chinese ethnomusicologist Wu Xueyuan and the prestigious national journal *Art Criticism* (Yishu pinglun 艺术评论) for defamation, and he eventually won. Wu is an acclaimed scholar based in Kunming who criticized Xuan Ke’s version of the Naxi ancient music as ‘an international joke’ in a 2003 article published under ‘Beating the Counterfeits’ section of the journal. Wu also attacked Xuan Ke’s personal integrity, suggesting that he had internationally tricked audiences, media, officials, scholars, and numerous foreign dignitaries.<sup>46</sup> Scholars have developed a long hostile relationship with Xuan Ke. For example, they have criticized Xuan Ke’s stage creation of adding young girls wearing colourful costumes to perform together with the original elderly crew for better stage effects, and see the performance as nothing authentically Naxi but a purely commercial enterprise.<sup>47</sup> Siding with Wu, most scholars believe that the so-called Naxi ancient music is nothing but traditional Han music that was transmitted by Naxi as well as by other ethnic groups in the region.<sup>48</sup>

Xuan Ke seems to have an idiosyncratic personality and often plays the role of an eccentric and makes polemical comments.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the level and terms of the conflict reflect some embedded tensions between the national elites from Beijing and the provincial capital of Kunming and local minority and folk artists. *Art Criticism* immediately launched several scathing articles after the lawsuit was filed, many by renowned scholars of ethnic music.<sup>50</sup> Four members of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference filed a complaint piece appealing for the sued author and journal.<sup>51</sup> Most newspaper and TV interviews of Xuan Ke presented him as fake and egocentric; some even portrayed him as simply crazy.<sup>52</sup> Harsh criticisms of Xuan Ke lasted almost a decade. The intensity of such opposition shows not only the problematic nature of Xuan Ke’s work but also elites’ rage. As the perceived Han music is ‘stolen’ by and appropriated as Naxi by Xuan Ke, the gatekeepers’ monopoly of culture is challenged by a self-taught heterodox minority from a remote part of the country. Although Xuan Ke is not a typical case of political activism, he has persistently competed for the discursive power with Han elites, either with Wu Xuanyuan and the journal editors

or with Zhang Yimou, director of Impression Lijiang. In a way, he protests against Han hegemony over the Naxi culture by utilizing global resources. Xuan named his association ‘Lijiang China Dayan Naxi Ancient Music Association’ (*Lijiang zhongguo dayan Naxi guyuehui* 丽江中国大研纳西古乐会) in this exact order. As one critic asks, ‘where is China’ in Xuan Ke’s world?<sup>53</sup>

While Xuan Ke represents a local critical voice to the elitist enriching YST discourse, He Wenguang 和文光, acclaimed author of popular YST (*liuxing* YST 流行原生态) Naxi songs, provides an interesting example of a local, minority adoption and adaptation of the Han-created YST discourses. This noted ‘Naxi Music Family’ (*Naxi yinyue shijia* 纳西音乐世家)<sup>54</sup> includes Grandma, an illiterate rural folk singer born in the 1920s, Grandson and Granddaughter, both graduated from elite music schools and now in a modern band with a studio in Beijing, and Father He Wenguang, the key figure in the family’s successful transformation of their local performances for domestic and international stages. He Wenguang was born in the 1950s into a rural Naxi family from the Lijiang area. He supposedly learned numerous folk songs from his maternal grandmother and mother, both well-known local singers. Nevertheless, He spent his early adolescence in the Cultural Revolution era, singing revolutionary operas and Maoist songs without knowing what Naxi folk songs were. He graduated from Lijiang Normal School (*Lijiang shifan* 丽江师范)<sup>55</sup> in the 1970s and was assigned to teach in a hometown elementary school. Not unlike the Han elite musicians of the previous decades, such as the eminent and controversial Wang Luobin 王洛宾 who was even accused of stealing Uyghur Songs, He Wenguang has since played a mixed role as collector, recorder, compiler, editor, song-writer, and singer.<sup>56</sup> Since the 1990s, his works have become popular in local pubs because of tourists’ increasing demand for traditional Naxi music. He has been invited to perform in different festivals and popular TV shows all over China.<sup>57</sup> In 2010, his book and new album were published, including over 100 songs he made from 1977 to 2010.<sup>58</sup> A press conference was held in Kunming in the next year, followed by a seminar that included scholars, ethnomusicologists, local officials, artists, directors, editors, and cultural and political elites. The seminar presentations were later published in the journal *National Folk Music* (*minzu yinyue* 民族音乐), celebrating He’s achievement as ‘king of Naxi love songs (*Naxi qinggezhiwang* 纳西情歌之王)’.<sup>59</sup>

The family started to achieve national fame unexpectedly through Grandma Xiao Rulian 肖汝莲. After meeting her in the annual Snow Mountain musical festival in Lijiang in summer 2002 and being totally shocked by her beautiful improvised singing of folk songs, Cui Jian 崔健, the acclaimed ‘Father of China’s Rock’, has invited Xiao several times to perform with him as a special guest at his concerts.<sup>60</sup> It is said that Cui regards Xiao as his spiritual mentor and calls her songs the most touching ones that he has ever heard in his life.<sup>61</sup> The collaborated performances are hailed by the media as a perfect combination of traditional YST and rock music. Since then, He’s family has often been proudly quoting Cui Jian’s remarks and media reports and using the innovative label of YST to describe their own music. In 2008, his daughter together with a cousin won the runner-up of the YST category in the National Youth Singing Competition.

Another watershed comes from the family’s direct global encounters. Between 12 and 27 April 2005, the three-generation He family visited America for the first time and performed at an Asian folk festival in Arizona.<sup>62</sup> Although the trip was organized by the Chinese Folk Literature and Art Society (*zhongguo minjian wenyijia xiehui* 中国民间文艺家协会) and the He family was accompanied by an organizational official, this is not a case where the state employed professionals to masquerade as folk artists representing China in international festivals, a common phenomenon in global artistic exchanges

today.<sup>63</sup> The published account on his personal website was essentially a blurb of their own success where the family ‘conquered American audiences with Naxi folk songs’.<sup>64</sup>

He’s journey, most likely his first international trip, created an intriguing contact zone where simultaneous encounters had taken place: between Chinese and Americans, between Naxi and Native Americans, between tradition and modernity, between individual folk artists and state agendas, and between local ethnic cultures and global artistic exchanges and folk tourism. Thanks to the visit, He not only experienced and re-evaluated what America was, but also acquired better understanding of his own identity construction as a Chinese minority and folk artist. He learned valuable lessons about what foreign audiences valued and liked, and how to best represent Naxi culture in front of the Americans. For example, from some Native Americans and the American hosts, He learned that ‘the biggest taboo for Americans is songs using accompaniment’. They say, ‘this is Karaoke, too tacky. Only improvising can show a singer’s capability, showing authentic taste. It happens to be that the songs by the Naxi family can do this. Therefore they are welcomed by the live audience’.<sup>65</sup> He even developed a new lens and theoretical framework to describe Naxi and Native Americans: they were similar in language, costume, and custom, and both were part of the YST culture functioning in a global and universalist value system. Explaining their secret of success, He stated, ‘foremost is that we brought authentic YST culture’.<sup>66</sup> He concluded his essay with the biggest lesson learned from the trip: ‘the more YST it is, the more global it can become’.<sup>67</sup>

In the 2011 seminar discussion in honour of his new book and album, He elaborated his theory of the ‘popular YST music’ and its ‘four characteristics: Local Qualities (*diyuxing* 地域性), Ethnic Qualities (*minzuxing* 民族性), Artistic Value (*vishuxing* 艺术性), and Singability (*kechangxing* 可唱性)’.<sup>68</sup> By singability, He emphasized that on the one hand melody must incorporate popular elements and on the other hand lyrics should be in Mandarin. Besides a few existing folk songs collected and edited by He, most of He’s songs are newly written Mandarin songs with Naxi themes, often mixed with a few Naxi sentences transliterated in Mandarin characters. In fact, in He’s words, ‘it has to use Mandarin, because that’s what most people speak. Otherwise, it cannot become popular’.<sup>69</sup> We might assume ‘regional and ethnic characteristics’ for He indicates certain distinctive Naxi characteristics in the forms of lyrics, melody, or musical instruments. But in fact He’s new folk songs include multiple ethnic elements and free borrowing from different minority cultures, a practice many critics see as ‘beneficial to strengthening Naxi musical character and flavors’.<sup>70</sup> Besides Naxi music, He has also written Mosuo, Bai, Yi, Tibetan, Dai, Jinpo, Miao, Mongolian, and Uyghur songs.<sup>71</sup> According to one published account, even Mongolians welcomed his Mongolian songs.<sup>72</sup> Overall, He regards Naxi folk music, dance, and folklore that he has been collecting and editing as the real Naxi culture with more ‘sociological meanings and aesthetic values’ than other newly revived ‘Naxi music’. In particular, He argues that the aforementioned Naxi Ancient Music is not really Naxi culture because it came from China proper.<sup>73</sup>

He is perhaps right that Naxi Ancient Music is in essence Han Chinese-derived traditional music that had died out in China proper but was preserved by Naxi elites and renamed Naxi only around 1980. However, He’s own Naxi folk culture is no less influenced by Han, as Naxi is a highly sinicized group that has had long histories of close interactions with Han culture at least since the Tang dynasty.<sup>74</sup> Regardless of whether He’s own folk songs are ‘authentically’ Naxi, his view of Naxi folk songs is intriguing. He asserts that folk culture, especially of ethnic minorities like himself, is more authentic and carries higher aesthetic values than Han-influenced music created by elites in the region, and that distance from Han influence should be the marker of their social and aesthetic

values. Such a criterion for art departs from the orthodox view that the more sinicized one is, the more cultural one is. As recently as the 1980s, folk music by ‘the uncultured masses’ was still largely seen as ‘backward, unscientific, and aesthetically inferior to Western art music or Westernized modern Chinese genres’.<sup>75</sup> He’s assertion is consistent with the principles that the directors of the Impression Lijiang have advocated, that is local, minority, and YST culture is more authentic and valuable than the Han professionally produced ones due to its ‘natural’ and global features. A major difference, however, is that to the Han elite producers of the Impression Lijiang, YST culture has to use local minority performers combined with their artistic tutelage, elevating the raw materials into culture. By contrast He maintains, ‘I am the most qualified representative of Naxi culture’.<sup>76</sup>

Like Impression Lijiang, He’s popular YST Naxi songs remain problematic. They do not always match the common musicological consensus that YST songs are sung in local dialects by improvising folk singers with local musical instruments rather than in standard Mandarin with Western-style accompaniments. For example, He sometimes uses different minority elements without distinction and reproduces stereotyped minority images. He also writes patriotic songs with messages and styles similar to traditional ethnic songs based on Han models. ‘I am Dragon of the East (*woshi dongfanglong 我是东方龙*)’, a song whose melody was written by He and sung by his son to celebrate China’s success in the 2008 Olympics, is still proudly advertised on their websites. On the one hand, the lyrics include some ‘regional characteristics’ such as the snowy mountain and Shangri-La (*Xianggelila 香格里拉*), and the melody incorporates some Naxi-style music with a slower and lower pitch. On the other hand, the lyrics are full of stereotypical patriotic themes: ‘I am dragon of the East, flying on the sky...Five thousand years past and present, China (*huaxia 华夏*) survived strong winds and heavy rains’.<sup>77</sup> The dragon is an imagined symbol that has been frequently used to depict the quasi-racial entity of ‘the Chinese nationality’ (*zhonghua minzu 中华民族*). Descendants of the Dragon supposedly share not only culture but also biological features and common ancestry, descending directly from Peking Man through an uninterrupted 5000 years of civilization. Similar to typical patriotic songs, ‘Eastern Dragon’ entails black eyes, yellow skin, and yellow men of the East,<sup>78</sup> and can be associated with stereotyped Han chauvinist and racist representation of Chineseness. Such internalization or even emulation of Han elite practices lead to questions on He’s ethnic sensibility and these songs’ authenticity. People may wonder how different He’s YST songs are from orthodox genres of ethnic songs overall, and whether his compositions should be privileged due to his minority background, especially for his non-Naxi songs.

The different trajectories of the family members reflect the generational differences among minority folk singers in the last century, from the illiterate grandma who sang to the children for fun, to the self-taught father who tried to collect and make local folk songs in his spare time, to the professionally trained grandchildren who rediscovered their minority identities and now have a promising career performing Naxi songs. He’s son and daughter were first trained in provincial music schools in Kunming and later attended Beijing’s prestigious Minzu University of China (*zhongyang minzu daxue 中央民族大学*). It may seem natural for He’s children to inherit and develop the family tradition, but it is said that the son was not always in love with Naxi folk songs. Growing up in the 1980s, he first worshipped Hong Kong popular music, just like the Han youth of his generation. It was only after he was admitted to the highly competitive regional and national music schools by singing his father’s folk songs that his father became his new idol and hero. He Wenguang says of his son, ‘He realized that, only ethnic has the highest

value'.<sup>79</sup> The story exemplifies a common pattern among the new generation of ethnic minorities: young people in Lijiang are now relearning traditional culture because of outsiders' interest. For example, the Ancient Naxi Music troupe has been able to recruit young members after their initial lack of interest.<sup>80</sup> The increasing demands for ethnic music and the new prestige associated with it have triggered rediscoveries of ethnic identity among minorities and their reconnections to their own traditions. Now the son's narrative has been reversed: he talks about how his unique YST singing style was initially rejected and only gradually accepted by the public through his persistent efforts.

He Wenguang's own life is indicative of the changing history of minority culture in modern China, from neglect and repression to revival and recreation. It is amazing how far He himself has gone, from a self-taught amateur living in a remote county in a frontier province to a nationally renowned artist frequently appearing on national and international stages. Besides commercial success, the family has also received official recognition and is now considered 'transmitters of Naxi culture' (*Naxi wenhua chuanchengren* 纳西文化传承人).<sup>81</sup> He's personal story reflects the overall trajectory of Naxi traditional folk culture, a story from decline to revival, from depending on state sanction to valuing commercial success. He's creative practices in making new folk songs labelled popular YST and their enthusiastic receptions in China and globally show that the authenticity of ethnic folk culture takes on more slippery meanings in popular or even semi-scholarly discussions today. YST music no longer has to be static, old music from the past, but rather can involve or even requires active cultural reproduction with popular appeal. Although coming from the people, the performance can use popular instrumental accompaniment as well as sophisticated modern media for publicity and popularization. Although the songs used to be transmitted through oral traditions in local contexts, YST singers like He's children are trained in conservatories incorporating modern Western styles of singing and now largely perform in commercial settings. As stated in He's four principles, YST music needs regional and national characteristics on the one hand and must be popular and artistic on the other.

He and the family now consciously use the so-called 'popular YST' category to label, advertise, and elevate their music, portraying themselves as creators of a new style of singing and music. He's example shows a successful yet unsettling co-optation of Han-created YST narrative. Grandma's invitation to perform in rock concerts and the subsequent media reports have signalled to He the importance of popular elements in the contemporary world and presented him with the framework to re-conceptualize his music. The regional government's promotion of YST provides additional incentives for composing and performing YST songs. Unlike Xuan Ke who saw Impression Lijiang as threats to local agency and identities, popular shows like the National Youth Singing Competition might have enhanced He Wenguang's confidence and experience with the new genre. Finally, direct global contacts might have further confirmed his belief that YST could bring his music national and global recognition. Depending on the contexts, He varies his role as Naxi, Chinese, folk, and elite, and switches between improvising for Americans and using modern accompaniments for certain Chinese audiences. He grasps the opportunity in the new powerful YST discourse that focuses on folk, local, indigenous yet global features, and combines it with popular elements, achieving commercial success and official recognition. While the flexible and fluid YST discourse legitimizes what He has been doing on his own to promote Naxi folk songs since the 1970s and allows him to repackage and sell it on national and international stages, it also provides a powerful tool for He to compete with Han elites regarding cultural and national superiorities.

### Ethnic self-representation and minority cosmopolitanism

Chinese anthropologists today disagree on the impact of YST on 'authentic' minority cultures.<sup>82</sup> The *Journal of Original Ecological Culture (YST minzu wenhua xuekan 原生态民族文化学刊)*, devoted to YST ethnic culture, was created in 2009 to showcase the divergent discussions on the topic. In 2010, China's Annual Anthropology convention held a three-day special meeting on YST culture, attracting heated discussions among over 80 participants on the concept's legitimacy and impacts.<sup>83</sup> Many arguments are similar to the worldwide debates on the future of ethnic tourism and its impact on ethnic groups as to whether selling reinvented ethnic identities is empowering or impoverishing.<sup>84</sup>

It is perhaps still too early to draw a conclusion on the impacts of YST on minority identity constructions. As the Naxi case illustrates, the same YST label can produce different, even contradictory, meanings and implications. YST can lead to self-exoticization and further domination as Han elites and consumers guide minorities to act, but also can be used as a means to empower minority performers in reclaiming their own cultural identities. In reality, the apparent enriching process of the Han elites often leads to environmental damages and further impoverishment of certain communities. The very claim of saving minority culture from diminishment is accompanied by the strict enforcement of linguistic and cultural codes placed on poor rural minority performers. The enriching process also involves cultural simplification: the 500 recruited rural minority performers of the Impression Lijiang, most in their twenties, are from 10 different minority groups; not all Naxi in the show are played by Naxi.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, despite the problematic or even deceptive nature of the Enriching YST model, minorities like He Wenguang are learning to interpret and transform their own cultures and becoming more self-conscious and reflective. He, originally a local, folk, and minority performer from rural Lijiang without formal training, is able to take advantage of the increasing global demand for ethnic cultures and creatively participate in such transcultural processes of self-representation. He has carved out his own space between official discourse and Han elitist representations and manufactured his popular YST brand, therefore claiming his own authenticity in various local, national, and global settings.

YST's implications for the ideology of multi-ethnic unity also remain ambivalent. Despite the state's role in promoting and shaping the discourses of YST, its actual impact on the official ideology is uncertain. For example, a team from Macao participated for the first time in 2013's National Youth Singing Competition. By competing with other mainland provinces and autonomous areas, Macao's team contributes to the image of national unity, while also complicating it by including a Macanese singer who performed 'Macau Sa Assi' (That's Macau) in Patuá. The creole language was created and used by Eurasians in Macau mixing Portuguese, Malay, Cantonese, and others, and was recently named by UNESCO as a critically endangered language. From the language and style of the song to the singer's distinctive skin colour and facial feature, all remain unfamiliar and unintelligible to most of the viewers.<sup>86</sup> Such visual alienation and aural dissonance pose some explicit challenges to the Han-centric version of Chineseness. It remains questionable whether different voices can be safely contained in the single category of Chineseness.

One thing is clear: our analysis of ethnic relations in China requires a new conceptual framework beyond a simple binary of Han oppression versus minority resistance, and YST, as discussed in this article, helps us complicate such a powerful binary. Instead of being an official ideology imposed from above, the new discourses of YST culture create an elastic and inclusive paradigm that allows for multiple agency and beneficiaries. While orthodox state policies tend to remake minorities based on

Han models and modern aesthetics,<sup>87</sup> YST narratives generally emphasize local, original, and folk cultures of the minorities less influenced by Han culture and modern society. Unlike in the pre-reform era when minority representations were predominantly political, or even two decades ago when commodification of ethnic cultures still existed in a limited scope, YST productions of minority cultures have developed into sophisticated cultural enterprises in line with global ethnic tourism. Focusing on economic and cultural dependency rather than on political subjugation, traditional Han domination now manifests itself in more subtle terms, as in the name of respecting, preserving, and reviving traditional ethnic culture.

The enchantment of YST is that it transforms local ethnic categories into a transethnic, translocal, and transnational concept through which both the nation state and the minority groups can find means to promote their own versions of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism, being Chinese or Naxi. By promoting the universalist YST, the state can adapt to the demands of ethnic nationalism and reality of local diversity, while sidelining radical ethnic nationalism without resorting to overt persecution or censorship. As such, YST is useful in reconciling the new needs of ethnic diversity and the fundamental political agenda of national unity. To minority elites like Xuan Ke and He Wenguang, by linking their local, indigenous culture with global values and cosmopolitan aesthetics, YST allows them to build and legitimize their own ethnic culture and challenge the long-term Han monopoly of modernity and superiority. In sum, YST provides a magic language that can lend itself to easy conversations with both state ideologies and popular narratives, with simultaneously nationalist and universalist appeals and implications. YST also represents an alternative model in the ongoing minority-Han state negotiations. Compared to the antagonistic model between state control and minority self-expression, which can be useful in more politically oriented cases and less-integrated regions, YST demonstrates a mutually accommodating relationship, and reflects the new strategies of both the state and the minorities in the drastically changing global environments. As China increasingly engages in global commercial and cultural exchanges today, minority image-making is better described as a set of complex transcultural processes involving the simultaneous participation of local, national, and global agents that use heterogeneous indigenous and foreign resources.

### **Disclosure statement**

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### **Notes**

1. For example, Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties." Bovington, "The Not-So-Silent Majority"; Hillman and Henfry, "Macho Minority: Masculinity and Ethnicity on the Edge of Tibet"; Khan, "Ghinggis Khan: From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero"; and Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the Turn of the Century."

2. See Sautman, "Self-representation and Ethnic Minority Rights in China"; Baranovitch, "From Resistance to Adaptation."
3. *Yuan* has a range of meanings from original, authentic, to primitive. In this article, I translate *yuanshengtai* culture literally as original ecological culture to allow multiple interpretations and use YST as its abbreviation. See the following of the main text for more detailed discussions on the concept.
4. Since its establishment in 1984, the singing competition has been held twice a year as the most authoritative and watched singing competition in the last two decades. The only exception is that the 2012 competition was postponed to 2013. Weng, "Bei 'yuanshengtai' wenhua de renleixue sikao."
5. While the popular and *bel canto* vocal styles are heavily influenced by Western operatic classics and pop music, respectively, the ethnic style is supposedly based on Chinese folk songs but often mixing in Western *bel canto* and orchestral instrumentation. See Gorfinkel, "From Transformation to Preservation" and Rees, "Use and Ownership: Folk music in the People's Republic of China."
6. Gorfinkel, "From Transformation to Preservation."
7. Rees, "Intangible Cultural Heritage in China Today."
8. Gorfinkel, "From Transformation to Preservation."
9. Gorfinkel, "From Transformation to Preservation"; Qiao, "'Yuanshengtai' minge suoyi."
10. Qiao, "'Yuanshengtai' minge suoyi"; Rees, "Intangible Cultural Heritage in China Today."
11. Gorfinkel, "From Transformation to Preservation"; Rees, "Use and Ownership: Folk Music in the People's Republic of China."
12. Guo, *State and Ethnicity in China's Southwest*.
13. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*; Yang, "Central State, Local Governments, Ethnic Groups and the Minzu Identification in Yunnan (1950s–1980s)."
14. Ibid.
15. Gorfinkel, "From Transformation to Preservation."
16. Guo, *State and Ethnicity in China's Southwest*; Chao, "Layered Alterities: Discourses of the Other in Lijiang, China."
17. Qiao, "'Yuanshengtai' minge suoyi."
18. Xu, "Guangxi yuanshengtai minzuyinyuede shengcunfazhanzhengce chutan."
19. Ibid.
20. La, "Geshou Jinzhuzhuoma canjia zanggehui zhiwei chuanchengzangzuyinyue."
21. Baranovitch, "From Resistance to Adaptation."
22. McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism: Ethnic Revival in Southwest China*.
23. Weng, "Bei 'yuanshengtai' wenhua de renleixue sikao."
24. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question" and "The good, the Bad and the Ugly." Rees, *Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China*. Guo, *State and Ethnicity in China's Southwest*.
25. Weng, "Bei 'yuanshengtai' wenhua de renleixue sikao."
26. Yinxiang Lijiang, "Jiuzhou yinxiang chuban gongsi."
27. Mao, "Impressions under Fire."
28. Yinxiang Lijiang.
29. Ibid.
30. Mao, "Impressions under Fire."
31. Ibid.
32. Li and Wu, "Zhongguo pijiu shichang aozhan kaishi."
33. Ibid.
34. Yinxiang Lijiang.
35. White, "The Political Economy of Ethnicity in Yunnan's Lijiang Basin."
36. Schein, "Gender and INTERNAL ORIENTALISM in China" and *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*; Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring majority/minority identities." *Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 53, no. 1 (1994), 92–123.
37. Rees, "Intangible Cultural Heritage in China Today."
38. Yinxiang Lijiang.
39. Baranovitch, "Between Alterity and Identity: New Voices of Minority People in China."
40. Mao, "Impressions under Fire."



41. Yinxiang Lijiang.
42. Ibid.
43. Performed mainly by local amateur elderly accompanied by Xuan Ke's charismatic English interpretation, 'Naxi Ancient Music' (*Naxi guyue*) has been the earliest and most famous group for Naxi traditional music, thanks to its numerous overseas tours since the late 1990s. See Rees, *Echoes of History*.
44. *Huaxi dushi bao*, "Zhang Yimou beizhi pohuai huanjing zao Yunnan geshou Xuan Ke paohong."
45. Zong and Bao, "jiegou Naxiguyueshenhua – Duiyixiang minzuwenhuaziyuan zhuanhuawei wenhuashangpinde renleixuefenxi."
46. Wu. "What is Naxi Archaic Music."
47. Zong and Bao, "jiegou Naxiguyueshenhua."
48. Ibid. and Tian, "Adjudge without Justness."
49. For example, after giving a talk at Cambridge University, Xuan Ke later claimed his honorary doctorate degree from the institution. He lists several foreign interviewees as his student advisees.
50. For example, Liu, "The myth of Xuan Ke"; Tian, "Adjudge without Justness."
51. Li, "Sizhengxieweyuan ti'an baohu wenyipipingquan."
52. Arts Criticism, "Zhenshi yu huangyan: Wang Zhi yu Xuan Ke zai zhongyangdianshitai 'mianduimian'."
53. Quoted from Zong and Bao, "jiegou Naxiguyueshenhua."
54. In this article, I follow He Wenguang's own account and other media reports and refer to the family as the He family.
55. Equivalent to high-school level.
56. China has a long tradition of elite collecting, editing, and composing folk songs for political purposes since the civil war era. In the early years of PRC, musicologists were often sent by the state to record and improve traditional folk music from minority regions. Many folk songs produced this way are later involved in controversies and lawsuits regarding copyright. See Harris, "Wang Luobin: Folk song King of the Northwest or Song thief? Copyright, representation, and Chinese folk songs"; Rees, "Use and Ownership."
57. Zhang, "He Wenguang he tade yinyue zuopin." Yun, "He Wenguang he tade dangdai 'yuefu xinminge'."
58. He, *Mengzhong de Xianggelila: He Wenguang yuanchuang gequ zuopin jingxuan*.
59. Zhang, "He Wenguang he tade yinyue zuopin."
60. Wang, "Cui Jian: Xiao Ruilian shi zhebeizi yingyueshang zui dadong woderen."
61. Wang, "Cui Jian."
62. He, "Naxi renjia zai meiguo."
63. Li, "The Making of Ethnic Yunnan on the National Mall."
64. He, "Naxi renjia zai meiguo."
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Yun, "He Wenguang he tade dangdai 'yuefu xinminge'."
69. Ibid.
70. Jin, "He Wenguang yuanchuang gequde minzuxing neihan."
71. Yun, "He Wenguang he tade dangdai 'yuefu xinminge'"; Wu, "He Wenguang de 'dangdai yuefu xinminge'."
72. Yun, "He Wenguang he tade dangdai 'yuefu xinminge'."
73. Shi, "Naxi gewu zhijia."
74. Rees, "The Many Musics of a Chinese County Town."
75. Rees, "Use and ownership," 47.
76. Shi, "Naxi gewu zhijia."
77. He, *Mengzhong de Xianggelila*.
78. Cheng, "From Campus Racism to Cyber Racism"; Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*.
79. Shi, "Naxi gewu zhijia."
80. Rees, "The Many Musics of a Chinese County Town."
81. Zhang, "He Wenguang he tade yinyue zuopin."

82. Weng, "Bei 'yuanshengtai' wenhua de renleixue sikao"; Rees, "Use and ownership"; Xu, et al., "Yuanshengtai wenhua yu zhongguo chuantong."
83. Ye, "Jiedu 'yuanshengtai wenhua'."
84. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*; Tilley, "Performing Culture in the Global Village"; Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience"; Xie, "The Bamboo-beating Dance in Hainan, China."
85. To complicate matters further, the Ethnic Classification Project of the 1950s grouped many different people under the single category of Naxi, despite their cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. For example, although labelled as Naxi, Mosuo and Naxi of Lijiang speak mutually unintelligible languages and have different socio-economic systems. See McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question"; Rees, *Echoes of History*; Chao, "Hegemony, Agency and Re-presenting the Past."
86. Another highly distinguishable voice in the 2013 competition was a blonde Russian girl representing the online team. Nevertheless, she is unambiguously considered a foreigner and not as conceptually challenging as the Macao singer.
87. Chao, "Layered Alterities."

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