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**Traditional Music as “Intangible Cultural Heritage”  
In the Postmodern World**

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In the Postmodern World**

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**Report**

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## **Dedication**

For my colleagues at NEA and UNESCO, with gratitude.

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## **Abstract**

# **Traditional Music as “Intangible Cultural Heritage” In the Postmodern World**

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Compared with its roles in pre-modern societies, traditional music, previously called “folklore,” has been playing very different roles in the globalized world. These new roles, however, are rarely articulated in a systematic manner. While most discourse on the contemporary use of traditional music comes from the case studies of ethnomusicologists, the concept of “intangible cultural heritage,” which is usually associated with the initiatives of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (including traditional music), provides a new perspective to understand the new roles that traditional music plays in the postmodern world. A systematic examination of these roles is crucial, because it allows an in-depth analysis of the hidden power relations behind the contemporary use of traditional music. Furthermore, with the idea of “salvation from disappearing” being more and more problematic in contemporary practice, the project of preserving traditional music cannot be firmly grounded unless its contemporary values are demonstrated. In order to systematically identify and

analyze the contemporary use of traditional music, this paper examines the current literature on intangible cultural heritage and the related international initiatives undertaken by the United Nations and its specialized agencies such as UNESCO and UNDP, in combination with the major issues raised by ethnomusicologists regarding the use of traditional music in creative industries. Using two major case studies—*Kunqu* and HAN Hong's new Tibetan music—to demonstrate the aesthetic, political, economic and ethical dimensions of the use of traditional music in contemporary society, I argue that there is a fifth dimension, the social dimension, of the value of traditional music in the postmodern condition. The articulation of this social dimension of the contemporary use of traditional music serves to establish its universal relevance and to identify its unique character that makes it a powerful tool to serve as a counter-hegemonic force.

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## **List of Acronyms**

AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
HDI	Human Development Index
HULs	Historic Urban Landscapes
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
IP	Intellectual Property
TCEs	Traditional Cultural Expressions
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

## **List of International Legal Instruments** (by year)

- 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations
- 1972 *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, UNESCO
- 1989 *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, UNESCO
- 2001 *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, UNESCO
- 2001, 2003, 2005  
*Proclamations of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, UNESCO
- 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO
- 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, UNESCO
- 2007 *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, United Nations

## Chapter 1: Introduction

A recent concept, the term “intangible cultural heritage,” was invented by European heritage experts to counter the conventional perception of cultural heritage, which focuses on the materiality of cultural buildings and sites. By adding the adjective “intangible,” the new concept aims to recognize the equal significance of that cultural heritage that does not take tangible forms as buildings and sites, but plays a significant role in maintaining cultural traditions and cultural identity. It was a political response of UNESCO to the critiques of some of its member states (mainly non-Western countries) and postcolonial anthropologists against the Eurocentric methodology of defining cultural heritage. The Eurocentric method, as manifested in the *World Heritage List* program of UNESCO,<sup>1</sup> places heavy concerns over the monumental grandness and aesthetic values of the selected sites, therefore reflecting the dominance of the West in operating international cultural initiatives (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 1-3). Different from this dominant view of cultural heritage, the concept of intangible cultural heritage emphasizes the value of oral traditions, ritual practices, and traditional performing arts forms, which would otherwise be neglected by the western framework. They are intangible because they are mainly transmitted through community practices, and they experience continuous alterations and changes when passed from generation to the next. As shown on UNESCO’s website,

Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.<sup>2</sup>

After the establishment of the *2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (The 2003 Convention), UNESCO launched the

*Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program to put the 2003 Convention into practice, paralleling its earlier *World Heritage List* program based on cultural and natural sites. Similarly, UNESCO holds intergovernmental committee meetings to evaluate nominations from the member states to inscribe recognized intangible heritage so that they can be honored as the common heritage of the world. The new *List* received broad recognition from the majority of the member states. As many as 90 inscriptions were filed within the first year of operation of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists program* in 2008.<sup>3</sup> To bring the exorbitant number of submissions under control, UNESCO decided to limit the number of nominations each country would be permitted to submit per year. Unsurprisingly, the term “intangible cultural heritage” was quickly brought into prominence as the nation states all over the world promoted the program.

Obviously the concept of intangible cultural heritage as defined by UNESCO resembles that of the earlier anthropological term, folklore (Perlman 2011, 125). The change in terminology reflects the influence of indigenization and environmentalism movements since the 1970s (Perlman 2011, 116). The *World Forum on the Protection of Folklore* in 1997 in Thailand, organized by the *World Intellectual Property Organization* (WIPO) and UNESCO, witnessed a protest by the indigenous members of the Australian delegation against the word “indigenous folklore” because it “connotes inferiority” (Perlman 2011, 122). In addition, the limited understanding of folklore as intellectual property was challenged by the holistic approach indigenous groups use to account for their cosmological views that correspond to the “communal nature of indigenous societies” (Perlman 2011, 121). The use of indigenous genetic resources in pharmaceutical production also called for a rethinking of the scope of indigenous peoples’ intellectual property in order to establish legal protection against the unethical use of their genetic resources by multinational companies. It was within

such a context that WIPO, in 2002, decided to use “traditional cultural expressions (TCEs)” to replace “folklore” (Perlman 2011, 125). Concurrently, a more comprehensive concept emerged to denote the medical and environmental knowledge constituting the integral whole of the cultures of indigenous groups that fell under the protection of intellectual property law. Therefore, UNESCO’s concept of intangible cultural heritage encompasses both TCEs and traditional knowledge. The significance of this concept is demonstrated in the following text from UNESCO’s webpage [emphasis added]:

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining *cultural diversity* in the face of growing *globalization*. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with *intercultural dialogue*, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.<sup>4</sup>

To emphasize the “intangibility” and fluidity of the intangible cultural heritage, one more paragraph follows [emphasis added]:

The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather *the wealth of knowledge and skills* that is *transmitted* through it from one generation to the next. The *social and economic value of this transmission* of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups *within a State*, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.<sup>5</sup>

What is emphasized here is the “social and economic value of this transmission” within the context of “globalization.” Moreover, part of the social value, as the first paragraph suggests, pertains to “cultural diversity” and “intercultural dialogue,” both of which are given considerable attention in another UNESCO Convention—the *2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (the 2005 Convention).

Against the backdrop of UNESCO’s initiatives of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, promoting cultural diversity, and facilitating intercultural dialogue

within an intergovernmental framework among nation states, this paper focuses on traditional music, one of the major elements of TCEs, and its significance as a particular kind of intangible cultural heritage. In examining UNESCO's ongoing initiatives and the recent literature on cultural heritage, I attempt to articulate the multiple conceptualizations and uses of traditional music as intangible cultural heritage by various interest groups. Then I contextualize each conceptualization in relation to the changing dynamics of the power relations within the field of cultural heritage. Drawing from two case studies on traditional music in China, I argue that although the current literature and international initiatives emphasize the importance of the transmission of intangible cultural heritage—including traditional music as embodiments of traditional knowledge and skills, the underlying rationales are problematic. As these initiatives focus on identity politics along national and ethnic lines, they did not provide a solid theoretical ground to mobilize effective social agencies to *sustain* the transmission. Due to the lack of clarity regarding the universal importance and relevance of such transmission to *both* the Western *and* non-Western worlds, it is not hard to predict a further decline in the transmission of traditional music in places and countries where it has already started to decline, thus widening the gap between discourse and reality. To that end, I venture to argue for a renewed conceptualization of traditional music as intangible cultural heritage, using a strategy-based approach, in order to demonstrate the urgency of safeguarding traditional music and its *universal* relevance to our daily life within the particular context of neoliberal globalization that gives rise to the conditions of postmodernity. The paper concludes with a discussion of how traditional music could be empowered through political realignment and the dialogue between academia and UNESCO's heritage programs.



## Chapter 2: Background and Literature

### BACKGROUND: UNESCO AND THE 2003 CONVENTION

UNESCO is one of the specialized agencies within the United Nations, paralleling other well-known specialized agencies such as IMF (*International Monetary Fund*), WIPO (*World Intellectual Property Organization*) and WHO (*World Health Organization*). UNESCO's mission is "to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the science, culture, communication and information."<sup>6</sup> In relation to the focus of this paper, the *Cultural Sector* of UNESCO works to "protect, safeguard and manage the tangible and intangible heritage" and to "promote the diversity of cultural expressions and the dialogue of cultures with a view to fostering a culture of peace."<sup>7</sup>

The 2003 Convention is an extension of UNESCO's legal instruments to fulfill its commitment to cultural diversity in accordance with UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* in 2001 (the 2001 Declaration). The 2001 Declaration likens cultural diversity as biodiversity for nature, defines cultural diversity as "the common heritage of humanity," and considers cultural rights "an enabling environment for cultural diversity" (UNESCO 2001). The significance of cultural rights, as human rights, which are protected by UNESCO, was established at the *World Conference on Cultural Policies* in Mexico City in 1982, where the concept of "culture" was "broadened as the whole complex" that "characterizes a society and social group" (Langfield, Logan, and Craith 2010, 6). Therefore, it is the cultural identity embodied in the cultural heritage that UNESCO intends to protect, because different cultural identities are the building blocks of cultural diversity as the universal heritage of humanity. Intangible cultural heritage, in that sense, is a carrier and marker of the cultural identities, and, hence needs safeguarding. In fact, the precursor of the

2003 Convention is UNESCO's *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* (the 1989 Recommendation), which was reinforced by the 2001 Declaration and transformed into the 2003 Convention. As discussed in the earlier section of the paper, the previously defined concept of "traditional culture and folklore" was subsumed under the new concept of "intangible cultural heritage" in the 2003 Convention in order to encompass both TCEs and traditional knowledge and skills (Perlman 2011, 125). The new concept also supplements the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* in 1972, which deals primarily with tangible cultural and natural heritage sites.

The new concept, as clarified in Article 2 of the 2003 Convention, is defined as follows [emphasis added]:

#### Article 2–Definitions

For the purposes of this Convention,

1. The 'intangible cultural heritage' means ***the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills***—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that ***communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage***. This intangible cultural heritage, ***transmitted*** from generation to generation, is ***constantly recreated by communities and groups*** in response to ***their*** environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a ***sense of identity and continuity***. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.”
2. The 'intangible cultural heritage,' as defined in paragraph 1 above, is manifested inter alia in the following domains:
  - a. oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage.
  - b. performing arts;
  - c. social practices, rituals and festive events;
  - d. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
  - e. traditional craftsmanship. (UNESCO 2003).

Associated with the earlier *World Heritage Sites* program, UNESCO used the same method and established the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program to raise awareness among nation states of the new concept. The program received wide recognition and witnessed fierce competition among the nation states to inscribe their cultural heritage in the *Lists*. The emerging prominence of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program suggests the potential of the concept of intangible cultural heritage for fulfilling national political and economic agendas. On the one hand, the imagined cultural identity safeguarded as embodied in the intangible cultural heritage can serve the purpose of nation building and consolidation for the member states; on the other hand, the inscription generates both domestic and international fame for the inscribed items so that it provides favorable conditions for commercialization of the items for cultural tourism.

The selection criteria are elaborated in the *Operation Directives* of the 2003 Convention [emphasis added]:

In nomination files, the submitting State(s) Party(ies) is (are) requested to demonstrate that an element proposed for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity satisfies all of the following criteria:

- R.1 The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention.
- R.2 Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring ***visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage*** and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting ***cultural diversity*** worldwide and testifying to ***human creativity***.
- R.3 Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element.
- R.4 The element has been nominated following the ***widest possible participation of the community***, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their ***free, prior and informed consent***.
- R.5 The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in Article 11 and Article 12 of the Convention.<sup>8</sup>

## **FIRST GLIMPSE: MAJOR ACADEMIC CRITIQUE OF THE 2003 CONVENTION**

The fast spread of the new concept of intangible cultural heritage with the establishment of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program drew considerable attention in academia. The 2003 Convention encountered a variety of academic critiques revolving around its built-in paradoxes. First, the dual claim of universal human rights and diversity of culture poses a major question regarding “the extent to which societies are required to accommodate and recognize all cultural differences and languages” or “whether any such recognition should be confined to indigenous groups” (Langfield, Logan, and Craith 2010, 12). This critique points to the conflicts generated by cultural diversity that perpetuate difference rather than encouraging dialogue. Besides, where to locate the universal character of cultural diversity is nebulous. Second, as an intergovernmental organization, UNESCO’s complete reliance on the national governments of the member states to submit applications for inscriptions on the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* does not answer its call to focus on the participation and informed consent of the communities and groups that practice the cultural heritage. In other words, the safeguarding of intangible heritage is conditioned upon the agenda of the national governments, rather than the communities and groups. Moreover, the submitted items, while based on the informed consent of the local communities, are nevertheless claimed as “national heritage” (Langfield, Logan, and Craith 2010, 10), hence the safeguarding of intangible heritage becomes a nation building process that disguises the heterogeneity within the member state. Third, the convention does not address the potential conflicts between cultural rights as a collective human right and individual human rights. Fourth, a conceptual framework to validate the universal significance of intangible cultural heritage remains absent. Such a framework is crucial to achieving consensus among the member states. For example, some countries like United States and Great Britain do not think safeguarding intangible heritage

pertains to their agenda. Some even viewed the idea itself of claiming a universal importance of intangible heritage to be “absurd” (Smith 2006, 110). Fifth, the inscription itself is a fossilization process that goes against the claim of the mutability of the intangible heritage within the 2003 Convention (Smith 2006, 111). Sixth, the Convention does not address “to what extent must traditional ways be sacrificed in order to achieve [economic] progress” (Langfield, Logan, and Craith 2010, 13). Simply put, it does not offer insight into the ongoing problem of the conflict between tradition and modernity.

### **A BIGGER PICTURE: AFTER THE 2003 CONVENTION—RECENT LITERATURE ON HERITAGE STUDIES**

The implementation of the 2003 Convention makes available invaluable real-world cases on the international level for academic inquiries. Its broad geographical coverage and complicated implementation processes involve frequent interactions on different spatial scales—the international, the national, and the local. Such complexity, together with the multiple dimensions that the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program touches upon, has attracted the attention of both scholars and heritage professionals. Dialogue among scholars from different disciplines such as anthropology, ethnomusicology, archaeology, museology, geology, and media studies has contributed to the publication of series of edited collections revolving around the phenomenon of heritage that calls for a reconceptualization of the concept of heritage. Professionals from within the field of heritage preservation, including conservation staff, legal experts and policy professionals, on the other hand, focus on the issues of cultural heritage management and the problems encountered in the implementation process of UNESCO’s 2003 Convention. In what follows I examine some selected works on cultural heritage to identify the new developments in the conceptualization of intangible cultural heritage to contrast with UNESCO’s initial conceptualization.

Most of the existing heritage literature revolves around the general issue of cultural heritage. Only a limited number of edited works specifically deal with intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Nevertheless, as ICH is an integral part of cultural heritage, works on cultural heritage in general *did* mention the new concept of ICH, quite often with a brief discussion of how it challenges the widely received inherited perception of cultural heritage in Western heritage practice. While fully recognizing that heritage of all forms has intangible meanings, the literature review below mainly focuses on ICH and the fields that immediately and significantly relate to ICH, such as globalization, cultural landscape, human rights and museology. Such a focus enables a close examination of the functions of traditional music within the discourse of ICH, which will be elaborated in chapter three.

### **ICH-Specific Collections**

There are two outstanding ICH-specific collections: Smith and Akagawa (2009) and Stefano, Davis and Corsane (2012). Smith and Akagawa use a historical approach to contextualize UNESCO's 2003 Convention as an international legal instrument to shape international cultural policy. In alignment with the earlier discussions, Smith and Akagawa (2009, 1) emphasize the "intervention" role that the 2003 Convention played in prompting international debate to challenge the well-established rule for heritage preservation in the West. Termed as the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), the dominant understanding of cultural heritage from the West "defines heritage to be material (tangible), monumental, grand, 'good,' aesthetic, and of universal value" (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 3). Questioning the dichotomized terminology that tends to separate the intangible from the tangible, Smith and Akagawa switch the focus from history to the practice of the *Intangible Heritage Lists* program. In addition to the detailed elaboration on the nomination and evaluation process of the program, multiple representative articles were incorporated into

the collection in order to cover the multiple dimensions of the new concept and its variety of conceptualizations shaped in the practice in the fields. Covered themes include ICH and root seeking and identity (Marrie 2009), ICH and indigenous groups and human rights (Munjeri 2009), and ICH and new museology (Kearney 2009). Besides the focuses on history and practice, Smith and Akagawa also collect several articles that critique UNESCO's *Intangible Heritage Lists* program from a philosophical level. These critiques cover a broad range of conceptual dilemmas displayed in the program, such as the contradiction between the inclusive "intangibility" (Hafstein 2009) and the exclusive "documentation" (Byrne 2009), the paradox between "heritage as goods" and "heritage as identity" (Bendix 2009), and the irony of the "universal" and "shared" value of ICH that does not seem relevant to countries like United Kingdom (Hassard 2009; Smith and Waterson 2009). Simply put, even though ICH as a political strategy achieved popularity among UNESCO's member states, the concept of ICH, especially when put into practice, appears to be philosophically problematic—politically, the tensions between the local, the national, and the global are unsolvable both in the process of decision making and in local practice (Aikawa-Faure 2009; Seeger 2009; Blake 2009); economically, the material culture driven by global capitalism hinders the romanticized imaginations of identity embodied in the heritage; more ironically, even within the member states of UNESCO, the claimed universal values of ICH cannot be proven, as there are a few countries who do not see the program as relevant (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 3).<sup>9</sup> Smith and Akagawa, in this regard, call for a "re-theorisation of 'heritage'" because "the tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible" (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 6). Smith and Akagawa point out that heritage literature<sup>10</sup> has achieved an initial consensus that heritage should be re-theorised "as a cultural practice, rather than simply a site, place or intangible performance or event" (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 6). Toward the end of the

collection, Smith and Akagawa identify the relationship between ICH, identity and the sense of place as a topic that entails further exploration.

A second ICH-specific collection is *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Touching the Intangible*, edited by Stefano, Davis, and Corsane (2012). Three years after the publication of Smith and Akagawa's earlier collection, Stefano, Davis, and Corsane (2012, 2) go beyond the focus on "the strengths and weaknesses of UNESCO's prescribed approaches", instead, they apply the emerging literature on heritage-related geopolitics and geo-culture discourse to present a "globalized" ICH that is contextualized and manifested on multiple geographical scales and levels:

Owing to the fact that the importance of ICH is growing globally, it was felt that questions concerning the current state of affairs of ICH promotion and protection at local, regional and national levels should be explored from a wide array of geographical locations. (Stefano, David, and Corsane 2012, 2).

Stefano, Davis, and Corsane also expand the concept of ICH from UNESCO's prescribed version—namely rituals, oral traditions, performing arts, traditional knowledge and skills—into a much broader one which "represents everything: the immaterial elements that influence and surround all human activity" (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012, 1). In that sense, this new book further unfolds the tensions and contradictions as presented by Smith and Akagawa's earlier collection, especially the cultural and political tensions between UNESCO, the national governments of the inscribed member states, and the communities in question. However, instead of centering upon the assessment of UNESCO's convention and its internally charged logical conflicts, the new book focuses on "the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental contexts" in different geographical regions "within which it [the concept of ICH] is expressed and developed" (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012, 2) and from which the practice of the ICH program was carried out. In other words, UNESCO's ICH concept, created from an egalitarianism



ideal, cannot be fulfilled or realized without being given multifarious translations and interpretations. These translations and interpretations, undertaken by the inscribed national governments and the involved communities, have to be discursive because they are predicated upon the discursive social, cultural and political contexts of the communities and nations involved. The entire collection features case studies<sup>11</sup> and a series of “conservation pieces”—the interview records that revolve around the same set of interview questions toward interviewees from diverse backgrounds and different countries in the field of heritage preservation. Structurally, the first section of the book centers upon the rethinking of the ICH concept against the “19<sup>th</sup>-century inherited salvage paradigm” (Alivizatou 2012b, 15). Among the selected articles for this matter, Alivizatou suggests an alternative rationale based on the “politics of erasure and transformation” (ibid) that perceives ICH as a space of constant negotiation between the past and the present. Cummins, by the same token, conceptualizes heritage as “a performative act and the tools we use in the process of authentication or validation” (Cummins 2012, 31). Abungu, from a different perspective, takes ICH as “means for asserting power and retaining its place” (Abungu 2012, 56). Simply put, the notions of preservation and salvation were commonly critiqued in its limited utility in coping with the paradoxes such as “globalizing the local” and “preserving the living” (Alivizatou 2012b, 15). The second section of the book focuses on the different attitudes and approaches each national government had and used in translating UNESCO’s ICH concept into one that ties to specific national projects. The last section explores alternative institutional designs to contest the dominance of national governments in undertaking safeguarding projects. Suggested solutions include grassroots efforts (Denes 2012; Kreps 2012), diversification of stakeholders (Dos Santos and Müller 2012), application of ecomuseology (Stefano 2012), sustainable tourism (Bowers and Corsane 2012), community-based management (Maggi 2012), and multinational alliances,

a good example of which is the “en-compass project” with a focus on cultural dissemination and capacity building (Corsane and Mazel 2012).

From Smith and Akagawa’s collection (2009) to the one edited by Stefano, Davis, and Corsane (2012), the foci of the debate shifted from the conceptual evaluation of the concept of ICH in relation to its meanings, to the connection between the conceptualizations of ICH and their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental contexts. The conceptualization of ICH, accordingly, expanded from meaningful cultural practices in certain forms, to the aggregated “immaterial elements that influence and surround human activity” (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012, 1).

### **ICH In Relation to Globalization, Human Rights, Cultural Landscape, and Museology**

*Heritage and Globalisation*, edited by Labadi and Long (2010), emphasizes the “intangibility” of all heritage: “While heritage protection has never been simply about the past, it seems more than ever to be seen as a strategy for the future” (Labadi and Long 2010, 2).

Comparing with the above-mentioned collections, Labadi and Long perceive the concept of heritage from a higher order by situating it under the macro-economic conditions of neoliberal globalization. It is for two reasons that their analysis is of a higher order. First, it goes beyond simply identifying and articulating the cultural meanings—such as contested values, ideologies, and identities—embodied in various heritage forms. Second, it is not geared toward case studies that serve to enumerate the unlimited ways heritage can be interpreted depending on the particularities of the social context. Labadi and Long penetrate the surface and explore the underlying agencies that contribute to the popularization of the concept of ICH shortly after UNESCO ratified its 2003 Convention. One such underlying agency is neoliberal globalization. Termed “free market capitalist

globalization” (Labadi and Long 2010, 3) by Labadi and Long, neoliberal globalization carries the following “fundamental characteristics:”

Free trade, liberalization of the international flow of capital, an enhanced role for the financial sector, deregulation of, and increased use of the coercive powers of the state in support of, the activities of business (but, especially in the English-speaking world, stricter and punitive regulation of labour), privatization, reduction in the direct role of government in the economy, a winding back of the welfare state, and a greatly expanded role in social and economic policy for unfettered market forces. (Labadi and Long 2010, 3-4).

Labadi and Long’s framework is grounded upon the Marxist argument that *economic base*, marked by the *mode of production*, determines the *superstructure* of the society in which culture is an integral element. In comparison with the earlier forms of globalization in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century led by colonizing powers such as Britain and France, Labadi and Long point out that the contemporary neoliberal globalization is distinct in its own right. Continuous technological innovations like mass media, automation and digitalization, revolutionize the *mode of production* in contemporary society. The reduced cost of transportation and communication substantially speeds up the process of production and distribution and thus generates highly favorable conditions for multinational corporations to actively participate in the globalized economy and exert global influence. With the rise of the consumerist mass culture, efficiency and profit-making override social equality and social welfare and dominate the policy priority, which to a great extent weakens the power of national governments in harnessing national economy. Such an *economic base* leads to the dominance of popular culture, which marginalizes the practice of traditional cultural forms. Ironically, even though the practice of traditional culture is marginalized, the elements of traditional culture were incorporated into the global market, reappropriated by creative industries to produce strategically diverse but globally standardized cultural products for global consumers. Within such a context, Labadi and

Long argue that the popularity of UNESCO's heritage program is "inherently implicated with" processes of globalization, where: "...heritage destinations worldwide may be adapting themselves to the homogenizing trends of global tourism, but, at the same time, they have to commodify their local distinctiveness in order to compete with other destinations" (Labadi and Long 2010, 8). Furthermore, the authors note,

UNESCO has played an important role in encouraging a global perspective of cultural heritage. UNESCO has also played an important role in defining that perspective. In recent decades new developments have reinforced the intertwining of cultural heritage and global process of political and economic interaction: climate change, concerns about loss of cultural diversity, poverty and sustainable development. (Labadi and Long 2010, 2).

On the one hand, studies on UNESCO's influence through its *World Heritage* program recognizes UNESCO's success in achieving a global impact through playing an "instrumental-symbolic function" by "assigning 'World Heritage' as a status" (Askew 2010, 20-21), which attributes universal values to cultural heritage. On the other hand, the various case studies of UNESCO's *World Heritage* program in this book<sup>12</sup> brought into light the various "appropriations" of the concept by the national governments to serve national projects such as promotion of nationalism and economic development through heritage tourism. Labadi and Bortolotto both analyze the multiple interpretations of the term "authenticity" along historical and spatial dimensions during the operation process of UNESCO's *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program (Labadi 2010; Bortolotto 2010). Regarding heritage tourism, opinions vary toward the intensifying commercialization of heritage. At one end of the continuum are experts who endorse the privatization of heritage because it is conceived as an effective way to prevent heritage from disappearing (Starr 2010). On the other end are those who argue that commercialized heritage runs the risk of losing sustainability (Salazar 2010). Winter, in his analysis of heritage in Asia, believes that heritage will be more relevant and more important because it meets the travel needs of

the ever-growing population of the middle class in Asia (Winter 2010). Relating ICH to environmental crisis and poverty reduction, alternative approaches to tourism are suggested and explored at the end of the collection. Some call for the critical involvement of grass-root and transnational NGOs as alternative forces that undertake safeguarding tasks (Long and Smith 2010), whereas others suggest a new museology and sustainable tourism (Samuels 2010). To summarize, Labadi and Long's collection focuses on the tensions between the local and the global within the context of globalization in three layers: political, as seen in the promotion process of ICH projects; economic, as seen in the rise of heritage tourism; and ethical, as seen from ICH's association with environmental protection, poverty reduction, and empowerment of vulnerable communities.

The other three selected books are Tylor and Lennon (2012) on managing cultural landscape, Silverman and Ruggles (2007) on heritage and human rights (both are edited collections), and a single-authored book on intangible cultural heritage and museology by Alivisatou (2012a).

Perceiving landscape as a cultural process, Tylor and Lennon demonstrate the "heritage values" and the "cultural heritage significance of cultural landscapes" (Tylor and Lennon 2012, 4).<sup>13</sup> Specifically, situating a particular landscape within its particular cultural context can reveal "human values and plurality of meanings" (Tylor and Lennon 2012, 4). The idea of cultural landscape manages to encompass two dimensions of heritage: the art form, and its embodiment of ideological associations, such as memory and identity. Grounded upon this holistic stand, the second part of the book discusses "culture-nature relationship, and traditional ways of seeing cultural landscapes and, allied to this, traditional management approaches and biodiversity protection" (Tylor and Lennon 2012, 5). Multiple case studies that feature different locations and regions<sup>14</sup> are included to exhibit different management approaches. Inaba, in a case study on heritage in Japan,

employs the concept of “associative cultural landscape” (Inaba 2012, 110) to denote the holistic approach to heritage protection. This concept covers a broader series of embodiments that constitute cultural landscape, such as natural scenery, paintings and literature. To accommodate the continuous change of the landscape into the theoretical framework, part three of the book focuses on the concept of historic urban landscapes (HULs). Bandarin uses France and Italy as counter-examples to suggest that their integrated way of preservation of monuments and sites fails to preserve the “social fabric” that once embodied historic cities (Tyler and Lennon 2012, 10). The last section of the collection pertains to the management challenges in applying the holistic idea of landscape. Compared with the cases studies covered in the ICH-specific collections, the cases presented in Tyler and Lennon’s book bring to the table another set of questions: How is it possible to keep the “intangibility” of a physical site? Can a physical site have a renewed “intangibility?” How does its “intangibility” interact with its materiality?

From a completely different angle, Silverman and Ruggles (2007) highlight cultural heritage as a double-edged sword in relation to cultural rights. Cultural heritage can be both inclusive—as means to promote mutual understanding and dialogue—and exclusive and thus violent, as the target of destructive violence. This perspective mainly pertains to the forms of heritage that feature physical symbolism, such as monuments, cultural sites, and indigenous conservation land. UNESCO’s adoption of the ICH concept poses a conundrum to scholars of cultural rights: the concept of cultural rights, while simultaneously providing access and drawing boundaries, entails clear-cut criteria to define ownership of the involved heritage, which contradicts the multifaceted nature of ICH as immediately experienced and performative (Logan 2007). Centering upon the issues of ownership of the heritage and of the history of the silenced, Silverman and Ruggles provide plenty of examples<sup>15</sup> to demonstrate the exclusion of the powerless from freedom of cultural

expression on religious (Israel and India) and ethnic (Central America, Zimbabwe, Native Americans, Bolivia, Iran, Nazis, Tibet and Indonesia) grounds. At the heart of the issue lies the “predicaments of human rights and cultural property” (Barkan 2007, 184) that turn the application of cultural rights as a dimension of human rights into the singular practice of political activism (Pyburn 2007) and “politics of recognition” (Smith 2007, 159). It turns out that the notion of self-determination appears problematic to an imagined community that does not act as an individual human being.

The last book is Alivisatou’s monograph (2012) on ICH and museology. With a solid background in museology and heritage studies, Alivisatou uses both historical and ethnographic methods in her book to provide the empirical basis for modern museology. Contrasting the inherited museology that bifurcates the tangible and the intangible, the modern museology features an “inclusive and people-oriented” (Alivisatou 2012a, 15) conceptualization of heritage. Alivisatou did multi-site ethnographic research that spanned five museums across different continents.<sup>16</sup> These museums represent “indigenous, ethnic, or minority groups” (Alivisatou 2012a, 20), namely those often excluded from the mainstream culture of the given society. From her ethnographic analysis Alivisatou presents intangible heritage as “a postcolonial reinvention of museum practice centred on providing a space for cross-cultural communication” (Tylor and Lennon 2012, 21).

### **Synthesis**

The literature review above reveals the multiple levels of understanding of the concept of heritage. First, there is the inherited Eurocentric understanding of heritage as buildings and sites. Prompted by UNESCO’s conceptualization of ICH, this understanding of cultural heritage was renewed and redefined as the representation of cultural meanings attributed to a variety of heritage forms created by local communities. Beyond this, a re-

theorized concept of heritage later emerged in which ICH is understood as the “immaterial elements that surround and influence human activities” (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012, 1). The Eurocentric conceptualization of heritage focuses on disjunct points, individual sites separated by physical space. The renewed conceptualization of heritage, on the other hand, associates heritage with its underlying cultural meanings. The connection between heritage and cultural significance adds a dimension to heritage. If the previously disjunct heritage of the Eurocentric conceptualization is likened to disjunct points, heritage within this new conceptualization can be compared to lines, in which heritage and meaning are integrated. Extending the analogy, the conceptualization of heritage grounded upon the dynamic understanding of cultural landscape broadens the concept of heritage into a plane, in which the social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions interweave with heritage and constantly shape it. The intervention of globalization, as the driving force that initiates rapid change in social conditions, adds a vertical dimension, hence a scalar aspect, to the understanding of heritage. As an agency, globalization eradicates some of the major material elements that constituted the pre-existing heritage plane of a given locality, globalizing it and transforming it in order to adapt to the strengthened global operation driven by the engine of neoliberal globalization. The global is thus simultaneously local. As responses to the globalizing force, the changes and transformations that occur in the corresponding localities, both economic and political, further affect the configuration of the cultural landscape. Unfettered, market forces accumulatively incorporate the elements of the cultural landscape of a given locality into the global market and the global goods distribution system, creating a greatly standardized cultural landscape. Cultural standardization no doubt leads to standardization of natural landscapes. Without the preservation of ICH, the richness and diversity of previous cultural landscapes would only be transmitted to future generation by digital means through images



of cultural imagination. If diverse cultural landscapes are replaced with a uniform global landscape, ICH would cease to be a lived reality.

The trajectory of the literature as exhibited and discussed unfolds a surprisingly capacious space of heritage with a multidimensional, multi-layered, and multifaceted shape. To better understand the dynamics of change in this space, it is critical to identify and articulate the major agencies and forces in progress. The following section uses traditional music as an example to investigate how the literature addressing cultural heritage as examined above informs the practice of traditional music in the contemporary world. Where do we situate traditional music within the vast space of intangible cultural heritage?

### **Chapter 3: Traditional Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Just as TCEs are preceded by the term “folklore,” the concept of “traditional music” is preceded by the term “folk music and dance.” Traditional music, without a widely accepted definition, encompasses a broad range of music that was developed independently of music industries. Simply put, traditional music is for the most part what modern music is not, especially in terms of the processes of its production, practice, and distribution. The particularities of traditional music are worth discussing apart from other forms of ICH. Traditional music, as a cultural practice, is a cultural element in a traditional way of living based on pre-modern economy and social relations. Its source of survival, namely, the pre-modern cultural, social and economic context, has been rapidly disappearing since the advent of industrialization. The vulnerability of traditional music is caused by changes in both financial and social conditions. Whereas the breakdown of the traditional patronage system substantially affects the livelihood of the court and elite musicians, the replacement of rural social relations with the urban way of living turned rural farmers into migrant workers, disrupting the social context in which folk music is performed. Further, in contrast to most other forms of cultural heritage, traditional music is a *social* practice that features performing events shared among the performers and the audience at the same point in time and space. With recent continuous technological innovation, musical sounds have been separated from its social setting and instead turned into cultural goods. This damages the performative nature of traditional music as a social event. At the same time, the dominance of recording industries in shaping the music listening experience in daily lives, diminishes the attendance at live music concerts and social events. The commercial use of traditional music sounds in creating new cultural products also disguises the fact that traditional music in its original nature is disappearing. In addition, no consensus has yet been achieved in

terms of the necessity of maintaining and safeguarding traditional music. Although the existing literature and the practice of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage program, as discussed above, suggest multiple factors that have been used to justify the preservation of traditional music in contemporary life, none of these has proven to be universally applicable. One justification for safeguarding traditional music pertains to its aesthetic value, especially in the case of traditional court music. Major proponents for this justification include scholars of music aesthetics and the masters of traditional music. A second justification emphasizes the identity, or the sense of a unique national or ethnic self that is embodied in traditional music. This identity is important because it can be used to claim the "lost identities" resulting from the hegemony of popular music as standardized cultural products. This conceptualization is embraced by a broad range of nation states and individuals—especially those in the "non-Western" world—who attempt to claim a shared, but distant and romanticized, past that was twisted by colonial history. Needless to say, while such identity provides an imagined sense of belonging that compensates a somewhat melancholic sense of loss among the "older" generation in the presence of the rapid changes in life accelerated by constant technological innovation, it also provides a platform for production and consumption of the commercialized, romanticized, and "exoticized" cultural goods as manifested in cultural tourism and world music recording industries. Therefore, the political nature of this identity-based justification, together with its commercial appropriation, is quite often contested by scholars and musicians who emphasize the aesthetic values of the traditional music in question. A third justification for safeguarding traditional music is grounded upon the ideal of cultural diversity, which intends to seek cultural peace through intercultural dialogue. These are the major concerns of UNESCO, demonstrated in its 2003 and 2005 Conventions (the former on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, and the latter on promoting cultural diversity). UNESCO's

conceptualization of cultural diversity, regardless of its good intention, is nevertheless open to unexpected interpretations. On the one hand, its definition of cultural diversity,<sup>17</sup> though specified, does not preclude a Montesquieuan imagination of the “divided unity” (Leonard 2005, 81-82) achieved through essentialized national and local representations.<sup>18</sup> Such an imagination tends to set clear-cut boundaries between the essentialized cultural identities embodied in a particular cultural expression, and therefore, serves as the basis for cultural conflicts. On the other hand, cultural diversity is often interpreted to be the cultural counterpart of biodiversity (UNESCO 2001).<sup>19</sup> This view perceives culture and nature as two similar realms built upon the same mechanism. It has served as the major rationale for the cultural and natural conservation projects since the 1970s, which have usually been led by environmentalists and indigenous activists (Perlman 2011, 119-121). There is even a strand of thought that legitimizes the necessity of preserving traditional music by conceiving of it as the building blocks for “new music” through digital sampling and synthesizing.

To what extent can the various justifications listed above be employed in order to maintain the livelihood of traditional music? How do these justifications relate to each other? It seems that each justification embodies a different perspective informed by a unique value. How can the conflicts between these values be mediated? Is there a universal justification that can possibly pull together all the stakeholders? To better articulate the conflicts in value among the different groups interested in traditional music in contemporary society, I frame various contemporary uses of traditional music into the following four dimensions.

## **AESTHETIC DIMENSION: TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND MUSICIANSHIP**

The aesthetic value of traditional music as a fine art has been the focus of scholarly attention, especially among musicologists and ethnomusicologists. This focus closely relates to the established supremacy of high arts, which features refined musicianship exemplified in Western classical music. Demonstrated by the institutionalization of music studies in Europe and North America, the supremacy of high arts was widely accepted in postcolonial countries during the process of modernization. Revolving around the musical genius of an individual, musicianship is defined by technical and aesthetic aspects such as composing techniques, performing techniques, the mastery of the human voice or a particular instrument, and the expressive quality of a musical work or a musical performance. Many non-Western musical arts draw Occidental attention because of their aesthetic qualities. UNESCO's *Proclamations of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* (2001, 2003, 2005) are examples of validating non-Western traditional music from the aesthetic perspective, driven by the ideology of cultural egalitarianism. According to UNESCO, the aesthetic achievements of the proclaimed masterpieces, as well as the identities they embody, carry equal importance to those of Western high arts. The tradition bearers, in this case the "masters of traditions," therefore, become symbols of national identities, a glory based on musical talents. The emphasis on individual genius and musical aesthetics common in Western music history scholarship was applied to the evaluation of the applications for the masterpieces. In that sense, traditional music, as the masterpieces of intangible heritage, runs the risk of being reduced to individual artistic achievement, which is considered to be the embodiment of the essence of a particular identity. Since the aesthetic validation of traditional music mainly concerns the aesthetic aspects and the individuality of the musicians, it unintentionally leaves out the extra-musical aspects of traditional music. Therefore, the aesthetic justification for

safeguarding traditional music is only shared among high art connoisseurs, and hence does not have universal relevance. In relation to the previously examined literature, the focus on the aesthetic dimension of traditional music accords with the “Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD)” as discussed by Smith and Akagawa (2009).

It follows that the conceptualization of cultural diversity in the case of traditional music, if using the aesthetic perspective, would be marked by diversity in musical instruments and aesthetics. Likewise, the transmission of traditional music, from the aesthetic perspective, would be concerned primarily with the traditional instruments and the transmission of performance techniques passed down from the master musicians. This rationale is illustrated by the earlier trajectory of scholarship in ethnomusicology, which focused on musical analysis and the personal engagement of the ethnomusicologist with the aesthetics of non-Western traditional music. Without immediate links to the social and economic context of the non-Western societies, the aesthetic focus emphasizes musical exchange between individuals, usually individual musicians, and therefore, appears to be blind to the relationship between traditional music and the political agenda of the people in the non-Western world. Nevertheless, the aesthetic appreciation of non-Western traditional music generates both scholarly attention and market demand for traditional music concerts within the circle of music connoisseurs. In that sense, the aesthetic validation of traditional music in contemporary society does contribute to the aesthetic sustainability of traditional music.

#### **POLITICAL DIMENSION: TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND IDENTITY—BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT**

By political dimension, I mean a space where traditional music is used to empower or disempower an individual or group for political purposes based on various ideologies. In this space, traditional music is often invoked to symbolize an imagined past to serve

current political needs. In contrast to other forms of intangible cultural heritage, traditional music as an icon of the past does not take a fixed form due to its performative nature. The fluidity of traditional music, together with its straightforward communicative and expressive nature, allows it to be used as an effective prompt for sonic imaginations that go beyond the music itself. Based on lived experience, these sonic imaginations vary from individual to individual, from time to time, and from place to place. Oriented by a particular political agenda, the traditional music in question can take multiple meanings at the same time. Simultaneously expressive, provocative, emotional, and political, traditional music carries the unique potential to generate a sense of solidarity because it sonically reconciles the different life experiences that the listeners have through the musical elements that collectively signify a particular shared meaning among the listeners. This process is realized through the association between musical sounds and meanings. For those who are familiar with a particular musical sound, a collective identity can be generated; vice versa, for those who identify themselves with a particular group of people, they can claim the identity by imitating the music that the group of people collectively play. It is by playing the game of musical association that individuals and groups align with each other to achieve a shared political goal. That is why folk songs that describe the peacefulness of pre-war lives were often used during the time of war to generate solidarity by affirming the shared memory of the past. In other situations, traditional music serves as a bridge to the past from the present and generates a sense of continuity by being musically connected to a perceived cultural root. A case in point is music nationalism, which uses traditional music to claim nationhood, the essentialized national identity. Identity as such is determined by one's national origin and is, in most cases, a racialized one.

The notion of nationhood not only serves as a vehicle for national mobilization to fulfill national agendas, but also constitutes the fundamental element of an “international

grid” based on the politics of representation. In connection with nation building in the global economy, traditional music becomes a key element for cultural imaging of nation states on the international stage. Ironically, the internal heterogeneity of each nation state does not allow a universal embodiment of nationhood. Nationhood, as the carrier of an essentialized, hence imagined, national identity, does not take a fixed shape. Instead, as the outcome of political negotiations among the regional and local groups based on changing power relations, nationhood is a constantly contested space. Similarly, traditional music, which is quite often used to define a national music, has been continuously appropriated and adapted for political reasons to reflect the power negotiations both within and between nation states. The birth of the official “Chinese traditional music” during Mao’s China is a typical example of the latter. Combining traditional Chinese instruments with Western musical aesthetics, especially the aesthetics of musical composition and instrumentation, the Chinese nationhood is translated into musical modernity.

In addition to music nationalism, traditional music is also widely used by immigrants and diasporic communities, in combination with the music of the host location, to claim a hybrid identity. The cultural displacement caused by immigration and migration situates the immigrants and diasporic communities in a status of liminality. Whereas their native living experience equips them with a different perspective to gaze at and participate in the daily life in the host location, they cannot interact with local communities on a shared cultural basis. Straddling an unconnected past and an inserted present, they need hybridized cultural expressions to articulate their unique identities in order to contest the hegemony of the local culture. In addition, as minorities the immigrants and diasporic communities have to actively seek support from those with similar cultural backgrounds to mobilize resources for self-empowerment. In that sense, the practice of traditional music can consolidate the shared identity among various immigrant groups and diasporic



communities by affirming and reinforcing a shared past. However, immigrants and diasporic communities are scattered and are usually composed of people from various regions in their homeland. As a result, the traditional music practiced and shared among immigrants and diasporic communities has to be adjusted to accommodate the regional differences that exist within the communities. Peter Manuel, in his article on the construction of Indo-Caribbean “local classical music,” demonstrates how a new diasporic tradition, *tan-singing*, is consciously and creatively constructed by the diasporic communities through synthesizing folk and classical elements as well as pan-regional and vernacular elements that were previously distinct from each other. As such, this new diasporic tradition forms a coherent and fluid intermediate genre that breaks from the previous classification. Manuel suggests that such idiosyncratic synthesization and re-articulation of the previously discrete elements reflects “the fluid relations” between the “traditionally classified in terms of ‘Great’ and ‘Little Traditions’ and the richness of cultural practices which straddle them and problematize their conceptualization as dichotomous entities” (Manuel 2000, 98).

The examples above suggest how the identity embodied in traditional music can be generated and reinforced via symbolic politics. In the case of music nationalism, it is the ideology of nationhood that consolidates a nation’s power in undertaking national initiatives. In terms of immigrants and diasporic communities, the shared ideology, rather than being imposed by the national governments, is grounded upon the shared social status of minorities in the host country. Their common disadvantage pushes immigrants and diasporic communities to actively crystalize their shared minority identity through practicing a synthesized version of traditional music. As a cultural expression, the synthesized traditional music provides a space for the minority communities to articulate their distinctive identity. As a resource for social mobilization, the synthesized traditional

music becomes a source of political empowerment. In fact, identity formation is a form of interest alignment based on a political project. Therefore, it has a fluid nature. Whenever the political project is completed, the basis of the formed identity dissolves, as does the music used to symbolize the identity. The conception of fluidity in traditional music is confirmed by the literature examined earlier regarding the fluidity of intangible cultural heritage, which is conceptualized as “means for asserting power and retaining its place” (Abungu 2012, 56) as “a performative act and the tools...in the process of authentication or validation” (Cummins 2012, 31) and as “a space of constant negotiation between the past and the present” based on the “politics of erasure and transformation” (Alivizatou 2012b, 15).

Since identity is strategically formed as a response to emerging political needs, the essentialized identity based on self-determination runs the risk of promoting separatism and generating cultural conflicts and violence. Therefore, essentialized understanding of identity should be avoided. In terms of cultural diversity, it seems that the identity politics as reflected by the two musical examples above generated a variety of new forms of musical expressions. In that sense, the political use of traditional music *does* contribute to the maintenance of cultural diversity as defined by UNESCO.

#### **ECONOMIC DIMENSION: TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

The use of traditional music for economic gains is an immediate result of technological innovation. The invention of the phonograph allowed musical sounds to be isolated from their performance milieu and turned into a sonic product. The spread of digital technologies brought down the cost of recording and distributing musical sounds. Additionally, advanced recording technologies have greatly improved the sound quality of the musical products, generating a clearer and more engaging sound compared with that at

a live concert. To maximize profits, recording companies aspire to maximize the aesthetic and symbolic values of the commercialized musical sounds through such strategies as market packaging, imaging, and sound engineering. By simply purchasing the musical sounds, one can enjoy an ideal listening experience without physically participating in a concert. In addition to musical sounds, CD covers and the liner notes also play an important role in shaping the sonic imaginations of consumers.

Traditional music, within such a context, is often labeled “World Music” in the recording market. To cater to the different musical tastes of customers from different regions and local cultures, the traditional music in the recording market is constantly altered and renewed to provoke a desirable sonic imagination among consumers. Exoticism, spirituality, and secrecy are among the widely conceived marks of “World Music” (Feld 2000).

Of course, the recording industry is just one of the many forefronts where traditional music is marketed as a cultural product. Traditional music has also been used in tourism performances and movies, in which traditional music is presented both aurally and visually. Whereas the recording industry is oriented in accordance with the musical tastes of its target customers, the traditional music used in tourism performances and movies *actively shape* the audience’s understanding of the “authenticity” of the traditional culture involved. Due to the commercial nature of these performances and movies, the presented “authenticity” is more of a validation of the product than a true reflection of the traditional music practiced in daily life. In other words, although the traditional music used in tourism performances and movies originates from traditional daily life, aesthetic packaging is necessary to turn the “field sound” into a marketable cultural product that intends to please the ears and the eyes of the audience.

UNESCO's *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* program encouraged the marketization of traditional music because the program attributes a claimed universal value to the inscribed elements that entitles them to a global status as the representations of universal humanity. For the traditional music genres that were inscribed, their global status validates their relevance to cultural tourists. Therefore, UNESCO itself becomes a powerful brand that increases the market value of the traditional music genres inscribed. As many of the inscribed traditional music genres are facing the challenge of continued transmission, cultural tourism becomes an effective tool to generate economic revenue for the communities involved in order to economically empower them. This strategy is particularly important for poverty-stricken communities. In a broader sense, the development of cultural tourism that features UNESCO-inscribed elements also promotes the national economy of the nation states as heritage destinations.

Regarding cultural diversity, it seems UNESCO's *Intangible Heritage Lists* itself may symbolize an achieved cultural diversity. The use of traditional music in creative industries also seems to agree with UNESCO's mission to promote cultural diversity because the commercial use of traditional music undoubtedly constitutes "the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression" (UNESCO 2005, 4).

The economic dimension of traditional music involves multiple interest groups that participate in the distribution of the sales revenues from the creative industries. The most obvious participants are recording companies, movie producers, performing artists, composers, and arrangers. The strategic significance of economic development, as an indicator to gauge a nation state's political power, adds an additional layer of importance to the economic dimension of traditional music. A stable and enhanced economic development, in return, strengthens the credentials of the current administration, enabling it to maintain its ruling power and consolidate its international image and fame. Another

important beneficiary of the economic use of traditional music is the consumer. The growth of cultural tourism and the popularity of the movie industries reflect the vast market demand for creative goods. The global economy allows easy access to international cultural products. Not only does it meet the consumers' needs of cultural consumption in pursuit of mental pleasure by interacting with different cultural symbols commercialized by the creative industries, it also materializes their imaginations of alterity through sonic imaginations, market imaging, and fascinating visual presentations realized in movie products through technology. In a word, traditional music as used in creative industries generates considerable revenues, strengthens the economic power of nation states, and pleases the consumers of the creative industries through the stimulation of their imaginations and fascination. Therefore, economic value seems to be a universally recognized value of traditional music in the contemporary world.

#### **ETHICAL DIMENSION: TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

In comparison with the above-mentioned dimensions of traditional music in contemporary society, ethical issues appear to be less straightforward. As always, ethics is a sensitive issue since it involves judgments based on different world views and values. How, then, does ethics relate to traditional music? To avoid conceptual confusion, here I use ethics to refer to the concern of social justice that pertains to the contemporary use of traditional music.

##### ***Traditional Music and Cultural Diversity***

Two issues stand out in the investigation of ethical questions regarding the contemporary use of traditional music from the perspective of social justice. The first issue is cultural diversity. UNESCO's concept of cultural diversity, as mentioned earlier in this paper, is closely linked to cultural pluralism [emphasis added]:

Article 1–Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity  
Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As *a source of exchange, innovation and creativity*, cultural diversity is *as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature*. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations. (UNESCO 2001).

This article, from the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* of 2001, features a universal humanity constituted by a plurality of identities which is likened to biodiversity. By associating cultural pluralism with biodiversity, the article implies that all the identities as embodied by cultural expressions are equally important, each having their own right, as if they were different kinds of natural creatures. This egalitarian ideology validates the equal importance of traditional music in parallel with other musical expressions in its function to constitute cultural diversity, the manifestation of universal humanity. This ethical call demands equal opportunity for all cultural expressions to survive. It is under this rationale that UNESCO's 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* was developed. Traditional music, in this sense, was granted *a right to survive* given the reality that it was disappearing. It is its very existence and transmission that maintain its ethical value. Therefore, it is not a surprise to see the emphasis on transmission in the 2003 Convention.

Eight years after the 2001 Declaration, UNESCO published the world report *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, which investigates the impacts of globalization on cultural diversity [emphasis added]:

While it is true that globalization induces forms of homogenization and standardization, it cannot be regarded as inimical to *human creativity*, which continues to *engender new forms of diversity*, constituting a perennial challenge to featureless uniformity... Yet *cultures are not equal in the face of globalization processes*, and every effort must be made to safeguard cultural expressions struggling to survive. (UNESCO 2009, 11, 28).

This report recognizes the dual effects of globalization: the creation of new forms of diversity and the challenge to the survival of some of the existing forms of diversity. One can tell from this report that UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity encompasses vast, and almost unlimited, forms of cultural expressions. It does not contradict globalization because globalization does not necessarily hinder "human creativity" as the source of cultural diversity. Hence, UNESCO's examination of globalization's impact on cultural diversity is an extension of its egalitarian ideology based on the paradigm of salvation. What was renewed is not the paradigm, but the recognition of globalization's potential to disempower certain forms of cultural expressions while empowering other forms. The paradigm of salvation determines that the interest groups involved are quite limited—mainly cultural conservationists and the communities whose cultural expressions are endangered. In the case of musical traditions, the stakeholders are enthusiasts of a particular form of traditional music that struggles to survive, as well as the masters and performers of those endangered traditional musics. Ethnomusicologist Bell Yung's work *The Last of China's Literati: the Music, Poetry, and Life of Tsar Teh-yun* explores one kind of such musical tradition (Yung 2008).

### ***Authorship, Ownership and the Use of Traditional Music***

While UNESCO's concept of cultural diversity grants a right to survive to all cultural expressions, including traditional music, the practice of intellectual property (IP) law in creative industries brings forward another ethical issue in terms of the use of traditional music in the creative industries. Lacking protection under intellectual property law due to unarticulated authorship, many traditional musics from indigenous groups recorded by early ethnomusicologists were appropriated and claimed by recording companies and Western composers for commercial purpose without crediting the origin of

the appropriated musical sounds. The first ethical issue at hand with respect to this phenomenon is the equitable distribution of royalties. Whereas the recording companies and the borrowing composers in question have benefited from a considerable amount of revenue from their authorial rights to the appropriated tunes, the original composer or the communities from which the traditional tunes were collected still live under the shadow of poverty, without being aware that their lives would have been substantially different should they be granted authorial rights by IP law.

A well-known case is tribal musician Soloman Linda's original song "Mbube," created in 1939 in South Africa, recorded and owned by Gallo Record with a symbolic payment of ten shillings to Soloman. The song then traveled to the United States. It was first borrowed by American folk singer Pete Seeger under the name of "Wimoweh," which was performed by his band "The Weavers." It was then adapted by George Weiss, in cooperation with Hugo Peretti and Luigi Creatore, in 1961 under the name of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," which became the No. 1 hit in the United States and quickly spread throughout the world. It was also used in Disney's movie *The Lion King*. In spite of the song's international popularity, Soloman Linda passed away in severe poverty and left a family behind that was not even able to afford a tombstone for him (Malan 2001; Dean 2006). The story was brought to public attention by South African journalist Rian Malan. This led to the legal recognition of Soloman Linda's authorship of the song and the remuneration of some royalties to the Linda family.

A second ethical concern pertains to the ownership and use of traditional music, which problematizes the change of meanings of the traditional tunes borrowed during the process of marketization. Steven Feld's article about pygmy pop investigates the unexpected consequences of pioneering anthropologists' and ethnomusicologists' documentation of indigenous music in the course of their fieldwork. In opposition to their



initial altruistic scholarly intentions, the documented sounds ironically provide a new ground for sound commodification driven by marketed fascination with the exoticized, romantized, and spiritualized pygmy pop. The originally documented sounds were transformed into catchy melodies and simple tropes. Drawing from theorists of globalization such as Appadurai and Attali and Derrida's deconstruction theory, Feld theorizes the unpredictable process of constant appropriation and re-appropriation of sounds as "schizophonic mimesis" (Feld 1996), which features the paradox of simultaneous unification and multiplicity. The scholarly recordings unintentionally create a multiplied space where multiple agendas exploit the commercialized sound, displaced and isolated from its original ecological and social context. Behind Feld's critique is an image of a powerless ethnomusicologist, whose purism and ideal of musical diversity are swallowed and manipulated by the mimesis of sound marketization.

The disempowerment of ethnomusicologists is further articulated in Feld's article "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music." Feld's account exposes how *Deep Forest* manipulated Hugo Zemp's letter and forcefully used UNESCO's documentation for commercial purposes without authorization. It also delves into the reading of the concept of "world music" as "third world music" (Feld 2000, 163) that has been marketed as a fascination genre to play out the politics of representation. Feld's categorization of the discourse on world music into discourse of anxiety and discourse of celebration articulates the political nature of the discourse. Whether the global world music market brings more anxiety or celebration depends on whose needs and interests the discourse is intended to address. Feld uses the example of the exploitation of the *Sweet Lullaby* recording to demonstrate the uneven labor relationships brought up by the discourse of anxiety.

The discomfort of ethnomusicologists in the commercialized use of traditional music reveals a different understanding of cultural diversity from UNESCO's

conceptualization. Whereas UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity features simultaneous emphases on the survivals of the old and the creativity to generate, as guided by its egalitarian ideology that assigns equal rights to survive to the diverse forms of cultural expressions, ethnomusicologists focus on the original meanings that traditional music carries, guided by their purist ideology toward the "authentic communities." While the diversity of the former lies in diverse forms of cultural expressions with a common source of humanity, the diversity of the latter rests upon the diverse meanings and world views embodied in musical expressions. If the meanings are altered, the skeleton of the musical sounds loses the original value and meaning it held in its original community.

### ***Traditional Music In Relation to Cultural Rights***

Both aspects of the ethical dimension of the contemporary use of traditional music, as articulated above, pertain to the issue of cultural rights. As an integrated element of human rights,<sup>20</sup> cultural rights provide a legal foundation to protect the interests of minority groups in maintaining their traditional practice in the face of rampant modernization and unfettered marketization processes that would otherwise forcefully tear up the traditional cultural practice as well as the traditional knowledge and skills embodied therein. Therefore, cultural rights intend to provide access to protection for minority groups. However, as discussed in the literature review section, the "predicaments of human rights and cultural property" (Barkan 2007, 184) reduce the application of cultural right as part of human rights to a singular practice of political activism (Pyburn 2007) and "politics of recognition" (Smith 2007, 159). The notion of self-determinism turns out to be problematic to an imagined community that does not act as an individual human being. Nevertheless, without the legal justification of cultural rights, UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity could not be justified because cultural rights

legitimize the egalitarian ideal that demands cultural diversity. This consistency is reflected at the beginning of the 2003 Convention:

..., referring to existing international human rights instruments, in particular to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966... (UNESCO 2003).

In terms of traditional music, how does the notion of cultural rights interact with UNESCO's definition of cultural diversity and the issues of authorship, ownership, and use of traditional music as discussed? Regardless of the instrumental function of cultural rights as the legal basis of cultural egalitarianism, it seems that UNESCO's concept of cultural diversity focuses on the right to survive and the right to choose, rather than proprietary rights as granted by intellectual property law, which solely considers the economic dimension of culture as cultural goods. Felicia Sandler's reflection on the relationship between traditional music and intellectual property rights as related to the ownership of traditional music clearly articulates the complicated rights relations involved.

Sandler's question about the current IP law system starts from the liner notes of David Fanshawe's 1973 recording *African Sanctus*, where Fanshawe borrowed the musical materials from the African Jewish chant he recorded during his fieldwork without asking for the performers' approval (Sandler 2009). While this behavior would now certainly be considered to have violated the IP law, back in Fanshawe's time the situation was quite different.

Sandler invokes the history of cultural rights as part of human rights to map out the complicated rights relations involved in Fanshawe's musical borrowing. It seems that the cultural rights, the earliest mention of which dates back to the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, were not given specific definition and articulations until they appeared in UN's *2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (The 2007

Declaration). Before that, IP law concerning music focused primarily on economic gains for the legitimate authors of their published artistic works, namely on authorial rights. Although there were treaties on performers' right (the Rome Convention,<sup>21</sup> for example), they only protected the rights of the performers of published works until their revision in 1994. That means a broad spectrum of unauthored and unpublished folk and religious musical works and their performers were not covered, and hence, not protected by the IP regime in Fanshawe's days. Additionally, since musical borrowing had been a common practice in music history, there is no clear-cut line to cast judgment on the behavior of unauthorized borrowings. It all depends on the contexts.

Sandler uses her personal experience of interacting with musicians in Ghana, as well as the articles by Paul Kuruk and Kwabena Nketia, to illustrate two distinct, and quite often opposite, paradigms to deal with the problem of musical borrowing—"the market paradigm" and "a paradigm featuring the primacy of relationships" (Sandler 2009, 252-258). The former is broadly shared among capitalist societies, and the latter among traditional societies, especially indigenous groups. According to the latter, music, instead of being treated merely as a cultural product in the market paradigm, which doesn't require additional social meanings based on personal and communal relationships, carries a lot of nonproprietary significance in traditional societies, where the flow of music depends on social hierarchy along religious and kinship lines. Such nonproprietary aspects of music and its moral indications, largely invisible to the dominant capitalist societies, were ignored by the WTO-oriented international IP practice. What's worse, because of the primacy of relationships embodied in music, those living in the traditional societies would not see it reasonable to perceive music as merely a product to legitimize monetary gains. This perspective allows the capitalist economy to freely take advantage and turn the "unclaimed musical property" in the traditional societies into personal economic gains. In that sense,

Sandler argues that the current international IP law is unethical in that it unfairly imposes one paradigm onto the other, assuming that the problem can be solved only through the assimilation of the traditional paradigm into the market paradigm. To improve the situation and to make it ethical, a cross-cultural legal mechanism is required to incorporate the other paradigm, and more importantly, to facilitate the negotiations between the two. The indigenous movement has already achieved initial success in making their voice heard in the legal field. Sandler also suggests the feasibility of such a new framework by enumerating the new developments in WIPO's documents that positively and flexibly revised the "subject matter for protection" - from individuals to cultural groups - and the "term for protection," which "reflects the prioritization of a community's right to retain control over those cultural expressions" (Sandler 2009, 262).

From the right to survive, to the right to choose, to the right to equally benefit from economic revenue generated from authorship of musical goods, it seems that for the minority groups to get equal protection, the equality must be achieved both economically and culturally. Unfortunately, the current system of cultural rights, in its alignment with IP rights, fails to be articulated in a coherent manner, and hence it finds multiple interpretations in the field of intangible heritage protection, indigenous activism, and cultural ownership. What's still unanswered is the question of the ownership of traditional culture, or perhaps less controversially, the right to control the use of traditional culture.

## **SUMMARY**

The four dimensions of the contemporary use of traditional music discussed above reflect the functions that traditional music finds in contemporary society. As the music used in traditional societies, its historical and aesthetic value is recognized by scholars in music history and archaeology. As creative capital to be exploited in the global cultural market,

it is continuously invoked by music business stakeholders for generating new cultural products to meet the market demand for materialized imagination and cultural consumption. As a symbol of political identities in connection to the past, traditional music is used by multiple cultural groups and individuals, including nation states, for political empowerment and cultural diplomacy. As a fixed sound isolated from its original performance milieu, traditional music becomes a space of tension along the ethical line, problematizing the issue of authorship and ownership of musical sounds. It seems all the dimensions of the contemporary use of traditional music have a shared focus—the “alterity” of traditional music as something distant along the temporal, aesthetic, spatial, political, social, and ethnic lines. Traditional music is alternatively viewed as a subject of research to decode the past, as a different art with different aesthetics to enrich musicianship, as a target of exoticist fascination, as an element to constitute the newness of hybridity, and as a symbol to claim uniqueness for validation among the imagined global cultural grid. Interestingly, the political dimension also features the use of traditional music to claim commonality through an imagined shared past, either for political alignment or for diplomatic representation. The question is, if traditional music is all about otherness, past, political alignment, and representation, why is it important to maintain its faithful transmission among the imagined community that has a homogenous configuration? Is the survival of a particular form of traditional music simply validated by its otherness that constitutes the web of cultural diversity? In other words, is it simply the logic that “I am important, because I am different?” For the indigenous communities who are still practicing their traditional music, do they want to maintain the traditional practice of it in the ethnomusicological sense as argued by Steven Feld? Why? Are ethnomusicologists who are attracted by the charm of traditional music from distant lands attracted simply by

the perceived “authenticity” of the traditional music they study? Why is it authentic? To them, why is it that the alteration of the meaning of the musical sound is not acceptable?

Before answering these questions, we turn to two case studies to examine the relevance of the questions above to the reality in the field.

## Chapter 4: Revisiting Cultural Diversity: Case Studies

### CASE STUDY 1: *KUNQU*–MUSIC AND THEATRE TRADITION IN CHINA

In 2001, UNESCO initiated *The Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* program, as a precursor of the 2003 Convention, to recognize the importance of oral traditions and intangible heritage. So far there have been three biannual proclamations. They have played a role similar to that of the later program of *Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists* that came into force in 2008 as part of the implementation of the 2003 Convention. *Kunqu* theatre in China is among the first nineteen oral traditions proclaimed by UNESCO as “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” (UNESCO 2001, 2003, 2005).

As the first masterpiece within the territory of China that was inscribed by UNESCO as a world’s intangible heritage, *Kunqu* theatre created a unique space from which people in China launched a new round of searching for a “self” on the international stage. The bitter encounter with the powerful West in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the resulting history of colonization until 1945 broke the dignified self-image of Imperial China. The radical New Culture Movement in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, upholding the banner of democracy and science, called for a complete break from the old social regime of governance and education. Traditional cultural forms, including the theatrical forms popular among the scholar-literati, were rendered obsolete and marked as inferior. Modernity, with its sweeping triumph in China, has since become a symbol of superiority. Contemporary China is still heavily influenced by this mentality, where people tend to use Westernization and modernity to claim a higher social status. Within this context, the traditional art forms, including *Kunqu* theatre, are more of a mark of the inferior past than an honored tradition. It was not until UNESCO’s unanimous decision to inscribe *Kunqu* as a remarkable example of the oral and intangible heritage that people in China surprisingly *rediscovered* the charm



of its traditional culture. The following discussion uses a “before-after” approach to illustrate this rediscovery.

### **Brief History: *Kunqu* before UNESCO’s Inscription**

*Kunqu* dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, originally as a vocal art form of pure singing (*qing chang*) without staging or particular costumes, at times accompanied by a Chinese bamboo flute (*di zi*), a wooden clapper (*ban*), and a small flat drum (*huai gu*). The earliest repertoire for *Kunqu* arias largely draws from a type of local theatre called South Theatre (*nan xi*) that was popular among “common people.” In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was refined by WEI Liangfu,<sup>22</sup> a local elite scholar, with systematized and stylized vocal techniques, and it came into prominence among the elite class. In the commercial centers of southeastern China, the life of Chinese literati, as social elites, is marked by a distinctive and refined literati culture. This culture is situated in the long history of Confucianism, which glorifies Chinese literati as both the political and the cultural leaders who carry “the mandate of heaven” (*tian ming*) to maintain social harmony. Usually private gardens are an indispensable element of a dwelling of literati. In them, the social elites entertained themselves by making poetry and singing, accompanied by tea tasting and Chinese calligraphy. The gardens were usually delicately designed in accordance with the Daoism aesthetics of Yin and Yang and the Daoism philosophy of reclusive peace, contrasting with the bustling street scenes outside. These private gardens, therefore, were key venues in the Chinese literati’s cultural life. After the vocal art of *Kunqu* became popular among the literati for daily cultural practice and entertainment, it was further developed into a theatrical form by borrowing the format of *Chuanqi*, a popular theatre among the wealthy middle class. Combining the purely vocal art of *Kunqu* with a stage-oriented libretto, the Chinese literati transformed *Kunqu* into a new theatre tradition in southeast China, the

commercial center at the time. As an art form exclusively for the literati communities, *Kunqu* theatre was created inside the private gardens and was rarely performed in public settings. The two constituted an integrated whole of *Kunqu* theatre tradition (see illustration 1).



Illustration 1 *Kunqu* and the Private Garden Setting  
Source: online image database of baidu.com<sup>23</sup>

Although *Kunqu* theatre was succeeded by *Peking Opera* toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which took over its dominant role across the spectrum of various regional theatrical forms, it maintained its vitality in Southeastern China throughout the rest of the Imperial Period until the Opium War broke out in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It suffered systematic attempts at destruction when the *Tai ping Movement* against Confucianism and imperial values struck its home area in 1860s. Many actors and patrons were killed, and others fled to other areas. In addition, the inflow of Western culture nourished the emergence of public theatre. This further threatened the financial survival of *Kunqu* theatre, because its focus on refinement and sophisticated literacy and poetry kept it away from the mass market. In spite of efforts to integrate the Western political and legal system into the framework of traditional Confucianism values, the Qing dynasty breathed its last breath in turbulence and disorder, leaving the former empire in unprecedented chaos. The

overwhelming military power of the West, equipped with modern weapons invented on the basis of scientific knowledge, awakened the people from the dream of “the empire of supremacy” and generated extreme frustration and disappointment with the inability of the empire to defend its territory. The fall of Imperial China and the radical social forces seeking to uproot the Confucian tradition and replace it with Western democracy further diminished the social conditions needed for *Kunqu* theatre to survive. The former elite literati lost all the privilege and social status they previously had. Destitute, they were humbled and reduced to mere entertainers. They had to face a double challenge from popular theatre and from the anti-tradition political atmosphere. Some committed suicide. The situation improved after the establishment of Communist China. Mao, the founder of the New China, adopted a proactive cultural policy to create proletarian art for the people to demonstrate the “inevitability of the success of socialist revolution” (Wong 2009, 27). The social status of performing artists in general improved substantially. They had been culturally despised entertainers, and now had become the honorable artists of the people of the New China. In a poor country where rural population makes up more than 80% of the total, Mao was aware of the importance of folk and traditional arts in mobilizing political support.<sup>24</sup> In some regions, the actors of traditional arts became key figures in transforming the old arts of the ruling class into the new arts of the people. The *Kunqu* actors who survived the social transformation were granted teaching jobs by the government at the newly established national and regional performing arts institutes and theatre schools. After being reformed to serve the popular needs, *Kunqu* theatre enjoyed a temporary growth spurt during 1950s under the new cultural policy. Unfortunately, with the resurfacing of radical political thoughts in 1960s, the widely known *Cultural Revolution* brought disastrous consequences to Chinese society from 1966 to 1976. The purge of masters in philosophy, arts and literature again traumatized *Kunqu* theatre. By the

time the *Cultural Revolution* was terminated, only sixteen *Kunqu* actors who had attended the *Kunqu* Transmission Institute<sup>25</sup> established in 1921 in Suzhou, were alive, and the students they taught in the 1950s had reached middle age (Wong 2009, 30). As the new generation of *Kunqu* artists who grew up in the turbulence of the *Cultural Revolution*, they were rarely exposed to the traditional theatre in its original milieu, which exacerbated the apparent demise of *Kunqu* theatre. In its place, Western popular culture and media flourished during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the adoption of the Reform and Opening-up Policy of 1978, which introduced a systematic market economy to China and embraced industrialization and modernization.

### **UNESCO's Inscription of *Kunqu* Theatre in 2001 and Its Ramifications**

On the eighteenth of May in 2001, UNESCO announced its first *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* with nineteen pieces listed. *Kunqu* theatre was one of them, after the unanimous votes of the 18-member international jury of UNESCO, which surprised the people of China. PANG Rong's article in *Northern Music*, which commemorates the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNESCO's recognition of *Kunqu* theatre, suggests the significance of UNESCO's recognition in changing the domestic perception of this traditional theatrical art: "since 1990s, there have been few staged performance of *Kunqu* theatre [in China]" (Pang 2011, 128).<sup>26</sup> The irony is that while people in China, especially the younger generation, were removed from the old Chinese traditions that were broadly conceived as symbols of oldness and obsolescence and embraced Western popular culture to show their modernity and progress, the 600-year-old theatre tradition impressed all the jury members of UNESCO and was recognized as one of the world's most remarkable examples of oral and intangible heritage.

What does this irony mean to people in China? Before I proceed with further elaborations on the ramifications of *Kunqu* theatre's inscription on UNESCO's list of oral and intangible heritage, I would like to cite from a government-sponsored television documentary series named *Kunqu of Sexcentenary*,<sup>27</sup> which was produced during 2006 and 2007 in response to *Kunqu*'s inscription in order to raise public awareness of its significance (CCTV and JSTV 2007).<sup>28</sup> As described at the beginning of the documentary, "starting from 2001, the long-silenced *Kunqu* started to enter public media" (2007, 3'24''-3'31''). A variety of events were incorporated in the documentary: the nationwide initiative to add an additional section in museum exhibitions specifically for intangible cultural heritage, the exceedingly expensive productions of the new *Kunqu* theatre performances by internationally renowned artists, and their warm reception abroad. However, "to an average audience of the *kunqu* performance that was suddenly put on stage in such a manner, it was like a dream from a distant past" (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 5'10''-5'18''). When asked what makes the ancient theatre retain its charm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, YU Qiuyu, a very popular cultural critic and writer in China, answered, "It is a beautiful magnificence, a yearning for the past. The yearning gives us a sense of completeness and pride" (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 6'24''-6'40''). The painter and culture researcher CHEN Danqing invoked his personal experience:

I remember seeing students in jeans from the theatre department rehearsing Shakespeare's work, at a residence of a former aristocrat in the suburb of London, right on the lakeside, memorizing the stage lines. I realized that their traditional drama and theatre, regardless of the reduced scope, is absolutely still there, filled with vitality: young people from one generation to another keep performing and watching it, this is what is happening in Europe. In the case of China, the traditional culture had been maintained through imperial China until the mid-19th century, when Chinese culture experienced a break, followed by a complete disengagement from the past in 20<sup>th</sup> century, driven by stormy westernization and modernization ... when I arrived in the real West, I was lost. I realized that the Westernness that I witnessed in Shanghai in my childhood was very superficial and limited. So you

immediately start to feel lost. You search for yourself among the lost, out of self-respect or with the feeling of self-humiliation, you *will* search for yourself... (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 14'51''-16'48'').

Following Chen's words, the voiceover of the documentary continues, "what was forgotten, together with *Kunqu*, is a way of living that once belonged to Chinese people, a status of spiritual satisfaction and peace" (2007, 14'20''-14'29''). LOU Yulie, Professor of Philosophy at Beijing University, raises a further question: "After the political independence and economic development, we start to acquire the self-awareness of culture. [We begin to ask] Is our culture completely valueless? Within the big cultural family of the world, is it doomed to fade away? Or is it also a brilliant fruit of this big family?" (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 17'00''-17'36'') When discussing the dilemma of preserving *Kunqu*, LIU Huan, scholar and singer, said,

The reason why we have very limited exposure to *Kunqu* is that the general living pace of the society has moved too far away from *Kunqu*. There is a severe disjuncture between the two. First and foremost, if we listen to a popular song, it only takes 3 to 5 minutes; how could I think of the option to sit down for three hours just to watch a *Kunqu* show? Modern people do not have such time ... the only thing we can do is to keep it there for those who are interested and who are capable of appreciating it. (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 29'38''-31'03'').

Chen, however, does not consider *Kunqu* to be merely an old art form:

I think it is far more than an issue of tradition, classics and culture; what is also needed is a real dialogue between *Kunqu* and the present ... Culture needs to be experienced. That means, you need to be placed in that situation, within the courtyard and the garden, along the lake, through the long corridor, then you will have a retrospective imagination. (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 31'21''-31'30'', 34'33''-34'50'').

Yu also adds more depth to the question:

By the end of our reading of the different sections of Chinese history, the ultimate questions are: Who am I? Who are we? Who is the "we" as a community? Why do we love this culture for so long? To love it, is at the same time self-fulfillment. Why? Because *Kunqu* is where the secret of who we are can unfold. (CCTV and JSTV 2007, 35'54-36'17'').

The content covered here in this article about the documentary series is merely a sketch, but it is a good starting for exploring the complexity of the issue. In addition to the self-examination by people in China provoked by the inscription of *Kunqu* theatre, there are other outstanding ramifications. Wong argues that the international reputation of *Kunqu* built up by UNESCO's heritage project does not necessarily help the transmission of the traditional art. Instead, there are parallel phenomena that complicate its transmission. Whereas the government enthusiastically promotes *Kunqu* theatre to international audience by catering to the "international" taste and commercializing it, those who still participate in the study of *Kunqu* as part of their daily lives are indifferent to UNESCO's heritage project. For example, people in Suzhou, the hometown of *Kunqu*, practice *Kunqu* in their spare time as entertainment. They choose to maintain the tradition of *Kunqu* theatre by preserving its original aesthetics (Wong 2009). The private gardens, once an integrated part of *Kunqu* theatre, have now become tourist sites. Wong indicates that what was once considered a "high art" has totally lost its original private setting. It has become a public activity within a tourist site.

#### **CASE STUDY 2: HAN HONG'S TIBETAN MUSIC: TIBETAN OR CHINESE?**

If the case of *Kunqu* theatre tells the story of a lost self, which was brought about by the paradoxical perception of the "masterpieces" conceived by UNESCO and by the people in China, the case of the development of the new Tibetan music and its reception within and outside China provides a narrative of multiple selves.

While the notion of a "free Tibet" is nothing new to an average audience who reads newspapers and watches television channels on world events, a brief contextualization can be helpful to provide an alternative lens to approach the issue of Tibetan music. Tibet was for the most part isolated from the core Chinese politics in the middle plains area (*zhong*

*yuan di qu*) of the Chinese continent until the establishment of the New Communist China in 1949, the year when the Red Army “liberated”<sup>29</sup> the land of Tibet from its long-practiced serfdom without resorting to violence. As demonstrated in the case of *Kunqu* theatre, the New China under Mao’s rule witnessed a very progressive cultural policy that propagated the necessity of a nationally shared proletarian culture. Such a culture, according to Mao, should be based on the active creation of a new Chinese music that depicts the beautiful life of the proletarians who successfully overthrew the “three big mountains of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism”<sup>30</sup> and finally obtained independence and freedom from oppression in the pre-Mao period. Several musical institutes were established to complete the task of creating a new Chinese proletarian music, a mass culture that differed from the old Chinese music that was considered retrogressive because it represented the life and art of the social elites that had oppressed the peasants.

In the creation of the new Chinese music, Tibetan folk music became one of the prototypes State artists and composers used to create modern Chinese music. Based on prototypes, namely the folk tunes that Chinese musicologists had collected from various local communities, State artists reworked the musical elements to manifest the proletarianism and newness of the new China. Two major concerns were significant in the process of reworking. The first of these was the alignment of the project with western compositional processes and theory. This alignment was motivated by the conceived superiority of industrialization and modernization marked by the direct application of science and knowledge. Mao contended that industrialization and modernization based on natural science and technology would solve the severe problem of poverty that the new China was facing. As an important facet of modernity, Western classical music that features complicated and systematic tonal theory, was emulated by the New China. A typical



example is the establishment of the “traditional Chinese orchestra” that was modeled on the Western classical symphony orchestra. The major difference lies in the instruments used and the melodic modes employed. The second concern was that the lyrics of the vocal pieces, drawn from the ethnic minorities, would feature a fixed theme that praised the rule of the Communist Party and the life of “the new China.”<sup>31</sup> This reflected Mao’s ethnic policy that emphasized harmonious coexistence, development, and prosperity through joint efforts between the ethnic minorities and the Han majority. Five major ethnic minority autonomous regions were established to buffer the political and cultural tensions. In that regard, the Tibetan folk tunes that were reworked into the repertoire of the new Chinese music by the State artists became a symbol of Chinese ethnic solidarity.

It was not until 1978 that China adopted a market economy and became an active player in the global economy. The reform and opening-up policy allows a much more free flow of musical products across borders. Technological innovations significantly brought down the cost of music recording and distribution through digitization and the Internet. Meanwhile, while the State maintained a strong role in balancing economic growth and social equality, Neoliberal policy started to dominate urban planning and quickly transformed a number of cities in China into investment-friendly metropolises. The boom of urban culture, the surge of the number of Internet users, and the fast spread of consumption culture gave rise to a large crowd of Western popular music fans. As for Tibet, the construction of a railway from West to East China, between Lhasa and Beijing, greatly increased the physical accessibility of Tibet, paving the way for a continuous growth in cultural tourism in the sacred city on the plateau that had been long known for its isolation from the rest of the world. Growing tension between cultural fundamentalists and neoliberal policy makers started to emerge from the ever-intensifying complexity of political and social reality in Tibet. On one side of the conflict are fundamentalist Tibetans

who consider traditional Tibetan music to be completely threatened by the culture of the majority Han and altered by the overwhelming spread of cultural commercialization. On the other side are the advocates of neoliberalism who argue that poverty is a more imminent problem. Without increasing the living standard of the local communities, the question of cultural preservation wouldn't be meaningful.

It is within such a social-economic context that the story of new Tibetan music came into existence. The analysis of this example is based on Baranovitch's case study of Chinese-Tibetan pop musician HAN Hong (Baranovitch 2009).<sup>32</sup> HAN Hong is a half-Tibetan, half-Han musician who was largely assimilated into Han Chinese culture after living for nine years as a child in Tibet.<sup>33</sup> However, she identifies herself as a Tibetan and constantly seeks a spiritual return to her homeland. A significant portion of her repertoire features Tibetan melodies and uses lyrics imaging the Tibetan landscape. Baranovitch takes HAN Hong as a representative case of an "integrated minority artist," a concept that Baranovitch uses to denote the Tibetan musicians<sup>34</sup> who "have been practically assimilated but insist on identifying themselves as minority people and engage in a constant struggle to redefine their ethnic identity" (Baranovitch 2009, 188-189). HAN Hong joined the army at the age of sixteen as a singer and became popular eight years later with her first national appearance on China Central Television where she performed her song "Himilaya" (Baranovitch 2009, 191). She mentioned her Tibetan heritage during the performance, and she has been well-known since, primarily for her Tibetan songs.

To what extent are HAN Hong's songs Tibetan? What constitutes their "Tibetanness"? How was HAN Hong's work received among different groups of audiences marked by different cultural identities? Baranovitch examines the reception of HAN Hong's music among four different groups: the Han Chinese in China, Tibetans living in China, Tibetans living outside China, and Westerners in general. Before comparing the

reception of her Tibetan songs, an overview of the stylistic features of her Tibetan music is necessary for the analysis. Musically, she uses the idiomatic characteristics of Tibetan folk songs, including “powerful and piercing, high-pitched singing,” and a “slow tempo and long, misty synthesized sounds, to which hand drums are added” (Baranovitch 2009, 192). At times, she also incorporates Tibetan language in the singing and the accompaniment of other Tibetan singers in “characteristic Tibetan group singing.” These elements, as Baranovitch suggests, “create the stereotypical atmosphere of mysterious spirituality, which conforms to the popular image of Tibet that developed in China in the early 1990s” (ibid). The visual elements of her album and video clips also feature the typical Tibetan landscape of snow-covered mountains. As a State-supported artist, HAN Hong also wrote a song<sup>35</sup> to commemorate the construction of the new railway mentioned previously. However, in addition to the multiple Tibetan elements featured in HAN Hong’s musical works, these elements are “always incorporated into the framework of mainstream Chinese [pop and rock] music” (Baranovitch 2009, 193). Most sections of the lyrics are in Chinese. She has also created a number of works that do not relate to her Tibetan minority identity. Nonetheless, HAN Hong “feels that she is playing an important role in changing people’s attitude toward Tibetan music.” This pertains to the prior situation in which Han Chinese, as the mainstream audience, found it difficult to appreciate Tibetan music except for its impressive and wild high pitches. HAN Hong believes that it is her creative work of incorporating Tibetanness into the mainstream Chinese pop music scene that elevates the status of Tibetan music among the general audience. In that sense, she considers herself to have contributed to the task of reviving Tibetan music.

It turns out that the reception of HAN Hong’s Tibetan music varies broadly among the four groups of audiences from the aforementioned different locations. Baranovitch argues that each of the four groups is “intimately linked to the different perceptions of Tibet

that exist in each of the four locations,” especially the sharp contrast between “her extreme popularity in China” (Baranovitch 2009) and total exclusion from the music market in the West. The following paragraph elaborates on the differences in the reception of HAN Hong’s Tibetan music among the Han Chinese, Tibetans outside China, Tibetans in China, and the general audience in the West.

Beginning with reception among the Han Chinese, HAN Hong’s extreme popularity in China is closely associated with the “Tibet fever” that spread throughout the country in the mid-1990s. Baranovitch suggests that this phenomenon relates to the “general global fascination in recent years with ethnic things” (Baranovitch 2009, 195). The fast economic growth in China nurtured a new middle class generation that traveled extensively in commercialized tourist sites to temporarily retreat from the standardized modern way of living. Once belittled rural landscapes became fancy exotic destinations. Local music, in the booming of cultural tourism, also became a commodity to cater to the travelers’ needs to musically store their memory and imagination of the visited sites to refresh and energize them and provide an escape from daily routines. HAN Hong’s Tibetan music, in that sense, captured such musical needs. Her “general interest in ‘world music’ and ‘unplugged music’ and in the fusion of musical elements from various sources...help to enhance the sense of otherness that her music aims to communicate” (Baranovitch 2009, 197). Baranovitch also discusses the political dimension of HAN Hong’s popularity in China. The State’s active promotion of HAN Hong’s music on national media reflects the national promotion of a materialized imagination of the national essence, namely a Tibetan music that incorporates both local elements and the mainstream Chinese pop music. A Tibetan music as such musically enables the peaceful coexistence of a local identity and a national identity. The promotion by the State of a unique national character as reflected in music testifies to the “growing influence of globalization in China” (Baranovitch 2009,

197), which includes the influx of Western cultural products and its stirring effect on the Chinese that prompts them to rethink the concept and meaning of being Chinese.

With respect to reception of Tibetans outside China, Baranovitch's internet research reveals that HAN Hong was "either completely unknown, deliberately ignored, unacknowledged as Tibetan, or treated with conspicuous hostility" (Baranovitch 2009, 199) among Tibetans living outside China. Baranovitch argues that HAN Hong's alignment with the Chinese State government excludes her from the Tibetan identity recognized by Tibetans outside China. Such Tibetan identity is grounded in the idea of an independent Tibet and claims a clear-cut boundary between being Chinese and being Tibetan. The way HAN Hong was perceived by Tibetans outside China also applies to other Tibetan artists who grew up and lived in China. These artists were often criticized by fundamentalist Tibetans outside China for "being sinicized" (Baranovitch 2009, 200).

Interestingly, the opinions on HAN Hong's Tibetan music and her Tibetan identity are quite diverse among Tibetans in China. Quite a few Tibetans living in China like HAN Hong's music and feel proud of her as a Tibetan pop star who is promoting and reinventing Tibetan music. At the same time, local music stands in Lhasa mainly sell CDs and recordings of traditional Tibetan folk music sung in Tibetan by Tibetan artists, whereas more established music shops in Lhasa features HAN Hong's albums. While HAN Hong is "clearly not the most popular pop singer among Tibetans in China" (ibid), the relationship between Tibetan pop and Chinese pop has been complex and controversial. The Chinese and Tibetan languages are both used in the lyrics by local Tibetan singers.

Regarding the Western audience, Baranovitch suggests that the reception of HAN Hong in the West has been "the complete antithesis of her popularity in mainstream Chinese culture" (Baranovitch 2009, 205). Repudiated by the Western audience as lacking authenticity and too modern, HAN Hong's music is blocked in the West. Instead,

individual Tibetan musicians in exile are favored in the West because their music displays the motifs of tradition and spirituality and reflects the political views of the exiled, who fight against oppression for freedom with their “yearning for return.” On this, Baranovitch writes,

the extreme popularity that Tibet enjoys in the West could be attributed to the fact that it offers many Westerners a powerful and concentrated focal point onto which they can project not only their Western Orientalistic fantasies and Western postmodern aesthetic preferences (for premodern things) but also, and no less significantly, important Western values such as freedom, democracy, and concern for cultural protection and human rights. (Baranovitch 2009, 207).

#### **THE CASE STUDY IN RELATION TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND TRANSMISSION**

In the case of *Kunqu* theatre, UNESCO’s proclamation played a critical role in validating this theatrical form by attributing a universal value to it, while, ironically, it was considered to be obsolete by most people in China. One may wonder what criteria and procedures were used for this proclamation. Quoting from UNESCO’s official website,

The cultural expressions and spaces proposed for Proclamation had to:

- demonstrate their outstanding value as masterpiece of the human creative genius;
- give wide evidence of their roots in the cultural tradition or cultural history of the community concerned;
- be a means of affirming the cultural identity of the cultural communities concerned;
- provide proof of excellence in the application of the skill and technical qualities displayed;
- affirm their value as unique testimony of living cultural traditions;
- be at risk of degradation or of disappearing.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, these cultural forms and spaces were to be in conformity with UNESCO ideals and in particular with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The files proposing candidates for Proclamation also had to provide proof of the full involvement and agreement of the communities concerned, and to include an action plan

to safeguard or promote the cultural spaces or expressions, which should have been elaborated in close collaboration with the tradition bearers.

Regarding the procedure,

The submission and selection procedure consisted of the following steps:

1. Member States could submit one candidature files every two years. Over and above the limit of one national file, Member States could submit multinational candidature files.
2. Once they had been registered and the content verified by the Secretariat, the files were evaluated from a scientific and technical point of view by NGOs specialized in the different domains that are covered by the notion of intangible cultural heritage.
3. An International Jury consisting of 18 members and nominated by the Director-General for four years, examined the candidatures in the light of the scientific and technical evaluations and in accordance with the criteria established by the Rules of the Proclamation. After that, the Jury submitted its recommendations to the Director-General.
4. Further to the Jury's recommendation, the Director-general proclaimed a list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.<sup>37</sup>

Considering *Kunqu*'s declining status in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese government probably did not expect to have a unanimous recommendation from the international jury for *Kunqu* to be proclaimed as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. As Outlook Weekly commented two months after *Kunqu*'s recognition by UNESCO,

“The inscription of *Kunqu* as ‘the Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ was a great encouragement to the insiders of the field, however, as the director of Minister of Culture SUN Jiazheng said, this is a bittersweet situation. It is good news that the *Kunqu* art of China attracts more and more international attention. Meanwhile, it is worrying that all those inscribed in the proclamation are experiencing hardship for survival, some of them even facing the risk of disappearing. The protection and revival of *Kunqu* is a long-term task, and a challenging one.” (An 2001, 48-49).

It is obvious that Chinese Ministry of Culture was completely aware of the dilemma of inscription. As one of the aforementioned academic critiques for UNESCO's

safeguarding program pointed out, the contradiction between the “living heritage” and “safeguarding” was a real problem that the heritage practitioners are facing. This again calls into question the notion of cultural diversity based on the egalitarian ideal validated by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, Wong’s critique that UNESCO’s program, due to commercialization, didn’t help sustain the transmission of *Kunqu* also challenges UNESCO’s approach to include all kinds of cultural expressions into its grids of cultural diversity. On the one hand, UNESCO aims at mobilizing all possible resources through nation states in order to raise the awareness of cultural pluralism against cultural imperialism, on the other hand, its egalitarian ideal does not align with the uneven reality. Even though UNESCO’s 2009 world report on cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue noted that “cultures are not equal in the face of globalization processes,” it does not provide solutions to tackle the inequality other than reaffirming the importance of safeguarding. In that sense, *Kunqu*’s inscription only changed its political status, but didn’t cure its inability to survive. At the same time, the contrast of Chinese government’s promotions of the stylized modern *Kunqu* performance on the international stage with the amateur practice of *Kunqu* in its home area reflects the different agenda between the formal nation state and the informal communities. Again, why is the commercialization of *Kunqu* as a cultural product unacceptable to ethnomusicologists? If the communities are the ones who have the authority to decide what is authentic *Kunqu*, how to tackle the internal differences within those communities? Can’t people outside the conceived communities practice *Kunqu*? Who are the communities anyway? Do they practice *Kunqu* for the same causes? For what causes?

Next, the case of HAN Hong’s new Tibetan music. Without UNESCO’s involvement, HAN Hong’s new Tibetan music is a result of the interaction between the economic and the political dimension of the use of Tibetan music as traditional art form. It



materializes a hybrid identity of Han Chinese and Tibetans by incorporating multiple musical elements into the pop music aesthetic system, which is further justified by her ethnicized identity. As a sonic product, it is a result of political alignment. The claim that HAN Hong revitalized Tibetan music disguises the fact that such revitalization is realized through symbolic politics by aligning the Tibetan elements with the mainstream aesthetics. It is empowered because it is aligned with the powerful. The political nature of HAN Hong's new Tibetan music contributes to its politicized reception among different audience groups. Nevertheless, as a product of creative industry, HAN Hong's new Tibetan music also constitutes the cultural diversity conceptualized by UNESCO.

Until now, the notion of cultural diversity appears to be very problematic in the lifeworld. Undeniably, the egalitarian ideology embodied by the term cultural diversity is critical in building cultural peace, and minimizing cultural discrimination and cultural imperialism. However, UNESCO's translation of this ideology, is oriented by political values more than critical thinking, as shown in its 2001 Declaration of cultural diversity.

### **Cultural Diversity ≠ Biodiversity**

As quoted earlier in this paper, UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001 suggests that "cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature." This is plausible at a first glance, but does not stand up to careful examination. First, the biodiversity of nature follows the law of natural science and functions that are independent of human thoughts. In other words, whereas efforts on biodiversity preservation help maintain the existing species on the planet, there is no way for human beings to exert substantial control over nature. As one of the species living on the planet, human beings have the responsibility to act as stewards of the planet to achieve harmony and balance. Any actions that damage the ecological balance will also affect the

subsistence of human beings. On the contrary, cultural diversity does not rest upon a stable mechanism like natural science. Instead, it is based on an egalitarian ideology that calls for equal protection under the law and equal opportunity toward freedom without discrimination. Whether there exists a stable mechanism for maintenance of cultural diversity is still an open question, although no universal consensus has been achieved on the specific definition of cultural diversity. In addition, cultural diversity, as defined by UNESCO's 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, further differs from the concept of biodiversity. Specifically, unlike natural species on planet earth, cultural expressions not only can be freely transmitted, altered, prohibited, and recreated by human beings for various agendas, but can also be created freely. While the mandate to maintain biodiversity comes from the potential universal threat to human subsistence, the mandate to maintain cultural diversity, as declared by UNESCO, is a purely ethical call to battle against cultural discrimination as a source of cultural conflicts and cultural violence. Lacking an articulated internal mechanism and a universally shared mandate, the concept of cultural heritage defined by UNESCO is inevitably controversial. Second, the configuration of biodiversity, due to its strict adherence to laws of natural science, is stable and predictable. Genetic differences between species determine that the living creatures that constitute biodiversity are exclusively different and unchangeable. In contrast, the variety of cultural expressions, which constitute UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity, are subjective reflections of social experience. Therefore, they are historically and spatially situated. The boundaries between them, rather than exclusive, are in fact subjective, political and fluid. Cultural expressions, uncontrollable and unpredictable, have the same characteristics with the social experience of an individual or a community. They reflect various projects that an individual or a community encounters during their lifetime. Simply put, whereas natural biodiversity

follows the strictly logical and repeatable laws of nature, the conceptual shape of cultural diversity is multidimensional and flexible. Therefore, while natural biodiversity is a stable system that demands careful maintenance, human cultural diversity is a chaotic space that has a constantly changing configuration. This problematizes the concept of transmission. In order for transmission to occur, the maintenance of a stable social experience is necessary, which seems quite impossible, and unnecessary, in a globalized world. No matter how benevolent UNESCO's intention was, the likening of cultural diversity to natural biodiversity encourages an essentialism-based conceptualization of cultural diversity, which does not serve to reduce cultural conflicts.

### **Cultural Diversity and Human Creativity**

This section pertains to a sentence quoted earlier from UNESCO's 2009 world report *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* [emphasis added]:

While it is true that globalization induces forms of homogenization and standardization, it cannot be regarded as inimical to *human creativity*, which continues to *engender new forms of diversity*, constituting a perennial challenge to featureless uniformity. (UNESCO 2009, 11).

This statement suggests that human creativity is the source of cultural diversity. Since cultural diversity is defined by the 2001 Convention as the "common heritage of humanity" and as "a source of exchange, innovation and creativity," one can affirm that the concepts of humanity, human creativity, and cultural diversity are interchangeably used by UNESCO. A critical inspection would reveal that such an understanding of cultural diversity is a normative justification of the emerging creative industries as part of the process of globalization. It also indicates that all existing forms of cultural expressions, including traditional music, serve as inspirations for generating new forms of cultural expressions to glorify human creativity. Not lacking a narcissistic tone, this connotation

universalizes the superiority of creativity over all other dimensions of cultural expressions. It also justifies the supreme value of cultural commercialization based on cultural objectification, because creativity as related to cultural arena is what turns cultural expressions into cultural capital.

In summary, UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity, which likens it to biodiversity and orients it toward human creativity, reveals UNESCO's prioritization of the economic dimension of the contemporary use of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional music, on top of its mandate to battle against cultural discrimination. It is such a positioning of cultural diversity that creates the dilemma faced by the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, as manifested in the case of *Kunqu* and in the discussions of the ethical dimension of the contemporary use of traditional music. In addition, given the intergovernmental nature of UNESCO, the emphasis on the economic dimension of intangible cultural heritage reflects the priority of the nation states in approaching the issue of heritage on the international stage.

UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity is premised upon an unconditional recognition of difference and cultural pluralities, which seems to be strategically necessary because it removes the conceptual possibility of cultural judgment and encourages cultural tolerance. However, such unconditional recognition of difference masks the uneven power distributions among individuals and groups with different cultural expressions and world views. It neglects the underlying agencies and forces that cause changes to happen in power relations. Therefore, whereas the salvation paradigm of UNESCO's 2003 Convention aims at maintaining transmission, it does not solve the problem of the vulnerability of traditional music in the globalized world. Even though UNESCO emphasizes the transmission of the traditional knowledge and skills embodied in the traditional cultural expressions, it does not provide a solid theoretical ground to

justify the universal value of the traditional knowledge and skills other than its proven value in economic development. The following section explores new perspectives to tackle this problem.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion: Traditional Music as a Counter-Hegemonic Force toward a Fair Power Structure**

Harvey's time-space compression theory articulates the underlying logic of the postmodern conditions driven by neoliberal globalization: the "new organizational forms and new technologies in production" accelerate the turnover time in production, which "entails parallel accelerations in exchange and consumption" (Harvey 2000, 82). The consequences include a dominant focus on "the values and virtues of instantaneity...and of disposability." In line with the re-adaptations of the cultural landscape discussed above, Harvey terms it a "spatial adjustment" that features "annihilation of space through time" and "the collapse of spatial barriers" (Harvey 2000, 84). Ironically, this collapse does not lead to a decrease in significance of space, instead,

the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital. The result has been the production of fragmentation, insecurity, and ephemeral uneven development within a highly unified global space economy of capital flows. (Harvey 2000, 86).

Where does intangible cultural heritage (ICH) fit in this discourse? In addition to the existing meanings, memories, emotions that have been attributed to ICH, within the context of neoliberal globalization, a new layer of meaning can be attributed to it as an agency to counter the hegemonic power of neoliberal globalization. In that sense, ICH signifies the set of cultural landscapes that places direct human-nature communication and interaction in the center of the mode of production, without such association, ICH will lose its potential to combat the hegemonic power, even if its embodiments maintain its artistic and aesthetic form. It is the intimate culture-nation relationships, as symbolized in ICH, that empower the concept of heritage as it becomes more and more relevant within the perplexing postmodern conditions. Strategically, the characteristic of its "intangibility"

allows unlimited flexibility in its interpretation. The ability of the concept of ICH to contain unlimited interpretations enables it to generate globally shared meanings in confronting neoliberal globalization. Music, within this context, carries the same potential.

What is wrong with neoliberal globalization in relation to traditional music as intangible cultural heritage? Again I quote Labadi and Long's collected work on heritage and globalization: "...heritage destinations worldwide may be adapting themselves to the homogenizing trends of global tourism, but, at the same time, they have to commodify their local distinctiveness in order to compete with other destinations" (Labadi and Long 2012, 8).

If we combine this view with Harvey's time-space compression theory and the demonstrated emphasis on the economic value of traditional music as analyzed above, it is not hard to conclude that UNESCO's initiatives on cultural diversity and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, regardless of its egalitarian ideal and its claimed mandate to battle cultural imperialism and cultural conflicts, has undergone quite a metamorphosis, or at least alteration, in their implementation in nation states. Without a strong theoretical foundation, the concept of cultural diversity as defined in UNESCO's declarations and conventions, insufficiently articulated, has been interpreted in various ways to justify different agendas, including the indigenous activists who adopted "strategic essentialism" (Engle 2010, 2) to validate indigenous rights as cultural rights.<sup>38</sup> The vague definition of cultural diversity also affects the positioning and practice of intangible cultural heritage. Even though traditional music as intangible cultural heritage has multiple dimensions of significance in current societies, when it is translated into reality, only those dimensions that dominate the contemporary society are reinforced, since they have stronger negotiating power. As a result, the agenda of neoliberal capitalism to create commercialized local distinctiveness, while spreading "a highly unified global space economy of capital flows,"

also dominated the use of traditional music in the postmodern world. Neoliberal capitalist forces in the economic dimension, together with nationalism and human rights movements, contribute to an overemphasis of alterity and difference. This overemphasis also found its articulations in the contemporary use of traditional music, and leaves the other dimensions of its use, the ethical one in particular, in a marginalized status, which constitutes the frustration and disempowerment of ethnomusicologists like Steven Feld.

Even worse, the “spatial adjustment” with its “annihilation of space through time” (Harvey 2000, 88) *does* create destructive effects to humanity under the guise of economic development and prosperity. It complicates the identities of an individual by pluralizing his or her life experience through dislocation facilitated by the globalized economy and transportation system. It naturalizes the isolation of musical sound from its social milieu to turn previously *social* activities of music making and appreciation into a private event characterized by an individual imagination of a stylized sound in relation to the listener’s personal system of meanings. Its focus on ephemeral consumption engineered by marketed fascination encourages a value system that gravitates toward ownership of goods rather than interpersonal communication and engagement. Even creativity is oriented toward the development of creative industries that privatize creativity and illegalize communal sharing.

Why is it that the ramifications of unfettered neoliberal globalization mentioned above are destructive to humanity? Emile Durkheim, in his essay on the dualism of human nature, wrote,

It is still true that at all times man has been disquieted and malcontent. He has always felt that he is pulled apart, divided against himself; and the beliefs and practices to which, in all societies and all civilizations, he has always attached the greatest value, have as their object not to suppress these inevitable divisions but to attenuate their consequences, to give them meaning and purpose, to make them



more bearable, and at the very least, to console man for their existence. (Durkheim 1973, 153).

Durkheim termed this embedded antagonism within man “the constitutional duality of human nature” (Durkheim 1973, 150). One is our body-based individuality, which is personal, and the other is “everything in us that expresses something other than ourselves” (Durkheim 1973, 152), which is impersonal. The balance between the two cannot be fulfilled without collective ideals and representations. However, to take effect, these ideals and representations require collective action, by which “a plurality of individual consciousness enter into communion and are fused into a common consciousness” (Durkheim 1973, 160). Durkheim suggests that such communion can only originate when the collective actions are “organized in a lasting fashion:” “It perpetually gives back to the great ideals a little of the strength that the egoistic passions and daily personal preoccupations tend to take away from them. This replenishment is the function of public festivals, ceremonies, and rites of all kinds” (Durkheim 1973, 161).

Traditional music practice, in this sense, is critical in generating and maintaining the communion between the individual and the common consciousness, which creates a sense of peace within us that pulls us away from the internal struggle. Whatever forms the traditional music takes, it serves a *universal* purpose to sustain a healthy humanity when it embodies the collective ideals. These collective ideals, as analyzed by Durkheim, “are invested by reason of their origin with an ascendancy and an authority that cause the particular individuals who think them and believe in them to represent them in the form of moral forces that dominate and sustain them” (Durkheim 1973, 159).

Durkheim’s work articulates the universal need of man to have an identity marked by a collective ideal, one that provides sense of belonging and sense of security. As Durkheim summarizes,

The states of consciousness of the other class (as opposed to the one that is strictly individual), on the contrary, come to us from society; they transfer society into us and connect us with something that surpasses us. Being collective, they are impersonal; they turn us toward ends that we hold in common with other men; it is through them and them alone that we can communicate with others. (Durkheim 1973, 162).

With this in mind, it would not be difficult to tell how neoliberal globalization, which is driven by the value-free capitalist engine toward efficiency to maximize profits, tears up the previously stable system of meanings by generating postmodern conditions. In the system of neoliberal globalization, man as human being is simply turned into a source of labor as part of capitalist production. Manufacturing factories wiped out preexisting social relations in the areas—mostly developing countries—that have cheap labor and fewer environmental regulations and replaced them with the dominant employment relationship. The previous social relations, established along kinship, ethnic, gender, and class lines, were disrupted and complicated by the forceful insertion of the new relations created through mass production and excessive marketization. To battle poverty, many developing countries embraced neoliberal globalization and practiced its underlying logic on both national and local levels. Rapid social changes, caused by dominant neoliberal economic policies and facilitated by the processes of urbanization and international immigration generated plural social identities for the individuals and groups involved. Fragmented and discursive, the plurality of identities questions the authority of the collective ideals that those individuals and groups practiced and thus becomes a source of insecurity. In addition, rituals and traditional music that were previously practiced lost their social foundation to a great extent. Their sounds were turned into sonic products, and their practices were turned into objectified tourist performances. The social meanings carried by traditional music practice, when facing the recording industry, were filtered away and replaced with new meanings that the industry can use to attract potential customers. Neoliberal globalization

disrupted not only the preexisting social relations, but also the meanings of the cultural objects, including traditional music, which was usually associated with moral ideals. These disruptions inevitably threaten the sustainability of the inner peace of man. This inner peace, according to Durkheim, is quite often achieved by a stable source of collective consciousness.

At the same time, corporate efficiency, the key factor behind neoliberal globalization, penetrates every aspect of society and becomes a new ideal. Mechanization leaves less and less space for interpersonal communication. Heavy workloads, which are geared towards efficiency, encroach on social time. Digital games even substitute for parenting in busy families. Music activities have also become more and more private. While digital recordings take the place of live concerts to function as the major source of musical listening, music making activities are much more oriented by spontaneity and the “coolness” of sounds facilitated by easy-to-play electric instruments. In a word, neoliberal globalization, with its complete focus on individuality, ephemerality, and plurality, significantly shrank the space of social interaction and interpersonal communication. Not only did neoliberal globalization disrupt social identities formed through preexisting social relations, it also failed to generate an antidote to the intensified sense of insecurity caused by this disruption. I argue that under the postmodern conditions the value of traditional music has a social dimension, and it is universal.

#### **SOCIAL DIMENSION: TRADITIONAL MUSIC, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE**

Even though UNESCO’s existing framework of legal instruments on cultural diversity and intangible cultural heritage has a theoretical deficiency, its practice and world report clearly identifies the social value of traditional music within the UN’s conceptual framework of human development. The term human development was established in 1990

in the first issue of the *Human Development Report*, marking the beginning of the long-term publishing initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). As defined in the report,

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect... According to this concept of human development, income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, albeit an important one. But it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people. (UNDP 1990, 10).

The Human Development Index (HDI) is also developed in the report and has been used ever since for its annual, sometimes biannual, publication of the *Human Development Report*. The UNDP's strategy is to redirect society's attention from economic development alone to development that factors in social aspects. It was not until 2004 that the HDI incorporated cultural freedom as "an essential element of human development." Specifically, it refers to "the freedom to choose one's identity and to exercise that choice without facing discrimination or disadvantage" (UNESCO Suite 2010, 30).

In response, UNESCO launched initiatives to investigate the relationship between culture and development. In 2010, in search of "a UNESCO suite of indicators on culture and development," UNESCO published a literature review on existing indicator models to explore the possibilities of designing an index particularly dedicated to culture. The term "development" as in "culture and development" covers a much broader scope that includes not only economic and human development, but also sustainable development. This can be seen on the front page of UNESCO's brochure *The Power of Culture for Development* [emphasis added]:

Culture, in all its dimensions, is a fundamental component of ***sustainable development***. As a sector of activity, through tangible and intangible heritage,

creative industries and various forms of artistic expressions, culture is a powerful contributor to economic development, *social stability* and *environmental protection*. As a repository of knowledge, meanings and values that permeate all aspects of our lives, culture also defines *the way human beings live and interact* both at local and global scales. (UNESCO 2010, 1).

In 2011, UNESCO published an analytical framework for the “UNESCO Culture for Development Indicator Suite.” The introduction section states,

without quantifying and explaining the “how,” culture’s contributions to development processes will continue to be misunderstood and undervalued...without a clear understanding on the nature and extent of this relationship, these claims have not managed to move beyond the level of discourse or to penetrate development approaches. (UNESCO Analytical Framework 2011, 3).

If the UNDP’s initiative to redefine development by taking into consideration the social dimension of human society countered the hegemony of neoliberal globalization, UNESCO’s recent efforts on quantifying the relationship between culture and development furthered the counter-hegemonic initiative. The fact that neoliberal globalization has easily dominated the global economy proves Durkheim’s analysis of the dualism of human nature. Allure of fancy commercial goods incessantly invites man’s “sensory motives” and leaves less and less grounds for his “rational motives” (Durkheim 1973, 158) to take control.

Why, then, is traditional music particularly important in the postmodern world? As a social activity, traditional music has played a critical role in traditional societies. It was used during rituals and festive activities to create moments of communion between the individual consciousness and the collective consciousness. It is both a space and a representation of traditional collective ideals. As a representation of traditional collective ideals, traditional music is the epitome of the traditional way of living and traditional social relations. As an integrated element of the cultural landscape, traditional music retains the social and aesthetic values of the time it was practiced. It also reflects the social relations

and the world views that formed the basis of the understanding of authority in traditional societies. Even though the traditional way of living may have been substantially threatened by the process of neoliberal globalization, traditional music as the sonic carrier of the past cannot be eliminated in physical form. By communicating with surviving traditional music players and consulting the histories of the place involved, one can decode the past through learning and experiencing traditional music within a setting close to its previous social context. The practice of traditional music on a regular basis in accordance with its original social context creates a space where the players enter a conversation with the past, which makes it possible to create a bridge to facilitate the communication between the past and the present. What's not provided by the reality of postmodern conditions can then be experienced, rediscovered, adapted, and finally, incorporated into the present through the long-term practice of traditional music by sticking to its original aesthetics and developing an understanding of its previous social meanings throughout the learning experience. Once such understanding of the past is achieved, it can then be incorporated in the present. The renewed traditional music would embody renewed social relations without a forced cut off from its previous practice based on old social relations. In that sense, traditional music provides a space for dialogue between the present and the past. The entry into the past is premised on the musical subjugation of the present self to the distant past. The subjugation allows oneself to connect to the past without casting forced aesthetic and social judgments on the past, which in turn allows the social ideals as embodied in the traditional music to emerge. By experiencing both the present and the past through traditional music, the borderline between the present and the past disappears, not in a unified manner, but in a coexistent manner, without antagonism between the two.

The entry into the past through practicing traditional music, therefore, carries two social functions. First, it creates access to the kind of social relations embodied in the music

that would be otherwise inaccessible in the postmodern present. Within a world dominated by neoliberal globalization, it would require significant sacrifice to rectify the excessive focus on individual sensibilities through social movements and social activism. However, by practicing traditional music, those who were rarely exposed to a similar social setting have the ability to experience communion between his or her individual consciousness and a collective consciousness. The ability to experience such communion makes available a new world that absorbs the anxiety and insecurity caused by excessive attention to personal sensibilities, and therefore, helps generate a state of inner peace. The rise in popularity of early music is an example of invoking the music in the past to meet the social needs of the present. Although there are those who attend early music concerts solely for its “coolness” and distinctness in the present time, many early music enthusiasts are drawn to its underlying aesthetics and social ideals. Achieving inner peace undoubtedly agrees with the concept of human development as defined by UNDP. Second, practicing traditional music also facilitates intercultural dialogue, which refers to the dialogue between any social differences caused by discrepancy in time, location, and social experience. These differences shouldn’t be bound by national and ethnic lines. By creating a peaceful space to invite the past into the present, the experience of practicing traditional music transforms the conflicts between social values into a dialogue between different aesthetic values. The aesthetic dialogue has the potential to further translate back into a dialogue between social values and world views.

How does the practice of traditional music influence the lives of those in developing countries? In the case of *Kunqu*, the complete failure of the imperial army to maintain its sovereignty in the face of Western powers gave rise to a radical social movement that demanded that society be cut off from the imperial past. The radical rejection of the past was manipulated by the political leftists to initiate the 10-year Cultural Revolution.

Deprived of its old social ideals and lacking a new system of morality, the economic reform, which took place soon after the Cultural Revolution, shaped a new social ideal in China, one based on the neoliberal economic policy that entirely focuses on material abundance and luxury. Whereas Western countries with neoliberal policy agendas continue to lose ground to social security stability, China lost both its identity and its social morality. That is why UNESCO's recognition of *Kunqu* created a new round of debates about what constitutes the collective consciousness of China today. To China, the rediscovery of its traditional music is a rediscovery of its traditional social ideals. As CHEN Danqing said in the documentary discussed earlier, the transmission of traditional music enables a dialogue between the past and the present, which leads to an emerging hybridity that incorporates both the past and the present.

It is also worth mentioning the paradox of *Kunqu*'s transmission discussed by LIU Huan in the documentary. He talked about the infeasibility of practicing *Kunqu* in modern life because it takes too long to perform. However, Western traditional arts like ballet and opera both have a long time span of performance, but they haven't encountered problems of justification among the Chinese audience. It seems that Chinese traditions are still associated with the old and Western traditions are still associated with the new in Chinese society. To those who share LIU Huan's opinion, the Chinese past seems to be absolutely backward, and the call of capitalist efficiency has been naturalized in their consciousness.

Before I conclude this section, I would like to revisit the disempowerment of ethnomusicologists whose ethical call toward an organic and "authentic" use of traditional music was ignored by the music industries. This disempowerment reflects the change in ethnomusicologists' role after the 1990s. The digitalization of musical sound, the emergence of Internet sharing, and the much reduced cost of sound and video recording deprived ethnomusicologists of their authority in representing musics from distant lands.



Powered by the machine of neoliberal globalization, sonic alterity has been playing a key role in the marketing of sound. The commercialization of sounds and the capitalist ideal of “coolness” has generated enormous amount of audio and video recordings that are claimed to be creative and unique, although these are the result of constant borrowing and rearranging of similar sonic elements extracted from ethnomusicological recordings. This is well exemplified by the number of musical works based on Solomon Linda’s “Wimoweh.” In the case of HAN Hong’s new Tibet music, the process of sound commercialization is happening on a global scale, both in the West and the non-West. The growth of popular music industries in non-Western countries, facilitated by neoliberal globalization, equipped local popular singers with a capitalist consciousness to create new music along political and ethnic lines fashioned to popular taste. The plurality of music representations of distant cultures challenges the notion of authenticity that has been long associated with ethnomusicologists. Therefore, the deconstruction of the ethnomusicological authenticity, marked by the emerging studies in performativity, identity, liminality and diaspora, also deconstructed the importance of traditional music in distant cultures because there is no authenticity and the communities in question are imagined communities.

However, the value of traditional music in the postmodern world does not depend solely on whether it has an essentialized form or representation. While the economic and political dimensions of traditional music have been fully explored by the music industries and academia, the social dimension has been given little attention. In addition to the ethical issues raised by UNESCO and legal scholars specializing in intellectual property, the relevance of traditional music to broader social issues, such as social justice, social cohesion, and social insecurity, was neglected partly due to the dominance of neoliberal thinking. At the same time, even though all the communities are imagined and do not take

on a fixed configuration or form, man needs a community or plural communities to sustain his “rational motives” through stable collective activities bound by shared social ideals. It is the sense of belonging within communities that generates sense of security and inner peace. Under the postmodern conditions, the factors that played a key role in shaping communities in pre-modern societies, such as ethnicity, race, and gender, have been deconstructed due to the increased plurality of an individual’s social experience caused by frequent changes in living environment and intensified capital flows on the global level. This requires a departure from the ethnicized or racialized understanding of traditional music that assumes a necessary link between the ethnic groups from which the traditional music emerged and interests in the transmission of traditional music. While postmodern conditions complicate the layers of meanings in daily life, they also facilitate a realignment of social groups based on social ideals that are not bound by ethnicity, gender, and race. In that sense, the preservation of traditional music is relevant not only to the communities whose ancestors practice the music, but also to those who have discovered both the aesthetic and the social charm of the music through long-term discipleship.

The next question is how can we penetrate the hegemony of neoliberal globalization in order to create a traditional-music-friendly environment and also sustain it? What can be learned from the discussion above in terms of the relationship between discourse and power?

### **UNESCO, ETHNOMUSICOLOGY, AND POLICY**

From UNESCO’s definition of cultural diversity, marked by cultural pluralism, to the UN’s strategic adjustment that focuses on human, instead of economic, development, the project of intangible cultural heritage initiated by UNESCO has become an international forum where voices from both nation states and academic bodies are heard in

direct relevance to the actual problems faced by developing countries: poverty reduction, human rights, education, and cultural freedom. Through a normative definition of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO creates an open space in culture where all the stakeholders can freely interpret this concept in accordance with their own agendas. The operation of this open space provides an observable and analyzable experience on the international level to articulate the agencies and forces that drive the murky field of culture, of which traditional music is an integral element.

Even though it is almost impossible to foresee the impact of an international project, UNESCO's ratification and implementation of the 2003 Convention, in line with its other conventions and declarations on cultural diversity and cultural rights, reflect the contour of the international consciousness of cultural heritage. This process, however, is also marked by unexpected discrepancies between policy and results.

### **From the Ideal of Cultural Diversity to the Reality of Cultural Essentialism**

UNESCO's promotion of cultural diversity was intended to combat cultural imperialism with the conceptualization of cultural pluralism. Unfortunately, the ideal of cultural egalitarianism masks uneven power relations. The imposition of neoliberal globalization disrupted the preexisting social relations shaped by traditional social ideals, especially in developing countries. Also disrupted is the collective consciousness built upon those ideals. This collective consciousness, which once was more profound than the individual consciousness, now has been rendered problematic in a globalized economy where almost everything can be turned into goods, including musical sounds. Homi Bhabha (2004) wrote in the preface to the new edition of his book *The Location of Culture*,

However, I do want to make graphic what it means to survive, to produce, to labor and to create, within a world-system whose major economic impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your country or your people.

Such neglect can be a deeply negating experience, oppressive and exclusionary, and it spurs you to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery. (Bhabha 2004, xi).

My reading of Bhabha brings me back to Durkheim's deep analysis of human nature. Is economic development a universal justification for a forced project of economic restructuring that disrupts the social ideals that had been sustaining a stable collective consciousness? This consciousness, invisible to and neglected by the neoliberal agenda, has been forcefully torn up, fragmented, generating numerous lost souls. Furthermore, neoliberal global economy itself is "a dual economy" (Bhabha 2004, xvi) because it is based on unequal economic relations between developed countries and developing countries. Bhabha continues,

Global cosmopolitans of this ilk frequently inhabit 'imagined communities' that consist of silicon valleys and software campuses; although, increasingly, they have to face up to the carceral world of call-centres, and the sweat-shops of outsourcing. A global cosmopolitanism of this sort readily celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery, so long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies. (Bhabha 2004, xiv).

Whereas my previous analysis focuses on the deficiency of UNESCO's conceptualization of cultural diversity, Bhabha's narrative provides an experiential account of how cultural diversity as a concept disguises the unequal and uneven development of neoliberal globalization. The direct link between this problem with cultural diversity and traditional music is the assumption that the responsibility to preserve traditional music lies solely with the "imagined community" in question, quite often called an "indigenous community," no matter how traditional music is used under the postmodern conditions. The reinforced unevenness of power relations adds to the challenge of preserving traditional music because this inequality tends to further marginalize traditional cultural expressions unless they are incorporated into the global market system in order to survive. This means that, if the social dimension of traditional music is to be used to counter the

hegemony of neoliberal globalization in order to provide a space of collective consciousness as a sanctuary for the insecure souls occupied by individual sensibilities, the sources ensuring survival need to be empowered. Regarding this, Bhabha gives further guidance:

Political empowerment, and the enlargement of the multiculturalist cause, come from posing questions of solidarity and community from the interstitial perspective. Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of emergence of community envisaged as a project—at once a vision and a construction—that takes you ‘beyond’ yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present. (Bhabha 2004, 4).

Traditional music, as analyzed above with respect to its social dimension, is a specific example of the Bhabhaian sense of an “interstitial” space (Bhabha 2004, 2). It allows an interstitial perspective that promotes intercultural dialogue and a hybridized version of the understanding of culture, which is *both* here *and* there, without being forced into a reduction into cultural essentialism that uses the past to freeze the present. By practicing traditional music in its proper social context, the experience of making music becomes a bridge between the world views of the player and the world views of those who created and practiced the traditional music. It is a musical experience that has the potential to transform the aesthetic experience of music into the experience of the social ideals embodied in the music. Once such a transformation is realized, the performer is able to enter a world where his or her previously possessed world views and ideas are in dialogue with the emerging social ideals from the practice of the traditional music. This dialogue, if practiced on a regular basis, would facilitate a new identity within the performer that engages with both his, or her, prior social values and the social ideals obtained from practicing the traditional music. In this case, understanding and peace, rather than conflict, are created.

Bhabha's notion of the "emergence of community" expands upon the earlier discussion of the political dimension of traditional music. Since traditional music is often used to form new political alignments because of its connection to the past, its political value cannot be achieved without a particular political project. Every political alignment corresponds to an imagined community and the fought-for ideals. Most of the imagined communities in history have been constructed along ethnic, racial, gender, and geographical lines in order to consolidate notions like indigeneity, pan-Africanness, femininity, and nationhood and address a shared social problem. Under postmodern conditions, these previously constructed identities have been substantially deconstructed, but the projects of political empowerment remain. To cope with postmodern conditions we need a liberated way to construct identities. We have seen many of these newly constructed communities, which include but are not limited to environmentalists, traditionalists and conservationists. Rather than being bound by conceived ethnic, racial, gender, and geographical boundaries, these emergent communities represent a collective initiative to counter various aspects of social hegemony. This articulates the social function of difference. It provides grounds for a collective action, as a political project, by naming a shared enemy. Amy Starr's narrative on anti-corporate movements demonstrates how different stands of political coalitions have been working together to counter the hegemony of multinational corporations in the globalized world.

Traditional music has the potential to participate in the counter-hegemonic projects. By embracing the universal social value of traditional music in the postmodern world, an emergent community can be established. It would include those who care about human development and cultural peace. By experiencing and practicing traditional music, this emergent community engages with the past, and it revises and reconstructs the embodied social ideals and values within "the political conditions of the present." It is through this

revision and reconstruction that traditional music is sustained, without imposition of one value over another, through dialogue.

### **Development of Counter-Hegemonic Forces from Within the Problematic Framework of Cultural Diversity**

Regardless of the demonstrated conceptual problem with the notion of cultural diversity, UNESCO strategically incorporated the UN concept of human development and other social values of intangible heritage, including sustainable development, into its current agenda. Oriented by the heritage practice in the nation states, UNESCO closely monitors the progress in the field by publishing periodicals and forums to foster debate and dialogues on the issue of intangible heritage. As discussed in an earlier section, in order to capture the power of culture to contest the dominant neoliberal policy making, UNESCO developed the *Analytical Framework of the Culture for Development Indicator Suite* in 2011 to encourage research projects focused on how to theorize and visualize the values of culture by developing a user-friendly indicator system to measure the impacts of culture on our daily lives. It seems in the world of practice, as opposed to that of theory, an international organization like UNESCO is more of a battlefield than a machine permanently dominated by hegemonic powers, as assumed by many scholars in cultural studies.

### **Stigmatized Policy Makers: The “Evil” Nation States**

Hegemony as a process is dynamic. It constantly incorporates the interests of the once marginalized to achieve a renewed status of hegemony to regain its stability. While the scope of this paper does not allow an in-depth analysis of how politics and policy shape contemporary living, I find it necessary to question the widely received stereotype of corruption in politics. Quite often in the narratives of indigenous groups, we see a ruthless

enemy—called the nation state—that deprives the community of the freedom to maintain their traditional way of living. This “evil” nation state controls the communication between indigenous groups and international organizations to oppress their right to fight for freedom. Whereas a nation state is definitely not benign, neither is it evil. The exclusion of indigenous groups from the decision making process is a product of rounds of political power negotiations between a variety of interest groups that constitute the society. The evilness of the state, if it exists, does not depend on the failure of a particular political project initiated by a marginalized group. Instead, it depends on whether the political institutional structure promotes social justice and provides an empowering mechanism for marginalized social groups to participate. The canon of majority rule is a built-in weakness of modern representative democracy in that it leaves the minority in a vulnerable position. As a system of interest-coordination, national politics deal with various competing social issues by distributing a limited amount of resources collected from its citizens. Conceptualized as an economic entity that participates in a global economy, the neoliberal nation state expects a quantifiable or measurable approach on a given issue to justify its significance to the society. Therefore, unless the local initiatives are translated into the language of policy makers, their importance is unjustifiable in the policy making process.

In the book *Between Post-Colonialism and Poststructural Theory: A New Cosmopolitanism*, Phillip Leonard (2005) borrows a key concept from Deleuze and Guattari’s work—“deterritorialization-reterritorialization.” Leonard interprets it as “the movement by which nation-states incessantly unground their own geopolitical foundations and are restored as fixed systems” (Leonard 2005, 53). In that sense, a nation state is comparable to a nomad that does not have a fixed territory. It keeps moving based on emergent changes in the society’s needs without pointing toward an ultimate goal. The conditions of each territory occupied by the nomad keep changing and mutating so that the



nomad is forced to move from one territory to another. The force that compels a nation state to reterritorialize is “the capital’s trajectory away from the nation state” (Leonard 2005, 55). In other words, the “mechanism for the capitalist axiom” deterritorializes the sovereignty-centered notion of nation state. The trope here emphasizes a shift from a concept of nation state that is romanticized, fossilized and fixed, to a reconceptualization of the nation state as a dynamic and mutating work in progress, from a nation state as *being* to a nation state as *becoming*. Mutations are unavoidable because there are always “lines of flight that take place within, as well as beyond, the borders of the nation states” (Leonard 2005, 57). These “lines of flight” can be “bands, margins, minorities and segmentary societies” that were minoritized by the dominant narrative of the nation state. Whenever the ever-changing power relations grant them opportunities to exert impact on the society within the dominant narrative of the nation state, deterritorialization sets in motion, which ultimately leads to a reterritorialization of the nation state by incorporating the previously minoritized into the national narrative. By constant deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the authority of the nation state stays decentralized. In this sense, the empowerment of the minorities in the postmodern world is primarily the alignment of shared political interests to affect the power relations.

### **Ethnomusicology and Policy**

What role have ethnomusicologists played in the field of intangible cultural heritage, especially from the perspective of traditional music preservation? It seems that the ethnomusicological discourse, from “authentic representations” of music from distant lands to articulations of how music is used to construct social identity, has not been quite connected to the practice of cultural heritage initiatives. On the contrary, the frequent discussions on race, identity, gender, and ethnicity tend to pull people’s attention away

from other factors that contribute to the construction of new identities in the postmodern world. On the one hand, we have the lament of ethnomusicologists like Steven Feld on the dominant corporate power that ignores the ethical dimension in the use of traditional music. On the other hand, UNESCO is calling the attention of society to the urgency of theorizing and quantifying the power of culture. If UNESCO's political nature does not equip itself to empower those who practice traditional music to have the capacity to sustain it, whose job is it? If ethnomusicologists are disempowered regarding their influence on cultural policy, how can they be empowered? UNESCO's initiative of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is fundamentally an ethical call. However, in order to justify this initiative on the policy level, rational thinking and applicable theories are also necessary. UNESCO actively consults with both experts and heritage practitioners in the field to adjust its strategies to empower culture under the pressure of neoliberal globalization. How can ethnomusicologists participate in this counter-hegemonic initiative?

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Traditional music in the postmodern world is multi-dimensional. As an integral element of intangible cultural heritage, it is widely used in creative industries to generate revenues in the global economy and frequently invoked by social groups to claim a shared political identity. However, the popularity of traditional music in news and media does not reduce its vulnerability as a musical embodiment of pre-modern social ideals. Instead, its continued incorporation into the global sound market further threatens its sustainability. Traditional music, due to the fact that it is an embodiment of pre-modern social ideals, is a powerful agent to counter the excessively individualistic ideology underlying neoliberal globalization. It provides a precious space to accommodate human needs, especially of those who are dislocated, and to establish a collective consciousness that absorbs anxiety

and the sense of insecurity. The potential of musical aesthetics in traditional music to be translated into the understanding of the embodied social ideals makes the practice of traditional music a powerful tool to actuate dialogues of cultural values within the same individual. Therefore, empowering traditional music as an integral part of the cultural landscape is an urgent task with universal value. This task requires a close dialogue between the disciplines of cultural studies, especially ethnomusicology, and the heritage practitioners, in order to conjure up a theoretically reasonable and practically useful model to visualize the significance of traditional music in the language of policy makers. It is through this dialogue and collaboration that both traditional music and the discipline of ethnomusicology could be empowered.

## Notes

1. The *World Heritage List* program was launched in 1972 by the World Heritage Center of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to recognize the universal value of the selected cultural and natural heritage sites in the nation states. The program is an extension of UNESCO's *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, which was ratified in 1972. Detailed information is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/>.

2. UNESCO website, "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage," <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002>.

3. UNESCO website, "Lists of intangible cultural heritage and Register of best safeguarding practices," <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00559>.

4. UNESCO website, "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage," <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002>.

5. Ibid.

6. UNESCO website, "Introducing UNESCO: what we are," <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/introducing-unesco/>.

7. UNESCO website, "About us," <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/about-us/>.

8. UNESCO website, "Criteria and timetable of inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=173>.

9. "notably Australia, Canada, the UK, Switzerland and the USA." Smith and Akagawa, 3.

10. Here the "heritage literature" refers to "Harvey 2001; Urry 1996; Dicks 2000; Graham 2002; Peckham 2003; Smith 2006; Byrne 2008; Bendix 2007; Deacon et al. 2004:11; Hassard 2007." Smith and Akagawa, 6-7.

11. The case studies in this book cover broad geographical locations, including the Caribbean region (Cummins), Sweden (Bergdahl), Africa (Abungu), Jordan (Abu-Khafajah and Rababeh), India (Bedekar), France (Hottin and Grenet), Australia (Leader-Elliot and Trimboli), the Netherlands (Mensch and Mensch), Wales (Dixey), Botswana

(Keitumetse), Canada (MacKinnon), Thailand (Denes), Indonesia (Kreps), Guyana (Bowers and Corsane), Brazil (Dos Santos and Muller), and Italy (Maggi).

12. The case studies here include the ones on Japan (Beazley), Cambodia (Askew), Afghanistan (Krieken-Pieters), and Europe (Bortolotto).

13. The “heritage values” and the “cultural heritage significance of cultural landscapes” were drawn by Taylor and Lennon from cultural landscape theorists Meinig and Baker. “Donald Meinig (1979:1), proposed that ‘[l]andscape is an attractive, important, and ambiguous term [that] encompasses an ensemble of ordinary features which constitute an extraordinarily rich exhibit of the course and character of any society’ and that ‘[l]andscape is defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds. It is a panorama which continuously changes as we move along any route’ (ibid.:3).” Taylor and Lennon, 1. Baker argues that “historical studies of landscapes must be grounded in analysis of material structures: they are properly concerned with tangible, visible expressions of different modes of production ... But [that] such material structures are created and creatively destroyed within an ideological context: such studies must therefore acknowledge that landscapes are shaped by mental attitudes and that a proper understanding of landscapes must rest on the historical recovery of ideologies.” Taylor and Lennon, 2.

14. These different locations and regions include Indonesia (Amin), China (Feng Han), Japan (Inaba), Melanesia (Ballard and Wilson), India (Thakur), Thailand (Sirisrisak and Akagawa), and Cambodia (Butland).

15. The examples refer to works covered in the collection by Wescoat, Silver, Orser, French, Benavides, and Zimmerman.

16. The five minority museums where Alivizatou chose to undertake fieldwork are as follows: National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Te Papa, Vanuatu Cultural Centre in Port Vila, National Museum of the American Indian in the United States, Horniman Museum in South London, and the Musée du quai Branly in Paris.

17. According to UNESCO’s definition, “cultural diversity” refers to “the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies.” The 2005 Convention, 4, Article 4. Digital version.

18. Philip Leonard’s book on postcolonial theory analyzes Julia Kristeva’s interpretation of Montesquieu’s understanding of cultural differences features the notion of “cultural totality” [emphasis added]: “this concept of totality is traversed by a series of singularities... *places the totality of the social at the intersection of two different orders:*

settling on neither a geopolitical determinism nor an anthropocentric rationalism, Montesquieu's notion of totality is, as Kristeva observes, one *marked by a divided unity*, 'encompassing *nature and culture...men and institutions; laws and mores; the particular and the universal; philosophy and history*.'" Leonard, 81-2.

19. UNESCO website, 2001, "UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity," Article 1, [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13179&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

20. UN website, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948), Article 22, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>.

21. The Roman Convention of 1961 protects the IP rights of "musically creative persons, namely performers, broadcasters, and producers of phonograms." Sandler, 243.

22. "(fl 1522–72). Chinese composer, singer and theorist. He played a central role in developing the Kunshan qiang, a regional singing style of the Kunshan area of Jiangsu province that had first emerged in the middle decades of the 14th century, into a national genre of operatic music known as Kunqu that came to dominate the Chinese theatre from the late 16th century and the 17th." Grove Music Online, "Wei Liangfu [given name, Shangquan]," [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/49364?q=liangfu+wei&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/49364?q=liangfu+wei&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) (accessed April 29, 2013).

23. <http://image.baidu.com/i?ct=503316480&z=&tn=baiduimagedetail&word=%C0%A5%C7%FA%CB%D5%D6%DD%D4%B0%C1%D6&in=29099&cl=2&lm=-1&pn=7&rn=1&di=47519628750&ln=782&fr=ala0&fmq=&ic=&s=&se=&sme=0&tab=&width=&height=&face=&is=&istype=#pn21&-1&di1921548495&objURLhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.netsuzhou.com%2Fmyszcc%2Ffa%2Fupload%2F2010520165439316.jpg&fromURLhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.netsuzhou.com%2Fnews.asp%3Fwid%3D31249&W400&H274> (accessed November 18, 2011).

24. China's rural population was 82% in 1970. It has experienced a continuous decrease since the economic reform in 1978. Source: *Facts and Details* <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/china/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html> (accessed April 19, 2013).

25. My translation. The original name of the institute is in Chinese—昆曲传习所. Its important role in the history of *Kunqu* is articulated in a number of Chinese journal articles, among which is: 王珏平 (WANG Yuping), "世界非物质文化遗产“昆曲”的困境 (The Dilemma of Kunqu, the World Intangible Cultural Heritage)," *当代艺术 (Contemporary Art)* 2 (2007): 202-4.

26. My translation. The original text is in Chinese.
27. CCTV and JSTV, *Kunqu of Sixcentenary* (昆曲六百年), “The Past and the Present (前世今生),” episode 1 out of 8, Youtube site, 37:58, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sT8p4pgNxy8&feature=share> (accessed November 16, 2011, originally produced in 2007, uploaded on Youtube on September 25, 2011).
28. All cited quotes here from the documentary are my translations from Chinese.
29. The quotation mark is used because it is a term frequently used in China’s official discourse regarding the social change in Tibet after the establishment of Mao’s China.
30. The term “the three big mountains” is frequently used in public discourse to describe the multiple oppressions that people in China were facing during the semi-colonial, semi-feudal historical period, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
31. The term “new China” is frequently used to refer to Communist China since 1949.
32. “HAN” is family name, and “Hong” is given name. To maintain the consistency of how the musician is called in Chinese, I use the Chinese way of ordering names, with the family name in front of the given name.
33. According to Chinese online sources, HAN Hong lived in Tibet with her Tibetan mother and Han father until the age of nine, three years after the unexpected death of her father. Then she moved to her father’s hometown, Beijing, to live with her grandmother. Details can be found at <http://baike.baidu.com/view/3894.htm#sub6407314>.
34. Including those with mixed blood.
35. The song is titled “Heavenly Path” (*tian lu*).
36. UNESCO website, “Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2001-2005),” <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00103#definition-and-criteria>.
37. Ibid.
38. Karen Engle, the author of the book *Elusive Promise of Indigenous Rights*, articulates how “strategic essentialism” prevented indigenous rights activists from

resolving internal conflicts and drove the movements away from their original motivations such as fighting against economic dependency, structural discrimination, and lack of indigenous autonomy. See page 2 of the book for more details.



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