CHINESE MINORITY POPULAR MUSIC:
A CASE STUDY OF SHANREN, A CONTEMPORARY POPULAR BAND

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By
Xiaorong Yuan
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Thesis written by

Xiaorong Yuan

B.A., Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China, 2012

M.A., Kent State University, 2016

Approved by

___________________________
Andrew Shahriari, Ph.D., Advisor

___________________________
Ralph Lorenz, Ph.D., Director, School of Music

___________________________
John Crawford, Ed.D., Dean, College of the Arts
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces Chinese popular music, as well as minority ethnic populations in Mainland China from the post-Mao period (1976-1989) to today. Chinese minority popular music is increasingly shown to function as a means of promoting cultural identity among the people of China, as well as a means for minority popular musicians to distinguish themselves within Chinese popular music culture.

Opening and Background

*Popular Music, Art Music and Folk Music*

“Popular music” can be uniquely defined according to specific cultural situations. A common view is that popular music is differentiated from art music on the basis of its economic patronage, which is presumed to be mass audiences. This suggests that music performance would provide music to a greater number of listeners than art and folk music. To reach a sizeable audience, the popular music industry relies on new technologies and mass marketing strategies more often than other types of music.

…Unlike art, [popular] music is: (1) conceived for mass distribution to large and often socio-culturally heterogeneous groups of listeners, (2) stored and distributed in non-written form, (3) only possible in an industrial monetary economy where it becomes a commodity and (4) in capitalist societies, subject to the laws of ‘free’ enterprise,
according to which it should ideally sell as much as possible of as little as possible to as many as possible.¹

Folk music, similarly to popular music, is also associated with socio-cultural events, such as rituals and festivals. However, folk music is not usually motivated by economics or mass mediated in China like popular music. Folk music is transmitted primarily through oral tradition and can be performed by both professional and amateur musicians. Folk music often has a functional meaning, e.g., hunting songs.² Popular music is used more often as entertainment in a commercial context, which highlights differences in economic motivations for identifying a music as being either folk, art or popular.

In this sense, popular music is considered a “cultural product” that exists simultaneously as a “market commodity, a form of secular entertainment and an element of a larger socio-political and cultural system”.³ While the development of popular music in Western and non-Western cultures came with the commodification of economies, technology and the mass media, and urbanization, in non-Western contexts, popular music also emerged as a synthesis of Western music culture with indigenous form. As such, popular music is also a symbol of modernization in the non-Western world.

³ Andrew F. Jones, Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music (New York: Cornell East Asia Program, 1992), 23.
Chinese Interpretation of Popular Music

When Chinese scholars consider how to define “Chinese popular music,” they also need to distinguish it from art and folk music, at least when considering Mainland China. Art music in China includes both Western art music, such as opera and orchestral music, as well as Chinese traditional art music, such as Guqin 古琴 music and Kunqu 昆曲, which are highly regarded along with other traditional Chinese arts, such as watercolor painting, poetry, literature, philosophy, and calligraphy. Such “high” art traditions are preserved with very little influence from modern or popular culture in Chinese society. In contrast, Chinese folk music, played by either amateur or professional musicians for ceremonies or other social contexts, is often susceptible to modernization and can be re-contextualized in the popular music industry.

The modernization process occasionally blurred boundaries between Chinese folk music and that of art and popular music. A prime example is the increased status of Peking Opera music during modern Chinese history (1912 – present). Originally a folk music genre from Hubei province in the late Qing dynasty (1644-1912), Peking Opera became more popular after the Qing dynasty in Beijing, Shanghai, and overseas. It was not well accepted as a National theater genre until reformers, such as Wang Yaoqing 王瑶卿, Cheng Yanqiu 程砚秋, and Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳, modified the artistic values of the genre by incorporating plot writing typical of Western Opera and traditional art Kunqu singing techniques, as well as progressive ideologies.

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4 Guqin is a seven-string zither with a history of roughly a thousand years. For traditional Chinese scholars, there are four essential arts they must learn: “Qin (Guqin music), Qi, (Weiqi, traditional Chinese black and white chess), Shu (Chinese calligraphy), and Hua (Chinese water color painting). Kunqu is considered as high-level culture, because it is associated with high-quality poetry, literature, and philosophy, as well as skillful singing techniques.
such as democracy and feminism. From the 1910s to the 1930s, the renowned Peking opera master, Mei Lanfang, toured internationally in Japan, Russia, and the United States to help this genre gain international fame. Records of Peking opera masterpieces produced by *Shanghai Baidai* (the Chinese title for EMI Group) also promoted Peking Opera music, particularly to young urbanites in Shanghai, as well as Peking, Tianjin and Guangzhou, creating an early Chinese fandom for the famous Peking opera singers, such as Mei Lanfang (see figure 1.1). Successfully improving both its artistic and commercial value, Peking opera emerged as a National theater genre after the 1920s.

Figure 1.1: Mei Lanfang and his Baidai (EMI) record: the Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang playing goddess in *Flower Blossom Goddess* 天女散花 in 1917 (left); Baidai records of *Flower Blossom Goddess* (middle); Mei Lanfang in the 1920s (right).^{8}

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^{5} Mei Lanfang is one of the most important Peking Opera masters from 1910-1940. He is famous for his trans-gender role, called qingyi, referring to female roles. His style, known as the Mei School, became the most important female role singing and performing style in Peking Opera. Among his most creative compositions are the Drunk Concubine, Flower Blossom Goddess, and Farewell my Concubine.

^{6} EMI (Electronic and Music Industries Limited) was a British multinational music recording and publishing company headquartered in London, England. EMI was founded in 1897, with its first sub-company in China, “Baidai” (meaning “hundred generation” established in Shanghai in 1906. The company soon became localized and changed its title to “Dongfang Baidai,” meaning “eastern EMI” in 1921, producing phonograms in a Shanghai factory. The company played an important role in the development of Shanghai popular music culture.

^{7} The fandom was very important for the Peking opera singers during the 1910s to 1930s. Young fans of Mei Lanfang were fascinated with his singing and performance style. His tours became so successful that he had to hire security guards to protect him and his family from his fans, as well as fans of other Peking opera singers.

The Chinese translation of the term “popular music” can have different connotations than the English equivalent. A common translation is liuxing yinyue (流行音乐), where liuxing indicates “fashionable” and yinyue means “music” in general. Hence liuxing yinyue has the sense of “transiently or contemporarily popular but possibly passing as a fad or fashion.”

Another translation is tongsu yinyue (通俗音乐), where tongsu has the sense of “widespread among the people,” but can also suggest vulgarity, low value, or common-ness. Less common translations include dazhong yinyue (大众音乐) and minjian yinyue (民间音乐).” The former — translated as “mass music” — is strongly associated with revolutionary songs of the Mao period, which has little to do with mass marketing, but is mainly related to government political ideologies. The latter term — translated as “common people’s music” — is more like folk music and suggests among Chinese scholars associations with folklore, folk songs or music, dance, myths, rite, and legends. None of these translations perfectly matches the English understanding of “popular music” in reference to it as a “cultural product.”

Although there is some debate regarding the above translations of “popular music,” all relate Chinese popular music to the mass market and social stratification. Chinese popular music in Mainland China relies heavily on political sponsors for financial support and navigating political hurdles. As the government controls the mass market in Mainland China, “official”

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popular music can exist along with Western and traditional Chinese art music, while “unofficial” popular music maintains a low profile largely in underground markets.\(^\text{10}\)

*Official and Unofficial Popular Music Markets*

The Chinese government’s policy on official versus unofficial popular music shifts during different periods. During the Mao period (1949-1979), the masses were at the center of Mao’s politics.\(^\text{11}\) The term “dazhong,” which referred to the masses, today still carries connotations of socialism, workers, peasants, and soldiers in communist China, even while the Chinese people as a “mass” are heading towards a greater sense of individualism. In the post-Mao period (1979 to present), the economic market began to open and commercial value gradually replaced political forces in the Chinese music market. From the 1980s, many features of the contemporary “mass market” and popular cultural products in China actually pushed toward greater individualism – from “we” to “I”. Nonetheless, the Chinese market is not an absolutely free open market. The government still controls it, but in a far more sophisticated and diplomatic way, called “Macroeconomic regulation and control market” (宏观调控的市场经

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\(^{11}\) Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893 –1976) was a Chinese Communist revolutionary and founding father of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). He governed as Chairman of Communist Party of PRC from its establishment in 1949 until his death in 1976. In 1966, he initiated the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a program to remove “counter-revolutionary” elements of Chinese society. The period lasted 10 years and was marked by violent class struggle, widespread destruction of cultural artifacts, and unprecedented elevation of Mao's personality cult, which is officially regarded as a “severe setback” for the PRC.
In this kind of market, the government is not directly involved in market activity, but observes it and intervenes when the market appears to be losing control.

The popular music market is affected by the government’s influence as well, particularly in relation to ideological and political purposes. For example, the content of popular music is expected to obey or promote the government’s agenda. Indeed, although the term “mass song” in the Cultural Revolution period is no longer used, the concept of “we” is still maintained in government rhetoric associated with the market economy. For example, “red song” in the contemporary popular music market is a genre referred to as mass song and “revolution song” during the Mao period, which were compositions intended to promote the Communist’s political purposes and to celebrate the people’s “happy life” in the PRC. Western scholars later called songs promoted by the government “orthodox songs”. In contrast, Gangtai love songs (popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan) in the 1980s, Beijing rock music in the 1990s, and the wave of Korean influence on Chinese pop stars’ ballads and most recently online musicians’ satirical songs all indicate more individualism (see chapter 2). This kind of content is considered “unofficial” music that the government does not promote, no matter how successful the music sells in the commercial market.

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12 Macro-economic regulation and control is an economic policy that refers to the use of direct government intervention by the central government of PRC to cool down the overheated economy. Zhu Rongji 朱镕基, the premier of the PRC, first introduced the policy in 1993. The policies included collective measures to constrain monetary policy, suppress real estate and stock markets, control inflation, lower supplies of raw materials, and reduce domestic consumption. Although this is an economic policy, it reveals the government’s role influencing Chinese markets, including the popular music market.


14 They all emphasize personal opinion that could exist in the market, but are never promoted as mainstream music.
The labels “mainstream media” or “mass media” are generally applied to print publications, such as newspapers and magazines that contain high public readership, as well as radio formats and television stations. Mainstream popular music is associated with the mainstream media, whereas indie and alternative music are found on independent media, alternative newspapers, specialized magazines, and various underground organizations and corporations.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) runs the mainstream media, which is called zhuxuanlu (主旋律). Translated as “main melody,” this refers to popular music that represents the official government-promoted Chinese ideology, which must be “related to the developing of the Nation and happiness of people’s life.”\textsuperscript{15} Military and patriotic songs are considered mainstream, while love songs and satirical songs are not characterized as mainstream regardless of their album’s sales. This official determination also rejects some mainstream popular songs from the Western world; for example, the government will not condone popular music with content suggestive of violence, money, or sexuality. Mainstream popular music is only recognized when it is “harmonic, patriotic and healthy” for the Chinese society.\textsuperscript{16}

Three major types of popular singers exist in the modern Mainland Chinese music market today: official mainstream singers, who sing orthodox songs and use the Minzu Changfa 民族唱

\textsuperscript{15} Bo’an, Jiang, \textit{The Publicity Department of the Communist Party Central Committee promoted One Hundred Patriotic Songs Collection} (Wuhan, China: Wuhan University Press, 2011), 139.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 140.
National singing style\textsuperscript{17}; pop-singers, who are commercial entertainers with companies, such as Taihe Rye music Co., Ltd.;\textsuperscript{18} and indie popular bands, who are self-supporting – neither supported by government or commercial companies.

The latter type of music is produced independently from major commercial record labels or their subsidiaries. Musicians in this group follow an autonomous, “do-it-yourself” approach to recording and publishing. Many indie popular bands, discouraged by the government, intentionally seek to make music different from the mainstream music, either by including content on sensitive social issues, such as government bureaucracy and sexuality, or playing music in styles different from the National singing style, such as heavy metal and punk music. Such indie musicians are mostly ethnic Han, the majority population of China, however, there are also indie musicians from minority ethnic groups who want to make their popular culture different from mainstream music. Some minority indie bands, such as Hanggai and Shanren, have emerged in recent years as part of the indie popular band movement and are increasingly accepted by the current generation youth culture.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Mainland Chinese Youth in 2000s}

\textsuperscript{17} Minzuchangfa or Chinese National singing style combines Western opera vocal technique and Chinese folk song style (see chapters 3 and 4).
\textsuperscript{18} Taihe Rye Music Co.Ltd. 北京太合麦田音乐文化发展有限公司 founded in 1996, and originally a subsidiary of Time-Warner Music Group; it is the largest private commercial music company in Mainland China.
\textsuperscript{19} Hanggai 杭盖乐队 is a Chinese folk music group in Beijing that specializes in a blend of Mongolian folk music and more modern styles, such as punk rock. (see chapter 4).
In relation to popular culture, younger Chinese (twenty to thirty year-olds) have only known the relatively liberal “reform and opening” period (1980s – present). This generation grew with an increasingly wide spectrum of new media and communications technologies, from the cassette player, the television set, and the video recorder in the 1980s to broadband Internet, MP3 and MP4 players in the 1990s to Apple iPad, MacBook and iPhone in the 2000s.

Consequently, there are significant differences in the approaches to and understandings of technology between the younger and the older generations (more than 40 years old). The younger generations had the opportunity to venture overseas to study more frequently than preceding generations. They considered *gangtai* pop stars old-fashioned, being more familiar with Japanese and Korean popular stars. They knew more about American and European pop-stars, which most Chinese popular music fans still consider the highest level of pop culture.

Meanwhile they also struggled with insecurity towards modern culture. Many of this younger generation believe they are losing faith in authority and leadership in the rapidly developing modern society of China today.

An important development among the younger generation during the 1980s to 2000s is a differing understanding of Marxism, which features prominently in contemporary China. Literature on class and social differentiation is more readily available today in communist China. During the Mao era, class designation was central to people’s everyday lives, affecting their
career, marriage prospects, and experiences with China’s politics. The government recognized the most valued classes as the “peasants, workers, and soldiers,” which were considered “good” class categories. In contrast, “bad” class categories included “bourgeoisie, landlords, and capitalists.” People included in these latter categories suffered most in political campaigns, from land reform in the early 1950s, when millions of landlords were executed, to the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), when scholars and students were sent to rural work camps to live. An individual’s class label was inherited from one’s father, which meant that later generations of Chinese, who may have grown up entirely in the PRC with no knowledge or involvement with the actions of their ancestors, could still be condemned for their unfavorable class history.

In the early 1980s, economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping (邓小平, 1904-1997) downplayed class in Chinese politics, and gradually these labels became less important. While class lineages are rarely considered today, economic reform has resulted in the emergence of huge contrasts in wealth. China now has a class of super-rich multimillionaires comprised of businessmen and private entrepreneurs, a growing number of middle-class families, and still millions of people who live below the internationally recognized poverty line, such as peasants and migrant workers.

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21 Ibid., 15-17.
22 Deng Xiaoping was the leader of China from 1978 until his retirement in 1992. After Mao Zedong’s death, Deng led the country through far-reaching market economic reforms. While Deng never held office as the head of state, head of government or General Secretary (that is, the leader of the Communist Party), he nonetheless was considered the “paramount leader” of the People's Republic of China from December 1978 to 1992.
The one-child family policy instituted in 1980s, resulted in the vast majority of younger Chinese, urban Chinese in particular, having no brothers or sisters. This is an important distinction between the generations born in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Parents and grandparents only focused on one child for each family, leading to the phenomenon of “little emperor,” or spoiled, single children accustomed to being the center of attention. At the same time, however, this generation also experienced greater pressure from family and parents to do well in school, find a good job, make money, support the family, and look after his or her parents in their advanced age. The aging Chinese population became the most critical issue of the time, as there will be more aged people than young people to take care of them. These higher expectations caused many youth to struggle with insecurities and feelings of worth. Searching for solutions to their problems, many have now turned to traditional culture prior to the Chinese Civil War (1946 – 1949), which had mostly faded from the active memory of the previous generation.

In 2008, China surpassed the United States as the world’s largest number of Internet users. Mass media focuses heavily on the Internet for the dissemination of content and activities, resulting in a complex promotion of Chinese nationalism online to reflect crucial trends in the offline world. Chinese native Internet entrepreneurs quickly took the opportunity to develop parallel products after the communist government banned Facebook and Youtube in Mainland.

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23 In the Mao period, people did not struggle to find jobs because of the National economical policy, which designated their work activities based on their class background. The post-Mao “opening and reform” period created a job crisis. In 1980s, a student who had a bachelor’s degree was easily hired by a national company, but by 2009, roughly 32% of the 6.11 million college graduates were unemployed, according to National Ministry of Education.
China. The Chinese websites are nearly identical to outside websites except the language is in Mandarin. Some examples include the Chinese versions of Facebook, called Weibo (微博) and Renren (人人网); Youku (优酷网) and Tudou (土豆网) replace YouTube as most popular video sharing websites on the Mainland; Douban (豆瓣) substitutes for Rotten Tomatoes as an important resource for reviews of current popular culture in music, video, and film, as well as dining, and tourist interests for youth culture. The government, however, strictly monitors such sites and censors material deemed to be illegal or socially immoral. Radical political views are banned, particularly if they criticize the CCP, and sensitive issues regarding violence, nudity, porn, rumors or drugs are prohibited. Blogs, such as Sina (新浪), Sohu (搜狐), and Tencent (腾讯), as well as fandom platforms, like Douban (豆瓣), Tianya (天涯), and Baidu (百度) are censored, as well as any uploaded information. Music downloading and online listening websites, such as Kugo (酷狗) and Xiami (虾米) that are commonly used by young Chinese are also surveyed to delete any online songs that violate censorship criteria regardless of a song’s popularity. In short, Chinese Internet culture is expected to be “harmonious” with the government’s authority. Many of these Chinese websites are restricted for non-Mainland Chinese audiences with warnings indicating the sites are only for mainland customers.

While mainstream popular culture overlaps with the officially promoted popular culture to create this “harmonious” Internet environment, an alternative group of so-called “literary youth” emerged in response to such government intrusions in popular culture. Known as Wenyi...
qingnian (文艺青年), or wenqing for short, these “literary and artistic youth” (literal translation) might be termed as “hipsters” in the English-speaking world. The movement is broadly associated with indie and alternative music, a non-mainstream fashion sensibility, liberal political views, organic and artisan-produced foods, and alternative lifestyles. Wenqing in its current usage first appeared in the 1990s and became particularly prominent in the 2010s.\textsuperscript{24} Unrecognized young artists and musicians were given more attention by literary youth to show their unique taste in contemporary art in modern Mainland China after 1990s, such as handmade clothing, dolls and other creative marketing concepts related to music network promotion, as related to indie rock and roll music, in particular. Although Han youth comprise the bulk of the literary youth group, interest in minority indie rock music has become increasingly prevalent within this cultural group, catching the attention of various social media on the Internet and television.

\textit{Majority and Minority Ethnic Groups}

The majority ethnic group in Mainland China is Han, which comprises 92% of the total population. Another 55 non-Han ethnic groups live in China, but a challenge is the absence of a political consensus as to who is considered “Chinese” among the people of the People’s Republic

\textsuperscript{24} Wenqing is derived from terminology used to describe earlier movements in the 1940s. Members of this youth subculture typically do not self-identify as hipsters, considering it a pejorative term describing those who are pretentious, overly-trendy or degenerate and depraved. Some analysts even assert that the contemporary hipster is actually a marketing myth to increase sales of products related to this youth subculture.
of China (PRC) and Taiwan. The criteria includes political, linguistic, cultural, and social distinctions. For instance, a Tibetan is internationally recognized as a citizen of the PRC, while the cultural, linguistic, and social differences vary significantly from the vast majority of other PRC citizens. Additionally, several distinct non-Han minority ethnic groups are not recognized by the Chinese government, e.g., Mosuo. In the long history of China, many ethnic groups disappeared due to intermarriage, conquest, and assimilation into the Han or other ethnic groups. Other ethnic groups still recognized today, such as Uyghur and Hui, arrived throughout the northern ethnic invasions of the Yuan (元朝, 14th century) and Qing Dynasties (清朝, 17th century) into China and were able to thrive and increase their populations.

Biological factors, such as race and lineage, are not always practical in distinguishing Chinese minority ethnic groups. Rather, “culture and linguistic differences that over time have been relatively persistent” are more commonly used to identify separate ethnic identities. However, some western region ethnic groups, like Uyghur, Tibetan and Eluosi (Russian) do have physical characteristics distinct from the majority Han ethnic group. Others are less discernable, such as Manchu, Korean, and Mongolian from the northeastern regions, as well as Zhuang, Miao (Hmong), Yao and Buyi from the southwest region. Even so, the majority of ethnic minority

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25 This thesis only focuses on ethnic issues related to Mainland China.
26 According to “the Sixth National Census” completed in 2010, there was a total population of 640,101 from unrecognized ethnic groups.
groups lack physical and phenotypic differences from the Han majority, encouraging cultural distinction as the primary determinants in ethnic identity.

In part, the distinction between Han and minority ethnic groups in the twentieth century is due to perceived histories, which considered Han culture as “highly civilized” in contrast with minority cultures “barbaric.” The Han people positioned themselves as more modernized than minority populations. Nationalist Party leader Sun Yat-sen,28 quite aware of the fragile nature of the new Chinese Nation-State (c.1912), tried to minimize the influence of the minorities to enhance the ethnic superiority of the Han in his writings and speeches.29

The Communist Party’s attitude toward minorities contrasted with that of the Nationalist Party. In 1953, the Communist leader, Mao Zedong, gave a speech to the Central Communist Party Committee about minority identification.

Regarding the diverse history and current situation of minority ethnic groups, the identity work should focus on the characters of region, ethnical name, historical descendant, economical social condition, cultural condition, language, spiritual and psychological diathesis; … [the work] must respect the choice of ethnics themselves.30 Essential is the ethnic group being self-determining with their identity, indicating that identity focuses on how each minority would consider cultural affiliations. While providing direction to

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28 Sun Yet-sen 孙中山 (1866 – 1925) was a Chinese revolutionary, first president and founding father of the Republic of China. Sun is referred to as the “Father of Nation” in the Republic Of China, and Forerunner of democratic revolution” in the People’s Republic of China. Sun played an instrumental role in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty during the years leading up to the Double Ten Revolution and was appointed to serve as Provisional President of the Republic of China when it was founded in 1912. He later co-founded the Kuomintang (KMT), serving as its first leader.

29 In a famous speech by Sun Yet-sen in 1896, he called for the Han to “Drive out the barbarian [mainly referring to Manchu and Mongolian hegemony, but also suggesting other ethnic groups], revive the Han Station.” Chiang Kai-shek, commander of the Kuomintang party and a follower of Sun, was also noted for his exclusionary policies towards non-Han ethnic groups in China.

30 Mao, “Summarizing about the Communist party works and experience among Minority in past years, 1953.”
solving this issue, Mao’s dictate created new challenges for minorities due to a lack of cultural self-awareness. The ethnic Yi, for example, still cannot be clearly identified according to their location and appearance. During the Cultural Revolution (1966 -1976), most Sinicized minorities, such as the Manchu, Mongols, and Koreans, changed their appearance to show respect for Chairman Mao. Chinese Mongolians, Russians, and Koreans today live differently from those in their country of origin.

The late 1970s saw a resurgence of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism in China. This resurgence was the result of several interrelated factors, including a general liberalization of the country, similar global trends, and the traumatically negative experience of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976). The brutal suppression of China’s minority traditions during the Cultural Revolution period had the effect of awakening minority ethnic consciousness and led the minorities to reaffirm their ethnicity with greater zeal than ever. As China opened its markets to outside interest, an increasing demand for minority goods appeared, bringing greater awareness to the ethnic minority situation.

The revival of ethnic awareness in China in the last two decades of twentieth century led to a significant increase in studies focused on China’s minorities. One important theme addressed within many of these recent studies is the negotiation of minority identities and their representation. Since the revival of scholarly interest in ethnicity in China, it has been recognized that minority people have some degree of agency in defining themselves. This agency has been demonstrated best in several studies that point out the existence among certain minorities of
perceptions, narratives, and practices related to their ethnic identity that refuse to conform to, and sometimes even contradict, those constructed by the CCP.

**Yuanshengtai and Grassroots**

As with the Han popular music, the minority popular music industry also deals with issues of official and unofficial labeling. During Mao Zedong’s rule, minority music elements were used to eulogize his leadership and Communist ideology. After the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping became leader of the country and initiated a series of economic, political and cultural movements that affected the role of minority music in the new era. Similar to Han popular music culture, minority musicians struggled with promotion of government ideology through orthodox songs aimed at shaping a unified political atmosphere. However, they also benefited from learning other music genres, which they utilized as a medium for expressing their own ideas and agenda.

No longer eulogizing the leadership of one leader, post-Mao minority songs promoted by the government encouraged the need for ethnic pride and identity in order to portray China as a multi-ethnic yet unified nation. However, since the market environment was freer in the post-Mao period, minority musicians also aspired to reach global audiences and were eager to gain an equal stature with Han musicians. They experimented with adapting their traditional literature and music to the most modernized styles of music.
In the new millennium, traditional rural minority music has gained a large following throughout Chinese social media. *Yuanshengtai* (原生态, nature style of music, see chapter 3), associated with several minority media icons, such as Yang Liping (杨丽萍, b.1958) is now among the most popular music types in Chinese mass media. Some minority musicians of yuanshengtai adopted Western popular musical elements to create new styles of popular music, such as dance and vocal techniques, like *khoomei*. Though such musicians typically do not have a modern education, they are talented performers with musical knowledge unique to their ethnic traditions. They represent the movement of minority musicians towards modernization and globalization.

The term *yuanshengtai* is also associated with another term, *caogen* (草根), which translates as “grassroots.” Grassroots refers primarily to people from rural parts of China who migrated to big cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, in search of work in the post-Mao period. The influx of rural people created a folk movement, called *Caogen Wenhua* (草根文化, “grassroots culture”). During the 1990s, several actors, called *Caogen yinxiong* (草根英雄, “grassroots heroes”), became extremely influential in the Chinese media. Over the past two decades, the Internet has further helped rural culture gain attention in modern society. Grassroots actors, such as Zhao Benshan (赵本山, b.1957) influenced rural culture by encouraging people

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31 Yang Liping is a Chinese modern dancer from the Bai 白 ethnic group in Yunnan province (see chapter 3).
to become involved with urban popular culture.\textsuperscript{32} Zhao founded his \textit{Benshan Entertainment Company} in 2002, which strongly supported the rural folk music genre \textit{Errenzhuan (二人转)}.\textsuperscript{33}

Yuanshengtai (nature style of music) is always associated with grassroots culture. Because these minority musicians also came from rural regions, agricultural images, anti-industrialization and anti-urbanization sensibilities were also important in the style’s creation.

With the general public’s increasing interest in minority traditional music since the 1990s, many minority popular bands emerged in urban areas of China. One such example is the indie minority popular band Shanren (山人, Mountain Men), which formed in 2000 in Yunnan province of southwest China.

Yunnan is a province that is situated in a mountainous and rural area in southwest China. Some of Shanren’s members, like Xiaobudian (Little Dot) and Li Guohua, are from rural areas, while the songwriter, Qu Zihan, is from Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan. The band is representative of minority popular music in China, including musicians from the Buyi and Wa minority groups, as well as the Han majority. Their music includes minority-associated instruments, such as the \textit{dabiya} substituting for Western music instruments.\textsuperscript{34} The musicians sing in their own dialect and language, rather than Mandarin, which further enhances the connection with their ethnic roots. The lyrics of their songs tend to focus on the life of rural ethnic people.

\textsuperscript{32} Grassroots television images became popular in large part because of a rural comedy star, Zhao Benshan. His comedy shows were labeled as a rural style and were televised almost every Spring Festival Gala, the largest Mandarin-language Chinese New Year celebration, from 1989 to 2012 on China Central Television (CCTV).

\textsuperscript{33} Errenzhuan is a genre of folk music and dance drama in rural northeast China usually consisting of two people, a boy and a girl. They sing and dance, using folded fans or red square handkerchiefs, which are twirled along as a song is performed during the dancing portions.

\textsuperscript{34} The dabiya is a pear-shaped plucked lute, similar to the Han-Chinese pipa (see chapter 5).
who now live in Beijing. Such elements distinguish them from Han rock bands that emphasize politically-sensitive issues. Minority rock bands like Shanren, prefer nostalgic themes, such as “returning to nature” and “escaping from the noisy cities,” reflecting their attitude of “anti-industrialization” towards urbanization in the post-Mao period (see chapter 5).

Selected Literature Review

Research on Chinese popular music in Mainland China to date focuses primarily on its history. During the 1980s and 1990s, popular music study emphasized how early Chinese pop singers, such as Cui Jian, were involved in political issues and changing opinions about Western ideology. Others discuss post-Mao period ideologies and their influence on popular musicians of the era. Few studies have considered minority popular music culture in either rural or urban settings, which is the focus of this study.

*China’s New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978-1997*, edited by Nimrod Baranovitch, includes a chapter titled “The Negotiation of Minority/Majority Identities and Representation in Popular Music Culture,” which discusses ethnic revival in China during the indicated period that led to a significant increase in studies that focus on China’s minorities. She concludes that the post-Mao minority identity was not only tolerated, but even encouraged, through minority music. The chapter offers a timeline of Chinese minority song and

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35 Cui Jian 崔健 (b.1961) is a Beijing-based Chinese singer-songwriter, trumpeter and guitarist. Affectionately called “Old Cui 老崔,” he is considered to be a pioneer in Chinese rock music and one of the first Chinese artists to write rock songs. For this distinction, Cui Jian is often labeled “The Father of Chinese Rock.”

36 Baranovitch, *China’s New Voices*, 45-47.
popular music developed during the twentieth century and also discusses the distinct histories of minority groups and their historical relationships with the Han majority. Some minority popular music associated with ethnic groups, such as Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, and Yi, are examined to demonstrate how minority musicians used alternative Han-constructed minority representations. Spiritual beliefs once labeled as “superstitious” have, for example, become eulogized by Han urban youth, who seek an escapist spirituality from the stress of city life. Support of such themes in Chinese minority popular music reinforces the positive portrayal of the unique ethnic identities of its performers to the Chinese mainstream musical culture.

*Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* by Andrew F. Jones provides the earliest English-language scholarship on contemporary Chinese popular music. It is primarily an introduction to the Chinese ideologies (意识, yishi) that divide Chinese popular music into different genres: rock and pop. Concentrating on rock artist, Cui Jian, Jones observes that Chinese rock music is developing in contradictory ways, concluding that rock subculture is becoming more polarized. Some artists gravitate towards popular music styles, as others consciously react against these influences. This polarization exists mainly in Han rock music, which faced challenges of audience overlap after the importation of Cantonese and Taiwanese popular music. Chinese minority populations, however, are less concerned with distinguishing themselves from these popular music styles, as their ethnic minority connection gives them recognizable distinction.

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37 Andrew F. Jones, *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music.*
Source Materials

In addition to literary resources mentioned above, source materials for this thesis include interviews with members of minority popular music bands, such as Shanren. These interviews were conducted during fieldwork experiences in 2014 with further correspondence via the Internet and mobile text and voice messaging services. Internet fieldwork was conducted via blog and video channels associated with minority popular music from China. A rare film interview of the Shanren band members, the case study in this thesis, was found at the Beijing Film Academy and offered additional insight into their experiences and perspective as indie musicians.

Television programs from China also provided important resources demonstrating the prevalence and influence of minority popular music bands in Chinese popular culture. The Spring Festival Gala (Chinese New Year Gala) included performances from ethnic groups and minority bands. Other video footage from concerts, such as the 2006 MIDI festival in Beijing, 2012 “Bali Art Festival,” and 2013 Inner-Mongolian “World Music Festival” provided further information.\(^{38}\)

Methodology

The methodologies used for this study include fieldwork, music, and lyric transcription and analysis. The music and lyrical analysis will focus on music of the case study band, Shanren.

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\(^{38}\) The MIDI Modern Music Festival, also known simply as MIDI Festival (迷笛音乐节), is among China's largest rock music festivals and is hosted by the Beijing MIDI School of Music (see chapter 2).
The music analysis reveals secondary meanings beyond the literal content of the text in relation to the ideology of the performers and their audience in the context of China’s post-Mao period. Linguistic differences between the dialects used in Shanren’s music in comparison with their use of standard Mandarin will be a primary focus to explain how these languages influence the musicians and their compositions.

This study will also include an examination of past and present government policies towards minorities in mainland China in order to understand how minority musical culture is affected. This research will contribute to the growing number of studies focused on minority popular culture in comparison to that of the Han majority population. An important contribution is the investigation of the recent culture phenomena, Caogen, which has emerged as a result of interaction between rural and urban cultures in modern China and the rise of the Internet and social media in ethnomusicological studies.

This study will also offer brief examinations of the music and culture of several ethnic minority groups, such as the Yi, Wa, Nu and Buyi of Yunnan province, who provide original source material and inspiration for minority popular music groups, such as Shanren. These insights will contribute to an understanding of how minorities in China are affected by globalization and their efforts to preserve their traditional music and culture.

These examinations of music and culture in association with ethnic minorities and mainstream popular artists will lead to an analysis of authenticity as it relates to ethnic minority popular musicians, focusing specifically on Shanren, an indie popular band with strong ties to
minority music and culture. Shanren seeks to represent themselves as connected with “nature and reality,” instead of being motivated by modern trends in music. They achieve a sense of authenticity through visual, aural, and linguistic connections with the social reality of the rural ethnic minority community, as well as migrant workers who are drawn to major urban centers in China, such as Beijing.

The notion of authenticity is important to discuss in relation to ethnic minority popular musicians and their major audience, the _Wenyi qingnian_ (translated as “literary youth”), referring to urban youth primarily born in the 1980s and 1990s. This demographic generally appreciates indie rock music and is a particularly prominent audience for indie minority bands, such as Shanren. They are most interested in so-called “real music,” categorizing popular musicians as either _Tu_ (土, raw folk, native and authentic) or _Chao_ (潮, fashion, artificial and modernized), Chinese slang terms common in youth culture. As the primary audience for ethnic minority popular musicians in Beijing, the use of these terms is significant in determining whether or not a band, such as Shanren is considered to be authentic today and in the future.

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39 _Tu_ and _Chao_ is local slang used in northern China, especially in the urban centers of Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong, as well as northeastern provinces such Jilin, Liaoning and Haerbin. These terms have not previously been discussed in academic literature, but are important in considering music targeting today’s youth culture.
CHAPTER II

CHINESE POPULAR MUSIC HISTORY (1900-PRESENT)

This chapter traces China’s popular music history from 1900 until present. Historical, political, and cultural movements influencing popular music, as well as relevant technological advances affecting the Chinese popular music industry are also discussed. Twentieth century popular music in Mainland China can be divided into six historical periods: 1) Chinese popular music roots in the late 1900s and 1910s: School Song culture;¹ 2) Chinese popular music appeared in late 1920s; 3) Shanghai Jazz in 1930s and 1940s: popular music coincided with shifting political environments during the Second China-Japan War², World War II and the Chinese Civil War (国共内战, 1927-1937, 1946-1949)³; 4) Communist Mass song in 1950s-1970s: after the Kuomintang (KMT) were defeated by the Communist party when the 1930-40s style of popular music in China moved to Hong Kong and Taiwan. Meanwhile the People’s Republic of China was formed in 1949 and the CCP developed Mass Song and later Revolution Song as the officially promoted music on mainland from the 1950s to the 1970s; 4) Gangtai (港

¹ School Song culture refers to the establishment of new schools in the 1910s that were based on Western model of education, emphasizing music, mathematics, science, and physical education as important in all classes.

² The First China-Japan War happened in 1894 to 1895, and the Second China-Japan war started in 1937 until World War II ended in 1945. The Second Sino-Japanese War was the largest Asian war in the twentieth century. It accounted for the majority of civilian and military casualties in the Pacific War, estimated between 10 and 25 million Chinese civilians and over 4 million Chinese and Japanese military personnel dying from war-related violence, famine, and other causes.

³ The Chinese Civil War 国共内战 or Chinese Nationalist-Communist Civil War was a civil war in China fought between forces loyal to the Nationalist’s (Kuomintang) government of Republic of China, and force loyal to Communist Party of China (Kongchchantang). It began in 1927 with Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalist party, and essentially ended when major active battles ceased in 1950. The conflict eventually resulted in two state – the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in Mainland China.
and mainland Chinese rock and roll in 1980s and 1990s: following the Cultural Revolution when musicians in the 1980s revived popular music influenced by Gangtai popular music—the popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan rooted in the 1930-40’s Shanghai popular music style. Rock and roll music also emerged in Beijing during this period, as an un-officially promoted music genre. Its popularity spread throughout the mainland and appeared with new advances in mass media, such as TV and broadcasting. By the 1990s, Chinese popular music developed to highlight diverse aspects of rising multiple ethnicities, gender issues, and individualism, which blurred the boundaries between official and unofficial popular music styles.

6) Era of diversity in Chinese popular music from 2000s to Present: In the early decades of the new millennium (2000-2014), the popularity of digital technology led to great changes in the popular music market. Online music and indie music became the trends that young musicians followed. Meanwhile, Japanese popular music and South Korean popular music found greater audiences in Mainland Chinese popular music culture. Music talent show television programming, such as “Super-girl” on Hunan TV, created new types of music careers and the development of Chinese youth fandom culture.

1910s-1920s: Chinese Popular Music Roots and the First Chinese Popular Song

At the beginning of the twentieth century, several Western nations, such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the new power of Japan, had already invaded various Chinese territories, resulting in several wars with the imperial Qing government. The Shimonoseki Treaty,
signed after the Qing army was defeated by the Japanese army in 1894 to 1895, resulted in
dramatic nationalist movements by those dissatisfied with the imperial feudal rule of the Qing
dynasty. A call for modernizing the country was promoted by Chinese social reformers, such as
Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929), and revolutionary leaders, like Sun Yet-sun. The Chinese
Nationalist Party (or Kuomintang (KMT)) was led by the Western-educated Sun Yet-sun and
became the largest political party after the Republic of China was established in 1912.

Although the early twentieth century was a time of political instability in China, it also
was a period for social changes at all levels of society: rural girls became factory workers,
farmers joined Communist activists, and middle-class students went overseas to learn first-hand
about Japan, Europe, and America. With the end of the imperial system in 1911, the political
climate allowed for several new social ideas, such as nationalism, socialism, and feminism,
which challenged the Confucian ideology that had been the foundation for the imperial feudal
system, and still shapes many aspects of everyday life in China.

Western music strongly influenced Chinese music life in the early twentieth century as
well. Western music influences entered China in three primary areas: Chinese Christian chants;
military marching bands; and the new educational system, which included music lessons. Via

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4 Sun Yet-sun’s early political formulation of the “three principles of people” – nationalism, democracy, and
social well-being – were swiftly pushed aside by warlord rule. The warlords are national rulers, such as Yuan Shikai
袁世凯 (1859-1916), and his followers who ruled regional areas and were supported by foreign powers, such as
Zhang Zuolin 张作霖 (1875-1928), who ruled Manchuria with the support of Japan; Wu Peifu 吴佩孚(1874-1939)
and Sun Chuanfang 孙传芳 (1885-1935), who ruled Hebei and a region of Yangzte river, who were supported by
Great Britain and America; and Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥 (1882-1848) in Shan’anxi, who was supported by the Soviet
Union.
these routes, Western instruments, such as the piano, guitar, and violin, became popular among middle-class youth. Western composers, such as Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) and Wolfgang Mozart (1756-1791), earned appreciation by young Chinese musicians. Harmony in choral and instrumental composition became fashionable, as well as Western opera singing techniques, particularly among students in secondary school and higher education. Although Chinese musicians rarely composed school songs during this period, the Western music styles nevertheless influenced the young generation’s culture.

School Songs

School Songs, called Xuetang Yuege (学堂乐歌, classroom songs or school songs), became an important way to link Western music to Chinese culture. It is also the root of Chinese modern music, including popular music, as well as Chinese art music. The School Song singing movement is a reflection of the 1919 May Fourth Movement (五四运动) and the New Culture Movement (新文化运动), both of which advocated that the country be “democratic and scientific (民主和科学).” By emulating Western civilization, these movements encouraged Chinese musicians to seek training in Western music education. The school songs essentially applied Chinese lyrics to Western art music, Christian church chant melodies, and European folk songs, as well as Chinese folk songs. The school songs paved the way for Chinese musicians to learn basic Western music theory, such as notation, harmony, and rhythm. This new education inspired

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5 Yuhe Wang, Chinese Modern Music History (中国近现代史), (Beijing: People’s Music Press, 2009), 105-160.
many Chinese musicians to fit Chinese lyrics to Western tunes, and encouraged them to write Chinese folk tunes from oral-tradition into Western notation. Several early scholars who studied abroad, such as Shen Xingong (沈心工, 1870-1947) and Li Shutong (李叔同, 1880-1942) played important roles in composing such school songs.\(^6\)

The school songs writing style fused Chinese and Western elements together. For example, *Songbie* (送别, farewell song) was a school song written in 1915 by Li Shutong, an artist who influenced early twentieth century Chinese literature, music, and art. He used a piece called “Dreaming of Home and Mother” by American composer, John Ordway (1824-1880), and incorporated Chinese traditional poetry for the lyrical content.\(^7\) This song became very popular both in China and Japan, inspiring a song-writing style followed by many popular musicians in the 1930s and 1940s. Another Li Shutong’s song, “Zuguoge (祖国歌, Motherland Song),” was written in 1905, using the commonly known Chinese folk tune “Lao Liuban (老六板, Old Six Beat)” as its main melody. In this example, the traditional tune was written in Western notation for a soloist accompanied by piano.

\[Li Jinhui 黎锦晖 (1891-1967)\]

Many Chinese musicians in the 1920s improved their writing skills by composing their own popular music, rather than using previously known melodies. Although such composers,

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\(^6\) Shen Xingong was the first modern music teacher in China. He made 180 school songs based on Chinese traditional music, folk music, and Western folk tunes with Mandarin lyrics.

\(^7\) There was a 1935 record published by Shanghai EMI, which included the two stanzas likely added by Li Shutong.
like Zhao Yuanren (赵元任, 1892-1982) and Xiao Youmei (萧友梅, 1884-1940), were not regarded as popular music composers, their works influenced Li Jinhui, who was to become known as “the father of Chinese popular music.” Such predecessors fusing Chinese local music with Western jazz music, an important popular genre at the time, shaped his style.

Before popular music became prominent in the 1920s, Li Jinhui was one of the most influential composers for children songs and theater. His popular music style was influenced by his work for children. Many of his child actors and actresses, such as Wang Renmei (王人美, 1914-1987) and Li Minghui (黎明晖, 1909-2003) became popular music stars after serving in his troupes. In 1922, Li began editing the children’s magazine Xiaopengyou (小朋友, Little Friend), which soon became China’s best selling periodical. In Little Friend, he also promoted anti-feudalist attitudes, national use of the new Mandarin language, family values of sharing,

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harmony with nature, and good citizenship through nursery rhymes to educate children aged 1 to 12 years old. For this specific purpose, he created 12 *Children Music and Dance Theaters* (儿童歌舞剧) by fusing the music from Western nations, such as Germany, with Chinese local folk opera and songs. The most important contribution is that he used the simplified notation *Jianpu* (简谱) to simplify the melodies. This simplified notation made the music much easier to play by musicians whose music education was through oral tradition, usually on folk instruments, such as *pipa* (琵琶) and *erhu* (二胡). The notation also encouraged the inclusion of both Chinese and Western instruments, such as guitars, violins, and pianos, in ensemble performance.

In 1929, Li Jinhui’s “Chinese Dance School” changed its name to the *Bright Moon Song and Dance Troupe* (明月歌舞剧社). The new name indicated that Li endeavored to promote a “music for the common people.” After a financially unsuccessful tour, Li disbanded his Bright Moon troupe, but soon after released a wildly popular album, *Family Love Songs* (1927), which included the first recognized Chinese popular song, “maomaoyu 毛毛雨 (Drizzle).” With the success of his first album, Li reunited the Bright Moon troupe in 1929 and toured China. The tour began mostly as a political ploy in support of the National Revolutionary Army during the Northern Expedition. When he arrived in Singapore, his *shidaiqu* (时代曲, songs of the period) compositions were fully formed. The style included Western influences that moved Chinese music in a new direction. Shidaiqu music, initially labeled as Shanghai Jazz, gained popularity in

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10 The Northern Expedition (1926-1928) was a war where the Nationalist Party and Communist Party united to battle with the Northern warlords. During this war, Nationalist Party leader Chang Kai-shek came to power.
nightclubs and dancehalls of large cities throughout China in the 1930s. The musicians who worked for Li’s organizations then became the main force to contribute to the success of the 1930s to 1940s Chinese popular music in Shanghai.

![Figure 2.2: Bright Moon Ensemble, 1929](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4854309301009m5v.html, entered in 2015/11/5).

Importantly, Li Jinhui’s music provided the basis for the modernized Chinese language, *Baihua* 白话, which later became the standard Mandarin used throughout the Chinese speaking world, including Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere. As a younger brother of modern Chinese linguistic reformer, Li Jinxi, Li Jinhui supported his older brother’s “adult literacy project,” which aimed to spread a new modernized Mandarin to more people. This simplified Mandarin language was different from the ancient Chinese language, adding a new grammar system inspired by Western languages such as English, though it was refused by conservative scholars. The brothers promoted the language among the younger generation as a fashionable style of speaking, as well as singing. Li Jinhui’s children and popular songs were instrumental in establishing modern Mandarin to become accepted by the whole society.

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The First Chinese Popular Song: “Drizzle”

The success of Li Jinhui’s children songs and his theatre troupe enabled him to offer support to his older brother’s “adult literacy project,” which aimed to spread modernized Mandarin to more people. In 1927, he composed “Drizzle” which utilized a jazz band playing a Chinese folk melody with its target audience being adults, rather than children. Li Jinhui’s daughter, Li Minghui, who was by this time already a famous actress, sang the lead vocal. Two years later, EMI made a record of the popular song, which became the first recorded Chinese popular song and marked the birth of the Chinese popular music industry.

“Drizzle” became popular because the folk-like melody was perfectly set to modernized Mandarin, as well as local folk slang, making it memorable and easy to sing. The jazz

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accompaniment helped associate it with images of American popular culture and lifestyle, which was very fashionable at the time among urban young people.

The song’s popularity quickly made Li Jinhui wealthy, but public opinion suddenly turned against the song when critics, such as Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881-1936), decried its “poor” singing technique and “unhealthy” lyrical content. Folk slang, such as “xiaoqinqin,” which means “my baby,” and “nunu,” which means “me” as spoken by a young girl with licentious tone, evoked images of an unsavory secret love affair. Such suggestive thematic material was considered detrimental to social morality. Though a successful first attempt at a Chinese popular music composition, the negative perception of the song’s lyrics eventually labeled the song as Huangse Yinyue (黄色音乐, yellow music), marking it as pornographic. This resulted in the population being generally suspicious of Chinese popular music. “Drizzle” was banned by the Nationalist government in 1931, and later banned by the Communist government after 1949.

1930s-1940s: Shanghai Jazz

The time between the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 through World War II to the Chinese Civil War was one of the darkest times in Chinese history. To save the country from turmoil, nearly every Chinese patriot was involved in anti-Japanese movements. Promoted both

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13 Lu Xun was a leading figure of modern Chinese literature. Writing in vernacular Chinese as well as Classical Chinese, Lu Xun was a short story writer, editor, translator, literary critic, essayist, and poet.

14 In conservative families, Chinese young couple are introduced by the parents with their permission. The lyrics of “Drizzle,” suggested a Western approach to dating, which did not require parents’ permission and thus brought social criticism.
by the Nationalist government and the Communist Party, anti-Japanese mass songs were composed and sung by choruses to encourage people to join movements towards saving the country. Under the clouds of war and the anti-Japanese mainstream, Li Jinhui’s popular music was seen as a distraction, even though his music and that of other popular musicians sold well in Shanghai.

**Buck Clayton (1911-1991)**

By the 1930s, “popular music” was used to describe all contemporary music sung in modernized Mandarin in Shanghai. In 1934, Li Jinhui was directly influenced by American jazz musician, Buck Clayton, who trained his own jazz musicians to perform shidaiqu music. Chinese popular music with accompanying jazz bands became successful in nightclubs and dancehalls of major cities throughout China in the 1930s and 1940s.

Figure 2.4: The Shanghai “Harlem Gentlemen” jazz band, in 1935.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Photo from the University of Missouri Archive of Buck Clayton. Image was taken inside the Canidrome in Shanghai in the 1930s with Buck Clayton's band.
Buck Clayton was an American Jazz trumpet player and a leading member of Count Basie’s Testament orchestra, as well as a leader of mainstream-oriented jam session recordings in the 1950s. Principally influenced by Louis Armstrong, he synthesized much of the history of jazz trumpet with a bright, brassy tone and an apparently limitless facility for melodic improvisation. From either 1934 or 1935 (depending on sources), Clayton was leader of the “Harlem Gentlemen” jazz orchestra in Shanghai. Chiang Kai-shek’s wife, Song Meiling (宋美龄, 1898-2003), was a regular at the Canidrome – a nightclub in Shanghai where his band regularly performed. Clayton often played songs composed by Li Jinhui, and he adapted the Chinese pentatonic scale to a diatonic scale more common in American music. Though he eventually left Shanghai before the 1937 invasion by the Japanese, Clayton is credited for closing the gap between traditional Chinese tunes and Western popular composition style. He elevated shidaiqu from “low-level” songs, like “Drizzle,” to a more respectable status, helping to bring American mainstream jazz into Chinese popular culture.

*1930s-1940s Popular Singers in Shanghai*

Jazz influenced shidaiqu continually through the 1930s and reached its peak in the 1940s. Popular singing troupes, such as Li Jinhui’s Bright Moon troupe, gained success, as well as other singers in Shanghai. Among the stars who came to prominence due to Li Jinhui’s efforts were Nie Er (聂耳, 1912-1935) and Zhou Xuan (周璇, 1920-1957). Nie Er became one the most
important Communist musicians and his song, “Yiyongyun Jinxingqu (义勇军进行曲, March of the Volunteers)” became the national anthem of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Zhou Xuan was the top singer during the 1930s - 1940s and later become one of the “seven greatest singers” of the Republic of China in Shanghai, and an important symbol of shidaiqu during the 1940s.¹⁶

Her “golden voice” helped her to achieve fame as a movie star, recording more than 200 songs and appearing in over 40 films in her career.¹⁸ Zhou considered Street Angel (马路天使, 1937) her favorite film, which included two theme songs she sung: “Four Seasons Song (四季歌)” and “The Wandering Songstress (天涯歌女),” which both enjoyed long-lasting popularity.

¹⁶ The seven greatest singers of shidaiqu were Zhou Xuan, Li Xianglan 李香兰 (1920-2014), Bai Hong 白虹 (1919-1992), Gong Quxia 龚秋霞 (1916-2004), Yao Li 姚莉 (b.1922), Bai Guang 白光 (1921-1999), Wu Yingyin 吴莺音 (1922-2009).
¹⁷ Photo from: http://blog.163.com/hlj_hf/blog/static/5187749620091169422713/, entered in 2015/10/2.
Other well-known songs by Zhou Xuan include, “When Will You Return (何日君再来),” “Shanghai Nights (夜上海)” (the title song of a film by the same name), “Yellow Leaves Dancing in Autumn Wind (黄叶舞秋风),” “Forever Smile (永远的微笑),” “Hundred Flower Song (百花歌),” “Where Can the Soul Mate be Found (知音何处寻),” and “Picking Betel Nuts (采槟榔).”

Zhou Xuan’s singing style was considered “wistful” and attracted a wide demographic audience, from housewives to soldiers. Her singing provided a contrasting style to the mainstream push towards “strong” music used to support war efforts, though some of her songs were included in patriotic films. Her singing technique related to Chinese opera techniques more than Western opera styles and has influenced many popular singers, such as Deng Lijun (also known as Teresa Teng, 1953-1995).

One important aspect of Zhou’s singing technique was her use of the microphone. She held the microphone close to her mouth and tried to sing in a natural and soft voice instead of strong and loud. This contrasted with other popular singers, such as Li Minghui, who sang with an extremely high-pitch. Critics sometimes questioned her style because it was too soft, making people forget about patriotic themes in wartime, although she never intentionally aimed to do so. Some criticism became harsh and unfair, suggesting that her songs were “sweet poison” that would weaken the Chinese people and lead the state to perish. Her popularity waned in the 1970s, until Deng Lijun revived 1930s Shanghai popular music style during the 1980s, rejuvenating Zhou Xuan’s popular music legacy.
Along with Zhou Xuan, Li Xianglan 李香兰 (1920–2014), a Chinese-born Japanese singer, is also considered as one of the “seven greatest singers” from Shanghai during the 1940s.\(^1\) Li Xianglan was the adopted Chinese stage name of the actress, prompted by the film company’s economic and political motives, seeking a Manchurian girl who had command over both the Japanese and Chinese languages. She became a film and music star, as well as Japan-Manchuria Goodwill Ambassadress (日满亲善大使) in 1937. Unexpectedly, Li Xianglan also became a political icon of the Japanese government promoted during wartime. The 1940 film, *China Nights* (上海之夜, Japanese: 支那の夜, also known as *Shanghai Nights*) by Manchuria Film Productions, is especially controversial as it is unclear whether or not it was a “National Policy Film” for its portrayal of Japanese soldiers as both good and bad. In this film, Li Xianglan portrayed a young woman possessing an extreme anti-Japanese sentiment who came to fall in love with a Japanese man. Her Japanese nationality was never divulged in the Chinese media until after World War II. Ironically, she was criticized for being too Chinese in both her dress and speech when she visited Japan following the war.

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\(^{1}\) Li Xianglan (her Japanese name is Yamaguchi Yoshiko 山口淑子 1920–2014) was a Chinese-born Japanese actress and singer who made a career in China, Japan, Hong Kong, and the United States. She was elected as a member of the Japanese parliament in the 1970s and served for 18 years.
Li Xianglan was most popular during the 1940s in Shanghai. Her film theme songs included jazz-like arrangements, such as "Candy-Peddling Song (买糖歌)" and "Quitting Opium Song (戒烟歌)," quickly raising her status among the top singers in all Chinese-speaking regions in Asia. Many songs recorded by Li Xianglan during her Shanghai period (1940s) became classics in Chinese popular music history. Other notable hits include "Telosma Cordata (夜来香)," "Ocean Bird (海燕)," "If Only (恨不相逢未嫁时)," and "Second Dream (第二梦)."

Trained in Western opera vocal technique, Li Xianglan was much different from the Mainland Chinese singers at the time, such as Zhou Xuan. She fused techniques from Western opera, Chinese opera, and Japanese Enka to create her own distinctive style. Li Xianglan was extremely popular in Manchuria, Shanghai and Taiwan, and was considered a performer of the high-level popular music style at the time. Through her music, the Japanese popular music elements began to influence Chinese popular music culture. Although her songs were banned

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21 Enka 演歌 is a popular Japanese music genre in Japan until from early twentieth century to 1980s, resembling traditional Japanese music stylistically. It was most popular during World War II, but faded in the1980s, replaced by the more fashionable J-pop style. Enka was also considered a root of Japanese popular music culture.
during 1950s to 1970s, Deng Lijun revived interest in her music during the 1980s, influencing mainland popular singers of the period, such as Li Guyi (李谷一, b. 1944), who was also an orthodox popular singer in Mainland China. Besides her political influence, Li Xianglan left a legacy of incorporating Western opera singing techniques into Chinese popular music culture.

1950s – 1970s: Communist Mass Song

The Communist Party ousted the Nationalists in 1949 to gain control of Mainland China. The musical life of the Mainland Chinese radically changed as a result. In accordance with the widely influential cultural policies articulated by Mao Zedong at the Yan’an Conference on Art and Literature, Chinese music was now officially expected to highlight class struggle, revolution, and self-denial to satisfy the demands, ideals, and authority of the Communist Party. Music became a political tool restricted to the task of propagating the ideology of Mao Zedong and serving the needs of workers, peasants, and soldiers. Yellow music was an early casualty of this radical new cultural policy. Li Jinhui and his music became victims of the political purging. Zhou Xuan’s movies and songs were banned and romantic popular songs were prohibited. The *qunzhong gequ* (群众歌曲, Mass Song) that Nie Er and Xian Xinghai (冼星海, 1905-1945) wrote from the 1920s to 1940s, became the most common songs of the Communist period. The subordination of mass music to serve the ideology of Mao reached its height during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Coupled with *yangbanxi* (样板戏, modern revolutionary
opera,” mass music was restricted to yuluge (语录歌, quotation songs)” that cited Mao Zedong’s speeches, poems, and experiences. Ironically, even some famous mass music written in the 1940s and 1950s also became unhealthy and was banned during the period, considered the fault of popular music.

![Figure 2.7: Red Guard singing Mao’s quotation Songs on Tiananmen Square.](http://image.baidu.com/search/detail?ct=503316480&z=0&ipn=d&word)

Although this period was considered as a dark time for popular music, several elements influenced succeeding periods. The Mass and Revolution songs became influential on Chinese popular culture in the 1990s, relabeled as “red” songs and orthodox songs. Ironically, the origin of rock music in Beijing actually began among the Communist young soldiers’ community. The vice president’s son, Li Liguo (林立果, 1945-1971), for example, was among the first in China to play and listen to the music of the British rock band, The Beatles, in the 1970s. The 1980s

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23 Lin Liguo was the son of the Chinese Communist military leader, Lin Biao 林彪 (1907-1971), during the Cultural Revolution. He was also the person in charge of project 571, which was intended to assassinate Mao. His plan failed in 1971 and he, his father, Lin Biao, and mother, Ye Qun, attempted to flee China for the Soviet Union. They died, however, when their plane crashed over Mongolia on September 13, 1971. Cui Jian’s (see below) image of green military uniform was inspired by Lin Liguo’s photo.
rock and roll star, Cui Jian (崔健) trained in the army during this period and consequently learned revolutionary songs. Popular music was subdued, but not forgotten.

1980s – 1990s: Gangtai and Mainland Chinese Rock and Roll

With China’s opening to foreign markets in 1978, young Mainland Chinese were able to listen to foreign popular music for the first time in over ten years. The first popular music to be widely disseminated on the mainland came from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Mandarin word for Hong Kong is *xiang gang*, which is combined with the name “Taiwan” to form the phrase *gangtai*.\(^2\) Gangtai is the term used to describe Hong Kong and Taiwanese popular music. Complementing the influx of gangtai cultural products on the mainland was the emergence of native musicians in Beijing developing their own popular music style by adapting Western popular music styles, such as rock and roll. These two trends in 1980s and 1990s sparked the early revival of mainland popular music culture in Mainland China.

*Gangtai influence and Deng Lijun*

Hong Kong and Taiwan have long established popular music industries. Hong Kong and Taiwanese singers have been recording and performing in both territories, as well as farther afield in Southeast Asia since the 1960s. The popular music industries in these two territories

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\(^2\) The term gangtai is used widely for many things originating from or characteristic of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chinese media, politicians, and ordinary people regularly talk about gangtai policies, gangtai trade, gangtai relations, etc. The word is also widely used to refer to popular cultural products—films, television, music, books, games, magazines, newspapers, etc.
have been connected since the 1950s with singers and musicians regularly travelling and living between Hong Kong and Taiwan, cultivating fan-bases in both places from the postwar period to today. While the popular music industries developed in Hong Kong and Taiwan, China prohibited their products and artists on the Mainland. China’s popular music industry existed separately from these areas in media, production, and distribution.

Cassette recordings, which remain viable today, played an important role in the distribution of popular songs throughout China. Though restrictions on international markets were lessened in the late 1970s and 1980s, a major influx of gangtai music in post-Mao China was through the illegal circulation of pirated cassettes. From the late 1970s, gangtai cassettes were smuggled into China, illegally copied and sold either through networks of friends or in stalls on the newly emerging ziyou shichang (自由市场, free market) that allowed individual entrepreneurs to sell goods privately for a personal profit for the first time in decades. Several Hong Kong and Taiwanese pop stars rapidly became the new unofficial superstars of the People’s Republic.

The best-known of these was a female Taiwanese singer named Deng Lijun (also known as Teresa Teng), whose songs and cassettes enjoyed enormous popularity throughout China in the 1980s and continue to be popular in China today. Deng was known best for her folk songs and romantic ballads. Many became standards in her lifetime, such as “When Will You Return (何日君再来)” and “The Moon Represents My Heart (月亮代表我的心).” She recorded songs

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in her native Mandarin, as well as in Taiwanese Hokkien, Cantonese, Japanese, and even English. Some of her songs were originally written and recorded in the 1930s, and were banned for being “yellow music.” These included, for example, “When will You Return?” by Liu Xuean (刘雪庵, 1905-1985) and sung by Zhou Xuan; “Yelaixiang (夜来香, Telosma Cordata)” by Li Jinhun’s brother, Li Jinguang (黎锦光, 1907-1993), and sung by Li Xianglan.\footnote{Liu Xuean was a patriotic composer who also wrote popular music in the 1940s.}

![Figure 2.8: A cassette of Deng Lijun illegally imported into China during the 1980s.\footnote{Photo from http://m.7788tape.com/a603/10415815/, entered in 2015/12/7.}](image)

Deng’s songs and music, along with that of other gangtai artists, such as the \textit{Four Heavenly Kings} (四大天王), who became immensely popular in Hong Kong and overseas, dominated the “Cantopop (Cantonese Popular Music)” scene for several decades.\footnote{The “Four Heavenly Kings” included male popular singers Andy Lau, Leon Lai, Jacky Cheung, and Aaron Kwok. All four achieved fame in the 1980s through a mixture of film and television acting, as well as singing. Between them, they have starred in hundreds of Hong Kong films and recorded dozens of albums over the years. They have also maintained their popularity to varying degrees, both in Hong Kong and in Mainland China, where each has performed live concerts.} Deng Lijun’s music predominantly consisted of sweet, gentle love songs and ballads and retained characteristics from the 1940s period of Shanghai jazz. Though not “rebellious” in its groundbreaking appeal, Mainland Chinese, especially younger generations who had grown up...
during the People’s Republic period (1920s-1940s), were completely unaccustomed to listening to this kind of nonpolitical, personal, and expressive music, which heightened its pioneering appeal.

**Cui Jian and Mainland Chinese Rock and Roll**

Paralleling Gangtai popular music interest in the 1980s, many young musicians from Beijing became fans of Western rock and roll music culture. Contrasting with other popular music styles in China, rock music has historically been the most politically engaged, drawing international attention more so than any other form of Chinese popular music. Rock music is also considered more highly intellectual and is often compared with avant-garde literature, poetry, and art, even though it is still regarded as a popular culture product. Such associations are largely due to Chinese rock music becoming a new medium for the country’s disaffected intellectuals of the 1980s and 1990s to voice their social concerns.

Cui Jian broke onto China’s music scene in the 1980s and quickly became symbolic of the genre. Composing his own songs and lyrics, he simultaneously promoted individualism, self-expression, and a rebellious attitude toward different forms of authority. Cui Jian had to make compromises with his songs to abide by government restrictions. Openly criticizing Chinese leaders of the CCP, or directly calling for any kind of confrontation with the authorities would have no doubt quickly ended his career. Consequently, Cui Jian adopted Chinese literary practices, which used connotation, implicit satire, or ambiguous interpretative possibilities to
voice his dissatisfaction. Drawing from his army training background, he appropriated revolutionary songs, such as “Nanniwan (南泥湾),” a Chinese communist song from the 1940s, to write songs with veiled criticism of political subjects. In 1989, “Nanniwan” became an anthem of the Tiananmen Square student protests, which resulted in Cui losing favor with Chinese authorities.29

![Image of Cui Jian performing](image)

Figure 2.9: Cui Jian is performing “A Red Scarf 一块红布.”30

In 1990, Cui Jian performed a concert commemorating the Eleventh Asian Olympic Games that was held in Beijing, which some viewed as a compromise intended to ingratiate him with Chinese authorities. The Chinese term *yaogun* (摇滚) — literally “rock roll”— has since been used to describe his musical style among Chinese youth. Cui Jian’s partial rapprochement with Chinese authorities also initiated a period of greater political neutrality in rock music and

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29 Cui Jian performed live in Tiananmen Square in May 1989. His songs were soon adopted by many of the students as anthems for the protests. Still performing live in the 2000s, Cui Jian’s appeal to Mainland Chinese, overseas Chinese, and other international audiences has endured, making him one of the longest-surviving Chinese popular music stars of the 1980s.

30 Photo from [http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat7/sub41/item1628.html](http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat7/sub41/item1628.html), entered in 2016/1/7.
commercialization of the genre—even if Chinese officials remain wary of rock music’s potential for subversion.

The changing official attitude towards rock music during the 1990s encouraged development of the genre. By this time, rock music had become a lucrative big business. Three of China’s most famous rock bands were established during this period: *Huxi* (呼吸, Breathing), *Yanjingshe* (眼镜蛇, Cobra), and *1989 Band*. Earlier rock music groups that began in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s, included *Budaoweng* (不倒翁, Infallible), which was formed by Zang Tianshuo (臧天朔); *Tang Chao* (唐朝, Tang Dynasty) with lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist, Ding Wu 丁武; and probably the most famous of all Chinese rock bands, *Hei Bao* (黑豹, Black Panther), a glam metal band originally fronted by China’s alternative music pioneer Dou Wei (窦唯, b.1969). Many such rock and roll bands and artists in this period signed with large record companies — many of them international labels, such as EMI, Sony, BMG, RCA, Polygram, and Warner Music.

Since these bands were mainly founded in Beijing, the music was known as Beijing rock and roll. Beijing rock and roll culture reached its peak of popularity between 1990 and 1993.

Black Panther released their self-titled debut album in 1991. Dou Wei featured hit singles such as “Don’t Break My Heart” and “Ashamed,” selling more than 1,000,000 copies nationwide in 1992. Tang Dynasty, whose style was comparable to early British heavy metal, was even more successful, breaking previous record sales. Their singles “9/4” (in reference to the song’s time signature), “The Sun,” and “Choice” rose in chart rankings during 1992, when their debut album
A Dream Return to Tang Dynasty sold over 2,000,000 copies throughout Asia, including Japan, Korea, and mainland Southeast Asia (Thailand, Vietnam, etc.). Such success prompted greater popularity for previously established rock bands, such as the first all female band, Cobra.

The core participants in rock subculture adopted nonconformist appearances and behaviors from the West, such as glam rock musicians wearing extreme facial makeup, long hair, jeans, silver metal ornaments, and black leather coats, or emerging grunge styles, with flannel shirts and an independent spirit combined with carefree, hippie-style fashions, such as wearing tattoos, bandanas, and bell-bottom jeans. These changes in musical direction and accompanying appearances brought an unequivocal fierce alienation of China’s social norms. This “do-it yourself” ethos became the basis for indie music culture in Beijing after 2000.

Mainstream Popular Music

Mainstream popular music in Mainland China during the 1980s and 1990s was strongly influenced by gangtai pop music, but distinct from Beijing rock music. Rock music was narrowly-defined as found in “informal, small-scale, underground bars, which enabled musicians to perform, earn some money, socialize, and establish a rock community that provided the individuals who participated a desired identity of exclusive anti-mainstream and anti-officialdom fraternity.”31 In contrast, Chinese mainstream popular musicians often performed in large stadiums or concert halls to massive audiences in the late 1990s. These mainstream songs were

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often heard on buses, trains, and airplanes, in restaurants, on karaoke machines, and in other public spaces. Some mainstream popular singers, such as Li Guyi, Na Ying (那英, b.1967), Mao Amin (毛阿敏, b.1963), Mao Ning (毛宁, b.1969), and Liu Huan (刘欢, b.1963) were widely accepted by society and dominated the popular music market.

2000s to Present: Era of Diversity in Chinese Popular Music

The first decade of the 21st century brought many changes to the musical life of young people. Technological developments, such as the Internet and MP3 players, greatly affected the consumption of popular music around the world. With the expansion of the Internet in China, particularly among urban youth, music downloading (often illegally) became an increasingly popular way of obtaining recordings of popular music. By 2003, other technologies started to increase the effects of music availability on the Internet. Computers with writeable CD, and later DVD drives became readily available, so students could create discs for playback on conventional CD players. A few years later, MP3 players replaced the DVD and CD as the preferred medium for music listening among young people.

The digitization of popular music clearly affected the transferability of music. MP3 files made the process of copying music much quicker, easier, and more flexible without loss in the quality of the recording, as was previously with cassette tapes. The new technology also led to new ways in which music was popularized, most notably via cellphone ring-tones. From the early 2000s, as in many other parts of the world, young people became enthusiastic ring-tone
downloaders, often using popular songs for this purpose. The mobile phone became an important medium through which people learned of, listened to, familiarized themselves with, and transferred popular music files, even if in lower quality and shortened forms. With the multimedia-capable mobile phones now becoming part of China’s popular technology landscape, the importance and popularity of downloaded music continues to rise.\textsuperscript{32}

Along with a technological shift, there was also an important political shift in the music of the 2000s versus that of the 1980s and 1990s. Political criticism made way for commercial motives, causing rock music in particular to lose much of its political significance. Although some songwriters still write songs expressing their dissatisfaction, they have little access to substantial audiences.\textsuperscript{33} Popular music evolved into a highly commercialized business with key roles played by large transnational music and media companies. While Chinese young consumers in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century are quite familiar with the media, and are well-informed, and fully aware of music, media, and popular cultural trends both within China and overseas, few are actively looking for banned or subversive music. Rather, the majority of music buyers remain content with mainstream pop music that is readily available and has no political content.

The globalization process has also affected musicians during the 2000s, particularly after Mainland China entered the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002. Mainstream popular music experienced a freer environment because of commercial success, but non-mainstream

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Latham, \textit{Popular Culture China!}, 353.
\item Recording companies will not risk penalties that could follow from producing anything possibly construed as politically sensitive. Broadcasters are even more cautious.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
music, derived primarily from rock and roll is most challenged by the internationally oriented mainstream market, struggling to find audiences and disseminate their music for financial survival. With the opening of commercial markets to foreign music from countries, such as Japan and Korea, consumers had access to underground musicians from these countries, as well as China. Consequently, Chinese musicians were now faced with the challenge of competing with foreign music cultures, as well as government censorship.

**Popular Music Culture Invasion from Outside Mainland China in the 2000s**

Gangtai music during the 2000s remains at the core of the Chinese popular music industry. New artists regularly appear from mainland China, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. The gangtai pop music scene has continued to transform itself gradually during the 2000s. Since the late 1990s, there has been a gradual shift in popularity away from Cantopop (Cantonese lyric pop music) to Mandopop (Mandarin lyric pop music).

Since its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong society has moved progressively toward greater use of Mandarin in many areas of public life. Mainland Chinese pop music consumers, however, have become ever less dependent on Hong Kong for their musical commodities, dictating market demand for themselves. Consequently, even Hong Kong musicians increasingly produce Mandarin pop music to remain competitive.
In 2000, the Taiwanese Mandarin hip-hop singer, Jay Chou (周杰伦, b.1979), released his debut album, simply titled *Jay*, under the record company Alfa Music. Acknowledging his influence on popular culture, the Chinese government soon allowed promotion of his music, even though it was not considered official. Neither gangtai nor Mainland Chinese popular music, Chou’s characteristic style included rapping and singing. His lyrics were often incomprehensible, unless read. Chou considered his signature style as infusing his singing with the music, but critics sometimes referred to his singing as “mumbling.” This garnered a host of attention for Chou; reporters often questioned him on his singing style. Chou also believed his technique encouraged listeners to read the lyrics, which he considered very “deep.”

As Chou’s music falls mainly within the R&B genre, he is considered responsible for introducing this style to Mainland Chinese audiences. Chou followed this formula for his third album, *The Eight Dimensions* (2008), collaborating again with lyricist Vincent Fang, composing songs that evoked imagery, utilized his “mumbling” singing technique, and were performed mainly in the R&B style. Chou’s popularity encouraged the media of Mainland China to invite him to perform. The Spring Gala 2010, an annual New Year’s Eve show on state-sponsored CCTV, invited Chou to sing “Bencao Gangmu” with mainland singer Song Zuying. This

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34 Alfa Music is a Japanese record company established in 1969 by composer and record producer Kunihiko Murai. It was formed into an independent record label known as Alfa Records in 1977, a short-lived American subsidiary operated from 1980 to 1982.

35 Chou’s music has gained recognition throughout Asia, most notably in his homeland of Taiwan, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, and Japan, as well as Asian communities of Western countries, such as the United States and Australia. He has sold more than 30 million albums and received numerous awards for his music. Chou has also written songs for other artists, while simultaneously working on his albums. In 2003, the Asian edition of Time magazine featured him on its cover with a story entitled “New King of Asian Pop.”
prompted other collaborations between Mainland Chinese musicians and their Taiwanese or Hong Kong musical counterparts to showcase different popular culture combinations. Gangtai and Mainland Chinese mainstream popular music has thus begun to fuse together.

![Figure 2.10: Jay Chou’s album cover of November’s Chopin, 2005.](http://tieba.baidu.com/p/545818067)

Japanese and Korean popular music has also been extremely influential on the Chinese popular music industry in the new millennium. The popularity of Japanese anime culture, television shows, video games and Internet productions, along with Japanese popular music, has appealed to the Chinese market since the late 1990s. In contrast, Korean popular music has gained a following through Chinese mainstream TV shows, concerts, and Karaoke, referred to by the Chinese media as KTV culture. As the government has officially improved its relationship with South Korea, the market for Korean pop culture products is considerably more open in contrast to Japanese popular culture. Most Japanese anime and TV show were banned from the

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mainland, while South Korean drama and pop bands were welcomed to the Chinese market.

From 2002 to 2008, mainstream television programs featured South Korean dramas, such as “Da Changjin” and “Happy House.” The Korean-style boy and girl bands also became popular with several, such as Girl Generation, T-ara, and Super-Junior, establishing considerable fan-bases within Mainland China’s youth culture.

![Figure 2.11: Image of Korean girl band Girl Generation with Korean customs](http://desk.chinaz.com/mingxing/14051937646.htm, entered in 2015/10/11)

**Indie Music and Literary Youth Culture**

In big cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, reduced restrictions allowed music clubs and night street markets to open that targeted young communities. These attracted musicians who had yet to achieve fame or be signed with a record company, enabling them to develop their music independently, i.e., indie music. For example, *Nan Luogu Xiang* (南锣鼓巷, South Luogu Alley) and surrounding areas in Beijing is now considered as a center of Chinese indie music culture. Western-style coffee shops line the main road, alongside street stalls,

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construction projects, and a scattering of dive bars tucked away behind hot pot restaurants. Many young adults enjoy these kinds of areas as their nighttime entertainment.

Houhai (后海), Sanlitun (三里屯) and South Luogu Alley are the most famous areas for such activities. Houhai means “the back sea” and refers to the area of the lake just north of the Forbidden City (故宫), which is popular with tourists. Houhai is often visited by tourists who enjoy nighttime activities after they visit the famous Beihai Park (北海公园) and the Forbidden City. Sanlitun means “three miles village” and is located near embassies where foreigners often live. Sanlitun is a fairly modernized area and considered a fashion center in Beijing where women wear make-up and dress fashionably, while young men drive expensive cars. In contrast, South Luogu Alley is frequented by educated Chinese youth, referred to as “literary youth.” With well-preserved ancient architectural design called siheyuan (四合院), the area is associated with the traditional Chinese alley style, called Huhong (胡同). South Luogu Alley is the best-preserved ancient region in Beijing, however, much of the area has been turned into bars, tea

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38 Nanluoguxiang (abbreviated as “Nanluo”) means “south gong and drum alley.” It is a well-preserved ancient region in Dongcheng District 东城区, (East city district), Beijing, and it features traditional architecture. It is the region where many Siheyuans (see below) remain well-preserved. Several of them were homes for princes, generals, artists, authors, politicians, and actors.

39 The Forbidden City was the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty – 1420 to 1912. Located in the center of Beijing, it is also called the Palace Museum. It served as the home of emperors and was the ceremonial and political center of the Chinese government for almost 500 years.

40 Beihai park was an imperial garden and now a public park located to the northwest of the Forbidden City. First built in the 11th century, it is among the largest of all Chinese gardens. Since 1925, the place has been open to the public as a park. It is also connected at its northern end to Houhai.

41 Siheyuan Siheyuan is a historical type of residence that was commonly found throughout China, most famously in Beijing. It is also referred to as Chinese quadrangles, which literally means a courtyard surrounded by buildings on all four sides.

42 Hutong is type of a narrow street or alley that commonly associated with northern Chinese cities such as Beijing. In Beijing, hutongs are alleys formed by lines of siheyuan. The word hutong is also used to refer to poor neighbor-hoods in Beijing.
houses, coffee houses, music instrument stores, book stores, antique shops, and Japanese
Izakaya.43 While their exterior is traditional, the interior of these establishments is often modern
and international in character, such as Jianghu Bar (江湖酒吧, see chapter 5), one of the most
popular in the area. Nearby districts, such as Jiaodaokou (交道口) and Gulou (鼓楼), attract
literary youth searching for a bohemian lifestyle.

Figure 2.12: Performances at the Mako Livehouse (left) and Jianghu Bar (right).44

Indie musicians are active in these areas. Beijing musicians know that, “if you never
played in the South Luogu Alley, never live in Anding Gate (安定门) district, you could not
considering [sic] yourself as a indie musician.”45 Han Chinese musicians, such as Xie Tianxiao,
Wang Feng, Escape Plan, Mirror, and even Cun Jian once performed in these areas. Today,
ethnic minority bands, such as Hanggai, Shanren, and Arker perform here regularly (see chapters
4 and 5).

43 A Izakaya is an informal Japanese drinking bar that also serves some food.
44 The left photo from http://travel.qunar.com/p-oif3196775-maquewashe, the right photo was taken by author.
45 Personal communication with lead vocalist of Shanren, Qu Zihan, who has performed in Beijing as an indie
musician for many years. Anding Gate district is a region where most indie musicians with poor and unstable
incomes live in Beijing.
Indie musicians also perform for music festivals, which have blossomed in Beijing, as well as other cities, during the 2000s and 2010s. Founded in 2000 by *MIDI School of Music* president Zhang Fan (张帆), the *MIDI Music Festival*(迷笛音乐节) is China’s longest-running and best known music festival, attracting roughly 10,000 fans per day. MIDI Music Festival, Modern Sky Festival, and the MIDI Modern Music Festival (also known simply as MIDI Festival), are among China’s largest rock music festivals, all hosted by the Beijing MIDI School of Music. Since its inauguration in 1997, the festival has been held each year in Beijing during the May holiday (May 1–3), except in 2003, 2004 and 2008, when it took place in October. The festival is currently held annually in three Chinese cities: Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen.

Smaller festivals, such as the Strawberry Music Festival (草莓音乐节) that mainly focuses on youth popular music, and Zhangbei Grassland Music Festival 张北草原音乐节, which focuses on ethnic minority popular music, are also celebrated every year, providing new opportunities for young musicians. Today, the Chinese indie music market is widening for different musicians of many genres, countries, and ethnicities from around the world to take part.
CHAPTER III
MINORITY THEMES IN THE MAINLAND CHINESE MASS MEDIA

Increasing interest in ethnic minority culture has influenced various fine arts in China, such as modern painting and the movie industry. Official policy promoting the multi-ethnic image of Chinese culture has encouraged the mass media to feature traditional minority culture on television and elsewhere since the start of the century. Minority ethnic television stars consequently influence public opinion about minority ethnicities in China. Minority icons and images are of great interest, resulting in the modernization and globalization of minority ethnic culture.

Ethnic Minority Image

_Yunnan Painting School_

After the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, several young artists in Yunnan province joined like-minded colleagues throughout China in pushing for more individual expression and a general opening to previously proscribed modern Western art since the Post-Impressionist period. Like their contemporaries in music, film and literature, they were inspired by long-neglected traditions of Buddhist religious art. Artists from Yunnan province made important contributions using Yunnan minority ethnic people as their subjects, while painting in the styles of Western Post-Impressionist and Chinese traditional paintings. Graduates of Peking art academies, such as
Jiang Tiefeng (蒋铁峰, b. 1938) and Ting Shaoguang (丁绍光, b. 1939) became known as the Yunnan School of painting. Though not themselves considered ethnic minorities, they lived for several years in Yunnan province and experienced the rich mixture of ethnic cultures, customs, and folk arts in this frontier of Chinese civilization.

With the opportunity for meaningful personal expression at the end of the 1970s, Yunnan school artists forged a coherent style and movement out of their collective experiences in the province. For a brief time, Yunnan culture moved from remote interest to the forefront of China’s avant-garde movement. From a Western perspective, the most familiar feature of their new style was the semi-abstract forms often suggestive of Picasso. But for Chinese youth, who had been cut off from all sources of Western modernism since 1949, their innovative work stirred considerable excitement.

The bold use of “heavy color” was obtained by painting on both sides of a special type of rice paper with native material and vegetable pigments. Combined with a highly decorative and deliberately flattened surface, this technique produced a distinctive style resembling neither traditional Chinese ink painting or modern oil painting, as had previously been practiced in China. These bold stylistic changes alone did not impress young artistic radicals or older established conservatives. However, the artists’ frequent use of erotic female imagery based on the customs and folklore of Yunnan’s ethnic minorities did draw attention. Unsurprisingly, such subject matter hit a sensitive nerve among China’s cultural authorities, which were reeling from unprecedented demands for freedom in all areas of the country. By the 1980s, such demands
were voiced suppressed activists of the Democracy Wall movement. Yuan Yunsheng (袁运生, b. 1937), a Peking painter usually associated with the Yunnan school, garnered the greatest attention with his nude figures in murals exhibited in the Peking airport. Some of his works at the Yunnan School’s 1981 exhibition in Peking were deemed too shocking for television transmission.

![Figure 3.1: Yunnan School paintings: Jiang Tiefeng’s Siji Ge (four season song): A naked ethnic woman playing a Pipa with a colorful background of Lotus, sun, birds, and sky, 1987 (top); Ting Shaoguang’s paintings “Flute Girl” (bottom left) and “Hunting Girl” (bottom right).](http://image.baidu.com/search/index?height=&face=0&istype=2&ie=utf-8&word=云南画派, entered in 2015/10/14.)

Although the Yunnan school works are generally not recognized as representative of a specific cultural group, they were portrayed with strong ethnic imagery, often too exotic for Han people. Sexual freedom, for example, was portrayed as a unique aspect of minority ethnic culture.

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with minority women sometimes appearing naked in Yunnan School paintings (see Figure 3.1). These minority images challenged Han women’s culture with images of nudity in outdoor scenes that was considered morally corrupt under Confucianism ideology. As Yunnan School artists generally did not hold negative opinions about the freedom of ethnic sexuality, their works influenced the attitudes of youth culture in the 1980s towards acceptance of such images associated with ethnic minorities. Although globalization would later more dramatically change Chinese popular culture, the Yunnan School’s ethnic themes are considered the first wave of Han cultural freedom.

*Minority Images in Film*

According to early CCP official documentation of ethnic minorities in the 1950s, minority identity was commonly interpreted as “musical, good at dance and singing, and mostly were close to Nature.”² The description was generally about minority images on the surface, while the deep meaning of culture, society and history were ignored.

Minority music in the early movies of the 1950s included definite themes considered anti-Confucianist. For example, *Liu Sanjie’s Legend* 刘三姐 (1951), a film about a Zhuang ethnic singer, was suggestive of an anti-Confucianist sentiment, such as when Liu sang a song to a Han-Confucian scholar who bragged about how smart he was in front of poor peasants. Liu’s

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response was, “if people only read books and never know how to cultivate the land, no matter how many Confucius texts they read, they will die of hunger.”

Figure 3.2: Minority images in film during the 1950s: (Top) a scene from Liu Sanjie’s Legend, (1951) actors sing “I sing for my friend from far away” using the tune from a Zhuang (ethnic minority) tea picking song.

TV Media and Minority Image

Television culture has developed rapidly since the 1990s, in both local and international arenas with individuals, private companies and even state-governed institutions. The mass media and new communication technologies naturally play an important role in production, selection and dissemination of minority image. They also increase public interaction with international trends and standards. Crucial to this trend is the potential to undermine censorship and “hardline” cultural hegemony asserted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), becoming a “major player in the commodification process,” and “its sugar-coated politicism [that] pacifies the masses and represses the memory of China’s political reality.” The government closely monitors Central-

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level media organizations, such as CCTV, and the People’s Daily. As such, media is considered to represent national and international interests for the Party and the government and has less leeway for either innovation or experimentation than other organizations. The situation becomes even more complex at the provincial, city, county or township level, where local media organizations, such as Hunnan TV and Shanghai Eastern TV challenge the Central-level media, CCTV, by creating new programs motivated by market interest, rather than politics. Thus, many Western style TV programs, such as talent and talk shows, are found on local television broadcasts, as well as controversial actors and musicians that would never be shown on CCTV media.

*Song Zuying (宋祖英, b.1966) and Minzuchangfa (民族唱法) as Minority Affiliates*

China Central Television (CCTV) is the predominant state television broadcaster in Mainland China. The CCTV New Year’s Gala is also known as the Spring Festival Gala, or abbreviated in Chinese as Chunwan and is produced by China’s national TV station, China Central Television, and is shown on the Chinese New Year’s Eve. The broadcast has a yearly viewership of over 700 million viewers, making it the premier television event of the

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6 China Central Television or Chinese Central Television, commonly abbreviated as CCTV, has a network of 45 channels broadcasting different programs and is accessible to more than one billion viewers. Most of its programs are a mixture of news, documentary, comedy, entertainment, and drama, the majority of which consists of Chinese soap operas and entertainment.

7 People’s Daily is an official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party. It is published in its main Chinese-language edition, as well as other ethnic languages, such as Zhuang, Uyghur, Tibetan, Kazakh, Korean, Mongolian, and foreign languages, such as English, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, French, and Spanish. This daily newspaper provides direct information on the policies and viewpoints of the government.
country. The Gala is a variety show, featuring music and dance, comedy, and drama performances. For many Chinese families, watching the Spring Gala has become a ritual of the Spring Festival with many overseas Chinese watching as well. Many performers on the program become household names in China.

Minority elements on the Spring Festival Gala have been present since the broadcast’s inception in 1983. Musical acts feature various genres of Chinese music, including traditional folk songs and modern Chinese popular music. Representative minority ethnic groups showcase their traditional singing heritages, such as Uygur songs, Mongolian long song, Tibetan song and dance, and Yi drinking songs and dances. Minority elements in the Spring Gala are mostly music and dance. From this Gala, the National singing style, called minzu changfa (“ethnic singing style”), was developed by several Han military songwriters and vocalists, such as Yan Weiwen, Dong Wenhua, Peng Liyuan, and Zhangye. The most representative minority national style singer is Song Zuying, from the Miao ethnic group.  

After winning her first award at the China Vocal Contest of Minority Nationality, Zuying recorded many solo albums and videos. She visited Europe, Australia, the United States, Canada, and Southeast Asia along with a China Art Delegation. She was invited to sing, representing China, when the World Cup was co-held in South Korea and Japan in 2002. She has performed

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8 Song Zuying was born in Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous prefecture, Hunan. She studied at the department of music and dancing in the Central Institute for Nationalities in Beijing, after which she studied at the China Music College. In 1991, she joined the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Naval Song and Dance troupe as a national first-class singer. As of 2009, she is a non-combatant Rear Admiral in the Chinese Navy.
at many international venues, such as the Sydney Opera House (Australia) in 2002, the Vienna Golden Hall (Austria) in 2004, and the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts (United States) in 2008. In 2006, her album, *The Diva Goes to the Movies: A Centennial Celebration of Chinese Film Song*, was nominated for the 49th Annual Grammy Awards in the category of Best Classical Crossover Album.

Because of her status as a representative for minority ethnic groups, Zuying also performs regularly on the Chinese New Year Gala, which is an honor for a national singer. Although her Miao ethnic customs, such as clothing, are very traditional, her singing style seamlessly fuses Han and Western opera techniques. Her singing style serves as a role model for other vocalists who train in conservatories, using Western opera techniques. While national singers were considered to represent all ethnicities (Han and non-Han) in the 1990s, the diversity of folk song styles became more homogenous, instead of individually distinctive.

Figure 3.3: Song Zuying

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From the 1990s until 2005, minority songs were sung with Han lyrics set to minority melodies. Audiences did not see “authentic” minority style singing until 2006, when a choir of several ethnic groups sang their folk music genres, such as *dage* (大歌, Dong ethnic group), *haicai tunes* (海菜腔, Yi ethnic group), and Mongolian *long song* (长调) and *khoomei* (呼麦), on the Spring Gala. These performances fascinated Chinese audiences, who were largely unfamiliar with minority music. Such minority ethnic singing styles were labeled as *yuanshengtai* singing, encouraging both Han and minority musicians to look to their local traditions for musical inspiration.

*Yang Erche Namu* (杨二车纳姆, b.1970) and *Jin Xing* (金星, b.1967)

Along with the Spring Gala performers are several media celebrities from minority groups who promoted their ethnic identity and encouraged changing attitudes towards minority ethnic groups, such as Yang Erche Namu, a writer and singer born in a small village near Lugu Lake in northern Yunnan.10 Namu’s English autobiography, entitled *Leaving Mother Lake*, was published in the United States in 2004, and received international attention for her unrecognized ethnic group Mosuo.11 Her book has been criticized for intentionally eroticizing her childhood and culture with some fellow-minorities claiming that she is not Mosuo, because she rejects

10 Yang Erche Namu joined a singing troupe and won a scholarship to study Western art music in Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1983 at the age of 13. She later married an American photographer and moved to San Francisco, California in 1991.

11 *Leaving Mother Lake* is co-written by Yang and another writer -- Christine Mathieu. Mosuo was initially officially recognized by the Chinese government as a Naxi-related ethnic group.
Mosuo men. Many in Chinese society also criticized her in her later career as a judge of “Super Girl,” because of her unusual appearance, dialect, and critical opinions. For example, she often wears a big flower on her head and ethnic jewels to represent her ethnic style of dress, which became somewhat fashionable among the youth. She claims that Chinese men hate her because she degrades them, in contrast to Chinese women, who she believes think fondly of her. Such comments encouraged a media focus and helped to create a fan base among the youth subculture.

Figure 3.4: Yang Erche Namu (left) and her book *Leaving Mother Lake* (right).¹²

Along with Namu is a fellow minority fashion icon, Jin Xing, a Chinese-Korean television star. Recognized as a modern ballerina and choreographer, she also gained popularity as the host of a talk-show program on the Shanghai East TV station, called *Jin Xing Show.*¹³ She is owner of a contemporary dance company, Shanghai Jin Xing Dance Theatre, which created a modern dance theater *Shanghai Tango* (海上探戈). Xing is one of earliest and most recognizable

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¹³ The *Jin Xing Show* began at 2014. According to a TV audience rating survey by Sina News in August 2015, the show received 10.43% of the viewing audience, making it the most watched program in the country.
transgendered performers in the Chinese media. Her transgender identity was initially a roadblock to her success.\textsuperscript{14} In reference to her appreciation of Shanghai audiences in comparison to those in Beijing, she said, “the city is a completely female city. Female town. Beijing is male, all rough and politics. Shanghai is more delicate. Money talks. Beautiful. I had enough rough. I need details. Especially because I am a lady, I need the city [i.e., Shanghai].” Such characterization of Beijing and Shanghai was unappreciated by many netizens who disagree with her perspective, which they consider a negative image for both cities. Such comments are not officially allowed on CCTV national programming, but can be aired on local TV programs, which have a freer market.

Jin Xing also achieved notoriety for her comments about Korean influences on Chinese youth culture. She suggested that stereotypes are used in creating K-pop and images of K-pop singers, claiming that some K-pop singers have bad manners that negatively influence Chinese youth. She also criticized the typical themes of Korean television dramas, because she felt it promoted Confucius traditions that were not modern thinking for most Chinese families. She encouraged her Han followers to consider the 1930s Shanghai manner for inspiration, because she considers this the most civilized period in China’s modern history.\textsuperscript{15} Her modern dance theater, \textit{Shanghai Tango}, represents this nostalgia for the 1930s and 1940s-style Shanghai popular music period, through fashion, music, dance, etc.

\textsuperscript{14}In 2011, Jin Xing was banned on a Zhejiang TV station because of a prohibition against transgender and homosexual actors by the National Broadcast and Television department, which has since been lifted.
\textsuperscript{15} From “Jinxing Show” Shanghai, April 22, 2015.
Though criticisms of Jin Xing and Yang Erche Namu’s popularity reflected negative opinions of ethnic minority groups being considered as “backward” culture, Internet youth culture accepted them as something different than the norm and progressive in their thinking.

*Yang Liping (杨丽萍, b. 1958) and Yuanshengtai on Stage*

Another dancer, Yang Liping from the Bai minority group, drew attention in 1986 because of her exotic dance, “Sprit of Peacock (雀之灵).” Taking her cue from the Yunnan painting school’s style, Liping’s dance does not replicate Bai traditional dance, but synthesizes multiple elements from Yunnan ethnic groups, such as the Dai, Naxi, and Yi, as well as Buddhist

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16 Photo from Jinxing Show, April 28, 2015.
17 “Sprit of Peacock” was performed in 1986 at the Spring Gala and voted as the most popular dance piece of the year. Inspired by the Yunnan painting school, Yang Liping’s image of minority dance was also colorful and brought the legend to life.
imagery from Dunhuang. During the 1980s and 1990s, she was labeled a minority dancer though her dancing movements were highly original.

During the 2000s, she drew new inspiration of the minority Yuanshengtai concept of “natural singing” and created several dances with accompanying music inspired by such activities in Yunnan province. She named the stage show spectacular *Dynamic Yunnan* and spent several years travelling to remote villages of the 26 ethnic minority tribes in Yunnan, selecting over 60 villagers who she considered to have natural abilities of song and dance in the Yuanshengtai style to join the troupe. Her *Dynamic Yunnan* stage show included Yi, Tibetan, and Hani dance combined with their traditional singing style.

![Figure 3.6: “Dynamic Yunnan” and Yang Liping: Yi ethnic dance in Yuanshengtai style (left); Yang Liping’s original dance style inspired by the Yunnan school painting (right).](image)

*Dynamic Yunnan* became popular and promoted the value of ethnic diversity, asserting that minorities should be encouraged to display their unique cultural attributes, such as music.

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18 Photos from: http://www.synotrip.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/node_view/caee1ce4a1dc2dfe1, entered in 2015/10/7.
and dance, to the world to gain recognition. Some famous movie editors/directors, such as Zhang Yimou (张艺谋, b.1951), followed Liping’s lead by creating similar ethnic minority dance variety shows, such as “Image of Liu Sanjie.” Several famous composers, such as Ye Xiaogang (叶小纲, b.1955) and Guo Wenjing (郭文景, b.1956) compose music for the stage show, which similarly represented the Yuanshengtai ethnic minorities style.

Yang Liping’s stage show was actually inspired by discussions between scholars of both Han and ethnic minority backgrounds about the concept of yuanshengtai. The yuanshengtai concept first appeared at the twelfth Qinggesai (全国青年歌手大奖赛), or National Young Singer TV Grand Prix (青歌赛) in 2006, when a piece entitled, “Yuanshengtai Changfa (原生态唱法),” which means “nature style of singing,” was performed as part of the competition by a group of ethnic performers from a variety of backgrounds, as well as Han, as part of the competition. This concept of yuanshengtai, exemplifying minority folk song singing techniques, became notable for its contrast to the national official folk song singing style. This prompted a national discussion regarding authenticity in minority music performances versus the official representation of minority ethnic culture, influenced by Western art and popular music singing techniques.

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19 Zhang Yimou is a Chinese film director from the fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers (the generation of actors/actresses, directors and staff that graduated from Beijing Film College and Central Theater College in 1980s and 1990s). The fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers was the first generation following the Cultural Revolution and involved with the international film industry.
Yuanshengtai Singing Style

The National Young Singer TV Grand Prix, referred to as the Young Singer vocal competition, was organized by CCTV along with television programming in provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities throughout China. A biennial event that has produced many well-known singers, the Grand Prix seeks to “Blossom [i.e., promote] music, launch new music, vibrant TV production.” When “yuanshengtai changfa” was featured in the 2006 competition, traditional folk singing became part of the event. Various types of Han and minority folk music genres were represented with many performers singing in native languages with their own vocal techniques and ethnic instruments, rather than just graduates from China’s conservatories of music. This prompted an argument between conservatory folk song style (minzu changfa) that incorporates Western opera vocal techniques and “natural singing” style (yuanshengtai) that only utilizes native vocal techniques, such as from local opera and mountain song vocalizations.

Yuanshengtai also suggests that people live in harmony with nature, alluding to the agricultural lifestyle of Chinese ethnic minorities that has existed for thousands of years. Spiritual ideology among the ethnic minorities allows for the concept of “heaven,” initially meaning “god,” reflecting the belief that man is an integral part of nature. “Heaven,” in this view implies harmony between man and nature. Yuanshengtai music and dance performances often

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focus on prayers for the gods to give them favorable weather, so such spiritual beliefs are well-
accepted among ethnic minorities.

In contrast to “yuanshengtai” music is “minzu changfa,” translated as “national singing technique.” The national singing style combines Western opera vocal techniques and traditional Han opera and folk song vocal techniques. The foremost musician of this style is Jin Tielin, who is a professor at the National Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Many famous singers, such as Song Zuying and Tan Jing studied this style with him. Composers representing the army, Communist ideology, and political policy write music for the national singing style songs. The “yuanshengtai” style of singing is not laden with such overt modern influences. The variety of singing styles presented in “yuanshengtai” performances encouraged audiences to support music beyond just the official style of national singing.

Figure 3.7: Li Huaixiu and Li Huafu: The Yi siblings won first place in the Prix in 2006, with Li Huaixiu singing a Haicait tune and her brother, Li Huafu, playing a Yi moonlute and singing accompaniment.21

Inspired by CCTV’s National Young Singer TV Grand Prix, local TV stations also produced similar programs featuring young ethnic minority singers. Different from CCTV, the local programs focused on competitions for a single ethnic group. For example, the Sichuan satellite TV station holds the “Zhongguo Zanggehui, (中国藏歌会, Tibetan traditional singing competition),” which is exclusive to Tibetan singers. There are some regional TV competitions, such as “Dadi Feige (大地飞歌, The Songs Flying) on Guangxi Satellite TV, which include multiple ethnic minorities in the area. The regional television stations feature such ethnic minority programming more frequently than national stations because the local viewers are more familiar with minorities in their area.

In 2013, it was announced that the yuanshengtai singing competition was cancelled by CCTV as part of the National Young Singer TV Grand Prix, instead returning to its original focus on Western opera, popular singing, and national-style singing. The news prompted strong reactions from the public, especially scholars who had worked to bring indigenous style singing to the stage. Tian Qin (田青, b.1948), an ethnomusicologist, was most vocal in his disapproval of the elimination of the yuanshengtai singing competitions.

The official response to these protests was that “the technique of some native style singers [i.e., yuanshengtai] was too rough and unprofessional. But we still allow the native style singers to join the other three competition groups.” Tian Qin argued that

This is an unacceptable explanation because how could you judge a traditional singing style based on the standards of Western opera and National ethnic singing styles? If they join the National ethnic style competition, are they allowed to sing their native
language, or required to sing standard Mandarin? We can’t imagine that the ethnic minority singer would ever be able to win the competition [based on these expectations].”

In addition to the singing style restrictions, the competition committee published a song pool that was to be used by all the competitors. No original songs would be permitted. The songs in this pool were all composed by Han Chinese and sung in standard Mandarin. This excluded ethnic minority languages, as well as Han local dialects, folk slangs, internet idioms, as well as any unofficially promoted languages.

The public debate over yuanshengtai being excluded from the Grand Prix revealed a deep divide between official and academic stances on the acceptance of ethnic minority singing. Scholars believed that minority music culture should be preserved and treated as equal with Han heritage. However, such scholars are more interested in preserving these traditions as “cultural artifacts” through things, such as recordings and museum displays, whereas the populations themselves seek to modernize as they wish.

Figure 3.8: Logo of the “China Intangible Culture Heritage.”

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Since 2002, ethnomusicologists have supported minority cultural programming in the media, including the “China Intangible Culture Heritage” program, which includes 72 music traditions of both Han music, such as guqin performance, and non-Han music genres, such as Khoomei and Marihor from the Mongol ethnic group, folksong from the She, Haicai tunes (seaweed tune) and drinking songs from the Yi, Maqam from the Uyghur, Guge songs and Lu Sheng from the Miao (Hmong), Siligang narrative song from the Wa, and jaw harp traditions from multiple minorities in the southwest area of China, including Yunnan, Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuang, and Tibet. The program has been effective in preserving the chosen traditional genres by encouraging younger generations to learn and maintain these traditions. Even so, the general public has not been as responsive, primarily due to a stronger focus on economic development and modernization. The loss of original contexts for performance of local traditions is a primary reason for their preservation as “artifacts,” rather than living tradition.

CHAPTER IV

ETHNIC MINORITY POPULAR MUSIC IN CHINA

During the 1990s, popular musicians began to emerge from larger ethnic minority groups, such as the Tibetan, Mongolian and Uyghur, as well as smaller groups from the regions of Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces. This Chapter will focus on popular singers from such groups who specifically identify themselves and/or their music as having ethnic minority characteristics.

Orthodox Minority Songs

The earliest television broadcasts of ethnic minority songs were sung in Mandarin instead of minority languages. Primarily Han musicians, who were sponsored by the government to promote ethnic minority images, composed these songs. Some Western scholars, such as Nimrod Baranovitch, described these government sponsored minority songs as “orthodox minority song.” Baranovitch suggested that the mainstream media promoted images and sounds of ethnic minorities based on limited knowledge of their actual traditions.¹ These songs would include symbols of the ethnic group represented, such as distinctive instruments and tuneful melodies, along with some lyrics in the group’s language, though most of the songs would be in Mandarin.

These orthodox minority songs, however, often differ greatly from the music actually performed by the minorities represented.

The composition of orthodox minority song dates to the 1930s, when Mao rose to power in the Jinggangshan Communist based area in Jiangxi province, where multiple minority groups resided. Local folk tunes were used to compose music with military themes in support of Communist policy and Mao’s leadership in an effort to attract local youth to join the Communist army. The Communist “Long March” (1934–1935) traveled through Jiangxi, Hunan, Hubei, Szchuan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, Xizang (Tibet), Gansu and Shananxi, provinces, which are regions including many minority ethnic groups. For example, in 1930, the chief commander of the Red Army, Zhu De, announced that “the red army had came to Sichuan and will respect Yi ethnic group, and the Communist army aims to help ethnic minorities liberate from the government control. They treat minority and Han equally like brothers.” Such promotions were important for attracting local residents to reject the Nationalist army and follow the Communist agenda.

After the PRC was founded in 1949, the Communist army was sent to remote regions of China where minority populations were prominent, such as Xizang (Tibet), Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia and Yunnan. Some of the orthodox minority songs commonly used in the army

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2 The Long March was a military retreat undertaken by the Red Army of the Communist Party of China, the forerunner of the People’s Liberation Army, to evade the pursuit of the National Party (KMT or Chinese Nationalist Party) army.

3 The Content came from the announcement of Zhude, the leader of Chinese Communist Red Army during 1930s.
became the Mass Songs and later the Revolution Songs (see chapter 2). From 1949 to the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976), many official minority songs were produced to promote Mao’s ideology and socialist policies. Songs, such as “Wa People Singing a New Song (阿瓦人民唱新歌)” (Wa ethnic) and “The Golden Mountain of Beijing (北京的金山上)” (Tibetan), for example, were written by Han military composers using ethnic minority folk tunes set to lyrics promoting socialist values. “Mao zhuxi (Chairman Mao) is like a sun on the sky,” a lyric from “The Golden Mountain of Beijing,” suggested that following Mao would lead the minority groups out of darkness into a new era for a happier life. These songs, which were first popular from the 1950s to early 1960s and written in Mandarin, became popular again among the Han majority in the 1990s. Known as “Red Songs,” they were sung by many popular singers, such as Peng Liyuan and Han Hong (b. 1964).

Though the orthodox minority songs promoted by the central government in the post-Mao period no longer dominated the mainstream media, both Han and minority composers affiliated with government-run music institutions and conservatories of music continued to write new songs. The songs appeared primarily on government controlled television programs, eulogizing the Communist party, government policy and leadership of pro-Mao leaders. The most significant change in these songs was choirs or mass groups of patriots no longer sang them. Western influences increasingly affected compositions and vocal techniques, following verse-

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4 Popular singers of “Red Songs” were mostly trained in the state-run Conservatory of Music or military music institutions, such as the Chinese Liberal Army.
chorus forms and developing modernized Chinese Western orchestras. Vocal techniques were fused with European opera vocal style (mostly bel canto style) and Chinese Peking Opera vocal style, both highly regarded art styles during the 1990s.\(^5\) Conservatory and military singers incorporated these singing styles into their performances of Chinese folksong. Only one singer instead of a group now sang orthodox songs. Vocalists in 1980s and 1990s, such as Peng Liyuan, Song Zuying and Yan Weiwen, became popular on television because of their skillful combination of Western Opera and Chinese vocal techniques (see chapter 3). This style of singing became known as “Minzu Changfa,” translated as “national singing” by the Chinese music academe.

There are three factors maintaining the popularity of orthodox minority songs over the past half-century: lyrics based on standard Mandarin; patriotic sentiment; and Minzu Changfa (national singing style) as the official vocal style of the government. Interrelated, these factors are not common in the musical culture of the ethnic minorities themselves, but are portrayed as such through the media. For example, ethnic minority groups, such as the Yi, Wa, and Dong, as well as Tibetan, Mongolian, and ethnic groups in Xinjiang province, speak their own languages and Xinan Mandarin, which is distinct from standard Mandarin. From my fieldnotes among the Yi in a village in Lishan county in Yunnan province:

I asked the lead singer of the group to sing a song (an orthodox Yi song in this case) called “Welcome to stay, my friend from far away,” which was labeled as a folksong from Yi group and sang by Song Zuying (the famous orthodox minority singer,\(^5\)

\(^5\) Bel canto is a lyrical style of Italian operatic singing using a full rich broad tone and smooth phrasing.
see chapter 3). She shook her head and looked confused. She had never sung this song. Instead, she sang her version of a Haicai tune (a Yi traditional folk song genre), which was totally out of my expectation of how Yi people’s music should be at that time.

Furthermore, I also asked a folk singer from the Yi ethnic group in Kunming (the Capital city in Yunnan province) [to perform this song]. She sang it in the Yi language and Yunnan Mandarin dialects, which brought a totally local sense of this orthodox song.6

The orthodox minority songs are often unfamiliar to the ethnic groups they are said to represent. Orthodox minority songs also express patriotic sentiments in association with the central government, which are not found in traditional music in their original contexts. For example, “Chairman Mao’s Words are Written in the Bottom of our Hearts (毛主席的话永远记心间)” is a song attributed to many ethnic groups from throughout Xinjiang province, including the Uyghur, Kazak, Hui and others. “Ai Wo Zhonghua (爱我中华, Love my China, see Appendix C, example 2 ),” performed by Song Zuying (see chapter 3), is similarly considered to represent all minorities because of her Miao ethnic identity. A typical performance includes Zuying standing onstage with settings representing the whole country. She sings in Mandarin (emblematic of the Han majority) while accompanied by several dozen dancers dressed in traditional-style costumes from China’s fifty-five minorities. The choreography inevitably places the ethnic minority dancers at the rear of the stage with the dancers in colorful dress and a smiling, happy demeanor, reaffirming the legitimacy of the party-state as with the old revolutionary socialist propaganda. Although the images promoted no longer directly express

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6 Interviews conducted August, 2009, in Lishan county in Yunnan.
loyalty to Mao, the party, and socialism as in the early days of orthodox minority music, such post-Mao musical displays still focus on legitimizing orthodox views of patriotism.

Along with the Mandarin language and strong patriotic sentiment, the use of the “national singing style” is a departure from the authentic traditions of the ethnic minority groups the orthodox minority songs are said to represent. This national singing style was created by Han vocalist, Jin Tielin (金铁霖, b.1940), who was trained in Western opera singing techniques and became a voice professor in the Zhongguo Yinyue Xueyuan (中国音乐学院, China Conservatory of Music). Jin Tielin’s opinions about popular music have influenced public opinion and musical tastes in China.

In 1983, a Shanghai Young Singer TV Competition, co-hosted by Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Cultural Affairs and Shanghai People’s Radio, included three categories, “Western Opera singing,” “National singing,” and “Popular singing.” Each category relied on the recommendations of a Shanghai Conservatory of Music professor, Zhou Xiaoyan (周小燕, 1917-1916), a Western opera vocal professor. Since 1986, the CCTV National Youth Singer Grand Prix introduced the minority music category as part of the National singing style to the competition. Given Jin Tielin’s background in bel canto vocal performance, she introduced a so-called “scientific” vocal style that became standard for singing most Chinese folk songs. The techniques avoided the “raw” Chinese vocal style of minority folk singing, which quickly tired vocalists not accustomed to the folk styles, replacing them with an artificial, “smooth” vocal timbre that allowed for longer performances. The mainstream media and national vocal
competitions readily accepted this singing style for minority songs, which came to be known as the “Jin school.”

As the national singing style was adopted for the performance of minority music, the most popular singers, such as Song Ziyung, influenced succeeding performers to follow in similar fashion. The distinctiveness of traditional vocal practices became standardized, leading to criticism of this National singing style, particularly via Internet forums:

The singers have a shrill lingering treble, with a heavy vibrato at the end, extremely emotional eyes, similar hair styles, and are usually female. No matter their ethnicity, the singers dress in eighteenth century European dresses, and sound too similar. Everyone sounds like Song Zuying.\(^7\)

Such criticisms highlighted the similarities of the national style singers and also warned that authentic minority songs were in danger of being replaced by the orthodox minority songs.

Searching for a Voice for Ethnic Minority Popular Music

*Han-Produced Minority Popular Music*

While the Han majority population dominates social, political and cultural activities in China, the weakening control of the state in the post-Mao era has enabled minority groups, along with sympathetic Han supporters, to publicly challenge orthodox ethnic minority characterizations and government agendas that misrepresent these populations. Such challenges have occurred prior to the post-Mao period, and can be found, for example, in minority focused

films during the revolutionary period. Though officially produced by the government, Han
audiences welcomed these “exotic” films as a relief from the oppressive politics, enclosure, and
orthodoxy of the government. Some of the films were instrumental in addressing taboo subjects,
such as animistic religions and sexuality.

Such challenges to the hegemony of the government have grown much stronger in post-
Mao China. Underlying agendas of some minority representations are no longer merely to escape
daily realities, although this can still be an important component. Rather, there is often implicit
and indirect criticism of mainstream culture and the totalitarian state.

Several scholars, such as Baranovitch, have studied Han-produced alternative
representations of minorities that challenge orthodox characterizations, presenting a cultural self-
critique and form of political resistance.\(^8\) Although different from orthodox representations in
style and imbued with different meanings, they are still regarded as an objectification of minority
culture, in which the minority groups themselves were denied voice and presentation of their
subjective experience. Even so, minority subjectivity and agency are not limited to
representations that they themselves produce, but also influence Han-produced representations of
minorities. Han artists used minority people and their cultures in the 1990s as vehicles or
metaphors to present cultural and political criticism, as well as to actively inspire criticism of
modernization. “Return to Lhasa (Huidao Lasa),” for example, is a song about Tibet that was

\(^8\)Baranovitch, *China’s New Voice*, 168.
composed by a Han musician, Zhen Jun (b. 1967), and became a popular hit in Mainland China in 1994 and 1995:

… Return to Lhasa, return to Potala Palace…
Washing my heart clean…
Awaken my soul
Climbing the Tanggula Mountain, I came across snow lotus…
She is going to teach you how to find yourself …
Singing endlessly, we dance endlessly
Lha yayiyayi…sa feels like home …
Come, come, let’s return together to Lhasa,
Return to the home from which we’ve long been separated…

Such songs acknowledge the persecution that some of China’s minorities endured due to spiritual beliefs and practices during the Mao period and earlier. In the post-Mao era, however, some of these same minority religious practices have been revived in minority territories and also become a focus of renewed spirituality found in the unofficial culture of China’s urban areas, as expressed in Zheng Jun’s song and 1994 album, Naked (Chiluoluo, 赤裸裸). For Jun, as for many Han and non-Han intellectuals and bohemian youth, Tibet has come to symbolize the ultimate in spirituality. Increasing numbers of urban Han youth visit Tibet today, no longer as missionary agents of state-sponsored “civilizing projects” in which they are expected to inspire and convert rural populations, but rather for the opposite purpose, namely, to gain inspiration and search for something “authentic.” This changing purpose is reflected in “Return to Lhasa” in the words of “Washing my heart clean,” “Awaken my soul,” and “She is going to teach you how to

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9 The song was in Jun, Zheng’s first album titled as Chiluoluo 赤裸裸 (Naked), in 1994.
find yourself.” This shows how Zheng himself regrets that there is not enough spirituality in China.

Zheng entitled his album Naked (Chiluoluo), a title that, according to him, articulates his antagonism to the materialism, commercialization and fakery that he believes, like many other Chinese today, has taken over China in recent years. The musician’s criticism is partially directed at the capitalist West, but is equally a challenge to the Chinese government, which promotes economic prosperity and material progress, but leaves little room for religion and spiritual freedom. The reference to nudity in the title of Zheng’s album challenges traditional and Communist values and aesthetics of concealment, as Zheng repeatedly criticized in an online interview with this researcher.10 Zheng’s album illustrates how Han and minority artists today form ideological allegiances that not only exclude mainstream culture and official agendas, but also challenge them in the most direct manner.

Dadawa, another Han popular music artist, also expresses her support for ethnic minority culture through her music, such as the song “Sister Drum,” which was popular in the 1990s. In 1994, He Xuntian and Dadawa travelled to Tibet to research Tibetan culture and music. The result was her second studio album, Sister Drum (阿姐鼓, 1995), which was an international success, selling over a million copies in China and worldwide.11 The album is heavily influenced

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10 In an interview with Zheng, he said that for him, “Tibet represents all the beauty that is left in this world.” Personal communication, 1994.
11 Dadawa is the stage name of Zhu Zheqin (朱哲琴), a Chinese singer/songwriter and contemporary Chinese music’s first independent producer. She is of Hunanese origin, ethnically Han and Miao. Dadawa has been referred to as the “Chinese Enya.” She has also been described as China’s Ry Cooder, for her eclectic forays into world music, including one recording and tour with Ireland’s Chieftains. Dadawa has collaborated on several albums with
by the music of Tibet, using Tibetan folk music as the basis for some of the recordings. This caused some controversy due to international criticism over China’s political dominance of the region.

Musicians often have to take dual positions in writing about ritual practices, being respectful of the Tibetan religious teachings by acknowledging past practices considered “cruel,” while simultaneously accepting their spiritual intentions. For example, in “Sister Drum,” the lyrics make reference to a Tibetan ritual drum allegedly made from the skin of young virgin girls. While Tibet had long abolished this ritual, the song’s appeal centers on its acknowledging the tragic disappearance of the “sister” to make the drum, so that those who hear the sound of the instrument can benefit from the wisdom and understanding of death and rebirth in their dreams and daily life. (See Appendix C, example 3)

My sister never speaks.
She left home when I couldn’t remember.
From that time I missed her every day. Sister ah…
When I grown up as same as her age, I suddenly understood her.
From then on, I will look for her every day. Sister ah…
An old man sitting on the hill, Repeatedly reading a word,
Uh Om Mani Padme Moo, Uh Om Mani Padme Moo. Sister ah…
The drum’s sound pass from the sky. It is the sister talking to me.
Uh Om Mani Padme Moo, Uh Om Mani Padme Moo.

“Sky-Burial,” another song on the album, uses the Tibetan funeral practice of placing a human corpse on a mountaintop to decompose while exposing it to the elements or to be eaten by scavenging animals, especially birds of prey. Such funeral rites are practiced in Chinese composer/producer He Xuntian, also a Shanghai Conservatory of Music’s composition professor.
provinces like Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan and Inner Mongolia, as well as other countries, such as Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal and the regions of Sikkim and Zanskar in India.

The final death is the same as the original birth. They are warm time
The last sunset and dawn as the original. Is the sun brilliant
Close to life, this is the most close place to the blue sky.
To Farewell to life, The folks here are very high.
Let the wind blew away the time
Sprinkle to Eagle
Let the cloud lifted the body
To the skies

Dadawa’s songs often focus on abolished customs and uplifting beliefs and practices that Han culture considered “uncivilized.” Rather than singing love songs typical of Chinese pop stars, the themes of Dadawa’s music are inspired by Bonist ritual and folklore, as well as Buddhist ideology. Her music has an atmosphere of mystery, emphasizing respect and depicting the grace of ethnic minority culture. Dadawa’s next album, *Voices From The Sky* (1997), followed in a similar vein and was released internationally, making her the first Chinese popular musician to reach a global audience. She received an MTV award in 1994 for her contribution to Asian music.
Minority Musicians Emerging in the Popular Music Market

Several minority popular musicians have emerged in the new millennium. They appeal to both Han and minority ethnic group youth with some even gaining international attention. While the notion that some minorities are discontent with their present position and way in which their ethnic group is represented in mainstream culture, the public and direct expression of this attitude by a nationally recognized minority media figure is very recent. This section considers the music of four music styles categorized by the ethnic group’s they represent. These include Mongolian musician, Teng Ge’er, and the band, Hanggai; Tibetan musicians, Han Hong and Alan Dawadroma; Uyghur musician, Arken and the hip-hop band, Six City; and the Yi musicians, Mountain Eagles and Jikejunyi.

Mongolian Pop Musicians

In the post-Mao era, the non-Han elite who represent their ethnic groups in the mainstream media increasingly draw on their traditional culture to represent their unique identities, but present it in a realistic light, rather than nostalgic and romanticized image. As Mongolian scholar, Almaz Khan mentions in reference to Mongolian identity:

The Mongolian elite today, in their construction of Mongolian identity, ignore agriculturalist and urban Mongols, very much like the state and the Han majority do in their representations of Mongolian identity, despite the fact that these groups constitute the majority of the Mongolian population… shared symbols and images of Mongolian identity do not necessarily imply identical meanings. For us, the yearning and option for the pastoral is not simply a result of some innocent romanticism or nostalgia for the idyllic. In our efforts to resist socio-cultural subordination and assimilation, the imagery of pastoralism has inevitable became [sic] the most salient rallying point and identity marker because, as a mode of economy and way of life, pastoralism is not only the most effective distinguishing marker of opposition to Han Chinese, it is also intimately connected to the Mongol’s proud past as a powerful nation that once ruled over the Middle Kingdom and beyond.13

Mongolian musician, Teng Ge’er, similarly follows this sentiment. Quoting from a 1993 interview in *Audio and Video World* (音响世界), a popular music magazine published in Beijing and distributed nationwide:

I can’t sing any more the kind of songs that deceive oneself as well as others, like “the Beautiful Grassland is My Home (美丽的草原我的家).” My elder and my fellow people will not forgive … In my native land, Ordos grassland, the herding people live year after year in drought and poverty. The lushness of the Grassland belongs only to the past.14

Teng Ge’er’s statement is indicative of the significant shift taking place recently in the role that minority people play in the general culture of the People’s Republic of China, particularly in the

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14 Ibid., 92.
representation of their ethnic identity in the media. His admission that he “can’t sing anymore the kind of songs that deceive oneself as well as others,” presents a critique of the orthodox official representation of Inner Mongolia and the Mongols in the PRC. The song, “Beautiful Grassland is My Home,” is a well known popular song from the revolutionary period about Mongols, which is similar in style and content to “the Sun in the Grassland.”

Teng Ge’er’s challenge to orthodox portrayals of his culture finds another, more poetic but not less powerful, expression in “The Land of the Blue Wolf” (Canglang Dadi, 苍狼大地). The song title invokes the image of a legendary ancestor of the Mongolian people. Teng Ge’er reflects on the remote past, when Mongolian rulers, rather than Han Chinese, ruled the mainland and the Mongols had a viable and distinctive way of life and identity. Indeed, the symbolism and images that Teng Ge’er uses in his songs to articulate Mongolian identity are not new, such as galloping horses, endless grassland, a pastoral, nomadic way of life, and Mongolian historical figures.

…I once heard that the nomadic people were the master of the mainland…
My rulers of former days, where are you now? …
The steeds have lost their masters
The hunting dogs have lost their steeds
The land of the blue wolf is yellow sand
How lonely is the grassland in the wind…

15 The song is from Teng Ge’er album “The Land of the Blue Wolf,” in 1999.
Though nostalgic, the lyrics are suggestive of a proud history that has been neglected in the modern era. Teng Ge’er was also influential in changing the style of singing orthodox minority songs. “Gadameilin,” for example, is a traditional narrative epic from the 20th century about the Mongolian revolution (1910s). Orthodox singers, such as Peng Liyuan, used Mandarin lyrics and sang in the national style to sing this, but Teng Ge’er added overtone throat singing characteristic of his traditional musical culture to introduce the main melody. His unique interpretation contrasted sharply with Peng Liyuan’s version, as well as other well-known singers, even Mongolian singer, Han Lei (韩磊, b.1964), who continued to sing in the national style.

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17 Han Lei (Mongolian name: Senbor), is also a Mongolian folk and pop singer and songwriter who was born and raised in Inner Mongolia. Han has recorded theme songs for various Chinese TV series, mostly about Western parts of China or the Qing Dynasty (when Mongolians ruled China), including the introductory theme to the theatrical play, Kangxi Dynasty (a biography of Qing ruler Kangxi).
Teng Ge’er has been an important role model for other ethnic minority popular musicians. His success with mainstream markets dominated by Han musicians became particularly influential with the revival of Mongolian nationalism in the 2000s. In 2000, he won best song and best vocal awards for the Hangzhou China Art Songs Music TV show. His song, “Heaven,” also won China’s “best song” national award, encouraging more interest in not only his music, but also other Mongolian musicians, such as Han Lei.

The increased interest in Mongolian popular music helped to inspire the indie rock band Hanggai, a new Mongolian band founded in 2007 and likely inspired by the Mongolian Yuanshengtai band, “Anda,” who featured the unique Mongolian vocal techniques of khoomei at the 2006 CCTV Young Singer Prix. In the following years, khoomei and the morinhuur became the most important representations of Mongolian popular music.

Hanggai has become the most successful of the bands minority bands in Mainland China. By the end of 2007, Hanggai began their first European tour, performing at the Ethno Music Festival in Sweden and also in Berlin, Hamburg and other cities throughout Germany. In 2009, Hanggai participated in some of the world’s most important music festivals, including Roskilde, an international rock music festival from the Netherlands, and Europe's largest metal music festival, Zwarte Cross, held in Portugal. They also performed for the FMM SINEs World Music Festival in 2010, and London's famous Union Chapel, performing in the Jump the Great Wall from China's Modern Music concert series. In the United States, Hanggai has performed at New York's World Music Center in 2009, for the Lotus World Music and Art Festival in 2010, and the
Chicago World Music festival in 2010. After their international success, the mainstream media in Mainland China began to include them in their television programming and live performance events. In 2015, they appeared on the CCTV-3 program “China’s Best Song Composition” (中国好歌曲), a popular song composition competition.

![Figure 4.3: Hanggai Band members](image)

The music of Hanggai often draws from Buddhist and Taoist philosophy, as with the song “Reincarnation (轮回, Lunhui),” which is about the belief that a person’s spiritual essence continually returns after each death until they become enlightened. All the lyrics of this song are in Mongolian and the instrumentation includes the traditional Mongolian morinhuur (horse head fiddle) along with accompanying guitar. The song received some criticism for its success in media competitions, primarily from Internet listeners, while others praised the song, even though the language barrier was problematic for the mainstream Han audience to understand. As quoted from various posts on Youku, “Chinese to promote Mongolian? To the Mongolian official

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language?,” “Why should a Mongolian song be the best song writing in this competition?;” others praised the song, “Mongolian language is cool and fantastic,” “It is beautiful, but we cannot understand.”¹⁹ Such criticisms were recognized by the band, which adapted their music for live performances to include Mandarin lyrics, sung by their music mentor, Liu Huan, to attract more audience acceptance.

_Tibetan Pop Musicians_

Among the most prominent of Tibetan popular music artists is Han Hong (Tibetan name: Ingdzin Droma).²⁰ Her mother is a popular Tibetan singer and her father is a Han comedian who served for the military. After her father died when she was 6 years old, Hong began to learn traditional Tibetan singing from her mother.

![Figure 4.4: Han Hong²¹](http://www.shundecity.com/a/amazenews/2015/0328/150966.html)

¹⁹ Youku website comments: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XOTAwNDg3Njg0.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2, entered on 2015/10/20.
²⁰ Han Hong was born in Shekhazhi, the second largest city in Tibet. She performed in a Chinese television gala broadcast after the Olympic closing ceremony on August 24, 2008.
Though her physical appearance does not meet the usual stereotype of a stunningly attractive and slim pop star, Han Hong gained a significant following based on her talent as a vocalist and songwriter. In 1997, CCTV produced a talk show called, *Half Sky*, which included an episode entitled, “Do Not Worry about How You Look,” hosted by Zhang Yue, a famous talk show host whose appearance was somewhat similar to Han. Han presented herself in a confident and unique way, receiving a strong positive response online from people who watched the show. She was not concerned with her appearance and sang with an appealing Tibetan vocal style that distinguished her from mainstream popular singers without the need to display this through physical imagery, such as her clothing.

Han Hong’s Tibetan vocal distinctiveness includes the female style of throat singing, referred to as “Anghe.” This allows her to reach extremely high pitches not characteristic of Han singing styles. Han’s popularity surged in 2003, when her version of Li Na’s “Qingzhang Gaoyuan (青藏高原, Tibetan Plateau),” made her one of the most famous female singers in China. Han’s songwriting focuses primarily on Tibetan folk music. After completion of the Qingzang Railway linking Tibet to the rest of China in 2006, Han had one of the biggest contemporary hits of the year, “Tianlu (天路, Heaven’s Road),” a song praising the railway and promoting positive images of the Tibetan people. The Chinese government helped to promote the song as well, resulting in immense popularity within the Han popular music market. Although she mainly deals with Tibetan themes, Han Hong has incorporated different styles of music as a
pop singer in Beijing. Her influences include Jazz, R-n-B, Rock-n-Roll, as well as Latin music, which are all reflected in her work.

Uyghur Pop Musicians

China’s Uyghur musicians hail from the autonomous region of Xinjiang in northwest China. The Uyghur population has its origin in the Middle East and consequently has music traditions related to that region, such as *maqam*. Since the 1980s, younger Uyghur musicians are more intent on changing the Han population’s view of Uyghur music by creating popular music. Uyghur musicians, such as Arken, famous for his fusion with Flamenco, and Uyghur hip-hop singers, such as Six City, became popular on the Internet among both Uyghur and Han fans during the 2010s.

Wang Luobin (王洛宾, 1913-1996), a Han musician, has been important for his presentation of many styles of Xinjiang music and Uyghur popular songs. “Youth Waltz” by Wang is the best-known Xinjiang song among students at universities in Beijing. Most of Wang Luobin’s music, however, including songs he collected, as well as composed, was labeled as anonymous orthodox minority songs. Some Uyghur youth became dissatisfied with the image that the songs portrayed about Uyghur culture. For example, in Wang Luobin’s song “Lift your Veil” (掀起你的盖头来), based on a Uyghur folk song, presented the image of a Uyghur man dancing with a hand-drum, which the younger generation of Uyghurs considered offensive and old-fashioned.
Like Mongolian musicians, China’s Uyghur musicians have also struggled to retain their traditional culture in the face of widespread assimilation from the country’s Han majority. As the government has developed its Western frontier through resettlement programs, many Uyghurs feel they have become strangers in their own land. For instance, in Urumqi, the region’s sprawling capital, Uyghurs now represent just 12 percent of the city’s population. Hip-hop has become a non-traditional outlet for Uyghur youth in Urumqi. Since 2006, the music has attracted thousands of Uyghur and Han fans across Xinjiang province.

Askar, a rock musician, is considered the first Uyghur popular music star, releasing his first album, in 1996. Known among Uyghurs for his bold political dissent, his career was influenced by the pro-independence movements of the 1990s. Askar’s nationalism and resistance themes had faded by the 2000s, surpassed by the music of another popular Uyghur musician, Arken.

Arken’s music is devoid of any message of ethnic resistance and is completely non-political. However, Arken was more popular than the rock star Askar. Arken had achieved success among the Han Chinese, evidenced by his appearing on the Spring Gala 2004. His image as a womanizer fit the stereotype of a rock star and helped him achieve notoriety in the mainstream popular music market of China.

Since 2000, the internet has become instrumental in bringing attention to Uyghur musicians. Hip-hop music, in particular, is highly regarded among Uyghur youth, as it is throughout China. The band Six City, for example, uses hip-hop music as a medium to counter
the government produced Uyghur songs. Although they sing and rap in the Uyghur language, songs like, “Going to Battle” from the album *Douban*, have found audiences with Han youth as well as their own ethnic group. Today the band performs primarily in Urumqi and Beijing’s indie music centers, such as South Luogu Alley in Beijing.

![Six City](http://site.douban.com/kmummy/room/1239973/)

Figure 4.5: *Kochidiki Parang* (Who Told You That) by Six City

*Yi Pop Musicians*

The tension between minority and mainstream is also found in Yi groups. In 1994, *Shanying* (山鹰, Mountain Eagle) released their first album. The self-titled album cover featured the three male musicians in the traditional dress of their ethnic group, Yi. Within the album, however, the band members were pictured wearing modern Western clothing, including backward-worn baseball caps. These images highlight the duality of the musicians with regards to tradition and modernity, as well as their Yi versus Han identity, which in the modern Chinese

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context implies Sinification. Yi-Han duality is also articulated on the album’s cover, where several characters in the traditional Yi script are printed alongside Chinese characters.

Their minority status is articulated most forcefully on the first track of the album, “Qiyue Huobajie (七月火把节, the Torch Festival of the Seventh Month),” which references the traditional Yi Torch Festival. The song begins with a distinctive rhythm distinguishing it from mainstream Chinese pop; the tempo is very fast, with a lively, stimulating, danceable rhythm enhanced by forceful solo percussion breaks. Yi-language shouts, speaking and sung lyrics are heard throughout the song. Although most of the lyrics are sung in Mandarin, Mountain Eagle makes extensive use of Yi in their songs. They also utilize local minority musical instruments, such as the bawu. Along with such traditional Yi elements, Mountain Eagle’s album simultaneously celebrates mainstream modernity and Sinification by extension, such as performing in “rap style” with drumbeats and utilizing synthesizers for melodic accompaniment.

Mountain Eagle’s album is an effort to promote their ethnic identity and distinctiveness from other minority ethnic groups.

…[Mountain Eagle] come from the mysterious, remote, silent, and powerful and grand Daliangshan. This vast and boundless primeval forest bestowed on them a simple and honest, coarse and tough spirit. They belong to the Yi nationality, which worships the eagle and has a long history and its own unique cultural forms … and language. Therefore, their music is wild and simple, full of passion, and free…. Once seeping into our exhausted, dusty and slow-to-react hearts, it certainly will make us experience an

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23 Bawu is a transverse (horizontal) single free-reed aerophone. The bawu likely originated in Yunnan province in southwest China, and has become a standard instrument throughout China, used in modern Chinese compositions for traditional instrument ensembles. The instrument is also closely associated with Hmong, Yi, Hani and other minority cultures in southwestern China. Typically played as a solo instrument, it is often featured in film scores and sometimes heard in popular music recordings.

24 Daliangshan (大凉山) is a region in Sichuan Province primarily populated by the Yi ethnic group.
unprecedented shock and aesthetic awakening … their convergence with the modern record industry is a one-time, multifaceted, forceful collision of the classical and the modern, the Han nationality and the Yi nationality, mainstream music and alternative music.\textsuperscript{25}

Though the minority voice in Mountain Eagle’s album is prominent in both the lyrical and musical content, they also sing in Mandarin. The inclusion of Mandarin gives them greater access and acceptance from mainstream Chinese popular culture.

Mountain Eagle and their music is in part a reaction to the enclosure and isolation of their own ethnic group. Many Han-Chinese, especially urban youth and intellectuals, identify with this sentiment, wishing to participate in the global transnational popular culture today in reaction to their own experience of enclosure and isolation in China’s history. Although their songs do not criticize traditional Yi isolationist attitudes, they nevertheless articulate a wish to reach beyond Yi territory and culture in several of their songs, such as the lyric, “I want to see if the outside world is really so exciting,” in the song “Parting Ballad.”

This interest in exploring outside of their traditional Yi territory has encouraged many Yi people to migrate to urban areas. In contrast to the Mongolian and Tibetan musicians discussed above, Yi musicians typically show more interest in joining the mainstream Han popular music market. Jikejunyi,\textsuperscript{26} a young female Yi singer, who is also from the Daliangshan region, became

\textsuperscript{25} Baranovitch, \textit{China’s New voice}, 105.

\textsuperscript{26} Jikejunyi (Chinese name: Wang Junyi) is a Yi singer born in 1987 in Daliangshan Yi county. She was an English major student in Sichuan University, which is partly why she prefers to sing in English. She participated in the Happy Girl competition of 2009, which was the successor of Hunan TV’s most popular talent show, Super Girl.
popular through the mainstream TV popular singer competition *The Voice of China* in 2012 on the Zhejiang TV station.\textsuperscript{27}

![Image of Jikejunyi on The Voice of China](image)

**Figure 4.6: Jikejunyi on *The Voice of China* (2012).**

Being from the Yi ethnic group, Jikejunyi was criticized by fans of the show for her physical appearance, likening her dark skin pigmentation to black Africans.\textsuperscript{29} Such racist comments reflected the mainstream popular music audience conceptions of how a female Chinese pop stars should look, e.g., white face, gentle demeanor, Western pop star fashion. Jikejunyi’s “wild” vocal style, also drew some criticism, as did her use of the Yi language along with English pop songs, challenging the show’s preference for mainstream Mandarin-language

\textsuperscript{27}The “Voice of China” is part of “The Voice” Franchise and is based on the Dutch program, The Voice of Holland. The deal was brokered by IPCN Ltd, a London and Shanghai based media company, which focused on the Chinese media market. Jikejunyi won third place in the 2012 competition.

\textsuperscript{28}Photo from: http://tieba.baidu.com/?kw, entered in 2015/11/07.

\textsuperscript{29}Comments from Baidu platform “Jikejunyi Ba”: http://tieba.baidu.com/?kw=%BC%AA%BF%CB%F6%C1%D2%DD&fr=ala0&loc=rec, entered in 2015. 10.24, 11:22. And Youku Jikejunyi “Hola”: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNzQ1NDkwNDEy.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2, entered in 2015/10/29.
popular songs. On the Youku video website, for example, some netizens questioned her singing “Don’t Afraid (Ajielu)” with Yi and English lyrics as a ploy to help her stand out from the Mandarin singers.

Following The Voice of China, Jikejunyi released her first song “Colorful Black” in 2013. This song was in response to the netizen comments about her dark skin, which is typical among Yi females. Lyric, such as:

…You look at me in a wrong way. I’m proud, not like you, pretending to be someone you’re not. This colorful world pretends to be perfect. Those broadcasters, Internet searchers, newspaper reporters are making mischief. But I’m happy that I’m black, my soul is simple and direct, I don’t need to be colorful. 30

The “black” reference also highlights use of the color as a distinguishing feature and symbolic color of the Yi people and their customs. The song itself has thus become symbolic of not only Jikejunyi’s struggle to gain acceptance and value within the Han dominant mainstream popular markets, as well as her confidence in facing these challenges, but also voices a similar sentiment of the Yi people she represents.

30 The lyric is from the song “the Colorful Black.”
CHAPTER V

A CASE STUDY OF A CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY INDIE BAND: SHANREN

This chapter focuses on the ethnic minority indie band, Shanren, which presents a representative example of such musicians and their association with authenticity and culture in modern China. Ethnic minority indie bands are interested in shaping their own identity in contrast to the officially promoted minority music scene found in mainstream media. Shanren, as an example, seeks to represent themselves as connected with “nature and reality,” instead of being motivated by modern trends in music and culture. They achieve a sense of authenticity through visual (instruments, movements, clothing and album cover art) and sonic (vocal and instrument timbre, music structure, and language) production associated with the social aspects of ethnic minority life represented in their songs.

Introduction to Shanren

Shanren is a multi-ethnic band formed in 1999 in Yunnan province of southwest China. The name of the band means “mountain men,” suggesting an association with nature and an environmentally friendly lifestyle. The name also highlights their alternative interest in using mountain minority village elements, like instruments and melodies, in their music.¹ The five band members include a combination of different ethnic groups within China, as well as abroad.

¹ Minority ethnic groups in Yunnan usually live in mountain areas.
The lead vocalist and primary composer is Qu Zihan, a Han Chinese who prefers to call himself “Gui Zu,” which means “noble group,” but also sounds like a new ethnic group, i.e., Gui people (Zu meaning ethnic in Chinese). The youngest singer calls himself Xiaobudian, meaning “Little Dot,” and is from the Buyi ethnic group residing in Guizhou. The original bass musician and rap singer was Aiyong, from the Wa ethnic group found on the border of China and Burma. Recently, Li Guohua, from the Yi ethnic group, has joined the band to replace Aiyong. The drummer is Ou Jianyun, a Han Chinese. The band also has an English interpreter, Samuel Debell, from the United Kingdom, though his Chinese name is Xiatian, meaning “summer.” This diverse makeup helps make it possible for the band to write both Han and minority lyrics in their songs.

Shanren started as a local indie band in Yunnan province. Over the past decade, they have established themselves in Beijing and attained an international following. The lead vocalist, Qu Zihan, left his former band, called “Kuafu,” in 1998 and founded Shanren with the drummer, Ou Jianyun, and Wa bassist, Aiyong. From 1999 to 2005, Shanren’s performances were mainly in Yunnan province and followed Cui Jian’s style of rock music that emphasized Han Chinese music elements, such as instruments and indigenous melodies, but also featured ethnic minority elements in their music. In 2006, they moved north to Beijing, as part of the “North drift” – a slang reference to the young people who migrated to Beijing in search of work without having a Beijing residence (known as Beijing Hukou).² Their musical style at this time shifted to include more ethnic minority features, while the rock music emphasis was minimized.

² Beijing means “the North Capital,” as it is located in northern China.
In 2006, Little Dot (Xiaobudian) joined the band and became a key member. He had previously been a street singer, who lived around Guijie Street (簋街). Located near the indie music center of South Luogu Alley, which includes many night-clubs on the square and plaza, Little Dot’s notoriety in this area helped to attract an audience to Shanren performances. His musical abilities also enabled him to quickly learn ethnic minority instruments, such as the kouxian, a Jawharp; bawu, a Yi flute; qin, a Han lute; shuye, a leaf whistle; niujiaoqin, a Wa buffalo horn whistle; and lusheng, a pipe-organ from Hmong people in China, as well as Western instruments, such as guitar. He could also play a variety of world music percussion, such as bongo (hand drums) and kalimba (lamellophone). Little Dot also provided backup vocals to some of the songs. The inclusion of world music instruments due to Little Dot’s contributions helped build a fan base for Shanren, particularly on their international tours of Europe and the United States.

With the band’s move to Beijing and the addition of Little Dot to the roster, the character of Shanren began to change from a Yi folk rock band to a multi-ethnic musical band that emphasized instrumental performance from different ethnic groups. In 2009, all the band members conducted fieldwork in Yunnan province to seek music materials from mountain ethnic groups, such as the Nu people, who lived in Gaoligong Mount, a mountain that is 7000-meters in altitude and considered one of the most isolated place in China. After this fieldwork, the band’s

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3 Guijie Street is a famous street in Beijing frequented by late-night food vendors and public street musicians.
4 An example is found in this performance on the Youku video website: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNzE5NjA2NTk2.html?from=y1.2-1-95.3.5-2.1-1-4-0, entered in 2015/11/10.
image and musical style became even more “mountain” related, as they portrayed themselves as an agricultural rock band opposed to the urbanization of rural areas, as well as the modern lifestyle that faces migrant workers when they move to urban areas.

![Figure 5.1: A map of Yunnan province. The arrow shows the direction of Shanren moving to Beijing in 2006.]

Like many minority musicians, Shanren’s music style is not overtly rebellious towards the Chinese government, especially after moving to the capital city of Beijing. Instead of getting involved in political issues, the band prefers to describe their life in the city and images of their home in rural China. The lyrics of their music tend to focus on the life of rural ethnic people who now live in Beijing. Such elements distinguish them from Han rock bands that emphasize politically sensitive issues. Minority rock bands, such as Shanren, prefer eco-friendly (environmental) themes, such as “returning to nature” and “escape from the noisy cities,” reflecting their attitude towards urbanization in the Reform and Opening period in China (see chapters 1 and 2).

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Similar to other indie popular bands around the world, minority popular bands in China also find that increased recognition brings opportunities to perform in the mainstream media. As Shanren has achieved such notoriety, they project an image of being “peaceful and exotic,” which reinforces this perception of Yunnan minority music by the mainstream media. Their style choice reflects their struggle of surviving in the Beijing music market – neither too radical and risk being banned by the mainstream media, nor too ordinary without distinctive characteristics – while maintaining an authentic and stress-free mindset, offering their audience another way to think about popular music, as well as real life in the modern city. For Shanren, they encourage youth to find their “real” selves, being true to their inner feelings and beliefs, in hopes that their listeners will find happiness without regret.

Although Shanren shies away from political metaphor, the portrayal of the reality of living in Beijing reflects fundamental issues that have occurred during the Reform and Opening period (1980s to present). For example, their song Thirty Years, reflects the challenges rural people face living in large urban areas during this period. Instead of singing about how happy they are about the economic development of China, like mainstream media’s minority songs, they express doubt and mock themselves throughout their songs, as well as reveal an intense desire to be honest with themselves. They strive to be self-aware and authentic in representing themselves to their listeners.

There are two overlapping modes for characterizing any entity [people or objects] as authentic: genealogical or historical (origin) and identity or correspondence (content). Authentic objects, persons, and collectives are original, real, and pure; they are what
they purport to be, their roots are known and verified, their essence and appearance are one.\textsuperscript{6}

In Shanren’s Case, authenticity in their music is presented through visual, aural, linguistic and social aspects, which are linked to their own roots as minority people, as well as the original traditions of Yunnan local folk music. They also strive to identify with the migrant working classes that live in urban regions, as they themselves have followed in a similar manner.

**Visual Authenticity**

Shanren’s interpretation of authenticity in the visual aspects of their performance is expressed through their use of ethnic minority clothes and musical instruments, as well as album covers designs. Visual authenticity is also represented through movement, such as gestures inspired by the lifestyle of Yunnan’s rural people and dance movements adapted from these ethnic groups. The venues where Shanren usually performs also reinforce their sense of authenticity, most often performing in ethnic minority theme bars and for festivals that relate to the Southwest Chinese minority groups, such as the Lijiang Snow Mountain Festival held in Yunnan every year in June.

**Appearance: Fashion Style, Instrumental Image, and Album Covers**

The first marker of minority popular bands is usually their performing clothes indicating the ethnic group they want to represent. The members of Shanren, as an example, wear fashions

from various ethnic groups, as well as distinctive haircut styles (see figure 5.2). Qu, the main vocalist, most often wears a colorful Yi vest or loose black pants typical of Yi village people. Little Dot similarly wears loose pants, but dons a long haircut style and typically wears a kerchief or headband that represents his Buyi character. Aiyong, the Wa member of the band, is recognizable due to his darker skin tone, which differs from the lighter pigmentation of the Han. He usually wears Wa style clothing to perform. The drummer, Ou, and translator, Samuel Debell, wear Yi style ethnic clothes to suggest a connection to Yunnan province.

Shanren also features a variety of ethnic minority instruments in their image and performances. The electric guitar and bass, as well as drum set, play supporting roles. The Yi Moon-lute, played by lead vocalist, Qu Zihan, is the primary instrument for many songs, not only for Yi songs, like *Drink Song* and *Left Feet Dance*, but also songs without any ethnic

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7 Photo from https://site.douban.com/shanren/, entered in 2015/12/10.
association, such as *Thirty Years* and *Mountain Men*. For example, in figure 5.2, the performers display the following instruments (left to right), *cha, qinqin, Yi moon lute, dabiya*. The other minority instruments are not used to represent a particular music from a specific ethnic group, but nevertheless promote an ethnic minority image to audiences.

The moon-lute is an instrument used in Han music, as well as by many minority musicians. The *Yi moon-lute* (彝族月琴) found among the Yi ethnic group refers to it as *xianzi* (弦子, string-instrument), *kuzhu* (苦竹, bitter bamboo), *sixian* (四弦, four strings), *bajiaoqin* (八角琴, octagon lute), or *longtouqin* (龙头琴, Dragon Head lute), due to its top being shaped like a dragon head. These names differ from the Han moon-lute, such as the *Yueqin* (月琴, which translates directly as “moon-lute”). It has a short fretted neck and four strings tuned in courses of two (each pair of strings is tuned to a single pitch). Each pair is generally tuned to the interval of a perfect fifth. The Yi moon lute is traditionally tuned at the pitches D and A with the plectrum made from bamboo. This instrument usually accompanies Yi dances, such as *Axitiaoyue* (阿细跳月, Axi People Dance Under the Moon).

The Yi moon-lute played by Qu Zihan is 68-cm long and made from Tong tree with colorful painting and cloud-shaped carved patterns on the body. The style of the instrument is designed similarly to the cloth color and traditional patterns of the Yi people in Yunnan. His

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8 The Han Moon-lute is so named because of its round, hollow, wooden body. However, the Yi moon-lute can have different body shapes and is always colorfully painted.

9 *Axitiaoyue* is a center-dance genre from the Yi community. Axi is the name that Han people in Yunnan call Yi people in the region. Tiaoyue means “dance under the moon.”
Moon-lute features prominently on Shanren’s album covers, such as *Shanren* (2007) and *Thirty Years* (2009), to symbolize the band’s association with the Yi ethnic minority.

Figure 5.3: Qu Zihan plays the Yi moonlute.\(^{10}\)

Another instrument associated with ethnic minorities from Yunnan is the dabiya, a pipa-style lute from the Nu ethnic group. The Nu have a population of roughly 20,000 people living isolated in the Gaoligong Mount (高黎贡山) in Yunnan.\(^ {11}\) Known as the Nu pipa, the instrument utilizes some of the most ancient playing techniques that have already disappeared from Han music culture, such as playing the instrument behind the neck and couple performance where a man and woman are intertwined as they play each other’s instrument.

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\(^{10}\) Photo was taken by author, August, 2015.

\(^{11}\) The pipa (琵琶) is a four-string pear-shaped plucked lute that is commonly used in Han music traditions. The instrument has a varying number of frets ranging from 12 to 26, while the Nu dabiya has no frets.
Other instruments that Shanren use to reference ethnic minorities from Yunnan include the *kouxiang* (bamboo jawharp, see figure 5.7) found among the *Yi*, *Wa*, and *Nu* people, as well as the “Water Buffalo” whistle common to the *Wa* ethnic group. The Qinqin, a round-body lute of the Han, is also featured in Shanren’s instrumentation, rather than an American banjo. Although the timbre is similar to the banjo, the image of the Qinqin emphasizes their connection to local roots rather than the influences of American and popular culture.

These instruments and associated performance customs appear on Shanren album covers, such as the carving patterns of Qu Zihan’s Yi moon-lute. The band also utilizes calligraphy stylized to look like a mountain, particularly with the “Shan” character, which means “mountain” (see figure 5.5). In the anime music video for *Thirty Years*, Shanren incorporated a paper cutting

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13 Photo from https://site.douban.com/shanren/, entered in 2015/12/10.
style from Yunnan province to illustrate a direct reference to ethnic minority culture heritage (see figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Shanren’s album covers.¹⁴

Movements: Gesture and Dance

Shanren performances include imitation of folk dance movements, as well as the rural people’s posture and physical demeanor. The band’s anti-industrialization attitude is reflected in their imitation of rural regional work activities on the stage. For example, the song “Tiantianxiangshang (天天向上)” references a typical rural primary school associated with Chairman Mao’s quote, “Haohao Xuexi, Tiantian Xiangshang (好好学习，天天向上, ‘Study hard, then you will improve day by day’).” During a performance at Jianghu Bar, Shanren

¹⁴ Photos from https://site.douban.com/shanren/, entered 2015/12/11.
imitated the movements of primary school children, when Little Dot used the Communist Young Pioneers’ saluting style, as Qu Zihan’s called out, “Study hard and you will improve day by day.” This scene is typical of rural primary school yards, when students perform their morning radio exercises.\(^{15}\)

Images of migrant workers are also reflected in their performances, such as Shanren’s song, “Mountain Men,” where the band members imitate the movements of laborers as they correspond to a whistle and march to a “one-two-one” rhythmic pattern. “One-two-one” in Chinese is “Yi-er-yi,” which is associated with the marching bands or military style of marching. Similarly, when migrant workers walk in the city, they also march, particularly when they are doing construction work, such as coal mining, or safety work, as with their radio exercise training in the morning to the rhythm of “Yi-er-yi.”

Shanren’s dance movements are most frequently inspired by the Nu, Wa, and Yi ethnic groups, particularly in association with hunting and Dionysian spirits, as well as the drinking culture common to Yunnan province. During many songs associated with dance, the band members move less like rock stars, and more like rural folk dancers. In the song, *Left Feet Tune*, they borrow movements from the Yi folk dance, “Left Feet Dance” from Chuxiong county in Yunnan, which is identified by a kick of the left foot on the last beat of each sentence. In “Wa

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\(^{15}\) Radio Exercises / 操 体 操 is also called Radio Calisthenics or rajio taiso. Originating from Japan during 1930s and 1940s, and introduced by Mao Zedong in 1951, these warm-up calisthenics became the most popular in Mainland China (as well as Japan and Taiwan). Used primarily at schools (primary school, middle school, and high school in mainland China) as warm up for physical education classes to encourage students to raise their energy and promote good health. They were also introduced to rural schools of Mainland China to popularize the government health program “Everybody Exercise (Quanmin Jianshen)” from the 1990s to present.
Drink Song,” which Shanren performed at Indonesia’s Spring Spirit Festival, a guest Wa female dancer from Siligang, “Amei,” performed the Wa dance, called “Hair dance” that incorporates the choreography of spinning her extremely long hair in a circle.

![Little Dot plays QinQin with Qu Zihan playing the Yi Moon-lute.](http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/rock/2015-01-12/doc-iawzunex8899005.shtml, entered in 2015/11/10)

Finally, the Dionysian spirits, which are mostly associated with simple and absolute happiness, is most important in Shanren’s stage performances. For example, in the song, “Yi Drink Song,” the band members all create their own style of getting drunk: Qu Zihan, usually encourages the others to “drink more, drink more;” Ai Yong gets drunk quietly and almost falls asleep; and Little Dot, the most active member, is often bouncing and vivacious across the stage, even jumping into the audience.

**Venues: Auditoriums, Bars, and Music Festivals**

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The bars on South Luogu Alley have stylish names to attract young audiences, the literary youth in particular. Shanren prefers to perform in these bars to meet the “qingdiao” (meaning “sentiment”) style that distinguishes such venues from those associated with mainstream music. For example, Jianghu (江湖酒吧), a favorite destination for Shanren and their fans, is hidden away in a siheyuan. The owner of the bar is a friend of Shanren, a Beijing-born Han indie musician. The informal nature of the venue encourages a comfortable and casual atmosphere. The bar is small, such that the audience and musicians are close to each other, encouraging a stronger relationship between the band and their fans, in contrast to those of mainstream musicians that are more distant physically and emotionally from their audience.

Although Shanren draws on rural roots for inspiration, their audience is mostly urban literary youth. Like the bar’s name, Jianghu, suggests “seclusion” inspired by Taoist philosophy, reflecting the taste of literary youth to live naturally without ambitions. The literary youth (see chapters 2 and 3), who are mostly from middle class or wealthy families, became tired of luxury and fancy clothes. This is reflected in their fashions, as they typically wear t-shirts, jeans, and canvas shoes, as well as big glasses, even if they have clear vision. They like to play computer games, go hiking and read books. The women wear no make-up and dress “nerdy” in school-style clothes, rather than “sexy” in tight dresses and the latest fashions. Many famous indie musicians have performed in this small bar, such as Wang Feng (汪峰, b.1971), and Xie

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17 Siheyuan: an ancient style of architecture in Beijing.
18 Jianghu in this context references people who are considered outlaws by the mainstream political world, but who fight for justice of the common folk.
Tianxiao (谢天笑, b. 1972), Shanren frequents it in part because of its unpretentious spirit.¹⁹

Figure 5.7: Author with Shanren in Jianghu Bar: Xiaobudian, Xiaorong Yuan (author), Xiaou, and Qu Zihan.²⁰

Aural Authenticity

The aural authenticity that Shanren presents is shown in the following aspects: vocal and instrumental timbre; adaptation of ethnic minority folk tunes into a popular music style; and use of local dialects in their songs. Vocal and instrumental timbre refers to the use of instruments typical among the mountain ethnic groups of Yunnan province, as well as high-pitched nasal timbre and vocalizations imitating nature, such as bird song, running water, and echoes in the empty valley. Shanren’s use of ethnic minority folk tunes as inspiration for their compositions also represents an effort to remain connected to the rural culture they promote. Language is also important, as the group incorporates slang local to minority ethnic groups and intentionally changes the syntax of modern Mandarin to fit the Yunnan language style. These aspects

¹⁹Wang Feng is a rock musician popular during 2010s in Beijing. He is also a judge on the Voice of China. (see chapter 4, Yi musician, Jike Junyi). Xie Tianxiao, also a rock musician, became the new mentor of Beijing rock music after Cui Jian in the 2000s.

²⁰“Interview with Shanre,” personal communication with the band, 2015, August.
contribute to the unique “mountain style” popular music that Shanren performs, which
distinguishes them from the mainstream popular singers, as well as other Beijing indie musicians.

Nature Music: Images of Mountain Life

An important aspect of Little Dot’s character is that he uses his body and voice to create the sound of an instrument. His musical talents shine onstage, shifting fluidly between instruments, such as Qin Qin (jaw-harp), Yi Xiao (a bamboo flute from the Yi people), and Wa (a buffalo horn whistle used by the Wa people), to vocalized imitations of the sounds of birds, a train, flowing water, and echoes between mountains. In the songs “Tingshan (Listen to the Mountain)” and “Niaoyu (Birds’ Language),” Little Dot became the main “instrumental” background to Qu Zihan’s lead vocal.

Instrumental timbre also contributes to the “mountain” music style. Although played throughout China, the kouxian (a Chinese version of the jaw-harp made of either bamboo or metal), for example, is particularly popular among many non-Han ethnic groups, such as Yi, Buyi, and Hmong in the provinces of southwest China, such as Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guizhou.\textsuperscript{21} This plucked idiophone has a lamella that is mounted in a small frame and is held over the player’s open mouth, which serves as a resonance chamber. Highly rhythmic with unique over-tone sounds, the kouxian plays an important role in creating the distinctive sound

and feeling of minority musical culture. Several ethnic minority popular bands utilize versions of the kouxian, including Shanren, where Little Dot is considered an exceptional performer of the instrument.

Figure 5.8: Kouxian (jaw-harp) types used by the Yi people.

The bamboo jaw-harp used by Shanren is 10 cm long and is from the Yi people. Its fundamental tone, considered by Shanren as a low “sol,” and overtones sound simultaneously. The instrument is primarily used to add another layer of rhythm and offer a unique timbre quality. For example, in “Laomudeng,” which is a hunting song of the Nu people adapted by Shanren, the kaouxian overtones and rhythmic pattern mesh with folk-style tunes and dance to portray a “Mountain people” scene to the audience.

“Left Feet Dance” is a song from Yunnan heard among the Yi that uses the Yi moon-lute to accompany couples dance. The dance is from a Yi legend: Once there was an evil dragon that destroyed the Yi people’s homes and farms. The Yi warriors went to fight the dragon. They caught it and covered it with stones and mud. Then they called everyone in the village, young and old, men and women, to come out and step on the dragon. It took them three days and three

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nights to kill the dragon. The step uses the left foot, hence the name of the dance. Everyone uses the same movement on the same beat to imitate stepping on the dragon, mainly with the left foot.\textsuperscript{23}

\textit{Qinqin (秦琴)}, a Han plucked-lute, was originally manufactured with a wooden body, slender fretted neck, and three strings.\textsuperscript{24} The instrument is a banjo-like instrument with a membrane resonating face. There are two types of qinqin in modern China: the traditional version, characterized by raised frets made of wood or bamboo, and the modern version, which uses metal frets. The modern version closely resembles an American banjo in that its body shape is usually round. The drum head is most often made of sheep or python skin. The modern qinqin usually comes with three strings, though the tuning is not consistent from musician to musician. Shanren uses a modern style Qinjin in their newly composed songs, such as “Thirty Years” and “Mountain Men.” The lead vocalist, Qu Ziha, composed these songs and uses the instrument to simulate the banjo, feeling that the qinqin encourages American audiences who consider it more familiar than other Chinese lutes.

The dabiya is a wooden pear-shaped plucked lute with four strings. The two inner strings play the main melody, while the two outside strings provide harmony. The dabiya has two versions of the body shape, a narrow style, and a round style (see figure 5.4). Shanren tunes the

\textsuperscript{23} This story was related by the English translator, Samuel Debell, on Shanren’s North American tour in 2014.

\textsuperscript{24} The qinqin is used in some regional silk-and-bamboo ensembles in southern China, such as Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, as well as Hong Kong and Macau. A similar instrument, the two-stringed dan sen, has been adapted from the Qinjin for use in the traditional music of southern Vietnam.
dabiya strings to a-c-e-a, and use the instrument as a substitute for a guitar in the emotional song, “Nu love song.”

Form in Ethnic Minority Music

Strophic and Verse-Chorus Form

Strophic form is also called “verse-repeating” or chorus form, and applies to songs where all verses or stanzas of the text are sung to the same music. As ethnic minority folk songs are usually composed in strophic form, many ethnic minority popular bands in Beijing, such as the Mongolian band, Hanggai, use the strophic form with additional instrumental solos and khoomei virtuosic displays. Shanren’s song, “Thirty Years,” which is their most popular, follows this form. Other folk style songs, such as “Bird Language,” “Laomudeng,” and “Nu love song” similarly follow this form.

Beijing bands often use verse–chorus form, which is common to popular music forms found in blues and rock music since the 1940s. The chorus in verse-chorus form is heard more frequently with the verse playing a supporting role. The chorus often sharply contrasts with the verse in melody, rhythm, and harmony, and generally has more variance in dynamics and musical activity, often with added instrumentation.

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25 The lyrics of the “Nu love song” translate as, “I see you in the forests, I see you in the fields. I see you in the dance group. But I can’t talk to you.” The typical context is a boy plays the dabiya and sings to a girl. He wants her to love him. But the girl responds to him by playing a specific khozian tune to answer “no.”
However, based on many Chinese folk songs, especially Yi folk songs often used by Shanren, the melodies are difficult to convey in the Western notation system. They sometimes change the original phrase in order to fit into more standard popular song forms. For example, an original Yi drinking song from the Chuxiong Yi community that contains twelve measures (see figure 5.8) is condensed in the Shanren version to follow a more standard form of only eight measures. Shanren then creates an original chorus based on an inversion of the main motif from the folk tune.

**Original Folk Version of Yi Drink Song**

![Original Folk Version of Yi Drink Song](image1)

**Shanren’s Version of Yi Drink Song**

**Verse**

![Shanren’s Version of Yi Drink Song](image2)

Yi Moon-lute solo break
Figure 5.9: Original Yi Drinking Song and Shanren’s version.\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Story-Telling Medley Style}

“Mountain man” is an example of a story-telling song that uses a medley structure, rather than strophic form, due in part to its length of over seven minutes. Qu Zihan, the composer, follows the structure of a Yunnan local opera style, called “Qupai lianzhui, which translates literally as “tunes-locks,” suggesting that the main melodies are “locked” in the same key, called Gongdiao (宫调).\textsuperscript{27} The melodies are either complete or fragments of the original tunes usually from local folk and children songs. This narrative approach to song writing is unusual to find in Chinese rock music, although some Han R&B singers, such as Houxian, have attempted this approach, such as in “Suzhou Chengwai (苏州城外, Outside the Suzhou Wall).” Keeping a

\textsuperscript{26} Transcription by author, 2015.
\textsuperscript{27} This is a traditional structure common to local folk opera genres, such as Huadengxi opera, a local opera common to southern China. Its history is traced to 500 years ago in Kunqu opera, which was the national opera prior to Beijing opera. In Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, the most popular folk opera is Yunnan Huadengxi, a genre that uses the “tunes-lock” structure for composing melodies and associated narrative.
strong rock style that uses the off-beat and electric guitar with a rock-style vocal, the song includes three narrative verses mixed with three melodic verses linked with seven different instrumental tunes. The transcription below shows the main tunes used in the song and how they are linked together (also see appendix D).

Tune 1:

Tune 2:

Tune 3:

Tune 4:

Tune 5:
Structure Guide (there are two versions of the song—the Live show version and the TV version):

**Live show version:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tune Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Tune 1 (Speaking with instrumental accompaniment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narratives 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Tune 2 (Melodic story-telling over)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal melody</td>
<td>Tune 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal melody</td>
<td>Tune 4 (Repeated once)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>Tune 5 (Speaking with instrumental accompaniment, repeated once)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TV version:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tune Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Tune 1 (With very short spoken text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Tune 2 (Melodic story-telling over)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal melody 1</td>
<td>Tune 3 (Becomes same function as a chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narratives 2, 3</td>
<td>Tune 2 (Melodic story-telling over)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal melody 1</td>
<td>Tune 3 (As a chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal melody 2</td>
<td>Tune 4 (Repeated once)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal melody 1</td>
<td>Tune 3 (As a chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>Tune 5 (With very short spoken text)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 5.10: Structure of “Mountain Man.”][28]

“Mountain Man” is considered biographical of Shanren, as its song title is the same as the band’s name. Although fans prefer typical song structures, such as the strophic and verse-chorus forms found in “Yi Drink Song,” “Thirty Years,” and “Left Feet Dance,” the band regularly performs “Mountain Man” in their concerts as their introduction to the audience. The atypical form and length of the narrative makes “Mountain man” difficult for audience members to follow and remember. Also of note is the use of standard Mandarin for the melodic sections,

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while the Yi, Nu, and Wa languages are used for the narrative sections. This practice of performing narrative in a local dialect and using standard Mandarin for the sung sections is also common practice in Peking opera.

The song is also distinctive for its form following the practices of a Yunnan opera form, known as Huadengxi, rather than the national opera – Beijing opera. This form incorporates narrative, plus melodic content, similar to a medley, as is sometimes found in Western popular music. A medley is a composition comprised of parts from existing pieces played one after another and sometimes overlapping. Though unclear if Shanren was inspired by the local opera style or western popular song’s medley style, Qu, the lead composer for Shanren, asserts that, as a native listener of Yunnan local opera, he was strongly influenced by this style of music.

Han musicians sometimes draw from Peking opera compositional styles, which are based on “banqiangti,” meaning the rhythm shapes the melody.\(^\text{29}\) Although their later songs no longer use the medley forms, instead returning to normal structures as with other bands, most of their other songs were much simpler and more easily remembered by Beijing audiences. However, “Mountain Men” represents the “indie” character that the band wants to promote – making them distinctive from other bands in Beijing, maintaining a distance from the mainstream music culture as part of Beijing’s indie music world.

\(^{29}\) Peking opera’s tunes are basically two tunes called “Xipi” and “Erhuang.” Compared with Peking opera, some southern operas, such as Kunqu (ancient local opera in Jiangxi province located in south China) and Chuangju (local opera in Sichuan in southwest China), use a “tune-lock” style of writing, which suggests fixed melodies.
**Multi-Language Lyrics with Minority Rural Roots**

Shanren also distinguishes itself from mainstream popular musicians and other indie bands through its use of the Yunnan dialect or other ethnic minority languages in its lyric composition, rather than standard Mandarin. For example, for their concert tour of America in 2014, the English interpreter, Samuel, asked the audience if anyone could understand their Chinese lyrics performed in the minority style. Although there were several Chinese audience members, including the author (a standard Mandarin speaker), only a few raised their hands. Some songs, such as “Bird Language (Yi lyric),” “Wa Drink Song (Wa lyric)” and “Love Song (Nu lyric)” were performed in the associated ethnic group’s language, while others, although sung in Mandarin, still sounded unfamiliar, because Yunnan Mandarin differs from northern Mandarin in some aspects, such as articulation of certain phonemes.

For example, in the Mandarin song, “Mountain Man,” the difference between standard Mandarin and Yunnan pronunciation is generally found with the vowel “o,” and the consonants “h” and “g.” The Mandarin pronunciation of the character, 着, as an example, would be “zh-a-o,” while it would be pronounced as “zh-u-o” in the Yunnan dialect. The first pronunciation tends towards an open mouth tone, “ae,” while the second sounds with a more closed mouth, as in pronouncing “u.” Similarly, the consonants “h” and “g” have distinct pronunciations with Mandarin sounding more nasal, while the Yunnan dialect is heard through the teeth, like a “z.” Such differences make the song unique among other Han language songs. The differences can also lead to some misunderstanding of the meaning.
The *chenci* (衬词, stress words) — an interjection style that adds localized language to the end of a phrase or links two phrases or words — also illustrates how the Yunnan dialect is distinct from standard Mandarin. For example, to express “the white plane flies every day” in Mandarin, would be “*babai* (big and white) *feiji* (plane) *meitian* (everyday) *fei* (fly),” while in the song, “Mountain Man,” the lyric is pronounced as, “*dabo* (Yunnan dialect of “big and white”) *feiji* (plane) *catian* (Yunnan dialect of “everyday”) *fei* (fly).”

Shanren was not the first indie band to use local dialects in their songs instead of official standard Mandarin. Several Han indie bands used “old-fashioned” regional languages to distinguish themselves from mainstream popular music. The Han indie band, Second-Hand Rose, for example, used the Dongbei Hua dialect found in Shenyang, Changchun and Haerbin, three northeastern provinces in China. Many local slangs and idioms are also broadcast in Beijing because of its migrant populations from other parts of China.

**Social Authenticity**

“Even though we have rebellious things in our music, they’re really not so obvious. We just want to approach things from a different angle – to make people think.”

— Qu Zihan, 2011

This quote from Qu Zihan, lead singer of Shanren, references the band’s efforts to bring attention to social and economic inequities in China, while also indirectly addressing political

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30 This phrase is used to demonstrate differences in chenci (衬词, stress words) between Yunnan and Mandarin pronunciation.
issues. For example, in the song “Thirty Years,” the lyrics focus on the life of a poor young man who is unable to find work or a girlfriend. Considering the title and images presented, the song highlights more than just the miserable life of the main character, but indirectly references the thirty years of “reform and opening up” of the Chinese government. Changes during this period prompted growth in migrant workers, a shift towards urbanization, as well as increasing pollution that has become a prominent consequence of the growth in Chinese modern society. The song relates the plight of the migrant workers during the first decade of the “Reform and Opening” period when people (especially rural) moved to cities in search of jobs, leaving their homes that were considered poor and hopeless. However, after two decades (1980s and 1990s) of rapid development, the new city workers found they could not attain the good life they had hoped and, even worse, lost their rural homes and farms.

*The Migrant Worker Theme in Shanren’s Music*

Since the 1980s, orthodox songs, such as “Walking into the New Era” (1997) performed by Zhang Ye, included themes that promoted China’s society as highly developed due to the government’s “Reform and Opening” policy. Song Zuying’s (see chapter 4) song, “Getting Better and Better,” similarly promoted the idea that the standard of living was annually improving for Chinese people. However, lower class laborers, such as construction workers who were mostly rural migrant workers, found their situation worsening, rather than improving. The gap between rich and poor widened, while the environment became increasingly polluted over
the twenty-year period. Considered worse was the failure of the social security system to keep up with the rapid growth of the economy. This magnified the separation between rich and poor classes. Such subject matter, however, was ignored in orthodox songs, but became a focus of indie music culture.

The life situation of Little Dot, the young Buyi singer who grew up in the poorest mountain region of Guizhou Province, illustrates the challenges of migrant life. As the son of a cow herder and member of the small Buyi minority, Little Dot left home when he was nineteen years old, followed his older brother and other folks from his village to travel to Beijing. In order to buy the train ticket to Beijing, he spent his high school tuition. He relates, “I wanted to see what was on the other side of the mountain.”³² While this may seem like a simple goal, his life changed forever as a result. After arriving in Beijing, he lived with his brothers and kinfolk in the Siheyuan area where poor people settled. Without the possibility of a college music education, he taught himself to play music. His experiences with migrant workers helped him to understand their lifestyle, which helped him to quickly adapt to Shanren’s musical style and motivations.

Qu Zihan, Shanren’s primary composer, also mentions, “Those folk song singers should be respectful. They are like the grass, lived as the roots of other music, and we should learn from them with much careful attitude.”³³ Like other ethnic minority rock bands, Shanren not only represents the minority groups’ anti-industrialization attitude, but also promotes agriculture rock

³³ Interview to Qu Zihan, 2015, August. (Interviews were conducted in standard Mandarin).
as representative of a social group of grassroots people regarded as the lowest class of modern Chinese society. While the grassroots people are composed mainly of migrant workers from rural regions of the country, the music also speaks to ordinary people who live in conditions below the middle-class.

Shanren connects with this grassroots population through images that symbolize and promote them as part of migrant worker culture. The figure below (see figure 5.10) shows Qu Zihan (middle) wearing a T-shirt that reads “good economizer” in Chinese; bass player, Ai Young (right) wears a miner hat, a common job for migrant workers; and the drummer, Ou Jianyun (left), wears clothes and stands with a posture typical of the traditional farmer.

Figure 5.11: Members of Shanren wearing clothing reflective of their solidarity with migrant workers and farmers.34

Migrant workers (*nongmingong*) in China are notoriously marginalized, especially with regards to residency, called *hukou* (citizenship), which requires permits for a person to receive

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social welfare benefits. Migrant workers are typically in the greatest need of such benefits, as they survive on low wages with long working hours and poor safety conditions. The lack of social security puts them at risk of untreated occupational diseases, such as alcoholism, and poor education for their children, who are unable to attend school without established residency. This creates the dilemma for migrant workers who must either bring their children with them to urban areas where they will not receive schooling, or require them to stay behind in their home communities without a parents’ care. Often the children become delinquents lurking on the streets and wind up in the bottom social class. Furthermore, the rural regions from where these migrant families originate must endure the problem of their population aging when the younger generation does not return, particularly in areas of Northeast China, such as Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjian.

Feature 5.12: A typical young female migrant construction worker. Such workers typically have no social security benefits.  

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Returning to Shanren’s song, “Mountain Men,” such social situations for migrant workers provide the inspiration for the lyrics, which relate the life experience of migrant workers in urban regions.

...Those urban people laugh at me as a bumpkin... enter to city I need a place to live, I could only wear my sheep-skin coat... those color scene is lying to me, don’t believe those phony kindness... let’s go only for RMB [Mainland Chinese currency]

-- From Shanren’s “Mountain Man”

Such lyrics relate the feeling of migrant rural people who struggle in the city. However, instead of anger with the situation, the melody and lyrics are happy and dance-like, almost satirical. They consider how migrant workers often dream of traveling to the city, which can be regarded as an honor for their family. This hopefulness, however, often changes when they discover their lack of rights and respect, such that happiness in the city becomes like a daydream. The song shifts to a sarcastic tone to reflect the continual bullying they experience from others, as well as among themselves.

Shanren often performs at folk music festivals that attract migrant workers, such as the Yunnan Puer Rural Music Festivals (普洱乡村音乐节). The audience typically includes migrant workers and urban music fans. As such patrons are Shanren’s primary supporters, it is important the band performs at these events.

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The concert is on the website: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDg5NTY5OTY4.html. Entered in 2015/11/10.
Yuanshengtai minority music appears in Shanren’s songs as symbolic of anti-industrialization (see chapter 3). Shanren’s website introduces their purpose for creating “agriculture” music:

When the Beijing Rock and Roll bands blindly chase Western metal music as a fashion, Shanren, the native people from Yunnan, are willing to go in another direction... Shanren is going to preserve the “Diku” [slang for “underwear,” used as a metaphor for “the last line of defense”] of Chinese rock and roll music. They are going to play agricultural-style Rock music, which is more laid back, calm and beautiful. This nature-driven rhythm must counter the rapid speed of industrialization. So they will clean up your ears, bring you back to the plateau [referencing Tibet and Yunnan and Guizhou regions], back to the countryside, back to the childhood to feel the soul. Shanren’s music is never backward,

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not simple, never conservative. They try everything new while never giving up tradition.38

This introduction represents their attitude towards the use of Yanshengtai music to defend against the rapid industrialization process that has affected other Beijing bands. Other bands, such as Hanggai, have also accepted this attitude, integrating Chinese rural style popular music in their performances. Like many agriculture rock bands, Shanren characterizes their agriculture rock character in three ways: folk instruments are included along with modern instruments, such as guitar, drum-set and bass; folklore, in the form of traditional rural customs and references to rural folk in their lyrics, is essential; the lyrics present the reality of people’s lives, often in an ironic or satirical style. The latter often includes a play on words or Chinese linguistic tones.

Shanren’s song, “Love Story between Wang Fugui and Jia Meili” illustrates these characteristics. The main figures in the story have names common to rural populations – connecting to rural customs. The family name, Wang, with the fourth tone means “mirage,” and the family name, Jia, with the third tone means “fake” (see appendix 2). The names suggest that their dreams of becoming rich and fashionable are an unrealistic fantasy. Rather than a romantic love story, the song is instead filled with ironic imagery of the harsh reality of life for migrant rural workers in the city, even though mainstream television media depicts them as having happy lives in the modern period.

In describing rock and roll music, Qu Zihan responds “Yaogun (rock and roll in Chinese) is a spirit.” Shanren’s connection to “mountain” culture appeals to the general interest of Han culture in Taoist ideology, which suggests “the most beautiful (music) is from nature.” Many Taoist musicians and literary figures, such as Ji Kang (223-263 CE) and Tao Yuanming (365-427 CE), discuss their musical inspirations as coming from nature. Taoism, in this context, refers to philosophy, rather than specific religious influences, such as Zen Buddhism. The Taoist philosophical school was founded in the Chunqiu (Chinese, Spring-Autumn) period (BCE 770 - 403) in ancient China. This philosophy developed parallel to Confucianism, which encourages people to become involved in politics and society. Taoism, in contrast, suggests that life unfolds naturally; being in connection with this nature and the natural flow of life is considered essential. Following this ideology, the Taoist musician believes music should be beautiful without artificial human emotions. A Confucianist musician would suggest that music must serve to uplift morality and ethical behavior, as well as educate people to obey accepted social principles. Taoist ideology is simply described as chushi (出世), meaning, “avoid and escape from being overwhelmed by human society,” while Confucianism encourages the attitude of rushi (入世), meaning to get involved with society. Both the Confucianist and Taoist schools of thought have been important influences in Chinese history for more than 2000 years, affecting art, music, and literature, as well as economic and politic structures. Shanren preserves the Taoist ideology in their anti-industrialist attitude and eco-friendly activism, rather than the Confucianist emphasis on the growth of society, which in today’s context suggests urbanization.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapters address the recent rise of interest in ethnic minority popular music among the mainstream population in Chinese society. Musicians in this genre sing in support of such ethnic minorities, as well as working-class citizens, particularly rural migrant workers.

Chapter 1 offered a general discussion of the “Reform and Opening” period (1979-present), a new era in China’s political and economic history. These changes resulted in a generation born in the 1980s and 1990s described as a new Youth Culture, whose mentality shifted from a group (“We”) focus to individually centered (“I”) interests. Reflecting the new political and economic environment, popular music culture also shifted from a political focus towards more diverse topics, such as daily life, love, religion, social criticism, and other topics related to ordinary people.

Chapter 2 presented a historical review of Chinese popular music from its roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the 2010s, the most recent period. During the 2000s and 2010s, minority popular music emerged with themes of “finding purity of the soul” and “searching for my authentic self” (see chapters 2 and 4). These new social interests caught the attention of mainstream media.

Chapter 3 addressed the image and themes related to these associations with minority music and culture that are presented in mainstream media. Minority images make reference to
the term *yuanshengtai* (“natural beauty”), which became an important focus for social debates about “artificial” vs. “authentic” representations of minority populations and their culture.

Although the *yuanshengtai* style was removed from the national television singing competition, National Young Singer TV Grand Prix, in 2013, it persisted in popular music and inspired indie minority musicians to search for their unique voices in popular music culture.

Chapter 4 surveyed some of the most successful minority popular musicians in the 2000s and 2010s, revealing how these artists gained attention from Chinese society and mainstream audiences, because of their different style of singing in contrast to conservative minority singers (orthodox singers). Such minority musicians shaped their own identity and image of authenticity for Han audiences, especially youth, through their music. As minority musicians increasingly use the term “authentic” to describe themselves, this becomes an important focus for discussion of indie musicians and their motivations in Mainland China.

Chapter 5 presented a case study of the indie band, Shanren, a premiere representation of “authenticity” in ethnic minority popular music. They express their authenticity in visual, aural and social representations based on direct association with the cultural activities of Yunnan ethnic minority populations. The band is primarily motivated by their connection to nature and real life circumstances, rather than the influences of modern trends in mainstream music and culture. They achieve a sense of authenticity through visual (instruments, movements, clothing and album cover art) and aural (vocal and instrumental timbre, music structure, and language) production associated with the social aspects of ethnic minority life represented in their songs.
The band’s popularity among both minority and Han youth is driven by their sensibility towards nature and reality, as well as their respect for migrant workers. Their music acts as a voice of support for the challenges ethnic minorities and migrant workers face in modern society.

Perspectives on Authenticity of the Chinese Urban Youth

The notion of authenticity is important to discuss in relation to ethnic minority popular music, as it is with the representation of ethnic minority culture more generally. In anthropological contexts, authenticity is often used to describe a vast range of human experiences, such as art, music, food, dance, clothing, literature, and language. As quoted from Lindholm in chapter 5:

There are two overlapping modes for characterizing any entity [people or objects] as authentic: genealogical or historical (origin) and identity or correspondence (content). Authentic objects, persons, and collectives are original, real, and pure; they are what they purport to be, their roots are known and verified, their essence and appearance are one.¹

Such varied usage of the term “authenticity” may challenge a conclusive definition, just as references to sincere, natural, original, and real require a counterpart that is insincere, unnatural, copied, and fake. Discussing these counterparts of authenticity help to provide a meaningful definition of what is authentic in a specific cultural context.

Authenticity may apply similarly to both individuals and groups of people. A person is authentic if he or she is lives within their means and directly expresses their beliefs; collectives

are authentic if their biological heritage and culturally valued manners can be verified and maintained. For social studies, this term describes human experiences that are close to a desired or aesthetic taste that motivates like-minded people to come together as a community in their search for something “real, essential, and vital.” The search towards a sense of authenticity can encourage and give an individual a stronger sense of personal, as well as social identity. Searching for authenticity can initiate an influential social movement. Authenticity can positively motivate people to work harder towards their goals and feel good about their jobs. Authenticity can also be buried deep within the ideology of a community, influencing the perspective and beliefs of those with political power.

In China’s case, authenticity and its counterpart can be considered in several ways, such as native versus Westernized, local versus global, rural versus urban, and natural versus fashionable. As the stability of an agricultural economy deteriorates in China, the society is being transformed by a new economic environment, which results in massive migrations of rural people into urban regions. During this process of urbanization, these populations are plunged into modernity and find themselves living among strangers, no longer quite sure where they belong or what the future holds for them or their original communities. Like many other countries in Asia, such as Thailand, India, Korea and Vietnam, Chinese society faces the challenge of transforming their old economy and political structure into culturally dynamic systems that can participate in the global arena. This presents opportunities and difficulties for

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2 Ibid., 3.
the emergence of a new elite and other social classes. People in this evolving environment, including musicians, must reconsider their roles in society and find new ways to survive and succeed.

The Han majority and 55 other ethnic minorities in China are challenged on varying levels with regards to changes in their society. While the Han people attempt to preserve their cultural heritage from globalization, minority groups are faced with threats of modernization to their traditional culture, as well as their minority status in the face of Han hegemony. Minority populations are sensitive to the preservation of their heritage, but also strive to be accepted by the Han majority through an awareness and incorporation of modern activities. For their part, the Han population considers minorities as representative of a connection to authentic rural life that is rare to find in Han urban communities. They presume ethnic minorities hold a spiritual purity through their religious beliefs, which is considered fascinating by many Han youth in particular, having grown up with no dominant religion.

This transition from rural to urban emphasis happened quickly, as addressed in chapter 1. The generation of Chinese born in the 1980s and 1990s are considered part of the transition to modern urbanization, whereas the generation born in the previous two decades (1960s and 1970s) is regarded as being strongly tied to rural roots. In the 2000s, the Chinese urban elite emerged as a result of the “Reform and Opening” policies of the 1980s and 1990s. Their musical tastes were strongly influenced by Western genres and modern trends, which they themselves often regarded as artificial and disconnected from their cultural heritage.
In contrast, the working middle classes pursued lifestyles considered more genuine and connected with China’s own culture, reflected in a preference for native styles of music. The youth born of these middle class families represent more typical people of China. Such Chinese youth, comprised of both Han and ethnic minorities, often find their personal identity and spiritual lives in crisis. Their search for a sense of authenticity is reflected in the themes of the music they support.

*Wenyi qingnian* (“literary and artistic youth”), a kind of urban youth that appreciates indie rock music, became particularly prominent in the 1990s and 2000s. They are most interested in so-called “real music” and characteristically renounce all material desires in order to free themselves from attachment, false ego, and a sense of proprietorship. This literary youth culture encourages greater interest in and acceptance of ethnic minority music as an authentic musical style. Within Chinese literary youth culture, the notion of authenticity and its counterpart presents as a pair of antonyms in Chinese urban slang language – *Tu* (土, folk, native and authentic) and *Chao* (潮, fashion, artificial and modernized). “Tu,” which originally had negative associations of being backwards and lagging behind, reflects the attitude many youth express through a love of native Chinese arts, including music, and take pride in being referred to as “tu.” Those who identify as “Chao” represent the fashionable and modernized aspects of popular culture, including imports from outside China. In popular music, *chao* preferences tend towards non-Chinese styles, as evidenced by the heavy influx of Westernized Korean and Japanese popular music appealing to generations born in the 1980s and 1990s. The popularity of Gangtai
and Mando-pop music, indigenous to China, continues to decrease among this group (see chapter 2). Popular music on mainstream television is similarly regarded as *chao*.

In comparison, Chinese indie popular music, ethnic minority popular music in particular, strives to be less modernized and infused with a “DIY” (Do-It-Yourself) sensibility. Literary youth describe this as *tu*, or authentic, in comparison to mainstream musicians. Minority popular music that maintains connection to its Chinese rural roots, such as music performed by Shanren, is considered more authentic than other Chinese Han-associated mainstream popular music.

Using Shanren as an example, the following chart shows the relationship of ethnic minority popular bands with regards to their primary audiences among rural communities (Yunnan ethnic groups and migrant workers), as well as urban literary youth and how this group considers them with regards to authenticity.

![Diagram](chart.png)

Figure 6.1: The relationship of ethnic minority popular musicians with their primary audiences.
Because members of Shanren came from Yunnan rural communities, they are strongly tied to their ethnic minority musical roots. Having moved to the capital city of Beijing, the band also identifies with migrant workers and better understands their lifestyle, as their lives parallel this transition as well. Their music reflects these two inspirations, utilizing rural-style melody, movements, and singing techniques, as well as singing in minority languages that clearly identify them as distinct from urban musicians with minority backgrounds who instead emphasize standard Mandarin and conservatory-style vocal performance. Their clothes and instruments also represent the tu sensibility for most urban middle class youth, reminding them of the migrant workers who still wear rural clothes and listen to folk music from their home.

Urban youth who search for native style of rock and roll consider Shanren and such minority bands as having an authentic (or tu) style, in part because they perform in bars and concert halls where they can be in close proximity to the audience. When these bands perform, their stage presence is informal, friendly and modest. They tell anecdotes about themselves and connect directly with the audience, as if they were their co-workers, family members, or neighbors. They often sing about current events, shared by the fans and their neighbors. They write their own songs, using themes related to their own lives with lyrics that are concrete, simple, and personal. They express a wide range of emotions and are passionate in their singing. Their music is rough and energetic with rural origins. They sometimes wear working clothes and are conscious of the tendency for hard-core fans of this musical style to move on when a club
becomes too popular among dilettantes and sightseers, in search of a more remote locale and other bands they consider more authentic and known only to a small number of dedicated fans.

Shanren, for example, has achieved a growing popularity in recent years. In their earlier performances, they always spoke directly to the experiences and emotions of their audience. Their ticket prices were low and the fans were few, but growing and enthusiastic. As recently as February 2016, they appeared in a mainstream competition on CCTV (2016), the national media. Though their hard-core fans were proud that their favorite band achieved such success, the price of Shanren performance tickets rose rapidly, endangering their perception of being tu and worrying many that the band would lose their authentic appeal. This became an important issue for fans of Shanren via social media. While the band was recognized as maintaining their unique style of music, the increased popularity brought concern among their literary youth fans as to whether or not the band would “sell-out” and change their musical style to gain a larger audience, as is typical of the mainstream music industry, which they consider chao, i.e., artificial. For fans of Shanren, such as this researcher, the hope is that the indulgences and temptations of financial success and public notoriety will only come as a fringe benefit of ethnic minority popular musicians remaining steadfast in their dedication to ethnic minority music and culture. If so, then their motivations, though perhaps questioned by others, may never waiver among the band members themselves or their dedicated audience that regards them as exemplars of authenticity in the modern world.
# Appendix A:

## Pronunciation Guide (Mandarin to English)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Approximate English Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>as in father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>as eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an</td>
<td>as in man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ang</td>
<td>as in hung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ao</td>
<td>as in now</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>as in nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
<td>as in make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td>as in under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eng</td>
<td>as in sung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er</td>
<td>as in her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>as in meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>(after z, c, s, zh, ch, sh and r is silent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>as in yacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ian</td>
<td>as yen</td>
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<tr>
<td>iang</td>
<td>as young</td>
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<tr>
<td>iao</td>
<td>as in meow</td>
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<tr>
<td>ie</td>
<td>as in yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>iu</td>
<td>as you</td>
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<td>in</td>
<td>as in pin</td>
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<td>ing</td>
<td>as in ping</td>
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<tr>
<td>iong</td>
<td>as in German junger</td>
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<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>as in lore</td>
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<tr>
<td>ong</td>
<td>as own</td>
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<tr>
<td>ou</td>
<td>as in tow</td>
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<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>as in rude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ua</td>
<td>as in waddle</td>
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<tr>
<td>uai</td>
<td>as in wide</td>
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<tr>
<td>uan</td>
<td>as in wand</td>
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<tr>
<td>uang</td>
<td>as in wah+ng</td>
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<tr>
<td>ui</td>
<td>as in weigh</td>
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<tr>
<td>un</td>
<td>as in wonder</td>
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<tr>
<td>uo</td>
<td>as wall</td>
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<tr>
<td>ü</td>
<td>as in French tu</td>
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<tr>
<td>üan</td>
<td>ü+an</td>
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<td>üe</td>
<td>ü+eh</td>
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<tr>
<td>ün</td>
<td>as in German grün</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>as in bat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>as in hats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mandarin Chinese has four tones, referred to as the first tone, second tone, third tone and fourth tone. They are indicated respectively by the tone graphs in the following sound combinations: ma, ma, ma, ma. The first tone is called the high level tone. It should be high, almost at the upper limit of the pitch range, and level, without any fluctuation. The second tone is called the rising tone, it starts from the middle range of the pitch and rises. The third tone is called the falling-rising tone. It has two parts, first falling from the lower half on the pitch range and moving up to a point near the middle range. The fourth tone is called the falling tone. It falls all the way down from the top of the pitch level. In addition, there is a “fifth” tone, which is actually an unstressed tone. It is also called the neutral tone and pronounced softly and quickly. The neutral tone is not marked with diacritical.
## Appendix B

Chronicles Chinese Modern History (1900-Present)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910s</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>The Qing collapsed during the fall of 1911, end of imperial rule, followed by Republican period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1912, Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen) took office as the provisional president of the newly created Republic of China. Although Sun’s Revolutionary Alliance had widespread support, the power lay with regional militaries, and within a few months Sun stepped down in favor of General Yuan Shikai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>After entering World War I on the side of the Allies, Japan seized German territories in Shandong Province. Japan then issued 21 demands to the Chinese Government, seeking extensive new trade and territorial privileges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Entered the Warlord Period: China fragmented into territorial fiefdoms ruled by local warlords, with a nominal national regime located in Beijing. October Socialist Revolution and Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>The Communist in Russia begin to enter in China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>May Fourth cultural movement: calls for modernization and Westernization compete with conservatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>In July, a small group of Chinese leftists met in the French Concession in Shanghai to form the Chinese Communist Party. Within a couple of years, and largely at the urging of advisors from the Soviet Union, the CCP forged a united front with Sun’s Nationalist Party (Guomindang/Kuomintang).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>May 30th Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1928</td>
<td>Northern Expedition by the Nationalists and Communists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Establishment of Nationalist government at Nanjing, CCP failed in the main cities and move to settle in rural areas.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Japanese incursions in Manchuria begin in the three provinces in Northeastern China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-1935</td>
<td>Long March by Communists: Mao begins rise to power; CCP Red army settled in Yan'an, Shan'anxi</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Outbreak of war with Japan: Nationalists retreat to Chongqing, Schichuan province</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>End of the war with Japan and WW II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1949</td>
<td>Civil War ends with Communist victory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1958-1962</td>
<td>Began of Great Leap Forward causes massive famine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>End of Great Leap; Socialist Education movement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Four Purifications campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-1976</td>
<td>Culture Revolution: Mao at war with his own party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Death of Mao; End of Culture Revolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Deng Xiaoping solidifies position as paramount leader</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Demonstrations in Tian'anmen Square Jaing Zemin chosen as new Communist Party leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Deng's southern tour's energizes reforms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Death of Deng; Jiangzemin reconfirmed as leader Hongkong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>China enters World Trade Organization (WTO)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Leadership passes to Hu Jintao</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Hu confirmed as leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 1:

Drizzle
(Maomaoyu 毛毛雨)

Lyric and Songwriter: Li Jinhui
Transcription: Xiaorong Yuan

I = G
J = 80

Drizzle seems to be never stopping.

Gentle wind blows as if it will never stop.

My baby, I don’t want your gold,

My baby, I don’t want your silver

Drizzle, please don’t feel awkward,

gentle wind, please don’t feel trouble

Young handsome guy, you are like the rising sun,

young beautiful lady, you are like lotus just blow.

Don’t let the flower fade. Don’t’ wait until the sunset. Ai yo yo, the sunset.
Example 2:

Love My China

(*Ai Wo Zhonghua 爱我中华*)

Singer: Song Zuying

Transcription: Xiaorong Yuan

1 = ♭

\[ J = 100 \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wǔshí liùgè xīngzuò} & \quad \text{wǔshí liúzhīhuā} \\
\text{wǔshíliúxiōngdíjiēměi shì yī jiā} & \\
\text{五十六个 星座， 五十六枝花。 五十六族 兄弟姐妹 是 一 家} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The 56 ethnics (in China) are like 56 flowers. We 56 ethnics are like brothers and sisters in the same family.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wǔshíliúzhōng yǔyán} & \quad \text{hùlǐngyìjiǔhuā} \\
\text{àiwózhōnghuáàiwózhōnghuá} & \quad \text{sài luo} \\
\text{五十六种 语言 汇 成 一句话 爱我 中华 爱我 中华 爱我 中华。 赛罗} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The 56 languages mixture to one sentence: Love my China, Love my China, Love my China. (sailuo)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sài luo sài luo sài luo sài luo sài luo sài luo sài luo sài luo} & \quad \text{ài wó zhōnghuá} \\
\text{赛罗 赛罗 赛罗 赛罗 赛罗 赛罗 赛罗 赛罗} & \quad \text{爱我 中华！} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Vocalization: sai luo sai luo )

Love my China!

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ài wǒzhōnghuá jiānérfènqìde bùfá} & \quad \text{ài wózhōnghuá jiànshewēnménde guójìa} \\
\text{爱我 中华， 健儿奋起的 步伐, 爱我 中华， 建设我们的 国家。} & \\
\text{Love my China. Strong workers start matching. Love my China. Let’s built our great nation.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]
Love my China. Our Country is getting heroically stronger. Love my China.

56 languages come together to be one sentence: Love my China

Hei
Example 3:

Sister Drum
(Ajie Gu 阿姐鼓)

Composer: He Xuntian
Singer: Zhu Zheqin (Dadawa)
Transcription: Xiaorong Yuan

\[ 1 = 'B \]
\[ j = 65 \]

Intro

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Sing} \\
&\text{wǒde ā jiē cóng xiāobùhù shuōhuá} \\
&\text{zài wǒ jī shì dēnànián lìkāile jiā} \\
&\text{我的阿姐从 小 不会 说 话， 在 我 记 事 的 那 年 离开了 家。} \\
&\text{My sister could never speak. She left home just the year that I began to remember something.} \\
&\text{From then I started to miss her almost every day. Sister ah...} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[ \text{从 此 我 就 天 天 天 天 的 想 阿姐 啊} \]
一直想到阿姐那样大，

When I grow up as same as her.

When I grow up as same as her.

我突然间懂得了她。

I suddenly understood her.

从此时天天天天的找

From then, I started to look for her every day.

我突然间懂得了她。  I suddenly understood her.

From then, I started to look for her every day.

阿姐啊…

Sister Ah…

在尼堆上坐着一位老人。

On the Mani hill, there is an old man sitting.

天边传来阵阵鼓声。

I heart the sound of the drum (made of my sister’s skin) came from the heaven.

He repeatedly read a sentence from the text.  

That is my sister talking.

Uh
唵嘛呢叭咪哞。 唔

Om Mani Pedme Moo (Reapead)

唵嘛呢嘛呢叭咪哞。 唔

Om Mani Pedme Moo (Reapead)

唵嘛呢嘛呢叭咪哞。 唔

唵嘛呢嘛呢叭咪哞。 唔
Appendix D
Selected Song Lyric Translations of Shanren

Example 1

Thirty Years 三十年

Song writer: Zihan Qu
Translator: Xiaorong Yuan

Intro (Speak over instrumental melody)

小瞿, 生活 过 呢 个 好？
zhū me zhū méi yǒu yǎng rén me rén bìng zhòng
猪 么 猪 没 有 养 , 人 么 人 病 重 。
wǒ men qù běi jīng chuǎng shè huì qù
我 们 去 北 京 闯 社 会 去

Ask:     How is your life going recently?
Answer:  I didn’t feed my pigs. I am getting weak and poor.
Suggest:  Let’s go to Beijing to find our new life!

Verse 1

三十 年 前 找 不 着 , 今 天 找 着 了

三十 年 前 找 不 着 , 今 天 找 着 了

三十年前我 们 找不 着, 今 天 我们 找 着 了

三十 年 前 找 不 着 , 今 天 找 着 了

Thirty years ago I couldn’t find it. Today I found it.
Today I found the girl, but she is not mine.
What a pity, what a pity, she is not mine.
Verse 2

三 十 年 前 搞 音 乐，今 天 搞 音 乐
gǎo zhè zì jī xǐ huan de yīn yuè shēng huò què méi zhǎo luò
gǎo zhe zì jǐ xǐ huan de yīn yuè, shēng huò què méi zhǎo luò
gǒo zhe zì jǐ xǐ huan de yīn yuè, shēng huò què méi zhǎo luò

三 十 年 前 找 不 着，今 天 找 着 了
zhǎo bù zháo zhǎo bù zháo zhěng yè shuì bù zháo
zhǎo bù zháo zhǎo bù zháo zhěng yè shuì bù zháo
zhǎo bù zháo zhǎo bù zháo zhěng yè shuì bù zháo

Thirty years ago, I was making music. Today I am still making music.
It’s nice to make music that we like, but we haven’t made any money.
Try to sleep, try to sleep, but I can’t fall asleep at all.
Try to sleep, try to sleep, but I can’t fall asleep at all.

Verse 3

三 十 年 前 找 不 着，今 天 找 着 了
zhǎo bù zháo zhěng yè shuì bù zháo
zhǎo bù zháo zhěng yè shuì bù zháo
zhǎo bù zháo zhěng yè shuì bù zháo

Thirty years ago, I was looking for a job. Today I am still looking for a job.
I see lots of good jobs, but none of that are mine!
What a pity, what a pity, they are not mine.
I think it’s time to go home to plant field again.
Example 2:

Mountain Man 山人

Songwriter: Zihan Qu
Translator: Xiaorong Yuan

Intro

jiāfǔzhīchàngběnxīāngdēgū
Speak: 家父只唱本乡的歌曲，

bùbǐnǐmenyǒngyǎngsāngzhìchànggē
(Yunnan) 不比你们用洋嗓子唱歌。

nǐtīng lǐmiàn yǒu duō duō dàishǒudēnèiróngné
dialect) 你听，里面有好多带少的内容呢。

My father only sings in his local voice, not like you guys singing in Classical western style. Listen, my song has the different story.

Narratives 1 (Tune 2)

wǒjiāzhùzài shāntóushàng gèzhechéngshìbùzhāncūn
Sing: 我家住在山上，隔着城市不沾村

chéngrén jiāowōxiāngbālǎo tóngzhimenmāzhège
(Yunnan) 城里人叫我乡巴佬，同志们骂你这个……

Dialect)

gémíng deqízhīgànxiāngshān wǒsùfùqínshàngshān
(Beijing) 革命的旗帜干山，我随父亲上山

dàshān dāshānshōulí wǒ mǔqīn núlǐ wǒ
Dialect) 大山大山收留我，母亲母亲远离我

I live in the mountain, far away from the city.
Those city people call me hillbilly. They always laugh at me.
Thanks to the (Culture) Revolution, I went to the mountain with my father.
Great Mountain treat me well, but my dear mother left me forever.

xiǎowá wū zhèshènhuóshì tiánmì de rìzìlèlìde
Speak: 小娃娃，莫哭，这生活是甜蜜蜜的，日子乐滋滋的。

suǒyìme niàiwō zhànzhǔ
(Yunnan) 所以么，你挨我站住。

Dialect)
The mountain talked to me:
Hey, my boy. Don’t cry. Come here. Stand by me.
You will be happy if you think life as sweet as honey.

Narrative 2 (Tune 2)

Sing: wáwáshídài wǒ mèng xiǎng duō zǎmèng yě mèng bù dào shān nà biān
Narrative

(Yunnan) tīng shuō nà biān shì lǎo hǔ de wō, cóng xiǎo xué huì bù duō shuō
(Yunnan)

Dialect)

I had lots of dreams during my childhood, however,
I never dream about the other side of the mountain.
I heard that the other side of mountain is tigers’ home.
So I am scared to talk about that place.

wǒ běn shì yī shān zhōng hàn, dāo gēng huǒ zhòng shēng jì máng

Speak: 我 本 是 一 山 中 汉, 刀 耕 火 种 生 计 忙,
gǎi gé de chūn fēng chuī shēn rén wǒ de shēn yǎn

(Yunnan) 改 革 的 春 风 吹 进 山, 吹 得 山 人 我 心 痒 痒。

Dialect) 喏 勒 勒, 大 白 飞 机 擦 天 擦 天 的 飞

I think I will be a mountain man, planting the field forever.
But the Reformation movement went into the Mountain.
I saw the beautiful airplanes flying above my house everyday.
I want to go out from the mountain.

wǒ xiǎng hē tā men yì yàng shén me jì ào dà péng zhǎn chì

Sing: 我 想, 和 他 们 一 样, 什 么 叫 大 鹏 展 翅,
zhēn de nǐ xiǎng xīn wǒ yǐ hòu yào shén me yǒu shén me

(Beijing) 真 的, 你 相 信 我, 以 后 要 什 么 有 什 么。

Dialect)

I want to live like them (the city people). I wish I could fly like an eagle.
Really, I believe that if I can go to the city, I can get whatever I want.

jìn chéng le

Speak: 进 城 了!

Ok, Let’s go to the city now!
Narrative 3 (Tune 2)

When I came to the big city, I think a lot.
The first thing I need to do in the city is that I must have a home.
I need a leather cloth defend the cold.
Don’t worry, the mountain man have good idea.

Vocal Melody (Tune 3)

I heard the Mountain’s voice. It is telling me something important.
Be careful about those phony speeches and masked faces.
Remember the truth. Be yourself.
Don’t be lost in this money world.

Speak:

Let’s focus on the RMB (Chinese currency).
It’s all about the money!
Vocal Melody (Tune 4)

nǐ shì tiān shàng de cǎi fèng huáng
wǒ shì dì shàng de hàn mǎ huáng

Chorus: 你 是 天 上 的 彩 凤 凰，
wǒ shì dì shàng de hàn mǎ huáng

(Beijing 我 是 地 上 的 旱 蚂 蝗)

nǐ zài tiān shàng fēi wǒ zài dì shàng zhuī

(dialect) 你在 天 上 飞，我 在 地 上 追

nǐ shì tiān shàng de wáng mǔ niáng
wǒ shì dì shàng de huā gǔ duo

nǐ cóng tiān shàng diào xià lái wǒ cóng dì shàng mào chū lái zhěng

Ending (Tune 5)

shān gāo qí shí bù suàn gāo shān shàng shí jǐ yǒu chái shāo

Speak: 山 高 其 实 不 算 高，山 上 实 际 有 柴 烧，

nǐ jìn me wǒ tuì nǐ tuì me wǒ jiù jìn

(Yunnan 你 进 么 我 退，你 退 么 我 就 进。)

shān rén cóng bù wán huā zhāo

Dialect) 山 人 从 不 玩 花 招。

The Mountain is not that tall and that poor, and there are many wealth.
I, the mountain man, had learnt so much from its wisdom.
When the difficulty moves to me, I will retreat.
When it moves back, I will advance.
I will never be afraid about the difficulties.
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